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THE VICTORIAN DANTE: DANTE AND VICTORIAN LITERARY CRITICISM

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THE VICTORIAN DANTE: DANTE AND VICTORIAN LITERARY CRITICISM

BY

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To My Parents

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THE VICTORIAN DANTE: DANTE AND VICTORIAN LITERARY CRITICISM

INTRODUCTION

The Victorians accorded Dante an acclaim and stature unprecedented in English literature. The four most often mentioned poets in all Victorian literary criticism are Shakespeare, Milton, Wordsworth and Dante.[1] To the most eminent Victorian critics, Dante was both exemplary poetic artist and touchstone against which the intellectual and aesthetic concerns most commonly identified with the spirit of Victorian thought are viewed. The purpose of this study is to define the scope and context of critical response to Dante and to show in which ways it was particularly unique, particularly "Victorian."

The emergence of Dante as a major figure in the consciousness of nineteenth-century English thought is a subject worthy of study, both because of its intrinsic literary and intellectual importance and because of the reasons which may be found for Dante's rise from virtual obscurity in the "mind" of eighteenth century England. It was the Romantics who signalled the importance of Dante by finding several points of congeniality between him and their own time and temperament. The Victorians focused their interest in a distinctly different manner from the Romantics

and it is principally in Macaulay, Carlyle, Hallam, Arnold and Pater that this influence and interest are traced. These critics do not necessarily manifest the most sustained or even the most knowledgeable encounter with Dante, but in their interest they reveal important aspects of the Victorian "ethos" and Dante's place in it. The critics in their various essays and reflections, with which this study is concerned, both further a knowledge of Dante and his works and demonstrate their concerns with their own time.

An historical consciousness is a dominant characteristic of all the works in which Dante is discussed and serves as a context for the other dominant themes to which Dante is related: the function of literature in society, the relation of literature to religion, and the need for a source of spiritual and moral authority. Within the context of these concerns emerges another dominant set of ideas to which Dante is relevant, and which forms one of the dominant themes of Victorian critical thinking: the relationship of literature to the implications of utilitarian principles and to "aestheticism." Dante is used as exemplary of a resistance to both. These comprise the major themes of the Victorian critics, and although formulated in various and often "concealed" ways, a consideration of Dante in relation to them is a way of reflecting on their status as uniquely Victorian problems. Indeed, a major delineation may be drawn between the

Romantic and Victorian interest in Dante by the latter's greater concern with the social and cultural dimension of literature. Many of the texts are concerned with literature, and its function, "at the present time." A brief survey of the extent and scope of the interest of Dante will help to illustrate these points.

Voltaire's sarcastic remark about Dante in 1756 may have served as the apotheosis of the English attitude of the same period; "Sa reputation s'affirmera toujours, parce qu'on ne le lit guere." For the most part Dante was neglected, misunderstood or referred to only in passing. Before the nineteenth century there were no complete translations of the Commedia. In no other times had Dante's reputations fallen so low. A great influence on Chaucer, Dante also had a considerable influence and affinity with Milton, but the points of contact between Dante and English literature otherwise were few and unimportant. Horace Walpole declared, "Dante was extravagant, absurd, disgusting, in short a Methodist in Bedlam." Walpole spoke for many of his generation who were repelled by the "barbarous" elements in Dante. Considering the aesthetic predisposition of the Augustans and their taste this was not surprising. The neoclassical emphasis on order, decorum and the power of abstractions were found to be antithetical to the spirit of Dante. The "baroque" qualities, which later appealed to the Romantics and Victorians, were enough to

repel the Augustans; but there was some interest in Dante, which the Romantics inherited and greatly expanded. In 1782, Roger's blank verse translation of the Inferno appeared and Boyd's translation of the entire Commedia in six-line stanzas was issued in installments between 1785 and 1802. Although grossly inferior to translations soon to follow (Boyd's was often called a paraphrase) it reflects the growing interest in Dante at the time. Other significant eighteenth century contributions to Dante's popularity were two attacks on Voltaire, the "Dissertation upon the Italian Poetry" (1753) and the "Discours sur Shakespeare et sur M. de Voltaire" (1777) by Joseph Barretti, a recent Italian exile. Great interest in Dante was also generated by Sir Joshua Reynolds' depiction, in a painting exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1773 of "Count Ugolino," the first subject taken from the Commedia to be portrayed in English painting.

About the turn of the century, greater interest was accorded Dante, resulting in more involved critical interest and study and clear manifestations of influence on the Romantic poets. One of the major achievements of the Romantic interest in Dante was Cary's translation of the Commedia which appeared in installments between 1805 and 1814. This blank verse translation became the most influential and revered throughout the century, important to almost all the Romantics and Victorians. If one did not

read Dante in the original, one almost always did in Cary's translation. This was no small achievement as there were eighteen full translations between Cary's and the end of the century, along with sixteen of only the Inferno. With its critical notes and biographical information, Cary's translation was the major vehicle by which Dante came to be known in nineteenth-century England (and became a standard for almost all translations). In 1844, the year Cary died, a revised, inexpensive fourth edition sold out in two weeks. Macaulay stated of Cary's translation that

> there is no version in the world, as far as I know, so faithful as Mr. Cary's translation, yet there is no other version which so fully proves that the translator is himself a man of poetical genius. 2

Wordsworth simply called it a "great national work." Coleridge's approbation in an 1818 essay in the Edinburgh Review was important to the translation's popularity.

