# BLOOD: A VICTORIAN IDEA IN THE FLESH

by

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Abstract

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Based on a large body of primary works in science, philosophy, political economy and literature, this study argues that in the nineteenth century novel the meaning of "blood" changes from genealogy, as employed in the service of the aristocracy, to capacity for generosity and affection, conceived as able to counteract the godless secularism and money worship haunting the industrialized England of the time. "Good blood" begins to mean possessing these qualities more relevant to the needs of the time. Nevertheless, the old associations with noble genealogy continue to exercise influence imaginatively, through the connection with ancestors reputed to have been exceptional in some way, and in some respects practically, through the wealth and political clout still left the aristocracy. This inherent power is not to be wasted but repurposed by novelists, in an effort to reconcile the two meanings of the term and put the fable of blood behind the qualities required of true leaders.

The study establishes the versatility of the word, which denotes, more than just social standing, physiological as well as moral and affective predispositions. This wide adaptability of meaning stems from the duality of blood, its physical concreteness coupled with unusual powers of suggestiveness. In showing that these can be manipulated to give authority to self-serving ideas, novelists dismantle the old prejudices in favor of hereditary titles and coats-of-arms. However, they continue to make use of the metaphoric potential intrinsic to the idea of blood to suggest that all people are bound in a

fellowship of mankind and that those who are strong have a duty to help the weak. This spirit of altruism is apt to create a new set of relationships benefitting from associations with blood only in the derivative sense of parental care, brotherly love, and affinities of the heart. The goal is to reconstruct British society on the organic model of a great family, with an aristocracy of talent, and possibly even of birth, at its head, but functioning in a benevolently paternal way. This is not the end of the aristocracy but, rather, an opportunity to justify its privileges anew.

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## Chapter I – Blood and Literature

### I

This study is about blood. It is not spilt blood, the blood of battle or the blood of Christ that constitute the present subject, although both of these swell the stream of living blood under question, namely the sublimated essence, no longer red but blue, coursing through the veins of a nineteenth century nobleman. Courage in arms and the Christian religion, momentously united in the Crusades, indeed gave vigor to this kind of blood, since noblemen made it a point of honor to be descended from a long lineage of men tried in the battle for God, king, and country. This validated their claim to an inherent superiority, which the novel of the century acknowledges implicitly but finds hard to defend and even to define.

The age that had begun under the auspices of Napoleon, the epitome of the self-made man, could not but challenge the right to privileges inherited and not earned. For two centuries, the habit of deference securing aristocratic privilege from the defiling touch of the mob had been gradually eroded, so that noblemen had to rediscover those qualities and duties that had placed their forefathers at the head of the nation, the strength and the ability to protect and to lead. While the subject described thus far seems the concern of history or sociology, and incursion into those field would undoubtedly be revealing, what literature does do is to capture the struggle of the aristocracy to justify its privileges anew on the terms dictated by the new political, economic, social and spiritual order. The case of the aristocracy provides an entry point into the subject because its entrenched dominance rests fundamentally on the notion of blood as the basis of property

and power. Inquiry into what gets passed in the blood so as to make man what he is, physiologically and morally, as well as make some, more than others, worthy to procreate, prosper, rule and build empires, persistently appears in the novel, as indeed in society as a whole. It is the pivotal concern that strips down to a basic premise about inherent human worth the century's most pressing problems: political unrest and revolution, loss of faith in divine design and new respect for the dictates of science, and rivalry between industry and passively inherited wealth.

The novel uses blood to signify a number of things, so that the map of its semantic meanderings becomes superimposed on the restive pattern of nineteenth century life. Blood is described as high and good or low and humble, but in neither case does it guarantee a noble character or lack of it. In its variety of states, whether hot, cold, frozen, roused, or tainted in some way, blood denotes permanent inclinations to anything from violence to artistic talent as well as visceral sensations of pain, fear, anger, shame, and sexual arousal. Blood carries disease with the same facility that it does a rebellious disposition, the insurrection of mind and morals, or of the body politic in a larger sense, being symbolically a form of illness. When healthy, blood infuses life into physical organisms, social institutions, and human endeavors alike, ensuring progeny not just through children and heirs but through the lasting effects that human actions produce. Blood, and much more than man was ready to admit, is something that he shares with animals, as scientists pre-Darwin and beyond relentlessly proposed. It provides genealogical links to common ancestors, which divide humanity according to race, nationality, and the exclusive unit of family.

The romance of the Middle Ages had little trouble in discerning good blood in even the smallest details of one's appearance and conduct. The irresistible mixture of a knight's bodily perfection and brave feats of arms that conjoined beauty with grace and dexterity in battle made the ladies "quick to note" and exclaim, as they do about Tristan's father Rivalin,

> "What a perfect body he has! How evenly those magnificent legs of his move together! How tightly his shield stays glued in its place! How well the spear-shaft graces his hand! How elegant all his robes! How noble his head and hair! How charming his whole bearing! What a divine figure he makes!" (Gottfried 50-51)

Rivalin seems born to wear the trappings of a knight that are welded to his body as if outlining the mold into which physical perfection must fit. Such perfection is not destined to die out with just one exemplar of a well-favored race but is so reliably passed on to the offspring as to anticipate his noble deportment even in situations when he acts anonymously or in disguise.

Whatever susceptibilities the lookers-on at a tournament may fall under, they cannot be accused of judging a knight favorably because of the resonance of his name, since often that is not even known. In this sense the romance proceeds in reverse order from the novel, which tends to introduce and describe a character before following his or her career, although unexpected twists of identity in the spirit of the romance can sometimes occur. By showing first the hero in action and drawing inferences about his name and parentage from this observed conduct, the romance is at once elitist and equitable. It is elitist because only the most exceptional conduct earns praise and because the ones who attain it are invariably revealed to be, although after the fact, nobly born. It

is equitable nevertheless because as long as conduct is made the basis and proof of nobility the door is conceivably open for anyone who can rise to the occasion to make a name for himself. Although there are nobly born knights, the heroes' antagonists, who fall short of the ideal conduct, no knight who does exhibit it fails to be called noble. The very anonymity of the heroes suggests that a name is not granted but must be earned, and once acknowledged it becomes not just a denomination inherited from the forefathers but a repository of one's deeds.

The prevalence of the motif of the Fair Unknown, or Le Bel Inconnu, points to the importance of anonymity. The motif was inspired by *The Tale of the Fair Unknown*, a romance about an unnamed youth who comes to court in search of adventure and discovers his identity after undergoing a number of tests. The story has survived in a thirteenth-century version of which there are earlier traces in a number of twelfth-century romances, including those of Chrétien de Troyes,[1] and also appears in the compilation of major English and French romances that is Thomas Malory's *Le Morte Darthur*. Even the renowned Lancelot starts out as an unnamed knight who is strangely adamant about keeping his name a secret until he has achieved the goal that defines him as hero, freeing Queen Guinevere from her abductors along with the captives in the land of Gore. On one hand anonymity emphasizes the importance of exceptional deeds as a way of deserving nobility – instead of just relying on borrowed designations such as son of King Ban – and on the other it is a reminder of how predictably the former are supposed to spring from the latter. Mutual interdependence best describes the relationship between the two, and the fact is that as long as nobility still demands that something be earned the biases of the romance are not entirely groundless. One cannot blame Isolde, after seeing Tristan

[1] Kennedy ix.

"marvellously blessed with every grace that goes to make a knight" (187), for declaring, "'How well I have known all the time, since I began to take note of him and study him in every detail of his appearance and behaviour and all that has to do with him, that he was a nobleman born" (174).

Anonymity can also be said to represent simply an element in the structure of the romance, understood as a pattern of storytelling that involves mysterious birth, oracular prophecies, foster parents, death-defying adventures, recognition of true identity, and marriage with the heroine at the end. [2] And, in so far as this endures from the Greek romances[3] into the novel, the assessment is certainly fair, although it seems at first to divest anonymity of any more specific meaning. But the thrilling quality of these narrative tropes makes them suitable not only to entertain and excite the reader's imagination but also to act as vehicles for delivering in palatable form comments about a spatially and temporally specific reality. Thus, Dickens can be romance writer and social commentator all at once. The transformative process from one to the other has been called "displacement" and consists of providing explanations for the mysterious events so as to fit them into a plausible context.[4] And if that is the case, those explanations are precisely the key that fits right in to unlock not just the fateful secret but insights into what is credible and significant to a set of readers, and in each time and place that key is tellingly different.

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[2] This discussion of structure is based on Northrop Frye, *The Secular Scripture: A Study of the Structure of Romance* 4.

[3] Examples of Greek romances are *Ethiopica* of Heliodorus and *Pastoralia*, or *Daphnis and Chloe*, of Longus. Frye 72.

[4] *Ibid*., 36.

To the Greeks it was fate that gave the character identity and explained the coincidences and twists of the plot, to romance writers it was prowess, to nineteenth century British novelists it is generosity and affection in dealing with fellow human beings. Sometimes these things can overlap so that the differences between them are a matter of emphasis. Nonetheless, it is these explanations that provide a unique point of contact between the story and the reality it intersects, and it is further they, in whatever form is prevalent at the moment, that are seconded by the idea of blood. Fate pursues the child discovered through all disguises in accordance with the acts of the parent from which his own have sprung, prowess graces the arm of the noble son proving him worthy of an unknown illustrious father, and generosity and affection – and this is the point under question – may be capable of redeeming the nobleman of the novel from the charge of falling short of the honor and duty displayed by his forefathers, who are none other than the heroes remembered in history and fictionalized in romance.

For all its fancifulness, the medieval romance is certainly rooted in a historical terrain. A European phenomenon in itself, it is in England especially an interesting mix of the elements of prowess, love, kinship and dynastic right contributed by Celtic, Saxon, and Norman influences. From the Norman conquerors who in 1066 started importing their French-based culture, English romance acquired the admiration for martial deeds sung in the trouvères' chansons de geste yet softened by the troubadours' devotion to love as inspiration and reward for prowess. When the invaders, eager to blend with the natives, sought common interests with them in the historic past going back to before the Saxons whom the new conquerors displaced, a wealth of Celtic legends and folktales about figures such as Arthur and Tristan was unearthed. When, furthermore, the Angevin

dynasty founded by Henry II in 1154 brought a resurgence of French influence from its extensive continental domains, romances such as those of Robert Wace, Marie de France, and Chretien de Troyes flourished at the court of Henry's wife Eleanor of Aquitaine and her daughter Marie de Champagne. Meanwhile, outside the royal courts, French language and literature were falling into obscurity among the nobility in favor of the Anglo-Norman mixed culture that William the Conqueror, more interested in assimilation and intermarriage, had managed to successfully initiate a century before. Once King John lost Normandy in 1204 to Philip of France, the English Kings, who since the Conquest had been in some degree also vassals of France, had a breach with their overlords and started to identify more strongly with their insular culture as a way of asserting their independence. What ensued was a revival of the Anglo-Saxon romances along with the Germanic ideals of reliance on the kinship group that traditionally had ensured armed support and established dynastic lines in the interest of gaining stability for a warlike people.[5]

The influences that shaped the romance with each successive conquest show it to be largely the product of a distinct ruling class made up of those who fought for land and power and who patronized stories that pleased and served them best. This was a class defined by land ownership earned in battle or held in fealty, chivalric values and refined manners acquired at the court of the king or his various vassals. Originally a knight, or chevalier in French, merely denoted a man who was able to equip himself with a warhorse and arms and fight in a cavalry combat, and who had been dubbed to

[5] Barron 1-51.

knighthood through certain rituals.[6] Nobility was a prerequisite for knighthood only to the extent that nobles were the ones who possessed enough money for the required, very expensive equipment. The very designation of nobility was based on property rather than aristocratic bloodlines, which had disappeared as a concept after the fall of the Roman Empire.[7] Along with property, knighthood became increasingly hereditary, but it could still be earned through exceptional prowess, skill and bravery in battle, allowing for some degree of upward movement. Thus, knighthood came to represent the seed of a new nobility based on personal worth, of which prowess was the key trait, but which also entailed a number of other virtues: "loyauté, largesse, courtoisie, and franchise (the free and frank bearing that is visible testimony to the combination of good birth and virtue)" (Keen 2). The church, many of whose clergymen were knights themselves, sanctified the institution of knighthood by way of religious oaths and observances that were part of the ceremony of dubbing and the overall chivalric code.

To a great extent, the romance helps define the ethos of a burgeoning culture, as captured in King Mark's advice:

> "Listen, nephew Tristan," he said, "now that your sword has been consecrated and you have become a knight, give thought to the glory of knighthood, and to yourself and who you are. Let your birth and nobility be ever present in your mind. Be modest and straightforward: be truthful and well-bred. Always be kind to the lowly: to the mighty always be proud. Cultivate your appearance. Honour and love all women. Be generous and loyal, and never tire of it." (Gottfried 110)

[6] Keen 1-2.

[7] Southern 110.

In accordance with these ideals, the heroes benefit from stock characterizations that describe them as members of an elite caste at its best, a caste that constituted, moreover, the main public for such productions and liked to see itself flatteringly reflected in them. Romance was so pervasive as to invade the ostensibly historical chronicles about the martial deeds of ancestors, the stories of saints' lives, and even reality itself. [8] As life started to imitate art, the nobility rallied round chivalric orders modeled after King Arthur's Round Table, tournaments and mock battles, which constantly recalibrated the balance between reality and imagination, creating the ambient of fact laced with fiction within which that more delicate and consequential balance between granted status and genuine worth struggled to be achieved.

In the conceptual space outlined by these coordinates, the tug-of-war that was to establish the role of blood was waged. The fictionalized superiority of the nobles led to a growing distance that separated them from the mob and served as means of justifying their exclusive right to inheritance of land and power. Conversely, the very real opportunistic character of the English nobility in particular, who had always left room for people to rise from below not just through war but service in government and money used to finance the crown or buy land,[9] undermined the authority of the fiction. On one hand the English nobility permitted ascension, but on the other this very feature heightened the need to distinguish itself against commoners through its proprietary chivalry and good-breeding, titles and badges of honor. So necessary were these

[8] Barron 57.

[9] Susan Crane in *Insular Romance* speaks of the relatively inclusive organization of England's ruling class, which "had never been a true nobility of blood nor a solely military class" (20).

M.L. Bush in *The English Aristocracy* qualifies the accessibility thesis by specifying: "Upward mobility in England depended upon the Crown's willingness to create titles of peerage, knighthood and baronetcy and to admit new coats of arms, and the state of the land market since entry could follow the acquisition of an estate" (8).

trappings to maintaining a difference under constant assault that those who bought their way into the upper ranks, in the nineteenth century no less than before, felt compelled to adopt them with more or less success and pay good money for false escutcheons and fictitious family trees. Loosened from the old ground of exceptional prowess and inflated with airy nothings, the notion of nobility threatened to fly up and get lost in the stratosphere, until the need for real service to the country tugged at the strings and brought it down to earth. This time the mystery of noble birth, grown since the romance more elusive and fraught with questions despite carefully preserved records of ancestry, finds through the novel explanations that are plausible in an age still demanding action but of a different and less martial kind, aimed at responsibility in leadership, help to the poor, sympathy with mankind.

The cornerstone of the movements happening from the romance to the novel is the concept of blood. It is that mysterious concept that in the process of being made credible and comprehensible to a certain public reveals the sensibilities of the age. It contains in the germ both the counterpoised notions of real merit and special birth and the potential to extrapolate these into the realm of fiction so as to amplify them, experiment with their meanings and debate over their relative values, keeping in mind all the while that they belong back in the world where to inform the way people think and act as the blood does the movements of the body. With its strength of suggestion grounded nevertheless in the physical aspects of life, the idea of blood rises above the real while remaining responsive to and even inseparable from it. It gains versatility through conceptual detachment and perpetual relevance through the attachment it maintains to the affairs of the world. This is how the romance could be historical yet fanciful in its

treatment of blood, transforming pragmatic laws of inheritance and descent into expectations of enduring qualities. Thus, it contributed to creating lasting perceptions about a group of people with a specific mindset and way of life that the novel is left to recontextualize and reinterpret.

The bloodlines springing from the glorified knights became the conduits for transmission of wealth, power, status, physical attributes and character traits, real or imagined. This motley inheritance passed in the blood was exclusive to the aristocracy, whose merits rested on the connection with ancestors reputed to have been exceptional in some way. As Thomas Hardy points out in *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* (1891), there is a political value and an imaginative value of blood, and although by his time the former had been threatened with revolution and the latter had devolved to "the dreamer, the moralizer on declines and falls" (275), traditionally the two had supported each other. Stories created power and power felt the need to bolster itself up by creating stories. Politically, blood meant authority and validation of the right to rule. Imaginatively, it was the stuff of legend rooted in the past, implying continuity and promise of consistency in the perpetuation of the race and the qualities that made it outstanding. When Hardy meditates, "So does Time ruthlessly destroy his own romances" (276), he has in mind one of the greatest of all, namely that blood has the intrinsic ability to confer human worth.

For the time, the romance acquitted itself of the task of validating the culture that gave it life, but it also set forth some ideas of which posterity would have done well to take heed. It insisted that merit was the only basis of sustainable honor. Blood in the sense of honor acquired through descent from an ancestor becomes prejudice only when proof of worthiness is no longer required for the distinction to be granted. Bystanders in

the romance never prejudge but, on the contrary, pay close attention to the events that unravel before their eyes and only then voice their verdict. Besides, the criteria that they use to arrive at an estimation are fairly concrete and demonstrable. An ecclesiastical commissioner from the time of Henry VIII who made his fortune by despoiling monasteries was more likely to have his merits contested than a knight who had won in battle fair-and-square, or who at least had fought honorably in a respected cause such as the Crusades, to which noblemen in the nineteenth century novel are still vying to trace their roots.

If the romance impulse of accounting for privilege through proofs of real merit is at all a reflection of the priorities of its time, if in idealized form, then a departure from such mindset as becomes visible by the time the novel starts spreading skepticism and discontent can be taken to signal that the priorities have changed. Moreover, looking into how the changing sensibilities of the novel are tied to changes in the premises that determine the way society settles into a structure, chooses its best and helps its laggards along, and, more specifically, how these premises reflect the changing fortunes of the idea of blood, can help to unlock some of the meanings behind the century's seismic movements in politics, religion, science, and economics. Since the romance no longer works, it may be that society has stopped promoting what is valuable and has come to regard what is not, keeping in mind that value is in itself a shifting concept decided by the thing for which there is a need. As more people engage in the societal discourse through broader-based political thought as well as a widening public of literate and literary men, and women, it may also be that ideas begin to rise up from the bottom, expressing sorrows and concerns that found no voice before. And if the mood for idealizing is gone,

that in itself becomes a sign of the century's increased self-awareness that leads to a depression of spirits but also to the constructive consciousness of the need for reform. The remedy for the change separating the present from the age of the heroes is more change, some of it reactionary and aimed at regaining what was good in the past and some progressive and aware that certain things have moved irreversibly in a new direction.

II

In the beginning of the seventeenth century Shakespeare in *The Winter's Tale* (1623) could still count on noble blood to show through Perdita's pastoral garb and "to proclaim her, with all certainty, to be the King's daughter." He claims with confidence that "the majesty of the creature,…the affection [natural disposition] of nobleness, which nature shows above her breeding"(5.2.38-42), in short everything she does or seems "smacks of something greater than herself, / Too noble for this place" (4.4.158-59). Aside from the fact that the time is still ripe for such comments, this is of course also evidence that the appeal of the romance and its device of discovered identity has endured and become embedded in other literary forms. Nor is this something that starts with Shakespeare or even medieval romance for that matter, since the Greek romances already had it and were, in the estimation of some critics, the ones to lay the foundation of a continuous tradition that survived into the novel. [10] Shakespearean comedy, the gothic novel, and even episodes of the realist novel seek to envelop key characters in the irresistible aura of mystery, made transparent and ultimately dispelled by the workings of fate and their own resolute display of the core traits that hint at their origins. By such

[10] This view is expressed by Clara Reeve in *The Progress of Romance through Times, Countries, and Manners* and by Margaret Anne Doody in *The True Story of the Novel*.

devices, Emily St. Aubert in Ann Radcliffe's *The Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794) barely escapes illegitimacy but rediscovers her connection with a lost aunt and her descendants, Mr. Bramble in *Humphry Clinker* (1771) by Tobias Smollett is reunited with an illegitimate yet worthy only son, and George Eliot's hero in *Daniel Deronda* (1876) discovers not just his parentage but his racial and spiritual roots.

But around the same time that Shakespeare was subscribing to the idea that 'blood will tell' favored by the romance, a more skeptical mind than his own was deliberating with some apprehension about the term's meaning. And if Cervantes could be trusted to put a gravestone to the unquestioned authority of the romance, why not look to him also to raise questions about *The Force of Blood* in his novella of that name. In introducing his male character Rodolfo, Cervantes juxtaposes things that could have never coexisted in the description of a romance hero:

> There was a gentleman of that city, about the age of twenty-two, whom his great wealth, his nobleness of blood, his depraved disposition, his too-much-assumed liberty, and the loose and licentious company that he kept, made him to do such insolent and extravagant actions as did ill beseem his quality, and gave him the attribute of impudent and insolent. (95-96)

Cervantes is aware of the displeasure he incurs by becoming the mouthpiece of criticism when others cautiously opt for fawning subservience, for he admits that "your great and rich men which are lewdly and licentiously given shall never want those that will canonise their evil actions and qualify their bad courses for good" (97). The criticism is nevertheless well-deserved once it becomes apparent that Rodolfo is depraved enough to abduct the maidenly Leocadia on a lonely road while she is travelling with her aged

father who is too weak to fight in her defense. He takes her home in a swoon and rapes her while she is still in that condition, and when she awakens to give vent to proper lamentations for her despoiled virtue his desire cools off and he disposes of her on the street. There is a touch of characteristic satire in the way that Cervantes depicts the scene leading up to this cruel abandonment:

> The answer which Rodolfo returned to the discreet discourse of afflicted Leocadia was no other save his embracing her and making show that he had a mind to renew in himself his lustful desire, and in her her further dishonor; the which being perceived by Leocadia, with greater force and resistance than her tender age could promise, she defended herself with her feet, with her hands, with her teeth, and with her tongue…. (103)

Leocadia's resistance and pathetic complaint for having lost "the best jewel that she had" (99), without which, she claims, "it is fit that I should lose my life since that I have lost my honour" (100), find deserving successors in the struggle of other assaulted heroines in the eighteenth century novel. The most memorable of these are Samuel Richardson's *Pamela* and *Clarissa*, although only the first triumphs through skillful defenses and the ability not to swoon at the critical moment. Scenes such as these helped shape the ideal of female nobility, which naturally relied more on virtue than even blood, since the latter could be quickly downgraded through misalliance or upgraded through a fortunate marriage. Men had the power to raise women, even servants like Pamela, to their level and noble rank, whereas women had to suffer the fall consequent on marrying badly. Moreover, women's chastity at the time of the marriage and fidelity subsequently had a direct connection with keeping blood pure and heirs free from suspicion of

illegitimacy, so much so that certain romances which elevated love above virtue still kept adulterous queens barren rather than tamper with dynastic descent.

While Leocadia's honor, as far as her will goes, is without stain, Rodolfo's cannot so easily be wiped clean. Still, there is a chance for redemption, and in offering it to his hero the harsh Cervantes from the beginning becomes more of a reprimanding father instead of the stern moralizer he set out to be. Following her abduction Leocadia has a son. He is "of a fair complexion, a pleasing countenance, a sweet disposition, a gentle nature, a quick wit, and in all those his actions which in that tender age he could do he gave apparent signs and tokens that he was begotten by some noble father" (111-12). The perfection of the inheritance received from such an imperfect father leaves one to assume that Cervantes, conflicted between skepticism and belief in the quality of the blood, permits it to overcome the errantry of youthful passion and skip untainted to the next generation. Thus he is encouraging the complacency Rodolfo displays when affirming, without concern for his actions, "For nobleness, thanks unto Heaven, my ancestors, and my parents, that is left to me by inheritance" (124). But if there is a sacrifice that must be paid for the author's indulgence, and it comes in the form of literally spilling the blood under scrutiny. The child, Luisico, is run over by a horse that leaves him "stretched on the ground for dead, pouring out much blood from his head" (113).

Just as this accident takes place, an elderly man with reverent grey hairs takes note of the child and precipitately, "neglecting the grave Spanish pace, with large steps he hied him home to his own house" (113). The man later explains his zeal by reason that it seemed to him he saw his tenderly loved son in the face of the child, which moved him to take him up in his arms and bring him home where to remain until fully cured. The happy

ending that this incident occasions, the reunion and marriage of Luisico's parents, his own acquired legitimacy, and the friendship between the two families united over the near-tragedy, is brought to pass according to Cervantes "by the permission of Heaven, and by the force of that blood which the valiant, noble, and Christian grandfather of Luisico saw spilt upon the ground" (132). If the father raised certain doubts at first, perhaps on account of his youth and misguided passion, at least the grandfather stands proof that those qualities passed on to Luisico do not come from no source at all but are his rightful paternal inheritance.

Two things become evident in Cervantes: one is the rupture of blood from noble conduct, though partial or partially acknowledged for now, and the other is its dual nature, speaking through the son's qualities but also the visible traces on the ground. What is intriguing is that Cervantes does not step down from criticizing blood in its depraved condition but still shows faith in its ability to make its mark on posterity through the best attributes it can muster. There is a physical component to this heritage in the resemblance of the beautiful son to the father, and even a moral one, though subject to an occasional lapse. Yet there is also something, immaterial but palpable all the same, in the call of the pool of blood spilt in the presence of the grandfather, who forgets his errand and old Spaniard's dignity in the precipitancy with which he runs to save the child. For the first time in this admittedly far from exhaustive study, blood is not only something that runs in the veins, making its presence felt through the arcane pathways of heredity in an offspring's features or conduct. It is something that lies on the ground and sends out its call of distress that is, more than the call of a wounded creature in danger, that of a son who needs to find and fasten the lost thread of his ancestry once again.

The duality of blood, shown by Cervantes' novella to be the ultimate in concrete evidence as well as abstract suggestiveness, inspires many motifs in the novel and surrounding world, with its religious rituals, scientific discoveries, and revolutionary zeal. Blood is revered in the Eucharist, spilt in the cause of reform, shed as tears of suffering from oppression, drunk as wine in the frenzy of the French Revolution, used as the ink with which history is recorded, and examined under a microscope. Its sheer physicality enables it to morph into other substances used to write with, drink, spill and step in, and wear as stains on clothing and hands. At the same time this visible, tangible, ingestible reality of blood would not carry more meaning than the stain on a butcher's apron were it not for the ability to evoke intellectual and spiritual questions about the human search for truth and redemption. Over other ritualistic objects and potions used to ground in reality the immaterial world, blood has the advantage of being in no way contrived or man-made. On the contrary, it is the familiar fluid that flows from an everyday cut or scrape but also acts as a constant reminder of a primary, natural or divine, source of life beyond the reach of man's interference.

## III

As far back as the *Bible*, there was a sense that blood was intrinsically connected with life. This is reflected in the injunction imposed by God upon the Jews, "But flesh with the life thereof, *which* is the blood thereof, shall ye not eat" (Genesis 9:4). In all the animal sacrifices, God demands that "the priests, Aaron's sons, shall bring the blood, and sprinkle the blood round about upon the altar that is by the door of the tabernacle of the congregation" (Leviticus 1:5). The ritual involves as well the priest's dipping his finger in the blood and sprinkling it seven times before the Lord, putting some upon the horns of

the altar of the burnt offering and pouring the rest at the bottom. This is so that the life of the animal will be offered to God as reparation for transgressions, "For the life of the flesh *is* in the blood, and I have given it to you upon the altar to make an atonement for your souls: for it *is* the blood *that* makes an atonement for the soul" (Leviticus 17:11). Not only is blood a symbol of sacrifice but also of the protection it earns from the propitiated God. The Jewish Passover celebrates the time when God punished the Egyptian enslavers by killing the first born child and animal of each household, passing over, however, the houses of the Jews. In order to recognize them, God asks his elect to sacrifice a lamb without blemish and then take of the blood and strike it on the two side posts and on the upper doorpost of the houses wherein they shall eat it. The token of sacrificed life is a sign of obedience to God and a barrier against his wrath.

Evidently, the biblical God demands nothing less than sacrifice of life to appease his displeasure, in the Old Testament as in the New, except that in the latter the sacrificial victim is provided in God's only son as an act of supreme divine love and indulgence for human failings. In the old scriptures God asks his servants to sacrifice life as a token of their contrition, in the new God sends his son to be sacrificed as a token of his eagerness to lavish forgiveness on man. In the scene of the last supper, which is Jesus' last Passover meal, he offers up his body and blood to be eaten and drunk by his disciples:

> And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and blessed it, and brake it, and gave it to the disciples, and said, Take, eat; this is my body.
>
> And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, Drink ye all of it;

> For this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins. (Matthew 26:26-29).

Jesus is clearly the equivalent of the sacrificial lamb that the Jews traditionally ate for Passover, and St. John identifies him as such when he says, "Behold the lamb of God, which takes away the sin of the world!" (St. John 1:29). The new testament that gives its name to the distinctly Christian scripture is in the cup of Christ's blood, "which is shed for you" (Luke 21:20). To this day the Christian sacrament depends on the drinking of blood, and some sects take it quite literally.

All these elements of the Judeo-Christian tradition made blood the very seat and principle of life. This seemed quite easy to prove for scientists no less than theologians, and probably more so once rituals stopped asking for real bloodshed and science started cutting into the body. In *The* C*yclopaedia of Anatomy and Physiology* (1835-1836) the dependence of life on the existence and circulation of blood is expressed in these terms:

> We observe, in fact, that if an animal be bled till it falls into a state of syncope, and the further loss of blood is not prevented, all muscular motion quickly ceases, respiration is suspended, the heart pauses from its action, life is no longer manifested by any outward sign, and death soon becomes inevitable; but if, in this state, the blood of another animal of the same species be injected into the veins of the one to all appearance dead, we see with amazement this inanimate body return to life, gaining accessions of vitality with each new quantity of blood that is introduced, by-and-by beginning to breathe freely, moving with ease, and finally walking as it was wont to do, and recovering completely. This operation, which is known under the name of *transfusion*, proves better than all that can be said the

importance of the action of the globules of the blood upon the living tissues; (409)

While, even outside the realm of religion, the dependence of life upon blood had been suspected for a long time, it relied on inferred, pseudo-scientific conjectures until experimental scientists discovered some incontestable facts about the morphology, physiology and pathology of this vital fluid. In the Hippocratic model, which held authority from the fourth century BC all the way into the nineteenth century, blood was one of four fluids that required balancing in the body in order to ensure good health; the others were choler, phlegm, and black bile, and all of them in concert determined predispositions for different bodily ailments as well as personality traits. The temperaments determined by the four fluids found in various proportions in the body were sanguine (or lively and impulsive), choleric (or angry), phlegmatic (or inert), and bilious (or gloomy), which in their old-fashioned denominations continue to be referred to in the novel. Blood especially was acknowledged to be the source of vitality. Sometimes this vitality could build up too much from an excess of blood production by the liver relative to consumption by the body, and then it caused feverish or maniacal states, fits and seizures. Blood-letting as a way of relieving accumulation of the unwanted or polluted fluid was popular into the nineteenth century. Deficiency of blood, by contrast, led do decreased vitality, fainting, coma or even death.[11]

Although blood had been recognized as the "liquid of life," "the body's nourishment" (Porter 59) from earliest times, its supremacy was not always self-evident to inquisitive minds on the hunt for the one, ultimate, elusive force capable of infusing life into the functioning apparatus that is the human body. According to the overview

[11] Porter 26-27.

provided in *The Physiological Anatomy and Physiology of Man* by Robert Bentley Todd and Sir William Bowman (1856), this force was thought by Aristotle to consist of a series of "animating principles" that differed for each type of living being, so that each distinct principle had its appropriate species of body (19). William Harvey, a London physician who in the early 1600s proposed that the blood moved in a circular pattern through the vascular system propelled by the beating of the heart, naturally designated the fluid that preoccupied him the most as the special seat of what he initially also termed, with Aristotle, an animating principle. But his supposition that in it lay "the vital spirit, and *even the principle of life itself,*" based on an early observation that in the egg blood was the first thing to appear, elicits from Todd and Bowman the exclamation, "So completely biassed were the views of this illustrious man, by his exaggerated notions respecting the nature and properties of the blood!" (16) Then again, this is also the century when not much earlier, in 1846, Emma Willard's unsound theory that the movement of blood was caused not by the heart but by expansion through caloric[12] produced in the lungs found support from some chemists and medical men in the American and European communities. [13]

Harvey's discovery was monumental, but he still labored under the influence of ancient science, which subsumed observation to philosophical thought. The example of the egg appears in Aristotle's *History of Animals*, where the author observes:

> Meanwhile the yolk comes into being, rising towards the sharp end, where the primal element of the egg is situated, and where the egg gets hatched; and the

[12] A supposed form of matter formerly held responsible for the phenomena of heat and combustion (Merriam Webster).

[13] This theory was published in *A treatise on the motive powers which produced the circulation of blood* in New York and London.

> heart appears, like a speck of blood, in the white of the egg. This point beats and moves as though endowed with life, and from it two vein-ducts with blood in them trend in a convoluted course […]. (158)

This, along with the observation that the heart can continue to beat even after death has begun to install in other parts of the body, supported the conclusion expressed in Aristotle's *On the Generation of Animals* that the heart is the first principle in sanguineous animals. The basis of this inference was the philosophical dictum that what comes into being first fails last and what comes last fails first, as nature reverses in death the evolution it followed in life. Aristotle further believed that the blood of the parents secretes the matter of the egg (no bloodless animal lays eggs) and that the blood of each individual organism secretes the nutriment or material that, when solidified by cold, turns into the flesh and the organs. Therefore, blood was both present along with the heart in the earliest stages of life and responsible for producing the other parts of the developing body.

It appears that Aristotle inspired Harvey with a sense of awe for the role of the heart in animating the body, and even more so for the role of the blood, which in the latter's estimation may have even preceded the heart, or rather what he calls "the ears of the heart" visible before the whole organ is formed. Harvey inherited the assumption that what comes first dies last and interpreted his observations accordingly, concluding that the seat of life must be the place where heat, motion, and the first stirring of the spirit are engendered and where they continue to dwell to the end. In *The anatomical exercises: De motu cordis* (1628) he claims in regards to the incipient life in the egg:

> Nay, it's doubtfull too, whether or not before them [the ears of the heart] also the spirit and blood have an obscure beating, which to me it seem'd to retain after death, or whether we may say that with this beating the life begins […]. (32)

Blending observation with the life-cycle theory of Aristotle as well as with scriptural inspiration, Harvey conclusively remarks in *On Animal Generation*:

> The life, therefore, resides in the blood, (as we are also informed in our scared writings,) because in it life and the soul first show themselves and last become extinct. For I have frequently found, from the dissection of living animals, as I have said, that the heart of an animal that was dying, that was dead, and had ceased to breathe, still continued to pulsate for a time, and retained its vitality. […]; and even when all motion has ceased, there the blood may still be seen affected with a kind of undulation and obscure palpitation or tremor, the last evidence of life. (*The Works of William Harvey* 376)

The temptation to invest blood with some kind of mystical capacity for independent life and movement preceding and succeeding everything else lurks in the background, but it is qualified by physiological functionality. In fact, Harvey's position is of interest especially because it synthesizes a number of influences, ancient and modern, scientific and spiritual. Had his assertions rested solely on philosophically-derived truisms, his notions might have been discounted. But he actually used dissection and devised simple yet effective experiments to demonstrate the way that the vascular system works, and these obscure his echoing of obsolete Aristotelian 'truths'. Harvey established the role of the blood as source and carrier of life irrigating the body in more demonstrable terms than the old Hippocratic model, so that his allegorical interpretations of it as "the

immediate instrument and principal seat of the soul," "the Vesta, the household divinity," "the sun of the microcosm, the fire of Plato," "the ultimate and the proximate and the primary aliment," and "the instrument of the Great Workman" are nothing more than fanciful renditions of anatomical facts (*The Works* 510).

Such effusive language was bound to turn off scientists who thought Harvey too partial to what was just one element of the whole. The example of the egg continued to haunt them because it implied the primacy of blood in the emergence of organized structures, but the assumption that being first meant being most important and lasting was challenged. While Todd and Bowman call Harvey's ideas "exaggerated," they introduce the eighteenth century surgeon John Hunter as "the celebrated" on account of his more inclusive views that were received with very general favor by English physiologists. Like Harvey, with whose work he did not appear to be acquainted, Hunter started out by looking at an egg, and like Harvey he noticed the nascent signs of life present there. Unlike Harvey, however, he adopted a holistic interpretation and ascribed the phenomena of life "to a *materia vitae*, diffused throughout the solids and the fluids of the body" and therefore not proprietary to blood (38). Similarly, Jon Muller, a professor and MD from Berlin, is also mentioned by Todd and Bowman for advocating the presence of an "*organic force*" resident in the whole organism on which the existence of each part depends. Interestingly, it is the location rather than the mystical quality of original life that is being questioned.

Debates as to where life originates and resides in the body led George Henry Lewes, a discerning writer and natural scientist, as well as George Eliot's domestic

partner, to ask in *The Physiology of Common Life* (1859), "Is the blood alive?" He responds to this question with much sobriety and good sense:

> What is meant by the blood being alive? If it be meant that an organic structure, having specific composition, and passing through a definite cycle of changes – such as Birth, Growth, Development, and Death, can truly be said to *live*, then blood, which manifests these eminent phenomena of life, must be pronounced to be alive.
>
> This, however, no one would think of denying. But if it be meant that blood has an *independent* vitality, unlike the vitality of any other tissue, a vitality which can be manifested apart from the organism, the opinion seems wholly untenable. Blood is vital, and has vital properties; but so has every tissue of the body, and in no sense can we attribute to it independent life. (255)

It may appear that this statement dethrones blood from the place it has held, but in effect it is no more than Harvey already knew when he stated:

> The blood considered absolutely and by itself, without the veins…possesses but few, and these not very obvious virtues. Contained within the veins, however, inasmuch as it is an integral part of the body, and is animated, regenerative, and the immediate instrument and principal seat of the soul…it obtains remarkable and most excellent powers, and is analogous to the essence of the stars. (*The Works* 510)

Here is Harvey's language degenerating into the metaphorical once again. But aside from that, all Lewes does differently is to take the "soul" out of blood, except perhaps the vegetative soul of Aristotle responsible for life and growth in animals and plants, causing

it to remain a crucially important fluid that flows between the other vital parts. Harvey had been aware of the interdependence of parts, though he did fail to give proper attention to things such as the function of the lungs, but what held his observations in thrall was the mystical search for the fountain of life – call it principle, entity, intelligent agent or organized force – that is manifest in the physical but transcends it at the same time. The effects of this quest are far from over in the nineteenth century and account for much of the metaphysical power that still irradiates from blood. This is what drives Muller, who is perfectly knowing of the prosaic fact that "lesions of the lungs, heart, or brain, may be the cause of death," to conceive of "a force, the operation of which is extended to all parts of the body, which does not depend on any single organ, and which exists before the harmonizing parts" (Muller 31). This independent generative force that cannot be pinned down to physiology, let alone to one aspect of it, is what Todd and Bowman discover when at the end of their scientific search, or rather the beginning of it all, they find Him, "the Almighty" (40), who has instilled in his creatures energies and capacities for life to be propagated through generations.

For a while, blood and everything it stood to represent enabled people to partake of the divine inspiration through the very vessels and sinews of their being. But the more prying eyes looked through a microscope at the smallest particles, the more the grand vision started to fall apart. It was not that these particles could not be minute details of the divine creation but that the more their physical and chemical properties and interactions were understood they began to provide the much sought after explanations of the processes that produced not just life but disease and death. By the time Alfred Charles Cole, MD, published *The Blood: How to examine and diagnose its diseases, etc.* (1898),

he was able to establish a few important facts based on his own experiments and knowledge gathered from French, German and English treatises. Some of these things had been glimpsed at in the seventeenth century when the existence of corpuscles (cells) and the color they lend to blood was first noticed. Observations made with a microscope on fresh or preserved blood spread on a film and stained for more visual emphasis revealed different corpuscles with different structures and functions: the hemoglobin-carrying red corpuscles, the immunity-creating white, and the coagulant blood plates.

The red cells especially drew attention, and Todd and Bowman note as early as 1856 that "[they] must perform some very important office in the life of the blood, because of their great numbers, their constancy, and the serious consequences to the general nutrition and the vital actions of the body, which ensue upon any considerable diminution in the quantity of them." But the authors also mention that there is no definitive knowledge about them and call Liebig's theory that "the red corpuscles are carriers of oxygen, and that by their colouring matter they are peculiarly adapted for attracting that principle," a "highly ingenious notion" (640). The fact that hemoglobin bears some relationship to oxygen distribution and the color of the red cells appears fairly well established, but how exactly this happens remains a point of speculation.

The color red excited particular interest, partly because it was linked with hemoglobin, the carrier of oxygen, and partly because in some semi-intuitive way it had always implied vigor. Cole was aware that "[t]he robust have, as would be expected, a larger number of coloured elements than the feeble" (40), anemia being a condition defined by their deficiency. There was also widespread knowledge that the oxygen-carrying arterial blood is scarlet red whereas venal blood containing the refuse of

metabolic processes is of a dusky red bordering on black. Moreover, it did not remain unnoticed that in the invertebrate, animals with no backbone and flaccid, rudimentary bodies compared to that of man, no colored particles exist. Thus scientists could feel justified in regarding the blood of such animals as identical with chyle or lymph, namely containing only white blood cells, the function of which was as yet debated and which were suspected of representing an incipient phase in the formation of the red corpuscles not yet elaborated into blood (Todd and Bowman 641). These observations suggested that red blood was superior to all other forms and that a visibly ruddy color was indicative of good health. The link between a florid complexion and a sanguine disposition had existed in the Hippocratic model, but the new assessment no longer entertained the fear that profusion could throw off the body's equilibrium.

George Eliot in *Middlemarch* (1871-72) structures the entire opposition between her heroine Dorothea's old and sterile husband and her young, active lover on the dichotomy between the white-blooded placidity of the former and the red-blooded spiritedness of the latter which visibly pulsates beneath his transparent skin. Given Eliot's intellectual curiosity and the fact that she lived with her partner George Henry Lewes, she could not have been ignorant of the science of blood. In his *Sea-Side Studies* (1858) Lewes brings up that some invertebrate animals, such as the Cuttle-Fish and Sea Hare, have "colourless blood" (67), although he is much too well informed to mean by that a lack of vital fluid and fall into the error that Aristotle had committed when in his *History of Animals* he called these creatures "devoid of blood" (87). Mollusks, snails and worms may very well have misled Aristotle, but the red-bloodedness of man was a point past dispute and an argument for his perfected nature.

But just as the exclusivity of blood was moderated by showing that it was only one part of the whole, so its capacity for perfection was shown to often fall short of the mark. It was observed that blood had a particular role in spreading disease or indicating that it existed somewhere in the body. Known problems fell into three categories: diseases of the blood (i.e. leukemia), diseases caused by parasites in the blood (i.e. malaria), and diseases originating in other parts of the body but that caused telltale changes in the blood (i.e. pneumonia, diabetes, gout). Corpuscles were checked for size, shape, color, number, and behavior to allow abnormalities to be revealed. Derangements of the blood had been linked with disease even in Hippocratic medicine, but the new findings cast the issue differently, in terms of quality rather than excessive or insufficient quantity. Nevertheless, doctors tributary to the old system continued to cure things such as "plethora" or "congestive repletion of the vessels" instead of looking for the corrupting parasite in the blood or the cause of malfunctioning in other parts of the body.

As long as treatments of disease were aimed at what in *A Manual of Therapeutics* (1869) Richard Hughes calls relieving the blood of "its 'perilous stuff '" (70), the ancient remedy of bloodletting was the method of choice. Moreover, there was nothing more plethoric in the sphere where medicine held sway than the cornucopia of emetics, enemas and half-poisons prescribed to purge the body of its pent-up toxic waste and get the juices flowing again. These included calomel (mercury chloride, a laxative and disinfectant), belladonna and aconite (toxic plants), quinine (effective treatment for malaria but likely to cause vomiting and side effects), opium (a narcotic), arsenicum (a derivative of arsenic), sulphur (or brimstone), clyster (an enema), magnesia (a laxative) and antimony (used in tartar emetic), colocynth (an excoriating laxative strong enough to cause an

abortion), spirit of ammonia, brandy and water, and so on. Charles Searle, MD, who declares in *The Why and the Wherefore; or, The Philosophy of Life, Health, and Disease* (1846) that all disease is "intrinsically and essentially, of the vascular system" (126), also fondly remembers elsewhere, in his *Cholera* (1847) treatise, "It was Sir Astley Cooper, if I remember right, who said, as the fruit of his experience, that with the lancet, calomel, antimony, and opium, in the various forms and combinations, he could cure every disease" (127), possibly by inducing intoxication severe enough to curtail any further appeals for a cure.

Determined to prove the adage 'what doesn't kill you makes you stronger,' one of Searle's patients, "a gentleman of plethoric habit, 30 years of age," obstinately recovered from cholera "although he had taken no less than 280 grains of calomel, and had lost, at four operations, 56 ounces of blood!" Not surprisingly after the intense course of purgatives he had undergone, he told his doctor that despite the soreness of his gums (an effect of mercury poisoning preceding loss of teeth) "his appetite was so good, that he could scarcely refrain from eating the whole of the roast fowl, of which he dined the day before," which greatly reassured the perpetrator of his healing (*Cholera* 116). Such approaches, though still accepted medical practice in the 1830s and 40s, were causing G.H. Lewes at the end of the 1850s to caution the public against "quacks" whose object was "'to purify the blood.'" He explains:

> Not that the Blood is always healthy and pure, free from hurtful substances, and rich in needful substances; but Nature herself takes this purification in hand, whenever it is possible – or, to speak less ambiguously, the organic processes upon which our existence depends for its continuance are themselves the means

> by which the Blood is kept at its proper standard, hurtful substances removed, and needful substances carried to it. (*The Physiology* 240)

Lewes further adds that the malady under which the diseased patient labors "does not lie in the blood, but in the tissues" (241). He thus attacks the old misconceptions and asserts instead that, where possible, the blood itself tends toward perfection without interference from the outside, and where not possible the fault should be sought in the organism at large. This does not mean that the blood is unchanging but, on the contrary, that its optimal balance of cells, plasma, oxygen and nutrients is reached through continuous changes that provide the body with what it needs for growth and activity. In effect, Lewes realistically relegates blood to the role of facilitator and vehicle of life, or death, as opposed to the seat of any physical or metaphysical incarnation of it. This role is very important indeed and worthy of the analogy with "a mighty river of life" (239).

While the practice of removing noxious or excess blood was discounted, putting blood in became the new trend. It was a further blow to those who held exalted views to realize that blood was not only corruptible but replaceable as well. Lewes can be trusted once again to give an account of transfusion, a very ancient idea but not tried on a human until the seventeenth century. He relates that two years after Lower had injected blood in the veins of a dog in 1665, a French mathematician, Denis, assisted by a surgeon made a bold attempt on a madman who arrived one evening in Paris. The outcome of the experiment was more successful than at first imaginable since, after having calf's blood transfused into his veins on two consecutive days, the madman "awoke sane!" (*The Physiology* 275). The popularity of such experiments relied not just on what they proved physiologically but on their ability to tap into vaguely apprehended notions that somehow

temperament ran in the blood, an idea explored in *The Blood is the Man; A story* (1890), by W. Lawton-Lowth, in which a man gets a transfusion and has his character transformed.

Transfusion also reawakened the "wild dreams of a sort of temporal immortality" that, according to Lewes, the ancients had entertained when they hoped "that by infusing new blood into an old and failing organism, new life would be infused" (*The Physiology* 277). For transfusion to be beneficial to the entire body, the old Aristotelian assumption that the blood forms the organs, and therefore both can be renovated at once, would have to be still standing. This clearly is not the case for Lewes but remains so for some men of science. Lewes concludes that transfusion is beneficial only in cases where there has been a dangerous loss of blood necessitating replenishment and not in any attempt at a cure that needs to extend to the organs. Besides, some of the hopes related to transfusion had already been dashed in the seventeenth century when Denis' patient went mad again and subsequently died during a second operation. The memory of such failures was bound to make nineteenth century scientists interested in reviving the practice cautious if not completely despondent.

