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*THE FUNCTION OF FANTASY IN VICTORIAN LITERATURE, ART AND
ARCHITECTURE*

by

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ABSTRACT

In this thesis I examine the ways in which the Victorians used fantasy in literature, art, and architecture to explore the main areas of debate and key issues which were giving rise to anxiety in their society, in some cases upholding the status quo, but in others questioning accepted social mores.

In particular, I consider the ways in which fantasy was used to examine what happens in a society when its traditional religious beliefs are challenged, either by commercialism as an economic creed, or by the acquisition of new knowledge, be this in the realm of science (theories of evolution) or the humanities (the new biblical criticism from Germany). Following on from this, I look at the possible alternatives to traditional religious belief which fantasy seemed able to offer to an age which appeared to need spirituality without dogma.

I argue that one of the strategies most commonly adopted by the Victorians in the creation of fantasy is the disruption of time, and I consider the part played in literature and art by medievalism, and in architecture by the Gothic style and the Gothic Revival movement. This is followed by an examination of the role of Classicism in architecture, and ancient mythologies, such as Greek, Hebraic, or Babylonian, in literature and art. Finally, I consider the use of geological time as a point of departure in creating scientific fantasies.

Given the very close links between the arts until the advent of aesthetic criticism at the end of the nineteenth century, I have drawn freely upon the visual and the literary arts. The main emphasis is, however, on literature and painting, with architecture playing a lesser, though still important, part in this thesis.



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Introduction

I

The belief that the proper function of art is the imitation of life is of very long standing, beginning inauspiciously with Plato's exclusion of poets from his perfect State on the grounds that they, like painters, imitate not the perfect ideal form of an object, but a specific, material model of that ideal, which is necessarily imperfect. Poets thus are 'thrice removed from the king and the truth'¹ and are therefore unworthy of a place in the City.

Later critics, while adding their own particular emphasis, have agreed with Plato: Aristotle, for example, stripped the notion of the negative connotations identified by Plato, but argued nevertheless that poetry and music can be 'described in general terms as forms of imitation'² and, furthermore, that humans are responsive to these art forms because the 'instinct for imitation is inherent in man from his earliest days'³.

In the sixteenth century Sir Philip Sidney elaborated upon this, suggesting that:

There is no Art delivered unto mankind that hath not the workes of nature for his principall object, without which they could not consist, and on which they so depend, as they become Actors and Plaiers, as it were of what nature will have set forth...*Poesie* therefore, is an Art of *Imitation*...A speaking *Picture* with this end to teach and delight⁴

while Alexander Pope set out his thoughts on the subject in the *Essay On Criticism*, coming to a similar conclusion:

Unerring Nature, still divinely bright,
One *clear, unchang'd* and *Universal Light*,
Life, Force, and Beauty, must to all impart,
At once the *Source*, and *End*, and *Test of Art*⁵.

Later in the eighteenth century Samuel Johnson concurred, arguing that although selection of incidents to be imitated was necessary on moral grounds, nevertheless fiction should 'exhibit life in its true state, diversified only by accidents that daily happen in the world, and influenced by passions and qualities which are really to be found in conversing with mankind'⁶. Likewise, in the nineteenth century Matthew Arnold grounded his aesthetic

set out in the 1853 Preface to his *Poems* directly on Aristotle's belief that all art is essentially imitative, and that it is imitation which is the 'basis of our love of Poetry'⁷.

This emphasis on the mimetic function of art is by definition an emphasis on what is observable in life: how people act and react in any given situation; what they do or say; what they look like and how they live. Yet most people, while acknowledging that such aspects are both interesting and important, would feel that there is more to life than what can be seen. Nor can the old adage 'out of sight is out of mind' be applied here, for most people seem to believe that the unseen aspects of life are at least as important (and many would say more important) than the observable aspects. There is something beyond that which can be observed to which human beings are responsive, and for which they search.

In the lives of many individuals this pressure exerted by the unseen sustains the religious impulse (using the word 'religious' in its widest sense to include the full gamut of pagan and non-canonical belief systems, as well as the more widely recognised and organised religions of Judaism, Christianity and Islam), but in literary criticism it has been expressed in an aesthetic which counterpoints the dominant mimetic aesthetic, as discussed by MH Abrams in *The Mirror and the Lamp*⁸.

This counter tradition is also of long standing, and was established by Longinus, who argued that nature

implanted in our souls an unconquerable passion for all that is great and for all that is more divine than ourselves. For this reason the entire universe does not satisfy the contemplation and thought that lie within the scope of human endeavour; our ideas often go beyond the boundaries by which we are circumscribed⁹.

For Longinus this is the something which lies beyond the observable, and which became the basis for his aesthetic theory of the sublime.

This thought was echoed at the beginning of the seventeenth century by Francis Bacon, who in *The Advancement of Learning* suggested that

Poesy is a part of learning in measure of words for the most part restrained, but in all other points extremely licensed, and doth truly refer to the Imagination; which, not being tied to the laws of matter, may at

pleasure join that which nature hath severed, and sever that which nature hath joined...The use of this...hath been to give some shadow of satisfaction to the mind of man in those points wherein the nature of things doth deny it; by reason whereof there is agreeable to the spirit of man a more ample greatness, and a more absolute variety, than can be found in the nature of things¹⁰.

Likewise, in the eighteenth century Richard Hurd, in a counterpoint to his near contemporary Samuel Johnson, helped to free poetry from the constraints of mimesis, arguing:

A poet, they say, must follow *Nature*; and by Nature we are to suppose can only be meant the known and experienced course of affairs in this world. Whereas the poet has a world of his own, where experience has less to do, than consistent imagination. He has, besides, a supernatural World to range in. He has Gods, and Faeries, and Witches at his command...Thus in the poet's world, all is marvellous and extraordinary¹¹.

The pressure of the unseen which in individual lives sustains the religious impulse and in literary criticism gives rise to a counter tradition based on Longinus's notion of the sublime, also manifests itself in the creation of romance or fantasy literature. This, too, is free from the constraints of the strict imitation of nature, and has less to do with experience than 'consistent imagination', to use Hurd's phrase.

It would, however, be mistaken to regard these two literary traditions as existing in a simple, static, bipolar opposition, in which one is deemed 'right' and the other 'wrong' (whatever these words may mean in this context). It is more helpful to regard them as complementary, with the mimetic mode being appropriate in some circumstances, and the romance or fantasy mode being more suitable in others. Indeed, this complementarity is the point of CS Lewis's argument that

If good novels are comments on life, good stories of this sort [ie fantasy stories]...are actual additions to life; they give, like certain rare dreams,

sensations we never had before, and enlarge our conception of the range of possible experience¹².

Given that fantasy is a necessary complement to mimesis in art and literature the comparative paucity of criticism on works of the fantastic is a weakness in the critical canon and should be redressed.

In the past, the critical energies of the advocates of fantasy have most often been directed against the charge that fantasy is ‘mere’ escapism¹³. And with good reason, for if the contention that fantasy deals with the unseen aspects of life, such as the spiritual, the psychological and the sexual, holds true, then to set out on this avenue of exploration of human experience cannot be an escape from the human condition, but rather must be seen as a deeper engagement with it, an attempt to reach a fuller understanding of just what that condition comprises. J.R.R. Tolkien’s work provides a clear illustration of this point for, according to him, *The Lord of the Rings* far from being an escape from the human condition is centred upon

Death and Immortality: the mystery of the love of the world in the hearts of a race “doomed” to leave and seemingly lose it, the anguish in the hearts of a race “doomed” not to leave it until its whole evil-aroused story is complete¹⁴.

Fantasy, in this instance, is rooted in the most certain fact of all human experience: the uncompromising fact of that great leveller, death. Nor is this peculiar to Tolkien, who rightly pointed out that ‘death is the subject that most excites George MacDonald’¹⁵. For MacDonald death was not so much an after-life as another and more intense part of life itself. However, as the form this takes is beyond human knowledge, it also lies beyond mimetic art which must have something to imitate, and so fantasy is the only possible approach to its recesses.

This focus on death in turn suggests a parallel between fantasy and religion, so it is no coincidence that many fantasists have also been deeply religious people, with George MacDonald, Lewis Carroll, Charles Kingsley, CS Lewis, Charles Williams and JRR Tolkien being the obvious examples here. At first glance, HG Wells would seem to be an exception to this, in that he lacks a link to religion. This however, is misleading: the link lies in his

extreme hostility to conventional, organised religion which is replaced by a belief in the possibility of salvation in terms of improved living conditions brought about by science and social planning.

It is not of course necessary that fantasists should profess any specific faith, but since religious belief is culturally-influenced most of the fantasies published and read in Britain have been broadly speaking Christian-based. Later fantasists reflect a greater cultural mix, and one finds, for example, a strong Taoist element in the work of Ursula Le Guin, who repudiates any specific religious faith.

The exploration of death using fantasy as the instrument is an exploration of what is arguably the final transformation of the human condition, but during the Victorian period this interest was extended to include the death of the universe, as well as the death of the individual. Whereas the interest in the death of the individual lay in what came afterwards, in the case of the death of the universe the interest is to be found in the process of dying.

This was, however, counterbalanced by an equally keen interest in beginnings. More specifically, contemporary theories of evolution and notions about the origin of the human species provided grist to the fantasist's mill. Charles Kingsley, for example, used the theory of evolution as the basic imaginative framework for the development and education of Tom in *The Water-Babies*, but even as he did so he used *The Water-Babies* as a means of considering aspects of current evolutionary thought. Even before the publication of Darwin's *Origin of Species* Kingsley wove evolutionary thought into the the structure of the fantasy sequence in Chapter X of *Alton Locke* (1850). Here the narrator is transformed from madrepora to shell; from shell to fish, then into bird, followed by beast before he becomes a man again and 'sees the glory of the latter days'¹⁶.

The twin emphases on the beginnings and endings of the human creature, be this in terms of the individual or the species, and how these emphases were explored by writers and artists who used fantasy as their principal probe, form the basis of Chapter 4, 'Science and Fantasy'.

Between these two lynch pins, the alpha and omega of human existence as it were, lies all life as it is lived and experienced by individuals, with all the interests, obsessions and fears which mark them out as the people of one particular culture and one particular time.

In Victorian Britain certain interests and fears constantly recur and are constantly to be found in the fantasy works of the period. The development of differing but complementary roles of men and women in society, for example, was an area of heated debate throughout the nineteenth century. Chapter 1, 'Medievalism and Fantasy', considers how time was disrupted by Victorian writers and artists in order to adapt and use the chivalric ideal of a previous age as a means of identifying the ills of their own and as a means of exploring the changing roles of men and women in society.

This theme is continued in Chapter 2, 'Fantasy Architecture: Gothic and Classical', which considers how architecture was used to suggest values and ways of looking at the world that were considered acceptable in a civilised society. Section I considers the use of architecture in Gothic fiction to express forbidden sexual desire or the fears of society while Section II, dealing with Victorian Gothic buildings, considers how far this architectural style furthered the chivalric ideal outlined in Chapter 1 and, further, how a few architects embedded this in works of architectural fantasy which modified that ideal. Section III performs a like service for Classical architecture, identifying the hidden values it embodies, such as the need for order, coherence, symmetry and proportion, and showing how this, too, could be developed into fantasy which modified these values.

Chapter 3, 'Ancient Mythology and Fantasy', sets these architectural fantasies based on classical architecture in the larger context of a heightened interest in classicism in general, and classical mythology in particular. This leads on to a discussion of how the Victorians adapted various mythologies to explore some of the interests and fears already noted. For example, while the way in which the changing roles of men and women were explored by means of the chivalric ideal is the focus of the first chapter of this thesis, Chapter 3 considers how mythology was used to express and explore the ambivalent attitude towards woman, in which she is seen as both angel and demon, virgin and whore, and which was heightened by her changing role throughout the century.

Likewise, the interest in the origins of human life, which was explored from the scientific perspective by means of fantasy by the Victorians, and which forms the subject matter of Chapter 4, 'Science and Fantasy' is introduced in this third chapter, which

considers how this interest was expressed mythologically, using the myth of Prometheus as a focal point.

The main problem to be dealt with before moving on to these specific areas of debate is that of meaning: what do we mean when we refer to 'fantasy'; what is denoted by the term 'the real'? And, going further, what can be said about the precise nature of the relationship between them, other than the general observation that it is a symbiotic or even parasitic one?

Definitions are notoriously elusive, and never more so than when the subject is characterised by conceptual fluidity to the extent that fantasy is. Nevertheless some understanding must be reached of how these words are being used, and what they denote. And for this some awareness of an underlying philosophy is required.

II

There was a young man who said, 'God
Must think it exceedingly odd
If he finds that this tree
Continues to be
When there's no one about in the Quad'¹⁷.

Although originally referring to George Berkeley's (1685-1753) belief that material objects exist only through being perceived and for the duration of that perception, this limerick (and its response) can be applied equally to the ideas of Immanuel Kant (1724-1804). As a critique of Kantian philosophy the limerick leaves much to be desired, but it does drive to the perplexed heart of modern thought: what is this world in which we find ourselves? How far is it an immutable, given thing, and how far a human construct? The latter, of course, bears the dangerous implication that a construct must always be open to deconstruction, and such a disassembling of the universe is a precarious notion to all but the recklessly courageous or the entirely insensitive. And although many serious thinkers have debated this notion its inherent danger perhaps contributes to the emotional recoil some people experience when confronted by fantasy worlds which are used to explore it.

In previous ages, however, the issue was less acutely presented, for as the response has it

Dear Sir:
Your astonishment's odd:
I am always about in the Quad,
And that's why the tree
Will continue to be,
Since observed by
Yours faithfully,
GOD.

Rather than flicking in and out of existence as it was perceived or not by humans, the tree had a continuous existence because it was always being perceived by God, who observes all things at all times. For many Victorians, that is, the world of things was grounded in God, who was always present, always in Being and who was therefore always the guarantor of His own creation. René Descartes had used this type of theological support to underpin his bedrock foundation of knowledge: *cogito ergo sum*, 'I think therefore I am'. And throughout the centuries many people continued to regard this as the only secure basis for knowledge.

The problem is that Descartes uses an ontological argument to bring God into existence, for as part of his search for the Deity he discovers that there 'must at least be as much reality in the efficient and total cause as in its effect; for whence can the effect draw its reality, if not from its cause?'¹⁸. However, when considering his definition of God he writes:

By the name of God I understand a substance infinite [eternal, immutable], independent, all-knowing, all-powerful and by which I myself and every other thing that exists...were created. But these properties are so great and excellent that the more attentively I consider them the less I feel persuaded that the idea I have of them owes its origin to myself alone. And thus it is absolutely necessary to conclude...that God exists: for though the idea of substance be in my mind owing to this, that I myself am a substance, I should not, however, have the idea of an infinite substance, seeing that I am a finite being, unless it were given to me by some substance in reality infinite¹⁹.

Descartes seems to be saying that because he has a clear perception of God and there must be at least as much reality in the cause as in the effect, then God must exist. And *because* God exists he can be confident that the tree in the Quad continues to exist and that whatever is clearly and distinctly perceived (including presumably his perception of God) is true. This is not a valid argument: Descartes simply defines God into existence, then uses him to bolster his definition.

So there are problems with Descartes' particular arguments by which God acts as the guarantor of his creation. But more generally, however, throughout the eighteenth century,

that period known as the Enlightenment when rationality reigned supreme, the movement from a theocentric to an anthropocentric view of life called for a philosophy which could stand alone, without recourse to religious belief for validation. Immanuel Kant's philosophy met this need, for he specifically repudiates Descartes' ontological argument by suggesting that existence is not a defining property of God. And the ontological argument having failed, the world cannot be validated in the way that Descartes suggested.

Although Kant rejects Descartes' philosophy in this instance, he accepts and, indeed, extends the subjectivity of Descartes' *cogito* by locating the emphasis in the relationship between the 'I' that thinks and each thought that it thinks. It is this 'I' which is the interpreter of our world.

The implications are profound, for as Andrew Bowie points out in *Aesthetics and Subjectivity: From Kant to Nietzsche*, 'The world as an object of truth is located in the structure of the consciousness we have of it'²⁰. Bertrand Russell supplies a useful gloss on this point by suggesting that according to Kant the 'outer world causes only the matter of existence, but our own mental apparatus orders the matter in time and space, and supplies the concepts by which we understand experience'²¹.

The world is not after all a fixed, given thing, but in part a human construct, and more specifically, a construct of each human being who engages with the world in any way.

This not only brings the 'I' into a direct relationship with the Other, the subject with the object, but validates each construct as a means of embodying truth. The role of the imagination is pivotal here, for as Bowie explains:

the first stage of making coherence out of the multiplicity of sensuous data is the effect of *Einbildungskraft* ('imagination') which turns sense-data into coherent images, *Bilder*, which it has the power (*Kraft*) to institute into (*ein*) ourselves²².

And while this is the case for all human beings, those who most use the imagination, creative artists, are most conscious of it because they must realize their worlds using the full resources of whichever craft they practice so that others may share their vision. As one such artist has argued, 'Artists are people who are not at all interested in the facts - only in the truth. You get the facts from outside. The truth you get from inside'²³. The facts are the

sense-data from outside (or 'matter of existence' in Russell's words); the truth is what the artist's 'structure of consciousness' or mental apparatus makes of them.

Clearly this concept not only reaches its most conscious state in the creative artist, but takes its most obvious form with an enclosed fantasy world; a world which is in various ways sharply differentiated from the world constructs of other human beings. Thus fantasy, which at first glance seems remote from and irrelevant to 'real life' to the point of self-indulgence is in fact a valid and powerful tool for investigating what the world is, and how we understand it.

III

The relative scarcity of literature or art featuring complete, self-contained fantasy worlds which operate on their own logic and conform consistently to the laws of that world might suggest that fantasy is an infrequent puncturing of the predominant mimesis. But this ignores fantasy's overall volume, variety and extent.

Therefore rather than considering fantasy as a genre, characterised by such features as an enclosed world operating on its own logic, it is more interesting to see it as a mode: a procedure which does include its variety of manifestations and which allows it to interpenetrate genres. Even such a 'plain tale with few pretensions'²⁴ as Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* (1848), for example, is touched by the fantastic in the supernatural carrying of sound which enables Jane to hear Rochester's voice over an impossibly long distance, and in its basic fairy tale structure.

Here I am at odds with the practice of such critics as Tzvetan Todorov, who in his study, *The Fantastic: A Structural Approach to a Literary Genre* (1970; Cornell University Press 1975), not only limits the fantastic to a genre, but restricts the scope of that genre as well. He argues,

In a world which is indeed our world, the one we know, a world without devils, sylphides, or vampires, there occurs an event which cannot be explained by the laws of this same familiar world. The person who experiences the event must opt for one of two possible solutions: either he is the victim of an illusion of the senses...and the laws of the world then remain what they are; or else the event has indeed taken place, it is an integral part of reality - then this reality is controlled by laws unknown to us...The fantastic occupies the duration of this uncertainty. Once we choose one answer or the other, we leave the fantastic for a neighbourhood genre, the uncanny or the marvellous. The fantastic is that hesitation experienced by a person who knows only the laws of nature confronting an apparently supernatural event²⁵.

My first objection to Todorov's definition is that this equates the fantastic with the supernatural, thus excluding many important texts. Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein, or The Modern Prometheus* (1818), for example, would be disqualified, for the fantastic element here concerns the physical creation of a human being by a scientist, and as such is tied to evolutionary and medical science rather than any form of the supernatural.

While it is true that Victor Frankenstein's interest had been stimulated by his early reading of alchemists such as Albertus Magnus, Paracelsus and Cornelius Agrippa, suggesting the involvement of magic, this reading had been superseded by studies in modern physics, chemistry and mathematics. Furthermore, his creature was not brought into being by incantations of esoteric lore, but by the operations of medical science - no matter how glossed over - and as the 1831 Preface makes plain what had been in Mary Shelley's mind immediately prior to her waking dream was a discussion about evolution and galvanism, modern sciences which seemed to hold secrets more powerful than those sought by the alchemists of a previous age.

Likewise, most science fiction, including *The War of the Worlds* (1898), 'The Time Machine' (1895) and *The First Men in the Moon* (1901) all by HG Wells would be excluded, for all pretend to be based on science, the operation of the laws of nature, and none is supernatural. In other words, the fantasy in each case is achieved by technology working on and according to the physical laws of the universe, not by the operations of some spiritual power, be it benign or malevolent. Lewis Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (1865) would also be lost, for in its parallel world the supernatural does not intrude; indeed, quite possibly 'the supernatural' has no meaning there. The situation is more ambiguous with *The Water-Babies* (1863) by Charles Kingsley, for it is arguable that the events described occur after Tom's death and are, therefore, essentially supernatural from his entry to the water to the end. This is, however, offset by the emphasis placed on evolutionary science and natural history which binds the events of this parallel world to nature, undermining its status as supernatural.

The difficulty in establishing the status of such parallel worlds is not uncommon in fantasy. It suggests the need for a new term - such as the paranatural - to describe a world which is clearly not this world, but is also not a supernatural world peopled by spirits,

angels, devils or ghosts. Typically a paranatural world would remain distinct from this world, but with some degree of interpenetration or at least readiness of access for some inhabitants of the natural world. This could range from the sense of nearness of the parallel world of George MacDonald's *Lilith* (1895), where some objects are shared by both worlds, to the more distinct world of *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, where there is a strong sense of distance covered to reach it.

Though such worlds are not in themselves supernatural (albeit often containing some supernatural elements) this is no reason to exclude them from the canon of fantasy literature as Todorov seems to require. Indeed, if his argument is accepted very little is left in the canon. Ghost stories remain there, since they are by definition supernatural. His definition could also include *The Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner* (1824) by James Hogg and the lesser known 'Strange Letter of a Lunatic' (1830) by the same author, for their supernatural status survives, despite the best efforts of a sceptical editor to undermine it in the former case at least. Nevertheless, a definition of the fantastic which excludes most of the texts normally regarded as such is singularly useless and must be reconsidered.

Todorov is not alone in equating fantasy with the supernatural. Colin Manlove slides a bald definition into the opening sentence of his most recent contribution to the study of the fantastic, *Scottish Fantasy Literature: A Critical Survey* (1994), with the words 'Fantasy literature, that is, fiction involving the supernatural...'. While this is arguably a broadening out of the definition in his earlier work, *Christian Fantasy: From 1200 to the Present* (1992), in which Christian fantasy is equated with the Christian supernatural²⁶, it is also an unhelpful reduction of his original definition. Fantasy, Manlove argued in 1975, is

fiction evoking wonder and containing a substantial and irreducible element of supernatural or impossible worlds, beings or objects with which the mortal characters in the story or the readers become on at least partly familiar terms²⁷.

This not only allows for impossible or parallel worlds, but leaves the way open for the intrusion of the impossible into the everyday world. Clearly fantasy is seen here in generic

terms, rather than as a mode, but at least the definition is not so narrow as to exclude many major works, as is the case with Todorov's critical study.

Another objection to Todorov's stance is that according to him fantasy can exist only as long as the reader's hesitation. When once the reader has decided on the status of an event - real or illusionary; natural or supernatural - it will be seen never to have belonged to fantasy at all: if it is 'real' or 'natural' it is uncanny, and if 'imaginary' or 'supernatural' it belongs to the marvellous. In applying this criterion most ghost stories are lost to fantasy. Hogg's *Justified Sinner* again survives, as does 'The Strange Letter of a Lunatic', for in both the author skilfully creates and maintains the tension between the natural explanation - a descent into madness - and the supernatural - the intervention of the devil - until the end. It is finally impossible to choose between them, as both orders of explanation are given external, objective supporting evidence.

My third objection to Todorov's argument is perhaps less immediately obvious but must be considered for all that. Todorov speaks of this world as a world 'without devils, or sylphides, or vampires', but how does he - or anyone - know this? It is based on an assumption and should be acknowledged as such. Whether devils or vampires actually exist is not susceptible of proof, and may not matter too much anyway; what is of greater import is whether they are *believed* to exist or not. If, for argument's sake, it is decided with Todorov that devils do not exist, then *The Justified Sinner* must hinge on the natural explanation and be seen as a case study of a descent into madness, which has been aptly described as a 'complete dislocation of the mind under pressures which cannot even be accurately categorised as internal or external'²⁸. In this case, what is presented to the reader is in the nature of a case history, that is a particularly strict form of mimesis which claims to represent only what is there to be observed. If, however, it is argued that devils do exist in some sphere, then this same novel becomes a species of ghost story and therefore comes within the broad category of fantasy.

Since what is believed to exist is part of the way an individual looks at the world, it changes with both place and time. This introduces an historical element which is ignored by Todorov, but which forms a vital part of José B Monleón's argument in *A Specter is Haunting Europe: A Sociohistorical Approach to the Fantastic*. In discussing the beginning

of fantasy literature, often taken to be the publication of *The Castle of Otranto* by Horace Walpole in 1764, Monleón argues:

If the fantastic...depends deeply on a specific concept of reality, of what is true and natural, then surely there must be a literature, prior to *Otranto*, that deals with this issue, even if the referential premises rest on different values²⁹.

Fantasy, in other words, is not merely a phenomenon brought into being by the development of a particular world-view at a particular time, and as likely to vanish with this world-view as it is to endure. Rather the fantastic is a permanent part of the way human beings operate, of how they view their world, which takes on a succession of different forms to reflect other changes in world-view at any given time.

As genres are defined principally by structural features, the multiplicity of forms the fantastic adopts to reflect these changes in conception of the world makes a generic approach inappropriate. By regarding it as a mode, however, this multiplicity is taken into account, and is the means of bringing fantasy into everyday situations and naturalistic fiction.

The emphasis on fantasy to qualify the mimetic mode of, say, a realist novel does not exclude the type of 'pure' fantasy already referred to, in which a complete world is created, since fantasy can exist simultaneously as mode and genre in one work. Thus HG Wells' novels of the 1890s will be included; indeed, they are particularly important as the earliest examples of science fiction as a distinct genre³⁰.

More contentiously perhaps, I also include the medieval or pseudo-medieval world so popular with Victorian artists. Clearly there is a case for regarding such paintings as straight history paintings showing reconstructions of the medieval world based upon historical research. Equally, there is a case for regarding them merely as tableaux or set pieces in fancy dress designed to appeal to the lowest common denominator of bourgeois taste. Art, like life or truth, is rarely so simple, and I will argue that despite their historical research the artists in question were very deliberately creating worlds which they knew had never existed as vehicles for the exploration of contemporary concerns.

Such worlds typically involve a degree of distortion of form, heightened colour and a sense of being hermetically sealed: their action seems to be imprisoned within a vacuum. As such they are remote from historical painting, though their historicism saves them from the charge of fancy dress. The tension between their self-containment and their historicism, however, creates a degree of ambiguity which can best be treated as fantasy.

Clearly, the danger here is that of casting the net so wide that all things are brought in: loose definitions cease to be definitions and become catch-alls. So fantasy, as used here must include elements which are demonstrably non-naturalistic, such as scale-shifting, shape-changing, shape-merging, or the supernatural.

Not everything that qualifies can be included, for criteria as general as these fail to discriminate sufficiently finely. Rather than adding more qualifications, however, it is simpler and more practical to indicate the chosen parameters and identify those forms of fantasy which will not be dealt with.

IV

One important limitation is chronology, which, since artistic, literary or indeed social trends rarely have one clearly defined beginning or end, introduces an arbitrary element. Despite this, there is a broad consensus of opinion that the beginning of modern fantasy literature is marked by the publication in 1764 of *The Castle of Otranto* by Horace Walpole. As early as 1823 Sir Walter Scott, for example, identified it as a ‘new species of literary composition’³¹ which unites the

marvellous turn of incident and imposing tone of chivalry exhibited in the ancient romance with that accurate display of human character and contrast of feelings and passions which is, or ought to be, delineated in the modern novel³².

1764 can, therefore, stand as a useful starting point for a literary genre which has developed, modified and expanded until the present day, as a glance at the ‘Science Fiction and Fantasy’ section in any bookshop will confirm. Over two hundred years of literary development far exceeds the scope of this thesis, so a narrower focus within this range must be found.

The most obvious step is to divide the period roughly by century, giving an early modern period (approximately the 19th century), which saw the establishment of fantasy as a literary genre and a late modern period (the 20th century) in which the genre developed. The focus of this thesis is the earlier period. This is in part a matter of personal preference, but also because the relationship between fantasy writing and mimesis on the one hand, and fantasy and social developments on the other can be more clearly charted during this earlier phase.

‘One swallow does not make a summer’, however, and although 1764 marks the beginning of modern fantasy it was not until the first few decades of the nineteenth century that it really emerged as a distinct genre, moving the starting point of this study forward into the Victorian period.

And even here a choice is held out between accepting the chronological limits offered by Queen Victoria’s reign and limits suggested by some sort of grouping of ideas and

attitudes. The advantage in accepting the span of the Queen's reign as a boundary fence is that of precision: all things between 1837 and 1901 are Victorian, while anything outwith these years is not. Although neat, giving no room for argument this is rather arbitrary and lacking respect for developments within art or literary traditions, or within society itself.

The problems with other limits, based on, for example, the existence of 'Victorian' attitudes or characteristics is that of creating a self-fulfilling definition. To take an extreme example: if it is decided that the use of narrative paintings for didactic and moral ends is a 'Victorian' characteristic, then William Hogarth's series, *Marriage à la Mode* (1745) could be classified as Victorian, against all the dictates of historical and common sense. Or more plausibly perhaps, the excess sensibility often seen as a Victorian characteristic is strongly evident in the Gothic novels of the 1790s, although this does not justify our description of them as 'Victorian'.

Medio tutissimus ibis: a middle course is safest. Those things which seem to belong to the Victorian era will be classified as Victorian, but the further outwith the years 1837 to 1901 they fall, the more justification they will require for their inclusion. Thus EJ Poynter's painting *The Cave of the Storm Nymphs* of 1903 could be accepted without question, but Annie Swynnerton's painting of *Cupid and Psyche* would require very cogent, specific reasons for inclusion, since it dates from 1923.

Clearly this is a very subjective process and as such is open to argument. It certainly leads to chronological inconsistencies. The ghost stories of MR James, for example, are excluded, for although the earliest ones were published in 1904 i.e. only one year after Poynter's *Cave of the Storm Nymphs*, they are Edwardian in tone. For the same reason Saki's short stories are excluded, as is - very reluctantly - Kenneth Grahame's *The Wind in the Willows* which was published in Britain in 1908, and which is uncompromisingly Edwardian in tone.

Obviously later work can be legitimately referred to as a contrast by which a line of thought can be developed, but this is the only use of such references. In the main the

emphasis will be on work originating between 1837 and 1901, but these boundaries will be extended to give terminus dates of approximately 1820 and 1910.

It is thus an extensive field; in many respects too extensive. Nevertheless such a time scale does give scope for a satisfyingly full consideration of the thoughts and ideas, the hopes and fears which arose from the inner sanctum of the individual but which could be expressed by the Victorians only within the play of fantasy.

The decision to exclude certain types of fantasy is also an arbitrary one, and is prompted by the constraints of time and space rather than the desire to be prescriptive or narrow the scope of fantasy itself.

The most important of these exclusions is nonsense poetry, and it is excluded not because it is deemed unworthy of consideration or because it cannot be defined as fantasy, but because it is a particular type of fantasy. In effect it is a distinct sub-genre marked out from general fantasy by some characteristic features, such as the emphasis on sound, in which it perhaps approaches pure lyricism. This is not to argue that it is devoid of meaning, or that meaning is unimportant, but to suggest that other aspects play a larger role than usual, and that this affects the apprehension of meaning. A detailed comparison with the absurd and arbitrary worlds of twentieth-century Dadaism would perhaps be the best way of demonstrating this, and clearly such a comparison lies well beyond the scope of the present work.

Nonsense poetry is thus excluded; so, too, is the Celtic revival work of the late nineteenth century. It also has claims to be a distinct sub-genre of the fantastic, but with the added complication that it is geographically marginalised. Along with this geographical marginalisation goes linguistic marginalisation, since the sources used by the Celtic revival artists and writers were in Gaelic (Irish or Scots) or Welsh, and were often from the oral tradition.

The Scottish Celtic revival was given a focal point with the publication of *Evergreen* by Patrick Geddes in 1895-1896, and about this time, too, Fiona MacLeod (pseudonym of William Sharp), one of the major figures of the movement, began to publish his fantasy tales and poems: *Pharias* in 1893, *The Mountain Loves* in 1895 and *Lyra Celtica*, which he edited, in 1896. In the visual arts George Dutch Davidson in Dundee began producing bright, intricately patterned watercolours on fantasy subjects in 1896, while John Duncan in

Edinburgh started work on painting fantasy subjects as well as producing many of the decorations for *Evergreen*.

Likewise in Ireland the 1890s saw a Celtic literary revival, for which WB Yeats' *The Celtic Twilight* (1893) provided both a focus and a name. The Irish Celtic revival had far-reaching effects, both in terms of the creation of a distinctively Irish culture to replace the dominant English or Anglo-Irish cultural values, and in the search for political emancipation which continues to the present day. The Celtic revivals in both Ireland and Scotland thus belong more to the twentieth century than the nineteenth, and as such they belong outwith the scope of this thesis.

It has also seemed better to exclude all non-British work, although this means the exclusion of such fantasy writers as Washington Irvine, Edgar Allan Poe and Nathaniel Hawthorne. An exception to this will be made in respect of the artist Gustave Doré who, despite his Alsatian origins, spent much of his working life in Britain. More pertinently, perhaps, much of his illustrative work embodying elements of the fantastic has a specific and demonstrable British input. Indeed, Doré's not entirely willing emphasis on book illustration owes far more to the British art tradition than it does to the French, while the British origins for his illustrations for *London: A Pilgrimage* (with Blanchard Jerrold, 1872) and ST Coleridge's *Rime of the Ancient Mariner* (1875) are self-evident. Even his illustrations to the Bible, actually published before his first visit to Britain, sit more comfortably in the British tradition of apocalyptic painting exemplified by John Martin, whose influence over Doré is as obvious as it is well known, than within the French artistic tradition.

VI

So much for the scope and definition of fantasy; the data upon which this study is based must also be considered. And here again an element of the arbitrary creeps in, for although the main focus of this thesis is on literature, the visual arts, especially painting, play a subsidiary, though not insubstantial role.

While one of the reasons behind this decision is quite simply personal preference other, more objective reasons can be adduced. The most obvious of these is that social factors affecting one art form commonly affect others more or less at the same time. The industrialisation of the late eighteenth century, for example, changed the landscape and led to a vastly increased urban population, both of which were reflected in the art and literature of the nineteenth century. As far as painting is concerned, one thinks here of Philippe de Loutherbourg's visions of the industrialised landscape (*Coalbrookdale by Night* 1801, for instance) and the social realist paintings of the 1850s and 1860s, while in literature such scenes form the backdrop for most of Charles Dickens' *oeuvre*. Likewise, urban Manchester is an essential element in Elizabeth Gaskell's *Mary Barton* (1848), while Charlotte Brontë focuses on a rural setting and community in the process of becoming industrialised in *Shirley* (1849).

Such parallelism between the arts is not, of course, limited to the nineteenth century, though rapid social changes within that century perhaps make it more obvious than. There were, however, other factors operating which drew literature and painting particularly close during the Victorian period.

It is notable, for instance, that a number of practitioners of one art form were also proficient in the other. Charlotte Brontë's interest in painting has long been known, but the seriousness with which she viewed this talent has only recently come to light. Christine Alexander argues in her essay 'Charlotte Brontë: The Earnest Amateur'³³ that in the early 1830s she entertained hopes of earning a living as a professional artist. The complete absence of oil paintings from her hand and the painstaking quality and small scale of her surviving drawings (possibly a result of her extreme short-sightedness) suggests her ambition ran towards becoming a miniaturist. Indeed this was one of the few courses of

action open to her, given the family's limited financial means, but lack of success was due in part to declining interest in and use for miniatures at this time. However, as she herself realised, her talent was not sufficiently robust for professional use, and her art training had been inadequate, being that given to young ladies who require social accomplishments to enhance success in the marriage market.

What is important is not that Charlotte Brontë failed in her ambition to be an artist (success in fact would have been little short of a miracle, given the lack of opportunity, training and acceptance for women artists during most of the nineteenth century), but that her talent enabled her to incorporate fully what she had seen in pictures into the written word of her novels. Her visual imagination, trained in precision, flows in the descriptive quality of her prose; the visual arts flow into and foster literature in this case.

Nor is Charlotte Brontë an isolated example of an exponent of one art form participating in the other. John Ruskin, a trained artist, is the single most important art critic of the nineteenth century whose slightest word at one point could damn an artist in the eyes of his contemporaries, but as the editors of his *Works* point out 'It is not always remembered that it was as a writer of verse that Ruskin first appeared before the world...and if at all times he missed being a poet, he sometimes missed it by a hairs-breadth'³⁴. Like Charlotte Brontë, Ruskin realised that his talent lay elsewhere, though he has left a substantial body of verse, most of it from the early part of his career.

For Ruskin the critic the parallels between art and literature were even more important, for he regarded

SCIENCE [as] the knowledge of things, whether Ideal or Substantial

ART [as] the modification of Substantial things by our Substantial
Power and

LITERATURE [as] the modification of Ideal things by our Ideal Power³⁵

Art and literature are, therefore, equal partners in the quest to modify and adapt the fruits of knowledge, and Ruskin goes on to argue that

You come to the School of Literature to learn the range and dignity of
conceptions

To the School of Art, to learn the range and dignity of deeds

To the School of Science, to learn the range and dignity of knowledges³⁶.

Art and literature are, therefore, necessary adjuncts and are essentially linked in the overall scheme of things.

The most notable example of an exponent of one art form participating in another is, however, the corporate example of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood and their later associates. Within that broad grouping DG Rossetti stands out, for his artistic energies were almost equally directed towards literature and painting, while William Morris was exceptional in the range of art forms to which he could turn his hand. However, as the work of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood will be considered in detail in Chapter 1 all that needs to be noted here is that they seemed to regard literature and painting as artistic expressions of equal merit and standing.

Equality between the art forms fostered and strengthened the notion that words and images belong together, and nowhere was this more clearly seen than in the realm of book or periodical illustration.

The emergence of a literate middle class who had both leisure and money at their disposal was one of the factors which led to the almost boundless market for periodicals, while at the same time improvements in print technology which created the possibility of much longer print runs meant that illustrations for a mass market were economically much more feasible. This in turn whetted the appetite for illustrated fiction in book form. Word and image were brought together, and more interesting still, author and artist collaborated with a degree of reciprocal interaction between them developing. In *The Princess and the Goblin* (1872), for example, George MacDonald advises the illustrator not to draw Princess Irene's toys³⁷ because they are indescribably good, and Arthur Hughes accordingly chose another feature of the story to illustrate at that point. *How* the story was to be illustrated was clearly in the author's mind as he wrote, suggesting the two were in some sort of active partnership, rather than the illustrator merely and passively following the author's lead.

The working relationship between MacDonald and Hughes was a long-term one, as was the much more troubled, but now celebrated relationship between CL Dodgson (Lewis Carroll) and John Tenniel. This began with the commission to illustrate *Alice's Adventures*

in Wonderland in 1864 and ended after the publication of *Through the Looking-Glass* in 1871 with Tenniel's refusal to do any more work for Dodgson, whom he referred to as 'that conceited old Don'. But as Humphrey Carpenter and Mari Pritchard suggest in the Tenniel entry in *The Oxford Companion to Children's Literature* (1995), the 'Alice' illustrations have a 'lightness of touch and a wit almost totally lacking from his *Punch* drawings', again suggesting an active collaboration between author and artist.

The situation with *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* is slightly unusual, in that Dodgson had originally illustrated the tale himself and only later while it was being prepared for publication decided that a professional illustrator was required. The fact that Dodgson had himself illustrated it suggests, firstly, that the visual aspect was important to the author from the start, and that it was not illustrated merely as an afterthought: as Alice herself asks, 'What is the use of a book without pictures?'³⁸. Secondly, it could be noted in passing that Dodgson's own visualisations of Alice were perhaps the source of some of the friction with Tenniel, whose ideas were necessarily different.

No matter how important illustration was, the emphasis in *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* remained on the written word, but in at least one case this situation was reversed and it was the illustrations which were the main focus. These were the watercolours by Richard (Dicky) Doyle, Tenniel's predecessor at *Punch*, entitled *In Fairyland*. After they were completed in 1870 William Allingham was commissioned to write an accompanying verse-text. In fact, the watercolours have been published since with other texts, showing that word, in this case, is less important than image.

In mimetic art, which was the predominant mode of representation during the nineteenth century, the close and multi-faceted relationship between literature and art is particularly apparent. It is worth considering this relationship in some detail even in a thesis on fantasy because by interpreting mimetic works of art in a particular way, the public learned a system of 'reading' paintings which they then applied to works of fantasy where the relationship between art and literature is not always so clearly stated.

One aspect of this relationship is that many artists did easel paintings of scenes from literature, for example. Typically such paintings did not require a knowledge of the parent text, and were not strictly speaking illustrations of it. Rather, they can be regarded as the

artist's interpretation of a particular scene from literature. As one might expect, the Bible and Shakespeare were favourite sources, as were Tennyson and Scott, and the quality of the resultant paintings ranged from the banal, such as *Ruth and Naomi* by Philip Hermogenes Calderon (n.d. Liverpool, Walker Art Gallery) or Paul Falconer Pool's *Scene from 'The Tempest'* (1856. Forbes Magazine Collection) to the fey but convincing image of *Ferdinand lured by Ariel* by John Everett Millais (1849-50. Makins Collection).

Likewise, literature was often plundered for picture titles or tags to accompany paintings being exhibited. Henry Alexander Bowler's painting of a young woman in a cemetery, for example, is entitled, *The Doubt: Can these Dry Bones Live?* (1856. London, Tate Gallery) [Plate Intro.1], though it is in no sense an illustration of Ezekiel's vision of the valley of dry bones. The tag in this case sets the scene depicted in a particular context - the valley of dry bones - prompting the viewer to question the artist's motives for selecting that tag in the first place, and to search for correspondences between word and image in an attempt to find the meaning of the picture. The tag prevents the painting being read as a piece of sentimental genre, and directs the viewer to the symbols within it - '*resurgam*' on the tombstone and the blue butterfly on the bones - and to interpret it as an expression of the religious doubt common during the period.

Likewise, Shelley provided the title, *Music, when Soft Voices die, Vibrates in the Memory*' (1893) for William Quiller Orchardson's painting of a young woman at a piano, while his painting entitled *The First Cloud* (Melbourne, National Gallery Of Victoria) was exhibited in 1887 with the tag 'It is the little rift within the lute/That by and by will make the music mute' from *Merlin and Vivien* by Tennyson. In both these examples the tag suggests some sort of narrative which the viewer attempts to construct around the image.

Arthur Hughes also went to Tennyson's *Merlin and Vivien* for his painting *The Rift in the Lute*, which is one of the most interesting examples of this type of borrowing, for Robin Gibson in an article in *Burlington Magazine*³⁹ argues that the lines which are the apparent basis of the painting were chosen as a reflection on the mood of the picture, not for their narrative content. The image, in other words, came first and the title was chosen to express or comment upon the mood it evokes. In fact, Hughes drew the relationship between subject and tag still closer in *The Knight of the Sun* (c1860. New Haven, Yale Center For British

Art), for the words 'Better a death when work is done/Than earth's most favoured birth' (from George MacDonald's 1857 poem, 'Better Things') were inscribed on the frame of the original painting.

Indeed, this is a particularly interesting example, for as Gibson points out in the same article, the incident depicted cannot be traced to any known literary source, while MacDonald's poem is not about the death of a knight at all. But by drawing MacDonald's words closer to the image he has created, Hughes prompts the viewer to search for connections between them in an attempt to pin down meaning. Gibson's own explanation is that the knight has lived, and is now dying, in harmony with the natural world, with this sense of harmony being created pictorially by the serenity of the composition and by the glowing, almost translucent colours in the background, while MacDonald's lines accentuate the feeling of peaceful closure.

Although this type of borrowing is not peculiar to the Victorian period, the extent to which it was practised is. This can be attributed at least in part to the enhanced status artists had enjoyed since the establishment of the Royal Academy in 1768. They were no longer artisans or craftsmen, but were educated men whose work had more to do with the intellect and the imagination than mere manual dexterity. By their frequent references to and borrowings from literature the artists were displaying their familiarity with it and emphasising their own standing as educated men.

Sir Joshua Reynolds, first President of the Royal Academy, played a pivotal role in the creation of this attitude, for not only was he close to the group of intellectuals centred around Dr Johnson, but he had serious ambitions as a writer himself. At his death, for instance, he left two thousand manuscript pages, including criticism of Shakespeare, and his published *Discourses*, delivered on an annual basis at the Royal Academy, deal not with painting techniques or correct perspective, but with the theory of art and the ideal aspects of painting.

The *Discourses* constitute the bulk of Reynolds's literary remains, and they have always been read by artists, often with reluctance and usually with some degree of irritation at his very prescriptive attitude. Shorn of their rhetorical embellishments and the unavoidable repetition, Reynolds's aesthetics are based upon the belief that the aim of the artist must be

the improvement of mankind by the grandeur of his ideas⁴⁰. And since improvement cannot be effected by anything low or base such art required the representation of ideal beauty, which consists in rising above all 'singular forms, local customs, particularities and details of every kind'⁴¹.

The subject chosen by the artist ought to be 'an eminent instance of heroic action or heroic suffering'⁴² and must appeal to the enduring elements of life, or what Sir Joshua Reynolds called 'general nature'. Such action should be exhibited distinctly and with precision, and stylistically should be characterised by firm and determined outline. Individual parts or particular beauties were to be subordinated to the overall effect, and colour was secondary to composition. This is what is meant by the 'Grand Style'.

The person who took this aesthetic most to heart was not, however, an artist but a writer, poet and critic: Matthew Arnold. He, too, believed that the aim of art must be the improvement of mankind and argued that the poet's subject must be

an excellent action...which powerfully appeals to the great primary human affections: to those elementary feelings which subsist permanently in the race and are independent of time⁴³.

Like Sir Joshua Reynolds, Arnold rejected as unsatisfactory a representation which is 'vaguely conceived and loosely drawn...which is general, indeterminate and faint, instead of being particular, precise and firm'⁴⁴. And to complete the parallel, Arnold notes with disapproval that 'we have poems which seem to exist merely for the sake of single lines and passages; not for the sake of producing any total impression'⁴⁵ before suggesting how 'unspeakably superior is the effect of the one moral impression left by a great action treated as a whole, to the effect produced by the most striking single thought or by the happiest image'⁴⁶.

The strong similarities in content, and, indeed, even in expression lead to the conclusion that Matthew Arnold had read Reynolds with great attention, and although his note-books contain no references to the *Discourses*, there is one letter to JD Coleridge in which he writes, 'As for Sir Joshua, your mention of his lectures recalls to my mind the admiration with which I read them and the debt I owe them'⁴⁷. Art, in this case, influences literature and the creation of literature.

Nor does this exhaust the possibilities for interaction between art and literature during the nineteenth century for, as has so often been noted - usually with disapproval - it was a period in which painting was marked by a very strong narrative drive. Both the strength of this drive and its ubiquitous quality, especially in mimetic art which purported to tell a story about 'real' life as it was lived or imagined to have been lived, by the nineteenth-century public, led to *all* paintings being regarded as novels in paint whose function must be to tell a story about real life. At worst this insistence on narrative resulted in anecdotal kitsch, such as *Off* (1899. Manchester City Art Gallery) by Edward Blair Leighton, but in other hands it became an experiment in the techniques of story-telling similar to the narrative experiments of contemporary writers, such as Wilkie Collins in, for example, *The Woman in White* (1860).

Here the most obvious example is the *Past and Present* series of paintings (1858. London, Tate Gallery) by Augustus Leopold Egg which were exhibited with a tag in the form of a diary entry written by an acquaintance of the actors in the scenes which reinforces the narrative. In these paintings the realistic details, such as the halved apple, or the house of cards built by the little girls, are provided by the artist as clues by which the viewer can construct the narrative and draw a moral conclusion from the story.

This technique of reading a painting (from the viewer's point of view) or constructing it (from the artist's) became the accepted, indeed, almost the only way of looking at paintings. That it was an accepted *modus operandi*, deliberately chosen by artists seems clear from a consideration of three paintings by John Anster Christian Fitzgerald, which show the process in reverse.

These three paintings depict the same incident - a girl lying on a bed sleeping, with her dreams taking a visible form around her - although the first is entitled *The Nightmare* and the other two are called *The Stuff that Dreams are Made Of*. In each subsequent painting the images are made more acceptable to the public, and the clues which lead to the conclusion that the goblin figures are drug-induced hallucinations are eliminated.

In *The Nightmare* (1857-58. Watercolour on paper. Private Collection) [Plate Intro.2] the young woman is twisted in anguish on the bed (in a pose strongly reminiscent of the woman in Henry Fuseli's more famous painting of the same name), with the wreath she had

been wearing in the dream incidents depicted around her lying on the pillow next to her head. The dream incidents themselves are slightly sinister and suggest a narrative which ends unhappily. At the foot of the bed and in the foreground are goblin figures bearing glasses of liquid whose colour matches that of one of the bottles on the bedside table. This touch of colour is repeated in the woman's sash which spills over the edge of the bed like blood pouring from a wound, and this leads the eye down to a grotesque band of goblins. The most strongly delineated of these figures is the cellist, who is touched with the same yellow and red hues as the bottles, but the other figures become ever fainter, until the one on the right is merely suggested by lines which look almost scratched in the paint.

The second version, *The Stuff that Dreams are Made Of* (c1858 Andy and Susan Borowitz) [Plate Intro.3] is not quite so sinister, in keeping with the change from 'nightmare' to 'dream' in the title. The woman is now lying in a more restful attitude with the wreath on her brow, although her heightened facial colour suggests some disturbance in her sleep. The dream action is less threatening, too, since the young woman herself is seen standing with a young man beneath the mistletoe, clearly having accepted him. One grotesque figure is still seen carrying glasses on a tray, but unlike in *The Nightmare* where he is looking towards the bed, in this version he looks out of the canvas. All other references to drugs have been suppressed, with the bedside table and its cargo of bottles being replaced by a chair with a goblin playing a drum on top of it. The other musicians from the band in the first painting are now spread out along the foreground, and are less threatening, in part because of that greater spacing, but partly also because they can be clearly seen as solid objects, and lack the suggestion they had in *The Nightmare* that they may have been in the process of becoming invisible.

The final version, *The Stuff that Dreams are Made Of* (1858. Private Collection) [Plate Intro.4] continues the sanitisation of the subject, and almost completely eliminates references to drugs by fading the goblin on the left hand side of the picture, and by making the other goblins comic rather than grotesque. The woman is also shown asleep on her back in a relaxed position, while the dream incident suggests an unambiguously happy ending: she is facing the young man and obviously smiling.

By looking at these three pictures in sequence it is possible to see how Fitzgerald reversed the usual process of providing clues to meaning, and by consistently removing such clues he was able to create a new and acceptable meaning for his viewing public. This is some indication of the extent to which narrative was built into paintings, and how skilled the public were in reading paintings as narratives. Indeed, so accepted was this technique that it was applied to fantasy paintings even when the connection between literature and art is not always so apparent.

By the end of the nineteenth century the very strong relationship between literature and painting was attracting a different kind of notice, and the benefits of such a close liaison were being questioned. Foremost among the new critics who were asking such questions was Walter Pater, who argued that,

it is the mistake of much popular criticism to regard poetry, music and painting - all the various products of art - as but translations into different languages of one and the same fixed quantity of imaginative thought, supplemented by various technical qualities of colour, in painting; of sound, in music; of rhythmical words, in poetry. In this way the sensuous element in art, and with it almost everything in art that is essentially artistic, is made a matter of indifference; and a clear apprehension of the opposite principle - that the sensuous material of each art brings with it a special phase or quality of beauty, untranslatable into the forms of any other, an order of impressions distinct in kind - is the beginning of all true aesthetic criticism⁴⁸.

This can be seen to mark the beginning of the aesthetic movement, and from this point onwards the distance between literature and painting began to increase. The change was not effected overnight, however, and there are many instances of the pairing of the art forms right up to the end of the century, and indeed, beyond it. But certainly prior to Pater's criticism, the arts were seen as belonging together and there are, therefore, some benefits to be had from treating them together.

The first of these is quite simply clarity, for there are some circumstances in which an appeal to painting would make the point under discussion more clearly than a literary

illustration. The Pre-Raphaelite use of strict verisimilitude in representation to create a fantasy world, for instance, is much more easily discerned in painting than in their poetry. Likewise, the fantasy aspects of the painting, *Fairy Seated on a Mushroom* (c1860. Private Collection) [Plate Intro.5], by Thomas Heatherly are immediately apparent in visual form, while words are more successful in dealing with a succession of events occurring through a period of time.

The second major advantage to be had from treating literature and painting together is that of completeness; or if not completeness (that being an unobtainable ideal), then at least it creates a fuller picture. To consider the literary aspects of the Arthurian revival without their visual embodiment in art, for instance, is to consider only a fragment of the evidence available, which is an unsatisfactory procedure at best, and at worst positively misleading.

NOTES

1. Plato, *The Republic* Book X. *The Dialogues of Plato*, transl. B Jowett, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1953), Vol. II, p.471.
2. Aristotle, *On the Art of Poetry* in *Classical Literary Criticism*, transl. TS Dorsch, (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1965), p.31.
3. Ibid., p.35.
4. Philip Sidney, *The Defence of Poesie* in *The Prose Works of Sir Philip Sidney* (4 vols.), ed. Albert Feuillerat, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1962), Vol.III, pp.7-9.
5. Alexander Pope, *Essay in Criticism* in John Butt (Ed), *The Poems of Alexander Pope* (London: Routledge, 1965).
6. Samuel Johnson, *The Rambler* 4, 31 March 1750.
7. Matthew Arnold, *Poems* 1853, Preface. In CB Tinker and HF Lowry (Eds), *The Poetical Works of Matthew Arnold* (London: Oxford University Press, 1957), p.xvii.
8. MH Abrams, *The Mirror and the Lamp. Romantic Theory and the Critical Tradition* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971).
9. Longinus, 'On the Sublime' in *Classical Literary Criticism*, transl. TS Dorsch, (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1965), p.146.
10. Francis Bacon, *The Advancement of Learning* (London: Macmillan, 1900), Book II, pp.249-50.
11. Richard Hurd, *Letters on Chivalry and Romance*, ed. Edith J Morley, (London: Henry Frowde, 1911), Letter X, p.138.
12. CS Lewis, 'On Science Fiction', *Of Other Worlds: Essays and Stories* ed. Walter Hooper, (London: Geoffrey Bles, 1966), p.70.
13. Although common, this is not universal: JRR Tolkien, in his seminal if polemic and shrill essay, 'On Fairy Stories' (1938), reprinted in *Tree and Leaf* (London: Unwin Paperbacks, 1975) admits the charge of escapism but sees it in a positive light, drawing a distinction between the admirable 'Escape of the Prisoner' and the cowardly 'Flight of the Deserter' (p.61). The word 'escape' as used by most critics, however, refers to the psychological denial and avoidance of unwelcome, uncongenial or painful thoughts or duties, and this Tolkien does not address.

14. From a letter to Joanna de Bortadano (draft) [not dated; probably April 1956], *Letters of JRR Tolkien*, ed. Humphrey Carpenter with the assistance of Christopher Tolkien, (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1981), p.186.
15. Tolkien, 'On Fairy Stories' p.67.
16. Charles Kingsley, *Alton Locke, Poet and Tailor: An Autobiography* (London: Macmillan, 1874), p.267.
17. Ronald Knox. Quoted in Bertrand Russell, *A History of Western Philosophy and its Connection with Political and Social Circumstances from the Earliest Times to the Present Day* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1946), p.673.
18. René Descartes, 'Meditations on the First Philosophy III', *A Discourse on Method, Meditations, Principles*, transl. John Veitch, Everyman Classics, (London: JM Dent, 1986), p.100.
- 19 Ibid., p.104.
20. Andrew Bowie, *Aesthetics and Subjectivity: From Kant to Nietzsche* (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 1990), p.16.
21. Russell, *A History of Western Philosophy* p.734.
22. Bowie, *Aesthetics and Subjectivity* p.18.
23. Ursula K Le Guin, 'Talking About Writing', *The Language of the Night: Essays on Fantasy and Science Fiction*, revised edition, (London: The Woman's Press, 1989), p.173.
24. Charlotte Brontë, *Jane Eyre*, Preface to the second edition, (Harmondsworth: Penguin Classics, 1985), p.35.
25. Tzvetan Todorov, *The Fantastic: A Structural Approach to a Literary Genre*, transl. Richard Howard, (New York: Cornell University Press, 1975), p.25.
26. Colin Manlove, *Christian Fantasy: From 1200 to the Present* (Basingstoke and London: Macmillan, 1992), p.5.
27. Colin Manlove, *Modern Fantasy: Five Studies* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975), p.1.
28. David Punter, *The Literature of Terror: A History of Gothic Fiction from 1765 to the Present Day* (London: Longman, 1980), p.78.

29. José B Monleón, *A Specter is Haunting Europe: A Sociohistorical Approach to the Fantastic* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1990), p.7.
30. Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* (1819) is sometimes considered to be the first science fiction novel; and if 'science fiction' is interpreted literally as a fantastic narrative based on scientific procedures which at the time of writing were beyond human capabilities this is quite possibly correct. However, science fiction has come to mean, and is generally understood to mean, a narrative involving space and/or time travel, and clearly *Frankenstein* does not meet this criterion, although Wells' early novels do.
31. Walter Scott, 'Horace Walpole' *The Castle of Otranto* Ballantyne's Novelists Library Vol.V, March 1, 1823. Reprinted in *Sir Walter Scott on Novelists and Fiction*, ed. Ioan Williams, (New York: Barnes and Noble, 1968), p.93.
32. Ibid., p.85.
33. Christine Alexander, 'Charlotte Brontë: The Earnest Amateur', *The Art of the Brontës*, eds. Christine Alexander and Jane Sellars, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), pp.36-64.
34. ET Cook in *Poems. The Works of John Ruskin* eds. ET Cook and Alexander Wedderburn (39 vols.), Library Edition, (London: George Allen, 1903-12), Vol.II, Introduction, pp.xvii-xix.
35. John Ruskin, *The Eagle's Nest*, Lecture 1 'Of Wisdom and Folly in Art', *Works*, Vol.XXII, p.125.
36. Ibid., p.129.
37. George MacDonald, *The Princess and the Goblin* and *The Princess and Curdie*, ed. Roderick M'Gillis, The World's Classics, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990) p.8.
38. Lewis Carroll, *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, in *The Annotated Alice*, ed. Martin Gardner (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1965), p.25.
39. Robin Gibson, 'Arthur Hughes: Arthurian and Related Subjects of the Early 1860s', *Burlington Magazine*, CXII, 808, July 1970, 451-6.
40. Joshua Reynolds, Discourse III, *The Literary Works of Sir Joshua Reynolds* (2 vols.,) (London: Cadell, 1835), Vol. I, p.330.
41. Ibid., p.333.

42. Discourse IV, *Ibid.*, p.345.
43. Matthew Arnold, *Poems* 1853, Preface. In CB Tinker and HF Lowry (Eds), *The Poetical Works of Matthew Arnold* (London: Oxford University Press, 1950), pp.xix-xx.
44. *Ibid.*, p.xviii.
45. *Ibid.*, p.xxiii.
46. *Ibid.*, p.xxvii.
47. Letter dated 25th September 1868. Quoted in Louis Bonnerot, *Matthew Arnold, Poète: Essai de Biographie Psychologique* (Libraire Marcel Didier, 1947), pp.497-8.
48. Walter Pater, 'The School Of Giorgione', *The Renaissance: Studies in Art and Poetry* (London: Macmillan, 1925), pp.135-6. (First published in the *Fortnightly Review*, October 1877.)



Pl. Intro 1 Henry Alexander Bowler, *The Doubt: Can these Dry Bones Live?* 1856.



Pl. Intro 2 John Anster Fitzgerald, *The Nightmare*, 1857-8.



Pl. Intro 3 John Anster Fitzgerald, *The Stuff that Dreams are Made Of*, c1858.



Pl. Intro 4 John Anster Fitzgerald, *The Stuff that Dreams are Made Of*, 1858.



Pl. Intro 5

Thomas Heatherly, *Fairy Seated on a Mushroom*, c1860.

I

If, as suggested in the Introduction (p.10 above), human experience is ordered and interpreted using the co-ordinates of space and time, one of the most obvious ways to alter the experience of what is 'out there' is to disrupt either or both of these co-ordinates. And in the Victorian period the co-ordinate to be modified most often is time.

There are various ways of accomplishing this: sideways slippage, for example, is an important possibility in fantasy writing. In this case a parallel or secondary world is created in which the time scale differs from the time scale of the primary world. *Phantastes* (1858) by George MacDonald is a case in point, for at the end of the novel the protagonist, Anodos, discovers that he has spent twenty-one days in fairy land (one day there for every year of his primary world life), although he experienced it as a far longer time. Likewise, in MacDonald's later work, *Lilith* (1895), time proceeds at a different rate in the 'region of the seven dimensions' from that of the fictive 'real' world zone.

In the case of *Lilith* the use of two time scales within one work differentiates the fictive 'real' world from the fantasy world, but at the same time suggests that movement between one and the other is possible. The difference in time scales, however, creates dislocation which suggests that the reader's skills in interpreting 'this' world (i.e. the fictive 'real' world) are not applicable in the fantasy world and must be re-learned: a process analogous to that of the central character, Mr Vane. A similar mechanism functions in *Phantastes*, although Anodos does not move from one world to the other as often as Mr Vane does.

As an alternative to creating parallel worlds with their own discrete time scales, as in *Lilith*, 'real world' time can be modified, either forwards - moving to the future - or backwards, to focus on the past. A forward adjustment allows the writer to create an imaginary world which has no actuality and results in utopian or dystopian literature, depending upon the temper of the writer and the times. In either case, however, the future world becomes a means of considering contemporary concerns. The most obvious example of this type of writing is 'The Time Machine' (1895) by HG Wells. However, a backward

time shift was more commonly adopted, since this gives an historical reality from which to work, a grain of fact around which to develop the pearl of fantasy.

Such frequent recourse to the past has brought with it the charge that the Victorians were simply and hopelessly nostalgic, and that they were merely indulging in an elaborate game of charades which enabled them to avoid engagement with the harsh realities of life. Nor is such criticism easy to refute, for many cases of unproductive nostalgia can be found, especially from the end of the century. One thinks here of the proliferation of paintings of burning-eyed Yseults or Elaines from second or even third generation Pre-Raphaelites from whose style everything distinctively Pre-Raphaelite has been eliminated in favour of a mild eroticism or easy sentimentality.

At its best, however, the past functioned as an avenue to a free space for the play of fantasy, allowing some hidden aspects of life, such as the spiritual and the sexual, to be explored, contemporary problems to be discussed and society criticised without raising the emotional temperature of the nation too high, or concentrating and thus compounding people's anxieties and fears.

Clearly some periods from the past lend themselves to this type of treatment more readily than others. The eighteenth century, for example, was much too close, lying as it did just beyond, or even within, the reach of human memory, and it was accordingly useless for this purpose. Indeed the major requirements - at first sight paradoxical - were historical distance and historical knowledge. And the periods which amply met both requirements were the Middle Ages and the ancient worlds of Greece and Rome.

While this use of the Middle Ages as a 'free space' is not solely responsible for the Gothic strain in Victorian art and literature, it certainly was one factor among many which contributed to it. Likewise, the use of Greece and Rome in a similar way helps to account for the strong classical impulse evident in the arts throughout the nineteenth century and which will form part of the subject of Chapters 2 and 3 of this thesis.

Historical research was clearly of some importance here, in that it shed enough light on the period to offer tantalising glimpses of the medieval world, but it was a fitful light which allowed that world to retain its otherness, and did not make of it a known, explored and charted region. Knowledge, in other words, was enough to stimulate the imagination but

insufficient to tie writers and artists down to the minutiae of actuality. So Holman Hunt, for example, was not confined to archaeological accuracy in his picture of *A Converted British Family Sheltering a Christian Missionary from the Persecution of the Druids* (1850. Oxford, Ashmolean Museum) and could depict a hut which allowed visual access to a viewer but little protection to its occupants even in summer in Britain.

One clear advantage of this use of the past is its flexibility: each artist or group of artists is free to use their chosen historical period with all its cultural and ideological associations in their own individual way, creating a whole range of styles which are obviously dependent upon an historically informed imagination, but which differ significantly from each other and from the selected historical period itself.

