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THE *WUNDERKAMMER* OF LADY CHARLOTTE GUEST

by

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Introduction: The Despotism of Fact

Lady Charlotte Guest (Lady Charlotte Schreiber), 1812-1895, was a figure to strike fear into the hearts of workingmen, museum curators, and ne'er-do-well nephews. A swath of Victorian industry, she assembled exhaustive collections of ceramics, fans, and playing cards, which were presented to the Victoria and Albert and British Museums; participated in running her first husband's ironmongery; and learned Welsh in order to translate the *Mabinogion*, the national epic of her husband's country -- all the while knitting a bright red scarf a day for the relief of London's hansom cab drivers. In addition, during the course of her lifetime, she produced a journal that comprised 10,000 typewritten pages, along with catalogues of all three of her collections. However, apart from an abortive attempt at *A History of the Iron Trade*, begun in a rush of newlywed enthusiasm, her 1849 translation of the *Mabinogion* was the only literary text Lady Charlotte produced. Yet, with her customary efficiency, she made it a significant one. For, with her translation of the *Mabinogion*, Lady Guest introduced to the Victorians one of the great subject matters of the nineteenth century, the Matter of Britain -- a narrative that also had powerful ideological resonance in the economic and political struggles between the marginalized Celts and their English overlords.

Despite its significance, Lady Charlotte's scholarship has been appreciated at best grudgingly. On the one hand, contemporary professional scholars routinely dismiss her as a "gifted amateur," a peculiarly mercantile denigration that by implication privileges paid activity over giftedness. On the other hand, perhaps more understandably, there is in Wales a sizable contingent who reject her accomplishments largely because of her role

in perpetuating the unequal cultural exchange between the Welsh and the English. These detractors base their rejection of her work on the argument that she "didn't really" translate the *Mabinogion*, but instead used her wealth and connections to publish and publicize a translation that was largely the work of Welsh scholars.[1] Yet a third class of detractors follow Judith Johnston's lead in characterizing Lady Charlotte's translation as an act of cultural appropriation, arguing that "Once you name, and transcribe, you acquire" (150). Given this assumption, Johnston characterizes Lady Charlotte's translation as "both an imperialist and a feminist project, although never expressed in either of those terms" (154).

What all of these criticisms have in common is that they are all arguments about the ownership, rather than the accuracy, of Lady Charlotte's translation. Such a question of ownership is a criterion that can be readily dismissed as irrelevant,[2] if one accepts the terms of Walter Benjamin's "The Task of the Translator." In that essay, he states:

> It is the task of the translator to release in his own language that pure language which is under the spell of another, to liberate the language imprisoned in a work in his re-creation of that work. For the sake of pure language he breaks through decayed barriers of his own language. (80)

Translation is thus a shared activity, owned by no-one. Rather, it is an encounter between two cultures, using a pair of texts as a vehicle to obtain a meaning that supersedes either the original or the target text. According to Benjamin's argument, the

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[1] An accusation that is not completely specious. The merits of the cases for and against Lady Charlotte will be examined in Chapter Two of this study.

[2] Although one might justifiably balk at defending a case of outright plagiarism -- a charge that has never seriously been leveled at Lady Charlotte.

only criterion by which we should judge the success of Lady Charlotte's translation is the admittedly somewhat abstract one of whether it afforded her -- or her readers -- access to the realm of "pure language."

Benjamin's construction is largely an idealist one, depending on the concept of a realm of "pure language" imperfectly reflected by language in the material world. Such an approach has been famously problematized by Jacques Derrida in his essay "White Mythology," which demonstrates the inevitable failure of the metaphorical jump from material object to abstract concept. This very failure of the idealizing leap relocates the metaphoric firmly in the world of the collective signifier, for "[a word's] content is really fixed only by the concurrence of everything that exists outside of it. Being part of a system, it is endowed not only with a signification but also and especially with a value..." (218) Derrida then extrapolates that "Value, gold, the eye, the sun, etc., are carried along, as has been long known, in the same tropic movement. Their exchange dominates the field of rhetoric *and* of philosophy" (218).

Yet Benjamin is well aware of the problem proposed by Derrida, presenting it in slightly different terms in "Edward Fuchs: Collector and Historian." In that essay, he argues that idealizing constructs such as "history" are an illusion. Instead, the past can only be viewed in dialectical encounter with the present, which, because it brings with it its own limitations in perspective, caused by historico-material influences, always provides an imperfect view. Furthermore, he argues forcefully against art providing any kind of escape to an idealist perspective, claiming instead that art must be seen as the product of

material, economic influences. This is emphatically not to say that there is no idealizing element in Benjamin's thinking; indeed, according to Hannah Arendt, all Benjamin's work depends on a search for a Goethean *Urphanomen* (11), certainly an idealizing construct, and one that at times verges on mysticism. However, this ideal can only be glimpsed momentarily, through a dialectical encounter in the material world. Translation provides one locus for this sort of encounter. Significantly for the latter half of Lady Charlotte's biography, collecting is another, described by Benjamin in "Unpacking my Library" as "[renewing] the old world -- that is the collector's deepest desire when he is driven to acquire new things" (61).

Understanding revelation as the result of a series of contingent, fragmentary encounters between sometimes antithetical perspectives is thus central to understanding Benjamin's work. It is a point of view that would be anathema to Lady Charlotte, who once refused to leave her room when a Catholic bishop was in the house. However, Lady Charlotte's life is suited to illustrate the peculiar encounter between material and ideal that underlies Benjamin's thinking in a way that might surprise her as much as it might surprise Benjamin himself. Indeed, all the texts that Lady Charlotte created during her lifetime -- her translation of the *Mabinogion*, her journals, and the catalogues she created for her collections -- enact the central problem of attempting to adopt an absolute perspective in a contingent and fragmented world.

For Lady Charlotte's world was a peculiarly fragmented one: She was born an earl's daughter, but spent the majority of her childhood and adolescence in her stepfather's

vicarage. She then married an industrialist, John Guest, neither a member of the nobility or clergy, but rather a member of the rising bourgeoisie, who was elevated to the baronetcy only after their marriage. Guest's ironworks were located in Wales, which meant Lady Charlotte spent a large portion of her first marriage in what was essentially a foreign country and culture -- a culture, paradoxically, with which she is so thoroughly identified that at least one Dictionary of Biography erroneously identifies her as Welsh. The time the Guests spent in Wales supervising the ironworks was balanced with time spent in London, pursuing Sir John's parliamentary career. This shift in locations created a violent shift in social contexts. In Wales, Lady Charlotte stood at the top of the hierarchy, benificently distributing jobs and education to workers who by all accounts adored her. In London, however, Lady Charlotte was merely another parliamentary wife, whose repeated efforts at social climbing create an epic that hovers uneasily between comedy and pathos.

Lady Charlotte's second marriage represents an even more violent fragmentation of her existence, separating, as it did, the first part of her life from the second. In marrying Charles Schreiber, her son's tutor, Lady Charlotte gave away all the rights of her position as Sir John Guest's widow, both figuratively and literally, for Sir John's will named Lady Charlotte executrix of his estate, a position she relinquished upon her marriage. The marriage also created a rift between Lady Charlotte and her family.[3] Perhaps most significantly, Lady Charlotte's second marriage reversed both the economic and chronological relationship between her and her first husband: John Guest had been

[3] Apart from her sons, who seemed largely tolerant of her remarriage.

twenty-seven years older and much wealthier than she; Charles Schreiber was fourteen years younger and had no personal fortune whatsoever.

Such a biography seems particularly fragmented when compared to the intellectual climate of the times, which continually searched for absolute principles underlying culture and existence. Matthew Arnold's reviled *On the Study of Celtic Literature,* which announces its intellectual debt to Lady Charlotte, is an exemplar of this search for absolute principles. In an idealist argument that seems grossly misplaced to the modern sensibility, Arnold infamously attempted to define the "English genius" -- primarily by contrasting it to the Saxon and Celtic geniuses from which it is formed. "Genius" is, of course, an idealizing, if not mystical, term. The twentieth-century reader grows immediately uncomfortable, thus, when Arnold essays a material definition of such an ineffable concept. The German genius, he claims is "steadiness with honesty," while somewhat predictably, the Celtic genius is a sentimental one (76). Arnold then spends the remainder of his essay defining the English genius as a combination of these two strains, along with the Norman genius -- which excels at rhetoric and has a "Roman talent for affairs" (87).

This clear demarcation between cultural types is exactly paralleled by linguistic demarcations. Arnold argues that three separate types of linguistic principles correspond to the three character types: The scientific principle is that of prosaic, but absolutely truthful, language. The poetic principle is the "passionate, turbulent, indomitable reaction against the despotism of fact" (118). Rhetoric is the third form of language, and

the only one that is not dependent on abstractions such as truth or fact. Instead, it is language situated in society: communication judged not in terms of truth value, but in terms of efficacy. This definition of rhetoric offers an interesting contradiction. On the one hand, Arnold offers it as an absolute principle; on the other, he defines it not by its relation to an ideal (either absolute truthfulness or poetic rebellion against the "despotism of fact"), but instead only by its usefulness, its functionality in the material world.

Lady Charlotte's life and works offer a similar tension. Economically and materially, her life was fraught with ruptures that allowed encounters between often dialectical opposites. Yet, intellectually and morally, it was governed by a search for absolute and idealist meaning. Indeed, it is quite arguable that it is precisely the fragmentation in her material existence that led to such an ambitious intellectual life. Yet all the texts that Lady Charlotte produced in her life exhibit the profound anxiety of perspective of an idealist trapped in a dialectical relationship to her historico-material circumstances. In her journals, this anxiety is projected on the figures of her two husbands, albeit in very different ways. In both her translation and her catalogues, however, this anxiety manifests itself in what Benjamin would describe as the orgiastic acquisitiveness of the collector, or what Arnold might term the despotism of fact.

Chapter Two of this study will examine the orgiastic acquisitiveness that underlies Lady Charlotte Guest's translation of the *Mabinogion*. Instead of focusing on the ultimately unanswerable question of the ownership of either the *Mabinogion* or Lady Charlotte's translation, it will instead focus on Benjamin's claim that:

> ... the relationship between content and language is quite different in the original and the translation. While content and language form a certain unity in the original, like a fruit and its skin, the language of the translation envelops its content like a royal robe with ample folds. For it signifies a more exalted language than its own, and thus remains unsuited to its content, overpowering and alien. ("Task" 75)

Chapter Two will consider Lady Charlotte's *Mabinogion* as a case where the "ample folds" threaten to overwhelm the original subject matter. However, these folds derive their amplitude, not from the exaltation of the ideal realm of pure language that they invoke, but rather from Lady Charlotte's acquisitiveness, which enfolds the original text in the great washes of footnotes and illustrations and appendices that she collected -- over 150 pages of notes for a 275-page text. Furthermore, the text called the *Mabinogion* is itself a collection, of twelve largely unrelated tales, that are now perceived as a whole, simply because Lady Charlotte translated and published them.

Arguably, this orgy of acquisitiveness can be seen as a female Other-directed strategy for self-assertion run amok, and this study will consider Lady Charlotte's obsessive collecting in terms of the contradiction between her desire for intellectual self-assertion and the nineteenth-century oppression of the female as a speaking subject. However, Chapter Two will also consider how such riots of facticity are characteristic of the larger nineteenth-century intellectual context -- in particularly the disciplines of antiquarianism and philology. In *The Amateur and the Professional*, Phillippa Levine has demonstrated how antiquarianism's intellectual heuristic was an empiricism run wild that provided "a

record *of facts*, copiously illustrated... but sparingly dilated with theory" (74). This emphasis on avoiding theory led the antiquarian quickly to degenerate into a figure of fun, mocked for his credulity and magpie-like collecting. Philologists, too, considered themselves "scientific" collectors of facts. However, they negotiated the idealizing influence of theory by transforming it into a fact, situating it in the historical past, as a lost unity that had been irrevocably ruptured. Thus, Lady Charlotte's creating a nineteenth-century text called the *Mabinogion*, which never existed in the medieval world, can be seen to have its roots in the nineteenth-century philologists' "scientific" attempt to recover the Aryan Ur-race and Ur-language that underlay the many different European races and languages, heedless of the fact that they were pursuing only a posited object -- at best a collective signifier, not a referent.

The relationship between facticity and the abstract was interrogated elsewhere in the nineteenth century, perhaps most famously by Nietzsche, but also by Charles Sanders Peirce's work on the theory of signs, which demonstrated that "If our language is to possess cognitive meaning, it must be defined by the ways in which it is used communicatively... no thought (in so far as it is a mental sign) is perfectly unitary or simple but is inseparable from interpretation by further thoughts" (Buchler *xii*). Peirce formalizes this insight into his triangulated definition of a sign, which consists of the object the sign represents, the sign itself, and the interpretant, which receives or processes the sign. Chapters One and Three of this study will examine how the other major piece of writing to which Lady Charlotte devoted her life, a diary that spanned over fifty years, negotiates the problems of obtaining an idealist perspective in a

contingent and fragmented world, sometimes by creating a figure that stands in the place of a Peircian interpretant, and at other times with a collector's acquisitiveness that parallels that of her translation of the *Mabinogion.*

A journal is perhaps the genre most likely to problematize a writer's obtaining an absolute perspective. For a journal is answerable to neither the ideal realm nor to the commerce of exchange of a society, written as it is, at least ostensibly, with oneself as an ideal and perhaps only reader. Indeed, presumably, a journal could be a piece of purely choric writing that transmits feelings to the written page as immediately as they are experienced.[4] Yet, in practice, most journals constantly engage with the thetic boundary as it is defined by Julia Kristeva, continuously translating the semiotic to the symbolic, exchanging emotions and experience, however half-felt or perceived, for an organized retelling of them, no matter how scattered and emotional. Bella Brodzki and Celeste Schenk have pointed out that, in writing an autobiography, many women in the nineteenth century used a postulated Other as the ostensible subject of their work, as one means of negotiating this boundary between semiotic and symbolic. Lady Charlotte, I will argue, used the figure of her first husband, John Guest, in a similar strategy, deployed in the first words of her published diaries:

> Not now, as in the winter, can I say that the only friend I had to confide in was my journal. Now, every care and every joy, every sorrow and every delight is shared and sympathized with, and henceforth my only friend, my only confidant is my

[4] Or possibly, as many business diaries were, a text of sheer facticity.

> husband... the dates I note are, at least, of as much interest to my husband as to me, and the book in which I keep them is as much his journal as mine. (*Guest* 14)

Unlike the female writers discussed by Schenk and Brodzki, this postulated figure of Sir John is not the subject of Lady Charlotte's narration (and an object of her gaze). Instead, he occupies the much more powerful position of a postulated interpretant who, having the powers of an ideal reader, can view both Lady Charlotte and her text as an object. His ultimate purpose is to serve as the final arbiter of the narrative she recorded -- despite the fact that there is no evidence that John Guest ever evinced the slightest interest in reading his wife's diaries. Chapter One of this study will examine the peculiarities and strategies of her creating and maintaining this deliberate triangulation.

Lady Charlotte creates no such triangulation with the figure of her second husband in her later diaries. Indeed, Charles Schreiber often seems like a walking absent object of desire. He left little in the way of his own voice save a few parliamentary addresses, which may be one of the reasons that Lady Charlotte's biographer Revel Guest dismisses him as "a shadowy figure" (*Lady Charlotte* 225). However, this fact alone would not be a reason that he could not serve as his wife's posited interpretant in her journals. What is more important is the fact that Charles Schreiber was fourteen years younger than Lady Charlotte, not of her social station, and, when they met, her employee. The unconventionality, if not sheer scandalousness, of their relationship, made him an impossible arbiter of the boundary between private feelings and socially acceptable expression. Instead, Charles Schreiber became an object that must be hidden, referred to

by allusions and ellipses, if at all. Chapter Three of this study will examine the shifts in Lady Charlotte's journal, as her narrative style is forced to change from one addressed to an imagined reader who serves to regulate the boundary between her private thoughts and desires and the public expression of them, to one that is occupied with hiding an object of desire.

A significant shift in these later journals occurs, however, some time after 1868, when Lady Charlotte and Charles Schreiber conceived a passion for collecting *objets d'art* -- primarily china, but also fans and playing cards. At that point, the Schreibers had been married for well over ten years and Lady Charlotte's children were largely independent. Arguably, then, the urgency of Charles Schreiber's positioning as an illicit object of desire had sharply decreased. Indeed, when Lady Charlotte resumed her journals after a six year gap, which lasted from shortly after the 1862 death of her son, Augustus, until 1869, the function of Charles Schreiber was transferred to the collected objects themselves. These later journals, edited by her son Montague, and published as *Confidences of a Collector*, are distinguished from the earlier journals by their combining detailed notes on her acquisitions side by side with the more conventional personal experiences the rest of her diaries record.[5] Increasingly, the objects function as both the impetus for experience and locus of experience, allowing Lady Charlotte to practice a masculinist triangulation of desire, such as that described by Rene Girard and Peter Brooks after him. A "gourd-shaped tin-glazed earthenware bottle painted with a lake

[5] Interestingly, it is these diaries that may have brought Lady Charlotte the scholarly respect that is she is so grudgingly granted for her translation of the *Mabinogion*, for her china diaries are still a standard reference source for china collectors today.

scene and tulips in bright polychrome" (*Lady Charlotte* 217), in particular, led Lady Charlotte to write a sketch entitled "The Adventure of a Bottle," which, "is a parody of the novel of sensibility with echoes of Sterne's *A Sentimental Journey*" (*Lady Charlotte* 217).

Yet such narrativity exists in uneasy tension with sheer enumeration on a scale that can only described as a further manifestation of the "despotism of fact" that is the overriding critical theme of this study. For, in collecting, the object assumes an unnatural primacy, where its very possession is at least as important as any interpretation or significance placed on it by its possessor. Several recent theorists of collecting, such as Susan Pearce and Daniel Miller, have drawn several important inferences from this uneasy balance. In particular, they argue that an object has a unique ability to supersede the structuralist definitions that underlie most modern discussions of meaning and interpretation. Pearce demonstrates how an artifact, such as Keppoch's sword from the Battle of Culloden, exists in a relationship that is simultaneously metonymic with respect to the actual battle in which it was used, and metaphoric with respect to present-day museum visitors, who read the sword as a symbol of the battle (24). She then goes on to point out how the act of collecting creates a similar bridge between the metonymic relations of the actual objects and the metaphoric signification of the collector's systematization of his collection. Miller expands on this idea to make the particularly suggestive argument that this slippage between axes of interpretability lends objects a deceptive flexibility of meanings -- deceptive because humans are biased toward seeing the meaning of objects as inherently more absolute than that of linguistic systems.

Chapter Four of this study will examine the freedoms in self-definition and judgment that such flexibility of meaning might offer to the female collector. In particular, the chapter will examine the Benjaminian implications of a female collector's fetishizing domestic objects such as china or fans. It will argue that, just as Benjamin saw collecting objects as rescuing them from the systematization and categorization of tradition (Arendt 44), collecting domestic objects allowed female collector to liberate the objects, as well as themselves, from the traditional uses to which they were put.

Following Miller's and Pearce's arguments, the chapter will go on to suggest that collecting allowed women a vehicle for self-assertion through Hegelian objectification. The object's flexibility of interpretability, however, allowed such collecting to appear as appropriately feminine Other-directedness. Thus, early critics such as Maurice Jonas (1907) saw women's collecting domestic objects as a natural metonymic relationship, reflecting their shared delicacy or domestic functions (Eatwell 126). On the other hand, in systematizing and categorizing their collections, women collectors could trespass on the conventionally masculine, idealizing territories of abstraction and categorization, which were normally considered too difficult for female minds. The chapter will also consider how the porcelain that Lady Charlotte collected also called tradition into question -- presumably largely unintentionally -- by miniaturizing historical, allegorical, and mythic narratives into doll-like grotesques. Other objective standards of judgment were also interrogated -- again, presumably unintentionally -- by creating hybrid objects that were neither definably decorative or useful, or objects, such as the "fine tureen, in

the form of a RABBIT BIG AS LIFE" (Rackham 28, No. 151), which masqueraded as other objects.

The chapter concludes by considering how, in contrast to Benjamin, Susan Pearce sees the culmination of collecting as the object's being placed in a museum, which reinscribes the collector's self-definition by into a larger societal definition of judgment or taste. This reinscription, she argues, is only accomplished when the object is permanently removed from the circulation of the marketplace, a final act of rupture or framing. It was to a similar act of framing that Lady Charlotte turned when she had to confront the final rupture that faced her.

In 1884, Charles Schreiber died. Two months later, Lady Charlotte offered a collection of approximately 2000 pieces of porcelain to the Victoria and Albert Museum, as a memorial to her husband. It was a gesture that can be read as attempting to substitute a multiplicity of objects for a single, lost object, her husband. Yet it is important to see that the collection inscribes not only Schreiber -- nor, for that matter, only Lady Charlotte -- back into tradition. Instead, much like the museum that houses it, the collection inscribes the partnership between the two.

The inscription of such a partnership into the fabric of tradition is perhaps the culmination of Lady Charlotte's ongoing attempt to define the literary sign "Lady Charlotte" in terms of her relation to an external standard that ranges from the Welsh tradition in the case of the *Mabinogion*, to her husbands in her journals, and finally to the

objects that she collected in her catalogues and collector's journals. As feminist critics from Gilbert and Gubar to Brodzki and Schenk have observed, asserting oneself by such focusing on others was a common literary strategy among nineteenth century women authors. Lady Charlotte, however, was one of those women often described with the backhanded compliment, "having a masculine mind." More importantly, she had the rare privilege of economic self-assertion, all but managing her husband's ironworks single-handedly for the last years of his life. Benjamin argues that art and intellectual achievement can only be viewed as products of economic influences. In Lady Charlotte's case, that material influence had a paradoxically idealizing effect. For, Lady Charlotte was one of the rare nineteenth-century women who, sporadically, had the economic opportunity to function as a desiring subject -- a largely idealist figure. It is this paradox that led to the peculiarly Benjaminian tensions that are characteristic of all the texts she produced.

Chapter One: Mrs. Ellis' Wives of England

Lady Charlotte Guest does not lend herself easily to categorization as a subject for literary consideration. Indeed, neither her biography nor her *oeuvre* present itself as a readily graspable unity. In particular, her *oeuvre* -- if she can be said to have an *oeuvre* -- is a collection of disparate genres: an abortive attempt at a history of the iron trade, inspired presumably by a fit of newlywed enthusiasm; her translation of, and notes for, the *Mabinogion*; catalogues that she created for her collections of ceramics, playing cards, and fans; and finally her journal, which she kept from the time she was given her first pocket book in 1822 (ironically by her loathed stepfather Reverend Pegus (*Lady Charlotte* 3)) until she was too blind to continue in 1891.

The fragmentary nature of Lady Charlotte's *oeuvre* lends credence to the unfairly marginalizing characterization of her as a gifted amateur, who just happened to produce the first translation of a series of romances important to both English and Celtic literature. That characterization is unhappily reinforced by a contingent fact of her biography: the emphasis on modest effortlessness in all things among the English aristocracy. It is further reinforced by the way Lady Charlotte's published output is systematically conditioned by the contexts created by her biography. In Wales, among antiquarians, she translated Welsh poems; later, as an independently wealthy collector and wife, she documented the collections she amassed. Even the form of her journal changed as she transformed herself from scholar and intellectual to collector.

It is easy to read this diversity as aimlessness, a version of the problems of autobiography that Carolyn Heilbrun defines for "privileged women" (Heilbrun 63 ff.), a nameless malaise of which genuinely oppressed writers, bell hooks most notably among them, are contemptuous. Yet, Lady Charlotte's literary production deserves more than such a simple dismissal. For, although her output may be fragmented, the act of writing was a consistent part of her life. In addition to business and scholarly documents, she wrote in her journal for an hour each day, producing 10,000 typed pages during the course of her lifetime (*Lady Charlotte xx*). Furthermore, examining her writing as an *oeuvre* allows the twenty-first century reader to explore the tension between writing as a contingent act, in which texts are governed by economic, political and historical forces, and writing as an idealizing act, that mediates the relation between the romantic self and a transcendent realm.

At first glance, Lady Charlotte seems like an ideal candidate to embrace romantic subjectivity in her writing, for she was not ashamed to function as a desiring subject, writing with refreshing candor in her diary "But whatever I undertake, I must reach an eminence in" (*Guest* 89) -- an ambition that was certainly borne on the back of servants and her husband's income, not to mention the backs of Welsh iron workers. Yet, none of the texts she produced, including even her journals, can be easily read as a deliberate construction of -- or interrogation of -- self. Instead, her writings, if they can be said to be unified at all, are unified by their peculiar Other-directedness. It is the dialectic between this Other-directedness and Lady Charlotte's inherent subjective romanticism that this chapter proposes to explore -- arguing that this tension mimics the "irresolvable

polarities of theory" that Walter Benjamin describes in "Edward Fuchs: Historian and Collector." Later chapters will go on to explore how Lady Charlotte, much like Fuchs, eventually substitutes a series of object relations to mediate these polarities.

In the Other-directedness of her writing, Lady Charlotte is also an exemplar of the problem of women's autobiography, as defined by Bella Brodzki and Celeste Schenck in their introduction to *Life/Lines*, as well as by Mary G. Mason in "The Other Voice," and Nancy K. Miller in "Writing Fictions," both articles in the aforementioned book. All four of these authors demonstrate how women writers from Margaret Cavendish to Gertrude Stein, rather than constructing their narrative around the romantic subject "I," instead construct their narratives in relation to an Other. Cavendish enfolds her autobiography, quite literally, in a biography of her husband; Julian of Norwich constructs her autobiography in relation to God; and Stein continues the tradition by writing her autobiography as *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas* by Gertrude Stein.

It is a secondary purpose of this chapter to consider Lady Charlotte's journals as an act of female autobiography and interrogate how they confound the definition of autobiography that Philippe Lejeune presents in his first major discussion of the genre, *On Autobiography*. In attempting a formalist definition that avoids the obvious referential fallacy of using exterior criteria, such as the facts of the biographee's life or the author's intention to publish, Lejeune finally offers one criterion in a gesture so reductionist, it can almost seem simplistic: autobiography is a genre in which the protagonist is implicitly or directly identified with the author of the piece, by the specific fact of their

having the same proper name. Cavendish's framing her autobiography as a life of her husband, as well as Stein's more obvious deflection of "her" autobiography, immediately problematize this definition, as do Lady Charlotte's diaries. For, in fact, in library listings, Lady Charlotte is the subject, not the author, of both published versions of her diaries. The first version, *Lady Charlotte Schreiber's Journals, Confidences of a Collector of Ceramics and Antiques,* published in 1911, is edited by her son Montague Guest, who is therefore listed in card catalogues in the place of author. The two later versions, *Lady Charlotte Guest: Extracts from her Journal 1833-52* (1950) and *Lady Charlotte Schreiber: Extracts from her Journal 1853 - 1891* (1952), are edited by her grandson, the Earl of Bessborough, who is credited as the author. This crediting of her editors as authors is more than a simple trick of bibliographic *legerdemain*. When one considers the fact that the only full-length biography of Lady Charlotte is done by yet another descendent, Revel Guest, as well as the fact that a large portion of Lady Charlotte's journals remain in the family's possession, it highlights how, even a hundred years later, the author Lady Charlotte remains an object in the family's control. Indeed, although Montague Guest contented himself with selecting extracts, the Earl of Bessborough was an editor who was interfering to the point of Bowdlerization, summarizing large passages of Lady Charlotte's life in paragraphs sometimes as long as the journal extracts he provides.

It might be immediately objected that the publication history of Lady Charlotte's diaries is indicative only of why they should not be considered as falling under Lejeune's rubric. Yet Lejeune himself considers the autobiography of Daniel Stern (Marie d'Agoult),

whose publication history is almost identical to Lady Charlotte's.[1] Both Stern's *Memoires* and *Mes souvenirs* were published posthumously and, in the case of the *Memoires*, were extensively edited. As the title implies, the *Memoires* were at least begun as an autobiography and then abandoned; however, Stern's editor Olliver saw fit to embellish them with journal entries and notes, as well as journal entries by Liszt, Stern's lover.

Stern's case highlights a critical theoretical difficulty in discussing the difference between diaries and autobiography, a difference that is crucial to the dialectic between material and ideal that is the central theme of this chapter. For the two genres are, on the one hand, so similar as to be interchangeable, and on the other hand, radically antithetical. A diary is an interior, contingent piece of writing that could be associated on a theoretical level with both the feminine and the material in its immediacy and self-effacingness. Yet, the diary can be turned into autobiography, a romantic assertion of self as an individual or extraordinary exemplar, not by any change in writing, but simply by the act of publication. Furthermore, that act does not have to be performed by the actual writer of the diary. Indeed, in both the cases of Stern and Lady Charlotte, it was a male who performed the final act of authorial self-assertion. Rather than indicating any flaw in Lejeune's construct, however, it can be argued, as Brodzki and Schenck do most effectively, that this sort of displacement is simply characteristic of female autobiographical writing.

[1] See Nancy K. Miller, esp. p. 47 and p. 58.

The fact that Lady Charlotte is female also problematizes Lejeune's definition from another perspective. For, in fact, the name of the female diarist is not the static single name of the male autobiographer: Lady Charlotte, both diarist and author, was successively Lady Charlotte Bertie, Lady Charlotte Guest, and Lady Charlotte Schreiber. It is a distinction that all three of her biographers support. Montague Guest published only the diaries of Lady Charlotte Schreiber. Bessborough published two separate volumes, one devoted to Lady Charlotte Guest, the other to Lady Charlotte Schreiber. Revel Guest divides her biography in three parts: Lady Charlotte Bertie, Lady Charlotte Guest, and Lady Charlotte Schreiber. Significantly, none of Lady Charlotte's editors chose to publish the diaries of Lady Charlotte Bertie -- perhaps yielding to the assumption that a woman is not a person until she is defined by a husband. Guest and John come closest, devoting 21 pages of a 251-page biography to Lady Charlotte Bertie.

Accepting Lejeune's definition, thus, leads to the inference that Lady Charlotte's diary consists, in fact, of three separate autobiographies of three separate lives, each defined by an external relationship to a male. Arguably, on one level, this inference is correct, for Lady Charlotte's relationships with her two husbands were so radically different that the two sets of journals can seem like two very different texts. Yet, on the other hand, these journals were all written without interruption by single person, whom this study will call Lady Charlotte, for that was the single identity by which she identified herself throughout her life. The "Lady" is as important to this identification as the "Charlotte," for it is acutely evident throughout her writing that she was extremely aware of her position as a daughter of the nobility and in fact defined herself by that status.

Indeed, the title "Lady" (which consistently superseded "Mrs."), served as a linguistic marker that functioned in dialectic tension with her married identities, neither of which was noble. One early indication of this tension appeared when Sir John (like many tradesmen before him) was elevated to the baronetcy, not the nobility, and that only after their marriage. It was a distinction that Lady Charlotte considered an insult, writing on July 3, 1838:

> In to-day's [*sic*] gazette my dear Merthyr was elevated, if so I must call it, to the rank of Baronet. I consider it a paltry distinction and was much averse to his taking it, but he liked to secure something which would descend to Ivor... I shall not rest until I see something of more value bestowed upon him. The present change is anything but agreeable to me. (*Guest* 71)

Such obsessiveness over rank is more understandable if one realizes that, although Lady Charlotte was born to the nobility, that identity was snatched away from her in the first six years of her life. She was born Lady Charlotte Bertie, the eldest child of the Ninth Earl of Lindsey and his second wife, Charlotte, on May 19, 1812. Lady Charlotte's father, the Earl of Lindsey, died in 1818, when she was six years old. In 1821, her mother remarried a cousin with the delightfully Dickensian name of the Reverend Peter Pegus. As if inspired by the writer himself, Lady Charlotte's life rapidly turned into a series of nineteenth-century set pieces. Her mother retreated to the couch and delicate health, perhaps in direct reaction to Rev. Pegus' drunken exploits such as sacking all the servants (*Lady Charlotte* 4) and passing out peppermints in church in order to disrupt a

rival's sermons (*Lady Charlotte* 5). When laborers during the Swing Riots of 1830 burned ricks, barns and mansions, the Rev. Pegus rose to the occasion in a manner that strikes the twentieth-century reader as a music hall number, arming himself with "two swords, a double-barreled shotgun, and a brace of pistols" (*Lady Charlotte* 6). The capstone on this low farce (although probably not to the lady in question) was Charlotte's French governess being seduced by a cousin, Albermarle Layard, "the black sheep of the Rectory" (*Lady Charlotte* 9).

The biographies of Lady Charlotte's two full brothers, presumably her most direct link to the entitlements the daughter of an earl might expect, could serve as nothing but a salutary story about the tenuousness of this link. The heir to the family title, referred to as Lindsey, was born two years after Charlotte in 1814. Although any kind of definitive diagnosis is impossible at this date, it is clear that Lindsey was a simpleton, who was treated, among others, by the same doctor as had treated the madness of King George III. In a series of episodes that the adolescent Charlotte could only read as indicative of how schemers were constantly attempting to snatch her hereditary identity, Lindsey was the victim of at least two mock marriages, one of them staged by his stepfather, as well as a more conventional attempt to marry him to a rich heiress (*Lady Charlotte* 16-7). The twenty-year-old Lady Charlotte, herself in the middle of marriage negotiations, was forced to intervene in the second of these mock marriages, by appealing directly and in secret to the Lord Chancellor, Lord Brougham (*Lady Charlotte* 17).

Charlotte's other full brother, known as Bertie, was born in 1815. Like Charlotte, he was a reader and an intellectual; however, unlike his sister, he seemed incapable of turning his talents to any productive use whatsoever. According to Charlotte's son Montague, he was "a voracious reader and crammed full of information which even with his great memory," he "was totally unable to make any use of to himself or other" (*Lady Charlotte* 4). A postmodernist could make much of this literal *aporia*. More importantly, however, it takes only the most obvious psychological reading to see the roots of Lady Charlotte's ambition and competitiveness, which verged on caricature, in this early situation in which her identity was rendered doubly ineffectual, both by her female status and by the incapacities of her brothers. The insecurity of her position goes a long way to explaining, if not justifying, such sentiments as "my blood was of the noblest and most princely in the kingdom, and if I go into Society, it must be the very best and first. I can brook no other" (*Guest* 89).

The quote is also emblematic of Lady Charlotte's continuingly vexed relationship with London society. Being the daughter of an earl, Lady Charlotte was given a London season -- an indulgence denied her stepsisters, who were merely daughters of a clergyman. The adolescent Charlotte was wise enough and cynical enough to understand that the purpose of the season was to obtain a husband, the wealthier and more noble the better. It was a lesson that had been drummed home when she was only fourteen and suffered her first romantic disappointment with Augustus O'Brien, the son of a neighboring squire. When they waltzed together at Lord Exeter's ball, Charlotte found herself whisked home by the Rev. Pegus, to face her mother who "declared she would

sooner see her daughter in her grave than married to Augustus" (*Lady Charlotte* 12). The breach was such that the families quarreled irreparably, and a fourteen-year-old Charlotte declared "the whole object and end of my life is withdrawn" (*Lady Charlotte* 13).

A year later, Charlotte was sufficiently recovered of her disappointment to notice Frederick Martin, Lindsey's new tutor, a "full, thin, kind-tempered man in black who used to teach me my letters and walk out with me" (*Lady Charlotte* 14). Needless to say, if a local squire's son was not good enough for Lady Charlotte, a tutor was out of the question. Although later he managed to pull himself together to enjoy a distinguished clerical career as the author of several religious books (*Lady Charlotte* 284), the unfortunate Martin was destined to fade into a continuing reproach to Charlotte, "the wreck of the bright hopes of former days" (*Lady Charlotte* 21) who, on an unwelcome visit to the married Lady Charlotte's house in Wales, exuded "a painful abandonment of hope, at the wreck of his prospects, the almost nine years expectancy of a living, and the continual disappointments" (*Lady Charlotte* 39).

The family's sights were set on a sixty-seven-year-old politician, Robert Plumer Ward, who had already buried two wives. Ward proposed and was refused by Charlotte; however by that time even she had accepted the impossibility of the match with Martin, perhaps encouraged by an acquaintance with the "wild, enthusiastic and very poetical" (*Lady Charlotte* 19) Benjamin Disraeli whose brilliance "infected [Charlotte] and [they] ran on about poetry and Venice and Baghdad and Damascus and [her] eye lit up and [her] cheek burned in the pause of the beautiful music [her] words flowed almost as rapidly as

his" (*Lady Charlotte* 19). The acquaintance with Disraeli resulted in Lady Charlotte's most traditional appearance in literature. In his 1845 novel, *Sybil,* Benjamin Disraeli refers to "'waltzing with the little Bertie' at an assembly at Lady St. Julian's" (*Lady Charlotte* 19). He also created a character, Lady Joan Fitz Warene, who is at least partially modeled on Lady Charlotte, and who was described as:

> certainly not beautiful; nobody would consider her beautiful... and yet she had a look, when... she was more than beautiful. But she was very clever, very clever, indeed, something quite extraordinary... languages and learned books; Arabic and Hebrew, and old manuscripts. (*Lady Charlotte* 19)

Appearing thus as a character in Disraeli's novel is perhaps the culmination of the tension between romantic, desiring subjectivity and Other-directedness in the textual life of Lady Charlotte Bertie. For, interestingly, the fictional character created by a man accomplishes something that caused considerable ambivalence for the textual construct "Lady Charlotte" in her own journals. The question facing the young Lady Charlotte Bertie, in the words of Nancy K. Miller, "is whether the story of a woman who sees conventional female self-definition as a text to be rewritten, who refuses the inscription of her body as the ultimate truth of her self, to become, if not a man, an exceptional woman (hence like a man), is a story significantly different from that of a man who becomes an exceptional man" (55). This posited difference between constructing female and male lives is magnified by the literal act of writing the story of a woman's life, for "while a woman may fly in the face of tradition, that is, of traditional expectations for women... while on the face of it she is an outlaw, the real fault lies with society and its

laws. To justify an unorthodox life by writing about it, however, is to *reinscribe* the original violation, to reviolate masculine turf" (50).

The double-bind created by the situation Miller describes is clear when it is considered in terms of Philippe Lejeune's discussion of nineteenth-century bourgeois autobiography. Lejeune posits three modes of autobiography, all determined by the writer's relationship to society: the exemplary autobiography, in which the writer believes in the *status quo* and succeeds because of this belief; the critical autobiography, in which the writer is antagonistic to the *status quo*; and finally the apologetic autobiography, in which the writer retains his belief in the *status quo*, but has been failed by it, or has failed, nonetheless (Lejeune 172). If one accepts Miller's premises, the female autobiographer is doubly excluded from writing the first type of autobiography, the exemplary one, because the act of a woman writing to define herself as extraordinary is adversarial to both the laws and expectations of society, as well as the idealized concept of her gender.