The reasons for Cary's popularity and some of the major issues involved in translation indicate ways in which Dante was involved in concerns important to the Victorians. The aims of the various translators from the time of Cary through the nineteenth century reveal several tendencies which serve as context for the Victorian response. The attempt at literal fidelity and the function of form in relation to meaning were predominant concerns of Victorian translators. In aiming at revealing Dante's literal meaning

and finding "English" equivalents of Italian terza rima, the translators indicated the critical interest in theme and the manner in which it was embodied in form.

In a study of Dante's translators, De Sua has delineated distinct differences between eighteenth century, Romantic, and Victorian translations. The few eighteenth-century translations, mainly of parts of the Inferno are "loose," almost paraphrases of the original. These translations attempted to bring Dante up to date, to clarify and explain him. Boyd's Commedia is characteristic:

> Evident too in the alterations is Boyd's intention of making the poem more readily available to his contemporaries by explaining or interpreting Dante's more hermetic passages . . . On the whole, Boyd's verse is stilted and ponderous, prone to inversions, paraphrases, the use of obvious or decorative epithets . . . and literary borrowings. 3

With the increased knowledge of and interest in Dante at the turn of the century, problems involved in determining the authority of the original text became dominant concerns; consequently the translator's role was modified. De Sua finds that the Romantic critic wishes to produce a

> translation [that] will have an aesthetic effect similar to that the model has in the source language. In this view, the process of translation is like a kind of magic mirror, an enchanted looking glass, against which the pages of a poem in one language are held and, somehow imaged forth in the other. And in performing this magic, the Romantic translator sees his function as being not wholly creative, but rather recreative. 4

Cary's Commedia, the emblematic "Romantic" translation, was praised both for its "fidelity," which Cary had stated was one of his aims, and for its use of blank verse, which many found to be the nearest equivalent to Italian terza rima. Coleridge, for instance, referred to Cary's translation as "Dantesque" as he believed that blank verse was "equivalent" to terza rima. Byron, however, was dissatisfied with Carey's translation and rendered a passage from the Paolo and Francesca episode in terza rima.

The debate about fidelity and form continued throughout the century, and has till the present. To the Victorians the problems of translation resulted in modification in both translation and criticism of the time, in a separation of form and matter. Victorian translators were committed to the original text as were their Romantic predecessors, but they believed the attempt at equivalency to be futile. Victorians stressed the "literality" of a desired translation or an English equivalent which conveyed Dante's content. Between 1833 and 1900 there were eighteen English and American translations of the complete Commedia, fourteen of the Inferno, three of the Purgatorio and one of the Paradiso; they all appeared in a variety of forms including prose.[5] The ability of Victorian translators to render the content of Dante without consideration of form, is often axiomatic in critical discussions. The extreme complexity of the position, reflected in the translations by

the rise of varying metric forms, is also reflected in critical discussions centering on the relation between Dante's art and his substance, which include discussions of his beliefs, world outlook and morality.

Examining a few of the many attempts to render the context of Dante in English serves to clarify issues on which the critics had centered much of their discussions. One of the major dilemmas was the importance of form in rendering Dante's meaning. Some translators insisted on the closest approximation to Dante's terza rima, while others were willing to sacrifice any metrical attempt for prose. Some, aware of the dilemma posed by either solution, compromised; finding a close metrical pattern to the original, or, being aware of the importance of metrics, they looked for an English "equivalent" to the original. Most of the theoretical debate about form reveals the attitude that content and form are separable and that the advantage of metric translation gives benefits that are other than semantic--for instance, "a dignity of manner, a poetic effect."

As the separability of content and form was an assumption of critical debate, the meaning of Dante's text was often paraphrased and discussed, apart from its form. All those here discussed turned to Dante for a world view as a source of ideas. His matter was certainly not irrelevant to any of them. Many also saw that this matter was either

linked to, or in some manner subordinated to, form. Hallam and Pater indicate the interdependence of form and matter, more so than Macaulay, Carlyle and Arnold. The critical assumptions of the latter three indicate that to them form is a container of matter. The separability of Dante's subject matter for them is less problematical. Translations reflect these problems with form and matter quite explicitly. Of the verse translations, two attempts are particularly apt illustrations. Ichabod Charles Wright's translation of the entire Commedia, completed in 1840, was an attempt to follow the meter of the original as closely as practicable, conceding complete metrical fidelity to the demands of English. This bastardized terza rima translation rhyming aba bcb cdc, is much more easily accommodated in Italian because of the greater range of possible end rhymes. This attempt asserted the importance of metrical form in rendering Dante, while it also implied the need of greater semantic fidelity than strict metrical equivalence would allow. Charles Shadwell, whom De Sua finds to be "the best poetic translator of the nineteenth century," in 1873 rendered a substantial portion of the Purgatorio in the four line stanzas of Andrew Marvell's "An Horation Ode Upon Cromwell's Return from Ireland." These stanzas, each comprised of two octosyllabic lines and two tetrameter lines, are an attempt to render Dante in an "English"

equivalent. Shadwell justifies his choice of stanzas by citing that

> the capacity of the two stanzas is nearly equal. Marvell's four lines are slightly less in space than Dante's three, twenty eight syllables to thirty three; but making allowance for the greater number of monosyllabic nouns and verbs in English, the room for expression the same quantity of thought is about the same. 6