This chapter will consider two main ways in which the medieval world was recalled to life and pressed into the service of nineteenth-century society, in some cases reinforcing the values established by Church and State, but in other instances undermining them. Firstly, the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood's creative recycling of the past and its complex relationship to the present will be discussed to show that contemporary concerns, such as an undue emphasis on commercialism - the principle of 'getting and spending', as Wordsworth would have it - which was often seen as a characteristic of the nineteenth century, are at the core of their image of ages past. This will include later manifestations of Pre-Raphaelitism in the work of Sir Edward Coley Burne-Jones, William Morris and 'The Firm', as well as the initial work of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood dating from 1848-1854. Then the chivalric strand identified in Pre-Raphaelite work will be teased out of this context to show how it was used by writers and artists unconnected to the Pre-Raphaelites to redefine and reinforce the distinct and separate roles of men and women in Victorian society.

My approach, then, is principally a thematic one, rather than strictly chronological. This has the advantage of showing how a particular theme was manipulated and adapted to suit the styles and purposes of various artists. However, it also brings together apparently disparate groups of artists in a way which suggests chronology is being ignored; care will therefore be taken to ensure that it is at least never violated by suggesting chronologically impossible links or influences.

Obviously works based on the medieval world, such as those done by the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, could be regarded as historical, but their disregard of archaeological and historical accuracy suggests that this would be inappropriate. Instead I want to suggest that the world created in these works is one which was known never to have existed. It is a world of the imagination, a dream world, and this brings it within the realm of fantasy.

In the context of historical re-creations the group which comes to mind most readily is the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood¹, whose concern was with the moral turpitude into which the arts had fallen - itself a reflection of the sensuous and irreligious age in which they lived - and whose ultimate aim was to reinvigorate both the arts and the age. As one reviewer of their periodical *The Germ* noted:

No one can walk along our streets and not see how debased and sensual our tastes have become...Voluptuous and seductive figures, recommended only by a soft effeminacy, swarm our shop-windows and defile our drawing-rooms. It is impossible to overstate the extent to which they minister to and increase the foul sins of a corrupt and luxurious age. A school of artists who attempt to bring back the popular taste to the severe draperies and pure forms of early art are at least deserving of encouragement. Success in their attempt would be a national blessing².

So to the extent to which the individual members were committed to changing the taste of their times, The Brotherhood was committed to modernity, and that commitment was expressed in their subject matter, exemplified by paintings with contemporary subjects, such as DG Rossetti's *Found* (unfinished. 1854-82; Wilmington, Delaware Art Museum. Samuel and Mary R Bancroft Memorial Collection) or Holman Hunt's *The Awakening Conscience* (1852. London, Tate Gallery). The importance of modernity implicit in these works is made explicit in an article, 'Modern Giants' (*The Germ*, 4), in which Frederick Stephens argues that:

there is decidedly one great fault in the moderns, that not only do they study models with which they can never become intimately acquainted, but that they neglect, or rather reject as worthless, that which they alone

can carry on with perfect success: I mean the knowledge of themselves and the characteristics of their own actual living. Thus if a modern Poet or Artist...seeks a subject exemplifying charity, he rambles into ancient Greece or Rome, awakening not one half the sympathy in the spectator as do such incidents as may be seen in the streets every day³.

Modern artists, in other words, should focus on modern subjects to evoke the greatest sympathy, taking that word in its primary sense of 'community of feeling' (*Chambers 20th Century Dictionary*, New Edition, 1983).

This theoretical and practical emphasis on modernity is, however, qualified by the extent to which the medieval world operated directly or indirectly upon their imaginations: the name of their group, which they adopted for themselves, refers back to the Middle Ages, albeit Italian rather than English, and expresses their admiration for medieval art which was characterised by simplicity and purity, before decay set in during Raphael's (1483-1520) lifetime in the Renaissance. Writing forty years after the founding of the PRB, William Holman Hunt explained that it was in medieval art that they found the

freedom from corruption, pride and disease for which we sought. Here there was at least no trace of decline, no conventionality, no arrogance. Whatever the imperfection, the whole spirit of the art was simple and sincere...Neither then nor afterwards did we affirm that there was not much healthy and good art after the time of Raphael; but it appeared to us that afterwards art was so frequently tainted with this canker of corruption that it was only in the earlier work we could find with certainty absolute health⁴.

The medieval bias also shows itself in choice of subject matter, both in the sense of scenes lifted from medieval life or literature and in the choice of subjects popular in the Middle Ages. There was, for example, a resurgence of interest in religious paintings, such as *Ecce Ancilla Domini* (1849-50 London, Tate Gallery) by DG Rossetti. Here the subject refers back to the Italian *trecento* and beyond, while the hesitant and shrinking virgin is derived from paintings such as the *Annunciation* (1333; Central panel of altarpiece for Sienna Cathedral) by Simone Martini.

The women in Rossetti's paintings are usually too sensual to be seen in purely religious terms, however: his impulse towards devotion was as much sexual as it was spiritual, accounting for the relative scarcity of religious devotional pictures in his *oeuvre*, while his increasing agnosticism moved him away from such subjects in any case. It could also be noted that devotional subjects were seen as being specifically Roman Catholic, and as anti-Catholic feeling was running high in the middle of the nineteenth century this was likely to have an adverse effect on their popularity, as Rossetti, always a shrewd marketer of his own work, would have been aware.

In addition to medieval subjects like *Ecce Ancilla Domini*, the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood used medieval techniques to express their artistic impulses with the simplicity and purity which they so admired in medieval art. The painting technique adopted by The Brotherhood in the early days, for example, is described by Holman Hunt in his history of the Brotherhood, *Pre-Raphaelitism and the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood* (1905):

Select a prepared ground, originally for its brightness, and renovate it, if necessary, with fresh white when first it comes into the studio, which is to be mixed with a very little amber or copal varnish. Let this last coat become of a thoroughly stone-like hardness. Upon this surface complete with exactness the outline of the part in hand. On the morning for the painting, with fresh white (from which all superfluous oil has been extracted by means of absorbent paper, and to which again a small drop of varnish has been added) spread a further coat very evenly with a palette knife over the part for the day's work, of such consistency that the drawing should faintly show through. In some cases the thickened white may be applied to the forms needing brilliancy with a brush, by the aid of rectified spirits. Over this wet ground, the colour (transparent and semi-transparent) should be laid with light sable brushes, and the touches must be made so tenderly that the ground below should not be worked up, yet so far enticed to blend with the superimposed tints as to correct the qualities of thinness and staininess, which over a dry ground

transparent colours used would inevitably exhibit. Painting of this kind cannot be retouched, except with an entire loss of luminosity⁵.

In effect this was to borrow the technique for painting frescoes (a skill which reached its apogee in the Italian *trecento* and *quattrocento*) and adapt it to nineteenth-century easel painting, providing the Victorian paintings with the same characteristic qualities as the medieval originals: a jewelled luminosity of colour which is absorbed into the medium it's painted on and which is, therefore, relatively safe from damage.

There are also stylistic affinities with medieval paintings. The Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood's predilection for saturated, pure colour, for example, is derived from medieval art, while the almost complete absence of chiaroscuro can be traced to the same source.

This was, in fact, a very specific rejection of the development during and after the Renaissance of showing objects within the play of light and shadow, and using this to create pictorial unity. In a balanced composition some objects would merge into shadow, while highlights would be used to make others stand out, thus creating an overall effect which mimics objects or scenes in actuality. In a painting by one of The Brotherhood, however, each object is clearly outlined, and exists fully in its own right, the uniform lighting giving the same visual weighting to every object on the canvas. This refusal to 'impose a hierarchy of structural or narrative values' on their subject, as Chris Brooks argues in *Signs For The Times: Symbolic Realism In The Mid-Victorian World*, constitutes an attack on the visual and structural conventions of Victorian painting, and suggests not only the 'casualness of real life' but also its lack of inherent order or arrangement⁶.

The medieval stylistic elements in the paintings of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood are, however, fused with a realism in representation which is scientific in its exactitude and belongs firmly to the nineteenth century, and it is this latter aspect above all others which ensures that a Brotherhood painting could never be mistaken for its medieval prototype. Taken together however, the medieval and the modern create a heightened realism which lifts many paintings into the realm of fantasy, irrespective of their ostensible subject matter. They belong to a dream or even nightmare world in which each object is presented with preternatural clarity and imbued with a hidden significance; a world which is, and

simultaneously is not, this world, and a world which frustrates the viewers' ability to interpret it, suggesting that the real world in which the viewers themselves live also resists interpretation.

Lorenzo and Isabella (1849. Liverpool, Walker Art Gallery) by John Everett Millais [Plate 1.1], for instance, exhibits uniformity of lighting, purity of colour and sharply-outlined form, coupled with closely observed and naturalistically rendered detail, which is seen at its best in the painting of the dog in the foreground and, behind that, in the rendering of the old woman's hand in the middleground of the picture.

Each detail in the painting, from the folds of Isabella's dress in the foreground to the upraised glass in the background, is rendered with the same degree of sharpness in a move which denies depth in the picture space and creates a sense of claustrophobia and airlessness. This is heightened by the continuation of the floral pattern of the rear wall⁷ into real flowers across the open space, which in effect frames the all-important pot of basil resting on the balustrade. The front plane of the picture is likewise reinforced, using the flat end of the table and the right leg of the nearest brother outstretched in a kick. By his twin emphases across the picture plane Millais denies depth and creates a compression which is tense, uncomfortable and disturbing, disrupting the viewers' ability to 'read' space.

Add to this the oddness of guests so self-absorbed they seem unaware of each other's presence, and the private but accessible symbolism of the falcon tearing a feather, the savage cracking of nuts and the cruel kick aimed at the dog, and the result is a world which is recognisably real and human, but redolent with hidden meaning; it is a world in which intensity of devotion and intensity of hatred are equally disturbing and equally inexplicable. And to that extent it is an alien world in which ordinary humanity and ordinary human emotion have no place.

On this reading *Lorenzo and Isabella* articulates the process of alienation inherent in the Industrial Revolution when communities were disrupted by the move to urban living and factory working, and became merely collections of many individuals, rather than comprising a community. But as well as articulating alienation within the community in this way Millais' painting also suggests disruption *within* the family unit: instead of being a place of refuge and safety, this family is the locus of animosity, tension and hatred. And on

a more personal level, the denial of painting conventions in this work may also articulate the sense of alienation the members of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood felt within the art world which shared neither their aesthetics nor their aspirations.

Both stylistically and in its subject-matter, which is derived from Boccaccio's *Decameron* (1349-51) mediated through John Keats' poem, 'Isabella, or The Pot of Basil' (1820), *Lorenzo and Isabella* has clear medieval elements, but other paintings, such as *The Hireling Shepherd* (1851. Manchester, City Art Galleries) by William Holman Hunt cannot be described as medieval in any sense. Later Pre-Raphaelitism came much closer to producing medieval subjects *per se* when the insistence upon modern life subjects was by-passed, although it was never actually dropped.

Theoretical justification for this lightening of the emphasis on modern life subjects was offered (possibly unwittingly) by John Orchard in his 'Dialogue on Art' (*The Germ*, 4), where, through the persona of Christian he argues:

when men wish to raise a piece of stone, or to move it along, they seek for a fulcrum to use their lever from; and, this obtained, they can place the stone wheresoever they please...So, and in such manner, the modern artist seeks to use early medieval art, as a fulcrum to raise through, but only as a fulcrum; for he himself holds the lever, whereby he shall both guide and fix the stones of his art temple⁸.

Medieval art is thus a tool to be used in the art-making process, but it is a tool manipulated by the artist, and because a painting should be the 'reflex of the living image in his own mind of the idea treated'⁹, as Holman Hunt argues in 'The Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood: A Fight for Art', modernity is an innate and necessary quality of every work of art.

Notwithstanding Orchard's insistence on the use of the medieval only as a means to an end - that of creating contemporary art characterised by purity of form and relevant meaning - artists gradually began to focus more on the medieval for its own sake, albeit never entirely dropping contemporary concerns. And although this sort of medievalism was open to almost endless manipulation it acquired two major but closely related forms.

The first of these is the very strong literary bias of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood and Pre-Raphaelitism in general, as well as that of DG Rossetti in particular. The literary emphasis is not an isolated phenomenon, but can be regarded as a strand of the chivalric ethic which informed so much art and literature throughout the century and which was sometimes used subversively to question the morality of society as it actually existed, and sometimes to validate or reinforce the mores of Victorian society. This chivalric ethic is the second and furthest reaching manifestation of medievalism which will be considered in this chapter.

II

In many respects DG Rossetti would seem to be the Pre-Raphaelite painter who almost wasn't Pre-Raphaelite, for few of his pictures are in the hard-edge Pre-Raphaelite style described by Holman Hunt in *The Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood and Pre-Raphaelitism* already quoted (pp.43-4, above). Furthermore, he was not interested in truth to nature as was, for example, Holman Hunt, and so he rarely, if ever, worked directly from nature. Finally, Rossetti did not share the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood insistence on modern life subjects, with *Found* being the only example of this type of subject in his *oeuvre*. And the difficulties he encountered with it were such that although it was begun in 1854, at the end of the existence of the Brotherhood *per se*, it was never actually finished.

Rossetti was, nevertheless, a key figure in Pre-Raphaelitism, for he was connected by professional or personal ties to more similarly-minded artists than any other individual. He had been a pupil of Ford Madox Brown, who was an important early influence on the Brotherhood and remained an associate, although never actually a member of the group. Rossetti was also a friend of John Ruskin, who was both an influence on the Brotherhood and their most important defender. It was Rossetti who was sought out by Edward Burne-Jones in 1856 when he and William Morris first took a serious interest in art as a possible profession, and thus Rossetti is an important link between the original Brotherhood

and the later manifestations of Pre-Raphaelitism. And finally, Rossetti was the brother of the poet Christina Rossetti, and was himself a poet as well as an artist. And it is this last factor which makes him so important in any study of the literary aspects of Pre-Raphaelitism and its relationship to the Victorian interest in chivalry, for in him the relationship between word and image is at its strongest, since it is obviously the *same* 'mental apparatus' which orders the 'matter of existence' in time and space, to refer again to Bertrand Russell's formulation quoted in my Introduction (p.10, above), though the artistic expression takes different forms.

Obviously for many artists English literature was their primary source but given Rossetti's background as the son of an Italian émigré it is hardly surprising that his preference was for Italian literature, with Dantean subjects coming high on the list. This focus was sharpened in 1850 after Elizabeth Siddal began sitting for *The Brotherhood*, for Rossetti drew parallels between Dante's love for Beatrice and his own love for the model. This comparison should not, however, be taken too far: as Rossetti later married Lizzie Siddal it can be assumed that his interest in her was as much sexual as it was spiritual and to that extent it differs significantly from Dante's longing for Beatrice, whom he met only once, and that when she was a child. Nevertheless, there is more than a touch of obsession in Rossetti's relationship with Siddal which adds to, or is reflected in, the obsessive quality of much of his work, and which is well expressed in Christina Rossetti's poem 'In an Artist's Studio' (1856; published *New Poems* 1896):

One face looks out from all his canvases,
One selfsame figure sits or walks or leans:
We found her hidden just behind those screens,
That mirror gave back all her loveliness.
A queen in opal or in ruby dress
A nameless girl in freshest summer-greens,
A saint, an angel - every canvas means
The same one meaning, neither more nor less.

Even before Lizzie Siddal's death in 1862 DG Rossetti had transferred his affections to Jane Morris, who became both model and Muse. Again there is an obsessive quality in the

relationship which is reflected in Rossetti's paintings, giving them a fantasy or otherworld quality created largely by the sheer repetition of her image. The paintings are heavy with eroticism and often express forbidden sexual desire. As a married woman, and particularly as the wife of a friend, Janey Morris was, in the eyes of society at least, unattainable, but by using her as his model for passionate women Rossetti was able to express (in the sense both of telling and of expelling) his desire for her. And this stands in contrast to William Morris's confession to Janey in a note: 'I cannot paint you, but I love you'⁸. Ironically this was written in connection with Morris's only surviving oil painting which depicts Jane as Isolde, King Mark's unfaithful wife in the medieval legend, *Tristan and Isolde*.

In paintings such as *Dante's Dream on the Day of the Death of Beatrice* (1880. Dundee, McManus Gallery) Rossetti fuses the medieval, the literary and the personal to create an angelic vision, which is nevertheless built upon realism and which can be read as a comment on his own life, although the subject is a medieval one. It was taken from Dante's *La Vita Nuova* which Rossetti translated into English in 1861, and it was a subject which clearly fascinated the artist over a long period of time.

Rossetti's first version (always regarded by Edward Burne-Jones as the best) is a watercolour now in the Tate Gallery, London dating from 1856 [Plate 1.2]. At first glance the figure of Beatrice seems to be based on Lizzie Siddal, but in fact the model was Mrs Hannay, the wife of one of Rossetti's friends. Given the similarity in physical type between the two women, and the fact that Siddal's health was poor at the time, it is perhaps not unreasonable to suggest that Mrs Hannay was a substitute for Siddal in this instance. If this suggestion is accepted, the painting articulates and reinforces the parallels between Dante's relationship with Beatrice and Rossetti's relationship with Siddal.

Yet Rossetti is also expressing the Victorian ambivalence towards women, who were seen simultaneously as objects of desire and sources of temptation, danger and possibly damnation for men. Sexually desirable, they nevertheless had the power to hold a man in thrall and could either lead him into irresistible temptation with resultant sexual sin, or continually frustrate that desire by their unavailability, without, however, granting freedom to the victim to enable him to form other, happier relationships. In Rossetti's painting Beatrice is eternally unavailable but still holds Dante in thrall by his love for her.

Furthermore, being dead Beatrice has reached the ultimate point in passivity, that quality which increases a woman's desirability by suppressing entirely all the characteristics which might lead her to question, provoke or challenge the authority of a man.

However, by placing his dead woman in a medieval context Rossetti is introducing some distance between this image of woman and his own times, which perhaps softens the original expression of ambivalence. As the figure is based on a living siren whose power was active upon Rossetti as he painted it, the displacement to a medieval setting disarms her power and renders her safe: she exercised power over Dante in the picture, but not over Rossetti in the nineteenth century. Likewise, the fact that the scene is part of a dream creates yet more distance, making the picture not just a simple rendering of a deathbed scene, as is the case with, for example, Henry Peach Robinson's famous composite photograph, *Fading Away* (1858).

As Beatrice acted as Dante's Muse, it could also be argued that Rossetti's painting suggests that the Muse, to be effective, must be dead. A dead Muse, after all, is relieved of all the potentially annoying human habits which prevent a living woman from functioning well as a Muse. Perfection, in other words, can be attributed to a dead Muse more easily than to a living woman.

Finally, it could be suggested that given Lizzie Siddal's long-term ill-health, which showed no signs of improving (and one of the foremost physicians of the day, Dr Acland, had been consulted the previous year), Rossetti was using this fantasy subject to explore an event which he expected yet dreaded. If this is the case, it is an uncannily accurate picture, for the poppies strewn on the floor anticipate the opium derivative laudanum, an overdose of which caused her death in 1862. This is not to argue that the painting is a prophetic statement, but to suggest very tentatively that laudanum was already associated with Siddal, even at this early date. Be that as it may, the fact that the scene shown is part of a dream sequence distances it somewhat, and perhaps made it less distressing to consider, as part of an attempt on Rossetti's part to come to terms with or prepare for the possibility of Siddal's early death.

Rossetti's fascination with the subject continued, and in 1871 he painted an oil version of *Dante's Dream on the Day of the Death of Beatrice* (Liverpool, Walker Art Gallery). The

major difference (apart from the medium) between this and the 1856 version is that the figure of Beatrice is modelled on Jane Morris, whom Rossetti met in 1857 while working on the Oxford Union murals. Although there was no breach with Siddal, whom Rossetti married in 1860, it is clear that the relationship with Jane Morris was a close one and later developed into adultery. She also took over the role as model for his paintings of women, usually of the *femme fatale* type.

In 1874 Rossetti's translation of *La Vita Nuova* was reprinted under the new title, *Dante and his Circle: With the Italian poets preceding him (1100-1200-1300)*, suggesting that the subject remained in his mind intermittently at least, and in 1880 he returned to it in painting for the final time. The composition of this version of *Dante's Dream on the Day of the Death of Beatrice* (Dundee, McManus Art Gallery) [Plate 1.3] is almost indistinguishable from the Liverpool version, but Rossetti designed for it a simple but imposing frame and gave it two predellae, showing on the left Dante asleep and, on the right, Dante recounting his dream to the women. Thus the overall structure of *Dante's Dream* is similar to an altarpiece, which in Protestant northern Europe is regarded as an essentially pre-Reformation art form.

Several things are achieved here: in the first place, the main painting is given a temporal setting by being made part of a narrative sequence, the events of which are shown simultaneously, though actually happening through a period of time, no matter how brief. Secondly, time is again evoked and reversed by setting a nineteenth-century work within the context of the medieval and literary Italian world. Finally, the poet is pushed into an essentially religious frame of reference, thus creating an equation between him and the prophet or saint.

These disruptions are given elaborate visual equivalents. The setting for the action, for example, is thoroughly ambiguous, and on close inspection it becomes impossible to decipher the location. Are the figures in an underground tomb or catacomb? If so, what of the doorways at each side of the painting which give out onto the outside world? A wooden ceiling with cutaway section appears to be above their heads and this not only reveals the outside world but also creates a vertical framework to counterbalance the frame across picture space created by the tomblike structure behind the dead Beatrice.

Spatial disruption is continued out to the picture edge, for the view through the left-hand doorway suggests the principal action occurs above the roof tops, while the view on the right suggests it is located below the surrounding buildings. Nor can the scene be consistently read as occurring at the midpoint of a steeply sloped village, for the difference in level between left and right is impossibly great when taken over such a short horizontal distance. A final disrupting touch is created within the scene by the asymmetry of the decorative work in the background, which stops at a higher level on the left-hand side of the tomb than on the right.

Rossetti's play with space prevents any settled reading of his painting, and moves it away from historical reconstruction or the simple illustration of a literary text into the realm of fantasy: it is an impossible world, worthy of the mathematical incongruities of the later artist, MC Escher, but a world in which the impossibilities are constructed from the stuff of realism. And by opening up the illustration of text to fantasy in this way, Rossetti gives it a relevance for the nineteenth century, in that the spatial disruptions in the image parallel the sense of dissonance experienced by Victorian people in society; the sense that the modern world was at odds with itself, already noted in relation to Millais' *Lorenzo and Isabella*.

On a personal level the spatial disruption in the image perhaps expresses Rossetti's own isolation, for by 1875 his relationship with Morris had broken down, and he had torn himself away from the close-knit web of family and friends which he had once enjoyed. He was increasingly dependent upon drugs, and lived a reclusive life, seeing even old friends such as Burne-Jones, whose loyalty to him was unshakeable, only infrequently.

Professionally, too, there is a sense of a lack of fulfilment in Rossetti's life, for despite his relative financial success he had not significantly improved the standards of art in Britain (though he had of course created many fine pictures along the way), while Millais, who had been elected to the Royal Academy in 1853, had a flourishing career as a society portraitist, and was producing works such as *The Boyhood of Raleigh* (1870. London, Tate Gallery) which were very different from the morally serious and stylistically austere paintings of his early years with the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood. In comparison to this, Rossetti's success was limited indeed.

Rossetti's use of a text as the basis for an illustration of Dante's poem which is then given greater significance ties in well with Rossetti's practice as a commentator upon Dante, for in a footnote to his translation of *La Vita Nuova* he stresses the importance of 'the existence always of the actual events even where the allegorical superstructure has been raised by Dante himself'¹¹. The actual and the historical is the basis for the transcendental, of which it becomes a symbol. In other words, historically verifiable events are used by Dante himself as the foundation of his allegorical superstructure which he uses to explore, question or describe any subject which is not part of the material universe.

In visual terms this corresponds to the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood's insistence on realism and observation of the thing to be painted to create their otherworlds, in that the physical, verifiable world painstakingly transcribed onto canvas is the raw material from which they create the fantasy worlds which are then used to explore, describe or question the hidden areas of life, such as the sexual or the psychological. Realism thus feeds into and becomes fantasy, allowing some of these areas or subjects to be addressed while still maintaining contact with the actual elements of the material universe and without overtly attacking the accepted sexual values of Victorian society.

Medievalism was as important to Rossetti the poet as it was to Rossetti the painter; indeed, if his statement that 'Picture and poem bear the same relation to each other as beauty does in man and woman: the point of meeting where the two are most identical is the supreme perfection'¹² is taken at face value the two are aspects of one whole. In practice this is borne out by the frequent instances where Rossetti brings word and image together by writing a sonnet to accompany a picture. Thus his early painting, *The Girlhood of the Virgin Mary* (1848-1849. London, Tate Gallery) [Plate 1.4], the first to carry the initials 'PRB', is elucidated by two sonnets, the second of which, 'Mary's Girlhood', was inscribed on the picture frame itself.

As Alicia Faxon argues in *Dante Gabriel Rossetti*, this painting is not a traditional representation of the education of the Virgin, but is unusual in 'subject, setting and symbolism'¹³. Rossetti used his mother, his sister Christina, and their handyman, William, as the models for St Anne, the Virgin Mary and St Joachim, and in doing so he emphasised the humble origins of the Holy Family, and the ordinariness of their daily lives. The

extensive symbolism used by Rossetti, however, imbues this sense of the unremarkable with an equally strong sense of the sacred, in effect re-sacramentalising the subject of the Virgin which had been secularised by the artist Peter Paul Rubens in his *Education of Marie de Medici* (Medici Cycle, 1622-3. Paris, Louvre)¹⁴. In Rossetti's painting the symbolism is all religious: St Joachim is shown tending a grapevine, foreshadowing the sacramental use of wine in the church, while the cruciform trellis separating the interior scene from the exterior anticipates the cross on which Christ was crucified, and the dove symbolises the Holy Spirit.

So far the symbolism in *The Girlhood of the Virgin Mary* can be interpreted easily by any viewer moderately trained in reading Christian symbolism. However, other symbols in the painting are more elusive, and it is these that Rossetti interprets in his accompanying sonnets, and especially the second sonnet inscribed on the picture frame.

The books in the left foreground, for example, are bound in colours traditionally associated with certain virtues: white for Temperance, red for Fortitude, blue for Faith, green for Hope and gold for Charity. This symbolism is glossed by Rossetti in the sonnet:

The books (whose head
Is golden Charity, as Paul hath said)
Those virtues are wherein the soul is rich.

II.4-6

And according to the sonnet the lily symbolises Innocence, and is therefore placed on the chief of the virtues, Charity (II.7-8). Not content with a general interpretation of the palm and the briar in the foreground of the painting as symbols of Christ's martyrdom, Rossetti uses his poetry to specify his meaning more particularly:

The seven-thorned briar and the palm seven-leaved
Are her great sorrows and her great reward...

II.9-10.

Likewise, the significance of the dove as the Holy Spirit is made more precise by the poem, which states that 'Until the time be full, the Holy One/Abides without' (II.11-12), and it is indeed shown outside the house, looking in on the Virgin and St Anne.

Rossetti thus uses his sonnet to modify the meaning of his picture, making it more particularised and specific. But in addition to this, the pair of sonnets also create a temporal

context for the picture, creating for it a past when Mary 'Was young in Nazareth of Galilee' (I.3) and a future when

She soon shall have achieved
Her perfect purity: yea, God the Lord
Shall soon vouchsafe His Son to be her Son

(II.12-14)

Or looking at it the other way round, in his painting Rossetti has created a visual embodiment of the meaning of the sonnets, which is marked by the purity and simplicity he so admired in medieval art, and which expresses something of the Virgin's own 'simpleness of intellect'(I.5).

The frequent pairing of word and image in this way suggests that Rossetti's own emphasis was on whatever he had to express, rather than on the means of expression. Both word and image were at his command, and he used them to complement each other in getting his message across. And what he had to express was often himself; his own state of mind, his own soul. As Rossetti himself wrote

I shut myself in with my soul
And the shapes come eddying forth¹⁵.

'Hand and Soul', for example, which was published in the first number of *The Germ* in 1850, is set in medieval Italy and tells the story of an artist, Chiro dell Erma, whose first desire was to give a 'visible embodiment of his thoughts'. This was succeeded by the desire for fame, which when attained failed to satisfy, and was in turn succeeded by a desire to use art for the moral improvement of others. When Chiro discovers to his dismay that his artistry has no effect on the actions of his fellow citizens he is approached in his studio by a woman who is the embodiment of his own soul. Her instructions to him are to

take now thine Art unto thee, and paint me thus, as I am, to know me:
weak, as I am, and in the weeds of this time...Do this; so shall thy soul
stand before thee always, and perplex thee no more¹⁶

The artist's function, then, is to transcribe directly and faithfully his or her own soul, and in the process the act of self-expression becomes a means to spiritual self-knowledge. This also reveals the high value that Rossetti placed upon art: it is not merely a pleasurable

leisure activity, or a means of earning a living, but a spiritual activity, performing the same role of spiritual self-discovery as prayer and meditation in the recognised religions. As David Masson notes in 'Pre-Raphaelitism in Art and Literature' (1852), Pre-Raphaelitism aims at 'rescuing Art from the degraded position of being the mere minister to sensuous gratification, and elevating it into an agency of high spiritual education'¹⁷.

'Hand and Soul' is given an introductory section in which the author briefly outlines the development of Italian painting in the years preceding Cimabue (c1240-1302), thus creating a temporal context for the narrative, and identifies one particular painting in the Pitti Gallery which is by the artist whose story he tells. It is this painting which prompts the narrator to tell his story, and which therefore links the medieval world of the story itself with the nineteenth century in which it was written. In this way the unremarkable, realistically portrayed medieval world in which would-be artists did seek out the best artists of the day as their Masters, and in which fights did break out between feuding families, becomes a setting for the fantasy elements in which a soul becomes an observable, paintable presence, and the painting made of that presence returns the reader to the unremarkable world of the Pitti Gallery in Florence in 1847, where the narrator sees it.

His response to the painting is one of awe prompted by its 'literality', the sense that 'that figure, when painted, had been seen; yet it was not a thing to be seen of men'¹⁸. This is in keeping with the PRB's insistence on the importance to their art of the thing actually seen, and with Rossetti's comments on Dante's *La Vita Nuova* in which he stressed the importance of actual events even where these bear an allegorical significance, as already discussed (see p.53 above).

In his Introduction to the 1901 facsimile reprint of *The Germ*, William Michael Rossetti draws 'Hand and Soul' even closer to Pre-Raphaelitism in his argument that,

though the form of this tale is that of romantic metaphor, its substance is a very serious manifesto of art-dogma. It amounts to saying, The only satisfactory works of art are those which exhibit the very soul of the artist. To work for fame or self-display is a failure, and to work for direct moral proselytizing is a failure; but to paint that which your own perceptions and emotions urge you to paint promises to be a success for

yourself, and hence a benefit to the mass of beholders. This was the core of the “Praeraphaelite” creed; with the adjunct...that the artist cannot attain to adequate self-expression save through a stern study and realization of natural appearances¹⁹.

The self that Rossetti discovered it was the function of the artist to express was not a static, unchangeable one. Rather he expressed the state of his soul at a given moment, and his poetry and painting thus become a psychological exploration of his own preoccupations, foremost among them being love.

‘The Blessed Damozel’ (*The Germ* 2, February 1850) is a case in point, for although the damozel herself is in heaven and thus, one might expect, in a state of contentment, of bliss attained, the poem is an elegy for human love which is now lost. The choice of archaic, or archaic-sounding words, such as ‘damozel’, ‘meetly’, ‘herseemed’ or ‘citole’ suggests a medieval world, and this suggestion is strengthened by the presentation of her as a religious icon, or a saint in a pre-Reformation painting, suggesting both the purity of the damozel and the purity of representation characteristic of medieval art.

The damozel herself, despite being - presumably - a spirit of the same sort as the souls which go by her ‘like thin flames’ (l.49), has a remarkably physical presence, with her eyes, robe and hair being described in detail, while we are told that ‘her bosom’s pressure must have made/The bar she leaned on warm’ (l.51-52). And her desideratum is physical, too, for her intention is to

ask of Christ the Lord

Thus much for him and me:-

To have more blessing than on earth

In nowise; but to be

As then we were, - being as then

At peace. Yea verily.

l.129-134

The usual desideratum of heaven on earth is turned inside out, for the damozel wants earth in heaven, and this being impossible heaven becomes a lonely place for her. She thus prefers the dreams of human love to the reality of spiritual bliss around her. The poem

therefore articulates Rossetti's belief in the supremacy of human love over religious devotion and at the same time elevates art as a spiritual activity, as 'Hand and Soul' also did.

Later changes to the poem emphasise the damozel's loneliness and her sense of the loss of human love. For example, the souls that go past her like 'thin flames' become the souls of lovers who have been reunited, and this of course foregrounds the fact that the damozel has not been, and will not be, restored to her lover. Likewise, her desideratum is made more specific and more poignant, for in the later version it is

Only to live as once on earth

With Love, -- only to be,

As then awhile, for ever now

Together, I and he.

(l.126-129)

In his assertion of the supremacy of human love over religious devotion Rossetti was not merely expressing himself, but reflecting the concerns of society in an age which had lost - or was in the process of losing - orthodox Christian belief, and was having difficulty in living with that loss. Alternatives to Christian belief were therefore actively sought. According to the Positivists, whose views were made known through the work of Harriet Martineau and GH Lewes, for example, a new religion was to be instituted. As this was to be based on a cult of Humanity, conceived of as comprising the souls of all those whose lives had been or would be devoted to human progress, it would in effect be a secular religion. Likewise, Matthew Arnold saw little virtue in religion as it existed, and believed it would be replaced by poetry, which would become the consolation and stay of humanity.

In both these alternatives to orthodox Christian belief the emphasis shifts from the divine to the human; from the supernatural to the natural. This shift, however, frustrates that 'unconquerable passion for all that is great and for all that is more divine than ourselves', as Longinus describes it (quoted in Introduction p.2, above). For Longinus this desire for that which lies beyond the observable is the basis for his aesthetic theory of the sublime, but it also creates a space in which fantasy can express or make manifest the spiritual,

unobservable aspirations of human beings without recourse to a recognised, dogmatic religious belief.

In 'The Blessed Damozel', however, Rossetti successfully creates a medievalised religious setting which is used to question the adequacy of religion itself and assert the supremacy of human, sexual love. The medievalism of the poem is thus an integral part of the strategy, and one that became increasingly important as Rossetti's agnosticism increased and he dropped the overtly religious elements of his poetry. At the same time his interest in the destructive power of love also increased and was the subject of much of his poetry.

It is, for example, the subject of a poetic fragment 'The Orchard-Pit' and of a prose narrative of the same name, which William Michael Rossetti regarded as the basis from which the poem would be constructed, although only a fragment was actually written. However, it is the prose version of 'The Orchard Pit' which operates most powerfully upon the reader's imagination, beginning as it does with the narrator's dream, rather than an image of the dead knights in the pit beneath the tree, as in the poem. And it is certainly in the prose version that the story is most fully worked out, reinforcing the link between love and destruction and suggesting that a woman's strength is sexual rather than intellectual, emotional or spiritual.

'The Orchard-Pit' tells the story of a knight who has a recurrent dream in which a Siren, standing in the fork of an apple tree, offers him an apple which he knows he will one day accept, and on eating it will fall dead into a corpse-filled pit beneath her feet. Each corpse is that of a knight who was one of her victims. Dream slides into reality, however, for the apple orchard is an actual place familiar to the narrator and the rumours of the Siren's song have some basis in fact, for the narrator is one of ten brothers, one of whom has 'gone there already'.

This is the scenario for the expression of Rossetti's ambivalence towards women, already noted in relation to *Dante's Dream on the Day of the Death of Beatrice* and which he shared with many Victorian men. For although women were the objects of male desire, they were also seen as the source of temptation and cause of destruction of men. Women's love, then, was irresistible and destructive; desirable but dangerous, leading to sexual temptation and the overthrow of male power.

The death of the victim as an immediate consequence of eating the apple recalls the fairy tale motif as it is found in 'Snow White And The Seven Dwarfs' (published under the name 'Snow-Drop' in *German Popular Stories, Translated from the Kinder und Haus-Märchen, Collected by MM Grimm, from Oral Tradition* in 1823). However, the story resonates most strongly in the context of Judaeo-Christian mythology, for the apple as a gift of death echoes Eve's temptation of Adam in the Garden of Eden.

This is emphasised by its re-enactment by the narrator's fiancée who offers him an apple from the tree at table one day. As he bites it he feels a kiss on his lips which reinforces the link between moral temptation and eroticism. That evening the narrator and his love walk in the dell and she enacts his dream by standing in the tree and holding out an apple to him, although she throws it into the orchard pit before he can take it. The narrator notes, however, that a snake crept out of the pit into which the apple fell. The unnamed fiancée is thus closely associated with Eve, but the re-enactment of the dream associates her at least as closely with the Siren. Eve, the Beloved and the Siren are interwoven and interact to bring about the downfall of the knight in which he is stripped of all power and trapped by the woman, almost being absorbed by her, so little self does he seem to retain.

Rossetti's paintings show the same move away from the early overtly religious works to secular works focusing on the place and function of women in his life. Thus his late paintings, which will be discussed in detail in Chapter 3, Classicism and Fantasy, typically centre upon the single figure of a woman, often from classical or pagan mythology, and each one is an expression of his ambivalence towards women.

The interest in religious subjects shown by Rossetti in the early years was, however, taken up very successfully by his follower Edward Coley Burne-Jones, who first made contact with him in 1856 and for whom the annunciation seems to have held particular appeal.

The reasons for this appeal are far from obvious, but one possibility is that the annunciation as a subject enabled Burne-Jones to depict a meeting of the earthly, in the form of a young woman, and the heavenly, represented by a rather androgynous angel. This points to an important key to understanding Burne-Jones's art: that for him art was a mystical activity, and his art objects are idealised rather than realistic. In fact, the extent to

which he turned his back on realism in the visual arts can be gauged from his explanation that by a picture he meant

a beautiful romantic dream of something that never was, never will be -- in a light better than any that ever shone -- in a land no-one can define or remember, only desire -- and the forms divinely beautiful²⁰.

Further light can be shed on Burne-Jones's meaning by turning to a letter (dated 1st May 1853) from him to his friend, Cornell Price. He wrote

When I take up the works of any other poet [i.e. other than Tennyson], save Shakespeare only, I seem to have fallen from the only guide worth following far into dreamland. There are some passages here and there so strangely accordant to that unutterable feeling which comes over one like a seizure at certain times, and which Schlegel writes of under the term 'sighing after the Infinite', that it is sometimes an inexpressible relief to know and be able to utter them aloud, as if the poet had, in an inspiration, hit upon some Runic words to give voice and form to what were otherwise painfully ineffable²¹.

Taking these two passages together, then, it would seem that for Burne-Jones art was a means of expressing the inexpressible, of giving form to the ineffable, and dreamland therefore becomes a metaphor for that which is desirable but unattainable, be this aesthetic, spiritual or sexual.

This being so, Burne-Jones's religious subjects are essentially different from their medieval prototypes in which the emphasis was laid on depicting an historical (or a supposed historical) event for didactic purposes, or as an aid to worship, and they can therefore perhaps be regarded in this context as a form of fantasy, rather than as purely religious works.

Burne-Jones' strategy here is to use the *form* of a religious painting, but empty it of its orthodox meaning, so that it can carry his own imaginative 'sighing after the Infinite'. Martin Harrison and Bill Waters develop this point in *Burne-Jones*, suggesting that Burne-Jones believed that

It was the duty of the artist to explore his inner life, deriving from the personal vision a concept of Beauty to uplift and ennoble his fellow men. The act of creation was a religious and mystical experience²².

But it was a religion without doctrine, a religion of Beauty in which the artist is a 'medium through which divine revelation passed and the art object [is] the symbol and manifestation of it'²³.

His 1862 version of the subject, *The Annunciation: The Flower of God* (Private Collection) [Plate 1.5], is traditional in form, with the kneeling virgin within a room and the angel appearing to her through a window, and in this it is comparable to Giotto's *Annunciation to Anna* (1305. Padua, Arena Chapel). The Virgin herself is shown with a halo, while the Holy Spirit is symbolised by the light streaming in from the angel, rather than from the window as the viewer expects and usually initially reads - a good example of the Pre-Raphaelite ability to give a naturalistic detail a specifically symbolic twist. While the setting and composition are medieval in origin (the effect of a wall having been removed to enable the viewer to see in, for instance, is a noteworthy medieval feature), Rossetti's influence is clearly discernible in the virgin's hard, almost chiselled features, which are characteristic of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood.

By 1876 much of the medieval iconography has been cleared away, resulting in the far less traditional effect of *The Annunciation* (1876-79; Port Sunlight, Lady Lever Art Gallery) [Plate 1.6]. The angel, now highly stylised, and with much softer profile, hovers above a standing Virgin whose contrapposto stance clearly proclaims a classical source, and is more usually associated with Venus than the Virgin Mary. The hard, straight lines of her drapery again recall Giotto (the angels in the *Ognissanti Madonna*, 1306, Florence, for example, or *The Vision of Joachim*, 1305, Arena Chapel, Padua), although her elegance owes far more to Sandro Botticelli, a Renaissance artist.

The high degree of stylisation evident in this painting is a hallmark of Burne-Jones' mature style and emphasises the androgyny of his figures, which obviously can be taken as evidence of a desire on his part to erode all distinction between the genders. This, in turn, has been interpreted as evidence of the artist's sexual fear of women and overt misogyny. However, Burne-Jones' art is essentially an art based on symbolism, and as Harrison and

Waters point out, 'Working in the final phase of figurative painting Burne-Jones took it to an extreme and used the natural forms as a springboard to leap into the abstract world of ideas; in doing so he began to point to total abstraction²⁴.

The artist himself was rather more specific in making this point, for he argued that

The only expression allowable in great portraiture is the expression of character and moral quality, not of anything temporary, fleeting, accidental. Apart from portraiture you don't even want so much...in fact you only want types, symbols, suggestions. The moment you give what people call expression, you destroy the typical character of the heads and degrade them into portraits which stand for nothing.²⁵

He used as an example of this his Avalon painting with Queen Morgan le Fay, the Queen of Northgalis and the Queen of the Waste Lands, and commented:

They are queens of an undying mystery and their names are Lamentation, and Mourning and Woe. A little more expression and they would be neither queens, nor mysteries, nor symbols, but just Augusta, Esmerelda and Delores...considerably overcome by a recent domestic bereavement. And that...is not what I mean²⁶.

The high degree of stylisation thus works with the androgyny of the human form to help create the 'beautiful romantic dream of something that never was' which Burne-Jones saw as the desideratum of painting.

The composition of *The Annunciation* of 1876-9 was repeated, with very little variation, in 1887. In this later version, however, Burne-Jones' chosen medium was gouache heightened with gold, and in this he is adopting a medieval technique to help create his fantasy land. The use of a medieval medium was far from unique in Burne-Jones' output: his highly stylised and richly coloured *Adoration* (No date. Norwich Castle Museum) is part of a revival of tapestry as an art form - one which had been in decline since the Middle Ages. This revival was not the result of a vague feeling of nostalgia on the artist's part; rather the characteristic qualities of the medium itself - the texture of the fabrics used and its lack of chiaroscuro in particular - encouraged a non-naturalistic representation of the

subject which suited the symbolic nature of Burne-Jones' art and enhanced the decorative qualities of his style which do much to create his fantasy world that never was.

Burne-Jones' revival of tapestry points to his involvement as one of the most important members of 'The Firm' (Morris, Marshall, Faulkner & Co., 1861), for whom he designed tapestries, stained glass windows and book illustrations, most notably for the *Kelmscott Chaucer* (1896). William Morris, the driving force behind The Firm and initially its financial guarantor, wished to move away from what he saw as the impersonal soullessness of the age, characterised and at least in part created by machines²⁷, and in this there is a clear (and on Morris's part, acknowledged) debt to the teachings of John Ruskin which will be discussed in Chapter 2, Fantasy Architecture: Gothic and Classical.

It is easy to suggest that as an early socialist Morris was following a political agenda and was, therefore, a forerunner of the twentieth-century tendency to use art as the servant of politics, but this is to oversimplify the situation. Morris's approach was far more holistic than a purely political one, for he argued in his address, 'The Art of the People' (1879) that 'it is not possible to dissociate art from morality, politics and religion. Truth in these great matters of principle is one, and it is only in formal treatises that it can be split up'²⁸.

At first glance Morris and his socialist comrades had much in common: he believed that the struggle for bare existence was an affront to human dignity, and so did they; he believed that this struggle should not be so intense that it left no strength, energy or time for leisure pursuits, and so did they. Likewise, Morris believed that the working man should receive adequate remuneration for the work produced, and so did the socialists. Yet for all that, Morris and the socialists were uneasy bedfellows, for whereas the socialists wanted a more equitable distribution of wealth and improvement in working conditions to enable all men to afford some of the beautiful things in life and leisure to enjoy them, Morris wanted to make beautiful things available to all men, in order to improve their lot, believing that it 'helps the healthiness both of body and soul to live among beautiful things'²⁹.

Morris's desire to improve the health of the soul distances him from pure politics, which is concerned with physical and material well-being in the here-and-now, and into the area of religion which concerns itself with non-material aspirations, both here and hereafter, and which he explored and expressed in his works of fantasy rather than specifically

religious paintings, poems or stories. In this way Morris avoided purely doctrinal matters, rather as Burne-Jones had employed the form of a religious work but left behind its doctrinal content.

But just as Morris's interest was wider than man's physical well-being so, too, his interest spread beyond the good of the individual to encompass the good of the species, for in the address already quoted he argued:

I wish people to understand that the art we are striving for is an art all can share, which will elevate all; in good sooth, if all do not soon share it, there will soon be none to share; if all are not elevated by it mankind will lose the elevation it has gained³⁰.

His aim was, therefore, to create an art which was ennobling and available to all, to elevate mankind, both during his own times and thereafter, and he attempted this in part by moving away from the Fine Art practices of the nineteenth century, based on an academy and exhibition system, adopting a more traditional means of art production which was closer to the medieval guild system.

Morris's vision, however, was socialist in a way that a medieval guild never could be, for his aim was to produce high quality art for *everyone*. His fundamental problem, never acknowledged, far less solved, was that only the rich could afford the hand-crafted goods produced by The Firm. Indeed, The Firm only existed because he was sufficiently wealthy to provide the necessary capital to start it up and carry it through the first few months before their reputation was established and orders received on a regular basis.

Nevertheless, Morris was attempting to transpose what he saw as the virtues of medieval art - such as the emphasis on craftsmanship, the glorification of manual skill and the social importance of good design, in which objects were designed for efficient functioning and therefore the same design was used for both rich and poor - to the nineteenth century in order to heal its ills or at least ameliorate the condition of its people.

Like DG Rossetti, Morris was able to use words as well as images, or in his case, artefacts, to express his concerns. And as is clear from his art criticism and social criticism (the two are inseparable), a central concern was the way in which past time operates upon

the present and affects the future. And in his poetry and fiction the medieval world, which he had studied in great detail, was the ideal setting for an exploration of this concern.

The short story, 'A Dream', first published in the *Oxford and Cambridge Magazine* in March 1856, is a good example. It tells of a young woman, Ella, who demands of Lawrence, her knight, that he sleep in an eerie cavern as a test of his love for her. Although regretted as soon as uttered, the challenge must be taken up, but Lawrence asks Ella to follow him the following night, if he has not returned before then. The rest of the story tells of their quest, over hundreds of years, to find each other, and finally of their disintegration together into dust.

The story is told under some inner compulsion initially by an old man, Hugh, then is taken up by a soldier, Giles. But Hugh and Giles are not only narrators, but participants in the story, who act as witnesses of the infrequent meetings between Ella and Lawrence 'body and soul together again', as Ella's sin is expiated. In the course of the story we discover that Hugh is in fact dead, while Giles's life has been supernaturally extended and he is over a hundred years old.

Past and present are fused as Ella and Lawrence meet for the final time in the presence of Hugh and Giles and two younger listeners, Osric and Herman, before they crumble into dust together. The implication is that it is the act of telling the story, firstly by Hugh then continued by Giles, that bring Ella and Lawrence to the house in which the four men sit to enact their final reunion and dissolution into dust. Art, in other words, affects life, and to that extent the story expresses Morris's belief that art is a vital element of life, and one that can elevate and improve the lives of the people who see or use it.

In this case, narrative art precipitates the consummation of Lawrence and Ella's love (although it is a consummation in death), releases Giles from the burden of his secret and brings the chivalry of an earlier time into the lives of Osric and Herman, who opened the door of the house to the lovers and were witnesses of the final dissolution. Their actual lives were invaded by Lawrence and Ella, as well as by the tale told about them, giving them an experience they would not otherwise have had, just as an artefact designed by the Firm according to medieval principles, for example, could be brought physically into the life of a Victorian purchaser.

As the title 'A Dream', implies, the story itself is set within the framework of a dream, which not only distances the story slightly, but links the consciousness of the dreamer with the events of the story itself. The nature of that link is not, however, specified by Morris, but it could be suggested - albeit tentatively - that the dreamer is the artist who brings to life the people and events of which the story tells.

The fusion of past and present seen in 'A Dream' is evident in 'Lindenberg Pool' (*Oxford and Cambridge Magazine*, September 1856) in an even more remarkable way, for it tells of a murderer who returns to the scene of his crime - the pool itself - exactly ten years after the event. He is then transmogrified into a thirteenth-century priest, and realises he is being taken to shrive a dying man who bears the same face as the nineteenth-century murderer's victim. Furthermore, the priest realises that the dying man's castle is built on the site of the Lindenberg Pool. On shriving the dying man, however, he discovers that what he took for an ill man was in fact a boar dressed up, and the animal attacks him, scoring the hand that holds the Sacrament. The priest escapes and on looking back sees the castle crumble into dust and its place filled with the black expanse of the Lindenberg Pool.

What is remarkable about this story is that although the thirteenth and nineteenth centuries are fused, they are never confused, for the participant retains his nineteenth-century consciousness and is able to make connections between his own story and the story of mockery he is acting out. For example, on his way to the castle, the narrator realises he is being escorted by a 'fantastically dressed' extremely drunk man and comments

I watched him in my proper nineteenth-century character, with insatiable curiosity and intense amusement; but as a quiet priest of a long-past age, with contempt and disgust enough, not unmixed with fear and anxiety³¹.

Likewise, the tunes being played by the revellers in the castle remind the thirteenth-century priest of dance tunes he had 'heard before (in the nineteenth century)'³².

There is also a link between the narrator/participant and the author, for in the mimetic framework outlining the source of the story as Thorpe's *Northern Mythology*, Morris identifies the time and weather of his writing his version of the story under some sort of compulsion with the time and weather on the occasion of the murderer's visit to the pool.

As Amanda Hodgson notes in *The Romances of William Morris*, 'In some way priest and murderer are the same, though six hundred years separate them, and both spring directly from the author's subconscious'³³.

This fantasy based on medievalism can be read as an exploration of the psychological state of guilt, and it traces the expiation of that guilt in the persona and through the actions of the priest. And just as William Morris believed that the history of a society affects its present, as his social criticism reveals, so here the personal past has a bearing on the present in a similar way, although the relationship is more complex.

Hodgson suggests that the original story found in Benjamin Thorpe's *Northern Mythology* (1851-2)

aroused something in his [i.e. the author's] own subconscious, which he had to exorcise by writing. In the same way the narrator may be hoping to exorcise his guilt as a murderer by shriving the man who reminds him of his victim³⁴.

And yet, had the thirteenth-century priest not been duped into shriving a pig (believing it to be a man), the castle would not have collapsed, and the pool wherein the nineteenth-century man drowned his victim or disposed of the body (it is not made clear which) would not have existed. Time, it appears, runs backwards as well as forwards: cause in the nineteenth century has an effect in the thirteenth, and cause operates in the thirteenth century to bring about effects in the nineteenth century.

Perhaps the only certainty in both these early stories, 'A Dream' and 'The Lindenberg Pool' is, as Hodgson argues, that they are

carefully wrought examinations of the relationship of history and of fiction to contemporary experience...the past is summoned up and made manifest in the present - sometimes by means of telling, or reading, a story, and often in conjunction with a dream or day-dream. This process has an effect on the dreamer, or reader or story-teller which usually involves some confusion, disorientation or distortion of perception; the accepted limitations of time, place and personality may be transcended.

And this experience is often sinister, though it may also (ambiguously) appear beneficial to those who learned from it³⁵.

This use of the medieval world to explore psychological states, and particularly the state of guilt in both 'A Dream' and 'The Lindenberg Pool' is not unusual in Morris's writing, and one of the clearest examples is to be found in 'King Arthur's Tomb' from *The Defence of Guenevere* (1858) which tells of the final meeting between Launcelot and Guenevere, who has become a nun. Past and present are again brought together as Launcelot's memories of the past rise in his mind as he rides through the night until fatigue almost overcomes him with dizziness. Morris writes:

he was now quite giddy as before,
When she slept by him.

1.113-114

Past and present giddiness meet to erode the distinctions between them and suggest a disorientated and dreamlike state.

The focus in the latter part of the poem shifts to Guenevere's state of mind, and the intensity of Morris's writing in her bitter prayer soliloquy is in marked contrast to Launcelot's more passive sadness:

'Unless you pardon, what shall I do, Lord,
But go to hell? and there see day by day
Foul deed on deed, hear foulest word on word,
For ever and ever, such as on the way

To Camelot I heard once from a churl,
That curled me up upon my jennet's neck
With bitter shame; how then, Lord, should I curl
For ages and ages...

If even I go to hell, I cannot choose
But love you, Christ, yea, though I cannot keep
From loving Launcelot; O Christ! must I lose

My own heart's love? see though I cannot weep,

Yet am I very sorry for my sin;

Moreover, Christ, I cannot bear that hell,

I am most fain to love you, and to win

A place in heaven some time - I cannot tell -'

l.161-168; 173-180

The division within Guenevere precludes inner rest and this is echoed in the poem which ends without a resolution: sexual guilt is described movingly, but not expiated, and Launcelot is left at Arthur's tomb, his quest to meet Guenevere again accomplished, yet not successful, for their sin - or their different reactions to it - seems to prevent all real communication between them.

Guenevere clearly acknowledges her own sin, and although she is not absolved from personal responsibility, Morris places a series of questions in her mouth - why did Arthur ask her to cherish Launcelot? (l.245-9), why did Launcelot kiss her hand so eagerly? (l.249-51), why could she always identify him among his fellow knights? (l.252-4), why was she always so worried about him? (l.255-6), and finally why was Launcelot so fair? (l.256-7) and so famous? (l.258) - to bring to life the social setting which encouraged them to fall in love, and to suggest that Guenevere was responding to something beyond her control. She loved Launcelot because she could not help loving him, although there was little obvious joy or pleasure for her, as she explains:

Was it nought then, my agony and strife?

When as day passed by day, year after year,

I found I could not live a righteous life? l.261-3

In this insight into the destructive effects of sexual sin and its fusion of personal responsibility with a degree of compulsion, Morris is perhaps condemning the sexual mores which regard the part played by the woman in an adulterous relationship as more serious than that played by the man. It is an acknowledgement that sexual sin has a social dimension and a plea for a corresponding change in society's attitude which would limit the destructiveness by allowing a way out for the 'sinners'.

All the examples discussed so far examine the ‘relationship of history and of fiction to contemporary experience’ and in each case the evocation of the medieval world is used to explore a psychological state experienced by one of the participants. However, in each example Morris is also critical of some aspects of the medieval world, and this marks his medievalism out from that of, for example, Rossetti who was content with the trappings of medievalism, such as a smattering of archaic words in a poem, in order to create the mood he wanted. Morris’s medievalism was far more historically-grounded than Rossetti’s and he was far more deliberately selective in the aspects of the medieval world he admired.

The Arthurian world which is the setting for ‘King Arthur’s Tomb’, for instance, is destroyed by the illicit love of Guenevere and Launcelot; the participants in ‘Lindenberg Pool’ are decadent, drunk and sacrilegious, while the lovers in ‘A Dream’ are parted because Ella’s unrealistic idea of the chivalric way of life in times before her own age leads to her foolish desire to test her knight’s love for her. In each case it seems the medieval way of life is inadequate, and it fails to provide happiness for the participants.

This ambiguity on Morris’s part comes even more strongly to the fore in ‘Golden Wings’ (*Oxford and Cambridge Magazine*, December 1856), in which the reader is led to expect that Lionel, a king’s son, will be victorious in all his undertakings. Initially and briefly that expectation is met, but failure, not victory becomes his fate. He elopes with and later marries the king’s daughter, Alys des Roses, whom he loves but who is betrothed to Sir Guy le Bon Amant, and this elopement leads to war. When defeat becomes inevitable, Lionel throws his armour, in which he had previously declared he wished to die, over the battlements, and returns to his wife to wait to be killed, which happens bloodily and in short order.

The story clearly indicates the brutality of war in the Middle Ages and suggests the impossibility of living up to the chivalric ideal, and by throwing away his armour Lionel acknowledges this. The chivalric world is a world of heroes, with no place in it for ‘ordinary’ humans; and it is a world in which failure leads to annihilation. Morris is not so much suggesting that chivalry must be abandoned, but arguing that it should not be taken over wholesale, but must be modified to meet new circumstances and needs. And this of course ties in with his antipathy to the mere copying of artefacts from a previous age:

instead the art of a bygone age must be so thoroughly understood by the contemporary artist that it is made part of his artistic sensibility, and so modify the art he creates. As Hodgson notes it was Morris's 'lifelong task to adapt medieval forms and practice to his needs as a nineteenth-century designer, author and social critic'³⁶.

Morris's later writings are more specifically political, owing to his Socialist involvement. In 'A Dream of John Ball' (*Commonweal* November 1886-January 1887), for example, the dreamer/narrator is transported back in time to witness part of the Peasants' Revolt (1381), led by John Ball. And although he is more securely tied to the medieval world than is the priest in 'Lindenberg Pool', the dreamer nevertheless retains some of his nineteenth-century consciousness. At the end of the story this serves the cause of Socialism by explaining the processes of history from the Peasants' Revolt to the nineteenth century, as part of an attempt to stop the same mistakes being repeated time and again. In this discussion the Dreamer shows that John Ball will achieve his aim, in that villeinage will be ended, but that other forms of slavery will take its place. It is only when people understand the reason for their subjection, which Morris believed was the 'great intangible machinery of commercial tyranny which oppresses us all'³⁷ (a clear reference to Marxist belief) will their slavery be ended and 'the Day will have come'³⁸.

The optimism of this ending is, however, undercut by the phrasing: not 'the day has come' which would be definite, but 'the Day will have come', which is more tentative. Indeed, the optimism is then further qualified by the return to the nineteenth century and waking reality, for the narrator's surroundings are drab, dark and dirty, and the air is cut by the sound of the factory hooters calling people to work: the day has not come yet and, indeed, may never come.

III

Although Morris's knowledge of the medieval world was unusually detailed his use of medievalism was part of a shared obsession with the chivalric ethos. Other manifestations of this obsession lacked Morris's historically-grounded understanding of medieval life, and in consequence are only superficially 'medieval', being created from the trappings of medievalism to build an image or a mood, rather as Rossetti used archaic language in 'The Blessed Damozel' to suggest a medieval base for a poetic mood.

This, of course, is where the Victorians can seem supremely silly, and it is difficult for the late twentieth century to take seriously, say, the debacle that was the Eglinton Tournament (1839). It would, however, be a mistake to dismiss even this from consideration too lightly, for it was rooted in that sense of loss which is characteristic of the whole period. This sense of loss was ubiquitous and its manifestations are many, but it could be characterised as the sense that though the nineteenth century was materially better off and more comfortable than its predecessors, it was poorer than they in all other respects. It had lost - or believed it had lost - for example, the stability created by a widely-held religious belief, and no longer enjoyed the security created by the automatic acceptance of authority, be this secular or spiritual. Furthermore, the nineteenth century was seen - or felt - to have lost a degree of romantic nobility through the predominance of materialism and become unremittingly prosaic; to quote Matthew Arnold, it was an age characterised by its 'poetrylessness'.

More specifically, it was announced that Queen Victoria's coronation would take place without the traditional banquet in Westminster Hall. This meant that there would be no Queen's Champion ceremony in which the Earl Marshal, Lord High Steward and Lord High Constable rode into the hall, and the Queen's Champion threw down his gauntlet in defence of her right to rule. This omission, which was prompted by the economic recession, offended many people, both within and beyond Parliament, including Archibald William Montgomerie, 13th Earl of Eglinton whose stepfather, Sir Charles Lamb, should have been involved in the ceremony as Knight Marshal to the Royal Household. Indeed, so offended was the Earl of Eglinton that he proposed to stage the Eglinton Tournament instead.

On one level this is arguably the most expensive fit of pique ever, but there is another, more serious aspect to it. For many people the Royal Champion ceremony was a 'noble symbol of ancient homage and chivalry'³⁹ and this symbol had been dropped, mainly for reasons of economy. To that extent England's glorious and feudal past was seen to be less important than pounds, shillings and pence. The light of nobility had been extinguished by the general lust for lucre, and a real sense of loss felt mainly, but not exclusively, by the upper classes and those already inspired by notions of chivalry, resulted. It was this loss which the Earl of Eglinton attempted to make good by his tournament, although no doubt a desire to boast of his own wealth was also part of his motivation in hosting it.

To some extent this was, as critics then and since have argued, a ludicrous attempt to force a self-consciously modern society back into the customs, mores and forms of an historically obsolete civilisation which resulted in a fantasy world which was essentially, rather than incidentally, escapist, self-contradictory and farcical. They have a point; but if this is all that it was, the whole notion would have been swept away by the torrential rain which washed the tournament out on the day. That this did not happen suggests that the chivalric ideal responded to some actual, felt, need within some sections of society, such as the need to infuse some romanticism or glamour into a society which was characterised by its 'poetrylessness'. And this in turn suggests that the Earl of Eglinton's response was in fact a reasonable one, in that it met that perceived need, though the form in which he cast it seems inappropriate to twentieth-century perceptions.

Whether his extremism is admired or denigrated, the novelty of what the Earl did must not be exaggerated: the interest in chivalry, both as a serious historical concern and as a moral or ethical code predated his involvement. Charles Mills published his two volume *History of Chivalry* in 1825, for example, while in 1822 H Kenelm Digby published the first edition of *The Broad Stone of Honour: Or Rules for the Gentlemen of England* which considered the moral and ethical aspects of chivalry.

The success of this book is suggested by its publishing history: the first edition was published anonymously in 1822, and the second two-volume edition was published under Digby's name in 1823. Both these editions bore the subtitle, 'Rules for the Gentlemen of England', making its pedagogical intention clear. In 1828-29 an expanded four-volume

edition with the subtitle, 'The True Sense and Practice of Chivalry', was published, and this was reissued in 1844-48, and finally expanded to five volumes in 1877.

Thus from 1822 to 1877 at least Digby's work on chivalry was readily available, and it proved widely influential. Among those who read it avidly were Burne-Jones, who kept a copy of it at his bedside throughout his life, despite describing it as a 'sillyish kind of book'⁴⁰, and William Morris. According to a recent biographer of this artist, Fiona MacCarthy, *The Broadstone of Honour* was 'a book to which Morris was addicted'⁴¹, although he, like Burne-Jones, augmented this chivalric source with a study of medieval illuminated manuscripts.

Digby's purpose in writing was avowedly moral and pedagogical. In the Prologue of the 1823 edition of *The Broad Stone of Honour* he explains:

Now it has been desired by many lords, and divers gentlemen, as well as of this realm of England, as of those famous kingdoms of Ireland and Scotland, now happily united in one mighty empire, that some short history and manual might be framed for the use of all the youth of this United Kingdom; wherein they should be taught the lessons which belong to gentle education, those of piety and heroism, of loyalty, generosity, and honour; whereby they might be taught, as servants of a British Monarch, to emulate the virtue of their famous ancestors, and as Christian gentlemen, to whom Europe is a common country, to follow the example of those worthies of Christendom, who were the patrons of the Church, the defenders of the poor and the glory of their times⁴².

Furthermore, the inverse relationship between money and nobility, in which greater wealth is accompanied by a loss of nobility, which was at the heart of the protests against the pared down coronation ceremony, known as the 'Penny Coronation', had already been articulated by Digby in his argument that

In every instance where the spirit of impiety, avarice, and corruption has pervaded a nation...this doctrine [of chivalry], and with it all its generous connections, have invariably yielded to the contrary influence of scepticism, riches and profligacy⁴³.

And to reinforce this point he later argued:

As a nation advances in wealth, to say nothing of any departure from the ancient principles of religion and philosophy, it is but natural to expect a pernicious influence extending itself even over the higher classes, and it is therefore but common prudence to provide against it one counteracting force. This consideration, at once, will suggest the extreme importance of the present undertaking⁴⁴.