The dialectic that is thus created by asserting herself as extraordinary in defiance of an idealized exemplar of womanhood creates the central textual tension in Lady Charlotte's journals. It is, however, more than simply a feminist tension between female self-assertion and the paternalistic society that oppresses her. Rather it is a necessary consequence of a central difference between the way male and female autobiographies mediate between the historically-situated and the abstract. In the case of exemplary male autobiography, creating the text of his life changes the author from a person situated in a specific historic context to an ideal. He is idealized only partly by the formal shift from

person to textual construct, which is resituable to an infinite number of contexts beyond the original context(s) that constituted the events of the writer's life. He also literally becomes an ideal, a exemplar against which others can measure themselves. In the case of women, however, the shift from historically-situated person to textual construct creates an irresolvable tension. The textual construct is still diachronic, resituable across space and time; however, the character presented can only be individual and contingent, since her extraordinariness depends on her violating the boundaries prescribed as an ideal for her gender. The only way for the young Lady Charlotte Bertie to fight her way out of this textual paradox was to rely on another narrator to speak for her and identify her as extraordinary.

For his part, Disraeli was taken enough by Lady Charlotte (or at least by her inheritance) to write to his elder sister:

> By the bye, would you like Lady [Charlotte] for a sister-in-law, very clever, 25000L, and domestic? As for 'love' all my friends who married for love and beauty either beat their wives or live apart from them. This is literally the case. I may commit many follies in life, I never intend to marry for 'love', which I am sure, is a guarantee of infelicity. (*Lady Charlotte* 19-20)

Happily for Charlotte, such a romantic prospect at last fell through, and instead, she was introduced to John Guest, a forty-eight-year-old widower, still acknowledged to be handsome, who owned an iron works in Dowlais and had come to London as the first MP for Merthyr Tydfil, the Welsh district where Dowlais was located.[2] Although Guest was

[2] The district was the reason for Lady Charlotte's referring to her husband as "Merthyr," both personally and in her diaries.

wealthy, he was not titled, nor was he comfortable in London society. Predictably, Lady Charlotte's mother was worried about Guest's being "in trade," but equally predictably, his enormous wealth and political future were judged to make up for the defect, and the couple were married on July 29, 1833.

Lady Charlotte -- at least the Lady Charlotte created by the family editors -- never pronounced anything but her undying devotion to John Guest in the diaries that cover their entire twenty-year marriage. Yet, the remarkable seventy-year period of production which her diaries span is marred by only three missing sections: one between September 1859 and January 1863; one from 1863 to 1869, and the entries for late September 1832 to May 1833, the eight months before her marriage to John Guest (*Lady Charlotte xx*). Those entries she burned because she felt they might be hurtful to him. Again, it takes only rudimentary psychologizing to hypothesize that she understood the marriage as a compromise -- whether with her ideals of what was due her noble blood or due her romanticism will be never known.

Thus, the "autobiography" of Lady Charlotte Bertie, or Lady Charlotte before her first marriage, begins in silence and ends in silence. It begins in the silence created by her editors excising her existence as unimportant. It ends, perhaps more tragically and certainly more irrevocably in the absolute silence of the burned pages that preceded her marriage. Indeed, the excerpt with which Bessborough chooses to begin his version of Lady Charlotte Guest's journals is a fitting epitaph for Lady Charlotte Bertie, "To begin

at the beginning: -- I draw a veil over much confusion and much arrangement and disarrangement" (*Guest* 14).

Whatever the compromises she perceived as inherent in her marriage to John Guest, it afforded Lady Charlotte an important, and somewhat paradoxical, vehicle for textual freedom. Upon her marriage, long before the interfering hands of her editors had ever touched her text, Lady Charlotte began editing her own diary, and editing it for a perceived reader other than herself. For it was her announced intention that her diary be fit for her husband's eyes, and it says much about Bessborough's editorial stance that he chooses to include this announcement in the first diary entry he presents:

> Not now, as in the winter, can I say that the only friend I had to confide in was my journal. Now, every care and every joy, every sorrow and every delight is shared and sympathized with, and henceforth my only friend, my only confidant is my husband... the dates I note are, at least, of as much interest to my husband as to me, and the book in which I keep them is as much his journal as mine. (*Guest* 14)

If silence is the defining characteristic of Lady Charlotte Bertie's diaries, this construction of her husband as her ideal reader is the defining characteristic of Lady Charlotte Guest's. It is ultimately a textual, not an actual, construction, for there is no evidence that John Guest ever evinced the slightest interest in reading his wife's diaries. Furthermore, it is a characteristically female construction. In "All of a Piece: Women's Poetry and Autobiography," Celeste Schenck argues that reading such a construction is a necessary strategy for reading women's writing, claiming that women's writing must be

read so that we "see reflected in the particularity of each corpus the lineaments of some particular woman's life experience as dialectically constructed both by cultural imposition and by her own countering agency" (291).

In making this claim, Schenck highlights a central difference between feminist and Marxist treatments of such a dialectic. Schenck's claim is that the dialectical struggle occurs between individual and society, internal and external, and ultimately involves a woman writer's right to the same romantic self-assertion as a male author's. Marxist theorists, in contrast, see all literary self-assertion as culturally constructed and any struggles occurring between classes within society, not between self and society. Judith Johnston has already pointed out the importance of the relationship between class struggle and feminist struggle in Lady Charlotte's case, arguing that Lady Charlotte's translation of the *Mabinogion* was a feminist act of self-assertion operating by means of an act of imperialist self-assertion. This claim will be examined at length in Chapter Two.

In the case of Lady Charlotte's diaries, however, what is more important than class struggle is the relationship between Schenck's claim and a Kristevan/Lacanian model of language acquisition. Schenck quotes Beatrice Didier in her attempt to define "characteristically feminine writing," which:

> [has] as [its] goal the reachievement of symbiotic forgetfulness, plenitude, identity, not by means of the militant, bounded separation that psychoanalytic culture prescribes for us but by the means of the blurring of subject/object dualism. The

> poetic and autobiographical acts collide as a means of access to language, maternal and primitive... For men, Didier argues, the return would be to an Other, whereas for women it is to the Same. (296)

The construction of John Guest, however, is neither Other nor Same. It is simply textual, embodying the contingent societal norms against which Lady Charlotte believed she was expected to measure herself in a figure that is at once diachronic and ideal, but also firmly situated in the narrative context of the text. Furthermore, by creating her husband as a figure in her own text, Lady Charlotte manages to internalize him, removing him from the external world and situating him in the private world that she alone controls. Yet it is this construction of her husband that has the power to validate her journal, that quite literally gives her license to write. Thus, in her early diaries, Lady Charlotte's self-assertion is achieved by splitting the subject of the journal's assertion, dividing its authority between the acting, feeling narrator Lady Charlotte, and the removed, judging reader, Sir John.

This dialectically constructed subject is paralleled by the tensions created by the facts of Lady Charlotte's biography. Indeed, Lady Charlotte's biography is unrulily difficult to reconstruct as a smooth, teleological narrative.[3] Even allowing for Bessborough's interfering editorial hand, her diary has an annoyingly schizophrenic quality, jumping from Dowlais to London to Canford and back again; from the birth of her fifth child, to

[3] Schenck would see this difference as organic and gender-determined. Indeed, she is quite open about her opinion that fragmentation, which is a necessary struggle for a woman writer, is a post-modern self-indulgence for Roland Barthes. (See especially page 288.)

her race to publish her version of *Peredur* before Villemarque published his French one; then to the Resignation of the Whigs, caused by the Chartist riots, in the space of two pages (*Guest* 88-9). The peculiar diversity of Lady Charlotte's interests leads Guest and John to compartmentalize their biography, treating each of seven perceived personas in turn, instead of trying to create a chronological narrative.[4] Such a division, especially in terms of discussing a woman's life, is quite theoretically permissible. Indeed, if one follows the lead of Anderson and Zinsser, who argue in *A History of their Own* that women's experience is better described in categories of experience, rather than in a masculinist, chronological narrative dominated by political demarcations, women's biographies might be best constructed this way. However, it is useful to at least begin with a chronologically-organized resume of her life.

Lady Charlotte married John Guest on July 29, 1833, when she was twenty-one years old. The marriage lasted just short of twenty years, ending with Sir John's death on November 26, 1852, which left her a relatively young widow of forty. John Guest was an ironmonger, who had inherited the Dowlais Iron Company from his father and grandfather before him. It was John, however, who transformed it into the largest ironworks in the world. He died a wealthy man, leaving a fortune of a half a million pounds and a working country estate at Canford, in addition to the works and house at Dowlais. In addition, he left behind a baronetcy, which was bestowed upon him in Queen Victoria's Coronation Honors in 1838. Lady Charlotte was Guest's second wife; his first, Maria Ranken, had died in childbirth.

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[4] These personas are, in order, Wife and Mother, Educator of the People, Society Lady, Intellectual in Wales, Businesswoman, Lady of the Manor, and Head of the Works.

In contrast with his first marriage, the union with Lady Charlotte produced ten children over the course of thirteen years. Although the impression may be partly due to Lady Charlotte's reticence in writing about such matters, she seemed, with the exception of her last child, to handle pregnancy and birth easily, her confinements causing her barely to pause in her routine of writing, managing, and socializing. For example, when her daughter Constance was born, Lady Charlotte:

> walked to the furnaces with her husband, learned some German poetry and read in the library. She was about to dress for dinner and rang for the maid "But my dressing was never accomplished for I was suddenly taken ill and had to send the maid for the nurse. The works bell rang six o'clock just as I got into bed which I did forthwith. In less than twenty minutes later another dear baby was added to our family." Her husband had no idea that anything was the matter... (*Lady Charlotte* 34-5)

At least according to the recollections of her daughter Enid, Lady Charlotte was a distant mother. Their governess, Miss Kemble was "more of a mother to us all than ever our own mother who was far oftener away from us" (*Lady Charlotte* 38). Yet, whatever Lady Charlotte's mothering skills, all ten of her children survived to adulthood, quite an accomplishment in and of itself. In addition, several of her children went on to make highly successful marriages -- an ambition for her children which Lady Charlotte was never shy of admitting. Her eldest son, Ivor, married Lady Cornelia Spencer-Churchill, the daughter of the Duke of Marlborough; the Guests' eldest son was created Baron

Wimborne in his own right. Lady Charlotte's daughter Enid married the discoverer of Nineveh, Henry Layard. Interestingly, Henry, who was a contemporary of Lady Charlotte, was rumored to be in love with Lady Charlotte herself. Indeed, the relationship between Lady Charlotte and Layard led Sir John to create a scene when:

> One Sunday in late March 1848 the family went to church and Lady Charlotte stayed behind writing. Afterwards Sir John confronted her with his suspicions -- "it was as though a thunderbolt had fallen at my feet." For two extremely painful hours he talked seriously to her... "it was too extravagant, for the moment it really seemed a sort of frenzy." (*Lady Charlotte* 152)

Despite Sir John's not infrequent (*Lady Charlotte* 152) and perhaps not unprovoked attacks of jealousy, Lady Charlotte's diary portrays their marriage as an idyllic once, beginning when Guest took her to Dowlais to live near the ironworks. Her first reaction could certainly be no more gratifying to a newlywed industrialist:

> The country *did* smile as we started on our Journey and I could not have entered my new abode under more favorable circumstances... By the time we reached the house it was quite dark and the prevailing gloom gave full effect to the light of the blazing furnaces, which was quite unlike all I had ever before seen or even imagined... Merthyr took me through the furnaces and the forges after coffee, and after dinner I saw them cast the iron. In the broad glare of the fires, from a little distance, the workmen formed groups which might yield fine studies for the painter, especially in respect to the lights and shades case upon their figures. (*Guest* 16-7)

She never lost this early enthusiasm for the industry. Her journal is rife with detailed discussions of the iron trade, such as that of March 3, 1838, when the Guests took:

> ... an expedition to Millwall to see a Manufactory which Mr. Fairbairn has there for making Iron Steam Boats. They were constructed much in the same way as boilers except that the plates do not overlap, but, having their edges placed evenly together, they are connected by a flat piece of iron placed on the inside and to which they are strongly rivetted. The holes for the rivets are all countersunk so that their heads do not project at all, and the exterior surface of the vessel is perfectly smooth... (*Guest* 66)

On August 16 of the same year, on a trip to Zurich, she wrote of her visit to the machine shop of a Mr. Essher:

> The man who went round with us did not know where the Bar Iron came from, but in poking about in the forge I found two or three bars upon which was the mark "*G.L. best*" [Guest, Lewis & Co., clarification Bessborough's], which settled the question very satisfactorily. It give me for a moment as much pleasure to find my own Iron in this remote spot as anything has done during the whole journey... (*Guest* 77)

One explanation for this unexpected enthusiasm for industry is that it provided Lady Charlotte with an immediate vehicle to identify herself as extraordinary. For example, when she was invited to fulfill the traditional wife's role during the laying of the Taff Vale Railway:

> I went through the form of laying mortar with a pretty little trowel, but when the stone was lowered to its place, and the Engineer brought an equally interesting

> Liliputian [*sic*] hammer from his pocket for me to strike with, the idea appeared to me so absurd that I rebelled outright and insisted upon using the wooden mallet, to the no small amusement of the workmen. I then said a few words of the pleasure I had in performing the ceremony... (*Guest* 56-7)

Once again, Lady Charlotte's behavior highlights the paradox that Nancy K. Miller describes. In this episode, as well as many others where Lady Charlotte leapt on boats, descended into abandoned ceramics kilns, and negotiated perilous viaducts, she proves herself memorable as woman specifically by violating the conventional roles assigned to the feminine. Yet, when she does this, it is Lady Charlotte herself, rather than the external author Disraeli, who is defining herself as extraordinary -- at least in her actions. Her words, however, immediately intervene to negate the effect of her action, for, as soon as she rejects her feminine identity by demanding the mallet, she hastily recoups it, saying the conventional few words on the pleasure she had taken in the ceremony. (This is by no means to accuse Lady Charlotte of hypocrisy. It is certainly quite possible that she took a genuine pleasure in discomfiting the Engineer.)

Related to this romanticization of industry as a locus for self-assertion was Lady Charlotte's reaction to Wales. As might be suspected, Lady Charlotte quickly romanticized Wales, and with it, Welsh nationalism, especially when it was embodied by such outlaw figures as the Rebecca Rioters, who disguised themselves as women to attack the toll gates of West Wales.[5] Lady Charlotte met their leader, John Hughes, on

[5] The Rebecca Rioters were later romanticized by no less a person than Dylan Thomas, in a sketch for a screenplay called *Rebecca's Daughters*.

the eve of his transportation to Tasmania, describing him as "my poor Welsh rebel with all his faults and all his grievances and all his romance" (*Lady Charlotte* 59). She also had political dealings with Dr. William Price of Porth y Glo, described by many as "a fit subject for the lunatic asylum," who:

> drove around in a carriage drawn by goats and wore full Bardic costume "of red and green and his lambskin on his head with the four lambs [*sic*] tails hanging about his eyes"... It was Price who, years later, was responsible for the legalization of cremation after his court case over the burning of his illegitimate child, whom he had called Jesus Christ. (*Lady Charlotte* 57)

This immediate embracing of Wales and Welsh nationalism led Lady Charlotte to the two works that have defined Lady Charlotte Guest's place in history: her translation of the *Mabinogion* and the exemplary school system she created for the benefit of her Welsh laborers. Scarcely a week after she had arrived in Wales, she began Welsh lessons with the local Rector, Evan Jenkins (*Lady Charlotte* 99). At first, the gesture was nothing more than that of a devoted linguaphile wife. Yet, the social circles in which Lady Charlotte moved comprised many antiquarians who were concerned with Welsh traditions. For example, Benjamin and Lady Augusta Hall, a couple whose social, financial, and political situations closely paralleled the Guests, "promoted Welshness like Renaissance patrons," Lady Hall going so far as to offer prizes for collections of designs for traditional tweeds (*Lady Charlotte* 103). Given Lady Charlotte's intellectual bent, it was no surprise that she entered into the cause of Welsh manuscripts immediately.

During the first year of their marriage, the Guests became founding members of The Society of Welsh Scholars of Abergavenny (*Lady Charlotte* 103). Soon after that, in 1835, Lady Charlotte proposed an independent project to Elijah Waring: creating a collection of legends and superstitions of Wales (*Lady Charlotte* 100). Nothing came of this project, but in 1836 she was involved in a new venture, the Welsh Manuscripts Society, which had just obtained access to Mr. Justice Bosanquet's copy of the tales from the *Red Book of Hergest* (*Lady Charlotte* 101). In keeping with Lady Charlotte's ambitious temperament, the idea of translating these manuscripts arose at the same time as she was working on her (never to be completed) history of the iron trade. Her entry for November 29, 1837 records, "[Dr. Aukin] has written a good deal upon the Manufacture of Iron, and I feared had forestalled much that I intended my history to comprize [*sic*], but I found his Lectures chiefly related to antiquarian researches among Hebrew, Greek, etc." (*Guest* 63). The entry for the very next day includes the historic notation:

> Mr. Justice Bosanquet, has, through Tegid, kindly lent me his copy of the Llyfr Goch y Hugest, the Mabinogion, which I hope to publish with an English Translation, notes, pictorial illustrations. Price of Crickhowel and Tegid have promised their assistance, and by God's blessing I hope I may accomplish the undertaking. (*Guest* 63-4)

At the outset, there was some resistance to her taking on the work. Her entry of December 8 records:

> The M.S.S. Society wants to take the Mabinogion into their own hands, believing that I have given it up. We have to arrange to prevent this, and also to go into some plan for translating Justice Bosanquet's Copy, as I do not feel inclined to give up my scheme of publishing it myself... Mr. Jones... has taken Justice Bosanquet's M.S. and is to copy from it one story at a time in a fit manner to go to the Press, vis: in Modern Orthography which would be more generally useful, and send them to me to translate. (*Guest* 64)

The translation, which occupied her from 1838 to 1849, appeared in eight installments, culminating in the three-volume complete edition, lavishly bound and illustrated, that appeared in 1849. It was a project that she began seventeen days before the birth of her fourth child. (She was back at work five days later (*Guest* 65).) The project concluded a year after the birth of her tenth and last child, Blanche.

As massive an undertaking as a four-hundred page edition of a medieval Welsh manuscript was, it was by no means Lady Charlotte's sole contribution to the Welsh and Wales. In Dowlais, she is remembered to this day for her work as an educator, a fact that is somewhat ambivalently attested to by a pub being named for her (*Lady Charlotte* 216). Lady Charlotte's interest in education was an extension of that of her husband, who had, very early on, established schools modeled on the Rev. Andrew Bell's National Society, funded in part by his company. His efforts were praised in a 1847 parliamentary inquiry, and the boys' senior school at Dowlais was described as "by far the best provided in Wales" (*Lady Charlotte* 65).

As with much liberal reform in the nineteenth-century, John Guest's concern with education can hardly be described as devoid of self-interest. His primary motivation was developing a more technically competent workforce; a secondary motivation was appeasing the Chartist agitation that constantly threatened the *status quo* at the Guest ironworks. Lady Charlotte herself did not get seriously involved in the cause of education until 1848. When she did, she devoted herself to the more conventionally "feminine" spheres of infant education and continuing education for young girls. Interestingly, "despite [Lady Charlotte's] own interest in Welsh literature and history, unlike Lady Hall who encouraged Welsh and English at her Abercarn schools, Lady Charlotte does not seem to have appreciated the value of the children studying their own language or history. Her emphasis on English language and affairs was consistent with contemporary teaching in general" (*Lady Charlotte* 67). Her schools did do the job she had set out to do, and did it admirably, despite the fact that "Her own background and standards made her initially somewhat unrealistic. After one examination she wrote that '*some* young ladies of ten years old could not spell Thessalonica'" (*Lady Charlotte* 70).

Given those caveats, she was an admirable educator, dedicated to the point of annoying her husband (Guest 68), actively teaching, substituting whenever required and experimenting with innovative classroom methods such as visual aids. The culmination of Lady Charlotte's educational drive was the opening of the Dowlais Central Schools on September 11, 1855:

> a showpiece containing seven schoolrooms and a large central hall lit by four perpendicular traceries windows. They accommodated 650 boys and girls and 680

> infants. The total cost of the land, design, buildings and fitting reached L20,000 -- the same amount as that set aside for the schoolroom building of England and Wales in the first government grant of 1833. (*Lady Charlotte* 71)

As Guest and John point out, Guest's educational program was the mix of paternalism, romanticism, and control peculiar to most Victorian social activism. More importantly, it reflects an issue central to Benjamin: the relationship between education and ideology. In Benjamin's view, the wrong sort of education was merely an ideological sop to the masses, for it was a mistake to believe:

> that the same knowledge which secured the domination of the proletariat by the bourgeoisie would enable the proletariat to free itself from this domination. But in reality, a form of knowledge without access to practice, and which could teach the proletariat nothing about its situation, was of no danger to its oppressors. This was particularly the case with the humanities. The humanities represented a kind of knowledge far removed from economics, and consequently untouched by the transformation of economics. The humanities were satisfied "to stimulate," "to offer diversion" or "to be interesting." ("Fuchs" 230)

The symbiosis between education and ideology posited by Benjamin in turn gives rise to the issue of class consciousness and its relationship to morality. Benjamin believes that the conscious elements in the formation of ideology are overestimated, which leads to the fundamental misunderstanding that "exploitation conditions false consciousness, at least on the part of the exploiter, because true consciousness would prove to be a moral

burden" (245). Instead, Benjamin suggests that the emergence of a class morality is an unconscious process; indeed that "the bourgeoisie did not need consciousness to establish this class morality as much as the proletariat needs consciousness in order to overthrow that morality" (245).

Certainly, Lady Charlotte demonstrates a moralism suitable to her class in passages such as the following, which she wrote in response to the second wave of Chartist riots in 1848:

> We talked about the poor and the feeling of the lower classes to the rich, and what he said quite confirmed my views of the unsound state of society and the necessity of educating, or humanising, the lower grade. But I know one cannot make people good and religious by an act of Parliament. The first step is to make them comfortable and happy, and for this purpose all the sanitary and social reforms are most important. (*Guest* 211)

Yet, applying Benjamin's analysis to Lady Charlotte's situation is complicated by the fact that, as a woman, she is simultaneously oppressed by the ideology that she is attempting to impose on her workers. The education that Sir John offered his male workers might, in fact, allow them to make the transition to the bourgeoisie, as did the man Lady Charlotte encountered on a channel crossing in 1873, who:

> ... introduced himself to me as a former Dowlais schoolboy, and told me he was now a partner in a rolling mill near Stockton-on-Tees. He said, having been a poor boy, he owed all his success in life to his teaching in the Dowlais schools, and

> remembered on one occasion, my having patted him on the head and told him to be a good boy... He seems to have well obeyed my instructions. (*Schreiber* 127)

It is a commonplace of Marxist thinking that allowing certain, highly-talented members of the proletariat into the bourgeoisie, is in fact simply another strategy to reinforce the overall oppression of the proletariat. However, there is an important difference between Lady Charlotte and her literally exemplary pupil. Education remained largely a decorative diversion to Lady Charlotte. Instead of having practical value in increasing her wealth, as it did for her ex-student, all education could accomplish in Lady Charlotte's case was to transform her into Disraeli's creature of "languages and learned books; Arabic and Hebrew, and old manuscripts" (*Lady Charlotte* 19).

Yet, paradoxically, ideology itself serves as a textual means to consciousness for Lady Charlotte, for the question of educating the English about the Welsh, as well as the Welsh about the English, offered her two constructions, similar to that of her husband, that served both to mediate the tension between material and ideal and to enable her textual construction of self. Chapter Two of this study will explore the relationship between the material explosions of facticity and the idealizing underpinnings of her translation of the *Mabinogion*. This chapter will concentrate on how the people of Wales consistently functioned as an imagined audience in her journals, always willing to look up to Lady Charlotte as an ideal that had been established -- particularly in her capacity as educator. Indeed, it is only in relation to the people of Wales that Lady Charlotte appears as a consistent, feminine ideal in her text, accepting "generously offered cheers" and

bestowing largesse as well as knowledge. In these moments, she can be identified with the neo-Platonic figure of *Sophia*, if not with -- as the staunchly low-church Lady Charlotte would have been horrified to discover -- the Virgin Mary herself.

There was, however, a period, beginning in 1843 and lasting until the death of Lord Bute in 1848, when the Guests' continuing association with Dowlais seemed very much in question. Lord Bute, whose ancestor had leased the land to John Guest's business partner's father in 1759, was disinclined to renew the 99-year lease. Sir John, who was in increasingly bad health at that time, was unwilling to pursue the lease aggressively. The significance that Lady Charlotte attached to Dowlais can best be judged by her diary entry at a point where she thought she would be forced to leave it. On December 22, 1847, she wrote:

> I asked Merthyr to go into the Works with me. I wanted once more, while they were in full operation, to go through the dear old works, leaning as of old on my dear husband's arm... I nerved myself to bear it, for it was very painful to think of thus taking leave of the dear old home. (*Guest* 200)

Yet, barely a month earlier, she could address the issue of the lease with her usual practical acumen:

> Mr. Divett's opinion entirely coincided with Merthyr's, that is, if the Lease could be had on really advantageous terms, it would be well to take it... Say the profits have been L50,000; of this the Royalties demanded by Lord Bute would absorb L25,000 leaving the other L25,000 for the Leases. But the capital &c., in the works if

> withdrawn would yield L15,000, so that the L25,000 to be expected on renewal would only give a gain of L10,000. (*Guest* 199)

At the same time the Guests were involved in negotiating with Lord Bute over Dowlais, they were also involved in a protracted negotiation to purchase a Dorset property, Canford, from Lord De Mauley. That negotiation was as least as fraught as the one over Dowlais, involving as it did, three heirs, one of whom was a minor whose interests were represented in chancery. The symbolic value of the purchase, however, may have been as fraught as the negotiations themselves, for Canford was a working estate that produced its own incomes from tenants, rather than a leased site for industry. The move to Canford thus represented the final step in the Guests' move from being "in trade" to being members of the landed gentry. That Lady Charlotte attached such significance to the move might well be extrapolated from the fact she hired Sir Charles Barry, the architect of the Houses of Parliament, to remodel the place, a decision that led to some marital tension over the costs of the renovation (*Guest* 185, 225-6).

Shortly after the Guests had begun the transition to life at Canford, word came that Lord Bute had died suddenly "within six weeks of the expiration of the great Lease, which has remained unrenewed only owing to his grasping obstinacy. For years... Lord Bute has been *the* person to thwart and annoy us, perhaps I should say was the only enemy I felt conscious of possessing" *(Guest* 206). The lease was renewed, leading Lady Charlotte to reflect "In days of witchcraft I might have been disposed to feel superstitious about it...

for although I wished him no ill, I certainly loved him not, and as I said before, it is an awful thing when one's only enemy dies suddenly" *(Guest* 206).

Dowlais was leased to Sir John's nephew and business partner, Edward Hutchins, but Lady Charlotte still regarded it as her home -- a situation that led to frustration on both sides. The domestic situation was mirrored in the business partnership between Sir John and his nephew. One feels a certain sympathy for the nephew, trying to set up a household and a career under the conditions set forth by his aunt-in-law:

> I gave him my views, as unauthorized, of what Merthyr might probably agree to, viz: that each should take his own Department; Merthyr, the London House with the general supervision of all the branches, Edward the Manufacture, residing 9 months in the year at Dowlais, on a fixed salary. Then I told him we should pay occasional visits to the Works, and I thought that, all circumstances considered, and being the senior partner and by far the largest proprietor, Merthyr should be at liberty to go and reside at Dowlais if ever he wishes it for two or three months, on giving the Hutchinses reasonable notice. All this I thought he seemed pretty well to concur in, though he still made some allusion to his desire "to manage the London House whenever Merthyr should be out of town." *(Guest* 241)

The caveat "as unauthorized" hints at how well the increasingly acrimonious encounters between Lady Charlotte and Hutchins illustrate the peculiar textual struggles between the assertive Lady Charlotte and the ideal of modest female behavior against which she measured herself. Her demands are insensitive, if not downright audacious, and in fact

were destined to cause a rift between Hutchins and Sir John. Yet, there is no apparent duplicity in her belief that these are in fact her husband's desires. Indeed, she is scrupulous about identifying their lack of finality, first by identifying them as "unauthorized," and secondly by carefully phrasing them in a conditional, "what Merthyr might probably agree to."

Whether out of respect for Lady Charlotte's gender or the sheer force of her personality, Edward Hutchins was apparently hiding his real feelings. The next day, Lady Charlotte wrote:

> Edward Hutchins called again and... Merthyr sent for me to join the conference. When I came down I found Edward in a very different mood from that which he was in the previous day. He was insisting that, if we were to come to Dowlais at all, it should be at a stated period of the year, to be fixed now at this present time for all the years to come. *(Guest* 241)

Lady Charlotte eventually won this territorial war, in an episode that will be discussed later. What is more significant at this point is the reciprocal relationship between Dowlais and the Guests' other residence, a leased house in Spring Gardens, London. The two homes both provided loci for audiences that observed Lady Charlotte. However, where Dowlais provided an adoring audience that saw Lady Charlotte primarily in terms of a female ideal, Lady Charlotte had to struggle simply to be visible in London society.

The Guests spent a large part of their time in London, because Sir John was an MP for Merthyr. Although officially an Independent, John Guest was most closely associated with the Whigs, and sometimes even with the Radical party. He was, if not a self-made man, the son of self-made men, a member of the rising bourgeoisie, and one of the founding members of the Reform Club, "established in 1836 'for the purpose of bringing together the Reformers of the United Kingdom'" (*Lady Charlotte* 81), with Joseph Hume as its first chair. Guest was, as pointed out above, a dedicated educator of his own workforce, creating schools that were acknowledged to be among the best in Wales. An early identification as "The Poor Man's Friend" during the Reform Crisis cost him his seat in Parliament, albeit temporarily (*Lady Charlotte* 47). He stood against the Corn Laws, as well as government expenditures, to the point that Gwyn A. Williams observed, "whenever Guest spoke at length in the House, someone lost money" (*Lady Charlotte* 47).

Yet, for all his liberal identification, John Guest was a member of Parliament, an institution that only represented men of property, for the Reform Act of 1832, as Revel Guest points out, sealed the power, not of the proletariat, but of the rising middle class (47). Liberal or conservative, Whig or Tory, all the members of parliament were men with a vested interest in preserving the order from which they had arisen. Furthermore, like any good industrialist, Guest was dead set against trade unionists (*Lady Charlotte* 47). In addition, he presumably married into the aristocracy quite deliberately, and apparently was more than happy to receive elevation to the Baronetcy as a reward for his diligence.

Whatever the liberality of his politics, they did nothing to discourage Lady Charlotte from relentless social climbing when she was in London. Indeed, she perceived it as necessary to her husband's career and pursued social acquaintances vigorously, despite the occasional journal apology, such as:

> I had intended to study Society and attempt success in it -- The object would have amused me the aim was not great enough to give me the least disappointment had I failed [*sic*] -- This idea was hastily adopted and more because I wanted the excitement of aiming at something other than from ambition (which relating to Society I cannot feel) but I have quite given it up and I am glad I have -- it is useless to catch an ugly butterfly not worth having -- it would be worse than useless -- criminal -- to waste time on the pursuit of it; but that I would never have done. (*Lady Charlotte* 79)

In writing thus, she is adopting an almost Balzacian stance as a detached observer of society. However, because of her status as a political wife, it was not a stance she could sustain, either textually or actually, for her husband's career was vitally linked to her social success. Indeed, it would have taken a detachment close to schizophrenia to see the comic side of an episode such as the party Lady Charlotte gave, where Mrs. Wyndham Lewis told a "shocking story" and "All the Mammas looked grave and the young ladies shocked, and I was red with anger that such a thing should have happened in my house" (*Lady Charlotte* 82).

At other times, Lady Charlotte's social disappointments were far crueler, including at least one outright slap in the face, when Lady Stuart called and:

> ... was remarkably civil, staid [*sic*] half an hour and talked about nothing... she says she is delicate about introductions which is to say she will make none. She says it is extremely difficult to get to any of the good parties, and does not offer to assist me to any of them. Even introducing me to the foreign Ambassadors, which at first she said she could accomplish, she now cannot promise, and I think her offer of giving some of my cards to young men was the only result of the half hour's conversation. I spoke to her coming to dine with me and she talked of Lord Stuart's coming alone and she said she seldom went out except to Balls with her daughter... I believe I must depend on myself for getting on. (*Lady Charlotte* 80)

It would be romanticizing Lady Charlotte's situation, however, to see her as an external observer of London society who was forced against her will to participate in it. Passages such as the following demonstrate that Lady Charlotte was capable of demonstrating significant social snobbery of her own:

> Conceive the horror of seeing a fat woman sit opposite to one in a *yellow* gown, and an *amber* cap with *red* flowers, and the still greater horror of that fat lady claiming to be an acquaintance. She proved to be Mrs. Hudson, and the only other people in the room that I knew were Major Gore Brown and his wife, with his sister, Miss Buryon. The Browns and the Hudsons were almost the only two families in London that I have taken pains to avoid having any communication with, so that I was supremely unlucky to have met them there. (*Guest* 27-8, quoted in *Lady Charlotte* 82-3)

The ambivalence in Lady Charlotte's positions as simultaneous observer of and participant in London society is reciprocated by an ambivalence concerning her roles as observer of and participant in her husband's actual political views. For, despite the fact she could not vote or otherwise engage in politics, Lady Charlotte was an active and engaged political wife, well beyond her efforts as a hostess in London. She canvassed for her husband, and her diary shows a fine understanding of political issues, although it was often undercut by an insecurity that it was unbecoming for a woman to have political views. Her situation is well-illustrated by her account of the bitterly contested election of 1840. It opens with an admirably precise resume of the position:

> I must give a little review of what has been going forward in the political world... Opposed and harassed by their never tiring opponents, the Whigs have been bound to take a course worthy of them. In bringing forward the budget they proposed a measure for reducing the tax upon corn and bringing it to a fixed duty, 8/- per qr. They have met with the most determined resistance from the shortsighted landowners of all parties, and the people have been slow to second them with their approbation. *(Guest* 121)

Despite her clear understanding of the issues, during the election itself, she went to wait at the Castle for fresh orders, at John Guest's request *(Guest* 123). The episode culminates in Lady Charlotte eventually venturing into the chaos that was taking place at the hustings. What is most interesting about the episode is the position in which she at last finds herself:

> I walked into the field and got a good place close to the hustings, but sufficiently in the background for Merthyr not to see me. I feared my presence might make him nervous, if he were aware of my being there. I heard pretty well. Merthyr's speech was a good one. He dwelt on the Corn Laws, and shewed the price of labour not regulated by the price of corn, but by demand and the price of iron... Morgan Williams made a very long and prosy speech, part Welsh, part English. I could not follow him, but he chiefly gave statistics, whether correct or not I cannot tell, which however I am sure no-one understood. *(Guest* 124)

If a struggle takes place in the passage, it is certain a feminist one between self-assertion and the conventional silent role assigned to nineteenth-century women. Nowhere is that more evident than in the last lines of the passage, where she cleverly couches an acute criticism of the speaker in a conventional profession of female ignorance. Such modest couching of self-assertion as submission is characteristic of many marginalized writers. More important to the structure of the passage is the fact that, in obedience to her husband's command, Lady Charlotte the character is silent and retreats from the fray, even as Lady Charlotte the narrator continues to observe and comment on the scene. However, on a textual level, this opposition between the narrator's and the character's ability to speak renders Lady Charlotte's retreat a tactical one at best. Her hiding from her husband's gaze places her in the position of being able to observe him instead. Interestingly, that is the position Sir John normally occupies in her text: the ideal reader with both the omniscience and the detachment to pass judgment on what he sees. Yet, textually, the gaze goes both ways. Although it is a negative power, Lady Charlotte's

primary power over her husband is still as the object of his gaze, for she is worried how she will affect him, if he sees her. Thus, in this passage, Sir John stands in two places at once: on the hustings, within the text, embedded in the action of the narrative, as well as outside the text, beyond his narrator/wife, a final, ideal interpretant to whom she can turn for verification of her perceptions.

Another episode, this one at a dinner party at Canford in 1850, casts such light on the ambiguity of Lady Charlotte's role as a political wife that it is worth quoting in its entirety:

> I had set my heart on saying a few words. It was the moment to do it. I trembled, and almost hesitated, but there was no time for more consideration and in a moment we should have been scattered. I summoned courage and rose. I saw Merthyr was astonished and his visitors too, but I could not now have retreated, even had I wished it. I proposed that another toast should be drunk, the labouring classes; and I said a few words upon the subject, and in praise of the peasantry of England, above the same class in every other part of the world. Once launched all my diffidence vanished. Of course I had never spoken in publick before, except to my own people at home, in my school in Wales, but I felt when I had once begun that I could have gone on with my subject, which is one I have much at heart, for any length of time. But the emotion with which I spoke gave me I think the appearance of being timid. I know my voice trembled, but I know also that every word was distinct and even measured and could have been heard all over the Hall. I apologized of course for the unusual step &c., or rather I made a little preface, and my toast was received with all

> due acclamations. This was the last scene of the dinner, where all the nine children at home had added to the picturesque effect... *(Guest* 249-50)

At least to the reader, if not to the writer, the episode is a slyly humorous version of a woman learning to speak for herself. The urgency with which Lady Charlotte understands that her opportunity to speak must be seized at once, before it vanishes forever, is balanced nicely by the imagined astonishment of John Guest, who might have well been wondering whether his headstrong wife was suddenly in her cups, even if, presumably by this point in their marriage, he was well aware of his wife's penchant for dramatic effects, whether they involved overacting in family theatricals[6] or leaping onto a steamer that bore her name (*Lady Charlotte* 128). Yet, the very fact that Lady Charlotte's voice trembled speaks more eloquently than any words could about how inappropriate this need to express herself publicly was, at least in her own mind. Still, what is perhaps most interesting is the peculiar *aporia* that results from this trembling, for it is an *aporia* of reception, not of meaning. Lady Charlotte has no doubt of the meaning of what she is attempting to say, nor presumably of the ultimate truth value of the claims that she is making on behalf of the laboring classes. Nor has she doubts about the rightness of what she is saying, or, presumably, of people correctly determining it. What she doubts instead, is the correctness of her audience's reception of her as the deliverer of the message: her fear is not for the truth of what she is saying, or that people will correctly interpret that truth, but instead for how people might believe she feels about delivering that truth.

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[6] Sir John's opinion (*Lady Charlotte* 91). Lady Charlotte claimed to be "overpowered with compliments" on her debut *(Guest* 145).

Furthermore, even as she seizes the role of speaking subject, Lady Charlotte demonstrates an acute consciousness of how she is functioning as the object of the gaze of others. Lady Charlotte may perceive her timidity about speaking as undermining the forcefulness of her self-assertion, but such timidity is also a conventionally desirable feminine quality, making the overall assertiveness of her gesture more attractive. Certainly, there is little more femininely attractive than the last effect she presents, that of her being surrounded by her nine (Muse-like) children -- apparently valued more for their picturesqueness than any inherent personal qualities.