Although there was an attempt to render Dante's matter in verse, the major consideration was to render his meaning with as much fidelity as possible. One of the most popular nineteenth century translations is John Carlyle's Inferno of 1849. The first prose translator of Dante into English, Carlyle states how important "literality" is:

> The object of the following prose translation is to give the real meaning of Dante as literally and briefly as possible . . . . English readers, it is hoped, will here find a closer, and therefore, with all its defects, a warmer version than any that has hitherto been published for them. 7

In identifying a prose translation with "real" meaning, Carlyle disassociates the function of form from the rendition of meaning. Many Victorian critics assume the viability of such a view. Those who do are particularly interested in Dante's subject matter by first accounting for this theoretical problem. All the major Victorian critics

are ultimately most concerned with Dante's subject matter. His "art" is either secondary or of interest, it seems, because of the predominant attraction to his intellectual, moral or philosophical achievement.

The problems involved in the relation of form and matter are an important context in which the critical discussion takes place. They form either a predominant portion of the essays or are an implied element of debate deducible from various assumptions about art. This problem was an important component in the debates about the importance of literature, the authority it could exert about matters of spiritual importance, and the attempts, notably by science and the "scientific spirit" to undermine its importance. The anxiety provoked by these problems made Victorian critics push towards the autonomy of poetry, its isolation, in order to protect it from the encroachment of challenges to its "practical" viability. The converse is apparent as well: the attempt to infuse it with a "substantiality" which would make it viable for the demands of its age. The Victorians were of two minds in relation to these questions. Dante was put to the service of both ends of the dilemma. He was both supreme artist and moral and religious poet.

The theoretical problems involved in discussions of form and matter are revealing of these "more comprehensive issues," for it was necessary to stress either Dante's

matter or form in order to place him in an exemplary position in relation to this problem. Perhaps one of the reasons for Dante's immense popularity is an enigma which Charles Eliot Norton has identified in the introduction to his translation of the Inferno:

> No poem in any language displays a more indissoluble union of music and meaning, or is more informed with a rhythmic life of its own than the Divine Comedy. And yet, such is its extraordinary distinction, no poem has an intellectual and emotional substance more independent of its metrical form. Its complex structure and its elaborate rhyme, highly artificial as they are, are so mastered by the genius of the poet as to become the most natural expression of the spirit by which the poem is inspired; while at the same time the thought and sentiment embodied in the verse is of such import, and the narrative of such interest, that they do not lose their worth when transferred to another tongue. 8

The practical and theoretical concerns facing translators and critics of Dante were being discussed in a context of issues central to Victorian critical thinking. The critical and poetic reception of Dante thus marks an important aspect of Victorian cultural life. This study attempts to account for the unprecedented interest in Dante by viewing the critical responses to him in relation to these aesthetic and intellectual concerns. What emerges is a "Victorian Dante" in whom the Victorian sensibility is revealed as much as Dante himself. This study is "defined" by its attempt to trace, sometimes indirectly, the study of

Dante at those points of intersection with major Victorian intellectual concerns. It is the juxtaposition of these broader concerns with an interest in Dante's work itself which accounts most comprehensively for the unprecedented interest in Dante.

No clear cut consensus emerges, either from translations or critical debates about the proper approach to the problem of form and matter as it relates to Dante. One important point, however, does emerge: there was a need to find a "substance" and "authority" in literature which could make it responsible take on a burden, which the diminution of other forms of spiritual authority, particularly religion, had placed on it. So the content of Dante's Commedia was stressed, particularly its moral and religious authority. The Victorians looked to it in producing their own literature, trying to resist those claims of aestheticism that would separate art from the major intellectual concerns and dilemmas of the time. The interest in Dante reveals the Victorian need to see a significant relationship between religion and poetry. The concern with a "religious" principle is best seen as a corollary of the need for an authoritative principle. Though it is this authoritative principle which is sought, its metaphysical basis in both Hallam and Arnold is inescapably Christian. The ambiguous relationship formulated in criticism between poetry and religion is

emblematic of a major concern of this study: the attempt to free poetry from a specific, dogmatic position, the attempt to maintain a "disinterested" posture in relation to it, and the unwillingness to carry through with the end result of such an assumption. The Victorians wished to stress the importance of "artistic" or "aesthetic" criteria in the evaluation of art while also calling for substance.