That this connection between wealth and the loss of glamour, romanticism and nobility had already been articulated by Digby rather suggests that under the specific impetus of his own sense of loss or deprivation, the Earl of Eglinton reached for a pre-existent means of expression which was both familiar and intelligible to society in general. In effect what the Earl did was rather than forcing modern society back into the straitjacket of the past, to pull the age of chivalry forward, fitting it over his own apparently impoverished age, thus creating access to the virtues which were perceived as characteristic of the Middle Ages. These virtues would include courage (particularly in defence of the weak and the powerless), humility, honesty, and fidelity, both in personal relationships and to the code of chivalry itself. Clearly this undermines the charge that the whole tournament was childish play-acting divorced from the unpleasant realities of nineteenth-century society: rather it arose from those realities and was an indirect means of identifying and criticising them.

Equally clearly, there is a strong parallel here with Morris's even more historically-aware attempt to use art to access medieval virtues as a means of commenting upon society or to actually improve it. Morris's attitude towards the Middle Ages was much more complex than those of Digby and the Earl of Eglinton, for where Digby saw the Middle Ages as good in all its manifestations and everything since then as inferior, and the Earl of Eglinton was initially interested only in the tournaments held during the Middle Ages, Morris was aware that some aspects of medieval life were open to criticism, and some aspects of modern life were worthy of praise. He was, for example, critical of the violence and brutality of medieval life, and approving of the ability of nineteenth-century machinery, when correctly used, to take much of the drudgery out of life, freeing people for pleasurable work. Despite these differences in attitude, there are parallels between these

three men in their use of a previous age to comment upon or improve conditions in their own age. And this in turn suggests that these elements should not be seen as isolated personal aberrations, but as a way of thinking, or a mode of the imagination familiar to society at large.

This might suggest that the nineteenth century was either reactionary, or simply nostalgic; preoccupied with attempts to turn the clock back and re-create a medieval golden age. However, if one wants to recreate a previous era, the obvious way to go about it is to copy its art and artefacts, but this was a practice strongly opposed by William Morris, who in speaking to artists argued:

Your convention must be your own and not borrowed from other times and peoples; or, at least, you must make it your own by thoroughly understanding both the nature and the art you are dealing with⁴⁵.

This point is taken up and elaborated by Martin Harrison and Bill Waters in *Burne-Jones*, in which they argue that for Morris and the artists associated with him

Medievalism was not just a style with which to decorate paintings or buildings...but a total way of life. Their paintings were genuine reflections of their contemporary life and mood...Their work does not fall into superficial historicism but is intense and touched with visionary power. They believed in using medieval situations as an expression of their inner world, to fuse dream with reality and to combine their way of life with art⁴⁶.

So the Eglinton Tournament was not divorced from reality and suggests that right at the beginning of Queen Victoria's reign the 'medieval' chivalric code, as adapted by Digby, was used to question the values of society; to ask whether mammon in the present was more important than the virtue of nobility in the past. The irony of course is that the tournament itself could not have been staged without a very great deal of money, and this in turn limits the implicit critique of society: the Earl was not so much suggesting that the emphasis on money was too great, as that the concern for nobility was too slight. (And in this irony there is again a parallel with Morris and The Firm who believed that commercialism - the need to make money - had unbalanced society, outweighing dignity and nobility, among other

virtues, but whose goods, which were a means of redressing this balance, were much too costly for the people they were intended to benefit.)

To stage a tournament is an extreme and therefore unrepresentative action, so other manifestations of chivalry were far more commonly found. Like the Eglinton Tournament, however, they had their roots firmly in contemporary society although they used the past, or more properly, a fusion of the medieval past and the present to comment upon those concerns.

As Roger Simpson has convincingly argued, Tennyson⁴⁷ cannot be said to have initiated the revival of interest in King Arthur. He did, however, tap directly into Thomas Malory's *Morte d'Arthur* (1485) as his source material and was primarily responsible for popularising the theme. Although Tennyson's most sustained effort in this direction was the publication of the *Idylls of the King* (1859-1885) there were other, earlier manifestations, most notably his poems 'The Lady of Shalott' (1832) and 'Morte d'Arthur' (1842).

Turning to content rather than context, a detailed thematic analysis of 'Morte d'Arthur' reveals its foundations to be dug deep into contemporary concerns. In the first place, the poem focuses not so much on the death of a king, but on the passing away of a noble order, based upon lofty ideals such as those extolled by Digby, and there is in this a direct comparison with the Earl of Eglinton's sense of the loss of nobility as epitomised by the omission of the Champion ceremony for reasons of economy already considered.

Furthermore, in his poem Tennyson links this sense of the old order passing away to wealth, for Sir Bedivere's eyes were dazzled by the richness of the sword Excalibur and he therefore disobeyed King Arthur's instructions to throw it in the lake. Closing his eyes to the sword's rich glint he eventually casts it into the water, setting in motion a train of supernatural events, including the removal of Arthur to Avilion.

Although John Rosenberg argues that the 'special pathos of Bedivere's Peter-like betrayal of his Lord's command...is that Arthur mistakes heroic loyalty to his memory for vulgar theft'⁴⁸, it is undeniable that it was the richness of the sword's appearance which seduced the knight into betraying his king, and thus becoming the final betrayer and denier of Arthur's order of chivalry, which was based upon the concept of obedience. The link

introduced by Tennyson is not strictly a causal one - greed does not lead to the end of chivalry - but the two aspects are mutually reinforcing.

Likewise, the immediate context, the essentially mimetic narrative framework within which 'Morte d'Arthur' is set, and which anchors the poem within to the 'real' Victorian world, is closely interwoven with contemporary concerns. A sense of loss is again evident in the notion expressed in the poem's narrative framework that Christmas is bereft of honour; and perhaps not merely honour, but also meaning or significance. It had 'dwindled down to some odd games'(l.8), suggesting that present triviality is being implicitly contrasted with past significance. Time-honoured customs were falling into disuse, giving the impression that an age was ending.

The parson, Holmes, takes this theme of the passing of an age further in the narrative frame by 'hawking at geology and schism' (l.16), thus repeating the perceived link between the scientific study of geology and the decline in faith which caused such anxiety to some sections of the clergy and the more orthodox elements in the laity during the Victorian period, before he

settled down

Upon the general decay of faith
Right thro' the world, 'at home was little left,
And none abroad. There was no anchor, none,
To hold by...'

l.18-21

This notion of the decay of faith introduced by the parson in the narrative framework is picked up in the description of the ruined chapel with its 'broken chancel [and]...broken cross' (l.9) to which Arthur is carried in the 'Morte d'Arthur' itself. Furthermore the link between the age of chivalry which ends in the death of Arthur and the age of faith is made specific by Sir Bedivere, the last of the knights, who sees that the 'old true times are dead...Such times have been not since the light that led/The holy Elders with the gift of myrrh' (l.227; 230-1) at the first Christmas. Bedivere, like the parson, Holmes, sees this as the closing down of an age, leading only to darkness.

King Arthur's response is, however, more positive, for he suggests that:

The old order changeth, yielding place to new

And God fulfills himself in many ways

Lest one good custom should corrupt the world. 1.238-240

This last line suggests that in Arthur's eyes at least the noble order of chivalry, although good in itself, might become a source of evil if it were venerated merely for existing, rather than for the good its knights achieved. The age that is passing, however, will give place to a new age which is also part of God's plan and within God's purposes, thus preventing an emphasis upon chivalry which could even become a form of idolatry. Arthur's recommendation to his knight is prayer, for

More things are wrought by prayer

Than this world dreams of...

For so the whole round earth is every way

Bound by gold chains about the feet of God.

1.245;253-254

The sense of continuity which is created by the idea that both the passing age and that which is coming are within God's purposes is heightened by the promised return of King Arthur himself. And here, of course, Tennyson is building upon the mythic qualities of King Arthur as a type of Christ; a figure with redemptive powers whose return will signal a golden age based upon a new and perfect order, to replace the flawed order symbolised by, but also prefigured in, the Knights of the Round Table.

Tennyson uses Arthur's removal to Avilion and his anticipated return to mesh his medieval fantasy, 'Morte d'Arthur', with its mimetic narrative framework, for the narrator dreams that night of Arthur's remove, and with the dawn, the coming of a new day, dreams of his return as a 'modern gentleman of stateliest port' (1.292-3), to the general rejoicing of the people, who cry 'come/With all good things and war shall be no more' (1.297-8). And the threefold 'come' in lines 296-298 has far-off but clear echoes of the thrice-spoken 'come' in verse 17 of *The Book of the Revelation of St John* chapter 22, which also institutes a new and golden age.

In this rather strange image, Tennyson interweaves the tradition of the return of Arthur with the Christian doctrine of the second coming of Christ. However, by portraying the

Arthur/Christ figure as a gentleman he familiarises an event which would surely be almost overwhelming in its strangeness and, in the case of the Christian tradition, in its sense of impending judgement and apocalypse. This link with the Christian tradition suggests that the return of the Arthur/Christ figure will inaugurate social transformation, creating a new order based on justice, but the response of the waiting crowd (l.297-8) suggests that they are less interested in social justice than they are in peace and material well-being.

The poem thus appears to double back on itself to uphold the values it earlier criticised, especially the value placed on material wealth. And as King Arthur who had been 'From spur to plume a star of tournament' (l.223) returns as a modern gentleman he has suffered a loss of nobility which the earlier part of the poem had lamented.

This picks up the idea expressed by Arthur that 'God fulfils himself in many ways/Lest one good custom should corrupt the world', but underlines it by suggesting that regardless of changing orders in society the problems will remain the same: wealth and chivalry will always exist in inverse proportion to each other.

Like 'Morte d'Arthur', 'The Lady of Shallot' (1833; rev 1842) arises from Tennyson's own perception of contemporary problems, but in an even more personal sense, for on one level at least this poem deals with the place of the artist in society. Clearly no age is exempt from this concern, but for the Victorians it was particularly acute: the Romantics had replaced the Augustan ideal of the artist as an integrated part of society performing a social role with the notion of the artist as one set apart from society, an outsider who starves in a garret while being a critic of the society from which he comes, whose vocation is to help reshape society on a more equitable basis.

Tennyson is almost an embodiment of this dichotomy between the poet as a public servant and the poet as a social critic distinct from the society under critical scrutiny : in 1850 he became the Poet Laureate, and as such was the 'poet of England and the English, the poet-interpreter of the thought of his time, and the poet-sage'⁴⁹, yet he had always had a need for isolation to provide protection from the effects of his public self. Not surprisingly, his personal need for a balance between, or resolution of, these two opposing drives figures largely in his art throughout his career. Obviously such a theme is well suited to a mimetic approach which sets the problems out in a fairly straightforward way, be it directly

autobiographical or not, yet by using fantasy, and specifically fantasy based on medievalism, Tennyson avails himself of a number of advantages.

The first advantage Tennyson gains from using fantasy rather than realism is that of a haunting indeterminacy which creates an aura of mystery and awe. Whereas in mimesis unanswered questions are apt to irritate the reader and suggest incompleteness in the author's conception, in 'The Lady of Shalott' the incompleteness heightens the mystery without detracting from the powerful narrative.

For example, it is not quite certain that looking down to Camelot will have dreadful consequences for the Lady, but

She has heard a whisper say,
A curse is on her if she stay
To look down to Camelot.
She knows not what the curse may be
And so she weaveth steadily...

Part II, l.3-7

Here the obvious questions, such as whose voice whispered? who holds her in thrall and why? what are the consequences of looking down to Camelot? or even, is there a curse at all? remain unanswered.

Rather than suggesting that Tennyson has not thought out the details of his story, however, they emphasise the mystery of it, allowing the reader's imagination to supply a range of possible answers which resonate within the individual's imagination. Had the poet stipulated one particular punishment for the lady, for instance, the reader's imagination would be tied to that and no other, which may or may not disturb that reader. By leaving this matter open, however, Tennyson prompts the reader to supply his or her own answers to those questions which will be more evocative than any he could suggest.

Furthermore, by his refusal to answer such questions, Tennyson takes the reader close to the prohibition which is at the heart of fairy tales and at the heart of the Judaeo-Christian view of mankind. No reason was given by God for forbidding Adam and Eve to eat of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. One interpretation of this prohibition is to regard it as a call to obedience simply for obedience's sake, rather than for any reward offered or

punishment threatened, and this can be seen as the source of the emphasis on obedience as a virtue of chivalry.

Secondly, by introducing the typically Arthurian elements of Camelot and even Launcelot himself as subordinate material Tennyson foregrounds the almost unknown figure of the lady of Shallot⁵⁰, who *because* she is unknown carries no ethical or moral freight such as that carried by better-known Arthurian female figures like Guinevere, which would inevitably affect the readers' perceptions and evaluations.

In 'The Lady of Shallot' the lady herself is an artist whose job is to represent the world outside her tower in her art. Yet as David Staines points out in *Tennyson's Camelot: The Idylls of the King and its Medieval Sources*, her subject-matter is not the world itself, but the reflections of the world she sees in her mirror, and her art is therefore an 'imitation of an imitation'⁵¹. Art is thus created in isolation from the world and the everyday social realities it contains, such as the young lovers who have been legally recognised as a couple in their recent wedding and the funeral cortege which is a social acknowledgement of death. But not only is the Lady's art created in isolation from reality, it is also a distortion of realities, for the image she copies is a mirror image of the object as it exists.

The Lady is prompted to turn from the reflection of life to life itself (that is, from the distorted image to the true) on seeing the knight Launcelot in her mirror and falling in love with him. However, in turning from reflection to reality the Lady loses her retreat and her art is destroyed. Or as Valerie Pitt argues in *Tennyson Laureate*,

If the outer world exerts too great an attraction the inner world is shattered and the soul dies...The soul only preserves its integrity and power when it is withdrawn, but while it is withdrawn it is turned in on itself, misses the liveliness of common life and turns sour⁵².

Thus the 'Lady of Shallot' exemplifies the tension between the artist's need for isolation and simultaneously the need for integration into society.

'The Palace of Art' (1832; rev. 1842) continues this theme but considers the healthy balance of the virtues within the soul. It is a study of art as idolatry; an investigation into the implications of the divorce of beauty from goodness and knowledge. Or to state the matter

in more philosophic terms, the poem is a psychomachia which considers the effects of dissociating the aesthetic from the moral and intellectual aspects of life.

As indicated in the prefatorial poem (published 1832 and addressed to RC Trench), this is a 'sort of allegory...of the soul' (l.1-2) in which the fantasy elements allow Tennyson to deal directly and in a straightforward manner with his theme. In dealing with the soul, which is immortal, the poem is concerned more with eternity than time, and an eternal now, rather than a strictly medieval past is suggested by the poem's wide-ranging references, which include those to the Virgin Mary, St Cecily, King Arthur, Homer, Ganymede, Milton, Shakespeare and Dante. This being so, the inclusion of 'The Palace of Art' under the rubric of fantasy generated by medievalism is contentious. The poem is, however, firmly historically grounded, with the medieval elements being emphasised rather more than, for example, the Renaissance elements suggested by the references to Shakespeare.

Whatever is finally decided about the poem's medieval quality, it is certainly the case that its chief concern - the union of beauty, goodness and knowledge within the soul - is a constant concern in human history. In the century which saw the rise of the 'art for art's sake' movement, the place of aesthetics within a broader moral and philosophical context was a concern for many. Reduced to its most simple, the matter can be expressed easily: does the pursuit of beauty always carry moral and ethical responsibilities, or is it the case as Oscar Wilde was most famously to assert that 'Vice and virtue are to the artist materials for an art'⁵³?

The stance that Tennyson adopted in 'The Palace of Art' clearly articulates the belief that art carries moral and ethical responsibilities, for he argues that

Beauty, Good and Knowledge are three sisters
That doat upon each other, friends to man,
Living together under the same roof,
And never can be sundered without tears⁵⁴.

The refusal to acknowledge this results in guilt, which must be purged before the soul can return, not alone but with others, to the palace of art.

Widely-read though Tennyson's poetry was, its popularity was enhanced even further by the publication by Edward Moxon in 1857 of an illustrated edition of Tennyson's *Poems*

which did much to bring the nascent medievalism to public attention. Despite the lack of visual unity created by a mixture of styles, and the problems encountered by the highly skilled engravers, including the Dalziel brothers, when confronted with the Pre-Raphaelite style, this was a high quality edition which quickly went into reprint. And as such it gave visual embodiment to the medieval and fantastic elements in Tennyson's poetry.

Even the least medieval of the poems considered so far, 'The Palace of Art', is given a much more specifically medieval feel in the illustrations produced by DG Rossetti. The first, and most interesting of these, *St Cecily* [Plate 1.7], is based on l.97-100 of the poem.

Or in a clear-wall'd city on the sea
Near gilded organ-pipes, her hair
Wound with white roses slept St Cecily;
An angel look'd at her.

At first glance the illustration appears to follow the text closely, but by showing St Cecily in a kneeling position with her hands on the organ keys Rossetti perhaps suggests that she is enraptured, rather than merely asleep. The significance of this change is difficult to assess, but if the underlying suggestion of the poem is that while the patron saint of the arts slept the arts themselves were unprotected and endangered by the divorce of beauty from its moral and intellectual contexts, then the visual suggestion that she is enraptured creates the same degree of vulnerability, but introduces a touch of eroticism as well, which shifts the balance of the poem very slightly away from the spiritual, which is the poem's ostensible subject, and towards the sexual. Indeed, the languorous sensuality of much of Rossetti's own poetry is given visual expression here.

To give just one example from Rossetti's poems: in the sonnet 'Lilith', which accompanies a picture of that name, Rossetti's main appeal is to the senses, and particularly sight. In l.3 we are told of the deception of Lilith's 'sweet tongue', in l.4 that her 'enchanted hair was the first gold' and in l.7 there is a reference to the 'bright net' that Lilith weaves. The emphasis on the senses is continued in the sestet and is reinforced by the reference to the poppy (l.9), suggesting a drugged langour. Rossetti goes on to ask,

for where
Is he not found, O Lilith, where shed scent

And soft-shed kisses and soft sleep shall not snare?

In these lines the sensuality is at its most intense, while the repetition of the words 'shed' and 'soft', together with the linear construction of the line which is elongated by the addition of phrases linked simply by the conjunction 'and', creates a sense of entrapment. This is in turn reinforced by the repeated sibilants, which not only slow a reading of the lines down to imitate languor, but are also a reminder of the serpent referred to in l.3, bringing to mind Lilith's deception.

Although in 'Lilith' entrapment, rather than enrapturement, is the keynote, there is the same sense of utter stillness in the poem as there is in Rossetti's 'Palace of Art' illustration. And the eroticism of the fused figures is repeated and strengthened in 'Lilith', and in particular in the final image of the enchanted youth with his 'straight neck bent/And round his heart one strangling golden hair'. (The fusion of figures is also found in 'Nuptial Sleep' [*House of Life*, sonnet V] where the reference to 'married flowers to either side outspread/From the knit stem' contributes to the eroticism of the sonnet, even if the concept of married flowers borders on the ridiculous.)

In 'The Palace of Art' illustration other elements of the foreground action contribute to the aura of otherworldliness. The angel's arms, for example, are draped in his cloak, concealing his hands and suggesting that the two figures are fused into one. And while the sentry stolidly munches an apple, the angel disconcertingly appears to do the same to the saint's forehead, while a bird escapes from the fortified space beneath the saint and the angel.

These details all initially suggest that the picture can be read as a straightforward illustration of an incident within a narrative, but simultaneously frustrate that expectation, forcing the viewer to conclude that the world depicted is not 'this world' in years gone by, but a different world altogether; it is a fantasy world, the creation of which underlines the poem's emphasis on this as a spiritual, not a physical or material place.

As with the final version of Rossetti's painting of *Dante's Dream on the Day of the Death of Beatrice* it is finally impossible to decipher a clearly defined and solidly constructed space: St Cecily and the angel appear to be on a raised bridge with the sentry in front of them and on a lower level. Only his head and shoulders are visible, but he is clearly

on a higher level than the battlements on which the cannon are being positioned. The central enclosed space with a tree and catapult in it has doorways leading through the battlements, and these are smaller than the human figures shown, while the steps leading up from this central space up to the ramparts are on a larger-than-life scale. Beyond the walls there is a ship with sails overhanging the ramparts, with other ships in the background. Scale has again been manipulated, for these are far smaller than the apparent distance between them and the near ship would suggest, and this again disrupts the viewer's reading of space. Finally, in the upper right-hand corner of the picture a walled medieval town is suggested, but this again appears to be smaller than one would expect.

Indecipherable setting and incomprehensible foreground action unite to create a fantasy world which is entirely suited both to the stanza illustrated and to the theme of the poem, for it parallels the architectural elements of the poem with their emphasis on space, but at the same time makes clear that this is not an actual palace constructed upon the principles of the Euclidean geometry of the viewer's own world. There is, too, a Russian doll effect: the palace of art is a fantasy construct, within which is a room opening up into this scene. Vision lies within vision, with perhaps another visionary element within that, for the sentry's apparent obliviousness to the saint and angel may suggest that they are simply invisible to him, but made present to the viewer through art. And this in turn may suggest that it is the person who can read or otherwise appreciate art who sees the need for the balance of virtues within the soul, and who knows that beauty must be set within its moral and intellectual contexts.

Rossetti's second illustration, *The Death of Arthur* [Plate 1.8], based on l.105-108 of the poem, is far more straightforward, and is directly illustrative of the stanza on which it depends. But even so, there is some manipulation of perspective: the watching queens are so tightly clustered round King Arthur that space is denied, and he merges into the patterns they create. The mind registers this not as a crowded space, but as an unreal or impossible space, though the fantasy element is less overt than in the St Cecily illustration.

Although William Holman Hunt was responsible for the most famous illustration of 'The Lady of Shalott', Rossetti undertook the second illustration of that poem, *The Lady of Shalott Arrives at Camelot* [Plate 1.9] based on its final stanza. This, too, shows the

characteristic compression, amounting to a denial of space, and the display of action on different levels. Here it is even more disconcerting, for the Lady of Shalot's boat seems to float on a higher level of water than the background scene logically allows.

The boat itself has been given a steeply-pitched, candlelit roof which shelters the lady's head. The unfamiliarity of this device makes it difficult to decipher, and additionally creates the suggestion of a cradle. And as the boat is not only a cradle but a coffin as well, a strong sense of the circularity, amounting to the futility of life is evoked, emphasising the futility of the lady's life when she was isolated from society and able to depict life only in reflection in her mirror.

Circularity, but in the literal sense this time, is the striking element of William Holman Hunt's illustration [Plate 1.10] of the cardinal moment of the poem:

She left the web, she left the loom,
She made three paces thro' the room,
She saw the water-lily bloom,
She saw the helmet and the plume,
 She look'd down to Camelot.
Out flew the web and floated wide;
The mirror crack'd from side to side;
"The curse has come upon me", cried
 The Lady of Shalot.

Part III: v.

This is apparent even in Hunt's pen and ink drawing of 1850 (Manchester City Art Gallery)⁵⁵ [Plate 1.11]; indeed, it is at its most apparent here, for the number of circular objects represented is greater. The mirror, for example, is circular, rather than elliptical and is surrounded by seven small paintings giving the full narrative. These are absent from the Moxon version. The circularity of the web itself is emphasised by its own deep shadow surrounding it, while the upper part of the window tracery continues the theme.

Although significantly altered for publication, this remains the clearest, if not the best, illustration of the text, and it has some emphases which are absent from both the Moxon version and the later oil paintings. In particular, a greater feeling of entrapment is created by

the shadow of the traceried window across the lady and the web, and this is heightened further by the clear reflection of her in the mirror. This has a dual function, in that it shows the lady apparently trapped behind the mullions and looking out, although held between the mirror's surface and the tracery. In this version, more than any other, the mirror is indeed reflecting reality, for in it the Lady is actually *seen* to be trapped, and isolated from the life she sees only in the reflections. By showing the elements which apparently imprison her, Hunt implies that the Lady is held against her will; that her tower is a prison rather than a retreat.

Significant changes were introduced for the 1857 Moxon version: for one thing, a lower viewpoint has been adopted and the viewer brought closer to the figure of the lady, foregrounding her more and giving her a much more monumental and imposing presence. The circularity of the web itself is reinforced by the circularity of the loom, and it is more like a spider's web in appearance. The circular mirror, however, has been elongated into an ellipse, and the small circular illustrations reduced to two elliptical pictures, one possibly of a knight in armour and the other of a crucifixion scene. The bright circular halo of the latter image has been inverted to suggest the waning moon, thus reintroducing the notion of circularity. Finally the web is far more obviously 'floating wide', and this is mimicked by the lady's hair (much to Tennyson's disapprobation, who argued that the poem said nothing about this)⁵⁶. And although Holman Hunt used this feature to suggest the chaos of destruction in the previously peaceful room, it also brings to mind the floating hair of Coleridge's creative, demonic, semi-divine poet-prophet in 'Kubla Khan'⁵⁷.

The pairing of the picture of the knight with that of the crucifixion perhaps suggests the Christian base of the chivalric ethic, though only the image on the right - the crucifixion - is easily identifiable. To discuss an artist's intentions on the basis of the picture alone is always dangerous since intentions cannot be inferred from an image (or, indeed, from a poem), so it is impossible to do more than tentatively offer suggestions as to why the picture of the knight is so indistinct. .

One possibility is that the engravers simply could not create the amount of detail Hunt originally envisioned, and the image is almost indecipherable because the engraving is simply not of a sufficiently high professional standard. And as is well known, problems

were encountered with the engravers: for example, when the engraver confessed that the plate for Rossetti's 'Palace of Art: St Cecelia' illustration was 'only' 1/16th inch too small Rossetti replied that he could get a whole city into that space. This may suggest that a similar problem was encountered with Hunt's 'Lady of Shalot' illustration and the lack of clarity is therefore due to technical shortcomings.

A more intriguing possibility is that Hunt himself wanted this image to be indistinct. In this case, it might be suggested that the clearly portrayed, redemptive figure of Christ on the right is being implicitly contrasted with the indistinct figure of the knight on the left who, far from being a redemptive figure, was the catalyst which prompted the Lady to look down to Camelot, thus sealing her own doom. The perfection of divine love would thus be contrasted with the flawed human love which brings destruction rather than salvation in its wake. And in support of this view it could be noted that Holman Hunt was the most overtly religious of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood and had a particular interest in forging a new Christian iconography suitable for the nineteenth century.

Whatever is decided on this point, in both this Moxon version and the 1850 version the lady is trapped in her fantasy world, the world of reflections and shadows, and by giving visual expression to this central feature of the poem Holman Hunt reinforces Tennyson's use of fantasy based on medievalism to explore a contemporary and personal concern, the artist's predicament: the conflicting need for isolation and integration into the social order. And despite the poet's strictures, based on his belief that an illustrator must not add to the text⁵⁸ (although there is nothing to suggest that Tennyson was actively involved in this illustrative project, or even that he had wanted to be), it is a fine example of book illustration where word and image are mutually complementary and reinforcing. Its success can be deduced from the fact that it is this image which has entered the public consciousness, and still largely governs people's perception of 'The Lady of Shalot'.

As has been said, implicit in 'The Lady of Shalot' and explicit in 'Morte d'Arthur' is the notion of chivalry which enjoyed not just a resurgence, but an extension of interest during the nineteenth century, in which extracts from tales of chivalry from, for example, Jean Froissart (c1337-c1410) or Sir Thomas Malory (d.1471) were shaped by Kenelm Digby and others into a code intended to guide behaviour. Nor was this new code of

chivalry limited to the upper classes, but it was aimed particularly at the middle class, for as Digby argued:

So far from intending any reproach upon the lower classes of society, I pronounce that there is even a peculiar connection, a sympathy of feeling and affection, a kind of fellowship, which is instantly felt and recognised by both, between these and the highest order, that of gentlemen. In society, as in the atmosphere of the world, it is the middle which is the region of disorder and confusion and tempest⁵⁹.

Thus chivalry was shaped into a code to help govern the behaviour of the middle class, which was rapidly increasing in size and, especially after the 1832 Reform Act, gaining political power to add to the economic power many of them already had, rather than being a matter for the aristocracy, as Mark Girouard and Debra Mancoff⁶⁰ among others have convincingly argued, and as we shall later see. And it is clear from the work of both these scholars that nineteenth-century chivalry was not a retreat from reality, but an engagement with and response to various aspects of it. Like the Lady of Shalott society was turning to face reality - the new reality of nineteenth-century social conditions - and the new chivalric code was one of the means of doing this.

This is, perhaps, more overtly stated by Mancoff, who divides the Gothic Revival into four broad phases: the picturesque, the archaeological, the religious and the political⁶¹. According to her, the Arthurian revival with its emphasis on chivalry belongs to the last-named phase, the political, and feeds into a celebration of national heritage. This can perhaps be seen as creating an historical greatness which could then be regarded as the foundation of contemporary imperial greatness.

The return to chivalry also had implications within a domestic context, for as Mancoff suggests,

it was not the historical facts of feudal society that appealed to the interested generations of the nineteenth century. They responded instead to the deceptively simple ordering of society that seemed to be based on the inherent power of goodness and justice in the English upper classes⁶².

A painting such as Walter Crane's *The White Knight* (1870. Private Collection) [Plate 1.12] is not merely a man in armour passing through an evocative landscape, nor the lost remnant of a past age, but a vigilant representative of a ruling elite whose duty - and joy - it was to defend the weak and maintain the right throughout the land.

In this particular instance style elaborates content, for the medieval basis of the subject allows the artist greater latitude in his treatment of it. The use of chiaroscuro to create the fully modelled landscape contrasts strongly and effectively with the almost flat form of the white horse, heightening the otherworldly aspect of the painting. The utter stillness of the scene contributes to the overall effect in its suggestion that the knight is trapped in time, even as he is trapped within an enchanted valley by the surrounding hills: there is no guarantee that the horse's raised hoof will ever return to the ground.

As Mark Girouard has so lucidly argued in *The Return to Camelot: Chivalry and the English Gentleman* (1981), chivalry was the means of creating an image of the gentleman for the nineteenth century and, more importantly, of laying down a code of behaviour useful to society by supporting the status quo in the face of changing conditions. And while this was originally an aristocratic concern, the ambit of its influence gradually widened, bringing in not merely those further down the social scale, but marginalised groups within those classes.

The most notable and far-reaching example of this is the Scout movement founded around 1900, which catered for a wide range of boys, from those at public schools to those of the working class, and which incorporated significant elements of chivalry⁶³. These boys, many of whom had been previously marginalised and without a voice, were brought under the influence of chivalry which gave them a model to imitate and a corporate identity or presence, as well as a structure of authority based upon a military model, to which to be obedient.

But just as Tennyson's use of Arthurian fantasy has both a public face (as in 'The Lady of Shallot') and a private application (such as 'The Palace of Art'), so too chivalry as an ethical code can be applied in a personal way as well as in the corporate sense embodied by the Scout Movement. A relatively late and little known example of the personal application

is *King Arthur's Wood: A Fairy Story*, written and illustrated by Elizabeth Stanhope Forbes and published by Simpkin, Marshall, Hamilton and Kent in 1904.

Lavishly illustrated with alternating charcoal and watercolour plates, this work alternates the young protagonist's real and fictive worlds, and it is the Arthurian secondary world which is used to aid his journey from boyhood to maturity. And as the story was written for Elizabeth Stanhope Forbes' young son there is an obvious didacticism here: the lessons learnt by the protagonist, Myles, can be applied to and learnt by the real boy, Alex, whose name suggests Alexander the Great, who was himself made the subject of medieval legends, such as *King Alisaunder* (early 14th century), comparable to the King Arthur legends.

The book itself suggests intimacy rather than mass circulation, for its large size, hessian covers and extensive illustration make it a luxury item with a limited circulation and suggest its purely private genesis as a bedtime story for a particular child from a wealthy family.

Throughout, the illustrations complement the text, with the charcoal being used to build up a sinister world based on the skilful use of chiaroscuro, while in the watercolour illustrations the colour has been applied in flat washes to create a richly decorative effect. The denial of volume a flat wash entails, in contrast to the effect of chiaroscuro, brings *The White Knight* to mind, but where Walter Crane combined the realism of chiaroscuro with the flat form of the horse in one picture, Forbes has separated and alternated the two distinct elements. In both cases, however, an other world is effectively created and signalled. It is in this otherworld that Myles (the name traditionally suggests a soldier) is faced with a series of situations and in dealing with these his development from boy to man is fostered. What Myles learns at first hand from experience, the real boy, Alex, learns from Myles' example, so that he ultimately may be a conqueror over himself and the circumstances in which he finds himself as he goes through life, as his name implies. Although the extent of this book's influence over Alex is unknown, it is certainly known that he died in battle during World War I, suggesting that the military example was not lost on him.

Alex Stanhope Forbes' experience was far from unique, for as Mark Girouard notes, the 'ideals of chivalry worked with one accord in favour of war'⁶⁴ by consistently presenting

warfare as an honourable duty owed by a gentleman to his country. So when Lord Kitchener made his appeal for volunteers on the declaration of war on 4th August 1914 thousands of young men responded. Most of these youths were from the upper middle class of society, and, like Alex Stanhope Forbes, had been imbued with the chivalric ethic at school, in the Boy Scouts, and at home, where they had encountered much of the literature and art already discussed in this chapter. Most of them died in the mud and the noise of the battle-fields in France. And chivalry, as an ideal which could be used to guide social behaviour, died too, for it could not survive the disillusionment which resulted from the Great War, in which warfare itself was revealed as a bloody, obscene and tragic waste of human life.

IV

While the chivalric code could be extended through social classes, so that instead of being an aristocratic concern, it became a form of social guidance for the middle class, it was always aimed primarily at men, the would-be knights who were to spend their days in deeds of derring-do. Nevertheless, the chivalric code had also to create an appropriate image for women, for it simply could not work were they seen as strong, independent and able to take care of themselves. And so the chivalric code created largely by Kenelm Digby not only guided men into knightly action, but exerted a pressure to circumscribe female behaviour and determine acceptable female roles, which were characterised by weakness, passivity and powerlessness.

These features come together in John Everett Millais' painting, *The Knight-Errant* (1870. London, Tate Gallery) [Plate 1.13], in which a naked young woman tied to a tree is being freed by a knight in armour. Unable to hide even from the glances of passers-by, she is the epitome of defencelessness and vulnerability, who exists in order to be rescued by a knight in shining armour. Indeed, her vulnerability is emphasised by the close juxtaposition of the woman's soft naked flesh and the knight's hard metal armour; a juxtaposition which also provides a slight degree of titillation.

In fact, *The Knight-Errant* is brought slightly closer to the condition of pornography by its emphasis on display and the purely visual: there is no narrative behind this incident accessible to the viewer, and no visual clues by which to read or construct a story. The viewer is invited to dwell upon surface, texture and touch - and that is all. In this case the lack of intellectual content can be related to the artist's facility with the brush: Millais was technically one of the most skilled artists of his generation and he enjoyed showing-off, especially as he could make a very great deal of money at the same time. Nevertheless, it must also be admitted that fantasy, with its inherent bias towards novelty and special effects, lends itself to this type of treatment and occasionally almost justifies the charge of psychological escapism from intellectual pressure, rather as the 'moving wallpaper' type of television is used in the twentieth century as an escape from stress.

That this move towards pornography is not inevitable can be demonstrated by another artist's treatment of a similar incident: Walter Crane's *The Laidley Worm of Spindleton Heugh* (1881. Private Collection) [Plate 1.14]. This is based on the traditional ballad 'The Laidley Worm of Spindleston Heughs' collected by MG Lewis in *Tales of Wonder* (1805) in which the strong narrative impulse is directed towards the princess, who exists in order to be enchanted, and when enchanted can do nothing to free herself. After her disenchantment she resumes a naked female body, but in this case her nakedness merely provides an opportunity for another, smaller act of chivalry as the knight wraps her in his cloak, despite the greater potential for eroticism created by the statutory three kisses which free her from the spell.

Walter Crane reflects this different emphasis in his painting by locating all the main incidents of the ballad in one canvas. Of necessity, then, the figures are smaller, less strongly foregrounded and integrated more fully within the landscape than in Millais' *The Knight-Errant*. The differences in texture which work powerfully in *The Knight-Errant* are therefore far less obvious here, and the viewer's attention is directed to the need to make connections between the various incidents and to seek meaning.

Taking an illustrative approach, Crane closely follows his source, although the seven miles of devastation around the worm's lair have of necessity been reduced to a much smaller area of barren rock. But the knight is shown in action wearing a bright red mantle,

which is then wrapped around the restored woman as they ride towards Bamburgh Castle, exactly as described in the ballad.

Detail is rendered in an extremely realistic way: foreground grasses and thistles which by their sparseness emphasise the surrounding barrenness are convincingly depicted, while the figure of the woman emerging from the worm is a *tour de force* of academic life painting. Despite this realism in representing female flesh, and the greater closeness of the two human forms, Crane has rejected the opportunity for eroticism which Millais exploited so fully, in favour of the underlying story.

By locating three incidents within this landscape Crane is, moreover, moving away from the modern realist approach towards an earlier symbolic manner of representation in which all the relevant components of a story are shown together, regardless of their chronological appearance. And despite the action of the three incidents there is in the painting as a whole a sense of stillness - of action frozen by a camera shutter, perhaps - comparable to that of *The White Knight* which emphasises the symbolic, rather than the realist aspects of the work. Crane himself believed he had achieved in this picture a 'sense of balance between the universal and the particular'⁶⁵ or, to put it another way, between symbolism and realism. And it is this balance which allows Crane's picture to explore themes such as the deceptiveness of appearances or the rewards of obedience, without losing its particularity as an illustration of a specific poem.

At the most superficial level Crane's picture tells the story, but going beyond this, by rejecting the realist approach alone and reverting to an earlier, non-chronological approach to storytelling, Crane focuses on the process of representation and the actual narrative process becomes part of his subject. And to the extent that Crane's interest lies in the manner of storytelling, his work can be seen as a parallel to the interest in narrative technique on the part of writers such as Wilkie Collins, Sheridan Le Fanu and Robert Louis Stevenson. Like these writers who build up a composite account of events, garnered from different participants or observers of the events being narrated, Crane builds up a composite picture of the whole narrative in the poem, but he does this by depicting all the relevant incidents on one canvas.

Yet another level of meaning can be detected in *The Laidley Worm of Spindleton Heugh*, for it is arguable that Crane is picking up on the supposed weakness of women and their passivity and propensity to be enchanted, with the consequent need to be rescued by men. Underlying this, it could be argued, is the notion that women are less fully evolved than men and therefore more prone to bestiality: on this reading the laidley worm is the princess's bestial Other from which she must be saved by a more perfectly evolved man. This idea, which forms the basis of Bram Dijkstra's book, *Idols of Perversity* links Crane's work tentatively to a form of social Darwinism which will be discussed more fully in Chapter 4, Science and Fantasy.

Accepting these very significant differences of approach between Crane and Millais, nevertheless in both *The Knight-Errant* and *The Laidley Worm of Spindleton Heugh* the concept of chivalry is used to delineate and reinforce acceptable female roles, and as such they are easily related to the concerns about the place of women in society which were voiced throughout the century.

For example, economic and social factors led to increasing numbers of women seeking paid employment outside the home⁶⁶, despite attempts to confine them ideologically to the domestic sphere. This in turn added to the calls for educational opportunities for women. Legislation such as the Married Women's Property Act of 1870 had begun to create a status for women independently of their husbands' while the demands for political enfranchisement became more insistent as time went on. The so-called 'New Woman' was born, and became part object of ridicule, part scourge of society. And as is often the case, social turmoil and uncertainty bred anxiety in both the rulers and the ruled, which was to some extent allayed by offering well-defined roles for different sections of society to perform, and clear role models for them to emulate; and the cult of chivalry provided both.

Chivalry in this case was used as a means of modifying the form the 'New Woman' assumed, so that even with greater access to education and work outside the home, and her new status as a potential property-owner even when married, women did not stop being 'womanly', in the sense of being dependent upon and in need of protection from men.

While fantasy provided a suitable embodiment for this intellectual and emotional freight, mimetic writing was not exempt, but used chivalry as a metaphor. One of the clearest examples is provided by Coventry Patmore in *The Angel in the House*:

I do and ever shall profess
That I more tenderly revere
A woman in her gentleness
Than all things else I love or fear;
But false to love and ladies he
Who, scarf on arm and spear in rest,
Assail'd the world with proof that she
Being his, was also nature's best.
That chivalry do I proclaim
Alone substantial, wise, and good,
That scorns to help one woman's fame
With treason against all womanhood⁶⁷

Women in general, not merely an individual woman, merit the protection of the true knight.

Even the non-fictional, didactic prose of the period turned to chivalry as a means of regulating attitudes and behaviour. WH Davenport Adams in *Plain Living and High Thinking* argues that,

It is the courtesy of Bayard, the knight *sans peur et sans reproche*, which has immortalised him quite as much as his valour...Why should not every young man aim at becoming a nineteenth-century Bayard, a very model and mirror of knighthood? And why, before he goes forth into the world intent on doughty deeds, why should he not display his prowess, his chivalrousness, in the household "lists"?⁶⁸

In thus subjugating family life to the ideals of chivalry the chivalric code itself was both diluted and domesticated. The concept of an all-male base, free from marriage ties, from which knights could go out on quests and to which they could return for male support, epitomised by the Knights of the Round Table, had given way to a family setting in which

the knight must operate as an individual and without peers, in that he was head of the household and responsible for its well-being, with even his wife playing a subordinate role rather than being an equal partner. The male role, no less than the female role, was being modified, for instead of being part of a group (albeit with independent power of action in quests) the 'domestic knight' had to assume an individualistic role from beginning to end.

No matter how widespread and effective the use of chivalry as a metaphor actually was, it could not have functioned as it did had it not already been given a powerful visual embodiment which carried notions of courage, honesty, and honour without actually provoking thought. And on this level the whole notion of chivalry and the way it was used is brought closer to advertising which exists by holding out images bright enough to be alluring, but usually bland enough to smother thought.

Most of the examples considered so far use the fantasy of chivalry in a fairly straightforward way as a means of airing contemporary concerns or as a pictorial role model, but that this does not exhaust the resources of the genre is clear from a study of *Phantastes* (1858) by George MacDonald. In this, the most overtly chivalric and Spenserian of his novels, MacDonald uses the notion of the quest as the basic structure of an exploration of his psyche on the part of the protagonist, Anodos. In this instance the process of adventuring is essentially an inward one, with the person to be rescued and the thing to be found being the protagonist's self.

Unlike the standard quest in which the knight is one of an elite whose job it is to maintain the right and protect the weak, Anodos's quest is primarily educative, and although he is being educated for the 'real' world the process itself takes place in Fairy Land. Furthermore, the name 'Anodos' means 'pathless' and this emphasises the educative aspect of his quest: he must learn to take the right path through life. Anodos himself is always aware of the educative aspect of his adventure and of the eventual return to the world of men which this implies, for he muses:

I began the duties of my new position somewhat instructed...by the adventures that had befallen me in Fairy Land. Could I translate the experience of my travels there into common life?...Or must I live it all over again, in the other forms that belong to the world of men, whose

experience yet runs parallel to that of Fairy Land? These questions I cannot answer yet. But I fear⁶⁹.

And that fear throws into doubt either the efficiency of the educative process itself, or its relevance for this life, creating a tentative atmosphere in which Anodos's vulnerability, qualified by a new stability of intention and realism of expectation, is evident. He has entered the world of grown-ups.

However, no matter how tentative he seems about the future, he is in no doubt about the gains he has made, for he continues, 'Thus I, who had set out to find my Ideal, came back rejoicing that I had lost my Shadow'⁷⁰; the Shadow that had come to him through a deliberate act of disobedience in opening a cupboard door he was advised not to open. Thus Anodos broke the prohibition close to the heart of fairy tale, but he also denied the chivalric virtue of obedience.

In Jungian psychology, to which George MacDonald's thought bears striking parallels, the shadow consists of subliminal perceptions and repressed material, and as such constitutes the dark side of an individual; it comprises all those elements, qualities and resultant actions which that individual wishes to forget. Although MacDonald never actually explains what Anodos's shadow symbolises, it is quite clear from Anodos's reaction to its presence that he wishes he could forget it, suggesting that MacDonald is using the figure of the shadow in a way very similar to the way Jung later analysed it. And perhaps it is possible to be more specific here, for the fact that Anodos loses his Shadow when he admits his own failure suggests that pride is one of the qualities he wishes to forget and which therefore is one of the constituents of his Shadow.

It would, however, be unwise to insist on this too exclusively, since the various ways in which Anodos is blighted by the Shadow suggest other constituents. The Shadow's touch on the sad knight⁷¹, for example, causes Anodos to lose trust in him and, similarly, the fairy child is stripped of his wonder in the eyes of Anodos, becoming a commonplace boy carrying two ordinary toys at that same touch⁷².

The Shadow's power is thus a power of disenchantment, which oddly becomes a source of pride to Anodos, for he argues:

I now began to feel something like satisfaction in the presence of my shadow. I began to be rather vain of my attendant, saying to myself, 'In a land like this, with so many illusions everywhere I need his aid to disenchant the things around me. He does away with all appearances and shows me things in their true colour and form. And I am not one to be fooled with the vanities of the common crowd. I will not see beauty where there is none. I will dare to behold things as they are. And if I live in a waste instead of a paradise I will live knowing where I live'⁷³.

Only bare fact will do. This suggests that as imagination is blighted, intellectual reasoning, focused upon what is material, observable and quantifiable becomes the only guide for life, at the expense of value and meaning. And furthermore, this kind of over-intellectualising, which under the name of utilitarianism was a common element in Victorian thought, undercuts the very possibility of art which characteristically finds and communicates meaning in life and therefore enhances its value.

Disenchantment darkens at last into destruction: the shadow touches the maiden with the sounding globe, heightening Anodos's curiosity and causing him to grasp it. This results in an inexplicable build up of energy which culminates in the explosion of the globe itself: the source of wonder and delight is shattered, and shattered, significantly, because of a vain wish to investigate instead of simply accepting pleasure as it comes.

Much of Anodos's quest is taken up with his shadow, either in trying to rid himself of it or at least limit its influence, or in the extent to which it dominates and blights that quest. And it is only when the acknowledgement of failure leads Anodos to a degree of self-acceptance - as he says, 'I am what I am, nothing more'⁷⁴ - that he is freed from its baleful influence.

In a fascinating essay on the function of the shadow in fairy tales, 'The Child and the Shadow', Ursula Le Guin suggests that the shadow 'stands on the threshold between the conscious and the unconscious mind' and goes on to argue that 'unadmitted to consciousness the shadow is projected outward on to others'⁷⁵ making them appear evil, just as the touch of the shadow on the knight made him appear untrustworthy to Anodos. Le Guin suggests that an individual can only deal with these projections by withdrawing them

and accepting personal responsibility for personal evil, which is the point to which Anodos has reached in admitting he is only what he is. In this way the shadow is integrated into the conscious mind and disappears.

There is gain in this for the individual who, according to Le Guin, has ‘grown towards true community, and self-knowledge and creativity’⁷⁶. Jung, however, gives this a *social* application and in *Psychology and Religion: West and East* argues that if the individual ‘learns to deal with his own shadow he has done something real for the world. He has succeeded in shouldering at least an infinitesimal part of the gigantic unsolved social problems of our day’⁷⁷.

This is part of the process identified by Jung as individuation. Put simply, this is a quest for wholeness which involves both self-knowledge and self-acceptance. According to Frieda Fordham the

individuation process is sometimes described as a psychological journey; it can be a tortuous and slippery path, and can at times simply seem to lead round in circles; experience has shown, however, that a truer description would be that of a spiral. In this journey the traveller must first meet with his shadow and learn to live with this formidable and often terrifying aspect of himself: there is no wholeness without a recognition of the opposites...If he is fortunate he will in the end find the ‘treasure hard to attain’, the diamond body, the Golden Flower, the lapis, or whatever name and guise have been chosen to designate the archetype of wholeness, the self⁷⁸.

In *Phantastes*, of course, the guise chosen is that of the grail, and the knight’s quest becomes a metaphor for the psychological journey of self-discovery in what might be termed an introverted chivalry.

MacDonald’s version of chivalry also bears a strong contrast to the types of chivalry already discussed in the role he allots to women. In the common forms of chivalry women were given a passive role in which they required protection or salvation from a knight. Thus Margaret, the enchanted woman in ‘The Laidley Worm Of Spindlestone Heughs’, existed in order to be enchanted. In MacDonald’s version of chivalry, however, women are likely to

be the protectors of men: the very first person that Anodos meets in Fairy Land is a country maiden who warns him against the Ash tree and the Alder tree, and the second person he meets is that maiden's mother, who offers him shelter and food, and reiterates her daughter's warning.

Women also provide some of the motivation to spur Anodos on in his quest. This is of course one of the conventions of chivalry, but whereas in many quests the quester is rewarded by being given in marriage the woman he has served, in MacDonald's introverted quest, it is more likely that in pursuing the woman of his affections Anodos will be forced into other adventures which further his education in Fairy Land. The form of the woman which Anodos reveals in the block of marble, for example, comes to life and flees from him, prompting him to follow her. But in following her, he is led directly into the path of the knight in rusty armour, who warns him against the Maiden of the Alder-Tree and acts as an example of what might happen if he ignores the warning given. And there is in this incident a reminder that women can act in MacDonald's version of chivalry - as they do in other forms of it - simply as sirens, luring knights on to their own destruction.

Just as the chivalric code created by Digby and expressed in the works of art and literature already considered was used to modify or govern social behaviour, and particularly the relationship between the sexes, so MacDonald's introverted chivalry or inner quest was a means of discovering and modifying attitudes of mind, which would in their turn alter the behaviour of the individual in question. For example, Anodos

learned that it is better, a thousand-fold, for a proud man to fall and be humbled than to hold up his head in his pride and fancied innocence...; that he that will be a hero will barely be a man; that he that will be nothing but a doer of his work is sure of his manhood⁷⁹.

MacDonald does not specify what this work may be, but perhaps it is the 'something real for the world' that Jung saw as a consequence of dealing with the shadow. Certainly for Anodos the inner change from pride to humility brought about by the chivalric quest is manifested as a change in behaviour. So although MacDonald uses chivalry or chivalric imagery in different ways from, for example, Walter Crane, he is using it for similar ends: to modify human behaviour.

The flexibility of the chivalric ethos is one of its greatest assets, and is demonstrated not only by the ease with which it can be introverted, but in its potential for parody, exploited by Kenneth Grahame in 'The Reluctant Dragon' (*Dream Days*, 1898). Here we have a rather effeminate St George who choreographs the precise moves of the combat and negotiates a mutually acceptable outcome with the peace-loving, sonnet-writing dragon, while the notion of an integrated society within which each member has a part to play is mocked by the consciousness with which each plays that part: the villagers, for example, in their belief that the 'countryside must be freed from this pest, this terror, this destroying scourge' who actually had destroyed nothing and no-one. The Boy, too, consciously plays his part in the story by expressing the belief that a fight must take place because, as he explained to the dragon, 'he's St George and you're the dragon', with St George concurring in the belief that such rules must govern behaviour in these circumstances.

There are other targets for mockery: the dragon, who sees ramping as a theatrical skill rather than as an expression of ferocity, mocks the conventions of the chivalric code, for example. But on a slightly more serious level perhaps, Grahame mocks the conventions of fairy tale literature, which in the early years of the century had been regarded as essentially frivolous and untrue. As fairy tales gained acceptance with the reading public, however, they acquired a greater pedagogical weight, until they were seen primarily as a means of teaching, rather than as a form of entertainment. However, by making the educative element overt and comically directing it towards the peaceable, undragon-like dragon so that he is given a lesson he doesn't need in behaving in a socially acceptable way, Grahame mocks the didacticism of many contemporary fairy tales.

More interestingly, Grahame also suggests that the world of 'The Reluctant Dragon' is, and simultaneously is not, a fairy tale world. It is after all from the distance of 'this' world that we delve into that other world of fairy tale, but the Boy in the fairy tale appears to read fairy tales; and reading fairy tales is one thing rarely done in a fairy tale (although there is a passing comparison here with *Phantastes* in which Anodos reads the tale of Sir Percivale before meeting him in the wood).

Yet as a boy in a fairy tale about St George and a dragon, the Boy reads fairy tales which inform him of dragon habits. He comments, for example, that none of his books

refers to dragons purring, an inadequacy which is made good by the Boy's direct experience. Furthermore, the Boy is expected to know about dragons *because* he reads such books. This is where fantasy slips into realism, for in Grahame's narrative the Boy reads fairy tales as children in this world read natural history to learn about animals which, however exotic they may be, are natural animals and not fabulous beasts.

Much of the humour of the story comes from the equation thus instituted between realism and fantasy, in the sense that the Boy does not treat the experience of one as more valid or more important than the experience of the other: like his reading habits he 'took them as they came, in a sandwichy sort of way'. But it is also the humour of the tale which purges the chivalric code of its ethical content, contributing to the demise of this particular strand of medievalism⁸⁰.

Until that point, however, literary and artistic manifestations of the chivalric ethos had been invaluable in the attempts to discuss and therefore disarm the anxiety created by what was perceived as materialism and irreligion by some of the more conservative sections of society who felt threatened by change, and to reinforce the distinct roles of men and women in Victorian society. Chivalry was a means of creating a society which, if not perfect, was at least better than the present one, in that it combined the advantages of the present with the virtues of the medieval past, although it was 'medieval' only as defined by nineteenth-century writers such as Kenelm Digby.

The literary and artistic manifestations of chivalry did not, however, stand alone, and in the next chapter fantasy elements of Gothic Revival architecture will be discussed and contrasted with the fantasy elements in Classical architecture to show that these architectural movements, too, had an ethical content which carried some of the values inherent in the fantasy of Victorian chivalry.

NOTES

1. For present purposes the term 'Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood' or simply 'The Brotherhood' refers to the original seven men who founded the group in 1848 - Dante Gabriel Rossetti, William Michael Rossetti, William Holman Hunt, John Everett Millais, James Collinson, FG Stephens and Thomas Woolner. In this form it was a short-term collaboration which had effectively come to an end by 1854.

The more general term 'Pre-Raphaelite' or 'Pre-Raphaelitism' will be used of the work of the Brotherhood members after 1854, their close associates, such as Ford Madox Brown, Christina Rossetti and Charles Alston Collins, and their successors including Edward Coley Burne-Jones, William Morris and Arthur Hughes.

2. *The Guardian*, August 20, 1850. Quoted by William Michael Rossetti in his Introduction to the reprint of *The Germ: Thoughts Towards Nature in Poetry, Literature and Art* (1850) (London: Elliot Stock, 1901), p.15.

'Effeminacy' I take to refer to the definition of 'effeminate' as 'enervated', 'feeble', 'voluptuous' (*Oxford English Dictionary* 2nd edition)

3. FG Stephens ('Laura Savage'), 'Modern Giants', *The Germ: The Literary Magazine of the Pre-Raphaelites* (Oxford and Birmingham: Ashmolean Museum and Birmingham Museums and Art Gallery, 1979), p.170.

4. William Holman Hunt, 'The Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood: A Fight for Art', I, *The Contemporary Review*, April 1886, pp.480-1.

5. William Holman Hunt, *Pre-Raphaelitism and the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood*, (2 vols.), (London: Macmillan, 1905), Vol. I, p.276.

6. Chris Brooks, *Signs for the Times: Symbolic Realism in the Mid-Victorian World* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1984), p.124.

7. In his discussion of the spatial distortions in this picture, Timothy Hilton suggests that it is as easy to read the rear wall as continuing uninterrupted across picture space as it is to read the opened section of wall as being at right angles to it, and sees this as a failure on Millais' part to resolve the ambiguities. However, the study to which he calls attention clearly indicates a right angle, shown mainly by the foreshortened archway. In the final painting this is not the case, making it more likely that the wall should be read as continuing

- uninterrupted across the picture space. See Timothy Hilton, *The Pre-Raphaelites* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1970), pp.37-38.
8. John Orchard, 'A Dialogue on Art', *The Germ*, p.160.
 9. William Holman Hunt, 'The Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood: A Fight for Art', II, *The Contemporary Review*, May 1886, p.740.
 10. Quoted in Stephen Coote, *William Morris. His Life and Work* (Stroud, Gloucestershire: Alan Sutton, 1996), p.38.
 11. DG Rossetti, *Dante and his Circle: With the Italian Poets Preceding Him (1100-1200-1300)* (London: Ellis and White, 1874), pp.101-102.
 12. DG Rossetti, 'Sentences and Notes', *Collected Works of DG Rossetti*, (2 vols.), ed. William Michael Rossetti, (London: Ellis and Scrutton 1886), Vol. I, p.510.
 13. Alicia Craig Faxon, *Dante Gabriel Rossetti* (Oxford: Phaidon, 1989), p.52.
 14. Ibid., p.53 and note.
 15. DG Rossetti, 'Versicles and Fragments' *Collected Works* Vol. I, p.379.
 16. DG Rossetti, 'Hand and Soul' Ibid., pp.394-5.
 17. David Masson, 'Pre-Raphaelitism In Art And Literature' (1852) in James Sambrook (Ed), *Pre-Raphaelitism: A Collection of Essays* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1974), p.82.
 18. DG Rossetti, 'Hand and Soul', *Collected Works* Vol. I, p.396.
 19. WM Rossetti (Ed), *The Germ*, Introduction, pp.18-19.
 20. Edward Coley Burne-Jones. Quoted in Julian Treuherz, *Pre-Raphaelite Paintings from Manchester Art Galleries* (Manchester: Manchester City Art Gallery, 1993), p.113.
 21. Letter of 1st May 1853 to Cornell Price. Quoted in Georgiana Burne-Jones, *Memorials of Edward Burne-Jones*, (2 vols.), (London: Macmillan, 1904), Vol. I, p.76.
 22. Martin Harrison and Bill Waters, *Burne-Jones* (London: Barrie and Jenkins, 1973), p.157.
 23. Ibid., p.177.
 24. Ibid., Introduction, p.xiii.
 25. Georgiana Burne-Jones, *Memorials*, Vol. II, pp.140-141.
 26. Ibid., p.141.

27. Morris's beliefs on art and society are discussed at length in the following lectures:
 'Art, Wealth and Riches' (1883), *Signs of Change; Lectures in Socialism, The Collected Works of William Morris*, (24 vols.), (London: Longmans Green, 1910-1915), Vol. XXIII, pp 143-163.
 'Useful Work *versus* Useless Toil' (1885), *Collected Works*, Vol XXIII, pp 98-120.
 'Art and Labour' (1885), *The Unpublished Lectures of William Morris*. Edited and compiled by Eugene D Lemire. Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1969, pp94-118.
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28. William Morris, 'The Art of the People' (1879), *Collected Works*, Vol. XXII, p.47.
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30. Ibid., p.39.
31. William Morris, 'Lindenberg Pool' (1856) *The Defence of Guenevere; The Hollow Land* in *Collected Works*, Vol. I, p.247.
32. Ibid., p.251.
33. Amanda Hodgson, *The Romances of William Morris* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), p.29.
34. Ibid., p.29.
35. Ibid., p.29.
36. Ibid., p.11.
37. William Morris, *A Dream of John Ball* in *Collected Works*, Vol. XVI, p.286.
38. Morris, 'Art and its Producers', *Hopes and Fears for Art and Lectures on Art and Industry* in *Collected Works*, Vol. XXII, p.352.
39. Ian Anstruther, *The Knight and the Umbrella: The Account of the Eglinton Tournament 1839* (London: Geoffrey Bles, 1963), p.5.
40. Georgiana Burne-Jones, *Memorials*, Vol. II, p.56.
41. Fiona MacCarthy, *William Morris. A Life for Our Time* (London: Faber and Faber, 1994), p.59.
42. H Kenelm Digby, *The Broad Stone of Honour: or Rules for the Gentlemen of England* 2nd edition (London: C&J Rivington, 1823), p.xi.

43. Ibid., p.xxiii.
44. Ibid., p.xxxvii.
45. Morris, 'Making the Best of It', *Hopes and Fears for Art and Lectures on Art and Industry in Collected Works*, Vol. XXII, p.187.
46. Harrison and Waters, *Burne-Jones*, p.45.
47. Roger Simpson, *Camelot Regained: The Arthurian Revival and Tennyson 1800-1849*, Arthurian Studies XXI (Cambridge: DS Brewer, 1990).
48. John Rosenberg, 'Tennyson and the Passing of Arthur', in Christopher Baswell and William Sharp (Eds), *The Passing of Arthur and New Essays in Arthurian Tradition* (New York and London: Garland Publishing, 1988), p.226.
49. Edmund Kemper Broadus, *The Laureateship: A Study of the Office of Poet Laureate in England with Some Account of the Poets* (Oxford: Oxford University Press 1921), p.190.
50. The source is 'Donna di Scallotta' Novella LXXXI, *Raccolta di Novelle* Vol 1 ed. G Ferrario (Milan 1804); a reprint of the 1525 edition of *Libra di Novella e di parlar gentile, Contenente Cento Novelle Antiche*. See David Staines, *Tennyson's Camelot: The Idylls of the King and its Medieval Sources* (Waterloo, Ontario: Wilfred Laurier University Press, 1982), Chapter 1.
51. Ibid., p.10.
52. Valerie Pitt, *Tennyson Laureate* (Toronto: University Of Toronto Press, 1962), p.62.
53. Oscar Wilde, 'The Preface', *Fortnightly Review*, March 1891.
54. Tennyson, 'To ____ with the Following Poem [The Palace of Art]' l.10-13.
55. The early date of this drawing indicates Hunt's interest in the poem prior to, and apart from, Moxon's involvement. This acquires a deeper significance when it is realised that his oil paintings of *The Lady of Shalott* date from 1886-1905. Hunt's interest in the subject, in other words, spanned almost his entire career.
56. Hunt, *Pre-Raphaelitism*, Vol. II, p.124.
57. ST Coleridge, 'Kubla Khan' (1798) l.37-54.
58. Hunt, *Pre-Raphaelitism* Vol. II, p.125.
59. Digby, *The Broad Stone of Honour*, p.17.

60. See in particular Mark Girouard, *The Return to Camelot: Chivalry and the English Gentleman* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1981); Debra N Mancoff, *The Arthurian Revival in Victorian Painting*, (2 vols.), PhD Thesis, (Ann Arbor, Michigan: University Microfilms International, 1984); Debra N Mancoff, *The Return of King Arthur: The Legend through Victorian Eyes* (London: Pavilion Books, 1995).
61. The term 'political' is potentially misleading if it is given a narrow interpretation relating to the actions of government and the philosophies of the political parties of the day. It is, however, acceptable if given a broader interpretation which includes the changing beliefs and actions of society at large.
62. Mancoff, *The Arthurian Revival*, p.174.
63. Every study must have its chronological limits, and Girouard's terminus date of 1918 is an obvious and reasonable one. The influence of chivalry, however, continued beyond this date, but in a much modified or diluted form. The Girl Guides were formed in direct emulation of The Scouts, for example, while schoolgirl stories from the first half of the twentieth century extol the schoolgirl code of honour. This performed a fine balancing act between the typical 'male' or chivalric qualities - defending the weak, telling the truth at all times, courage, honour and the like - and the need to remain ladylike. In *The Chalet School* series (1925-1970) by Elinor M Brent-Dyer, for instance, the girls' behaviour based on this code is constantly equated with boys' behaviour, derived from the chivalric ethos.
64. Girouard, p.276.
65. Erroneously cited in Jane Vickers, *Pre-Raphaelites: Painters and Patrons in the North East*. (Newcastle-upon-Tyne: Tyne and Wear Museums Service, 1990) as Vera Smith, 'Some Antecedents of the Department of Fine Art, Newcastle-Upon-Tyne', *Durham University Journal*, vol 45, no.2, p.14.
66. Using information derived from the 1851 census Harriet Martineau suggested that 'of six million women in Britain over twenty years old more than two million were independent and self-supporting like the men'. Quoted in Lee Holcombe, *Victorian Ladies at Work: Middle Class Working Women in England and Wales 1850-1914* (Newton Abbot: David & Charles, 1973), p. 11.
67. Coventry Patmore, *The Angel in the House* Canto IX, Prelude 1, The Gracious Chivalry.

68. WH Davenport Adams, *Plain Living and High Thinking or, Practical Self-Culture Moral, Mental and Physical* (London: John Hogg, 1887), pp.14-15.
69. George MacDonald, *Phantastes* and *Lilith* (London: Gollancz, 1961), p.181.
70. Ibid., p.182.
71. Ibid., p.67.
72. Ibid., p.66.
73. Ibid., p.67.
74. Ibid., pp164-5.
75. Ursula K Le Guin, 'The Child and the Shadow', *The Language of the Night: Essays on Fantasy and Science Fiction* Rev. ed. (London: The Woman's Press, 1989), p.53.
76. Ibid., p.54.
77. Carl Gustav Jung, *Psychology and Religion: West and East* Bollinger Series XX, *The Collected Works of CG Jung*, Vol 11 (New York: Pantheon Books, 1958), p.83.
78. Frieda Fordham, *An Introduction to Jung's Psychology* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1966), p.77.
79. MacDonald, *Phantastes* p.165
80. Although becoming generally less important, chivalry assumed a more specialised memorial function, with Galahad becoming as important as St George, especially after World War I



Pl. 1.1 John Everett Millais, *Lorenzo and Isabella*, 1848-9.