It was fortunate for the endurance of the notion of blood that it seized on a new vein of scientific concreteness just as the mythology built around it was beginning to wane. Of course, examining the blood in its concrete manifestations raised problems and exposed shortcomings but also granted it a crucial role in sustaining life based on observation and not just speculation. The fact was that the only intrinsic, unquestionable attributes of blood, as scientists were beginning to learn, were those revealed under a microscope in experiments that, moreover, had to be constantly repeated, perfected, and

compared to ensure accurate results. One can speculate as to how much scientific discoveries and medical treatises influenced the overall perception. They must undoubtedly have travelled through Europe and America since their various editions were published in London as well as New York. They must have been read by Renaissance men such as G.H. Lewes. It is clear that in some cases, George Eliot, George Meredith, and Edward Bulwer-Lytton among them, novelists wove into their writing references to scientific concerns. But even if the actual science was not consciously known, it must have permeated the public mindset through the ongoing dialogue on personal and public health, which was important at a time of repeated cholera epidemics and spreading diseases of poverty, such as typhus and rickets, and diseases of affluence, such as heart disease, diabetes and gout. Medicine is by nature an interactive domain, and the discoveries about disease made from closely observing the blood were likely to be passed on to the patients through the implementation of new treatments and the usual beside talk.

IV

Part of the process of demystifying blood was to show that its physical reality could be misunderstood and manipulated to give authority to unfounded and self-serving ideas. Dickens' genius makes it so that in his time almost nothing can be considered influential unless he holds it up to ridicule, and he does that with the concreteness of blood in *David Copperfield*:

> "Oh! There is nothing," observed Hamlet's aunt, "so satisfactory to one! There is nothing that is so much one's beau-ideal of - of all that sort of thing, speaking generally. There are some low minds (not many, I am happy to believe, but there are some) that would prefer to do what I should call bow down before idols.

> Positively Idols! Before service, intellect, and so on. But these are intangible points. Blood is not so. We see Blood in a nose, and we know it. We meet with it in a chin, and we say, 'There it is! That's Blood!' It is an actual matter of fact. We point it out. It admits of no doubt." (263-64)

In the muddled brain of the speaker, what get confused are exactly the tangible and intangible attributes and the relationship between them. The nose and chin of a commoner are equally capable of eliciting blood as those of the quality people the speaker has in mind. In that concrete form on which she rests the solidity of her argument no distinctions can be remarked, except perhaps those evident to a scientist under the microscope, which favor the healthier rather than the nobler-born man. The praise that attaches to blood is filtered through the biases of the speaker that are anything but "a matter of fact," as they are the product of a tradition of more or less arbitrarily associating blood with quality and quality with the nobility.

The worship of blood that Dickens ridicules is a remnant of the tradition that elevated to noble rank first the heroes of battle and then their descendants. And while the military ideal still raises proud remembrances of remarkable men, the frenzied hunt for genealogies headed by people who display none of their predecessors' mettle is merely snobbery at its worst. In *Barchester Towers* (1857) by Anthony Trollope, Ullathorne's sister is guilty of ancestor worship, but at least she picks something laudable on which to lavish her praise:

> Genealogy was her favourite insanity. Those things which are the pride of most genealogists were to her contemptible. Arms and mottoes set her beside herself. Ealfired of Ullathorne had wanted no motto to assist him in cleaving to the brisket

> Geoffrey de Burgh; and Ealfried's great-grandfather, the gigantic Ullafrid, had required no other arms than those which nature gave him to hurl from the top of his own castle a cousin of the base invading Norman. (170-71)

Ullathorne's sister goes back to the Saxons because what they lacked in refinement they compensated for in brute force. Her vision savors of legend and fabulous manly strength. However, most nineteenth century noblemen somewhat unsatisfactorily trace their roots to the Norman invaders, who virtually displaced the Saxons in the upper ranks. This race whom Thackeray calls "illustrious Norman robbers" (*The Book of Snobs* 39), combining the toughness of Norsemen with picked-up French refinement, set up its own rule and emblazoned it with titles and escutcheons so as to impose it not just on the land but on people's imagination. Out of the impressionable side of human nature, social monsters were born. "Lordolatry" and "Peerage-worship" are at the bottom of the "Snobishness" that mutilates the brains of Englishmen "like the feet of Chinese ladies bound in slippers the size of a salt-cruet" (*The Book* 18, 23).

As novelists recognize, there is something decidedly bothersome in the principle of deriving worth from ancestors whose legacy has been reduced to titles and coats-of-arms. These, however, give rise to a mania in the nineteenth century manifest in the general eagerness to display them, acquire them, and rub shoulders with those who possess them. Many a genteel salon has a copy of the Peerage prominently displayed and kept perpetually open on a table, and many a domestic matron seeks in it a list of commandments as to whom to invite to parties, claim acquaintance with in conversation, or hunt down for a marriage alliance. In *Middlemarch*, Mrs. Cadwallader, a clergyman's wife, embodies the type of the meddlesome small-time snob who idolizes rank from

somewhere at the outskirts of the influential world. Her name is Welsh, a throwback to the Celts, thus representing a people conquered twice over, first by the Saxons and then by the Normans. All the more, she observes with great interest "the fine old-blooded idiocy of young Lord Tapir, and the furious gouty humours of old Lord Megatherium." The inability of such facts to stop her from believing "as unquestionably in birth and no-birth as she did in game and vermin" suggests that something other than reason or morality is at work ((60). That something has to be what Thackeray calls "old-world superstition" (17) issuing forth from the pages of the "Englishman's second Bible," (21) the Peerage, "that foolish lying book" which he would love to see burned like Don Quixote's books of humbugging chivalry (29).

An image in Hardy's *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*, which follows a heroine born of a noble but fallen line, emphasizes the decline of blood in its genealogical sense as employed in the service of the nobility. Tess is riding in a cart drawn by her father's horse significantly called Prince, when the morning mail-cart speeding along "like an arrow" on "two noiseless wheels," apparently of more modern construction than "her slow and unlighted equipage," drives its pointed shaft into the breast of the unhappy Prince like a sword. From the wound, "his life's blood was spouting in a stream and falling with a hiss into the road" (22). When in the evening Tess goes back to the scene of the accident, this is what she sees:

> Prince had lain there in the ditch since the morning, but the place of the blood-pool was still visible in the middle of the road, though scratched and scraped over by passing vehicles. All that was left of Prince was now hoisted into the wagon

> he had formerly hauled, and with his hoofs in the air, and his shoes shining in the setting sunlight, he retraced the eight or nine miles to Marlott. (23)

The rigid carcass carried off the stage of the event, shining hoofs up in the air, is foreboding for the fate of Princes everywhere. It foreshadows Hardy's meditations on the degeneracy of old blood fraught with ancestral curses and sapped of its original vigor by centuries of drawing upon the same depleted source. Meanwhile, upstarts from all walks of life pick up in passing remnants of the old splendor by imitating their betters and dragging their ideals through the streets, just as the vehicles that scratch and scrape through the pool of poor Prince's blood.

Scenes like this show that blood is still useful as metaphor, though its uses have changed. In fact, once freed from the entrenched associations with ancient lineage and noble birth, its versatility is amazing. Dickens is aware of this, and his protests attack the old biases while he makes full use of the metaphoric potential, often employing it to support the opposing camp. In *David Copperfield*, when simple Mr. Peggotty reads a letter from his wayward but deeply loved niece, blood that had sprung from his mouth, or heart as Dickens contends, trickles down his bosom. When Ham, low in birth but noble in spirit, rescues the ship on which Steerfoth, the showy yet selfish seducer of his betrothed, is wrecked, blood is visible on his face. In effect, Dickens brings the word back to the Christian signification of deep, forgiving and self-sacrificing love extended not only and not even primarily to kin but to all fellow human beings. He fights the word tooth and nail when it stands for anything else, such as the cruelty of the Murdstones that drives David Copperfield to bite his stepfather's hand until he draws blood, or the dull

brutishness incarnate in the bloody but confident butcher with whom he settles his first fist-fight.

Dickens and others in his time are aware that blood relations involve at the most duty and rarely affection, the latter being often destroyed by selfishness and greed. The portrait of *The Egoist* (1879), which posterity owes to George Meredith, acknowledges the dissolution of family ties by way of Willoughby Patterne's reaction to the news of his uncle's bravery in India, which has occasioned the printing of his own name in the papers:

> He thought over it for several months, when, coming to his title and heritage, he sent Lieutenant Crossjay Patterne a cheque for a sum of money amounting to the gallant fellow's pay per annum, at the same time showing his acquaintance with the first, or chemical, principles of generosity, in the remark to friends at home, that "blood is thicker than water." (6-7)

Bravery is nevertheless old-fashioned and recedes in the face of social prestige, causing Willoughby to reject in front of a number of guests the visit of the mere Lieutenant of Marines who has travelled through a torrential rain that did not manage, in his case, to dilute his feelings of kinship and gratitude. Such different exemplars of the same kindred race raise doubts as to the ability of blood to create ties of affection and congenial inclinations. It might have been able to do so in the past, or it might always have been assumed, on the strength of its mystical value, to have a power it did not possess. All the same, the power imagined to reside in the blood is a thing not to be wasted but repurposed by novelists. If in the past blood ties were expected to create at least a sense of clanship if not necessarily affection, it is affection that now creates a new set of

relationships which benefit from associations with blood only in the derivative sense of parental care, brotherly love, and affinities of the heart.

In Dickens, adoptive parents and near-strangers are remarkable for taking the place of blood relatives who are uncongenial in temperament and pursuits. Paul Dombey is estranged from Florence because, as a daughter, she fails to perpetuate his line; his bride-to-be Edith is resentful of her mother who wants to trade her in marriage for wealth; Walter is an orphan raised by a loving uncle with the assistance of Captain Cuttle who looks on him as a son; Nicholas Nickelby finds parental support from his employers but breaks with his uncle after the latter tries to sacrifice him and his sister for money, while his beloved's exploitative father wants to marry her off to a hideous creature so he can pamper his dwindling days. In George Eliot, there is a blood relation between Casaubon and Ladislaw but no similarity or love; at the same time, Peter Featherstone's relatives court his favor while awaiting his death with a view to inheriting his fortune. Moreover, there is a tendency for young couples who at some point have a 'brother and sister' relationship to end up getting married, as for example David and Agnes in *David Copperfield*, Walter and Florence in *Dombey and Son*, and Jem and Mary in *Mary Barton*. It is unlikely that novelists like Dickens and Elizabeth Gaskell, with their wholesome Christian morals, are skirting the notion of incest. Rather, it appears that the meanings of father, brother, and sister have changed, being now loosely applied to relationships that create kinship out of affection instead of expecting affection to be attendant on kinship. What remains is the language of family ties, which is given free play in the sphere of human attachments.

## V

In the context of questionable family relations, conflicted class relations, and all-around fragile relations among men, some novelists have found in blood understood as affection the saving virtue that can help put society back together. This is not merely a personal matter but a larger phenomenon that follows in the footsteps of previous ages, when blood understood as courage in battle, and then as genealogy sprung from the heroes of battle, determined the prevailing form of social organization. What is left of those older meanings to exercise influence imaginatively, and in some respects practically, needs to be harnessed to the updated purpose of providing for the wellbeing not just of a few select families but the larger one of the nation. The age of feudal loyalties that exploited blood as a way of ensuring military and dynastic support, for all it sometimes pitted sons against fathers and brothers in the struggle for patrimony, is over. The subsequent age of riding on the fame of forefathers is likewise past. But this does not destroy the appeal of blood, rooted as it is in the model of continuity and connectivity upheld by nature. It merely acts as a reminder that before it meant treasuries and estates it had meant life and nurturing care, and that these may start in the family but do not have to stop there, and should not, if the example of Christ, who by offering up his blood made foster-brothers of all mankind, is to be followed. Wealth and power lend themselves to hoarding, but life and Christian love only to expanding. By subscribing to the latter above selfish interests, noblemen in England can show why they, unlike the French, deserve to stay.

Perhaps the thing that most thrusts into view the importance of how blood is perceived is that this has social ramifications. So many destinies are bound up with it, not

only at the level of the individual and the family but of the entire community. Blood has the power to confer human worth, wealth and political clout, and to do so capriciously, depending on who appropriates that power at a particular time. The nobility had its day, but the term's new and enlarged meaning spreads its beneficence more democratically. For some time society has been on a hunt for exterminating illusions, especially those born out of elitist interpretations of blood, without having quite ascertained what the world would look like without them or what should be installed in their place. This is the struggle that gave rise to the French Revolution, which brought the eighteenth century to a climactic close but settled nothing in the place of what it had overthrown, leaving the following century to pick up the pieces.

Illusions nonetheless have their role in human affairs, as Plato knew when in his *Republic* he made Socrates tell a story belonging to the class of "necessary lies." Described by an apparent oxymoron as "one genuine lie," the story has to do with convincing the rulers, the soldiers, and the rest of the citizens that they were molded inside the earth in ways appropriate to their status:

> "So you are all brothers in the city," we shall tell them in our fable, "but while God moulded you, he mingled gold in the generation of some, and those are the ones fit to rule, who are therefore the most precious; he mingled silver in the assistants; and iron and brass in farmers and other craftsmen…Now have you any device to make them believe this fable?"
>
> "No, these people themselves will never believe it; but I see a way to make their sons believe it, and those who come after them, and the rest of mankind."

> "I think I understand pretty well what you mean," said I, "but even that would be good for the men themselves; they would be more inclined to care for the city and each other. This will, I suppose, allow some chance for tradition to give a lead in the matter." (*Great Dialogues of Plato* 215)

Socrates has discovered the usefulness of fictions in strengthening the ties among citizens, as well as the necessary distinctions that separate the rulers from the ruled, by inscribing them in a stable and efficient structure. His plan is to pick rulers according to how capable and careful they are for their city and use the fiction only to secure this well-deserved place. The good intention behind it is what makes the lie "genuine."

In the wake of the French Revolution, the time of reckoning has arrived for fictions such as these to either reconfirm their value or go away. Much of the battle that goes on between "Innovation and Conservation," the allegorical antagonists that in Carlyle's *The French Revolution* (1837) "wage their perpetual conflict" (39), has to do with the stance that different parties take on this issue. Edmund Burke and Thomas Paine have imprinted their personalities on the two sides of the debate through the impassioned contest carried out in the former's *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (1790) and the latter's retort in *The Rights of Man* (1791). The two do not merely disagree, they practically speak different languages. In defending conservatism, Burke speaks the language of antiquity, heredity, precedent, experience and example, while Paine, inspired by the American Revolution in which he took a prominent part and by the effulgence of the French Revolution, speaks the language of reason, democracy, and the rights of man. Each accuses the opposing party of some lapse in concurrence with reason and of reliance on speculation and imagination.

Paine aims at undermining the pillars of monarchy which Burke upholds. He calls the hereditary crown "a thing in imagination" (133) and reduces the hereditary nobility, already marred by "a visible imbecility and want of intellects in the majority" (110), to "chimerical" titles that are no better than "nick-names." He asks, "what is this metaphor called a crown, or rather what is monarchy? … Doth the virtue consist in the metaphor, or in the man?" (137). Burke as good as answers 'the metaphor,' although such a reply can only be devised from the principles he lays out antecedently in the treatise that provoked Paine's attack. Several facts support this conjecture. As a man who admires the practical wisdom of governments, he values ideas and principles for the actual effects they produce. To him the sanctity of hereditary succession is the cornerstone of the peace of a nation, because it creates smooth transitions of power that ward off strife and civil war. It also serves to validate the history of the English monarchy and all the rights and liberties gained by its subjects in a series of constitutional acts – from Magna Carta to the Declaration of Right on the ascension of William and Mary – which he admiringly terms the English Constitution. Thus "the pedigree of our liberties" (45) is essentially linked with the pedigree of the kings who made them into law.

Much is to be lost by subverting the legitimacy of kings, so much in fact that, historically, parliaments have gone to great lengths to put the face of legitimacy even on deviations from the strict order of succession, which were necessary in extreme situations such as kings dying without issue or turning tyrants. A prominent example is the revolution of 1688 when James II was forced to abdicate after trying to bypass Parliament in his scheme of promoting Catholicism against the state religion, Protestantism. Burke's view is that accepting King William of Orange "was not properly a *choice*" but "an act of

*necessity*" to all those who did not wish to recall the tyrant King James or to deluge their country in blood (23-24). Parliament took great pains to find a prince "very near in the line of succession" and throw "a politic, well-wrought veil" over every circumstance that might have weakened dynastic right so as not to furnish a precedent for further departures (24-25). More than just countenancing these measures, Burke downright reveres the shrewdness of the statesmen who put 'the man' second to 'the metaphor.' The impression is that any man would have done, even a foreigner for that matter, as long as he was not a Catholic or a tyrant and came from "the same stock" and "the same blood" (30).

Aside from ensuring peace, the principle of hereditary succession imparts to "our frame of polity the image of a relation in blood; binding up the constitution of our country with our dearest domestic ties; adopting our fundamental laws into the bosom of our family affections" (49). Here Burke envisions the different spheres of British life as manifestations of the same core principle that runs through generations. Thus the government and the law are not impositions but patrimony and guidance affectionately received. To Paine's complaint that government cannot be hereditary because "it is impossible to make wisdom hereditary" (125), Burke might reply that the wisdom is in devising a stable system, which took centuries to achieve, and not so much in the individuals who fill the places in it at any given time. Succession is the law of nature binding in a perpetual cycle fathers and sons, past and present, and as such it is the best way to govern.

Paine views succession with very different eyes. While to Burke it is an injunction to follow the proven ways of the forefathers, Paine sees it as an imposition against the right of posterity to choose a government for itself. Where Burke invokes

antiquity and example, Paine glorifies revolution and the advent of democracy in America and France. When the former speaks of the sanctity of inheritance, the latter speaks of monopolies. When one commends the constitutional rights of Englishmen, the other worships the imprescriptible rights of man. Burke is so bound by the circumstantial, which alone gives occasion and utility to abstract ideas, that one may deem him the more down-to-earth of the two. But the comparison is not quite fair since Paine's ideals are still fighting to gain a footing in the real and have not yet been tempered by experience. They did indeed succeed in America, but there they had found a virgin ground where there was little need to demolish before building anew.

The ideas that Paine extols are too abstract and vague to satisfy Burke's practical exigencies. A telling anecdote appears in *The French Revolution* by Carlyle featuring the Baron de Clootz, who, inspired by universal rights, gathered together an Assembly of Mankind and walked into the National Assembly on the 19th of June, 1790, to claim a share in the deliberations, with Swedes, Spaniards, Polacks, Turks, Chaldeans, Greeks, and dwellers in Mesopotamia at his heel. One Turk broke his companions' solemn silence, likely caused by their inability to speak French rather than any bashfulness about the rights of man, but his own scanty knowledge of the language gave to his words the effect of "spilt water" and left his thought "conjectural to this day" (329). During that time France was a true Babel, even for people who spoke the same language but had different political views. Some things the National Assembly did agree on philosophically, as reflected in its constitution – mainly the abolition of privilege and the natural rights of man – but the trouble was translating them into practice. Paine is full of what the French constitution "says" but has not had a chance to assess what it does, and

what it will continue to do or fail to do long after revolutionary enthusiasm is drowned in bloodshed. Here Carlyle, with the wisdom of hindsight, interjects the remark that constitutions can be built, "but the frightful difficulty is, that of getting men to come and live in them!" (208).

The challenge is to reconcile in practice change with stability and liberty with restraint. The French are literally caught in the struggle, but the English are also drawn in as spectators who can look at France as an example to be either followed or shunned. Thinkers and politicians are beginning to realize that there is a difference between the people's will, their interests, and their powers. They may know what they want but not how to get it; they may not have the power to accomplish their ends; or, once accomplished, they may realize these fail to produce the intended effects. Carlyle points out that "one of the fatalest omissions" from the Declaration of the Rights of Man and of Citizens by the National Assembly of France was forgetting to ascertain "the *Mights* of Man" (219). That explains how when the Bastille was down, French Liberty restored, the Rights of Man voted, Feudalism and all Tyranny abolished, grain could continue so dear and the starved people could still be standing "*in queue*" for bread.

The puzzling question remains, what can untie the Gordian knot entangling will, power, and interests in fruitless political strife? Carlyle deplores the lack of some thunder and lightning out of heaven or some such "celestial sanction" that could induce men to obey and act when reason only makes them debate. The human mind needs prepossessing ideas to subdue it into obedience and jolt it into action, not merely born of itself and comprehended within itself but descended from a higher sphere and operating on its spiritual, impressionable side. Without "Belief" there can only be "Anarchy."

Belief, however, comes in many forms, being only distinguished by the presence of the awe-inspiring and divine, or even "divine-seeming." Something of the divine was present when the first king was made:

> Neither was that an inconsiderable moment when wild armed men first raised their Strongest aloft on the buckler-throne, and, with clanging armor and hearts, said solemnly: Be thou our Acknowledged Strongest! In such acknowledged Strongest (well-named King, *Kon-ning*, Can-ning, or Man that was Able) what a Symbol shone now for them, - significant with the destinies of the world! A Symbol of true Guidance in return for loving Obedience; properly, if he knew it, the prime want of man. A Symbol which might be called sacred; for is there not, in reverence for what is better than we, an indestructible sacredness? On which ground, too, it was well said there lay in the Acknowledged Strongest a divine right; as surely there might in the Strongest, whether Acknowledged or not, - considering *who* it was that made him strong. (10-11)

The person of the king derives its sanctity from the God-given strength that caused him to be elevated in the first place, and from the guidance and protection this enables him to provide. If God had only made it so that the strength was as resilient and enduring in the descendants as the elevation, a lot of problems could have been avoided.

But there is a great divide between the man who "*kens* and *cans*" (394) of Carlyle, who surrounded himself with other men of his kind, and Paine's Nobility disintegrated into "No-ability" (110). Carlyle admits that royalty, like a centennial cactus, takes centuries to blossom, as in the person of Louis XIV, and dies shortly after. In the aftermath of the rein of Louis XV, with his expensive mistresses and inordinate spending,

the straw figure of the French monarch was tossed about by the winds of change. All were free to graft their ideals on it. The very people who brought down the Bastille acclaimed a pliant Louis XVI as the Restorer of French Liberty. But he was an inert king and died by his inertness. His removal to Paris from Versailles gave royalty the coup de grace, "[r]asclity having looked plainly in the King's face, and not died!" (280) The king's submissiveness made him from an "infinite" into a quite "finite" thing at a time when the only hope was in the "infinite" or at least "infinite-seeming." For, concludes Carlyle, "it is most true that all available Authority is *mystic* in its condition, and comes 'by the grace of God'" (280-81). Lacking the impression of divine validation, which can come by way of uncommon qualities or uncommon dignity of position, or any some such signal of something better and higher than the common run of men, no authority can be sustained.

When examined, the old approach that power should be held by an assumed divine right does look a lot like compulsion enforced by superstition. That is what Plato called necessary, and Carlyle would have concurred, but what French revolutionaries called oppressive. The key is ascertaining the aims and outcomes of promoting such superstitious beliefs, be they even based on a fiction. If the result is that they instill confidence, provide stability, and secure competent and beneficial rule, then this becomes the best justification. If, on the other hand, they lead to abuses, neglect and hunger among the people, as it happened in France, then some changes are clearly needed, although whether they should amend what exists or overthrow it altogether is still a matter of debate.

There is, however, one more way of untying the Gordian knot aside from trusting in the divine to disentangle it magically as of its own accord, and that is by cutting it in the manner of Alexander the Great. This can be done by a man of resolution and action, who Burke anticipates will be a popular general who by commanding the army will make himself master. This man is Hegel's "World-historical individual" (79), like Alexander the Great, who acting from private motives nevertheless advances history in its course because he can intuit the spirit of the moment and bring it to realization. Napoleon of course was that man, and he did not deliberate but acted. Ironically, this self-made man stumbled upon the age-old question of succession for his empire, and ended up divorcing Josephine and taking a new wife in Marie Louise, Duchess of Parma, partly to ensure an heir.[14] In the end, he was not unlike royal tyrants who had set up their families and favorites in high places and dreamt of leaving everything to a son.

VI

If both superstition and action have a claim to determining who should have power, how much more can they achieve together! This is the awareness that English novelists reach when they give the nobility of their nation a chance to redeem blood in the old sense of special qualification to govern. By uniting what faith remains in its exclusive status with real capability and affectionate care, the nobility could revive once again the ideal of leadership for the good of the people. This is a point on which France and England must decidedly separate. The English nobility has over its French counterpart the advantage of living with countrymen whom Burke has taught to respect tradition and fear bloody revolutions. With this distinction in mind, Burke and Paine are not just two voices, two sides of a political as well as philosophical and moral debate, but

[14]This idea appears in *Napoleon: A Short Biography*, by R.M. Johnston.

ultimately two nations. Burke is British and Paine British by birth but revolutionary by constitution, joining whatever nation is in the throes of revolution at the time. It is no wonder that he was both one of the founding fathers of the United States and an elected member to the National Assembly despite not being French. The dichotomy between Burke and Paine is that between England and France and essentially the old and the new, with all the good and bad associations that follow in the train of each side.

Dickens' *A Tale of Two Cities* (1859) captures the extent of the gap, in nothing more acutely than in the fight of two women who bring to their struggle the fierce potentialities of threatened motherly devotion and vengeance born out of frustrated love. The women are Miss Pross, Lucie Manette's and her family's "devoted friend," and Madame Defarge, their "malevolent enemy" – who bears them a mortal hatred because her own sister and brother were destroyed by the aristocratic excesses of the family of Lucie's husband. The former proudly calls herself "an Englishwoman," the latter is a "wicked foreign woman." Each speaks in her own language incomprehensible to the other, until the fight becomes physical and there is little need for words. The hard and wiry Miss Pross clasps her opponent tight to prevent her entering Lucie's bedroom and finding out she has fled. Madame Defarge in turn tears at Miss Pross' face in an effort to ascertain if Lucie and her child are still around and can be dealt with immediately or if they need to be pursued. The Englishwoman, "with the vigorous tenacity of love, always so much stronger than hate," stalls the cruel intentions of the other and eventually leaves her dead in consequence of an accidental gun discharge (394).

The struggle is allegorical on so many levels. Here is Love battling Hate and Christian charity fighting "the wife of Lucifer" (391). The love soured to hatred in the

breast of Madame Defarge is set in opposition to the pristine and selfless love of the spinster Miss Pross, who treats Lucie like her own daughter. In one case the family is a nest of vengeance, in the other the product of love. But this spiritual opposition is imposed on the background of political strife in the days of the French Revolution, when the blood of the slums of Paris was up and the blood of tyranny was down (234). The wave of vengeance grows out of ominous incidents, such as a large cask of wine the color of blood being spilt on the streets of the slum Saint Antoine. Wine and blood are used interchangeably to paint the events in red, as they are spilt, drunk, and smeared everywhere. Wine is used to scrawl the word "BLOOD" on a wall, and actual blood mixed with soot is used to write in prison the testimony of aristocratic persecution.

In Dickens' vision, the French Revolution is a bacchanalian deluge of blood, wine and intoxication. This aligns Dickens with Carlyle, who "invokes the myth of Dionysus as the encompassing frame for his narrative (*The French Revolution, A History*, 1837), so that the blood becomes an image of the wine of Dionysus, the rage of the people who cry for the guillotine, the *mania* of the god, the destruction the *sparagmos*, and so on through the entire myth…."[15] The connection is clear in Dickens when, first of all, the inhabitants of Saint Antoine scrape up and drink the spilt wine, acquiring "a tigerish smear about the mouth" (31), and later when they bring hatchets, knives, bayonets and swords to the grindstone in the prison courtyard to be sharpened for the fiendish work of killing the aristocrats held inside:

> …some women held wine to their mouths that they might drink; and what with dropping blood, and what with dropping wine, and what with the stream of sparks

[15] Bonaparte 372.

struck out of the stone, all their wicked atmosphere seemed gore and fire. The eye could not detect one creature in the group free from the smear of blood. (279)

Dionysian frenzy is a fitting metaphor for the wildness of the revolution and the ecstasy of the people who are 'out of themselves' and taken over by irrational passions. The wine opens a pathway for the god's influence to be literally ingested and allowed to do its work from within. Goaded on by the spirit of the god, the people are 'devouring' their oppressors, the way that Maenads devoured wild animals, and wearing the blood-wine stains to prove it.

Yet on the background of this pagan frenzy there are biblical overtones as well, as if the powers of all mythologies must be called in to describe such a scene. Upon first entering Lucie's apartment, Madame Defarge finds Miss Pross at her washing, and as the basin drops out of her hands the water bathes the sole of the intruder's shoe. This very sole bears the blood stain of a corpse that Madame Defarge had trodden on earlier to steady it for decapitation so that the demoniacal mob could raise the head on a pike. "By strange stern ways, and through much staining blood, those feet had come to meet that water" (391) in an impromptu ceremony of baptism. Clearly, only the cleansing water delivered from the hands of the Englishwoman can wash away the excesses of the French. Christian love, the mark of the Englishwoman and by extrapolation of her God-fearing nation, is the antidote to the vengeance of the French, who tear down their king, their institutions, and their fellow men. The English champion Christian values while the French have devolved to heathenism or Old Testament status at the most, as suggested by Carlyle when he names the insurrectionary French women now "Menads" and now "Judiths."

When Dickens' two women clash, two nations also clash, with their different ideologies and motivations for action. Burke and Paine were in fact never closer to settling in an actual brawl the harsh words they had for each other's ideals. In the new crusade of the nineteenth century, England is carrying the Christian banner while France is the nation that sacrifices its mild and conceding king, its nobles – even the ones who, like Lucie's husband Charles Darney, reject aristocratic abuses – and ultimately its own people, many of whom are guillotined, starved to death, or killed in Napoleon's wars. The Christian paradigm is complete with a Christ figure in the character of Sydney Carton, who in an act of supreme selfless love gives himself up to be guillotined in the place of Charles Darney, saving the husband of his beloved Lucie for the sake of her happiness.

The destruction of the revolution is mythical in proportions, but the story of redemption is equally great. The Dionysian and Christian myths both support the idea that out of sacrifice emerges rebirth, and in fact on this ground Christ and his pagan counterpart meet. Dionysus is the twice-born son of Zeus whose worship involves purging human passions through ecstasy and renewal, and Christ is God's son sacrificed and reborn so as to clear humanity of sin. They both embody the conception that decadence and excess can only be wiped out in blood, an idea that the reactionary Joseph de Maistre sees as the stamp of the divine on the French Revolution, which to him is God's pretext for the regeneration of France.[16] What de Maistre means by regeneration is not what Paine means by it, or even Burke, who falls somewhere in the middle. Heaven has said its piece but, like an oracle, left men to interpret the meaning and contend if its mandate is a return to absolutism, the advent of democracy, or constitutional reform.

[16] *Considerations on France* (1797).

For the English, a strong case, though not uncontested, is in favor of moderation. The hope is that the nobility can once again put what remains of the fiction of blood behind the qualities expected of true leaders. The perfect opportunity presents itself in the form of much-needed leadership at a time when England is dealing with the shock-waves of the French Revolution, pressures from liberals and radicals, and periodic economic slumps caused by the unregulated workings of capitalist markets. With its guaranteed ownership of the House of Lords and significant presence in the Commons, the aristocracy has the power to help England get out of crisis. On an unprecedented scale, the new generation of leaders is required to act in the spirit of civic duty, without concern for self-promotion, an idea reflective of the new altruism that is to marry action with affection and politics with Christian love. In France the situation is more desperate. Here, after the revolution, the idea of blood – assuming the word could be rescued from the air of the scaffold – is a prison for noblemen, who are bound in honor to serve the cause of the legitimate king and are therefore shut out of political action under each successive hostile regime. The loss of function and loss of faith in the ideas that sustain aristocratic supremacy contribute to the sense of apathy that Stendhal signifies in *Armance* through his protagonist's quite literal impotence.

As always, it is action that makes heroes, doing as opposed to inheriting, and this is where the irony of aristocratic privilege lies. The hard-earned rewards of the father, in becoming hereditary, breed idleness in the son, who thinks he has nothing to earn. But this is the false premise of aristocracy. The act of earning privileges is meant to be perpetuated with the race, just as in the paradigmatic examples of antiquity and romance the son has to prove worthy of the father before paternity can be confirmed. For all it

sneers at the degeneracy of blood and sympathizes with commoners, the English novel of the nineteenth century calls the aristocracy back to its rightful place at the head of the nation, thus contrasting with the despondency that pervades much of the French novel. The so-called bourgeois genre, sprung from capitalism and modern individualism,[17] is not ready to write the epitaph of the aristocracy. England needs involved and competent leadership. If such a thing as natural superiors exists, they are now called to face their ancestral duty.

[17] This is the view advanced by Ian Watt in *The Rise of the Novel* and Michael McKeon in *The Origins of the English Novel*, but critical works such as Clara Reeve's *The Progress of Romance* and Margaret Anne Doody's *The True Story of the Novel* affirm that the novel has been around since antiquity and is in fact one with the romance.

## Chapter II - Character over Blood

### I

"Prithee, son, do: for we must be gentle, now we are gentlemen," says the Shepherd in Shakespeare's *The Winter's Tale*, encouraging his son, the Clown, to forgive the rogue who has been interfering with their affairs and recommend him kindly to the Prince (5.2.62-63). The Clown is all too ready to imitate the manner of the gentlemen of his day and swear for the honesty of his new friend in disregard of truth. His flexible morals prove his nobility just as well as the new fancy suit of clothes, which marks him as "a gentleman born" who has been so "any time these four hours" (5.2.140,145). Shakespeare here, writing in the first quarter of the seventeenth century, shows characteristic insight into the manners and tendencies of his time, which are to shape those of the coming ages. Some of the things he points out are still true in the nineteenth century, namely the concern with appearances, as well as the mobility of English society which, in the space of hours, could throw open the highest sphere to those with money and the right connections. The English, unlike the French, had always kept the lines between the classes fluid, allowing people to rise from the bottom or fall from grace equally fast.[18]

Just as important is Shakespeare's satire of gentlemen's morals, their claim to embracing gentleness but doing so in a blundering way that breaks one rule while upholding another. Initially, this is reminiscent of the conflicted conduct of romance knights who strove to balance different aspects of the chivalric code, such as prowess

[18] According to Edmund Burke, what destroyed the French nobility was the fact that it was too jealous of its status and rejected new money, which, however, could not be imputed to their insular neighbors (*Reflections* 204).

with mercy and with the softer virtues of the lover. But by the Renaissance the chivalric ideal had been rarefied by the passing of time and had a bearing on the ancestors of those who now claimed noble status more than directly on them. It had become the root of nobility but not its living code. Ancestry was important, but in what relation it stood to conduct was being redefined. Connotations of family membership emanating from words such as "gentle" and "gentility," with their etymological roots in "gens" (clan) and "genere" (to beget), are intertwined with "nobility," whose etymology is Latin for "well-known," creating the conception of the gentle man of noble birth whose famous ancestry accrues to him through his very blood.[19] From this point on, the words "noble" and "gentle" undergo a progressive transformation, being tossed between the two meanings that, in a way reminiscent of the chivalric past, they already contain in the germ – blood and conduct.[20]

These two meanings have inverse careers, edging each other out in the battle for predominance yet maintaining at the same time an underlying affinity hard to break. Once blood starts to decline under the influence of democratic forces combined with the demotion of the term that science brings about, conduct gains the upper hand. For as long as it was protected by a more rigid notion of blood, the nobility could afford to be somewhat amoral and focus on preserving the dignity of its class, its property and estates, and its place in ruling the nation.[21] But as members of the middle class began to use the money earned in the booming industrial life of England to buy their way into the upper

[19] David Castronovo in *The English Gentleman* writes, "Nobility and gentility were synonymous terms right through the Renaissance; they both denoted men of ancestry" (5).
[20] There is also the term "aristocracy" used interchangeably with "nobility," but its etymology in the Greek for "the government of the best" has stronger political than moral connotations.
[21] In referring to the fifteenth century, Castronovo states, "members of the class of gentry need have no relation to morality or manners: they were a group of people committed to perpetuating themselves, to keeping estates intact, to finding places for their younger sons, to ruling the community and governing the nation" (9-10).

ranks, they brought with them their values of decency and respectability strongly colored by Christian virtues. And even though these newly ennobled had an interest in hiding their roots and emulating the possessors of old blood, their entrenched values could not help but travel with them in the new sphere. This was only the influence of those who admired and aspired to blood, but in addition there were those – notably, novelists and social critics – who denounced its pretences, asserting conduct instead.

The ascent of conduct seemed to be assured, but it still had to fight for its place. Conduct displaying certain characteristics, which increasingly settled on generosity and humaneness, became the battleground for science and religion. The former pointed relentlessly to the animality of mankind and the latter to its origin in a divine act of creation. A seemingly insurmountable obstacle was the greater acceptance gained since the 1850s by the fact of man's place in the chain of animal evolution. And though this situated man at the top of the chain, it nevertheless raised him from the bottom rather than descending him from above.[22] This imprint of animal nature caused skeptics like Thomas Huxley to sustain as late as 1893 in *Evolution and Ethics* that attempts at moral conduct simply mean going against the grain:

> As I have already urged, the practice of that which is ethically best – what we call goodness or virtue – involves a course of conduct which, in all respects, is opposed to that which leads to success in the cosmic struggle for existence. In place of ruthless self-assertion it demands self-restraint; in place of thrusting aside, or treading down, all competitors, it requires that the individual shall not merely respect, but shall help his fellow; its influence is directed, not so much to

[22] Leo J. Henkin in *Darwinism in the English Novel* marks the change caused by evolutionism, affirming that "the future of men who know themselves to be super-apes is bound to be different from that of men who believe themselves to be fallen angels" (268).

> the survival of the fittest, as to the fitting of as many as possible to survive. (81-82)

Huxley here more than divorces morality, understood as sympathy and mutual help, from the animal instinct of survival; he sets them at war with each other. The "cosmic struggle" – the daily strife to survive at the expense of competitors in the given conditions of limited resources and constant multiplication of individuals – turns generosity into vulnerability. And if more people are artificially fitted to live, their lives must necessarily become meager by way of spreading the means of subsistence too thin. Only those who indulge their animal propensities can escape such a pattern, and they are not the ethically best. Social progress, the effort of checking the cosmic struggle, is in effect an uphill battle contending with the forces of nature, and the forecast for such a battle is grim. Despite some concessions to the ability of human intelligence and will to change the conditions of life, Huxley cannot but brood over the "essential evil of the world" (85) to be borne with ancient Greek resignation.

Of course, Huxley had a precursor in Charles Darwin, whose self-proclaimed "bulldog" he was and who had set the terms of the conflict in *On the Origin of Species* (1859) and *The Descent of Man* (1871), having been inspired in turn by Thomas Malthus' foreboding assertion that the tendency in animated life to increase beyond the nourishment prepared for it was the main impediment to the happiness of mankind (1-2). The proposition that man had evolved from an incipient form of life and resembled the apes, advanced a century before by Georges Buffon and Erasmus Darwin, had already caused mankind to slide down the scale of creation from the sphere of the angels to the baseness of animals. Charles Darwin's unique contribution was the idea that variations in

the exemplars of a species occur purely by chance and are then sifted by way of natural selection according to how advantageous they are. This made man not only an animal but one that had no control over its evolutionary course. Neither will nor effort to adapt to the environment, which Jean-Baptiste Lamarck had perceived as the agents of change, could rescue man in Darwin's conception from submission to the caprice of nature. It remained to be seen if these deficiencies in human nature necessarily annihilated all impulses and capacities for things generous and humane.

With one stroke, Darwin destroyed any remaining confidence in a benevolent creator who had ordered the world after a set and wise design. Though he did not explicitly divest the world of a God, the nature he revealed was brutal in its methods of selection, purposeless in its evolutionary path, and amoral in the individual's quest to secure his own survival. This obviously did not sit well with people who believed the divine to have combined benevolence with omniscience and omnipotence, ensuring that goodness and wisdom had enough force behind them to be realized in all details of created life. Even those who relinquished the divine could not but feel discomfort at the notion that man was powerless as well, that his intelligence and will were not the source of change in his randomly evolving nature, and that the altruism on which he based the harmony of social relations was laboriously constructed and artificial at best. The reactions to these disturbing ideas took a number of forms, some trying to reconcile physiology with morality, some trying to reintegrate religion as the one saving grace of otherwise animalistic man.

The extravagance of some of the proposed mediations gives the measure of the dilemma. W. Washington Evans – a medical practitioner, the frontispiece of whose book

*The Blood of the Aristocracy; its origin* (1861) denies any connection with "the erroneous Schools of Medicine" – affirms that "Jesus perfectly understood the physiology of the body" (5). By this he means the physical benefits of God's laws of clean eating, which Moses had spread and Jesus supported as well, adding to them the spiritual laws of the Gospel. Man's constitution is composed of two aspects, physiology and spirituality, which work continually upon each other. The blood is the intermediary disseminating through the entire body the influence of unclean foods or unclean acts – those disregarding Jewish dietary and Christian spiritual laws. The idea is that all parts of the body were originally made up of blood, which had been formed out of the food consumed and had deposited the particles thus acquired into the organs. The brain and the ideas and feelings that originate there, in short the moral condition, also depends on the type of food ingested. Impure food adversely affects the mind, producing "all feelings of revenge, envy, hatred, and malice," which turn back upon the blood and disorder the organism at large (36). On the other hand, pure food and living from generation to generation produce in the offspring a "heavenly development" manifest in "a high and long development of brain, with fine texture" (16-17). Initially, this described the descendants of the High Tory families who are now being challenged by upstarts, so the aristocracy of blood at least stated out as that of nature. The state to aspire to, regardless of social status, is one of organic wholesomeness that culminates with spiritual purification, denoted by an odd but pertinent expression due to the allusion to a physical state – "the circumcision of the heart" (22).

Evans does not make reference to evolutionism – could those who do be part of the erroneous schools he refutes? – as he relies on premises reminiscent of Aristotelian

physiology and ancient medicine by now considered quite obsolete. The blend of Hebraic and Christian law gives his theory the coloring of religious restraint, which finds a strange but congenial bedfellow in the ancient fear of plethora, or excess. The very term "circumcision" implies the removal of something for the sake of good physical and spiritual health. Both physically and spiritually, curbing the appetites has long been the prescribed method for fighting illness. This is the cast of mind that Herbert Spencer opposes when proposing in "The Data of Ethics" (1879) that fulfillment rather than denial of functions, not indeed in excess but in sufficient measure, is the condition of the moral man. Pagan stoicism, Christian asceticism and all forms of denial of the body are detrimental to life and therefore immoral. The fact that the physical needs exist is proof that evolution has deemed them necessary and worthy of propagation. Therefore, they should be respected and satisfied to avoid the degeneration of the body – stunted growth, debilitating disease, early death – and consequently the immoral act of wasting precious life.

Spencer concedes that restraint was, and still is, necessary as long as humanity continues in an imperfect moral condition. At a time when people were savage and worshipped savage gods, when they engaged in war and violence to avert danger, and even in the industrial age when they provide mutual help but in exchange for pay, restraint is a necessity against hoarding of resources and abuses of power. But the ultimate moral state is one in which individuals can discharge their natural functions without endangering one another. In that state they help each other disinterestedly, impelled by an awareness of the damage to life that immoral actions produce and by a genuine pleasure derived from benevolent actions. Seen in this light, the moral science is

one with the phenomena of life. When the body is content the mind and heart, in more than their physical sense, follow suit. Biology is morality and morality is evolution, moving humanity toward a state when "the performance of every function is, in a sense, a moral obligation" (5).

Although Spencer was a believer in evolutionism and supported "The Development Hypothesis" as early as 1852 – not so much as a convert of Darwin, whose great work was yet to be published, but as a man who had made up his own mind – he was clearly opposed to giving up morality as a result. Nor was he willing to deplore the struggle of mankind against its evil nature but rather focused on its moral capacity, to be fulfilled not in spite of but in harmony with bodily needs. Amongst these needs, Henry Drummond proposed in *The Ascent of Man (*1894) in retort to Darwin's *The Descent*, were not only those that promoted the individual struggle for life but also what he called "the struggle for the life of others" (215). The love of a man and a woman who come together to conceive and of the mother for her child is as instinctive as the need for food and as necessary for evolution. The goal of nature is not just survival but reproduction, achieved through an act that "has abolished the numeral *one*" (244) by bringing a couple together and condemning the solitary to die out. Moreover, since reproduction without sex is possible – such as in parthenogenesis, the development of an unfertilized female gamete in some plants and invertebrate animals – the fact that sex is the predominant method is evidence that nature is working for an ulterior ethical end (248). Love is the outcome of all "other-regarding" acts originating in reproduction and involving cooperation in the struggle for life, which start out as instinctive but progressively become conscious and ethical in a true sense. It is manifest in self-sacrifice, sympathy,

tenderness, pity and compassion, the sentiments that foster the survival of others along with the self; "Literally, scientifically, Love is Life" (231).

Drummond was a Scottish evangelist and the religious penchant in his thinking is strong, but he was also well-travelled and adept at physical science. The fact that such a combination could exist in one man is eloquent in itself. Writing in the 1880s and 90s, Drummond had the century in retrospect and could react to scientific ideas and to attempts already made at reasoning out their adverse effects on ethics and religion. His solution was to establish Love as the means and object of evolution. Love was the nexus where the physical and spiritual sides of humanity could unite, and he felt there was need for such a union. Connection with the former was grounded in the instinct of producing and nurturing offspring and with the latter in the impulse to move beyond those limitations and embrace all mankind. This was the spark of the divine in man, the transcendental part of his nature that was born with the body but grew far beyond.

Without looking to science for answers, interpreters of religion had known this philosophically for some time. It was not that God had instilled the divine in human nature but that He mirrored the best that was there, the penchant to love in the most pure, unbounded, and disinterested form. This is at least the anthropomorphic view advanced by Ludwig Feuerbach, whose book *The Essence of Christianity* (1854) George Eliot herself translated from the German. Similarly, in "The Use of Anthropomorphism" (1852) Herbert Spencer claims: "It is now generally admitted that a more or less idealized humanity is the form which every conception of a personal God must take. Anthropomorphism is an inevitable result of the laws of thought" (183). Feuerbach's version of it displays faith in the "fundamental nature" of man, latent but capable of

realization and imbued with all the effulgence of feeling which, through an act of mirroring and contemplation of his best self, he ascribes to the divine. Feeling is the divine in man (9), and it is not received from outside but radiates from within human nature. It is reflected in the image of what ideally man ought to be, and could be, but what for now is still known as God. The fact of the 'is' as opposed to the 'ought,' the fallible "personality" of the limited individual, does not extinguish the divinity of human nature in the aggregate and best form it can achieve. Had this capacity for perfection been lacking, mankind would not have admired and aspired to the divine as it does, not having had the ability to even conceive of such greatness. The thing that heals the rift between what man is and what he ought to be, putting an end to this "state of disunion" that is the bane of mankind, is divine, selfless love (47).

Feuerbach's was not the only attempt at recasting religion, but it was a most reassuring one. Previously, David Friedrich Strauss had proposed in *The Life of Jesus* (1835) – translated by George Eliot once again – that allegorical interpretations had, since the Greeks and Hebrews, bridged the gap between old religions and more advanced and incongruous modes of thought. Allegory was an alternative to reducing a spent religion to a mere record of natural or historic events, explained, for lack of better understanding, by reference to a supernatural cause – an actual dream or inspiration, an address to the people fortuitously attended with lightning, the deeds of deified but flawed kings, heroes and sages. It opened up the possibility, much exploited by Christians, of rejecting the literal meaning of implausible biblical claims while preserving their figurative signification. Also opposed to reducing religion to a collection of old tales was the Kantian view, which saw in it the teaching of the practical rules of life. Accordingly, the

stories conveyed not absolute ideas but instructions on conduct aimed at awakening the latent moral aptitude of the human mind. Furthermore, the mythical view sought to preserve the core ideas, thoughts, precepts, or even actual events contained in religious stories, but admitted to their being couched in marvelous and symbolic terms. These were accounted for by distortions arising in the course of orally transmitting and amplifying the tales over time, not from any intent at misrepresentation but from a genuine effort to understand, delight, or illustrate some truth (39-59).