Those critics who flirt with some of the notions of aestheticism, particularly the separation of art from moral didactic concerns, are hesitant to move to the position that acceptance of art for art's sake implies. This cannot be better demonstrated than by the way Dante is approached in relation to these questions. Hallam and Pater's reactions to Dante exemplify how their approach to aestheticism resists "art for art's sake" and insists on the relevance of morality. Both Hallam and Pater, while flirting with the idea of substituting other than substantive criteria as a basis for evaluating art, return to Dante as exemplar of great art because of his substance. For Hallam, Dante is a basis of authority needed after its lack in Romantic literature. For Pater, Dante is is an example of "great poetry" because of his subject. Pater found literary form a criterion for good art, not "great" art. Both, however, find Dante a supreme artist in form as well as theme. One reason, then, for Dante's appeal is that he combines the moral with the aesthetic. Victorian utilitarianism seemed

to make poetry unimportant in a world of practical affairs more effectively championed by the claims of science and empirical knowledge. But Dante could be pointed to as great poet and artist who was meaningful--and useful. His enormous popularity, indicated by numerous references to him, must be accounted for by the fact that he entered into the debate about the importance of literature and culture. Those concerned with the possible detachment of poetry from intellectual preoccupations and those concerned that the demands of pragmatism might lead to a weak, didactic or moralistic poetry could point to Dante as resisting both possibilities.

Although Macaulay challenges the importance and potency of poetry in the "modern" world, his reflections on Dante are historically important, for he is one of the first English critics to make clear distinctions between matter and form in the Commedia. This delineation was of major importance to issues discussed by subsequent critics, and I briefly trace the genesis and evolution of this concern in later writers and translators.

Carlyle, in various lectures, discusses concerns similar to Macaulay's, but also introduces that sense of urgency brought about by a lack of spiritual authority in the early Victorian period. In reacting to Dante's moral depth and "nobleness of heart," Carlyle reveals a desired synthesis between the "spiritual world" and man's relation

to it. By writing from the "materials" available in a coherent world view, Dante's fusion of spiritual and material "reality" is in stark contrast to Carlyle's culture. A "concealed metaphysics" emerges from Carlyle's early writing which informs later reflections on Dante.

Arthur Hallam is a central figure in understanding the Victorian attitude toward Dante. Finding Romantic poetry weakened because of its excessive reaction against Eighteenth-century rationalism, Hallam wished to formulate an "aesthetic" for "contemporary" poetry, in which Dante figured prominently. Hallam calls for a poetry like Dante's in his essay on Italian literature, and is primarily concerned with the Commedia as an example of poetry wedded to substance; he urges his contemporaries to write a truly "religious" poetry. Hallam indicates the issues involved in later theoretical formulations about Dante that maintain that aesthetic integrity can be maintained without dissociation from "moral content." Hallam helps us focus on Pater's subsequent reflections on Dante.

Arnold's interest centers on two major issues: Dante's supreme artistry and the controlling metaphysics, essentially Christian, shaping his work, and congenial to the high demands of poetry. As Arnold was of "two minds" on the issue of poetry's artistic integrity and its "usefulness," he continues that dialectic in which Dante is used to resist both utilitarian principles and aestheticism.

Dante exemplifies, for Arnold, the apotheosis of artistic endeavor in the possibility it offers to take on much of the "work" of religion.

Almost everywhere one turns in Pater, Dante is mentioned. In discussing the perspective Pater brings to earlier formulations on Dante, it is especially useful to consider his resistance to various implications of the art for art's sake movement, and Dante's place in this program. Dante also lends perspective to "apparent" contradictions in Pater's "aesthetic." By referring to Pater's interest in Dante, one can account for the "apparent" lack of concern implied in the metaphoric equation, "art aspires to the condition of music," and the paradox implied in theoretical formulations elevating the lyric and little interest revealed in lyric poets and poetry.

Pater's complex "aesthetic" is mediated by motivations apparent in earlier critical discussions on Dante: the attempt to construct a "poetics" by balancing artistic integrity with a basis of spiritual, non-doctrinal "substance." The Victorian critical reaction to Dante is revealing of many aspects of the Victorian ethos; it is one possible approach which "opens a window" to an understanding of Victorian poetics.

Notes

[1] Alba Warren, English Poetic Theory 1825-1865 (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1950), p. 6.

[2] Thomas Babington Macaulay, The Complete Works of Lord Macaulay, VIII ed., Lady Trevelayan (New York and London: The Knickerbocker Press, n.d.), p. 85.

[3] William J. De Sua, Dante Into English (Chapel Mill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1964), p. 15-6.

[4] De Sua, p. 28.

[5] Paget Toynbee, Britain's Tribute to Dante in Literature and Art (London: Oxford University Press, 1921), p. XIII.

[6] Charles Lancelot Shadwell, Trans., The Purgatory of Dante (London: Macmillan and Co., 1892), p. IX.

[7] De Sua, p. 56.

[8] Charles Eliot Norton, Trans., The Divine Comedy of Dante: Hell (Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1902), p. IX-X.