Pl. 1.2 Dante Gabriel Rossetti, *Dante's Dream at the Time of Beatrice's Death*, 1856.



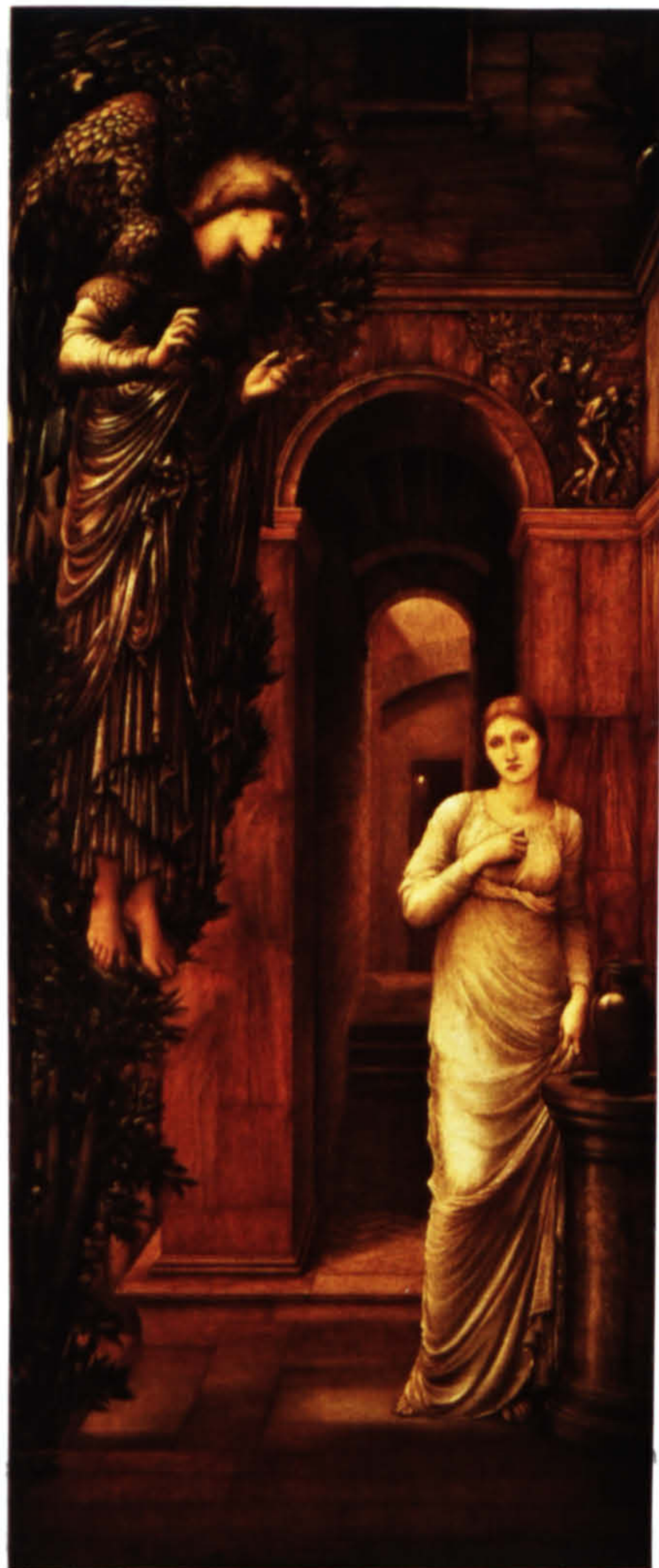
Pl. 1.3 Dante Gabriel Rossetti, *Dante's Dream on the Day of the Death of Beatrice*, 1880.



Pl. 1.4 Dante Gabriel Rossetti, *The Girlhood of the Virgin Mary*, 1848-9.



Pl. 1.5 Edward Coley Burne-Jones, *The Annunciation, the Flower of God*, 1862.



Pl. 1.6

Edward Coley Burne-Jones, *The Annunciation*, 1876-9.



Pl. 1.7 Dante Gabriel Rossetti, *St Cecily, 'The Palace of Art'*, 1857.



Pl. 1.8 Dante Gabriel Rossetti, *The Death of Arthur, 'The Palace of Art'*, 1857.



Pl. 1.9 Dante Gabriel Rossetti, *The Lady of Shalott arrives at Camelot*, 'The Lady of Shalott', 1857.

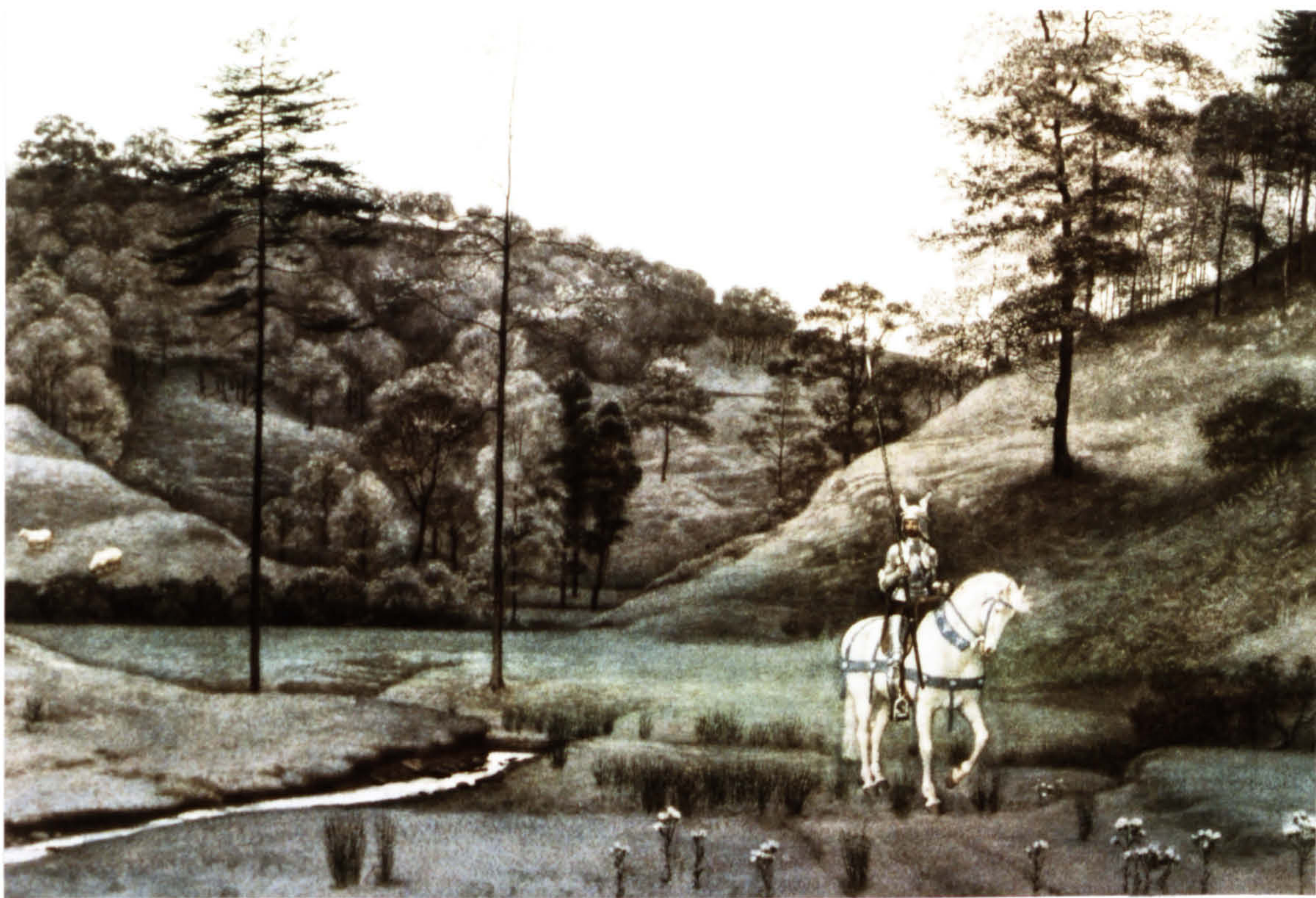


Pl. 1.10

William Holman Hunt, *The Lady of Shalott*, 1850.



Pl. 1.11 William Holman Hunt, *The Lady of Shalott*, 'The Lady of Shalott', 1857.



Pl. 1.12

Walter Crane, *The White Knight*, 1870.



Pl. 1.13

John Everett Millais, *The Knight-Errant*, 1870.



Pl. 1.14

Walter Crane, *The Laidley Worm of Spindleton Heugh*, 1881.

I

Architecture figures in fantasy in two main, interconnected ways. The first of these ways is the use of Gothic architecture in literature. 'Gothic architecture' in this case is an historical term, and refers to the various building styles used particularly for churches and large domestic dwellings - manor houses, castles and the like - until the Renaissance (somewhere round about 1500) when artistically-informed taste increasingly favoured the Classical style of architecture. The literature in which Gothic architecture figures is largely, but not exclusively, the 'Gothic' tales and novels which flourished particularly in the 1790s and which continued to be published throughout the nineteenth century. Here 'Gothic' is a generic term, and is applied to tales which, according to David Punter in *The Literature of Terror* are characterised by

an emphasis on portraying the terrifying, a common insistence on archaic settings, a prominent use of the supernatural, the presence of highly stereotypical characters and the attempt to deploy and perfect techniques of literary suspense¹.

Obviously not all Gothic tales display these characteristics to an equal extent, and in particular there was a tendency to explain away the supernatural in purely natural terms to show, for example, that what had been taken for a ghost was in fact a secret, human inhabitant of the castle in which the action takes place. However, as the actions of the characters in such stories had been governed throughout by the belief that what was seen was a ghost it is still possible to treat them as fantasy, despite the rational explanations given by their authors.

Such tales have one further claim to be considered as fantasy, for as Rosemary Jackson suggests in *Fantasy: The Literature of Subversion* it is in this Gothic literature, which she describes as a literature of 'unreason and terror'² that the immediate roots of modern fantasy are to be found.

Section II of this chapter will focus on this use of Gothic architecture in literature to consider its historical development and to consider what the writers of such stories

achieved; to ask if Gothic architecture was used merely as a suitably eerie setting for tales of terror, or whether it played a more prominent role in the narrative, carrying a range of symbolic meanings which contribute to the story itself.

The second way in which architecture figures in fantasy arises from this literary use of architecture as it develops into the architectural movement of the nineteenth-century Gothic Revival, in which Gothic buildings (whether extant in literature or extant in stone) were used as the bases for new Gothic designs suited to nineteenth-century needs and purposes. Many of these buildings, constructed upon principles derived from Gothic buildings, simply reuse historical material and are therefore out of place in a study of fantasy. In a small minority of buildings, however, the Gothic element has undergone a metamorphosis, rather than a mere revival, and as they are based upon a fusion of styles which can never in reality have existed together they can be perhaps be considered as a form of fantasy. This is the subject of Section III of this chapter.

The Gothic Revival movement was the most pronounced architectural movement of the nineteenth century, partly because the Gothic style could be claimed as both English and Christian. The Classical style, which had seemed an apt expression of the reason and order so important in eighteenth-century thought, was not entirely out of favour during the nineteenth century, and is the subject of Section IV of this chapter, where I shall consider the ways in which two architects, Alexander Thomson and Cuthbert Brodrick, were able to incorporate elements of the fantastic into their designs, based on Classical principles.

II

The link between architecture in literature and architecture in stone is made explicit by Kenneth Clark, for in his seminal work, *The Gothic Revival. An Essay in the History of Taste* (1928) he argues that 'more than any other movement in the plastic arts, the [Gothic] Revival was a literary movement'³, and suggests that if anyone could be considered the founders of this movement it is a group of men who in the middle of the eighteenth century united poetry and archaeology. This group includes the poet Thomas Gray, considered in his own times an authority on Gothic architecture, Joseph Warton, poet and essayist, and his younger brother, Thomas Warton, whose note to the lines '--Did arise/On stately pillours framed after the Dorick guise' in the 1762 edition of his *Observations on The Faery Queen* is the first published attempt to trace the origin and development of Gothic architecture.

Although Gray and the Warton brothers all to a greater or lesser extent championed the Gothic style, their efforts were superseded by those of Horace Walpole who not only wrote the literary work which by common consent is taken to mark the beginning of modern fantasy, *The Castle of Otranto: A Gothic Story* (1764) but also published an account of Gothic architecture in Chapter V, 'State of Architecture to the End of the Reign of Henry VIII', of his *Anecdotes of Painting* (1762). In this, as Kenneth Clark points out, Walpole is not at all interested in archaeological questions concerning the origin of Gothic stylistic features, such as the pointed arch, but rather 'makes a real attempt to estimate the aesthetic value of Gothic as compared with Classical architecture'⁴, an evaluation which concludes that 'One must have taste to be sensible of the beauties of Grecian architecture, one only wants passions to feel Gothic'⁵. For Walpole, then, the essential difference between Classical and Gothic architecture is that an appreciation of Classical architecture requires the exercise of taste, employing the faculties of reason, but Gothic architecture simply requires emotion to be appreciated. And emotion, particularly strong emotion, is not subject to the control of reason.

This link between Gothic architecture and emotion ties Walpole's aesthetic judgement to the aesthetics of Richard Hurd, whose *Letters of Chivalry and Romance* were published in the same year as Walpole's *Anecdotes of Painting*. As we have already seen (Introduction

p.3, above), Hurd was writing in the aesthetic tradition running counter to mimesis established by Longinus in his theory of the sublime, and helped free poetry from the constraints of mimesis by arguing that the poet has a 'world of his own where experience has less to do than consistent imagination'.

In Letter XII of *Letters on Chivalry and Romance* Hurd traces the development of poetry up to his own times, arguing that the 'old romances' gave way to allegories, under which guise the 'tales of faery' became the 'ordinary entertainment of our princes'. He then goes on to suggest that 'reason, in the end...drove them off the scene and would endure these *lying wonders* neither in their own proper shape nor as masked in figures' before concluding that 'what we have gotten by this revolution...is a great deal of good sense. What we have lost is a world of fine fabling; the illusion of which is so grateful to the *Charmed Spirit*; that in spite of philosophy and fashion, *Faery* Spenser still ranks highest amongst the Poets'⁶.

For both Hurd and Walpole, then, reason, as embodied in mimetic literature and Grecian architecture, is not sufficient: romance poetry and Gothic architecture are required to help satisfy the 'unconquerable passion for all that is great and for all that is more divine than ourselves' that lies at the heart of Longinus' theory of the sublime, for they best express the 'ideas [which] often go beyond the boundaries by which we are circumscribed'⁷.

Walpole's other major contribution to architecture was his re-creation of the house he bought in 1747, Strawberry Hill, as a Gothic building between 1750 and 1753, when its first transformation was completed. Kenneth Clark regards this transformation as growing out of contemporary efforts to revive Gothic architecture, rather than being a catalyst which stimulated the historical research in the first place, though in reality Strawberry Hill possibly had a dual function, acting as an expression of contemporary interest in Gothic architecture, but simultaneously stimulating that interest still more. Certainly, the use of Gothic architectural ruins (whether authentic ruins or contemporary 'built' ruins) as visual features in garden landscapes, symbolising the passage of time and the inevitability of death, so contributing to a mood of gentle melancholy, was common in the years prior to Walpole's work on Strawberry Hill.

Walpole's transformation of Strawberry Hill into the Gothic style, his theoretical evaluation of Gothic in *Anecdotes of Painting* and his use of Gothic architecture in his

Gothic tale, *The Castle of Otranto* make him a particularly suitable figure with which to begin any study of the links between architecture, literature and fantasy.

In his Preface to the first edition of *The Castle of Otranto* Walpole presents his work as a translation of a story based on real events supposed to have occurred sometime between 1075 and 1243, which was printed in Naples in 1529 and discovered in the library of a Catholic family from the north of England. In this way he creates a medieval context for the story and simultaneously provides a defence for himself as a mere translator, rather than creator, in the event of a poor critical or public reception of it.

However, Walpole also specifically suggests that the scene is 'undoubtedly laid in some real castle'⁸. By this suggestion that the castle is a real, actual building, Walpole ties his story more closely to its medieval Italian context and implies that the events comprising the story are real events; things that happened in time and place, not merely in imagination.

The castle is held by Manfred, Prince of Otranto, inherited from his grandfather who obtained the lordship from its rightful owner by means of murder and a fraudulent will. Deciding in the light of a prophecy that 'the castle and lordship of Otranto should pass from the present family whenever the real owner should be grown too large to inhabit it'⁹ that male heirs are of the utmost importance, Manfred marries off his only son, Conrad, to Isabella, daughter of Frederic, Marquis of Vicenza. Before the wedding takes place, however, Conrad is crushed to death by an enormous plumed helmet which suddenly appears in the courtyard, so Manfred determines to divorce his wife Hippolyta and marry Isabella himself in order to secure the male line. A peasant whom Manfred accuses of sorcery is held responsible for the death of Conrad and is imprisoned beneath the helmet, his engine of destruction.

The castle is a fitting location for such a tale, it having many rooms which ensure that physical distance is created between the protagonists, making each one more vulnerable to Manfred's evil intentions, galleries large enough to hold the most over-inflated spectral manifestations and numerous windows which offer glimpses into the castle's courtyards, one of which is still filled by the helmet which killed Conrad.

However, the castle also has several underground cloisters and a subterranean passage leading to the nearby church of St Nicholas. This is Isabella's escape route when she flees

Manfred's sexual advances. These subterranean regions of the castle can therefore be seen as symbolising forbidden sexual desires, particularly as Isabella opens the trap-door to the underground passage only with the help of the young peasant, who is eventually revealed as the castle's rightful owner. As he reclaims the castle from Manfred and marries Isabella it could be argued that in this story illicit sexual desires give way to sexual desire sanctified by marriage, marking the establishment of a more just society at the end of the *Castle of Otranto*, and justifying the author's claim that

The piety that reigns throughout, the lessons of virtue that are inculcated, and the rigid purity of the sentiments, exempt this work from the censure to which romances are but too liable¹⁰.

The castle in Walpole's *Castle of Otranto* is more than just a suitably eerie setting for an extravagant tale, but as I have suggested, has an active role in creating meaning by symbolising forbidden sexual desire. This aspect of Walpole's story was adopted by other authors and ultimately became a focal point of Gothic fiction, although the precise symbolic content carried by the castle varies from story to story. Davendra Varma goes so far as to argue in *The Gothic Flame* that in Gothic romance the castle occupies a central place, for it is

an image of power, dark, isolated, impenetrable. No light penetrating its impermeable walls, high and strengthened by bastions, it stands silent, lonely and sublime, frowning defiance on all who dare to invade its solitary reign...Even when presented in decay, the castle is majestic and threatening: a spot where we encounter the mysterious and demoniac beings of romance¹¹.

And Varma goes on to argue that it is from the castle that the Gothic novel derives its 'usual accessories', such as

massive doors swaying ponderously on rusty hinges, invariably closing with a resounding crash; dark eerie galleries; crumbling staircases, decaying chambers and mouldering roofs, tolling bells or stalking phantoms. Curious heroines or rightful heirs explore the deserted wings

where they are able to solve the mystery of a murder perpetrated by the ancestors of the current usurper¹².

In some cases the castle itself is of sufficient importance to figure in the title of the story, with the *Castle of Otranto* and Ann Radcliffe's *Mysteries of Udolpho* being the most famous examples. In J Wadham's 'Lady Eltringham or The Castle of Ratcliffe Cross' (1836), however, the title implies that the castle and the major character are of equal importance to the story, although it is arguable that since Lady Eltringham dies, but the castle continues to be the locus of her dead lover's hauntings, the building is of slightly greater importance than the woman.

Wadham's story (first published in a penny-dreadful magazine, *The Calendar of Horrors! Weekly Register of the Terrific, Wonderful, Instructive, Legendary, Extraordinary and Fictitious*) has so many of the 'usual accessories' derived from the castle, such as blood-stained manacles, dungeons with massy portals, crumbling pillars and monkish bells, that it appears almost as a parody of the genre, though it is unlikely to have been written as such.

The emphasis on these accessories far outweighs the interest in the narrative itself, which tells of Lady Eltringham's visit to the dungeons where her tyrannical husband keeps his prisoners before ordering their execution by poison. There she promises freedom to the 'last victim that ever the iron key of solitude and barbarity turned upon'¹³. Before she secures his release, however, the executioner, accompanied by two priests and sundry attendants, brings the poison which the prisoner willingly drinks. The following night he makes good his threat to haunt the tyrant, at that point peacefully asleep with his wife. On this rude awakening, Lady Eltringham instantly recognises the ghost as that of her first lover by a pen she had given him and which happens to fall from his shroud as he leans over the bed, the better to haunt them. She immediately dies from shock, her husband dies abroad at some later but unspecified time and the phantom continues its futile haunting of the castle.

This story is not only weak but inconsistent, as Lady Eltringham apparently has never been in the dungeons before, but, we learn, always manages to have the prisoners she actually visits freed. What interest or power the story has therefore comes not from the

narrative, but from the detailed descriptions of what Varma calls the 'usual accessories'. The castle, in this case, almost displaces the narrative as the 'point' of the fiction.

In addition to the importance of the castle itself, this story has two features in common with the far more accomplished *Castle of Otranto*. The first of these is an anti-Catholic bias, for in both stories the church is implicated in the shocking events portrayed. In 'Lady Eltringham', for example, the executioner is accompanied by two priests who are - presumably - part of the larger household and merely performing their usual duties. The church is thus presented as the upholder of a bloody, barbarous, and tyrannical social system within the castle which is ruled over by a member of the aristocracy.

In the *Castle of Otranto* the church is not presented as the upholder of social injustice to quite the same extent, but is shown in an uncomplimentary light nevertheless. The original crimes of murder and forgery by which Otranto passes into Manfred's family are committed by his grandfather, Don Ricardo, in the Holy Land where he had gone as part of a Crusade to free Jerusalem from the Muslim Turks who were believed to be ungodly, savage and devoid of all honesty or compassion.

The contemporary representatives of the church, Jerome and his fellow monks, are presented as weak and if not entirely willing to accommodate Manfred's cynical manipulation of canon law to allow divorce from Hippolyta, then at least unprepared to defy him. And even when those representatives of the ruling classes, Frederic and Manfred, conspire to barter their daughters in marriage to each other, Jerome is unwilling to protect the young women in question by speaking out against their fathers' actions, though he is clearly unhappy with the situation.

The link between Gothic architecture and Catholicism is made more explicit in Walpole's *Anecdotes of Painting* where he argues that 'in Westminster Abbey, one thinks not of the builder; the religion of the place makes the first impression; and though stripped of all its altars and shrines, it is nearer converting one to popery than all the regular pageantry of Roman domes' before drawing the general conclusion that 'Gothic churches infuse superstition'¹⁴.

This is at least in part a reaction against the emphasis on reason and order and, in the arts, on purity of form, which were characteristic of the eighteenth-century Enlightenment.

And since whatever could not be subjected to the discipline of reason was to a great extent ignored or suppressed during the eighteenth century, the interest in the Gothic constitutes an interest in those suppressed or rejected aspects of life.

To the extent that Gothic fiction was a means of accessing those lost areas of life, such as emotion or sexuality which are not amenable to reason's control, it can be seen as inherently subversive of society's mores and values. However, by tying Gothic architecture and Catholicism up with superstition, Walpole creates an implicit criticism of Catholicism which serves to limit Gothic's subversive function in religious matters at least in which the dominant trend was Protestant.

The second feature which 'Lady Eltringham' shares with the *Castle of Otranto* is the pressure of the past which is continually exerted against present events, directing the characters' actions and shaping the narrative.

The *Castle of Otranto* is, as Walpole admits in the Preface to the first edition of the tale, grounded upon the moral that the sins of the fathers are visited upon the children to the third and fourth generation. The punishment for the crimes committed in the past, that is, falls upon the grandchildren and great-grandchildren of the criminal in the present. And it is the architecture within which all the action takes place which symbolises the past, for it is the ownership of the castle with all that that implies which was the motive for the crime in the first place. Furthermore, it is by returning the building to its rightful owner that a new, more just order in society is established, as already suggested (p.117, above).

Whereas in the *Castle of Otranto* it is the familial past which operates upon the present, in 'Lady Eltringham' it is the protagonists' own pasts which exert a pressure against the present. In particular, it would seem on a first reading anyway that Lady Eltringham's infidelity to her first lover is finally punished when she recognises his ghost and dies of shock. This view, however, is not entirely consistent, for although the unnamed prisoner connects Lady Eltringham with the 'faithless but lovely form of my earliest attachment'¹⁵, it is her husband who is to be punished by nightly hauntings. Lady Eltringham's death is, therefore, an unforeseen consequence of the punishment meted out to her husband, rather than a planned punishment for her infidelity. Likewise, it is not made clear what crimes or actions - if any - have brought the prisoner's punishment upon him.

In this story, then, the links between crime and punishment, action and consequence, are inexact, but the past is nevertheless a brooding presence throughout the narrative. And as in the *Castle of Otranto* it is the building itself, with its crumbling pillars and walls, which symbolises the invasion of the present by the past. Indeed, since Lord and Lady Eltringham die without issue, the castle itself is all that is left to be haunted by the ghost of the man from the past.

Both the *Castle of Otranto* and 'Lady Eltringham' have rural settings, and the action in both stories occurs in the Middle Ages: the *Castle of Otranto* between the first and last Crusades, and 'Lady Eltringham' more vaguely in the 'last summer that ever the golden sun flashed upon the blood-stained banner of chivalry'¹⁶. Charles Dickens, on the other hand, creates an urban, nineteenth-century setting for the last of his Christmas books, *The Haunted Man and the Ghost's Bargain* (1848).

In this story the chemist, Mr Redlaw, who lives and teaches in a long-established educational institution of some sort, is haunted by the memories of sorrow and wrongs done to him earlier in his life. At times, however, this haunting takes the form of a phantom which is the image of himself and which offers to take from him these troubling memories. Ignoring the warning implicit in the legend inscribed on one of the institution's portraits, 'Lord, keep my memory green'¹⁷, Redlaw accepts the phantom's offer, and discovers that he inflicts the same gift on all those people with whom he has to do, whether they want their memories removed or not.

As Redlaw quickly realises, this gift is in its effects a curse, because as well as losing his memories of sorrow, he also loses associated memories which otherwise could kindle love, kindness or forgiveness. As the phantom explains, Redlaw loses nothing but the 'intertwisted chain of feelings and associations, each in its turn dependent on, and nourished by, the banished recollections'¹⁸. So in forgetting, for example, the friend whom he had hoped would marry his beloved sister, Redlaw also forgets her; and the memory of her is such as to make him kinder and more loving. The others to whom Redlaw passes this gift - or curse - of forgetfulness also become hard-hearted, selfish and unforgiving, with the only person impervious to this power being a savage urchin boy, whose life has been so harsh as to give him no memories which could ever kindle love. His only experience of kindness is

his present experience of being taken in and put in front of the fire by the housekeeper of the institution, Milly.

The man and the boy have a dreadful companionship with each other, derived from the fact that devoid of softening memories each is less than fully human. In Redlaw's case, as he admits, this is the result of his own decision, but the boy has been made what he is by the prevalent social conditions and, in particular by unrestrained capitalism. As the Phantom later explains to Redlaw,

All within this desolate creature [the boy] is barren wildness. All within the man bereft of what you have resigned, is the same barren wildness. Woe to such a man! Woe, tenfold, to the nation that shall count its monsters such as this, lying here, by hundreds and by thousands!...There is not...one of these - not one - but shows a harvest that mankind MUST REAP. From every seed of evil in this boy, a field of ruin is grown that shall be gathered in, and garnered up, and sown again in many places in the world, until regions are overspread with wickedness enough to raise the waters of another deluge. Open and unpunished murder in a city's streets would be less guilty in its daily toleration, than one such spectacle as this....There is not a father...by whose side in his daily or nightly walk, these creatures pass; there is not a mother among all the ranks of loving mothers in this land; there is no one risen from the state of childhood, but shall be responsible in his or her degree for this enormity. There is not a country throughout the earth on which it would not bring a curse. There is no religion upon earth that it would not deny; there is no people upon earth it would not put to shame...Behold, I say...the perfect type of what it was your choice to be...His thoughts have been in 'terrible companionship' with yours, because you have gone down to his unnatural level. He is the growth of man's indifference; you are the growth of man's presumption. The beneficent design of heaven is, in each case, overthrown, and from the two poles of the immaterial world you come together¹⁹.

In this story, Dickens is thus able to use the conflict between the past and the present in one man, Redlaw, to lead into a criticism of the social conditions which result in creatures as devoid of full humanity as the urchin boy, and to highlight the inescapable element of individual responsibility. The past thus sheds light on the present and highlights a warning for the future.

This lesson is not lost on Redlaw who thus learns the value of painful memories and sees the sense in the legend inscribed on the portrait, and after the phantom reappears he is able, with Milly's help, to begin to undo the damage he unwittingly inflicted on others. Finally, he is able to forgive the man who was unfaithful to his sister, the memory of which was the most painful of all. Redlaw is able to give this man a fresh start in life, and also to help his son, one of Redlaw's own students, so that he can marry the woman he loves.

As in 'Lady Eltringham' it is the personal past which impinges upon present events, but whereas Wadham leaves the past (in the figure of the ghost) endlessly but uselessly haunting the castle in the present, Dickens creates a resolution in which the past is used to improve present conditions within the enclosed society of the story. It is only by accepting the pain of his memories that Redlaw is freed from the unhappy events of his earlier life and thus escapes the power of the past.

However, like Walpole and Wadham, Dickens uses Gothic architecture to symbolise the past. Both externally and internally the world of this story is a forgotten world, as Dickens describes it:

His dwelling was so solitary and vault-like - an old retired part of an ancient endowment for students, once a brave edifice planted in an open place, but now the obsolete whim of forgotten architects; smoke-age-and-weather darkened, squeezed on every side by the overgrowing of the great city and choked, like an old well, with stones and bricks; its small quadrangles, lying down in very pits formed by the streets and buildings, which, in the course of time had been constructed above its heavy chimney-stacks; its old trees, insulted by the neighbouring smoke, which deigned to droop so low when it was very feeble and the weather very moody; its grass-plots, struggling with the

mildewed earth to be grass, or to win any show of compromise, its silent pavements, unaccustomed to the tread of feet, and even to the observation of eyes, except when a strange face looked down from the upper world wondering what nook it was; its sundial in a little bricked-up corner, where no sun had straggled for a hundred years, but where, in comparison for the sun's neglect, the snow would lie for weeks when it lay nowhere else, and the black east wind would spin like a huge humming-top, when in all other places it is silent and still.

His dwelling, at its heart and core - within doors - at his fireside - was so lowering and old, so crazy, yet so strong, with its worm eaten beams of wood in the ceiling and its sturdy floor shelving downward to the great oak chimney-piece; so environed and hemmed in by the pressure of the town, yet so remote in fashion, age, and custom; so quiet, yet so thundering with echoes when a distant voice was raised or a door was shut - echoes not confined to the many low passages and empty rooms, but rumbling and grumbling till they were stifled in the heavy air of the forgotten crypt where the Norman arches were half-buried in the earth²⁰.

Clearly much of this imagery - low ceilings, vault-like rooms and echoing passages, for example - is derived directly from the castle as a central feature of Gothic fiction, but by surrounding his Gothic architecture with modern streets and buildings Dickens suggests that the past is being encroached upon and contained by the present. And this of course contributes to the meaning of the story in which past and present are in conflict. But Dickens does more than this with this description, for by portraying the modern streets and buildings at a higher level than the Gothic building, 'above its heavy chimney-stacks' he suggests that the endowment for students lies at the bottom of a pit of time; a pit which will become a grave if its main inhabitant doesn't escape from his past.

Dickens' friend Wilkie Collins also uses architecture to symbolise the pressure of the past upon the present, but in 'Mad Monkton' (1859) this is fused with the anti-Catholic bias evident in earlier works of Gothic fiction, such as the *Castle of Otranto* and 'Lady

Eltringham'. Even Collins' title conveys this bias with its implication that monks invariably go mad.

The Monktons are an old Roman Catholic family who are afflicted by a hereditary strain of madness which, having assumed almost every possible form at some time, most often manifests itself as monomania. The sole surviving members of this unfortunate family are Alfred Monkton, a young man engaged to be married to Ada Elmslie, the daughter of a family friend, and his uncle Stephen, a profligate who lives mainly on the Continent. On hearing that Stephen has been killed in a duel held at a secret location, Alfred becomes obsessed with the idea that he must find his uncle's body and bring it back to the family seat, Wincot Abbey, for burial. He therefore postpones his marriage and begins his search.

The narrator, a neighbour of the Monktons who has met up with Alfred in Naples, presents this as incontrovertible evidence of the Alfred's monomania, but according to Alfred himself he is acting in response to the ghost of his dead and unburied uncle to prevent the fulfilment of a prophecy that the Monkton family will die out if any member is not laid to rest in the family vault beneath the chapel in Wincot Abbey. As Stephen is the only family member missing from the vault, Alfred must find his body and bring it home for burial to save the family from extinction and ensure his own survival and happiness.

Alfred Monkton traces the prophecy back to a book once owned by the monks who had inhabited Wincot Abbey before Henry VIII's Dissolution of the Monasteries (1536-1540), after a long search in the uninhabited oldest part of the Abbey, which Alfred describes in glowing terms:

Ah! what a life it was when I began my search. I should like to live it over again! Such tempting suspense, such strange discoveries, such wild fancies, such enthralling terrors, all belonged to that life! Only think of breaking open the door of a room which no living soul had entered before you for nearly a hundred years! think of the first step forward into a region of airless, awful stillness, where the light falls faint and sickly through closed windows and rotting curtains! think of the ghostly creaking of the old floor that cries out on you for treading on it, step as softly as you will! thinks of arms, helmets, weird tapestries of bygone

days, that seem to be moving out on you from the walls as you first walk up to them in the dim light! think of prying into great cabinets and iron-clasped chests, not knowing what horrors may appear when you tear them open! or poring over their contents till twilight stole on you, and darkness grew terrible in the lonely place! of trying to leave it and not being able to go, as if something held you; of wind wailing at you outside; of shadows darkening around you, and closing you up in obscurity within. Only think of these things, and you may imagine the fascination of suspense and terror in such a life as mine was in those past days...My search lasted months and months...in whatever direction I pursued it, I always found something to lure me on. Terrible confessions of past crimes, shocking proofs of secret wickedness that had been hidden securely from all eyes but mine, came to light. Sometimes these discoveries were associated with particular parts of the Abbey, which have had a terrible interest of their own for me ever since²¹.

Just as Dickens places his Gothic architecture in *The Haunted Man* in a pit or well, surrounding it with higher, modern buildings to suggest an oasis in which the past is trapped, so Collins uses this description of the deserted part of the Abbey to symbolise the past when Catholic superstition governed people's lives, and the description of the locked rooms, undisturbed for a century, to symbolise the shameful family secrets. And as the locked rooms are within the deserted section of the Abbey, Collins suggests that these shameful secrets are closely connected to monkish superstition: the family secrets are Catholic secrets, passed down from the Middle Ages and only finally coming to light.

Having been told this story of the successful search for the book containing the prophecy, the narrator helps Alfred Monkton in his search for his uncle's body, more to humour the madman than from any genuine conviction of the truth of Alfred's interpretation of events. However, just as the book was found in a deserted and isolated section of the Abbey, so the body is found in an isolated and desolate convent, which according to the narrator was

a dark, low, sinister-looking place. Not a sign of life or movement was visible anywhere about it. Green stains streaked the once white facade of the chapel in all directions. Moss clustered thick in every crevice of the heavy scowling wall that surrounded the convent. Long lank weeds grew out of the fissures of roof and parapet, and drooping far downward, waved wearily in and out of the barred dormitory windows. The very cross opposite the entrance-gate, with a shocking life-sized figure in wood nailed to it, was so beset at the base with crawling creatures, and looked so slimy green, and rotten all the way up, that I absolutely shrank from it²².

The association between decay and Roman Catholicism implicit in the description of the uninhabited part of Wincot Abbey is given shocking force here in the image of the slimy, rotting crucifix with crawling creatures around its base, which anticipates the description of Stephen Monkton's body, which on the first impression appeared as a 'long recumbent object, tinged with a lightish blue colour all over, extended on trestles, and bearing a certain hideous, half-formed resemblance to the human face and figure. A second look confirms it had 'lain rotting on the trestles under the open sky long enough for the linen to take the livid, light-blue tinge of mildew and decay which now covered it'²³.

The images of the disintegrating building and decaying crucifix also prepare the reader for the unsympathetic portraits of the inhabitants of the convent, one of whom is the stereotypical dirty and almost imbecile old monk open to bribery, in this case with snuff. In contrast to this, the father superior is shown as decisive and articulate, but he is sour-tempered and though fair, he is a hard man to whom the laws of the church mean much more than compassion, decency or magnanimity.

Although Alfred has been proven right in his interpretation of events so far, the narrator still regards him as mentally unhinged. He makes arrangements for the body to be transported back to England and joins Alfred in accompanying it on the sea voyage. A storm and the mutiny of the superstitious crew, who suspect their packing case is a coffin complete with body, together cause the ship to sink, ensuring that the empty place in the Wincot vault will never be filled, though both Alfred and the narrator survive the wreck.

Once on land, however, Alfred succumbs to brain-fever, and though he recovers well enough to be taken home he dies very soon afterward. The prophecy is thus fulfilled in every detail.

This does not, however, convince the narrator, who continues to regard Alfred's interpretation of events as a consequence of inherited mental instability, a fright given him in childhood by Stephen Monkton and the secluded life he had led at the Abbey. However, in the light of the hard evidence uncovered throughout the story - that Alfred first saw Stephen's ghost on the day of the duel, though he had no knowledge of that event; that Stephen's body was found unburied, as Alfred predicted; that Stephen's place in the vault was left empty because his body was lost at sea; and, finally, that the Monkton family was extinguished with the death of Alfred, the last of the race, soon after - it must be asked who it really is that suffers from monomania. Is it Alfred who makes logical deductions from events, and has his interpretation supported by later events, or is it the narrator who, despite his knowledge of the man, and despite all the evidence which he carefully collects and summarises, holds to the idea that Alfred Monkton is mad? And this of course is to question what madness really is.

In this story, then, Wilkie Collins raises questions about the definition of madness, but he also links madness to Roman Catholicism and suggests that the roots of both lie in the past. And in presenting this nexus of ideas, the description of architecture is vital, as it was for Dickens, for Wadham and for Walpole.

No art form exists in isolation from other artistic endeavours, and just as we have seen in Chapter 1 that medievalism was a vital element in both literature and painting during the nineteenth century, so now we shall discover that the associations between past time, the non-rational aspects of humans, and architecture traced out in Gothic literature were paralleled in the architectural practice of the period.

III

The interest in Gothic architecture in literature was accompanied by a rising interest in Gothic as an architectural style suitable for nineteenth-century cities, which developed into the Gothic Revival architectural movement. This can be seen as the most self-conscious and far-reaching aspect of Victorian medievalism, for the buildings designed as part of that movement continue to dominate the physical form of many British towns and cities. It is here that the social and political implications of much medievalism as already discussed in Chapter 1 came to the fore and were openly acknowledged and discussed. The choice of building style, therefore, reflected much more than aesthetic sensibilities and personal preference.

The Gothic style is very dynamic and makes great use of pointed arches and flying buttresses, which allow walls to be thinner, lighter and penetrated by extensive fenestration, all of which carried for the Victorians, as for their medieval forbears, symbolic overtones. The upward thrust of such architecture, for example, was seen as man's reaching upwards to God, while sunlight flooding down through a clerestory was symbolic of the light of the Holy Spirit. This style was therefore seen as specifically Christian, and was associated particularly with medieval England; and since Christianity during the Middle Ages was Catholic this continues the link between Gothic architecture and Catholicism already established, as we have seen, in the Gothic literature of the late eighteenth century.

Furthermore, thin walls and extensive fenestration create an architectural style in which space is able to flow, while skilful use of arches enables large areas to be vaulted. Space of this sort (especially before the development of artificial light sources which could provide a steady light) often has the effect of dwarfing the individual, and catering for that need for a 'more ample greatness' which, according to Sir Francis Bacon, is 'agreeable to the spirit of man'²⁴ (quoted on pp.2-3 of Introduction).

There were two major apologists for Gothic architecture: Augustus Welby Pugin (1812-1852) and John Ruskin (1819-1900), both of whose views were eccentric, extreme and sometimes unbalanced, but hugely influential nevertheless.

Pugin was, perhaps, the more extreme of these two Gothicists, and his views were first set out in *Contrasts; or a Parallel Between the Noble Edifices of the Fourteenth and*

Fifteenth Centuries and Similar Buildings of the Present Day: Showing the Present Decay of Taste: Accompanied by Appropriate Text (1836), then in *The True Principles of Pointed or Christian Architecture* (1841).

According to Pugin, the Gothic style was specifically English, for he wrote:

national feelings and national architecture are at so low an ebb, that it becomes an absolute duty in every Englishman to attempt their revival. Our ancient architecture can alone furnish us with the means of doing this successfully²⁵.

That this refers to more than the outward form and decoration of a building is clear from the development of Pugin's argument, for having instituted a comparison between ancient and modern mansions he argues that the ancient mansions were

substantial appropriate edifices, suited by their scale and arrangement for the purposes of habitation...Every person should be lodged as becomes his station and dignity, for in this there is nothing contrary to, but in accordance with, the Catholic principles...The mansions erected by our ancestors were...solid dignified and Christian structures, built with due regard to the general prosperity of the family...Under the oaken rafters of their capacious halls the lords of the manor used to assemble all their friends and tenants at those successive periods when the church bid her children rejoice while humbler guests partook of their share of the bounty dealt to them by the hand of the almoner beneath the groined ceiling of the gatehouse. Catholic England was merry England, at least for the humbler classes; and the architecture was in keeping with the faith and manners of the times - at once strong and hospitable²⁶.

Clearly this continues the link between the Gothic style and Catholicism found in Gothic literature, but as a convert to Catholicism Pugin presents this in very positive terms. Nevertheless, as anti-Catholic feeling ran high during much of the nineteenth century the link between the Gothic style and Roman Catholicism implied by the reference to 'Catholic principles' created suspicion in the minds of many Protestants and limited the appeal of Gothic Revival architecture among Anglicans, who felt that by creating an architectural

space designed for the enactment of ritual, the way was opened up for Catholicism to be eased into the Church of England. Architectural form, in other words, was inextricably bound up with doctrinal belief. Anglicanism (and, indeed, all varieties of nonconformism) required an auditorium suitable for preaching which allowed the Word to be heard by all, while Roman Catholicism demanded a space wherein ritual could be enacted and seen by all.

Despite the problems created by the association of the Gothic style with Roman Catholicism, the parallels between Pugin's vision of merry England and the world of chivalry already discussed in Chapter 1 are striking, and Debra Mancoff's comment that the nineteenth century responded to the 'deceptively simple ordering of society' (quoted p.91, above) implicit in their idea of chivalry, as expressed by Sir Kenelm Digby among others, is especially pertinent here. And it is this vision, projected in all seriousness by Pugin, which is the butt of Kenneth Grahame's gentle mockery in 'The Reluctant Dragon', suggesting as it does that this is, and always has been, a fairy-tale world.

It is, however, clear that this was the world that Pugin wanted to recreate in stone, and he must therefore be seen as a revivalist with an architectural 'back to basics' rallying call to his generation. And to the extent that Pugin was a revivalist he cannot be regarded as a fantasist: his historical imagination stopped at the accurate recreation of period artefacts rather than going on, as for example the Pre-Raphaelites did, to consciously using the historical material to create something new; something which had never previously existed and which never could exist save in the vision thus presented.

The concept of fantasy - or indeed realist - architecture is more complex than fantasy painting or literature, since it usually has a strictly functional aspect absent from these other art forms. (The exceptions are the follies and ruins which were so popular during the eighteenth century, whose function was purely aesthetic, and which were designed simply to be looked at. To the extent that their primary function is visual they are closer to sculpture than architecture.) Since a building must be fit for its primary purpose (a house for living in, a church for worship, a prison for incarceration etc.) it is necessarily tied to everyday life. Beyond that basic functional element, however, it is possible to suggest that some architecture is a type of fantasy provided the architect modifies or transforms the basic form

upon which it is modelled, thus modifying the ideas or associations the architecture itself prompts in the viewer. But Pugin stopped short of this, being content to recreate the architecture of an earlier age in which an earlier society was petrified.

The second great apologist for Gothic architecture was John Ruskin, whose views were even more widely disseminated than those of Pugin, and in the long term more influential. This is not so much a reflection of Ruskin's importance to architects, but a consequence of the central position he occupied in Victorian thought, at the intersection of a whole range of interests: geology, literature, art, architecture and the 'state of the nation' all came within his orbit. Since Ruskin had a synthetising turn of mind which led him to adopt an holistic approach to any topic under consideration these interests can never be dissociated from each other, either in his mind or in any discussion of his work.

In making his views known, Ruskin was greatly helped by his persuasive prose style which encompasses precise detail, long rolling periods, biblical allusion and the echoes of biblical prose to create a powerful rhetoric to which a very wide readership responded.

A good example is to be found in the final section of Chapter II, 'The Lamp of Truth', of *The Seven Lamps of Architecture* (1849):

Fig. 3 is half of the head of a door in the Stadhaus of Sursee, in which the shaded part of the section of the joint, g g, is that of the arch moulding, which is three times reduplicated, and six times intersected by itself, the ends being cut off when they became unmanageable. This style is, indeed, earlier exaggerated in Switzerland and Germany, owing to the imitation in stone of the dovetailing of wood, particularly of the intersecting of beams at the angles of chalets; but it only furnishes the more plain instance of the danger of the fallacious system which, from the beginning, repressed the German, and, in the end, ruined the French, Gothic. It would be too painful a task to follow further the caricatures of form and eccentricities of treatment, which grew out of this single abuse - the flattened arch, the shrunken pillar, the lifeless ornament, the liny (sic) moulding, the distorted and extravagant foliation, until the time came when, over these wrecks and remnants, deprived of all unity and

principle, rose the foul torrent of the Renaissance, and swept them all away.

So fell the great dynasty of medieval architecture. It was because it had lost its own strength, and disobeyed its own laws - because its order and consistency, and organisation, had been broken through - that it could oppose no resistance to the the rush of overwhelming innovation. And this, observe, all because it had sacrificed a single truth. From that one surrender of its integrity, from that one endeavour to assume the semblance of what it was not, arose the multitudinous forms of disease and decrepitude, which rotted away the pillars of its supremacy. It was not because its time was come; it was not because it was scorned by the classical Romanist, or dreaded by the faithful Protestant. That scorn and that fear it might have survived and lived; it would have stood forth in stern comparison with the enervated sensuality of the Renaissance; it would have risen in renewed and purified honour, and with a new soul, from the ashes into which it sank, giving up its glory, as it had received it, for the honour of God - but its own truth was gone, and it sank for ever. There was no wisdom nor strength left in it, to raise it from the dust; and the error of zeal, and the softness of luxury, smote it down and dissolved it away. It is good for us to remember this, as we tread upon the bare ground of its foundations, and stumble over its scattered stones. Those rent skeletons of pierced wall, through which our sea-winds moan and murmur, strewing them joint by joint, and bone by bone, along the bleak promontories on which the Pharos lights came once from houses of prayer - those grey arches and quiet aisles under which the sheep of our valleys feed and rest on the turf that has buried their altars - those shapeless heaps, that are not of the Earth, which lift our fields into strange and sudden banks of flowers, and stay our mountain streams with stones that are not their own, have other thoughts to ask from us than those of mourning for the rage that despoiled, or the fear that

forsook them. It was not the robber, not the fanatic, not the blasphemer, who sealed the destruction that they had wrought; the war, the wrath, the terror, might have worked their worst, and the strong walls would have risen, and the slight pillars would have started again, from under the hand of the destroyer. But they could not rise out of the ruins of their own violated truth.²⁷

Ruskin's starting point in this admittedly long extract is detail: a drawing of half of the head of a particular door in a particular building. And this is the type of detail one expects in a work on architecture. Ruskin then picks on a slightly larger and more general detail - the imitation in stone of wood dovetailing - which leads him into a passage tracing the degeneration of the Gothic style. Detail is piled onto detail in a long sentence marked by a rather staccato rhythm which is then stopped by a short, straightforward sentence: 'So fell the great dynasty of medieval architecture'. Another long sentence but with a more flowing rhythm elaborates the point before it is stopped in its tracks by the simple comment, 'And this, observe, all because it had sacrificed a single truth'. Crucially this moves the discussion from architectural aspects to moral considerations, in a passage marked by long sentences building up to a climax at the mention of the honour of God. And this climax is made more obvious by the falling cadences in the rest of that sentence: 'but its own truth was gone and it sank for ever'.

Although the passage contains no direct biblical allusions, it is full of echoes of biblical prose: 'there was no wisdom nor strength' carries the tones and rhythm of 'he had no form or comeliness' of *Isaiah* Chapter 53, verse 2, for example. Ruskin's image of the ruined abbeys brings to mind the frequently used biblical image of the desolate city (a favourite, too, with illustrators of the fantastic such as John Martin and Gustave Doré during this period), while the sea-winds strewing the stone skeletons 'bone by bone' recalls Ezekiel's vision in the valley of dry bones in which the bones came together 'bone to its bone' (*Ezekiel* 37:7).

The main point to note is the ease with which Ruskin moves seamlessly from purely architectural matters to ethical concerns and, more specifically, to the ethical matter of truth, which he regarded as the 'equator and girdle' of all the virtues ('Lamp Of Truth' ¶1,

The Seven Lamps of Architecture), the focal point of his vision of the world and lynch pin of his system of thought. However, it could also be noted in passing just how closely Ruskin's language in this passage on architecture resembles the 'Gothic' style in literature, especially in his emphasis on ruins, skeletons, and decay, as discussed in the previous section of this chapter.

The link between architecture and ethics which seems incidental, if not actually tenuous in the late twentieth century, was an obvious one to Ruskin, and is derived from his vision of the world as a system of hieroglyphs or signs in which external, physical form embodies and simultaneously reveals an inner moral truth which is greater than the hieroglyph itself. It is a scheme in which the 'whole visible creation is a mere perishable symbol of things eternal and true'²⁸. As this is true of the 'invented symbols' of art as well as those created by God, such as mountains and rivers, it follows that any and all artefacts carry a heavy payload of eternal truth. Architectural style is therefore of vital importance, since it partakes of this symbolic nature and determines the truth it tells. An architecturally pure style carries the moral purity of its creators, while a debased style reveals something of the debasement of its creators, or of the society in which it was created.

Ruskin's belief that the world can be read and interpreted in this way derives in large measure from the typological interpretation of the Bible which he learned from his Evangelical mother, and which he continued to use even after his own loss of faith in 1858.

This Evangelical upbringing was also responsible for Ruskin's social conscience which prompted the belief that the individual is indeed his brother's keeper, and that those with the advantages of relative wealth, education and physical comfort have a responsibility towards those who lack such things. Ruskin differs from many Evangelicals, however, in that he actively attempted to discharge that responsibility towards his fellow-citizens.

Ruskin's belief that the 'haves' in society bear some responsibility for the 'have-nots' is hardly unusual, of course, and is certainly not architectural, but when his moral sense was united with his interest in the arts, Ruskin was confronted with the central aesthetic dilemma that sense impressions and moral feelings have no intrinsic connection. The obvious response to this difficulty is simply to give visual facts a moral interpretation. However, since such an interpretation is arbitrary and can be changed at will, it fails to

make a true or intrinsic connection between what is seen and its moral significance. But Ruskin goes beyond this obvious step, for as Lee Mackay Johnson suggests in *The Metaphor of Painting: Essays on Baudelaire, Ruskin, Proust and Pater* he believes that the ‘sense of morality can be concentrated into the sense of sight [in] an imaginative leap which essentially fuses moral sensitivity with visual accuracy’²⁹.

It is worth pausing here to note the similarity between Ruskin’s link between visual accuracy and moral sense and the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood’s insistence on the precise and accurate rendering of detail in their early works, such as *Lorenzo and Isabella* (1849; Liverpool, Walker Art Gallery) by John Everett Millais, and especially the part that played in the creation of fantasy. This point will be developed further in Chapter 4 which considers the use of science in making fantasy during the Victorian period, but for the moment the interest in truth to nature in the representation of detail should be noted.

Having established that Ruskin fuses moral sensitivity and visual accuracy, Johnson goes on to tease out the implications of this link, arguing that:

As Ruskin’s eye for social conditions taught him, a moral decline can be measured in aesthetic pollution. But Ruskin also felt that the general ugliness of the state of English life in physical terms, of architecture and landscape, was not only a symptom but a cause of moral apathy. One approach to the social problems, Ruskin felt, was to improve the environment. If the visual sense of the public were refined through education and example, the moral tone was likely to benefit...Seeing clearly was a way of attaining moral clarity.³⁰

Again there is an obvious parallel between Ruskin’s desire for the moral improvement of society and the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood’s desire to reform their morally degenerate age by regenerating the arts, and whose agenda was that of bringing back ‘public taste to the severe draperies and pure forms of early art’³¹ as we saw in Chapter 1. This, of course, is no coincidence, for the relationship between the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood and John Ruskin was a mutually reinforcing one, in that the various members of the PRB read and were influenced by Ruskin, while Ruskin became one of their earliest and most influential champions, writing to *The Times* in their defence in 1851.

Likewise, there are immediate points of comparison between Ruskin's belief that ugliness was a cause as well as a symptom of moral apathy and William Morris's use of a medieval-based art to improve society and make people happier, as already discussed in Chapter 1. Indeed, the parallels between Ruskin and Morris are even stronger than those between Ruskin and the PRB, since both Ruskin and Morris believed that the commercialism of the nineteenth century had eroded the freedom of the craftsman, reducing him from a creative human being to a mere machine, no matter how efficient, and both men believed that the remedy was to turn to the art of the Middle Ages and adapt it to nineteenth-century social conditions. Furthermore, both Ruskin and Morris believed that by giving men work in which they could take pleasure, ugliness would be eradicated and society itself would be renewed and reinvigorated.

If Johnson's interpretation of Ruskin's equation between ugliness and moral apathy is correct then two closely related things follow. The first is that social criticism, far from being a digression in Ruskin's intellectual life, was pre-eminent; it was his *raison d'être*. And the second point to note, coming from this, is that Ruskin ceases to be a dilettante with fingers in any number of pies who can't keep his opinions to himself, and must be seen as a man with a mission to reform society who is prepared to use several means to achieve that end. And one of the most important of these means was the improvement of architecture.

By 'improvement' Ruskin of course meant a return to the Gothic or medieval style of architecture as a means of accessing the medieval virtues of sacrifice, truth, power, beauty, life, memory and obedience which constitute the chapter subjects of *The Seven Lamps of Architecture*. There is in this an obvious comparison with the Earl of Eglinton's use of the tournament to access virtues such as courage, humility, honesty and fidelity which he perceived as characteristically medieval, already considered in Chapter 1. This is not to argue that Ruskin was copying the Earl, but rather to suggest that this strategy was one which both men believed to be an effective means of imparting or making available these important virtues.

However, although the idea of a tournament was free from negative mental or emotional associations, Gothic architecture was hampered by the link with Roman Catholicism expressed in negative terms in Gothic literature and emphasised as a virtue by Pugin, and its

appeal was duly limited. By his symbolical, typological reading of the world, including architectural style, derived from Protestant theology in which the Word is supreme, Ruskin realigned Gothic architecture with Protestantism, thereby making it acceptable to Anglicans. As Kenneth Clark points out in *The Gothic Revival*, Ruskin's achievement was in 'disinfecting Gothic architecture'³² from the taint of Roman Catholicism.

As already suggested, Ruskin's approach to life was an holistic one which is impossible to tease out into its constituent parts. So his work on art and architecture was accompanied by, and to some extent dependent upon, his analyses of the political economy and social ills of the nation and his attempts to remedy these.

One such attempted remedy was the Guild of St George, whose Articles of Association were recorded on 14th October 1878 and whose principle aim was to show 'how much food-producing land might be recovered by well-applied labour'³³. Like the Pre-Raphaelites, Tennyson and Morris, Ruskin is here appealing to the chivalric ideal as a means of ameliorating the ills of nineteenth-century society; unlike the Pre-Raphaelites and Tennyson, however, Ruskin attempts to make his chivalric ideal actual by recreating the conditions of imagined medieval life in nineteenth-century Britain.

This involved the purchase of land which was to be let at fixed rents and made productive, with any profits being put back into the enterprise to make the land more productive still. Machinery was to be limited to that moved by natural forces, rather than any driven by 'artificial fire'. Landlord absenteeism was to be forbidden and every landlord would be expected to be at least as capable of working the land as his labourers. (This is derived directly from the Victorians' imaginary knightly ideal that the knight must be superior in everything to his squire and serfs.) The labouring force itself would be well-treated, well-trained and well-educated for its station in life, and to this end schools and museums were to be instituted. Dress would be determined by social position and 'luxury realised for all, but luxury exquisite and refined'³⁴. In other words, the 'golden age and mild Saturnian reign were to return to England as a result of St George's labours for Merrie England'³⁵.

The pedagogical thrust of the Guild of St George links it to Kenelm Digby's *Broadstone of Honour* which was also avowedly pedagogical in character: both were attempts to

ameliorate the social conditions in nineteenth-century Britain by educating people in their social responsibilities and personal behaviour. Digby's efforts were moral and aimed at the middle class who, unlike the upper and the working classes, had no tradition to guide them, but Ruskin's efforts were directed towards the working class, as well as the middle class, and fused moral instruction with practical measures to improve the conditions in which people lived.

Ruskin had earlier taken this idea of working towards a golden age further in Letter XX, 'Rose-Gardens' (dated April 12, 1867), of *Time and Tide by Weare and Tyne* (1867) which advocates the control even of marriage by 'wholesome law'. Such law includes the notion of marriage as a reward for good character, with the right to marry being earned by women between the ages of seventeen and twenty-one years, and by men between the ages of twenty-one and twenty-four years. Permission to marry would be publicly granted at biannual festivals reminiscent of the Venetian celebration held until c.943AD which Ruskin describes in *The Stones of Venice*³⁶, and a fixed income could be claimed from the State for the first seven years of marriage, if necessary. The income of wealthy couples would be limited according to their rank for the same period, after which the State would return to them the wealth it had held in trust³⁷.

Clearly the Guild of St George can be regarded as an attempt to 'call back yesterday' and create a pre-industrial, agrarian society, and to that extent is seen as an historical or revivalist movement, in the same sense that Pugin's architecture is revivalist (see p.131, above). However, the emphasis which Ruskin placed on education within his scheme for society has nothing to do with the Middle Ages and everything to do with the nineteenth-century expansion of knowledge and the need to order and control it. And it is this fusion between the two periods which bears strong affinities with the work of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood (discussed Chapter 1, pp.44-46, above), and which makes the Guild of St George a form of fantasy, rather than an historical recreation.

That this was consciously so is borne out by Ruskin himself, who acknowledged that the ideas expressed in 'Rose-Gardens' must inevitably bear 'an aspect of romance and unrealisable vision'³⁸ to his readers, although he would not attempt to persuade them otherwise or to justify his stance. Likewise, while it is obvious that the Royal Mint would

not abrogate its exclusive right to strike coins, no matter how tasteful the design (derived from Florentine ducats) of the proposed replacement, Ruskin's care in creating the design despite this knowledge reinforces the idea that he was consciously blending reality and fantasy in his discussion of the problems, as he saw them, of the nineteenth century. It can perhaps be seen as a form of constructive play in which fantasy is allowed to open up possibilities which the mind recognises as unrealizable, but stimulating nevertheless; an elaborate game of 'what if?'

As Ruskin's editors, ET Cook and Alexander Wedderburn, acknowledged, the 'story of St George's Guild is, in part, a study in Utopia, and, in part, a study of things actually done'³⁹; it is also a story which ended in a full stop and had no continuing influence on society. Considered on its own, therefore, it appears to be one of the wilder schemes of an impractical idealist. If, however, it is set within the context of Ruskin's writings on art and, more especially, on architecture it can be seen as a logical development or counterpart to his belief that to improve society one must improve the buildings in which people eat, sleep and worship.

Although Ruskin lent such weighty support to the cause of Gothic Revival architecture, the buildings he was actively involved with, such as the Oxford Museum (Thomas Deane and Benjamin Woodward; 1855) cannot be regarded as fantasies. Like Pugin, however, Ruskin's influence on and stimulation of the Gothic Revival created an ambience in which this architectural style was accepted and became popular, and which was transformed by some architects into a form of fantasy.

One of the most interesting exponents of this type of architectural transformation which radically modifies its basic source material of medieval designs into something new, is George Gilbert Scott, who was a disciple of Pugin and one of the most prolific architects of the period. Most of his work is competent and slick, if unexciting Gothic Revival building (often dismissed - not always unfairly - as hack work), but his Scottish architecture goes far beyond this and becomes a form of fantasy.

In his discussion of the *University of Glasgow* building [Plate 2.1] which he designed in 1870, Scott argued that he had

adopted a style which I may call my own, having already initiated it at the Albert Institute in Dundee. It is simply a thirteenth or fourteenth century secular style with the addition of certain Scottish features peculiar in that country in the sixteenth century⁴⁰.

These sixteenth century Scottish features were in fact derived from the thirteenth or fourteenth century French style. And in addition to this mixture a strong Flemish element has been noted⁴¹, while James Stevens Curl points to an Italian influence, as well as to the German Gothic flavour contributed by the open spire added by John Oldrid Scott in 1887⁴².

The result of this eclecticism is a powerful essay of the imagination, in which an admixture of styles is fused with purely modern features, such as the open use of iron interiorly [Plate 2.2], often in conjunction with the decorative use of more traditional building materials such as marble [Plate 2.3], or the siting of ventilation shafts within the open spire⁴³, to produce something essentially new. Gilbert Scott succeeded in creating a building which was suitable for a large and thriving university with strong scientific and technical interests, but which looked back to its medieval origins (founded in 1451).

In this way the university's status as a well-established seat of learning - the second oldest in Scotland - is emphasised, but at the same time the building's suitability for the study of modern subjects not previously part of a university curriculum, such as engineering, is stressed. (Glasgow University was the first university in the UK to establish a School of Engineering, with the Regius Chair of Civil Engineering and Mechanics being established in 1840, and the world's first Chair of Naval Architecture in 1883. These developments are in part a consequence of the shipbuilding industry on the River Clyde which runs through the heart of Glasgow. However, if David Daiches is correct in dating the rapid growth in the shipyards to 1841 in his history of the city, *Glasgow*⁴⁴, the establishment of engineering in the university curriculum is likely also to have been a further stimulus to that industry.)

The crow-stepped gables and steeply pitched roofs of the Gilbert Scott building are traditional Scottish features which have been exaggerated for effect. The pitch of the roof, for example, when seen in conjunction with the many turrets and bartizans creates a 'witch's hat' effect worthy of any Bavarian castle. Likewise, the dormer windows and high

chimneys continue the vertical emphasis and create a powerful effect of elements stacked up behind one another when viewed from a distance [Plate 2.4].

The Albert Institute in Dundee [Plate 2.5], where this style was established, was begun in 1864 and although the eclecticism is perhaps less dramatic (mainly because the site does not permit a full view of the building) it is equally fanciful. Perhaps even more so, for the Gothic western flank of the building has a Renaissance-plan horseshoe staircase abutting it. Although not part of Gilbert Scott's original conception, its presence on a bit of paper undoubtedly in the architect's own hand pasted onto the original plans now held by Dundee City Archives, suggests that it was added very early on, and probably before building started.

This improbable fusion of styles suggests that Gilbert Scott was creating a world which he knew had never existed (and in this he goes far beyond his teacher Pugin's historicism), but which he found suitable for nineteenth-century needs and nineteenth-century taste. The aim of the Albert Institute Company set up to fund a memorial was to 'commemorate the life of the Prince by establishing an Institute dedicated to science, literature and the arts and crafts which he had spent his life promoting'⁴⁵ and Scott's building, incorporating a great hall to be used for public meetings, concerts and lectures and a library, undoubtedly accomplishes this. Furthermore, the sheer scale of the memorial - the largest apart from the Royal Albert Hall in London - enhanced Dundee's status as a wealth-producing city at a time when that status had been undermined by its temporary bankruptcy. And, finally, the building was also a conspicuous display of the wealth and self-confidence of the members of the Albert Institute Company, most of whom were owners of the city's numerous jute mills.