What is perhaps most significant in this passage is Lady Charlotte's consciousness of where she would be permitted to speak freely: in her schools and in Wales. This perception on Lady Charlotte's part supports Judith Johnston's claim that colonial women, while on the one hand often identifying very strongly with the indigenous people they are colonizing, on the other hand, find themselves in a position of relative power that they would be unable to taste in their homeland.[7] Johnston's argument, however, emphasizes the importance of power in this position, rather that the importance of relativity. Arguably, what is most important about Lady Charlotte's relationship with Wales and the Welsh is that they allow her to create a continuing dialectic with her existence in London, just as her existence in London allows her to exist in dialectic relationship with Wales. It is a process that is perhaps best illustrated by Lady Charlotte's wearing Welsh flannel to the Cambrian Ball in London (*Lady Charlotte* 86).

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[7] See Judith Johnston's "Victorian Appropriations: Lady Charlotte Guest Translates *The Mabinogion*," discussed in Chapter Two of this dissertation.

Yet, when she gave a fancy dress ball in Wales in 1837, what she wore was "exactly similar to what the peasants wear about Merthyr except that the material instead of woollen was satin wove to the proper pattern on purpose, the hat was black velvet instead of beaver and that the whole had a sprinkling of gold over it to give candlelight effect" (*Lady Charlotte* 103).

Instead of creating a double-bind, however, these opposing dialectics allow Lady Charlotte to open up a crucial space for self-definition. In both cases, she is at pains to portray herself as memorable, and, in both cases, that memorability stems from difference. This difference, in turn, defines her as extraordinary. Her extraordinariness, however, is not solely dependent on gender. Moving the question of difference to nationality -- unlike the Welsh in Wales, unlike the English in London -- allows Lady Charlotte to distinguish herself not just as an extraordinary woman, but as extraordinary, regardless of gender. This perception suggests a refinement to Johnston's claims: the most critical part of an imperialist woman's encounter with a foreign, colonial culture is this heightening of difference, which, in turn, heightens the room for dialectic, which Schenck has already shown to be essential for female self-definition.

Sadly, Lady Charlotte was well aware that her honeymoon with both Wales and her husband, as well as the opportunities both offered for textual self-definition, would not last forever. Sir John was twenty-seven years older than his wife, and was in largely poor health due to bladder stones for the last several years of his life. It was a situation that

led inevitably to the set piece with which Bessborough concludes his version of her memoirs:

> When we stopped at [Canford's] door, I got out silently, and leaving them all went straight to the Library, where luckily there was a light. A slight veil had been thrown over [the deceased John Guest's] bust, which at once I removed and then I flung my arms around it, and remained clasping it for some minutes, kissing the cold lips -- not colder than his own when I kissed them last -- and shedding torrents of passionate tears. And this cold marble is now all that is left me! *(Guest* 302)

Guest and John, on the other hand, provide a more telling finale. After her husband's death, Lady Charlotte took over control of the iron works in the name of her son, Ivor, with the advice of John Evans. Within a year, she was faced with a situation that called into question any assumptions she might have had about the natural relationship between the beneficent upper classes and deferential lower classes: a strike in the ironmongeries. The other ironmasters met with Lady Charlotte, suggesting collusive wage practices in order to break the strike. In her journal, Lady Charlotte wrote:

> It seems to me monstrous to tell our steady good men that unless (as it were) they *compelled* their refractory neighbours to go to work we would revenge it upon them and throw them out of bread -- But they were all against me -- even *Evans* -- they said it would never come to *that* -- that with the month's notice -- if not within the week -- all would be at work -- that only strong measures could be of any use. (*Lady Charlotte* 175)

Nevertheless, she acceded to the ironmasters' plan, only to immediately send Evans to revoke her decision. She then began to worry that her credibility was at issue and took a hard line with her own miners. The result was a hybrid that was known later as "The Respectful Strike," during which one labor leader called attention to the fact that the strike was taking place in a factory "principally ruled by a lady, whose excellent qualities all willingly acknowledge, and whose claims to their good wishes could scarcely be overstated (Applause). No lady in the kingdom had such cares to bear as Lady Charlotte Guest" (*Lady Charlotte* 181).

The strike was eventually resolved, but the episode crystallizes the shaky triangulation among idealism, gender and materialism that characterized the twenty years of Lady Charlotte's marriage to John Guest. The relationship between Lady Charlotte and her miners is a reciprocally idealizing one: she perceives her men as "good" and "steady," in opposition to their "refractory" neighbors; similarly, they perceive her as possessing the ideal, "excellent qualities" of a lady. These parallel ideal structures allow Lady Charlotte and the workman to communicate in a way that is impossible between her and her fellow ironmasters. That relationship is governed by a continuing, unsuccessful dialectic that remains stalled in the tension of negation, without moving forward to any meaningful resolution. Interestingly, however, in maintaining her idealized relationship with her workmen, Lady Charlotte succeeds in displacing her material self-assertion as an industry owner onto the other ironmongery owners, who, in the tradition of good cops and bad cops everywhere, are effectively set up as the "heavies" in the strike. This

displacement, in turn makes negation, her powerlessness and her lack of identity with the other ironmasters, rather than idealization, her primary means of assertion.

Feminist critics have shown that such displacement of assertiveness onto negation is an essential concept in any discussion of women's writing. As Bella Brodzki claims, "In the case of the female autobiographer who is compelled to strive for modes of expression and self-representation in a patriarchal world not generous enough to make room for her, 'double displacement' is... a way of life" (Brodzki 244). Lady Charlotte is certainly no candidate for an early "eternal dissident" (Julia Kristeva's term, quoted by Brodzki 244); indeed, the overall impression one garners from her writing is that, not only was she more comfortable in the company of men, but she was susceptible to half-acknowledged "sentimental friendships" that might be termed in a crueler environment "crushes." Yet, men, in particular the figure of her husband as reader, also serve an important strategic function as negative Others whose main characteristic is that they are antithetical to Lady Charlotte.

The functioning of these recurring negative Others makes Lady Charlotte's journals difficult to reconcile with Bella Brodzki's claim that "the autobiographical project symbolizes the search for origins, for women a search for maternal origins and that elusive part of the self that is coextensive with the birth of language... To be exiled from the maternal continent is to be forever subjected to rules of a foreign economy for which one also serves as the medium of exchange" (Brodzki 246). Instead, Lady Charlotte turns to the masculine in her search for language. It is, therefore, perhaps significant that Lady

Charlotte's prowess was always with *foreign* languages. For certainly it is arguable that the phallocentric order of language was a foreign discourse for Lady Charlotte. Yet, the relationship between Lady Charlotte and her mother made any attempt to search for maternal origins of language impossible. Indeed, Lady Charlotte's relationship with her mother could be characterized as nothing so much as a series of frosty silences.

Many incidents separated mother and daughter, but the most dramatic took place when Lady Charlotte's rejected suitor, Mr. Martin, the tutor, asked Lady Charlotte's stepfather, the Reverend Pegus, to influence the Bishop of Norwich to ordain him, and the Reverend Pegus refused. The Rector of Uffington then incurred Pegus' eternal enmity by supporting Martin, and, when the Guests dined with the Rector of Uffington, Pegus was so furious he offered to call out John Guest over the incident (*Lady Charlotte* 41). The incident escalated and culminated in Pegus telling "Poor Lindsey," the heir to the earldom, that Charlotte and her husband wanted to take out a Statute of Lunacy against him.[8] With Pegus' encouragement, the accusation convinced Lindsey first to cut off the entail to his estate, then to write a will that specifically excluded all of Lady Charlotte's children from ever succeeding to the Uffington estate (*Lady Charlotte* 42). The friction culminated in a genuinely painful scene between mother and daughter:

> [I] was surprised by a note from Mamma saying... that she wished to see me... I doubted at first what I ought to do under all the circumstances of their conduct to Merthyr. But he himself thought I ought not to refuse to go to my own mother... It was a great effort, but I was determined to be calm and I succeeded. I think however

[8] A tale that, while never substantiated, it must be admitted sounds at least plausible for the headstrong and rank-conscious Lady Charlotte.

> it was very cruel in my present state of health to drag me to so needless an interview. We were on both sides very cold and civil. Two common acquaintances could not have been more so, and what object there could be in thus trifling with my feelings I cannot imagine. No allusion whatever was made to any differences between the families, but when I went away Mamma asked to see the children. I said that from all that had taken place I could not feel there would be any real affection for them, and that I could not therefore consent to her doing so. This may seem harsh. But when it is considered that by the direction of her husband, and I doubt not by her connivance, those children are sought to be excluded *by name* in a legal document... I think the refusal is sufficiently justified. *(Guest* 113-4)

If Lady Charlotte were to search for an alternative to this failure to locate a maternal origin of the language of self, her most obvious candidate was quite literally a feminine ideal presented to her by her husband as a gift early in their marriage. This was Mrs. Ellis' *Wives of England*, an advice manual that offered such memorable wisdom as "in the case of a highly gifted woman, even where there is an equal or superior degree of talent possessed by her husband, nothing can be more injudicious or more fatal to her happiness than an exhibition even of the least disposition to presume upon such gifts" (*Lady Charlotte* 29). In addition, the newlywed Charlotte read Hannah More's *Coelebs in Search of a Wife*. The ambivalence she felt about these models can be easily read in the following passage:

> How deeply I have felt this inferiority of sex and how humiliated I am when it is recalled to my mind in allusion to myself! Knowing that most wives are but looked

> upon as nurses and housekeepers (very justly too) I have striven hard to place myself on a higher level -- and dear Merthyr, who knows how sensitive I am on this point and who really does think that some women are rational beings -- has always aided and encouraged me -- I have given myself almost a man's education from the age of twelve when I first began to follow my own devices -- and since I married I have taken up such pursuits as in this country of business and ironmaking would render me conversant with what occupied the male part of the population -- Sometimes I think I have succeeded pretty well -- but every now and then I am painfully reminded that toil as I may, I can never succeed beyond a certain point and by a very large portion of the community my acquirements and judgements must always be looked upon as those of a mere woman. (*Lady Charlotte* 31)

Guest and John have already pointed out that what is most striking about the passage is its dependence on caveats and parentheses, a constant tension between self-assertion and self-effacement. Interestingly, the passage was recorded in response to a contretemps with her husband, in which "[s]he had asked his opinion about an idea she had and he had replied, half in jest and half seriously, that he would never seek his wife's view on such a subject. Characteristically, she agreed and laughed 'yet the words he had spoken sank deeply into my heart and clouded all that evening'" (*Lady Charlotte* 32).

Both formally and emotionally, this example illustrates the textual strategy that characterizes the first half of Lady Charlotte's diary. There can be no more overt attempt to impose an idealizing construct than a "How To" manual on being a good wife -- or on

any other subject for that matter -- but it scarcely takes a Derridean reading to see the stubbornness with which Lady Charlotte attempts to counter the imposition. Yet, even as she counters the ideal, she internalizes it. Mrs. Ellis' ideal wife is no straw (wo)man to attack, but literally part of the diction with which Lady Charlotte attempts to rebel. The voice of Mrs. Ellis' construct never possesses Lady Charlotte's diary, but neither does Lady Charlotte's own voice. The two voices inhabit each other, within a multiplicity of further dialogues: of Lady Charlotte with her descendants; of Lady Charlotte with her family, friends, and enemies, and especially of Lady Charlotte with herself.

Although Lady Charlotte's journals thus set up a multiplicity of dialectic tensions, the question of her linguistic internalization of the ideal provided by Mrs. Ellis opens up the question of the difference between female, Other-directed strategies for self-assertion, and two closely-allied strategies that are normally perceived as masculine: objectivization, as it is defined by Hegel, and the related concept of the Marxist (Hegelian) dialectic. It is not a question that will be answered within the space of one chapter. For now, it enough to suggest that Lady Charlotte's ongoing dialogues with Wales, her husband, and posited female ideals are related to the dialectically-created lacunae that Walter Benjamin sees as creating the necessary space for quasi-idealizing move. In his "Task of the Translator," this lacuna between languages and meaning supersedes the respective failures of both the original and target language, allowing access to the realm of pure language. In "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," this lacuna is the border that the cult object crosses when it is unveiled on ceremonial occasions, which in turn validates the work's "aura." In "Edward Fuchs,"

the lacuna is created by the "irresolvable polarities of theory," which Fuchs attempts to resolve with his collecting.

Lady Charlotte, too, often had recourse to collecting as a solution to the tensions of her existence. Chapters Three and Four of this study will discuss the significance of the china, fan, and card collections she obsessively assembled later in life; Chapter Two will discuss the object orientation of her translation of the *Mabinogion*, which is the purest early example of her opening a space for self-definition by displacing the tensions of her existence onto objects. In her early journals, however, Lady Charlotte's primary strategy for self-assertion is incorporation, not displacement. In this, it is a characteristically feminine strategy.

Indeed, Julia Kristeva, in her work on the *chora*, sees boundary violation, such as incorporation, as a philosophic necessity, which stands in eternal opposition to the Oedipal imposition of the symbolic and the realm of the father suggested by Freud and elaborated by Lacan. Read in Kristevan terms, Lady Charlotte's prose, if not her persona, is dissident, not in its opposition to the symbolic, but rather in the way it forces the symbolic to reinforce the self, even as it challenges the clear, Lacanian division between self and other. For example, in the passage cited above, when Lady Charlotte fully presents herself as exemplary, she phrases it in terms of her husband's approbation. The ideal of a dutiful wife (and therefore woman) is pressed into service in order to validate her claim to be extraordinary -- in other words, not like other women. The result is an organic piece of prose that can only be understood as it is experienced, asserting,

backtracking, doubting, qualifying -- and in the process forcing the status quo to defend her, rather than simply measuring herself against it.

It is tempting to read Lady Charlotte's narrative in straightforward psychological terms as well, seeing the roots of her ambivalence over the patriarchal order in the absence of a father in her life. It is even more tempting to make much of the fact that her highly unsatisfactory stepfather was a clergyman, a profession that is normally accorded authority in the matter of any idealizing move. Yet, it is a fact of Lady Charlotte's biography that she steadfastly refused to see the transcendental move as one to the realm of the symbolic, for she was a dedicated foe of the Puseyite clergy -- the high Anglicans who insisted on the importance of symbol and ritual in worship -- often to the point of comedy. The nadir of this war took place in 1851, when Edward Hutchins had the misfortune to invite a Roman Catholic bishop as a houseguest at Dowlais. The arrangements for the visit were made on the assumption that the bishop would arrive the day after the Guests left; however, when it was discovered that the bishop was scheduled to arrive a day earlier, Lady Charlotte insisted that the bishop must delay his visit by a day. Edward Hutchins' wife, however "chose to assert her authority, and one would have thought to hear the tone and clamour of them both, that we were the junior partners newly admitted to the concern... and that they were the old respected owners" *(Guest* 255).

When the bishop arrived, Lady Charlotte refused to leave her room to join the company at dinner; furthermore, she was more than a little disappointed that her husband did choose to dine with her perceived enemy, writing:

> I was struggling for a great principle of what I deemed the right, and I little dreamt that he would have left me to combat alone and have thus abandoned me, after all he had felt and expressed, and almost seemed to reproach me and take part with my enemies. But he thought he was doing right and acting on a principle of Christian Charity, what could I say? *(Guest* 256)

The episode degenerated into low farce when Lady Charlotte was told that Dr. Brown, the bishop, had gone out to breakfast, and she:

> went into the dining room to breakfast accordingly. I was scarcely seated and a cup placed before me, when someone went by the window. I knew it was the priest returned... I hardly know how I got away, but having declined to meet him I could do no other in consistency... and I since found Dr. Brown had been told it was illness that had caused my absence from table on the two preceding days. *(Guest* 258)

Dr. Brown was apparently more perspicacious than Lady Charlotte or less stubborn, for the episode concluded when he:

> left suddenly by the midday train. A letter was supposed to have recalled him, but I could not help surmising that he at length suspected how uncongenial his presence was to my husband and myself, and that he had acted with gentlemanly feeling and withdrawn himself. *(Guest* 259)

Even Lady Charlotte's most fervent apologist could scarcely claim that the episode reflects well on her. What is most off-putting about the episode, however, is that its -- presumably unintentional -- irony all derives from the problems of language it presents. Lady Charlotte's defense is that of sincerity and consistency: as a member of a church that prizes truth over symbol, she feels she cannot so much as dine with a proponent of the other view. She insists on adhering to the right and supporting it with consistency, even if that goes against the actions of her husband, who dined with the bishop for propriety's sake. Yet, when her stance is in danger of being smoothed over by a social lie, she escalates, so that the bishop cannot help but be aware of her objection. In direct opposition to her own insistence on truth and clarity, she next shows herself an adept reader of the bishop's own social lie, and furthermore commends his using it as "gentlemanly feeling." She then ends the entire episode on a final evasion: that it was not only her feelings, but also those of her husband, that the bishop was attempting to spare.

The comic linguistic anecdote does have an epilogue, however, that demonstrates that something very material was at stake in all these language games. Not unexpectedly, Edward Hutchins was "greatly aggrieved about [Lady Charlotte's] conduct about the Romish Bishop at Dowlais" *(Guest* 263), and these feelings were certainly a contributory factor in his decision four days later to sell his shares in the Dowlais Works back to Sir John Guest. Lady Charlotte's written reaction is expectedly ambivalent:

> I had hoped and earnestly wished for this arrangement to be concluded, I had scarce dared to expect that it would be brought to pass... I sat down and wept bitterly, and

> yet I know that it was right and best. He gives no help but much anxiety to my dear husband, by his unintentional counteractions in business. The Roman Catholick [*sic*] influence... is most pernicious. He had not depth, no real business-like views, and really his removal will be a relief to Merthyr. But to look further: if it pleased God to remove my dear husband, his influence and interference, in such as a position as this, would have been objectionable beyond anything I can imagine now or detail; I shudder to think what might have been the consequences. *(Guest* 264)

It did please God to remove Sir John scarcely a year later, a development that could not have come as a surprise to Lady Charlotte, for her husband was in poor health for many years. Sir John had long ago demonstrated his faith in his wife by making her the sole executrix for her children; the removal of Hutchins meant that Lady Charlotte was left to manage the works with only the assistance of John Evans, whom she found congenial. For all its bitter weeping and deference to God's pleasure, the passage demonstrates a very clear-eyed consciousness of this consequence of the situation.

Did Lady Charlotte exacerbate the incident with bishop in order to drive Edward Hutchins out of the Dowlais Iron Works? Her intentions are quite frankly lost to us; all we can discuss is her narrative of these events. There is a certain delicious pleasure in reading them as a Machiavellian discourse of a woman who is doing what she must do in order to protect her children's inheritance -- a mission that, given her belief that her own inheritance had been snatched from her, seems quite justifiable. Yet, the text itself refuses measurement against any "objective" standard outside itself, precisely because

that standard is continually incorporated into her version of events. It is impossible to come to any clear judgment of sentences such as "I sat down and wept bitterly, and yet I know that it was right and best."

Instead, it is best to see this passage as the culmination of the "female autobiography" of Lady Charlotte Guest, a passage that marks a woman as extraordinary, unlike other women, a woman who completed the great, exemplary project of Lejeune's bourgeois autobiography, success in business. And yet even as this passage acknowledges that, it enacts how genuinely difficult this accomplishment was, since she was denied both symbolic and literal access to acknowledging her own desires directly. Julia Kristeva has written of tears as one of the excrescences that destroy the symbolic border between self and other, choric and symbolic.[9] And, if silence is the culmination of Lady Charlotte Bertie's narrative, it is Lady Charlotte Guest's tears that are ultimately the culmination of her narrative -- tears at her husband's death, tears at the defeat of a man she saw as an impediment. Boiling over, breaking the decorous boundaries of self-assertion in a way her prose refuses to, we must leave her weeping over Sir John's veiled bust.

[9] See especially *Powers of Horror.*

Chapter Two: Rhonabwy's Virtue-bearing Stones

Lady Charlotte's diary entry for November 30, 1837 marks the beginning of the project that ensured the lasting scholarly fame of Lady Charlotte Guest.[1] On that date, Lady Charlotte recorded that Mr. Justice Bosanquet agreed to lend his copy of the tales from the *Red Book of Hergest* to the recently founded Welsh Manuscripts Society, which was dedicated to "promoting and publishing" old manuscripts *(Lady Charlotte* 101). It was Lady Charlotte who, on behalf of the Society, took on the task of translating and publishing the tales from Bosanquet's manuscript, beginning with her 1838 translation of "The Lady of the Fountain." The remaining tales were published in seven parts and were then republished in 1849 as a sumptuously illustrated and bound three-volume edition *(Lady Charlotte* 97).

There had been previous attempts to translate these tales, most notably that of William Owen Pughe, serialized in the *Cambrian Register* from 1796 on. He, too, planned to translate something he called *The Mabinogion*, although the scale of the project he envisioned is unclear, for he only managed to publish "Pwyll," and "Math," both branches of what could be termed Mabinogi proper, along with "Taliesan," now no longer included in the *Mabinogion,* before he was sidetracked by the demands of, among other things, his newfound adherence to the prophecies of Joanna Southcott, "who proclaimed herself as Revelations' 'Woman clothed with the sun' sent to deliver mankind" *(Lady Charlotte* 96). Other scholars who had made translations of the tales included Bosanquet himself *(Lady Charlotte* 101). However, it was Lady Charlotte who

[1] Lady Charlotte Schreiber is perhaps more respected, if not famous, among the rarefied circle of collectors of porcelain. Her accomplishments in that field will be discussed in Chapter Four of this study.

was responsible, not only for providing the first complete translation, but also for transforming this loosely-connected, arguably even unconnected, set of tales into the literary text now commonly accepted as the *Mabinogion.*

Indeed, what first needs to be said about the *Mabinogion* is that no such thing exists. In fact, the word *mabinogion* does not exist in Welsh, though it appears once by mistake in "Pwyll" (Gantz 31). The translation that Lady Charlotte published in 1849 is, more precisely, eleven tales from the *Red Book of Hergest* (ca. 1400), a manuscript in the possession of Jesus College Oxford, along with the tale of Taliesan from a later manuscript (*Mabinogion* 1). There are other versions of these tales, most notably the earlier, and incomplete, *White Book of Rhydderch* (ca. 1325) and a few other fragments, the oldest of which is Peniarth 6 (ca. 1225) (Gantz 29). In addition to being the latest version, the *Red Book* is the most complete version; however, whether it is a copy or redaction of one or more of the earlier books, or whether they derive from a common source that no longer exists, is still a matter for scholarly debate (Gantz 29).

Of the eleven tales that Lady Charlotte translated from the *Red Book*, only the first four, "Pwyll Prince of Dyved," "Branwen the Daughter of Llyr," "Manawyddan the Son of Llyr," and "Math the Son of Mathonwy" can properly be termed Mabinogi. However, even these four are identified as such only because each one ends with a variation on the phrase, "So ends this branch of the Mabinogi." If one eliminates the unifying function of this phrase, it becomes difficult to decide whether even the Four Branches constitute a unified work, or whether they might better be described as "an imbroglio of anecdotes,

allusions, motifs and characters which under close scrutiny reveal the outlines of a number of familiar mythological paradigms within a British setting" (Proinsias Mac Cana, quoted in Gantz 14-5). Admittedly, it would be folly to look for a nineteenth-century architectonic narrative structure in a medieval piece derived from the oral tradition. However, one might anticipate a little more narrative unity from a work with a single title than that Gantz describes in "Pwyll" and "Math." Both tales, he claims, appear to:

> incorporate three distinct and originally independent parts: Pwyll and Arawn; Pwyll and Rhiannon; Teirnon and Gwri in "Pwyll"; Goewin and Gilvaethwy; Aranrhod and Lleu; Lleu and Blodeuedd in "Math." Thematically these episodes have been remarkably well integrated, but at the plot level there are omissions and inconsistencies. In the third section of "Pwyll" numerous loose ends remain: Who abducted Gwri? Why? Why leave him on Teirnon's doorstep? What of Teirnon's missing colts? And in "Math," why, when Goewin was raped, does Aranrhod bear the child? Why does Gwydoyon rear that child as a father? What purpose does Dylan serve? (Gantz 27)

Nor do the Four Branches derive from a single mythological source. "Pwyll" has its roots in both the *Odyssey* and the Irish tales of Cu Chulainn (Gantz 45), while "Branwen" derives from Geoffrey of Monmouth and an early Welsh poem "The Booty of Annwvyn" (Gantz 67). Interestingly, "Manawyddan" is the only tale to refer back to the other Four Branches, with its opening line "When the seven men of whom we spoke above had buried the head of Bendigeid Vran [Bran], in the White Mount in London; with its face

towards France" (*Mabinogion* 48). However, as Gantz points out, "Although Manawyddan himself is the Welsh counterpart of the Irish god Manandan son of Lir (whether one name derived from the other is not certain), no Irish adventures parallel those of the Third Branch" (Gantz 83). Finally, Math can be seen equally to derive from the story of Amnon and Phaedra, or that of Ailill in the Irish "Wooing of Etain" (Gantz 97).

The Four Branches cannot even be claimed to be united by geography or style. "Branwen" and "Math" are set in the north of Wales; "Pwyll" and "Manawyddan" are set in the south. Perhaps because of this difference in location, the southern tales seems to demonstrate a French influence, whereas the northern tales do not. Indeed, beyond some crossing over of characters between the tales, it is quite arguable that what unites the Four Branches is in fact nothing beyond the four markers that conclude the four tales, all variations on the phrase "Thus ends this branch of the Mabinogi." Stated that baldly, the Four Branches create a sort of ultimate case of Jacques Derrida's claim in "The Law of Genre" that every work that belongs to a genre contains a "supplementary and distinctive trait, a mark of belonging or inclusion, [which] does not properly pertain to any genre or class. The re-mark of belonging does not belong. It belongs without belonging..." (230). Derrida's mark that "appears only in the timeless time of the blink of an eye" (230) appears grotesquely swollen in the case of the Four Branches into the sole indicator of the works' identity as a set.

Examining the role of these "marker" phrases is further complicated by no-one knowing what a *mabinogi* really is. Definitions of the term range wildly, beginning with the Rev. R. Williams' charming speculation in his 1906 introduction to the Everyman edition of Lady Charlotte's work:

> The aspirant to bardic rank was called a *Mabinog*. The traditional lore which he had to acquire was roughly represented by the *Mabinogi*, which seems to have been at once a course of study and a source of income, for the *Mabinog* was probably allowed by custom to recite the tales he knew for pay. Using *Mabinogion* as the plural of *Mabinogi* Lady Charlotte Guest gives it as the general title of all the twelve tales contained in her book, although, strictly speaking, the title is applicable only to the four-branch tale of *Pwyll, Branwen, Manawyddan* and *Math*. (*Mabinogion* 1)

Current thinking depends on Ifor Williams' suggestion that, because *mabinogi* usually refers to the story of someone's youth, the Four Branches might have originally told the story of Pryderi (Gantz 31), a suggestion that is supported by R.L. Thomson, who points out that the Welsh *mabinogi* is used to translate the medieval Latin *infantia* (Thomson *xvii*). In "Folklore and Myth in the Mabinogion," W.J. Gruffydd provides the most elaborate articulation of this point of view, postulating that the Four Branches are the remains of a Saga of Pryderi, who is the child of a union of the King of Dyfed with Rhiannon, a visitant from the Other World. Part One would have been the Conception of Pryderi; Part Two Pryderi's Raid on the Other World; Part Three a Capture and Return of Pryderi, not unlike the Demeter/Kore myth; and Part Four the Death of Pryderi. However, his reconstruction is considerably undermined by the twin facts that its order

and division of episodes is nowhere near the order and division of the stories as they currently exist, and that Pryderi is a relatively minor character in the current version of the tales. Rachel Bromwich has offered an alternative suggestion, that "*mabinogi* came to signify 'a tale of descendants,' and that the Four Branches actually deal with the children of the early Celtic deities: the families of Llyr and Don, and Pryderi son of Pwyll" (Gantz 32). However, none of these explanations is universally accepted as definitive.

Whatever the meaning of the word *mabinogi*, its close relation to the Welsh word for boy, "*mab*," led to the common perception that Lady Charlotte believed *mabinogi* meant a story for children and intended her collection to be one of fairy tales for children.[2] This point of view is supported by her loftily Victorian dedication of her first published translation to her two oldest sons, who were three years old and newborn, respectively, at the time:

> To Ivor and Merthyr
>
> My dear Children,
>
> Infants as you yet are, I feel that I cannot dedicate more fitly than to you these venerable relics of ancient lore, and I do so in the hope of inciting you to cultivate the literature of "Gwyllt Walia," in whose beautiful language you are being initiated, and amongst whose free mountains you were born. May you become early imbued with the chivalric and exalted sense of honour, and the fervent patriotism for which its sons have ever been celebrated. May you learn to emulate the noble qualities of

[2] If she did in fact believe this to be true, Lady Charlotte was not alone in this error: William Owen Pughe also referred to the tales as "Mabinogion or Juvenilities" *(Lady Charlotte* 98).

> Ivor Hael, and the firm attachment to your Native Country, which distinguished that Ivor Bach, after whom the elder of you was named.
>
> I am,
>
> Your affectionate Mother,
>
> C.E. Guest.
>
> Dowlais, August 29th, 1838 *(Lady Charlotte* 98)

The idea that Lady Charlotte was writing for children is reinforced by her notorious Bowdlerization of a passage from "Pwyll" that she considered indelicate: the fate of Arawn's wife when he and Pwyll exchanged kingdoms, disguised as one another, for a year. Gentleman that he was, Pwyll, whenever he went to bed with Arawn's wife, "turned his face to the edge [of the bed] and his back to her, nor did he speak another word before morning" (Gantz 49). When Arawn returned to bed with his wife, he reproached her for not speaking with him. She in turn replied that they had not spoken in bed for a year. Arawn then:

> told her what had happened, and she said, "I confess to God, you made a strong pact for your friend to have fought off the temptations of the flesh and kept faith with you." "Lady, that was my thought when I was silent." "No wonder," she said. (Gantz 51)

The notion that Lady Charlotte was writing for children has been one component in the marginalization of her scholarship. Recently, however, Donna R. White, in "The Crimes of Lady Charlotte Guest," has attacked this long held commonplace about Lady

Charlotte's intended audience. She claims that the perception that Lady Charlotte was writing for children is an unfairly marginalizing one, arguing:

> Specialists in children's literature would be amazed at this charge and would also object to the underlying and all-too-common assumption that children's literature is a lesser breed of writing. The charge is ludicrous. Nobody has ever published for children a massive, bilingual, multi-volume collection of tales accompanied by voluminous scholarly notes and appendices. Nor is there any evidence that the books were marketed for children or reviewed as children's books. In fact, in the Preface to the second edition, Guest refers to her "learned" reader. Nowhere does she indicate that her intended audience was children. (White 245)

White is particularly dismissive of the "evidence" of Lady Charlotte's first dedication, arguing persuasively, "it is a mistake to conflate dedicatees with audience. Some authors dedicated their book to their cats or to deceased relatives, but no one assumes an intended feline readership or an audience of ghosts" (White 246). She goes on to conclude her essay with what is inarguably the most spirited defense of Lady Charlotte among modern critics:

> Lady Charlotte Guest's situation amongst her Welsh academic peers bears a striking similarity to an episode in "Manawydan fab Llyr," when Manawydan had taken up the crafts of saddle-making, shield-making, and shoe-making, and had become so proficient at the work that the other craftsmen sought to slay him. Perhaps, in a similar way, Lady Charlotte's own proficiency may have led to this groundless character assassination. (White 247)

White's defense may be little more than an exquisitely-turned analogy; however, it is a fact that Lady Charlotte's current reputation has had to withstand consistent marginalization as an inspired amateur, who, despite her many erroneous understandings, managed to create the first popular translation of the *Mabinogion.* Indeed, the marginalization of Lady Charlotte goes back to her work's very inception. The first assault on her character came from the Welsh Manuscripts Society itself, who seemed to have believed at one point that she was disinterested in the project *(Lady Charlotte* 102).

A second, more serious assault occurred within a year of her beginning the translation, when a nine-months pregnant Lady Charlotte was caught up in an undignified race to publish a translation of "Peredur" in English before a Frenchman named Theodore Hersart de la Villemarque did in French. Sadly, the imbroglio began as a civilized academic exchange. Villemarque provided Lady Charlotte with a transcription of the "*Chevalier au Lion*" from the French, which she published as an appendix to her own work *(Lady Charlotte* 108). Next, however, Villemarque grew:

> wild in his notions and presumes on my good nature, because he corrected the press of the last part of the Chevalier au Lion (which was necessary he should as no one could correctly read his transcript so vilely was it written) he writes insisting on Rees' signing his name to the printed copy and saying it is published by him. Poor Rees is annoyed. Of course I can consent to nothing of the sort. *(Lady Charlotte* 108)

A year later, Villemarque entered an essay on the influence of Welsh tradition on European literature in the Abergavenny Eisteddfod, which not only used Lady Charlotte's work without attribution, but also "delicately insinuated that I did not write the book myself (a degree of moral turpitude which he dare not openly accuse me of.) The secret of all this is his anger at being unable to forestall me in the publication of Peredur" *(Lady Charlotte* 108-9).

A comparison of their current reputations makes it clear Lady Charlotte survived Villemarque. However, she remains the victim of the condescending ongoing perception that she "didn't really" translate the *Mabinogion*, a charge that is inextricably linked with her "amateurism." What is cruelest about this charge is that, 150 years after the fact, it is completely unprovable. It is also completely conjectural, being based largely on the logic that Lady Charlotte would have been unable to master enough Middle Welsh in a scant five years to complete a scholarly translation. Lady Charlotte's current defenders range from White's staunch claim that "A woman with such a strong drive for perfection and fluency in half a dozen languages would have had no difficulty learning to read Medieval Welsh" (White 245), to Rachel Bromwich's more measured "Whatever may have been the extent of the help which Lady Charlotte received from others... it cannot detract from the magnitude of her achievement and her deep interest and involvement in her work" (Bromwich 15). Yet their voices are consistently drowned out by the voices of detractors such as W.J. Gruffydd, "who believed that the main credit should go to the two scholars who 'devilled' for her, Tegid and Price" *(Lady Charlotte* 113).

Accusations such as Gruffydd's are based on the completely unanswerable question of how much assistance Lady Charlotte received in making her translation, particularly from two fellow antiquarians the Reverends John Jones and Thomas Price, who were known by their bardic names of Tegid and Carnhuanawc, respectively.[3] What is open to debate is whether Tegid simply provided assistance by copying the manuscript and Price by reading it over, or whether they did the majority of translation work. Unfortunately, at this point, the only conclusion that can be drawn is that the question is open to debate. The only definitive evidence that can be brought to bear at this late date is Lady Charlotte's description of Price's reading of the first tale: "after dinner we polished off my translation slightly for the Press. But being willing to keep very rigidly to the original, very little alteration could be made in my version, which will, I fear, appear rather clumsy English" (White 243).

On the other hand, there is no denying that Jones' assistance was at best tepidly acknowledged in Lady Charlotte's Preface to her 1849 edition, and that Price's assistance is not acknowledged at all. However, these omissions are much more ethically questionable to a twentieth-century professional scholar than they would have been at the time. Without careers to protect, Lady Charlotte and her colleagues were much less concerned with garnering credit for their publications. Acknowledgments were a matter of courtesy, rather than appropriate assignment of credit. The omission of an

[3] Rachel Bromwich also investigates what debt Lady Charlotte might owe to the earlier translations of William Own Pughe, but concludes "She used Pughe's Dictionary, but her translation clearly owes nothing to his, and in the several pieces of *Pwyll* and *Math* that I have compared, it is in several instances more accurate than his. And she began her undertaking, not with the *Mabinogi* tales which Pughe had already published, but with the three Arthurian romances, of which Pughe's translation existed at this date only in manuscript" (Bromwich 12).

acknowledgment for Price, for example, is normally justified by the fact he was dead by 1849, when the three-volume edition came out.

Admittedly, this defense in terms of uninterested amateurism is somewhat at odds with Lady Charlotte's firm determination to publish ahead of Villemarque. Indeed, it may be simpler to accept that she believed she had done the work and therefore deserved the credit for it. It is certainly this point of view that is taken by her most gallant defender, an appealing clergyman named D. Rhys Phillips, who presented a spirited defense of Lady Charlotte in a pamphlet published by the equally appealing Swansea Mabinogion Society. His methodology is a portrait of a bygone age:

> We asked the late Countess of Bessborough if her mother's *earlier* Journals contained any detailed references to the Translation of the *Mabinogion*: a work handsomely printed by W. Ress of Llandovery, in seven numbers, during 1838-1846, and afterwards bound in three sumptuous volumes.
>
> Though at that time busily engaged as Hon. Secretary of Princess Victoria's Auxiliary Committee for the inspection of the Y.M.C.A Recreation Huts for Soldiers at the Base Camps in France (which work she did not long survive, for she died in 1919), the Countess kindly replied on September 26, and in the course of her letter said:
>
> > "I delayed answering your letter till I was able to look out extracts from my mother, Lady Charlotte Guest's Journal. I now enclose you samples of the kind of details I could send you. I have typed copies of her unpublished Journals from

> 1822 to 1853, and I find that I have noted in the margin where she alludes to working at her translation of the Mabinogion; so that I could very easily find you a great choice of extracts for publication." (Phillips 8-9)

The pamphlet then goes on to cite entries from diaries that show Lady Charlotte at work on her translation. Rhys' research is meticulous, and the pamphlet contains such delightful anecdotes as the following:

> [Tennyson] was anxious to make [Lady Charlotte's] acquaintance... He asked her, amongst other things, what was the proper pronunciation of the vowel E in Enid. Should it be short or long? In one of the passages of his book he had written "Geraint wedded Enid," which would be all right with the long E, but was impossible, he said, with the short one. When he was told that it should be short, he at once altered the word to "Geraint married Enid." It is the custom for ladies, in the present day, who have christened their daughters Enid, to pronounce it as with the long E, but in this they are undoubtedly wrong. (Phillips 14)

Still, as a piece of scholarly evidence, Rhys' work remains inconclusive, proving nothing about Lady Charlotte's level of command of Welsh. Rather, it simply documents the fact that she did put a great deal of consistent effort into producing her version of the *Mabinogion* -- a fact that has never been contested by even her harshest critics.

Yet, effort, imagination, and love of her subject matter are ignored as criteria for judgment. Among her critics, Lady Charlotte's command of Welsh is seen as the only measure of her ethics.

One reason for this exacting standard of judgment becomes clearer when one examines the underlying agenda of many of her accusers. Many of them object to Lady Charlotte simply because she is an English noblewoman and industrialist's wife. Revel Guest summarizes the claim of one of the most overt of these critics as follows:

> Another accusation, levelled in an 1921 letter to the *Western Mail* by an anonymous correspondant who signed himself "Ap Dowlais" claimed that Thomas Stephens, a young scholar who later distinguished himself by publishing *The Literature of the Kymry* and a refutation of the Madoc myth, was the true author, tellingly branding his claims as the "joyful assertion that it was a Welshman who gave to the world these Translations and not the intellect of another race" *(Lady Charlotte* 110).