Thomas Babington Macaulay

Macaulay's interest in Dante reflects the major themes which were to occupy subsequent Victorian critics of Dante. Concerned with Dante's life, work, and historical importance, Macaulay's biographical and aesthetic pronouncements were among the most detailed in English criticism until that time. Of particular importance to an understanding of Victorian interest in Dante is Macaulay's delineation of form and matter in the Commedia; discussions of form and matter were carried on by translators and critics and were a basis upon which many theoretical formulations hinged.

"Milton" (1825) and the "Essay on the Principal Italian Writers" (1824) are the two major texts dealing with Dante. Often considered a touchstone of early Victorian sensibility, "Milton," which appeared in the Edinburgh of 1825, is informed with an aesthetic deriving from utilitarian principles. In depreciating the importance of literature because of progress in science, Macaulay built on a tradition that extended back to Peacock and Hume, and did not see the relevance of Dante to contemporary poetry. Macaulay believed poetic achievement and progress in science to be inversely proportioned, but his insular view of literary development and "anti-art" aesthetic was soon to

be challenged, ironically, by many critics who saw in Dante's work the very possibility of guiding poets and establishing poetry as an important and legitimate spiritual pursuit. Thus, critics reacted against some of Macaulay's premises and conclusions by upholding many shared assumptions about form and matter. An important context for understanding both essays is their rhetorical structure, which informs many judgments. Macaulay refers to Dante as foil in "Milton" and contrasts Milton to Dante in the essay on Italian literature.

In Macaulay's definition of poetry in "Milton," which follows from several precepts implied in the analysis of a civilization and its relation to language, we have a valuable clue to the appreciation of Dante. "By poetry we mean the art of employing words in such a manner as to produce an illusion on the imagination, the art of doing by means of words what the painter does by means of colors."[1] This definition of poetry, consistent with what Macaulay was most often to appreciate in Dante's art, his detailed imagery, is important in understanding Macaulay's aesthetic, for he does not confound the personal estimate of the writer with the object of art itself. Rather, he maintains different criteria for the evaluation of each and finds both important. Keeping both separate, as many later commentators on Dante were trying or unable to do, was an important factor in explicating the formal characteristics of the Commedia.

In the analysis of Milton's work, as well as Dante's, Macaulay delineates the formal characteristics of the work and the man that produced them. In the comparison proper between Milton and Dante, which comprises slightly less than one-quarter the entire essay, both the works and the men are considered. Macaulay contrasts their characters, but also accepts both the Commedia and Paradise Lost as aesthetic objects. The Commedia's value is not diminished because of faults in its creator: "We will not take upon ourselves the invidious office of settling precedency between two such writers. Each in his department is incomparable; and each, we may remark, has wisely, or fortunately, taken a subject adapted to exhibit his peculiar talent to the greatest advantage."[2] Although precedency is not established regarding their works, it is in respect to their character. A moral superiority is claimed for Milton. Dante's bitterness resulted from the temperament of his own character, Milton's from his circumstance. Of Dante, Macaulay writes "No person can look on the features, noble even to ruggedness, the dark furrows of the cheek, the haggard and woeful stare of the eyes, the sullen and contemptuous curve of the lip, and doubt they belong to a man too proud and too sensitive to be happy."[3] This portrait was imbued in the mind of the nineteenth-century. Rossetti's "Dante at Verona" is but one example of the bitterness and pride which was felt to be part of Dante's character. For Milton, in the midst of "a loathsome herd"

in which he found himself, his character was exemplary. "If ever despondency and asperity could be excused in any man, they might have been excused in Milton."[4] Milton is made saintly in Macaulay's portrait, as the tumultuous time in which he lived is contrasted to his personal dignity. In attacking the notion that Milton must be deprecated because he had the advantages of a civilization from which to write, Macaulay elevates Milton's character by stating that the poet must overcome civilization, which is a detriment to poetic endeavor. Dante, therefore, had the benefit of writing in a "cruder" age.

In the essay on Italian literature many of the same propositions apparent in "Milton" serve as context for an understanding of Dante's work and a depiction of his character. Examining the necessity for the appropriate moment to a literary production, Macaulay describes the importance of the religious as well as the political spirit of society. In both instances it is an enthusiasm, an involvement with the world, a coming out of one's self which is the important factor. There is an attempt to dissociate and comprehend the evil of history with those beneficient elements which it produces: "The violence of party feelings may be an evil; but it calls forth that activity of mind which in some states of society it is desirable to produce at any expense."[5] Commenting on the importance of the religious spirit:

> Fanaticism is an evil, but it is not the greatest of evils. It is good that a people should be roused by any means from a state of utter torpor;--that their minds should be diverted from objects merely sensual, to meditations, however erroneous, on the mysteries of the moral and intellectual world; and from interests which are immediately selfish to those which relate to the past, the future, and the remote. 6

Macaulay finds the spirit or energy of history an important cause of poetic activity and does not stress the historical content, either in its social, political or moral implications. Such a view of poetical activity finds an expected concomitant in Macaulay's reading of Dante's text: style and mood are stressed, rather than moral or political message. The relevance of Dante to his literary descendants, in Macaulay's reading of Italian literary development, was his style. For other Victorian critics, such as Hallam, Dante's content was stressed.