At the same time as Scott designed Dundee's Albert Institute he was also working on the National Albert Memorial in London. Scott himself was very aware of the role of fantasy in this work, for the ciborium was based upon designs of actual ancient shrines, which were themselves derived from designs of imaginary buildings 'such as had never in reality been erected'⁴⁶. Here the ultimate source of Scott's work were entirely imaginary buildings which had never been built. Scott explained that his Albert Memorial was

the realization in an actual edifice, of the architectural designs furnished by the metal-work shrines of the middle ages. Those exquisite productions of the goldsmith and the jeweller profess in nearly every instance to be models of architectural structures, yet no such structures exist, nor, as far as we know, ever did exist. Like the charming architectural visions of the older poets, they are only in their primary idea founded upon actual architecture...They are elaborated by the mind and the hand of the jeweller; an exquisite phantasy realized only to the small scale of the model⁴⁷.

This shows the extent to which Scott was aware he was creating a fantasy world which had never before existed; but it was this world that he found suited to present needs. The richness of the National Albert Memorial reflected the respect which the Prince Consort had eventually commanded, was an index of his worth in the eyes of the nation and enhanced Gilbert Scott's reputation as one of the foremost architects of his generation.

Other examples of architectural fantasy derived from medieval styles can be cited - Morgan Academy (1863-66), Dundee, by Peddie and Kinnear, overshadowed by David Bryce's Fettes College (1862), Edinburgh or R. Rowand Anderson's Venetian Gothic Scottish National Portrait Gallery (1890) which stands in almost ludicrous contrast to the Edinburgh Georgian townhouses nearby - but most Gothic revival architecture is less spectacular, and builds upon, rather than transforms, its original models.

Like the other art forms considered, however, architectural fantasy uses its source as a way of adapting to, or commenting upon, modern society. Clear links can be traced between, for example, the Pre-Raphaelite desire for moral improvement, William Morris's hope for a better world brought into being by medieval-based art, as well as the adaptation of the chivalric code to the nineteenth century and Gilbert Scott's architecture, influenced as it is by Pugin's Catholic aesthetics. In each case, however, the original source has not simply been reproduced, but transformed in the process of being used by the artist's 'structure of consciousness'.

There have, however, been clear changes in the values Gothic architecture proclaimed. Gothic architecture as it is found in the Gothic fiction of the late eighteenth century

provided access to some aspects of life, such as emotion or sex, which are not subject to the control of reason, and supported a strong anti-Catholic bias. Gothic Revival architecture, by contrast, had been cleansed of all taint of Catholicism, and while it carried the imagined ideal of the medieval past forward into the present, suggesting the virtues of medieval life could be accessed in the nineteenth century, it did not carry the brooding presence of the past forward, in the way that architecture in Gothic fiction did, and did not therefore suggest the passing of time, or its destructive effects. Rather, these were modern buildings suited to modern needs, but based on medieval principles and exhibiting Gothic characteristics.

These characteristics included

an upward soaring, an apparent inversion of gravitation into a striving towards heaven, and a vivacious wakefulness in every feature. Constructively, instead of the mere support of dead weight, its principle is the systematic balancing of an infinity of diagonal pressures; yet this, though a constructive fact, is not an artistic characteristic, for in its more spiritual effects, weight and thrust seem to be annihilated, and converted into upward striving, so that the archivolt, the flying buttress, and the ribs of the vaulted roofs, seem rather the medium of upward than of downward pressure⁴⁸.

In this the Gothic Revival architecture satisfied that human 'desire for all that is great and for all that is more divine than ourselves'⁴⁹, as Longinus suggested, just as Gothic architecture in Gothic fiction attempted to satisfy that same desire.

This is not to argue that the Victorian period was overwhelmingly Gothic, however, for this was counterbalanced by the classical impulse revealed in architecture which is the subject of the next section of this chapter.

IV

As we have seen, Gothic architecture embodies the principle of the 'systematic balancing of an infinity of diagonal pressures', to borrow Gilbert Scott's words once more, which generates dynamism, and it has an inherent tendency towards excess or extravagance which lends itself to an elaboration into fantasy.

With Classicism, however, the situation is entirely different, for the Classical style, derived from Greek buildings, is based on a 'post and lintel' system of construction which results in buildings of great visual stability and carries connotations of order, balance, reason and harmony. It is this which made it the preferred architectural style of the eighteenth century, despite the influence of the theory of the Picturesque. However, the actual examples of Classical architecture which had survived into the eighteenth or nineteenth centuries were temples, and this created an association between Classicism and paganism which rendered the style inappropriate for church buildings in the eyes of some architects, at least.

In addition to this construction principle, Eugenio Battisti⁴⁹ identifies three further characteristic features, and suggests that the first of these is an 'intense theoretical activity as a result of which the movement has always appeared eminently rational'. This theoretical activity was based on the treatise of Vitruvius rediscovered in 1414 and included the writings of Palladio (*Le antichita di Roma*, 1554; *Quattro libri dell' architettura*, 1570), Colen Campbell (*Vitruvius Britannicus*, 1715-25) and Winckelmann (*Gedanken über die Nachahmung der griechischen Werke in der Malerei und Bildhauerkunst* 1755, translated by the artist, Henry Fuseli as *Reflections on the Paintings and Sculpture of the Greeks* in 1765; *Geschichte der Kunst des Altertums*, 1764 [*History of the Art of Antiquity*]).

Secondly, Classicism is always connected with politics, religion and ethics, and with the notion of the ideal republic. Thus the purely visual cannot exhaust the significance of Classicism, which claims to express 'eternal and transcendent values', while its beauty is a beauty of order, coherence, symmetry and proportion, not of ornament, which tended to be viewed with suspicion. And this of course stands in stark contrast to the high place held by ornament in Gothic architecture and especially in that form of Gothic favoured by Ruskin,

who in fact equated architecture with ornament, arguing in *The Seven Lamps of Architecture* that the term 'architecture' should be confined to 'that art which, taking up and admitting, as conditions of its working, the necessities and common uses of the building, impresses on its form certain characters venerable or beautiful, but otherwise unnecessary'⁵⁰.

The rejection of ornament is made specific in one of the most important Neo-Classical documents of the period, Sir Robert Smirke's unpublished treatise on the theory and practice of architecture, which was widely circulated in manuscript. He stresses the simplicity and functionalism of Greek architecture, and argues that

as the moral character is corrupted by luxury, so is art vitiated by the exuberance of its ornaments...An excess of ornament is...the symptom of a vulgar and degenerate taste. Exterior architecture is a grave exhibition of talent and being always in the public eye, it cannot condescend to trifle. When art chooses to frolic in masonry, the effect is not only unnatural but indecorous⁵¹.

This not only invokes the idea of decorum, vital in the use of the Classical orders of architecture, but anticipates the various programmes of regeneration through a purified art, such as those advocated by Ruskin, the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood and William Morris, which have already been considered. There is also a clear parallel with Ruskin's description of the corruption of Gothic which begun with the voluntary surrender of its integrity and was completed by the 'foul torrent of the Renaissance' (quoted pp.132-4, above).

The third, and possibly the most straightforward, feature identified by Battisti as characteristic of Classicism is its traditionalism. More than most architectural styles, Classicism depends upon authority and precedent, and functions by rules and proportions, which can become a straitjacket or a scaffolding, depending upon the talent and temperament of the architect concerned.

These characteristics usually result in works of art derived from rational principles expressed in strict symmetry and true proportion. Such works carry connotations of social order and invoke the authority of tradition, making full use of artistic precedents. All this suggests that Classicism is inimical to the creation of fantasy, which in many of its forms has a pronounced tendency to question, if not disturb, established order, and a formal

reliance upon disproportion and novelty. However, two Victorian architects succeeded in breaking through this barrier and used Classicism to generate architectural fantasies of great power, if not always of great beauty; they are Alexander Thomson and Cuthbert Brodrick.

Thomson, who worked exclusively in and around Glasgow, is reckoned to be the most thoroughgoing and original Classicist of the period, with his style earning him the sobriquet 'Greek' Thomson. In his small-scale domestic architecture the Greek influence is relatively pure, but adapted to its new domestic function and modified into a visual sympathy with the surrounding Scottish townscape.

Moray Place (Glasgow; 1859) [Plate 2.6], for instance, consists of two projecting pavilions with a giant order of square pilasters running up to the shallow pediments, which strongly suggest Greek temples. These end pavilions are linked by a long terrace in which the upper floor forms a clerestory, with the closely-set windows being separated by square pilasters [Plate 2.7]. The restrained geometric decorative features are confined mainly to the upper storey, harmonising this building with the Scottish vernacular architectural tradition in which ornament is relegated to the upper reaches of the structure. Thomson, in other words, has adapted the basic temple form to a new site and a new function.

With his church architecture all such restraint is cast aside and an imaginative wilfulness is the hallmark of these buildings, which surely can be regarded as essays in fantasy in their manipulation of form to create something essentially new. It is significant that Thomson was working in Scotland, where the equation between Gothic architecture and Christian principles which had dictated ecclesiastical style for the established church in England, had never been accepted. Indeed, historically the impulse has always been to differentiate sharply between the established church in England, headed by the monarch and governed by bishops, and the non-conformist churches in Scotland, organised on Presbyterian principles⁵². Translated into architectural terms, this suggests a preference for a non-Gothic style to maintain the distinction, with Neo-Classicism being the obvious choice as the perceived antithesis of Gothic.

Thomson had one further reason for choosing a Classical style, for he was a deeply religious man, an elder of the United Presbyterian Church, and according to James Fleming he believed that the 'classic style which was in use for all sacred structures when Paul

preached was that best fitted for a Presbyterian place of worship'⁵³. As far as Thomson was concerned, this was the period in which Christianity was at its purest, and therefore its architectural style was the best style to use to carry overtones of that original purity. As a justification, this is remarkably similar in form to Pugin's belief that the Gothic was the true Christian architectural style because it was developed in an era when Christianity itself was purer.

However, where Pugin chose to recreate the forms of a previous age, Thomson cast his architectural precedents into new forms which were both eccentric and effective. The site for his first church, the Caledonia Road United Presbyterian Church (1856-57) [Plate 2.8], is a relatively small guschet site between two main roads, making it impossible to utilise the whole site and create a standard Classical building. Thomson's solution was a radical one, for he raised the Greek temple form to first floor level, using the ground floor, pierced by Vitruvian doorways and small blank windows, to create a solid base. The main body of the church lies behind the temple portico and originally created visual links with the tenements behind, which were also designed by Thomson [Plate 2.9]⁵⁴.

Although square towers are not uncommon in Scottish church architecture they are usually quite squat affairs, with a four-legged 'tabletop'. Thomson, in contrast to this, used a far smaller base to create a tall, almost detached tower reminiscent of an Italian *campanile* which articulates the junction of the church and church hall. The church hall itself follows the line of the road, so its walls are not parallel: rather, a wedge-shaped space is created which focuses attention to the front of the hall. The cyclopean stonework on the ground floor, and the horizontally-banded pseudo-isodomic stone in the upper reaches of the building create textured surfaces on otherwise blank walls which play off against the strong massing of shapes very effectively.

The point to note is that this unorthodox design is fundamentally asymmetrical, and is therefore organised on principles closer to those of the Picturesque (described in the *Penguin Dictionary of Architecture* [ed. John Fleming, Hugh Honour and Nikolaus Pevsner] 3rd edition, 1980, as 'interesting asymmetrical dispositions of forms and variety of texture) than the Classical. It is Picturesque, too, in the concern to integrate the structure with the surrounding landscape so that they are mutually complementary. This suggests that although

Thomson used a Classical vocabulary the extent of his Classicism is open to question; or at least his modifications to it must be taken into account in a consideration of his personal brand of Classicism. And going further, this calls into question the commonly perceived binary opposition between Classicism and Romanticism - a point developed fully by J Mordaunt Crook in his essay, 'The Arcadian Vision: Neo-Classicism and the Picturesque'⁵⁵. In this essay Crook specifically argues that the 'rediscovery of Greece in the late eighteenth century...was fundamentally a romantic - even a Byronic- gesture'⁵⁶.

According to Crook, the Picturesque judges architectural *composition* on grounds of its pictorial impact, while *style* is measured in terms of association: architecture is 'embodied memory'⁵⁷. And the memory embodied by Thomson's building is the memory of the dawn of Christianity when it was at its most vigorous, just as Pugin's architecture embodied the memory of the Middle Ages when Christianity (in the Roman Catholic view anyway, which he shared) had reached full maturity, but before the 'corruption' that culminated in the Reformation.

Crook's discussion is confined to the Arcadian vision, which he identifies as a fusion of Neo-Classical architecture and Picturesque setting. Thomson used Egyptian and Babylonian features as well as Greek, and his setting was not, of course, Picturesque, but a Scottish townscape noted more for its lowering skies and driving rain than the golden light of Arcadia. Nevertheless, it is worth asking if Thomson was offering an urban (and nineteenth-century) version of Arcadia in which Arcadian harmony is evoked and extolled. If so, he is using Classical architecture to suggest an ideal society characterised by peace and harmony in a way similar to that in which Gothic architecture and the cult of chivalry were used to offer an ordered and therefore harmonious vision of society.

But to return to the building itself. It is possible to read this work in symbolic terms, with the temple portico symbolising a doorway to heaven, the cyclopean stonework suggesting the ancient but rock-like foundation of Christianity and the clerestory allowing the entrance of light from above, symbolic of the spiritual light of heaven. Although clerestories are not entirely unknown in Classical buildings, they are so unusual that the common perception would be that Thomson had taken a feature of particular importance in Gothic architecture and simply incorporated it into a Classical design. Other borrowings can

be traced, and in each case they have been fused with a fundamentally Greek form to create a dramatic but functional building. And in adopting this practice, Thomson radically altered, rather than merely elaborated upon, his historical source, exemplifying his belief that

if ever success is to be attained, we must look at all that has been accomplished in art, and all that we see in nature, as so much raw material. We must throw our knowledge into the crucible to be transmuted by thought into new forms. Even the best of old or existing forms are unfit for use until they are thus born again into a new life⁵⁸.

An historicism that was content merely to recreate a previous age was not sufficient; the artist's 'structure of consciousness' was required to transform that into something new, something related to the past but different from it.

Having established this personal idiom, Thomson developed it further in the St Vincent Street United Presbyterian Church (1859) [Plate 2.10], the only one of his great churches to have survived the passage of time. First impressions emphasise the very strong links with the Caledonia Road church: the powerful grouping of masses on Picturesque principles, the tall tower almost detached from the main building which is used to articulate a junction, and the basic Greek temple form. Thomson's efficient and creative use of a difficult site could also be noted, although in this case it is a regularly shaped site on a very steep slope in a built-up area.

Closer scrutiny, however, reveals some new developments. As in the Caledonia Road church, for instance, the temple form has been raised to the first floor level, but in the St Vincent Street church it has developed beyond a simple portico and now houses the gallery. In fact, the gallery actually protrudes beyond the temple on either side, creating space between it and the tower, which is again visually distinct from the main building but physically attached to it.

The main body of the church is set deep within the podium, which is pierced by a range of small windows, creating a frieze-like effect. This horizontal emphasis, strengthened by the use of pseudo-isodomic masonry, is an efficient counterbalance to the overall vertical thrust of the building which on such a steeply sloped site threatens to overwhelm the

viewer. And, again, this can be seen as a development of a feature first tried out in the Caledonia Road church.

Internally developments abound too, but Thomson's use of cast iron should be singled out for consideration. Here he has exploited the qualities of cast iron to create slender columns which emerge from the lower church hall, soar through the church and gallery to the full height of the building to bear the massive stone clerestory and timber roof above. Structurally the advantage is that of strength without bulk, offering the visual advantages of unimpeded space and unobstructed sight lines.

There is in this an obvious comparison with Gilbert Scott's work at the University of Glasgow: both architects fused an historically-derived style with that most modern of materials, cast iron, to create something which was fitted for modern needs and conditions of use, and which went far beyond mere imitation of the model, or even pastiche.

The most obvious change in style from the Caledonia Road church is, however, Thomson's increased range of architectural borrowings, especially in the dramatic tower. Clearly, the Grecian influence has marked the overall structure, but it can also be detected in many details: in the strange caryatid heads facing each other in the tower's T-shaped window, for instance. The *campanile* form of the tower itself suggests an Italian influence, while the more extensive use of pylons bespeaks an Egyptian input. Like the Grecian element in Thomson's architecture this carries a larger religious significance, since he believed that Egyptian religious beliefs, such as the immortality of the soul, pre-figured Christianity⁵⁹. (Christianity's most immediate forebear, Judaism, based on the Torah, is silent on the afterlife.) Thus the Egyptian elements were in effect sanctified and deemed suitable for use in a Christian building.

Perhaps there is here a parallel with George MacDonald's fascination with death which he saw as another, and more intense part of life. And as I suggested in the Introduction (p.4), since the afterlife is not susceptible to mimesis, MacDonald required fantasy to probe its recesses. In a similar way, perhaps, Greek Thomson required Egyptian architectural features to bring to viewers' minds the Egyptian emphasis on the afterlife and their expression of this in every art form, but especially in architecture. By fusing these elements with Grecian architectural features for use in a Presbyterian church Thomson can convey

the importance of the afterlife, giving it a specifically Christian form, and simultaneously evoke the ideas of harmony and stability suggested by the Greek post and lintel principle of construction.

Thomson's eclecticism, seen at its most extreme in the St Vincent Street Church, is neither aesthetic nor arbitrary. Rather it reflects his concept of the progressive nature of divine revelation throughout history, in which pre-Christian civilisations, such as those of ancient Greece and Egypt, adumbrate beliefs which find their fullest expression only in Christian doctrine. It is a widening of the typological reading of the Bible in which Old Testament characters, situations and events were held to pre-figure and express in part what New Testament events and, especially, the person of Jesus of Nazareth would express fully. This concept not only cleanses or sanctifies a pre-Christian architectural style for Christian use, as already noted, but reveals something of Thomson's belief that 'religion has been the soul of art from the beginning'⁶⁰.

The final, and most dramatic, of Thomson's three great churches is Queen's Park United Presbyterian Church of 1867⁶¹ [Plate 2.11]. Common links with the first two churches can, of course, be found: a frieze of windows in the lower part of the building to create an horizontal emphasis, for instance, can be related to Thomson's use of that device in the St Vincent Street church. His efficient use of an awkwardly shaped plot of land could be compared with the Caledonia Road church, where the shape of the site governed the form of the building, creating a wedge-shaped church hall. However, by incorporating a courtyard into the design for Queen's Park church Thomson himself created the odd shape which influenced the shape the church hall assumed.

The differences between this church and what had gone before are, however, more significant than the undoubted similarities. The Greek temple form still exists, but has been compressed into a shallow pediment adorning four squat columns. This in turn is supported by a blank-walled podium, flanked on either side by Vitruvian windows. A large pylon-shaped entrance is cut into the podium and thereby cuts into the ground floor frieze of windows. And to complete the effect a squat, tapering drum-like tower crowns the whole building.

Queen's Park church is a building composed in layers, an effect which is sharpened by the long single-storey wing which conceals the courtyard and church hall. Initially, the building appears oddly unbalanced, but a more careful study reveals that it is organised on a strictly symmetrical basis, and it is the addition of this wing which creates the asymmetrical effect. For the first time Thomson had rejected the Picturesque as an organisational principle and turned instead to a more orthodox Classicism. The end result is, however, the most unorthodox and fantastic of all Greek Thomson's churches, which transforms more completely than any other the 'raw material' of Classical building designs.

It is another good example of Thomson's ability to take the vocabulary of Classicism and use it as the 'raw material' from which an architectural fantasy is constructed, but as in his other work the fantasy is tailored to its function as a place of worship.

Not all of Thomson's influences were architectural, however; pictorial art also had a role to play in the creation of his fantasies in stone, and in particular he was influenced by John Martin, a painter of historical and biblical scenes incorporating architectural settings.

Although Martin was a poor colourist, and his painting was often technically inadequate, it translated well into mezzotints and engravings, and in this form his work was widely disseminated and became extremely popular. Additionally, some of his originally independent works were used as adjuncts to texts, and he did some book illustration proper, which again pushed his work out to a wider audience. In this latter category, his illustrations to the Bible, published by the Glasgow firm, Blackie, in 1861 are particularly important as one likely source of Thomson's knowledge of Martin's style.

Martin's speciality was sublimity, involving vast spaces which dwarfed the human protagonists of the scene, and dramatic lighting effects (often made more dramatic in the transition from painting to mezzotint). As James Macauley suggests in "'Greek" Thomson's Literary and Pictorial Sources', it was from these prints that Thomson 'gleaned an appreciation of gigantic scale, of elements heaped one upon the other on podia, of colonnades of limitless extent, of ornate capitals and of towers looming in the background'⁶², all features of his architectural style, and all reminiscent, too, of the eighteenth-century theory of the sublime, as set out by Edmund Burke in *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Sublime and the Beautiful* (1757).

Burke, for example, suggested that greatness was one source of the sublime, and where Martin could achieve this by manipulation of scale [Plate 2.12], Thomson used architectural bulk, especially noticeable in the St Vincent Street Church when viewed from the south, for the same effect. Succession and uniformity of parts was another source of the sublime in the Burkean theory, and this appears as the principle of repetition, suggesting eternity, in the work of both Martin and Thomson. Finally, Burke's suggestion that light and its absence was important in the creation of the sublime reappears as the dramatic lighting effects favoured by Martin, and in Thomson's manipulation of light, especially in the St Vincent's Street and Queen's Park churches.

It matters little whether the emphasis on the sublime comes directly from Burke, or mediated through Martin (or even both operating together). What is of greater interest is that Thomson has taken these elements of 'raw material' and reworked them to create fantasy architecture of compelling power belonging to a world that Thomson knew had never existed, and that these buildings embody in stone his belief that religion is at the heart of every artistic endeavour.

Clearly Thomson's use of architectural bulk, repetition of elements and dramatic lighting effects can be seen as an expression of what Longinus regarded as man's 'unconquerable passion for all that is great and for all that is more divine than ourselves', rather as Gothic architecture expressed the same longing by vast and flowing spaces and dramatic lighting. Both Gothic principles as used by Gilbert Scott and Classical principles as used by Greek Thomson were attempts to 'go beyond the boundaries by which we are circumscribed', as Longinus puts it (quoted Introduction p.2).

There is, too, an obvious parallel with Burne-Jones' use of art to express the inexpressible, or to give form to the ineffable which he regarded as one form of 'sighing after the Infinite' as described by Schlegel which I have discussed in Chapter 1 (p.61). All three artists - Burne-Jones, Gilbert Scott and Greek Thomson - were attempting to go beyond what can be seen in this life and express that which can never be attained, but only desired.

The second architect to break through the natural barrier between Classicism and fantasy is the Yorkshire architect, Cuthbert Brodrick. Unlike the steady development of

ideas traced through Thomson's ecclesiastical works, Brodrick arguably suffered from an *idée fixe* which was given its only successful form in Leeds Town Hall (1853-1858) [Plate 2.13]. Opinion is polarised by this building, with the twentieth-century architectural authority Nikolaus Pevsner arguing that it is a town hall of which Leeds can justly be proud since it is 'one of the most convincing Classical buildings of its date in the country, and of the Classical buildings of its date no doubt the most successful'⁶³. John Ruskin, however, referred to it as an 'abortion' and 'wished to crucify the snobs or charlatans of architecture' responsible for it⁶⁴. To see the building is to see his point, and granted Ruskin's love of Gothic his attitude is unsurprising, though his language is rather extreme.

The whole facade of this almost square building comprises giant Corinthian columns and pilasters, set on top of a heavily rusticated base, which is broached by a wide staircase to the front. This leads to the central portico of ten giant Corinthian columns, on either side of which are end pavilions between coupled pilasters. There are no pediments on this building, but a heavy attic defines its upper edge. Set above this pompous and ornate town hall is a tower, which has been aptly described as 'megalomaniac', it being 225 feet high with a detached square colonnade of six columns per side and an elongated domical top with concave sides.

Leeds Town Hall is derived from Roman, rather than Grecian precedent, to which a large dose of French Classicism has been added. The overall effect is one of grotesque exaggeration which seems to justify Smirke's warning against frolics in masonry. The tower in particular is disproportionate to the rest of the structure, and takes it away from imitation of its architectural forbears towards the fantastic, particularly in its disruption of scale.

The fantasy inherent in Brodrick's work was later recognised by *The Builder* in its disparaging comments on his competition design for Manchester Town Hall. For this Brodrick adopted a Franco-Italian Gothic style which he grafted onto the basic schema of a square building with corner pavilions and a massive tower which he had used for Leeds Town Hall. It was essentially a Classical body in a Gothic overcoat and *The Builder* sneered that he had 'raised a palace for the fairies'⁶⁵. Brodrick was not even placed in the competition, and the commission went to Alfred Waterhouse with his Gothic design.

So where Greek Thomson organised his Classical vocabulary on Picturesque principles, Brodrick used Classical compositional principles, but so exaggerated the individual elements that a fairy tale effect was created. And this undermined the capacity to carry ideas of order, harmony and stability - both physical and social - which are characteristic of Classicism and were particularly desirable in the seat of local government.

Both architects, however, used elements of classicism to carry the virtues - religious in Thomson's case; secular in Brodrick's - of a previous, heroic age forward into their own times. This stands comparison to the use of Gothic architecture and the cult of chivalry to access virtues which were seen as quintessentially medieval, and in that superior to the present. One thing that these Classicist and Gothicists have in common is the ability to transform their chosen historical model and make of it something new, which is neither wholly of the past, nor wholly of the present but bridges both.

What is perhaps more interesting and more surprising is the specific virtues the Classicists and the Gothicists chose to emphasise. Both saw their chosen historical period as devout, for example. The Classicists used a temple form, while the Gothicists drew on designs from the Middle Ages, to suggest purity of religious belief and therefore imply purity and virtue in the social order.

Furthermore, both the Classicists and the Gothicists saw their chosen historical periods as periods of great social stability. In Classical architecture this was suggested by the visual and material stability created by the post and lintel system of construction, and it is implied in the very idea of the architectural orders comprising Classical architecture, in which the architectural elements are related to each other by established proportions.

In Gothic Revival architecture, however, social stability was suggested by associating the buildings with an age in which society was organised on a feudal basis in which the lower orders of society were related to the higher orders by established obligations and allegiances, in what can be seen almost as a human counterpart to the architectural orders of Classicism.

Despite the heated architectural debate which continued through much of the century, this shared emphasis lends support to Phoebe B Stanton's view, expressed in 'Architecture, History and the Spirit of the Age', that

the association of virtue, social responsibility, and reforms of society through the arts which had in the eighteenth century been the property of neoclassical architects and writers was, in the nineteenth century, transplanted to the Gothic Revival. Virtue simply changed its costume⁶⁶.

NOTES

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3. Kenneth Clark, *The Gothic Revival. An Essay in the History of Taste* (London: John Murray, 1970), p.9.
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25. Augustus Welby Pugin, *The True Principles of Pointed or Christian Architecture*. (London: Academy Editions, 1973), p.66.
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41. Williamson, Riches and Higgs, *Glasgow*. The Buildings of Scotland Series, ed. Colin McWilliam, (London: Penguin, in association with the National Trust for Scotland, 1990), p.338.
42. James Stevens Curl, *Victorian Architecture* (Newton Abbot: David & Charles, 1990), p.68.
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44. David Daiches, *Glasgow* (London: André Deutsch, 1977), p.193.
45. Tessa Sidey, 'Simple, Bold and Effective': *An Architectural History of the Albert Institute, Dundee* (Dundee: City Of Dundee, 1978), no pagination.
46. Scott, *Recollections*, p.225.
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49. Eugenio Battisti in *The Encyclopaedia of World Art* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1959-1968), pp.675-7.
50. Ruskin, 'The Lamp of Sacrifice', *The Seven Lamps of Architecture*, in *Works*, Vol. VIII, p.28, ¶1.
52. Quoted in J Mordaunt Crook, *The Greek Revival* (Feltham: Country Life Books, 1968), p.27.
53. The principle of establishment was a particular stumbling block. The United Presbyterian Church, by whom Thomson was commissioned, was formed in 1847 by the union of the United Secession Church and the Relief Church; they rejected the notion of an established church completely. The issue had also been central to the 'Disruption' of 1843 which split the Church of Scotland with one group, led by Thomas Chalmers seceding on the establishment principle. This group, which accepted establishment, became the Free Church. By the end of the nineteenth century, however, the United Presbyterian Church had come round to accepting establishment and so joined with the Free Church to form the

United Free Church. See JD Mackie, *A History of Scotland*, 2nd edition, (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1978), pp.302n; 331-2; 361.

54. James Fleming, *Historical Sketch of the St Vincent Street United Free Congregation, Glasgow*. (Glasgow, 1916), p.17.

55. These tenements at 190-192 Hospital Street were designed by Thomson in 1857 and demolished in 1973. Caledonia Road Church was destroyed by fire in 1965 but the shell of the building and the tower are still standing. So much demolition has taken place in this area of Glasow that it is impossible to appreciate fully Thomson's use of a very difficult site, or the radical nature of many of his solutions to the problems involved.

56. J Mordaunt Crook, 'The Arcadian Vision: Neo-Classicism and the Picturesque', in GW Clarke (Ed), *Rediscovering Hellenism: The Hellenic Inheritance and the English Imagination* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), pp. 43-59.

57. Ibid., p.44.

29. Ibid., p.45.

58. Alexander Thomson, 'A Fight Against Gothic: Mr Scott's Designs for the Glasgow University Buildings', *The Builder*, XXIV (1866), 368-371.

59. Sam M'Kinstry, 'Rowand Anderson and "Greek" Thomson: Scottishness and the Glasgow/Edinburgh Divide', *Architectural Heritage: The Journal of the Architectural Heritage Society of Scotland* ed. Rebecca Bailey, IX, (Edinburgh University Press, 1998).

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61. Destroyed in an air raid in May, 1942.

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63. Nikolaus Pevsner, *Yorkshire and West Riding*, The Buildings of England Series, (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1959), p.314.

64. John Holmes, 'John Ruskin, A Reminiscence', *Sheffield and Rotherham Independent Weekly Supplement*, April 24 1886. Quoted in *Works*, Vol XXXIV, p.725.

65. Quoted in Derek Linstrum, 'Cuthbert Brodrick: An Interpretation of a Victorian Architect', *Journal of the Royal Society of Arts*, CXIX, Jan 1971, 72-88.
66. Phoebe B Stanton, 'Architecture, History and the Spirit of the Age' in Josef L Altholz (Ed), *The Mind and Art of Victorian England* (Minneapolis: University of Minneapolis Press, 1976), p.149.



Pl. 2.1 George Gilbert Scott, *University of Glasgow*, south front, 1870.



Pl. 2.2 George Gilbert Scott, *University of Glasgow*, Hunterian Museum, detail of ironwork.



Pl. 2.3 George Gilbert Scott, *University of Glasgow*, staircase to Bute Hall and Hunterian Museum: detail of iron and marble, 1870.



Pl. 2.4 George Gilbert Scott, *University of Glasgow*, 1870. Distant view from the east.



Pl. 2.5 George Gilbert Scott, *Albert Institute* (now the *McManus Gallery*), Dundee, 1864.



Pl. 2.6 Alexander 'Greek' Thomson, *Moray Place*, Glasgow, end pavilion, 1859.



Pl. 2.7 Alexander 'Greek' Thomson, *Moray Place*, Glasgow, central terrace, 1859.



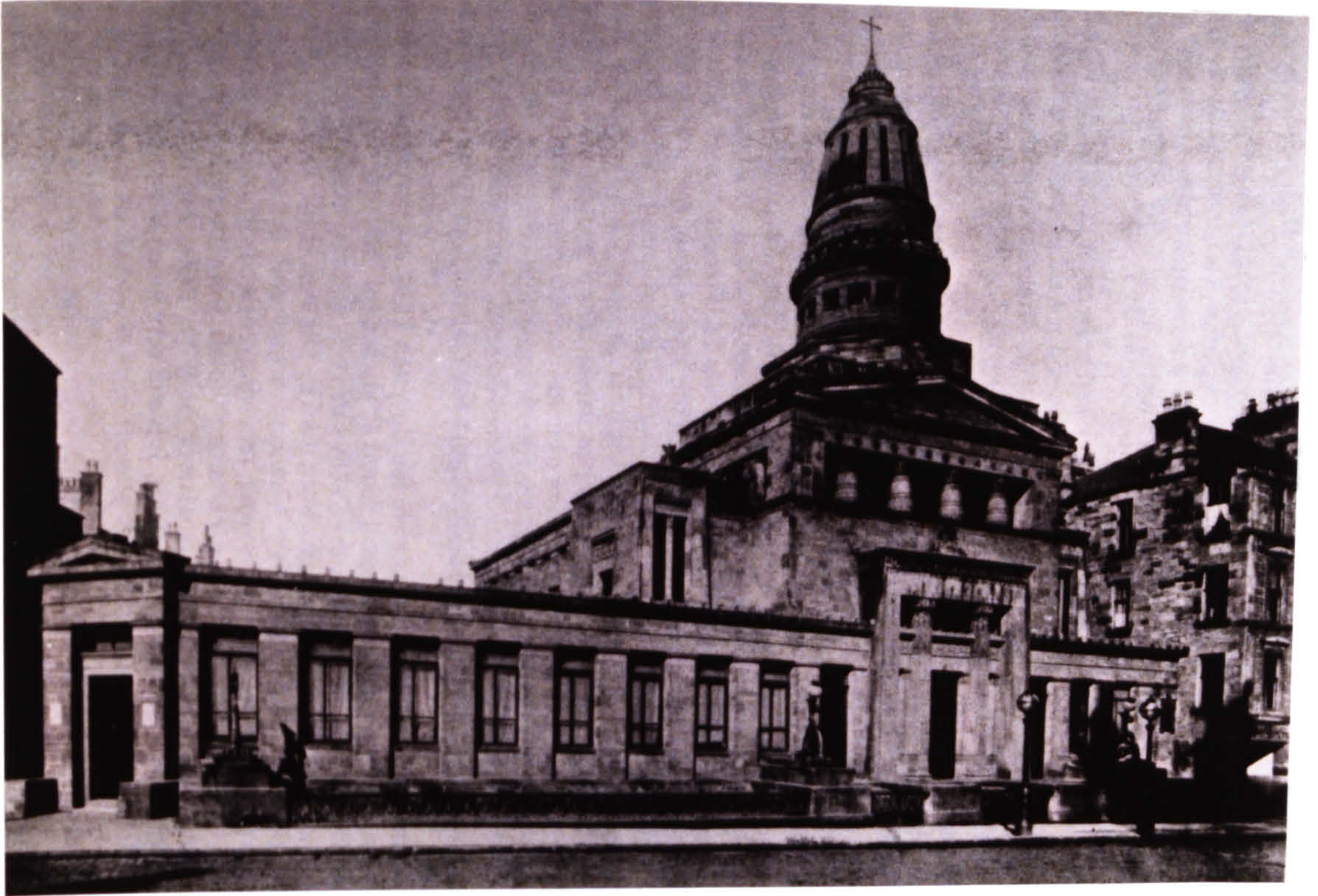
Pl. 2.8 Alexander 'Greek' Thomson, *Caledonia Road United Presbyterian Church*, Glasgow, 1856-7.



Pl. 2.9 Alexander 'Greek' Thomson, *Caledonia Road United Presbyterian Church*, Glasgow, 1856-7. Early twentieth-century photograph showing adjoining tenement.



Pl. 2.10 Alexander 'Greek' Thomson, *St Vincent Street United Presbyterian Church*, Glasgow, 1859.



Pl. 2.11 'Greek' Thomson, *Queen's Park United Presbyterian Church*, Glasgow, 1867.



Pl. 2.12 John Martin, *The Seventh Plague of Egypt*, 1823



Pl. 2.13

Cuthbert Brodrick, *Town Hall*, Leeds, 1853-8.

I

Just as Gothic Revival architecture was not an isolated phenomenon during the nineteenth century, but was part of a larger interest in medievalism, so, too, classical architecture must be set within the context of a more general interest in classicism, which had been stimulated by the historical research and archaeological finds of the eighteenth century.

Most neo-classical architecture, however, like most of its Gothic counterpart, was created by the simple reuse of architectural form without radical alteration. Cuthbert Brodrick and 'Greek' Thomson in the Classical stream and Gilbert Scott in the Gothic idiom were the exceptions, rather than the rule, in that they all rejected a straightforward reworking of their respective traditions in favour of transforming these traditions into fantasy.

It is easy to see why this metamorphosis into architectural fantasy should be rare: architecture is a non-representational art form, and as such would seem to have no point of contact with narrative, either implied or direct. It can carry implied values and covert messages, as I have argued in the preceding chapter, but it has no means of describing an event or succession of events through time, nor can it delineate a moment.

Literature and painting are not so circumscribed, however, and their respective capacities for carrying narrative, describing an incident or expressing emotion facilitate the transformation into fantasy, which was used to explore contemporary issues, such as the place of women in society; to comment on aspects of society, such as the perceived materialism of the nineteenth century; or to ask fundamental questions about, for example, what it means to be human.

Literature not only enjoys the greatest latitude in this regard, but it also has a well-established classical tradition from which authors could draw the raw material they

required to generate fantasy. Within this classical tradition, however, the strand which was of the greatest importance for fantasy writing was mythology.

Interest in the stories about the classical gods is of long standing in English literature, but was heightened by the archaeological finds of the eighteenth century: many Greek vases, for instance, showed scenes from the *Iliad* or the *Odyssey* which involved the gods. These vases proved influential with British artists, such as John Flaxman (1755-1826), who incorporated similar scenes into his designs for Josiah Wedgewood's pottery. In this way, representations of various mythological incidents were made familiar to a far wider audience than had ever seen the Greek vases themselves. Likewise the public display of the relief sculptures from the Parthenon, bought by Thomas Bruce, 7th Earl of Elgin for around £70,000 and sold by him to the British government for £35,000 in 1816, did much to sharpen interest in all things Greek, and helped to disseminate knowledge of Greek mythology more widely.

Anthropologists also contributed to the interest in mythology throughout the nineteenth century, with the crowning achievement in this field being the publication of *The Golden Bough* by Sir James George Frazer. This began life in 1888 as a pair of articles on totemism and taboo for the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, which were expanded into a two-volume edition of *The Golden Bough* in 1890. This was followed by a three-volume edition published in 1900 and expanded into a third and definitive twelve volume edition between 1911 and 1914, with a final 'Aftermath' being added in 1936. As the original plan of *The Golden Bough* was never fundamentally changed from that of the first edition, with even the 'Aftermath' being used to clarify or amplify the main issues of the book, *The Golden Bough* must be seen as a work of Victorian scholarship, despite the twentieth-century publication dates, and Frazer's own survival well into the century.

The significance of the anthropological interest lies in the fact that for the first time *Homo Sapiens* as a species organised in social groups with particular belief systems was being studied on a *scientific* basis, and that this scientific footing held out the promise of objective truth, rather than the allure of subjective impressions or philosophical speculations which had been so important in the previous century.

As Mary Douglas points out in her Introduction to the 1978 one-volume abridgement, *The Illustrated Golden Bough*, Frazer should be 'read and known for a representative nineteenth-century thinker', and as such his mind was much occupied by the distinction between human beings and beasts, for the 'dawn of human thought was a central problem for the thinkers of the nineteenth century'¹ and it was human thought which was believed to mark mankind out from the animals.

Mythology was particularly important in this context, for it is a form of primitive thought which society was deemed to have outgrown in a process of social development bearing striking parallels to Auguste Comte's Positivism and to the social evolution propounded by the followers of Darwin². Mythology, then, was something which distinguished *Homo Sapiens* from other species.

This, however, was merely the starting point for the creative writers and artists of the nineteenth century, who saw that the old myths could be manipulated or reinvented to explore not the thought patterns of primitive peoples as Frazer did, but the thoughts and the nature of nineteenth century human beings. Certainly if we accept the psychoanalyst, Rollo May's belief that myths are ways of 'making sense in a senseless world,...narrative patterns that give significance to our existence'³, then mythology suitably changed to fit modern conditions becomes an analytical tool with which to study contemporary society and, ultimately, to explore the hopes and fears of the individuals who make up society.

This use of mythology seems to be historically and culturally sensitive, with some myths being particularly suited to a given society at a specific point in its development because they articulate that society's current anxieties and fears. In Victorian Britain there were a number of specific myths which were used to articulate society's concerns: the myth of Icarus, for example, could be used to explore the anxieties generated by technology's apparent ability to enable mankind to do whatever they desired, over-riding nature's inherent limitations; or the myth of Pygmalion could be used in an enquiry into the nature of art and its place in society. And in addition to these specific myths which were adapted to modern conditions, a number of figures sharing some of the features of mythology such as their embodiment of types, rather than individuals, or their potential for exploitation in a number

of ways, were developed and used during the Victorian period, though these were not necessarily adaptations of specific myths.

Obviously it would be possible to consider in turn the main mythological figures from the Classical canon and how they were used by the Victorians to explore current concerns. However, it seems more productive to select specific mythological figures which seem to have had particular relevance to Victorian society, and to consider the nature of that relevance and the use to which these figures were put. In this chapter I will, therefore, first consider a number of re-workings of the story of Prometheus, drawing out its particular relevance to the Victorians, and then go on to consider a group of female mythological figures which were used to explore Victorian anxieties about women and their place and function in society. Finally, I will consider the emphasis given by the Victorians to the vampire as a myth which articulated many of their concerns.

II

One myth which lent itself particularly well to this type of reinvention was the story of Prometheus, the Titan who gave knowledge or fire to mankind or, alternatively, who infused mortal people with life by means of lightning, depending upon the version one reads. For this he was chained to a rock on the orders of Zeus, and his liver was ripped out by an eagle each day and reconstituted every night in a punishment which ended only when Hercules released him from his bondage.

This was the basis of Mary Shelley's imaginative reworking of the theme in *Frankenstein; or, The Modern Prometheus* published in 1818. The title itself encapsulates her strategy: she is using the myth of Prometheus, but making it *modern* and adapting it to the needs of society and conditions of life in the early nineteenth century.

While attempts have been made, with some measure of justification and a degree of success, to read *Frankenstein* as a political allegory with specific reference to the French Revolution and the subsequent Reign of Terror, it is as a myth articulating modern fears that

Frankenstein has stalked the imagination of generations of readers and spawned countless retellings, both in word and on film. And it is as a myth that it will be considered here.

The story of the origin of *Frankenstein* is well known: Mary Shelley, her husband Percy Bysshe Shelley, Lord Byron and his doctor, John Polidori, were on holiday together, and prompted by reading a ghost story they decided that they would each write one. *Frankenstein* is the progeny of that decision. However, it is argued in the Preface that more was attempted than 'merely weaving a series of supernatural terrors'. Rather, fantasy allows the 'delineating of human passions more comprehensive and commanding than any which the ordinary relations of existing events can yield' and thus the 'truth of the elementary principles of human nature'⁴ has been rendered more visible. Fantasy is thus used to describe or analyse fundamental human emotions as they are manifested in extreme circumstances, and is therefore at the service of reality, the conditions of actual human life.

The emotion which consistently motivates Victor Frankenstein and marks him out as an over-reacher is ambition. It is this which drives him to attempt the impossible and to succeed where others would fail; it is this which entices him on to know more than his fellow creatures and to do more. Nor was he merely coldly ambitious to be the best for its own sake, for from the age of thirteen years Frankenstein's desire was to 'banish disease from the human frame and render man invulnerable to any but a violent death'⁵.

Indeed, even in his disillusionment, Frankenstein was motivated by ambition, for his discovery that the alchemists whom he had previously venerated were completely ineffective undercut his desire to study their modern counterparts and prompts the reflection that:

It was very different when the masters of science sought immortality and power; such views, though futile, were grand: but now the scene was changed. The ambition of the enquirer seemed to limit itself to the annihilation of those visions on which my interest in science was chiefly founded. I was required to exchange chimeras of boundless grandeur for realities of little worth⁶.

It was accordingly an exchange which Frankenstein was unwilling to make, until he was re-enchanted by the vision of M. Waldman expressed in a panegyric upon modern chemistry which directly addresses and answers Frankenstein's own disillusionments:

The ancient teachers of this science...promised impossibilities and performed nothing. The modern masters promise very little; they know that metals cannot be transmuted, and that the elixir of life is a chimera. But these philosophers, whose hands seem made only to dabble in dirt, and their eyes to pore over the microscope or crucible, have indeed performed miracles. They penetrate into the recesses of nature, and shew how she works in her hiding places. They ascend into the heavens; they have discovered how the blood circulates, and the nature of the air we breathe. They have acquired new and almost unlimited powers; they can command the thunders of heaven, mimic the earthquake and even mock the invisible world with its own shadows⁷.

It is by restoring glory and grandeur to Frankenstein's vision that Waldman reanimates his ambition and sets him on the course which will ultimately prove his undoing.

Frankenstein's ambition is mirrored by that of Robert Walton, to whom he relates this story. Indeed, in the letter to his sister with which *Frankenstein* begins Walton writes:

What may not be expected in a country of eternal light? I may there discover the wondrous power which attracts the needle; and may regulate a thousand celestial observations, that require only this voyage to render their seeming inconsistencies consistent forever. I shall satiate my ardent curiosity with the sight of a part of the world never before visited and may tread a land never before imprinted by the foot of man... But supposing all these conjectures to be false, you cannot contest the inestimable benefit which I shall confer on all mankind to the last generation, by discovering a passage near the pole to those countries to reach which at present so many months are requisite; or by ascertaining the secret of the magnet, which, if at all possible, can only be affected by an undertaking such as mine⁸.

And to emphasise his ambition Walton adds: 'I feel my heart glow with an enthusiasm which elevates me to heaven'.

Ambition, then, is not only a motivating force in the lives of both Frankenstein and Walton, but is used by Mary Shelley to link Frankenstein's story of ambition fulfilled and subsequent torment to the framing narrative of Walton's ambitious expedition which, it is clear, will not be successful: he is forced to turn back and return to England with his quest unfulfilled. This can of course be given a pedagogical reading, in which Walton learns by Frankenstein's errors and thus avoids his own downfall, but this seems to be straining meaning too far, because it is the crew's mutiny, and not Walton's will which is the crucial factor in forcing the return. Furthermore, in Frankenstein's address to the crew he makes it clear that he still regards ambition as an honourable motivating factor which should spur them on to completing the quest on which they willingly embarked, and in this way Shelley undercuts the warning against ambition.

Nevertheless, there is a strongly didactic element in *Frankenstein* which surfaces when Victor Frankenstein advises Walton to

Seek happiness in tranquillity, and avoid ambition, even if it be only the apparently innocent one of distinguishing yourself in science and discoveries⁹.

Frankenstein is in part teaching Walton where happiness lies, but in part he is consoling him when his ambition has been thwarted by the crew. By simultaneously presenting Frankenstein's advice against ambition and his consolation for failed ambition, Mary Shelley qualifies the moral message that an over-reaching ambition is dangerous, and this important qualification is taken further by Frankenstein, for he continues, 'But why do I say this? I myself have been blasted in these hopes, yet another may succeed'¹⁰.

By using fantasy rather than a realist situation for her exploration of ambition and its effects, Mary Shelley increases the stakes: Frankenstein's vision is one of unbounded glory, but the price he pays for his own success is the murder of all his family except his brother Ernest, and his own exile from normal human society, followed by death.

The contrast between Frankenstein's limitless hopes and his ultimate despair is heightened in the second version of *Frankenstein; or, The Modern Prometheus* published in 1831 as part of the Standard Novels series.

It must be acknowledged that the changes introduced by Mary Shelley in 1831 do nothing to improve the literary quality of *Frankenstein*, for they sensationalise the novel by moving it closer to melodrama and make it emotive, rather than convincing. However, these changes consistently emphasise Frankenstein's ambition and the depth of his subsequent despair, making ambition more important, and giving it a larger role than in the original version.

In Letter 4 of the 1831 edition, for example, Frankenstein's ambition is revealed in his comments to Walton:

'Unhappy man! Do you share my madness? Have you drunk also of the intoxicating draught? Hear me; let me reveal my tale, and you will dash the cup from your lips'¹¹.

Ambition, then, is a madness, or the result of an intoxicating draught. But these phrases are part of a direct response to Walton's disquisition to Frankenstein in which he reveals his own ambition, arguing that

One man's life or death were but a small price to pay for the acquirement of knowledge which I sought, for the dominion I should acquire and transmit over the elemental foes of our race¹².

As might be expected, the clearest statement of Frankenstein's ambition comes in the section dealing with the actual discovery of the secret of life:

Life and death appeared to be ideal bounds which I should learn to break through, and pour a torrent of light into our dark world. A new species would bless me as its creator and source; many happy and excellent natures would owe their being to me. No father could claim the gratitude of his child so completely as I should deserve theirs¹³.

This passage reveals not only Frankenstein's ambition but his will to power which is one of the most disturbing features of the novel. For despite his protests of altruism and benevolence, Frankenstein's aim is power and control, with the power over life and death

being his ultimate aim. As this is to arrogate the ultimate in power and infringe the prerogative of the Almighty, the fantastic incident of making and bestowing life upon a new creature allows Mary Shelley to explore clearly and to the fullest extent the effects of overweening ambition and the will to power.

The 1831 version of *Frankenstein*, which was much more widely disseminated than the first edition text, emphasises to a greater extent the overweening ambitions of both Victor Frankenstein and Robert Walton, and this in turn foregrounds the links between them. Not content to leave it at this, however, Mary Shelley makes the parallels more overt by elaborating Frankenstein's bald statement to Walton of the 1818 version, "'You seek for knowledge and wisdom as I once did'"¹⁴ into the observation that "'You are pursuing the same course, exposing yourself to the same dangers which have rendered me what I am'"¹⁵ in the 1831 edition. Indeed, this is made even more explicit later in Frankenstein's narrative when he tells Walton,

I will not lead you on, unguarded and ardent as I then was, to your destruction and infallible misery. Learn from me, if not by my precepts, at least by my example, how dangerous is the acquirement of knowledge and how much happier is the man who believes his native town to be the world, than he who aspires to become greater than his nature will allow¹⁶.

By drawing Walton and Frankenstein closer together in this way, Shelley is creating the first of a series of doubles which emphasise different aspects of Frankenstein's nature. Walton can be seen as his double in ambition, for example, but where Frankenstein fulfils his ambition and is destroyed by it, Walton fails in his but survives the experience.

Frankenstein's experience is contrasted not only to Walton's, but to the classical Promethean myth, in which Prometheus achieves his ambition by creating humans and, in some versions of the story, by teaching them the arts and sciences to raise them above their brutish condition. In this there is an interesting contrast to Shelley's retelling of the myth, in which Frankenstein abandons the creature he made, refusing to teach him or, indeed, to do anything to improve the monster's condition. Frankenstein clearly lacks the loyalty to his creature displayed by Prometheus, and his punishment is greater, for although Prometheus is

punished for helping mankind, he is not destroyed as Frankenstein is, but is eventually released by the hero Hercules and reconciled to Zeus.

Shared ambition also links Frankenstein to his friend Henry Clerval, for they are both ambitious, and the ambitions of both are intended to benefit the human race, Frankenstein by overcoming disease and death, as we have seen (p.167, above), but Clerval in some unspecified way.

Although these two friends are paired together in their shared ambition, they counterbalance each other in the conflict between reason and feeling in modern man, which is a major theme of the fantasy.

In this balance, Clerval embodies feeling: his childhood heroes were the 'chivalrous train who shed their blood to redeem the holy sepulchre from the hands of the infidels'¹⁷ and his chosen reading material were books of chivalry and romance which fired his imagination and inspired in him notions of gallantry. This is counterbalanced by Frankenstein's emphasis on reason and his admission that it was the 'secrets of heaven and earth' that he wanted to know. The dichotomy between the two is brought out most clearly in the 1831 version, for Shelley writes that Frankenstein's interest was in the 'physical secrets of the world. Meanwhile Clerval occupied himself...with the moral realities of things'¹⁸. Clerval's preoccupation with these moral realities is not, of course, devoid of reason; indeed, the power of reason is essential in their discernment. It is clear, however, that where Frankenstein's interest lay in *things*, Clerval's was in human action and motivation, and in this feeling and imagination play a pivotal role.

The relations of the friends must not be polarised too strongly, for as already suggested it was the romance and glory of the alchemists' quests which first attracted Frankenstein's attention. In other words, he was moved *first* by imagination or feeling. The change from this to reason unsupported by ethics is marked by Frankenstein's move from studying the ancient alchemists to studying the work of modern chemists, and it is by science, which can be described as reason translated into practical action, that he makes his creature. The picture thus painted by Shelley is of a youth in whom feeling and reason coexist in balance for a time before reason becomes predominant and ultimately precipitates his destruction.

In this context it is significant that after creating the monster Frankenstein is joined by Clerval and begins to share his interests and studies in Persian, Arabic and Sanskrit, languages which opened up to him the soothing melancholy as well as the elevating joy of Oriental literature which is contrasted with the 'manly and heroical poetry of Greece and Rome'¹⁹.

At this time Frankenstein achieves a degree of happiness which comes from the balance of feeling and reason made possible by Clerval's presence and which recalls the balance of his early years. Looking back at this period in his life, Frankenstein addresses his dead friend and eulogises:

Excellent friend! How sincerely did you love me and endeavour to elevate my mind until it was on a level with your own! A selfish pursuit had cramped and narrowed me until your gentleness and affection warmed and opened my senses²⁰.

The event which precipitates the murder of Clerval is Frankenstein's destruction of scientific apparatus, or the equipment of reason. The progeny of reason, the monster, then murders Clerval who embodies feeling, and it is that murder which prompts Frankenstein to exclaim that the 'cup of life is poisoned forever'²¹. He who had dreams of bestowing life upon a new species which would be forever grateful to him discovers that his own life is poisoned beyond recovery, and that all he can hope for is death.

The third pairing to be considered here is also the most celebrated and most discussed: that of Frankenstein and his creation. One of the strengths of the Frankenstein myth created by Mary Shelley is its adaptability, which makes a plurality of readings possible. This is as true of the relationship between Frankenstein and his monster as of any other aspect of the novel, but the emphasis here will be on their shared guilt.

Taken at the most obvious and superficial level, it is easy to decide that having out of choice created a being, Frankenstein has a clear responsibility towards him: the responsibility of a father towards his child. Instead of bearing that responsibility, however, Frankenstein rejects his creature and is, therefore, guilty of a form of child abandonment, with the monster being the wronged party, the innocent one. This would create a straightforward polarity in which Frankenstein's guilt could be defined against and explored

in opposition to his creature's innocence, bringing out something of the natures of guilt and innocence and, by implication, of evil and good.

However, by emphasising the illness brought on by horror acting upon Frankenstein's sensibilities, a degree of sympathy is built up in the reader which detracts from his guilt. Two years, in which the reader witnesses Frankenstein's slow return to health, elapse with no sign of the monster, but when the creature reappears at the end of this time, his first action is the heartless and apparently motiveless murder of Victor Frankenstein's young brother William. From being a wronged and innocent victim, the monster becomes a villain guilty of a particularly heinous crime.

Although Frankenstein acknowledges his own guilt in the murder of William and in the consequent judicial execution of Justine, this seems not to diminish the monster's guilt, nor does it create any sympathy for him. Indeed, by his agonised confession of guilt to Walton, which both deepens and sharpens his grief, Frankenstein appropriates the reader's sympathies and alienates the monster even further.

The depth of that guilt prevents Frankenstein confessing his actions to either friends or family, and the idea of confession within a specifically religious context is satirised by the 'confession' extorted from Justine by a priest. Thus Frankenstein's silence on his own involvement at the time of these events is enforced and increases his isolation, making absolution impossible: if he cannot confess to a third party, be it friend or priest, then he is the only person who could forgive and absolve himself, but the depth of his guilt prevents this. Frankenstein's feelings of guilt then become the punishment for his complicity in his creature's crimes, and since the guilt cannot be absolved his punishment is ongoing and, like Prometheus, his torment is renewed each day: he carries with him his 'eternal hell'²².

The balance between the guilt of creator and creature is, however, redressed when the monster is allowed to speak for himself, and the reader is thus given another view of events; the view through the monster's eyes.

In this narrative set within the overall narrative of Frankenstein's tale, the monster pleads his case powerfully and eloquently. The emphasis laid on his utter isolation and exclusion from all society generates sympathy for him, while the biblical allusions in which the monster likens himself to Adam lock Mary Shelley's fantasy into the story of the

creation of mankind as it is given in *Genesis*, making *Frankenstein* part of the nineteenth-century fascination with the origins of mankind and what it means to be human. Likewise the echoes of *Paradise Lost* with which this section abounds tie *Frankenstein* to the idea of the original corruption of mankind as presented in the Judaeo-Christian tradition and simultaneously to English literary tradition.

The references to *Paradise Lost* are explicit, extensive and made by the monster himself. Although an Adam figure, in that he is the first of his kind, the monster justifiably likens himself to the fallen angel, Satan. The tension between guilt and innocence carefully built up by Mary Shelley creates an ambivalence in the reader's response which is made more marked by his identification with the oxymoronic figure of Milton's Satan: the monster, like Satan in the eyes of the Romantics at least, is perceived as both guilty and innocent, evil and good. Both are figures whom it is impossible to condemn outright, but whose actions cannot be condoned.

The ambivalence which characterises the reader's response to *Frankenstein* thus also marks the response to the monster. And just as *Frankenstein's* guilt is the source of his hell so, too, the monster is tormented by his own ceaseless feelings of guilt. He himself comments: 'I, like the arch-fiend, bore a hell within me'²³.

Ambivalence continues to be a feature of the reader's response to Victor *Frankenstein*, who is presented as the heartless creator of a wretched and ugly being, abandoned as soon as infused with life, and simultaneously as the wronged and persecuted victim of the monster.

Other parallels between *Frankenstein* and his monster can also be found: both have 'high thoughts of honour and devotion'²⁴ and both have a love of virtue, though rejection turns this to a desire for evil in the monster's case. This latter aspect touches on one of the most problematical aspects of human nature: why, if man was created morally good, did he sin? Why, if he loved good, did he embrace evil? And this central mystery of human nature applies as much to *Frankenstein* and his creature as it does to Adam in the garden of Eden or to Lucifer, the brightest of all the angels who, after his rebellion against God was named Satan. In fact, the links between Satan and the monster in this context are particularly close, for the monster's explanation that 'Evil thenceforth became my good...I had no choice but to

adapt my nature to an element I had willingly chosen'²⁵ is an echo of Satan's belief in *Paradise Lost*: 'all good to me is lost;/Evil be thou my good'²⁶.

On the personal level, the monster's rejection leads to his misery and misery to evil, but Mary Shelley goes further by transposing this to the social level and suggesting that it is the misery of the poor, and their exclusion from social structures such as government, law and education, which leads to their crime and lawlessness. This suggestion is reinforced by the argument put forward by Elizabeth that the republican institutions of Switzerland produced a society in which there is

less distinction between the several classes of its inhabitants and the lower orders, being neither so poor nor so despised, their manners are more refined and moral. A servant in Geneva does not mean the same thing as a servant in France and England...[It is a] condition which...does not include the idea of ignorance and the sacrifice of the dignity of a human being²⁷.

The poor people in Switzerland, in other words, are not excluded from the social structures of law and education, and therefore maintain their dignity as human beings and have clear moral sense. The situation of the servants of Geneva is thus contrasted with Frankenstein's creature who exists in complete exclusion from all society and is therefore lawless, and with the servants of France and England who, it is implied, are ignorant and immoral, and lack the dignity of being human because they, too, are excluded from these social structures.

Given Mary Shelley's background as the daughter of two of the foremost radical thinkers of their time, William Godwin and Mary Wollstonecraft, this specifically political element is not surprising. Republicanism was, however, perceived negatively by British society at large, it being the spectre that haunted Europe at the end of the eighteenth and the beginning of the nineteenth centuries, thanks to the French Revolution of 1789 and the execution of Louis XVI in 1793. This made the subject difficult to use as a central theme in realist novels of the period, but Mary Shelley used fantasy to create sufficient distance between the subject and the society it threatened to allow an exploration of the positive aspects of Republicanism.

Frankenstein and his monster are thus linked by their love of virtue, the perversion of which in the monster's case allows Shelley to explore the origins and effects of both personal and social evil. But they are also linked by their geographical and social isolation. Initially Frankenstein's isolation is self-imposed and allows him to work on the creation of the monster unimpeded by human contact and human relationships, but later he is unwillingly isolated from society by his complicity in the monster's crimes. In contrast to this, the monster is unwillingly isolated from the start when he is rejected by Frankenstein, and thereafter is typically seen looking in on society, but unable to join it because although built from human components he is himself not truly human.

Finally, Frankenstein and his monster are linked by their desire for death as the only possible resolution of the conflict between them which locks them together in a hated interdependence. This is brought out not only in the final section where Frankenstein's death prompts remorse and the intention to die on the monster's part, but in his earlier realisation that he must leave clues for Frankenstein to follow, lest he despair and die before their final confrontation.

These parallels force the suggestion that Frankenstein and his monster are two parts of one whole. Frankenstein himself seems almost to realise this for he explains:

I considered the being whom I had cast among mankind and endowed with the will and power to effect purposes of horror...nearly in the light of my own vampire, my own spirit let loose from the grave and forced to destroy all that was dear to me²⁸.

This suggestion that Frankenstein and his monster are closely related is reinforced by the namelessness of the monster who can therefore be given only a generic appellation - such as 'monster' - or specifically named only in relation to his creator; he is 'Frankenstein's monster'. Indeed, the popular or cultural imagination, feeding upon the many plays and films based on the book, has taken this one step further by bestowing the name 'Frankenstein' upon the creature, rather than the creator.

The range of concerns explored by Mary Shelley in *Frankenstein* is a wide one: the nature and effects of overweening ambition; the nature of guilt and innocence, and by implication of evil and good; and the dissociation of imagination and reason in human

beings. She is thus dealing with issues which are fundamental to the human race and which reach to the heart of the human condition.

However, these were also concerns which were particularly acute in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries: science had seemed to increase mankind's power over nature, fostering ambition but not apparently affecting the predilection of some people for evil rather than good, while reason was believed by many to have outweighed feeling during the Enlightenment.

By creating fantasy, rather than using realism, Mary Shelley can explore these concerns in an extreme and therefore obvious manifestation. It is difficult to imagine, for instance, ambition more extreme than Victor Frankenstein's ambition to bestow life and nullify death. At the same time, this ambition is benevolent and good rather than selfish and evil in its intention, allowing an exploration of how even good ambition can give rise to evil effects, and suggesting that excessive ambition *per se* is morally wrong. It is the *extent* rather than the nature of the ambition which is culpable.

Likewise the fantasy mode allows the author to dissociate imagination and reason in Frankenstein too completely for plausibility in a realist novel in order to demonstrate the destructive effects of reason when it operates in isolation from feeling and divorced from moral considerations. This aspect is perhaps best seen as a response to the anxieties raised by the eighteenth-century Enlightenment in which human reason was deemed capable of addressing every issue and solving all problems. Such anxieties were deepened and complicated by events in France which included a post-Revolutionary campaign to outlaw Christianity and convert churches to Temples of Reason in which the Goddess of Reason occupied the place formerly held by the Virgin Mary.

The fantasy elements of the novel are, however, tempered by the realism of, for example, the description of Frankenstein's walking tours in the countryside, his early family life or his trip to England with Clerval. Realism here is reinforced by the outer framing narrative of Walton's voyage of discovery and his presentation of Frankenstein's story in epistle form to his sister, since private letters imply both authority and integrity. These realist elements locate the fantasy firmly within 'this' everyday life, giving it a relevance to the lives of its readership which has contributed to its continuing success, and in Mary

Shelley's hands the underlying Promethean myth gives rise to the modern myth of Frankenstein.

The Promethean myth is, however, a flexible one, allowing it to be used to address different concerns from those which occupied Mary Shelley. One later writer, Richard Garnett, brings to it a lighter touch in 'The Twilight of the Gods' (1888), giving it a cynical, slightly mocking edge.

In contrast to Mary Shelley's emphasis on the Promethean torment of Victor Frankenstein, Garnett's starting point is the end of Prometheus's suffering, when the eagle drops down dead even as it descends to its daily feast and Prometheus's bonds break. He is almost immediately met by Elenko, the last of the priestesses to Apollo, who has been forced to flee by a Christian Bishop and his followers intent upon cleansing what they see as an idolatrous sanctuary. Given the absence of an obvious alternative course of action, Prometheus and Elenko return to the temple of Apollo she has just left where the Christians decide that since Prometheus has obviously been kept alive miraculously by the now-dead eagle which he still clutches, he must be a martyr and he is accordingly honoured. Indeed, he is honoured so much that he becomes a cause of dissent in the church, so it is decided that he and Elenko should leave. They accordingly remove themselves to a small cottage where they are joined by the Olympians to discuss, and in some instances bemoan, their new status as deposed gods, and this discussion results in their removal to Elysium, with only Prometheus and Elenko choosing to remain on earth.