As Matthew Arnold states in *Literature and Dogma* (1873), "[t]he thing is, to recast religion" (x). Arnold had figured out by his time that a workable, useful recasting was needed. Too many theories had led to blind alleys. For religion to remain relevant, it was important that it guided conduct. It was completely fruitless to debate over the falsehood or truth of events, unless people could learn something from them. It was equally futile to contemplate the death or detachment of God if He no longer could or cared to provide laws for conduct. That was the trap Spencer had fallen into when, in laying out his *First Principles* (1862), he tried to reconcile religion with the burgeoning, troublesome science of the time by showing that they both pointed to "the Unknowable," the inscrutable and incomprehensible power that lay beyond the pale of human knowledge (84-97). But what could man learn from God or nature if they did not make themselves known? This and all forms of agnosticism led toward a dead end. In order to be useful, religion had to offer not just guidelines but faith in man's ability to grasp and follow them. In his *First Principles*, Spencer felt that investing the deity with attributes, derived from human nature nonetheless, constituted a degradation. [23] But if a deity is to

[23] Spencer recognizes in "The Use of Anthropomorphism" (1852) that "We cannot take a step toward constructing an idea of God without the ascription of human attributes" (183-4). But in *First Principles* he

be emulated, attributes it must have, the more admirable the better. And if man is perfectible, as Spencer did believe[24] and Feuerbach strongly affirmed, admiring this potential perfection reflected in the figure of God is a quite useful aim of contemplation and imitation.

Anthropomorphism of this stamp remains to some extent aspirational until humanity is morally ready to match its conduct to the ideal, but it still does tremendous service to restoring confidence in mankind. The belief in God is lost only when the belief in man is lost (44), asserts Feuerbach, and that latter belief can be redeemed by the reaffirmation of the human aptness to love. Under the guidance of a human-God who spread and acted on the gospel of love, the path of righteousness was laid down and smoothed out, as Arnold states through "[t]he method and secret and sweet reasonableness of Jesus" (*Literature and Dogma* 333). *"[C]ulture*, the acquainting ourselves with the best that has been known and said in the world" (xi), is necessary for apprehending God rightly, which the nineteenth century strives to do, but "conduct, not culture, is three fourths of human life" (345). With the living influence of God in the world, it matters little if He truly exists. The necessity of following in His ways is proven by observing what happens when mankind does and what happens when it does not. At times mankind may fail, but with loving guidance and a loving nature it need no longer feel that it must. The message of the century, not indeed the only one but the one that can still give some hope, shapes itself out of a series of axioms – Love is Physiology, Love is

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writes: "Does it not follow that the Ultimate Cause cannot in any respect be conceived because it is in every respect greater than can be conceived? And may we not therefore rightly refrain from assigning to it any attributes whatever, on the ground that such attributes, derived as they must be from our own natures, are not elevations but degradations?" (93).

[24] Spencer thought that much of the path of perfectibility had already been travelled, from primitive savagery to a state that required less and less the idea of punishment for bad and inducement to good action. The religions corresponding to each step along the way provided the impetus or restraint necessary at that particular time ("The Use of Anthropomorphism").

Evolution, Love is Morality, Love is God, Love is Life. These are the ideas afloat in the air that the novel breathes.

II

The fact remains that love cannot be divorced from blood, but the miracle lies in its ability to transcend it. Whatever physiological basis can be assigned to love comes from the process of care for the offspring indelibly connected to the parent by blood. Even God is a father, has a son, whose sacrifice, however, is the greatest token of the exaltation of love above blood, spiritualized as it may be in this case. In a sense, the selflessness that love entails cannot be understood without blood because it implies a movement beyond its physical imperatives. Conversely, when the care for satisfying these is acute, there is a tendency to hoard wealth and power. The fighting ethos born of self-preservation and attended by greed is, in Spencer's view, a primitive phase in the moral development of mankind. As such, it casts a shadow on the ideas and institutions affiliated with it, namely the hereditary class structure evincing a rapacity that cannot rest content with the span of one lifetime. Antiquity of lineage, so long a source of pride for noblemen, now only brings them closer to a brutish, primitive past.

William Thackeray's *Vanity Fair* (1848) makes the mettlesome spirit found in the blood of "horses, dawgs, AND men" – animals that a decade later will make favorite subjects of observation for Darwin – the butt of ridicule. Thackeray articulates this point using Sir Pitt Crawley's cousin James as his mouthpiece:

> "Oh, as for that," said Jim, "there's nothing like old blood; no, dammy, nothing like it. I'm none of your radicals. I know what it is to be a gentleman, dammy.

> See the chaps in a boat-race; look at the fellers in a fight; aye, look at a dawg killing rats--which is it wins? The good-blooded ones." (397)

Comments such as these come from the mouth of the usual drunk, as above, or snob, men whose degeneracy of body and mind gives an inverted meaning to their words. Good blood as a function of killing is in fact not good at all in any sense beyond the animal realm, and there is little proof that old means good even in this limited sense.

With characteristic satire, Dickens in *David Copperfield* (1850) also demolishes the notion of blood by raising it to ludicrous heights in the estimation of "a simpering fellow with weak legs," who insists:

> "[…] we can't forego Blood, you know. We must have Blood, you know. Some young fellows, you know, may be a little behind their station, perhaps, in point of education and behaviour, and may go a little wrong, you know, and get themselves and other people into a variety of fixes – and all that – but deuce take it, it's delightful to reflect that they've got Blood in 'em! Myself, I'd rather at any time be knocked down by a man who had got Blood in him, than I'd be picked up by a man who hadn't!" (362)

At this point the narrator confesses that he feels he belongs to "a party of ogres" – a sentiment with which the Transylvanian-born author of this study cannot but concur. Since the speaker's weak legs do not permit him to engage in some knocking down of his own, he reverently leaves the practice to those who can perform it, being endowed with that fountain of vigor known by the proper name of "Blood." Yet Dickens adds another dimension to the assessment of the term. After all, knocking down and picking up are very different actions in their effects and motives, and it is not just incidental that the

former is associated with potent blood. But this is also evidently old blood, which elicits such servility from the speaker that he puts his own fragile safety at risk, and there is a moral imputation in the admission of those defects of conduct that get a number of people in trouble.

The fact is that noblemen in the novel give ample reasons for the quality of their blood to be doubted, and this is certainly not new. It takes the habit of deference on the part of the lowly and the aura of affluence on the part of the elevated to obscure the fact that the latter are often notorious gamblers, womanizers, spendthrifts or misers, and almost always idlers. The link between nobility of blood and of character, which has been shaky since the demise of the romance, is effectively broken, setting the two formerly inseparable terms in competition with each other. The result is that a good character becomes the new nobility, which supersedes a title where it exists and supplants it where it does not. The days are over when princes were recognizable in exile and disguise because their nobility of bearing and conduct shone through the simple peasant garb. Those heroes of romance, Shakespearean comedy, or Gothic novel were secure in their possession of the noble qualities that invariably became united by the end of the tale with a fitting title.

Conversely, in the novels of Dickens and Thackeray, society looks to the trappings of affluence – clothes, money, and connections – to define what is noble, and that becomes the mindset that the authors oppose. At the center of the debate about what constitutes true nobility is the idea of the gentleman. It is an intriguing idea because it crosses multiple social layers, from the nobleman to the business upstart, army officer, clergyman, and government clerk, and encompasses qualities such as birth, morality, and

manners. The trajectory of the term explains how it came to subsume such an array of significations. It started from "gens" or family connections in blood, it then became linked with the courtly manners expected of those close to the king, it incorporated new wealth acquired in the industrial age, and finally, it came to emphasize morals once social changes made untenable the premises of old blood. [25]

Some notion of honor had always attended the concept of the gentleman and given it its luster, as well as changed along with it. Being less predetermined than birth but also more elusive as to meaning, honor opened the term to redefinition. The initial roots in the prowess and physical strength of the knight are enduring aspects of honor, though they survive in diluted form. The fighting spirit is parodied in Thackeray's dandy, or young "blood" about town, who takes up boxing, rat-hunting, and four-in-hand driving, which are the fashion of the nobility. More especially, it causes him to seek satisfaction in instances of the mildest offence by volunteering to take a bullet in a duel in ostentatious contempt for death. This touchiness of temper works well enough for soldiers belonging "to the household troops, who, as it was their duty to rally round the Prince Regent, had not shown their valour in foreign service yet," but falls short of the bravery in battle that fills the records on ancient parchments (106). Those who do fight bravely in battle, usually in India and other places abroad, fulfill their duty unassumingly and do not mix well with the men about town.

The element of strength is superseded by qualities more difficult of detection because intimately lodged within. Dickens and Thackeray both agree that they consist of charity and humility, those qualities St Paul talks about in the part of Corinthians entitled

[25] David Castronovo outlines the evolution of the term in a series of chapters in his book *The English Gentleman*: "The Gentleman of Birth," "The Gentleman of Wealth," "The Gentleman of Honor," "The Gentleman of Breeding," "The Gentleman of Religion," "The Gentleman of Education," etc.

"Love." The two novelists have created a gallery of gentlemen who come from relatively humble beginnings but have the nobility of an upright and generous nature: John Jarndyce in *Bleak House* (1852-53), Arthur Clennam in *Little Dorrit* (1855-57), John Harmon in *Our Mutual Friend* (1864-65), Captain Dobbin in *Vanity Fair* (1848), and Colonel Newcome in *The Newcomes* (1855). The colonel's words to his son, "if we can't inherit a good name, at least we can do our best to leave one, my boy" (65), define Thackeray's stance, which is that a good name is earned through good conduct and just one memorable lifetime suffices to create such legacy. On the other hand, Dickens in *Little Dorrit* (1855-1857) outlines the portrait of the gentleman through its negation in the character of Rigaud Blandois. It is not that the author hesitates to commit to a definition but that he endeavors to suggest that qualities positively and loudly stated, as in the case of Blandois, go against the very essence of gentlemanliness. The delicate generosity and humility inherent in the real gentleman are traits whose authenticity depends on their not being proclaimed, and therefore are best left to show through a character's virtuous thoughts and gentle treatment of others.

By gathering Blandois' peremptory claims scattered throughout the novel, one can reassemble by the end the portrait of the popular gentleman of the time. Blandois calls himself "proud" (25), "sensitive and brave" (26), "morally graceful, not less than physically" (802), possessing "quick perception," "accomplishments" (147), "polished manners" (801), "humour," "ease" (375), "frankness" (26), "the softest and sweetest disposition" but apt to be "enraged" if trifled with (801). The attribute of modesty is added by necessity indirectly, through mitigating formulas such as "I do not advance it as a merit" (26), since a direct manifestation of it would require a retraction of all such

boasts. Clearly, Dickens' intention is to distance the portrait of the gentleman from the impostor posing for it, whose "brute selfishness" and "utter disregard of other people" (374) raise doubts as to his being the right fit; and what better candidate to replace the misfit than the man with whom he stands in complete opposition, Arthur Clennam. The problem is that Clennam is the "grave gentleman, who smiled so pleasantly, who was so frank and considerate in his manner" (182) but who also "knew himself to be deficient in many little engaging qualities" (217). Thus he presents only a partial fit to the standards previously proposed, creating the dilemma of questioning either the person or the standards.

The standards err by being not so much wrong as incomplete. They are lacking in what the heroine, Amy Dorrit, positively describes as the character of her protector when she says, "Mr Clennam is always to be relied upon for being kind and generous and good" (824). They pay too much attention to decorous manners without demanding that they be substantiated by virtue. This is the concern that Cardinal John Henry Newman raised in the discourses delivered in 1852, collected in *The Idea of a University*, which he considered to be the gentleman's breeding ground. Newman cautions against loss of conviction in the pursuit of genteel values, which as a man of God he attributes to loss of faith but can result from lack of any moral center. In the absence of one, it becomes easy to cultivate the style and manners of gentlemanliness without the moral substance:

> It is well to be a gentleman, it is well to have a cultivated intellect, delicate taste, a candid and equitable, dispassionate mind, a noble and courteous bearing in the conduct of life; - these are the connatural qualities of a large knowledge; they are the objects of a University; I am advocating, I shall illustrate and insist upon

them; but still, I repeat, they are no guarantee for sanctity or even for conscientiousness, they may attach to the man of the world, to the profligate, to the heartless, - pleasant, alas and attractive as he shows when decked out in them. Taken by themselves, they do but seem to be what they are not. (120-1)

Newman appreciates the role of education in cultivating the intellect and teaching elegant manners. But virtue is more than any of these. Without virtue, they make a pleasant façade that may attach hypocritically to men whose inside is not as attractive as their outside. However, Newman does not believe that morality comes entirely from within, from the benevolent impulses of human nature or the capacity for self-assessment inherent in men of refinement. In the absence of religious precepts and the fear and hope they instill, morality is in danger of becoming a matter of decorum and taste. That is where the Earl of Shaftsbury had gone wrong in his aggrandizement of taste as the end of virtuous action. Taste, which to him was the same as beauty, truth and virtue, inspires behavior that is decorous but superficial, that creates an impression of ease and gracefulness in social dealings by ignoring what is unpleasant or jarring.

For Newman, morality is a lot more than taste. It is "the ideal, which the Apostle has delineated under the name of charity in its sweetness and harmony, its generosity, its courtesy to others, and its depreciation of self" (190). The distinction may appear subtle because harmony and courtesy belong to both virtue and taste, but nonetheless, "[k]nowledge is one thing, virtue is another; good sense is not conscience, refinement is not humility, nor is largeness and justness of view faith" (120). All the things that are not what Newman requires represent the character that intellect builds without religion. They represent the difference between the conduct of gentlemen who are old-fashioned in

manners and perhaps lack loquacity and wit but come through for a person in need and the unruffled elegance and composure of those who leave many a sufferer in the lurch. Rigaud Blandois, once again, calls attention to what it means to affect the style and manners of the gentleman without the moral content, since with him it is "mere swagger and challenge". Disturbingly, "blustering assertion goes for proof, half over the world" imposing on the public an illusion that, after all, is effective enough to clear him of the accusation of murder against his wife, whose vulgar manners and breach of taste are mentioned to have been almost as criminal as his violence (25).

Mrs General, the priestess of taste in *Little Dorrit*, voices the universal adulation of "that graceful equanimity of surface which is so expressive of good breeding" and "the ignorance of the existence of anything that is not perfectly proper, placid, and pleasant" (501). Placidity, however, cannot account for the earnestness with which real gentlemen jump into action on behalf of the needy. And while Newman thinks that charity comes from the letter of religion, Catholicism to be exact, Arnold two decades later finds sufficient influence in the Bible as book of conduct, if not literal truth. Indeed, the relationship with religion is a conflicted point in the novel, but suffice it to say for now that gentlemen do not make explicit reference to it. In fact, Arthur Clennam grows up to be humble and merciful in spite of being bred "in a creed too darkly audacious to pursue, through its process of reversing the making of man in the image of his Creator to the making of his Creator in the image of an erring man" (181). The coldness of his dogmatic stepmother, who sees in the Creator such exacting severity as is unworthy even of man, has cultivated in him the softer feelings by testing them against adversity and not by providing a guide. This is, moreover, coming from Dickens, who was a believer himself,

and there is even less to be observed in Thackeray. It is not that the heroes of their novels defy religion, at least in non-dogmatic form, but that they have internalized its milder spirit so as to make it part of their own.

Thus, the spirit of Christianity provides the first answer to the breach between blood and nobility which the novel expounds. Those who have internalized it are seen as gentlemanly and noble and those who have not are ranked low, though they be ever so well born. Dobbin, though only the son of a grocer, is a gentleman through and through. He is not arrogant or self-seeking. He is considerate and generous and inclined to do good by stealth, as when he recovers Amelia's piano and lets her think it is a gift from her fiancé George, who is moreover his rival in love. John Jarndyce is so diffident about the acts of kindness he lavishes on those around him that he is constantly suspected of wanting to fly out the window at any show of gratitude for his help. Joe Gargery is no less of a gentleman in his heart for being a simple and illiterate blacksmith, and his brand of gentlemanliness is the one that Pip learns to value above the showy kind; the latter belongs to the man who jilted and embittered Miss Havisham, in reference to whom the remark is made, "No man who was not a true gentleman at heart, ever was, since the world began, a true gentleman in manner. No varnish can hide the grain of the wood" (171). John Chivery, the prison turnkey's son enamored of Little Dorrit, has such genuineness about him that at a word of consideration from her "the heart that was under the waistcoat of sprigs – mere slop-work,[26] if the truth must be known – swelled to the size of the heart of a gentleman" (237); not that he heart is slop, or poor-work, but that it is a poor fit for the owner's humble station.

[26] An endnote to this edition of the novel explains that "slop-work" means: "Cheap and rather poor work; ready-made, not fitted."

The gentleman is not the fighting man, not the noble, wealthy, intellectual, or mannerly man, but the moral man. Morality anchors all the other qualities that in the course of time have attached to the term. While it is indispensable, they are not. In effect, true nobility implies indifference to the idols of status and wealth and cultivation of genuine feelings directed at generous aims. In its sincere form, nobility is not a matter of learning or deliberation but of natural inclination toward all that is selfless and good, and in this sense it really is inborn.

III

There is still a pervasive sense in the novel that a lot travels through the blood to account for conduct, though this inheritance is not so easily compartmentalized by social class. When Dickens in *David Copperfield* speaks of "the gloomy taint in the Murdstone blood," when the boldness of the protagonist of Meredith's *The Ordeal of Richard Feverel* (1859) is explained by "comes of the blood," or when Eliot's Will Ladislaw is said in *Middlemarch* to come "of rebellious blood," that indistinct sense of inherited character, good or evil, is manifest. Even more elusive is the relationship of character to noble blood, which sometimes retains the ancestral grandeur and sometimes carries an ancestral curse. Tess hears the ominous sound of a coach that "can only be heard by one of the d'Urberville blood," being linked to a murder one of the family committed long ago; Thackeray's Lady Steyne has a "mysterious taint of the blood" her mother brought from her own ancient race; and Feverel's father warns him, "In our House, my son, there is peculiar blood. We go to wreck very easily" (192).

Connections to physiology are present but rather precarious and often prevailed over by superstition. Blood is a conduit for the mythical influence of the past, and the

longer the line of skeletons in the family vault the greater the likelihood that the history it partakes of is troubled. It also does not work in favor of noble blood that it tends to resist mixing with newer streams in the name of preserving its much vaunted purity. In the case of Richard Feverel, his father's system of selective breeding leads to the death of the young woman of humble station Richard marries by stealth, abandons, returns to when she gives him a son, and leaves again at the critical moment to fight a duel. The girl's "health and happy blood," her "soft skin showing the action of the blood," designate her as nature's choice for the vivacious Richard, and maybe even for renovating his House, except that the stubbornness and dignity of the father initially, and then of the son, get in the way of its renovation (129). Much more felicitous is, ironically, "the frightful mixture" of Ladislaw's English-Polish-Jewish blood, which draws malicious sneers from commentators "themselves of a breed very much in need of crossing," but earns him the prize of Dorothea's love. Some of these references are prompted by the century's ongoing investigations into science,[27] but they are also mingled with allusions to virtue. It may appear logical that blood would be the subject of science and morality of religion, but as previously observed, they intersect.

The physical resemblance between parent and offspring is relatively easy to detect, yet the question remains whether character follows suit. This is particularly important in the case of prominent families who pride themselves on descent from ancestors exceptionally endowed. In a manuscript published posthumously under the title

[27] Meredith was inspired by a number of treatises: *Prostitution, Considered in its Moral, Social, & Sanitary Aspects* (1857) and The *Function and Disorders of the Reproductive Organs, in Childhood, Youth, Adult Age, and Advanced Life* (1857) by William Acton, and *Education, intellectual, moral, and physical* by Herbert Spencer (1858). George Eliot was also conversant with the science of her time, being surrounded by men such as Huxley and Spencer while contributing to the *Westminster Review*, and also being the partner of J.H. Lewes, who was esteemed for his scientific knowledge.

*The Compleat English Gentleman*, probably written in 1728-9, Daniel Defoe gives blood its due while admitting that a complete gentleman will also be remarkable for merit:

> Nay, I will grant an invisible Influence of the Blood, if they please, as if there were some differing Species in the very Fluids of Nature; that the Spirits of a finer Extraction flow'd in the Vessels, or some *Animalculae* of a differing and more vigorous kind which existed in the Blood, sir'd the creature with a superior Heat differing from those which mov'd in the Vessels of a meaner and lower Kind of Creature; (16)

Defoe's tone when describing the gentleman of blood wavers between earnestness and sarcasm, his own claim that he belongs to this class suggesting aspiration and the dubious details of description the reverse. His aspiration can certainly coexist with resentment, especially when privilege is seen as not well deserved. That is in fact Defoe's undertaking, to bring the blood and the merit together so that a gentleman who is senior in blood be at least equal in merit. Equal, he means, to "the son of a mean person furnis'd from Heaven with an originall fund of wealth, wit, sence, courage, virtue, good humour, and set apart by a liberall education for the service of his country" (4). The man possessed of these qualities has the capacity to be the first of a new race, whereas one lacking them may be the last of an old one.

The idea of the Aniamlculae is double edged, since, if they can confer greater vigor, they can also be mixed and corrupted to cause degeneration. Through one more feat of pseudo-scientific mystification, Defoe explains that corrupt mixtures of blood can occur due to marriage to persons of plebeian descent. Yet he also insinuates that, as is commonly suspected, there may be "some Globules in the Blood, some sublime Particles

in the Animal Secretion, which will not mix with the hated Stream of a mechanic Race, but preserve themselves pure and entire, and in time expels the degenerate Mixture, and restores its original Purity" (17). It appears that armored blood particles are now fighting the battle for distinction that in the past was waged by their hosts. If that be even speculatively the case, though Defoe seems conscious of the ludicrousness of the idea, marriage alone cannot account for the alloy and some more primary corruption must be at work. To avoid offending the ladies by questioning the paternity of their sons, he settles on the issue of the milk they drink from wet nurses hired from among the lowest ranks. And "as the milk is in a true sence the blood of the nurse, so when taken in, it is mixt with the blood of the child much more effectually than any other of the mixtures of generation," thus making the influence of the nurse whose passions, temper, bodily infirmities, crimes, and very soul the son drinks with the milk predominate over that of the parents (73-5).

This solves provisionally the mystery of the degeneration of old blood, but it only accounts for the predisposition of the heir to be "a blockhead by the meer consequence of Nature" (84-5). However, there is also the element of nurture that brings degeneracy to completion. The culprit is the likelihood that the heir will be raised with too much leisure and not enough learning, which leaves him free to wallow in sensuality, sloth, indolence, levity, gayety and wanton excess (8). This privileged upbringing, which really amounts to neglect, springs from that pernicious belief that noblemen need not be troubled with work or learning since they do not have to earn their bread. Surrendering this distinctly aristocratic prerogative is seen as degradation. But this attitude is self-defeating. As long as it continues, it is not surprising that the race of nobles sprung from

vigorous fighters who used to handle massive weapons of war is now made up of effeminate creatures flaunting their small white hands spared from work. From the perspective of evolution, privilege can be treacherous because it suspends the struggle on which development is dependant, potentially creating the scenario that H.G. Wells anticipates in *The Time Machine*, in which the feeble aristocratic Eloi are being raised as cattle and preyed upon by the laboring Morlocks.

But noble blood is not invariably at a disadvantage. Not only can good physical traits also be transmitted, but there is speculation that the characteristics acquired by the parents in their lifetime can be passed on to the offspring as well. This means that lifestyle, special knowledge and skill can potentially make their way into the blood. Darwin in *The Descent* states that the use or disuse of various parts of the body leads to changes in their proportions, so that for example "the hands of English labourers are at birth larger than those of the gentry" (419). But the process is more intriguing when character is involved, because it suggests that habitual virtue or wisdom, or any such impalpable trait, also run in the blood. Herbert Spencer corroborates this idea when he says in *The Data of Ethics* that knowledge of consequences, the truly moral check on wrong actions, comes from "an assemblage of indistinct representations accumulated by experience of the results of like acts in the life of the individual, superposed on a still more indistinct but voluminous consciousness due to the inherited effects of such experiences in progenitors – forming a feeling that is at once massive and vague" (22). In other words, acquired knowledge of consequences penetrates the genetic fond, producing an accumulation through generations that increases in the descendants the consciousness

of and capacity for moral acts. They learn from the experience of their ancestors not just through history but through vague impressions lingering in the blood.

This idea follows in the tradition of Samuel Butler, who essentially applied to habits, aptitudes, opinions, conduct, even religious faith the theory advanced earlier by Lamarck that characteristics acquired through practice can be further passed on to the offspring. Butler claims that posterity benefits from the experience of previous ages through a sort of "unconscious memory" that helps the past inform the ideas and behaviors of the present (*Life and Habit* 126). His intention is to establish continuity between generations and a sense of moral purpose for evolution that can rescue it from the randomness to which it has been consigned by Darwin. But even Darwin – who quotes in *The Descent* one of Spencer's renditions of the concept of acquired traits[28] – concedes:

> There is not the least inherent improbability, as it seems to me, in virtuous tendencies being more or less strongly inherited…they become first impressed on the mental organization through habit, instruction and example, continued during several generations in the same family, and in quite subordinate degree, or not at all, by the individuals possessing such virtues having succeeded best in the struggle for life. (492-3)

Virtue may be the one variable for which Darwin makes an exception from his theory of pure chance, allowing it to accrue steadily through the habits of generations and be

[28] "Our great philosopher, Herbert Spencer, has recently explained his views on the moral sense. He says, 'I believe that the experiences of utility organized and consolidated through all past generations of the human race, have been producing corresponding modifications, which, by continued transmission and accumulation, have become in us certain faculties of moral intuition – certain emotions responding to right and wrong conduct, which have no apparent basis in the individual experiences of utility'" (Letter to Mr. Mill in Bain's 'Mental and Moral Science,' 1868, p.772).

further passed on in the blood without curtailment from the laws of selection. Could this, then, be the attribute that empowers man to take charge of his evolution?

Sir Francis Galton's laborious review of the family histories of men of genius in *Hereditary Genius* (1869), which Darwin also quotes with assent, supports the idea that talents and mental traits can be forwarded through the life-blood or carrier of hereditary material (359-60). This strengthens the conclusion that in the duality 'blood and breed,' otherwise known as 'nature and nurture,' the former provides the basis for the latter to work upon. Moreover, 'breed' reflects back on the blood, if it be admitted with Butler, Spencer, and Darwin that life lessons create enduring habits which are the inheritance of generations to come. It is not until August Weismann's *Essay upon Heredity and Kindred Biological Problems* (1889), which enlarges on the ideas of William Lawrence and Sir Wilhelm His, that the transmission of acquired traits is thoroughly contested in favor of evolution that happens from the inside out rather than from the outside in. In place of environmental influences, Weismann favors the development of "primary tendencies" (84) from within the reproductive cell, which determines the amount of genetic inheritance from the parent or deviation from it. He finds no proof that traits acquired during life – scars, cut fingers and, by extension, conceivably even habits or knowledge – have any impact on the makeup of the offspring.

These theories are only partially useful, mainly because they regard the principles of inheritance that govern humanity at large and not a particular class, or perhaps showing that inheritance cannot be tied down to class is precisely why they are useful. Nevertheless, if aptitudes are transmitted, which even Weismann does not deny, and if, moreover, habits may become ingrained, it is not unreasonable to assume that

some families are more favored by both nature and nurture. It still does not follow, however, that the favored families must necessarily be those that boast noble blood. The heritage scientists debate over has to do with physical strength, intelligence, talent, virtue, and it would be a hard case to prove that these are the property of one class. Nature takes precedence over social conventions and works in complete disregard of them, so that whatever it has to offer can be conceived as democratically dealt. But qualities that are the province of nurture may be proprietary to only a few and in time potentially enter their bloodstream. In other words, the capacity for "special tastes and habits, general intelligence, courage, bad and good temper, &c.," which according to Darwin "are certainly transmitted" (414), may exist in all walks of life, but not the conditions propitious to their cultivation. Charlotte Bronte's heroine in *Jane Eyre* (1847) intuitively agrees when, in thinking about her village pupils, she tells herself:

> I must not forget that these coarsely-clad little peasants are of flesh and blood as good as the scions of gentlest genealogy; and that the germs of native excellence, refinement, intelligence, kind feeling, are as likely to exist in their hearts as in those of the best born. My duty will be to develop these germs. Surely I shall find some happiness in discharging that office. (381)

## IV

In what concerns the intellect, the case is still strong in favor of the wealthy and leisurely classes who had access to books and learning – again, in regards to cultivation if not capacity – but not necessarily so with virtue. Assuming the inclination is there, virtue can be fostered in the high and the low, especially by a religion that encompasses everyone in its pale, and that has been the guiding light and reference point for moral

questions long before the popularization of evolution. Up until the 1850s, the issue of morals was challenged by an earlier foe than the evolutionism popular since the 60s, namely the British empiricism and continental rationalism of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, both of which located the source of knowledge in something other than revealed religion – empiricism in sense perception and rationalism in human reason.[29] The void that a disparaged religion threatened to leave behind was great, and people clung to what they could salvage. When Matthew Arnold speaks of the need "to recast religion," this is the struggle he has in mind. Morally, spiritually, humanity used to have a genealogy in a wise and loving Father who provided guidance for all. Now it was faced with the prospect of becoming spiritually orphaned and having to devise a system of discipline of its own.

The precarious state consequent on the demise of religion is evident in the difficulty of finding motivation for moral action when the divine censor is no longer watching. Count Fosco, the Machiavellian character in Wilkie Collins' *The Woman in White* (1859), voices the ensuing destitution. When Laura Fairlie – whose fortune he preys upon in complicity with her husband – reproves him for dividing criminals into fools who get caught and wise men who do not, by affirming that "truly wise men are truly good men, and have a horror of crime," he responds deprecatingly, "those are admirable sentiments; and I have seen them stated at the tops of copy-books" (202). To him the hiding or detection of a crime is a "trial of skill between the police on one side,

[29] "The 1850's and the early 1860's had seen the final consolidation of an empirical spirit which challenged, quite tentatively at first and then more directly, the old Mosaic cosmogony, as well as the miraculous element, in the Scripture. The assumptions of natural scientists and historians were quickly – though often quite superficially – assimilated by a small elite of intellectuals. In the 1860's, but above all in the 1870's and 1880's, there was a proliferation of imaginative efforts to reconcile the new findings with the moral verities of the old religion….What had begun as a disparagement of the old religion two decades before, ended in the 1870's and 1880's as a conservative clinging to its remains" (Knoepflmacher 5-7).

and the individual on the other" (204). Virtue is, and has been in a sense, a matter of policing the world, but when divine omniscience and omnipotence no longer support the endeavor, some get away with crime. The axiom "Crimes cause their own detection" (203) – which bears the stamp of that faith in God's justice that in the Middle Ages caused the accused to be subjected to trials by ordeal whereby their innocence was expected to save them from drowning or burning – is just another piece of naïve, copy-book morality ignorant of the anonymity of crime. The empiricists said that reality was what the senses perceived, so invisible crime is not real. Moreover, virtue does not have enough rewards to be practiced for its own sake. The vicious get on better, and, after all, Fosco asks, "Is the prison that Mr. Scoundrel lives in, at the end of his career, a more uncomfortable place than the workhouse that Mr. Honesty lives in, at the end of *his* career?" (206). Even public approval does not reward virtue, since society preaches a set of rules but does not abide by them, letting money wash out a lot of sins. In practice, society condones crime.

Thomas Hardy voices the perplexity once again – still unresolved in 1891 when *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* was first published – in the dialogue between Tess and Alec D'Urberville on the occasion of the latter's renouncing his short-lived religious zeal sparked by passing remorse for seducing her:

> "As for what you said last time…about having what they call an ethical system without any dogma, I don't see my way to that at all."
>
> "Why, you can have the religion of loving-kindness and purity at least, if you can't have more."

> "Oh no. I'm a different sort of fellow from that! If there's no Power to say, 'Do this, and it will be a good thing for you after you are dead; do that, and it will be a bad thing for you,' I can't warm up. Hang it, I am not going to feel responsible for my deeds and passions any more, if there's nobody to be responsible to; and if I were you, my dear, I wouldn't either." (377)

This outlook shows that Herbert Spencer's fears have been partially realized and that the theological system of punishments and rewards can be renounced too soon, before people have fully developed the means for self-discipline. There is, at least, "the religion of loving-kindness," but not everyone can take to it without a divine watchman to enforce it. The hardest thing is finding the inner resources on the strength of which moral conduct can be carried on.

The paradigm has shifted away from a sense of purpose provided by God to one that has to be provided by man. The "straight and narrow" path to fulfillment of the divine plan was delineated in John Bunyan's *The Pilgrim's Progress from This World to That Which Is to Come* (1678), a book popular into the nineteenth century, as evident in the title of *Vanity Fair* taken from the place in the pilgrimage where the wares of this world are sold. In Bunyan's allegory, the protagonist, Christian, makes his way to the Celestial City and relies on his faith and the guidance of Good Will, or Christ, to escape the pitfalls along the way and get rid of his burden of sin. Reaching the end of this arduous journey, he enters Paradise where he is received with blaring trumpets and blazing splendor. This is the allegory embedded in *Jane Eyre* where, after unsuccessfully trying to lure Jane into an affair outside marriage, Rochester makes the confession:

> Jane! you think me, I dare say, an irreligious dog: but my heart swells with gratitude to the beneficent God of this earth just now. He sees not as man sees, but far clearer; judges not as man judges, but far more wisely. I did wrong: I would have sullied my innocent flower – breathed guilt on its purity: the Omnipotent snatched it from me. I, in my stiff-necked rebellion, almost cursed the dispensation; instead of bending to the decree, I defied it. Divine justice pursued its course; disasters came thick on me: I was forced to pass through the valley of the shadow of death. (478-480)

Christian had also passed through the Valley of the Shadow of Death and in the middle of its gloom and terror had heard the words of the twenty-third Psalm, "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me (Psalm 23:4). Christian had God's guidance to depend on, but Rochester's belated revelation cannot sustain him in his course. Consequently, he falters, but what sustains him, enough at least to prepare him for the revelation, is his love for Jane and the chastening sense of her purity as opposed to his guilt. The disasters he speaks of, losing his sight in the fire that burnt down his home, are part Old Testament chastisement, part ancient Greek restoration of 'inner vision' through loss of the outer. Their function is to jolt him into the awareness of something that he, however, has first learned tentatively from Jane. She is the one to respond to his call when in a mysterious meeting of souls she hears his distant summons and promises to return to him. At the same time, she refuses the appeal of St. John Rivers to enter into a loveless marriage for the purpose of joining his missionary work. He calls her "impassioned," meaning that "human affections and sympathies have a most powerful

hold [on her]" (380-1), yet she chooses to use her fervor not in the service of God but of man, and in this she departs from Christian's mission. Jane makes her own choices and builds her identity, which is her destination for lack of a God. The words "I will fear no evil: for thou art with me" take on the signification of human companionship, over which God may watch but in which He does not intervene.

This turning of religion inward is a legacy of the Romantics, who looked within for God or "the experience of 'God," using self-consciousness and imagination to envision "a process towards perfected wholeness rather than the teleological movement of Christian history."[30] The goal is the realization of man's better nature, not over-wrought by dogma but graced with the peacefulness of the introspective mind – and, a favorite word in the novel, heart – that knows itself to have felt kindly and touched other lives in a benevolent way. The 'essence of Christianity,' as Feuerbach called it, is not theology but the spirit it fosters within human beings: love, compassion, thoughtfulness, brotherly feeling. This spirit is manifest in the secular world through everyday occurrences and acts of kindness. Novelists knew this but needed to devise stories and symbols that made its representation more accessible and concrete, and Dickens especially found one such symbol in Christmas. The celebration of Christmas combines the secular with the divine, since the birth of Christ gives occasion to a time for soul searching but also, not insignificantly, for eating, drinking, and making merry. Both Dickens and Thackeray wrote Christmas stories, but Dickens' are more emblematic while Thackeray defends himself in one of them against insinuations that he is trying to

[30] Barry Qualls, *The Secular Pilgrims of Victorian Fiction* 4.

replenish an empty purse, though this is probably a jab at his rival who for some years in a row made use of this money-making popular subject.

Already in *Sketches by Boz* (1833), Dickens had suggested that the goodwill and cheerfulness of a Christmas dinner do more "to awaken the sympathies of every member of the party in behalf of his neighbor, and to perpetuate their good feelings during the ensuing year, than half the homilies that have been written, by half the divines that have ever lived" (203). Following on the statement, "[t]hat man must be a misanthrope indeed, in whose breast something like a jovial feeling is not roused" (199), Dickens creates such a misanthrope and reforms him in "A Christmas Carol" (1843), which he wrote instead of a contemplated political pamphlet intended to relieve the dire situation of the poor, and with resounding success. The protagonist, Scrooge, is cured of his greed and insensibility by the ghosts of Christmases past, present, and future, which remind him of the better tendencies in his nature when he was a child and expose what he has become as an adult. This brings his outlook closer to that of his nephew, who has no money but a loving family, and who has always thought of Christmas "apart from the veneration due to its sacred name and origin, if anything belonging to it can be apart from that – as a good time: a kind, forgiving, charitable, pleasant time" (6). Scrooge helps his nephew financially at the end, after learning the important things in life and finding solace in showing and receiving kindness. The story was praised for inspiring people to open their hearts and purses to each other, and it established Christmas as the symbol of humaneness and a favorite device for Dickens. The novel *Great Expectations* (1860-1) also opens at Christmas and calls for distinguishing the light of Estella – who bears the name of 'star' and whose lighted candle gliding along the dark passages of Miss

Havisham's house Pip mistakes for a star – from the alluded to star of Bethlehem that revealed to the Magi the birthplace of Jesus. Estella is merely "a lighted candle" about which moths hover to their destruction, and it is her ingrained bitterness toward men that makes her so and dissociates her from the Christmas spirit.

Through such allusions and symbols, the spirit of religion lives on. In *Our Mutual Friend* (1864-5) Dickens cautions against being too quick to throw things away by revealing that there are treasures in the heaps of rubbish which make Boffin, the Golden Dustman, a rich man. Through smoke-and-mirror devices, the protagonist John Harmon, alias John Rokesmith, alias Julius Handford, appears in different guises, first to attest to his own death by falsely identifying a corpse found in the river, then to investigate the character of his future wife, and finally to recover the riches that after some misappropriations devolve to him as the rightful owner. To the characters in the novel he is "Our Mutual Friend," and the versatility of his talents and beneficent influence are a reminder of another, much more elevated and also apt to be reborn out of apparent death, Mutual Friend. Eugene Wrayburn is the character in the novel who needs just such a friend – at least a version of this virtuous pattern, which can be anyone and anything as long as it conveys the right spirit – to cure him of being "so soon bored, so constantly, so fatally" (150). He needs someone who makes it worth his while to reform and be good (234) and finds it in Lizzie Hexam, his inferior in station but superior in virtue. At first he pursues her relentlessly and selfishly, without concern for the damage he can do to her reputation. His friend Mortimer remonstrates with him and urges him, "Look on to the end," eliciting the reply, "Ah! See now! That's exactly what I am incapable of doing" (125-6). Eugene's inability to look forward to the consequences of

his behavior sounds the depth of his moral void. His reformation marks the moment when awareness of consequences, what Spencer calls the true moral check in the absence of a religious one, begins to dominate the consciousness of the novel, as evident not just in Dickens but George Eliot and others as well.

That we are all connected is the message of Carlyle's story in *Past and Present* (1843) about the Irish widow who, spurned by her fellow men, sinks into misery, contracts typhus-fever, and infects seventeen other people who die along with her ("Gospel of Mammonism"). Each life touches so many others, so isolation is not possible and certainly not the answer to problems. George Eliot's protagonist in *Adam Bede* (1859) knows this when he says about wrongdoing, "It's like a bit of bad workmanship – you never see the end of the mischief it will do. And it's a poor lookout to come into the world to make your fellow-creatures worse off instead of better" (166). Adam is an artisan, a carpenter in fact – perhaps not incidentally, since the scriptural story of the world's creation by God was called pejoratively 'the carpenter theory' – and as such he shapes the world with his actions the same way he shapes the ingenious cupboards that make people's lives more convenient. When it comes to disputes about doctrinal points in the Bible, he says, "It isn't notions sets people doing the right thing – it's feelings" (184). His own feelings for the alluring Hetty Sorel are honorable but misguided, as he is too lenient with her frivolity while being too severe with the faults of others. The squire Arthur Donnithorne, on the other hand, pursues Hetty dishonorably, since she is a farmer's niece and not suitable to be his wife. He is egoistic and self-deceiving in his pursuit of pleasure and has yet to learn that consequences are unpitying, which he does

when Hetty leaves their illegitimate child to die in the field and barely manages to exchange, due to a remorseful intervention from him, execution for transportation.

The attempt at seduction is the scenario in *Jane Eyre* and *Our Mutual Friend* as well and appears to be the main test of a man's restraint and consideration for others. Lizzie, like Jane, resists temptation, and her modesty and sense of honor cause Eugene to feel "a real sentiment of remorsefulness and pity," at first "not strong enough to impel him to sacrifice himself and spare her" (675) but at least strong enough to break through his apathy. Wrayburn's initial desolation is that of someone who has lost his guiding light and his way, and not surprisingly he meditates on what it would be like to live away from society with just one other person "in a lighthouse" (150). Lizzie is his lighthouse, and she and people like her substitute for the divine light that now works through its votaries in the world. Once she saves him from a nearly deadly attack, he marries her and earns the disapproval of the frivolous section of society but the approval of those who believe his choice "is a question of the feelings of a gentleman" (796). He escapes from his struggles physically disfigured, as Rochester had escaped blind, and it may seem that low-born women only have access to gentlemen once they have been damaged, except that they are improved within.

When Lizzie's father, a waterman falsely slandered by his former partner, is drowned in the river – which in Dickens consistently stands for the tide of life and progress of time – her cry of anguish speaks for all who are spiritually orphaned and lost:

> Father, was that you calling me? Father! I thought I heard you call me twice before! Words never to be answered, those, upon the earth-side of the grave. The wind sweeps jeeringly over Father, whips him with the frayed ends of his

> dress and his jagged hair, tries to turn him where he lies stark on his back, and force his face towards the rising sun, that he may be shamed the more. A lull, and the wind is secret and prying with him; lifts and lets fall a rag; hides palpitating under another rag; runs nimbly through his hair and beard. Then, in a rush, it cruelly taunts him. Father, was that you calling me? Was it you, the voiceless and the dead? Was it you, thus buffeted as you lie here in a heap? Was it you, thus baptized unto Death, with these flying impurities now flung upon your face? Why not speak, father? Soaking into this filthy ground as you lie here, is your own shape. Did you never see such a shape soaked into your boat? Speak, Father. Speak to us, the winds, the only listeners left you! (175)

The waterman has been engulfed by the waters and has become one of the dead whom he used to allay on his lap. He is the Father, capitalized, though never so before in the novel, whose corpse is shamelessly prodded by gusts of wind that give spectral movement to each fluttering rag. This does not leave much hope for the theories that have been blowing about the defunct religion, vainly endeavoring to revive its carcass. They only serve to dislodge it further and turn its face toward the dawn of progress, which sheds prying light on its destitution. But while buffeted, it is also baptized unto death, an echo of the New Testament baptism unto Christ effected through his death, which in the Catechism is described as a death unto sin, and a new birth unto righteousness. Is the Father, then, taking on a new life and a new guise, like Harmon whose ruse as regards his identity is nearly discovered prematurely by his wife's playful questions from the Catechism, "What is your name?", "Who gave you that name?" (670). Could it be that the Father, stern and silent, also requires to be saved through that part of Him that is the

Son, who walked the earth and mingled with people, leaving his legacy of love? The father in the novel has a daughter, not a son, but a daughter in whom the Son lives, and who could bear sons and draw to her through her goodness other sons, and daughters, spread about the earth.

V

It is not at all a far stretch to think of the daughter as the legatee of God in the world, nor does it by any means exclude veneration of Christ. The idea of a son is too strongly connected with inheritance of a different kind, as Dombey finds out when in losing a son and heir to his commercial empire he learns to appreciate a daughter's love. That is the true Christian heritage, and the gentleness of the feminine spirit is an essential appendage to it. With this in view, Feuerbach speaks of "the feminine principle" in the Son:

> The Son is the mild, gentle, forgiving, conciliating being – the womanly sentiment of God. God, as the Father, is the generator, the active, the principle of masculine spontaneity; but the Son is begotten without himself begetting, *Deus genitus*, the passive, suffering, receptive being; he receives his existence from the Father. The Son, as a son, of course not as God, is dependent on the Father, subject to his authority. The Son is thus the feminine feeling of dependence in the Godhead; the Son implicitly urges upon us the need of a real feminine being. (71)

There is, of course, contained in these lines a patriarchal stereotype of femininity for which current opinion has little patience. It would be distorting, however, to impose the lens of the present upon the past. Doing that could be a source of problems, as manifest in the readiness with which portraits of demure women are read as ironic, which reverses a

novel's ostensible values by suggesting that it ridicules what it feigns to approve. Nor is it necessarily empowering to women to be always held to a standard of independence and strength, though it would be a further mistake to assume that these could not coexist with a gentle demeanor. When Feuerbach associates mildness with femininity, he pays women the greatest compliment that his age could conceive. He believes the Trinity is completed by the Virgin Mary instead of the Holy Spirit, which is too precarious and vague, and which in fact in certain schools of Jewish mysticism is in itself feminine (70-1). The Virgin Mary is the Mother who conceives chastely, as a sign that the Christians regarded sexuality as unholy, but she is an indispensable vessel for the birth and nurturing of the Son. From her comes the feminine principle in the Son – "the heart of the Son is the heart of the Mother" (72) – as an antithesis, complementary rather than antagonistic, to the masculine principle in the Father.

The figure of a virgin mother is an expression of the tension between physiology and theology. It is, physiologically speaking, an impossibility, yet also, scripturally speaking, a necessity. It becomes, in the century's spirit of repurposing and reinterpretation, another battleground over which the flag of peace is eventually raised. Drummond, once again, marks the momentous change when declaiming, "Now is the hour of the Mother" (17). He has in mind physiology and evolution but focuses on those aspects out of which the first stirrings of love and tenderness are born, so that the mother is revered for birthing not just the young but the higher impulses of animal nature:

> Watch any higher animal at that most critical of all hours – for itself, and for its species – the hour when it gives birth to another creature like itself. Pass over the purely physiological processes of birth; observe the behavior of the animal-

> mother in presence of the new and helpless life which palpitates before her. There it lies, trembling in the balance between life and death. Hunger tortures it; cold threatens it; danger besets it; its blind existence hangs by a thread. There is the opportunity of Evolution. There is an opening appointed in the physical order for the introduction of a moral order. (17)

The mother's love bridges the gap between physiology and morality in the course of evolution. Without a mother's care the newborn would be subject to the predatory aspects of nature and likely not survive, but she shelters it and continues to give it life even after giving it birth, instinctively at first but more and more consciously as the moral capacity of the species expands from this initial exercise of love. The mother's role symbolizes the triumph of love over blood, or rather the surpassing of blood because the idea is not of a rupture but of an organic growth. The germ of "other-regarding" acts lies in these moments when a tenuous life receives protection, and from there it grows stronger and wider until it encloses all humanity within its pale. What else could the love of adoptive parents and near-strangers mean in the novel but a transcending of physiology, an ability – perhaps a freak of evolution or extension far beyond natural instinct – to experience the feelings without the physiological basis?

Drummond is not past the prejudices that admit of "a certain constitutional difference" between male and female, inclining the one to a "robuster life" and the other to "what one can only call the womanly disposition" (256); nor does woman lose by the distinction. Her nurturing role has put her at the forefront of "the Struggle for the Life of Others" originating in the function of reproduction, while to man has been mainly assigned "the Struggle for Life" arising from the function of nutrition and the law of self-

preservation. His life tends towards selfishness, hers towards unselfishness, so that "[w]hile one kept Individualism alive, the other kept Altruism alive," hanging together in that balance in which true life lies (258). This belated elucidation may still solve some of the conflicts detected earlier in the century between honor as a function of blood and honor as a function of love. In the first instance, honor arises out of what Drummond sees as man's role, fulfilled "by going out into the world, and in the rivalries of war and the ardors of the chase" (257); in the latter, it is born out of the feminine principle in nature as well as in religion, which reach a common ground in this respect. Coming from the religious angle Feuerbach affirms what Drummond, coming from the natural angle, will later confirm, that "Love is in and by itself essentially feminine in its nature" (72).