The notion that a Welshman should be the first person to translate such an important part of the Welsh national literature has created a peculiar double-bind for Lady Charlotte. For, even as one set of contemporary scholars condemns her for not having translated the text herself, others, such as Judith Johnston, have condemned her translations as an act of self-aggrandizing cultural appropriation. In "Victorian Appropriations: Lady Charlotte Guest Translates *The Mabinogion*," Johnston argues that translation is inherently an act of appropriation, for:

> Language, as Lefevere has shown, is not the main problem in translation, the problem lies in ideology, poetics and "cultural elements that are not immediately clear, or seen as completely 'misplaced' in what would be the target culture version of the text to be translated." The target language, shifted out of its

> culturally significant context, reappears in another form: in the case of tales and legends, for instance, that form is most often locked into a particular mode: quaint, noble savage, child-like. (Johnston 145)

According to Johnston, this act of appropriating the "exotic," while simultaneously marginalizing it, is particularly characteristic of nineteenth-century women, especially those in exile in a colony, precisely because they are displaced from both the security of their regular society and the restrictions imposed by it. As Johnston claims:

> Although marginalised socially in Wales by her upper-class rank, and by her husband's powerful position as the ironmaster, a reversal of the usual process, Guest's mobility of class and geography gave her both intellectual and critical advantage. But throughout the published sections of her diary which I have been able to examine, the reader gains an overwhelming sense that Charlotte Guest's was indeed both an imperialist and a feminist project, although never expressed in either of those terms. As a feminist project she sought for both identity and position, "in opposition," as Wolff puts it, "to linear narratives of the self and essentialist conceptions of gender and place."[4] (Johnston 154)

The notion that Lady Charlotte's translation is marked as an Englishwoman's because it is somehow quaint and child-like directly contradicts the notion that her translation was in fact done by a pair of native Welshmen. Yet, Johnston's claims have a certain validity, for Lady Charlotte's translation of the *Mabinogion* did seem to stabilize her own

[4] Janet Wolff, *Resident Alien: Feminist Cultural Criticism*. Cambridge: Polity, 1995.

sense of identity. Just as the open-endedness and textual ambiguities of her journals can be seen to reflect an unstable structure of judgment and self underlying her role as Sir John's wife, the creation of a single literary work out of a loose conglomeration of twelve tales can be seen to reflect the creation of a stable identity for Lady Charlotte as a scholar and a translator.

However, Johnston's argument lacks conclusive force, primarily because she never succeeds in demonstrating that Lady Charlotte's translation is particularly quaint, child-like, savage, or in any other way demonstrates its status as appropriation, gender-driven or otherwise. Indeed, Johnston claims, in a side-by-side comparison of several versions of the first paragraph of "Kilhwch and Olwen" that "It is clear that differences in the English translations... are minimal" (Johnston 160). Particularly to a twentieth-century ear, Lady Charlotte's prose sounds, if anything, stylized and deliberately archaic,[5] not child-like or savage. For example, in "Pwyll," Lady Charlotte writes:

> And the year he spent in hunting, and minstrelsy, and feasting, and diversion, and discourse with his companions until the night that was fixed for the conflict. And when that night came, it was remembered even by those who lived in the furthest part of his dominions, and he went to the meeting, and the nobles of the kingdom with him. (*Mabinogion* 16)

Jones and Jones' 1949 translation, accepted as definitive, differs little in diction or detail:

[5] Although it is difficult to judge how much of this perception may be the effect of nineteenth-century prose on the twentieth-century ear, rather that a deliberate stylistic gesture on Lady Charlotte's part.

> The year he spent in hunting and song and carousal, and affection and discourse with his companions, till the night the encounter should be. On that appointed night, the tryst was as well remembered by the man who dwelt furthest in the whole kingdom as by himself. And he came to the tryst, and the gentles of the kingdom with him. (Jones and Jones 6)

Indeed, the most direct prose in a translation belongs to that of Jeffrey Gantz (1976), although one balks at calling it either childlike or savage:

> Pwyll spent that year hunting and singing and carousing, in fellowship and in pleasant talk with his companions, up to the night of the meeting, which the men in the most distant parts of the kingdom remembered as well as he did himself. He was accompanied by the nobles of the realm... (Gantz 49)

Obviously, a comparison of three sentences does not a comparison of translations make; however, further examination of the texts provides no egregious examples of Lady Charlotte's diction being either quaint or childlike. Indeed, Lady Charlotte's choice of diction, along with that of Jones and Jones, bespeaks nothing of self-conscious primitivism, but rather of archaicization. As will be argued later in this chapter, these are not unrelated terms -- especially in the nineteenth-century teleological intellectual context. However, both Lady Charlotte's and Jones and Jones' translations seem more concerned with regaining the lost elegance of the Arthurian world than with preserving a "primitive" Celtic folkway.

Moreover, in their Introduction, Jones and Jones create a powerful argument that archaicizing diction is true to the target text itself, for the unity of the eleven tales is "imposed both by their subject matter and their social and literary milieu. The matter is primarily mythology in decline and folklore, though it is unlikely that the story-tellers were themselves often, if ever aware of this" (Jones and Jones *x*). The literary context is that of the redactor frantically attempting to preserve on paper "such relics and fragments of the [oral] Celtic tradition as have survived the steep mortality of the years" (Jones and Jones *xii*).

There are, of course, significant differences in the prose of the original tales. According to Jones and Jones, the redactor of the four branches of the Mabinogi "wrote the finest Welsh prose of his age, a grand master who never for one sentence intrudes the veil of style between the reader and what is read" (Jones and Jones *xix*). In contrast, "Not so the author of *Culhwch and Olwen*, who deploys with gusto every resource of language and style to heighten the color and deepen the character of the fantastic and primitive world his creatures inhabit" (Jones and Jones *xxi*). Yet what unites these writers both with each other and with their translator is their position in relation to their subject matter: they are looking back at it, attempting to give form to something that is irretrievably lost even when it never existed, at least in the form in which it is being recreated.

Perceiving Lady Charlotte as a redactor following in the footsteps of a medieval redactor serves to highlight the fact that previous discussions of Lady Charlotte's translation have been effectively limited to discussions of ownership of the text. The central issue in all

these studies is not how accurately the translation reproduces the original Welsh, but rather whether the translation of the *Mabinogion* "belongs" to Lady Charlotte or to the Welsh. This study proposes to focus instead on Walter Benjamin's conception, articulated in "The Task of the Translator," of translation as an encounter between languages, similar to the encounter between past and present represented by the figure of the redactor. According to Benjamin, the translator's task is "to release in his own language that pure language which is under the spell of another, to liberate the language imprisoned in a work in his re-creation of that work" (80). Thus, translation is an act of erasure of the original language, by simultaneously reconstructing it in a new language, in order that both fragments might provide glimpses of the meaning inhering in "pure language." "Pure language" is defined as "the intention underlying each language as a whole -- an intention, however, which no single language can attain by itself but which is realized only by the totality of their intentions supplementing each other" (74). Thus, it is pointless to examine who owns the *Mabinogion*, for what is most significant, at least to the Benjaminian reader, is the fact that in translating it, Lady Charlotte created one of the Ur-texts of the Victorian consciousness. Rather than seeing this as an act of ruthless cultural appropriation, however, Benjamin, in a move that would horrify a doctrinaire post-colonialist, would argue that such acquisition is in fact the only way to release an object's true meaning. Indeed, in "Unpacking my Library," he assigns an almost mystical significance to the act of acquisition, claiming, "Ownership is the most intimate relationship that one can have to objects. Not that they come alive in him; it is he who lives in them" (67). What saves this act of acquisition from the charge of appropriation is its reciprocal nature: "I am not exaggerating when I say that to a true collector the

acquisition of an old book is its rebirth... To renew the old world -- that is the collector's deepest desire when he is driven to acquire new things" (61).[6]

The importance to any discussion of Lady Charlotte of Benjamin's insight into the reciprocity that underlies both collecting and translating becomes clear when one realizes that the first mention of any Welsh literary project in Lady Charlotte's diaries was a reference to collecting, not translating. In 1835, she recorded a meeting with the editor of the *Cambrian Visitor*, Elijah Waring, in which "our conversation turned much upon the superstitions and legends of Wales -- I think it might be desirable to make a collection of them" *(Lady Charlotte* 100). Furthermore, perceiving Lady Charlotte as a collector and scholar, rather than as a translator, creates a whole new perspective from which to view her work -- one that has not been significantly addressed by critics. Indeed, once one considers Lady Charlotte from such a perspective, one can easily argue that the main accomplishment of the attack on her status as a translator is its capacity to render irrelevant the seven-page introduction and 145 pages of footnotes that also make up her *Mabinogion*.

Admittedly, part of this dismissal of her scholarly notes on the *Mabinogion* is due to the nature of the work itself. Her notes are a genuine *Wunderkammer*, a collector's cabinet, jammed with curiosities seized without regard for their sources. It was this magpie-like nature of her work that led Roger S. Loomis to complain that her notes must be "be

[6] Although the hapless booklender, still seething over the loss of their first precious editions of *The Lord of the Rings* to a college roommate, may feel an understandable wariness when they read the sentence, "Of the customary modes of acquisition, the one most appropriate to a collector would be the borrowing of a book with its attendant non-returning" (62).

carefully sifted, many of the worthless inventions of Iolo Morganwg and of earlier fabricators being mixed in with the genuine traditions derived from medieval manuscripts" (Loomis 105).

The tale of Kilhwch and Olwen provides some of the best support for Loomis' critique. In the text, Kilhwch seeks a boon of Arthur and his warriors, specifically, "Kai, and Bedwyr, and... Gwynn the son of Nudd... and Prince Fflewddur Fflam, and..." so forth for five straight pages (*Mabinogion* 100). Lady Charlotte is helpless to resist such a tempting list of names. The following is only the opening paragraph of her three page footnote on Gwyn the Son of Nudd, the first of the five pages of names:

> In Gwyn ab Nudd, we become acquainted with one of the most poetical characters of Welsh romance. He is no less a personage than the King of Faerie, a realm, the extent and importance of which is nowhere better appreciated, or held in greater reverence, than in Wales. Very numerous indeed are the subjects of Gwyn ab Nudd, and very various are they in their natures. He is the sovereign of those beneficent and joyous beings, the Tylwyth Teg, or Family of Beauty (sometimes also called Bendith I Mammau, or Blessing of Mothers), who dance in the moonlight on the velvet sward, in their airy and flowing robes of blue or green, or white or scarlet, and who delight in showering benefits on the more favoured of the human race; and equally does his authority extend over the fantastic, though no less picturesque class of Elves, who in Welsh bear the name of Ellyllon, and who, on the other hand, enjoy nothing so much as to mislead and torment the inhabitants of earth. Indeed, if Davidd ap Gwylim may be believed, Gwyn ab Nudd himself is not averse to

> indulging in a little mischievous amusement of this kind; for one dark night the bard, having ridden into a turf bog on the mountain, calls it the "fishpond of Gwyn ab Nudd, a palace for goblins and their tribe," to whom he evidently gives credit for having decoyed him into its mire. Perhaps he may have been tempted to exclaim like Shakespeare, "Heavens defend me from the Welsh fairy." (*Mabinogion* 309-10)

One can immediately understand Loomis' scholarly frustration. That the passage exhibits a shameless lack of academic detachment, is only the first of its sins. More damningly, Lady Charlotte makes no attempt to differentiate a Welsh source such as Davydd ap Gwylim from an English source such as Shakespeare, nor does she attempt to distinguish literary sources from the oral folkloric tradition. Quantity and picturesqueness, rather than authenticity, seem to be her major criteria for inclusion. Yet, the sheer energy of her acquisitiveness, as well as the clear affinity she has for a purely romantic story, give the passage a literary value all its own. Indeed, rather than sharing Loomis' frustration, one can take pleasure in the unconscious self-portrait of a woman who has a greed for narrative curiosities -- a greed that foreshadows her later career as a collector.

More importantly, Loomis' frustration obscures that fact that both Lady Charlotte's scholarly heuristic and its intellectual underpinnings merely reflected the intellectual climate in which she was operating. Johnston's charge of "quaintness" rapidly turns against Lady Charlotte in passages such as the following from her Introduction, which

can, at first glance, seem to be dismissable as the work of a dotty amateur, even if her gender is not considered:

> There is one argument in favour of the high antiquity in Wales of many of the Mabinogion, which deserves to be mentioned here. The argument is founded on the topography of the country. It is found that Saxon names of places are very frequently definitions of the nature of the locality to which they are attached, as Clifton, Deepden, Bridge-ford, Thorpe, Ham, Wick, and the like; whereas those of Wales are more frequently commemorative of some event, real or supposed, said to have happened on or near the spot, or bearing allusion to some person renowned in the story of the country or district... But as these names could not have preceded the events to which they refer, the events themselves must be not unfrequently as old as the early settlement in the country. And as some of these events and fictions are the subjects of, and are explained by, existing Welsh legends, it follows that the legends must be, in some shape or other, of very remote antiquity. It will be observed that this argument supports *remote* antiquity only for such legends as are connected with the greater topographical features, as mountains, lakes, rivers, seas, which must have been named at an early period in the inhabitation of the country by man. But there exist, also, legends connected with the lesser features, as pools, hills, detached rocks, caves, fords, and the like, places not necessarily named by the earlier settlers, but the names of which are, nevertheless, probably very old, since the words of which they are composed are in many cases not retained in the colloquial tongue, in which they must once have been included, and are in some instances lost from the language altogether, so much so as to be only partially explicable even by scholars. (9-10)

Perhaps the most pleasing aspect of this argument, apart from its surface logic, is its sheer circularity. Her argument that Saxon place names are largely descriptive tells the reader much more about her perception of the Saxons as practical literalists than about the etymology of the names, which are more likelily reifications of a variety of influences, including mispronunciations of the original Welsh or proper names and corruptions of current or forgotten words in the Saxon, as well as simple description, all superimposed on one another. Symmetrically, it is equally likely that a superficial resemblance between Welsh place names and legends led later storytellers to connect the two, rather than the place names serving as a guarantor of the legend's antiquity. Indeed, that a legend can be attached to a geographical feature long after the first instances of the legend were recorded is witnessed by the number of Arthur's Seats in England.

Lady Charlotte's argument descends into the unwittingly farcical as it culminates in her assertion that we can determine the antiquity of geographic features by their referring to events lost in time -- even when in fact we do not know the actual meaning of the words making up the place's name. One could spend hours delightedly bathing in that particular *mise en abime* before one even moved on to consider her corollary proposition, that these remaining place names thus somehow prove the antiquity of the legends for which they are purportedly named. However, in Lady Charlotte's defense, such fascination with false etymologies and bad euhemerism is absolutely true to the medieval text she was translating, as well as to the work of her contemporaries. As Gantz explains:

> A last amusing example of "history" in *The Mabinogion* is provided by the onomastic episodes... over-ingenious and inherently improbable explanations which seem to have arisen out of desperation rather than from genuine knowledge. Thus the storytellers of "Math" explain the numerous occurrences of Mochdrev (Pig Town) in Wales by routing Gwydyon's retreat north -- with the pigs -- through as many of these as possible. Some names appear to have been misunderstood: in "Branwen," the place name Tal y Bolyon (End of the Ridges) is explained by the episode of the colts which were made over to Mallolwch -- the storyteller evidently understood (or chose to understand) the name as Tal Ebolyon (Payment of Colts). (Gantz 20)

Furthermore, Lady Charlotte's heuristic is also precisely that of the average nineteenth-century romantic philologist. In *The Myth and Ritual School: J.G. Frazer and the Cambridge Ritualists*, Robert Ackerman describes the birth of the etymological approach to interpretation that underlies Lady Charlotte's claims about language. He claims that the eighteenth-century rise of the etymological approach to the interpretation of myths and legends, which, in turn, gave rise to nineteenth-century philology, was a response to the rationalist view that myths were "philosophical allegories formulated by the ancient sages" (Ackerman 2). Thinkers such as Fontenelle, Bayle, and most notably Vico and Herder, turned to euhemerism and etymological analysis in order to locate the genesis and meaning of myth in the concrete experience of the people who first told them. Euhemerism attempted to discover myths' meaning by looking for actual events that

inspired them, while philology attempted to strip words down to their common roots in Indo-European in the hopes that words' origins might parallel myths' origins.

If a contemporary reader is acquainted with these ideas, it is most likely through Derrida's "Exergue" to "White Mythology," in which he offers a critique of Anatole France's dialogue in *The Garden of Epicurus.* France's description of the development of philosophical language, as formulated by Derrida, is actually a common nineteenth-century philological one, "Abstract notions always hide a sensory figure" (210). Derrida famously goes on to problematize France's claim, by arguing that:

> ... the history of metaphysical language is said to be confused with the erasure of the efficacity of the sensory figure and the *usure* of its effigy. The word itself is not pronounced, but one may decipher the double import of *usure*: erasure by rubbing, exhaustion, crumbling away, certainly; but also the supplementary product of a capital, the exchange which far from losing the original investment would fructify its initial wealth, would increase its return in the form of revenue, additional interest, linguistic surplus value, the two histories of the meaning of the word remaining indistinguishable. (210)

In sharp contrast to Derrida's insisting on the impossibility of grounding language in a system of referents, the nineteenth century saw this search for the lost origins of language in extremely concrete terms. Perhaps the most representative proponent of the nineteenth-century philological point of view was F. Max Muller, who claimed in his discussion of the lost Aryan race, that:

> It seemed that these Aryans, by the peculiarity of their language, were doomed never to be permitted to worship their nature gods directly but instead were forced into the most elaborate periphrases to voice their piety. The reason for this state of affairs was that Aryan was a truly primitive language in that it consisted solely of words that expressed action; its speakers could not therefore use it to express abstractions... Every word, whether noun or verb, had still its full original power during the mythopoeic ages. Words were heavy and unwieldy. They said more than they ought to say, and hence, much of the strangeness of the mythological language, which we can only understand by watching the natural growth of speech... (Ackerman 27)

The *Star Trek* aficionado may recognize in this argument the roots of the memorable "Shaka when the Walls Fell" episode[7]; however to any other post-modernist ear, what is perhaps most foreign about this approach is the actuality which words acquire. Words were, for a philologist, facts, and a translator could then be seen as a collector of these facts, a "scientific" point of view about the origins of language that was well in keeping with the intellectual inheritance of empiricism. Furthermore, earlier words, being closer to their sensory origins, had more meaning than later words that were abstracted from their meaning.

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[7] In which Jean-Luc Picard is stranded on a planet with an alien, whose only means of linguistic communication is by referring to an epic, which is known to all his species, but to no-one else. The alien, thus, can only abstract by citing an episode in the epic: for example, in order to say "I am sad," he says "Shaka when the walls fell." Furthermore, the alien can refer to no feelings or ideas that are not already contained in the epic. Since Picard has no knowledge of the narrative to which the alien refers, and the alien has no meta-language to describe that narrative, Picard must first decipher the citations, then cite the Epic of Gilgamesh to introduce new ideas. The episode eventually degenerates in "Me Gilgamesh, you Enkidu" pointing and grunting -- albeit in orotund RSC vowels; however the initial linguistic problem is fascinating.

Understanding this nineteenth-century privileging of the origins and actuality of language as fact is critical to understanding Lady Charlotte's work. Indeed, one can make no intelligent evaluation of her as a scholar or a translator, until one considers that she was operating in an intellectual context where folklorists and antiquarians were all searching for the meaning of language in its origins, which were best preserved in the folklore of "primitive" peoples. More importantly, since philologists believed that the Celtic languages remain closer to the original Indo-European than any other language -- a notion that still persists[8] -- Celtic language, customs and folklore were accorded a privileged position in the study of philology and anthropology.

Furthermore, Lady Charlotte was, in the truest sense of the word, a philologist, a woman whose inherent love of languages -- not language in the literary sense -- was evident from her early study of foreign languages as esoteric as Persian (Loomis 103). When she began to study Welsh, the philologist whom she herself studied was James Cowles Prichard. She paid especial attention to his *The Eastern Origins of the Celtic Nations* (1851).[9] Both Prichard's conclusion and heuristic are neatly set out in his complete title: *The Eastern Origin of the Celtic Nations proved by a comparison of their dialects with the Sanskrit, Greek, Latin, and Teutonic Languages: Forming a supplement to Researches into the Physical History of Mankind.* Any lingering question as to the intellectual affinity between Lady Charlotte and her own preferred influence can be quickly resolved by glancing at their similar touch with a footnote: Prichard provides

[8] See, for example, Nicholas Wade, "Y Chromosomes Sketch New Outline of British History." *New York Times* (Science Times), May 28, 2003, p.F2.
[9] Guest's professed "Solid reading" when she began to study Welsh *(Lady Charlotte* 99).

eighteen pages of ten-pitch notes to the first sixteen pages of twelve-pitch text of his book.

Like most of his contemporaries, Prichard's concern was not, in fact, so much with the origin of languages as the origin of peoples. He opens his first chapter by stating this directly:

> Many writers on natural history and geography have maintained the opinion that each particular region of the earth must have been supplied from the beginning, by a separate and distinct creation, with its peculiar stock of indigenous or native inhabitants. Among the ancients this notion prevailed almost universally. There existed, indeed, in the pagan world an obscure tradition of a primitive pair fashioned out of clay by the hand of Prometheus or of Jupiter; but this belonged to mythology; which in its literal sense, at least, was of little authority with the best informed, and the frequent occurrence of such term as *autochthones*, *indigenae*, or *aboriginal inhabitants*, whenever reference is made to the population of different countries, indicates a general prevalence of the ideas which such expressions are fitted to suggest. The prevailing opinion in modern times has referred all the nations of the earth to a common parentage; and this it has done chiefly, as it would appear, on the authority of our Sacred History, the testimony of which seems hardly to be reconciled with a different hypothesis. Of late, however, many learned men, chiefly on the continent, have been strongly inclined to adopt an opinion similar to that of the ancients. (1-2)

Linguistic study (or, more properly, philology) is nothing but a method that will "furnish great and indispensable assistance in many particular inquiries relating to the history of and affinity of nations," even if Prichard himself must admit, "It would be too much to expect from this quarter to demonstrate the unity of race, or an original sameness of idiom in the whole human species" (5).[10]

A major premise of this argument that has long been called into question, particularly by post-colonial theorists, is the assumption of historical progression from primitive to civilized peoples and parallel progression of language. Indeed, Prichard restricts his philological heuristic with the claim "I must confine my observations to the original materials of speech, and to expressions which denote simple and primitive ideas," which implies that simple and primitive materials can always be equated with original ones. With such underlying assumptions, his list of concepts that are normally considered primitive is unsurprising:

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[10] Even in this weighty and "scientific" approach to the origins of people and languages, there is an eerie anticipation of the twentieth-century location of this event in the mind. Prichard posits four basic relationships that can be discovered when comparing two languages: (1) Similarity in vocabulary, without similarity in grammar; (2) Similarity in grammatical structure without similarity in vocabulary; (3) Cognate languages, which demonstrate similarities in both; and (4) "a fourth relation" that:

> exists between languages in which neither of the connecting characters above described can be discerned: when there is neither analogy of grammatical structure, nor any correspondence in words sufficient to indicate a particular affinity. Such languages are not of the same family, and they generally belong to nations remote from each other in descent, and often in physical characters. But even among languages thus discovered, a few common or resembling words may often be found. These resemblances are sometimes casual, or the result of mere accident: in other instances they are perhaps too striking and too numerous to be ascribed to chance of coincidence. Such are the phenomena of connexion which M. Klaproth hypothetically terms *antediluvian*... (Prichard 11-2).

Although Prichard's preferred explanation for this divergence in language derives from the Book of Genesis, the post-modernist mind is drawn perhaps to a more primal myth. The mapping of Prichard's system of relationships onto Jakobson's metaphoric and metonymic axes is irresistible, and the antediluvian, despite the dotty attractions of the mythic lands of Atlantis and Lemuria, which, significantly, enjoyed a vogue in the nineteenth century, maps itself much more easily onto Kristeva's Land of Cockaigne, the *chora*.

> When such relations as those of father, mother, brother, and sister are expressed by really cognate words, an affinity between the several languages in which these analogies are found is strongly indicated. The same remark may be made in respect to the names of visible bodies and the elements of nature, such as sun, moon, air, sky, water, earth. (231)

This nineteenth-century teleological view of history, which saw colonial cultures, including those of the Celts, as less developed than those of European mercantile nations, affords Celtic language and culture a paradoxical privilege, for, because of their social isolation, "the Celtic people have been more tenacious of the peculiarities of their language, as they have been in many respects of their customs and manners, than the other nations of Europe" (233-4). The intellectual importance of this perception is made clear by Prichard's five volume opus, *Physical Anthropology*, of which *The Eastern Origins...* is nothing but an offshoot. In *Physical Anthropology*, he accords the Gauls the privilege of being the original European race; therefore, he is interested in their language, Gaelic, as one of the few artifacts of this lost race. He even devotes several pages in *Physical Anthropology* to attempting to determine whether the Gaelic branch of Celtic, such as Irish and Scots, or the Cymric, which includes Welsh, is the earlier and therefore "more authentic."

Such philological notions remained a fundamental approach of criticism of the *Mabinogion* well into the 1950s, when W.J. Gruffydd saw in one stratum of the sources of the *Mabinogion*, a "folk recollection of an aboriginal people living in inaccessible

parts of the countryside, having no contact with the dominant race, and living in fear and suspicion of them" (Gruffydd 8). More importantly, these notions lead directly to the opposition between the purity of the primitive and the corruption of the sophisticated that underlies Lady Charlotte's scholarly approach. This fundamental dichotomy is laid out in her claim that:

> The Mabinogion, however, though thus early recorded in the Welsh tongue, are in their existing form by no means wholly Welsh. They are of two tolerably distinct classes. Of these, the older contains few allusions to Norman customs, manners, arts, arms, and luxuries. The other, and less ancient, are full of such allusions, and of ecclesiastical terms. Both classes, no doubt, are equally of Welsh root, but the former are not more overlaid or corrupted, than might have been expected, from the communication that so early took place between the Normans and the Welsh; whereas the latter probably migrated from Wales, and were brought back and re-translated after an absence of centuries, with a load of Norman additions. Kilhwch and Olwen, and the dream of Rhonabwy, may be cited as examples of the older and purer class; the Lady of the Fountain, Peredur, and Geraint ab Erbin, of the later, or decorated. (*Mabinogion* 8-9)

Her argument creates a series of parallel binary oppositions between ancient and modern, simplicity and ornament, and pure and corrupt that in fact privileges less developed societies as being closer to some absolute, fundamental truth. The notion of such a fundamental truth, Stuart Piggott explains in *The Ancient Britons and the Antiquarian Imagination*, derives from the Renaissance desire to place the learning of the Egyptians

and pagan philosophers, as personified by Hermes Trismegistus, on an equal footing with that represented by the Mosaic (Biblical) text (40-2). The result was the concept of an early race that was not merely antediluvian, but preadamic.

This Preadamite hypothesis was given its most complete explication in Isaac de Lapeyrere's *1655 Systema Theologicum ex Praeadamitarum Hypothesi: Prae-adamitae* (published in English in 1656 as *Man Before Adam*). In it, Lapeyrere:

> made use of the two unreconciled versions of the Creation, the E text of Gen 1 and the J text of Gen 2, only the second of which names Adam and Eve, and proposed that the E text should be taken to mean that a separate and large population of Preadamites was created before Adam, who was merely the progenitor of the Jews, not of all mankind. This Gentile, non-Adamic, non-Jewish past was of vast antiquity, as was the fund of wisdom and knowledge acquired over this long period. The Flood, as an episode in Jewish ancient history, need only have been limited in extent, and far distant regions such as the Americas could have been populated by Preadamites in a remote antiquity. (Piggott 45-6)

The ancient Picts, and with them the Celts, were quickly associated with the primitive American peoples, leading to the privileging of Celtic antiquity as a Preadamic one.

One corollary of the Preadamite hypothesis is a view of history as a gradual corruption of the Preadamite races' original characteristics. Perhaps the most infamous proponent of this point of view was Matthew Arnold, whose public acknowledgment of his debt to Lady Charlotte may be a factor in Welsh resentment of her accomplishment as a

translator. In *On the Study of Celtic Literature,* Arnold infamously attempted to define the "English genius" -- primarily by contrasting it to the Saxon and Celtic geniuses from which it is formed. "Genius" is of course a mystical term, meaning the guiding spirit of a place or people. The twentieth-century reader grows immediately uncomfortable, thus, when Arnold essays a material definition of such an ineffable concept. The German genius, he claims is "steadiness with honesty," which, while it offers at its best "freedom from whim, flightiness, perverseness; patient fidelity to Nature -- in a word, *science,*" is also responsible for Germany's "eternal beer, sausages, and bad tobacco" (74). Somewhat predictably, he goes on to claim:

> sentimental, if the Celtic nature is to be characterized by a single term, is the best term to take. An organisation quick to feel impressions, and feeling them very strongly; a lively personality therefore, keenly sensitive to joy and to sorrow; this is the main point. (76)

This clear demarcation between cultural types is paralleled by associated linguistic principles. The scientific principle, which corresponds to the Saxon character, is that of prosaic, but absolutely truthful, language. The poetic principle, which corresponds to the Celtic character, is the "passionate, turbulent, indomitable reaction against the despotism of fact" (118).

Arnold then spends the remainder of his essay defining the English genius as a combination of these two strains, which he treats as definable and separable: when the Englishman is scientific, that is the German/Saxon side of his nature manifesting itself;

when he waxes poetic, that is the Celt prevailing. Soon, like a cook dissatisfied with his recipe, Arnold is forced to add a dash of the Norman genius -- which excels at rhetoric and has a "Roman talent for affairs" (87) -- to explain any behaviors that fail to conform to the other two extremes. Indeed, it is for rhetoric that Arnold claims the English language is best suited:

> ... perhaps no nation, after the Greeks and Romans, has so clearly felt in what true rhetoric, rhetoric of the best kind, consists, and reached so high a pitch of excellence in this, as the English. Our sense for rhetoric has in some ways done harm to us in our cultivation of literature, harm to us, still more in our cultivation of science; but in the true sphere of rhetoric, in public speaking, this sense has given us orators whom I do think we may, without fear of being contradicted and accused of blind national vanity, assert to have inherited the great Greek and Roman oratorical tradition more than the orators of any other country. (89)

Such a definition of rhetoric as a bridge between the polar opposites of poetry and science begins to sound very much like a Hegelian dialectic, situated across races rather than across time. And in fact a similar dialectic across time underlay the contemporaneous speculative approach to history, associated with the Scottish philosopher, Adam Ferguson. As Avrom Fleishman characterizes Ferguson's paradigm:

> "rude nations" (which we would call "primitive" or "folk" societies) are organized on the close identification of individual and community, and this holds them together despite their lack of freedom, order, and peace. The growth of states into "polished

> and commercial nations" does away with the simple virtues of loyalty, patriotism, and blood-brotherhood, along with the barbaric vices. (Fleishman 43)

Such a speculative approach to history is another premise of Lady Charlotte's scholarship, albeit an uneasy one. Her discomfort with such an approach may be evidenced by at least one genuine scholarly peculiarity on her part: selecting "The Dream of Rhonabwy" as an exemplar of the "older and purer" class of narrative. As Jeffrey Gantz has pointed out:

> The most literary of the tales in *The Mabinogion*, "Rhonabwy" may also be the last to have taken shape. Madawg son of Maredudd -- a genuine historical figure -- died in 1159, and his brother Iorwerth a few years later; thus the framework of the story cannot be much older than 1200. (Gantz 177)

Lady Charlotte was well aware of the historical context and indeed devoted five pages of detailed geographic and historical notes to Madawg and Iorwerth. Her notes then go on to map the dream that the historical context frames in equal detail, beginning with the improbably precise sentence, "In following Rhonabwy on his visionary journey, it may be allowable to suppose him crossing the Vyrnwy at Rhyd y Vorle (Melverley), and then pursuing his course through the Deuddwr, between that river and the Severn, till we come to the plains of Argygroeg. The district traversed is remarkably fertile" (341). Given such persistent literalism, one can scarcely assume that her identifying "Rhonabwy" as an old tale was a scholarly error. Instead, we can justifiably assume that she was ignoring the framing tale and concentrating on the material in the dream itself, especially the

mysterious chess game between Arthur and Owain, which is contested with Owain's supernatural army of ravens.

Such an abrupt dismissal of the corruption of the present in favor of the purity of the past relates her work closely to that of Walter Scott. Indeed, it is no coincidence that Scott was one of Lady Charlotte's favorite authors. The defining dichotomies of her scholarship are also the defining dichotomies of Scott's work. The first, and most important, of these dichotomies is the conflict between past and present. In Scott's work, Fleishman claims:

> The values of the past are those of the folk or *Gemeinshaft*, of ritualized religion and nuclear family ties, of the absolute ethic of relatively primitive societies, and of personal motivation by inherited mores -- for the individual has not yet differentiated himself clearly from the group. On the other side stand the values of modern life, not moral pragmatism or economic improvement alone, but also the values of the Enlightenment: rational freedom, liberation from the dead weight of the past both intellectually and politically... (38-9)

The second dichotomy, which Scott can be credited with inventing in *Ivanhoe*, is the myth of the Norman yoke. Scott's assumptions are so thoroughly ingrained in the post-nineteenth-century consciousness, it seems hard to believe that he wrote the following only in his 1830 introduction to the novel:

> It seemed to the author, that [there existed] two races... in the same country, the vanquished distinguished by their plain, homely, blunt manners, and the free spirit infused by their ancient institutions and laws; the victors, by the high spirit of

> military fame, personal adventure, and whatever could distinguish them as the Flower of Chivalry... (quoted in Fleishman 26, alterations Erica Obey's)

In "Rhonabwy," Scott's Saxons have been transformed into Welsh Britons, but the tale still enacts the conflict between ritualized past and pragmatic present as a conflict between the morally pure vanquished and their corrupt conquerors. Madawc, the king whom Rhonabwy serves, is nothing if not a pragmatic man. Maredudd, his father, "had been one of the most strenuous and successful opponents of the Normans, celebrated by the national records" (*Mabinogion* 336). Madawc, however, "was not distinguished for equal ardour in his country's cause; on the contrary, Madawc combined with Henry II. [*sic*] in the attacks he made upon Wales in 1158" (*Mabinogion* 337). It is from this unlovely, compromised situation that Rhonabwy retreats to dream of the mythic world of King Arthur's courts.

"Rhonabwy," however, is a medieval romance, not a historical romance as Scott's are. Therefore, in "Rhonabwy," the past can only be dreamt, not contemplated, and only under specific, restricted circumstances: Rhonabwy's three-day slumber on the yellow calf-skin, which is presumably a mantic space. Even more interesting is that the events of "Rhonabwy" revolve around interpretation, not action. The story takes place seven years after the battle of Camlan (138), in which Arthur met his final defeat at the hands of Mordred, yet Arthur is still conducting battles. However, he does so by means of an apparently magical chessboard. The reader never sees the actions on the chessboard or the battle; instead, the exchange between Arthur and his opponent Owain is limited to the

repeated phrases "Forbid thy Ravens," on Arthur's part, and "Lord, play the game," on Owain's part. Indeed, Rhonabwy would understand nothing of what he sees in the dream without the intervention of Iddawc Cordd Prydain, an intermediary who introduces him to the men of old and interprets their actions. However, Iddawc's role is significantly complicated by the fact that he is a self-proclaimed liar and trouble-maker, who admits "I kindled strife between them, and stirred up wrath, when I was sent by Arthur the Emperor to reason with Medrawd" (138).

What is perhaps most significant about the tale is the fact that Rhonabwy's having seen the vision of the past does not guarantee that he will remember it. He is only allowed to remember his dream because he also saw the ring on Arthur's hand. Iddawc explains that "It is one of the properties of that stone to enable thee to remember that thou seest here tonight, and hadst thou not seen the stone, thou wouldest never have been able to remember aught thereof" (139). The final, peculiar *envoi* to the story makes it clear that literature and literariness are in fact nothing but a collection of such talismans that invoke memory and with it history, explaining:

> And this tale is called the Dream of Rhonabwy. And this is the reason that no one knows the dream without a book, neither bard nor gifted seer; because of the various colours that were upon the horse, and the many wondrous colours of the arms and of the panoply, and of the precious scarfs, and of the virtue-bearing stones. (150)

Both Lady Charlotte's translation and her accompanying scholarship, arguably, perform exactly the same function as Rhonabwy's virtue-bearing stones -- transforming facts into

a series of literary talismans that mediate memory and history. Indeed, such collections of talismanic facts were the foundation of antiquarianism, which is the third intellectual influence on Lady Charlotte's scholarship. Stuart Piggott traces its birth back to the seventeenth-century Battle of the Ancients and Moderns, claiming that antiquarianism evolved directly from the "Royal Society tradition of the empirical investigation of natural and artificial phenomena" (150). In its emphasis on collecting facts, bridged by a minimum of theorizing, Piggott characterizes antiquarianism as being squarely opposed to Ferguson's speculative approach to history (151).

Philippa Levine describes this antiquarian milieu further in her *The Amateur and the Professional*. In that book, she traces the evolution of the amateur pursuit of antiquarianism, whose roots extend back into the Renaissance, into the twin professional disciplines of historian and archeologist, specifically during the period from 1838 to 1886. Concomitant with this transformation was a change in the perception of time and a people's past from the mythic to the historical and scientific. According to Levine, during this period, "history was to acquire powerful human appeal as the intellectual mechanism whereby time could be measured and evaluated. The transition from myth to history was an uncomfortable and often painful process which involved very centrally the questioning of assumptions about universality and permanence" (3). At the same time, however, the mystical and transcendent were redefined in terms of the temporal and material. William Gladstone exemplified this intellectual shift when he wrote:

> I am convinced that the thorough [...] study of history is a noble, invigorating manly study, essentially political and judicial, fitted for and indispensible to, a free country.

> But rightly or wrongly, I go much farther than this; and I believe that it is the truly historical treatment of Christianity, and of all the religious experience of mankind, which [...] will supply under God effectual bulwarks against the rash and violent unbelief [...] rushing in upon us. (Levine 37)

This emphasis on the careful assemblage of evidence led to antiquarianism's peculiarly omnivorous collecting -- ridiculed by, among others, Jean Baptiste Chardin in a 1740 painting entitled "Le Singe Antiquaire," "in which an erudite ape sits in his fashionable day-gown, surrounded by his numismatic books and collections, peering at a coin with his lens" (Piggott 151). What made antiquarianism so open to mockery was that "rather than confining itself to one specific type of source material [it] had attempted to marry the literary and material evidences of past ages to preserve, and to transmit the memory of the past" (Levine 70). Descriptive classification was the antiquarian's only heuristic, and "Few antiquaries before the advent of specific archaeological method would have seen any need to treat exhumed burial remains differently than a town charter or a church font. They were as comfortable editing medieval poetry as they were inspecting Roman remains" (Levine 71).

One result of this intellectual promiscuity was that antiquarians were notorious collectors. The collection of Thomas Layton, for example, included, "11,000 books, 3,000 prints and maps, 3,000 coins, tokens and medals, 9,000 pottery and glass vessels and tiles and 2,600 [assorted] antiquities" (Levine 15). Indeed, collection itself was perceived as the primary intellectual activity of the antiquarian, a stance that is clearly a

holdover from eighteenth-century scientific method. For empiricism (and the related approach of logical positivism) in its purest form only allows theories to arise naturally from observations, or, as Charles Roach Smith argued in his *Collectanea Antiqua* in 1848, "The notion that a record *of facts,* copiously illustrated, and but sparingly dilated with theory, would be acceptable to the antiquary and to the historical inquirer, is proved to have been well-founded" (Quoted in Levine 74).