The end of the punishment and the freeing of Prometheus is specifically linked to the spread of Christianity, implying initially at least that Christianity is being viewed in positive terms as bringing an end to suffering and instituting an age of freedom. This implication is, however, nullified by the presentation of the Christian Bishop as cynical and manipulative, more interested in the exercise of power than in the salvation of souls.

This of course is almost a traditional view of churchmen, who are nearly always seen as legitimate targets for satire. However, during the eighteenth century the close links between church and state encouraged this view: Bishops were powerful men and, thanks to the wide disparity in stipends and the opportunity for churchmen to hold multiple livings, were often also rich. The worst excesses had been curbed during the 1830s by Acts of Parliament,

which systematised the payment of churchmen and outlawed the practice of plurality except where the livings were within two miles of each other. Nevertheless abuse of position still continued, and still attracted adverse comment: William Holman Hunt's painting, *The Hireling Shepherd* (1854. Manchester City Art Gallery), for example, is an allegory on the faithlessness of churchmen and their propensity for pursuing private pleasures. Although Garnett was not writing until thirty years after this, it seems likely that he is nevertheless taking a sideswipe at the clergy without making them his sole target, and that the fantasy of his tale provides some degree of protection from retaliation.

The violence of the band of Christians under the Bishop's authority is remarkable and contrasts with the serenity, tolerance and integrity of Elenko. It is clear, however, that she is prepared to fake a conversion to Christianity to save her life and that of Prometheus, and is therefore as manipulative as the Bishop though in a much more pleasant way, and in a readily understandable cause.

Garnett is here using fantasy to examine a society in which one religion was giving way to another and considering how individuals react and adapt to that change. Obviously there are implications in this for the nineteenth century when Christianity was perceived to be in retreat before atheism or the new religion of science, which had some claims to be the objective truth about the world. Although fantasy is by no means essential in this context, it does allow these matters to be raised without a corresponding rise in anxiety on the part of the individuals who make up that rapidly-changing society or the authorities who might believe themselves to be threatened by these changes.

Perhaps the most interesting change in 'The Twilight of the Gods' is the shift in the nature of Prometheus himself, for his release from torture brings with it the end of his immortality and the beginning of his humanity. Although this involves physical weakness, such as Prometheus never suffered during his punishment, and he is suddenly subject to hunger and thirst, the change is viewed positively and marks the end of hostility between Zeus and Prometheus, who claims, 'Immortal hate befits not the mortal I feel myself to have become'²⁹. And this elevates mortals morally above the gods for whom hatred is apparently right and appropriate.

This change in Prometheus's being from immortal Titan to man is part of a larger move away from the supernatural and towards the natural: the gods were forsaken and the 'deluded people turned to mechanics and fishermen'³⁰. The focus in religion is thus shifted from the divine to the human, with the human being seen as incomparably superior. Prometheus quickly recognises in this the fulfilment of his prophecy that 'Zeus should beget a child mightier than himself, who should send him and them [i.e. the gods] the way that he had sent his father', adding that he 'knew not that this child was already begotten, and that his name was Man'³¹.

The superiority of man is made even more explicit later in the story, for Garnett writes,

How trivial seemed the history of the gods to what he [Prometheus] now heard of the history of Man! Were these indeed the beings he had known 'like ants in the sunless recesses of caves, dwelling deep-burrowing in the earth, ignorant of the signs of the seasons', to whom he had given fire and whom he had taught memory and number, for whom he had 'brought the horse under the chariot, and invented the sea-beaten, flaxen-winged chariot of the sailor'? And now, how poorly showed the gods beside this once wretched brood³².

This process of moving from a god-centred religion to a man-centred one is made complete in the closing section of the story when Prometheus and Elenko fly up into the now-empty heaven, using the discarded, supernatural sandals of Hermes, and from that vantage point look out at the speck of light which is earth. They are faced with the choice between residence in heaven or on earth; between divinity and humanity, and unhesitatingly throw in their lot with mankind³³.

The importance to Garnett of the shift from the divine to the human can be gauged from the fact that it forms the main focus of the short story, 'The Dumb Oracle' (1888), in which Apollo's young priest, disillusioned by learning of deception in the giving of oracles, roams the world, but returns to the shrine at which he served at Dorylaeum in order to unmask a fraudulent impostor. The impostor, who is revealed as Apollo himself, calls the young priest out of the crowd and points out to him that his travels have equipped him to be a sage rather

than a priest, and insists that he turn to a 'more august service than Apollo's, to one that shall endure when Delphi and Delos know *his* no more...To the service of Humanity'³⁴.

The overall movement from supernatural to natural, from divine to human, can be seen as an expression of changing attitudes towards religion throughout the nineteenth century, in which Christianity was progressively emptied of its miraculous elements. This of course is a continuation and consummation of the rationalising process which was characteristic of the eighteenth century, and which Mary Shelley identified in the person of Frankenstein whose reason was isolated from feeling.

Although many books were published on this subject, such as Robert William MacKay's *The Progress of the Intellect as Exemplified in the Religious Development of the Greeks and the Hebrews* (1850) which argued that the lack of scientific knowledge in primitive peoples led to their interpretation of natural events in terms of the miraculous, or William Rathbone Grey's *The Creed of Christendom: Its Foundation and Superstructure* (1851), which is an attempt to account for the origin and growth of Christianity in naturalistic terms, the case is most clearly stated by Charles Hennell in *An Enquiry Concerning the Origin of Christianity* (1838). In his Preface Hennell wrote that Christianity

regarded as a system of elevated thought and feeling will not be injured by being freed from those fables...which hung about its origin. It will, on the contrary, be placed on a surer basis; for it need no longer appeal for its support to the uncertain evidence of events which happened nearly two thousand years ago...but it will rest on its claim to an evidence clearer, simpler and always at hand - the thoughts and feelings of the human mind itself³⁵.

David Friedrich Strauss was probably the most influential thinker in this field (though not necessarily the the best or most consistent theologian), and in 1840-1841 he published *Die christliche Glaubenslehre (The Christian Doctrine of Faith)* which demonstrates how 'Christian doctrine grew out of its ancient environment' and concludes by advocating the 'dissolution of traditional supernaturalism, replacing it with a purely secular, Hegelian theory of Absolute Spirit'³⁶.

Strauss's most widely-read work was, however, *Das Leben Jesu, kritische bearbeitet* (1835) which was translated by George Eliot under the title, *Life of Jesus* in 1846. In this Strauss rejects both the supernaturalist and the rationalist interpretations of the Bible, making space for a mythical interpretation which seeks the eternal truths underlying events, regardless of their veracity as historical facts. Like rationalist explanations of miraculous events, the mythical interpretation moves the emphasis away from the supernatural, or the divine, instead placing it upon mankind.

'The Twilight of the Gods' can be seen as a dramatisation of this theological debate which replaces abstract arguments with specific instances and people, leading to greater clarity and immediacy. George Eliot also brought her own directness to bear upon the matter, for in a letter to Mr and Mrs Charles Bray she wrote

I begin to feel for other people's wants and sorrows a little more than I used to do. Heaven help us! said the old religion; the new one, for its very lack of that faith, will teach us all the more to help one another³⁷.

Garnett's story can be read in the light of a gloss on this comment in its insistence that human interests are the main interests and the old gods are sidelined.

The time scale involved - Garnett's story is set in the fourth century when Theodosius recognised Christianity as the state religion of the Roman Empire (380 AD) - creates historical distance which, together with the distance involved in the use of fantasy, provides protection against suggestions of heresy which were possible even though he was writing forty years after this theological debate or - much more likely in this case - against accusations of mockery of the church (an issue on which the church is always sensitive).

Yet this account of Garnett's stories is much too simplified in its suggestion that he was in some sense opposed to supernaturalism and antagonistic to religion, for clearly he treats supernatural explanations as possible. In 'The Twilight of the Gods', for example, Prometheus exists and is supernaturally released from punishment. Likewise, in 'The Dumb Oracle' the impostor is revealed as none other than Apollo himself who had taken on the priest's appearance and identity so that the oracle would not be dumb but active. In this case the supernatural takes over from the natural, but only in order to hand back control to humanity in the person of the priest, whose service is the service of humanity.

Garnett's treatment of Apollo in the story is sympathetic, for although the beginning suggests that religious practice is merely a cloak for greed, the end of the story indicates that Apollo has a vital concern for truth. This in turn suggests that Garnett's attitude was not one of straightforward scepticism, but that for him the major issue was the distinction between true and false religion. Prometheus articulates this in his belief that man does well to be rid of Zeus provided that 'in dropping his idolatry [he] has not flung away his religion'³⁸. The danger is that in turning away from the worship of false gods, man will discard all religion.

Obviously this could be given a doctrinal interpretation, in terms of worship of the Olympians being idolatry and Christian worship the one true religion. However Garnett does not leave this interpretation open, for Prometheus has already commented that Man has done no more than 'enthroned a new idol in place of the old', creating an opportunity for a discussion of the relationship of man to God.

It is a weakness of the story that Garnett has recourse to such vague and unsatisfactory notions as the 'common principle of all existence' which really say nothing, but in this passage he does suggest that man's attitude towards the gods determines what they are. In this scheme of things the Olympians are dead as deities but 'survive as impersonations of Man's highest conceptions of the beautiful'³⁹.

This, it could be argued, relates to the idea much discussed at the time of progressive revelation, in which God's revelations to man develop as mankind becomes more responsive and capable of greater understanding. Thus to primitive peoples God is revealed as bloodthirsty, always demanding sacrifice and taking revenge, but to civilised societies he is revealed as a God of love whose emphasis is on forgiveness. It is a way of taking the best aspects of the Olympian gods, but leaving behind their unacceptable qualities such as Zeus's endless and ingenious fornications with human women, for which he assumed various physical forms to disguise his divinity and trick them into bed.

Prometheus himself embodies this idea of progressive revelation, for he can be seen as a type of Christ: he performs a signal service for mankind, be this endowing humans with life, knowledge or fire, and for which he suffers greatly at the hands of God. There are, of course, major differences, for Christ is made incarnate in order to accomplish his service to mankind, whereas Prometheus is made incarnate after his service is performed. Out of love

for humanity Christ becomes incarnate so that he can help mankind, but Prometheus helps mankind out of love and is rewarded by becoming incarnate.

The concepts involved in the Christian revelation are also nobler than those embedded in the myth of Prometheus, for the suffering of Prometheus is a punishment for having helped mankind, while the suffering of Christ is seen in Christian theology as instrumental in that help. It is not merely a punishment at the hands of an outraged God, but the means of securing forgiveness and forging a renewed relationship with Him. Thus there is a mystery at the heart of the Christian revelation which is entirely lacking in the Prometheus myth, and to that extent it requires a greater responsiveness, although there are sufficient similarities between the two to classify this as an instance of progressive revelation, in which punishment in the type (the myth of Prometheus) is succeeded by forgiveness in the antitype (the story of Christ).

This would initially seem to suggest that Garnett is upholding the status quo in religious matters by emphasising the superiority of Christianity to the Olympian deities it replaced. However, by suggesting that Prometheus helped mankind with no awareness of the possibility of reward he raises in his readers' minds the idea that Prometheus's motives are purer than those of Christ, and this in turn questions the supremacy of Christianity, undermining the status quo. It is this subversive element, apparently characteristic of Richard Garnett, that caused the twentieth-century novelist, Sylvia Townsend Warner, to note with pleasure 'how demurely he [Garnett] twitched the carpet from under the feet of Authority'⁴⁰.

The general trend of Garnett's reasoning in 'The Twilight of the Gods' is towards greater flexibility in religious matters, leaving dogma far behind. The connections between the Christian revelation and the myth of Prometheus make Prometheus a particularly useful figure in exploring the change from one religion to another, and the thinness of the dividing line between idolatry and religion. Fantasy allows him to do this demurely and with impunity, while the mocking tone he adopts throughout belies the seriousness of the issues raised.

Garnett's treatment of the Promethean myth can be compared to Percy Bysshe Shelley's version in his lyrical drama, *Prometheus Unbound* (1820). Most obviously, both these

writers focus on the ending of Prometheus's punishment, rather than on its beginning which was Aeschylus's starting point in *Prometheus Bound* (5th century BC), to which Shelley's title makes reference.

A more important comparison is to be found in the use of the Promethean myth by both Garnett and Shelley to question traditional religious belief in the supremacy or the benevolence of God. Garnett, as we have seen, suggests that Prometheus's motives for helping humanity were purer than those of Christ, since they did not involve the possibility of personal reward. Shelley, in an equally subversive move, links Jove, the 'supreme of living things' (II.iv.113) and ruler of all, with the Judaeo-Christian concept of God. Since Jove's enmity to mankind is clear this suggests as a possibility at least, that God is similarly ill-disposed towards humanity.

Garnett's story is, however, given a social setting which is lacking from *Prometheus Unbound*, where the personæ, with the single exception of the hero Hercules, are gods, demi-gods, phantasms or spirits of one kind or another. This gives 'The Twilight of the Gods' an immediacy not to be found in Shelley's drama. One effect of this is to suggest that the process of human advancement will continue slowly: Prometheus and Elenko join mankind but have no divine qualities to perfect humanity. Their contribution to the amelioration of humanity is the human qualities of love and tolerance.

By confining his action to gods and spirits, however, Shelley can take advantage of divine omniscience, especially the knowledge possessed by Demogorgon or Eternity to reveal a perfected humanity and society which Prometheus's actions have made possible, though not yet actual:

To suffer woes which Hope thinks infinite;
To forgive wrongs darker than death or night;
To defy Power which seems omnipotent;
To love, and bear; to hope, till Hope creates
From its own wreck the thing it contemplates;
Neither to change, nor falter, nor repent:
This, like thy glory, Titan, is to be
Good, great and joyous, beautiful and free;

This is alone Life, Joy, Empire, and Victory.

IV.570ff

Despite being found in a number of versions, allowing scope for different interpretations, the myth of Prometheus retains a high degree of integrity in that he remains a recognisable figure who is distinguishable from other mythic figures who incurred the wrath of Zeus, for he alone of the Titans sided with mankind, and he alone was chained to the rock and attacked daily by an eagle as punishment. Some mythic figures, however, never attain that level of clarity, but what they lose in distinctness they gain in their multiplicity of significance, meaning and resonance.

III

The most important of such figures, or to be more precise, clusters of figures is that of the demon-woman, who although never absent from the cultural imagination, attained mythic status during the Victorian period. Her forms are many and her names various - Pandora, Helen, Circe, Venus and Medea immediately come to mind - but she presents a remarkably unified myth which Victorian writers were able to rework for their own purposes.

At the risk of unfair generalisations or even caricature, it could be argued that to Victorian men (and probably to many women, too) woman was inherently paradoxical: she was desirable, necessary for family life (and not just biologically), in need of protection, probably sexless and certainly a moral guardian for those around her. However, she was also dangerous, subversive, a powerful, sexually alluring enchantress, and if not actually morally degenerate, then at least susceptible to degeneracy.

A single female figure from mythology was often used to explore the sexual aspects of this paradoxical image of woman, while providing some protection against the adverse and often virulent criticism representations of contemporary women attracted. Sometimes the mythology chosen was classical, but other mythologies were used as well. In addition to the

advantages of using a mythological figure in the first place, these other mythologies offered novelty and an atmosphere of exoticism. Indeed, there is so much common ground between classical and non-classical mythologies that to consider their function in Victorian literature and art separately would create unnecessary repetition.

DG Rossetti was one of the many poets and artists who availed themselves of the protection afforded by mythology, and often used a female figure, either alone or with attendants to explore contemporary or personal concerns.

The earliest of these, *Venus Verticordia* (1864-1868. Bournemouth, Russell-Cotes Art Gallery and Museum) [Plate 3.1], is one of Rossetti's few nudes, and shows Venus between a bank of roses coming to head-height behind, and a wall of honeysuckle in front. Space is thus uncomfortably compressed (as it is, for example, in his illustration of the death of Arthur for Moxon's edition of Tennyson's *Poems* already discussed) and the figure is simultaneously isolated from the background. Venus is shown with a halo, a specifically Christian icon which suggests her divinity or holiness and, by implication, that of love itself. A number of butterflies, symbols of the soul, are shown on the halo, as well as on the apple held in Venus's left hand. This perhaps suggests that love is being regarded by Rossetti in a spiritual sense, and not merely in physical terms. Venus holds in her right hand love's arrow which is pointing to her breast, and she looks dispassionately out of the canvas, her face being almost devoid of expression.

The overall impression is of a woman caught in a moment of stasis; the moment just before decision and action. This impression is made explicit in the poem which was published under the title 'Venus' in 1870 and republished as 'Venus Verticordia' in *Poems* of 1881. The change in title is not insignificant, suggesting as it does that while the poem was not written specifically to accompany the picture it was likely to have been written round about the same time as Rossetti was working on the painting.

The poem expresses the restlessness engendered by love, for having tasted the apple's 'brief sweetness' (l.7) the lover is doomed to perpetual wanderings (l.8), and this is in marked contrast to Venus's comment on his state before her intervention: 'Behold, he is at peace' (l.5). Love, it seems, will not satisfy the lover. And not only so, but love is also destructive, for the sestet specifically links the gift of the apple to the 'love-lit fires of Troy'

(1.14). The love-gift to one involves the destruction of many; indeed, the destruction of a whole civilisation. So what began by being a personal matter becomes a social concern.

The major difference between the poem and the painting is that the poem suggests that love's arrow is destined for the man's heart, but in the painting it is directed towards Venus's own heart, suggesting that self-suffering is an inevitable consequence of the spell which will hold the man in thrall.

Thus poem and painting explore, or perhaps just describe, aspects of the idea of woman as indifferent to the suffering and destruction she has caused. Both poem and painting suggest that this involves or prompts pain for Venus as well as the man trapped by her spell, but even this seems to leave her unmoved.. Both poem and painting are, however, strangely dispassionate, which seems to be at odds with Rossetti's belief that the artist's function is to transcribe directly his own soul (see Ch1, p.55 above).

In contrast to this, Rossetti's *Astarte Syriaca* (1877. Manchester City Art Gallery) [Plate 3.2] is weightier and seems to carry a greater significance than *Venus Verticordia*, suggesting, perhaps, a greater degree of emotional involvement on the artist's part.

For one thing, Astarte is a more complex mythological figure than Venus, whom she predates. Venus is simply a goddess of love, and although love has destructive elements in it, her role is relatively unmixed. Astarte, on the other hand, is an Eastern goddess of love *and* war, combining in one person two apparently antithetical functions and making her an ideal figure for an exploration of the paradoxical nature of women.

The greater weight of meaning in *Astarte Syriaca* is also related to the model used, for where Rossetti's cook was the model for *Venus Verticordia*, his lover, Jane Morris, modelled for the figure of Astarte. The sonnet which Rossetti wrote for the picture is helpful here in directing attention to the commanding nature of love which the painting can only imply.

For example, the description of Astarte's 'love-freighted lips and absolute eyes that wean/The pulse of hearts to the sphere's dominant tone' (l.7-8) suggest that there is an element of the inescapable about love, and this is elaborated in the sestet where Astarte's face is considered to be 'of Love's all-penetrative spell/Amulet, talisman and oracle' (ll.12-13). Beauty's face, then, is both love charm and a divine revelation.

Astarte Syriaca is a sensuous painting, with the figures of Astarte and her attendants filling the whole canvas and creating a sense of compression or even claustrophobia. The dark green robes offset the pale skin of the women, drawing attention to their arms in particular which are prominently placed. In the case of Astarte herself this is emphasised by the disruption in scale between the small head and the statuesque figure: she is all body.

There is, too, an absence of facial expression which, combined with the quite hard-edged painting around the eyes suggests heartlessness or perhaps even cruelty, but this is offset by the figure's stance, which is a provocative one. Astarte has her left leg thrust forward, and the shape of her thigh is emphasised by carefully placed highlights, while the gold girdle resting low down on her pelvis hangs down the inside of her leg to emphasise it still further. The girdle clips the robes closer to the body to emphasise its shape and by placing one hand on each part of it - just below her breasts and in the genital region - the sexual provocation is heightened. In addition to this, Rossetti used a glazing technique to give richness and depth to the colours and increase the sensuous quality of the actual painting.

By choosing Astarte as the subject of his painting Rossetti could explore the perceived contradictory quality of woman as both lover and destroyer, as the goddess of love and the goddess of war. By using his lover as the model for this figure, Rossetti invites a personal interpretation which suggests the power that Jane Morris's love had over him and perhaps acknowledges the destructive element their adulterous relationship contained. In this painting, Rossetti was transcribing his own soul, as he believed an artist ought, but he was also expressing male fears about women.

In 1881 Rossetti transformed one version of *Astarte Syriaca* into a painting of *Mnemosyne* (1881. Wilmington, Delaware Art Museum) [Plate 3.3], goddess of Memory and mother of the Muses. The painting is less erotic than *Astarte Syriaca* partly because although the figure is in substantially the same pose, she is shown in half-length, rather than three-quarter length, and so the forward thrust of the leg is not visible. The arms, too, are in very similar positions, but have been altered so that where Astarte held and thereby emphasised her girdle, Mnemosyne holds a lamp in one hand and a chalice in the other, giving her, if anything, a slightly sacramental air.

Mnemosyne was the last original oil painting Rossetti completed before his death, and without wishing to make any claims to prophecy on his part (and given his health and drug addiction, common sense rather than prophecy would have suggested his approaching end) it can be seen as a summary of what Jane Morris had been to him. By giving her the role of Mnemosyne, he was declaring that she was the one who dominated his memories, and she was the inspiration of his art.

Rossetti included in this painting a branch of yew, associated with death and suggesting sorrow, and next to it, a pansy which is a symbol of remembrance. However, the pansy was a flower which meant much to Jane Morris and she had chosen it to decorate her writing-paper, designed by Rossetti. It seems also to have been a code, for Wilfrid Scawen Blunt, who was Jane Morris's lover after Rossetti's death, recorded in his diary that she left a pansy in his room when she wanted to make love⁴¹. Assuming it had the same meaning in her relationship with Rossetti, its inclusion in this painting makes *Mnemosyne* an expression of the artist's love without any of the general meanings relating to society's attitude towards women that are part of *Venus Verticordia* and *Astarte Syriaca*.

The destructive elements in both Venus and Astarte are strengthened in Lilith, one of the most complex of the demon-women to feature prominently in Victorian literature and art. Although she has many characteristics in common with Lamia, such as her use of the serpent-form and her function as a fertility goddess, Lilith is derived from the Hebrew tradition in which she is regarded as Adam's first wife. A disagreement arose between them over Lilith's equality, and having named the secret name of God she flew off. Three angels were sent to force her return, threatening her with the deaths of one hundred of her sons each day if she did not comply. Lilith however refused to return, arguing that she was created to harm new-born babies⁴².

This story, even in its most basic form, was useful to the Victorians in two ways. The first of these is that the disagreement between Adam and Lilith was over her equality, and this reaches to the heart of the 'woman question' which occupied so much of the Victorians' time and energy. This has been stated most directly by Ponsonby Lyons in a paper which was found among the possessions of DG Rossetti: Lilith, he suggests, was the 'first strong-minded woman and the original advocate of woman's rights'⁴³.

The second aspect of Lilith's character which was of particular relevance to the nineteenth century was the subversion of the nurturing role of woman, especially as mother, and her transformation into the destroyer of her children. These two very closely related aspects of Lilith make her particularly useful in articulating and exploring the anxieties about the role of women⁴⁴ which were felt mainly, but not exclusively by men.

Many of these elements are not only embodied in the person of Lilith in DG Rossetti's poem, 'Eden Bower' (1870), but they are concentrated, for Rossetti splits off the positive aspects of woman, locating them within Eve. Lilith is thus left with the destructive qualities and she and Eve are placed in sharply marked antithesis:

Lilith stood on the skirts of Eden;

(And O the bower and the hour !)

She was the first that thence was driven;

With her was hell and with Eve was heaven.

1.5-8

The good qualities in Eve are immediately sidelined and we hear no more about them, so the whole focus of the poem is upon Lilith and her power over Adam, for she boasts:

All the threads of my hair are golden

And there in a net his heart was holden...

1.27-28

In this last line there is a parallel with Rossetti's sonnet 'Lilith' where golden hair is again portrayed as entrapping a man, discussed in Chapter 1 (p.83).

The main difference between 'Eden Bower' and 'Lilith' is that in the latter poem Lilith is passive (as indeed she is portrayed in the picture which accompanies the poem), but in 'Eden Bower' she is active: active in her hatred of Adam; active in her jealousy of Eve; and active in her determination to sabotage Eden and to have her hatred extended to the offspring of Adam and Eve.

Here Lilith is shown in her role as temptress and the cause of man's sin, effectively shifting the blame from man to woman and thereby underlining woman's inferiority. The use of the first person from l.11 of the poem onwards forces Lilith to articulate her temptation strategy, emphasising its premeditated nature and thereby increasing her guilt.

'Eden Bower' expresses many of society's anxieties about woman in her role as temptress, such as her power over men or her ability to act on her own initiative independently of a man. It also reinforces many of the stereotypes about woman: the propensity for her love to turn to hate following rejection, for example, or her jealousy of other women. It is perhaps slightly unusual in Rossetti's *oeuvre* in its eschewal of personal connotations in favour of a social interpretation, concerned with fears about women, despite the fact that it focuses on a mythic female figure, which Rossetti more commonly used to explore a range of concerns, some social - society's fears concerning women - and some personal - his relationship with Jane Morris.

Lilith was a myth which held strong appeal for George MacDonald, to judge from the fact that he used it twice in his fiction. Lilith's first appearance in his output was in the short story 'The Cruel Painter' which was originally an inset story in *Adela Cathcart* (1864), but which can stand alone very successfully. Unlike the uses of mythic figures considered so far which are not set in any particular time, MacDonald ties his story down to the 1590s and locates it in a specific place - Prague, a medieval city redolent of eastern European exoticism and superstition. He is essentially taking Lilith out of the timeless sphere of myth and giving her a modern manifestation, and as she is the beautiful and unattainable daughter of a painter, Teufelsbüst or 'Devilbrush', MacDonald is placing her in a realistic social context.

Teufelsbüst's speciality is in portraying the beautiful people he sees in his imagination in an extremity of suffering, so that their facial expressions and physical forms are distorted by pain. To increase the horror he includes representations of demons (sometimes recognisable as Teufelsbüst himself) and, as a final touch to each canvas, he adds a representation of his lovely daughter, Lilith, portraying her as disinterested, unruffled beauty unmoved by the suffering around her.

Having seen these pictures, a young student, Karl Wolkenlicht (whose name translates as 'cloud light') falls so deeply in love with Lilith that he seeks employment as Teufelsbüst's apprentice. Teufelsbüst employs him in the certain knowledge that Karl is in love with Lilith, intending to use him as an experiment in which he can observe at first hand the effects of mental pain on the young man. To further this aim Teufelsbüst concocts a

'love-philtre' which heightens the imagination by exciting those parts of the brain controlling it, and thus increases Karl's pain and frustration caused by living in the same house as Lilith, but unable to confess his love for her.

While this is going on inside the house, outside the whole of Prague is being thrown into a panic by rumours of vampire activity, arising from the death of Teufelsbüst's next-door neighbour, John Kuntz, and in this particular manifestation of vampirism, the vampires feed off those people they had loved while alive. Karl, his imagination artificially stimulated by the love-philtre, soon becomes preoccupied by the vampires, as well as by Lilith.

Under this strain Karl's health eventually breaks down and he collapses in a catalepsy which Teufelsbüst mistakes for death. Guilt-ridden, he conceals the body in order to make a plaster cast of it to use in future paintings before throwing it in the river. Karl, however, comes out of the catalepsy overnight, before the cast is fully set, and is able to break free. At first he believes himself to be a vampire and goes to Lilith's room, but before making contact with her realises what must have happened to him.

The further discovery that Teufelsbüst is terrified of the vampires prompts Karl to hide himself by day and alter the artist's pictures by night in order to suggest a haunting. However, Lilith soon discovers what Karl is doing and together they 'exorcise' the house by erasing the changes to the pictures and returning to their normal routine the following day, with the explanation that illness had forced Karl's absence during the previous few days. This deception is practised so well that Teufelsbüst concludes that he had simply imagined the death of Karl and the subsequent events, and that the 'haunting' was therefore all in his mind. In repentance and fear he turns away from his sadistic subject-matter, becoming a reformed character in the process.

On one reading Lilith is a *femme fatale* who innocently lures the virtuous Karl on into danger, since for love of her he becomes her father's apprentice in order to be close to her and tolerates all the torture Teufelsbüst can inflict. On this reading Lilith seems to be unaware of what is happening and is, therefore relatively innocent. She, as much as Karl, is a victim of her father's sadism.

Other readings, in which Lilith is both more complex and more interesting than this are possible, for on believing Karl to be dead she muses: 'She could have loved him if he had

only lived: she did love him, for he was dead⁴⁵, implying that at this stage she could love only the dead, though given time may have learned to love the living man. This realisation leads Lilith to analyse her own behaviour, and she thereby becomes aware of her own involvement in the situation.

The living woman is able to love the man *because* he is dead, and love therefore bridges the grave, thus linking Lilith tentatively with vampires. And as we have seen, Karl, on awakening from the catalepsy, believes himself to be a vampire and in that belief searches for Lilith, the woman he loved, before realising that he is still alive. And Lilith, believing Karl to be a vampire, becomes jealous when he does not bite her, considering this as evidence that he had not loved her.

In this story, which ends in an entirely unconvincing reformation of Teufelsbürst and the marriage of Lilith and Karl, Lilith is at first portrayed as a siren who draws men to their destruction, and as a heartless beauty who can look on suffering and be unmoved by it. In this George MacDonald was expressing fears about the nature of women in general as the destroyers of men. However, by representing her as under the authority of her father MacDonald removes from her the responsibility for what she is, placing it instead on her father who had chilled her, so that she became a 'frozen bud...[which] could not blossom into a rose' until enlivened (literally) by the warmth of love. MacDonald goes on to argue that:

pure love lives by faith. It loves the vaguely beheld and unrealized ideal. It dares believe that the loved is not all that she ever seemed. It is in virtue of this that love lives on. And it was in virtue of this, that Wolkenlicht loved Lilith⁴⁶.

In some respects this is a reversal of the usual scenario in which a man is redeemed by the love of a good woman; but it is also an expression of the belief that woman, as the weaker sex was particularly in need of a man's protection, both in matters moral and spiritual. In this case, Lilith needs Karl to awaken her emotionally, halt her drift towards amorality and restore her to a normal human existence, suggested by image of their family life with which the story concludes. To the extent that MacDonald portrays Lilith's need for Karl's love in this way he is reinforcing stereotypical views of women.

In addition to articulating fears about the destructive power of women, 'The Cruel Painter' also engages with the Victorian interest in the power of art. Clearly art is a means of self-expression, for although Teufelsbüst is careful to give his paintings titles which imply a narrative which they illustrate or an event they describe, no-one doubts that this is mere window-dressing; a means of justifying a pictorial conception which is already lodged in the artist's mind. This is confirmed by a discussion between Teufelsbüst and Lilith, in which the artist reveals that

amidst a thousand distastes, it was a pleasant thing to re-produce on the canvas the forms he beheld around him, modifying them to express the prevailing feelings of his own mind⁴⁷.

Art, then, is a means of expressing not the objects which it purports to represent, but the artist's emotions. It is a subjective view of art in which the artist's 'mental apparatus' orders the 'matter of existence' in time and space, to refer again to Bertrand Russell's analysis of Kant's philosophy already quoted in the Introduction (p.10, above), and thereby reveals something of the artist himself.

MacDonald takes this view no further, and has Teufelsbüst endlessly expressing his hatred of life and mankind on canvas, yet it is clear this view of art can have a therapeutic application; that hatred, for example, can be expressed in the sense of being expelled, as well as in the sense of being described. Art therapy is a twentieth-century development, but it is worth pausing to consider that the earliest, tentative moves in art therapy were being made about the middle of the nineteenth century, when this story was written.

Among Richard Dadd's effects, found after he murdered his father in 1843, were drawings of some friends, including his fellow-artist William Powell Frith, upon the throats of which thin red lines had been sketched, expressing Dadd's murderous feelings. And although the details are not quite clear, it seems likely that Dadd was encouraged to paint as a form of art therapy while in Britain's most famous lunatic asylum, Bethlem, where he spent much of his life. The intention was possibly just to make life more interesting and bearable for Dadd, rather than to effect a cure, but it does seem to have been a deliberately considered strategy in the management of this particular patient.

MacDonald seems to attribute to art a power greater than that of expression in 'The Cruel Painter', for Teufelsbüst's constant depiction of Lilith as heartless apparently moulds her character and makes her as heartless as his portrayal of her. This becomes clear to Karl when he sees Lilith surrounded by paintings which include her face, and MacDonald comments:

The power of the painter had not merely wrought for the representation of the woman of his imagination: it had had scope in realizing her as well⁴⁸.

This reveals something of George MacDonald's ideas concerning the nature and function of the imagination, and the central place it occupies in his own thought. For MacDonald, as he discusses at some length in the essay, 'The Imagination: Its Functions and its Culture' (1867), the imagination is 'that faculty which gives form to thought...and is therefore that faculty in man which is most likeliest to the prime operation of the power of God'⁴⁹. And although he draws a clear distinction between the creative power of God which creates from nothing and the imagination of man which illuminates the forms of nature created by God to reveal man's thought, the latter is closely patterned on the former, and reveals something of the workings of God.

MacDonald explains the process thus:

what springs [in man's mind] is the perception that this or that form is already an expression of this or that phase of thought or feeling. For the world around him is an outward figuration of the condition of his mind⁵⁰.

Teufelsbüst's imagination is, however, perverted and finds beautiful forms to distort, and in that distortion reveals his perversion. Fixing these forms upon canvas enables them to be seen by others, principally by Lilith who is surrounded by them every day. Sheer repetition imbues these images with authority and she accepts them as true statements about herself, and in time modifies her attitudes and behaviour to conform to the images.

What might at first glance be interpreted as the occult power of art, then, is in fact the operation of one person's imaginings in a material form upon the psychology of another, and by changing that person's self-perceptions, these change the way they actually are.

For MacDonald this is a serious matter, for as the human imagination is that faculty closest to the creative power of God whose main function, he tells us, is to 'inquire into what God has made'⁵¹, any distortion is a form of blasphemy, for it misrepresents God, and sacrilege, for it distorts what God has made. The aptness of Teufelsbüst's name is now clear: his work is blasphemous, and blasphemy being a characteristic of the devil, the artist is in effect the devil's brush.

The power that MacDonald attributes to art emphasises that Lilith is not responsible for her apparent lack of compassion. In this case, then, female heartlessness is a product of male power (most artists in the Victorian period being male, and the art establishment exclusively so). This subverts the stereotypical view of women as pitiless beauties which the story seemed to support, and by highlighting Teufelsbüst's abuse of his power over Lilith raises questions about the relationship between the sexes and points to the dangers of a patriarchal society.

In his most extensive use of this demon-woman, *Lilith* (1895), George MacDonald incorporates characteristics of demon-women from other mythologies, such as Sumerian, Assyro-Babylonian and Greek into the Hebrew myth to add further resonances which increase her paradoxical nature. For instance, the Sumerian demoness Ninkharsag is the goddess of childbirth, and by fusing this quality with the Hebraic figure of Lilith MacDonald heightens the irony inherent in her role of childslayer⁵². And this particular combination shows woman in her most nurturing aspect and simultaneously at her most destructive; in her natural role and simultaneously at her most unnatural.

Lilith is an extremely complex novel in which the chief protagonist, Mr Vane, enters another world, the 'region of the seven dimensions' and embarks on a quest to find himself. In this he has the occasional guidance of Mr Raven, who was once the librarian in Vane's own house, but in the world into which he has strayed, has become both the bird after which he is named and Adam, formerly the husband of Lilith and now of Eve.

'Finding oneself' in this world is achieved by sleeping in the House of Death, but being unwilling to do this, Vane leaves the house of Mr and Mrs Raven and sets off alone. He encounters Lilith lying in a trance-like state and after three months of warming and nurturing her, he finally succeeds in reviving her. Although Vane quickly recognises the evil

in her she entrances him and he attempts to follow her. During his subsequent wanderings he meets the Lovers, children who are unable to grow up but who lead a carefree existence under the guidance of the oldest girl, Lona. She is Lilith's daughter and, according to the traditions outlined above, she will be Lilith's downfall, but also the means of her salvation. Vane falls in love with Lona, and leads her and the other Lovers to the city of Bulika in search of their mothers. Here Lona is killed by Lilith in her attempt to outwit the prophecy that she will be vanquished by her child, but Lilith herself is captured by Vane, who takes her and the Lovers back to the House of Death.

The complexities of the novel arise from its multiplicity of meanings, extensive symbolism and the bewildering variety of forms which many of the protagonists assume. Lilith, for example, appears as a woman, a vampire, a leech, a mother, a mottled leopardess, a princess and a Persian cat. Mara, Lady of Sorrow, daughter of Adam and Eve, and one of Lilith's alter-egos appears as a veiled woman, a white leopardess and is known to the Lovers as 'the cat-woman'. Nothing, it seems, stays the same for long, making this world difficult to interpret, both by Mr Vane and by the reader (as well as making a résumé of the narrative very unsatisfactory).

Accepting MacDonald's theory that the imagination uses the forms of nature created by God to express thought, the multiplicity of forms Lilith assumes suggest the sheer variety of the aspects of her nature he wished to present to the reader and the impossibility of finding one form able to carry her antithetical qualities.

Lilith's capture by Vane and her enforced return to the House of Death takes Vane back to his quest to find himself. Indeed, it could be suggested that the quests of the main protagonists - Vane and Lilith to find themselves and the Lovers to find their mothers - coalesce at this point, with the fulfilment of one furthering the fulfilment of the others.

The focus, however, is on the salvation of Lilith, through which she will find herself. This is a reflection of MacDonald's belief that salvation was the central fact of religion, though he gave it a far wider application than more conventional believers usually allow, with potentially even Satan being the beneficiary of the redemptive plan. Significantly, salvation is inseparable from death, and this provides the central theme of *Lilith*, MacDonald's last fantasy. Indeed, so central is this pairing that Stephen Prickett has

referred to *Lilith* as a '*Todsroman*'⁵³ - a death-romance - in contradistinction to the *Bildungsroman*, *Phantastes*, written in 1858 at the outset of MacDonald's career.

The cardinal episode in *Lilith* is recorded in chapter XXXIX and is concerned with the redemption of Lilith herself which culminates in, and is achieved by, her decision to sleep in the House of Death. The beginning of that process is, however, a fourfold revelation of herself; the self that she herself had made, not her real self. Just as Lilith in 'The Cruel Painter' became as heartless as Teufelsbüst portrayed her, so here Lilith had become the person she had imagined herself to be, rather than the person that God had intended her to be. As she explains to Mara, 'What I choose to seem to myself makes me what I am'⁵⁴. And while this vision of the self as sinful is a recognised step in religious conversion which is usually followed - as here - by the awareness that the self is powerless to mend matters, it also stems from MacDonald's belief that true sight is the beginning of true action: to see what is good as good is almost inevitably to choose it.

MacDonald's belief in the need for true sight can perhaps be seen as a counterpart to Ruskin's emphasis on visual accuracy which he shared with the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, for as Lee Mackay Johnson points out, in Ruskin's aesthetic this is fused with moral sensitivity (see Ch2, p.136). As we shall later see, the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood made a similar connection between the precise representation of the thing seen and moral rectitude.

However, MacDonald's belief that right action proceeds from true sight also seems closely connected with Socratic philosophy, for as Bertrand Russell points out the Platonic Socrates 'maintains that no man sins wittingly, and therefore only knowledge is needed to make all men perfectly righteous'⁵⁵. Russell sees this as a characteristic of Greek thought as contrasted with Christian ethics in which the pure heart is paramount. George MacDonald, however, seems to be conflating the Greek emphasis on the clear intellect with the Christian emphasis on the pure heart and locating this fusion at the centre of the conversion process.

In *Lilith*, fantasy allows MacDonald to give external forms to internal spiritual changes; to make the unobservable observable, in fact. But going on from this, Lilith's nature gives him the chance to discuss the salvation of one who will not be saved; to find a way in which the unwilling self can be redeemed without compulsion which, as Mara rightly observes,

would be without value. Coercion without compulsion, then, is the seemingly impossible desideratum. But Mara goes on to explain that:

There is a light which goes deeper than the will, a light that lights up the darkness behind it: that light can change your will, can make it truly yours and not another's - not the Shadow's. Into the created can pour itself the creating will, and so redeem it⁵⁶.

This episode is in fact a very good illustration of George MacDonald's use of fantasy to give form to the theological beliefs which he expressed elsewhere. In 'The Hope of the Universe' he writes:

All liberty must of course consist in the realization of the ideal harmony of the creative will and the created life; in the correspondence of the creature's active being and the creator's idea, which is his substantial soul. In other words, the creature's liberty is what his obedience to the law of his existence, the will of his maker effects for him. The instant a soul moves counter to the will of its prime cause, the universe is its prison⁵⁷.

Lilith is the embodiment of this dichotomy between the 'creative will' and the 'created life', and her freedom consists in the realignment of her will to her creator's, at which point she would be in harmony with God and all that he had made, and she would therefore be free: the universe would have ceased to be her prison.

The point is emphasised by the participation of Mara, Lady of Sorrow, in the scene: she is one of Lilith's numerous alter-egos, and she embodies or realizes in her person the 'ideal harmony of the creative will and the created life'; she *is* the 'correspondence of the creature's active being to the creator's idea'. She can therefore claim truly

I am no slave, for I love that light [which goes deeper than the will] and will with the deeper will which created mine. There is no slave but the creature that wills against its creator⁵⁸.

Fantasy, in this instance, allows MacDonald to show one possible course of action in which what he knows of God's justice is reconciled with what he has experienced of God's

love, and in doing so he ‘enlarges our conception of the range of possible experience’, to borrow Lewis’s formulation once more.

The boldness of this move should not be overlooked, for it is radical in its suggestion that forgiveness and redemption are open to all, not just the chosen few. This rejection of the Calvinist doctrine of the salvation of the Elect was crucial to MacDonald’s theology. Here it is considered in a work of fantasy, but it is also one of the concerns of *Weighed and Wanting* (1882) and is implicit in ‘It Shall Not Be Forgiven’, in *Unspoken Sermons* (1867), where it is applied specifically to Judas Iscariot. And this, of course, underlines the point that fantasy is not an hermetically sealed category within the continuum of literature, but plays a complementary role, providing an alternative way of discussing the same concerns which arise in other forms of writing.

MacDonald’s exploration of forgiveness in *Lilith* is also radical in its implication that the Bible is not the only source of learning about God. William Raeper argues that

The Bible, though crucial, no longer had the monopoly on revelation, and MacDonald went on to maintain that in fact it was Christ, not the Bible who was God’s revelation to man, and that one had to read the Bible in order to respond to Christ. Reading the Bible therefore became a means to an end, rather than an end in itself⁵⁹.

And here again there is an explicit rejection of Calvinism, which teaches that

the word of the Lord is the only way to lead us to an investigation of all that ought to be believed concerning him, and the only light to enlighten us to behold all that we ought to see of him⁶⁰.

This has a twofold importance: firstly, it is important not merely as a rejection of one particular system of beliefs, Calvinism, but of the whole notion of a written code of knowledge which encapsulates God; a system in which the fullness that MacDonald perceived in God would be reduced to a set of rules or maxims, for the ‘written code kills, but the Spirit gives Life’ (2 Corinthians 3:6 RSV). And this perhaps accounts for his dislike of allegory with its one-to-one correspondence of object and meaning which he described as ‘everywhere a weariness of spirit’⁶¹.

Secondly, it is important in its questioning of how the Bible should be read and interpreted, with MacDonald rejecting a slavishly literal and purely historical reading. This brings him into the theological debates on Bible interpretation articulated by Strauss and Hennell (among others) and explored by Richard Garnett using the figure of Prometheus in 'The Twilight of the Gods'. Where the work of Strauss and Hennell tended to demythologise the Bible, however, MacDonald if anything laid emphasis on an increased supernatural element, and his work was marked by the ease with which transfer from the natural to the supernatural can take place.

This is an expression of the belief that George MacDonald shared with his father that God is very much richer and fuller than the mind of man can comprehend. George MacDonald's father wrote in a letter to him that

I see so much mystery in nature, and so much of it in myself, that it would be a proof to my mind that the Scriptures were not from God were there nothing in them beyond the grasp of my own mind⁶².

Human comprehension and need on the one hand, and what can be expressed in a written system of belief on the other, can never neatly coincide, so other means of communication must be found.

This is a useful reminder that George MacDonald was first and foremost an evangelist (using that word in its broadest sense) and was prepared to use any means - from literary criticism and lectures to theatrical productions of Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress* and written sermons - to communicate the 'good news', the 'Hope of the Gospel'. Within that battery of weapons, however, fantasy was one of those best suited to his need, for it reaches beyond the material and empirically knowable (as does human need), but more importantly, it is a literature of possibility: it opens human comprehension up to 'sensations we never had before' and hints at the fullness of God which cannot be exhausted. And more specifically, the mythological Lilith allows him to explore possible means of salvation at one remove by giving inner states external forms and thus revealing them.

In *The Great God Pan* (1894) Arthur Machen reverses this process and, like Plato, regards everyday objects as symbols which conceal, rather than reveal, the spiritual reality behind them. As the scientist Dr Raymond argues in Machen's novel, 'all these things...from

that star that has just shone out in the sky to the solid ground beneath our feet...are but dreams and shadows that hide the real world from our eyes. There is a real world but it is...beyond them all as beyond a veil¹⁶³.

The Great God Pan is an exploration of what happens when that veil is removed (called by the ancients 'seeing the god Pan'), using one woman as a subject. The choice of the name 'Helen' for this woman is significant as it links Machen's central character, described as 'at once the most beautiful and the most repulsive'¹⁶⁴ of women to Helen of Troy, whose legendary beauty prompted her abduction by Paris and led to the Trojan War in which a whole civilisation was destroyed. She is thus the exemplar of the beautiful but destructive woman.

In the classical myth into which Machen taps, Helen is the daughter of Leda who was raped by Zeus in the form of a swan, but in this retelling she is the daughter of Mary, an orphan rescued from the gutter as a child some years previously, impregnated either by the god Pan or, it is perhaps implied, by her guardian, Dr Raymond. (Machen's veiled allusion that Mary 'was so beautiful that Clarke did not wonder at what the doctor had written to him'¹⁶⁵ is so veiled as to be obscure and does nothing to clarify Helen's parentage.) By choosing the name 'Mary' Machen calls to mind the Virgin Mary, the mother of God, and he then strengthens this reference by presenting her as a virgin dressed in white. This inversion of the Christian incarnation, in which Helen is the child of Mary and Pan, is one possible reason for the hostile reception which greeted the work on its publication in 1894.

The action is set in late nineteenth-century London, suggesting a radical reworking of the myth of Helen and the Trojan War which never actually materialises. Instead of following the story out Machen focuses on one aspect of it, the compelling and destructive power one woman had over men, but gives it a spiritual, as well as a physical application. By using the London of his own day as a setting Machen emphasises the relevance of his story to modern conditions, and, indeed, emphasises its modernity further by using a surgical procedure carried out by Dr Raymond to create a 'slight lesion in the grey matter...a trifling rearrangement of certain cells'¹⁶⁶ as the means of enabling Mary to see the god, Pan, on recovering consciousness from the operation, rather than a religious ritual which would have been used in the past.

The structure of *The Great God Pan* betrays the influence of *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* by Robert Louis Stevenson, particularly in its multi-narrative technique in which one strand of the tale is recorded and followed through by each of the main protagonists before being integrated to reveal the whole story at the end. This technique has the advantage of allowing Helen to be presented through the eyes of a number of different characters, each of whom reveals one aspect of the story. This successfully creates a fractured or fragmentary image of Helen which precludes any settled reading of her, suggesting her ineffableness and remoteness from other people. However, the multi-narrative technique is also the weakness of the novel, for the many tellings of stories create confusion, making it difficult to remember the various protagonists, their contribution to the tale or how the stories fit together.

To some extent this weakness is offset by Machen's powerfully descriptive passages in which entirely innocuous objects are imbued with a sense of foreboding. One, albeit lengthy, quotation will make this clear:

He could only think of the lonely walk he had taken fifteen years ago; it was his last look at the fields and woods he had known since he was a child, and now it all stood out in brilliant light, as a picture, before him. Above all, there came to his nostrils the scent of summer, the smell of flowers mingled, and the odour of the woods, of cool shaded places, deep in the green depths, drawn forth by the sun's heat; and the scent of the good earth, lying, as it were, with arms stretched forth, and smiling lips, overpowered all. His fancies made him wander, as he had wandered long ago, from the fields into the wood, tracking a little path between the shining undergrowth of beech tree; and the trickle of water dropping from the limestone rock sounded as a clear melody in the dream. Thoughts began to go astray and to mingle with other recollections; the beech alley was transformed to a path beneath ilex trees, and here and there a vine climbed from bough to bough, and sent up waving tendrils and drooped with purple grapes, and the sparse grey-green leaves of a wild olive tree stood out against the dark shadows

of the ilex. Clarke, in the deep folds of dream was conscious that the path from his father's house had led him into an undiscovered country, and he was wondering at the strangeness of it all, when suddenly, in place of the hum and murmur of the summer, an infinite silence seemed to fall on all things, and the wood was hushed, and for a moment of time he stood face to face there with a presence, that was neither man nor beast, neither the living nor the dead, but all things mingled, the form of all things but devoid of all form. And in that moment the sacrament of body and soul was dissolved, and a voice seemed to cry, 'Let us go hence', and then the darkness of darkness beyond the stars, the darkness of everlasting.⁶⁷

Initially the details of the landscape seem to carry an unaccountable significance which gradually becomes both weightier and darker, building up to a climax in which time is rent apart. In that lesion in time is found the presence normally concealed by symbols of the everyday world, even as the detail erodes into formlessness: the 'Form of all things, but devoid of all form'.

The significance of this passage is invoked and concentrated in the doctor's description of Helen's end, which it answers almost point to point. One of the main characters, Villiers, a friend of Clarke, the witness to Dr Raymond's operation on Mary, has been fitting the story together and finally tracks Helen down through her various *aliases*, from her marriage to his university friend, Charles Herbert, to her appearance in society as the hostess, Mrs Beaumont. He and Clarke visit her and offer her the choice of hempen rope with which to kill herself or the involvement of the police to investigate the suicides of men with whom she had formed liaisons. Helen chooses to kill herself and in dying she metamorphoses through various shapes into formlessness:

'The skin, and the flesh, and the muscles, and the bones and the firm structure of the human body that I had thought to be unchangeable, and permanent as adamant, began to melt and dissolve...Here was some internal force, of which I knew nothing, that caused dissolution and change. Here too was all the work by which man had been made,

repeated before my eyes. I saw the form waver from sex to sex, dividing itself from itself, and then again reunited. Then I saw the body descend to the beasts whence it ascended, and that which was on the heights go down to the depths, even to the abyss of all being. The principle of life, which makes organism, always remained, while the outward form changed. The light within the room had turned to darkness, not the darkness of night, in which objects are seen dimly, for I could see clearly and without difficulty. But it was the negation of light...I watched, and at last saw nothing but a substance as jelly.¹⁶⁸

Throughout his fantasy, Machen invokes the classical myth of Helen of Troy to suggest the sexual power women can hold over men, and the destructive effects of that power as the men who had had some form of relationship with her died shockingly or committed suicide. Like George MacDonald, however, Machen gives his work a spiritual resonance, but where MacDonald used the figure of Lilith to explore the possibilities of salvation, Machen uses Helen to show the power of the spiritual realm operating in human society, and in doing so reveals the necessity of symbols to conceal and contain that power. It is a bleak view of life in which real power, that is, spiritual power is destructive, for when Mary sees the god Pan it is the destructive qualities of the woman, rather than her life-affirming nurturing characteristics which are unleashed in her daughter. This carries the implication that the reality of which the visible universe is the outward sign is destructive and there is, therefore, no possibility of salvaging anything from annihilation, as Villiers explains:

those who are wise know that all symbols are symbols of something, not of nothing. It was indeed an exquisite symbol beneath which men long ago veiled their knowledge of the most awful, most secret forces which lie at the heart of things; forces before which the souls of men must wither and die and blacken, as their bodies blacken under the electric current. Such forces cannot be named, cannot be spoken, cannot be imagined except under a veil and a symbol...You and I...have seen something of the terror that may dwell in the secret place of life,

manifested under human flesh; that which is without form taking to itself a form⁶⁹

In all these examples of a single mythic female figure, mythology is used to express (in both senses of describing and expelling) or to question aspects of woman which caused anxiety during the Victorian period, and the corporate image they present is essentially ambiguous: woman is both angel and demon; morally virtuous, but susceptible to moral degeneracy.

It is easy to see this emphasis on woman as the virgin-whore as the result of the much-discussed Victorian sexual repression, and though this is very convenient, it is also much too simplistic. Indeed, the readiness with which it is accepted as an explanation of why the Victorians viewed women in this way has perhaps less to do with its adequacy as an explanation than with the extent to which twentieth-century thought has been conditioned by the theories of Sigmund Freud. In particular, Freud's emphasis on sex as the sole motivating force behind human behaviour and the only source of human anxiety has done much to foster the explanation that the Victorians' image of woman as the virgin-whore is a product of extreme sexual repression. Sexual anxiety does indeed exist in all ages, and certainly contributed to the Victorian's image of woman, but to hold it entirely responsible is both too restrictive and too exclusive.

A more helpful way of considering woman in Victorian society is to regard her as man's Other: she is everything that man is not, and as such she constitutes a convenient location for a whole range of displaced male attitudes and anxieties, including the sexual. John Ruskin argues in 'Of Queens' Gardens', for example, that woman's domestic, nurturing role includes that of making peace, and from this concludes:

There is not a war in the world, no, nor an injustice, but you women are answerable for it; not in that you have provoked, but in that you have not hindered. Men, by their nature, are prone to fight...It is for you to choose their cause for them, and to forbid them when there is no cause. There is no suffering, no injustice, no misery in the earth, but the guilt of it lies with you [women]⁷⁰.

From a Victorian man's point of view, this is a convenient means of retaining power which could be used in the interests of peace, but simultaneously evading responsibility for the exercise of that power in war or injustice, and so male aggression is displaced as female failure.

In her explanation of the florescence of the virgin-whore myth, *Woman and the Demon: The Life of a Victorian Myth*, Nina Auerbach argues that

a cultural myth thrives in part because it lives below the formulated surface of its age; rarely does it crystallise into explicit gospel or precept which the conscious mind can analyse and reject. 'Myth' is, or should be, an uncomfortable word, poised uneasily between rejection and embrace, apocrypha and dogma, arousing our trust and dispelling it simultaneously, remaining with us longer, perhaps, than do those things we know to be lies and truth...The myth of womanhood flourishes not in the carefully wrought prescriptions of sages, but in the vibrant half-life of popular literature and art, forms which may distil the essence of a culture though they are rarely granted Culture's weighty imprimatur. But myth, though it may have a secret life below the official doctrines of its age, cannot survive if it uproots itself from the history of that age and from the lives its age shapes and is shaped by⁷¹.

The extent to which the virgin-whore myth not merely survived, but flourished in the Victorian era is some measure of how firmly it was rooted in the needs, expectations and anxieties of that age.

IV

In addition to reworkings of figures from recognised mythologies, such as Helen from Classical mythology or Lilith from the Hebrew, nineteenth-century literature is noted for its use of figures from folklore. The one most often used is the vampire, although it was not until the end of the century that it found its most enduring expression in Bram Stoker's *Dracula* (1897). This was not, however, the first appearance of this creature, and in fact it owes much to *The Vampyre* (1819) by John Polidori which was written in response to the story-writing agreement which produced *Frankenstein; Or, The Modern Prometheus*.

One of the most interesting earlier treatments of vampire lore is the short story 'Carmilla' (1872) by J Sheridan Le Fanu⁷². Le Fanu's vampire has much in common with the beautiful but destructive women from mythologies: in both George MacDonald's fantasies involving Lilith, for example, she is associated in some way with vampirism.

Le Fanu's Carmilla, an apparently young and very beautiful woman, batters only on other women, giving the story surprising but unmistakable lesbian overtones. The obvious attraction between Carmilla and her victim, Laura, is however, undercut by revulsion, which is perhaps the product of taboo, for as Laura explains:

Sometimes after an hour of apathy, my strange and beautiful companion would take my hand and hold it with a fond pressure, renewed again and again; blushing softly, gazing in my face with languid and burning eyes, and breathing so fast that her dress rose and fell with the tumultuous respiration. It was like the ardour of a lover; it embarrassed me; it was hateful and yet overpowering; and with gloating eyes she drew me to her, and her hot lips travelled along my cheek in kisses; and she would whisper, almost in sobs, 'You are mine, you *shall* be mine, and you and I are one for ever.' Then she has thrown herself back in her chair, with her small hands over her eyes, leaving me trembling.⁷³

And her revulsion is even more apparent in her comment that

In these mysterious moods I did not like her. I experienced a strange tumultuous excitement that was pleasureable, ever and anon, mingled

with a vague sense of fear and disgust. I had no distinct thoughts about her while such scenes lasted, but I was conscious of a love growing into adoration, and also of abhorrence.⁷⁴

Not until the story's Conclusion does the narrator and object of Carmilla's love articulate its sexual nature, but she reaches an instinctual recognition of it in her conjecture that a 'boyish lover had found his way into the house and sought to prosecute his suit in masquerade'⁷⁵. In that Conclusion, however, two forms of vampirism are described, the first being merely the sustaining of the vampire's life by nightly intake of blood, but the second 'resembling the passion of love'⁷⁶. In both forms the victim dies, but in the second form the process is drawn out to extract the maximum enjoyment for the vampire and to engender a willing, if unwitting, participation on the part of the victim. Or if the vampire fails to seduce her victim into a willing participation, then she aims at least to make the victim sympathetic to her, so that the vampirism can continue. It is this form of vampirism which is Le Fanu's focus in 'Carmilla', not least because it is here that the vampire's power is most clearly seen.

In his portrayal of Carmilla herself, Le Fanu creates the beautiful and sexually alluring but destructive woman already seen in, for example, Astarte or Lilith, but considers her as alluring to other women only. It could be argued that this is reassuring in that men are safe from her attentions, and in this context it is worth noting that Carmilla is never seen in the company of a man who is not in a paternal or avuncular relationship to her. However, the lesbianism of the story puts the women involved beyond the experience of men altogether and therefore out of their control, and this overturns the reassurance offered by male immunity to Carmilla's vampiric attentions.

Given this rather subversive scenario it might be expected that Le Fanu would return Carmilla to the grave (as indeed he does) and Laura to normal relationships by indicating her future marriage. This would bring her back within society's dicta and sexual mores. However, Le Fanu refuses this option and ends his story on a note of ambiguity by suggesting some sort of continuing relationship between the women in another kind of haunting, for Laura writes: 'To this hour the image of Carmilla returns to memory with ambiguous alternations...and often from a reverie I have started, fancying I heard the light step of Carmilla at the drawing-room door'⁷⁷.

The most famous of all vampires, Count Dracula, is of course male, but unlike Carmilla who preys on her own sex, he preys on the opposite sex and makes vampires of them. They, too, display many characteristics of the mythic female figures who were used to explore the paradox within woman, or woman's place in society: they are simultaneously beautiful and cruel, and provoke an ambivalent response in the male spectator, Jonathan Harker, who describes his experience thus:

In the moonlight opposite me were three young women...They came close to me, and looked at me for some time, and whispered together. Two were dark, and had high aquiline noses, like the Count, and great, dark piercing eyes that seemed almost red when contrasted with the pale yellow moon. The other was fair, as fair as can be, with great wavy masses of golden hair and eyes like pale sapphires...All three had brilliant white teeth that shone like pearls against the ruby of their voluptuous lips. There was something about them that made me uneasy, some longing and at the same time some deadly fear. I felt in my heart a wicked burning desire that they would kiss me with those red lips...They whispered together, then they all three laughed - such a silvery, musical laugh, but as hard as though the sound never could have come through the softness of human lips. ...The fair girl shook her head coquettishly, and the other two urged her on. One said:-

'Go on! You are first and we shall follow; yours is the right to begin.'
The other added:-

'He is young and strong; there are kisses for us all.' I lay quiet, looking out under my eyelashes in an agony of delightful anticipation. The fair girl advanced until I could feel the movement of her breath upon me...the girl went on her knees, and bent over me, simply gloating. There was a deliberate voluptuousness which was both thrilling and repulsive, and as she arched her neck she actually licked her lips like an animal, till I could see in the moonlight the moisture shining on the scarlet lips and on the red tongue as it lapped the white sharp teeth.

Lower and lower went the head as the lips went below the range of my mouth and chin and seemed about to fasten on my throat. Then she paused, and I could hear the churning sound of her tongue as it licked her teeth and lips and could feel the hot breath on my neck. Then the skin of my throat began to tingle as one's flesh does when the hand that is to tickle it approaches nearer - nearer. I could feel the soft shivering touch of the lips on the super-sensitive skin of my throat, and the hard dents of two sharp teeth, just touching and pausing there. I closed my eyes in a languorous ecstasy and waited - waited with beating heart.⁷⁸

The fusion of Harker's coy watching and waiting with the vampires' obvious excitement and their attitude towards him as a treat to be shared out make this an unpleasantly voyeuristic episode which emphasises the sexual nature of their 'feast' to an almost gross extent. Likewise, Lucy Westenra is described in sexual terms, emphasising her voluptuousness, and her appeal to Arthur Holmwood is specifically sexual.

However, sexual appeal and sexual power are associated with women only *after* they have been made vampires by Dracula, for the inherent sexuality of Lucy's appeal is explicitly contrasted with her original state: her 'sweetness was changed to adamant, heartless cruelty, and the purity to voluptuous wantonness'⁷⁹.

One possible interpretation is that female sexuality is an abnormal state, and to that extent *Dracula* supports the view of women as essentially and ideally sexless, and thus conforms to the Victorian stereotype. In other respects, however, Stoker disrupts the stereotype by giving women a significant and active role in his fantasy.

Mina Murray, for example, before her marriage to Jonathan Harker is a working woman, and although she is in one of the acceptable professions for women, nevertheless she earns her own living. Furthermore, she is proficient in shorthand, can use a typewriter and is familiar with the phonograph, suggesting that she is technically adept, which was not so acceptable for women, even at the end of the century. These factors taken together may also suggest that she was perhaps moving towards some more commercial area of work, although this would probably be in support of her husband's work.

As one might expect from this display of efficiency, Mina is also able to make decisions without male guidance: she decides to travel abroad (and alone) to nurse her fiancé, and she later decides to read his journal. Likewise, she meets van Helsing without prior consultation with her husband and makes available to him both her journal and Jonathan's, thus giving him all the information he needs to tackle Dracula. And finally, it is through Mina that Dracula is finally tracked down.

In all this the vampire himself is curiously passive, for although it was his choice to leave his home in Transylvania, he seems unable to initiate much action thereafter. That is left largely to the female vampires he makes and the focus of the novel is on the chase which finally ends in his actual death when he ceases to be a vampire. Dracula's passivity is in keeping with the absence of any real sense of what might be called 'personality'; he is so much a vampire that it is impossible to tell what he is like otherwise. And this may account for the fact that it is the visual aspects of Count Dracula - his aristocratic air, his high cheekbones, aquiline nose, pale skin and black cloak - which have survived in the public imagination when the story itself is largely forgotten or unread.

The erotic elements in vampirism noted both in 'Carmilla' and in *Dracula*, have led to this myth more than any other, being given a sexual interpretation. Rosemary Jackson, for example, argues in *Fantasy: The Literature of Subversion* that

the vampire myth is perhaps the highest symbolic representation of eroticism. Its return in Victorian England...points to it as a myth born out of extreme repression⁸⁰.

Nina Auerbach, however, rejects this view, arguing that it is 'more plausible to read the novel [*Dracula*] as a *fin-de-siècle* myth of newly-empowered womanhood whose two heroines are violently transformed from victims to instigators of their story'⁸¹.