The French philosopher August Comte, who was influential in England by being either followed or despised,[31] wrote *A General View of Positivism* (1856) in the aftermath of the French Revolution during the Second Empire as a reconciliation of theology, philosophy, and science. These are to him the three phases that took the development of mankind from imaginative superstition, to philosophical debate, to positive or experimental solutions for social problems. His system unites natural with moral philosophy by showing that traversing the different functions needed – observing the laws of nature, devising rational courses of action based on them, and moving toward their execution – requires a motive force, and that is feeling. This is a kind of soul that breathes life into the sober structure built by science and rational thought and impels them toward political action so as to provide social relief. It is moreover, the fervid and

[31] "Dubbed 'Catholicism *minus* Christianity' by Huxley, defended as 'Catholicism plus Science' by Dr. Richard Congreve, the leader of its English branch, Positivism had initially been hailed as a new *summa*, a unification of all verifiable truths, acceptable, as it was thought, both to the religious- and to the scientific-minded" (Knoepflmacher 39).

disinterested womanly feeling, that supplies the need for "[e]motions of a gentler and less transient kind" and "impulses in which reflection has no share" (219). Consequently, Comte urges:

> Thus, in the alliance which has been here proposed as necessary for social reorganization, Feeling, the most influential part of human nature, has not been adequately represented. An element is wanting which shall have the same relation to the moral side of our constitution, as the philosophic body has with Intellect, and the people with Activity. On this, as well as on other grounds, it is indispensable that Women be associates in the work of regeneration as soon as its tendencies and conditions can be explained to them. With the addition of this third element, the constructive movement at last assumes its true character. We may then feel confident that our intellectual and practical faculties will be kept in due subordination to universal Love. (219-20)

The tendency to elevate love in all spheres of life, natural, moral, political even, raises woman along with it. She is now the bearer of impetuous, selfless, divine love, not love enervated by deliberation, not love of power or wealth or the self-love that delights in an heir, but love truly deified and humanized at the same time, which is no longer a contradiction when God is only the divine in mankind. The right blood descends through her as a mother, and whatever comes from the father counts in the more prosaic sense of strength and vigor suitable for life. Manly blood is full of activity, but it has difficulty in casting off the coarser side of nature, which is still manifest in the impulse to dominate the weak. In the new moral climate, manliness is even more at a disadvantage when coupled with the pride and martial spirit that used to attend upon noble blood in the days

when Sir Walter Scott estimated chivalry as Christianity in action, and when Burke decried the demise of that "nurse of manly sentiment and heroic enterprise" (*Reflections* 22). Since then Herbert Spencer has deemed "the violence and the deception which warriors glory in" (12) an inferior state in the development of mankind and has prophesied, with some truth, the advent of a "peaceful state" in which the terms of competition are changed – industrialism being a case in point – and the need for domination assuaged (The Data of Ethics 39).

George Meredith's *The Egoist* (1879) mocks as anachronistic the race of "little princes" who, since they have not to yield military service to an imperial master, pay homage to their "brave blood" on the hunting-field or by preying on the innocence of women. Sir Willoughby Patterne is such a specimen of a race of warriors without a war, who has not merely a "man's" but a "conqueror's" heart and who directs his energies toward invading women's minds and bodies. He wants women to be innocent and malleable so as to better engross their thoughts and admire his reflection in them, to the extent that his fiancée Clara Middleton has to literally shut her eyes to prevent the intrusion. Women are tempting prey because they are diffident and inclined to worship, and it takes unusual self-control not to abuse these traits. Thus, they become "the test of the Egoist" against which men are measured.

In one sense nature vindicates men by showing they are heirs to that struggle for finding and securing a mate termed sexual selection. Darwin had documented it, and it was not to be imputed to men that they followed the ways of nature. But Willoughby goes further than that. He is, indeed, "of the race of amorous heroes who glory in pursuing, overtaking, subduing: wresting the prize from a rival, having her ripe from

exquisitely feminine inward conflicts, plucking her out of resistance in good old primitive fashion" (219). But he is also one who, admittedly like most modern men, wants to lay by his mate like a possession, store her for future use, and break down any signs of resistance or individual will. It is this rapacity of possession – which makes John Galsworthy's Soames Forsyte a 'man of property' in reference not just to his wealth but his beautiful wife, whom he is accused of raping, for all he is her husband – that distinguishes modern man and brings in him the ferocity of the brute to the peak of refinement. This is not to deny that for the male to stay with one female is also an act of commitment to protecting and providing for her and her young. It is simply to say that those are things he does for others, through which he shares in the nurturing role, and subjugating is something he does for himself, as a life-taking rather than a life-giving act. Meredith corroborates:

> Jealousy of a woman is the primitive egoism seeking to refine in a blood gone to savagery under apprehension of an invasion of rights; it is in action the tiger threatened by a rifle when his paw is rigid on quick flesh; he tears the flesh for rage at the intruder. The Egoist, who is our original male in giant form, had no bleeding victim beneath his paw, but there was the sex to mangle. (232)

Jealousy arises when the acquisitive instinct of primitive man is intensified by the fear of another's trespassing on the prize he appropriates in the contest for life and is refined into pride of possession. This causes the man to take every measure to secure the prey by immolating its identity until absorbed into his own. Even when the victim is no longer desired, his sense of proprietorship does not allow him to let go, so that an ardent creature such as Laetitia Dale ends up spending the better part of her youth nursing an unrequited

passion fed by Willoughby's little well-timed attentions. She describes herself as "anaemic; a rather bloodless creature." Given that "[t]he blood is life," she knows that she has not much life left, and it is clear to the feeding of whose appetite her blood has gone (157). Having gained more insight into Willoughby's nature, Clara Middleton turns away from him and shuns his house "as the antre of an ogre" (233). She learns that men who are egoists make conquests of good women, on whose devoted constancy they feed; "they drink it like blood" (160). This attitude is self-defeating even for the male, as it scares away suitable mates who might be able to stay lucid and put up just enough opposition to keep his hunting instincts enthralled. From the standpoint of evolution, vanity is an impediment that blinds the male to what he truly needs, a partner for procreation, and not the expending of energy on a fruitless affair with his own self. Clara "was healthy!" but he marries the feeble Letitia because she is the one who still accepts him, not out of love, since eventually the veil is lifted from her eyes too, but out of some selfishness of her own as a poor unmarried woman in need of a fireside. Given her state of health, it is likely that Sir Willoughby will die childless.

Ultimately, egoism runs counter to the struggle for life. Not only does it hinder sexual selection, but it upholds an ideal of conduct that has fallen behind the times. The downfall of the old notion of honor that glorified male violence and pride of race is a manifestation of this fact. When Clara speaks of "the world that contains real and great generosity, true heroism," Sir Willoughy replies, "We read of it. The world of the romance writer!" and she protests, "No: the living world" (63). She reacts to the unreality of generosity that lives in romance books but also to its antiquated nature. Intuitively, she knows that the age of the mother has edged out the age of the knight, as Hardy also

knows when in *A Pair of Blue Eyes* (1873) he faces Henry Knight with the crustacean while he is holding on to the edge of a cliff for dear life:

> By one of those familiar conjunctions of things wherewith the inanimate world baits the mind of man when he pauses in moments of suspense, opposite Knight's eyes was an imbedded fossil, standing in low relief from the rock. It was a creature with eyes. The eyes, dead and turned to stone, were even now regarding him. It was one of the early crustaceans called Trilobites. Separated by millions of years in their lives, Knight and this underling seemed to have met in their death. (252)

It is not just that Knight is outmoded because he had a former rival in a man who "didn't care for sauces" (98), and was thus obviously humbly born, but whose personal nature lived up to the standards of the time by being "pure and generous" (68). Knight himself is a gentleman, a university man, a geologist, and Elfride Swanscourt actually prefers him to her earlier lover because of the expanse of his mind. Nor does fate persecute him to signal that his higher rank has fallen into disrepute, since Lord Luxellian is much more highly placed and he marries the desirable Elfride. Knight is antiquated because he fails to see what Lord Luxellian sees, Elfride's virtues as a wife and mother who treats his children from a first marriage as if they were her own. On the other hand, Knight's vanity makes him exacting in his conventional expectations of female virtue, which stipulate that a girl should know her own mind from a tender age, should never falter in her choice of a lover to the damage of her reputation, should be untouched, unkissed, and unspoilt for his selfish enjoyment.

Elfride's father is also a "fossilized Tory" (52) who consults the "Landed Gentry" before making up his mind about a man, but she is open-minded and clever and writes her father's sermons. She is thus a female priestess and, though flawed, or by virtue of being flawed, apt to introduce a new moral code. A boy has died for love of her, another has been jilted, and yet she is, surprisingly, still able to love Knight with unflinching devotion. While he is facing the crustacean hanging over the abyss in a torrential rain, she devises a way to save him by tying up her underclothes in a rope, at the price of her modesty and prudence. She saves *him*, not the reverse, and so the damsel in distress romance scenario is overturned. Her intervention is earnest, impetuous, disregarding of self. The knight is obsolete because, in Meredith's words, "Are they [women] not of a nature warriors, like men?" (111). Women fulfill that role just as well and, unlike men of Knight's persuasion who 'save' women by marrying them so as to better occupy their minds, they do it with more passion and less pride.

Criticism of the traditional gender roles, however, should not be taken too far. Charlotte Bronte in *Villette* (1853) is outspoken about her discontent regarding the way women are perceived, but she still qualifies her disapproval. Particularly eloquent is her survey of the portraits of women which the heroine, Lucy Snowe, contemplates in a museum in Belgium. One portrait depicts an unnaturally large woman, "extremely well fed; very much butcher's meat," lying half-reclined with the broad daylight blazing about her, as if whiling away the afternoon. The sensuous inertness of that "affluence of flesh" (181) brimming with unused energies alludes to the type of the ornamental female devoid of intellect, feeling, or drive, whose only role is to provide diversion for the active, busy male. Other portraits which repulse Lucy are remarkable for such "depth of

expressionless calm, of passionless peace, a polar snow-field could alone offer a type." They remind her of a celebrated 'beauty' she once knew whose main traits were "the deep, settled love she bore herself" and "her proud impotency to care for any other living thing." This placidity is best described by reference to a lifeless, bloodless state: "Of blood, her cool veins conducted no flow; placid lymph filled and almost obstructed her arteries" (190-91). Selfless love is, by contrast, what blood must then mean.

Lucy herself is of a restless and passionate nature. She is also on a pilgrimage of sorts, but the goad that thrusts her on and the fever that forbids her to rest is that "a want of companionship maintained in [her] soul the cravings of a most deadly famine" (145). It is human companionship she craves. After living for some weeks quite alone, she goes to a Catholic priest out of sheer need for communication, but the solace she gains from the encounter is simply finding a listening ear and hearing a kind word. She runs away in terror at the thought of conversion to a religion according to which penitence and affliction are the facts of this life and pleasures only of the next. Her passionate temperament cannot be sterilized by doctrines or conventions, and thus she sets herself apart from the vapid women in the first portraits she sees.

But there is also a set of four paintings catalogued 'La vie d'une femme' that suggest a different error in apprehending women, this time by depicting an effusion of feeling. The first is a 'Jeune Fille' coming out of a church, "the image of a most villainous little precocious she-hypocrite;" the second is a 'Mariée' kneeling in prayer in her chamber and "showing the whites of her eyes in a most exasperating manner;" the third a 'Jeune Mère' "hanging disconsolate over a clayey and puffy baby;" the fourth a 'Veuve,' "being a black woman, holding by the hand a black little girl" and studiously

surveying a monument in Père la Chaise; "All these four 'Anges' were grim and grey as burglars, and cold and vapid as ghosts" (183). Lucy watches these feminine roles immortalized on canvas with evident revulsion, but the question is whether her complaint is against the roles themselves.

Granted, these roles situate women relative to a male presence, husband, son, God even, at each stage in their lives. Nevertheless, what Lucy denounces is the hypocrisy evident at every step. These women are "insincere, ill-humored, bloodless, brainless nonentities!" (183) The angelic ingénue hides her precocious worldliness, the wife prostrates herself in excessive devotion, the mother oozes maternal solicitude, and the widow turns entirely black with grief. Rather than condemning the roles, Bronte seems to deplore the fact that women fill them without real conviction, that they are frozen into these postures by social pressures which, like a bad painter, forcibly delineate their lives. The coquette in the novel, Ginevra Fanshawe, is partially redeemed by the fact that she is honest and open about her frivolousness. She entices men because she enjoys it and not because she feels compelled to find a husband at the right time. When she runs away with a suitor she does it for the thrill of the elopement which gratifies her eccentric tastes. With her everything is a matter of choice and not a grumbling submission to artificial rules of conduct.

Lucy contemplates marriage to a man she loves profoundly, and who admonishes her for her independence and unfeminine intellect but is irresistibly drawn to these very traits. Her unconventionality makes her better suited to be a wife because she is prepared to enter marriage deliberately, discerningly, and wholeheartedly. However, in keeping with the heroine's distaste for impositions, the author ends the novel ambiguously.

Lucy's betrothed leaves on a voyage to the West Indies and a ravaging storm at sea makes it unclear whether he survives the return journey. The conventional ending would have been for the two lovers to come together, but all the author is willing to do is leave the story open-ended, urging her readers to fill in whatever ending suits them best. This choice may be intended to suggest the irony of fate that denies Lucy a union freely granted to the undeserving, an empowerment of female readers to create an ending to their own lives, or simply a rejection of sentimental plots. In either case, the thing it does not do is deny the institution of marriage. Rather, it encourages women to put more heart and thought into living their lives, not for any gratuitous defiance of tradition but for the sake of feeling dignified and fulfilled.

There is, nevertheless, a caution interpolated in Bronte's celebration of feminine feeling. It is the episode in which a fire breaks out in the theatre during a performance by Vashti – the actress whose name is that of an Old Testament queen who refuses to appear at her husband's banquet – and frightens off her spectators. Clearly, the audience is unprepared to watch such an outburst of feeling from a woman, even when it takes place on the stage. Feminine passion is liable not just to insufficiency but to excess, and perhaps at times really can be hard to contain. Heroines get a bad reputation because their devotion to others is sometimes so extreme as to turn back against them and earn them the imputation of self-love. Amelia Sedley, for instance, has been called the ironic caricature of the traditional heroine up to Thackeray's time. She is admittedly "self-sacrificing, humble, forgiving and kind," [32] but this is thought to be a façade hiding her

[32] In *Egoism and Self-Discovery in the Victorian Novel*, John Halperin writes: "It is of course a critical commonplace by now that Amelia is Thackeray's ironic caricature of the traditional heroine of fiction up to his time…. It is part of the genius of Amelia's portrait that she seems to be one of the least selfish characters in the novel. She is self-sacrificing, humble, forgiving and kind. It is easy to fall into

ignorance and "unconscious selfishness," which cause suffering to Dobbin at least and are even responsible for the death of her brother, since it is her forgiving nature that allows the murderous Becky back into their lives.[33] Similarly, Dorothea's fervor of sympathy has not spared her the accusation of "self-conceit" and "self-indulgence" given that it is misguided at first.[34]

But ignorance is, in one interpretation at least, innocence, and kept Adam and Eve in heaven as long as it did. Devotion, if it must be scrutinized, is intrinsically selfish and potentially hurtful, because it means succumbing to an absorbing interest in one idea or person to the exclusion of all the others. Altruism can be hedonism for the person who finds pleasure that way. This, however, does not tarnish innocence, or devotion, or altruism, and the great work they do to inspire and bring comfort to the world. Too scrupulous a judgment threatens to turn characters into human piñatas out of which all feelings and desires have been beaten out. When, upon peeling the layers of character, novelists strike upon a vein of egoism, that is an insight, not an indictment – naturally, in cases that warrant such peeling of layers and not in those of the admitted villains, whom novelists have a way of unmasking from the very first. When Dobbin is disappointed in Amelia after their marriage, it is not that her earlier cruelty hangs over the couple but that disappointment is the outcome of all inflated expectations which have to do with the imperfect things of this world. This is the vanity announced in the title and the reason that worldly dreams turn to dust.

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Thackeray's trap – to sympathize with a guileless, simple creature such as Amelia – to suspend our powers of judgment and to pity her ignorance of the world. But her stupidity, while innocent, is neither passive nor neutral. It takes the form of an unconscious selfishness – unconscious because she is stupid – which encroaches destructively on the lives of several people" (34).

[33] *Ibid.* 42-43.

[34] *Ibid*, 151, 200.

Once cleared of the charge of inadvertent selfishness, women who are passionate, devoted, self-sacrificing, even foolishly so, appear in a more flattering light. Amelia still has her limitations and Dorothea still has "the passionate, ideal nature" of a Saint Theresa who needs to learn that martyrdom is no longer the way to go, but they are sympathetic creatures whose gentleness redeems their faults. Since there is "no coherent social faith and order which could perform the function of knowledge for the ardently willing soul," and teach it what to do, feminine ardor alternates "between a vague ideal and the common yearning of womanhood" (3), to be a wife and mother, not knowing that the two coincide. Dorothea fails when she marries the old and sterile Casaubon, whose work at building a key to all mythologies that lead back to a revealed religion is obsolete, and who cannot help her accomplish her greater work as she hoped. Her womanhood, on the other hand, is awakened by Will Ladislaw, who is vital and spirited and, though still searching for a vocation, energetic enough to do great things. The blood perceptible beneath his "transparent skin" shows he is moral in the one useful sense, by listening to the dictates of nature – feelings and desires – and using the vitality thus nourished to accomplish what in the end turns out to be widely beneficial political ends. He is also the one to check Dorothea's penchant for martyrdom, by correcting her when she says:

> "I should like to make life beautiful – I mean everybody's life. And then all this immense expense of heart, that seems somehow to lie outside life and make it no better for the world, pains one. It spoils my enjoyment of anything when I am made to think that most people are shut out from it."
>
> "I call that the fanaticism of sympathy," said Will, impetuously. "You might say the same of landscape, of poetry, of all refinement. If you carried it out you

> ought to be miserable in your own goodness, and turn evil that you might have no advantage over others. The best piety is to enjoy – when you can. You are doing the most then to change the character of the world as an enjoyable planet. And enjoyment radiates." (160)

This is conventional selfishness overturned and made, with qualifications, to be the new morality. Self-sacrifice is fine when born of and promoting love, but not for its own sake and not at the price of the sufferer's self-immolation. Spencer, to whom Eliot was very close and with whose ideas hers frequently coincide, conveys a meaning similar to that of Ladislaw's words by an analogy between people and 'radiators;' if each one of a cluster of bodies relies on others to give it heat and does not generate some for itself, the entire cluster goes cold. Self-generated heat stands for egoistic pleasure, and this enhances personal happiness as well as the aggregate of happiness in the world, which grows with every individual contribution and with the ability to share the surplus with those in need ("The Data" 43). This is different from being calculating and meanly selfish, because it involves seeking gratification that is considerate and careful of other people's lives.

Once again, physiology has invaded morality and made it none the worse, because it has done so in a specific way, by affirming the importance of caring for oneself in the interest of increasing life and not of wresting it from another. Morality runs in the blood because it is the blood that tells a person what it needs and what it can and feels inclined to contribute to others. Moreover, Spencer claims that the "altruistically-natured" have a duty to listen to the imperatives of the blood so as to leave "like-natured" descendants and not diminish the pool of benevolence in the world. Not surprisingly, *Middlemarch* ends with a wedding, not indeed that of Will and Dorothea but one that

previews its announcement in the "Finale." Eliot adds, "Many who knew her, thought it a pity that so substantive and rare a creature should have been absorbed into the life of another, and be only known in a certain circle as a wife and mother" (836). But Dorothea is not absorbed into her husband's life the way that Clara Middleton would have been had she married Sir Willoughby. Since Dorothea is a woman, many venues for action are closed to her, but she supports her husband in his work of political reform, bears children, and helps her neighbors. She is a river of feeling that does no less good for being diffused into channels and touching people's lives, unlike Bronte's impetuous St John Rivers, as gently and unassumingly as a Brooke.

Marriage, "the bourne of so many narratives," is according to Eliot "still a great beginning," most importantly because it creates life. That is ultimately the goal of all human endeavors. Religious asceticism and sterile morality fail the big test. Dinah Morris is at first a Methodist preacher who consults the Bible before every step that she takes and is content to spend her life serving others, incurring the ridicule of her practical aunt Mrs. Poyser. But Dinah falls in love with Adam Bede, not with his pious brother Seth, and they surround themselves with children. On the other hand, Hetty Sorel is blamable because her vanity leads her to meddle with a man above her in station and give birth to an illegitimate child whom she leaves to die. Of all Becky Sharp's flaws, the most despicable is that she does not love her son, and of all Esther Summerson's qualities the most admirable is her motherly way with children not even her own. While the spirit of Lady Deadlock, Esther's mother, is withered because she has renounced her illegitimate daughter, Esther's spirit is continually replenished by her love for the little ones who surround her wherever she goes. She soothes, bathes, and lulls to sleep Mrs. Jelliby's

neglected children, revealing the error of that "telescopic philanthropy" that engrosses the mother in charitable schemes for Africa while her own children suffer. Carlyle urged, "Do the Duty which lies nearest thee," and for women that starts literally at home (*Sartor* II.9.148).

Tess d'Urberville is a good mother, but her baby falls ill and dies as a mark of the condemnation that falls on a child born in sin. The destructiveness of moral conventions lies in the fact that someone like Tess who is voluptuous and fecund – who first appears in the novel in the midst of a spring fertility festival, or "Cerealia" in honor of Ceres, and who has "a luxuriance of aspect, a fullness of growth, which made her appear more of a woman than she really was" (30) – leaves no children behind. This is Hardy's commentary on rigid moralities that stifle the processes of nature. When he talks about honesty in dishonesty, sins of inadvertence rather than intention, failure in deed but not in will, he suggests that purity can coexist with transgressions against that conventionalism that expects a girl to withstand male seduction before she even knows what to avoid. The moral instincts inherent in Tess are manifest in her loving nature and far surpass the artificial restraint that arbitrary conventions impose. On the other hand, the 'moral' scrupulousness of Angel Clare – the husband who abandons her upon learning about her past, similarly to Henry Knight – dashes his hopes of happiness and causes Tess' death and that of the children she could have borne him.

In Dante's *Paradiso* dwells the soul of Rahab the harlot, the Old Testament prostitute whose amorous inclination also qualified her for acts of devotion to the cause of the Israelites and of God. Dante subscribes to the medieval view inspired by ancient philosophy that human passions can climb as if on a ladder from the basest lust, to love of

truth and goodness, and ultimately to worship of God. The same passionate nature is at work in all cases, but it earns praise or blame depending on the worthiness of its object. The idea is not the same as Hardy's, except in that it grants intrinsic value to love as a force not to be censored but harnessed and channeled, ideally toward deserving aims. There is also, of course, in the New Testament the figure of Mary Magdalene, the repentant prostitute and follower of Jesus to the cross and the first to see him after his resurrection. In that tradition, prostitutes in the novel are repositories of fervent feelings heightened by the urge to expiate for failings by being that much more kind. Such is Martha in *David Copperfield* who saves the runaway Emily from taking to the streets, the aunt in *Mary Barton* who intervenes to save her niece from temptation, or Ida Starr in George Gissing's *The Unclassed* whose "instinctive sympathy" with the poor drives her to help them once her fortunes improve.

Examples such as these show how important it is not to limit the passionate impulse, prominently displayed in the feminine sex, to any preset manifestation that society or even nature dictates. Sure, maternity is nature's way, but according to Drummond it is the mother not of children, who are "the mere vehicle of its spiritual manifestation," but "Of Love itself, of Love as Love, of Love as Life, of Love as Humanity, of Love as the pure and undefiled fountain of all that is eternal in the world" (258-9). The most telling instances are those of mothers without children of their own, of 'little mothers' such as Esther Summerson or motherly spinsters such as Laura Fairlie's half-sister Marian Halcombe, Lucie Manette's defender Miss Pross, and David Copperfield's aunt Betsey Trotwood – of anyone who takes life in hand and protects it

with feminine ardor and manly strength. Nature and morality agree on this one thing, that Love is Life.

By this test, blood as glorified in noble ancestry fails in a few respects: for being too martial, too egotistical, too masculine. Feminine love is the knighthood of the new age, which of course does not mean that men are shut out from it altogether but that they need to seek in it support and inspiration, as suggested by their own gentler nature and that of the women who show them the way. The reality is that women have very limited venues for action, being left out of politics and scrutinized for their modesty and restrained conduct, so male vitality is still the prime social mover. The aim at this point is serving mankind before oneself, one's family or one's caste, and God even, except to the extent, not inconsiderable, to which divine laws humanized and made world-conversant continue to trace the path to a good life. Exerting oneself toward this goal is what it means to be noble, and it is only imperfectly an attribute of the blood. It draws from it energy, talent and zeal for action, but for these to be seen as the gift of ancestors even in conception gentleness and gentility must become one, more earnestly than Shakespeare's facetious remark could have anticipated.

## Chapter III – The Nobleman's Duty

### I

From the identification of love with life to John Ruskin's affirmation "THERE IS NO WEALTH BUT LIFE" in *Unto This Last* (1860) there is a leap not in spirit but in scope. Wealth introduces the idea of gain and accumulation, possibly at the expense of another, and the consequent distinction between rich and poor. It defines people not according to what they are inwardly but what they have relative to what others do or do not have. It thus appears to widen the field of inquiry from issues of character and feeling to more prosaic ones of political economy and social hierarchy, because the difficulty lies precisely in recognizing that only the former can disentangle the latter. Whatever creates life, posits Ruskin, is still the only thing that confers value to commercial enterprises and national policies, as it was shown to do in the case of moral conduct. Social questions are thorny as long as they deny in the name of party factionalism and class distinctions the connectivity of all people as keepers and dependants of one another.

Ascertaining what form of government is likely to promote respect for life above narrow interests is hard. Plato had denounced in *The Republic* the oligarchy of wealth, the disorderly democracy, and the tyranny of demagogic rulers, proposing instead leadership by enlightened philosopher-kings. With the proximate memory of the French Revolution in mind, the English could not but admit the justice of Plato's caution against a hated oligarchy or the indiscriminate freedom consequent on its overthrow, which passes under the name of democracy and is in turn reined in by a tyrant disguised as champion of the people, as Napoleon turned out to be. Napoleon eventually revised the revolutionary ideals he had inherited, declaring that what the French people wanted was equality, not

liberty,[35] a condition that his highly centralized legal and administrative system was perfectly qualified to provide. But if liberty, as Carlyle feared, is actually "of Heaven" and not of this earth, the question remains as to the right form of control.

The suspicion that unrestrained freedom creates a pretext for tyranny to take over had informed Burke's vindication of monarchy as a type of rule that, when amended by laws and parliamentary checks, discourages excess in both the direction of anarchy and of oppression. Still, could dynasties be relied on to supply those philosopher-kings who in Plato's system were picked, taught, and tested according to the qualities of wisdom and devotion to the people? And if not, or not always, or not to an ideal degree, was it better to do away with them altogether or keep them as mainstays of power and moderate their position through the counsel of ministers and parliaments? How to combine change with stability and freedom with restraint is the question that preoccupies statesmen who continue to face the perplexity expressed by Burke:

> To make a government requires no great prudence. Settle the seat of power; teach obedience: and the work is done. To give freedom is still more easy. It is not necessary to guide; it only requires to let go the rein. But to form a *free government*; that is, to temper together these opposite elements of liberty and restraint in one consistent work, requires much thought, deep reflection, a sagacious, powerful, and combining mind. (352-3)

Such a government certainly cannot be achieved overnight or in the tumult of a revolution and requires the test of ages before it can be ratified by experience, which is why breaking with tradition is unadvised.

[35] Johnston 95.

Writing in the France of the Second Empire, Alexis de Tocqueville suggests in *The Old Regime and the French Revolution* (1856) that the French Revolution succeeded in instituting a centralized bureaucracy more despotic than the monarchy and attendant aristocracy it sought to wipe out. He draws poignant distinctions between aristocracy and despotism, democracy and freedom. The removal of the French aristocracy did not curb but in fact fueled despotism, which does not come from a particular ruling class but from an atmosphere of secrecy and suppression of thought and opinion. With the ties of family and caste destroyed, the worship of money, which changes hands and has extreme mobility, was able to prevail, especially under cover of the secretiveness that nourishes such transactions. The people merely changed masters, and not in favor of enlightened or disinterested ones. Freedom is different. It promotes fellowship, exchange of ideas, a sense of belonging to a vast though not unstratified entity that transcends narrow interests by enabling public opinion to keep even the powerful in check.

Freedom is not self-seeking individualism and independence from the collective, but neither is it, on the other hand, the massive uniformity that a democracy creates. In a democracy, equality can coexist with tyranny if the people have the right to vote but not the instruction and information necessary to make the right choices. Burke feared as much when he wrote, "The will of the many, and their interest, must very often differ; and great will be the difference when they make an evil choice" (*Reflections* 76). The uninstructed, "swinish multitude," as Burke infamously referred to it, may press for the wrong measures or fall prey to demagogic leaders who are good at courting its favor. Add to this the deliberative, contentious, and changeable nature of democratically elected governments and the conditions for the anarchy that breeds tyranny are complete. Some

elective component, as in the British House of Commons, infuses new life into the political body, but only when stability is serenely enthroned in the seat of the monarch and the hereditary House of Lords. Whatever liberty may mean in Heaven, here on earth, "share in the National palaver it may, or may as probably *not* mean" (Carlyle, *The French Revolution* 304).

In the absence of instruction and information, the people may not only unwittingly elect tyrannous leaders but may become the tyrant themselves, and an intellectually diffuse one at that. The thing to be feared, as John Stuart Mill boded, is "the tyranny of the majority," once it has power to dictate the laws as well as the customs and conventions to live by. Depending on the wisdom and virtue of those who collectively make up the public, or who are loud enough to be its mouthpiece, public opinion can easily turn from moderating organ into instrument of oppression. And since wisdom and virtue are typically reserved for the gifted few, a government chosen and influenced by the many, a "government of mediocrity," cannot but be mediocre government, condemning the nation to guide itself by dangerously dim lights. [36]

Finding the best form of government is a matter of striking an extremely delicate balance between equality and leadership, liberty and order. Fundamentally, restraint is intrinsic to liberty, which implies surrender to law and submission to a government that fulfills its aims by providing stability, guidance, and protection for the rights of the citizens against infringement by one another. This is the end to which political associations were formed through what Thomas Hobbes, John Locke, and Jean-Jacques Rousseau recognized as a contract whereby individuals relinquished their personal freedom in exchange for the benefits provided by the state. That each of these thinkers

[36] In *On Liberty* (1859) 6, 80.

drew different conclusions – in support of absolute monarchy, constitutional monarchy, and popular sovereignty respectively – makes a difference in the organization of the state but not in the fact of the individual's agreement to submit to a greater will – of the sovereign, the law, or the people – and, in Rousseau's words, "be forced to be free." Instead of a fictitious liberty, what the people need is competent leaders. To Carlyle, the "indisputablest" right is that of the ignorant man to be guided by the wiser (*Chartism* 343). But where to find these wise men able to constitute, as in Plato's republic, a real aristocracy, named after the Greek word for the government of the 'aristos' or 'best,' is a most pressing question.

"La carrière ouverte aux talents" was Napoleon's slogan, his own career serving to demonstrate the potency and pitfalls of that idea. Talent, as physiology has shown, is not proprietary to one caste, but in order for it to be useful it must be first accurately detected and then carefully cultivated. And although this does not confine the aristocracy of talent to the aristocracy of birth, it does mean that sometimes the former can conveniently be found in the ranks of the latter, already prominent class, trained in a tradition of leadership and enjoying the means and leisure to enlarge whatever aptitudes it may have. "The wisdom of a learned man cometh by opportunity of leisure: and he that hath little business shall become wise," points out Burke in quoting Ecclesiasticus xxxviii (*Reflection*s 73).

If the people are to take part in governing at all, at least to the extent of recognizing enlightened leaders and contributing to the public discourse, they also need to build credibility and competency through education. To this end, Samuel Coleridge, Thomas Carlyle, and Matthew Arnold advocated the dissemination of culture by an

intellectual elite working to spread knowledge more widely. The names that Coleridge and Carlyle assigned to this group, Clerisy and Priesthood respectively, suggest that it was partially to be formed of the clergy, who traditionally had made learning its profession. But more than that, they suggest that there is a spiritual and moral component to education. This is essential for reviving that sense of duty and fellow-feeling that, coupled with discernment in matters of state, could combat what many feared, the rule of doing as one likes. It may be that liberty truly is something other than that lack of restraint amounting to anarchy or that artificial equality that leaves everyone equally wretched. If Mill is right, liberty consists in nurturing free thought and diversity of talent, character, and opinion so as to yield the best the nation has to offer. And if it is to still savor of freedom at all, it must make submission gracious and easy and not contrary to the dictates of reason and feeling. Respect and duty can accomplish that.

It appears that prejudices in favor of the aristocracy of blood should not be allowed to prevail, but neither should prejudices against it. The imperative call for some form of leadership capable of perfecting society cannot but turn the attention toward this traditional ruling body. England needs reforms to deal with the mass of workers displaced from the countryside and crowded into cities, where they keep in motion the industrial machine. The cause of these millions of overworked, half-starved creatures requires championing by a class that has political clout but does not benefit directly from their exploitation, such as industrialists do. As paradoxical as a relationship might seem between the beneficiaries of unearned wealth and the unrewarded toilers, it is not counterintuitive. In addition to mutual help against industrialist encroachment, a significant dose of humanity and a strong sense of duty are to power this alliance. This

cannot be a forced, demonstrative, or condescending relationship but has to be a true fellowship. The figure of the vain aristocrat who disregards the claims of the lowly to personal and class dignity, which excited such hatred in France and was no stranger to England, points to the prejudices that stand in the way. Still, aristocratic leadership is to be desired because it can protect the people from even more problematic alternatives, the misery of industrialist exploitation or the pitfalls of self-government. Just across the channel in France there is also the example of Napoleon's imperial legacy ready to supplant a tottering monarchy or to suppress a rebellious mob with a new type of autocracy and privileged elite.

II

Benjamin Disraeli expounded the ideas of what became known as Young England, an association of individuals who proposed the return of the aristocracy and the church to their traditional duties of political and moral guidance. Already in his first novel *Vivian Grey* (1827) – published before Young England took shape and began exercising some influence in Parliament in the 1840s – Disraeli shows stirrings of his political conscience and earnest though indefinite aspirations to participate in government. Aware of his own lack of a platform for advancement, given his plebeian and Jewish background, Disraeli casts a hero who rebels against his unprivileged birth: "Were I the son of a millionaire, or a noble, I might have all. Curse on my lot! That the want of a few rascal counters, and the position of a little rascal blood, should mar my fortunes!" (29). Vivian knows that "to enter into high society, a man must either have blood, a million, or a genius" (27). The first he missed out on at birth; the second, though

not inherited, he may still acquire but not without some luck and investment of time; the third is the one he settles on as something he may still prove to possess.

Vivian has enthusiasm enough and is not uninstructed. He spends a year reading the classics and stumbles upon Plato and "THE STUDY OF POLITICS," the most perilous for a boy who is for the first time trying his mettle at such momentous questions. His initial ferment of mind comes from trying to reconcile philosophic idealism with political pragmatism. When he asks his father for the Platonists, he is first warned not to dream away a useless life by idle puzzles of the brain, and then directed to the fourth shelf where Plotinus is to be found. The father means to impress on the son what "human feelings" have taught him, "that we have some duties to perform; to our fellow creatures, to our friends, to ourselves" (26). Feelings, not philosophy, are the teachers of that great truth. But the elder still asks his disciple if he is sure that the Platonists did not place the great end in practical rather than theoretic virtue, in other words, in performing, for different reasons, that duty which the feelings also dictate (25). In contemplating goodness and justice, their aim may have been the working of a good and just thing. In fact, the practical science of politics is none other than the outward embodiment of the ideal. Its end is the ideal realized and capable of dealing with very palpable and urgent problems, for which the feelings also could not be any more impatient of resolution.

Feelings, more so than systematic thought, were in the view of the Romantics – who closely preceded the period when *Vivian Grey* was written – the way to apprehend the ideal. They stood for instinct, intuition, that inkling that the father has regarding the duties of man. It was still a vision of the ideal they sought, only they circumvented the paths of thought and aimed straight for the intuitive knowledge that there are eternal

truths of which the world is the incarnation. Percy Bysshe Shelley has deemed poets "the unacknowledged legislators of the World" (356) on account of their powers of intuition, which grasp the ideal to be made real. To him they are not only visionaries but makers, from the Greek 'poiein' for 'to make,' because they offer the conceptual mold on which institutions are to be built. The poet of Shelley is in fact not much different from Plato's philosopher, although the painstaking dialectical progress to truth was once appreciated as superior to the artist's dilettantism. However, it cannot be denied that much speculation entered into the philosopher's labors as well, who, after all, no more came face to face with the ideal than the poet whose imaginative productions he deemed pale imitations.

Contentions aside, the triumvirate thought –feeling –action is the supportive structure of politics. Once perceived, the ideal requires zealous effort to be put into practice. Thought may delineate the principles and strategies for action, but it is the affections that enlist people's service, binding them to a purpose and through it to one another. The poetry that lays the groundwork of institutions is always an expression of some such emotional impetus – sympathy with friendship and patriotism in Homer, yearning for the fellowship preached by Jesus in the poetry of the Christians, sexual love in the verses of the Trouveurs, Petrarch and Dante, to render a few of Shelley's examples. These are all manifestations of Love, the spirit of cohesion between human beings, which, having drawn them together, drives them to make the ideal a reality for all:

> The great secret of morals is Love: or a going out of our own nature, and an identification of ourselves with the beautiful which exists in thought, action, or person, not our own. A man, to be greatly good, must imagine intensely and

> comprehensively; he must put himself in the place of another and of many others; the pains and pleasures of his species must become his own. The great instrument of moral good is the imagination; and poetry administers to the effect by acting upon the cause. (334)

The romantic imagination does not only glimpse at the ideal but also cultivate the sympathies that must inform all efforts to approach it. It excites admiration for that which is conformable to its goodness and compassion for that which falls outside its pale, the goal being to bring it within it. More than distant adoration or pity, it is empathy that the imagination uniquely enables, a melting of identities until the joy and pain of one becomes that of all.

Vivian Grey has great admiration for the romantic Lord Byron, whose mind he likens to an ocean magnificent in its own nature and capable of representing as in a glass the natures of all others (142). Byron was certainly passionate and ready to share into the culture and political strivings of Armenians and Greeks alike, and to die in defense of Christendom against the Turks like a crusader. So far, Vivian has the passion of a Byron but needs to find an object toward which to direct it. Musing on his prospects of success and the experience of those who came before him, he wonders why some statesmen never ruled, some heroes never conquered, some philosophers died in a garret, and some poets were admired only by Nature in her echoes. It then dawns on him, "It must be that these beings have thought only of themselves." This grand discovery elicits the exclamation,

> Yes! We must mix with the herd; we must enter into their feelings; we must humour their weaknesses; we must sympathize with the sorrows that we do not

feel; and share the merriment of fools. Oh, yes! to rule men we must be men; …
Mankind, then, is my great game. 29-30

Forebodingly, Vivian's thoughts connected with this great undertaking smack of hypocrisy, of adopting pretences instead of principles. He is still too much concerned with his own success to entertain genuine feelings capable of inspiring the achievement he seeks. He looks at mankind disparagingly, from a distance, not yet feeling those sorrows with which he coldly determines to sympathize.

To enter the field of action, Vivian enlists the help of an aristocrat, the Marquess of Carabas, a shelved but pompous politician whom he tempts into becoming Prime Minister by leading a miscellaneous party of the ill-treated and discontent. In its rise to power, this conglomerate of disgruntled and unscrupulous men denies an official post to one of its allies, who challenges Vivian to a duel for having lured him into the scheme and is killed. A humbled Vivian, smarting under his father's chastisement, realizes he has been an unprincipled "juggler" in love with himself and indifferent to consequences save his own profit. He launches into foreign travel to escape his disillusionment but only meets with more of the same when learning during a visit at the court of a mediatised German prince – a prince with no real political power who uses pomp to hide his impotence – that the traitorous rival who received each foreign occupation, French and Austrian, with open arms is now the master of the patriot who resisted. More perplexingly still, the usurping prince, under the advice of a low-born but shrewd minister, manages to \rule the people with justice and gentleness. This instance of opportunism used to acquire a high place from which to actually do good ushers in the last phase of Vivian's education – ten years later, Disraeli was to enter the House of

Commons and also stir through his various alliances accusations of opportunism. He realizes that in politics compromises as to the means, not the underlying principles, are justified by the results they obtain. For all its inspiration in lofty ideals, politics measures success by actual effects. This is a long road for the ideal to travel and, begrimed by competing interests and squabbles, still emerge pristine and victorious in the accomplishment of a good and useful thing.

The mixed impressions Vivian receives in the course of his initiation weigh on him and make a battleground of his mind. His failed experiments drive him to seek refuge in romantic adventures, during which he befriends a stranger later revealed to be a Hungarian prince in search of his father and furnished by his mother with a ring and lock of hair as proofs of his birth. It seems the story could not tread any more than it already does on the turf of romance, when a storm breaks out, and in the midst of a deluge of waters the Hungarian prince is struck by lightning while Vivian's horse flings its rider to the ground and falls dead. Thus, the novel ends strangely and abruptly, portending turmoil for the young man and writer who stands "without the gate of the Garden of Romance," having been expelled from the realm of its pleasant illusions and left to brood over "those dreams of Youth over which all have mourned" (555).

It is in *Coningsby* (1844) that the next literary avatar of Disraeli reenters with new confidence, riding out of a storm on a new pure-bred Arabian horse. This is Sidonia, the wise and worldly Jew who first meets young Coningsby at an inn in a fortuitous encounter reminding of Cervantes. Sidonia shares his experiences and invests his stories with such a spirit of adventure and mystical illumination that they are sure to satisfy the listener's thirst for both imagination and wisdom. There is no longer in this novel any

unsatisfied aspiration to noble blood, since Coningsby has his fair share and Sidonia partakes of that more ancient and pure ichor belonging to the unmixed Hebrew race, the real "aristocracy of nature." Having been in Parliament for the better part of a decade, passed over by Sir Robert Peel in the formation of the Conservative ministry of 1841, and instrumental in the founding of Young England, Disraeli is in a better position to appreciate the ascendency of genius, as well as to advance a political platform with all the vehemence of conviction goaded on by temporarily thwarted ambition.

The period when *Coningsby* was written followed a few consecutive years of bad harvests and economic depression that, in the summer of 1842, culminated in a series of strikes and riots. The Poor Law Amendment Act, which replaced the charity of the parish with workhouses for amassing the poor, had been passed in 1834; Chartist petitions demanding reformation of the voting system, including a demand for universal manhood suffrage, had been sent to Parliament since 1839; and agitation for the repeal of the Corn Laws, which by imposing tariffs on imports kept up the price of domestic grain, was ongoing. The appalling "Condition of England" – reflected in the facts printed in the 'blue books' commissioned by the government as part of investigating the situation – had drawn thunderous protests from Carlyle in *Past and Present* (1843) and was being scrutinized by Friedrich Engels during his visit to England from 1842 to 1844 that was to lead to *The Condition of the Working Class in England* (1844).

*Coningsby* deals with the aftermath of the 1832 Reform Bill – which enfranchised middle-class voters who met the ten pound per household cutoff and did away with landowner controlled rotten boroughs – but knowledge of the later events certainly informs Disraeli's commentary. In short, he feels that the reform has missed the

mark and done more ill than good. It has failed to improve people's lives – and support for the Conservative ministry at the expense of the Whig, reformist one shows that by 1841 electors knew that much – but has unadvisedly weakened the House of Lords by forcing it to abstain from voting against the bill under threat that, if incompliant, the king would swamp it with newly created and sympathetic peers; the thought that lords could be made on demand naturally reduced the prestige of that office. In Disraeli's view, this sacrifice was useless and pernicious, useless because it yielded no benefits and pernicious because it destabilized power.

According to *Conings by*, the ineffectiveness of the bill stems from failure to recognize the real problem, which is that the "moral civilization" of England has not kept pace with its "material" one. Propelled since the beginning of the century into the industrial stratosphere by a conglomeration of circumstances – war, victory, foreign and internal trade, developing mechanical power – "material civilization" has engulfed any remnants of a moral life. By "moral" Disraeli means a complex of beliefs and sentiments independent of economics, involving "duty" on the part of the government and "faith" on the part of the people. Rebuilding this moral foundation can alone rehabilitate "the national character" and restore loyalty and confidence between the people and their leaders. The community, not the government, needs reform, and once that happens the organs of power will naturally begin to reflect the new spirit of mutual trust.

At the moment, the evil lies in the fact that nothing is done in earnest, that politicians regard their duty as what Vivian called "my game." After first turning the Sovereign into a Venetian Doge subject to Parliament and devoid of real power during the revolution of 1688, the Whigs have continued to act opportunistically, extending the

suffrage in 1832 to just enough men to bolster their own support. They have invoked democracy to sustain themselves as an aristocracy. On the other hand, Peel's Conservative Party salvaged from the ruins of the Tories is vaunting principles devoid of real substances: the supremacy of an impotent crown, the prerogatives of a debased House of Lords, and the inviolability of a Church regulated by lay politicians. Instead, Disraeli proposes a monarchy that is truly supreme, bounded only by law and by public opinion as voiced in the Press – that uniquely modern phenomenon unknown in ancient or feudal times but capable at present of educating and provoking discussion. Additionally, he asks for the Church to be divorced from the State and resume its spiritual function. Finally, he calls for the aristocracy to exercise once again the role of helper to the crown and the people.

The reinstatement of strong monarchy alone can guard against factionalism, since "The only power, that has no class sympathy is the Sovereign" while representative bodies have limited agendas; "The House of Commons is the house of a few; the Sovereign is the Sovereign of all" (426-7). In an enlightened age in which the crown rises above divisions, "the Monarch on the throne, free from the vulgar prejudices and the corrupt interests of the subject, becomes again divine!" (367). It is the sanctity of its role and influence on the unity and happiness of the people that has given the crown its divinity all along, and if the hand of God was ever present in conferring a Divine Right it must have been in the justice and beneficence of the arrangement. Simultaneously, the people, with their spirit replenished from the fountain of stability and order, may start dancing around a May-pole and take up those old customs scorned by cynics again, not because it fills their stomachs, as indeed it cannot do that, but because it feeds their souls.

Coningsby's friends Henry Sydney and Eustace Lyle – both modeled after members of Young England and, though aristocratic, with the best interests of the people at heart – plead, on one hand, for reviving the peasants' customs and, on the other, for recalling the aristocratic spirit of Christian chivalry. This double interest intimates that the people and their leaders can be regenerated together, ironically, by going back in time. There is romantic nostalgia in this backward glance, but chivalry, an updated version purged of useless conceits as young men are of puerile dreams, is exactly what England needs. Looking back to the old "Spirit of Faith" in God and the community of human beings generative of loyalty and trust helps to evade the Medusa-stare of skepticism embodied in "the Spirit of Utility," which some deem to be that of the present age.

The distaste for Utilitarianism is due to its denial of the immaterial and immeasurable. Jeremy Bentham in *The principles of morals and legislation* (1789) had established that human happiness consisted of seeking pleasure and avoiding pain, each action being judged right or wrong based on its tendency to augment or diminish these measures. He in effect made utility, the amount of pleasure or pain caused by an action, the fundamental criterion of right and wrong. Its main virtue was that it was measurable by factoring into an equation the parameters of intensity, duration, certainty, propinquity, fecundity, and purity applicable to either pleasure or pain, summing up the resultant values for each of the persons concerned treated as equal units, and determining if the balance ended up on the side of pleasure or pain for the group (31).

Utility is to Disraeli, as it was to Carlyle before him,[37] the spirit of unbelief. It denies, as goes Carlyle's complaint, that man has a soul and not a "stomach" made to digest pleasure and pain. In the Middle Ages, the age of chivalry, men looked to their souls to tell them their duty as God had ordained it and to give them faith in the ability to cast off doubt and fear and perform life's work. To skeptics such as Lord Everingham who claim that chivalry and faith are not the "Spirit of the Age," a visionary like Sidonia would reply that that is exactly what needs to change. The ground is in fact cleared for such change since the Utilitarian attempt to reconstruct society on a purely rational basis, "a basis of material motives and calculations," has failed (291). Coningsby proclaims late in the novel, after much deliberation with both the inspired Sidonia and the pragmatic mill-owner Millbank, "'The Utilitarian system is dead'" (433). It has died for lack of the sustainable force that faith – not only and not even primarily in God but in man – supplies, because it alone is inexhaustible and disregarding of circumstances whereas other interests are bound by them.