Yet, paradoxically, it was this very emphasis on facts without theory that gave rise to the peculiarly flowery prose style of the antiquarian. Unburdened by theory, the most significant facts were left to fend for themselves, in a prismatic, undifferentiated way. As an anonymous archaeologist described his task, he sought to present the past "in forms full of quaint and original features, which impart a picturesque and striking character to such fitful glimpses of the romance of life in other ages as are thus revealed" (Anon (H.N. Humphries), *Stories by an Archaeologist and his Friends* (London, 1856) quoted in Levine 73). Such an emphasis on impressionism meant that the antiquarian's language "reveals a greater emphasis on empathy than on analysis" (Levine 73).

As her later career as a china collector suggests, Lady Charlotte was above all things an antiquarian, moving in local antiquarian circles, whose appeal was often as much social as intellectual (Levine 40).[11] Similarly, her scholarly notes are best understood by viewing them as collection, whose significance derives primarily from the fact of their having been collected. Thus, Old French (386) and Old English (308) make their

[11] To Lady Charlotte's credit, incidentally, these societies usually comprised men, often relegating women to a secondary category of "lady members" (Levine 54).

appearance beside Welsh and English; the Englyn, the folk tale, the ecclesiastical history, and the romance all interact with equal validity as both reference and literary text -- as do, in good antiquarian fashion, found objects such as coins (330) and natural objects such as hills (9).

Indeed, perceiving Lady Charlotte as a collector rather than a writer may go a long way to explaining why she took on such a vast translating task, given her uncertain command of Welsh. Antiquarian societies were closely related to printing societies, which published editions of manuscripts (Levine 40), often in their original languages with the translation as nothing more than a "trot." As an antiquarian, Lady Charlotte may have considered her translating task as ancillary to her role as a collector and preserver of manuscripts. In fact, in at least once instance, she seems to see the stories purely as a vehicle for collection, to judge from her diary recording that she "returned at dusk and read part of the tale of Kilhwch and Olwen from the *Mabinogion*. It pleases me much. There is a great field for annotation" (Loomis 103).

Whatever Lady Charlotte's motivations, her footnotes demonstrate an antiquarian's ease with mixing material and literary sources, as well as a collector's penchant for including anything and everything she runs across. Although it is quite arguable that in her mind this approach was nothing but appropriate scientific method, the paradoxical result is to make her footnotes in many ways her most imaginative and personal writing. Scholarship seems to provide a distancing mask that allows her to give free rein to a humor and imagination that she seems impelled to control carefully elsewhere. For

example, "Geraint the Son of Erbin," provides a priceless glimpse of Lady Charlotte the passionate horsewoman, who named her own mount Llamerei after Arthur's half faery horse. When Gwenhwyvar asks Arthur if she may attend the hunt of the stag, Lady Charlotte hastens to assure the reader:

> It was formerly very customary for ladies to join in the pleasures of the chase; and Strutt informs us that when they did so it was usual to draw the game into a small compass by means of inclosures; and temporary stands were erected for them, from which, when not contented with being merely spectators of the sport, they shot at the game with arrows as it passed by... Strutt is of opinion [*sic*] that the ladies had even separate hunting parties of their own. (*Mabinogion* 404)

Yet, a touch of the gentlewoman cannot help but emerge just twenty pages later, when she remarks:

> Strutt accuses the ladies of former times of not having adopted a very feminine mode of riding on horseback, particularly when they joined in hunting expeditions; and he quotes the authority of certain illuminations in ancient MSS [which she cites in a footnote to the footnote] which is, I fear, rather conclusive evidence. But the mention of the Lady's saddle and riding-dress in Geraint ab Erbin, will, I trust, rescue the ladies of the present Tale from the imputation of so unbecoming a practice, and show that they wore a peculiar and appropriate costume whenever they rode out. Catherine de Medicis is said to have been the first who rode like the ladies of the present age, with a high crutch to her saddle. (*Mabinogion* 422)

For all its seeming silliness to the contemporary reader, the practice of antiquarianism introduced a fundamental methodological issue that is still a central question in reading folklore: that of the relative claims of empirically assembling facts and abstract theorizing. Vladimir Propp's seminal *Morphology of the Folk[Wonder]tale* is perhaps the exemplar of the approach that privileges abstract theorizing. In that essay, Propp attempted to extrapolate from simple antiquarian collections of folktales a formalist grammar based on two components: "the functions of its dramatis personae" (18) and the sequence of these functions, which is identical across the tales (20). Claude Levi-Strauss immediately critiqued Propp's work from a structuralist perspective that problematized Propp's insistence on theory, claiming that in Propp's formalism, form and content:

> must be absolutely separate, as form alone is intelligible, and content is only a residual deprived of any significant value. For structuralism, this opposition does not exist; structuralism does not treat one as abstract and the other as concrete. Form and content are of the same nature, amenable to the same type of analysis. Content receives its reality from its structure, and what is called form is a way of organizing the local structures that make up this content. (*Theory and History* 179)

Without content, Levi-Strauss goes on to argue, form "will remain at so high a level of abstraction that it stops meaning anything and has no heuristic value. *Formalism destroys its object*" (180, italics Levi-Strauss's).

In his extremely heated response, Propp claimed that Levi-Strauss overlooked the planned second half of his study, *Historical Roots of the Wondertale*, which is a Frazerian analysis of the roots of the folktale in primitive initiation rituals that imitated a

visit to a land of death. It is, at this point, impossible to tell how much Soviet political pressures may have influenced Propp's sudden shift from the abstractions of formalism to grounding his analysis in the form's historico-material roots. However, what is interesting is that Propp's examination of origins suffers from the fundamental problem of nineteenth-century philology: the postulated ritual is ultimately empirically unprovable.

In his *Mythologiques*, Levi-Strauss manfully attempts to address the flaws in Propp's methodology by situating his theorizing in multi-dimensional space. This space is created by matrices that Anatoly Liberman describes as treating "the myth as a orchestra score, which he reads from left to right as well as from top to bottom, with rows supplying the sequence of events and columns reflecting similar relations (*Theory and History xl*). Such a massive assemblage is one possible solution to the problem proposed by Walter Benjamin in "Edward Fuchs: Collector and Historian." In that essay, Benjamin concludes a Marxist argument about the impossibility of any abstract theorizing about history with the claim that "collections are the answers of the practical man to the irresolvable polarities of theory" (228). Benjamin's argument differs from Levi-Strauss' in that he sees any attempt at diachronic theorizing as rendered impossible by the fact that the theorizer is situated in a historico-economic context from which he cannot extract himself in order to gain the absolute perspective necessary for diachronic analysis. Levi-Strauss, on the other hand, sees limited room for generalization in his belief that "the unconscious activity of the mind consists in imposing forms upon content, and... these forms are fundamentally the same for all minds -- ancient and

modern, primitive and civilized" (*Structural Anthropology* 21). Benjamin and Levi-Strauss are united however, in their turning to what is very much the antiquarian's heuristic, collecting facts, "sparingly diluted with theory."

The importance of examining Propp, Benjamin, and Levi-Strauss is not to determine which one has discovered the best heuristic; instead, the importance of examining them is to demonstrate the stubborn irreconcilability of the claims of the purely enumerative and the claims of the abstracting generalization. It is an irreconcilability that is partially addressed by the talismanic nature of the mystical artifacts in "The Dream of Rhonabwy," as well as by the myriad facts in Lady Charlotte's scholarly *Wunderkammer*. Yet, abstraction and idealization are also brought to bear in Lady Charlotte's work on the *Mabinogion*. This chapter has already considered the importance of the underlying theoretical oppositions between pure and corrupt, and primitive and civilized, in her work. Idealization is more importantly represented, however, in Lady Charlotte's participation in creating what is arguably the seminal historical and moral symbol for nineteenth-century England: that of Arthur, the King of the Britons, characterized by Mark Girouard in *The Return to Camelot: Chivalry and the English Gentleman* as the "'selfless man and stainless gentleman... the great pillar of the moral order, and the resplendent top of human excellence', as Gladstone described him" (184). The image of such an ideal knight, "brave, loyal, true to his word, courteous, generous and merciful" (16), prescribed the behavior of the English gentleman up until the First World War.

The creation of such a symbol, Avrom Fleishman argues, allows art and fiction to mediate the past by functioning as "aesthetic contemplation[s] of history," which "lift the contemplation of the past above both the present and the past, to see it in its universal character, freed of the urgency of historical engagement" (14). However, Benjamin's countering claim that such a universal perspective is impossible, is amply attested to by the choice facing William Dyce when he was commissioned to decorate the Queen's Robing Room in 1847. He offered the Fine Arts Commissioners their choice of two approaches:

> One was a chronological series of pictures telling the main story of the *Morte d'Arthur*... The other was to 'consider the Companions of the Round Table as personifications of certain moral qualities... which make up the ancient idea of chivalric greatness.'
>
> It is not surprising that the Commission opted for the moral qualities; Guenevere presented problems for proper Victorians, even if she did repent in the end...(Girouard 181)

Despite her association with the great Victorian creators of Arthur as the epitome of the English gentleman (Girouard 178), Lady Charlotte's footnotes on Arthur remain less definable, poised between symbol and antiquarian reconstruction.[12] On the one hand, she gushes:

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[12] Indeed, much could be said about the symbolic value of Arthur's opponent Owain, who wages war with Arthur over a magical chessboard, using a flock of supernatural ravens. In her notes to Owain's eponymous tale, also called "The Lady of the Fountain," Lady Charlotte claims, "Amongst all the characters of ancient British history none is more interesting, or occupies a more conspicuous place, than the hero of this tale" (355). Yet, her case is significantly undermined when she is forced to admit a page later, "it appears from the manner in which he is always mentioned by contemporary Bards, that he greatly

> In him we see the dignified and noble-hearted sovereign, the stately warrior, and the accomplished knight... His image adorned our earliest visions of Chivalry and Romance, and though the weightier cares of maturer age must supervene, they serve to deepen, not to efface the impression; and while in the eddying stream of life we pause to look back upon the days when Caerlleon [*sic*] and its Round Table formed to us an ideal world, we feel that, in our hearts at least, "King Arthur is not dead." (353)

On the other hand, the woman who refused to translate Arawn's "indulging in loving pleasure and affection with [his wife]" *(Lady Charlotte* 117) happily includes as an antiquarian piece of evidence the following wholly undignified, and completely tangential tale, of the death of Huail, the brother of Kaw:

> ... it appears that Huail was imprudent enough to court a lady of whom Arthur was enamoured. The monarch's suspicions being aroused, and his jealousy excited, he armed himself secretly... After a sharp combat, Huail got the better of Arthur, and wounded him severely in the thigh, whereupon the contest ceased, and reconciliation was made upon the condition that Huail, under the penalty of losing his head, should never reproach Arthur with the advantage he had obtained over him...
>
> A short time after his recovery, Arthur fell in love with a lady... and, in order the more frequently to enjoy the pleasure of her society, he disguised himself in female

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distinguished himself in his country's cause, subsequently to the death of his father, but with what ultimate success we are not acquainted" (356).

> attire. One day he was dancing with this lady, and her companions, when Huail happened to see him. He recognized [Arthur] on account of his lameness, and said, "This dancing might do very well, but for the thigh." (*Mabinogion* 316)

Similarly, despite her disclaimer that "The real history of this chieftain is so veiled in obscurity, and has led to so much unsatisfactory discussion, that I shall in this place only consider him with reference to the position which he occupies in the regions of Fiction" (353), her note is immediately followed by an antiquarian attempt to map Caerlleon upon Usk to a station of the Roman Second Legion. Lady Charlotte speculates that such a site would naturally appeal to a native sovereign and that:

> it was the principal residence of King Arthur; and the amphitheatre is still called Arthur's Round Table. In confirmation of this traditionary evidence, Nennius asserts that one of Arthur's battles was fought at *Cairlion*.

The note concludes with an attempt, based on textual citation and etymology, to map this site to the contemporary city of Chester.

This intellectual tension between the empirical antiquarian and the Victorian symbolist gives rise to a final mapping, which may in itself be a conscious or unconscious admission of *aporia*. The notes to "The Lady of the Fountain" conclude with two general notes, one on the versions of the tale in other languages, the other on "The Forest of Breceliande and the Fountain of Baranton" (382-90). The first note is a simple scholarly listing of the other versions of the tale, in English, French, German, Swedish, Danish, and Icelandic. The versions are presented in chronological order, with no argument made for

the primacy of one over another. The note on Breceliande, in contrast, is an explosion of narrative, speculation, text, and landscape, beginning with the story of Merlin and Viviane, taken from Southey, then providing two Old French lays on the wonders of the Fountain and the marvels of Breceliande, before concluding with a contemporary description of the forest by her rival Villemarque, published in the *Revue de Paris* in 1837. Lady Charlotte's final comment is that:

> All the old traditions which give an interest to the Forest continue to be current there. The Fairies, who are kind to children, are still reported to be seen in their white apparel upon the banks of the Fountain...
>
> The Fountain of Baranton is supplied by a mineral spring, and it bubbles up on a piece of iron or copper being thrown into it.
>
> "Les enfans s'amusent a y jeter des epingles, et disent par commun proverbe: '*Ris donc, fountaine de Beredon, et je te donnerai une epingle.*'" (390)

Combined with the exhaustive listing of texts that precedes it, the entire footnote enacts the conflict between the symbolic and the purely enumerative. It is thus fitting that the conclusion of the note is not only a citation, but a citation in a foreign language of a proverb. Such a gesture combines, at least for one tenuous moment, the act of collecting, or citation, with the act of abstracting meaning, or translation. It is perhaps fitting that such an accomplishment can only refer to the fairy world, Never Never Land.

However, such a retreat to the Otherworld should not be interpreted as lending credence to the accusation that Lady Charlotte was writing for children.[13] Instead, one might look at fairy land as the only proper vantage point from which to admire Lady Charlotte's accomplishment in creating a text that exists as a fetishistic art object and a dialogic at once. Quite literally, the object that was her sumptuous three-volume edition also offered the Welsh text side-by-side with the translation. On a more abstract level, her actual text succeeds in being both a document of the nineteenth century and a document of the nineteenth century's encounter with the fourteenth century, which is in turn the encounter of the literate fourteenth century with the oral traditions preceding it. As such, it is simply one more link in Benjamin's infinitely extensive chain of the symbolizing turning into the symbolized. But, as an important link in the chain, it deserves its own transformation from symbolizing to symbolized. The discerning twenty-first century collector[14] ought to offer it pride of place in his shelves.

[13] In fact, a similar retreat was the refuge of seventeenth-century antiquarians such as Sir Robert Sibbald, when confronted with artifacts they could not explain (Piggott 92).
[14] With approximately $2500 to spare, at least for the three-volume edition.

Chapter Three: Confidences of a Collector

Sir John Guest died in 1852, leaving Lady Charlotte a relatively young widow of forty years old, with ten children, none of whom had reached their majority. Conventionally, her husband's death would dictate that Lady Charlotte retire from private life, spending at least a year mourning her dead husband before she ventured back into the peculiar half-world of the dowager, participating in society primarily as a mediator of her husband's memory and her children's needs. Yet, the very first entry in the second half of her diaries demonstrates how Lady Charlotte would challenge this expectation, even as she pushed herself to conform to it:

> *January 18 [Spring Gardens]* ... Mr. Bircham [the solicitor] in the morning [*sic*], bringing with him the Bute lease for my signature. It is granted to me as being the sole acting trustee for my life. When this paper was shown to me I was completely unnerved, so many associations of sorrow and anxiety seemed revived; I covered my face with my hands and for a moment wept bitterly, it was no use trying to repress it. A minute after, I had signed the important document. *(Schreiber* 1)

It is testament to Sir John's good sense, Lady Charlotte's acumen, and the strength of their relationship that Sir John appointed Lady Charlotte sole executrix of her children's estate. Yet, it is equally telling that Lady Charlotte's reaction to her first duty as executrix is a torrent of Kristevan tears, which testify to the continually blurred boundary between self and other, subject and object, that her new situation as widow re-establishes. Twenty years of a seemingly quite sound marriage to a man who obviously respected her intelligence allowed Lady Charlotte to develop a host of mechanisms, both textual and

actual, to negotiate asserting her will as a desiring self. Her tears may in part be a reaction to the realization that the structures that she has so carefully developed must all now be renegotiated. Yet, despite this sudden recognition of the displacement of her systems of judgment, she retains the presence of mind, not only to recognize the document's importance, but to sign it.

Within a year, Lady Charlotte was called upon to demonstrate a similar intelligence and presence of mind in her reaction to the colliers' strike. Her handling of the situation amply justified Sir John's faith in her. When she faced down the strikers at Dowlais, an episode that could easily be staged as a set piece, Lady Charlotte could provide no more striking picture of female will and self-assertion:

> ... one man in the party loudly dissented; he said the colliers expected their money to be given back at once and he thought, if it were not, they would all strike again tomorrow. To this appeal I remained quite unmoved. I said: Very well, I had stood that once, I could do so again, but they might be sure that when I said a thing I meant it, and that nothing could make me change my mind. If they were not satisfied, so be it. His tone changed upon this, and the others interposed and said they were very grateful, and knew they had sacrificed all claim to [the money] at all, whereupon I desired such as were satisfied to hold up their hands, which they did forthwith unhesitatingly. *(Schreiber* 25)

Interestingly, even in this episode, Lady Charlotte's self-assertion is primarily rhetorical: the basis of her claim is that the strikers might be sure that when she said a thing, she

meant it. Indeed, it is tempting to read such a claim as a resolution of all the uneasy displacements of her earlier journals, in which she continually presents her self-assertion as arising from a textual Other. Yet, other passages, dating from the same year, demonstrate how fragile Lady Charlotte's control of meaning, and, with it, her sense of self, remained. A particularly poignant entry shows how her husband's death left her literally and figuratively groping for forms:

> *March 24 [Canford].* ... My equanimity overset by Mr. Ponsonby sending word that he intended stripping the church of the mourning put up in respect for my dear husband...
>
> *March 25.* ... I had a very kind note from Mr. Ponsonby saying that if I had any feeling on the subject the mourning should not be removed from the church. I replied that I only wished what was usual, and that hoping to hear by the morning's post what the rule was (from precedents) I begged to wait till then before anything was done...
>
> *March 26.* ... I find that although in public, i.e., Royal funerals, it remains up but six weeks, yet that it is the custom in private ones to keep it up much longer. In this county Lord Eldon's remained a twelve-month, Lord Shaftesbury's fourteen months, from which may be argued that at all events the rule is such in this part of the country. I wrote all this to Mr. Ponsonby, and in reply he sent me a note to say he had already decided to make no change, which I answered by a letter of thanks; and thus it has ended, but the affair has worried me a good deal... *(Schreiber* 5)

To the modern reader, Lady Charlotte's concern with the niceties of hanging bunting is a Victorian oddity as silly as Lady Dunraven's claim to the Guest carriage horses as a heriot, "a feudal duty due to a lord upon the death of a tenant, consisting originally of the horses and arms lent by the lord to his man" *(Schreiber* 5). Yet, her concern also vividly demonstrates the destabilizing effect of the loss of Sir John, not only as a husband, but as an external standard of judgment. Literally at an *aporia*, Lady Charlotte turns to convention and precedent, as a method of asserting what she feels is due her husband's memory.

Logically, Lady Charlotte's eventual reaction to the loss of Sir John as a mediating figure would have either been to substitute a new figure as an ideal reader of her text, or simply to assume the right of judgment as part of the process of creating a new and firmer sense of self. However, the situation was complicated within months of Sir John's death by the appearance of a new male figure, destined to play a significant role in the second half of both Lady Charlotte's diaries and of her life: Charles Schreiber, fourteen years younger than she, Ivor's new tutor, engaged by the family at Mr. Pegus' recommendation. His first appearance in Lady Charlotte's diary is emblematic of the very different role he was to play, both actually and textually: Lady Charlotte records that she paused between church services to have "a short walk round the garden in front with Mr. Schreiber to whom I had a good deal to say about Ivor" *(Schreiber* 1). No mention is made of what, if anything, Charles Schreiber had to say.

The full scale of the disruptive role Schreiber was destined to play, however, was not evident until June of that year, when he fell gravely ill and asked to see Lady Charlotte. It was, to say the least, an unconventional request, and her first concern in recording this event was to establish the propriety of the situation:

> ... finding Mr. Schreiber had expressed a wish to see me I went to him, and very glad I am that I did so. I felt a little prudery about it at first -- for it is difficult for me who was comparatively a young woman last year, to feel and believe myself, as I am, an old woman now. *(Schreiber* 10)

For all its concern with propriety, the passage represents a radical shift in Lady Charlotte's construction of both meaning and self, for with Lady Charlotte's appearance at Charles Schreiber's sickbed, the triangulating figure of the ideal reader represented by Sir John vanishes. In this passage, Lady Charlotte irrevocably appropriates the right to observe, and with it the right to judge, from the textual construct of Sir John. The underlying justification of her seizing this right is the fact that Lady Charlotte is now an "old woman," invisible to the male gaze. No longer the object of male desire, she can enter a man's bedroom, an action that would have been unthinkable in a woman who was still perceived as a sexually desirable object. Needless to say, it is clear from her hasty claim that a year ago, she would have been young enough to make the situation a delicate one, that Lady Charlotte has her regrets about relinquishing her status as a sexually desirable woman. Yet, she chooses to avail herself of the new freedom of being an independent, judging observer, rather than clinging to her status as object of the gaze and leaving the room in girlish modesty.

Schreiber immediately reinforced Lady Charlotte's seizing of the gaze in this episode, by offering her an opportunity to stand in judgment of him. As he was in delirium, "all his youthful unrepented sins came thronging before him, exaggerated doubtless by his condition... There had been no-one to whom to pour out his heart and his fears, and now I heard it all, only, it is true, the usual generalities, anguish at ever having sinned, ever forgotten God, and neglected so many opportunities..." *(Schreiber* 10). Lady Charlotte's discomfort with her new ability to stand in judgment of Charles Schreiber is clear in the excuses "exaggerated doubtless by his condition" and "the usual generalities," both of which defer judgment to an imagined standard of conventionality. Yet when offered a new opportunity to change her role so radically, she again accepts it, even if she reacts to the breach in convention represented by his confessions in the most conventional way. She "ventured on a short extempore prayer beside his bed... [suggesting] that if he should be raised and devote his energies to God's glory, his present illness might prove to him to have been a signal blessing" *(Schreiber* 10).

More praying ensued after Schreiber's recovery, when he left on a journey to recuperate. Lady Charlotte:

> ... felt I ought not to let him go without fulfilling a promise that I had made him when he was so very ill; it was to the effect that, if he would but tranquillize [*sic*] himself, I would undertake to remind him on his recovery of all he had suffered with the fear of impending death before his eyes. He seemed quite to remember all that had passed then, and he took all I now ventured to say in very good part... Another

> mind is added to the very few I value and am interested in. I pray God I may be instrumental for its good... it seems to me as if that young life had been granted me, given me back, as it were from the very grave; and shall I not strive earnestly for its welfare? Is it not my duty so to do? By God's help I will do it... *(Schreiber* 17-18).

The extended episode is an appropriate introduction to the role Charles Schreiber was destined to play in Lady Charlotte's later life, for just as her entry into his bedroom threatens to violate Victorian convention, the figure of Charles Schreiber violates the textual conventions of Lady Charlotte's earlier diaries. Indeed, he literally reverses them, for in her later diaries, Lady Charlotte occupies the same textual position relative to Charles Schreiber as she had earlier assigned to Sir John relative to herself. It is she that stands in the position of clear-eyed observer and judge, while Schreiber is in delirium, a state of mental incapacity, helpless on his sickbed. However, it is important also to note that although Lady Charlotte's power in the episode is a mental and intellectual one, and although it arises directly from the newly discovered sexual invisibility that allows her to attend his bedside, its culmination is decidedly passionate, swelling from the final two rhetorical questions to the pure desire of her last vow -- which, even this early in their relationship, seems to involve more than honing his intellect. This uneasy balance between passionately desiring subject and clear-eyed observer is the hallmark of the next fifteen years of her diaries.

That the balance was often uneasy is clear from a sudden, very un-Lady-Charlotte-like retreat to the valorization of the dream world and madness as beauty:

> ... it seemed to me for a moment as if the last twenty-one years had never been, but must have been a dream, and I stopped and listened, and really for a moment doubted whether I was not awaking to find all the wonderful things that had happened to me and are happening, were but strange visions... It may be madness but it is so beautiful that I cannot wish it otherwise... *(Schreiber* 27)

A second, and more consistent, change is a new coyness in her prose. Perhaps because of this newly-discovered reticence -- equally describable as "becoming" or "annoying" -- it is very difficult to track the course of her romance with the "fresh, young, pure, enthusiastic, beautiful" Schreiber *(Schreiber* 46). Indeed, the first major manifestation of her interest in him was an inexplicable enthusiasm for Euclid.

As the romance gained momentum, "the daily references in the diary to Charles Schreiber take two separate forms. As tutor and companion to her son he is referred to as 'Mr. Schreiber'. But there are constant references to her feelings towards an unnamed person, and her desire to become his wife, and there are also very frequent allusions to her correspondence with him under the heading of 'letter to Cambridge' or 'letter from Cambridge'" *(Schreiber* 26). Lady Charlotte was apparently equally circumspect in actual conversation. For example, "when she discussed with Maria the minds of those possessing practical wisdom, she confessed that in addition to the four they singled out, 'I could I believe have added a fifth -- but I forebore'" *(Lady Charlotte* 186).

This coy allusiveness culminates in a passage of September, 1853, which reads, "I am gradually regaining my usual tone and the stereotyped manner continues unmoved. I feel now that there must have been some great misapprehension and must hope to put all straight" *(Schreiber* 26). It is no exaggeration to say the passage is impossible to parse -- mainly because of its inherent contradictions. The first sentence makes a virtue of the forms, not the meaning, of speech -- even stereotypical forms. On the other hand, the second sentence asserts the conventional value of truth as meaning what one says and virtue being contained in the seamless relationship between signified and signifier. That initial contradiction is intensified by the fact that the signifier is ultimately absent in this entire passage. Indeed, in an almost Derridean gesture, the signified is, in fact, a misapprehension. The only meaning that can be unambiguously determined from the passage is the author's desire to "put all straight." Any other deductions, as to with whom the misunderstanding arose, over what, what the truth is, or indeed whether Lady Charlotte understands that truth, are nothing but a projection on the part of the reader.

At least for the first fifteen years of their marriage, this absence of the signified can be seen as Charles Schreiber's defining contribution to the structure of Lady Charlotte's diaries. If Sir John's textual role was that of the ideal reader, Charles Schreiber's was that of the eternally receding object of desire. Personally and literally, he seems to be an absent figure. An ex-tutor, he had neither title nor wealth. Nor was he particularly ambitious: he served two brief stints as an MP, one for Cheltenham and one for Poole, but he was content with the role of leisured intellectual and collector financed by the remains of his wife's wealth.

This impression, however, may be due in part to the fact that all of Lady Charlotte's biographers and editors were Guests, not Schreibers.[1] Revel Guest and the Earl of Bessborough certainly give short shrift to Lady Charlotte's second marriage, even though it lasted nearly ten years longer than her marriage to Guest: Revel Guest dismisses Schreiber as "a shadowy figure" *(Lady Charlotte* 225). And Bessborough's second set of journal extracts, which cover the last forty years of her life, comprise only 202 pages, as opposed to 302 pages for the twenty years of her marriage to John Guest. It must be admitted that, in contrast, Montague Guest's diaries comprise a thousand pages of text, all dating to Lady Charlotte's second marriage, but these journals are a separate case, for they are largely devoted to her china collecting.

Schreiber's absence manifests itself even at the couple's wedding -- an act that was perhaps the pinnacle of Lady Charlotte's self-assertion in the face of external standards of judgment. There are no journal entries from Christmas 1854 until the day of her wedding, over three months later. Furthermore, the wedding itself is recorded as an absence or suspension. On April 10, the day of her wedding, her entry records, "... now I have reached the 10th of April, and, after much trial and inexpressible opposition, expect in a few hours to be the wife of Charles Schreiber" *(Schreiber* 45). Her next entry, on May 9, records somewhat prosaically:

> After writing here on April 10 I had much to do... We had not far to go from Usher's Hotel, where we were staying, to St. Martin's Church, where the ceremony was to

[1] Lady Charlotte suffered at least three documented miscarriages while married to Schreiber, but never bore a child with him.

> take place by special license, at 12 o'clock... Dear Charles met me and we shook hands; as soon as all was ready we proceeded to the Altar, and I became his happy wife. *(Schreiber* 45)

Silence before Lady Charlotte's marriages seems to be a trend: there were also no journal entries for the period that immediately preceded her marriage to Sir John. However, there is a significant difference between the silence that preceded her first marriage and the one that preceded her second. Lady Charlotte wrote in her journal during the period immediately preceding her marriage to Sir John; however, she burned the entries. In the case of her wedding to Schreiber, in contrast, she seems simply to have ceased writing -- perhaps because she feared discovery by her family, who were adamantly opposed to the marriage, even after it took place.

The erasure preceding her first marriage has deeper textual significance than the silence that preceded her second marriage. Her burning of the pages she wrote before her first wedding serves, intentionally or not, also to erase any trace of Lady Charlotte observing Sir John as an object of desire, a potential husband. This erasure in turn allows the journal to begin with Sir John already in the position of her ideal reader. In contrast to this erasure's being a necessary condition for the creation of text, the absence of her second marriage is enfolded by text that anticipates it and then looks back on it. Rather than being a reader, or enabling the writing, of that text, Charles Schreiber is quite literally the object toward which her narrative moves, as he awaits her in the church.

The newly-wed Schreibers' honeymoon is equally absent. Lady Charlotte describes it once more retrospectively as "three most blessed weeks... that it would be vain to attempt to describe." And, although she does concede that "They are engraved on the memory of my dear husband" as well as her own, the textual Charles Schreiber has already been reduced to an abstraction, "a fresh, young, pure, enthusiastic, beautiful being" *(Schreiber* 46). Significantly, without any other identifying context, it is a description one would be likely to assume applied to a young wife.

Very few specifics of the honeymoon are given, beyond "Much talk with dear Charles about my former life, and about much that I suffered with and for my poor late husband..." *(Schreiber* 46). One has to fight down a certain sympathy for Charles Schreiber, when one considers that this was the highlight of his new wife's honeymoon. Yet, textually, it marks an important turning point: Schreiber is finally openly presented as an object of affection by the use of his first name. Concurrent with this new foregrounding of Schreiber as an open object of desire is Lady Charlotte's equally open acknowledgement of her first husband as a cause of suffering. The combination of the distancing of Lady Charlotte's former "first reader" with the open presentation of an object of her desire serves to subvert the entire epistemological underpinnings of her earlier diaries. Thus, the consummation of her second marriage also marks the consummation of Lady Charlotte's transformation into an observing and judging subject of the text.

Unfortunately, this consummation, however hard-won, did not create either a stable textual or social position. Indeed, all the characteristics that had made the marriage between her and Sir John and her such a model one, were reversed in her relationship to Schreiber, making Lady Charlotte's second marriage, if not scandalous, certainly an unconventional one. Although Schreiber was well-educated, he had neither Lady Charlotte's wealth nor her social position. He was also fourteen years younger than she. In addition, the marriage itself took place within three years of her first husband's death -- leading to the inference that she had become romantically involved within a year of her first husband's death. Both her friends and relatives found such behavior indecorous -- so much so that, if the first half of Lady Charlotte's journals are instructive, the second half are, well, juicy.

It would be overstating the case to say Lady Charlotte was ostracized socially over her second marriage, despite the reaction of such old friends as Lady Augusta Hall, whose response was:

> ... very mischievous and her manner vexed me when I saw her in town last year. I befriended her years ago when she was in trouble and when her husband's conduct made her grateful for sympathy, though I always assumed to *know* nothing that could hurt her or reflect upon him, and this has been my return -- she is the only person in the course of all the differences of opinion about my marriage that has shown me personal coolness amounting almost to incivility. (*Schreiber* 54)

In fact, for the first several years of her marriage, Lady Charlotte struggled to maintain her position in London society. Her efforts, however, resulted in many uncomfortable

moments. As a newlywed, Lady Charlotte had to be presented to the Queen a second time; somewhat awkwardly, this occurred at the same time as her daughter Katherine's presentation at court. Lady Charlotte's reaction is understandable: "I was rather put out, and I am afraid I was not so self-possessed as I should have been" *(Schreiber* 55).

However, there were auspicious moments, as well. For example, "I gave my first party in London under my new name... I had a great many old friends and some new ones, and this my new *debut* might be considered perfectly successful" *(Schreiber* 56). Yet, only a week later, Lady Charlotte was to be disappointed when "My first ball took place. Now this ball was a great event. I had taken great pains about it... after the success of the concert it was expected to be very brilliant. However it did not succeed so well as I anticipated" *(Schreiber* 56).

Her summary of the season, yet another week later, is hopeful, but with a perceptible undercurrent of self-justification:

> A great deal had been said to make the children uncomfortable as to doubts of how I should be received on account of my second marriage. All this has been set at rest by the result. They must now be content to believe that my position is as good if not better than ever; and Charles himself appears so popular that on that head also they must feel satisfied... *(Schreiber* 57)

Like Jane Austen's modals, that final "must" brings with it a host of meaning; its mood is at once predictive, exhortative, and imperative.

The same words could be used to describe Lady Charlotte's relationship with her family during this period, for the marriage remained an ongoing source of tension long after it took place. The Peguses and Lady Charlotte's half-sister Mary "all but disowned Charlotte when she remarried" *(Lady Charlotte* 197). Among her children, her sons eventually accepted the transformation of their tutor into their stepfather. Her daughters, in contrast, violently objected to the relationship. At least in retrospect, Lady Charlotte's daughters Blanche and Katherine were upset with how quickly their father's memory was forgotten. Fights erupted over the trivial, but charged, issue of Lady Charlotte coloring her white hair, a change to which her daughters objected, but which Schreiber endorsed *(Lady Charlotte* 188). Furthermore, Lady Charlotte suspected that Katherine had feelings for Schreiber herself -- a charge that Katherine later dismissed as "absurd" *(Lady Charlotte* 187). Maria, in particular, was, according to Lady Charlotte:

> unable to accommodate herself to the present state of affairs. She has been touchy and dictatorial, in fact her manner has been our one great trial... For a very long time she found it impossible to provoke [Schreiber], but at last continual contradiction and the assumption of authority over us all produced some effect, and his replies became, on one or two occasions only, a little more decided. *(Schreiber* 51)

It thus comes as little surprise that Enid wrote, upon her marriage to Henry Layard in 1869, "None of us had a happy home and we were all glad to get away" *(Lady Charlotte* 199).

Not only did this conflict with her children undoubtedly create significant personal pain; it also represents the failure of a potential epistemological structure that might have

stabilized the later journals. Charles Schreiber's status as an object of desire prevented him from fulfilling Sir John's role as ideal reader and ultimately epistemological authority for the journals. Yet, Lady Charlotte's evident worry over whether society would accept her second marriage is ample evidence that she remained uncomfortable in appropriating this role for herself. The fact that she couched such worry in terms of concern for her children, however, suggests that they might have taken over their father's textual role -- particularly since they were still possessed of the rank, money and authority that devolved from John Guest.

In at least one instance, Lady Charlotte did use her daughter, Maria, to regulate judgment in the journals. However, it can be in no way said that the daughter functioned as a perfect substitute for her father, when she was dragooned into acting as a go-between as Lady Charlotte attempted to reconcile with her half-sister, Lady Huntly. The episode bears quoting at length:

> *April 20*... My sister... sent for my children to see her, and on Sunday they went. She gave Maria a message of reconciliation for me, and Maria managed to deliver it in such a manner as to make it appear to be an insult. I had been led to expect that my sister was sorry for her interference with my affairs and for her very harsh conduct towards me, and I thought she meant to call on me on coming to town, but the message that reached me was to the effect that I might if I pleased go to her, and she would be glad to see me. Now this seemed unbearable; to be ignored for a whole year, and then graciously permitted to go and make peace. I chafed at this idea very much, more for the sake of my position with those around me than for any

pride of my own in the matter. Ill feeling I have none, nor ever had... Having consulted Mr. Bruce what to do, I put on paper my reasons for being unable to accept such terms, and told Maria to communicate them to her aunt. Lady Huntly upon this disclaimed the message and said she had meant to call upon me, and only wanted to know if I should be glad to receive her. Explanations have been sent on both sides, but she is now, of course, annoyed at my note, and Maria, with her unconquerable reserve and mystification is the very worst envoy that could be employed. So hitherto we have not met and it seems to me very probable that we are further than ever from doing so.

April 26... Before going to my party I wrote a short conciliatory note to my sister. I knew now her message had been most incorrectly delivered, and was sure she had never received any of mine, and I felt I should be as glad to see her as she expressed that she would be to see me. I put this on paper and sent it to her.

April 27....We had just sat down to luncheon when my sister, Lady Huntly, was announced. I went down to her in my room and we had a very affectionate meeting, though no explanation passed or anything that had previously occurred was alluded to... The whole interview went off quite satisfactorily. She thought me looking wonderfully well. I did not think the same of her, she varied in colour, and seemed altered since we last met, but she was probably agitated, and her being *enceinte* of her ninth child may make a difference. *(Schreiber* 53-4)

There is a peculiar fittingness in the fact that, in the middle of all these machinations, Lady Charlotte attended a reading of *Hamlet* by Kemble, with which she was highly

dissatisfied. The doubts and misinterpretations governing Lady Charlotte's family dynamics are worthy of those at Elsinore -- nowhere more so than in the fact that throughout, interpretation precedes utterance. Lady Charlotte begins the story with an understanding of her sister's willingness for a reconciliation -- an understanding that is contradicted by the actual message she receives from her sister. Lady Huntly is in turn angered, not by her sister's response to her actual message, but by Lady Charlotte's response to her -- possibly erroneously -- perceived intentions.

What makes this failure ironic is the exquisite devotion to precision in language that both parties display. Lady Charlotte in particular displays a lawyer-like nicety in committing her grievances to paper. Indeed, it is particularly striking that she feels she needs to consult with Mr. Bruce before she so much as takes the step of writing. Yet, even writing fails to guarantee perfect communication, for Lady Huntly applies her own, hostile, interpretation to Lady Charlotte's message. The failure in communication is only at last regulated by creating a scapegoat to replace the *aporia*. The unhappy victim is Maria, who is already in her mother's bad graces over her attitude toward her new stepfather. Only when Maria is duly excoriated can the reconciliation take place.

Yet, when it does take place, even though it is pronounced "very affectionate," the reconciliation offers no interpretive satisfaction. The sisters do not resolve, or even discuss, their earlier differences. Furthermore, Lady Charlotte's final comment on the scene betrays a fatal lack of self-awareness -- or even of her customary astute reading of

social lies. She accepts her sister's evaluation of her looking wonderfully well at face value, even as she cattily points out that her sister's pregnancy is taking its toll.