In considering Catholicism as a cause of literary creativity Macaulay states: "It is of all religions the most poetical." Interestingly, it is those qualities important to the aesthetic and formal aspects of poetry which make Catholicism conducive to poetry, not the moral content. The importance of Catholicism is its fusion of the heart with the sensuous:

> The ancient superstitions furnished the fancy with beautiful images, but took no hold on the heart. The doctrines of the Reformed Churches have most powerfully influenced the feelings and the conduct

> of men, but have not presented them with images of sensible beauty and grandeur . . . . It has enriched sculpture and painting with the loveliest and most majestic forms. 7

Macaulay states: "Dante was completely under the influence of his age." This is reflected in his character: "He was a man of a turbid and melancholy spirit." Macaulay wishes to account for the Commedia through Dante's biography. The pain of his exile, a theme of many subsequent Victorian critics, accounts for the nature of the narrative of the Commedia: "his wounded spirit took refuge in visionary devotion." Beatrice, in Macaulay's view, "was invested by his imagination with glorious and mysterious attributes;" In this view Beatrice, the actual woman of Florence, loses many of her human qualities: "By a confusion, like that which often takes place in dreams, he has sometimes lost sight of her human nature, and even of her personal existence, and seems to consider her as one of the attributes of the Deity."[8]

The problems that Beatrice posed to the critics were many. To what extent was the Beatrice of the Commedia a real person? Was the problem itself relevant at all? Macaulay seems committed to account for the relation between the facts of Dante's life and the result of his work. In fact, such a question is vital. A literary text revealed the man and his times, and the times determined the work of art. It was Beatrice's transformation from real to unreal

which appealed to many Victorians, particularly Rossetti. The "humanness" of Beatrice was of central concern in Arnold's review of Theodore Martin's 1862 translation of the Vita Nuova.

Macaulay continues by trying to account for Dante's life in terms of his work, and his work in terms of his life. "He hoped for happiness beyond the grave: but he felt none on earth." Dante's spirit is the reason for the inferiority of Heaven to "the Hell or the Purgatory." Dante has something in common with the "suffering spirits" of hell but has nothing in common with the "beatified." Macaulay states: "There is no poet whose intellectual and moral character are so closely related."[9] The assertion is used to explain the earnestness with which Dante details his story and the aesthetic impressiveness resulting from a clearly delineated moral authority. The possibility of such a moral and intellectual relationship was an important aspect of Victorian intellectual life, and Dante's importance to later Victorians was due in great part to the realization of this fact. For many Victorians the intellectual character was clearly dissociated from the moral character; as there was no center of moral authority (certainly not a public one) for the Victorians, the aesthetic object was often supported by a relativistic or individualistic moral structure. The "marriage" of the intellectual and the moral, or the religious and the aesthetic, was a common theme of early Victorian criticism.

Although Dante's character and historical situation are considered as important components in the production of the Commedia, Macaulay is clear to consider the work of art in its relationship to its readers, and to point out clearly many of its formal characteristics. In "Milton" the form of a poem is related to its effect on a reader. "New forms of beauty start at once into existence, and all the burial places of the memory give up their dead. Change the structure of the sentence; substitute one synonym for another, and the whole effect is destroyed."[10] Implying how important the formal and structural characteristics are to a poem and the inability to separate meaning from effect, Macaulay points to Dryden's failure in translating Paradise Lost into his own diction. Implied is the inability to translate aspects of tone from one language to another. One suspects that Dante's images had a great effect on Macaulay, but he never mentions those aspects of "incantation" or "tone" in Dante that so impressed him about Milton. We do know, however, that Macaulay, who read Dante in the Italian at an early age, thought very highly of Cary's blank verse translation.

Macaulay makes an extended comparison in "Milton" between formal characteristics of Paradise Lost and the Commedia, particularly imagery. This focus brings attention to Dante's "art," one of the important components of his achievement to later Victorians who wished to separate Dante's creed from his craft. Macaulay's comparison of the

two poets and their work begins by distinguishing subject matter and treatment, which are respectively similar and different. Milton's poetry is compared to the "hieroglyphics of Egypt" and Dante's is likened to the "picture writing of Mexico." Dante's images are supposed to "speak for themselves; "Milton's" . . . have a signification which is often discernable only to the initiated." "Macaulay's sensitivity to the vivid Dantean imagery is apparent. Dante's method is to describe everything, however grotesque. "He gives us the shape, the color, the sound, the smell, the taste; he counts the numbers; he measures the size."[12] Although a sensitivity is expressed to an important factor of the Commedia, Macaulay does "overstress" the literal, at the expense of other levels of meaning. To say that Dante's images "stand simply for what they are" is to simplify greatly the Commedia. The literal level has been accounted for; what of the anagogic, moral and allegorical? The interpretation of images on the literal level positions Dante's achievement unfavorably in respect to Milton's images, which are "dim intimations," and accords with the laudatory intent of the essay. Centering attention on imagery, Macaulay offers a specific example to elevate Milton at the expense of Dante. "Once more, compare the lazar-house in the eleventh book of the Paradise Lost with the last word of Malebolge in Dante. Milton avoids the loathsome details, and takes refuge in indistinct but solemn and tremendous imagery, . . ."[13] The contrast is not new.