The connection with an age, that of chivalry, perceived as able to counteract the barrenness of the present is an opportunity for the aristocracy to reclaim its place. Millbank, the father of Coningsby's Eton friend Oswald, is proud of his self-made success and "sanguine" by way of his industry rather than aristocratic ties. But even he is not opposed to some conception loftier than that driving the present. If he believes that the aristocracy and its remnants of chivalric grandeur cannot remedy the deficiency, it is because he does not estimate it a true aristocracy. He is "for an aristocracy; but a real one, a natural one" (204) to be found among "those men whom a nation recognizes as the most eminent for virtue, talents and property, and if you please, birth and standing in the

[37] In *Sartor Resartus*.

land" (207). He believes the basis of aristocracy is "distinction," and blood is no longer enough. First of all, blood is mostly a fraud perpetuated by families who established their fortunes in disreputable circumstances, such as the spoliation of the church or the sale of honors in the centuries following the Crusades, to which they are nevertheless vying to trace their fictional pedigrees. Furthermore, it gives no guarantee of wisdom or public virtue, and in fact little hope of that inheritance from such paltry source. There is, indeed, old blood in the land, but it is to be found among the peasantry and the gentry and not the peers in the House of Lords. Coningsby makes an argument for the stability conferred on the state by a permanent political body, but even he has to admit that there is nothing permanent about illusory distinctions. More is required of the people invested with what Millbank calls "the highest of conceivable privileges – the privilege of making laws" (205).

Like Coningsby, Millbank is "no leveler" and looks upon "an artificial equality as equally pernicious with a factitious aristocracy" (207). He does not want to do away with the aristocracy but only to see it base its political participation on solid and relevant principles. Coningsby's views on this subject begin to coincide even more with Millbank's once he is disinherited by his domineering grandfather, Lord Monmouth, and set adrift from the old prejudices and party affiliations. The quarrel happens over Coningsby's open avowal to the willful Marques that he thinks it is inefficient to lead the country along Whig and Tory lines. The struggle to one-up the other party saps the energy of the aristocratic body divided between the two and trivializes the goals of political action. When Lord Monmouth speaks with confidence about the prospective

success of the reorganized Tories against the Whigs, Coningsby can no longer contain his indignation just to secure an inheritance:

> But what are they organized for? said Conningsby. At the best to turn out the Whigs…You may get a Ducal Coronet, sir. But a Duke now is not as great a man as a Baron was but a century back. We cannot struggle against the irresistible stream of circumstances. Power has left our order; this is not an age of factitious aristocracy…What we want, sir, is not to fashion new Dukes and furbish up old Baronies; but to establish great principles which may maintain the realm and secure the happiness of the People. Let me see Authority once more honoured; a solemn Reverence again the habit of our lives; let me see Property acknowledging as in the old days of faith, that Labour is his twin brother, and that the essence of all tenure is the performance of duty; 495-6

The aristocracy is a race perishing under the prejudices that occasioned its elevation. Old age may be venerable but eventually gives way to death, and the aristocracy is condemned by its own antiquity. Were there a doctor to diagnose such disease, and Coningsby comes close to it, he would probably prescribe a blood transfusion; keep the body if you must but restore the spirit that gives it life.

Coningsby speaks in favor of renewed Authority, Reverence, and Property, in short the things aristocrats want, but dares to enmesh in them the interests of Labour and the happiness of the People. He sees in this indestructible codependence the political expression of that greater, more fundamental fellowship of mankind. But he is punished for the insight. In the despondency that follows his disinheritance, he revises his allegiances and builds upon this strain of independent thought, eventually entering the

House of Commons with Millbank's support. It is not renunciation of his class that sets him free but its reintegration in the new social landscape on principles more permanent than the mere fable of blood. Party interests aside, the aristocracy needs to regroup in full awareness of the privileges that it has lost and the greater ones that it may still gain by fulfilling its duty of relieving and guiding the people. This alone can save it from the sense of futility that used to lead Coningsby to respond when asked by strangers if he was a businessman or a professional, "I am nothing" (190).

III

Carlyle writes in *Past and Present* (1843), "A High Class without duties to do is like a tree planted on precipices; from the roots of which all the earth has been crumbling" (180). With nothing to hold it in place, it stands to fall. For people, whether in aggregates or on their own, work is the great justifier, that much more imperative when there are advantages and luxuries to justify. "Work, what I do, not what I have, is important," urges Carlyle in *Sartor Resartus* (1833-34). Only work, constant movement and adaptation to changing needs, can help escape "devouring time." And although human works are "mirrors of the spirit," of things felt and thought, "The end of Man is Action, and not a Thought," be it even the noblest, as Carlyle reminds by echoing Aristotle's *Ethics* I, iii (126). Thought creates the conviction, which is worthless until converted to conduct. The thing is to find, by study of oneself and of the ground one stands on, "a vocation." In *Middlemarch*, Will Ladislaw's drifting from an interest in drawing to writing for a political paper and finally getting involved with the Reform Bill draws sneers from bystanders, but Dorothea insists, "After all, people may really have in them some vocation which is not quite plain to themselves, may they not? They may

seem idle and weak because they are growing. We should be very patient with each other, I think" (82).

How much more difficult, then, must be the search for the right line of work for members of a class that has come to base its prerogative in not working. But one should be patient with it as well. It has been made complacent by centuries of supremacy and suspended strife that have enervated its original vigor. It has hidden the ensuing laxity behind parliamentary busywork done to maintain itself not in sufficiency but in excess. That last kind of work is like spinning one's wheels. It is not productive; it does not create life in proportion to the energy expended; it does not count. Meanwhile, those aristocrats who have titles but not a hereditary peerage – do not sit in the House of Lords reserved for just a few – have even less incentive to work. Some enter the House of Commons and find avenues for action that way, but many choose to while away the time at London dinners and balls and spend their inheritance on gambling, women, and horses. And once the family fortune is squandered, the distinctly aristocratic injunction against common work, which is seen as debasing the very foundation of honor, stands in the way of survival. The nobleman's privilege becomes his prison.

It is no wonder that aristocrats have come to be regarded as drones and indolence as their distinction. Yet some, especially those devoid of noble blood who imitate the worst traits of their betters, are deluded enough to make that a point of pride. The decisive argument that Dickens' false gentleman brings in favor of his gentility is that he has "Never!" put his hand to any kind of work. Quite the contrary, the real gentleman lives by the precept "Duty on earth, restitution on earth, action on earth" (*Little Dorrit* 339). This is the creed of one who makes no doctrinal point of religion but sees in it a

commandment to work. “Strait was the gate and narrow was the way,” writes Dickens echoing the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 7:14), and works, not formalities and such frivolities, are the “steep steps upward” (339). The path had been straight and narrow for Bunyan’s Christian as well, though his labors were primarily of the spirit. But for a generation impatient of waiting for the afterlife to find respite, Bunyan’s celestial city, if it is to exist at all, has to be built on earth. Heaven inspires but the inhabitants of the earth need to roll up their sleeves and do what it takes to realize and benefit from the inspiration.

Heaven, of course, means something other than what it meant to Bunyan, but it is still the dwelling place of what could be called the divine, the spiritual, or the ideal. Through a paradox that so noticeably polarizes opinions in the century, the aristocracy partakes of this heavenly essence as well as of things utterly and blamably mundane. Vanity and idleness have lately been imputed to it, but it did rise to fame at a time when faith was strong through outstanding exertions on behalf of Christendom and the people. The idea is not to dwell on that part of the past which is dead – on the theology that makes a mockery of Divine Right – but on that which is still living because part of the essential nature of things, namely the human tendency to admire good and brave acts. In the case of aristocrats, these are recorded. They fill the tomes of history as the names and lives of the children of Adam fill those of the Old Testament. In the stream of time individual destinies, however glorious, are eventually submerged, but they continue to push the current forward through descendants and far-reaching deeds. Blood is the emblem of that unending stream.

Idealized reminiscences of the patriarchal relations whereby the lord of the manor provided hospitality and protection for all give rise to nostalgia for the time when blood figured prominently in the imagination as well as the practical lives of the people. Disraeli creates an idyllic replica of the medieval community through the description of Henry Sydney's ancestral seat, Beaumanoir, whose lord, Henry's father, "has many of the virtues of his class and few of their failings." He displays "that public spirit which became his station," acceptance of "the exertions and the sacrifices, which should be inseparable from high position," and an inclination to be "munificent, tender and bounteous to the poor" and to show "a flowing hospitality" (*Coningsby* 99). Between the time when this attitude was the norm and the present when it is the exception, something has happened.

*Sybil, or the two nations* (1845) suggests that the change has to do with the circumscription of the church by the state in the time of Henry VIII and the limitation of the monarchy through the deposition of James II, the last independent, and Catholic, king. These events are inevitably bound up with the fall of Catholicism in England, but that in itself is not what the novel deplores. Rather, it is the fact that the dissolution of the monasteries ordered by Henry VIII removed a paragon of communal life whose influence radiated widely. The monks were disinherited younger sons or ordinary peasants who had found refuge from the disadvantages of their position; they had leisure to educate themselves and spread knowledge; they had no interests of their own since they could not bequeath property, so they shared with the poor; and they were, as a body, stable proprietors, since the monastery never died and its lands never passed into the hands of

the squandering heir. Carlyle gave Abbot Samson as an example of rectitude and kindness, and Disraeli seems to be of the same mind.

Ironically, by being celibate, the monks bypassed blood, or rather demonstrated what it could be if purged of vainglory: continuity without prerogative, property without depredation, beneficence without self-interest. At the same time, they were an enclosed cell, a nursery of noble sentiments to be planted out in the world and not a phenomenon so widespread that people would have smarted under its rigors and, in entirely bypassing blood, would have bypassed human nature and life. It is the loss of the monks' disinterested spirit that *Sybil* mourns, along with the advent of self-serving Whig policies that went as far as to depose the last Catholic king so as to secure the plunder of the monasteries initiated by Henry VIII. Of course, in holding such opinions of the 1688 revolution, Disraeli is by no means immune to party rivalries, but this does not discount his thought, which attempts to sift sound principles from political machinations.

The effects of these momentous changes are evident in the character of the new landowners, such as Lord Marney and the Lord de Mowbray. The former is the descendant of one who excelled in despoiling monasteries and the latter that of a waiter grown rich by selling food to famished Indians at speculative prices. Their origins in ruthless upstarts bode ill, and their grinding of the poor at whose expense they prosper fulfills the darkest of expectations. With the parvenu's passion for self-aggrandizement, they delight in pedigrees concocted by the antiquarian Baptist Hatton, who administers the Baptism of vainglory instead of that of Christ. The really old blood and the really great family is that of the people rooted in the land, as Egremont – the novel's hero and younger brother of Lord Marney – learns from his friend Walter Gerard. This is to be

taken more literally than at first anticipated, as by the end Gerard is shown to be the true descendant of an ancient house and the rightful of proprietor of Mowbray.

The people partake of good blood in a couple of ways covering the spectrum of what the term implies: by being born of fallen noble houses – and Hardy's d'Urbervilles show there is much unacknowledged blood of that kind – and by making their industry the life-blood of the nation. The duality tradition and action exists here as in the higher levels. It haunts all value judgments and thrusts itself incessantly on one's attention. Energy and vitality, to work, to do one's duty graciously and with skill, is invariably the one true validation. Sometimes, as in the romance, the two sides come together, and the forefathers' mettle descends with a Walter Gerard of forgotten but great ancestry into the ranks of the common people, where he naturally rises as a leader in the noble fight to end oppression and defend life. Meanwhile, the makeshift lord refuses to sacrifice profits for the welfare of the people and does serious damage to their livelihood. He has the cottages on his land pulled down in order to be exempt from maintaining the population, causing it to retreat into the crowded town of Marney and travel daily to work the fields. The result is dismal. The picture painted by Disraeli is worthy of the most appalling 'blue book':

> …Marney mainly consisted of a variety of narrow and crowded lanes formed by cottages built of rubble, or unhewn stones without cement, and, from age or badness of the material, looking as if they could scarcely hold together. The gaping chinks admitted every blast; the leaning chimneys had lost half their original height; the rotten rafters were evidently misplaced; while in many instances the thatch, yawning in some parts to admit the wind and wet, and in all utterly unfit for its original purpose of giving protection from the weather, looked

> more like the top of a dunghill than a cottage. Before the doors of these dwellings, and often surrounding them, ran open drains full of animal and vegetable refuse, decomposing into disease, or sometimes in their imperfect course filling foul pits or spreading into stagnant pools, while a concentrated solution of every species of dissolving filth was allowed to soak through, and thoroughly impregnate, the walls and ground adjoining. (53)

Typhus, malaria, consumption, fever in every form run rampant and decimate the families that live in such crowded conditions they do not have enough room to quarantine the sick. The landowners' indifference to the misery of the people whose labor piles up their wealth and the discrepancy in lifestyle, education, habits, and overall sphere of life between them drive Gerard to describe the nation as being, rather,

> Two nations; between whom there is no intercourse, and no sympathy; who are as ignorant of each other's habits, thoughts, and feelings, as if they were dwellers in different zones, or inhabitants of different planets; who are formed by a different breeding, are fed by a different food, are ordered by different manners, and are not governed by the same laws. (67)

The two 'nations' have grown too far apart even for intercourse. From start to finish, their lives run almost parallel, intersecting only through the impersonal machinery of exploitation. With the lines of communication severed, there is little hope for a solution. The rift is monumental, though nothing new in the history of mankind, as a similar state of affairs is mentioned in Plato's *Republic*. Still, it is no less urgent of redress for having been around for two thousand years. The sheer longevity of the problem discourages hopes of complete amelioration, and the masters as well as the people are aware of that.

There always will be distinctions, and that is not the disturbing part but rather the basis on which they are founded and the depths to which they run. In the present state, shrewdness elevates, honesty debases; sloth prospers, work is ground down. It is the inversion of the value scale that grates on the observer, like a plot in which evil triumphs and which never could have been while there was a God.

Naturally, the people are rebelling. That is, at the same time, unnatural enough, considering that they depend on the masters just as the masters depend on them. The Chartist petitions that Walter Gerard and his associates place in front of the landlords are doomed to fail because, according to Egremont, they attack the wrong problem. It is not equality or parliamentary representation that the people need but a different kind of leadership, by those who have always had access to high position but have not always used it with the welfare of the lowly in mind. Egremont's pragmatic sense tells him that distinctions are not the evil nor fighting the solution, and that, although workers are right in their motives, they are blundering in their means. Instead, he is advocating not "a leveling principle; not a principle adverse to privileges, but favourable to their extension;" he seeks "to ensure equality, not by leveling the Few, but by elevating the Many" (300). This means restoring their dignity by ensuring that they have work and good living conditions and by allowing them a voice in communicating with the masters.

Though ostensibly of noble blood, Egremont shuns mindless prejudice and is instructed in the cause of the workers, so his position is not easily discreditable. Through his friendship with Walter Gerard, he closes the communication gap, although he does so undercover, pretending to be a commoner in order to remove any hostilities and inhibitions and start the discussion on the only natural footing, man to man. His

connection with the hated Lord Marney, whose younger brother he is, also makes anonymity necessary. But as a second son he is in a special position, similarly to the disinherited Coningsby, by not laboring under the auspices of primogeniture – that typically English system of passing the title and whole estate to the eldest son so as to keep them intact. It is not that rigid facet of blood, which Thomas Paine had deemed unnatural because it turned brother against brother and son against father in the expectation to be next in the line of inheritance, that is worthy of defense. Blood deviated, dislodged from the rut it has fallen into and brought back to ideas of continuity not just through power and progeny but excellence in conduct is the salvation. It combines capability with tradition, a need for vital progress with an aversion to tearing down the institutions validated by time.

In conversation with Gerard's beautiful daughter Sybil, Egremont disputes her argument that change is happening because the people have learnt their strength:

> 'The people are not strong; the people never can be strong. Their attempts at self-vindication will end only in their suffering and confusion. It is civilization that has effected, that is effecting, this change. It is that increased knowledge of themselves that teaches the educated their social duties. There is a dayspring in the history of this nation, which perhaps those only who are on the mountain-tops can as yet recognize. You deem you are in darkness, and I see a dawn. The new generation of the aristocracy of England are not tyrants, not oppressors, Sybil, as you persist in believing. Their intelligence, better than that, their hearts, are open to the responsibility of their position…They are the natural leaders of the people, Sybil; believe me they are the only ones." (281-82)

Not once in his speech does Egremont mention anything other than intelligence, education, and heart as the necessary attributes of the aristocrat, blood being implied in the term but not as of worth in itself but only as a gateway to that elevated position from which to secure public happiness. He is soon proven right, or at least for now Sybil is proven wrong. The workers' violent rebellion is put down and ends with the death of the instigator Stephen Morley, who betrays his cause by acting out of vengefulness and hatred, and the close escape of Sybil's own father. Sybil is thus not the oracle in the novel, Egremont is, but she adds her piece to the prophecy and the future by contributing to a union of ideals represented by their actual marriage.

## IV

Some words of qualification should accompany the redemption of blood as agent of political action. It assumes, first of all, the altered temper of the English nobility as "guides and guardians of the laboring man," which, in concurrence with Disraeli, Charles Kingsley also remarks on in the preface to the fourth edition of *Yeast*; significantly, this is a change from the preface to the first edition ten years earlier (1849), which merely expressed the hope that the novel might call attention to questions agitating the minds of the new generation. It seems the prophecy of *Sybil* was beginning to take some real shape. Though nurtured from the springs of historic greatness, the aristocracy had to realize that it could not be quixotic and anachronistic, and that the spirit it embodied had to don garments more suitable to the times – to allude to Carlyle's conception that the fundamental idea that makes the world go round is perpetually recast or "reclothed." This essentially means using politics as the arena, self-evident given the historic associations with leadership, for implementing those moral principles of duty and honor inherited in

updated form from the age of chivalry and validated by a secularized religion of responsibility and fellow-feeling. The old-world superstition that still invests the aristocracy with an aura of authority, so useful when wielding the instruments of power, requires justification through adaptability to the ideals of the new age.

Lord Valentine in *Sybil* exemplifies failure in this respect. He receives the workers' delegation courteously enough but his chambers are decorated with ancient swords and "a figure in complete armour, black and gold, richly inlaid, and grasping in its gauntlet the ancient standard of England" (228). The spectacle sends a chill though the assembly of humble men and arrests communication. Lord Valentine's frankly stated objection, "I do not think the great majority are the best judges of their own interest," may have validity, but he justifies it somewhat inconsequentially by reference to his family's service in making England what it is and shedding their blood in many battles. Instead of encouraging communication, he only manages to emphasize the distinction "You are democrats; I am an aristocrat" (229). And since he mentions he is to use the old armor to impersonate Richard Coeur de Lion at the upcoming Queen's Ball, it would seem fair for the delegates to infer that the past is for masquerade only and that it might be time for the re-making of England.

It is a daunting challenge to respect and draw inspiration from the past yet at the same time not rest on the ancestors' laurels. Perhaps that is why Kinsley's hero, who exemplifies the search for a purpose in a changing world, is a hybrid. The son of a rich merchant by birth, he is also a gentleman of independent means and generous inclination, as the mixture of the chivalrous and plebeian in the name Lancelot Smith suggests. An "unlicked bear" of twenty three, Lancelot goes through a course of readings that takes

him from "Wertherean" despair, through a phase when he studies Carlyle and is alternately "Chivalry-mad and Germany-mad," to recovery from "sentimental measles" and descent into the opposite extreme of materialism. He lacks a purpose but is conscious of an inner yearning and admonition that "If thou art the insect of the day, it is thy sin that thou art one" (14). His hunt for some great justificatory work meets with initial demoralization, prefigured by his fall off the horse while hunting the elusive fox. Out falls from his pocket a book – *Introduction to a Devout Life* by the monk St. Francis de Sales, who worked to convert Protestants to Catholicism – to the great merriment of his companions and his embarrassment at such obsolete and naïve erudition.

With still no purpose in sight, his eyes eventually alight on a girl of great beauty, Argemone, Squire Lavington's daughter, coming out of a chapel surrounded by graves after a session of mystic devotion. Though uncongenial in temperament at first, he and the girl are alike in their misguided idealism. They have yet to be emancipated from "selfish dreams" and "to learn to work trustfully in the living Present, not to gloat sentimentally over the unreturning Past" (40). Mental knight-errantry and ascetic devotion are in the past. The present calls for relief to the poor who are living in unwholesome hovels haunted by exhalations of fever and ague, relief that the squire is too preoccupied with guarding his grounds and his game and the vicar too fond of his learning and Prayer-book to provide.

Argemone's sister, Honoria, seems more in tune with the present needs. She sees people in want, pities them, and relieves them. But she doesn't know want herself and cannot understand that year-long want "crushes a man's soul down" beyond what her benevolence can repair (48). Her efforts are as ineffective as Lancelot's aimlessness, and

this is Kingsley's way of protesting, in opposition to Disraeli, that the poor do not need almsgiving but must be "set on a footing where they can shift for themselves" (217). Tregarva, the gamekeeper – a sage in the style of Sidonia and, like him, of foreign though Cornish rather than Jewish blood – is conscious of the deficiency. He is the one guarding Squire Lavington's game, and even though he is deeply sympathetic to the people, he is also diligent at his work because he knows that poaching and skimming the property of the rich is ineffectual and morally corrupting to the poor.

By looking about him and conversing with the gamekeeper, Lancelot also learns the importance of work as the only dignified and sustainable source of livelihood. But only after he loses his fortune through railway speculation does work become for him a necessity rather than just a fancy. He has the option of seeking his fortunes in finance again but refuses to do so, because for him work has become a matter of principle, not circumstance, and he declares, "no more pay without work for me. I will earn my bread or starve" (248). Lancelot tries his hand at writing, but the convoluted mixture of religion and politics, the human and the divine in his writing, reflecting his intuition of the interconnectedness of seemingly antipodal things, bar his productions from aligning with any popular and neatly defined theory. He almost despairs of finding a purpose when the death of Argemone empowers him, strangely, by causing him to hit rock-bottom and stand stripped of all that is superfluous. Argemone dies of typhus-fever contracted while attending to the poor, and her final regret is not her own death but the contrast between the comforts of her sick-chamber and the comfortlessness of those she could not save. She expires in an effusion of conscience and love, inspiring Lancelot to act in accordance with those sentiments.

But it takes more than walking among the poor and sharing their suffering to cure the disease. That kind of self-immolation, prefigured in Argemone's initial appearance in a graveyard, does nothing to promote life. Lancelot has yet to find some other way of arriving at the ideal, intuitively knowing all the while that if it is to count it must become "a realized one" (54). It is some time since he "had found Byron and Shelley pall on his taste" (3). After all, Byron and Shelley rebelled against their aristocratic roots in the name of high ideals, but they also died in romantic circumstances – one in Greece preparing to fight the Turks and the other in a storm at sea – which, though exciting to the imagination, were fruitless to the English nation. Their inflammatory lyrics inciting rebellion, as in Shelley's "You are many – they are few" in *The Mask of Anarchy* and Byron's "Down with all kings but King Ludd!" in *Song for the Luddites*, dismantle rather than construct. Even the lovelier moods of the romantics steeped in contemplation of the ideal have wearied Lancelot with such "tinsel abstractions" and left him wanting "not beauty, but some beautiful thing" (54).

At Lancelot's age, the sight of a beautiful woman such as Argemone or of a summer morning resplendent with light and sound were first steps toward satisfying that yearning, and who is to say that was not at least a good start? Socrates knew that beauty in all its forms was one and the same, and by observing its incarnations in the mundane one could gradually ascend to the ideal. As with beauty, so it is with all lofty conceptions. They are suspended up there like fruit hanging from the high branches of a tree firmly planted into the earth, ripening for the picking of those who dare to climb as if on a ladder, patiently, perseveringly, rung by rung. The big mistake is that people fail to see in the things of this earth incarnations of the ideal promising that elusive, higher vision. In

Lancelot's upbringing, those parts of the Bible which spoke of love had been always "kept out of sight;" "Love had been to him, practically, ground tabooed and 'carnal'" (4). Who could then suspect that on the deathbed of his gentle lover – whose own vigilant parents had forbidden her imprudent choice of an impoverished man – in her earnest embraces and his own self-forgetting kiss of those lips parched by contagious fever, his greater consciousness would be forged?

The ideal is always near us, "underlying the Actual, as the spirit does its body" (346), is the conclusion of Kingsely's book. He admits it must be dissatisfactory to readers expecting a dénouement and learning instead that Lancelot is spirited away to the country of Prester John or some Caucasian Utopia by the mysterious stranger Barnakill. This disappearance comes on the heels of Lancelot's initiation into the knowledge that what he has been pining for has been there, accessible all along. The ideal is bound to remain unintelligible, utterly aloof and inconsequent, unless incarnate in the things of this world. That does not mean just material things but also the soul, heart, imagination, that faculty called by whatever name that images the ideal in man's mind and thoughts as in a mirror (321, 325). God and faith are no more than this awakened capability in man.

The anthropomorphists had seen religion as a reflection outward and upward of the best that existed in man projected in the figure of a distant God. It is now time to receive back and re-internalize the reflection, to see that God is and has always been that "Spirit in you – a will, an energy, an inspiration, deeper than that region of consciousness and reflection" (328), the thing that impels man to great thoughts and deeds. Feuerbach had described the symbiosis between man and God,

> As the action of the arteries drives the blood into the extremities, and the action of the veins brings it back again, as life in general consists in a perpetual systole and diastole; so is it in religion. In the religious systole man propels his own nature from himself, he throws himself outward; in the religious diastole he receives the rejected nature into his heart again. (31)

The image is appropriate for Kingsley – though he does not suggest, like the anthropomorphists, that God originated with man but only that He finds in him a reflective body – mainly because of its carnality. To understand the ideal, one must stare at it in the flesh, feel it in the stirrings of the flesh, think of it through imagery of the flesh. This is the only facet of the ideal man can ever lay eyes on. The other, if there is another distinct from this and not perfectly reflected in it, no one has seen. The fabled "Beatific Vision," the highest good for man which is "to see God," is a regrettable "impossibility". "Where else would you see Him but in yourself and in the world?" asks Barnakill (325). This does not mean taking the empiricist route and reducing the universe to sense perceptions but rather perceiving the human body as the lightening rod of the spiritual that is channeled through it.

The answer to Lancelot's quest is the religion of "Jesus Christ – THE MAN" (333), the last revelation Barnakill makes before taking his hand to lead him away. Christ is the embodiment of what "the ideal of humanity" represents, "a spirit invested with flesh and blood," "a son, with a Father to love and to obey" (326). Such manifestations of the ideal are common enough in the world, universal and physiologically inescapable even, only outside of Christ's perfect life they are fragmentary, adulterated, buried under the rubble of worldly perversions. That is the doom of the ideal, that in its imperfect,

everyday form it often goes unrecognized and unheeded, being obscured and enslaved by the flesh that in Christ's exemplary existence offered itself as sacrifice to be stripped away and reveal the spirit within.

What saves religion is not its heavenliness but its earthliness. The ideal it expounds is alive in men worthy of admiration and imitation, such as Christ was when he took earthly form to show people that they needed not look just to heaven for guidance. When Lancelot asks for "a live Christ," not a dead one who has deserted the world like an absentee landlord but one immersed in it, this is what he has in mind. He thinks of faith as confidence in "a human lord, who understands me and the millions round me, pities us, teaches us, orders our history, civilization, development for us," not the Catholic purchase of salvation through penance or the Protestant expectation of the afterlife (259-260). Religion is indistinguishable from political conscience, faith in God the same as faith in a king of men, and heaven none other than the perfect polity. This is in fact the premise of the Christian Socialist movement that Kinsley started along with Frederick Denison Maurice, whose seminal work is *The Kingdom of Christ* (1838). The idea is that in the Judeo-Christian tradition religion was never divorced from worldly considerations. The Ten Commandments in the Old Testament, says Maurice, are rules of life with reference to work and rest, honoring father and mother, respecting property, and promoting the law by not bearing false witness, presumably in cases of trespassing on those other injunctions against murder, adultery, and theft. This is clearly a prescription for maintaining order and accountability in the community.

To this inheritance the Christian gospels added the influence of what Kingsley calls "[t]he Spirit, who teaches men their duty and relation to those above, around,

beneath them; the Spirit of order, obedience, loyalty, brotherhood, mercy, condescension" (329). This made mankind not just fearful but eager in pursuit of what was right, softening the rule of law by appealing to more dutiful feelings. In Christ's kingdom, all are equal and belong to the great community of mankind regardless of religious sects or national boundaries, so that all factions and rivalries are dissolved. Forms and ceremonies, such as Baptism and the Eucharist,[38] function as rites of entrance and "signs" that such a thing as a spiritual and universal society is in place. "All unity is to be in Christ" (556), as fellowship with Him means fellowship with each other. This sounds impractical and idealistic, and as far as worldly institutions go it is so, but it is of this world all the same because pertaining to the way people think of themselves and others, lead their lives, and act as members of a community. Though it does not dictate the shape of the actual polity, as equality in that sense would mean an undesirable – to Maurice and Kingsley – leveling of the classes, it does ensure that all lives weigh equally in the balance even if they do not fulfill the same role. In other words, in the eyes of Christ all human souls are equally important, although in the affairs of the world one belongs to a leader and another to a follower.

Still, could such surrogate equality suffice? It hovers just above the actual, gives solace when limited institutions do not, and moves the affections of the community independently of status distinctions. Nevertheless, Maurice is apprehensive when asking,

> But how would the proclamation to our Chartists and Socialists, that they had baptismal purity once, and that they have lost it now; that they must recover their

[38] Samuel Coleridge, to whom Maurice is indebted for some ideas on the national and spiritual church – as acknowledged in the dedication of the second edition of *The Kingdom of Christ* to his son, Rev. Derwent Coleridge – writes in *Lay Sermons* (1816) that Baptism and the Eucharist are merely "charms." This is one of the points on which the two authors differ.

> ground by repentance, by prayer and fasting; that they must submit to discipline, and be deprived of privileges which they never exercised nor cared for; how can such a proclamation as this meet any of the confused, disorderly notions which are stirring in their minds, or set them right? (559)

How indeed, when all they are trying to do is break their poverty-imposed fast and wreak vengeance on their well-fed adversaries? There is little comfort for an empty stomach in being told, "there is a fellowship larger, more irrespective of outward distinction, more democratical, than any which you can create." But this is, furthermore, supposed to be "a fellowship of mutual love, not mutual selfishness, in which the chief of all is the servant of all," and if the chiefs are also listening some positive change can yet be effected (Maurice 559).

It is difficult, however, to shake the chiefs out of complacency, which is why the epilogue of Kingsley's *Yeast* is an obituary for some. Squire Lavington, jealous of his privileges and deaf to the duties of property, dies unmourned, and at his funeral are read verses from the forty-ninth Psalm:

> "They fancy that their houses shall endure forever, and call the lands after their own names.
>
> Yet man being in honor hath no understanding, but is compared to the beasts that perish." (340)

Colonel Bracebridge, the glib seducer who, mindful only of his own pleasure, violates the dignity of the peasants by impregnating their daughters, is driven to suicide by the death of his illegitimate son, who was heard crying twice after birth as a sign that he was born healthy and died at the hands of his mother. But despite these reminders of the

evanescence of life, and more so of privilege, and the oblivious conceit of the privileged, there is still hope, though it comes from unusual quarters. It is born of the marriage between the gallant Lord Vieuxbois, whose very name – Old Forest in French – suggests pride of race, and the daughter of Lord Michampstead, the descendant of an industrious weaver turned manufacturer.

Michampstead is sneered at behind his back for his incurable deficiency of noble blood, but his money buys him an estate and enables him to improve the cottages of the poor and give them a school. He does it with the use of new technology and with profit in view, which only serves to illuminate the fact that progress, practicality, and benevolence need not be antagonists. At the same time, Lord Vieuxbois is allowed to prosper, for he fears God even though he still has to learn that "his tenants, just because they are children of God, are not to be kept children, but developed and educated into sons" (343). Just as he is to be the father of the anticipated "stalwart offspring, spiritual as well as physical, born of that intermarriage of the old and the new" (344), he is also to become a father of another kind, as promoter of his dependents' growth and wellbeing. Here are spiritual ideas returning once again to the flesh through which they are made manifest and active in the world, like God's love through his earthly son's presence. Given the renovated spirit of the lords uniting energy with responsibility, Kingsely evidently need look no further for his living Christ. The moral awakening of the aristocracy, performed in the spirit of Christ out of concern for fellow human beings, could transform it into an image of Christ, not as sacrificial victim but as living influence, teacher and lawgiver.

Attempts at vindication, however, elicit mixed success. Happy and likely fruitful alliances have been made between Coningsby and Millbank's daughter, Egremont and

Sybil. But there are also abortive attempts, such as that of Romney Leigh and Marian Erle in Elizabeth Barett Browning's *Aurora Leigh* (1853-6). Romney is the heir of Leigh Hall who wants to usher in social justice through charitable projects that the poor invariably misunderstand and reject. Among them is his proposal of marriage to Marian Erle, a drover's daughter escaped from being sold into prostitution by her own mother. The detractors of such a union could have pardoned a lord's imprudence for the sake of a pair of blue eyes but cannot condone an intermarriage that is "reasoned out / A contract (carried boldly to the light / To challenge observation, pioneer / Good acts by a great example)" (131). On the wedding day, a letter breaking the engagement comes in place of the bride, who escapes at the risk of falling into graver danger than ever before rather than "being put to Romney's school / Of philanthropical self-sacrifice / Irrevocably" (140).

The marriage fails for lack of conviction, not in regards to its character as benevolent project but to the bond of love it should have entailed. It is merely a contrived, demonstrative act of defiance that seeks to end class hatred by degrading human love. Romney fails to see that the ideal to be sought is not equality itself but love, that great equalizer, which succors but does not condescend. That ideal is closer than he imagines, glimpsed at by the poet's "spirit-insight" embodied in his cousin Aurora Leigh, but standing as of yet irresolute on the edge of communication. Aurora understands that she has "a vocation, work to do" as speaker of "essential truth" and road-keeper between "the seen" and "the unseen" – and she crowns herself with the poet's ivy as Napoleon had done with the crown of the empire, taking it from the Pope to place on his own head – but is stupefied by the awesomeness of her vision and her poetic voice is struck dumb. In

opposition to Romney, who is "overfull of what is," she is "overbold for what might be" and needs to bring down her grand intuitions to the scale of real undertakings suited to the conditions of the world (36). It is a case of far as opposed to near-sightedness, both of which miss the mark, the former ending in futility – symbolized by Aurora's inarticulateness – and the latter in misguided action – symbolized by the blindness Romney suffers in consequence of a fire that the villagers set to his hall, which they mistake for a prison instead of the refuge it was intended to be.

A marriage seems in order for moderating these two extremes, and indeed Romney has long been seeking Aurora's hand and been refused for the same reason that later foils his plans with Marian. To his first proposal, Aurora answered, "What you love is not a woman, Romney, but a cause. You want a helpmate, not a mistress" (50). The resemblance to Charlotte Bronte's *Jane Eyre* is striking, only Romney is St John Rivers and Rochester in one, the former because he subsumes love to a cause and the latter because he suffers blindness before he can achieve real vision. But at least Romney is in tune with the current age. Unlike Rivers, he tries to help the poor in Britain rather than evangelize in India, and, unlike Rochester, he learns to love a woman rather than obey religious prohibitions against unwedded love. Aurora too is attuned to the times and wants to write about the present, not make poems on "chivalric bones" (152). But in being a poet she forgets to be a woman and in loving the ideal of art she turns away from loving man. As long as she refuses Romney, she has inspiration but not the words to convey it and fails to complete the great work that is to change the world. After experiencing the aridity of a life without human attachments, she learns not to distort her nature for her work and accepts Romney's second proposal. Their union in marriage

furnishes what was missing from each of their lives, suggesting that the key to progress is balance between grand conception and useful action, feeling and enterprise, heaven and earth.

If paradoxes are what the age struggles with, Kingley's utopia is a cogent solution, while also being a marriage of sorts,

> […] a land where you shall see the highest spiritual cultivation in triumphant contact with the fiercest energies of matter; where men have learnt to tame and use alike the volcano and the human heart, where the body and the spirit, the beautiful and the useful, the human and the divine, are no longer separate, and men have embodied to themselves on earth an image of the 'city not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. (319)

Heaven is that lack of strife ensuing from the reconciliation of opposites and the end of all contradictions. That is the mystery of its restful peace. "In His will is our peace" (III.85) says the soul in Dante's *Paradiso*, too much in awe to pry into what that inscrutable will might be. "It is with Renunciation that life, properly speaking, can be said to begin" (145-6), says Carlyle half a millennium later, naming that serene state in which selfless love curtails selfish ambition "the Everlasting Yea." It seems, on inquiring further, that the will of God and the wellspring of peace is love. The last words of Aurora Leigh's father, whom she woke up one day to find stone-dead, were, "'Love, my child, love, love!'" (11). Heaven is where the God of love, or His legacy, dwells, making all animosities disappear. Bunyan was right that there was such a place, though he was wrong as to its location. "Earth's crammed with heaven" (246) is the revelation unfolding before the poet's "spirit-insight." It is on earth, then, that one must seek heaven, or

fashion it when not ready-made. This will not make Kingsley's utopia any more earthly and real, for the mind has already conceived it as such, but perhaps a little less distant and better populated with stalwart offspring who are the future, as Barnakill's name – coming from the old Saxon cry of 'do no kill the bairns,' or children – suggests.[39]

## V

To the hungry millions, had they access to books and learning, as some of them undoubtedly did, this talk of love might have seemed a lot like rhapsodizing. Not that they would have rejected the premise but would have found the application lacking. It is no secret that most nineteenth century novelists came from middle-class, often clerical, backgrounds, and that, even though sometimes poor, they were never reduced to the condition of laborers; as an exception, Dickens' stint in a shoe-blacking factory as a child marked him for life. Nevertheless, they wrote on behalf of the people, seeking from a vantage point somewhere between privilege and destitution the solutions they thought would serve them best. These were practical to the highest degree short of an act of Parliament, because nothing could be more practical to them than changing the tone of the public spirit to one of sympathy and mutual help. That was to be the fountain of change from which all other measures, the more defined ones, drafted on paper and debated over in Parliament, would ripple out. Their mistrust of radicalism may sooner be imputed to a kind of spiritualized optimism than to partisan interests or self-serving ideas.

Furthermore, if the novel does not take a distinctly radical stance, it is only partly because the current of middle-class thought did not lean heavily in that direction, the other part being that the people did not. The people had also grown up with *The Pilgrim's*

[39] Kinsley gives this explanation elsewhere, in *Hereward the Wake.*

*Progress*, written by one of their own who had started as an itinerant salesman and mender of kettles and pots but highly literate for all that. Christian's struggle with Apollyon and his journey through the Valley of Humiliation and the Valley of the Shadow of Death were not so easily extrapolated into political battles in the minds of people whose foremost task was still tending to their own souls. It was not until the Radical intellectual movement, in the years leading up to the first Reform Bill, that Apollyon was clearly identified with 'Old Corruption' and its instruments of power in the rhetoric of people such as William Cobbett and William Hazlitt.[40]

Yet there had always existed, even in Bunyan, this double undercurrent of reconciliation and instigation, the former relying on faith in an afterlife that would reward Christ's poor and deal harshly with their enemies and the latter on the repugnance with which these aristocratic enemies were portrayed – "the Lord Carnal Delight, the Lord Luxurious, the Lord Desire of Vain Glory, my old Lord Lechery, Sir Having Greedy, with all the rest of our nobility" (Bunyan 124).[41] For the poor, there was consolation and projected restitution in that undefiled inheritance laid up in heaven that made the rich man's treasures seem like so much tin and rubbish soon to be burdens in the journey to

[40] This discussion is informed by the chapter "Christian and Apollyon" in E.P. Thompson's book *The Making of the English Working Class*.

[41] Thompson repeatedly emphasizes the duality of Bunyan's influence: "When the context is hopeful and mass agitations arise, the active energies of the tradition are most apparent: Christian does battle with Apollyon in the real world. In times of defeat and mass apathy, quietism is in the ascendant, reinforcing the fatalism of the poor: Christian suffers in the Valley of Humiliation, far from the rattling of coaches, turning his back on the City of Destruction and seeking the way to a spiritual City of Zion" (34).

come, but then there was also "slumbering Radicalism" in the acknowledgement that baseness and vice had taken over the reins of this world.[42]

When the Puritans were defeated in the Civil War of the mid seventeenth century – at which time Bunyan, a Baptist, lived and wrote and defied authority by choosing to remain in prison rather than stop preaching in private meetings – the tendency to retreat into the consolatory realms of religion was reinforced. Old Dissent – Calvinists, Baptists, Quakers – subsided from the sphere of influence, for reasons of political defeat and the reestablishment of an intolerant Church of England under the 1660 restoration of Charles II combined with emigration to America (especially the Quakers) and the self-imposed barriers of creeds that excluded all but God's elect (especially Calvinism). There followed a dissociation between the temporal and spiritual aspirations of the poor, a turning away from the "kingdom without" of political interests to the incorruptible "kingdom within".[43]

The Evangelical revival of the eighteenth century occurred under the auspices of a man, John Wesley, who was High Tory in politics and autocratic in the organization of the Methodist movement he founded and led with a few of his picked ministers. And while his brand of Methodism, unlike certain short-lived schismatic elements that broke from it, encouraged submission and loyalty to authority, it also created forms of

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[42] "And it is above all in Bunyan that we find the slumbering Radicalism which was preserved through the 18th century and which breaks out again and again in the 19th. *Pilgrim's Progress* is, with *Rights of Man*, one of the two foundation texts of the English working-class movement […] (31).

[43] Thompson 30. In making this point, the author uses the language of Gerard Winstanley, the Digger:

"The living soul and the creating spirit are not one, but divided, the one looking after the kingdom without him, the other drawing him to look and wait for the kingdom within him, which moth and rust doth not corrupt and thieves cannot break through and steal. This is the kingdom that will abide, the outward kingdom must be taken from you." (*Fire in the Bush* in *Selections…from Gerrard Winstanle*y, ed. L. Hamilton (1944), pp. 30-1.

organization – class meetings, conferences, penny subscriptions, efficient centralization – that could later be exploited by the workers' radical movement. Besides, the very premise that the souls of the poor were as good as those of the rich contained the germ of rebellion in it (42). Meanwhile, workers and artisans, particularly in London and other great cities, were giving up religious dogma altogether in favor of more secular Deism and, for different reasons, were likely to reach the same conclusion that religion was not the answer to injustice.

Even so, pacifying influences were also at work. The counter-revolutionary spirit born in the later 1790's of witnessing the degeneracy of the French Revolution tipped the scales in favor of resignation. Added to this was the ever-present tendency of the English crowd to prefer leadership from its betters to that from its members.[44] For at least part of the history of the workers' movement, the tendency was not revolutionary but reactionary, looking back to a paternalist form of organization. Some of the earliest discontents arose in the 1760s from the invention of steam power and machines for spinning and weaving, the effect being the demise of the cottage industry that had allowed weavers to work at the loom in their homes and avoid competition with each other. What rebellious workers – such as the Luddites who took to breaking machinery – protested in the decades surrounding the turn of the century was not just loss of wages but of status and the environment connected with their craft. At first they expected capitalists to respond to the bargaining power conferred by their numbers in a somewhat paternalist way, only later in the 1830s beginning to make demands for restructuring the government and the voting system. [45] In the process, violence and destruction of property became

[44] Craig Calhoun's *The Question of Class Struggle*.
[45] This discussion synthesizes some points made in Calhoun's book.

somewhat stigmatized for confirming the disparaging middle-class view that the workers were wild, ignorant, and unruly. The 1819 Peterloo gathering was a deliberately peaceful pageant of solidarity and strength in numbers, but this time the authorities were to be the wild beasts charging into the inoffensive crowd with sabers and turning the meeting into a massacre.

Some distinctions have to be made as to who the authorities were. As industrialism got more aggressively underway and people left the countryside to work in cities, the face of the antagonists was beginning to change from that of the aristocrats to that of the new men grown rich in the processes of industrialism. These were simultaneously admired for their enterprise and derided for their pretentiousness belied by humble birth, respected for their wealth and criticized for the means of amassing it at the expense of the livelihood of the poor. This is not to say that noblemen were not involved as landlords and investors in industry, mining, and speculation, in addition to being producers of that grain that made bread cheap or dear. But middle class industrialists were the ones in closer contact with city workers in the daily operations of their trade. The dynamics were somewhat different from those between peasant and landlord because intercourse was based only on interest, and loyalty had not had time to develop through service on the same estate from father to son. No remnants of feudalism were there to allay the laboring poor or send them for alms at the master's door. The exchange was limited to work for pay and further strained by the laws of the market, which proved merciless when it came to doing what was necessary – lowering wages, cutting jobs – to stay competitive.

Undoubtedly, the workers were keen on the injustice. They organized themselves in trade unions, founded corresponding societies to exchange ideas, gathered over a million signatures for the Charter, circulated revolutionary pamphlets, concocted insurrectionary plots, gathered in Methodist assemblies, and used every form of association to exploit their strength in numbers. Friedrich Engels became convinced on observing the workers' squalid conditions of life during his visit to England from 1842 to 1844 that a rebellion was underway, and Karl Marx moved permanently to London closer to the stage of the injustice in 1849. Clearly, the communist program of Marx and Engels encouraged workers to aim at seizing the means of production and controlling the state. England, the most industrialized nation, was expected to be the breeding ground for such agitation, and Engels went as far as to prophesy in *The Condition of the Working Class in England* (1844) that the trodden-down workers were soon to start a revolution that would eclipse the Terror in furor and make it seem like child's play. But by 1920 when Georg Lukacs was writing *History and Class Consciousness*, in the aftermath of the Bolshevik success nonetheless, he was still trying to grapple with the failure of such prophecies.

Lukacs explains that the proletariat became caught in empirical concerns – low wages, unemployment, and poverty – and ended up fighting the effects rather than overthrowing the system that caused them. But aside from insufficient or unsuccessful measures, the blame falls on a problem that Marx had already identified in *The Communist Manifesto* (1848), the workers' becoming accessories to middle-class reform aimed at weakening the established oppressors, the aristocracy. Here is a situation in which confusion between two antagonists strengthened the newest and most dangerous one and weakened the one who, from age and declining fortunes themselves in need of

redress, could have been brought around as a friend. The 1832 Reform Bill was a defeat of the aristocracy, a triumph of the middle class, and a derailment of the workers. It only served to enfranchise more middle-class voters, since the property qualification for voting was still too high for the working man at ten lira per household annually. It was a victory of Mammon, the demon of commercialism, as Disraeli points out:

> If a spirit of rapacious covetousness, desecrating all the humanities of life, has been the besetting sin of England for the last century and a half, since the passing of the Reform Act the altar of Mammon has blazed with triple worship. To acquire, to accumulate, to plunder each other by virtue of philosophic phrases, to propose a Utopia to consist only of WEALTH and TOIL, this has been the breathless business of enfranchised England for the last twelve years, until we are startled from our voracious strife by the wail of intolerable serfage. (*Sybil* 31)

Once the bill passed, the political attitude of the newly enfranchised voters could be inferred from the measures of the legislature. They concerned things such as the abolition of the window tax – based on the number of windows and thus only relevant to big homes – and advocacy for the secret ballot – which would enable anonymous voting and break allegiance with controlling landowners – but kept silence on taxation for products that the people actually used, bread, malt, hops, tobacco, sugar, glass, spirits, and the newspaper stamp. The New Poor Law adopted in 1834 by the Whig government of Lord Melbourne ensured that no portion of income from land would be passed to the poor in the form of almsgiving. The people's Charter of 1838 was unsuccessful in convincing Parliament to reform the voting system, as would be that of 1848, and only caused anxiety about potentially insurrectionary Chartism. In 1841 Peel's conservative ministry

returned to power and lasted until 1846. Though Peel made no concessions to Chartism, his avowed aim was to remove the causes of discontent. By repealing the Corn Laws in a parliamentary battle that pitted him against Disraeli and ultimately led to the dissolution of his ministry, Peel loosened the link between political power and the interests of the propertied classes. The effects of his success were questionable however, and Disraeli suspected that once the price of bread declined wages would follow suit, so that landlords would suffer from competition with cheap foreign grain without any real benefits to the workers. Others, like Engels, were also skeptical, believing that this was a bourgeois measure to free international trade and intensify the cycle of economic growth, the downside being that more people would be drawn into cities to work, only to starve in the subsequent period of decline. However, the mid-century economic boom quelled any inclinations to revolt.[46]

This is all to show that in professing non-violence and toleration novelists were not abstracted from the realities of their time. Engels thought that philanthropy and universal love were too intellectual and metaphysical and that the workers could not retain their self-respect without rising in anger. But history sides with the tamer approach. This arose, as far as novelists were concerned, not from a religion that, according to Engels, was disregarded in practice but not disavowed and used only to weaken the workers, but from the application of that religion, for the first time in centuries perhaps, in an eminently non-hypocritical way. It is not that the novel is unsympathetic to the oppressed but that it is averse to violence as betraying their cause more specifically, and the cause of humanity at large.