Given other circumstances, Lady Charlotte might have reacted to the uncertainties of her situation by retreating to an earlier, stable identity, that of an earl's daughter. However, during these same fifteen years, Lady Charlotte had to cope not only with the tensions that arose from her marriage, but also with a secondary set of difficulties that challenged her other identity as a daughter of the nobility. Within a year of Sir John's death, Mr. Pegus, her stepfather, at last put into motion a plan Lady Charlotte had been able to stave off while she was married to Sir John:

> [Pegus told Lady Charlotte] that my poor brother Lindsey had had a fit... My first impulse was to go and see him, but I found on enquiry that he was staying at the house of a woman Mr. Pegus pays to live with him!... But my consternation was greater still when I found my other brother Bertie was staying with her, too, and was actually being nursed by her for inflammation of the eyes! *(Schreiber* 2)

Later events more than confirmed Lady Charlotte's seemingly comic suspicions. After the death of Lady Lindsey in 1858, Pegus, "very angry to see he was neither asked to live at this house, nor even made executor" *(Schreiber* 93), began to put in motion his plans to marry off Lindsey to Mrs. Maitland, the woman he had paid to live with Lindsey. Bertie, by this time, was married to a wife of his own, Felicia, and was determined to take Lindsey into his own custody. Pegus countered by telling "Lindsey that his brother and Felicia had an interest in poisoning him" and Lady Charlotte would

"contrive to put him in a lunatic asylum" *(Schreiber* 101). The quarrel dragged on for four years, but terminated with the happy event of Lindsey expressing "himself with a clearness and propriety of words and of thought that quite surprised [Lady Charlotte]. He declared his desire to get rid of Mr. Pegus entirely... A paper was drawn up as a memorandum of his wishes, which he signed, and which seemed a great relief to his mind" *(Schreiber* 102). Even given the rather obvious opportunity for projection on Lady Charlotte's part, the episode is a happy reversal of the misunderstanding with her sister, in which a previously occluded meaning is not only clearly ascertained, but also committed to writing by a person previously deemed unable to communicate clearly.

In contrast to such scenes, the most balanced reaction to the marriage came from a surprising source, Schreiber's mother. As Lady Charlotte describes it:

> Charles Schreiber came and joined me, and we went to his rooms and concocted a letter to his mother, which, I trust, for a time may put matters at rest. She writes to make enquiries, and there is one sentence in her letter that I should wish to record. She says: " There is nothing to be ashamed of, though there may be much to be said, for and against, on both sides..." *(Schreiber* 43)

The elder Mrs. Schreiber was clearly a sane and sensitive woman. She was also a closet post-modernist, content to leave the final judgment in a state of suspension. Lady Charlotte, in contrast, continued to search for a solution to the sliding judgments and failed interpretations that characterized the fifteen years between her second marriage and the time when the last of her children attained their majorities. One of these solutions

was a retreat to private life. On October 25, 1853, she wrote of a "Long talk at breakfast... about all the children, and my duties... May God support me to execute these duties, but may he grant me a release some day! May I hope at length to be allowed to retire 'into private life', and to enjoy the comforts of repose?" *(Schreiber* 27). It was to be the first of many entries on the theme.

Certainly part of this sudden desire for retirement and privacy -- so unlike the Lady Charlotte who ventured political speeches and descended into mine shafts -- was the natural reaction of a woman who has been abruptly confronted with all the difficulties of running her husband's business -- including a protracted and bitter strike. Such an interpretation is simplistic, however, if only because Lady Charlotte had handled the difficulties of her husband's business for the several years that preceded his death, along with the even more difficult task of shielding her at times extremely cantankerous husband from those difficulties. It is more logical to see in this sudden valorization of the private as being made necessary by Lady Charlotte's new relationship to the external judgment represented by public life.

It has already been shown how, during her first marriage, Lady Charlotte's strength lay in conforming to expectation, a situation represented textually by the figure of Sir John as an ideal reader. However, what has not been emphasized is how this construction depends on a world view in which external and internal can be seamlessly aligned. This is not to claim that Lady Charlotte achieved such an ideal or that it is in fact realizable. However, the early diaries are governed by the potential of its being realized; every

struggle of judgment strives to align public and private perfectly. The exemplar of such perfect identity is the moment where Lady Charlotte concludes her toast to the laboring classes with an awareness of how picturesque her children surrounding her are, and how that contributes to the effectiveness of her speech. How she is perceived is naturally aligned not only with how she wishes to be perceived, but also with how she perceives herself. The result is that she can speak for herself.

Lady Charlotte's second marriage created a rupture between how she could expect to be perceived -- as Sir John's widow -- and how she wished to be perceived, as a sexually desirable wife for Charles Schreiber. Textually, this rupture prevents her from constructing herself as an object of her husband's gaze. The difficulties of the first fifteen years of her marriage to Schreiber amply demonstrate how unstable constructing herself as a desiring subject proved as an alternative. The retreat into private life, thus, can be read as an attempt to stabilize her internal position as judging subject, by rejecting the external standard represented by society.

This retreat to private life, however, was far from complete. Indeed, Lady Charlotte still spent much of her time preparing Ivor to take over the manor at Canford; presenting her daughters and marrying them off ruthlessly; fending off a fortune hunter who wanted to marry Merthyr; and establishing Montague in an army career. Her activity continued until Ivor's coming of age party in Canford in 1856, which was the last great party that she gave. It was entertainment on a grand scale, including a daytime party for 800 children, with a Punch and Judy show and games, followed by nighttime illuminations,

fireworks and a ball for eight hundred. Interestingly, Ivor was asleep by two o'clock, and, at least in the opinion of his indefatigable mother, his absence was not noticed. Lady Charlotte herself stayed up until "God Save the Queen" was played at six in the morning *(Schreiber* 62). Yet, she kept such public efforts on behalf of her children rigidly separated from her private life as Charles Schreiber's wife, as can be seen in how she received the news that Montague's regiment was under orders for India. Lady Charlotte "went upstairs to Charley and had a hearty cry upon his shoulder... to the boy himself I wrote that I doubted not he was glad to go and have an opportunity of seeing active service" *(Schreiber* 69).

The Schreibers' retreat to private life was also marked by intermittent but significant attempts at regaining a public life in the shape of a political career for Charles. It is difficult to determine whether he had any particular affinity for such an endeavor, although he did serve twice, once as an MP for Cheltenham in 1865, and later as an MP for Poole in 1880. In contrast to the seamless understanding between Lady Charlotte and Sir John on politics, Schreiber's entry into politics was destined to create marital tension, for he was a Tory, while Lady Charlotte retained her liberal tendencies. In fact, she and Schreiber were of such divergent views that "we determined never to speak on politicks [*sic*] to each other at all, a rule which we have always strictly adhered to" *(Schreiber* 67).

Nowhere was this divergence more unpleasantly evident, than when Schreiber chose to blame Lady Charlotte's "radical politicks" *(Schreiber* 106) for his first electoral defeat. His scapegoating his wife led to a significant marital rupture:

> I felt as if a crisis in my life had come. Charles said no word to me. At Swindon where we had to change carriages, he went and got into a carriage by himself, taking no notice of me, so that in searching to find where he was, I was nearly left behind. But I did find him, and we had happily a compartment to ourselves. Before we reached London I insisted on having it out, spite of [*sic*] of his assertions that he meant to go to a lodging in town, and leave me, and not come near me for some weeks. I fought him very hard; I never had such a fight in my life. I made every allowance for his natural vexation at the issue of the election contest, but I told him the truth, and did not spare where I knew him to be in the wrong, and, praise be to God, I conquered. He came home with me. It was late in the evening; I read him prayers when we went to bed, and by degrees all was well once more. Doubtless everything in this world is ordered for the best, and I shall ever believe that when the election was lost my husband was saved to me. *(Schreiber* 105)

The passage is far from an ideal portrait of a marriage. Given the absence of any underlying, unstated motive for the couple's quarrel -- and one is led to suspect from the violence of his reaction that such a motive indeed existed -- Schreiber's reaction is simply childish. Yet, Lady Charlotte's customary rationality and determination seem almost Gradgrindian. One does not envy the husband whose wife's idea of a reconciliation in the bedroom is reading prayers. Perhaps the metaphysical was the only device -- either textual or intellectual -- left to mediate what appears to be both a catastrophic public and personal failure. Nevertheless, it would perhaps have been best if the scene had been confined to the privacy of the couple's shared carriage.

At the same time that Schreiber was flirting with politics, the couple was also flirting with the role of Bohemian intellectuals. In 1857, Lady Charlotte made the acquaintance of Tennyson, who "talked a great deal about Welsh literature, and I, who have forgotten all the little I ever knew about that and everything else, felt quite ashamed at my own ignorance" *(Schreiber* 72)[2] That acquaintance led to further acquaintances with such pre-Raphaelites as Holman Hunt and Dante Gabriel Rossetti. An elderly, twice-widowed Lady Charlotte even dined with Oscar Wilde (*Lady Charlotte* 248). Yet, it is not insulting Lady Charlotte to say that she was neither an artist nor a Bohemian by temperament or inclination. When she at last chose a second intellectual career by which to identify herself, it was as a connoisseur and collector

The satisfactions Lady Charlotte found in collecting are evident, but her motivations in turning to it are unknowable, for, frustratingly, she ceased writing in her journal for a second time during the three years between 1860 and 1863, making only brief notes during that period. Even more frustratingly, although she seems to have taken up writing in her journal again in 1863, after the death of her son Augustus, probably due to complications from scarlet fever, the volumes that comprise the years 1863 to 1869 are missing. What is particularly unfortunate about this loss, is that it was during this period that Lady Charlotte began her china collecting. However, all we know about this epochal

[2] She also made the acquaintance of Edward Lear, who "sang a great many of his compositions to Tennyson's words. They are mostly very pretty things, but he has no voice, and, on the whole, it is rather painful to listen to him" *(Schreiber* 72). Lear returned the favor by commenting "I find all that quiet part of the Island spoiling fast... Guests, Schreibers... and myriads more buzzing everywhere" *(Lady Charlotte* 201).

change in her life is that her journals were significantly different when they resumed in 1869. The first difference was a physical one: Lady Charlotte switched from conventional journals to smaller, soft-covered notebooks that could be carried easily *(Lady Charlotte* 204). More importantly, Lady Charlotte's regular journal entries now also included detailed notes on acquisitions for her ceramics collection. These notes, published by her son Montague in two volumes in 1911 as *Confidences of a Collector*, are still considered an essential source for serious collectors of ceramics.

It is nearly impossible to convey the effect of these later journals without quoting from them directly. The following is a comparison of Bessborough's and Montague Guest's presentation of the events surrounding the Schreibers' visit to Spain in 1870:

February 22 ... Stopped a long time at a sale of the Demidoff[3] pictures, brought from San Donato, near Florence, where we had seen them all last spring. The sale was going on at 26 Boulevard des Italiens. Only modern pictures were sold today. I did not care for any of them, but it was a curious scene. We saw the Ary Scheffer of Francesca da Rimini[4] sold for L 4,000. Delaroche's Lady Jane Grey went even higher. Yesterday Lord Hertford bought the Bonington "Henry IV Playing with his Children".[5]

22nd. I walked with Lane to the Rue Jacob about some marcasites for Merthyr, which, however, I did not purchase. About 2, we went out for our daily walk. Stopped a long time at a sale of the Demidoff pictures, brought from San Donato, near Florence, where we had seen them all last spring. The sale was going on at 26 Boulevard des Italiens. Only modern pictures were sold to-day; I did not care for any of them, but it was a curious scene. We saw the Ary Scheffer of Francesca da Rimini sold for L 4,000. Koches' Lady Jane Grey went even higher. Yesterday Lord Hertford bought the Bonington, "Henry IV. playing with his children."

[3] "Demidoff, Anatole, Prince, Duc of San Donato (1813-70), Russian diplomat, m. Princess Mathilde, dau. of King Jerome Bonaparte; on divorcing her he was in disgrace at the Imperial Court, and devoted the rest of his life to collecting works of art." [Footnote Bessborough's]

[4] "Scheffer, Ary (1795-1858), French painter of Dutch extraction. The picture of Francesca da Rimini is in the Wallace Collection." [Footnote Bessborough's]

[5] "Bonington, Richard Parkes (1801-28). This picture is also in the Wallace Collection." [Footnote Bessborough's]

[Now in the Wallace Collection.] From the sale we went again to the Fourniers to deposit our purchase of the George III tea-jar in their case, and we engaged to take one of their Sevres cups and saucers, gros bleu, with gold decoration, and a painting of musical instruments as a trophy. We are to pay L10. It is an experiment for us to touch Sevres, but this seemed tempting at the price, and the Fourniers are such pleasant folk and so civil to us that we wished to do some little business with them. On our return we looked into one or two shops, and visited the Salles des Ventes which was a still more curious scene than that we had been at in the Boulevards. Such noise! such bustle! Amidst such rubbish it might occasionally happen that something good might be found here. (*Confidences* I 74)

Before starting on their journey south the Schreibers sent letters to Spain to know if it was safe to go there as there were rumours in Paris of Carlist risings. On arriving at Montpellier on March 3rd they found a telegram from the British Consul at Barcelona: "Advise delay, will write." On the 8th, however, they received a further message from the Consul reassuring them, and the same day they left Montpellier, and reached Barcelona three days later. A few days after their arrival they found everyone in a state of excitement at the news of the Duke of Montpensier's duel. The Infante Prince Henry of Bourbon, brother of the ex-King Consort of Spain, had recently declared that the Duke was concerned in an Orleanist conspiracy against Napoleon III, and "that this braggart of a French pastrycook" had no support in Spain. On March 12 the Infante and the Duke fought a duel in Madrid. At eight yards the Infante fired first and missed. The Duke then took deadly aim and killed his opponent. A court martial condemned him to a month's exile and to pay the Infante's

3rd. Visited the three (so called) antiquaries and at the shop of one of them found an intelligent youth who volunteered to accompany us and to show us over the town. He sometimes picks up things himself, and promised, on our giving him notice, to look out for specimens for us should we come to Nismes again. His name and address -- "M. Suel Alfred, Rue St. Paul 41." First we went to the Maison Caree where we found a wretched collection of modern pictures desecrating the old Roman Temple. Then to the gardens, with the Baths and Temple of Diana, and up to the Tour, which is a most inscrutable building. It commands a fine view; the concierge was away so we could not mount it, but its site gives a magnificent prospect. Lastly to the Amphitheatre which is very perfect, but is not nearly so large as that at Verona, and did not impress me nearly so much. We looked into the old Cathedral, the interior of which is wretchedly spoilt, but which has some beautiful remains in the facade. Our last act in leaving the town was to buy

family 6,000 dollars, but refused to censure him.

a coffee pot of the tortoise-shell Avignon ware at a broker's shop at the corner of the Rue Guizot in the Boulevard Grand Cours, by name, Banquiere, price 16/-. We left Nismes by a train at 1/2 past 2 and in about an hour found ourselves at Montpellier in pouring rain. Hotel Nevet. Here a telegram met us from the English Counsul at Barcelona -- "Advise delay, will write." This upsets all our plans, which had been to the effect that we should go on to Perpignan to-morrow, and reach Barcelona on Saturday. Went to two antiquaries at the house of one Daumas, Rue St. Foy, close to the Hotel, we bought for 16/- a good Wedgwood Coffee Pot, transfer printed in red with subject, Minerva and emblems, and legend "Let wisdom unite us," birds, stags, and other ornaments. Also two Chelsea stags of goodly size in bocages, pretty perfect. These are the only thing we saw at Montpellier. Excellent table d'hote. Washed up our china and faience in the evening....(*Confidences* I 79-80)

March 13 (Barcelona) ... We had planned to come take a drive in the afternoon, and Balcon the guide to come to us with a carriage. To our consternation, he appeared in time with a regular Court conveyance -- a splendid open barouche decorated with blue and silver, with gorgeous lamps, and with two servants in State liveries to correspond! Too absurd. It was a great relief when we found this stupendous vehicle could not ascend to the Fort; and after some delay a more modest equipage was procured. *(Schreiber* 117-8)

13th. Barcelona full of excitement at the news of the fatal Montpensier duel. We went to the principal Club (called, I think, the Equestrian) for C.S. to see the papers, and then looked into the Church of Santa Maria del Mar. Took lunch at the Consul's where were the officers of an English Ship of War, stationed off the coast. We had planned to come take a drive in the afternoon, and Balcon the guide to come to us with a carriage. To our consternation, he appeared in time with a regular Court conveyance -- a splendid open barouche decorated with blue and silver, with gorgeous lamps, and with two servants in State liveries to correspond! Too absurd. It was a great relief when we found this stupendous vehicle could not ascend to the Fort; and after some delay a more modest equipage was procured. While this was being arranged we went and saw a private

> collection belonging to a dentist just opposite to our Hotel, which was for sale. I never saw so much hopeless rubbish in my whole life. At length we ascended the Castle, and a more delightful view is nowhere to be found. Walked about there some time, returning only in time for table d'hote. We had been told that this excursion would occupy a whole afternoon, whereas we might easily have made a pleasant walk of it. We feel an additional interest in Barcelona by reason of the curious old prints we have of the siege of the palace by Lord Peterborough in 1705, which we had so much difficulty in verifying, as the margins had been destroyed and there was no text to inform us what town was represented. Letters till late after going to see the commencement of a play on the life of Christ. (*Confidences* I 85-6)

Bessborough's interfering editorial hand is immediately evident, as he goes out of his way to minimize the effect of Lady Charlotte's obsessive notes on collecting, in order to highlight the actual narrative of her life. Indeed, in the case of the Montpelier duel, Bessborough goes so far as to substitute his own narrative of the lurid events surrounding the duel; Lady Charlotte's actual entry is much more concerned with the coffee pot of tortoise-shell Avignon ware. In making such decisions, at least from an editorial point of view, Bessborough is quite correct: there is a peculiarly anesthetizing quality to Lady Charlotte's meticulous notations. All of her humor and gift of sharp observation, along with such life and death events as the fatal duel, get swept up into the tide of buying and selling, of examining and evaluating -- until they are reduced to tiny hitches in the greater, more mesmerizing rhythm of the marketplace. Indeed, Lady Charlotte barely seems to notice the human drama surrounding her in Barcelona, even when it threatens

her directly in the form of imminent civil war. Instead, she is, almost comically, far more interested in an earlier uprising, the siege of the palace by Lord Peterborough in 1705, and that only because she had difficulty in authenticating a set of prints that depicted the event.

This preoccupation with the act of collecting is equaled only by her interest in food. Indeed, Lady Charlotte's obsession with the table d'hote is worthy of no lesser a literary figure than Pooh. From Brussels to Berlin, her journals offer meticulous details on the values -- and timing -- of tourist meals, such as the intriguing, but ultimately inscrutable "Joined a table d'hote dejeuner a la fourchette soon after 10, which amused me from its novelty and was a very good repast" (*Confidences* I 75). Yet this preoccupation with the values of gustatory tourism reinforces the equally obsessive consumption of objects[6] that is central to the later journals. Indeed, sitting down to read *Confidences of a Collector* can only be described as disquieting. At conservative estimate, 70% of the nearly 1000 pages of the two volumes simply enumerate in complete detail her buying decisions, including those items she did not buy. For example, on the twentieth of April 1872:

> C.S. and I went with Giovanni to look at an "Urna" (cabinet) in the Alcala, which did not suit. Then to Lorenzo's, where we concluded for a very good Urna and Mesa (table) (1500 reals) and bought some other trifles. We also got a miniature and some D.V. tea-jars in the Calle del Prado. (*Confidences* I 158)

[6] Porcelain in particular, but Lady Charlotte also collected objects ranging from gemstones to screens to fans to snuffboxes.

This obsessive energy of her prose is matched by the obsessive energy with which the Schreibers pursued their quarry. They often rose at five or six in the morning, in order to shop all day, and, after a brief respite at the table d'hote, went back out to conclude purchases in the evening. An anecdote Joseph Joel Duveen, the art collector, related about her, has become the defining legend of her energy and tenacity. As Montague Guest tells the story:[7]

> He happened to be over in Holland searching for "objets d'art" when he heard of some wonderful pieces of china in a little village a long way from any town or railway; to get to this out-of-the-way place entailed a long and tedious journey by carriage. He started off on his expedition, but as he was nearing his destination he observed a fly driving out of the village towards him; he looked into it as it passed, and he saw the face of my mother; he felt at once that he had been forestalled, and he continued his journey, only to find that she had snatched the prize, which she was carrying off with her. (*Confidences* I *xxvi*)

One textual explanation for the obsessiveness of Lady Charlotte's pursuit is that the china served as a more appropriate object of narrative desire than Charles Schreiber was. Indeed, although Schreiber did provide a source of textual energy, it was a highly problematic one, resulting in concealment and obsfucation, rather than a clear narrative trajectory. In contrast, the hunt for china, which Lady Charlotte happily referred to as the *chasse*, the hunt, a masculine, desiring term, if ever one existed,[8] provides an endless

[7] All three of her biographers tell a version of the anecdote.
[8] Her alternate term for collecting, the Mania, is decidedly more problematic. Indeed, a rather Freudian association of repressed female desire with a form of madness or hysteria, is unavoidable.

impetus for narrative and adventure, even if those narratives are consistently subordinated to the details of the hunt in the diaries.

The china also replaced the triangulating function of the other great Other in Lady Charlotte's early journals, Wales and the Welsh. For what is most peculiar about Lady Charlotte's collecting is that she went to Europe in order to find examples of English pottery. Her justification for this was completely pecuniary: she felt that she obtained better prices in Europe, because the dealers there were not well acquainted with English china. The very statement, however, suggests a process that neatly echoes Lady Charlotte's self-definition in Wales: She finds a kinder epistemological standard (i.e., a better rate of exchange) by which to judge her relationship to England and the English, by turning to a outside context, whether that is her Welsh dependents or the Continental merchants from whom she buys china.

Similarly, it is significant that, although Lady Charlotte was as enraged as any collector at being taken in by forgeries or misrepresentations, modern forgeries provoked her particular ire. This valorization of the antique over the modern again parallels her earlier relationship to the Welsh and their traditions, in particular the antiquarian desire to reclaim the past. Furthermore, her collecting echoes the antiquarian epistemology that underlay her translation of the *Mabinogion*. As Stuart Piggott and Phillippa Levine have both shown, collecting, a sheer assembling of facticity, was characteristic of the eighteenth-century approach to understanding the past by controlling it -- literally by

incarcerating it in collections.[9] Lady Charlotte's insistence on applying her connoisseurship only to antique china [10] indicates that however much her life may have seemed to have changed with her husbands, both her underlying epistemological heuristic as well as her valorization of the past as a proper object of study remained consistent with her earlier enthusiasm for Wales.

One significant change that formal collecting brought to her methodology, however, was the introduction of money as the ultimate mediator of judgment. Indeed, collecting allowed Lady Charlotte to accord to money the privileged place she once assigned to her husband, Sir John.[11] Her collector's diaries are a paean to the interpretative value of money. She never describes a piece as beautiful, or, for that matter, even as useful. Instead, she discusses the pieces entirely in terms of what she paid for them or what was asked for them, in comparison to what they were worth.

There is, of course, a certain reassurance in the absoluteness of this external scale of value. Monetary valuation not only has the advantage of being mathematically inarguable. It is also resituable, providing a standard by which, for example, a Meissan

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[9] Although, as Phillippa Levine has also shown, by 1869, scholarship was largely controlled by professional historians and archaeologists, rather than the turn-of-the-century antiquarians.

[10] She never evinced any interest in contemporary art, although the role of the patron of the arts would have been one that would have seemed ideally suited to her ambitious, intellectual temperament.

[11] It must be noted that she was by no means unique in this privileging of economic records as a personal diary. Indeed, both Betty Jane Wylie and Philippe LeJeune have pointed out the close relationship between business records and personal diaries. In *Reading Between the Lines*, Wylie demonstrates how many women's journals began as simple notations of the death or birth of a child in a record of household expenses. LeJeune goes so far as to claim that the essential difference between memoir, which he considers an aristocratic, eighteenth-century form, and autobiography, which he considers a bourgeois, nineteenth-century form, is the close connection with business and business records of the latter. In fact, Lady Charlotte kept a business journal herself when she was married to Sir John, in her capacity as his private secretary. However, these were completely separate records, not collector's notes that exist in counterpoint to decidedly more personal entries.

teapot can be reliably measured against a silver snuff box -- although the reliability of such a measurement seems suspect indeed, when Lady Charlotte can, in the same day, reject a 7 shilling figurine as being beyond what she can afford, and then pay 100 pounds for a screen without batting an eye.

Again, one can only speculate upon Lady Charlotte's motivations in turning to collecting as a means of regulating judgment. However, Jacques Derrida's "White Mythology" provides at least a basis for that speculation. As has already been shown in Chapter Two of this study, Derrida has remarked on the capacity of money to serve as a vehicle for interpretation. He relates this interpretive value to the process of erasure that underlies the creation of metaphor, arguing that, as, over time, the metaphor loses its relationship with its original sensory figure, it also creates an ever-increasing linguistic surplus that derives from its on-going life as linguistic form. This linguistic surplus can be read as a commodity, for, just as a coin obtains its value, "It becomes a metaphor when philosophical discourse puts it into circulation" (211).

Like this metaphor that derives its commodity value from the erasure of its original sensory figure, the epistemological structures that Lady Charlotte constructed around the textual figures of her husbands also both depended on erasure. As has already been shown, her journals while married to Sir John begin with the most dramatic act of erasure possible, the burning of the earlier pages of her diary. Just as a metaphor gains its value as a metaphysical concept by erasing its connection to the original sensory figure, Lady Charlotte can only create the enabling construct of her husband as an ideal reader by

erasing the earlier pages that referred to him as the most significant sort of sensory figure, a potential husband. In contrast, Lady Charlotte's construction of Charles Schreiber is a continuing attempt at erasure. Indeed, the need to hide him is one of the most significant generators of linguistic surplus in her journals. That same effort at concealment is also the most significant block to interpretation or interpretability in the text. Is it thus any wonder that Lady Charlotte eventually moves away from such a preoccupation with erasure and absence to a structure of judgment that depends completely on presence, on the valuations of things in the marketplace?

Interestingly, Derrida points out that even before Anatole France, Karl Marx had described the peculiar relationship between currency and interpretation, writing "Whence did the illusions of the monetary system arise? The mercantilists... regarded gold and silver, not simply as substances which, when functioning as money, represented a social relation of production, but as substances which were endowed by nature with peculiar social properties...." (Quoted in "White Mythology" 216). Marx's discussion of money thus reverses the relationship between commodification and nature that was suggested in France's characterization of metaphor. The metaphor arises from nature and enters into circulation; whereas gold is a commodity whose value is established by circulation and then applied retroactively to nature. A similar movement seems to be at work in Lady Charlotte's turning to collecting as a governing structure of judgment in her journals. Despite the two men's opposite roles as subject and object, both of the epistemological structures constructed around her husbands are idealistic or metaphoric ones, in which the material person is subordinated to his textual function. In turning to collecting, Lady

Charlotte turns to a system of values that is already, quite literally, common currency, and then retroactively applies it as a system of judgment to her text.

It is precisely this same recourse to the iterative, mercantile and contingent standards of collection in order to negotiate the trickeries of shifting perspective that Walter Benjamin describes when he claims "collections are the answers of the practical man to the irresolvable polarities of theory" (*v. supra* 117). Like Derrida's argument, Benjamin's is rooted in the failure of the ideal, or metaphysical. However, Derrida sees this failure primarily as a linguistic one, rooted in the failure of metaphor. Benjamin, in contrast, sees the failure as a historical one, rooted in the failure of critics to discuss culture primarily in terms of the historico-material influences that gave rise to it. Indeed, Benjamin sees culture in much the same terms that Marx saw currency, as a symbol that is created only by consensus, but whose value is presented as somehow arising from nature itself.

Marx's symbol, however, ultimately, is a grounded metaphor, rooted in the commodities that gold or currency can purchase. The commodity that is culture, in contrast, is far less definable and therefore more significantly conditioned not only by the historico-economic circumstances that produced it, but also by the historico-economic situation of the observer attempting to evaluate it. Therefore, according to Benjamin, there can never be a complete understanding of the history of culture, or even of history in general, only a Marxist acceptance of the fact that any attempt to understand past history is in fact dialectically created by the historico-material conditions of the present.

Benjamin's answers seem to be the answers of the eminently practical Lady Charlotte in her later journals as well -- at least on the textual level of epistemology and judgment. However, any author who chooses to accept such a contingency of perspective -- consciously or unconsciously -- is immediately confronted by the fact that however misguided a teleological approach to history might be,[12] narrative -- even that of a journal -- is inherently teleological. Indeed, arguably, the primarily textual impulse that drives a journal is the metaphysical desire to give order to the immediate and contingent by showing how a longer term -- or absolute -- perspective can reveal the end toward which seemingly unrelated events were progressing. And, in fact, Lady Charlotte's later diaries provide almost a textbook case for the failure of contingent, episodic narrative, for if *Confidences of a Collector* could ever be argued to make for impassioned reading, it could only be to a connoisseur of china. The average reader grows easily frustrated at the seemingly endlessly laborious task of extracting snippets of narrative from the massive construction of valuation that make up Lady Charlotte's day-to-day existence.

Paradoxically, however, Lady Charlotte's china collecting gave rise to the one unrepentantly teleological narrative in the journals, the sketch, "The Adventures of a Bottle," that Montague Guest provides as an appendix to *Confidences of a Collector*. Written by Lady Charlotte, the story concerns the acquisition, loss, and reacquisition of a peculiar, gourd-shaped piece of German Delft ware. From its very first line, the story assumes the form of an exemplary tale, beginning:

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[12] As well as regardless of the somewhat pettish objection that the perception of a teleological approach as wrong is itself historically conditioned.

> In the very cold February of 1873 it happened that C.S. went alone on an exploring expedition to Holland. He came home pretty well laden with objets d'art, and having but two hands of his own, and being without those of his wife to help him, he was fain to leave behind him two specimens... (*Confidences II* 484)

The narrative's jokey, self-conscious tone is not as unusual as a comparison to the rest of Lady Charlotte's journals suggests. Such literary productions as family gazettes were a favorite pastime of the Guests. Indeed, there was a private printing press at Canford, and the family often amused itself with publishing private magazines and journals. However, this narration is unlike anything else in her actual journals.

What is even more unusual is the fact that the protagonist of the tale is not the journals' protagonist, Lady Charlotte, but rather Charles Schreiber, whose initial situation is that of any fairy tale hero, setting out on a quest, alone, to a foreign land, without the aid of his family. The fact that Schreiber was the one who initially set out alone most likely dictated Lady Charlotte's making him the hero of her tale; however, his role in this tale also underscores a significant shift in his textual function in the collector's diaries. No longer is he the eternally-receding object of desire; in this tale, Schreiber plays the role of the desiring subject who sets out to determine his place in the universe.

Moreover, Schreiber is also a surrogate for Lady Charlotte -- a fact that becomes more clear when later in the tale they become allies in the pursuit of the piece. The surrogacy become even more evident when the two main characters change from the protagonist

"C.S." and "his wife," who remains at home, to that of two near-interchangeable protagonists, C.S. (Charles Schreiber) and C.E.S. (Charlotte Elizabeth Schreiber), who voyage together to Rotterdam to retrieve the purchased bottle, along with a bowl that Schreiber had also purchased. Importantly, this habit of referring to her husband and herself by their initials is a feature of the collectors' diaries -- a suggestive one that implies how thoroughly the acquired objects have replaced the textual construct of Charles Schreiber as an object of desire.

The pair immediately meet their first obstacle: the dealer was still offering the pieces for sale. Given the fact that Schreiber had already paid for them, the dealer's act is a theft, which is, in turn, an act not only of capitalist, but also of mythic, transgression. The story of Prometheus is the touchstone narrative of theft violating the boundaries of self and other, mine and yours, gods and men. It is also one of the primal stories of self-assertion through the pursuit of an object. That self-assertion takes on an additional significance in a capitalist system, where property becomes a system of value. Theft then threatens not only the system of values but the very symbolic underpinnings of society itself. It is thus textually satisfying that, although the attempted theft of the Schreibers' bowl and bottle is quickly resolved, it leaves behind a situation of epistemological instability:

> ... now the question was, what it could be. Was it Delft? Was it some other manufacture? Was it not, at all events something good and rare? So thought C.S., so thought C.E.S. But Bisschop, the great Hague painter, well versed in these Delft

> products, declared it was only German, and not at all to be prized. So what was to be done? Was it worth carrying all the way to England? (485)

Next, the pair meet a helper, in the form of an anonymous dealer at Utrecht, who believed he could sell the bottle to an equally anonymous amateur. In a fit of pique, Schreiber abandons the quest, snapping, "Then for goodness' sake let him have it." Thus, according to Lady Charlotte, ended "the Second Act of the Drama" (485).

The quest was, of course, not abandoned so easily. On the appropriately ominous 13th of October of the same year,[13] the Schreibers received the unwelcome news that, although the amateur had been happy to pay 100 florins for the bottle, his friends had told him it was valueless and he had returned it to the dealer. Schreiber was, naturally, "very sorry to have to carry about so despised a piece of goods" and sold it in Antwerp for eighteen shillings. The entire drama seems to end with Charles Schreiber content that he had "disembarrassed himself of [the troublesome bottle] at very little loss" (486).

However, fate had a final twist in store for the questing pair. On yet another thirteenth of the month, August 13, 1874, the stability of value and judgment that they seemed to have achieved by admitting they had made a mistake in purchasing the piece, was abruptly reversed. While traveling in Normandy, the Schreibers visited the museum, where:

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[13] Schreiber's initial foray was made in February of 1873; the Schreibers' trip together and the subsequent contested purchase took place on either April 9 of that year, according to the text, or April 8, according to Lady Charlotte's summary time-table.

> Oh horror! Oh despair! what should meet their eyes, set on the most conspicuous shelf, in the very place of honor, but bottles exactly similar in style, shape and decoration to that which they had once possessed and in an evil hour had sacrificed. (486)

What is perhaps most striking about this reversal is that, despite the absolute nature of the museum's placing the reviled bottle in the "very place of honor," it depends on an epistemological impossibility, "exact similarity." Something is similar or it is identical; it cannot be both. Yet such a simply stated impossibility is a fundamental component of both the theory of metaphor and the theory of monetary exchange. For, in fact, nothing is identical unless it is in fact itself. Both metaphor and money provide systems of exchange that allow the person making the judgment to measure the relative values between similar things by providing a scale of measures artificially designed to be identical, solely in order to facilitate exchange.

This central impossibility of "exact similarity" is the story's lesson, one that is learned with appropriately mythological "wailing and gnashing of teeth! To have been unconsciously possessed of such a treasure, and to have been at such pains to have deprived oneself of it was almost more than amateur nature could endure!" (487). Yet, such outsized despair belongs to the mythic realm, not the actual, and the purpose of any fairy tale is the successful education of the hero. Consequently, C.S. and C.E.S., having learned their object lesson in the instability of judgment, are allowed a final resolution. After having "returned to England, sadder and wiser, they remained there a week, and

then their restless dispositions prompted them to set out on their travels again" (487). In a nondescript shop in Brussels:

> having well ransacked it without any result, they were on the point of leaving it and had reached the door when C.E.S. happened to cast her eyes to a topmost shelf, on which a bright familiar object met her astonished and delighted gaze: "What is that I see above?" said she. "Oh, it is only an old bottle of German ware," said the dealer, and he reached it down. There was no mistaking it now. It was the long-lost, much-lamented bottle, which their better educated sense now showed them to be of the priceless Rouen fabric. C.S. was overjoyed at the recovery of the beloved object, and he instantly paid whatever he was asked without any demur. (487)

The Schreibers' final financial outcome in the entire transaction has a fairy tale's even-handedness of valuation. The original -- too good to be true -- purchase price of one sovereign is gone forever, the victim of the protagonists' short-sightedness. However, having gone through the long and painful educational process of the narrative, the Schreibers are still allowed a surplus, purchasing it for forty francs, a price more than the original bargain, but still less than the piece's true worth -- a fact confirmed by the tale's ending, which compares the Schreibers' judgment favorably with their fellow amateurs, who, not having undergone such a painful education, overlooked the bottle when they saw it.

The tale's denouement also offers an interesting insight into the couple's relationship as connoisseurs. For, although it is Charles Schreiber (C.S.), who originally notices and

attempts to purchase the piece, it is Lady Charlotte (C.E.S.) who notices it the second time. There is certainly a nice post-modernist fable to be read in the surplus that is created by the letter "E" as she attempts to replicate an act of judgment. For an act of judgment can never purely be replicated, since it is always influenced by the surplus created by the history of previous such acts. What is more overtly readable, however, is how the episode reflects the relative connoisseurship of the couple. There is no question that the china collecting was a shared passion[14] and that Charles Schreiber went out on many individual, and often uncomfortable, forays, to find china, often at five in the morning or nine at night. Yet, it is equally clear that, although Lady Charlotte perceived their collecting as a joint venture, and more or less ceased collecting when Schreiber died, she is always credited with the connoisseurship of the pair -- as is perhaps inevitable with such a forceful personality.

Bessborough gives the four years from 1873 to 1876 as the height of the china mania, and there is no reason to question this dating. Certainly, by 1879, Lady Charlotte was putting more of her energy into cataloging her china than collecting it -- and she had also developed secondary and tertiary interests in collecting playing cards and fans. In 1880, Charles Schreiber once more stood as a member from Poole. Lady Charlotte's description of the election give striking evidence of the change wrought at least in part by her collecting. Schreiber's election was a -- skin-of-the-teeth -- triumph :

> March 31 ... The polling began at 8 and closed at 4... I have employed my solitary day by abstracting the Wedgwood entries from the catalogue. It has helped to turn

[14] Indeed, a superficial (although by no means necessarily untrue) psychologizing reading would see their shared passion as a substitute for the child the couple could never have.

> my attention from the momentous issues of this day and my dear husband's prospects... I went on steadily working, till interrupted by the shouts of the crowd, and by Mrs. Williams rushing in to tell me it was all over and that my husband had won... but presently there came a pause, the noise ceased, it was rumored that all was uncertain... *(Schreiber* 166)

Eventually, Schreiber won, by only six votes. However, that year, three of Lady Charlotte's sons were also running for office. Of them, Ivor lost and Arthur lost; only Montague (the editor of *Confidences*) won. The position of Henry Layard, Lady Charlotte's old admirer and her daughter Enid's husband, as ambassador to Constantinople was also significantly jeopardized by the elections. These facts alone might explain why, instead of venturing triumphantly on the hustings, as she did with Sir John, Lady Charlotte spent the next few days "alone; it poured with rain, so I wrote letters, verified the salt glaze stoneware catalogue, and was fully employed" *(Schreiber* 167). Some of this change might also be attributed to a natural quietism that occurs with maturity, and even more of it might be attributable to the difference between her Liberalism and Schreiber's Toryism. Yet, it also seems quite arguable that cataloging the china, assembling its provenance -- and therefore value -- provided Lady Charlotte with an arena of pure and absolute valuation that offset the often conflicted as well as conflicting political aspirations of her husbands and sons.