Coleridge had made the same point in one of his lectures several years before.

> Nor have I now room for any specific comparison of Dante with Milton. But if I had, I would institute it upon the ground of the last canto of the Inferno from the 1st to the 69th line, and from the 106th to the end. And in this comparison I should notice Dante's occasional fault of becoming grotesque from being too graphic without imagination; as in his Lucifer compared with Milton's Satan. 14

In the portrayal of supernatural beings, Macaulay believes that Dante must yield to Milton, because Milton's depictions are mysterious and picturesque, Dante's only picturesque. Interestingly, Macaulay has inserted a long apology on behalf of a point of critical contention in regard to Milton: The charge of inconstancy, the peculiar mixture of material and immaterial imagery. Man cannot perceive of the abstract, the immaterial in any terms other than when they are embodied in imagery. This for Macaulay is a poetic principle also embodied in other aspects of culture. "Man cannot picture the divine in any other than in concrete images: thus the embodiment of saints after the Triumph of Christianity. Milton, however, wrote in an age of philosophers and theologians for which he tread the middle ground between the material and immaterial."[15] This is presumably what gives rise to his "mystery." The "reality" of Dante's angels and demons is the element which does not lend itself to mystery. "Dante's angels are good

men with wings. His devils are spiteful executioners."[16] Although Dante is disparaged at the expense of Milton, Macaulay does bring attention to Dante's detailed, imagery, and those aspects of the Commedia which could be dissociated from the doctrinal component of medieval Catholicism. Many later Victorians were attracted by what Macaulay implied, but never explicitly stated. What was the relationship between exact, detailed, and unambiguous imagery to a system outside of the aesthetic? How could one be true to nature, to man's nature, and reflect a moral, a spiritual world? Fidelity to nature was a key tenet of the Pre-Raphaelite manifesto, but just as there was more than revealed by the merely physical, so Dante's text indicated a moral, spiritual world to them through its imagery.

The chapter on Dante in the "Criticism on the Principal Italian Writers" finds Dante's detailed imagery perfectly suited to its intent. "The great source, as it appears to me, of the power of the Divine Commedy is the strong belief with which the story seems to be told . . . . The solemnity of his asseverations, the consistency and minuteness of his details, the earnestness with which he labors to make the reader understand the exact shape and size of everything that he describes, gives an air of reality to his wildest fictions."[17]

Macaulay asserts here the importance of the close relationship of the "moral and intellectual character" as it effects the aesthetic object. It seems that it is the

earnestness of belief that links reality to fiction. This strong and earnest belief also leads Macaulay to refute those critics who find many elements of the Inferno grotesque. Macaulay writes of this feeling:

> . . . . which pervades the whole work, and to which it owes much of its fascination. This is the real justification of the many passages in his poem which bad critics have condemned as grotesque. I am concerned to see what Mr. Cary, to whom Dante owes more than ever poet owed to translator, has sanctioned an accusation utterly unworthy of his abilities. "His solicitude," says the gentleman, "to define all his images in such a manner as to bring them within the circle of our vision, and to subject them to the power of the pencil, renders him little better than grotesque, where Milton has since taught us to expect sublimity." 18

Macaulay rejects Cary's accusation by stating the differences between Milton and Dante which necessitated differing conceptions and aesthetic portrayals of hell. Without establishing precedency, Macaulay finds both conceptions suitable to their purpose: "It is true that Dante has never shrunk from embodying his conceptions in determinate words, that he has even given measure and numbers, where Milton would have left his images to float undefined in a gorgeous haze of language. Both were right."[19] If Dante had written in the style of Milton, Macaulay asks:

> But where would have been that strong impression of reality, which, in

> accordance with his plan, it should have been his great object to produce? It was absolutely necessary for him to delineate accurately all monstrous, all prodigious things,--to utter what might to others appear unutterable, to relate with the air of truth what fables had never feigned,--to embody what (fear) had never conceived. And I will frankly confess that the vague sublimity of Milton effects me less than these reviled details of Dante. 20

The last statement is certainly consistent with the major premises of the essay on Dante, although it stands in sharp relief to what Macaulay was to write a year and a half later in his Milton essay.

Whereas in the essay on Milton, the Commedia was "picturesque to the exclusion of wonder," in the essay on Dante, Macaulay states ". . . the narratives are exactly what they should be,--definite in themselves, but suggesting to the mind ideas of awful and indefinite wonder."[21] In "Milton," Macaulay had also suggested that Dante's supernatural beings, because they were closely related to distinguishable aspects of our own human nature (his devils are spiteful executioners) were aesthetically unconvincing; in the essay on Dante almost the opposite is asserted:

> The fact is, that supernatural beings, as long as they are considered merely with reference to their own nature, excite our feelings very feebly. It is when the great gulf which separates them from us is passed, when we suspect some strange and undefinable relation between the [laws] of the visible and the invisible world, that they rouse,