[46] This information is based on Gareth Stedman Jones' *Languages of Class*.

In Elizabeth Gaskell's *Mary Barton* (1848), the workers engage in union activity and send petitions to the government but, frustrated by the indifference of politicians and industrialists, take it upon themselves to restore justice by murdering the son of a mill-owner. At the end, the aggressors repent the cruelty and futility of such desperate acts. The conclusion of Gaskell's novel uttered as part of John Barton, the murderer's funeral oration is that it was not equality he and his class were seeking. He was wise enough to know that, "were all men equal to-night, some would get the start by rising an hour earlier to-morrow" (363). His rancor was against the greed and indifference which permitted that "a heap of gold should part him from his brother so far asunder" (363). Cast in these terms, the problem is not class antagonism at all but the disintegrating brotherhood of man. Rational arguments – that employers also suffer from the rigors of supply and demand, that charity vitiates the poor, that the poor should be provident in times of plenty and abstain from marriage to prevent overpopulation – all those ideas exemplified in the popular stories of Harriet Martineau's *Illustrations of Political Economy* (1832) address the symptoms, not the cause of the malady. This is not a disease of the economic order but of the nation's soul, which Carlyle thought in such urgent need of regeneration.

When Carlyle calls for "resuscitating some soul and conscience in us" (*Past and Present* 31), he anticipates Gaskell's invocation of the "Spirit of Christ" as the regulating law between contending parties (367). By this she means having workers who are bound to their employers by ties of respect and affection, not money bargains alone, or the proverbial 'cash nexus' that Carlyle identifies as the only point of contact when payment is the sole motivation. It is lack of mutual trust and communication that plagues the

relations between masters and men, whereby the former refuse to stoop down to explain market pressures and the latter mistrust the former's motives and resent their apparently undisturbed prosperity. The workers would be willing enough, as the popularity of Martineau shows, to listen to economic justifications, as long as they believed as well that wherever there was a "want of power" to alleviate their plight there was at least no "want of inclination," that the rich were ready to share with them the good times and the bad, not live as separate as if "in two worlds" (Gaskell 365, 9).

The culprit here is the capitalist mania for pursuing self-interest, that Mammon worship Disraeli and Carlyle denounce, which divides people by causing them to go after incongruous ends. This urgency, pernicious because it strikes at the nation's soul, is once again manifest in the principles of Utilitarianism, with its tallying of pleasure and pain and its treatment of individuals as finite quantities to prosper or be sacrificed in the calculation of a specious aggregate good. The utilitarian ethic is the nemesis of the spirit of Christ, as evident in the employment of the term, later borrowed by J.S. Mill, in John Galt's novel *The Annals of the Parish* (1821), in which a clergyman warns his parishioners not to leave the Gospels and become utilitarians. Bentham favored utility for being quantifiable and objective whereas all other principles were subjective, dependent on caprice, opinion, sentiment and not fact. Such he considered to be "the principle of sympathy and antipathy," meaning that principle "adverse to that of utility" which approves or disapproves of an action not on account of its tendency to augment or diminish happiness but merely because a man finds himself disposed to do so (13-16). Propensity, sentiment, opinion, these were to Bentham the shifty concepts that disguised

under a variety of names – moral sense, common sense, eternal and immutable Rule of Right, Law of Nature, Natural Justice etc. – what was merely a matter of taste.

The theological principle, which refers everything to God's will, was in Bentham's view just as tenuous as the other makeshift ones, and in fact a variation of them. Setting revelation out of the question, no one knows what the will of God is. All man has to go by is presumption and interpretation, the offspring of opinion, caprice, sentiment once again. "God does not, he confessedly does not now, either speak or write to us," Bentham adds in a note, and His will as contained in the sacred writings no one thinks of referring to at this time of day for the details of political administration and barely even for private conduct (21-22). And although, through a reverse dynamic, what is right is certain to be conformable to His will, it is still necessary to find out based on the criterion of utility what that right course of action is that will please the Almighty. Neither feelings nor the word of God can help discern what actions will produce a desired result, utility being both the primary cause of good conduct and the yardstick by which its effects are measured.

John Stuart Mill in *Utilitarianism* (1861) tries to humanize the premise inherited from Bentham by emphasizing quality, not quantity, and assigning higher value to pleasures of the intellect, imagination, and moral sentiments. But there was still much that chafed on the sensibility of the age. Carlyle had reproved in *Sartor Resartus*, "What right hast thou to be happy? What right, a short time ago, hadst thou even to be?" to which Mill, reasonably enough, replies that if not happiness at least mitigation of pain is required to prevent mass suicide. The goal outlined by Mill is to align personal interest with that of the community and make it inconsistent with harming others and even

desirous of their happiness. Mill sensed that the problem was Bentham's lack of confidence in mankind, and that utility had to vindicate human nature somehow before it could stand a chance. It was this mistrust of man's better nature as moral compass and the assumption that God's will had to be written down to be known that made Utilitarianism unpopular in the novel.

Dickens' *Hard Times* (1854), dedicated to Carlyle, makes the highest knowledge accessible to the least initiated, children like Cecilia, Sissy, Jupe, whose name inspired by the Roman 'caecus' or blind designates her as guide for the blind. Asked to define a horse in a classroom in Thomas Gradgrind's mill of factual knowledge, she fails and is eclipsed by her classmate Bitzer, who gives the impeccable definition, "Quadruped. Graminivorous. Forty teeth, namely twenty four grinders, four eye-teeth, and twelve incisive" (458). There is more grinding already happening in this classroom than all those instruments of mastication could effect, but Sissy is too hopelessly "dense" to be broken down. She thinks pictures of horses should be hung on walls, even if horses cannot walk there, and representations of flowers should be put on carpets, even if in fact they do not grow there. When asked to state the first principle of political economy, she answers, perspicaciously enough, "To do unto others as I would that they should do unto me" (500). The Golden Rule does not satisfy the rigors of factual knowledge, and she is singled out as a seditious element to be removed.

All Sissy's inadequacies are presumed to come from being brought up in the circus, a place that cares so "little for Plain Fact." The circus is the fortress of fancy, where Tom and Louisa Gradgrind occasionally escape from their father's tyranny over their tender natures, only to be found out and even more severely castigated. Sissy's

father, a clown and horse breaker who has ceased to amuse an apathetic crowd, disappears and frees her from a connection that stands in the way of her better prospects. But though practically an orphan, she never gives up faith in the love of her deserting father and the belief that he left thinking it was for her own good. She is far less rational in her devotion than her old classmate Bitzer, who, seeing his fortunes look up in the world, disencumbers them further by putting his old mother in a workhouse. He also refuses to start a family, for what could a wife and children do but cause him to become improvident and aggravate the problem of overpopulation?

It is the family that is the first to go when the spirit of utility is allowed to prevail. Those affections unconditional and unquantifiable are the foremost to be wiped out because deviant from the scheme. They call attention to pleasures and pains that defy boundaries and parameters and unsettle the whole neat fabrication. It is clear by now what fatherhood or lack thereof means in Dickens, and it is also obvious that orphanage is the universal state of the world. A world in which children are not taught, as in Kingsley's *The Water Babies* (1863), by the great fairies Mrs. Doasyouwouldbedoneby and Mrs. Bedonebyasyoudid but have to tally and measure – as with the rule, the pair of scales, and the multiplication table that Thomas Gradgrind always carries around – the consequences of their actions is not only one cheated of the joys of the present but robbed of the future. Children are not "vessels" and "pitchers," as in Gradgrind's school, in which the alloy of facts is to be poured and left to harden but creatures with incommensurable and spontaneous passions. Only the children of an orphan world, who are not only destitute of a Father but doubtful as to His and their own loving natures, can ignore their intuitions to the extent of having to lean on formulas for guidance.

Sissy cannot understand that if out of one million people only twenty-five starve the situation is still better than it might have been, because to her that does not make it any easier for the ones who do starve. A father could have never chosen with such facility from among his children. But looked at in the aggregate, people lose their humanity and become numbers – in Gradgrind's classroom Sissy herself being no more than girl number twenty – incapable of attracting or generating sympathy. Statistics are dehumanizing and neglectful of the individual. Though dire enough as regards the state of the poor, they have not yet produced a solution. The New Poor Law designed in part by Bentham's secretary, Edwin Chadwick, inspires such aversion that the poor prefer death to the workhouse. Nor can computations give the measure of the relief requisite for the poor, the only measure being how much each individual stands in need of relief and how much another can spare. The case stands clear in the mind of Gaskell's Job Leigh who, with uncorrupted simplicity of intuition, responds to Mr. Carson's affirmation that facts are daily proving how much better off each man is when independent of help,

> "You can never work facts as you would fixed quantities, and say, given two facts, and the product is so and so. God has given men feelings and passions which cannot be worked into the problem, because they are forever changing and uncertain. God has also made some weak; … Now, to my thinking, them that is strong in any of God's gifts is meant to help the weak, - be hanged to the facts!" (364).

Only the stringency of the need for relief can give the measure of the help to be offered. There is no more precise equation than that for determining a course of action. It does not matter that one gives much and receives little in return, if the first is not deprived of

livelihood and the second is supplied by the imbalance. Each man's store of wealth and talent is furnished unequally compared to that of his neighbor, and the urgency of giving is commensurate with possibility.

The poor have a lot to give as well through their labor, which is productive to the utmost because it creates, not just hoards or transfers, value. Once created, that value must not be made stagnant by accumulation but distributed according to need. John Ruskin – who preferred *Hard Times* to all other novels by Dickens and who dedicated his *Munera Pulveris* (1863) to Carlyle, just as Dickens had done with his novel – sees economy as indistinguishable from morality. To him the aim of economy is the extension of life, which can be achieved through consumption and not accumulation of what is produced. Each guinea in one's pocket is a guinea away from one's neighbor, and the value of the coin varies with how badly one needs it to sustain life. It is significant in this regard that *Sybil* begins with betting at the horse races, where lords lounge in "a vast and golden saloon, that in its decorations would have become, and in its splendor would not have disgraced, Versailles in the days of the grand monarch" (1). Gambling is mere transference, not increase, of wealth, as someone's gain is another's loss. It is wealth regurgitated.

These ideas of Ruskin are expounded in *Unto This Last: Four Essays on the First Principles of Political Economy* (1860) – the title of which is inspired by the line in Christ's parable of the vineyard, "I will give unto this last as I have given unto thee" – in opposition to John Stuart Mill's *Principles of Political Economy* (1848). To Mill's definition of wealth as a large stock of useful articles, Ruskin adds "which we can use," implying that only in life and health and moderation can true wealth be enjoyed without

danger of becoming irrelevant or redundant. To Mill's rendition of the popular theory that wages are susceptible to supply and demand, Ruskin retorts that wages should be fixed irrespectively of demand for labor at the rate that will maintain the worker in comfort and earn the employer the loyalty and industriousness that are the rewards of just treatment. Workers are not machines and are capable of such fidelities as cannot be purchased with gold.

Ultimately, maintaining life is the only wealth. The title of one of Ruskin's four essays, "The Veins of Wealth," draws an analogy between the circulation of wealth in a nation and that of blood in the natural body:

> The analogy will hold, down to minute particulars. For as diseased local determination of the blood involves depression of the general health of the system, all morbid local action of riches will be found ultimately to involve a weakening of the resources of the body politic. (50)

Wealth stopped up and pooling in certain places leads to a state similar to the plethora that the ancients feared, circulation and consumption of resources being the only way to disseminate life through the polis as the blood does through the flesh. It may eventually be discovered, along with George Eliot's Silas Marner who has his beloved gold stolen and finds instead a golden-haired child, that people themselves are the wealth and that "the true veins of wealth are purple – and not in Rock, but in Flesh – perhaps even that the final outcome and consummation of all wealth is in the producing as many as possible full-breathed, bright-eyed, and happy-hearted human creatures" (*Unto This Last* 61).

The image is organic, as was the description of the fields outside Manchester in the beginning of Elizabeth Gaskell's novel, in contrast with the aridity of the town, and

the three-part heading "Sowing," "Reaping," and "Garnering" in Dickens' novel, inspired by Galatians 6:7, "For whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." This organic vision, occasionally belied by the "stunted look" and "wan, colourless face" of Gaskell's working men or the act of 'planting' nothing but facts and 'rooting out' everything else from the minds of Dickens' children, is the very incarnation of life. It suggests that when treated as organic, nourished, provided with something to plant into their hearts and minds, given air and room to grow, people will form a community. All big ideas relate to the natural cycle of life. It is the way that the human mind inscribes, perhaps as a reverberation of the primal desire for preservation and perpetuation, the striving for a supreme good. Birth, the genesis of life, marriage, the union productive of life, and death, the interruption of life, paralleled by the cycle of growth and decline in nature, are the landmarks that trace the trajectory of the individual as well as the community.

When, as in Gaskell's novel, "flesh and blood" starve, bodily ailments like consumption are manifest in "spitting of blood" and moral ailments in vengeful "thirst for blood" ending in "blood-guiltiness" and remorseful "tears of blood," the entire body politic evinces signs of a deadly disease. When, on the other hand, marriages are forged and offspring born, revitalization is underway. These are the strongest symbols that the mind, seconded by the body, can respond to intellectually and viscerally, with all the energies stirred up by the alarum of life prospering or under threat. If, as according to Ruskin, value is that which creates life, with murder at the negative pole and bearing of children at the positive, then the standard of right and wrong and the end of all action is clear. It is not enough to say, with Thomas Hardy's *Jude the Obscure*, "I doubt if I have anything more for my present rule of life than following inclinations which do me and

nobody else any harm, and actually give pleasure to those I love best" (246). That utilitarian deduction is the religion of disillusionment professed by a man, the Jude of the title, frustrated in his search for enlightenment in the church, work in the city, and love in marriage. His aspirations of going to college in the cathedral city of Christminster are shut down by his lowly condition and burdensome marriage to a frivolous woman. The love he later finds with Sue Bridehead, who ironically is the bride of another and never can be his, is censored by moral conventions against adultery. So the strength that religion lacks in offering guidance it makes up for in prohibitions, which are the letter that "killeth." In the end, Jude's son with his lawful wife, nicknamed Little Father Time, kills his illegitimate children with Sue Bridehead and then hangs himself "because we are too menny," as his suicide note reads, after witnessing what an encumbrance children are to such parents who are constantly judged, discharged from work and evicted from lodgings on account of their illicit love. Jude explains to Sue,

> It was in his nature to do it. The doctor says there are such boys springing up amongst us – boys of a sort unknown in the last generation – the outcome of the new views of life. They seem to see all its terrors before they are old enough to have staying power to resist them. He says it is the beginning of the coming universal wish not to live. (254)

Mass suicide does not seem to come, as J.S. Mill feared, from not enough pleasure or too much pain but from infantile feebleness in trying to cope with those pleasures and pains that have always been life's dowry. Resilience is not to be found in the vaults of the new cathedral built on the site of the old where Jude sets up a meeting with Sue – the railway station. There, all that exists is machinery, engines, billows of smoke, and the grinding

sound of metal tracks. The image is mechanical and overtakes the general landscape, trespassing on the fields outside Manchester and the classrooms where ideas are sown into children's minds. The antagonism is archetypal, Zoroastrian in the rivalry between good and evil. It is not so much mechanical science that is the evil, as in some ways its progress is an outgrowth of understanding the laws of nature and can be used to facilitate life, but the mechanization of human nature and interaction. Contrivances and calculations can never yield knowledge of the intrinsic good contained in certain human actions, to which access is granted only by the direct, piercing thrust of the moral instincts.

Any other course besides that dictated by man's better nature leads to fratricide. In Charlotte Bronte's *Shirley* (1849), the eponymous heroine responds to the comment that some people say one shouldn't give alms to the poor,

> "They are great fools for their pains. For those who are not hungry, it is easy to palaver about the degradation of charity, and so on; but they forget the brevity of life, as well as its bitterness. We have none of us long to live: let us help each other through seasons of want and woe, as well as we can, without heeding in the least the scruples of vain philosophy."
>
> "But you do help others, Shirley: you give a great deal as it is."
>
> "Not enough: I must give more, or, I tell you, my brother's blood will some day be crying to Heaven against me." (252)

No wonder that it is in Genesis, the book of creation, that the injunction against fratricide appears. It is a primary principle for maintenance of life in defiance of sibling rivalry and competition. United, not in groupings like those of beads on an abacus but in a

brotherhood of mutuality and dependence resembling the cells of the organic body, human beings can overcome the frailty of each individual life.

In the understanding of community as organic rests the power of blood. When Margaret Hale in Gaskell's *North and South* (1855) shields John Thornton's body with her own and receives the stone blow intended for him, the rage of the crowd of workers protesting lowered wages is suddenly arrested:

> They were silent while he spoke. They were watching, open-eyed and open-mouthed, the thread of dark-red blood which wakened them up from their trance of passion. Those nearest the gate stole out ashamed; there was a movement through all the crowd – a retreating movement. (179)

The crowd is entranced by the sight of Margaret's pale, upturned face and closed, tearful eyes and the drip of blood from her wound that comes with "a heavier, slower plash than even tears." They stand there in awe of the physical mystery of departing live, the spiritual mystery of life surrendered for the sake of another. Perhaps that is the meaning of sacrifice, the reason that appeasement demands drawing of blood. This is the token of something larger than life, a conception, devotion, feeling, the path to which, however, begins with and travels through life, like the red thread of Ariadne leading out of the confines of this world. But Margaret is saved and marries Mr. Thornton, the other side of sacrifice being that it is crowned with resurrection or some reaffirmation of life, or else it would diminish what it seeks to increase.

The union brings together North and South, the former representing the industry of manufacturing towns and the latter the indolence of agrarian districts. But, in its backwardness, the South also preserves more humanity away from "the gambling spirit

of trade," as Margaret fervently argues. There the poor do not wear so much on their countenances the expression of "a sullen sense of injustice," telling not just of suffering but of hate (81). The South is nostalgically feudal and aristocratic, Margaret herself trying hard to hold on to remnants of gentility after moving to town, though she is merely the daughter of a clergyman who abandoned the Church of England on account of religious doubts. In reminiscences such as Margaret's of the communal spirit of the South lies the opportunity for the aristocracy, with its affiliation to both family and feudal ties, to regain its place and assume the role of a paternal presence ensuring sustenance, protection, justice, comfort and love. An organic as opposed to mechanical community is a great family, built from the clustering of smaller families that are the cells of its organic growth. The family, in which the strong are responsible for the weak and the affections are an aid not an impediment to survival, is to some the one valid model for the state. In Ruskin's view, the governor of men must exercise paternal authority, guiding and disciplining but also taking the brunt of a crisis upon himself, "as a father would in famine, shipwreck, or battle, sacrifice himself for his son" (*Unto* 41).

Just as spiritually, England is in danger of becoming politically orphaned as well, unless its natural leaders can step up to the task. "From the throne to the hovel all call for a guide" (*Coningsby* 143), declares Sidonia. Who is to answer the call? Certainly, it cannot be the upstarts who worship Mammon, but just as certainly not the privileged man "clogged with honey and unable to rise and fly" (*North* 81), nor the languid gentleman "weary of everything, and putting no more faith in anything than Lucifer" (*Hard* 554). Rather, what the call summons is the "Aristocracy of Talent" that Carlyle invokes, able to institute, as in Plato's *Republic*, the rule of the best, most gifted, enlightened, and widely

moral. Talent can at times be found among the new men when self-interest and money-worship do not get in the way. But, according to Disraeli, "[m]an is only truly great when he acts from the passions; never irresistible but when he appeals to the Imagination" (*Coningsby* 292). Exciting the passions and the imagination is a qualification that the new votaries of Bentham lack. On the other hand, aristocrats, scions of eminent parentage, continue to hold the imagination in thrall. They epitomize the relations building up from the smallest cell to the largest – from parent to family, dependants, community and beyond – the organic edifice of mankind. To designate them as the natural leaders means to reaffirm class distinctions as a way of providing the social organism with what it needs to function efficiently and well – politicians, industrialists, and workers – and create a society in harmony with each of its parts and the laws of nature at large.

Though aristocrats must continue to look to their blood for distinction, steadfastly holding on to that notion in its elitist, antiquated form brings the danger of being too old-fashioned and rigid in changing times. A new set of qualities is needed to navigate the new age, and these include compassion, diligence, and fundamental honor, but not of the punctilious and paralyzing kind. If the new men lack morals and the old flexibility, a hybrid creature combining both, a kind of mutant aristocrat who could benefit from the advantages of birth and remaining wealth and power but also go along with the tide of the times would be best fitted for survival and most useful to society as a whole.

## Chapter IV – Layers of Blood

A look at the makeup of the nation that the aristocracy is to preside over is now in order. If this is to be modeled after a great family, it becomes instantly apparent that it must be one founded on principles of adoption and assimilation, given that it gathers together multiple ethnic elements layered one on top of the other. These, like the sediments in rock formations that give geologists clues about the earth, reveal the history and character of the nation. First there are the Brythonic Celts, conquered in the first century AD by the Romans; then come the Saxons, who in the sixth century pushed the remaining natives to the fringes of the British Isle in Wales and Cornwall, and who were harassed in turn by the Danes in the east; and finally, there are the Normans, who by conquering in 1066 brought a new domination from the north-west of continental France. Scotland and Ireland, the former annexed to England in 1707 and the latter in 1800 – with the Republic of Ireland being politically detached from it in 1922 – present special cases, as they supply their own Gaelic, a branch of Celtic, blood to the nation's pool. To make this composite work as a whole, the "wise saying" invoked by Walter Scott's Highland chief Fergus Mac-Ivor – "'a kinsman is part of a man's body, but a foster-brother is a piece of his heart'" – needs to be kept in mind (*Waverley* 185). The hope is that England's heart is big enough for all the foster-brothers that its historical process has forced it to comprehend.

Mac-Ivor is merely speaking of permitting the courtship addressed by one of his clansmen to the daughter of a neighboring chief who inhabits the same mountain range in the confined are of the Highlands north of the river Froth, so the sphere of his condescension is small. But there is a lot to be said about sheer proximity when trying to

achieve cohesion for a group of people. The love of humanity urged by British novelists is not to be taken in the abstract, in a general way neglectful of geographic boundaries, as that would lead back to the cautionary tale sketched by Carlyle in *The French Revolution* featuring the Baron de Clootz and his Assembly of Mankind, another Tower of Babel and similar promoter of inefficiency. The British are too practical and thoroughly local for that. George Eliot, whose voice rises loudest in defense of generosity and compassion, proclaims nonetheless,

> I am not bound to feel for a Chinaman as I feel for my fellow-countryman: I am bound not to demoralize him with opium, not to compel him to my will by destroying or plundering the fruits of his labour on the alleged ground that he is not cosmopolitan enough, and not to insult him for his want of my tailoring and religion when he appears as a peaceable visitor on the London pavement. ("The Modern Hep! Hep! Hep!" in *Impressions of Theophrastus Such* 147).

When implemented abroad, the religion of humanity takes on the passive hue of restraint from doing harm. In fact, active involvement amounts to intrusion and can turn into a platform for aggressive imperialism, because it means interfering with the particular culture, institutions, loyalties and affections of the invaded people.

To this course of action the British are no strangers, having continued quite successfully "the plan of invading and spoiling other lands" initiated by their conquering Saxon forefathers and consequently incurred the ill-will of Red Indians and Hindoos alike, who refer, out of spite no doubt, "to our historic rapacity and arrogant notions of our own superiority" (146). Involvement abroad, even when couched in the benevolent terms or civilizing primitive peoples, is nothing but imposition. The world is not made to

be an amorphous mass of Anglophiles. It is meant to be broken up into geographical nuclei drawing together people who, by virtue of living close enough to each other, are able to have shared ancestors, lifestyles, experiences, memories and feelings. "Affection, intelligence, duty, radiate from a centre, and nature has decided that for us English folk that centre can be neither China nor Peru" (147), continues Eliot, honing in on the geographical dimension. The existence of such a center, by no means the only one in the world but unique in its character compared to all the others, gives rise to "a national consciousness" to which is attributable "the patriotic affection and every other affection which lifts us above emigrating rats and free-loving baboons" (145). Being tied to a specific place and corresponding tradition, rather than vaunting a glib cosmopolitanism symptomatic of lack of attachments, is what makes people distinctly human.

Carlyle with his injunction to do the work that lies near, Dickens with his admonishment of Mrs. Jellyby's charitable exploits in Borrioboola-Gha, knew the importance of territorial closeness in building the allegiances that hold together a nation. Not only does geography facilitate interaction but it also operates in insidious ways through the influence that topography, climate, food and the amount of labor needed to extract it have on the character of a people. The importance of climate was first emphasized by the French philosophe Montesquieu in his *Spirit of the Laws* (1748) and then taken up by Johann Gottfried von Herder, considered by many the father of nationalism, in his *Reflections on the Philosophy of the History of Mankind* (1784-91). Herder believed in a "national genius," in the sense of peculiar spirit nurtured under the influence of a particular parcel of earth and sky lending their characteristics to the people. The gentleness or roughness of the landscape is communicated to the inhabitants' temper,

the bounty or scarcity of nature makes them indolent or agile in obtaining the means of life, and the blandness or violence of the weather imbues them with confidence or superstitious fear of the forces of nature manifest in the tone of their imagination and the character of their gods.

George Eliot is quite Herderian when she states,

> Our national life is like that scenery which I early learned to love, not subject to great convulsions, but easily showing more or less delicate (sometimes melancholy) effects from minor changes. Hence our midland plains have never lost their familiar expression and conservative spirit for me; yet at every other mile, since I first looked on them, some sign of world-wide change, some new direction of human labour has wrought itself into what one may call the speech of the landscape – in contrast with those grander and vaster regions of the earth which keep an indifferent aspect in the presence of men's toil and devices. ("Looking Backward" in *Impressions of Theophrastus Such* 24)

The English midland landscape mirrors the course of steady, not convulsive progress of people inclined to conservatism, who have grown fond of its gentle lineaments and see in their continuity a connection with the past and in the noticeable marks of improvement – a "mill-wheel" on "our quiet little rivers," a "railed bridge" – the sympathy of the motherland with their labors toward building a future (25). This communion with nature gives rise to what Herder calls "hereditary national feelings" (12), and the word feelings is important because for him, as for Eliot, it is they who create the innate, instinctive and organic consciousness of being part of a nation. The presence of idiosyncrasies intrinsic to the essence of nations, yet not incompatible with the cohesiveness of mankind as "*one*

*and the same species*" (5), indicts imperialism for doing violence to the delicate balance between multiplicity and the unity within which it is inscribed. Underlying unity exists as a fact of Nature, which is itself infinitely diversified yet ever one, and requires no political reaffirmation by way of empire. On the contrary, attempts at that are unnatural and abusive. In Herder's words, "A kingdom consisting of a single nation is a family, a wellregulated household: it reposes on itself, for it is founded by Nature, and stands and falls by time alone. An empire formed by forcing together a hundred nations, and a hundred and fifty provinces, is no body public, but a monster" (130). The "empire of humanity" exists in defiance of and opposition to "the mad spirit of conquest," as it is based on affinities among people as members of the same species and not territorial conglomeration.

Herder's pronouncement is clear regarding distant colonies, such as America, Australia or India were to Britain, and it is no wonder that in the novel these are places where to escape Britishness, whatever that may in due time be revealed to mean. But it remains to see whether the more proximate peoples contained within the perimeter of the British Isles can coexist as "a family, a wellregulated household." The environment cooperates only partially. There is in the novel such a thing as a distinctly "Irish scenery" (*The Egoist* 184) that Colonel de Craye reminisces about when admiring Sir Willoughby's park, or a precipitous Highland landscape of "heathy and savage mountains" (145) that affords the inhabitants cover and accounts for the sinewy climber's legs showing from under their kilts. Life in the open air and in a moist climate explains even why Highlanders can drink with impunity, without the usual baneful effects to the constitution, so clearly the environment counts for much and works against homogeneity.

But while it is still possible to say with Clara Middleton about Irish, English, and Scottish landscapes, "All's one so long as it's beautiful," thus reuniting them under the universal principle of aesthetics, "Cosmopolitanism of races is a different affair," as de Craye remarks (184). He has in mind his own interest in the lady, her being affianced to another man notwithstanding, and the obstacles that stand in the way of marriages between Irishmen and Saxon maidens. This sore subject is further developed in another of George Meredith's novels, where the slogan "'We are one nation'" is proclaimed somewhat pro forma, eliciting the response from the brother of a spurned Irish lover, "'And it's one family where the dog is pulled by the collar.'" In making this comment the speaker gives vent to his inferiority complex and to a condemnable, in the eyes of a Saxon, "want of saving pride" (*Celt and Saxon* 41).

Though not so distant geographically, the Irish and the English are apparently separated in other ways. Geography accounts for much, but it is clearly not all there is to consider in the quest for identifying a nation. Other considerations need to be brought into view, among them the ethnic, institutional, psychological and moral aspects that bring unity to a group of people. After all, the scenery that de Craye admires is typically Irish in the sense that it "tempts the eye to dream" (184), and that seems to invoke a human temperament more than a tableau of nature, though the two may conform to each other. Stereotypically, the Celts – both the Welsh, found on the western fringes, and the Gaels, found in Ireland and the Highlands – are portrayed in the novel as, physically, dark-haired and dark-eyed and, temperamentally, passionate and sentimental. The Saxons, on the other hand, are fair-haired with northern blue eyes, exhibiting the

steadiness and good sense that have left a marked imprint on the characteristic reserve of the English.[47]

The Scotsman Donal Farfrae in Thomas Hardy's *The Mayor of Casterbridge* (1886) is masterful at the art of music, which Herder considered to be a primal manifestation of feeling speaking directly to the human heart and the first among the arts of primitive nations, taking precedence over poetry or drawing of pictures. That music is truthful to the essence of things, and thus particularly apt to render the inner character of a people, must have been felt by novelists such as Hardy who lived with the inheritance left by the German. In Hardy's novel, this is what Scottish music sounds like to an English audience of random people assembled at an inn in Wessex, the western part of the traditional Saxon kingdom:

> It was plain that nothing so pathetic had been heard at the King of Prussia for a considerable time. The difference of accent, the excitability of the singer, the intense local feeling, and the seriousness with which he worked himself up to a climax, surprised this set of worthies, who were only too prone to shut up their emotions with caustic words. (72-3)

Farfrae's song is about going home to his own country, likely the Highlands since he is said to have come down from the mountains of Scotland, which is ironic considering that the singer is planning to emigrate to America where to make money from an invention for mending spoilt corn. The "pathos" of Donald's song breaks the monotony and emotional coolness of the locals, causing one of them to admit, "'Folks don't lift up their

[47] The term English is favored here because of its Germanic provenance from the Angles, although British is used when referring in general to the inhabitants of Great Britain as it stood after the acts of union with Scotland and Ireland. Because of its affiliation with the Britons, of Celtic origin, the latter term would be somewhat misleading in this instance.

hearts like that in this part of the world'" (72). But while the Scotsman is capable of enrapturing souls long petrified by restraint, he is also the possessor of practical inventiveness and managerial skills. Thus he joins passion with practicality in a winning combination that earns him great success in business and the hand of the novel's heroine, sought after a detour into an unfortunate marriage to a woman of doubtful virtue that may be blamed on the same susceptibility to imagination which, on more fortunate occasions, inspires his lucrative ventures.

There is a complexity in the Scots that occasions much surprise to Edward Waverley when he visits the Highlands, setting forth from the Lowlands home of the Baron of Bradwardine, his uncle's friend and fellow supporter of the Old Pretender – the son of the deposed, and Catholic, James II considered by Stuart loyalists the rightful heir whom William and Mary usurped in 1688. Highlanders manage to be thieves and respectable gentlemen of old ancestry at the same time, jovial and shrewd, free and loyal. They steal cattle from Lowlanders and demand "black-mail" in exchange for restoration and protection from further theft but put a good face on the transaction by affecting friendliness and deploring so-called misunderstandings. They enlist in the regiments instituted for control of the Highlands by the hostile Hanoverian government so as to get paid money that goes toward supporting the rival Stuart cause. They are adamant that their only master is the one in heaven but then submit wholeheartedly to the clan's chief and the hierarchy regulating their lives down to food and drink distributed at table according to rank.

Waverley's expectations of the Highlanders are further thwarted when he notices the surprisingly frenchified ways of the chiefs he meets. One of them, Donald Bean Lean,

receives him in the attire of the French army in which he served, with "French politeness and Scottish hospitality," and the other, Fergus Mac-Ivor, "of whom a Frenchman might have said 'Qu'il connoit bien ses gens,'" welcomes him in a purposely plain Highland dress with only one man in attendance, knowing that a full display of his power might impress other chiefs but would seem ludicrous to a "Southron" (153). Despite being half French on his mother's side – in consequence of his father's escape to the continent after the failed Jacobite rebellion of 1715 – Mac-Ivor's countenance is "decidedly Scottish, with all the peculiarities of the northern physiognomy." Other than the "black curls" that frame it, this, however, is described more in terms of the "hasty, haughty, and vindictive temper" it bespeaks than physical traits (154). The description of Flora, the sister who resembles him, reveals more of "the antique and regular correctness of profile," "dark eyes, eye-lashes, and eye brows," and "clearness of complexion" they share as marks of the Gaelic type (167). Flora undertakes to translate to Waverly the verses of the family bard delivered with animation and ardor during the evening meal to the accompaniment of bagpipes, and in the process she displays her own skill at the Scottish harp, which she insists on playing out in nature, against the backdrop of a "romantic wilderness" of gigantic crags and murmuring waterfalls. The water comes from the confluence of two streams different "in character," one placid and sullen and the other rapid and furious, meant perhaps to edify the visitor in the complexities of the Scottish landscape and its people.

While the Highland Flora is an outgrowth of her surroundings, untamed and fiercely passionate about her clan and the cause of the rightful king – whose return she and Fergus are plotting in the years leading up to the fateful 1745 insurrection – Rose

Bradwardine, the Lowlander's daughter, is a flower of gentler cultivation. She is thoroughly domesticated, like her parceled and harvested native land that produces what the Highlanders come to steal. Misled by the romanticism of Flora's apparition into fancying himself in love, Waverly initially spurns the devotion of the tamer maiden and becomes entangled in wild adventures on behalf of the unlucky Stuart, only to return to the arms of the woman whose nature makes her suitable for a wife rather than a political rebel. This is Scott's homage to both the industry of his native Lowlands, spurred on by the peace and influx of wealth and commerce consequent on the decisive Stuart defeat, and the romantic fervor of the Highlands, the legacy of a race nearly vanished along with its patriarchal clan power but memorable for old-fashioned devotion.

In these distinctive Gaelic traits the Irish also share, although they inhabit a different isle and are more thoroughly mixed with their neighbors who settled in two waves on the territory of the Milesians, or Old Irish – once during the twelfth century Anglo-Norman migration, which created the now fully assimilated Old English segment, and a second time post-Reformation, leading to the Protestant New English faction since then in conflict with the existing Catholic population.[48] This is the type of rift that the Reformation created among the peoples of the British Isles, the one between the reformed Lowlanders and the Highlanders loyal to the old church and king being another instance of the same. The effect was to exacerbate a long-standing antipathy for savage Gaeldom entertained by the decent and law-abiding citizens of the anglicized world. As a counterpoint, the admiration of the Romantics for the mystical and sentimental bent of the Celt softened the aversion he was apt to provoke. His primitivism elevated more than

[48] This information appears in Colin Kidd, *British Identities before Nationalism*, the chapter entitled "The weave of Irish identities, 1600-1790." 146-147.

debased in the eyes of those who saw in the simplicity of nature a remedy for corrupt civilization. Investigations into myth and folklore strengthened the idea that transcendental, unadulterated truth was revealed to people attuned to the wisdom of nature and of the earth. The wealth of Celtic lore brought to the fore, legitimately or not, by the Ossianic vogue and the outburst of sentimental fiction – to whose representative, Henry Mackenzie, author of *The Man of Feeling*, Scott dedicated his novel –, both phenomena of the late eighteenth century, qualified the discredited cohabitants of the British Isles for a more favorable appreciation. Later, the mitigating influence of Romanticism was to be diluted by the emerging racialism of the second half of the nineteenth century, which reinstituted on racially-charged and pseudo-scientific grounds the conception of the excitable and improvident Celt as opposed to the sober, prosperous Saxon.[49] The image of the Celt is caught in the crossfire between these camps.

A commonplace of Irish portraiture, for better or worse, is sentimentality. Meredith's Colonel De Craye feels the influence of the lovable Miss Middleton on "the Irish fountain in him" (218) while Dr. Corney, under similar susceptibilities, calls himself "Irish and inflammable" (268). However, this emotive inclination is likely to degenerate from gallant courtship or friendly joviality into drunken boisterousness, as the curate Malone, whose utterance proclaims him after two syllables "a native of the land of

[49] According to Kidd, "cultural historians have revealed the origins of the modern duality of Celt and Saxon: the twin influences of romanticism and racialism forged the modern myth of the Celt [...]. The opposition of the pragmatic, freedom-loving Teuton and the mystical, sentimental, but improvident Celt was not a feature of early modern ethnic stereotyping. This romantic conception of the Celt took shape gradually, beginning with the Ossianic vogue of the late eighteenth century, and culminated in the vision of the high-minded Celt peddled by Matthew Arnold. In the interim the romantic Celt had been appropriated by Teutonic racialists as the hapless antithesis of the vigorous and prosperous Saxon" (*British Identities* 185).

shamrocks and potatoes," demonstrates in Charlotte Bronte's *Shirley*. What starts as a pleasant gathering turns into a near brawl, that much more fearful a prospect given Malone's strong build and "real Irish legs and arms" animated by a clamorous rudeness that makes his hostess wish his "Irish habits" had been left behind (4). Prejudices are also evident between Malone and his fellow curates:

> Malone, being neither good-natured nor phlegmatic, was presently in a towering passion. He vociferated, gesticulated; Donne and Sweeting laughed. He reviled them as Saxons and snobs at the very top pitch of his high Celtic voice; they taunted him with being the native of a conquered land. He menaced rebellion in the name of his 'counthry,' vented bitter hatred against English rule; they spoke of rags, beggary, and pestilence. (5-6)

Almost too many serious subjects are embroiled in a scene of such coarse satire, but apparently these are the situations when the truth comes out. The status of Ireland as an annexed country, the resultant resentment further irritated by the conquerors' self-satisfaction, the poverty and disease decimating the home population and sending hordes of immigrants over the channel in a retaliatory mock invasion that endangers the jobs and wages of English workers are topics all too well known.

But along with the plight of the Irish poor there is a more insidious source of contempt for their kind, and that is the tendency to servility and to aping the English yoked onto their national character by their deterrents. Thackeray parodies these traits in *The Book of Snobs*, to the detriment of both those who are laughed at and those who do the laughing:

> You do not, to be sure, imagine that there are no other Snobs in Ireland than those of the amiable party who wish to make pikes of iron railroads (it's fine Irish economy), and to cut the throats of the Saxon invaders. These are of the venomous sort; and had they been invented in his time, Saint Patrick would have banished them out of the kingdom along with the other dangerous reptiles.
>
> I think it is the Four Masters, or else it's Olaus Magnus, or else it's certainly O'Neill Daunt, in the "Catechism of Irish History," who relates that when Richard the Second came to Ireland, and the Irish chiefs did homage to him, going down on their knees – the poor simple creatures! – and worshipping and wondering before the English king and the dandies of his court, my lords the English noblemen mocked and jeered at their uncouth Iris admirers, mimicked their talk and gestures, pulled their poor old beards, and laughed at the strange fashion of their garments.
>
> The English Snob rampant always does this to the present day. (67-68)

Thackeray's uncertainty as to facts ignores traditional history, which takes Henry II, the great-grandson of William the Conqueror, rather than Richard II two centuries later, to be the subjugator of Ireland. There is indeed a suggestion that he brought the Irish chiefs to their knees not through violent conquest but through their voluntary submission.[50] But by that time, alas, the Saxons had themselves been conquered, and the ones who remained alive or in power due to assimilation or intermarriage were merely frenchified versions of their old selves serving under the Plantagenet kings, of which Henry II was one, who were closely connected with France through their extensive continental domains. It is to dashing clothing and dandified manners of French extraction that the Irish chiefs submit

[50] Kidd attributes this to William Molyneux (*British Identities* 169).

in Thackeray's account, just as their wild and simple descendants were to remain "on their knees still before English fashion" (68).

The "twopenny splendours" displayed by the Irish who buy their way into fashionable London circles become the target of ridicule. Their brand of snobbishness develops itself "in servility and mean admirations, and trumpery imitations of their neighbours" (69), as Thackeray claims, making good his assertion by painting a life-like portrait of an Irish snob thrown in the middle of a party in the glittering world of *Vanity Fair* (1848):

> The house was filled with the familiar British faces, and those toilets for which the British female has long been celebrated. Mrs. O'Dowd's was not the least splendid amongst these, and she had a curl on her forehead, and a set of Irish diamonds and Cairngorms, which outshone all the decorations in the house, in her notion. (321)

Mrs. O'Dowd outdoes the competition by exhibiting diamonds the size of rocks – the Cairngorms being a mountain range in the Highlands of Scotland – but has not learned the art of subtlety and restraint. Her presence is excruciating to George Osborne who calls her "this damn'd Irishwoman," though the possibility that she is anything but charming to her company never enters her head. She is clearly wrapped up in her grandeur and ignorant of the dislike her ostentation incurs.

It would almost seem that Thackeray was biased had not another wit less caustic than his own – and more sympathetic to the Irish from whom she sprang – trodden a similar path in *The Absentee* (1812). In that novel Mariah Edgeworth deplores, this time with real commiseration, "the renegado cowardice" (7) that causes Lady Clonbrony to,

first of all, desert the Irish land which supports her extravagances, and then torture her person, her manners and her tongue into seeming perfectly English. The degree of success she achieves is evident in the scornful commentaries of the London elite on her ruinous expenditure and varnished person. These are accidentally overheard by her son, Lord Colambre, who, though an Englishman bred and better integrated than his mother could ever hope to be, goes in search of his roots in Ireland and rescues from ruin his patrimony and the peasants on his estate.

It should be noted, however, that these examples point to class prejudices that underscore the national ones. The buxom Irish servant who performs the duties of the little house where the Sedleys take refuge after financial ruin is, truth be told, remarkable for her "bonnets and ribbons, her sauciness, her idleness, her reckless prodigality of kitchen candles, her consumption of tea and sugar, and so forth" (447) but also full of soul, participating wholeheartedly in Amelia's joy when she marries George Osbourne, though a more prudent character, English or Irish, would have found sadness to be in order. It seems that the good traits of the nation are best preserved in the simple people, who at least do not mutilate their open and impetuous Irish good-nature with pretentious constraint. Such a conclusion is in fact quite appropriate for the century, George Eliot herself making a remark to this effect in "The National History of German Life: Riehl" under inspiration from the Germans, who know how to assess simple people correctly and without idyllic falsification but see them nonetheless as keepers of authenticity. Still, Eliot was generally averse to stock figures, so one wonders if she would have condoned a Betty Flanagan maidservant as drawn by Thackeray.

Although more open to the charge of Irish penury than their country's nobles, commoners are also less susceptible to servility other than the upfront, remunerative kind that their menial employment demands. The aristocracies of conquered nations have overturned pedigrees to worry about, and that leads to a certain pomposity that makes them the butt of their English counterparts' jokes. Thackeray admits to having met "as many descendants from Irish kings as would form a brigade" (69), and these are clearly not legitimate heirs to the titles that they assume. In the same vein, Mrs. Cadwallader, the consummate snob in *Middlemarch*, bears, perhaps with the author's intention, the name of the king who in Geoffrey of Monmouth's famous *History of the Kings of Britain* (1136) is forced to abandon his homeland to the Saxons as he is harassed by plague, famine, civil dissent and the apprehension that God has turned away from the Britons. True, the Welsh still have the legacy of King Arthur, but in the course of centuries it has been so much fictionalized and misappropriated, now by the Anglo-Saxons – in the *Historia ecclesiastica* of Bede (731) and Layamon's *Brut* (1190) – to show the glory of the past they built on, now by the Normans – such as Geoffrey of Monmouth and his follower Wace in his *Roman de Brut* (1155) – to discredit the Saxon conquerors whom they displaced, now by romancers of all denominations – the more obvious being Chretien de Troyes – to turn him into a paragon of chivalry, that he is hardly still a Breton hero. Brutus, the legendary descendent of Aeneas and founder of Britain on the ruins of the runaway Trojan civilization, also becomes, of a piece with Arthur, consigned to fable and medieval monkcraft.[51]

[51] "The unreliable features of medieval origin myths, such as the legend of the Trojan origins of the Britons concocted by Geoffrey of Monmouth, were attributed to monkcraft" (Kidd, *British Identities* 59).

So Mrs. Cadwallader is thoroughly beaten and a sore loser, since she cannot become reconciled with her obscure position. In this she is joined by the penniless Mr. Melchisedec, who "was mysterious concerning his origin; and, in his cups, talked largely and wisely of a great Welsh family, issuing from a line of princes" (*Evan Harrington* 16), thus holding up his end of the bargain in a union with the rich daughter of a lawyer who married his cook. The pedigrees of Celtic nations, obliterated by the demise of their historic fortunes, are exposed to both ridicule and exploitation. On one hand they are treasure chests of old ancestry left open for every highway robber to help himself but on the other they are disbelieved, more so because of the promiscuous use made of them.[52] They are exaggerated only to be discounted.

Setting all these failings aside, there is something that the Celts still have to teach the English and that does not come from their history but from their spirit. Their scorned sentimentality and enthusiasm are redeemed once the consequences of too much steadiness and not enough soul become known. The Cornishman Tregarva in Charles Kingsely's *Yeast* attributes the southerners' degeneration to their bestializing work and lack of an outlet in something other than drinking and vice. He explains to Lancelot Smith,

> From the plough-tail to the reaping-hook, and back again, is all they know. Besides, sir, they are not like us Cornish; they are a stupid pig-headed generation at the best, these south countrymen. They're grown-up babies, who want the

[52] Sophie Gilmartin writes in *Ancestry and Narrative in Nineteenth-Century British Literature*: "As a conquered nation, Ireland could have no royal line of her own, and Irish pedigrees were dismissed as absurd lies and myths. The pedigrees of Wales, a country which had been conquered much earlier than Ireland, were subject to similar treatment" (134).

> parson and the squire to be leading them, and preaching to them, and spurring them on, and coaxing them up, every moment. (229)

Tregarva has insight into the reality of the southerners' lives and enough compassion to give away half of his scanty gamekeeper's pay to one in need. But he is not deluded about their utter lack of initiative and vital spirit. Adherence to tradition, capable at its best of inspiring loyalty, is downgraded in their case to dogged slavishness. On the contrary, Tregarva has spirit and initiative on the scale open to his field of possibilities, without at any point slipping into idealization of the poor whom he pities or vindictiveness against the landlords whose abuses he protests by writing a plaintive ballad. He sees the people around him looking differently from their fathers and grandfathers, "much smaller, clumsier, lower-brained, and weaker-jawed than their elders," and attributes the change to "'[w]orse food, worse lodging, worse nursing – and, I'm sore afraid, worse blood,'" eliciting Lancelot's mental interjection, "'for some young sturdy Lancashire or Lothian blood, to put new life into the old frozen South-Saxon veins! Even a drop of the warm enthusiastic Celtic would be better than none. Perhaps this Irish immigration may do some good, after all'" (223). Lancelot looks to the northern counties, the second actually a Scottish one, and to the reviled Ireland for succor from the decline of the Saxon blood frozen still. It is warmth that it needs to melt its frost and send it flowing again in the channels that feed the life of the nation.

Though striving to avoid mindless "philoceltism," Matthew Arnold in *On the Study of Celtic Literature* (1867) agrees that at this point the Celts can render England at least as good a service as vice versa. While calling for an end to the obstinate adherence of the Welsh to their language and national antiquities as a practical matter needful for

progress and integration, he sees this as not excluding an appreciation of the spirit of Celtic literature. He is thinking in terms of the "enthusiasm" and the "delicacy and spirituality" it evinces, finding in these excellencies the consoling thought that it is possible even for politically disinherited nations to make their mark on the world. Meanwhile, the Englishman fails to secure a "vital union between him and the races he has annexed" due to the "scorn and rebuke" with which he treats them, leaving little inclination for them to join in love and admiration of such an overbearing master. This very "want of sympathy and of sweetness of disposition in the English nature" (xv) gives the measure of the need it has for a dose of Celtic intervention.