While this chapter makes no claim to completeness, it has perhaps suggested the importance of myth, be it classical, Eastern or folkloric, to the imaginations of the Victorians, as a way of making 'sense in a senseless world', to borrow Rollo May's phrase once more. The critic and novelist, Marina Warner, makes a similar point in *Managing Monsters. Six Myths of our Time*, suggesting that myths 'represent ways of making sense of universal matters, like sexual identity and family relations'⁸².

This need identified by both May and Warner to order experience so as to find or create meaning for human existence links mythology to religion; not, indeed, in the sense of being stories about gods in whom one must believe, but in the sense that mythology and religion have this function in common. In this way life in general is given point and the individual is given value: the universe has meaning and the individual has a place in that universe.

This suggests that the need for mythology is a universal need, and applies to people of all races and ages. However, mythology is at the same time historically grounded, in that particular myths are especially helpful to a particular society in a particular age, because these myths are the ones which can articulate most fully the anxieties which were pressing at that time.

It is, therefore, no coincidence that this chapter has also suggested the importance of women in the myths that the Victorians selected to rework, with even works ostensibly about male myths (*The Great God Pan*) or those with a central male mythological figure (*Dracula*) being dominated by women.

This can be seen as a reflection of the importance of the 'woman question' to the Victorians, particularly towards the end of the century when married women had finally been granted legal identities in their own right, able at last to own property, rather than just be the property of their husbands. During this period the calls for women to be politically enfranchised were becoming increasingly insistent, education for women was broadening and becoming more widespread, and the professions were beginning to open up to women, albeit both slowly and reluctantly. Taken together these factors induced fears of male redundancy; not merely in terms of loss of employment for men (though that was a real

enough fear), but in terms of loss of a role in society, and, since personal identity is at least partly dependent upon social function, loss of a sense of self. And these fears were often displaced as female aggression and pride.

Dealing with such matters directly and in contemporary terms was likely to encounter resistance and provoke a negative response in both critic and general reader. Fantasy, however, could explore such sensitive issues indirectly, disarming the worst of society's fears with the comforting thought that the incidents and people weren't actually 'real' and therefore could pose no threat to the fabric of civilization, which the more conservative sections of it believed could be torn apart by the changes in the role of women.

NOTES

1. Mary Douglas, Introduction to James George Frazer, *The Illustrated Golden Bough*, abridged and edited by Sabine MacCormack, (London: Book Club Associates by arrangement with Macmillan, 1978), p.9.
2. This point will be followed up fully in Chapter 4, Science and Fantasy.
3. Rollo May, *The Cry for Myth* (London: Souvenir Press, 1993), p.15.
4. Mary Shelley, *Frankenstein; Or, The Modern Prometheus* (1818), Everyman, (London: JM Dent, 1994), Preface, p.5. The Preface is the work of Mary Shelley's husband, Percy Bysshe Shelley, although written as if by her.
5. Ibid., p.25.
6. Ibid., p.31.
7. Ibid., p.32.
8. Ibid., pp7-8.
9. Ibid., p.187.
10. Ibid., p.187.
11. Mary Shelley, *Frankenstein; Or, The Modern Prometheus* (1831), (n.p.: Aerie Books, 1988), p.15.
12. Ibid., p.14.
13. Ibid., p.44.
14. Shelley, *Frankenstein* (Everyman, 1994), p.19.
15. Shelley, *Frankenstein* (Aerie, 1988), p.16.
16. Ibid., p.43.
17. Ibid., p.26.
18. Ibid., p.27.
19. Ibid., p.61.
20. Ibid., p.62.
21. Ibid., p.188.
22. Ibid., p.212.
23. Ibid., p.137.
24. Ibid., p.230.

25. Ibid., p.229.
26. John Milton, *Paradise Lost*, ed. Alastair Fowler, (London and New York: Longman, 1971), Book IV, 109-110.
27. Shelley, *Frankenstein* (Aerie, 1988), p.57.
28. Ibid., p.70.
29. Richard Garnett, *'Twilight of the Gods' and Other Tales* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1947), p.11.
30. Ibid., p.10.
31. Ibid., p.12.
32. Ibid., p.24.
33. Ibid., p.28.
34. Richard Garnett, 'The Dumb Oracle', *The Twilight of the Gods and Other Tales* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1947), p.109.
35. Charles Hennell, *An Enquiry Concerning the Origin of Christianity* (1838), Preface. Quoted in Bernard MG Reardon, *Religious Thought in the Victorian Age: A Survey from Coleridge to Gore*, 2nd edition (London and New York: Longman, 1995), pp.185-186.
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- See also Fiona MacCarthy, *William Morris. A Life for Our Time* London: Faber & Faber, 1994, pp651-2.
42. Raphael Patai, *The Hebrew Goddess* (n.p.: Ktav Publishing House, 1967), pp.209-211.

43. Ponsonby A Lyons, paper dated 18th November 1869, published in *The Rossetti Papers 1862-1870*, ed. William Michael Rossetti (London: Sands, 1903), pp.483-6.
44. In some versions of the original myth, the disagreement between Adam and Lilith was specifically about *sexual* equality and was provoked by the impossibility of them both adopting a dominant position during sexual intercourse. See Patai, *The Hebrew Goddess* (n.p.: Ktav, 1967). Although the Victorians did not allude to this directly, there is no doubt that they brought the sexual aspects of Lilith well to the fore, relating them both to the issue of equality and to the subversion of women's nurturing role. It was, it seems, impossible to be both sexual and motherly, and the greater the prominence assumed by sex, the more likely it was that the woman in question was a bad, destructive or unnatural mother.
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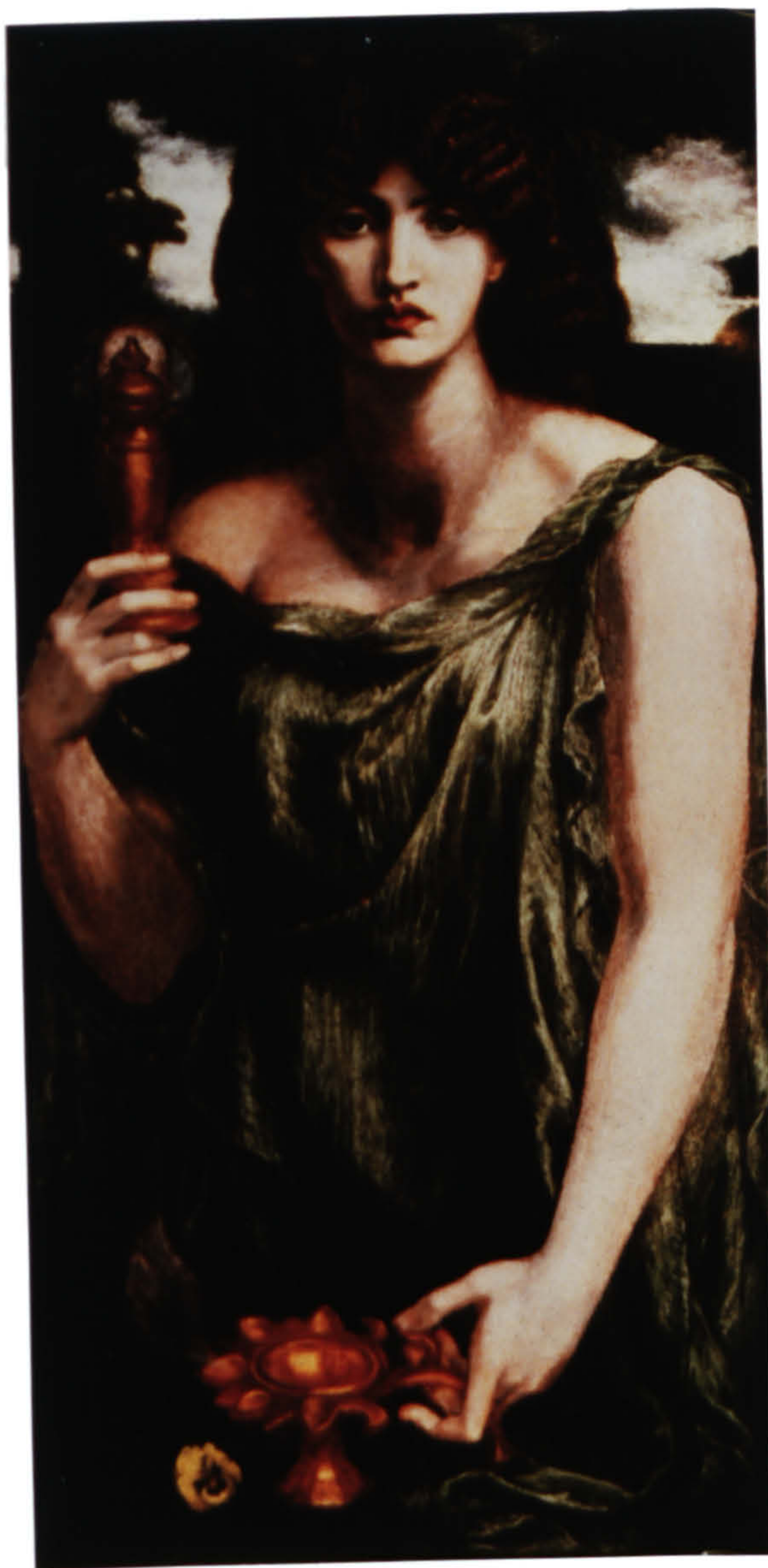
Pl. 3.1

Dante Gabriel Rossetti, *Venus Verticordia*, 1864-8.



Pl. 3.2

Dante Gabriel Rossetti, *Astarte Syriaca*, 1877.



Pl. 3.3

Dante Gabriel Rossetti, *Mnemosyne*, 1881.

I

Just as historical researches of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries provided some of the raw material from which writers and artists generated their fantasies so, too, science had a significant part to play in the creation of Victorian fantasy by providing some of the basic data required. This was then adapted and shaped by author or artist to create fantasies which expressed anxieties about scientific research itself, or considered, for example, the distinctions between the animal and the human as a means of arriving at some idea of what it means to be human.

Much scientific research was directed towards the development of technology: investigations into the nature of electricity, for example, were used in the invention and subsequent development of the telegraph in 1837, the telephone in 1876 and radio in 1885, all of which had clear practical benefits. But 'pure' or theoretical science (as opposed to 'applied' science) was perhaps of even greater importance in the creation of fantasy. The reasons for this are clear: technology modified the conditions in which people actually lived to make life easier or in some way better for them, but theoretical science offered people new ways of seeing or thinking about their world.

In this context the seminal event was the publication of Charles Darwin's *On the Origin of Species, by Means of Natural Selection; or the Preservation of Favoured Races in the Struggle for Life* in 1859. Obviously, no scientist works in isolation and Darwin was no exception: the concept of evolution had been mooted many times before (by, among others, Charles Darwin's grandfather, Dr Erasmus Darwin) and it was the subject of current interest and debate.

If Darwin's ideas did not come like a bolt from the blue, there is no doubt that many of the anxieties the sciences were generating crystallised around his work. The most immediate difficulty this creates is that of chronology: it is just not possible to use 1859 as the point at which evolution, or even Darwinian thought, began to exert its influence. The loss in tidiness, however, leads to a gain in richness in which a number of ideas subtly

modify each other, and the subject, far from being a simple causal chain, must be regarded as a closely woven fabric of interconnections and cross-references.

Although discussion of various evolutionary theories prepared people's minds for the reception of Darwin's theory by familiarising the concept of evolution itself, the geologists' research during the latter part of the eighteenth and first half of the nineteenth centuries was of far greater importance, for this resulted in the discovery of 'deep' or geological time. The significance of geological time lies in the fact that it provides an appropriate time scale within which evolution could reasonably occur, as Darwin himself suggests when he writes, 'the belief that species were immutable was almost inevitable as long as the history of the world was thought to be of short duration'¹. Once the history of the world was shown to be of long duration the evolution of species through time was seen to be a distinct, even a likely, possibility.

Much of the work in this field was undertaken by Charles Lyell and recorded in his three-volume *Principles of Geology*, published between 1830 and 1833. Despite the dryness of the title this work reached a surprisingly wide audience: Tennyson is known to have read it and, more significantly, it was the only scientific work carried by Darwin during his travels on HMS Beagle when he formulated his theory and collected much of the supporting evidence.

To argue that Darwin greatly benefited from these developments is not to devalue his work, for his crucial scientific contribution was the provision of a means or mechanism by which evolution could take place. In summary, Darwin's belief was that changes in the conditions in which a species lives cause variations or modifications to individuals within that species, making them better adapted to the new conditions. The individuals possessing these helpful modifications tend to have more progeny than those lacking them, either because they live longer, or because they are stronger and healthier, or both. The progeny of the modified individuals inherit the helpful variations, so that they too are better equipped to deal with the new conditions. Unmodified individuals have fewer and weaker progeny, so that strain tends to die out, leaving only the modified form which, when all individuals carry the modifications, can be regarded as a new species. This is the process which Darwin called 'natural selection' and which moved evolution from the realm of hypothesis into the

ambit of actual happening, with irreversible consequences for human thought, which can be traced in the art and literature of the time, particularly in fantasy.

While it would be easy to overstate the impact Darwin's work had on nineteenth-century religious belief, the most frequently-made error is that of overlooking his effect on the Victorian imagination, be it corporate or individual. Certainly in the past there was a tendency to see this issue as a bipolar argument between science on the one hand and religion on the other, with the ways in which Darwin's work fed into and affected cultural products, such as works of literature and art, being largely ignored. In recent years, however, this tendency has weakened, and more interest is now shown in the effects of Darwinian thought on cultural products. As no individual work of art is produced independently of a tradition, it is arguable that in affecting the imaginative works of the nineteenth century Darwin's work has affected all art works ever since.

In other words, in all those parts of the world in which Darwin's theory of evolution met with some degree of acceptance within the scientific community, the imagination of creative artists was also fired by it. Their resultant art works shaped the imagination of society at large, contributing to the tradition upon which the next generation of artists would build, or against which they would react. In this way Darwin has had a permanent effect on the British imagination, essentially providing it with a new way of looking at the world.

Time is of the essence: suddenly society was confronted by a shift from a very long but measurable time, such as was suggested by Bishop James Ussher's (1581-1656) calculation that creation took place on 23rd October 4004 BC, to an immeasurable, uncontainable flow. Time was opened up into eternity and the crown of creation, man, suddenly became the species, *Homo Sapiens*, an insignificant piece of flotsam carried along by that flow and unable to direct or dam its course. As the twentieth-century palaeontologist, Stephen Jay Gould, has perceptively suggested:

What could be more comforting, what more convenient for human domination, than the traditional concept of a young earth, ruled by human will within days of its origin. How threatening, by contrast, the notion of an almost incomprehensible immensity, with human habitation restricted to a millimicrosecond at the very end².

It was not merely that time was suddenly perceived to be very much longer than anyone had previously imagined, but that this change in quantity was so great as to constitute a change in quality: time was of a new *kind*. The magnitude of this change can be grasped by considering the matter in Kantian terms, in which time is an *a priori* form of intuition which conditions the consciousness by which we perceive and conceive the world; it is one element of the lens through which we view our universe, and changing that element results in a different image of the world itself⁹.

The world was suddenly de-familiarised, and a reading of its history in non-human terms was enforced, in that it could no longer be seen merely as the setting for mankind. Human beings were alienated within their homes and exiled from what they had seen as their own world; they were effectively disinherited. Tennyson catches at this effect in his poem, *In Memoriam AHH* (1833-1850), which was begun in the year when the final volume of Lyell's *Principles of Geology* was published:

There rolls the deep where grew the tree.

O earth what changes thou hast seen!

There where the long street roars hath been

The stillness of the central sea.

The hills are shadows and they flow

From form to form and nothing stands;

They melt like mist, the solid lands,

Like clouds they shape themselves and go...

cxii, 1-8

In a move which depopulates the landscape, banishing the human, the busy city streets are seen as the site of the still, central sea in past aeons, and even the hills, for centuries the symbol of the solid and immutable, are dissolved into mist and drifting cloud.

In the context in which Tennyson uses them, these lines are simply, if powerfully, elegiac, but other contexts generate other effects. The deep sense of unease and insecurity which pervades 'The Time Machine' (1895) by HG Wells, for example, is largely brought home by the notion that the house in which the narrator listens to the Traveller's tales is the

precise location of the events themselves: *this* was the place in which the Time Traveller watched 'with a strange fascination the sun grow larger and duller in the westward sky, and the life of the old earth ebb away'⁴. By providing a strong spatial link between the two events - the listening to the tale and the events described in that tale - Wells brings the familiar and the unfamiliar together and emphasises the changes by which the familiar house became the alien point on the planet on which the Traveller stood to watch the life of the earth ebb out, giving a sense of the radical changes wrought by an almost unimaginable length of time. Fantasy, in this case, allows Wells to project these radical changes in the past forward into the future, allowing them to be glimpsed both by his protagonists and by his readers.

As quickly as the geologists banished man from the earth, the palaeontologists repopulated it with dinosaurs, those vast lumbering creatures which seem to lend themselves to imaginative and figurative use. And to some extent they were so used: but, strangely, not usually as an embodiment of monstrosity, but as a metaphor for the significantly outdated, for the utterly obsolescent. Charles Dickens' famed introduction of a megalosaurus into the opening chapter of *Bleak House* (1852-53) is a case in point, for this dinosaur is stripped of any overtones of dangerous monstrosity, functioning instead as a metaphor for the clumsy outdated inefficiency of Chancery and, by implication, English law in general.

Given the obvious appeal of dinosaurs (amply attested by their continuing fascination for young children) one might expect a proliferation of them in fiction, but this expectation is never realised, and all that can be found are a few isolated examples.

One of the best of these is found at the end of 'The Time-Machine', where HG Wells relies on a disruption of scale to create grossly enlarged crabs which crawl over the beach, making very effective dinosaur-like monsters. Their behaviour, such as the exploratory flick of the Traveller's cheek with an antenna, is recognisably crustacean, but by fusing this familiar action with the image of them as dinosaurs, Wells creates a *frisson* of horror and disgust which increases the sense of unease implicit in the story and emphasises the radical changes which have taken place on earth.

He effectively exploits the jerkily mechanical but natural movement of a crustacean to tap into the human unease with what appears to be a conjunction of the organic and the mechanical, the natural and the artificial, resulting in a strong sense of the uncanny, which in his seminal essay, 'The Uncanny' (1919) Freud characterises as 'that class of the frightening which leads back to what is known of old and long familiar'⁵. The familiarity of the crabs clashes with the strangeness of their setting to prompt the feeling of uncanniness which Freud, referring to a paper, 'Zur Psychologie des Unheimlichen' (1906) by the psychologist Ernst Jentsch⁶ goes on to argue is particularly acute whenever 'there is intellectual uncertainty whether an object is alive or not, and when an inanimate object becomes too much like an animate one'⁷; a condition fulfilled by the crabs.

By populating the future world with these creatures Wells exploits that sense of the uncanny they generate to convey the alienation implicit in Homo Sapiens' place in the new scheme of things: as in aeons past the world was the place of the non-human, so, too, in future ages man is banished. The human race is simply and irrevocably lost.

It is clear, however, that the evolutionary direction used by Wells is opposite to that posited by Darwin. It is possible that Wells was simply using other scientific theories in his story, such as that of Georges-Louis Leclerc, Comte de Buffon, according to whose degeneration theory the earth continuously loses heat, bringing about the extinction of all life, and according to which man is the primitive type and monkeys and other related species are the derivatives.

However, by the end of the century when Wells was writing such theories had been thoroughly superseded by Darwin's theory, as his keen interest in science would inform him. Indeed, the opening chapter of *The Outline of History* (2 vols., 1920) makes clear that he accepted the Darwinian theory of evolution, not merely as a probable hypothesis, but as *fact*. It is, therefore, rather more likely that he simply did not regard himself as tied to the details of any evolutionary theory, but free to use aspects of it as imaginatively as he liked. In this case, by projecting Darwin's vision of the past into the future Wells gained a slightly spurious authority by using an actual creature scientifically proven to have existed. By relocating it in the future, however, he was able to tap into the human fear of the unknown, and especially the fear of the future.

Furthermore, the large size of these crabs (implying an abundant food supply) and their continuing existence after the extinction of the human race, suggests that they are better equipped for survival than man. This in turn undermines the traditional concept of the superiority of mankind over the animals, and especially the lower animals; a class that includes crustaceans.

One of the genuine strengths of Wells' writing is his ability to create and sustain the sense of alienation which is implicit in this new scheme of things, and which was created in part by Darwin's work: we have been 'confronted and affronted with the knowledge that we are mere fragments in a world that appears to be neither about us nor for us'⁸, to quote the writer on science and religion, John Durant. It is an uncomfortable notion which brings its own problems on both a personal and a social level, but by playing with or considering it in a fictionalised form Wells makes the unfamiliar slightly more familiar and disarms it to a limited extent by allowing the reader to take comfort in its nature as *fiction*.

In *The War of the Worlds* (1898) Wells takes a different approach to the same problem of the world no longer existing for mankind by bringing that which is alien - the Martians - into the world which was familiar to his late nineteenth-century readers. However, by having the Martians defeated not by armies of men and the latest in military technology, but by bacteria, the lowest life form of all, Wells restores the earth to mankind, at least temporarily. The earth therefore belongs to man once more, but not by the command of God to 'replenish the earth and subdue it and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth' (Genesis 1:28), but simply because the human body is adapted to deal with the bacteria of the earth and the Martian body is not. A purely natural cause is invoked and a new, but more ambiguous and fragile sense of belonging results, which anticipates the twentieth-century organic view of the earth, in which mankind and the planet are mutually sustaining and mutually dependent. And even this fragile sense of belonging is undercut by the continued threat from the Martians which is suggested in the 'Epilogue' of the story: 'It may be...that the destruction of the Martians is but a reprieve. To them, and not to us, perhaps, is the future ordained'⁹.

Other monsters can be found in Victorian literature. Dragons, for example, are usually derived from the romance and chivalric traditions which were of widespread interest during

this period, as we have seen in Chapter 1. Tennyson, however, rejects this tradition and instead draws upon Lyell's *Principles of Geology* which he is known to have read during 1837 for Section 56 of *In Memoriam* (1833-1850), where he describes 'Dragons of the prime,/That tare each other in their slime'¹⁰. They come from an earlier, pre-human existence.

In this section of the poem Tennyson articulates the dialogue between what is traditionally taught by religion and what has been discovered by science, suggesting that if love is not 'creation's final law' (l.14) all human aspirations are futile and the dinosaurs are more attuned to their environment than is mankind. For the 'dragons of the prime' there is no conflict save the bodily conflict between one dinosaur and another, and they are at home in their environment in a way impossible for modern man.

The slippage from the romance tradition to the new science as a source of the creatures effectively disrupts the readers' expectations and mimics the displacement of man's status which is the subject of this part of the poem. *In Memoriam* is, however, so long and so discursive that the role of this part in the overall scheme is a small one. It is effective in its local context in suggesting the alienation of modern man who is ill-suited to the conditions in which he lives, in contrast to the fierce dinosaurs which are obviously well-adapted to their environment. But this slippage from romance tradition to science is not used as a modulating influence or key metaphor throughout the poem.

The same could be said of William Morris's monsters in *The Life and Death of Jason* (1867): the local effect is powerful at least until Jason and his companions see and respond aggressively to the creatures, but they are not used as a key metaphor or central image to moderate meaning throughout this work.

But every day, more and more sluggishly
And shorter time, the water from the sea
Ran up, and fouled ere eve of the third day,
Though slower took the downward stream its way,
Grown wide and dull, and here and there the wood
Would draw away and leave some dismal rood
Of quaggy land about the river's edge

Where 'mid the oozes and decaying sedge
There wallowed ugly, nameless, dull-scaled things...

Book X, 231-239

At this point the monsters suggest dinosaurs at home in the primeval swamp from which all life might be said to arise, given its dual nature as land and water. The human beings, however, cannot ignore the challenge such creatures proffer by their very existence, and by their attack on them convert an eerily powerful primeval landscape into the mere setting for just one more incident during a predictably epic journey.

Indeed, in the description of the creatures as 'legged like a lizard, maned with long lank hair' (X.249), Morris modifies the image from that of dinosaur to mythological creature, then, finally, in the reference to them as 'worms' (X.258) to dragon, thus turning back to the romance tradition and away from the new science as a source of images of the monstrous. This has the effect of transmuting the monsters' alien strangeness into mere difference: the extraordinary has become - in the context of epic poetry in which dragons are a recurrent feature - the everyday.

It is not until the twentieth century that dinosaurs play a major role in a work of literature, either as its subject, as in *The Lost World* (1912) by Arthur Conan Doyle, or in terms of their pivotal function in, for example, *The Enchanted Castle* (1907) by Edith Nesbit, which will be discussed later in this chapter.

It is arguable that in *The Lost World*, the first of the Professor Challenger series, Arthur Conan Doyle was taking up a scientific stance on the question of evolution, with the novel constituting an exploration, rather than explanation, of that issue. He takes over the accepted premiss that evolution is a continuing process, so that where conditions change, life forms adapt accordingly; but he creates a plateau in which conditions have not changed, and in which life forms usually considered prehistoric survive, allowing him to bring together primitive and current life forms and examine the conflict between them. It is thus a means of representing in an extreme form the conflict between species, and, within each species between variant forms, which is an inherent feature of evolution.

The novel reads very much like an adventure story from *Boy's Own Paper* which has been pushed into an unnecessarily exotic setting. There is a hint of male initiation rites in

that a journalist, Edward Malone, who is also the narrator of the tale, joined the expedition in order to 'win his place in the world' and consequently his woman, and this, together with the insistent manliness and emphasis on moral hygiene creates an obstacle to appreciation, if not to understanding for the late twentieth-century reader.

For example, in Doyle's fictive world the place for women is clearly the home, and their role is that of a catalyst, prompting men to deeds of derring-do, and to that extent he was reinforcing the stereotypical view of women as belonging naturally and exclusively to the domestic sphere, which by 1912 was becoming increasingly outmoded and unrealistic. And just as woman's role was a passive or inspirational one, man's role was active and chivalrous. This meshes *The Lost World* in with the nineteenth-century adaptations of the chivalric ideal considered in Chapter 1, and is an expression of Doyle's own nature which, according to his son, Adrian Doyle:

adhered absolutely to the medieval values in all the basic pillars of life - women, money, courtesy to those of lower degree, pride of blood that is the condemnation of snobbery and the steel self-sacrifice that should be the natural choice of the gentleman to his fellow wayfarers¹¹.

Given that one of the accepted uses of literature, and especially literature for young people, is to educate or facilitate moral improvement, the underlying didacticism is hardly surprising (although its extremely reactionary nature is disturbing), but one could wish that Doyle had managed to merge it more subtly in his material.

The emphasis on moral hygiene with its presentation of the ape-men as unclean and Lord John Roxton's stated desire to 'clear out the whole infernal gang of them and leave this country a bit cleaner than we found it'¹² strikes the modern reader as sinister in its echoes of ethnic cleansing and disturbing as well as distasteful in its racist implications. Adrian Conan Doyle may have regarded this merely as an instance of his father's 'pride of blood that is the condemnation of snobbery', but this is hardly a view acceptable to the late twentieth century which has witnessed the logical outworkings of a moral code based on racial purity in Nazi Germany during the 1930s, and which was brought to a halt only with the defeat of Germany in World War II in 1945. (And this, of course, is only the most

extreme of many instances of racially-motivated genocide throughout the century, both before and after 1945.)

The point at issue in *The Lost World* is civilisation's superiority, and this is made explicit in the comparison of the physical appearance of Challenger with that of the king of the ape-men who was, according to the narrator, Malone,

the very image of our Professor, save that his colouring was red instead of black. The same short, broad figure, the same heavy shoulders, the same forward hang of the arms, the same bristly beard merging itself in the hairy chest. Only above the eyebrows, where the sloping forehead and low, curved skull of the ape-man were in sharp contrast to the broad brow and magnificent cranium of the European could one see any marked difference¹³.

At the point at which it really matters the European is superior, and European civilisation must therefore vanquish the ape-men, who are presented merely as evolution's 'Missin' Links'¹⁴.

Manliness and moral hygiene, however irritating to the modern reader, are less damaging to *The Lost World* than the imperialist undertones which sound throughout the novel and which they help to create. Clearly the plateau is seen not as a world of lost opportunity (however that may be defined), but as a land to be explored, conquered, catalogued. Scientist, hunter and journalist are united in their efforts to 'bag' trophies, be it in the form of specimens for the scientist, animal skulls for the hunter, or copy for the journalist. For all of them the lost world is something to be used for their own ends and must eventually be ruled over by beneficent Western man. As Professor Challenger boasts:

What, my friend, is the conquest of one nation by another? It is meaningless...But these fierce fights, when in the dawn of the ages the cave dwellers held their own against the tiger folk, or the elephants first found they had a master, these were the real conquests - the victories that count. By this strange turn of fate we have seen and helped to decide even such a contest. Now upon this plateau the future must for ever be for man¹⁵.

Such imperialism can be regarded as an echo of British imperial aspirations which were at their height in the early years of the twentieth century, when Britain had annexed almost all the territory she could, and had not yet begun the slow process of returning power to the nationals from whom it was taken. However, it can also be seen as a reflection of Doyle's own brand of imperialism, in which civilisation depends upon the union of the English-speaking nations, with America and Britain taking the lead, as described by Hesketh Pearson in *Conan Doyle. His Life and Art* (London: Methuen, 1943).

In Professor Challenger's programme for the plateau dinosaurs have no place and will no doubt perish: even the pterodactyl is captured merely to prove to his fellow scientists that Challenger has found living dinosaurs. These explorers might just as well be on safari in Africa, with the dinosaurs taking the place of especially ferocious tigers for all the real imaginative use Doyle makes of them.

Despite this *The Lost World* is a success as an exotic adventure story, and with it Arthur Conan Doyle established a new genre (even called the 'lost world') which is manifested mainly in film. Titles such as *King Kong* (Ernest Shoedak; Merian C Cooper, 1933), *The Land that Time Forgot* (Kevin Connor, 1974), *The Last Dinosaur* (Alex Grasshof; Tom Kotani, 1977), and perhaps most spectacularly of all, *Jurassic Park* (Steven Spielberg, 1993) come readily to mind, though the role played by dinosaurs has changed greatly from Doyle's use of them as particularly fierce animals. Marina Warner, for example, argues in *Managing Monsters. Six Myths of our Time* that *Jurassic Park* can be seen as a 'naked confrontation between nature coded female and culture coded male'¹⁶, in which the dinosaurs - all female - living in the Park are a metaphor for a society in which women are out of control and have taken over from men. While it is easy to understand the appeal the 'lost world' genre has for filmmakers - pure spectacle is after all at its core - its success is a little more surprising, given the difficulty of creating a really convincing dinosaur in rubber, though the current sophistication of optically-created special effects has largely disposed of this problem in the 1990s.

This practical difficulty also goes a long way to explaining the relative scarcity of dinosaurs in the art of the period. The most commonly bought art form was easel paintings (or prints derived from easel paintings) and although such paintings may have a variety of

functions (to teach, or provide moral enlightenment, for example) they are essentially a decorative art form, intended to enhance or make more attractive in some way the place in which each painting is hung. As dinosaurs (or the popular idea of them) are physically unattractive to most people, they make unlikely subject matter for easel paintings, despite the interest they created during the nineteenth century. Applied art is not much better off, given that there is so little dinosaur literature for illustration, and given the difficulty of transferring the romance of the prehistoric world so that it could be assimilated into some other subject.

Exceptions can be found, however. In his painting of *Perseus and Andromeda* (exh.1892. Liverpool, Walker Art Gallery) [Plate 4.1], for example, Lord Leighton's monster is more like a dinosaur than the traditional representation of a dragon. In appearance its head is somewhere between that of a horse and a diplodocus, while its leathery wings recall those of the pterodactyl and its leg resembles that of a two-legged species of dinosaur which walks upright. Andromeda is trapped beneath the monster's wings and a *frisson* of disgust is created by the juxtaposition of the human flesh of the graceful and naked young woman and the leathery hide of the dinosaur this entails.

The sense of entrapment is increased by the sheer cliff walls on either side which hem the monster in as securely as it hems in Andromeda. This not only heightens the feeling of claustrophobia, but gives the artist the chance to play the textures of rock, monster hide, human flesh and swirling water against each other, rather as Millais played the texture of metal against flesh in *The Knight-Errant*, as we saw in Chapter 1. Leighton's painting is a notable success in creating High Art from a fusion of two major Victorian interests - classical mythology and the new science - but it remains an interesting exception to, rather than part of, a recognised trend in the visual arts of the period.

Another exception is Gustave Doré's illustration of *David and Goliath* [Plate 4.2] in which he has succeeded in recalling not merely the size of dinosaurs, but the ponderous weight which so disabled them in the struggle for existence. Utterly unique in this respect, Doré's is the only illustration to convey the giantness of the Philistine champion, while the scale-like mail cladding the heavy body creates a reptilian image: Goliath is indeed a mighty lizard, a dinosaur. David, of course, is the smaller, lighter and more adaptable favoured race

which uses intelligence not brute force to overcome problems, and which consequently survives.

The problems of visualisation encountered in the film industry are neatly circumvented in literature, and Edith Nesbit's dinosaur in *The Enchanted Castle* (1907) is among the most convincing ever created. This is in part because its role, though crucial, is not extensive, and its activities can therefore be circumscribed to avoid raising awkward questions. More importantly, Nesbit has found a way of bringing dinosaurs forward into human history without sacrificing their prehistoric alien qualities or relying upon pseudo-science to accomplish a sleight-of-hand trick.

Instead she uses a stone sculpture of a dinosaur, such as those created by Darwin's draughtsman, Benjamin Waterhouse Hawkins, which were placed in Sydenham Park, South London in 1852. This one, however, comes to life in the moonlight, thus allowing close proximity to people and to the everyday in a way impossible for the 'lost world' genre. This creates an opportunity to play the dinosaur off against normal life and thereby heighten the feeling of dream-consciousness, in which things are simultaneously utterly unsurprising and interestingly novel which Nesbit uses to take the reader from the world in which they live to her fantasy Other World. Additionally this tactic creates a space for the play of the natural against the artificial, science against art, which she uses as part of her exploration between appearance and reality which is one of the themes of the novel, as well as concealing a neat reference to the fact that dinosaurs are known only through fossils, fragments of skeleton quite literally petrified into stone through countless aeons of time.

Nesbit's use of the dinosaur is, in fact, much concerned with time. By locating it in a garden with sculptures of classical gods which also come to life she is eliding not merely two time scales, but two different *sorts* of time whose only common factor is their extreme length. The dinosaur arises from geological time which is scientific and, given a sufficiently large unit of measurement, quantifiable, while the gods are the embodiment of mythological time which stands outside any known measure. Each type of time is used by Edith Nesbit to interrogate the other, and by revealing the limitations of each the very concept of time itself is brought into question for the reader, prompting them to ask what time actually is. From

being part of the apparatus by which the world is perceived, as Kant would have it, time has moved centre-stage and become the subject of thought.

Although representing different sorts of time, Nesbit's treatment of them on equal terms sets up an equation between the dinosaur and the classical figures. In effect, the dinosaur is subject to the same conditions governing the times when the classical statues come to life, and is, therefore, treated as a mythological figure rather than a biological relic. Henceforth the dinosaur can be used by Nesbit as any other mythological figure is used to make 'sense in a senseless world...[and] give significance to our existence'¹⁷, as the psychologist, Rollo May, would have it, or, as I have suggested in Chapter 3 (see pp.165; 215) to help find meaning in the universe and impute value to the individual.

The Enchanted Castle is probably Edith Nesbit's most aesthetically satisfying novel, and one reason for this is the complete and seamless interweaving of these two different mythologies into a children's story whose frame of reference is the everyday and the unremarkable. To read this novel is to locate oneself on the borderline between the mundane and the magical, and to be sensible of the operations of both, leading to the pleasantly disturbing experience of having to consider the nature of these categories, and the interactions between them. As Nesbit herself argues:

There is a curtain, thin as gossamer, clear as glass, strong as iron, that hangs for ever between the world of magic and the world that seems to us to be real. And when once people have found one of the little weak spots in that curtain which are marked by magic rings, and amulets, and the like, almost anything may happen¹⁸.

The success of Nesbit's tactics here prompts questions of why this wasn't previously attempted; why the better part of a century had to elapse before dinosaurs could be assimilated into literature. The problems encountered in an attempt to prove a negative are well known, so a satisfactory reason for this delay will probably never be found. Despite this, three possibilities could be tentatively offered, bearing in mind that while they are not mutually exclusive each one alone is likely to prove inadequate.

In the first place it might be suggested that dinosaurs were simply too threatening to be enjoyed as the stuff of fiction. And since human beings usually feel threatened by the

unknown, dinosaurs undoubtedly carried some threat, which was heightened by the broader threat they posed to the view of the world as an essentially unchanging entity: the same yesterday, today and forever. Whether this level of anxiety was sufficient to prevent the imaginative use of dinosaurs in fiction is far more questionable. Certainly, if it is accepted that one of the functions of literature is to explore or express a society's fears, rather than escape them, one would expect to find a proliferation rather than a scarcity of dinosaurs in the literature of a society which felt threatened by the science that discovered the existence of these creatures. It is possible, however, that if a society's anxieties are particularly acute, people prefer to ignore the threat rather than explore it, and in this case no work of literature emphasising that threat would be commercially viable. Since many authors depend upon their writing to earn their living, they would in most cases avoid such themes as would render their work unsaleable.

The second possibility also involves the unknown-ness of dinosaurs, but in this case suggests that insufficient information was held to make them fully imaginable. Lacking basic information about physical appearance - type and colour of hide, usual stance, sort of movement, and the like - writers were unable to describe dinosaurs sufficiently sharply to make them resonate in readers' minds, and readers would be unable to respond to these mighty but now extinct lizards should they be offered in literature.

The final, and perhaps most fruitful possibility, is that some other source of the monstrous was being tapped during the nineteenth century, and the likeliest vein is the mechanical inventions of the preceding hundred years or so. More than mere size was involved, because for the first time apparently independent movement was possible. The locomotive source was concealed, and these huge machines appeared to be self-determining, and it is this combination of size and movement which was so potent to the imagination of the Victorians.

II

Of course dinosaurs had size and movement too, but they were organic, so the combination was less surprising: it is possible to scale up from an elephant after all. The other point about dinosaurs, which marked them out from large animals, was that they were dead. This gives them an added potency, which one might expect to lead to a proliferation of stories about or involving them. This potency was, however, undermined by the threat inherent in the notion of the extinction of a species, as evidenced by the discovery of fossil remains of dinosaurs. If one species can become extinct (especially when the reasons for this are unknown), then *any* species can become extinct; and this includes Homo Sapiens. The annihilation of life is a common enough concept, and one familiar to a reader acquainted with the Christian tradition, but the scientific formulation of extinction due to natural if unidentifiable causes, opened up a gap between it and the notion of the judgement of God.

Related to this is the proliferation of tales about the last man on earth published mainly during the first half of the nineteenth century. Although their main thrust is towards the sensational, such stories are intimately connected with the scientific developments of the day, and especially contemporary work on thermodynamics, dealing with the laws governing heat and its mathematically quantifiable relationships with other forms of energy.

In 1847 Hermann Helmholtz argued that in any system energy is neither created nor destroyed, but is transformed into a different type of energy. Thus the energy created by a human hand winding the key in a clockwork toy train, for example, is transformed into kinetic energy, heat and sound when that mechanism is released and the train runs along the track. The sum of the kinetic energy, heat and sound equals the energy built up in the action of winding in the first place. This is the First Law of Thermodynamics, and applied on a grand scale would suggest that life could continue indefinitely, since energy is never lost.

However, in this example the heat and sound energy which are by-products of the transformation energy are not useful forms of energy, in that they play no part in making the train move. William Thomson 1st Baron Kelvin (1824-1907) called this the 'dissipation of energy' in the Second Law of Thermodynamics which he formulated in 1852. As this law

also states that heat must always pass from a warmer body to a cooler, Kelvin effectively upset the state of equilibrium posited by Helmholtz in 1847. When the Second Law of Thermodynamics is applied on a grand scale to the universe, we are confronted with the notion of the 'heat-death of the universe'. Thus the scientists postulated scientific reasons for what had previously been seen as a myth; the myth of the death of the sun.

This idea held a powerful appeal for writers, affording as it did the opportunity to create a sense of alienation which can be seen as a reflection of the alienation many people already felt; the sense of not being at home in the world, like Matthew Arnold's traveller 'Wandering between two worlds, one dead/The other powerless to be born'. More importantly, perhaps, the formulation of the laws of thermodynamics gave writers the chance to consider the end of all life without the need to involve the idea of the judgement of God. In May 1824 Mary Shelley, for example, wrote in her journal, 'The Last Man! Yes, I may well describe that solitary being's feelings, feeling myself as the last relic of a beloved race, my companions extinct before me'¹⁹, and in 1826 this personal sense of alienation was expressed in her novel, *The Last Man*. Likewise, in the anonymous short story, 'The Last Man' (1826) a feeling of alienation is conveyed powerfully in the description of the changed astronomy at the end of time:

The moon was large and dark...It had no longer the fair round shape that I had so often gazed on with wonder. The few rays of light that it emitted seemed thrown from hollow and highland - from rocks and from rugged declivities. It glared on me like a monstrous inhabitant of the air, and, as I shuddered beneath its broken light, I fancied that it was descending nearer and nearer to the earth, until it seemed about to settle down and crush me slowly and heavily to nothing. I turned from that terrible moon, and my eyes rested on stars and on planets, studded more thickly than imagination can conceive. They too were larger, and redder, and darker than they had been, and they shone more steadily through the clear darkness of the mysterious sky. They did not twinkle with varying and silvery beams - they were rather like little balls of smouldering fire, struggling with a suffocating atmosphere for existence²⁰.

Changes in the observed landscape from what had been a beautiful vale to 'one dreadful mass of rocky desolation, with a wide, dry channel winding along what had been the foot of a green valley'²¹ reinforce this sense of impending doom and the painful sense of alienation, reflecting the alienation of the individual from society already identified as a characteristic quality of the nineteenth century, and perhaps also reflecting the change from a 'green and pleasant land' to the desolate and grimy streets of vast impersonal cities.

Until the final scene, in which the narrator is awoken from sleep by the servant whose 'eyes [were] rolling hideously at thus witnessing the frolics of his staid and quiet master'²² and realises that his vision has been merely a dream, the world depicted is one in which the extinction of life carries complete conviction, but no burden of judgement.

Artists, too, were interested in the 'last man' scenario, with one of the best known examples being *The Last Man* by John Martin (1833. Newcastle Upon Tyne, Laing Art Gallery) [Plate 4.3]. Here a powerful sense of isolation is created by the manipulation of scale in which a tiny human figure is depicted in an apparently limitless landscape in which corpses are piled up. Martin uses a palette predominantly of reds to create a dramatic feeling of impending doom and to convey the idea of a final sunset, signifying not merely the end of a day, but the end of all time.

It will have been noted that the examples cited here are all from the first half of the century, while the laws of thermodynamics were formulated only in mid-century: the scientific interest in thermodynamics cannot therefore have caused the artistic interest in the theme of the last man. Fashion, which affects the subjects deemed suitable for literature or art as much as it dictates clothes and hairstyle, may have contributed to the interest in the 'last man' theme, but this does not explain the lessening interest in it from about 1840.

It is at least arguable that the 1816 eruption of the volcano Tamboro in the East Indies contributed to the interest in the last man theme by throwing so much dust into the earth's atmosphere that some of the sun's rays were cut out. The weather was cold, there was heavy rainfall, harvests were late and 1816 became known as the 'year without a summer', giving some idea of the after-effects of a major natural catastrophe. This, together with the beginning of the cholera pandemic recorded in 1818, created a feeling of impending doom and the end of all things.

While the eruption of the volcano in 1816 and the cholera outbreak two years later heightened interest in the 'last man' theme, these factors cannot explain why the interest died out, apparently just as the scientists were becoming more interested in thermodynamics. Probably no single reason can be held responsible for this change, but the laws of thermodynamics were likely to have been a major contributing factor, for it is arguable that the death of the earth (and therefore of human life) was a potent stimulus to the artistic imagination only prior to the scientific interest. By positing reasons for such a catastrophe, the scientists introduced not merely a feeling of probability, but of inevitability about the end of the earth. This being so, the theme was just too threatening to constitute the subject of a work of art.

Indeed, there is some evidence to suggest that the sense of threat was becoming uncomfortably potent even before the formulation of the laws of thermodynamics. *The Last Man* by Mary Shelley had a very poor critical reception in 1826 which, as Morton D Paley notes in his Introduction to the 1994 World's Classics edition, belongs to the realm of invective, not literary criticism. Paley then goes on to suggest that 'it is as if by this rhetorical overkill the critics were trying to erase the conception of lastness'²³.

III

Other aspects of the scientific revolution proved to be as stimulating to the imagination of artists and writers and of longer duration than the theme of the last man. Mundane and unexciting as it sounds, the detailed observation of nature which was both *modus operandi* and final, deciding evidence for scientists like Darwin was also figuring in the art of the period.

William Holman Hunt, for example, spent many hours in an orchard at night painting the background trees and foreground grasses for *The Light of the World* (1853. University of Oxford, Keble College) [Plate 4.4]. Not content with imagining the result, Hunt had to observe and transcribe these details in such a way that they contributed to a new religious

iconography. Although Hunt took verisimilitude to extremes (he was said to be the only man able to paint the invisible lining of a sheep's ear) it was not a personal eccentricity, as George Frederick Stephens' article, 'The Purpose and Tendency of Early Italian Painting', in *The Germ* makes clear:

By a determination to represent the thing and the whole of the thing, by training himself to the deepest observation of its fact and detail, enabling himself to reproduce, as far as is possible nature herself, the painter will best evince his share of faith²⁴.

It is interesting that Stephens links this new aesthetic to science, arguing later in the same article that the sciences

have become almost exact within the present century. Geology and chemistry are almost re-instituted...by bringing greater knowledge to bear upon a wider range of experiment...If this adherence to fact, to experiment...has added so much to the knowledge of man in science why may it not greatly assist the moral purposes of the Arts?

This view of nature in which details are important for what they are, rather than existing to elicit an emotional response from the audience, is essentially a new approach to nature and should be contrasted with the mood-evoking Romanticism of previous years. Nothing could make this point clearer than a comparison of FG Stephens comments quoted above and Dorothy Wordsworth's response to landscape, in this case a view of Dumbarton Rock. She wrote:

Right before us, on the flat island...were several small single trees or shrubs, growing at different distances from each other, close to the shore, but some optical delusion detached them from the land on which they stood, and they had the appearance of so many little vessels sailing along the coast of it...With the ghostly image of Dumbarton Castle, and the ambiguous ruin on the small island, it was much in the character of the scene, which was throughout magical and enchanting - a new world in its great permanent outline and composition, and changing at every moment in every part of it by the effect of sun and wind, and mist and

shower and cloud, and the blending lights and deep shade that took place of each other, traversing the lake in every direction. The whole was indeed a strange mixture of soothing and restless images, of images inviting to rest, and others hurrying the fancy away to an activity still more pleasing than repose. Yet, intricate and homeless, that is without lasting abiding-place for the mind, as the prospect was, there was no perplexity; we had still a guide to lead us forward²⁵.

The characteristically Romantic emphasis on movement, on process, or the act of becoming which typically evokes wonder or awe evident in Dorothy Wordsworth's journal gives place to a more static view of the world in which detail is all-important, and can be fixed, pinned down and studied in the work of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood during their brief existence as a brotherhood between 1848 and 1854. The broad sweep of the brush which leaves its mark in the texture of the paint gives way to a precise and measured application of colour and a smooth, enamelled surface.

Joseph Noel Paton adopted an approach similar to that of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, but more extensively and on a larger scale for his paintings from Shakespeare's *A Mid-Summer Night's Dream*, *The Quarrel of Oberon and Titania* (1847. Edinburgh, National Gallery of Scotland) [Plate 4.5], and *The Reconciliation of Oberon and Titania* (1848. Edinburgh, National Gallery of Scotland) [Plate 4.6]. In each painting minutely observed and painstakingly transcribed details of nature are used as the basic fabric of a lavish fantasy vision, with even the fairy wings being based on the careful study of the wings of a fly, which Paton kept in a jar for that purpose. Such exact replications can be found almost anywhere on the canvases, but the snail on the extreme right of *The Quarrel* and the owl in the centre foreground of *The Reconciliation* are particularly noteworthy.

While the paintings are *tours de force* of painting technique and the management of crowded scenes (Lewis Carroll counted 165 fairies in *The Quarrel* alone), they are more important for their radical disruptions in scale of details realistically represented to create fantasy visions which previously existed in the mind of the poet/playwright. The multiplicity in size helps to create a richness and fecundity which reflects both the fecundity

of nature and the scientists' methodology which is based upon the collection of data. More specifically, Paton's style of painting, in which a multitude of detail accurately rendered is built up into a unified whole, is similar to Darwin's style of writing in *On The Origin of Species* in which he, too, builds up a vast array of detail accurately recorded into a single unified theory.

The fact that these paintings antedate the publication of Darwin's work by just over ten years suggests that both artist and scientist were part of a general intellectual trend during this period towards a view of the world based upon objectively observed facts. Both artists and scientists were apparently describing the world as it actually exists, and they therefore could present their descriptions as objectively 'true'.

Richard Dadd went even further in *The Fairy Feller's Master-Stroke* (1855-64. London, Tate Gallery)[Plate 4.7], which is packed with minutely observed and recorded detail. This compression of detail and the disruption of picture space in which the detail is located vertically up the picture plane, rather than being positioned within picture space, create a claustrophobic painting which defies rational interpretation, even with the benefit of the long poem written by Dadd to explain it. Densely packed content is coupled with a smooth, hard, almost enamelled surface which resists viewer involvement: this picture is simply looked *at* to an unusual extent. No matter how bizarre the content, the fantasy world Dadd thus creates is related to the scientific movement of the time through his focus on detail, which was also the focus chosen by scientists. Like Joseph Noel Paton, Dadd built a large number of details up into a unified composition, and this bears similarities to the way in which scientists, most notably Darwin, also built detail up into a unified whole.

Much the same can be said of William Henry Fisk's painting, *The Secret* (n.d., Private Collection) [Plate 4.8], in which densely packed and carefully reproduced details of nature are intermingled with equally carefully painted artificial detail. Coupled with disruption of scale and an Edward Lear-like whimsicality and intensity which borders on insanity, this painting creates a nightmare world which is all the more threatening for its surface innocence.

It is no coincidence that this was the period in which illustrated books on natural history were available to a wide audience. One thinks here of Philip Gosse's stream of publications

- *The Aquarium: An Unveiling of the Wonders of the Deep Sea* (1854); *The Ocean* (1854); *Life in Its Lower, Intermediate and Higher Forms; or The Manifestation of Divine Wisdom in the Natural History of Animals* (1857); *The Romance of Natural History* (1861) - each illustrated in part at least by the author, whose watercolours were 'executed in the manner of miniature, with an amazing fidelity of form and...brilliancy of colour'²⁶, a description which could be applied with equal accuracy to the paintings of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, if 'amazing fidelity to form' is restricted to details.

Where Darwin's collection and collation of vast quantities of detail led him to the theory of evolution, Gosse's religious convictions, which included a literal interpretation of the biblical account of the six-day creation of the world, prompted him to write *Omphalos: An Attempt to Untie the Geological Knot*. Published in 1857, two years before Darwin's *Origin of Species*, *Omphalos* is a response to other recently published works on evolution, such as *Vestiges of the Natural History of Creation* by Robert Chambers. In *Omphalos* Gosse argues that since life is a cycle with no part constituting a natural starting point, and every natural object having an omphalos or egg, creation must be a 'violent irruption into that circle of nature'²⁷. Under these circumstances, the objects created must be fully developed and would, therefore, bear the marks of their previous living, although fresh made. Thus Adam was created with a navel, although he had never actually been a foetus and so had had no need of one. On the same principle, the earth was created with fossil skeletons in its crust, although the creatures fossilised had never actually existed.

As Philip Gosse's son and biographer, Edmund Gosse, points out, the irony is that it was Gosse's own experiments and observations which helped to supply the theory of evolution with arguments. And there is a further irony in that both Gosse and Darwin were wholehearted and earnest in their search for truth, and used similar methods based on the close observation and recording of detail, although they came to diametrically opposed conclusions.

In one respect Philip Gosse has been judged harshly, for he is remembered as the man who supposed that God embedded fossils in the earth's crust to 'set a trap for naughty geologists'²⁸, and the ensuing ridicule has obscured his genuine contributions to nineteenth-century science. He was one of the most respected scientists of the day, and one

whose religion and science were mutually illuminating and united in the service of God. Too often his extreme religious views have been used as an excuse for dismissing his science, but as the twentieth-century scholar, Herbert L Sussman, argues:

The highest achievement of the religious scientist is a particular kind of work in which the facts and the laws of the natural world are presented in the most minute detail, but in which details and general laws are so organised as to be seen as signs of transcendental truth. The work of Philip Gosse...exemplified the belief, shared by the [Pre-Raphaelite] Brotherhood, that acute observation could unveil spiritual truth²⁹.

For both scientists and artists, detail was particularly important in their understanding of the world and their description of it. In this context photography is also important because it offered for the first time the power to halt time and objectively record all that lay in front of the lens. Again, this most realistic of media encouraged a fascination with detail, albeit detail which was softened by the photographic processes of the day and by the heavy and sometimes quite rough printing paper used by photographers. Indeed, the nature of photography, which is both science and art, tended to increase its importance, for it had claims to objective truth - it records all and only what is in front of the lens - and to artistic expression on a par with painting in, for example, portraiture. (It is only fair to add that this view of photography was in constant battle with the view of it as a mechanical device, and as such devoid of all artistic merit; and if one judges from the representation of each medium in art galleries, or from the prices fetched at auction this battle is still not over.)

Photography also had a more direct influence on some artists, including Joseph Noel Paton, whose sister married the most famous Scottish photographer of the day, David Octavius Hill, who had initially trained as an artist. Indeed, Hill seems to have encouraged Paton to use photographs as *aides-mémoires* when he was painting. Although this was not Paton's invariable practice - he did many detailed preliminary sketches as well - it was one which he had recourse to throughout his working life.

The literal realism of photography was quickly exploited to create fantasy visions which had previously existed only in the mind of the photographer, making fantasy out of realism and giving the lie to the popular belief that photography was essentially a mechanical

process in which there was no room for creativity. A good example is Julia Margaret Cameron's enigmatic and puzzling photograph, *The Return after Three Days* (c1868-70. London, Victoria and Albert Museum) [Plate 4.9] in which the title bears no obvious connection to the content, forcing the viewer to seek their own correspondences between them in an attempt to find the meaning the title implies. Henry Alexander Bowler used the same device in his painting, *Can these Dry Bones Live?* (1856. London, Tate Gallery), but as we have seen (Introduction p.27), it is possible to find the meaning suggested by Bowler's title. The title chosen by Cameron for her photograph offers so few clues to the content that it is impossible to create a sure meaning, so the photograph remains enigmatic, suggesting a meaning it does not disclose.

The urge to authenticate what is obviously unreal, whether this is by the realistic representation of fairies in paintings, or by the use of a realist medium such as photography which records only what is there to be recorded, is perhaps one expression of the desire noted by Longinus to 'go beyond the boundaries by which we are circumscribed', and which Francis Bacon later described as the need to satisfy in the spirit of man a 'more ample greatness and a more absolute variety than can be found in the nature of things' as discussed in the Introduction (pp.2-3).

It is also, perhaps, a reaction against what was perceived by Kenelm Digby among others as the materialism of the nineteenth century. By authenticating what is not observable, the artists were declaring a belief in the reality of some things which cannot be seen. However, by using an accurate representation of things as they exist in this world to make their declaration, the artists could simultaneously maintain their commitment to nature as their guide in painting.

The new approach to nature also affected literature, though much less obviously. Indeed, the extent to which this is true is difficult to ascertain simply because nature has always played a major role in literature, and especially in poetry. Christina Rossetti, for example, often writes within this poetic convention, drawing upon the standard tropes and images, but she is equally capable of twisting that convention to her own ends. 'Twilight Calm' (1850), for instance, is opened by a purely conventional, slightly anthropomorphic description of the end of the day. Thereafter the natural details become ever more precise

and sharply etched, giving the poem a new vitality and ultimately showing that Christina Rossetti's view of nature has become unconventionally all-embracing:

The gnats whirl in the air,
The evening gnats; and there
The owl opes broad his eyes and wings to sail
For prey; the bat wakes; and the shell-less snail
Comes forth, clammy and bare.

Violence and ferocity are easily assimilated into the poetic convention, but the slightly disgusting is not: Christina Rossetti, however, has succeeded in creating a repulsive description of a slug, emphasising the repellent qualities as much as the more attractive aspects of nature. In so doing she is recording what is actually there, without selecting only what is aesthetically pleasing or emotionally moving, much as photography records only what is in front of the camera.

The precision of Rossetti's descriptions of nature suggest very close and directed observation, particularly as so much is focused on animal movement, which cannot be learnt merely by looking at illustrations. In the second stanza punctuation is used to break up the line, mimicking the movement of the squirrel referred to, while the fourth stanza gives a sharp-edged description of a dormouse and increases the vitality of the poem.

In the *Goblin Market* Christina Rossetti places such precise descriptions of the natural world at the service of fantasy, where one important effect is the creation of the idea of multiplicity or fecundity. For example, although the description of each fruit offered by the goblin men is brief, and many fruits are merely listed, the description of them all takes up some 25 lines (l.5-30) of the poem, suggesting that the supply is endless and in effect increasing the temptation. By describing the same fruit again later in the poem (l.352-363) Christina Rossetti suggests an even more plentiful supply.

Likewise, the detailed descriptions of the goblin men themselves suggests multiplicity, which increases the apparent threat. In fact, only six goblins are described, but by initially describing only one aspect of each (l.71-76), then returning to add a description of another aspect (l.107-114), then piling on descriptions of their actions and movements (l.331-347)

Christina Rossetti creates the impression that there are many more than six of them, and this has the effect of increasing the threat they pose.

The *Goblin Market* was originally illustrated by Christina Rossetti's brother, DG Rossetti, who followed the text closely. However, by dividing his composition diagonally to separate the virtuous Lizzie, seen toiling home uphill, from her foolish sister Laura and the goblin men, DG Rossetti unbalances the illustration, crowding half of it [Plate 4.10]. And like the piling on of detail by Christina Rossetti, this suggests that there are more goblins than there actually are. Part of this effect is achieved by this artist's refusal to create a coherent space for each creature (a device which he used in his illustration of Tennyson's *Morte d'Arthur* discussed in Chapter 1.), but this crowding effect is heightened by using the picture edge to cut into their figures, implying that there could be more goblins beyond the picture frame.

The second effect of the precise descriptions of the goblin men is to merge the human and the animal in one creature. They are goblin *men*, but have the form (or, in one case, movement) of various animals or birds: cat, rat, wombat (DG Rossetti is known to have owned one), snail, parrot and owl. They are impossible creatures, and all the more threatening for the fact that they cannot be placed securely in the category of human or animal. This sinister fusion of the animal and the human is, however, offset to some extent by the later, but equally precise description of the two sisters as birds sleeping together in one nest. Although the sisters remain entirely human, this attractive picture of them as nesting birds offers a more pleasant image of nature than anything else in the poem.

Finally, the detail inherent in Christina Rossetti's descriptions enabled her to create a remarkably sensuous poem. This is particularly obvious in Laura's description of actually eating the fruit, exemplified in the lines, 'You cannot think what figs/My teeth have met in' (l.173-174), which focus attention on the tactile pleasures of biting into fresh fruit far more than a general description could do.

The sensuous quality of the poem assumes a more sinister aspect when Lizzie attempts to buy fruit to save her sister's life, for the goblins' subsequent attack on her is rendered in precise detail. There is no hiding from the physical qualities of that attack, or from the

extremity of its violence as the goblins attempt to cram the fruit into her mouth, making of it a particularly unpleasant fantasy rape scene.

The violence of this passage is modulated into a greater eroticism on Lizzie's return home, when she invites Laura to

Hug me, kiss me, suck my juices
Squeezed from goblin fruits for you,
Goblin pulp and goblin dew.
Eat me, drink me, love me...

l.468-471

It is again the detail of Laura's response which emphasises the sensuality of the poem, for

She clung about her sister,
Kissed and kissed and kissed her:
Tears once again
Refreshed her sunken eyes,
Dropping like rain
After long sultry drouth;
Shaking with aguish fear, and pain,
She kissed and kissed her with a hungry mouth.

l.485-492

Given Christina Rossetti's very close ties with the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, which was at least as literary as it was artistic, the emphasis on detail in her work is what one would expect, and can be seen as the outcome of a 'determination to present the thing and the whole of the thing', based upon the 'deepest observation of its fact and detail' which Stephens saw as the means of reproducing nature and so evincing the artist's share of faith, and which he believed was at the heart of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood's aesthetic (see p.242). Additionally, Christina Rossetti's use of detail is similar to that of Joseph Noel Paton in painting, or the use of photography to create fantasy visions, for they all use realistically rendered detail to authenticate a vision of something which is manifestly unreal, as discussed above (p.247).

A detailed approach to art or literature was not the sole prerogative of *The Brotherhood*, however, and Richard Jeffries comes even closer to a Darwinian use of natural detail in his fantasy, *After London, or Wild England* (1885).

This work - surely one of the oddest of the period - is written in two parts, the first of which is entirely descriptive. Jeffries is, in effect, creating a systematic description of the geography, flora and fauna of the world through a period of time as it changes after a catastrophe which almost destroyed it. This is the setting for the second part of the book, which contains the action of the story. Two things are particularly striking about Jeffries' description: the first is its comprehensive nature, as though it were written to enlighten a stranger from the other end of the earth or beyond. It is, therefore, orderly and progressive, beginning with plant life, going through various mammals and ending with man, before dealing with the macrostructure, the geography of the land.

The more interesting aspect is, however, Jeffries' extraordinary emphasis on process: he describes this world not merely as it is, but in its stages of becoming so. Set in the future, the opening sentence nevertheless provides a temporal location in the fictive past - beyond memory but not beyond the memory of memory - to create an overarching of time. The ambiguity thus created frees the romance from the constraints of a specific time or period, without losing the resonance of passing time.

Thereafter the process of the land becoming what it now is is worked out in the details of the description, with each change in nature leading to more degeneration, which is simultaneously an increase in growth. Whole forests come into being, grow up and become almost impenetrable before the readers' eyes, while the luxurious growth of the plant life chokes water channels and helps to create a huge, unexplored lake at the centre of the world. Clearly many of the details are derived from Jeffries' own observation of nature, but the overall effect, and especially the sense of the fecundity of nature, is reminiscent of Darwin's *Origin of Species*, in which he argues that

every organic being increases at so high a rate, that, if not destroyed, the earth would soon be covered by the progeny of a single pair. Even slow-breeding man has doubled in twenty-five years, and at this rate, in

less than a thousand years, there would literally not be standing room for his progeny³⁰.

This sense of fecundity is also evident in *After London*, for in summarising the changes in plant life after the disaster Jefferies writes:

From an elevation...nothing was visible but endless forest and marsh. On the level ground and plains the view was limited to a short distance, because of the thickets and the saplings which had now become young trees. The downs only were still partially open, yet it was not convenient to walk upon them except in the track of animals, because of the long grass which, being no more regularly grazed by sheep as was once the case, grew thick and tangled. Furze, too, and heath covered the slopes, and in places vast quantities of fern. There had always been copses of fir and beech and nut-tree covers, and these increased and spread, while bramble, briar and hawthorn extended around them. By degrees the trees of the vale seemed as it were to invade and march up the hills, and...in many places the downs are hidden altogether with a stunted kind of forest. But all the above happened in the time of the first generation³¹.

This can almost be seen as an outworking of Darwin's belief in the geometrical ratio of increase in evolution in which he argues:

cases could be given of introduced plants which have become common throughout whole islands in a period of less than ten years. Several of the plants such as the cardoon and a tall thistle, which are now the commonest over the wide plains of La Plata, clothing square leagues of surface almost to the exclusion of every plant, have been introduced from Europe; and there are plants which now range in India...from Cape Comorin to the Himalya, which have been imported from America since its discovery...The obvious explanation is that the conditions of life have been highly favourable, and that there has consequently been less destruction of the old and young, and that nearly all the young have been enabled to breed. Their geometrical ratio of increase, the result of which

never fails to be surprising, simply explains their extraordinarily rapid increase and wide diffusion³².

In *After London* Jefferies combines his own very detailed knowledge of nature (he was the author of various books and articles on nature, all of which are noted for their detailed descriptions of the countryside or natural phenomena) with aspects of evolutionary theory to produce a work of fantasy which not only uses nineteenth-century science as its raw material, but which articulates some of the unease which that science itself generated in society.