Upon his election, Schreiber took a renewed interest in his political career, so that he and Lady Charlotte saw less of each other than they were accustomed to do. Instead of

mourning his absence, Lady Charlotte, never at a loss to occupy herself, was inspired by her first-hand witnessing of the situation in Constantinople, where Henry Layard was ambassador, to engage in relief work selling the embroidery of Turkish refugees in England. It was a task she accomplished with her usual furious efficiency, selling embroidery to everyone from her aristocratic acquaintances to Oscar Wilde *(Schreiber* 184). The couple did, however, continue to travel and collect when Parliament was not in session. In 1880, they went to Oberammengau to see the Passion Play, with which Lady Charlotte was very impressed, asking the actor who played Jesus whether he was not very tired, after having spent twenty minutes on the Cross (*Schreiber* 170). She was less struck with Wagner's new theater at Bayreuth, dismissing it as "a hideous building, and apparently inconveniently distant from the town. What made him fix upon such a desolate place as Bayreuth to build in, I am at a loss to imagine... It seemed a miserable deserted town" (*Schreiber* 170).

In 1883, Charles Schreiber fell ill with a lung ailment from which he never fully recovered. A sea voyage to South Africa was recommended. The trip was largely an exercise in frustration, relieved only by the evident closeness of the couple, as Schreiber took relief in Lady Charlotte's reading to him. The end came in Lisbon, on March 29, 1884, on the return voyage to England. Lady Charlotte wrote:

> And now it is all over. The eleven months of anxious care and watching are past, and he is gone... he died in my arms about 4 o'clock. A little before he passed away he asked: "Where am I?" to which I answered: "With your own dear wife." He

> replied: "God bless her", and those were almost the last conscious words he spoke. *(Schreiber* 180)

Two days later, Lady Charlotte concluded, "And so ends my life on earth. It has been a very happy one, and I have very much to be grateful for. Henceforth I have but to bow the head in patience, working and waiting till it shall please my Merciful Father to call me hence" *(Schreiber* 180).

With the peculiar irony with which the nineteenth century often compensated for its ten-year-old consumptives, Lady Charlotte was destined to live eleven more years, to the age of eighty-three. Work and wait she did for those eleven years, but it must be said that working was, of the two, the more congenial to her naturally energetic temperament. Her first endeavor, begun within two months of Schreiber's death, was to present their collection of English porcelain to the South Kensington Museum (later incorporated into the Victoria and Albert Museum) as a gift in memory of her husband. As obvious -- even inevitable -- as this step may seem, it caused some friction between Lady Charlotte and her son Ivor, himself also a collector. Perhaps justly, he was annoyed that he not been consulted about the gift, and that he could furthermore say nothing when he learned of it, as the gift had already been announced in the newspapers[15] *(Schreiber* 183). Yet it is difficult not also to read into his pique a remnant of the tension between Lady Charlotte and her children over their father being supplanted by a much-younger stepfather. In making the gift, Lady Charlotte was arguably following the wishes of her late husband, who had reflected "what a pleasure it would be to collect national objects for the benefit

[15] It must, however, be pointed out that Lady Charlotte gave only the collection of English china to the nation. The collections of European porcelains remained in family hands.

of the country" *(Schreiber* 182). Yet, the gift was also a final reification, replacing the now permanently absent Schreiber with not only a collection of objects, and a pair of portraits of the couple commissioned to accompany the collection, but also with a catalogue, Lady Charlotte's final piece of writing. Begun in 1884, Lady Charlotte continued working on her catalogues even after blindness caused her to give up her journal in 1891.[16]

A second, more idiosyncratic memorial to her late husband was her concern with the refurbishing of a statue of Achilles that stood in Hyde Park -- another cause that Schreiber had espoused. In January, 1885, she was happy to report:

> My dear Monty has most kindly taken up the subject of the Hyde Park Achilles. There is a letter from him on the matter in this morning's *Times*. Very few people know that the statue is from a Greek model, the Castor and Pollux at Rome, and that it was cast at the expense of the ladies of England, of cannon which we took from the French in the war terminating with the battle of Waterloo. *(Schreiber* 186)

The passage is the epitome of a favorite dotty old aunt, keeping her old age interesting with a succession of eccentric causes. Indeed, there is a certain music-hall comedy to Lady Charlotte's passionate espousal of a variety of missions that ranged from finding a pug dog to send to a friend in Lisbon *(Schreiber* 187-8) through a brief flirtation with photography lessons (192) to getting her maid Moody's sister a respectable place as an actress (190-1). Lady Charlotte also underwrote the cost of a shelter for hansom cab

[16] Chapter Four of this study provides a more detailed discussion of impulse underlying this donation.

drivers, being careful to supply a copy *of The Times*, daily, for the cabmen's edification. Eventually, she was dismayed to discover that the cabmen would actually prefer more copies of a cheaper paper, and finally compromised by deciding "that *The Times* delivery should be continued, because of the usefulness and variety of its information, but that a copy of the *Daily Chronicle* should be added, so that the cabmen might be given both sides of politics" *(Schreiber* 194). Her concern with the cabmen also led her to take up knitting once more, eventually producing a red woolen muffler each day for their relief. That habit produced a memorable picture of her in old age. In her seventy-ninth year:

> Lady Charlotte now started the habit of taking exercise every morning by walking up and down her long drawing-room for some hours, knitting the while; one day she would recite aloud "Chaucer's dear old prologue" which she calculated took thirty-five minutes to repeat; another day it would be *Childe Harold (Schreiber* 204).

The comedy of all this frantic activity is offset by how obvious it is that Lady Charlotte was desperately trying to stave off the twin losses of her husband and her eyesight. Many entries, such as that for February 7, 1885, are nostalgic, filled with references to a lost, happy past:

> I never write the date of 7 Feby [*sic*], but I think of my first Latin grammar bought in 1825, if I mistake not, just 60 years ago, with almost the first money I ever had. I was so conscious of inaccuracy then, that I thought studying the learned language would help to correct this grave fault. I have the book now and will take it out and look at it before I go to bed. No, I was wrong, my little Latin grammar bears date

> [*sic*] of 1826, which I used to call "that hot and happy summer". On the 10 May of that year my darling [Schreiber] was born. *(Schreiber* 186)

Even religion provided little refuge, for going to church reminded her painfully of Schreiber. Instead, she read the service to herself, usually in Regent's Park, for:

> Sunday is always such a sad day with me. I cannot bear to go to church with anyone, and when I am alone I find myself brooding over the past, and the happy days when we went together, and he always held my hand in his dear hand during the lessons and the sermon. *(Schreiber* 194)

Equally devastatingly, Lady Charlotte began to lose her sight, most probably from glaucoma. She mentioned the problem first in 1884, the year of Schreiber's death (*Schreiber* 185). For the next six years, she chronicled the decline of her vision, along with the various treatments she sought. In January of 1887, she underwent an operation that was performed in her bedroom under conditions of strict secrecy. Rather typically, she threw herself into activity the day before, not knowing how long it would be before she would see again (*Schreiber* 195). The operation was a qualified success; however, two years later, she was attempting the more appalling treatment of having electricity applied to her eyes. Despite her doctor's assertion to the contrary, she believed the treatment harmed, rather than helped her (*Schreiber* 200-1).

Despite her best efforts, her blindness continued to increase, forcing her to become dependent on others. In 1888, she ceased reading, relying on her maid, Moody, to read to

her instead. Moody was eventually joined by her sister, whose stage tour of America had failed, reading Shakespeare, and a Mr. Upton, who, Bessborough claims "moistened his throat for reading aloud by a visit to a publican in the neighborhood" (*Schreiber* 204). The aplomb with which Lady Charlotte apparently handled his drunken stumbling is offset by her genuinely sad entry of January 6, 1889:

> I can only record a painful increase of depression. All are very kind to me, and I do my best to be or to seem cheerful. But I am getting less and less able to sustain the mask... What I most like here is to sit in Ivor's room with my eternal knitting... There I sit, revolving many things... (*Schreiber* 199)

The passage's despair is offset by the fact it is a mythic image, a Norn, a Fate, an old woman sitting by herself, shut off from the world, eternally knitting as she revolves things only to herself. And that mythic solitude is a fitting solution to the multiple triangulations of judgment and value throughout her journals. The circle of eternity has replaced the triangle of judgment. The crucial third person that is essential for judgment -- whether in the figure of John Guest as judge, Charles Schreiber as continually receding object of desire, the censorious view of society, or the objects in her collections -- has vanished. Lady Charlotte is left alone. However, her solitude has paradoxically provided her with an almost Cartesian belief in herself: she at last accepts the validity of her own thinking, and reference to any external standard is perceived as inherently false, a mask.

It is difficult to think of the eternally restless, acquisitive Lady Charlotte ever as at peace, but it is at least pleasant to think that this final retreat into the self that she had pursued

for so many years underlies the graceful peace of the entry with which she closes 10,000 pages and sixty years of journals:

> *1891, February 24 [17 Cavendish Square].* And here I close a journal which I have kept for very many years. I can no longer see to write, or to read what I have written. I am, thank God, perfectly well in health though growing feebler every day, and I feel confident the end cannot be far off. I am most kindly cared for by all that are dear and I bless them for it... and now, adieu to all. *(Schreiber* 205)

Chapter Four: Dangerous but Domesticated Passions

Despite the fact that her second marriage lasted nearly ten years longer than her first, Lady Charlotte is best remembered as Lady Charlotte Guest. Similarly, Lady Charlotte Guest, the translator, is better remembered than Lady Charlotte Schreiber, the connoisseur. The biography of Lady Charlotte Guest overshadowing that of Lady Charlotte Schreiber can be readily understood when one considers that all of her biographers have been descendants of her first husband; moreover, she and Charles Schreiber had no children. The primacy of Lady Charlotte the translator over Lady Charlotte the connoisseur is more difficult to explain, especially when one considers the fact that her accomplishments as a connoisseur of English porcelain could easily be claimed to outshine her abilities as a translator or antiquarian. Certainly the opinion of later scholars is far more respectful of Lady Charlotte Schreiber than Lady Charlotte Guest. In 1953, at almost the same time that Roger Loomis was publishing his guarded appreciation of her as a pioneering Arthurian scholar, "Mr. O. Van Oss addressed fellow members of the English Ceramic Circle with a paper [on the subject of Lady Charlotte] which was 'an act of piety -- almost an essay in hagiology -- devoted to the memory of the lady who has the best claim to be considered our patron saint'" *(Lady Charlotte* 195). A later scholar, Frank Herrmann, in *The English as Collectors,* goes even further, claiming:

> In the second half of the nineteenth century there were three works in particular which threw much light on the history of collecting... [*Ancient Marbles in Great Britain* by Adolf Michaelis. *Art Sales* by George Redford] ... The third important work consisted of extracts from a diary kept between 1869 and 1885 largely relating

> to purchases of ceramics and antiques -- the unique, two-volume *Journals* of Lady Charlotte Schreiber. (44)

One reason for this lack of attention paid to Lady Charlotte's later accomplishments may be that, as Ann Eatwell suggests in her essay, "Private Pleasure, Public Beneficence: Lady Charlotte Schreiber and Ceramic Collecting," the art community has marginalized woman collectors in general, as well as collectors of domestic objects such as ceramics, fans, and playing cards -- all areas of expertise for Lady Charlotte -- in particular. A second reason may be that, until recently, little systematic critical or theoretical work has been published on collecting. Indeed, before Frank Herrmann's 1972 publication of *The English as Collectors: A Documentary Chrestomathy* (revised and reissued in 1999 *as The English as Collectors: A Documentary Sourcebook*), most publications on collecting were either "How-To" manuals with provenances, styles and valuations, or memoirs -- often titled "Confessions" -- of such figures as William Hazlitt and the notorious art dealer, J.H. Duveen.

The first of the two notable exceptions to this rule was a spate of early essays, such as Walter Durost's 1932 dissertation, *Children's Collecting Activity Related to Social Factors*, which arose from Piaget's and Klein's theories of object orientation in child development. The second was Walter Benjamin's seminal pair of essays on collecting: "Unpacking my Library" and "Edward Fuchs: Historian and Collector." Admittedly, no-one would every apply the word "systematic" to Benjamin's work. "Unpacking my Library" is impressionistic and "Fuchs" is sprawling. Yet, they established perhaps the

central theoretical tenet in all later discussions of collecting: the unique ability of the material object to replace abstract systems of signification that are destined to fail.

Both essays have already been discussed at length in this dissertation; their claims are perhaps most easily recalled by citing Hannah Arendt's authoritative introduction to *Illuminations*:

> ...this passion, far from being a whim, derived directly from the only world view that ever had a decisive influence on him, from Goethe's conviction of the factual existence of an *Urphanomen*, an archetypal phenomenon, a concrete thing to be discovered in the world of appearances in which "significance"... and appearance, word and thing, idea and experience, would coincide... In other words, what profoundly fascinated Benjamin from the beginning was never an idea, it was always a phenomenon. (11-2)

Despite this central debt to Goethe's thinking, much of "Edward Fuchs" reads as an attack on Goethean idealism, for Goethe (along with Winckelmann) is mentioned as an exemplar of idealism, against which Benjamin admiringly contrasts Fuchs' work as a significant departure in which "the *disiecta membra* which idealism contains as both 'historical representation' on the one hand and 'appreciation' (*Wurdigung*) on the other become one and are thus surpassed." The act of collecting, in particular, surmounts the limitations of idealism because "The historical object removed from pure facticity does not need any 'appreciation.' It does not offer vague analogies to actuality but constitutes

itself as an object in the precise dialectical problem which actuality itself is obliged to solve" ("Fuchs" 235)

Much of this seeming contradiction arises from the difficulty in defining the word "phenomenon." The meaning Benjamin ascribes to the word might best be described as anything tied to the material world, as opposed to the world of abstractions. Indeed, Benjamin often discusses actions, such as translation or the unveiling of a cult object, as phenomena. However, in the two essays on collecting, the objects, as well as the act of collecting, are the vehicles of this phenomenal power. And there can be no doubt it is phenomenal in every sense of the word, when one reads Benjamin's description of the collector -- one of the most profound *apologias* for the type in Western letters:

> Yet one searches in vain among the figures of a Hoffman, Quincey or Nerval for that of the collector. Romantic figures are those of the traveler, of the *flaneur*, of the gambler or of the virtuoso... All the more important, therefore, is the place of the collector in the work of Balzac..... Every fiber of [Balzac's collectors] trembles with exultation. This exultation is the pride in the incomparable treasures which they protect with never tiring care... as a collector, Fuchs is truly Balzacian -- a Balzacian figure that outgrew the poet's conception. What could be more in accord with this conception than a collector whose pride and expansiveness lead him to bring reproductions of his collection onto the market for the sole reason of being able to appear in public with his collections? ("Fuchs" 241-2)

Despite Benjamin's poetic evocation of Balzac, the collector's belief in such concentration of meaning in the object long antedated the nineteenth century. Indeed, it is quite arguable that early collectors were anti-Romantic figures, rooted in Aristotelian method, whose threefold aim was "Accumulation, definition, classification" (Mauries 25). Perhaps the best introduction to these collectors is Patrick Mauries' lavishly illustrated *Cabinets of Curiosities*, which offers a marvelous tour of the *Wunderkammern* of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, in which one can find wax figures, death masks, horrifyingly life-like South Sea natives constructed entirely out of shells, crucifixions carved out of coral, babies' heads pickled entirely along with their lace caps, conjoined twins, mermaids' skeletons, automata, a cherry stone carved with thirty miniature heads, and a bezoar cup that could render poison harmless -- all of them fit to turn the stomach of even the most hardened connoisseur of kitsch. Indeed, when contemplating a sculpted figure of Daphne, whose fingers and hair, meant to be metamorphosing into laurel leaves, are made of bright red strands of coral, it is hard to imagine any intellectual impetus behind such grotesqueries.

Yet, the peculiar tension of the Daphne in fact reflects the intellectual tension of the cabinet, in which the collectors deliberately sought out "liminal objects that lay on the margins of charted territory, brought back from worlds unknown, defying any accepted system of classification" (Mauries 12). The collector then sought to impose meaning on these liminal objects by inscribing them in a structure of classifications which was created by the physical structure of the *Wunderkammern* themselves, which placed the collected objects:

> within a special setting which would instill in them layers of meaning. Display panels, cabinets, cases and drawers were a response not only to a desire to preserve, or to conceal from view, but also a parallel impulse to slot each item into its place in a vast network of meanings and correspondences... the cabinet [was] a place in which objects were viewed according to a scale, a perspective or a hierarchy that endowed them with meaning. (Mauries 25)

This emphasis on analogy or correspondence implied a close relationship between collections and magic. According to Mauries:

> Cabinets were perpetually susceptible to the passion for finding analogies, a theme that belongs as much to the realm of magic as to that of aesthetics, and which haunts the history of the cult of curiosities from its beginnings. Lugli traced it back to the *vis assimilativa*, Nicholas of Cusa's "force of assimilation' (a human attribute, as opposed to the *vis entificativa*, or creative force, which was divine). Thus, through the revelation of hidden connections invisible to the uninitiated, and through the discovery of an essential affinity between objects far removed from each other in geographical origin and in nature, collectors offered their visitors a glimpse of the secret that lay at the heart of all things: that reality is all one and that within it everything has its alloted place, answering to everything else in an unbroken chain. (Mauries 34)

It is precisely this passion for controlling the hidden correspondences underlying the natural world that explains the collector's fascination with such seemingly execrable

objects as the half-coral Daphne. Hybrid objects, half natural and half artificial, were prized since cabinets were designed to be places where:

artistic masterpieces and virtuoso examples of technical skill jostled with evidence of divine omnipotence (such as marvels of nature, relics, and the earthly vestiges of miracles). Together these two realms formed one complete world, or microcosm, which was a reflection of the macrocosm and of creation in general... The collector, meanwhile, played the part of a master-mind bringing these two chains of being together. (Mauries 91)

This kind of collecting began to decline with the advent of scientific method, in which, Mauries claims, "differences became more important than correspondences" (185). During the latter half of the seventeenth century, collections grew more systematized, as a collection's "didactic purpose [took] precedence over the sense of the marvellous" (185). Hybrids and curiosities were relegated to amazing "the 'most vulnerable' in society: 'women, the very young, the very old, primitive people, and the uneducated masses, a motley group collectively designated as "the vulgar"'" (Daston and Park, quoted in Mauries 193). The hallmark of the vulgar was their incapacity for judgment; conversely, the hallmark of the man of taste was his ability to discriminate, first between "works of art [and] works of science; the next [step] was to draw a distinction within the category of works of art between major and minor works, and between fine and decorative art, the latter being a superior form of craftsmanship" (Mauries 194). Respect for judgment, however, was balanced with a respect for the collector's emotional response to a work of art, so that:

> "Not only was the mere acquisition of pictures and statuary becoming more valuable as a source of social prestige but it was considered desirable to possess, if not expert knowledge of, at any rate an articulate enthusiasm for, the objects acquired; most persons of quality... discovered new pleasures of "sensibility." (Steegman, quoted in Herrmann 9-10)

At the end of the eighteenth century, the great Romantic collectors, including Sir Walter Scott, Horace Walpole, and William Beckford, began collecting for an entirely new reason: in order to rediscover history, rather than to increase their knowledge of the physical or metaphysical world (Mauries 209). This unique ability of a collection to reinscribe history into the present is a cornerstone of the structuralist theory of collecting that Susan Pearce develops in *Museums, Objects and Collections.* Central to her discussion is the insight that "Objects... alone have the power, in some sense to carry the past into the present by virtue of their 'real' relationship to past events... This 'reality' is fundamental to the impulses which we know as the collecting process" (24).

Using the appropriately Scottish example of the sword carried by Macdonald of Keppoch at the Battle of Culloden, currently on display in the National Museums of Scotland, she describes the underlying relationship that makes this possible in structuralist terms. The sword's power stems from the fact that it is simultaneously *langue* and *parole*, functioning in metonymic relationship with the past and metaphoric relationship with the present simultaneously. The sword's status as artifact is metonymic; moreover, it is contingent: Any other artifact might have happened to survive, but in fact this artifact

survived because, after Keppoch died in battle "His son, Angus Ban, took his father's sword and dirk and hid them in marshy ground, from which they were afterwards retrieved, and after passing through a number of hands, they finally came into the possession of the National Museums of Scotland" (24) On display in the museum, however, the sword is transformed into a metaphor for the Battle of Culloden, whose meaning, Pearce points out, has changed from "a symbol of barbarity rightly defeated by English enlightenment" in 1746 to "a symbol of romantic and noble" in 1840, after the novels of Scott had changed public perception of the Jacobite rebellion (29). Following a loose interpretation of Saussure and Barthes, Pearce argues that Angus Ban's hiding the sword was a *parole*, "the actual action, spoken sentence or performed deed by means of which each society creates itself" (26). Yet as a symbol of Culloden, and with it, the Jacobite rebellion, the sword enters the *langue* of the present. Such a dual existence allows the possibility of infinitely resituated meaning, for, as Pearce argues, "Past *parole* continuously becomes a part of contemporary *langue*, which is continuously restructured to issue as contemporary *parole* in a never-ending spiral" (27).

This crucial interplay between metaphor and metonymy also underlies the act of collecting itself, for any object, once selected by a collector, bears both a metaphoric and metonymic relationship to the class of objects it represents as a whole. As Pearce argues:

> By being chosen away and lifted out of the embedding metonymic matrix, the selected collection now bears a representative or metaphorical relationship to its whole. It becomes an image of what the whole is believed to be, and although it

> remains an intrinsic part of the whole, it is no longer merely a detached fragment because it has become imbued with meaning of its own. (38)

Alternatively, as Daniel Miller argues in *Material Culture and Mass Consumption*:

> [The artefact] does not lend itself to the earlier analysis of symbolism which identified distinct abstract signifiers and concrete signifieds, since it simultaneously operates at both levels. Instead, it has been suggested that the object tends toward presentational form, which cannot be broken up as though into grammatical sub-units, and as such it appears to have a particularly close relation to emotions, feelings and basic orientations to the world. The artefact may be used to promote fine distinctions through its relation to extremely sophisticated mechanisms of perceptual discrimination which tend to remain outside of consciousness... (107-8)

Accepting the Kleinian premise that object relations are primarily an attempt to define oneself, Pearce goes on to argue that the collector's selection process, or organizing metaphor by which she structures her collection, is critical to how the collector uses the collection to structure her own sense of self. Pearce distinguishes three kinds of organizing metaphors for collections. The first is collecting souvenirs, which she defines as "objects that take their collection unity only from their association with either a single person and his or her life history, or a group of people... who function in this regard as if they were a single person" (69). Organizing a collection in terms of souvenirs has the dual function of preserving one's past as a recallable myth, and, in the case of war mementos, for example, making public events private and therefore emotionally and

intellectually manageable (72). In either case, the purpose of the souvenir is to reinforce the idea of the romantic self as the ultimate arbiter of experience, for "Souvenirs are intensely romantic in every way, and especially in the ways in which that idea is now often applied. The romantic view holds that everything, and especially everybody, has a place in the true organic wholeness which embraces human relationships, in the traditional continuity of past into present" (72). Thus, the final purpose of souvenirs is to construct "a romantically integrated personal self, in which the objects are subordinated into a secondary role" (73).

Fetishistic collecting, which is the second organizing metaphor that Pearce describes, is the opposite of collecting souvenirs. The term "fetishistic" derives from Freud's definition of a sexual orientation in which a single body part, divorced from the whole, becomes the focus of sexual gratification (82). However, Pearce's use of the term focuses on the aspect of separation of the object from the social whole it derives from, rather than on sexual gratification, in much the same way that Terry Eagleton (1983) and Daniel Miller (1987) use the term. Fetishistic collectors simply collect in order to possess things, and "[fetishistic collections] are detached from any context, they are removed from the sphere of actual social relationships with all the tensions, efforts of understanding and acts of persuasion which these imply. This detachment is, indeed, a very substantial part of the attraction for their collectors..." (Pearce 83).

Thus, although "the whole process [of fetishistic collection] is a deployment of the possessive self, a strategy of desire..." (Pearce 81), its overall effect is to privilege the

objects collected, rather than the person of the collector. As such, fetishistic collections and collectors "are at the opposite pole to the souvenirs discussed earlier. Here, the subject is subordinated to the objects, and it is to the objects that the burden of creating a romantic wholeness is transferred" (Pearce 84).

Systematic collecting, the third category that Pearce describes, is the organizing metaphor that one usually imagines when one thinks of collecting. In a systematic collection, the objects are organized by a governing metaphor or taxonomy. The essential difficulty with any such systematic classification, as long ago argued by Nietzsche, is the natural human tendency to believe that "categories have some kind of objective existence of their own" (Pearce 85), rather than to acknowledge that they are constructs either of the observing subject or of society. Instead of seeing this difficulty as an *aporia*, however, Pearce sees this as a strength of systematic collecting that allows it to bridge the gap between the two "frozen and static" poles of fetishistic and souvenir collecting (88). Systematic collecting's strength, she argues, derives from the fact it is a form of Hegelian "objectification," as it is defined by Daniel Miller. According to Miller, "objectification is "the dual process by means of which a subject externalizes itself in a creative act of differentiation, and in return reappropriates the externalization through an act (of) sublation." As an effect of objectification "the gulf between subject and object is healed and neither is elevated at the other's expense. The essence of the link is relationship; that relationship is always in process" (Pearce 88).

What Pearce's discussion fails to address are the difficulties inherent in the concept of a "romantic unity of self." The term is nearly impossible to define on a literary, philosophical or psychological level. Furthermore, even if the term is simply stipulated, it still remains extremely problematic for any discussion of a Victorian woman collector. For the trespass inherent in asserting one's right to such a self was perhaps the central issue the nineteenth-century woman artist, writer, or collector faced. As Clarissa Campbell Orr claims in *Women in the Victorian Art World*:

> ... the Romantic ideal of the artist could complicate the whole nature of female ambition... The roles offered to women... were all too often that of model or mistress, not sister-artist... A woman seeking fame and fortune in the Victorian art world was in some senses asking permission not only to be properly taught, allowed exhibition space and gain critical attention that did not patronize; she was also asking to be a new kind of woman, who held the claims of personal self-expression higher than any other tie or obligation. (Introduction 15-16)

Ann Eatwell's essay, in the same volume, focuses more specifically on the consistent marginalization that Lady Charlotte and other woman collectors faced. Eatwell suggests that three possible factors contributed to this marginalization. First, the figure of the collector was still a suspect one, "not wholly approved of" in polite society. Thus, becoming a collector represented a double unseemliness for a genteel woman, for, not only was it a trespass on masculine territory, but it was also risking identification "as an outsider and an eccentric" (126). Secondly, collecting, in the nineteenth century atmosphere that stressed the Evangelical "call to seriousness" (Introduction 3), still

smacked of conspicuous consumption, allowing women to be "condemned for extravagance and slavishly following fashion" (Eatwell 128). Thirdly, women collectors were largely excluded from support structures, such as the Collector's Club (later the Fine Arts Club). Mrs. Bury Palliser, the sister of Joseph Marryat, the nineteenth century's foremost expert on porcelain, as well as a significant collector in her own right, was proposed as a member:

> but a decision was postponed until the following year, when ladies were admitted as honorary members for the season only. Their membership had to be renewed each year. In 1867, out of a total of 201 members only eight were ladies. Although membership was largely restricted to men, the meetings were more open, being held in members' homes, and many ladies attended, including Lady Charlotte (Charles Schreiber became a member in 1858). (Eatwell 132)

Similarly, although both Schreibers were actively involved with the club from 1860 until at least 1867, it was Charles, not Lady Charlotte, who was the member (Eatwell 132) -- which fact did nothing to diminish Lady Charlotte's responsibility as a hostess for the dinner parties the couple gave for club members (Eatwell 132).

A premise of Eatwell's essay is that women collectors reacted to such marginalization by establishing informal networks among themselves. While such networks may well have existed among female collectors as well as female artists and writers, Eatwell fails convincingly to prove that Lady Charlotte made much use of such networks, relying largely on the argument:

> Contacts made through [the Fine Arts] club and through society in general did provide a modest informal network of women collectors... From the evidence of Lady Charlotte's journals, the meeting of like-minded ladies to discuss art objects, ask for assistance or exchange or sell ceramic pieces would appear to be a not uncommon occurrence... By the late 1870s, Lady Charlotte was regarded as something of an expert... and her journal records the advice she gave to ladies and the errands she would run for them at home and abroad... She may have purchased items on her ladies' behalf; and she took under her wing the more inexperienced, as her relationship with Mrs. Bloomfield Moore demonstrated... Lady Charlotte relied on and trusted certain dealers more than others. One of these was a woman, Eva Krug in Antwerp... (132-3)

The passage creates an unwarranted feminist bias. Lady Charlotte did in fact rely on and trust a variety of dealers, including a man, M. Meyer, two couples, the Bisschops and the Fourniers, and Eva Krug, a woman. Similarly, she undertook buying and verification commissions on the continent not only for women, but also for her sons and, as Bessborough was delighted to report, for "Sir Richard Holmes, the librarian at Windsor Castle, who told them that the Queen had just bought a piece of repousse silver with an effigy of George I, following upon Lady Charlotte's letter of recommendation sent a few weeks previously from Dresden" *(Schreiber* 172).

Perhaps the most questionable of Eatwell's assertions, however, is that Lady Charlotte "took Mrs. Moore under her wing." Lady Charlotte did certainly assist Mrs. Moore in

her purchases, and retained a life-long acquaintance with her. However, a certain underlying contempt for Mrs. Moore, whether because she was an American or because was an inexperienced collector, is evident even in the first passage that mentions her:

> Met there an American lady, Mrs. Moore, who is staying at our Hotel, and who said she was buying curiosities for a Museum, for which her husband had bequeathed a sum of L2000. She has little knowledge, and I do not think her selection will be a very interesting one. (*Confidences II* 306)

When Lady Charlotte did help Mrs. Moore with her purchases, the gentle denigration in her voice becomes more obvious, in notes such as "After dinner we went to Mrs. Moore's rooms, where there was an amusing scene with Sarlin, from whom she has made large purchases" (*Confidences II* 314). Within the month, however, Mrs. Moore was proving somewhat of annoyance:

> Called on the Bisschops early, to show them some of our recent purchases, etc. Mrs. Moore went with us and engaged them to come to dinner in the evening. She afterwards accompanied us to Dirksen's, which was rather unlucky for us. We had set apart this day for winding up all our purchases at The Hague, and visiting the remaining shops, but the whole morning was consumed with one thing or other. Among these interruptions was a scene between Mrs. Moore and Sarlin. (*Confidences II* 316)

Mrs. Moore was not the only woman to fall afoul of Lady Charlotte's critical eye. Lady Sykes, who "delighted [Lady Charlotte] with an account of the ceramic and other

treasures she had found carefully packed away, in her new home" *(Schreiber* 130), was considerably less delightful when she rented the Schreibers' house. Lady Charlotte sounds like many a disgruntled landlord when she complains "She has greatly altered our arrangements in the rooms etc., to her taste. I cannot say I think she has improved it" *(Schreiber* 133).

Passages such as these make Eatwell's characterization of Lady Charlotte's relationship with other female collectors seem at best feminist speculation, at worst feminist wish-fulfillment. This is in no way to disparage Lady Charlotte's relationship with other women or to imply that she did not in other cases make use of exactly such networks. Indeed, Lady Charlotte's involvement with selling needlework done by Turkish Refugees provides a stellar example of her making use of informal female networks. In 1878, she and Charles Schreiber made a visit to her daughter Enid, whose husband, Henry Layard, had been appointed ambassador to Constantinople by Disraeli, now Lord Beaconsfield. The situation in Turkey was very unsettled, for:

> an Anglo-Turkish Convention was signed... [that] provided that if any attempt should be made at any future time by Russia to take possession of any further territories of the Sultan in Asia, England engaged to join the Sultan in defending them by force of arms. In return the Sultan promised to introduce necessary reforms into the Government, and assigned the island of Cyprus to England. *(Schreiber* 145)

As may be judged by her referring to it as an "unhappy and unwise country" *(Schreiber* 152), Lady Charlotte's reaction to the plight of the Turks was rife with much of the same

paternalistic romanticism that infused her reaction to Wales. Although she describes the Sultan as "a pale, dignified, good-looking man" *(Schreiber* 153), her other descriptions of the Turks include a "quite imbecile" Pasha, the Golden Horn, and a hitherto-unwitnessed-by-Christians glimpse of dervishes at their devotions *(Schreiber* 154). Like most British, she believed it was a duty to combat the "barbaric horrors" of the Russians in the Rhodope mountains, leaving Turkey with the final thought, "Poor devoted country, how will its sad history end? The Turks are so much the best of the population, if they could only be decently governed, but Russian intrigue will never leave them alone" *(Schreiber* 155).

Within the year, Lady Charlotte had become involved in selling needlework done by Turkish refugees to the English. It was an activity ideally suited to Lady Charlotte's formidable skills as activist, connoisseur, socialite, and entrepreneur. Her primary market was like-minded wealthy women who would use the needlework in decorating their houses, such as "Lady Bolsover [who] wanted pieces for furnishing at Welbeck, for the Prince of Wales' visit next week" *(Schreiber* 177). Her associates in the venture were other like-minded women, including one Mrs. Hanson, who in 1880 wrote "saying she must give up the Turkish Refugee Work. This was a matter of great regret, both on the account of art and that of humanity... Of course I write as strongly as I can to have it continued and put on a permanent footing" (*Confidences II* 332). Lady Charlotte continued her admirable efforts in selling the needlework until at least 1884, when "A decorator, Mr. Godwin, bought some for Oscar Wilde's house" *(Schreiber* 184).

Lady Charlotte, thus, was quite capable, not only of networking with other women, but also of using her connoisseurship to benefit others. However, in her relationship with other collectors, regardless of their gender, she can only be described as, if not adversarial, competitive in the extreme. This is not necessarily a character flaw, or if it is, it is a character flaw shared by any serious collector. Quite arguably, Lady Charlotte's patronizing attitude toward Mrs. Moore can be largely excused by simply accepting that part of the fun of being an acknowledged connoisseur is being able to disdain others' taste. Furthermore, it is clear from Duveen's anecdote,[1] in which Lady Charlotte literally beat the competition to a choice cache of porcelain, that at least in collecting, her guiding principle was still "But whatever I undertake, I must reach an eminence in" *(Guest* 89).

This contrast between Lady Charlotte's cooperativeness as a social activist and her competitiveness as a collector introduces an issue that has already been discussed at length in reference to Lady Charlotte's construction of her own autobiography in her journals: Nancy K. Miller's assertion that, at least in the nineteenth century, an extraordinary woman could not be an ideal one. Eatwell hints at this issue when she claims that:

> Lady Charlotte differs from other women collectors of the nineteenth century, with the exception of Josephine Bowes, in several ways... Collecting for woman was a means of self-expression, an activity limited by their lifetime. They tended to see their collection in terms of personal effects for the private pleasures of themselves

[1] See Chapter Three of this dissertation.

> and their families... They do not seem to have felt that need for self-aggrandisement in death, for the good will of posterity, for that kind of immortality which leaving collections to the nations implies. It is ironic that, having suggested a public purpose for their collection of English ceramics, Charles Schreiber is less famous for it than his wife. (135)

Eatwell's last claim is disingenuous. For, much as women writing autobiographies couched the essential self-assertion of the act in a biography of another,[2] Lady Charlotte couched the essential self-assertion of assembling a museum-worthy collection by presenting it as a memorial to her dead husband. Indeed, Lady Charlotte's first diary entry on the subject reads, "My desire has long been that our valuable, I might say unique, collection of English china and enamels should be the property of the nation. I wish to offer it as a tribute to my dear husband's memory." It is not until the next day -- perhaps significantly, after she has communicated her desire to make the gift to the South Kensington Museum (now the Victoria and Albert) -- that she claims "The idea is not a new one with me, indeed years ago, my darling used to say what a pleasure it would be to collect national objects for the benefit of the country." That claim is significantly undermined, however, by the passage that immediately follows:

> This plan has slumbered of late years, but the last thing I did last October, before leaving England, was to make a will, leaving all the English collection, as far as I might have the power of leaving it, to the South Kensington Museum, under certain conditions as to its being kept in its integrity. *(Schreiber* 182)

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[2]See Mary G. Mason's "The Other Voice," discussed in Chapter One of this dissertation.

Schreiber's lack of fame, thus, is not ironic -- as Eatwell herself admits in her final assessment of Lady Charlotte:

> It would be wrong to think that Lady Charlotte acted entirely selflessly. She liked to be seen to have done well, if not to have been the best at anything she undertook. The wide scope and the quality of the collection is testimony to that wish and to its fulfillment in her lifetime. It is material evidence of the expertise, knowledge, energy, commitment and stamina of the greatest of the nineteenth-century lady collectors, Lady Charlotte Schreiber. (142)

However, this final assessment of Lady Charlotte is limited as well, for it valorizes Lady Charlotte over her husband, when what is in fact significant is the symbiotic nature of their relationship. Lady Charlotte's expertise, knowledge, energy, commitment and stamina could not have existed without Charles Schreiber as a partner and ultimate object for Lady Charlotte's ambition. It is thus appropriate that it is the couple that is honored in the pair of portraits that hang above the collection today, in Eatwell's words, "a fitting memorial to them both" (142). Perhaps even more fitting is the fact that they hang in a museum named for the quintessential Victorian marital partnership: the Victoria and Albert.

This observation opens a new issue, however: Does such symbiotic Other-centeredness, described by Mason and embodied in the dual Schreiber portraits, differ from the collector's object-centeredness? For, as Mauries argues, the primary purpose of

collecting is self-assertion. This self-assertion is accomplished by a process in which the acquiring an exceptional object "in dialectic fashion vindicated the existence of the latter, newly validated as it was with each fresh acquisition. A certain school of psychological thought recognizes in this craving for the unique the basic impulse that drives all collectors; the need to see reflected in the objects of their collections an exhilarating, narcissistic projection of their own self-image" (Mauries 73).

Daniel Miller, in *Material Culture and Mass Consumption*, recasts Mauries' psychological perception in philosophical terms, relying heavily on Hegel's concept of objectification in *Phenomenology of Spirit*. Miller admits that he is extracting his discussion of the concept from the larger context of Hegel's work, limiting his definition to a process in which:

> the Hegelian subject at each stage is carried forward by a sequence of processes in which it first extends itself through creation, and then becomes aware of that created 'something' which appears as outside of itself. This continues until the consciousness of the external becomes a dissatisfaction with the state of separation from that which is properly part of the subject. This dissatisfaction, however, is the motor force which allows for the recognition and then the reincorporation of the external into the subject; now at one with that part of itself which it had externalized as its creation, and the subject is transformed by virtue of this incorporation into itself. (21)

There are two central assumptions underlying Hegel's theory. The first, which indelibly marks it as belonging to the nineteenth-century teleological mindset, is the progressive nature of objectification, in which:

> [the] sequence is repeated at a number of levels. At each stage the subject posits an increasingly complex and particular other, becoming aware of this other as a distance from itself. It then realizes that this apparently alien other is in fact a product of itself, created as a mirror by means of which it might further its own self-awareness. This process of understanding permits the subject to reincorporate the increasingly complex external world it has created, and by so doing to emerge as an increasingly complex subject. (23)

The second assumption is what differentiates Hegel's thinking from feminist thinking, for it grounds his argument squarely in the symbolic Realm of the Father. It is a central tenet of Hegel's theory that the goal of objectification is an autonomous and achievable ideal. Miller describes this ideal as a universal rationality, claiming:

> The basis of [the process of objectification] is Hegel's conception of the rationality of the actual... Hegel posits a universal rationality, intrinsic to the objective world, which we can come to know... The sequence begins with an unreflective humanity at home in an immediate subject-object relation. From this state, it gradually achieves a distance from nature, moving towards an increasingly self-conscious and differentiated concretization of being. This separation is the prerequisite for the development of an explicit understanding of the ultimate order in the world, mainly through a progressive philosophy. It is this assertion of a prior order towards which

humanity strives which allows Hegel to claim that he is describing a necessary and logical movement. (22).