Arnold subscribes to the dichotomy between the outward, material strength of the Saxon and the inward, spiritual strength of the Celt prevalent by his time and, furthermore, passed on to him by his father:

> I remember, when I was young, I was taught to think of Celt as separated by an impassable gulf from Teuton; my father, in particular, was never weary of contrasting them; he insisted much oftener on the separation between us and them than on the separation between us and any other race in the world. (17-18)

It is ironic that the closest nations, being thrown into each other's immediate sphere of animosity, intercalate the largest distance between themselves – the irony in Arnold's case being that his mother was actually from Cornwall. This is not to say that there can be no real distinction between a Germanic genius defined by "*steadiness with honesty*" but endangered by the collateral presence of "the humdrum, the plain and the ugly, the ignoble" (97-98) and a characteristic Celtic genius defined by *"sentiment*" or a keen sensitivity to joy and sorrow, liveliness, expansiveness, hospitableness, eloquence, gayety

but marred by lack of "balance, measure, and patience" and a consequent "habitual want of success" in business and politics (100-102). In fact, the difference can run so deep as to descend into the ludicrous, as in the following anecdotal evidence:

> The German, says the physiologist, has the larger volume of intestines (and who that has ever seen a German at a table-d'hôte will not readily believe this?), the Frenchman has the more developed organs of respiration. That is just the expansive, eager Celtic nature; the head in the air, snuffing and snorting. (101-102)

Arnold concedes to all this that, if differences are to be sought, they can in fact be discovered to be more nuanced than first apparent. They exist even within the Celtic group between the Cymri of Wales, who are more inclined to timidity, and the insolent Irish Gaels, always asking to borrow money, and perhaps even the French Galois, whose puffed-up lungs, however, are hard to pin down as a physiological fact to just one of the living, breathing races. But by this time the reader gets a sense that the divisions are somewhat too crisp and clear to account for the complexity of real life and accommodate the millions of people expected to fit neatly into a handful of molds.

II

It is now high time to acknowledge that the portraits drawn by nineteenth century writers reflect cultural constructs rather than scientifically-based, physiological or psychic, ethnic distinctions. Their shifting nature through time attests to their heavy-handed reliance on imagination, and not always of the inoffensive kind. They constitute visions of difference defined by relation to a core consciousness and often spurned by it. But determining, in the context of such convoluted and competing claims, what ethnic

regions are traversed by the central axis that grounds the nation is a challenge in its own right.

It is worth mentioning, though somewhat after the fact, that the notion of nationhood is itself a development of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. The racial characterizations with which the nineteenth century is so conversant were barely taking shape a century earlier and all but disappearing a century later, when deeper incursions into the science of race started revealing that it was "in the eye of the beholder" (1), a social and cultural construct instead of a natural fact – for instance, physical identifiers, such as fingerprints, ear wax, body hair etc. are shared by races in completely unpredictable patterns that frequently belie the story told by the visible traits of skin, eye or hair color.[53] From this, psychological characteristics, which have even less reliable markers, can be deduced to be that much more elusive.

The scriptural story of creation traces the origin of all races back to Adam and Eve, to whom writers from Thomas Paine to Thackeray return for reassurance of the unity and equality of mankind. In the church at least "we all of us have the same pedigree, and are direct descendants of Eve and Adam, whose inheritance is divided amongst us," says Thackeray (*Book of Snobs* 51). With due interruption for the Noachic deluge, humanity resumes the thread of its existence as the posterity of the sole survivor Noah through his three sons, Japhet, Shem, and Ham. In traditional scriptural exegesis, the Whites are considered descendants of the first, the Semites of the second, and the Blacks of the third, who, moreover, labored under an a paternal curse – incurred for

[53] Colin Kidd investigates the question in *The Forging of Races: Race and Scripture in the Protestant Atlantic World, 1600-2000.*

gossiping about his father's accidental nakedness while asleep – to serve his brothers through generations, quite conveniently for the institution of slavery.

Nevertheless, there is an ineradicable egalitarian element in the monogenist, single genesis, theory of the Bible, which worked well in the course of centuries for the descendants of Japhet at least, and particularly for those in the part of the world under question. From the early modern period through the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, antiquaries identified the Celts as the offspring of Gomer, the son of Japhet, and the Germanic peoples as descendants of Gomer's son Ashkenaz,[54] ensuring the closeness of a grandfather-grandson degree of relationship. Philological studies further revealed through language similarities the connectivity of Indo-European races, to which all segments of the British nation belonged. The jury was overwhelmingly in favor of kinship, until French Enlightenment philosophers and German Romantics, side by side with geologists, physiologists, ethnologist, and archeologists, stirred up interest in the particularities of different peoples, with the intention of studying and celebrating them and perhaps little foresight as to how they would become manipulated. But aside from a few irreverent rebels such as Voltaire, none, not even the naturalists – Carl Linnaeus and George Buffon – did more, openly at least, than to reintegrate newly discovered facts regarding the plurality of races within the framework of the underlying, sacred unity of mankind. [55] After all, there was always the influence of the environment to explain away differences that arose subsequently between races originating in one common stock. It was only in the nineteenth century, particularly the second half, that a "full-blown

[54] *The Forging of Races* 21.
[55] A discussion to this effect appears in *British Identities* 23.

racialism" emerged, highlighting divergences in both physiological and psychological traits.[56]

This place in the inquiry marks the culminant point in the ascension of the Saxons in the national consciousness of Great Britain. The choice of the Saxons, sometimes called Goths or Teutons, as the main ancestors of the British nation out of all the alternatives that history offered had to do with the love of liberty believed, on the strength of Tacitus' account in *Germania*, to have been intrinsic to their nature. This was thought to lie at the root of their institutions so wisely reliant on deliberative bodies and accepted laws, the precursors of the modern-day British constitution, Parliament, common law and jury system. While the Saxons were not the last in a string of conquests, in their robust uprightness they were the initiators of the best that the governing of the country had yielded over time, while the Normans were perceived to have imposed a foreign oppression. This train of thought led to "equating the former with the purity and simplicity of the common people's liberty and the latter with an arrogant elite of foreigners who had imposed the 'Norman yoke' of arbitrary rule on a formerly free people."[57]

This division naturally aligned itself with the competition between Whig and Tory principles, which burst with forcefulness unto the political scene during the English Civil War and its aftermath ending in the Revolution of 1688. The Whigs made it a point of emphasizing the continuity of the ancient British constitution dating back to the deliberations of the Saxon "gemots or parliaments" and even before, since the Britons had also had a "*concilum*" or "*conventus*" and laws, though the latter had to be rescued

[56] *Ibid*, 209.
[57] Mandler 13.

from Roman overrule by the coming of these very Saxons – as goes the tune of the history of defeated nations.[58] Conversely, the Tories reveled in the discontinuity created in the ancient Saxon liberties by the Norman Conquest and in the monarch's indefeasible right to grant power to parliaments at his pleasure, which force of arms had afforded to William I and the kings he spawned.[59] Besides, the Conqueror claimed to have been promised the throne by Edward the Confessor – the last king of the House of Wessex, who was himself a Norman half-breed and related to William on his mother's side – so he was not entirely a usurper.

These political battles caused quite a commotion in the alignment of ethnic loyalties. The Saxons benefitted from the association with a long history of resilient liberties that supported the cause of the people against arbitrary tyrants. The Normans, who also had a share of the coveted northern blood as Viking settlers of the north of France who mingled there with the Celtic-Gaul and Teutonic-Frank base of the Frenchmen they overpowered, bore nevertheless traces of Latinized French frivolity. Thus, the Saxons and the Celts of Great Britain actually became united in their common opposition, with various degrees of success, to the luxuriousness and corruption of Rome – the Celts having lost to Rome and the Saxons having helped to dismantle it – and later, with equal failure, to the same dubious Latin traits present in the makeup of the Normans. What separated the two, however, was the fact that in the contest they fought with each other prior to the advent of the Normans, the fortunes of the Celts, from whom 'God had turned' at an early point in history – as Bede and Monmouth concur – had been unquestionably superseded by those of the Saxons.

[58] Inspired by *British Identities* 80-85.
[59] This "royalist thesis" is discussed on 79, 89.

So the Saxons won by having defeated the Brythonic Celts but did not lose by having succumbed to the Normans in the popular sympathy and estimation. By the nineteenth century they had emerged as the core of Britishness, ironically more British than the Britons, who out of their plundered glory still lent their name to the identity of the nation, when not displaced even in that respect by the term English of Teutonic derivation. The Saxons' dominance was not unchallenged but quite secure. From the Celtic camp, all they had to fear was the imputation of dullness for which "the creeping Saxons" were eminent, as Matthew Arnold reminds in quoting an old Irish poem (99). From the Norman camp, if such could even hold considerable sway given the tendency to vilify the conquerors of a piece with their French kinsmen who were troubling Europe – including the endearing Germans – with a Corsican emperor and then his nephew Napoleon III at their head, the only thing to be feared was the memory of a sore defeat. Thackeray's Miss Tickletoby is still smarting under the reminiscence when admitting, "though the Battle of Hastings occurred – let me see, take 1066 from 1842 – exactly seven hundred and seventy-six years ago, yet I can't help feeling angry to think that those beggarly, murderous Frenchmen should have beaten our honest English as they did." Cries from the audience of "'*Never mind, we've given it'em since'* " follow, suggesting a stifling of that part in '*we*' which comes from that part of '*'em*' responsible for the Norman mixture in the English blood – as well as that part of history which makes the victor who 'gave it' to Napoleon at Waterloo, the Duke of Wellington, and the one who 'gave it' to errant Francophiles on the ideological field, Edmund Burke, Irish-born (27-28). Thus, when enjoying highest praise, Saxon blood is purged of deviant foreign influences.

In defiance of historical fact, which underscores the tendency of the Normans to intermarry and become assimilated, the Saxon and Norman elements are so thoroughly decanted in the popular imagination as to barely permit contiguity, let alone admixture. This is already evident at the beginning of the century in *Ivanhoe* (1819), another novel in Walter Scott's nostalgic campaign on behalf of historically disinherited but morally vigorous peoples. The action takes place some time after the Conquest, in the twelfth century, when King Richard the Lionheart is imprisoned in Austria while returning from the Third Crusade and his brother John is trying to usurp the throne. Scott prefaces his tale with a fictionalized assessment of the state of the nation, with the avowed intent of emphasizing "the great national distinctions" and the "line of separation" between the descendants of the victors and the vanquished:

> A circumstance which greatly tended to enhance the tyranny of the nobility and the sufferings of the inferior classes arose from the consequences of the Conquest by Duke William of Normandy. Four generations had not sufficed to blend the hostile blood of the Normans and Anglo-Saxons, or to unite, by common language and mutual interests, two hostile races, one of which still felt the elation of triumph, while the other groaned under all the consequences of defeat. (30)

In the space of the first few pages the layers of heritage subsisting in the land – specifically South Yorkshire situated in the center of the British Isle – are piled one on top of the other. First comes the description of a "circle of rough, unhewn stones, of large proportion" found in the middle of a forest glade – the remnants of a Druidical monument; then there is "the stern, savage, and wild aspect" of the first human figures appearing to be a Saxon nobleman's 'born thralls' with names inscribed on brass rings

"resembling a dog's collar" – so much for the Saxon love of freedom; and finally, there is the "primeval vestment" of one of them, including sandals "like those of a Scottish Highlander" – perhaps this, along with the "dark-red" and "amber" tones of the man's hair and beard (possibly descriptive of a Scot or Pict), explains the marks of serfdom, although the name is Saxon, "Gurth, the son of Boewulph" (32-33). The runaway herd of swine that Gurth is after occasions his companion's, the jester Wamba's, disquisition on the likelihood of the beasts to be "converted into Normans" if found by travelling soldiers or pilgrims, given the tendency of Swine, Ox, and Calf to remain Saxon as long as they require tendance but turn into their Norman variants of Pork, Beef, and Veau when they become matter of enjoyment on the table (36). Along with the ethnic stratification, the power relations determining who works and who enjoys the fruits of labor also surface, though few remaining Saxon noblemen still hold their own in this respect.

Among the exceptions to the wholesale extirpation of this race of nobles are Cedric of Rotherwood, whose name is Scott's corruption of that of the first Wessex king Cerdic, and Athelstane of Coningsburg, the last scion of the usurped Saxon monarchs. While Cedric is proud and fierce, Athelstane has inherited "with the blood of this ancient royal race" many of their "infirmities." "He was comely in countenance, bulky and strong in person, and in the flower of his age; yet inanimate in expression, dull-eyed, heavy-browed, inactive and sluggish in all his motions, and so slow in resolution, that the sobriquet of one of his ancestors was conferred upon him, and he was generally called Athelstane the Unready," adds Scott (95). The allusion is to Ethelred the Unready, father to Edward the Confessor, who earned his epithet through a misunderstanding of the Old English word "unraed" or "evil-counsel," an ironic reversion of his first name meaning

"noble-counsel." Charles Kinsley explains in *Hereward the Wake* (1865), written in the second half of the century when Teutomania was in full swing, that this bad counsel had to do with harassing the Danish settlers in the Danelagh – the northern and eastern parts of England dominated by Danish law – which only caused reinforcements to be brought from the north, culminating with the conquest of Canute the Great who ended up marrying Aethelred's wife after his death. Kingsley specifies, "and all the nobility of the English race was there destroyed," leaving one to wonder, between spoliation by the Normans and massacre by the Danes, what was there left of the Saxons to speak and be so proud of?

What is left is Athelstane, with his sluggishness sometimes attributed forgivingly to a "hereditary vice of drunkenness" (95) – the English climate apparently not permitting drinking with impunity like the Scotch –, his recreant borrowing of Norman words and unreadiness to do battle from indolence rather than cowardice, which jar on Cedric's hopes but do not lessen his devotion to the last royal Saxon. Unlike Athelstane, Cedric is sufficiently quick to take offense to Norman insults but his assessment of circumstances is sluggish. He disinherits his own son Ivanhoe due to the youth's love for Lady Rowena, who is reserved for marriage to Athelstane, not recognizing, in his blind adherence to dynastic right, who is the vigorous Saxon branch and rightful source of posterity. Ivanhoe appears incognito at a tournament, where he crushes the Norman retainers of the pretender John. On his shield is the image of "a young oak-tree pulled up by the roots, with the Spanish word *Desdichado*, signifying Disinherited" (105), suggesting at once the breach with his father and his sallies into Saracen territory alongside Richard the Lionheart, whom he joined once severed from paternal ties. This is what a Saxon scion

and descendant of Hereward according to Scott, though Kingsley was to call that remarkable hero "Last of the English," is forced into by obstinacy in upholding an overturned dynasty.

Noble blood can become spent, and the trick then is to find and promote the rivulet in which it still flows, though deviating from the main stream. Hereward's story confirms this view. Just before Edward the Confessor dies without offspring, creating the opportunity for William to invade, Hereward's father chooses to banish the son, as inordinate punishment for some youthful tricks played on the purse of a monk he despoiled. With the last vigorous representative gone, the English nobles are utterly "trampled into the mud" by the Normans, to whom they are "barbarians without a name or a race" (21). Their fate is partly owing to the weakness of Edward, the "bell-wether," or castrated male sheep, whose religious devotion causes him to neglect his wife Edith – perhaps also in retaliation for her father Earl Godwin's betrayal of Edward's brother Alfred – and leave the throne bereft of an heir. But just as a king has no business dabbling in such monkish ways, so a father blessed with a son has no right to spurn such a possession. Thus the Saxons can be said to have lost by allowing scruples and formalities to obscure the natural law of blood, which makes the offspring the first pride and care of the parent, especially when exceptional qualities tend to concur. The one consistent and foreboding failing of Saxon fathers seems to be not recognizing the worthiest of their sons, which spells trouble for the country deprived of such able defenders. Of course, as literary ploy, allowing the destinies of a nation to hang on a last champion whose power is unjustly curtailed is especially useful for building tension and

justifying defeat. History is explained retrospectively, but the place of blood at the center of the explanation shows its preeminence in the concerns of the age.

Aside from regretting the Saxons' defection from nature, Kingsley's novel also recalls how much they are indebted to the "free" Danes, who copiously mixed the "rough" and "right" Danish blood with theirs. The Danes are also prominent in the east of Ireland as well as Cornwall, where "yellow" heads, not unlike Hereward's own "long locks of golden hair" (38), crop up among the dark-haired Cornish. Hereward's distinctive mark is that he has one gray eye and one blue, which, aside from making him recognizable in anonimity, may also be a testament to his mixed Anglo-Dane blood. One of his many opponents, the "red-bearded giant" with "high cheek bones and small ferret eyes, looking out from a greasy mass of bright red hair and beard," whom he finds at the court of a Cornish kinglet, is revealed to be a Pict – of a tribe in the north of Scotland that eventually merged with the Gaels. The "ogre," who domineers over the king with his brute force and torments the princess with his rough courtship, affronts Hereward right away with offensive taunts. This is the perfect opportunity for the hero to engage him in battle, and when he wins, the last thing to be feared, the loyalty of the Danes to this overpowering boor, is shrewdly removed by Hereward's servant with some pointed racial slurs: "'Here is a pretty coil about a red-headed brute of a Pict! Danes, Ostmen,' he cried, 'are you not ashamed to call such a fellow your lord, when you have such a true earl's son as this to lead you if you will?'" – Hereward is repeatedly presented or intuited based on his looks to be an earl's son, with the specification that "earl" comes from the Danish title of "jarl."

The servant's "appeal to the antipathies of race" begins to work its devious magic, so he follows it up with "a string of witticism upon the Pictish nation in general, of which the only two fit for modern ears to be set down were the two old stories, that the Picts had feet so large that they used to lie upon their backs and hold up their legs to shelter themselves from the sun; and that when killed, they could not fall down, but died as they were, all standing" (123). Encouraged by the effect of these words, Hereward bursts out in Danish with "a true Viking chaunt" boasting of thieving, pirating, and land-wasting exploits from the north all the way south to Algiers, thus identifying with his fierce audience. The Danes, "whose blood had been stirred many a time before by such wild words" (124), are finally cured of any vestiges of loyalty to the murdered Pict and won over to Hereward's side completely. This is racial warfare at its finest, more potent in destroying and building allegiances than even the mighty clang of weapons.

Then comes the part where Hereward is introduced to French culture, first in Flanders where he spends part of his exile, and then more aggressively in the clash with the Normans back home. Hereward's contact with the French-adhering Flemish evinces shortcomings on both sides. French gallantry is taken so far as to be nearly emasculating, so that the fight between the Flemish and their neighbors looks like child's play compared to the ferocious encounters the hero is used to. In the course of the engagement, there was "the usual splintering of lances and slipping up of horses, and hewing at heads and shoulders so well defended in mail that no one was much hurt. The archers and arbalisters, meanwhile, amused themselves by shooting at the castle walls, out of which they chipped several small pieces of stone. And when they were all tired, they drew off on both sides, and went in to dinner" (191). On the other hand, Hereward's

near barbarity wins him battles but is judged unfavorably by fair eyes, even the partial ones of Torfrida, whom he meets and marries at the Flemish court. There is in him a lack of the polish present in the French, merely external though it may be. Torfrida's awakening on this subject comes a bit late, after binding herself by confessing her feelings for Hereward, which occasions her some feminine torment:

> Gradually she found out that the sneers which she had heard at the English barbarians were not altogether without ground. Not only had her lover's life been passed among half-brutal and wild adventurers; but, like the rest of his nation, he had never felt the influence of that classic civilization without which good manners seem, even to this day, almost beyond the reach of the Western races. Those among whom she had been brought up, whether soldiers or clerks, were probably no nobler or purer at heart – she would gladly have believed them far less so – than Hereward; but the merest varnish of Roman culture had given a charm to their manners, a wideness of range to their thoughts, which Hereward had not. (241-242)

The target of the imputation is uncertain at times, especially when the superficiality of French acquirements is thrust in opposition with the simplicity of the so-called barbarians, which they end up setting in not unflattering relief. In *The Roman and the Teuton* (1864) Kingsley, echoing Salvian, denounces the decadence, profligacy and effeminacy of Rome and ascribes its defeat to the superior purity of the barbarians, the Saxons being especially "venerable for their chastity" (47), as Walter Scott in his "Essay on Chivalry" (1827) also affirms. It seems that there is a mixed reaction of appreciation and denigration of Roman culture, which leaves its French tributary vulnerable to

barbarian attack. Still, Hereward's faults, aggravated by the drinking habit that unifies the peoples of the British Isles more than anything else, come out in a rudeness and boastfulness unbearable to the French. They goad him further into chanting "his own doughty deeds," only to laugh at a practice they think "inconsistent with the modesty of a true knight" (242).

Of course, there is a dose of gently mocking reproof in Kingsley's approach, without which no romance can be written after Cervantes. Scott felt the need to atone for his heroes' excesses in the same way and invoked the old master, "Ah, long rest to thy soul, Cervantes! without quoting thy remnants, how should I frame my language to befit romantic ears!" (*Waverley* 195). But even in this parodic vein, Kingsley manages to call attention to some valuable things in not only Saxon but also French culture that Matthew Arnold was to take quite in earnest. The French have a "sensuous and sociable" Celtic base but also the practical talent to provide for their luxurious tastes and surpass their "out at elbows" kinsmen, which they got from Roman civilization. Coming in contact with weaker civilizations, of the Gauls who preceded and of the Franks who followed it, the Roman was able to override them and make it so that "the governing character of France, as a power in the world, is Latin" (113). The Norman settlers, who were adept at assimilation, partook of this Latin treasure, becoming endowed with "the Roman talent for affairs" (114-115). They acquired the "sense for fact" that the Celts lacked and "the high Latin spirit" that the Saxons lacked, and thus they had more than commonly assumed to contribute to the British nation when they came over, accompanied besides by a number of "Frenchmen by race" from Anjou and Poitou who added to the influx of "non-Teutonic" blood (113-4). Somewhat downgrading this considerable dowry is the

effeminate aspect of that chivalry that they brought as well, but this to Arnold stems from a sensibility and aversion to fact that are typically Celtic even before they can be called French (108).

III

If Arnold is to be heeded, the biases against the Normans are as exaggerated and neglectful of truth as those in favor of the Teutonic Saxons. Indeed, the extravagant praises advanced on behalf of the favorites tend to degenerate into sheer intolerance and preposterousness. Anthony Trollope's Squire Wilfred Thorne of Ullathorne in *Barchester Towers* (1857), with his history of the siege laid by the Normans to his ancestors' castle written on vellum in a language he does not know and illuminated in a costly manner, is ludicrously pathetic. This is the source of his prejudices, which disregard virtue or talent as long as "the one great good gift" is lacking, for the loss of which nothing can atone, whose good effects nothing can neutralize – "good blood" (167). By this he means Saxon blood, going back, like his own, "to a period long antecedent to the Conquest." All other families, be they ever so prominent for honors or service in Parliament and ministerial cabinets, he calls "dirt." And yet it is on the strength of that constitution that these cabinets serve to enforce that the star of the Saxons has been on the rise since the days when they lay down their arms, metaphorically though some may claim never literally, at the feet of the conquering Normans. The strength of the Saxons rests not on their fierceness in battle – for that could turn self-destructive, as shown in *Hereward*, in wars of succession in which brother killed brother, leaving the country open to the Normans – nor on manners – for there also their bellicosity was self-defeating – but on the reputed libertarian spirit embodied early on in their rudimentary institutions. It is the pedigree of

English liberties, as Burke called it, of which they are the bearers, instilling reverence in every Englishman who falls under its pale.

Complacency in this respect, however, can also verge on ridiculousness, as Dickens shows in *Our Mutual Friend* through a conversation between Mr. Podsnap and a foreigner sounding suspiciously French:

> "I merely referred," Mr Podsnap explained, with a sense of meritorious proprietorship, "to Our Constitution, Sir. We Englishmen are Very Proud of our Constitution, Sir. It Was Bestoweed Upon Us By Providence. No Other Country is so Favored as This Country."
>
> "And ozer countries? – […] They do how?"
>
> "They do, Sir," returned Mr Podsnap, gravely shaking his head; "they do – I am sorry to be obliged to say it – *as* they do.'
>
> "It was a little particular of Providence," said the foreign gentleman, laughing; "for the frontier is not large."
>
> "Undoubtedly," assented Mr Podnap; "But So it is. It was the Charter of the Land. This Island was Blest, Sir, to the Direct Exclusion of such Other Countries as – as there may happen to be. And if we were all Englishmen present, I would say," added Mr Podsnap, looking round upon his compatriots, and sounding solemnly with his theme, "that there is in the Englishman a combination of qualities, a modesty, an independence, a responsibility, a repose, combined with an absence of everything calculated to call a blush into the cheek of a young person, which one would seek in vain among the Nations of the Earth." (139)

To make matters final and render them safe from dissenters, "with his favouite right-arm flourish, [Mr Podsnap] put the rest of Europe and the whole of Asia, Africa, and America nowhere." Independence, repose, moral uprightness sound by now very much like virtues inherited from the Saxons, to whom swiftness, excitability, or sparkling inspiration could, after all, never be imputed. The fact that these are dialectically posed to a French interlocutor suggests denial of any affiliation, Normans be hanged. The rest of the world too hangs by a thin thread consisting of whatever aid Englishmen deign to throw it, by comprising it within their empire perhaps? It is too bad that the vaunted constitution was never actually written down, existing as an idea and a string of charters and acts rather than a single document to be copied faithfully by other nations.

The irony is that many tend not to disagree with English preeminence, either because with nations, as with people, "blustering assertion goes for proof, half over the world," or because Englishmen really have a good point (*Little Dorrit* 25). Madame de Stael – who, as the daughter of Louis XVI's finance minister Necker, had a front seat in witnessing the inception of the French Revolution, and who, as an exile of Napoleon, travelled through many lands and conversed with illustrious minds – states that "England is the only great European empire that has achieved the final stage of perfection of the social order known to us" (118-119). By this she means representative government, surpassing the stages of feudalism, in which the nobles share land and power after a conquest, and despotism, in which the king takes over both the legislative and executive power. The liberty of the English comes from transparency in public affairs, open discussion and freedom of the press. By combining the liberty thus achieved with the security conferred by a hereditary monarch and peerage, the English have solved the

problem still puzzling the French, who "have been hated by the sovereigns for seeking to be free and by the nations for not knowing how to be free" (111).

The French across the channel present to the English both a model and an antagonist. The verve of the French Revolution had proclaimed on the eve of the century the imperative need for change and for revising the old institutions to reflect new realities. The force behind the revolution acted as an inspiration to the suffering masses in England and as an awakening to the leaders and, at the same time, as a warning to both that desire for change could degenerate into indiscriminate bloodshed. After the revolution, the French began to be seen as rebellious and in need of guidance, "too noble to be enslaved and too impetuous to be free," to use Joseph de Maistre's concise portrait (66), while the English continued their steady journey under the tutelage of the old constitution. The "fury" and "envy" that Madame de Stael observed to have possessed the French poor in the presence of the rich, and made them easy prey for Napoleon's infiltration of despotism under cover of the rhetoric of equality and freedom, was attenuated in England by the habit of seeking constitutional remedies to injustice. The insistencies of the people, who had some partial gateway into governance through the House of Commons, coupled with the enlightenment of the leaders were to effect the needed change. On the other hand, in France the nobles incurred the brunt of the people's hatred for inflicting economic exploitation while being exempt from taxation but, politically, had no real power to remedy evils under a series of absolutist, highly centralized royal regimes.

And yet, in one mode of thinking, the French and English nobles should have been separated by nationality less than they were united by class. Monarchy, aristocracy,

chivalry, gentlemanliness are pan-European concepts that, while distinguishing members of an elite from the common run, unite them in one great community irrespective of national boundaries. Dynasties are notoriously careless of nationality, having extreme mobility by way of conquest and intermarriage between the offspring of noble houses, who end up leading a people not their own whose language they barely speak. But the wave of revolutions of 1848 seeking to unify the German states and expel from Sicily the foreign Bourbons, among other national movements and popular demands across Europe, proved that the germ of nationhood was beginning to grow and assert itself in defiance of multinational dynasties and empires. They showed that when the boundaries of an artificially created state were imposed on a people who had its own consciousness of belonging to a collective body united by blood, geography, language, and common experience, an unnatural fit could occur that foretold political trouble.

It is this sense of nationhood that the British are able to find by rallying round their constitution. For them the state and the nation are one, the strength of the state actually solidifying the nation from a conglomerate of ethnically varied peoples and socially distinct classes gravitating towards its prosperity and expanding freedoms. In a final analysis, the idea of nationhood is essentially democratic, as it must accommodate within a national type "elites and masses." The discourse built around it is "about the advent of democracy, about making all citizens of a nation feel fundamentally alike, though not necessarily equal."[60] For the British, this means crossing ethnic as well as class boundaries. Though prejudices exist, it is fortunate for the British nation that ethnic distinctions, such as remain, do not settle neatly along class lines. It would have been destructive for rich and poor, leaders and people, to think that they were not only

[60] Mandler 7.

separated by class but descended from entirely distinct ethnic springs. But the opportunities of industry and the existence of a representative body – filled as it still was with second sons and swayed by the influence of big landowners, yet conceptually, and sometimes practically, open to all – forestalls the sharp delineations that led to a bloodbath in France.

There is indeed a suggestion in the Anglo-Saxon words that John Barton and Job Leigh use – such as "nesh" for tender and "dree" for to suffer or endure – that in Manchester at least the working population is Saxon. There is also a hint in the physiognomy of Mr. Yorke, every trait of which is "thoroughly English, not a Norman line anywhere," but which is also "an inelegant, unclassic, unaristocratic mould of visage," that the roughness of the Saxon is shut out from associations with an elite, if not from land ownership altogether (*Shirley* 35). Nonetheless, Meredith reminds that this may well be, like his own Sir Miles Papworth, "a mature specimen of modern England's vaunted race: or let us say, the vaunted race of modern England's novelists." The "heroic grain" of the Saxons, the mixture of staunchness and pig-headedness, sagacity and coldness of feeling, is the stuff that writers "cut types from" and not the variegated fabric of life. On paper, Sir Papworth is in everything the contrast of the head of the Feverels, meant to be spelled Fiervarelles, "a name hearing which you seem to hear a trumpet blown remote, from the Conqueror's ranks" (22). But though he fights the Battle of Hastings every day with his Norman neighbor, he actually beats him on the domestic field – by keeping his wife faithful and having many children – and loses in politics mainly due to the other's greater riches – gained from mining a Welsh estate acquired

through intermarriage no less – and better cook, who "thrice returned him to Parliament" (25-26).

Ethnicity aligns rather vaguely and unreliably with class, and when it does it is only to work on the leveling principle of conferring Saxon dignity on the people and imputing Norman pedantry to the nobles. However, no coherent argument can be advanced that the aristocracy is entirely Norman and the people purely Saxon, or that, being either, they have a set allotment of talent to contribute to the nation. Egremont is Norman but so is Sybil who was raised as mill foreman's daughter, more believably so since Egremont's pedigree is concocted and of more recent stamp. Millbank proves his allegiances by naming his daughter Edith after a Saxon queen yet he is prosperous and influential in politics and unites his family with that of Coningsby in a marriage of Saxon industry and Norman prerogative, whereby the former is needed to revitalize the staleness of the latter.

Similarly, the distinctions drawn in the lower classes, this time between the Saxons and the Irish, delineate a gulf to be traversed. There is contempt for "them Irishers" for the way that they leave in hordes the poverty of their own country and take the work of English folk at half-pay, as well as for their "utter want of skill" that makes the masters mourn the loss of better trained hands (413). They are deviants and scapegoats, the most inflammatory leader of a worker's rebellion being suspected of having in him "Irish blood" and therefore not partaking of the "granite in all these northern people" (*North* 303). But when John Barton finds the child of such a one, right before setting off to kill his employer's son, the child's cry gets his thoughts running on

his own dead and buried children, and he rescues the poor creature thinking that he "might have been *his*."

The sentimentality of novelists – one wonders of what ethnic provenance – accounts for much of this perpetual return to the hope for universal love and understanding. All these children, lost, quarrelsome, vindictive, repentant, ultimately belong to one nation, as in the past they were all wards of one supreme God. Since the demise of that divine patriarch, it is the nation gathered round shared institutions and a shared purpose that alone can restore communal ties and put power and action behind the common good once again. And although underneath it all there is a messy entanglement of prejudices and affiliations that is cleaned up and made presentable and intelligible by being forced into the Celtic, Saxon, and Norman layers of blood, when exposed to serious scrutiny these fuse back together. From this admixture a complex consciousness is born, not entirely coherent but aware of the boundaries within which its different elements have room to play. In this confined space that makes compromise necessary and even inevitable, the mongrel British race can hopefully learn to assess kindly yet realistically the idiosyncrasies of each of its children while teaching them to coexist in the "wellregulated household" that Herder envisioned a kingdom to be.

The truth is – and this may work in favor or against the aristocracy – that such a thing as distinctive blood exists hardly in fact and only artificially in fiction, and even then somewhat inconsistently. This applies to ethnic as well as aristocratic blood, the two classifications not fully coinciding but relying on the same assumption of a hierarchy of worth based on qualities resident in the flesh. Interestingly, ethnicity is the more radical of the two. Whether because of the need to distinguish the British from the French or to

protect the continuity of the constitution, ethnicity gives the crown not to the conquerors but to the people in whom, in German romantic fashion, the essential qualities of the nation survive. This seems to disinherit the aristocracy more so than fake pedigrees or declining power, unless it can show greater partnership and intermingling with the people. It tugs at the strings of aristocratic aloofness, precipitating a phenomenon that is already underway and that, in bringing the aristocracy down to earth, brings it back to the task that can justify its continued existence.

Pedigrees confer power, but now there is also a pedigree of industry, a pedigree of liberty, a pedigree of the people as well as one of the nobles. In fact, of all these the last is the most questionable:

> "Ancient lineage!" said Mr. Millbank; "I never heard of a peer with an ancient lineage. The real old families of this country are to be found among the peasantry; the gentry, too, may lay some claim to old blood. I can point you out Saxon families in this county who can trace their pedigrees beyond the Conquest; I know of some Norman gentlemen whose fathers undoubtedly came over with the Conqueror. But a peer with an ancient lineage is to me quite a novelty. No, no; the thirty years of the wars of the Roses freed us from those gentlemen. I take it, after the battle of Tewkesbury, a Norman baron was almost as rare a being in England as a wolf is now." (*Coningsby* 205-206)

Considering the concerns expressed in the novel for the fate of the Saxon nobles at the hands of the Normans and then, as Milbank points out, for the fate of the Norman nobles at the hands of each other, it is no wonder that pedigrees, especially politically-charged ones, are a matter of fiction. Pedigrees can be concocted and plundered, the Norman, as

shown by Egremont who descends from an ecclesiastical commissioner, as well as the Saxon, as shown by the Newcomes who bypass their village foundling forefather and trace their fictional lineage to the surgeon-barber of Edward the Confessor. So how is the nation to know its leaders if, as far as real blood is concerned, the ground is swept clean for fiction to take effect? Even admitting that stories are what matters and fact goes for naught, they still have to have some credibility, in an age lacking faith, to hold sway.[61] The credibility comes from the competency of the leaders, not so much from how they got their place but how they use it for good or ill.

IV

This turns the attention from who should rule to how and on what principles to rule the nation. Disraeli's protagonist in *Tancred; or, the New Crusade* (1844) travels all the way to the east to find that answer. Rising from sufficiently convoluted beginnings to suit the times, Tancred's family acquired a seat in the House of Lords through the exertions of his great grandfather, "a mere country gentleman" who at the end of the previous century had captivated the heiress of the Montacutes, Dukes of Bellamont, "a celebrated race of the times of the Plantagenets" (8). Using the five votes he commanded besides his own in the House, the representative one at that point, to support the sovereign during the American War and the French Revolution, he managed to gain a seat in the upper House and revive in his person the ancient honors of his wife's lineage that in strictly orthodox fashion would not have devolved to him. Enterprise and prerogative meet from the start in the family's fortunes. The subsequent generations, invariably only children and sons, include a profligate "born to enjoy, not to create" (11)

[61] Sophie Gilmartin writes: "To know who ought to rule one needs to believe in the story or history that this ruler presents to the nation, and to believe that this ruler deserves a place in that story" (106).

and the son whose suffering at the hands of such a parent atoned for these ominous sins, Tancred's father. He, the present duke of Bellamont, married a beautiful and saintly woman, and together they lead a life of domestic affection, avoiding frivolity and, aside from intercourse with the court and a few select families while in London for the parliamentary session, the whirlwind of what is commonly called 'the World'.

Appropriately for his rank and position, and for Disraeli's Young England program, the Duke concentrates on his duties as a proprietor of the soil:

> On these he had long pondered, and these he attempted to fulfill. That performance, indeed, was as much a source of delight to him as of obligation. He loved the country and a country life. […] He liked to assemble 'the country' around him; to keep 'the country' together; 'the country' seemed always his first thought; he was proud of 'the country,' where he reigned supreme, not more from his vast possessions than from the influence of his sweet yet stately character, which made those devoted to him who otherwise were independent of his sway. (14-15)

With such an idyllic model of patriarchal power and duty, it comes as a surprise for the son to choose to leave 'the country'. It is not that the virtues of the father are exhausted in the son but rather that they are brought to a sensitive pitch that heightens his scrupulousness in trying to deserve his position. Nor is it that he lacks energy and spirit, since, despite the paleness of his brow, "the liquid richness of the dark brown eye, and the colour of the lip, denoted anything but a languid circulation" (41). Nevertheless, although the moment is favorable in the aftermath of the 1841 Tory triumph, Tancred refuses to enter Parliament upon his majority as member for Montacute, his father still

holding the hereditary seat at this time. He does this not in defiance of aristocracy, though he has some caveats as to its longevity in the future, but from a desire to do the duty to which he was born earnestly and discerningly. Before he can become "a pillar of the State," he must learn "what the State is," what is the "principle" on which it ought to be founded. "'It seems to me your pillars remain, but they support nothing; in that case, though the shafts may be perpendicular, and the capitals very ornate, they are no longer props, they are a ruin," retorts Tancred to his father's pleadings (47). What is lacking in everything, religion, government, manners, is "faith," without which there can be no "duty" because there is no conviction, consistent from London to Montacute and from the summits of the aristocracy to the lowly, as to how to distribute, wield or submit to power. Without this a people ceases to be "a nation" and becomes "a crowd."

Though the material condition of the country is generally prosperous at this time, this means nothing but "fresh causes of moral deterioration" (50) as long as money is the benchmark for value. To find a way to put an end to this state of affairs, Tancred requires and must seek "a Comforter," a reincarnation of the divine will, a second Christ if need be, and the place to find such a thing is the same that originated the first revelation. This is the Holy Land, the only land where since the beginning of time the Creator "has deigned to reveal Himself to His creature" (54). The new crusade is going to that land sanctified by the divine presence, like one of the Montacutes of old – and like Disraeli, himself a converted Jew who travelled east – not with swords but with questions: "What is DUTY, and what is FAITH? What ought I to do, and what ought I to BELIEVE?" (55). Political action without a purpose set by the answers to these questions can only be blundering and haphazard. And like the anonymous knights of romance, the hero,

referred to as the Duke's son until now, is named for the first time in the novel only after making these momentous avowals that define his character dominated by the thirst for a creed – from the Latin "credo" for "I trust, I believe" that lends its etymology to the second half of his name.

Tancred's crusade fits the purport of Disraeli's endeavor to vindicate "the sovereign right of the Church of Christ to be the perpetual regenerator of man,"[62] which bears traces of the conservatism of Coleridge for whom the Church was the spiritual support of the State. But for Coleridge, as for Disraeli, the church is not just about theology but about grounding "civilization" in "cultivation, in the harmonious development of those qualities and faculties that characterize our humanity" (46). "We must be men in order to be citizens," says Coleridge, and to be men means to have an understanding of "those fundamental truths, which are the common ground-work of our civil and our religious duties" (51). Without these civilization is merely varnish and a nest of festering evils, as Tancred pointed out in conversation with his father. England has civilization enough, may be "over-civilized" even, but is morally inert and hollow within for lack of cultivation. Tancred's ambition is to revive its spiritual center by restoring the communication with the divine, not through theological debates, for he tries that with a bishop and fails, but by intercepting some divine message the likes of which have been heard only in the Holy Land.

Attempts at luring Tancred into the world of fashion, so as to dissuade him from a long and dangerous journey, fail when he becomes interested in a lady but is disappointed at her flippant dismissal of sacred history on the basis of 'the development theory' picked up from a book on geology and astronomy. This convinces Tancred that his departure is

[62] Preface to the fifth Edition, written in May 1849. ix.

more necessary than ever. But his insistence on reaching "the land of inspiration" (121) serves a wider aim of the author, which is to remove the odium attached to the Jews and remind Christians from which fountainhead their own spirituality has sprung. In preparing to leave Tancred enlists the help of Sidonia, the recurrent character from *Coningsby*, who gives him access to the highest circles in Jerusalem. There he meets Besso and his daughter Eva, who, aside from physically being specimens of the soft dark-eyed and brilliant-complexioned beauty "such as it existed in Eden" (187) and still exists among those races "who have wandered the least from Paradise" (173), are also initiates into "the great Asian mystery" (124). Eva particularly engages with Tancred in a disquisition about the inconsistencies implied in persecuting the Jews for having the blood of Christ upon their heads when the victim himself prayed his Father to forgive them. The charge of having caused an event that was ultimately responsible for the redemption of the human race and that had always been a part of the divine plan is likewise absurd. Her arguments make clear the fact that one cannot truly believe in Christ and revile the Jews at the same time.

But while Tancred learns much from Eva and comes to identify her with Arabia itself, it is in a different shape that the angel of Arabia appears to him on Mount Sinai, where God parleyed with Moses some millennia ago. It happens when he falls in a trance after fervently praying to the God of Israel to break his silence and deliver his creatures from despair. The form that appears to him speaks of the power residing neither in the sword nor the governors of the world but in "ideas, which are divine" and have ever regulated human existence. What the unsettled and rebellious Europe needs to know is that "[t]he equality of man can only be accomplished by the sovereignty of God. The

longing for fraternity can never be satisfied but under the sway of a common father" (291). This "theocratic equality" can only be supposed to refer to the relationship of man to God, whereby all who enjoy it are equal, and not the relations of man to man, which can be varied and hierarchical. This is apparent when Tancred admires first and foremost in the Arabs – a term that to him comprises both Jews and Muslims – their unsophisticated, sublime devotion to the leaders of their tribes, unchanged since the time of Moses, Abraham, and Mahomet and the necessary correlative of "the patriarchal principle," which is none other than "equality, properly developed" (367).

Equality is submission and devotion properly placed and ungrudgingly ceded. This seems to be achievable only under a paternal presence that all children relate to equally as offspring of the same father but that does not preempt distinctions in their standing relative to each other. In fact, the more devout the more they will accept these as a matter of course and expediency in serving, each according to his own excellency, the patriarch, first that in heaven and then those on earth, keeping in mind that the latter are themselves children in the face of the Almighty and thrown back upon the equality in which all human beings stand to Him. This is layered equality, if such a term can avoid being an oxymoron, whereby each man – or woman, since the language of gender equality, usually anachronistic for the century, applies here – is too concerned with doing his part to complain that it is greater or lesser than that of another. Under it, competition disappears and harmony, fraternity and mutual help ensue.

This is the message that Tancred presumably brings back to England on his return, which the novel does not document but implies at the end when, just as he repudiates all ties with kin and country in the name of his love for Eva, the Duke and

Duchess of Bellamont arrive in Jerusalem to call him on his bluff. It is an ancient Hebrew idea from before representative governments and French revolutions were born. It amounts to true virtue of the Hebraic stamp that made Abraham willing in obeying the order to give his son over for a sacrifice, as if foreshadowing the sublime gesture of the supreme Father whose submission in offering Christ could only have been to His love of mankind as no greater will than His own existed. It is one of the ideas worthy to be enthroned whereas a dynasty is not, the distinction being made by Tancred when he contemplates the end to which it would be worth conquering the world. And of all peoples the Hebrews should know because theirs is the wisdom generative of ideas and inspiration, a trait that, as it would appear, has entered their blood. Indeed, some nineteenth century anthropologists reached the conclusion that just as intellect and language could be considered an outgrowth of race so could spirituality and religion. Thus religious phenomena were "manifestations of racial mentalities," which in turn could be traced to physical traits, as phrenologists trying to locate "the organs of 'veneration' and 'spirituality'" on the skull could attest. Consequently, there was such a thing as "the aptitude of races for spirituality" determined by external physical as well as deep psychic attributes, and the Semites seemed to possess it to an uncommon degree.[63]

If any of this is to be believed, the answer to the question of how to lead is, ironically, more readily to be found in the blood than the answer to the question of who should lead. One should lead as the Hebrews did, replicating the wisdom of that race that made duty and faith earnest and easy. In Tancred's view it is Hebrew spirituality, which never means a specific theology in the novel but rather the science of what is right and how to behave, that should guide action. While England's prosperity is creditable to the

[63] *The Forging of Races* 171-172.

Saxon race that "has stamped its diligent and methodic character on the century" (148), its spirituality is indebted to the particular aptitudes of the Hebrew race. "'All is race; there is no other truth,'" affirms Tancred, with the corollary "Because it includes all others" (II.14.149). The Greeks had art, the Romans had roads, the Semites had prophets. As for the English, they have material civilization but also pride, willfulness, greed, and obstinacy, when regarded from a prejudiced point of view at least. "They live in a misty clime, on raw meats, and wines of fire. They laugh at their fathers, and never say a prayer. They pass their days in the chase, gaming, and all violent courses. They have all the power of the State, and all its wealth; and when they can wring no more from their peasants, they plunder the kings of India," says Besso with somewhat superstitious recoiling from such unhallowed practices (III. 1.242). Setting aside the more fantastical misrepresentations, the English public needs to ask itself, is he wrong?

VI

The regeneration of Europe by Asia was an influential Romantic idea that had sent Friedrich Schlegel and Novalis on their own quests to the east, India to be precise, in an effort to find something "that could defeat the materialism and mechanism (and republicanism) of Occidental culture."[64] This is the same as the direction of Disraeli's journey, though he stops short of the target of the Romantics yet closer to the acknowledged fountain of Christianity – not to say that there had not been attempts to draw parallels between Jesus and Indian divinities also. The paradox, however, is that, with all this wisdom apt to become the informing power of British politics, the Jews should not have a political state of their own. Further yet, it is paradoxical that, not having one, they still manage to be a nation. The Jews present an instance of nationality

[64] Edward Said , *Orientalism* 115.

that is highly unusual and revelatory. They lack a country but have a mythic core, a central hub in which history, religion, customs, laws, as well as blood, intersect, and with which individuals connect, in turn connecting with each other. Through their intuitive as well as conscious adherence to a common tradition, they have constructed a habitation within the spirit of the race, which they have yet to anchor into political reality by creating an actual state.

In George Eliot's *Daniel Deronda*, the title character is drawn to his Jewishness by invisible threads that make him sense it instinctively before it is discovered as fact. He is raised as an English gentleman by his supposed uncle, Sir Hugo Malinger, but from the age of thirteen, which would have marked his entry into manhood in the Jewish tradition, he starts having doubts as to his origins. The consciousness of race comes over him in waves, in a series of fortuitous discoveries and coincidences that actually brought the charge of romanticism upon Eliot's tale. First he rescues the beautiful Jewess Mirah from drowning herself in the Thames, then he is approached with vague recognition by a Jew in Frankfurt during a synagogue service that satisfies some "remote, obscure echo" (323), and finally he is introduced to his real mother, an acclaimed Jewish actress-singer who gave him up to follow her career and free him "from the bondage of having been born a Jew" (550). But while contrivances have set him free, the blood still reels him into his heritage, particularly after he seeks and finds Mirah's long lost brother Mordecai, also named Ezra like the Old Testament figure who leads the return of the exiles from Babylon to Jerusalem.