The story itself is a simple one: a young man, Felix Aquila, the eldest son of a noble but not a wealthy family, is physically less well-developed than his brothers and feels inferior to his peers and powerless in the social setting in which he has grown up. His interests lie, not in the activities going on around him, but in the society of his ancestors, the Ancients, and in their crafts and skills, such as writing, which after the catastrophe which maimed the world, have been almost entirely lost.

His dream of escaping his constraining society by embarking on a voyage of exploration of the poisoned lake in the middle of the known world in a home-made boat becomes a reality when he realises the woman he loves, Aurora Thyma, will be married to someone else to further her father's political and economic ends. One reason for making this journey is the lure of wealth reputedly hidden on the islands in the lake, which would make him a more acceptable suitor, but Felix's main reason is his need to prove that he is capable of this sort of action, at least to himself.

During his travels Felix lives in a city, becomes part of an army and finally, having survived his journey to the poisoned lake, which is all that is left of the city of London, he is invited to become king of a number of small hill communities. He thus experiences every type of social structure his world can offer, and although he finds them all inadequate in some ways, his decision to bring Aurora to the hill community endorses that social structure and way of life. The story ends on a very tentative note, however, with Felix, whose name means 'happy', setting out on foot to fetch Aurora, meaning 'dawn', with no logical certainty, but only an inner assurance that he will find her and together they will create a 'happy dawn'.

The story can be read in a number of ways: it articulates the need to break free from social constraint and embark on a voyage of exploration of the spirit, for example. Or it can be seen more specifically as a *Bildungsroman*, in which a youth undergoes some rites of passage, at the end of which he can be confirmed as a man, and in this there is a comparison with George MacDonald's *Phantastes*, as we have seen in chapter 1. And, finally, *After London* can be seen as an exploration of that recurrent Victorian concern, the city/countryside polarity, in which cities were often condemned as the centre and source of pollution, be this moral or - as here - chemical, and the rural life endorsed as the good life.

Great care must be taken with this last interpretation, however, for Jefferies' attitude is very ambiguous on this point, and while it is true that the city of London is seen as the source of pollution, it is less certain that rural life is thereby endorsed. This seems to be an expression of Jefferies' personal ambivalence, for he was a countryman who lived and wrote in the city, and whose books were read by city-dwellers. *After London* can be seen as an expression of this dichotomy in Jefferies' life between town and country.

It could also be suggested that *After London* articulates Jefferies' own ambivalent attitude towards evolutionary science which is indicated by the contradiction between his belief that 'Natural Selection is a true cause, modifying, but not a sufficient cause to explain all phenomena'³³ and his statement that 'no evolution takes place'³⁴, for although Jefferies presents evolution at work throughout his romance, he nevertheless relies upon a catastrophe to create his fictive world as it is. And in this Jefferies is swinging away from evolution as an explanation of how the world comes to be as it is, and towards the earlier catastrophic view of the universe, in which scientists believed that very widespread natural disasters of one kind or another gave the world the form they found and accounted for the existence of the natural phenomena they observed.

Other parallels can be drawn between Darwin's work and *After London*, and these are again concerned with detail and example. A direct comparison could perhaps be instituted between Darwin's observations of the effects of land enclosure round the planting of a single species of tree in what previously had been barren heath³⁵ and Jefferies' description of the self-propagating plant life after man's control had been lifted by the catastrophe³⁶. In both cases vigour and variety of growth result, and Jefferies is thus using an important

scientific discovery as the raw material from which he constructs his fantasy, much in the same way as other writers drew upon Arthurian legend or classical myth to create their fantasies.

Darwin's observations on animal life could also be considered, for he notes that the prevalence of the plant. heartsease is directly related to the number of humble-bees, which in turn is determined by the field-mouse population, governed by the number of cats in the locality³⁷. This passage could be compared to Jefferies' description of the fluctuating fortunes of the mouse.

Initially, Jefferies tells us, unharvested crops provided abundant food for the mice which rapidly multiplied in number until they were sufficient to destroy new crops raised by the survivors of the catastrophe. The mice, however, are preyed upon by weasels, foxes, owls, and the like, but with little effect on the overall population. The enhanced food supply for the predators, however, leads to their multiplication, and the mouse population declines under this heavier depredation.

In the meantime, the large number of mice attract many cats from the towns, which with their new-found abundant supply of food, go forth, multiply and go wild. And in time this strain is physically differentiated from the domestic cat by becoming a longer animal, thus conforming to Darwin's belief that a subspecies evolves into a species when the variation that makes it a subspecies becomes fixed. Both Darwin and Jefferies thus trace 'ever-increasing circles of complexity'³⁸, working upwards and outwards through a spiral of life from plant to distant mammal, and making clear the fragile interdependence of species.

Although it is unwise to infer too much from this, it nevertheless marks an increased sensitivity, an holistic approach to the earth which developed into the late twentieth-century concern with ecology and 'green' issues. It traces a movement away from the image of the earth as an inert mechanism, such as was imagined by the geologist, James Hutton, to that of the earth as an organism, in which each species depends for its continued well-being on other species.

Darwin saw this in terms of a competition in which each species struggles against the others for the maximum share of light, space and food, while the French evolutionist, Jean-Baptiste Pierre Antoine de Monet de Lamarck (1744-1829) emphasised co-operation

between species. The twentieth-century scholar Ludmilla Jordanova suggests that Lamarck (whose views were known in Britain mainly through Charles Lyell's reviews of his work) saw nature as a 'unified system of laws, laws to be inferred from the observation of natural phenomena'³⁹.

One major element in this system of laws was the interaction between the powers of life (by which Lamarck seems to mean some kind of life force or essence) and the environment, and it is this interaction which Jefferies elucidates in *After London* by compressing the geological time scale required for evolution into an imaginable stretch of human time, and by this compression magnifying minute changes into differences large enough to be easily perceived. So one of the things achieved by his fantasy is an explication or demonstration of evolution itself.

The advantage Jefferies gains by dividing his romance into two parts is that of concentration, and in the first part evolution is worked out in a relatively pure manner, with the minimum of distractions and contradictions. Conditions changed, and animal behaviour adapted to those changes, with even the physical structure adapting to the new requirement for speed and strength over the generations, following a Lamarckian, rather than a Darwinian model, in which animals could even develop new organs, should these be required by changes in environment.

Jefferies' demonstration of evolution is successful and succinct at least as far as animal and plant life are concerned, but with the human animal the situation is different, because there has been no change in human behaviour or in the human body. What does change are the relationships between people and the way they live and work together; changes which result in a hybrid of clan, feudal and slave social organisation because the intelligentsia or natural leaders emigrate *en masse* immediately after the catastrophe. Clearly this is a move away from evolution as a biological theory to evolution as a social science, a form of social Darwinism which got little support from Darwin himself.

In any case, Jefferies' presentation of human evolution is less clear cut and less obvious since the human society which results from the changed conditions seems to be less highly organised than the original society of the Ancients. This anomaly is, however, more apparent than real, for according to Darwin natural selection 'leads to an improvement of each

creature in relation to its organic and inorganic conditions of life; and consequently, in most cases, to what must be regarded as an advance in organisation'⁴⁰. Progress, in other words, often results from evolution, but is not an inevitable consequence of it.

In this case, Jefferies uses an unspecified catastrophe as a device to set the evolutionary clock back to an earlier point, thus providing an artificial starting point from which evolution can be seen to work. Society, then, has not evolved backwards or regressed from the sophistication of the Ancients to the current more primitive social structures, but has simply been set back to that stage, a zero point from which progress can be measured.

A distinction must be made, however, between what Darwin actually wrote and the public perception of his argument, and in the ensuing century or so evolution and progress have been indissolubly linked in the public mind. Of course the public had some justification for this, in that Darwin himself believed that progress generally accompanied evolution, but of far greater importance was the desire, or need, to see and chart progress. As *Origin of Species* does not deal with the social organisations of the animals it discusses, the decision to apply the theory of evolution to society was an ideological one, rather than being justifiable on scientific grounds alone. And the reasons behind this decision are enmeshed in the matrix of Victorian society.

Evolution itself was prefigured in Auguste Comte's theory of Positivism, outlined in his *Course on the Positive Philosophy* (1830-1842), which was known in Britain through the translations by GH Lewes and Harriet Martineau, published within months of each other in 1853. Comte's argument is that the human mind advances from a theological stage, through a metaphysical one to end in a positive stage, and that this Law of Three Stages is mirrored in society. In the final positive stage authority is derived from a spiritual power invested in the scientists, whose knowledge would create for society a peaceful unity of thought and action. A secular heaven on earth would result, with scientists as the secular priesthood.

Progress was also seen in many other areas of Victorian life. Disease processes, for example, were beginning to be understood, holding out the promise that they might soon be treatable, if not actually eradicated. More generally science was progressing rapidly, creating improvements in the quality of life for many people, and these improvements lent substance to the idea that the human race itself was progressing.

A certain circularity is discernible here, for these factors lent Darwin's theory probability, making it more immediately acceptable to society, but at the same time evolution lent authority to the progressive view of life: as Lord Macaulay had put it 'the history of England is most emphatically the history of progress'⁴¹.

This close association between evolution and progress, bordering on but never reaching identification, made it possible to use the concept of evolution as a metaphor in a very obvious way. The metaphoric use of a scientific theory is not unique, and it is on this ground that science, literature and mythology meet as different sorts of stories about the way the world is, but the ease with which evolution lends itself to this type of use is certainly unusual.

More specifically, the notion that all things progress, becoming both more complex and more efficient, introduces a dynamism which was welcome to a society in which social mobility was of crucial importance. The image of life as a chain of being in which every creature held a fixed place was superseded by the image of the ladder of success, in which it is always possible to evolve to a higher state than the present.

In fact, the ladder of success is not the most accurate picture of evolution - a bush or tree is far more appropriate - but it is the one adopted by society at large. As Stephen Jay Gould argues, 'the "missing link" might as well have been called the "missing rung"'⁴². And clearly the ladder is the most dearly held image of evolution *because* it allows the emphasis on progress in a way that the bush or tree image does not. The more successful a man became, the 'higher' he had evolved and the 'better' he was: a comforting philosophy for the *nouveau riche*, even if none of it can be substantiated from Darwin's work. And as it is only those who are successful who have power, and only those who have power can impose their definition of success on society, a self-fulfilling definition was created.

As on the individual level, so on the corporate: the idea of evolution as a ladder of success enforces a linear idea of history. There is a great potential for arrogance in the idea that one society is 'higher' (and sliding in with this, 'better') than another simply because it comes later, but as an organising principle it has the twin attractions of simplicity and precision, as well as justifying colonialism in an age of rapid colonial expansion. And it is worth pausing to note that these twin attractions of simplicity and precision resulting from

the linear idea of history have much in common with the 'deceptively simple ordering of society' which Debra Mancoff identified as one reason for the popularity of chivalry in the Victorian period. (See Chapter 1, p.91).

The linear view of history in which one state is a direct result of preceding states also carries the assumption that everything preceding the present state existed in order to create present conditions. (Again we are dealing not with the actual theory of evolution, but with the public perception of it.) And this restores to man (or civilised man, at least) much of the status he apparently lost by being simply the product of evolution, the race that existed only for a millisecond at the end of an incomprehensible immensity of time, to refer again to Gould's evocative words. Now it could be argued that everything that existed during that immensity was important only for the part it played in the evolution of Western, civilised man.

On the negative side of the issue, this application of evolution opened up the notion that those who were less successful were less highly evolved, which involved the possibility of exploitation or oppression of various kinds. One example is the attitude of Victorian society (including many women) towards women, as Bram Dijkstra argues in *Idols of Perversity: Fantasies of Feminine Evil in Fin-de-Siècle Culture* (Oxford & New York: Oxford University Press, 1986). One of the most blatant examples of this, which argues very specifically that women were less highly evolved than men, is to be found in 'Mental Differences between Men and Women', by George Romanes. The burden of Romanes' argument is that women are less highly evolved than men, and are therefore indecisive, timid, less intelligent, and motivated by emotion, not will. In other words, Romanes finds a scientific justification to confirm the stereotype of woman and to keep her in her place, arguing that

We may predict with confidence that, even under the most favourable conditions as to culture, and even supposing the mind of man to remain stationary (and not, as is probable, to advance with a speed relatively accelerated by the momentum of its already acquired velocity), it must take many centuries of heredity to produce the missing five ounces of the female brain⁴³.

This is perhaps one reason why women were demonised during the nineteenth century, and seen to be in need of male control, as we have seen in Chapter 3. Being motivated by feeling, not reason, women were essentially irrational and therefore unfit for public work, but best confined to the home where they could do little damage. However, the comparatively late date of Romanes' article (1887) suggests that the relationship between evolutionary science and the demon woman is more complex than a straight cause-and-effect link.

Over many years women had been considered less intelligent and more emotional than men, making them dangerous creatures; but the widespread acceptance of this belief was then taken as proof that they were less intelligent and more emotional than men: it was true because it was believed to be true. A vicious circle was thus created, from which women could not escape, for being considered less intelligent than men, they could not be allowed to enter into rational debate about their own needs or role in society, while female use of rhetoric could be dismissed as a mere emotional outburst. In either case, the evidence that women could offer about their own needs and abilities, or their future role in society was disallowed. Evolutionary science closed that circle completely by 'proving' that women were less developed than men, and thus reinforced the patriarchal society's traditional attitude towards women.

Women were not alone in being regarded as less highly evolved than men, for the imperialism and potential for ethnic cleansing identified in Conan Doyle's *The Lost World* was also based on the belief that the tribes found by Challenger and his companions were less highly evolved than they, and therefore could be ruled over or simply eliminated.

This use of evolution in turn sharpened the debate on what it meant to be human, and gave new urgency to the problem of defining, or even describing, mankind. But even this way of stating the case is problematic, in that it implies a structure or a collection of qualities which are recognisably and specifically human, and which therefore constitute a sort of diagnostic test for humanity: if these qualities (whatever they were) were present, the creature would be deemed human, but if they were absent, then it would be an animal.

As long as mankind was believed to be the result of a single creative act of God, distinct from the acts which created animals, the boundary between the human and the

non-human was felt to be clear and absolute. However, when mankind was seen as the product of an evolutionary process which accounted for the development of animals as well as man, that boundary became blurred, making it difficult to decide whether a creature was human or not. And with this uncertainty came a corresponding rise in anxiety.

Writers often approached this vexed question of what was human by placing the human and the non-human in near juxtaposition and exploiting the tension thus created. The classic text here is Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein; Or, The Modern Prometheus*, which has already been considered as a reworking of a classical myth. Although it was published well before Darwin's *Origin of Species*, the Preface makes specific reference to Erasmus Darwin, grandfather of Charles Darwin, who had suggested a form of evolution in his *Zoonomia; or, The Laws of Organic Life* in 1794 and again in *The Temple of Nature; or The Origin of Society* in 1824.

The point picked up in the Preface to *Frankenstein* is Dr Darwin's belief in the spontaneous generation of life, for he argued that

New microscopic animalcules would immediately commence wherever there was warmth and moisture and some organic matter that might induce putridity. Those situated on dry land, and immersed in dry air, may gradually acquire new powers to preserve their existence; and by innumerable successive reproductions for some thousands, or perhaps millions of ages, may at length have produced many of the vegetable and animal inhabitants which now people the earth⁴⁴.

Thus *Frankenstein* is linked to ideas about the origin of life, although this link is immediately made more tenuous by the qualifying statement: 'I shall not be supposed as according the remotest degree of serious faith to such an imagination'⁴⁵. The words actually used here mean that the writer does not agree with Dr Darwin, yet this meaning is couched sufficiently tentatively ('I shall not be supposed as according' instead of, say, I do not give) to introduce an element of ambiguity, or raise some doubt in the reader's mind. Its effect is to prise open, if only just, the possibility that that which is lifeless may come to life, anticipating the central event of the novel.

It could be argued that the Preface should not be allowed to modify any reading of the novel itself, for as Mary Shelley states in the Introduction to the 1831 edition, it was written by her husband Percy Bysshe Shelley, and it was he who was influenced by Erasmus Darwin, as the scholar Desmond King-Hele outlines in *Erasmus Darwin and the Romantic Poets* (Basingstoke & London: Macmillan, 1986). On this argument the reference to Dr Darwin's work is a *post factum* addition and must therefore be discounted.

However, Mary Shelley included the Preface in the 1831 edition (after her husband's death), and indeed elaborated the reference to Dr Darwin in the Author's Introduction of this edition, suggesting that the Preface had her support. This, together with the fact that the circumstances surrounding the writing of *Frankenstein*, outlined in the Preface and Author's Introduction, have assumed such great importance that the two can never be separated, suggests that it is not unreasonable to consider the effect the Preface has on the text, and ultimately on the reader.

One major effect is to create a context for the novel, and that context is modern science, bringing *Frankenstein* close to important intellectual concerns of the day, such as the origins of life and the possibility of evolution. The reference to Erasmus Darwin is also a reference to one of the most respected modern, though not quite contemporary, physicians and botanists, for according to ST Coleridge, Erasmus Darwin possessed a 'greater range of knowledge than any other man in Europe and is the most inventive of all philosophical men'⁴⁶.

While it would perhaps be going too far to claim that this reference to Dr Darwin bestows an intellectual pedigree upon the novel, it does suggest that it is marked by an intellectual respectability: it is not what would now be called a trash read. Finally, as Erasmus Darwin was known to be an atheist, the use of his name would bring atheism to the readers' minds, which relates to the main action of the story itself (though it should be noted that PB Shelley also makes a claim for the novel's moral rectitude).

For although the central event of *Frankenstein*, the making of the monster, is sometimes related biographically to Mary Shelley's childbearing problems and the early deaths of all but one of her children, this seems to me mistaken: the point about the monster is that he is created, not begotten. Indeed, the Author's Introduction (1831) suggests this in

its reference to the 'human endeavour to mock the stupendous mechanism of the Creator of the world'⁴⁷, which carries overtones of the atheism hinted at in the reference to Erasmus Darwin. This is not a birth myth, but a creation myth; a parodic version of Genesis Chapter 1 in which the patterned simplicity of the biblical account is fractured into disordered multiplicity. In the Bible the divine fiat simply goes forth as God says,

Let us make man in our image, after our likeness...So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them.

But in the novel creation is achieved by the scientist's grubby tinkering:

who shall conceive the horrors of my secret toil as I dabbled among the unhallowed damps of the grave or tortured the living animal to animate the lifeless clay...I collected bones from charnel-houses and disturbed with profane fingers the tremendous secrets of the human frame. In a solitary chamber or rather cell...I kept my workshop of filthy creation⁴⁸.

Composed of bits of human beings, being rational and possessing such human attributes as speech, emotion, sensitivity to beauty and ugliness, and an acute awareness of self, the monster is yet not human. Much of the novel's mythic power is derived from the interaction of the human Dr Frankenstein and the just-not-human other, the creature he has made.

Going further, it is arguable that although the identification of the monster with Frankenstein discussed in Chapter 3 (pp.173-177) does indeed indicate its status as its creator's Other, it also highlights its own namelessness. It is so far from the human that it lacks a personal signifier, a nomenclature which belongs to it alone. Human beings have names, but the monster has not. It is doubtful if a more thoroughgoing form of exclusion could be found.

The concern about distinctions between the human and the non-human explored in Mary Shelley's fantasy is also evident in the unsigned article 'Our Nearest Relation' in *All the Year Round* (1, 23 May 1859, 112-114 ed. Charles Dickens) which just predates the publication of the *Origin of Species*, and which describes the recently discovered gorilla species as a very primitive type of man, able, for instance, to grieve for its dead young but feared for its strength and ferocity and regarded as unintelligent, almost non-rational. And it

is this confusion between the human and the animal which provides an opening for the first salvo in 'Monkeyana' (*Punch*, May 1861), a squib merely signed 'Gorilla', on the *Origin of Species*:

Am I satyr or man?
Pray tell me who can,
And settle my place in the scale.
A man in ape's shape
An anthropoid ape,
Or a monkey deprived of its tail?

It was an area of confusion which offered wide scope for exploration by fantasy, which has the specific advantages of being able to disrupt time scales and change shapes and forms. And all these areas of debate - the confusion between the human and the animal, the lack of characteristics specific to human beings by which humanity could be identified, and the possibility of playing with both time and shape - coalesce in Charles Kingsley's *The Water-Babies* (1863).

To read *The Water-Babies* as exclusively concerned with the origins of life involves a reductionism which strips the fantasy of its multivalency and hence of its power, but nevertheless it is informed by scientific awareness to an unusual extent, and evolutionary theory comes to the fore at critical points.

The background to this is, however, an extraordinary emphasis on the metamorphoses which occur naturally within the life cycle of an individual creature: the caterpillar changes to a fly; the caddis becomes a caddis-fly; an ugly - but precisely described - larva turns into a beautiful dragonfly. This can be seen as a familiarisation process by which an unfamiliar object is made familiar to the reader, and the process itself is made familiar by repetition. It creates an expectancy that things will transform and creates analogues with, on the one hand, the transformation of a land-baby, Tom, into a water-baby, and on the other hand, the evolutionary process from which the human (land-baby) is derived.

In considering evolution, which 'proves' in the popular imagination that men are descended from monkeys, Kingsley has a scientist, Professor Ptthllnsprts, apply a diagnostic test, using the 'hippopotamus major' (a punning variant on the part of the brain known as the

hippocampus major which is the centre both of emotion and of the autonomic nervous system) as an anatomical structure or characteristic specific to human beings by which a creature could be 'diagnosed' or defined as human. Kingsley thus introduces the delightful irony that the test by which the most advanced species, Homo Sapiens, is identified involves one of the most prehistoric-looking of all extant species, for as the professor explains

If you have a hippopotamus major in your brain, you are no ape, though you had four hands, no feet, and were more apish than all the apes of all apecies. But if a hippopotamus major is ever discovered in one single ape's brain, nothing will save your great - great - great - great - great - great - great - great - great - great - greater - greatest grandmother from having been an ape too...

and this latter suggestion is a shocking thing to say, for

if it were so, what would become of the faith, hope and charity of immortal millions?⁴⁹

This test is, however, applied by Professor Ptthlnsprts, the scientist to whom only the things he could see, taste or handle were true; the scientist for whom truth was found only in the observable, palpable fact. The conflict between this attitude which denies the existence of water-babies and his discovery of the water-baby, Tom, which disproves his dearly-held belief that such creatures do not exist, leads to madness, which is cured only by writing a book contradicting *all* his previously held opinions. This admission that more things are possible than can be proved from observed fact ultimately restores the Professor to sanity and to sense, and his revised opinions imply the inadequacy of the presence of the 'hippopotamus major' in the human brain to define human beings. As it was he who applied the test who became insane, the validity of this test is questioned by the reader: there are more important differences between man and animal, such as 'being able to speak, and make machines, and say your prayers'⁵⁰, as any child will immediately see.

Kingsley put the 'hippopotamus' test in context in 'The History of the great and famous nation of the Doasyoulikes'⁵¹. This traces the degeneration of men into apes, which happens precisely because none of the pressure of necessity is laid upon them. Conditions are stable, and all that they need is quite literally to hand, so there is no need for the adaptation which

would result in a positive evolutionary movement. All that is left to them, then, is increasing laziness and ultimately degeneracy.

The story, however, provides rich opportunity for play, for Kingsley's fantasy is set in a parallel world outside 'normal' time, but this incident occurs in the past, and whether fictive past or real past is unspecified. However, the precise *fact* (the word is emphasised by Kingsley) that Mrs Bedonebyasyoudid discovered photography *more than* (notice the undermining of precision here) 13,598,000 years before anyone was born suggests that Kingsley is cutting back into 'real' time from the timelessness of his parallel world, and this in turn suggests that the events being related in this section of the story could actually have happened.

The passage of time is suggested by turning the pages of a photograph album, with each page representing the passage of 500 years, while the photographs themselves are in colour. 1863 is a very early date to imagine colour photographs, especially such as are described in this passage, as a practical possibility, but James Clerk Maxwell had given a public demonstration of a subtractive colour process in 1861. Although it is unwise to infer too much from a coincidence in dates, it seems on the face of it highly unlikely that given Kingsley's scientific interests, he was unaware of this demonstration, so we are perhaps justified in regarding this as another instance of reality in the form of a scientific discovery feeding into fantasy, which is then turned outwards to comment on reality. Fantasy is thus closely connected with 'this' world, the primary world in which Kingsley and his readers live, and to its contemporary concerns and scientific developments.

The history of the Doasyoulikes has the advantages of being relatively self-contained - a relief in Kingsley's apparently chaotic storytelling technique - and possessing a welcome economy which neatly embodies different sorts of stories about the creation process. Although evolution is shown in reverse 'there are two sides to every question, and a downhill as well as an uphill road'⁵², so the positive thrust of evolution in which man evolves from apes is implied as a possibility at least. This is the apparently objective scientific process discussed by Darwin and his fellow scientists. Within the story, however, lies the story of the giant told by the Doasyoulikes to explain the physical phenomenon of the volcano, in which they take a mythological approach to the beginning of their world,

which is in fact undermined by the fairy in her description of this as a 'cock-and-bull story'⁵³. Finally, the whole history of the Doasyoulikes is set within a carefully constructed fantasy, *The Water-Babies* itself, which is enmeshed in evolutionary science: this is a literary story about beginnings.

Kingsley uses these stories to present two main types of explanation of why the world is as it is, and to suggest the relationship between them. The story of the Doasyoulikes carries the scientific explanation, but the Doasyoulikes' own story of the giant embodies the mythological explanation of why their world is as they see it. Both stories are an attempt to make sense of the world, however, and by setting them both within a fantasy which makes such extensive use of evolutionary science, Kingsley connects them to the world in which his readers actually live, in which that science has been discovered and is discussed. In this way he encourages them to consider the same types of explanation of why their world is as they find it, and in this way he can present the 'science *versus* religion' debate without increasing the tension that debate usually generated, and in a way which makes possible the conclusion that both science and religion have valid contributions to make.

The question of what was human did not go away, and at the end of the century was tackled from a different perspective to that chosen by Kingsley in the history of the Doasyoulikes by HG Wells in *The Island of Dr Moreau* (1896). In this starkly unpleasant fantasy the disgraced vivisectionist, Dr Moreau, attempts to make human beings by a process of cutting, clipping, slicing, trimming and stitching the living flesh of his raw material, animals. Moreau goes beyond the merely physical in his attempts to humanise his creatures by hypnotically imbuing them with some sort of moral sense which they themselves use to generate peer group pressure to enforce the Law. The Law itself is embodied in a litany chanted by a 'celebrant' complete with responses from the 'congregation', including the rhetorical refrain '*that* is the Law. Are we not Men?' The function of this grotesque parody of a religious service, is to forbid animal behaviour, such as going on all-Fours, sucking up Drink, eating Flesh or Fish, clawing the Bark of Trees and chasing other Men⁵⁴. The function of this incident within the novel is, of course, to satirise religious faith, which as an atheist Wells regarded merely as unintelligent superstition and therefore a form of oppression, unworthy of true human beings.

The attempt to humanise beasts fails and Moreau is unable to eradicate all marks of the beast, even on the physical level. Indeed, the narrator is first alerted to the oddness of his situation by seeing the pointed ears of a servant - a neat implicit reference to *The Descent of Man, and Selection in Relation to Sex* (1871) in which Darwin discusses the projecting point of the outer shell of the human ear as a vestige of the pointed and more mobile ears of man's progenitors.

Having begun with animals and made from them humans, secure in the belief that the difference between them is physical - Moreau argues that the 'great difference between man and monkey is in the larynx'⁵⁵ - Moreau is forced to concede that the most important difference is non-physical and unidentifiable, for he explains:

The human shape I can get now...but it is in the subtle grafting and re-shaping one must needs do to the brain that my trouble lies...And least satisfactory of all is something that I cannot touch, somewhere - I cannot determine where - in the seat of the emotions. Cravings, instincts, desires that harm humanity, a strange hidden reservoir to burst suddenly and inundate the whole being of the creature into anger, hate, or fear⁵⁶.

The 'humans' the doctor creates are not in fact human, and they degenerate back towards their animal nature, although held in an increasingly grotesque parody of humanity, never entirely losing their veneer of human-ness, but with the animal in them becoming increasingly obvious. It is a reversal of a civilising process by which whatever animal elements naturally occurring in mankind are subjected to the higher faculties of reason and will.

Like Mary Shelley in *Frankenstein*, Wells has in *The Island of Doctor Moreau* forged a creation myth, and one that is strictly evolutionary in source, with the professional scientist taking the place of God. And as one of the scientist's functions is to control and manipulate the world, this perhaps implies that religion has always been an analogous system of control. It is an unusually bleak view, given Wells' interest in science and faith in its ability to improve life for everyone, for Moreau fails in his self-imposed task, and that failure leads ultimately to his own death.

Nor is it possible to dismiss the bleak view of science by regarding it purely as a tale of horror intended to provoke only a *frisson* of fear and disgust, for Wells spells out its universal relevance in the statement given by the narrator after his escape from the island and his subsequent return to civilisation:

I could not persuade myself that the men and women I met were not also another, still more passably human Beast People, animals half-wrought into the outward image of human souls, and that they would presently begin to revert, to show first this bestial sign, then that...I see faces keen and bright, others dull or dangerous, others unsteady, insincere; none that have the calm authority of a reasonable soul. I feel as though the animal was surging up through them; that presently the degradation of the Islanders will be played over again on a larger scale⁵⁷.

The depth of the pessimism in this novel is revealed in this suggestion that it is impossible for the narrator, Prendick, to differentiate between humans and Beast People, because the people he sees every day *are* Beast People; none has the 'calm authority of a reasonable soul', and none is therefore fully human. Homo Sapiens is a chimera, with no basis in reality, though it would be interesting to discover how Prendick classifies himself, and on what grounds he regards himself qualified to classify others - points which Wells does not address.

Although Dr Moreau concedes that true human-ness means more than having a body that looks human, *The Island of Dr Moreau* differs from both *Frankenstein* and *The Water-Babies* in the relatively minor role played by choice exercised by the creatures. Moreau's creatures reassume their brute natures because Moreau has failed to reach the undefinable something that he cannot touch 'somewhere in the seat of the emotions', not because of any decision on their own part; they simply revert and the 'beast begins to creep back, begins to assert itself again'⁵⁸.

In *Frankenstein* the moral perspective assumes a much greater importance, for the pivots on which the action turns are represented as *moral* claims, and are accepted as such by the main protagonists. Frankenstein accepts that having made his creature he was 'bound towards him to assure...his happiness and well-being', but justifies his decision to renege on

that duty by claiming that the 'duties towards the beings of my own species had greater claims to my attention because they included a greater proportion of happiness or misery'⁵⁹. Likewise, the monster accepts responsibility for the choices he has made, claiming 'Evil...became my good...I had no choice but to adapt my nature to an element which *I had willingly* chosen'⁶⁰ (emphasis added). There is an added twist here, however, for having willingly chosen evil, the monster's power of choice is then taken away, and he has no choice but to follow through his original decision.

The moral aspects of his tale are, however, made much more explicit by Kingsley in *The Water-Babies* for, as we have seen, the Doasyoulikes degenerate from human to animal because of their laziness - a moral quality. This was a notion first introduced by Kingsley in his discussion of the belief that boys are cruel because they are descended from beasts of prey⁶¹, in which he rejects the determinist approach, suggesting instead that 'whether it is nature or not little boys can help it, and must help it'. Choice is vital.

This perhaps reaches the nub of Kingsley's evolutionary science: he is interested not so much in pure biology, but in the meeting place of the biological, the moral and the spiritual. A way out of the dichotomy between physical and spiritual is sought, and to some extent is found, for

instead of fancying with some people that your body makes your soul, as if a steam-engine could make its own coke; or with some people that your soul has nothing to do with your body, but is only stuck into it like a pin in a pin-cushion, to fall out with the first shake; - you will believe the one true

orthodox,	inductive,
rational,	deductive,
philosophical	seductive,
logical,	productive,
irrefragable,	salutary,
nominalistic,	comfortable,
realistic	
and on-all-accounts-to-be-received	

doctrine of this wonderful fairy tale; which is, that your soul makes your body, just as a snail makes his shell⁶².

And this of course tells us nothing at all, for despite the impressive verbal build up we do not know how a snail makes his shell, or how this would differ from a steam-engine making its own coke. Although this does not question the actuality of evolution itself, it does suggest that scientists as yet knew comparatively little about it. This restores a sense of wonder, which had been in danger of being completely lost through the emphasis on the merely factual descriptions of nature and of man's place in nature.

There is an interesting comparison here with the power of Anodos's shadow in *Phantastes* which is discussed in Chapter 1 (pp.100-101). The shadow, when it falls upon a child, strips him of wonder in Anodos's eyes, making him appear ordinary and uninteresting. Likewise, the shadow's touch upon the maiden with the sounding ball arouses Anodos's curiosity and causes him to grasp it, bringing about its destruction. In this case the wish to investigate destroys the source of pleasure and wonder, just as purely factual descriptions of nature can strip it of wonder, so that it becomes known and charted, rather than wonder-ful.

The shift from a biological evolution to a moral or spiritual evolution - in effect a movement from an emphasis on outer form to a focus on inner experience - is also made by two Scottish writers. Robert Louis Stevenson embarks on an exploration of one aspect of this in *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* (1886), while George MacDonald adopts an approach closer to Kingsley's in *The Princess and the Goblin* (1872) and *The Princess and Curdie* (1883).

Perhaps this similarity of approach between Kingsley and MacDonald is not too surprising, for these two men had much in common: they had known each other for many years, they both had a scientific training, but were called to the church, and both were influenced by the same people, principally the theologian, FD Maurice. MacDonald's work is, however, far more overtly touched with a mysticism which he derived from the German Romantics. William Raeper's criticism that Kingsley is 'happy with allegory and the terms of marine biology'⁶³ must be rejected, firstly, on the grounds that if *The Water-Babies* is allegory it is failed allegory, because as the wide divergence of critical approach suggests, it is impossible to take from it a coherent 'meaning'. Secondly, Raeper's criticism should be

overturned because Kingsley does far more with marine biology than bandy about its terminology. It is, however, true that for him science is far closer to the surface of things than it is for MacDonald.

This difference is very obvious in George MacDonald's use of evolution in his fiction, and it is marked by the register of language chosen. Where Kingsley seems to delight in the precision of scientific discourse in, for example, the definition of 'amphibious', the life process of the caddis, the 'hippopotamus major' test, the tidal increase of .3,954,620,819 or the description of Bumpsterhausen's blue follicles⁶⁴, MacDonald generally avoids it.

His description of the Cobs in *The Princess and the Goblin*, for instance, is in an ordinary vocabulary and seizes, not on scientific connections, but on general resemblances. The Cobs are

household animals belonging to the goblins, whose ancestors had taken their ancestors many centuries before from the upper regions of light into the lower region of darkness. The original stocks of the horrible creatures are very much the same as the animals now seen...with the exception of a few of them which had been wild creatures...which the goblins from their proclivity towards the animal creation had caught when cubs and tamed. But in the course of time all had undergone even greater changes than had passed upon their owners. They had altered - that is, their descendants had altered - into such creatures as I have not attempted to describe...the various parts of their bodies assuming in an apparently arbitrary and self-willed manner the most abnormal developments...What increased the gruesomeness tenfold, was that, from constant domestic, or indeed rather family association with the goblins their countenances had grown in grotesque resemblance to the human⁶⁵.

Although it receives little emphasis, changes in form are given a physical cause: the move from the light to darkness. In ascribing the change to this particular cause George MacDonald is exploiting the widespread symbolic equations of light with goodness and

darkness with evil to imply that the physical cause of the change in the Cobs' appearance was supplemented by the spiritual element.

MacDonald's own brand of evolutionary thought is developed further in the much-quoted interchange between Curdie and the Grandmother in *The Princess and Curdie*.

Have you heard what some philosophers say - that men were all animals once?...that all men, if they do not take care, go down the hill to the animals' country; that many men are actually, all their lives, going to be beasts. People knew it once, but it is long since they forgot it⁶⁶.

Physical expression of this comes later, in the forty-nine creatures led by Lina, whose appearance is both ferocious and ugly. Curdie, however, has the gift of feeling the inner, true hand, corresponding to the true nature of a person, when he takes their outer, physical hand, and he discovers that she has the inner hand of a child, matching her nature. Conversely, he discovers that the external human forms of the palace staff conceal animal shapes and brute natures. In both cases there is a strong dichotomy between the inner, true form and the external appearance, and a radical duality is thus created.

The language used in the descriptions of both the fantastic creatures and the palace staff is general, non-specialised, everyday vocabulary. Non-scientific language is used to convey non-scientific *truth*, as opposed to scientific *fact*; the truth, as George MacDonald saw it, of the potential for spiritual evolution as well as degeneracy, rather than merely the scientific fact of physical evolution. But in each case it is the inner true form which is paramount.

MacDonald's choice of an everyday register of language is reaffirmed in the discovery that the goblins in *The Princess and the Goblin* have no toes, for he creates an opportunity to undermine scientific, Latinate language (and in this shows more linguistic sensitivity than he is normally given credit for). In this incident we learn that one of the more educated miners was 'wont to argue that such must have been the primordial condition of humanity, and that education and handicraft had developed both fingers and toes'⁶⁷.

The deliberate pomposity coming from an educated man is immediately punctured by Peter, the uneducated miner, in his sarcastic supporting agreement that babies' gloves, which are fingerless and stockings for all ages are a 'traditional remnant of the old state of things'. Peter's sarcasm in relating such mundane items as gloves and stockings to the

'primordial condition of humanity' rather than practical necessity and efficiency mocks the emphasis placed on evolutionary theory applied in any given situation, regardless of its relevance. George MacDonald is thus able to mock the reductionism inherent in the use of evolution as a catch-all explanation of everything that could be deemed to require explanation or even justification. In this category could come, for example, the nature of women and their place in society, which as we have seen were specifically linked to the evolutionary process (pp.259-60, above).

MacDonald's refusal of the language of science indicates his priorities: essentially spiritual. As CS Lewis remarked, for MacDonald 'Divine Sonship is the key conception which unites all the different elements of his thought'⁶⁸. Rejection of the scientific register may also indicate that his source of evolutionary theory was not Darwin, or even one of those versions of evolution which posited a movement from pure to degenerate forms; rather his was a poetic evolution which owed its existence to the German Romantic poets. Novalis (1772-1801), for example, was an enduring influence on MacDonald, for as William Raeper argues, Novalis

appeared to be able to integrate heart and soul, longing after a 'new' Christianity, 'the basis for the projective force of a new world-edifice and a new humanity'⁶⁹.

The transformation here, as in the popular idea of evolution, is from a lower to a higher form; from an imperfect state to perfection itself, which was MacDonald's idea of the transformation from life to death, which he saw as a full and perfect life. As evolution is also based on the idea of transformation, change and progress, it lent itself to adaptation at MacDonald's hands.

This is indeed a far cry from Charles Kingsley's vision in which the details of science and scientific discovery are informed by spiritual values, but there is no real opposition between the two writers. Rather, despite their different tactics they meet on the common ground of their awareness that physical evolution on its own is not enough. The physical must always be united with the moral; it must be infused with those aspects of human beings which make them human.

Both MacDonald and Kingsley based their ideas about what it is to be human on their understanding of God, for both believed man to be made in the image of God. MacDonald, for example, argues in his essay, 'The Imagination: Its Functions and its Culture' (1867) that 'Everything of man must have been of God first'⁷⁰, and sees the act of creation as the 'prime operation of the power of God'. This corresponds to the power of imagination in man, which 'gives form to thought'⁷¹. The function of the imagination is, as we have already seen in relation to 'The Cruel Painter', discussed in Chapter 3 (p.198), 'to inquire into what God has made'⁷². Imagination, for MacDonald, is thus a spiritual element in humans through which the intellect can operate to issue in works of art and in scientific investigation.

In *The Water-Babies*, as we have seen (pp.264-5, above), Kingsley counters the diagnostic test for humanity applied by Professor Ptthllnsprts with the argument that the real distinctions between man and animal are 'being able to speak, and make machines and say your prayers'. This threefold distinction between man and animal is similar to MacDonald's for it, too, encompasses the intellectual aspect of man ('to speak'), the creative element ('make machines') and the spiritual side ('say your prayers').

In comparison to those of Charles Kingsley and George MacDonald, Robert Louis Stevenson's approach to evolution is at once both more generalised and more specific. More generalised, in that he is less scientific, but more specific in that he selects one aspect of evolution for consideration in *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*.

Although the use of a wonder drug can blur the issue slightly, it is clear that Robert Louis Stevenson's focus throughout is on the moral element of man. Jekyll's decision to embark on the course of action which ultimately led to his destruction is facilitated by a physical substance, but motivated by hubris, coupled with a degree of profligacy or 'impatient gaiety of disposition'⁷³.

The drug is simply a useful, if somewhat crude and sensational, device to separate these two elements; to reorganise the self into one component for the philanthropic, humane and morally uplifting side of Jekyll, and another for the hedonistic, profligate side. And having accomplished this, the drug then frees the hedonistic side from the constraints imposed upon it by the moral aspects of Jekyll. To that extent the story can be read as a moral myth

warning against the dangers of hedonism, and as such can be compared to *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1890) by Oscar Wilde.

Alternatively, it can be regarded as a fracturing of the self, followed by a descent into that form of madness which would now be diagnosed as schizophrenia, and on this reading *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* becomes an evocative and powerful psychological study. This, however, must be set within the immediate context of Stevenson's work, and the larger context of Scottish literature in general, showing that the duality in *Jekyll and Hyde* is a fundamental concern for Stevenson, and a fascination - almost a neurosis - for the Scots. For example, striking parallels can be found between *Jekyll and Hyde* and James Hogg's *Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner* (1824), itself a study of personal disintegration and duality, precipitated by spiritual pride.

In this case the duality of the subject is reflected in the radical duality of narrative technique, in which two narrators, neither of whom is unbiased or entirely reliable as a narrator, give two different, almost opposed versions of events. As some objective supporting evidence can be found for both versions the reader is unable to choose between them, and is thus caught in the same indecision as some of the witnesses in the story. In addition to this, however, the partial corroboration of both versions of events may also suggest the inadequacy of empirical knowledge: seeing is not always safe grounds for believing.

That a number of different readings of *Jekyll and Hyde*, which will be considered in detail later, can happily coexist suggests the power of Stevenson's story, which nevertheless should be set within the context of evolutionary theory, where these other readings lend it both depth and richness. The most striking aspect in this context is the extent to which animal imagery and terminology are used of Hyde, with a strong emphasis on simian descriptions. For despite John Sutherland's insistence in 'What Does Edward Hyde Look Like?' (*Is Heathcliff a Murderer?* (The World's Classics. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996)) that no adequate description is given by Stevenson and therefore the commonly-held animal image of Hyde is unjustified, he is consistently described as ape-like, his gait is simian (especially when wearing Jekyll's clothes), he howls, he snarls and, most memorably, monkey-like chatters to himself as he skulks through the deserted London

streets⁷⁴. In other words, he has gone back, through the chemical agency of the drug, to an earlier phase of existence, which is never actually outgrown in the sense of being left behind when a new phase of existence is begun. Rather, it is overlaid by subsequent developments, and is accessed and brought to the fore by the chemical action of the drug.

The lust for life, and the vigour of action which are so striking in Hyde, and which result not only in his rapid increase in stature, but in his eventual power over Jekyll recall the fecundity of nature which is so evident in Darwin's *Origin of Species* and which figures largely in Richard Jefferies' *After London*. The obvious difference between this latter work and Hyde's situation is that for Hyde 'life' must be defined in terms of lived experience, not mere existence, no matter how luxurious. However, there is an even more striking similarity in that the fecundity in each case is intimately linked to the relinquishment of external control. In *After London* control is lost when agriculture ceases to be practised, and this leads to the rapid growth of flora. Likewise, Hyde's rapid growth occurs after Jekyll repeatedly relinquishes control over his profligate side.

Evolutionary thought is, perhaps, most obvious in Hyde's single-mindedness when in danger of discovery, for this is truly a survival of the fittest which contrasts strongly with Jekyll's purely defensive attitude: he can only keep Hyde at bay, not destroy him, unless he chooses to destroy himself at the same time (an idea implied in his very name - Je-kyll or I-kill). An unwelcome state of equilibrium has been reached, a sort of moral stalemate which can be resolved only by the death of both Jekyll and Hyde. This suggests that Jekyll can no longer adapt to changed circumstances to extend or nurture his own life, whereas Hyde is unconstrained in this way, and is prepared and almost able to take over from Jekyll. Jekyll's ability to respond to changes, which is at the heart of evolutionary theory, is exhausted, while Hyde's is unabated, and like the vitality in *Origin of Species* and, especially, *After London* is about to overgrow and smother anything that impedes it.

Although *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll And Mr Hyde* resonates powerfully in the mind, in writing it Stevenson has moved very far away from evolution as a biological theory concerned with the origins of species. Nevertheless, it is reasonable to place it in this context, because it taps into evolution as a myth, a story told to explain how the world is as it is, or to express human experience. In this case Stevenson is using evolution as a myth to

explore aspects of the human condition; namely, the human potential for evil which comes to the fore as soon as moral control is relaxed.

It is arguable that evolution as a myth far outweighs evolution as a scientific theory. This is not to argue that the theory is not true, but to suggest it has acquired value, significance and power independent of its scientific truth. In fact, evolution offers two types of truth about the world - a scientific or empirical truth dealing with physical structure and function, and a mythological or poetic truth, dealing with man's cultural and social development. It was the need for the myth that led, if not to the discovery of the science, at least to its rapid acceptance at that particular time and in that precise culture.

This of course raises questions of why such a need was felt, and what it was about evolution which met that need. The answers, incomplete as they are, are to be found in the history of the period. More specifically, the eighteenth-century move from a theocentric to an anthropocentric view of life created a need for a philosophy which could stand alone and which was not dependent upon a deity for validation, as I have suggested in the Introduction. It is this need which evolution was so successful in meeting, for as Gillian Beer argues

The all-inclusiveness of its explanation, stretching through the differing orders of the natural world, seemed to offer a means of understanding without recourse to a godhead. It created a system in which there was no need to invoke a source of authority outside the natural order: in which instead of design there was inherent purposiveness⁷⁵.

It is the all-inclusive quality of evolution which enables it to function, to quote Beer, 'like a myth in an age of belief'⁷⁶. So instead of the traditional Judaeo-Christian myth of Adam and Eve's temptation and sin in the Garden of Eden to explain how human beings are as they are, the 'myth' of evolution can be invoked in its moral and metaphorical dimensions, as well as the physical, to explain how people and societies are as they are.

It is possible to go further here, and suggest that rather than being *like* a myth - a scientific myth - in a period of scientific belief, it *is* a myth: it is a story, based on science which has greater resonance than its individual components would account for, and which,

to quote Rollo May again, 'is a way of making sense in a senseless world...a narrative pattern that gives significance to our existence'⁷⁷.

Mary Midgley is even more specific on this point, for in her essay, 'The Religion of Evolution' (1985) she argues that:

Evolution is the creation-myth of our age. By telling us our origins it shapes our views of what we are. It influences not just our thought, but our feelings and actions too, in a way which goes beyond its official function as a biological theory...it has great symbolic power, which is independent of its truth⁷⁸.

The scientific theory of evolution first came to the fore at a period when science was beginning to be seen as the source of true knowledge, or as Ludmilla Jordanova suggests, to give an 'authoritative account of reality'⁷⁹; it was the source of answers to the questions about human nature, arising from what people observed about themselves. And if this is so, then clearly science has been placed where God once was, and religious belief has evolved into scientific belief, rather along the lines suggested by Auguste Comte's Positivism.

In passing we could note that according to this theory, in the final stage of society authority will be derived from the scientists who are invested with spiritual power, and who will, to that extent, replace the clergy. This goes some way to explain the extraordinary and implacable animosity expressed by Darwin's fellow scientists, TH Huxley and JD Hooker among others, against the established scientists of the day, many of whom were also clergymen⁸⁰. The battle was not about Darwin's theory *per se*, but was part of a larger movement towards a narrow professionalism and increasing secularisation which would result in the marginalisation of God and in the increasing distance between science and religion which has been a feature of twentieth-century intellectual and cultural life.

In many of these areas of scientific interest, much of what was investigated was invisible: geological time, for example, is time *past* and can be inferred only from an understanding of visible traces of change left in the earth's crust. Likewise, there were no dinosaurs in the nineteenth century to be studied by zoologists, but their existence, size and shape had to be inferred from fragments of fossils by palaeontologists. Evolution itself had

to be formulated from evidence found in the present of changes which had occurred in the past.

The emphasis on the mimetic function of art, which has been the dominant strain in European aesthetics is, as I have suggested in the Introduction (pp1-3), an emphasis on what is observable in life, limiting its usefulness in expressing these areas of scientific discovery concerned with what cannot be directly observed. Fantasy thus became the obvious choice for artists and writers who sought an artistic form for the ideas suggested to them by the work of scientists, since it, too, deals with the unobservable. And whether the artist's interest lay in evolution, thermodynamics or the distinction between animal and human, fantasy could trace the ideas which lie 'beyond the boundaries by which we are circumscribed'.

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20. Anon, 'The Last Man', *Tales of Terror from Blackwood's Magazine* eds. Robert Morrison and Chris Baldick, The World's Classics, (Oxford: Oxford University Press 1995), p.68. The relationship between this text and Mary Shelley's *The Last Man*, to which it bears a decided similarity, is impossible to determine. Shelley's *The Last Man* was published by Henry Colburn on 23rd January 1826, while this anonymous short story was published in *Blackwood's Magazine* in March 1826.
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22. Ibid., p.71.
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33. Jefferies, 'Notebooks'. Quoted in Looker and Porteous, *Richard Jefferies, Man of the Fields. A Biography and Letters* (London: John Baker, 1965), p.166.
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36. Jefferies, *After London*, pp.1-2.
37. Darwin, *Origin*, pp.57-8.
38. Ibid., p.57.
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40. Darwin, *Origin*, p.103.
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44. Erasmus Darwin, *The Temple of Nature; or The Origin of Society: A Poem, with philosophical notes* (London: Jones & Co., 1824), Canto I, line 327, author's note.
45. Mary Shelley, *Frankenstein; Or, The Modern Prometheus* (n.p.: Aerie, 1988), Preface, p.xix.
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47. Shelley, *Frankenstein*, Author's Introduction, p.xvi.
48. Ibid., p.45.

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50. Ibid., p.154.
51. Ibid., pp.229-239.
52. Ibid., p.238.
53. Ibid., p.232.
54. HG Wells, *The Island of Dr Moreau* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1946), p.85.
55. Ibid., p.104.
56. Ibid., p.112.
57. Ibid., pp.189-190.
58. Ibid., p.113.
59. Shelley, *Frankenstein*, p.226.
60. Ibid., p.229.
61. Kingsley, *The Water-Babies*, p.91.
62. Ibid., pp.85-6.
63. William Raeper, *George MacDonald: Novelist and Victorian Visionary* (Tring, Herts: Lion Publishing), p.321.
64. Kingsley, *The Water-Babies* pp.83; 92; 154; 226; 163.
65. George MacDonald, *The Princess and the Goblin* and *The Princess and Curdie* ed. Roderick McGillis, *The World's Classics*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), pp.71-72.
66. Ibid., pp.219-220.
67. Ibid., p.43.
68. CS Lewis, *George MacDonald: An Anthology* (London: Fount Paperbacks, 1983), Preface, p.31.
69. Raeper, *George MacDonald*, p.107.
70. George MacDonald, 'The Imagination: Its Functions and its Culture', *A Dish of Orts, Chiefly Papers on the Imagination and on Shakespeare*, enlarged edition, (London: Sampson, Low and Marston, 1893), p.3.
71. Ibid., p.2.

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73. Robert Louis Stevenson, *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* and *Weir of Hermiston*, ed. Emma Letley, The World's Classics, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), p.60.

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76. Ibid., p.17.

77. May, *The Cry for Myth*, p.15.

78. Mary Midgley, 'The Religion of Evolution' in John Durant (Ed), *Darwinism and Divinity: Essays on Evolution and Religious Belief* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1985), p.154.

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80. Huxley's animosity comes to the fore in his piece 'On the Reception of the "Origin of Species"' from *The Life and Letters of Charles Darwin*, ed. Francis Darwin, (3 Vols.), (London, 1887) when he refers to what he regarded as a cruel reception to Darwin's work by the press and argues 'I must make good a statement which may seem overcharged to the present generation, and there is no *pièce justificative* more apt for the purpose, or more worthy of such dishonour than the article in the *Quarterly Review* for July 1860'. This has a footnote by Huxley referring to Bishop Wilberforce's authorship of this article, which is in fact a courteous review of *The Origin* which focuses on scientific weaknesses: 'Confession unaccompanied by penitence...affords no ground for mitigation of judgement; and the kindness with which Mr Darwin speaks of his assailant, Bishop Wilberforce, is so striking an exemplification of his gentleness and modesty, that it rather increases one's indignation against the presumption of the critic.' Darwin himself acknowledged that Wilberforce made good use of the weakness of his arguments at points in *The Origin*. There is a delightful irony in the fact that one of Wilberforce's main concerns was that Darwin's method was anti-baconian, in that it was not sufficiently scientific, and relied too heavily on presumptions, generalisations and expectations.

JD Hooker's aggression is very evident in a letter to Darwin (2 July 1860), describing the famous confrontation between Huxley and Wilberforce in Oxford. He writes 'Well Sam

Oxon got up & spouted for half an hour with inimitable spirit ugliness & emptiness & unfairness...he said not a syllable but what was in the Reviews...I was cocked up with sam at my right elbow, & there & then I smashed him amid rounds of applause - I hit him in the wind at the first shot in 10 words taken from his own ugly mouth'. Even allowing for enthusiasm between colleagues and rhetorical flourishes this seems an excessive response, with the pugilistic terminology being rather out of place in what was, after all, an intellectual matter.



Pl. 4.1

Frederic Leighton, *Perseus and Andromeda*, exh. 1892.



Pl. 4.2

Gustave Doré, *David and Goliath*, 1866.



Pl. 4.3

John Martin, *The Last Man*, 1833.



Pl. 4.4

William Holman Hunt, *The Light of the World*, 1853.



Pl. 4.5 Joseph Noel Paton, *The Quarrel of Oberon and Titania*, 1847.



Pl. 4.6 Joseph Noel Paton, *The Reconciliation of Oberon and Titania*, 1847.



Pl. 4.7

Richard Dadd, *The Fairy Feller's Master-Stroke*, 1855-6.



Pl. 4.8

William Henry Fisk, *The Secret*, no date.



Pl. 4.9 Julia Margaret Cameron, *The Return after Three Days*, c1868-70.



Pl. 4.10

Dante Gabriel Rossetti, *Cutting her Hair*,
from Christina Rossetti, *The Goblin Market*, 1862.

Conclusion

The Victorian fascination with time has long been known, and is reflected even in the titles of modern works of scholarship on the period, such as A Dwight Culler's *The Mirror of History* (1985), Peter Bowler's *The Invention of Progress: The Victorians and the Past* (1989) or Jerome H Buckley's *The Triumph of Time: A Study of the Victorian Concepts of Time, History, Progress and Decadence* (1967).

A consistent thread through all I have discussed in this thesis is the way in which some Victorian artists and authors disrupted or adapted time, which, according to Bertrand Russell's gloss on Kantian philosophy, is one of the co-ordinates by which the human mental apparatus orders the 'matter of existence' caused by the outer world (quoted in Introduction, p.10) to create works of fantasy. These fantasies, be they visual or literary, embody what the artists take to be the truth about the world. Or to state the matter more precisely, these artists and writers disrupted time to create fantasies through which what they saw as the underlying reality beneath the outer forms of this world could be revealed, discussed, criticised or expressed.

The world whose reality is revealed by these fantasies is, however, the world the artists observed around them, the world as they found it in nineteenth-century Britain, including its social mores and unspoken assumptions, as much as the physical facts of the new railways or the recently developed telegraph system. Their fantasies, created by the disruption of time, therefore expressed not a generalised truth about an abstract world, but what the artists saw as the bedrock reality of that specific world. The fantasies express contemporary concerns and address areas of current debate, such as the need for new religious forms to replace what were seen as outworn and empty creeds, or the role of women in society.

I have suggested that among all the periods of history available to artists and authors as the starting point of their disruption of time to create fantasy, some were more useful than others. Many artists, as we have seen in Chapters 1 and 2, used the medieval period as the basis for their fantasy visions, while others chose the ancient periods of Greece and Rome as well as Hebraic and Far Eastern mythology to use in a similar way, discussed in Chapters 2 and 3.

Yet other authors and artists moved away from strictly defined historical periods of time to explore and disrupt different types of time. For some of these artists the disruption of mythological time was their starting point, while others adapted geological time, creating an opportunity to use extinct creatures, such as dinosaurs, to explore traditional ideas about creation or examine the concept of the ending of time or life. Whether mythological or geological, time was the point of departure used to create fantasies which explored contemporary issues or contributed to the current debates prompted by specific concerns, such as the sometimes very heated discussions of the origins of life and what constitutes humanity stimulated by Darwin's work on evolution.

Many of the fantasies which resulted from the disruption of time had a specifically religious role to play, either by upholding traditional religious belief in the face of the challenges offered by new biblical criticism, scientific discoveries and widespread changes in nineteenth-century society, or, alternatively, by suggesting new forms to replace traditional religious belief. This can be seen as the manifestation in a specifically religious context of the more general use of fantasy in two main ways: to uphold society's values, thus bolstering the status quo, or to subvert, or at least question, them, and so undermine society in the form in which it existed.

In many cases the *same* text or picture is used in both ways simultaneously. Looking at the use of fantasy to uphold society's values first, we have seen, for example, how the cult of chivalry was used to articulate ambivalent attitudes towards women, and to reinforce distinct roles for men and women in society. Thus I have argued that chivalry offered 'well-defined roles for different sections of society to perform, and clear role models for them to emulate', and suggested that for conservatives this modified the form assumed by the 'new woman' (Chapter 1, p.97), making her a less radical creature than she might otherwise have been. In this case chivalry was used to uphold the status quo.

Likewise we saw that classical architecture carries connotations of order, balance, reason and harmony. By using a classical style Greek Thomson could fuse these ideals with the purity (as he saw it) of the early Christian church, and by incorporating Egyptian elements could refer to their belief in human immortality which pre-dates Christian belief in an immortal soul. This was his raw material which he 'transmuted by thought into new

forms' (quoted Chapter 2 p.150) to create his arresting architectural fantasies which helped meet society's need for order, balance, reason and harmony, and which were Thomson's vision for an improved urban environment..

In Chapter 3 I discussed how the figure of Prometheus is transformed by Mary Shelley into the new mythic figure, Frankenstein, to point to the dangers of overweening ambition which, when coupled with the new sciences, can precipitate disaster. To that extent *Frankenstein* can be read as a plea for caution and moderation, qualities which make for better order in society. The various mythological female figures considered in this chapter, such as Astarte Syriaca, Helen and Lilith, all express the stereotypical view of woman as virgin-whore and thus reinforce, rather than disturb, society's attitudes towards her, making any change in her place or function within society more difficult to accomplish.

In the final chapter I have considered how geological time was disrupted to create fantasies which address concerns created by science, such as the distinction between what is human and what is animal, and uphold the traditional view that this distinction depends on more than merely physical characteristics. The spiritual and emotional aspects of human beings are seen to be of greater importance in creating this distinction than physical modifications which, according to evolutionary theory, would be relatively minor differences in degree, rather than a distinction in kind.

From this evidence it would be easy to deduce that Victorian fantasies were essentially reactionary in nature, and that their main function was to reinforce society's values in all matters religious, social or intellectual. This, however, is not the full story, for we have also seen that the same periods of time were disrupted to create fantasies which questioned or undermined society's values.

In Chapter 1, for example, I have argued that the Eglinton Tournament of 1837 was an attempt to use the cult of chivalry to question the commercialism of nineteenth-century society, and to suggest that the undue emphasis on money was accompanied by a loss of nobility. And in contrast to this use of medievalism to draw attention to commercialism in society, DG Rossetti used medievalism in his poem, 'The Blessed Damozel' to proclaim the supremacy of human, sexual love over conventional religion with its emphasis on bliss in the afterlife (Ch.1, p.58).

Other artists moved further back in time, and classical Greece was the starting point for Alexander 'Greek' Thomson who disrupted the classical emphasis on symmetry in architecture by introducing the principles of the Picturesque into his designs. We have seen that this asymmetry, combined with an emphasis on architectural bulk, repetition of architectural elements and manipulation of light, brought Thomson's work within Edmund Burke's theory of the sublime and helped cater for mankind's 'unconquerable passion for all that is great' as Longinus described it (see Chapter 2, p.154). By disturbing architectural symmetry with its connotations of order and reason, Thomson questions the sufficiency of reason, and points to the inadequacy of materialism, which regards material possessions and physical comfort as the highest priority, as a principle for living well. In this way he points to the need for a revised religion with a greater emphasis on the non-rational elements to qualify the stress the church placed on the use of reason within religious belief during the previous century.

Classical mythology as much as classical architecture proved to be a useful point of departure for some writers, and we have seen how both Mary Shelley and Richard Garnett used the figure of Prometheus to question some of society's attitudes, assumptions or beliefs. Shelley, for example, created Frankenstein as a modern Prometheus, and by allowing him to speak for himself, she provides the reader with direct access to the conflict between good and evil within him, and their relationship to the forces of good and evil which helped to shape him. Thus Mary Shelley questions the nature of these two qualities and the relationship between them. Garnett, on the other hand, used the figure of Prometheus to demonstrate the move from God-centred to man-centred religion which was a feature of contemporary theology and, like DG Rossetti in 'The Blessed Damozel', to proclaim the superiority of the human to the divine.

We have also seen how other mythologies could be used to question commonly held attitudes towards women. In 'The Cruel Painter' we saw how George MacDonald used the figure of Lilith to point out the way in which patriarchy could mould the behaviour and character of women, while in *Lilith* he used the same mythological figure to suggest ways in which spiritual salvation could be made available to all, thus subverting the church's usual teaching that some people are eternally damned. And Arthur Machen went even further in

subverting the teachings of Christianity in his fantasy novel, *The Great God Pan*, by suggesting that the power within the universe which is veiled by symbols is essentially destructive, rather than being the power of a beneficent God.

Vampires were also used to address the role and function of women in society. The lesbianism in Sheridan Le Fanu's story, 'Carmilla' places women outwith the experience of men altogether, and hence beyond their control, while Bram Stoker's *Dracula* shows the independence of what Nina Auerbach describes as 'newly-empowered womanhood' (Ch.3, p.214).

The subversion of traditionally held beliefs continues in fantasies based on geological time which had been discovered in the eighteenth century. In 'The Time Machine', for example, HG Wells suggests that animals are better adapted to their environment than humans, and are therefore superior to them by allowing some species to outlive mankind. In a similar vein, Wells uses fantasy in *The War of the Worlds* to suggest that man may not always 'have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth' (*Genesis* 1:28).

Just as Wells subverts the traditionally held belief that man is superior to the animals and his function is to rule over them, so, too, the many 'last man' fantasies from the first half of the nineteenth century subvert traditional Christian teaching by suggesting that the world may be brought to an end by natural means, not by divine will. This not only separates the idea of the end of the earth from the notion of the judgement of God, but also undercuts the traditional belief in the power of God and of his order in the universe.

Thus fantasy can work in two ways: to uphold traditional views and to subvert them; to support the patriarchal status quo and to undermine it. The fact that the *same* texts can be used as evidence that fantasy is reactionary but also radical suggests that it operates in both ways simultaneously, with no text seeming to be either entirely reactionary or wholly radical.

There is a clear advantage here, for a writer of fantasy can point to the elements which appear to support traditional views or values to draw attention away from the subversive qualities of the work. Fantasy would thus appear to have a defence mechanism for its

creator already built in to it, protecting the fantasist against accusations of undermining society.

However, it is possible to go further and suggest that although fantasy can be used in a conservative way to uphold society's values, its propensity to carry conservative and radical elements simultaneously makes it inherently subversive in a society in which things have traditionally been seen as paired, mutually exclusive opposites: light *or* dark; good *or* bad; radical *or* reactionary. It is therefore particularly suited to social criticism, where the emphasis usually falls upon what the critic sees as in some way wrong or in need of change.

And just as fantasy is well equipped to criticise society without raising its emotional temperature too high, fantasy's ability to express the inexpressible, or as Burne-Jones puts it, to 'give voice and form to what were otherwise painfully ineffable' (quoted Ch.1, p.61), enables it, as Francis Bacon suggests, to give 'some shadow of satisfaction to the mind of man in those points wherein the nature of things doth deny it' (Introduction, pp.2-3); satisfaction which was once provided by the firmly-established religious belief which the nineteenth century believed itself to have lost beyond recall.

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