Because of this ultimate grounding of the Hegelian argument in a symbolic Realm of the Father, a nineteenth-century woman who trespassed in these realms created difference instead of achieving unity, for she violated the distinctions, both explicit and implicit, between the male and female spheres. Even an admiring comment, such as Henry Layard's description of Lady Charlotte as "an extraordinary woman, and her character a remarkable one -- in some ways resembling Mme. de Stael in the union of feminine and masculine qualities" (quoted in "Corinne" 90), describes his cousin in terms of difference and violation. A century later, the word "remarkable" recurs in Frank Herrmann's admiring claim, "The three women who dominated the nineteenth-century collecting scene because of their remarkable intellectual capacity, their scholarship and their fantastic energy were Lady Eastlake, Mrs. Jameson and Lady Charlotte Schreiber" (*Sourcebook* 329).

Indeed, "remarkable" and "fantastic" seem too mild a pair of adjectives to apply to any of these formidable women. Lady Elizabeth Eastlake, *nee* Rigby, was born into a cultured and intellectual Norwich family with ties to the Martineaus, among others ("Corinne" 102). A stay in Heidelberg with her mother ("Corinne" 102) gave Elizabeth Rigby both the contacts and fluency in German that allowed her to become "the first woman to review for the Quarterly [and contribute] significantly through her essays on art and translations of German art criticism to the growth of English art historical scholarship"

("Corinne" 89). All this occurred before she was taken in to dinner by Sir Charles Eastlake, the future Director of the National Gallery, at a party, where the guests also included Turner, Landseer, and Mrs. Jameson. The couple were married in 1849 (*Sourcebook* 307).

After her marriage, Lady Eastlake happily adapted to the conventional role as Sir Charles' helpmeet -- both domestically and intellectually. Not only was she a "stimulating and knowledgeable catalyst" to her husband's work, but "there can be little doubt it was she who made possible the annual search for new paintings on the Continent" (*Sourcebook* 307). She also used such correct self-effacement to her own advantage, however, when she used "the conventions of book reviewing anonymity to... be... thoroughly dismissive of Ruskin's aspirations to be the definitive moralist of modern British painting" (Orr 19). "Tak[ing] issue with Ruskin's belief in the moral purposes of art" and arguing instead that the language of painting is more than simply a vehicle for thought ("Corinne" 102), Lady Eastlake concluded by dismissing the writings of the pre-eminent critic of the day as having "all the qualities of premature old age -- its coldness, callousness and contraction" (quoted in "Corinne" 103).

The biography of Anna Jameson followed quite the opposite trajectory, for instead of gradually turning the socially conventional roles of wife and mother to her advantage, she embraced the role of an outsider. Indeed, although her first novel, *Diary of an Ennuyee* (1825), provides a glimpse of the art historian she became, with its detailed descriptions of Italian art (Lilly), its main purpose is to invent "her own female version of

the world-weary Byronic outsider" (Orr 16). "A purportedly autobiographical although anonymous account of a love-lorn maiden who dies after wandering around Italy," the novel cost Jameson popularity with readers who were disappointed to find the writer "alive, well, and heart-whole" (Patterson).

Mrs. Jameson (the "Mrs." was largely honorific; the alcoholic Mr. Jameson left her for a career in the Americas, and, on dying, left her penniless) went on to a career as a distinguished art historian, her reputation earned by *Public Galleries* (1842) and *Companion to the Most Celebrated Private Galleries of London* (1844). Her most significant work of art history, however, was her 1848 two-volume *Poetry of Sacred and Legendary Art*, most remarkable for its detached historical, rather than religiously polemical, approach (Lilly). She died before she could complete her last work, *A History of our Lord*, which was completed by Lady Eastlake, who was also the executrix of her estate (Lilly).

Perhaps disappointingly to current critical fashion, both of these women, no matter how unconventional their lifestyles, were firm adherents of the notion that inherent taste and nobility of appreciation gave the English an inalienable right to the art treasures of other countries. In "The Remarkable Acquisition of Correggio's Education of Venus," Jameson describes how the Marquess of Londonderry obtained the picture, which, having been owned by a series of collectors with an unfortunate propensity for being deposed, was being offered for sale in Verona by Caroline Buonaparte, the wife of the exiled

Murat. Jameson admiringly allows the Marquess to narrate how he obtained the pictures by playing the English version of the Ugly Wealthy American:

> as it was not imagined I was an amateur, much less a connoisseur... I waited immediately upon Prince Metternich, and I asked him if, in the event of my closing a bargain... he would obtain for me, as British plenipotentiary, the same liberty of taking these gems to England that he had accorded to Russia? The prince smiled, and looked *en moqueur*, saying "Mais, oui, mon cher! certainement oui!" [italics *sic*]... The moment I obtained the order I went to General M'Donald, and enquired how his negotiation stood. He informed me the Russians stood out against taking the whole for the larger price, and wanted the Correggios alone. I asked him if he would close with me... and within twelve hours... the pictures... were conveyed by him to England almost before the Russians knew they were finally disposed of. (*Sourcebook* 210).

Lady Eastlake's 1854 diary entry records an unsuccessful version of the same story. Her husband, in his capacity as Keeper of the National Gallery, had gone to Tuscany to offer 1200 pounds for a Ghirlandaio in poor condition, (his mission being described delightfully by Lady Eastlake as being "in full treaty for some *prizes*" (*Sourcebook* 309). The Tuscan government however, cited its value as a national treasure and purchased it for a third of the price the English offered, eventually awarding it to the Uffizi Gallery (*Sourcebook* 308). Completely unmoved by the Italian's claim to a national heritage, Lady Eastlake's outrage at her husband's defeat unselfconsciously contrasts her husband's honest, English dealing with Continental perfidy, as she abolishes any moral

equivocation with the statement, "The laws here, as in Russia, are meant to be evaded; but Englishmen, and especially ones like my husband, naturally begin by acting according to them, and are punished for their upright dealing by every kind of annoyance" (*Sourcebook* 310). Rather than acknowledging any right of the Tuscan government to protect its own treasures, she claims:

> The reason for the whole lies in the spite and ignorance of the Director of the Academy, a man we hear, without the slightest knowledge of art, under whose *regime* everything is neglected. He is jealous of anyone who knows more than himself. Sir Charles' choice of the picture has proved to him that it is one of value; and though, had the choice not been made, he would have let it perish with perfect indifference, yet he now affects a zeal for the preservation of it for the Florence gallery, and, as he is a trumpery marquis, all the ministers think themselves bound to support him. He has gone the length of making all believe, as they are as ignorant as he is himself, that this is the only specimen of the master left in Tuscany... [although]... Sir Charles has supplied Lord Normanby with a list of other examples... (*Sourcebook* 311)

Regardless of the attractiveness of these excerpts to the contemporary ear, they serve to highlight what makes Lady Charlotte unique among this triumvirate. For, although Lady Charlotte bought Old Masters for her and Sir John's home at Canford, and lent contemporary paintings to the 1857 Art Treasures of the United Kingdom exhibit, she

collected decorative, not fine, art.[3] China collecting was certainly a far more conventional choice of expertise than those chosen by Mrs. Jameson and Lady Eastlake. Maurice Jonas' approving 1907 entry on china collecting offers many of the reasons why china collecting was perceived as so appropriate to ladies:

> This is a hobby that ladies should cultivate: the exquisite Chelsea and Dresden figures seem to be made especially for the delicate fingers of women to handle... Women, as a rule, have little taste for collecting books, prints or pictures, but it is a fact that they evince quite an attachment to their ordinary china services. (Quoted in Eatwell 126)

However, what is more important to any appreciation of the significance of Lady Charlotte's accomplishments as a collector is the fact that Mrs. Jameson and Lady Eastlake both describe the rapacious struggles for a single, unique work of art.[4] It is precisely this valorization of the uniqueness of a work of art that Walter Benjamin attacks in "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction." In that essay, he associates uniqueness with the term "authenticity," which he associates with the better-known term "aura," defining it as the work's "presence in time and space, its unique existence at the place where it happens to be" (220). This uniqueness inseparably embeds the work in the "fabric of tradition" (223). Tradition, however, for Benjamin is not to be valorized. On the contrary, he perceives it as a repressive influence, "For

[3] It is an interesting sidelight that Lady Eastlake's nephew, Charles L. Eastlake, became literally a household name with his *Hints on Household Taste*, but the elder Eastlakes concerned themselves only with fine art.

[4] Although Frank Herrmann points out "a whole genre of... books in which owners claim that they own the original of the celebrated paintings of which they maintain that copies are in public galleries" (*Sourcebook* 208).

tradition puts the past in order, not just chronologically but first of all systematically in that it separates the positive from the negative, the orthodox from the heretical..." (Arendt 44). Tradition, thus always incorporates systematization and judgments of quality, as opposed to:

> The collector's passion, [which] is not only unsystematic but borders on the chaotic, not so much because it is a passion as because it is not primarily kindled by the quality of the object -- something that is classifiable -- but is inflamed by its "genuineness," its uniqueness, something that defies any systematic classification. (Arendt 44)

According to Arendt, Benjamin saw such collecting as a way to rebel against the constraints of tradition, for collecting an object redeemed it from "the drudgery of usefulness" and foregrounded its value in and of itself (42). Interestingly, Benjamin's argument in "Fuchs" seems to contradict this insight, by emphasizing the close relationship between mechanically reproducible objects, such as porcelain, with the historico-material circumstances that produced them, and applauding Fuchs' insight that "Every time has very specific techniques of reproduction which correspond to it. The techniques of reproduction always represent the respective standard of technological development and are the result of a specific need of the time" (251). However, this seeming contradiction can be resolved by the realization that tradition and history (or more specifically, historico-material circumstances), rather than being the same, are in fact antithetical; indeed, it is precisely this point that is the entire thesis of "Edward

Fuchs." Tradition is in fact the sum of categorizations and abstractions that Benjamin sees as inimical to allowing any sort of dialectical appreciation of history.

"Edward Fuchs" demonstrates how Benjamin's aversion to tradition is very much an intellectual necessity, grounded in the fundamental insights of dialectical materialism. However, Arendt also relates Benjamin's aversion to tradition to his perception of himself as an outsider, estranged both by and from his Jewishness (Arendt 40). Similarly, it could be argued that woman collectors in the nineteenth century were outsiders, excluded mentally and physically from the mainstream of collecting. Following this logic, collecting by women, especially of domestic objects, can be seen, despite the opinions of the approving Jonas, to be mounting a Benjaminian assault, not only on the tradition of collecting, but also on the tradition that the collected objects represented. In liberating domestic objects, such as china, from their usefulness as objects -- a usefulness which was closely allied to traditional female roles -- women collectors may have actually been enacting Benjamin's belief that "Collecting is the redemption of things which is to complement the redemption of man" (Arendt 42). Collecting domestic objects may have allowed women collectors to liberate themselves both from the roles those objects symbolized as well as the entire process of symbolizing itself.

This conception of the redemption of things was closely related to Benjamin's fascination with miniaturization. In a famous anecdote, told by Gershon Scholem, and quoted by Hannah Arendt, Benjamin admired "two grains of wheat in the Jewish section

of the Musee Cluny 'on which a kindred soul had inscribed the complete *Shema Israel*' (Arendt 11). To most sensibilities, this seems like nothing but a parlor trick; however, Benjamin saw in such objects an extreme example of Goethe's *Urphanomen*, "a concrete thing to be discovered in the world of appearances in which 'significance'... and appearance, word and thing, idea and experience would coincide. The smaller the object, the more likely it seemed that it could contain in the most concentrated form everything else; hence his delight that two grains of wheat should contain... the very essence of Judaism" (Arendt 12).

Similarly, Lady Charlotte's china collection miniaturized the scale of history, literature, and myth into objects that could be contained in a domestic cabinet and handled by even the delicate fingers of refined ladies -- creating an unexpected exemplar of Benjamin's delightful characterization of the collector as "motivated by dangerous though domesticated passions" ("Fuchs" 241). The Bow figures of the Marquis of Granby and General Wolfe (Rackham Nos. 54A and 54, Fig.1) are good examples of such miniaturization. The two men were both military heroes and the figurines were "probably made to commemorate the victories over the French in 1759 at Quebec and Minden, in which the respective generals were engaged" (Rackham 18). Copied from contemporary portraits, the generals are portrayed with all the expected military accouterments: musket, cannon, grenades, a sword, and an axe, as well as the sprays of laurel due a victor. Yet the effect of the two pieces can only be described as effeminate or child-like: both generals have the cupid-bow lips and arched eyebrows of china dolls.

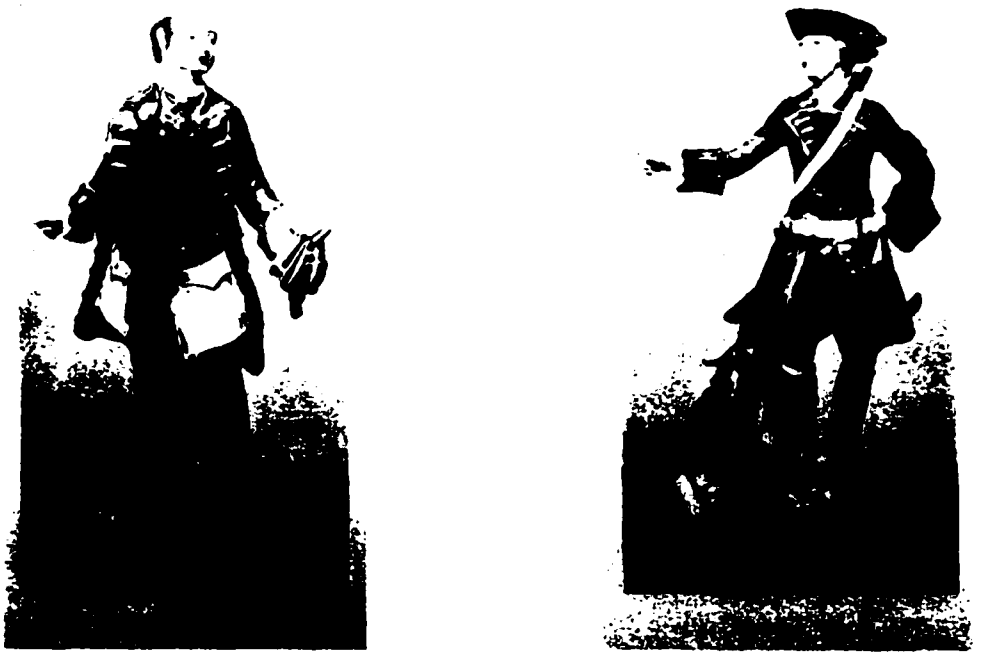

Fig. 1. The Marquis of Granby and General Wolfe

A similar miniaturization of myth can be seen in the Chelsea figure of Leda and the Swan (Rackham No. 134, Fig. 2). The catalogue describes Leda as "seated on a tree-stump, slightly draped in a pink mantle, looking down with a gesture of surprise at the swan by her side" (Rackham 36). One hand may evince surprise, but the other, rather than attempting to repel the swan -- who is gazing up at her with the decidedly unintimidating adoration of a puppy begging food -- seems to be stroking its back. Any other hint of the brutal rape that underlies the story was safely miniaturized away when "[a]n attendant nymph in the original composition [was] replaced by the figure of Cupid" (Rackham 36).

134. Leda and the Swan

Fig. 2. Leda and the Swan, after Boucher

It is not surprising that Leda was adapted from a painting by Francois Boucher; Rococo painters, including Watteau and Fragonard, along with Boucher, were favorite sources for china figurines.[5] Indeed, the shelves of the Schreiber Collection are a riot of genre scenes between shepherds and shepherdesses with coy titles such as *"Le Noeud de Cravatte"* (Rackham No. 352, Fig. 3) and *"Pensent-ils au Raisin?"* (Rackham No. 355, Fig. 3). Yet grander, tragic narratives are also miniaturized in porcelain figurines. Lady Charlotte's collection boasts Derby figures of King Lear (Rackham No. 287, Fig. 4) and Garrick as Richard III (Rackham No. 342). Hercules and Omphale also make an appearance in Chelsea (Rackham No. 120, Fig. 5), looking more shepherd and shepherdess than hero and nymph, despite the presence of Hercules' identifying club.

[5] Perhaps lending credence for once and for all to the French evaluation of Boucher's work: *Il vaut son nom.*

Fig. 4. King Lear

Fig. 5 Hercules and Omphale

Allegory, too, is miniaturized. A favorite subject is the four seasons; however, the four elements also make their appearance (Rackham No. 743), as well as the four (!) continents (Rackham No. 86). A pair of little girls, presumably from either the Seven Liberal Arts or the Nine Muses represent Painting and Astronomy (Rackham No. 135). In the most extended allegory, a Minerva who is only distinguishable from a *putto* by her toy helmet and shield (complete with miniature Gorgon's head), crowns Constancy, while on the obverse of the piece, another child, representing Hercules, kills the Hydra (Rackham No. 422, Fig. 6).

Fig. 6. Allegory of Minerva Crowning Constancy

Even allowing for the vagaries of taste over time, the overall effect of such abrupt inconsistency of scale must be admitted to create grotesques -- such as the figurine of Lord Chatham, casually bestowing his colonial blessing on an alligator and a Sambo-esque figure intended to represent a Native American woman (Rackham No. 306, Fig. 7).

Fig. 7. Lord Chatham

In addition, Lady Charlotte's collection includes several actual grotesques, including a pair of dwarves (Rackham No. 131, Fig. 9), exhibited in the same case as:

> Three figures of monkeys, copied from Meissen figures belonging to a set known as the "*Affenkapelle*"... Two are dressed as men, and one as a woman in costume of the period. Both the former are standing: one wearing a cocked hat, a yellow short-sleeved tunic, and purple breeches, is playing a pipe and a side drum; the other, clothed in a green and purple cap, loose white shirt, and purple breeches, carries two

draped kettle-drums slung on his shoulders. The female wears a lace cap tied with ribbons and a flowered Watteau dress over a yellow bodice and skirt; she is seated in a folding chair, singing from a music-book open on her knees. (Rackham 36, Fig. 8)

Fig. 8. ***Affenkapelle***

Fig. 9. Dwarf

Yet a third class of grotesques in Lady Charlotte's collection derive their grotesquerie from hybridization, rather than from scale or content. In this they are most closely related to objects such as the coral Daphne from earlier collectors' *Wunderkammern*. Just as those objects bridged the gap between the natural and the created, many of the porcelain hybrids bridge the gap between decorative and functional. A painted mug or

plate is clearly a functional object, while a figurine is purely decorative. However, objects such as the Derby vase (Rackham No. 372, Fig. 10) are impossible to categorize as functional or decorative at first -- or even second -- glance. Certainly, the vase's basic form seems functional, but the decoration has taken over the piece, so that the form of the vase is obscured beneath:

> three white caryatid figures ending downwards in lions' paws, which rest on a moulded circular pedestal painted with trophies of arms *en grisaille*. Wreaths of flowers painted in colours are festooned round the body and across the figures. The high domed covers are decorated with gilt pierced rococo scrolls and surmounted by a bouquet of flowers. (Rackham 76)

Fig. 10. Decorative Vase

Other hybrids disguise their function by masquerading as another object. A box and cover (Rackham No. 152), for example, are designed and colored to be so close to nature that they were described in the Chelsea Sale Catalogue as "Four fine APPLES for desart [*sic*]" (Rackham 38). In the same case stands, according another Sale Catalogue, "A very fine tureen, in the form of a RABBIT BIG AS LIFE" (Rackham 28, No. 151, Fig 11).

Fig. 11. Rabbit-Shaped Tureen

In an even more peculiar bit of metonymy, a patch box is presented in the form of the lady's face its contents are presumably destined to adorn (Rackham No. 231, Fig. 12).

Fig. 12. Patch-box in the Shape of a Woman's Head

The grotesque was an important concept for Benjamin, as well. Like the phenomenon, the grotesque concentrates meaning; what differentiates it from other Benjaminian phenomena is that the truth it expresses is always a primal, and often a sexual, one (237). For example, as Benjamin describes Fuchs' *Tang Plastik*:

> The grotesque is the highest escalation of what is sensually imaginable. In this sense, grotesque products become an expression of the teeming health of a time.... Yet one cannot dispute the fact that the motivating forces of the grotesque have a crass counterpoint. Decadent times and sick brains also incline toward grotesque representations. In such cases, the grotesque becomes the shocking reflection of the fact that for the times and individuals in question, the problems of existence have taken on an appearance of unsolvable complexity. ("Fuchs" 238)

Benjamin's argument creates a central difficulty for anyone attempting to discuss the Schreiber collection. For, although it does not take much of a feminist leap to see Lady Charlotte and her fellow collectors as possessing the "dangerous but domesticated passions" of Benjamin's Romantic collector, it seems a stretch, to say the least, to see them as exemplars of the teeming sensuous health of the High Victorians. It seems only marginally less difficult to see a properly domestic collection of china as reflecting the "delicate piquanterie" of a decadent class. Such a characterization might make sense when applied to a male collectors, such as Charles Lamb. His claim, "I have an almost feminine partiality for old china. When I go to see any great house, I inquire for the china-closet, and next for the picture-gallery" (quoted in Eatwell 128), has a certain decadence generated by the passage's inversions between feminine and masculine and

high and low art. It is difficult, however, to see a similar piquanterie in the implicit symmetry between female collectors' "delicate fingers" and the delicate objects they collect.

This problem in characterizing the grotesque foregrounds an important limit in attempting to apply historical materialist thinking to female collectors. For Fuchs' historical materialism, if not Benjamin's, depends upon a direct, unmediated relationship between the work of art and the spirit of the society that created it. In terms of the grotesque:

> This often occurs in rather massive fashion. Moreover these valuations are always extreme. They occur as oppositions and in this way polarize the concept with which they are fused... [Fuchs] avoids border cases in which the problematic of such images might become apparent. (238)

Anderson and Zinsser have already shown that women's history cannot be described using the same intellectual constructions as have been conventionally used to describe history.[6] Similarly, there are limits to describing female collectors' relationship with the objects in their collections from a historico-materialist perspective. Instead, they may be better understood by returning to the linguistic models of the object proposed by Pearce and Miller. Miller's approach is particularly instructive. In a theory that resembles Chomsky's generative grammar, Miller claims that individuals in society both read and

[6] Anderson, Bonnie S. and Judith P. Zinsser. *A History of their Own.* New York: Harper, 1989.

write objects, construing their "social appropriateness" and using them to generate new forms (104).

What is important about the process Miller describes is the flexibility of meanings that can pertain to objects. This flexibility is not obvious, for humans are biased toward seeing the meaning of objects as inherently more absolute than that of linguistic systems. As Miller argues:

> The artefact, on the other hand, tends to imply a certain innocence of facticity; it seems to offer the clarity of realism, an assertion of certainty against the buffeting of debate, an end or resting point which resolves the disorder of uncertain perspectives. All this is, of course, quite illusory; the object is just as likely as the word, if not more so, to evoke variable responses and invite a variety of interpretation. In fact, language, through abstraction, is a much more efficient form of communication and possesses much more control over its interpretation, and it is rather that this difference in evocation is less likely to be evident in artefactual symbolism than in linguistic symbolism. (106)

Miller argues that quite the opposite is true and "[t]he artefact's affinity to the unconscious also allows it to play an important role in marking different forms of social reality, and allowing these and the perspectives arising from different social positions to exist concurrently without coming into overt conflict" (108).

It is this last insight that perhaps explains the attraction of collecting domestic objects for women. Domestic objects such as china reinforce societal expectations about women

both metaphorically and metonymically. Metaphorically, they reinforce women's presumed daintiness, delicacy and fragility. Metonymically, an affection for china, for example, readily transposes into an affection for feeding or nurturing one's family.[7] Similarly, an affection for fans metonymically recalls an affection for flirtation. Yet, even as such a collection can appear to be reinforcing the female collector's conventional femininity, she can use her collection primarily as a vehicle for systematization and categorization, which in fact allows her to trespass on traditionally masculine territories. In this respect, it is instructive that Jonas (apparently approvingly) notes that women have little taste for collecting books, prints, or pictures. For a book, print, or picture's symbolic presence is much stronger than that of domestic artifacts, which, in Miller's words, "continually assert their presence as simultaneously material force and symbol...The use of artefact as symbol does not in any way detract from its significance as tool, material worked, or environment experienced" (Miller 105).[8] Collecting decorative arts may have thus afforded female collectors the opportunity to trespass on the symbolic Realm of the Father, by practicing systematization, which in turn allows for self-assertion through Hegelian objectification, all the while decorously disguising their activities as a form of suitably feminine, other-oriented -- fetishistic, in Pearce's terminology -- collecting.

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[7] Joshua Wilner has also suggested "a more or less standing association of china with feminine virginity" (Personal communication, 8/22/03).

[8] It should come as no surprise to the reader at this point that the redoubtable Lady Charlotte's expertise extended to prints, as well as decorative objects. She also amassed a considerable collection of paintings for her home at Canford with her first husband, Sir. John Guest.

In keeping with her admittedly ambitious, competitive nature, Lady Charlotte may be a rarity not so much because she practiced such systematization, but rather because she gave it written form, first in her collector's journals, then, more formally, by preparing a catalogue of her porcelains. Perhaps her most significant gesture, however, was her donating the collection to a museum -- a gesture that is arguably as much of a trespass on masculine territory as her translation of the *Mabinogion* some forty years earlier. Such a donation can be read as a rupture comparable to the primal imposition of the paternal symbolic. Furthermore, and more importantly, it is an act of framing.

The importance of the frame was first noted by Gombrich in *The Sense of Order* (1979). Miller expands Gombrich's argument, claiming:

> What is crucial to this argument, if extended a little beyond Gombrich's own assessment, is that the frame's anonymous and modest presence belies its significance for the appreciation of the work of art. It might be suggested that it is only through the presence of the frame that we recognize the work of art for what it is, perceiving it and responding to it in the appropriate way. In short, it is the frame rather than the picture which establishes the mode of appreciation we know as art. (100-1)

Pearce points out that collecting is a similar act of framing, in which "The kind of object collected is not important: what matters is the reframing of the object within the collection, as an act of formal admission from one state to another" (Pearce 52). Moving the collection to a museum, she argues, is a second act of framing, in which the object is

"marked" as art. Part of that marking includes the collector's act of self-definition being transformed into a larger sort of societal definition, in which judgment or taste, rather than self, is defined. Borrowing Thompson's categorization of objects into "rubbish," "transients," and "durables," Pearce points out that museums' importance to the group is directly related to the importance of the role they play in maintaining this categorization. First, and most obviously, the purpose of museums is specifically to house only durable objects. However, since as soon as an object is placed in a museum, it is, by definition, a durable, it is the museum that ultimately determines which objects are placed in which category (34).

Interestingly, Pearce sees in this final framing a rupture that very similar to Benjamin's concept of redeeming the object from its usefulness. For Pearce argues that it is the act of removing the object from economic circulation that permanently establishes the object as "art." Specifically, she characterizes the museum as an "otherworld" in which objects attain special value precisely because they have been removed from the commodity marketplace (Pearce 33).

In fact, however, Benjamin and Pearce are describing quite opposite effects. Despite the similarity of the action, the result of the rupture described by Pearce is antithetical to that described by Benjamin. Indeed, Benjamin argues quite vehemently in "Unpacking my Library" that "the phenomenon of collecting loses its meaning as it loses its personal owner. Even though public collections may be less objectionable socially and more useful academically than private collections, the objects get their due only in the latter"

(67). In Benjamin's theory of collecting, the object must be extracted from tradition in order to attain its full meaning as a phenomenon. Pearce does not disagree with Benjamin on this matter, except perhaps to see the object as enabling the collector's construction of self, rather than his perceiving the ideal. However -- as is perhaps natural for a professional curator -- she ultimately privileges the collection's being acquired by a museum as the culmination of a process that removes the object from tradition only to reinscribe it as an artifact with a defined symbolic value that is fixed by its being removed from the commodity markeplace.

Such a reinscription into tradition was anathema to Benjamin. However, for Lady Charlotte, it may have been a necessary mechanism. Collecting -- in particular collecting china -- seemed to provide Lady Charlotte with an opportunity successfully to negotiate her own status with respect to tradition. Discussed in terms of Pearce's logic, assembling the collection provided a mechanism by which she could create a unified Romantic sense of self, while, in Benjamin's terms, it also afforded her a way of challenging a tradition that could only serve to limit her. This separation culminates, however, in a final act of reintegration. Donating the collection to the Victoria and Albert museum successfully reinscribed not only the objects, but the figure of Lady Charlotte Schreiber, into the fabric of tradition -- but this time as an integrated self.

Conclusion: The Half-Coral Daphne

Lady Charlotte's life, as her biographers rarely fail to point out, spanned nearly the entire nineteenth century. Born at the height of Napoleon's powers, she lived to witness not only the birth of the British Empire, but also the beginnings of its dissolution. More importantly, her biography spanned more than just the historical range of the nineteenth century. She also traveled the whole of Europe and through much of the Middle East, while sending at least one son as far afield as India. She rubbed elbows with figures ranging from Disraeli to the Rebecca Rioters to the King of Italy. Her many expertises included several great nineteenth-century concerns: education, industry, colonialism, philology, antiquarianism, politics, and collecting.

It is perhaps the scope of her life that led Revel Guest and Angela John to subtitle their book "A Biography of the Nineteenth Century." It is unclear whether the phrase is meant to convey a biography that belongs to the nineteenth century or a biography that describes the nineteenth century. That ambiguity is an attractive and instructive one. For it is difficult to attempt to mold Lady Charlotte's biography into a reflection of the smooth development of what is generally perceived to be the history of the nineteenth century. Yet, just as Forrest Gump managed to appear in every touchstone event of the 1960s, practically any given episode of Lady Charlotte's life appears to be a microcosm of the Victorian experience.

The fact that Lady Charlotte's life does not conform to a clear trajectory may simply reflect her personality, or it may in part be due to the fact that she is a woman and therefore outside history as it is conventionally experienced and described by men. More importantly, however, the recalcitrance of her biography to transform smoothly into a representation of the nineteenth century, hints at Benjamin's perception in "Edward Fuchs" that such a smooth progression never in fact exists, but is instead an imposition from another time, masquerading as an absolute perspective -- which is in fact only graspable contingently and ephemerally, in an *Urphanomen,* an object or event that compresses transcendent meaning into the smallest possible space. Guest and John's title suggests the simultaneous existence of Lady Charlotte's biography as a fragment of the nineteenth century and as a description of the nineteenth century in its entirety. Following their lead, rather than considering Lady Charlotte's life as a vast, architectonic *summa* of the nineteenth century, this study proposes to read her biography as a series of *Urphanomen,* unique because many of its incidents distilled important aspects of the nineteenth-century English experience.

Despite its status as text, Lady Charlotte's translation of the *Mabinogion* is perhaps the episode in her life that can be most easily read as an *Urphanomen.* The physical aspect of the original text itself neatly distills the relation between the Celts and their English overlords, and with it, the larger question of Victorian colonialism. The Welsh original lies side by side, an equal with its English translation. Yet the whole is decorated with a sumptuous binding and illustrations that mark it clearly as a symbol of English luxury and English learning. The text's presence as an English artifact is offset, however, by

underlying absence. First and most important is the absence of any original text that was the *Mabinogion*. A more important absence, however, is the underlying lack of any absolute knowledge about human origins and the origins of human language that drove philologists and historians to privilege the Celts as "primitive" peoples who were somehow closer to a fundamental truth than the high Victorians.

Given Benjamin's insistence in "The Task of the Translator" on the incapacity of individual languages to convey pure meaning, it seems arguable that he would deny the possibility of a text -- rather than the artifact that was the published book or the encounter between two texts -- serving as an *Urphanomen*. Yet, the text Lady Charlotte established as the *Mabinogion* does serve as a locus where several literary trends converge in uneasy encounter with one another. Although Scott's work largely antedates Lady Charlotte's, the *Mabinogion* reflects many of Scott's ideas about ideal past and corrupt present, paralleled by ideal indigenes and corrupt overlords. Despite the strong identification of Scott with romanticism and personal heroism, Lukacs has already demonstrated how Scott's work plants the seeds of the Marxist novel whose subject matter is always the historico-material class struggle. Yet, the *Mabinogion* is also very much part of the great tradition of folklorists and collectors such as the Brothers Grimm, whose intellectual stance -- which was very much the one practiced by Lady Charlotte -- was the systematizing, totalizing one epitomized by George Eliot's *Key to All Mythologies*.

It is a fact of *Urphanomen* that they are ephemeral. Indeed, it is their ephemerality that guarantees their ability to connect with the transcendent. It is, thus, perhaps natural that the *Urphanomen* created by Lady Charlotte's *Mabinogion* collapsed almost immediately into reification, as the figure of Arthur was transformed into the great Tennysonian symbol of Victorian Britain. That signifying crown may have proved too heavy for King Arthur to bear, and shortly before Lady Charlotte's death, her translation was finally transformed into the children's literature she had been accused of originally producing: *A Boy's Mabinogion,* introduced by Sidney Lanier, who had also edited *A Boy's King Arthur.*

Intellectually, both the move to symbol and the move to fairy tale are reifications. Materially, however, they are sublimations, removing the contradictions inherent in her translation of the *Mabinogion* into transcendent worlds. In direct contrast to this movement is the clink of money and roar of blast furnaces that accompany the whole of Lady Charlotte's first marriage to Sir John Guest. Both symbolically and actually, there is no industry better suited than iron manufacture to represent the economic transformation of nineteenth-century England. Not only did the harsh fact of the foundry at Dowlais replace the harsh realities of subsistence farming in Wales' naturally rugged landscape, but Sir John was also involved in the manufacture of the very railroad that would change the English landscape forever.

More importantly, the "Respectful Strike" was a microcosm of class struggle. In terms of romantic self-assertion, Lady Charlotte was never more admirable than in this

moment. Particularly admirable is her fairness of spirit in refusing to take part in collusive labor practices with the other ironmongers. Yet, viewed from a Marxist perspective, it was never her fairness of spirit to assert. Despite its relatively amicable ending, the "Respectful Strike" served as nothing so much as a vehicle for Lady Charlotte to define herself -- graciously accepting the applause of her laborers at the justice of her behavior -- a justice that did nothing to rectify the essential injustice of a woman possessed of two manor houses -- one of which was being renovated by Sir Charles Barry -- measuring her economic needs against laborers who were in danger of starving if they were thrown out of work.

Education was the arena where Lady Charlotte best mediated this imbalance, perhaps because education was her primary means of self-assertion. Not unattractive, but not one of the great beauties of the day, Lady Charlotte would have remained undistinguished, had she not been brilliant. It was her intellectual accomplishments that attracted the young Disraeli; furthermore, it was her intellectual accomplishments that ensured her lasting fame. In turn, in perhaps her most unambiguous contribution to society, she passed on education as means of self-improvement and self-assertion to her husband's Welsh workforce. Yet, as Benjamin as shown, this education also served as an instrument of maintaining capitalist hegemony, by instilling in the workforce the very values that actually served to repress them.

Similarly, Lady Charlotte's feminist quest for self-assertion both embodied and contradicted the essential problems of nineteenth-century feminism. Her turning to an

Other-directed strategy to resolve her difficulty in asserting herself is typical of the nineteenth-century woman writer's struggle for voice. However, her creating Sir John as an ideal reader, as well as her appropriating the gaze in relation to Charles Schreiber, cannot be read as typical feminist strategies, albeit for nearly opposite reasons. Accepting Sir John as her ideal reader largely serves to confirm her place as an object of a man's gaze, while Lady Charlotte's seizing the gaze in relation to her second husband validates the masculinist construction of self-assertion through triangulation of desire. The biographical facts of her marriages reinforce this contradiction. On the one hand, she obtained her independence through the most conventional female scheme possible, marrying well. On the other hand, nearly as soon as she fully obtained this independence, as a widow in charge of running an ironworks on her own, she rejected it. Not only did she give up her position as executrix of her husband's estate, which afforded her considerable economic independence, but she also submitted herself to the rule of a second husband -- albeit, a husband whose financial dependence on her suggests that he was not extremely authoritative.

Her last incarnation, as a collector, embodied similar contradictions. Connoisseurship is, in many ways, is the epitome of an abstract standard of knowledge, embodied in taste. Yet the valuation of this judgment in concrete, economic terms situates it more firmly in the marketplace than perhaps any other intellectual activity. Furthermore, Lady Charlotte confined her connoisseurship to the decorative, not the fine, arts. Benjamin's ideas about the liberation of objects suggest how Lady Charlotte's collecting feminine objects such as fans and china, served to liberate them from their metonymically-associated feminine

usefulness. At the same time, collecting offered Lady Charlotte a vehicle to exercise her "masculine" mind through systematization and categorization, if not Hegelian objectification. Any inherent rebellion in the gesture was offset, however, by Lady Charlotte's donating the collection to the Victoria and Albert as a memorial to her dead husband. Not only does the reinscription of the collection into the museum reinscribe the objects into tradition, but in making the collection a tribute to her husband, she reinscribed the self-assertion of forming the collection back into a conventional, Other-directed strategy.

What is most singular about all these episodes is their stubborn resistance to interpretability. None of them can stand as a stock emblem of capitalism repressing labor, or liberalism uplifting people through education, or the creation of the ultimate Victorian symbol, or an assertion of Welsh nationalism, or a privileging of connoisseurship. Instead, each episode seems to hold within itself its own Other: The forceful, brilliant Lady Charlotte chooses to assert herself primarily through conforming to the ideal of a dutiful wife. The advocate for Wales and all things Welsh demonstrates her love of the country by assumptions and attitudes that would horrify even a mild post-colonialist. The woman who made an extraordinarily conventional first marriage between the impoverished nobility and the rising bourgeoisie, makes as imprudent a second marriage as any seventeen-year-old running off to Gretna Green. The woman who had the intellect of, and more means than, either Mrs. Jameson or Lady Eastlake, instead chooses to distinguish herself as a collector of decorative, rather than fine, arts.

A cynic might say that such a biography could only arise from sheer cussedness of character. A feminist might argue that Lady Charlotte unconsciously embodies the status of woman as "eternal dissident," as she attempts to reconcile her ambitious, achievement-oriented personality with the expectations of the society she clearly cared about too much to scorn. Both of these perceptions are most probably true -- but their truthfulness might be best perceived by characterizing the events of Lady Charlotte's life, if not Lady Charlotte herself, as Mauries' half-coral Daphne, in a constant state of transformation between antithetical states. What is most important to remember, however, is that Daphne and the laurel were sacred to Apollo himself.

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