Mordecai is dying and is thus in need of a "spiritual perpetuation in another," "an active replenishment of himself" through the agency of Daniel so as to continue his most

important dream, the rebuilding of Israel (438; 452). Daniel, whose name links him to the biblical visionary, is a diligent pupil even before he gets confirmation of his Jewish descent, but afterwards it feels as though all the pieces of his life are falling into their predestined places. He can now marry Mirah, a union desirable, the bride's qualities notwithstanding, in the interest of preserving the racial ties that give strength to the dream of political unification. As in the Bible, where Ezra asks that foreign wives and children be cast away, Mordecai-Ezra also encourages what Daniel comes to call "separateness with communication" (635) in dealing with the gentiles. He does not believe that repudiating their race helps some Jews become better integrated in the nations amongst which they live, as they continue to stand apart and carry the weight of hypocrisy and betrayal besides. Just as one has to born into this race, one cannot be unborn from it. "Can the fresh-made garment of citizenship weave itself straightaway into the flesh and change the slow deposit of eighteen centuries?" (466), asks Mordecai. In doing so, he inadvertently recalls Daniel's reply to the Jew from Frankfurt, "I am an Englishman" (323), and how feeble it sounds in light of the things that have since been revealed.

Blood, the instinctive and indelible sense of fellowship with one's race in preference to all others, is thus recognized as an important bond that holds this people together in the absence of political unification. Peculiarly to the Jews, it means even more than commonly understood by the term, since in their case it can truly be said "that their religion and law and moral life mingled as the stream of blood in the heart and made one grow" (469). For them, race and religion are one. The sacred history and traditions they share, all preserved in uniquely enduring records, work as "a seed" to be planted in any land to which they are harried. Like the Roman in the fable Mordecai mentions – Julius

Caesar in fact – who, swimming to save his life, saved his writings from the waters by holding them in his teeth, the Jews hold fiercely unto theirs. Herder, who was otherwise unimpressed by the extent of their ancient country or ability to conquer new lands, considers record keeping the distinguishing eminence of the Jews at a time when other peoples were ignorant of writing altogether. Having written them down, they have scrupulously preserved them for some thousands of years "as a divine prerogative of their race" (135). Apparently, there is a lot to be said about safeguarding a roll of papers, almost as much as about what they contain.

But the written part is only half of the heritage of Israel, the other, "the inborn half of memory," being that which beats "in the pulses of millions" and "lives in their veins as a power without understanding" (473). It is ineffable and therefore cannot be recorded, nor does it need to be since it is transferable only through blood. This identification with race of the one religion that sends no missionaries since it receives its faithful from birth is the root of the Jews' exclusiveness and alienation but also of the pristine preservation of that "spirit," that "soul of Judaism" which remains alive. This can provide "a lasting habitation – lasting because moveable," and given much occasion to make use of that trait (469). But even the light of this spirit can eventually grow dim when dispersion and oppression range as far and wide as they did for the Jews, so what now needs to be done is "[r]evive the organic centre: let the unity of Israel which has made the growth and form of its religion be an outward reality" (470). This people that has always had a common blood and common religion is now looking toward a common hearth, "a land and a polity," "a national centre" where its spiritual life can materialize into a visible national one. This is not to be a confining space, as indeed the habits of the Wandering Jew would

be hard to break after so many generations, but a place of departure and return, such as the English have when their ventures take them all over the world.

That a nineteenth century non-Jewish writer would call, before Zionism, for "another great migration" (473) toward Israel is in itself a matter of amazement. But this is the fruit of mature reflection on the part of the author and of overcoming earlier, hackneyed prejudices under the influence of travel and research as well as the instruction of a good friend, the German-Jewish scholar and British immigrant Emanuel Deutsch. It also comes as confirmation of the intuition, uncommonly strong in Eliot, that there is something imperious, even despotic in the call of blood, as she herself must have felt in the lingering regret she harbored for the breach with her father and brother over religion and her unconventional living arrangements with Lewes. This intuition surfaced clearly in her earlier dramatic poem *The Spanish Gypsy* (1868), in which Fedalma feels in her blood "the sense unspeakable of kind, / As leopard feels at ease with leopard (72) when she lays eyes on the Gypsy chief Zarca, even before she knows him to be her father. Her savage eyes, tendrils of black hair, curl of eyelashes, nostrils, lips, and dusky skin betray her as one of that tribe of human panthers, lithe-limbed, lynx-eyed, with rhythm in their bones and the yearning for a free roaming life.

Raised in a Spanish family in ignorance of her birth, Fedalma is in love with the Duke of Silva but has to give him up "To wed my people's lot" (77) and help her father to give them a homeland in Africa. This is that much more imperative for the Gypsies because, unlike the Jews, they have no faith except fierce faithfulness to each other, no god to call them his own, and no lore or memories of heroic forefathers. Though Fedalma soon realizes that she cannot "unmake" herself by denying her race, Silva persists in

pursuing their plans of marriage and leaves his home behind to follow her tribe. But he soon comes to repent his choice, when in his absence his friends are slaughtered by the Moors with whom the Gypsies are allied, and learns that in fact he has never had one, that there are "laws that, breaking, you will dip your bread / In murdered brother's blood and call it sweet" (70). The Spaniards are betrayed by a Jew, who, however, has warned the Duke from the very start that if his people's safety demands it he will turn traitor, avowing, "While my heart beats, it shall wear livery,- / My people's livery, whose yellow badge / Marks them for Christian scorn" (90).

Eliot shows clearly what the terms of the pact with blood are: surrender everything to it or become "fouler than Cain" and a "Judas" (154-155). It is a pact that truly is none because the element of choice is meager, the consequences being so grave. Silva says to Fedalma that love "subdues all heritage" (131), but he is wrong, and she knows that in missing him her "soul's clogged with self" (118). Selflessness is yielding oneself to one's nation. Imagining oneself free to love in defiance of family and tradition is futile, as Tancred learns with his parents' arrival just as he tries to disencumber himself from old ties for Eva's sake. That kind of independence wreaks vengeance on the adventurer who seeks it, forgetting the imperatives of the blood. Deronda also learns this partly, though in less threatening form, through the tentative interest he takes in Gwendolen Harleth, the fascinating and spoilt young woman he first sees at the gambling table in a casino. While romantically their relationship is impossible because of race, he becomes her personified external conscience, which upbraids her for gambling in marriage as well, in the sense of profiting from another's – her husband's old mistress' – loss.

Deronda's role as the Jewish prophet of Gwendolen's conscience and the comparison he earns to Bouddha giving himself to the famished tigress to save her and her little ones from starving (412) bring the discussion back to the function that the east can fulfill for the west. At the time generally "what mattered was not Asia so much as Asia's *use* to modern Europe," without inquiry as to whether Asia wished to effect the desired regeneration. [65] And although Eliot does not fit the mold – hers being a disinterested appeal to justice for the people still being driven, figuratively for now, to the slaughter of nations by the harrying cry of "The Modern Hep! Hep! Hep!", the title of one of her essays (1789) – she nevertheless shows what Asia can do for Europe through the service that Daniel pays. The diffuse nation of Israel can be Europe's conscience, forcing it to measure its deeds against the old spiritual law of equality achieved through faith. "Israel / Is to the nations as the body's heart," says the Jew in *The Spanish Gypsy* in promising to help Silva, with that one provision of putting his own people first. Its treachery comes only in response to harassment, its mission otherwise being to keep up on behalf of Europe the communication with the divine.

Here comes the heart of the matter, keeping in mind the fidelities and distinctions that arise from the apprehension of blood: "Can one divide human reality, as indeed human reality seems to be genuinely divided, into clearly different cultures, histories, traditions, societies, even races, and survive the consequences humanly?" [66] This is a momentous question, and of course means avoiding hostility, arrogance, and oppression. But the reverse works as well: Can one not? Can people still be human if drained of the blood in their veins, separated from their parents, and cast off from their lands? The

[65] Said 115.
[66] *Ibid.* 45.

miracle is that, with so many things on which to base humanity, each of them would still be so vital. Humanity is a medley of ancestry, spirituality, community, memory, history, prophets and heroes, each of these various yet grouped around centripetal national centers. Nations who lack any of these tend instinctively toward completion. Gypsies have only blood and the fierce loyalty that comes with it but nothing else; the Jews have race and spirituality but no unified nationality or country; the British have land and the sense of an assembled nation but no active spirituality or common race. Given the layers in the makeup of the latter, blood can only work in conflicted ways. While reality tells of affinity and assimilation, conceptual notions show greater insistency on separation, alleviated only by the territorial and political union that gives the British a reassurance others still seek. Thus, in issues of nineteenth century British nationhood, as in those of government and social class, blood cannot be silenced but neither can it be allowed to carry the day. In its purist form it is much too tyrannical, divisive and intolerant of the movements of peoples to survive without some adjusting change.

## Chapter V – The Myth of the Demi-Gods

### I

Ideas, just as people, look to their origins for self-definition, and so this study returns at last to the place that originated it. The initial inspiration came from a scene in Thackeray's *Vanity Fair* in which Becky Sharp's husband Rawdon Crawley, the younger son of a noble family, walks out after finding her in an intimate setting with her admirer, Lord Steyne. This scene is emblematic because the characters involved represent various degrees of entanglement with a society ruled by blood, the aristocrat of consequence, the insolvent second son, and the ambitious social climber. However, the real protagonists of the scene are the servants, who act as the detectives of authenticity. They 'sniff out' pretenders and brazenly defy them but show almost religious veneration for their noble masters, despite the latter's falling into poverty and dishonor. The minute that Rawdon walks out, the servants start a mutiny and stop showing obedience and even common courtesy to the abandoned mistress. What becomes sorely evident, once the borrowed luster gained from alliance with a nobleman is no more, is that they have been serving a commoner, no better than themselves.

The scene shows that there is something unique about blood that holds sway over people even when the accessories of wealth and power are gone. It is the ineffable quality that baffles imitators and makes the multitude bow to an idea socially, economically, and almost politically obsolete. In George Eliot's *Adam Bede*, a tenant farmer's wife, Mrs. Poyser, who is not diffident about complaining of the hardships of agriculture or asking for a subsidy to improve the farm, receives the clergyman and the squire's heir with low curtseying and a flurried, awe-stricken demeanor. True, this is partly due to her fear that

they are coming to turn them out of the farm from displeasure at her own niece's Methodist preaching, which would be that much more disastrous to her husband since in this case he could not console himself, as she could, with the thought that "folks must put up wi' their own kin as they put up wi' their own noses." But her attitude also reflects the customary deference that the society of Hayslope extends to the representatives of what Coleridge called 'Church and State'. Eliot adds, "for in those days the keenest of bucolic minds felt a whispering awe at the sight of the gentry, such as of old men felt when they stood on the tip-toe to watch the gods passing by in tall human shape" (81). It is no wonder that they felt awe, given the spectacle of unattainable splendor their idols put on and the fantastical stories of lords and princes throwing away thousands on gambling, which trickle down to the humble cottage of Mrs. Poyser for whom that money would have meant a few years' crops. These were Greek gods undoubtedly, full of vices, but no less imposing and feared for their capriciousness on account of those traits, which made them humans amplified to exaggerated proportions when reflected in the convex mirror of humble minds.

There is something endearingly ingenuous as well as frustrating in the way simple people lower their eyes before the optical illusion that these glorified mortals present. Much of it is glitz and glamour, ceremony, fanfare, petticoats, tassels, uniforms, liveried attendants and shiny buttons. And who can say that these, or their progenitors, are not still bringing the world to its knees like Norman fashion the Irish chiefs in the fable, avenging also the sneers with which Europeans regarded the American natives who traded their silver and gold for glass beads. True value is so understated that, mostly, what carries the day is mere dazzle, of garments, glass or gold. The discrepancy between

the dazzling and the dazzled plays out on the British scene every day, with the full blessing of the overblown persons who are the beneficiaries of the homage. On this truth Thackeray allows no equivocations, accosting his upper class Londoner with the demand,

> Well! Out with it at once: you don't think Molly is your equal. Nor indeed is she in the possession of many artificial acquirements. She can't make Latin verses, for example, as you used to do at school; she can't speak French and Italian, as your wife very likely can, etc.: and in so far she is your inferior, and your amiable lady's. ("Waiting at the Station," *Sketches* 140)

But he still marvels at the shameful fact contrary to modesty or morals, and national wellbeing as well, "that there should be that immense social distinction between the well-dressed classes […] and our brethren and sisters in the fustian jackets and patterns." These dwarfed Englishmen have to emigrate all the way to Australia to escape that "Gothic society, with its ranks and hierarchies, its cumbrous ceremonies, its glittering antique paraphernalia," of which their children will fortunately know nothing (*Sketches* 140). They will also escape, if their illiteracy or dire penury have not done the job, the newspapers and *Court Circular* where the following accounts appear for the enlightenment of the nation: "Habit de Cour, composed of a yellow nankeen illusion dress over a slip of rich pea-green corduroy, trimmed en tablier, with bouquets of Brussel sprouts;" or, "The Princess Pimminy was taken a drive, attended by her ladies of honour, and accompanied by her doll," etc. (*The Book*. IV. 22-23) – almost as fascinating and inane as Hollywood stars on Starbucks runs; but whatever magic the world takes away from us, for better or worse, from here on, one may hope that there still be Disney.

Thackeray thinks it is the public's fault that celebrities fancy themselves so far above the rest, for as long as a *Court Circular* exists "how the deuce are people whose names are chronicled in it ever to believe themselves the equals of the cringing race which daily reads that abominable trash?" (23) Thus, from a tender age, young ladies such as Ethel Newcome – of Saxon name and false Saxon pedigree on the father's side – are forced to worry, with a thrill of self-importance, that their comings and goings cannot be kept secret because they will be read about in the papers. During his brief sally into the world of fashion before leaving for the Holy Land, Tancred's movements are similarly traced in the papers and are "devoured every morning, oftener with a keener relish than the matin meal of which they formed a regular portion" in those "delicate lists" of ball and opera goers that form the nourishment of the reading public (II.6. 82). Both Thackeray and Disraeli find this eagerness to absorb information supplied just as eagerly by the newspapers to be a particular English trait, which precipitates Molly's emigration and Tancred's departure, especially after the shock he suffers when first seeing his name in print.

This is the world of fame and fortune from which scattered pixie dust falls on the heads of the mere mortals who go about their busy days below, under the arcades and towers of the magical castle. At the feast thrown in honor of Tancred's majority, as the heir of Montacute, for the inhabitants of the entire estate, Thomas the footman is to appear in the splendid state livery that leaves his parents, brother and sisters agape. "Never was a family who esteemed themselves so fortunate or felt so happy" while admiring with mingled awe and affection their scion clad in his resplendent garb of servitude. Thomas has also procured front seats for the festivities that are to follow, so

that his family is entitled to feel as if it has "a friend at court," especially that the display is expected to be unparalleled by anything that even the Queen might have seen:

> "You will have 'Hail, star of Bellamont!' and 'God save the Queen!' a crown, three stars, four flags, and two coronets, all in coloured lamps, letters six feet high, on the castle. There will be one hundred beacons lit over the space of fifty miles the moment a rocket is shot off from the Round Tower, and as for fireworks, Bob, you'll see them at last. Bengal lights, and the largest wheels will be as common as squibs and crackers; and I have heard say, though it is not to be mentioned-" And he paused. (I.6.33)

Here comes some confidential information, and the irreverent bit about the Queen, that leaves everyone trembling with anticipation for the apparition of "the young markiss on a cloud, with his hand on his heart, in his new uniform" on the background of blazing lights supposed to look "like heaven opening" (34). Who could resist such a majestic show, and yet for the fond mother seeing her Thomas in state livery is the highlight of the day, after which she little cares for seeing anything else. This is the pride and joy of the lowly fed with airy nothings and so easily satisfied that even Stendhal's Julien Sorel, who hides a portrait of Napoleon under his pillow during the French Restoration, is the happiest man when his mistress pulls a few stings to have him nominated for the guard of honor welcoming "the King of –" to town, thus opening the opportunity for him to wear, in preference to other young men of more consequence than a carpenter's son, the pretty sky-blue uniform with silver epaulets that makes him so many enemies. Stendhal writes about the festivities, which are graced with a choir singing Te Deum, his Majesty kneeling by the church altar, and endless volleys of artillery and muskets, "A day like this

undid the work of a hundred issues of Jacobin newspapers" (*The Red and the Black* I.18.102).

Then there are the shields and blazons, the avenues of ancient trees leading up to the imposing manor, the stones yellowed by time, the galleries of portraits of ancestors, the illuminated family trees, the malachite vases and marbled tables among which those who enter the sanctuaries of power tread lightly. There is an aura vested in these objects by time that causes them to appear grand yet not ostentatious like the freshly guilt carriages of the newly rich. They have about them the same nonchalantly elegant air that distinguishes the truly great men from those wearing badly cut coat-tails and the truly great ladies from those parading opulent toilettes marred by dirty gloves, whose arrival is announced by their footmen somewhat too thunderously. There is the world of fashion and then there is the higher one in which fashion has been refined into such an ethereal garment that it no longer reveals the seams or traces of the artifice that went into its making. Its gossamer fabric is that much more an illusion for having concealed over time the props that hold it in place.

II

Then, as now, nothing could inspire awe like a good show that made the figures surrounded with such pomp understandably seem quasi-divine. But it would be unfair to imply that it was all frippery. It should not be forgotten that aristocrats, the responsible ones at least, also used to perform the more mundane and useful task of guiding and managing the affairs of their subjects. The villages and towns that bore their names harbored the lives of simple working people who enjoyed the patronage and munificence of the landlords. This element is lost when it comes to the absentee landlords who flocked

to London, and not just for Parliamentary sessions, and neglected their estates, but survives as a model of aristocratic accountability in the structure of the town founded by the Dukes of Bellamont,

> the town which their fathers had built and adorned, which they had often represented in Parliament in the good old days, and which they took care should then enjoy its fair proportion of the good old things; a town, every house in which belonged to them, and of which there was not an inhabitant who, in his own person or in that of his ancestry, had not felt the advantages of the noble connection. (I.6.41)

This is of course an idealized, nostalgic picture painted by Disraeli, but it does act as a reminder that the blazons inspiring awe in the multitude were also supposed to hold noblemen to a standard of conduct, dignified for the sake of the family reputation and responsible for the sake of the people. Their role was to provide links between the interests of the people on their domains and the government of the country at large, between the social classes whose keepers they were and, not lastly, between the present and the historic past whose heroes were their ancestors kept in the memory and esteem of the nation. Thus, they stand for continuity and unity and become a source of division only when thinking of themselves more than their role.

Burke says in *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, "People will not look forward to posterity who never look backward to their ancestors" (47-48). This to him amounts to "following nature," a process that entails – interestingly, not unlike Darwin's theory – descent regulated by preeminence, transmission with adjustment, deference to forefathers justified by inherited benefits, all the things that in the natural cycle of life,

death, and procreation lead to the improvement of the race. In opposition to Burke, what Paine called natural was the right passed down from Adam, although by looking to one man he stepped outside the sphere of the social and by reverting to the dawn of time that of the historical. In the immediacy of daily life, people need something that will make the premises of the present knowable and those of the future predictable, and the past provides these answers through the pattern of repetition breached only by the right type of excellence at the right time that enables progress to build on experience. Even innovation requires intimacy with the past, if not as model at least as reference point from which to depart.

In different ways and on different levels of abstraction, both Burke and Paine affirm inheritance as a principle. It is in fact an inescapable one, coming as it does straight from nature. Herder saw in it the only defense that mankind had against the decay and transitoriness of terrestrial things:

> Man's body is a fragile, ever-renovating shell, which at length can renew itself no longer: but his mind operates upon Earth only in and with the body. We fancy ourselves independent; yet we depend on all nature: implicated in a chain of incessantly fluctuating things, we must follow the laws of its permutation, which are nothing more than to be born, exist, and die. A slender thread connects the human race, which is every moment breaking, to be tied anew. The sage, whom time has made wise, sinks into the grave; that his successor may likewise begin his course as a child, perhaps madly destroy the work of his father, and leave to his son the same vain toil, in which he too consumes his days. Thus year runs into

year: thus generations and empires are linked together. The Sun sets that night might succeed and mankind rejoice at the beams of a new moon. (79-80)

The connection between mind and body is essential but also ephemeral, because the body dies. At the same time, it is the body that belongs to the material substance of nature and is subjected to its laws, which it learns viscerally by feeling them transform and work upon itself in ways that stir the mind to questioning, reflection, and understanding. It is nature that teaches survival and renewal as the antidote to death. But the downside is that this process works only so many times in one lifetime until matter becomes exhausted, so it has to spill over into the next. Thus it becomes a process of physical and metal transmutation that birth accomplishes on one end and education on the other. Once the offspring is born in obedience to the law that grants man his supreme consolation and nature its self-propelling permanency, "[t]he father early inures his son to his own mode of life: teaches him his art, awakens in him the sense of fame, and in him loves himself when he shall grow old, or be no more" (68). With the genetic pool whose transmission is effected by nature, the specific dexterities and insights that helped the father in the life battle are also passed on. The replica created is not exact and is further shaped by conditions, so changes occur, yet setting out in life with this dowry is the most that a child can ask.

The transposing of self of the parent and conformity of the offspring are the marks of heredity, which can then be extrapolated to explain the continuity between generations. It is hard to proceed with erasing the past knowing, like Coleridge did, that "even in what is struck out the erasure will be manifest" (28-29). He is speaking of the two principles of society, conservation and progress, and the fact that they "modify and leaven" but do not

supplant one another. Of the two, the aristocracy obviously represents the former, as steady as the land on the ownership of which it was founded and the hereditary links it has scrupulously preserved, yet being acted upon by the commercial and mercantile order intrinsically adaptive and mobile. And while both are important, it is conservation that rests on the solid foundation of things fulfilled in history, preserved in memory, and promising of a stable future. Tradition is the source of the shared feeling Eliot talks about that "animates the collective body as with one soul," the "answering thrill" with which a people responds to the adjuration implicit in the deaths of its heroes to pass on further the inheritance they died to preserve "unimpaired to children and children's children" ("Modern Hep! Hep! Hep!" 146-7). Less optimistically, Coleridge urges with mingled reverence for the past and apprehension for the future, "behold the true historical feeling, the immortal life of the nation, generation linked to generation by faith, freedom, heraldry, and ancestral fame, languishing, and giving place to superstitions of wealth and newspaper reputation" (69).

The prospect is dreadful, yet, to be fair, it is not progress that makes it so but the sham of progress, which is destructive whereas its real variant is by definition constructive. The sham of conservation too, and, if Carlyle is to be believed – for all he is ridiculed as Dr. Anti-Cant in Trollope's *The Warden* – sham in every form is to blame. On the part of the elevated, traditional body it is manifest in the laxity that comes of excessive satiety and turns it into a mere corporation of the few, ornamental in manners but voracious in appetites, eating the sustenance of the many. On the part of the lowly, it is apparent in either fawning subservience or rash, excessive confidence in the ability to govern themselves, or, worse yet, in a most degrading and hypocritical combination of

both. But barring excess in either direction, progress should actually spring from conservation as a tree from its roots, which provide nourishment for vigorous action by way of those patriotic sentiments that according to Madame de Stael "are to the soul like blood to the veins and grow cold only as life ends" (283-284). Patriotism is not alien to but rather the offspring of tradition and conservation. It offsets the need to explore and inquire beyond what is customarily known by the salutary need to believe in the lessons of the past as a grounding force for future ventures.

Thus conservation and progress are intertwined, the former providing a wealth of inspiration to be mined and exploited for the best it has to offer in the interest of promoting the latter. There are ideas worth keeping that transcend the limits of circumstances because, as intimated to the Duke of Salina by his brother-in-law in Giuseppe di Lampedusa's *The Leopard*, they are "not connected with personalities," meaning dependent entirely on particular individuals living in a particular age. The idea of monarchy, or aristocracy for that matter, is not invalidated by the inefficiency of one king, such as Fredinand II of the Two Sicilies was estimated to have been, his foreign Bourbon descent aside, upon his death on the eve of the troubled 1860s documented by the novel. People like him are personifications of a greater idea, and although this is indisputable, and Burke himself would have agreed, still, they "should not, cannot, fall below a certain level for generations" or else "the idea suffers too" (12). It appears that this is exactly what happened when the French aristocracy abandoned the people and left them "Untaught, uncomforted, unfed!" (Carlyle, *The French Rev.* 34), and what is happening in Sicily where the aristocracy put in place by the foreign Bourbons is not recognizing the people's need for reform and a resurgence of native feeling – which the

Piedmontese constitutional monarch Victor Emmanuel of Savoy, to whom the popular hero Garibaldi handed the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies wrested from the Bourbons, was better qualified to provide.

The unrest leading up to this denouement occasions the Duke of Salina's meditations, "We live in a changing reality to which we try to adapt ourselves like seaweed bending under the pressure of water" (39). The solution is that proposed by his nephew Tancredi when he says, "If we want things to stay as they are, things will have to change" (28). This sounds strikingly similar to Burke's idea of changing as a way of preserving and means that the aristocracy needs to get involved with the changes, as Tancredi does, in order to moderate their outcome and avoid having a republic foisted on it and the nation. The younger Tancredi succeeds in making the adjustment, but the Duke, who belongs to "an unfortunate generation, swung between the old world and the new" and finding itself "ill at ease in both," dies and has his legacy thrown on a heap of rubbish like the moth-eaten hide of his long deceased dog Bendico at the end of the novel (180). The imposing leopard, representing the Duke's massive figure as well as his family's insignia, has been reduced to a once whimpering, now forever mute, skinned and discarded canine.

But Tancredi thrives, though he comes from an impoverished branch of the family. He is nothing like the Duke's measly and pusillanimous son and heir and marries not the Duke's proud daughter but the lusty, voluptuous one of the newly enriched town mayor. The fear of the race becoming worn out and ultimately extinct is realized in the case of the Duke. And from comments like Charles Kingsely's, "They are 'gone down to Hades, even many stalwart souls of heroes'" (*Yeast* 7), it appears that this is not merely a

Sicilian phenomenon. Kingsley adds, "and we their degenerate grandsons are left instead, with puny arms, and polished leather boots, and a considerable taint of hereditary disease" (7), validating the epigrammatic remark, "The prosperity of fools shall destroy them" (223). No doubt, he means by surfeit and complacency, the doom of people and institutions that tell themselves, as in Carlyle's account, "Take thy ease, thou hast goods laid up; - like the fool of the Gospel, to whom it was answered, Fool, *this night* thy life shall be required of thee!" (*The French Rev.* 29-30) The struggle for life in this case has tended, by way of accumulation, toward reducing future struggle, the full effects of which are as yet unfathomable but foretelling of degeneration.

What is largely to be feared at the moment is a decline in fortunes owing to neglect of life-sustaining duty, rigidity in the face of change, or in some cases misplaced pliancy. Nothing undermines the authority of the Duke of Salina like his condescending to invite to dinner the town officials who previously would have never entered his walls. It is not his aura, amplified by the people's imagination, that needed meddling with, but the habitual indolence, some of it blamed on the torpid Sicilian sun, that causes him to turn down the offer of joining the new Piedmontese government graciously extended to him. Tancredi, however, understands what is happening all around him. He has the insight and the vitality to save himself and his class, and in this sense he is a candidate for exemplifying a new type of hero, not so scrupulous as to become inert and not so corrupt as to betray his inborn calling.

III

Given the presaging need for heroes in England as elsewhere, there is a debate surrounding the issue of what makes one and what his role in history must be. Carlyle

creates one of the most coherent portraits in *On Heroes, Hero-Worship, and the Heroic in History* (1841) and, in characteristic prophetic fashion, proclaims, "The great heart, the clear deep-seeing eye: there it lies" (108). For him everything is a matter of the "Power of Insight," which is the same as morality itself, the ability to look beyond appearances – or what in *Sartor Resartus* he calls "clothes," "thought-woven" or "hand-woven" – to the great, invisible spiritual center that lies beneath, the idea that these outer layers body forth and render visible, sometimes with the nefarious effect of distorting and obscuring its essence. In the hero this clear-sighted capacity is at its peak and is accompanied by the ability to act on it, to perform inspired deeds that further inspire in others "[h]ero-worship, heartfelt prostrate admiration, submission, burning, boundless, for a noblest godlike Form of Man" (15). This is what Christ was and the thought in which the germ of Christianity lies, making heroism, of the sagacious and peaceful above the belligerent kind, the rightful origin of religion. At first, the admiration for someone greater than oneself, ennobling for both the one endowed with greatness and the one discerning enough to recognize it in another, was earned through courage, since at a time when nature was unknowable and unpredictable conquering fear was the chiefly recognized virtue. In battle, this made 'divine might' the equivalent of 'divine right,' and this is how conquerors and kings were fashioned. But on the plane of ideas, heroism means courage to look into truth and send forth into the world truth-inspired thoughts that become the seeds of action. Thus, heroes can be poets, prophets, kings or priests, according to the kind of world they find themselves born into, and often combining abilities in all these directions in some degree (108).

There is a divine quality attached to the hero that is only the fitting apprehension of his nearness to the great unseen, as well as the divineness intrinsic to man, who is "Revelation in the Flesh" and "God's temple," especially in his best incarnations (14). Accordingly, there is nothing demeaning about bending before a hero. There is, in fact, in the act of marveling at the wondrous and divine in man, something of the "transcendent wonder" that is really what worship means, and that by having become nearly extinct in the modern world accounts for its desolation. For hero-worship, such as is left, is "the most solacing fact one sees in the world at present." "The certainty of heroes being sent us; our faculty, our necessity, to reverence Heroes when sent," are the things in which all remaining hope for the proper management of the world is concentrated (280-81). Yet others question the certainty of heroes' alighting into the world. Disraeli's mouthpiece, Sidonia, responds to his disciple Coningsby's doubts in this regard with the affirmation, "'The Age does not believe in great men, because it does not possess any.'" It is not that "the Spirit of the Age" does not allow for belief in such exceptional individuals but that the age is still waiting for their arrival. Once that occurs, the spirit of the age becomes the very thing to be molded, it being not the uncontrollable force Coningsby envisions but, rather, precisely what a great man changes. Not quite satisfied with the explanation, the disciple, echoing Hegel's position, inquires further if the great man does not rather avail himself of it, to which Sidonia answers, "'Parvenus do… but not prophets, great legislators, great conquerors. They destroy and they create'" (142-143). According to him, the age is the product of its great men, not vice versa, so all is needed is for them to assert their presence in order for things to improve.

Disraeli agrees with Carlyle on the divinity of the individual whom God made "in his own image," whereas the trends of the age reflected in public opinion are bestirred by newspaper agitations and the contingencies of the moment. But this view qualifies the great man in a dangerously vague way, a tyrant such as Napoleon had become by the end of his career also laying claim to the divine image. Indeed, he had "an eye to see" and "a soul to dare" according to Carlyle (333), but he became an apostate from his old faith when he connected himself with "Austrian Dynasties" – through his second marriage to Marie Louise, Duchess of Parma, for whom he left Josephine – , "Popedomes" and "the old false Feudalities" – through the concordat with Pope Pius VII providing mutual recognition and the participation of "the old Italian Chimera" in Napoleon's ceremonial coronation attended with a pomp wanting nothing except "the half-million of men who had died to put an end to all that" (334-45). When he started believing in the "Dupeability of men" and catering to his "Self and false ambition" by setting out to found his own dynasty, Napoleon in effect abandoned his instinctive "feeling for reality" that in the days of the French Revolution had allowed him into the fundamental truths that democracy could not be anarchy and that the implements of power belonged in the hands that could handle them (332). Madame de Stael disparages Napoleon's heroism less forgivingly – and no wonder since she was exiled by him for her criticisms – reducing it to a knack, a feel like "the hunter's for his pray" for taking advantage of the tendency of the age and seizing the imagination of men with military success, accomplishments befitting Sidonia's parvenu (95-102). Moreover, in her view the emphasis falls not on the "actor" but on the "play," which took the development of ideas over centuries to prepare and make inevitable (116).

This points to the debate whether the man is the creature of his age or the age the creature of its man, the two alternatives giving precedence to one or the other of two terms of a dichotomy that in effect is none, since both are necessary in some degree to effect change. “Not a Hero only is needed, but a world fit for him” (300), says Carlyle. This line of thinking should have laid to rest the rivalry between democrats, socialists, and sociologists – who claimed, with Herbert Spencer, that the great man merely “transmits a shock” precipitating those changes awaiting in the wings to arise out of an aggregate of circumstances inherited from previous ages – and the hero-worshippers – who perceived, with William Hurrell Mallock, “one mind and personality impressing for the moment its superior qualities on many minds and personalities” (*Aristocracy and Evolution* (1898) 56, 58). The question is fraught with serious implications, since recognition that such a thing as a great man exists goes hand in hand with the admission that the entire course of history is vested in a handful of such men, is in fact “the biography of great men” (*On Heroes* 18). The conclusion, inimical to egalitarian thinking, follows that there are incontestable degrees of worth among people and that those who are gifted may truly deserve both greater rights and duties. It does not follow, however, that these rights must be used to oppress their fellows and cannot be used to do them good.

The idea that some men are simply better, or at least better at some things, the things that count and have deep implications, is inevitable in a hero-worshipping mode of thinking. The “collectivists,” those who strive for uniformity and equality – other than the kind Tancred learns about in the east – find this stratified arrangement unpalatable. On the other hand, “the opponents of collectivism” point to a hierarchy of merit that, by way

of appeasement, implies gradation and not vacuity at the lower levels. Even Carlyle understands by an age fit for heroes one in which ordinary people have sufficient discernment to recognize and follow greatness, which to him is more worthy of emphasis than the role that circumstances play. Mallock, with the whole century in retrospect, goes further to affirm that it is an error to recognize only great men of the greatest kind and not the infinitely varied kinds and degrees, like those of temperature (116-117). The virtue of the many is in following the talented few – as suggested by John Stuart Mill in his study on liberty, in agreement with Carlyle – but not only, as they have in smaller and inconspicuous but not negligible proportion their own talents to contribute to the whole.

Thus heroism trickles down through the ranks and attaches to the efficient mill-owner and even the ingenious worker, including them in a group that still towers over the multitude though not held there by social class. In fact, in the new outlook, correlations between heroism and class are hard to trace. It may be hoped that those of heroic strain are in a position privileged enough to allow them to develop and use it, it may be assumed that those who prove talented earn rank and fame, but neither of these is a necessary attendant on the theory that heroes exist and are great. The hierarchy of merit does not coincide with that of class, certainly not when class is hereditary and merit, debatably, is not. As the century comes to a close, Mallock defines aristocracy as follows:

> The word *aristocracy* as used in the title of this volume has no exclusive, and indeed no special, reference to a class distinguished by hereditary political privileges, by titles, or by heraldic pedigree. It here means the exceptionally gifted and efficient minority, no matter what the position in which its members have been born, or what the sphere of social progress in which their exceptional

> efficiency shows itself. I have chosen the word *aristocracy* in preference to the word *oligarchy* because it means not only the rule of the few, but of the best or the most efficient of the few. (Preface v)

It is clear that by this time ranks and honors are not what aristocracy entails, and that the hierarchy is rather Carlyle's "*Hero*-archy" topped by men truly great and wise, who may have started out as the first kings and heroes of battle but now also include heroes of industry, science, political and intellectual life. And though their achievements are firmly planted in practical matters, there is also a spiritual, quasi-religious element that they bring through fulfillment of the sacred duties to which they are indentured by their superior qualities and the reverence they earn in return. While Mallock dwells on the results produced by a man's actions not his whole moral character or nature, "not what a man is but what a man does" (121), others succumb to the mystical intuition that greatness is an attribute of the soul and that what a man does often and in the long run represents what he is.

Aurora Leigh says, "It takes a soul to move a body; it takes a high-souled man to move the masses" (52), the ability to 'move men' being also the attribute of Mallock's hero of the first rung. "To be; - to be great; to have done one mighty work before we die, and live, unloved or loved, upon the lips of men" is the life goal of Lancelot Smith (26). They all speak of greatness with full understanding that it is measured by success in the sense of results, but that it is also in communication with a loftier sphere of grand, selfless purposes and amazing capacities. Mallock concedes that while noble character is not a prerequisite when it comes to greatness, lack of some strength in that respect impedes success, which is why "all progress is due to great men but all great men do not

promote progress" (143). Some who have been endowed by nature with talent fall short of that primary duty of developing and using rightly the latent capacities that lie within, of 'unfolding' each his best self and working that thing he has a faculty for – to echo Carlyle (*On Heroes* 311).

Doing this requires introspection, perseverance, ambition, the last being frequently pestered by negative connotations but deemed good or bad only on consideration of "the fitness of the man for the place" (*On Heroes* 312). Napoleon had ambition and was fit for the high place he earned, but his perspective was obscured by that "tiny speck very close to our vision," as Eliot calls it, which by dint of its myopic closeness blots out the vastness of the world beyond – Self. This is of course not self as in unique ability to be cultivated but self as in narrow concern for one's person. The one gives wings, the other drags down. Darwinian man accomplishes for himself while letting or even causing others to die, but, in Mallock's distinction, the great man accomplishes for others too, while also gratifying his own ambition, rightfully so if others are to be fed, taught and inspired by it (130-32). Greatness transcends survival, even military, political, or any other type of success, and becomes a matter of soul and morals, not excluding the mentioned attainments but investing them with a largeness and depth of purpose worthy of what Disraeli calls "the heroic feeling; the feeling that in old days produced demi-gods" (*Coningsby* 315).

IV

It is pointless to debate here whether blunders can also produce great results – one should remember the discovery of penicillin was owing to a Petri dish left unattended in which the resulting mold killed the bacteria (Porter 105) – or whether great actions can

have mixed results. The former consideration leads to no principle except the haphazard, impossible to harness to premeditated purposes one that accidents are productive as well as destructive, and the latter to complications that took volumes of utilitarian philosophy to unravel with no definitive end. What matters is that England needs heroes and that heroes represent a moral force whose workings affect practical matters, morality being in the view of Madame de Stael and the English she commends for illuminating this fact "the most empirical of all human ideas" (209) – one should remember Matthew Arnold's simple criterion of observing what happens when one follows it and what happens when one does not. True heroes are moral in the sense that they act as "the disturbing cause in the calculations of short-sighted selfishness" (*Coningsby* 207). That is to Disraeli what a "natural aristocracy" means, which already exists in England though not necessarily in the Peerage or the House of Lords. He concludes,

> The power of man, his greatness and his glory, depend on essential qualities. Brains every day becomes more precious than blood. You must give men new ideas, you must teach them new words, you must modify their manners, you must change their laws, you must root out prejudices, subvert convictions, if you wish to be great. Greatness no longer depends on rentals; the world is too rich; nor on pedigrees; the world is too knowing. (*Coningsby* 548-9)

So greatness becomes about the power to generate ideas that sway the hearts and minds of the masses away from the beaten track learned by rote and in directions that serve them well. Valor and physical strength to subdue people and impose order were great in the old days, but at the moment someone like Sir Vavasour can object that "there would be no heroes if there were a police," that such a task could be taken over by public

servants assigned to the purpose and not left to the individual commander apt to turn tyrant. Yet Coningby believes that "civilization is only fatal to minstrels," not heroes (*Tancred* 150), and although he does not explain his words they can be inferred to mean that along with the demise of poets the task they used to fulfill has suffered, that of carrying heroic fame forward. Instances of individual heroism may still exist but what has been reduced is the ability to rest on one's laurels, perhaps even within the same lifetime and certainly over the span of generations. The hero has to mind the endurance of his own fame through continued action before he can even begin to think of passing it on to successors. With them, the struggle for self-validation begins anew, ideally under the auspices of ancestral greatness but mindful not to turn it from an advantage into a reproach.

And this is where things come to a head. While nothing can dissuade British novelists from requiring self-reliant, hard-earned and sustained greatness, nothing, likewise, can dissuade them from honoring a good story, perhaps by dint of their trade. Like Edward Waverley who listened "till his heart glowed and his eye glistened" to tales of his ancestor Wilibert's perils in the Crusades and disappointment upon his return to find his betrothed married to another, or William's brave defense of the runaway Charles II that claimed his life and left impressions of drops of his blood on the manor floor still traceable when the carpets are raised (52-53), novelists are enraptured by tales of greatness contained in romanticized historic lore. Even though, to a novel extent in literature, they also acknowledge the unassuming heroism of small lives, in doing so they pay homage to human greatness by extending the sphere of its functions rather than by discrediting the examples that occur at the peak. Success writes history, which is nothing

but "the history of great men" (*On Heroes* 1). This is on some level an unsettling fact but true all the same. When Dickens tries in writing "Nobody's Story" to right the wrong done to "the rank and file of the earth," he merely succeeds in deploring a condition that is built into the social scheme. "Nobody" acquiesces for the most part in the power of the "Bigwig family," questions it sometimes with his mind on the justice of the Almighty, breathes pestilence on it from his fetid home, asks to be taught and comforted by it instead of blamed, reminds it of the work he does on the home front in peace and the field of battle in war, but cannot put a name to the monuments raised in memory of the irretrievably anonymous hero. In a sense anonymity is the sublimity of this type of heroism that seeks no reward. But it puts a dead stop to the imagination, unlike stories about the lives of people who, in nineteenth century parlance, have 'a handle to their names' and as such leave something for the impressionability of their fellows to grab onto.

"A nation needs a story in which it can invest itself imaginatively,"[67] and it is obvious that this cannot be "Nobody's Story." While it gathers some strength from numbers, it lacks the aspirational appeal that inspires even the many to be desirous of becoming the few. It is only natural for "the recognition that there does dwell in the presence of our brother something divine" to be accompanied by some form of celebration, such as the multitude loves to watch in awe, but this, Carlyle warns, should be "earnest solemnity", not "empty pageant" (282; 285). It is fitting that heroes be worshipped but one must know what for and do it in commensurate ways. Failing that, imposture and falsehood, the precursors of revolution, take hold. No one cuts a more laughable figure than Sir Vavasour, who, in concordance with his denigration of heroes,

[67] Gilmartin 127.

thinks only of restoring the right of baronets such as himself to wear their traditional dark green, belted costume, with star glittering and pennon flying, hat plumed with white feathers, and of course the sword and gilt spurs. The "coronet of two balls" is also made a particular point of, though it sounds more like the paraphernalia of a court jester than anything else (*Sybil* 51). The time for magnificent, empty spectacles of this kind is past, since the people are rivaling them with their own processions, like the one convoked on Stephen Morley's release from prison in celebration of this martyred champion of the workers' cause. Such spontaneous assemblies are "indications how mankind, under the influence of high and earnest feelings, recur instantly to ceremony and form; how, when the imagination is excited, it appeals to the imagination, and requires for its expression something beyond the routine of daily life" (345). The occasion, the idea behind such gatherings can alone give them meaning and save them from mere pageantry.

The aristocracy had its share of pomp, some of it truly solemn, and of ideas of real moment in their time. The resonance of this inheritance cannot be slighted, nor can it be easily shelved as obsolete while people's imagination and penchant for worship require feeding. Besides, "if, as has often happened before, this class were to vanish, an equivalent one would be formed straightaway with the same qualities and the same defects; it might not be based on blood any more, but possibly on…on, say, the length of time lived in a place, or on greater knowledge of some text considered sacred" (*Leopard* 199). The need "to adore and to obey" is so ingrained in mankind that one is tempted to say with Voltaire, replacing the key word "God" in the assertion but not the thought, if blood did not exist one would have to invent it.

Give man something to worship then, to save him from graver delusions, but let it not be entirely a figment. This is at least Sidonia's position, when speaking of "eternal principles of human nature" and the danger of letting man fashion divinities out of his own passions if not given something in which to place his innate faith. Reason cannot make headway in this matter, since it is to the imagination that humanity owes its great movements, from the siege of Troy to the Crusades and even the French Revolution. "And you think then that as Imagination once subdued the State, Imagination may now save it?" is Coningsby's somewhat rhetorical question (292). Along with the expectation of an answer in the affirmative from Sidonia, it is clear that this means imagination enlisted in giving practical aid to the people, not merely the ethereal kind. Carlyle observes that of man's whole terrestrial possessions "unspeakably the noblest are his Symbols, divine or divine-seeming" under which he marches in this life-battle, with institutions such as the Church and Kingship being their main practical incarnations (*The French Rev.* 10). Blood, which is ratified by both, can operate in the same way. While holding the people's imagination in thrall, it can gain acceptance for those qualified by status as well as wisdom to fulfill the great mission of national regeneration.

In an obscure novel of the 1890s called *Blood Royal*, Grant Allen documents the search of his hero, auspiciously named Richard Plantagenet, for his family tree. With great disappointment, he and his proud sister discover that their name comes not from actual kings but from an actor going by the prosaic appellation of Muggins who earned his royal nickname by impersonating the Plantagenets in a pageant. This information pulls the ground from under their feet, as the conviction that they were true Plantagenets "was a theory on which they based almost everything that was best and truest within

them; a moral power for good, urging them always on to do credit to the great house from which they firmly and unquestionably believed themselves to be sprung" (261). If this is all that blood ever did, what would it matter if it was a falsehood? But unfortunately it did more than this. It made aristocrats at times lazy and complacent, greedy and selfish, snobbish and divided from the people they were meant to guide. Yet by being attacked they were saved, being reminded of all the old things that gave them prominence and attendant duties.

The investigator of hereditary genius Sir Francis Galton writes,

> The best form of civilization in respect to the improvement of the race, would be one in which society was not costly; where incomes were chiefly derived from professional sources and not much through inheritance; where every lad had a chance of showing his abilities, and, if highly gifted, was enabled to achieve a first-class education and entrance into professional life, by the liberal help of the exhibitions and scholarships which he had gained in his early youth […]. (362)

To this the United States, where civilization has had a chance to start fresh, may aspire, and perhaps has achieved. But in nineteenth century England, where Trollope's Squire Ullathorne still looks down on some people because "the streams which ran through their veins were not yet purified by time to that perfection, had not become so genuine an ichor, as to be worthy of being called blood in the genealogical sense," civilization disencumbered of prejudice appears to be a distant dream (173). Still, degeneration does not have to follow, because blood, if it is to survive, must go back to behaving as the illusion that inspires exertion rather than enabling sloth. The idea of blood is the permanent banner, though new people step in to hold it up, under cover of which the

century is zooming by, not wanting to stop and give explanations knowing that they mean revolutions.

The power that blood still holds over the nineteenth century is an invitation to the aristocracy to rally round this bastion of resistance to the leveling trend of the times. Otherwise, this class grown over the centuries so distinct as to exhibit its own physical, mental, and moral characteristics is bound to face extinction or, worse yet, a slow and painful degradation through the invasion of its ranks by upstarts aping the real thing. Sir Vavasour embodies the worst possible fate, becoming a museum piece or object on parade. Paradoxically, hope for redemption lives side-by-side with a strong reaction against the restrictiveness of the notion of blood, the power it has to situate people in a fixed context of race, ethnicity, social connections and opportunities. In this sense, blood acts as the modern form of predestination. And just as the ancients struggled against fate only to realize its intransigence, so the moderns struggle against the determinism of blood but cannot shake off completely the spell of an illustrious ancestry that carries with it a glimpse of immortality through fame and the succession of generations.

The novel, with its detail of description, subtlety of character, and veracity of tone, is especially apt to render this quality, but even it surrounds it rather than meeting it head on. It does so by way of scattering impressions to be picked up in order to reconstruct something that can be sensed or 'sniffed out' rather than observed or defined. A dignified bearing, a nose inclined to the aquiline, an intrepid though disillusioned spirit, an understated elegant décor, a gentle way of treating others, are some ways of suggesting that one is in the presence of nobility. The young and naïve can sense this elusive quality with the infallible intuition of simple, untarnished minds. Young Clive,

Colonel Newcome's son, divides people into those who possess it and those who do not, being guided by principles that cannot be put into words:

> "Uncle Hobson don't live in such good society as Uncle Newcome. You see, Aunt Hobson, she's very kind, you know, and all that, but I don't think she's what you call *comme il faut*."
>
> "Why, how are you to judge?" asks the father, amused at the lad's candid prattle, "and where does the difference lie?"
>
> "I can't tell you what it is, or how it is," the boy answered, "only one can't help seeing the difference. It isn't rank and that; only somehow there are some men gentlemen and some not, and some women ladies and some not." (64)

One may object that this study, looking no further than the last paragraph, takes up one definition of nobility based on blood and changes to another based on merit. This is undoubtedly the case, but it does not defeat the intended purpose, which is to show that in the nineteenth century blood is no longer viable unless coupled with qualities more relevant to the needs of the times. In England, the most pressing need is that for leadership in politics and in setting the tone of human interactions so as to make room for love and compassion in the secular world being shaped. The qualities required of leaders can come from other quarters of society, but when they are accompanied by the old sense of duty and honor and the advantages still left to the aristocracy they have a great chance of sustained and widely beneficial success. There are those novels that esteem blood and there are those that exalt merit, and then there are those, the troubled, restless ones, worrying about problems and seeking solutions, that think the two should be reunited, as of old.

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