> perhaps, the strongest emotions of which our nature is capable. 22

Macaulay's argument respecting Dante's supernatural beings seeks to find aesthetic justification for the nature in which they are depicted: aesthetic justification because the nature of supernatural beings is not questioned per se but in relation to the work of art they are embodied in. For Macaulay, Dante and Milton are both correct in their depictions because of differences of temperament, historical place and differences in aesthetic conception. Macaulay's authority for claiming artistic propriety for Dante's devils is affective:

> While this is the case, to describe super-human beings in the language, and to attribute to them the actions of humanity may be grotesque, unphilosophical, inconsistent; but it will be the only mode of working upon the feelings of men, and, therefore, the only mode suited for poetry. 23

If the affective is the measure of assessing the "appropriate mode suited for poetry" one can easily see how the "grotesque," the fanciful or the bizarre might indeed be necessary. Macaulay implies that that which does not affect the feelings of men is not appropriate for art. Implied in these observations is what poetry is and how it comes about.

The artist reflects his own times and expresses his own nature, and the works of art in turn must affect the feelings of their audience. Macaulay's own relation to the

Commedia follows a determined cause and effect pattern, the work of art being where both the time and temperament of the artist are reflected. It is important to note that the effects Macaulay considers are aesthetic, not religious or philosophical. The effect of Dante's supernatural beings do not carry any religious or even philosophical consequences except those which a philosophical or detached critic might point to. Obviously the metaphysical basis, medieval and Catholic, on which the Commedia is structured contains no spiritual power for Macaulay and most Victorians; but there is the attempt, in Macaulay's reading of the Commedia, to preserve it as "literature" and to account for those elements which acquire significance in their religious setting. Dante's biography, his religious and political involvement in his own time, accounts for the style and tone of the Commedia. Of course, the attempt to preserve literature or to find the literary value in a "religious" text is something very much at the forefront of Victorian aesthetics. One thinks of Arnold's attempt to preserve the "literary" elements of the Bible.

Macaulay discusses the influence of the Commedia on subsequent writers. The effect on Alfieri, for instance, is the style of the Commedia, its spirit. A major question to many Victorian readers of Dante and one which Macaulay does not presume to answer explicitly is what content is this spirit to embody? Macaulay does intimate one possible difference between Dante's and his own time.

> No person can have attended to the Divine Commedy without observing how little impression the forms of the external world appear to have made on the mind of Dante. His temper and his situation had led him to fix his observation almost exclusively on human nature . . . . He leaves to others the earth, the ocean, and the sky. His business is with man. To other writers, evening may be the season of dews and stars and radiant clouds. To Dante it is the hour of fond recollection and passionate devotion,--the hour which melts the heart of the mariner and kindles the love of the pilgrim,--the hour when the toll of the bell seems to mourn for another day which is gone and will return no more.
>
> The feeling of the present age has taken a direction diametrically opposite. The magnificence of the physical world, and its influence upon the human mind, have been the favorite themes of our most eminent poets. 24

For Macaulay in the "present age" of Victorian material progress, the subordination of the external world to the mind, was a symptom of an historical situation and a particular temper. To other critics the lack of moral authority implied in the empirical, and scientific orientation towards nature, was a crisis upon which to reflect on Dante's "cohesive" world view. Carlyle is one instance of a vastly different temperament who derived from the Commedia a vastly different set of values than Macaulay.

Macaulay's two essays, "Criticisms on the Principal Italian Writers" and "Milton," are touchstones of early Victorian aesthetic thinking. Although in many instances

later critics were to find different points of congeniality between their own interests and Dante's works and were to base their inquiries on different aesthetic premises. Macaulay's judgments are important indicators of issues which were to be expressed by subsequent critics. The general propositions about poetry, its imagistic qualities, its power to bring abstraction to the sensible understanding, the relation of form to matter, the relation between one's time, one's work, and one's character, were all crucial issues. In the appreciation of formal excellencies, which could be abstracted from doctrinal belief, Macaulay indicated a major critical direction, which subsequent thinkers, for instance, Hallam, could profit by in their endeavor to make relevant an idealogically distant literature.

Notes

[1] Thomas Babington Macaulay, The Complete Works of Lord Macaulay, I ed., Lady Trevelayan (New York and London: Whitehall edn., The Knickerbocker Press, n.d.), p. 8.

[2] Macaulay, Vol. I, Works, p. 22.

[3] Macaulay, Vol. I, Works, p. 30.

[4] Macaulay, Vol. I, Works, p. 31.

[5] Macaulay, Vol. VIII, Works, p. 69.

[6] Macaulay, Vol. VIII, Works, p. 70.

[7] Macaulay, Vol. VIII, Works, p. 70.

[8] Macaulay, Vol. VIII, Works, p. 72.

[9] Macaulay, Vol. VIII, Works, p. 72.

[10] Macaulay, Vol. I, Works, p. 13.

[11] Macaulay, Vol. I, Works, p. 20.

[12] Macaulay, Vol. I, Works, p. 20.

[13] Macaulay, Vol. I, Works, pp. 21-22.

[14] Samuel Taylor Coleridge, "Lectures," Italian Poets and English Crtics; 1755-1859, Patterns of Literary Criticism, No. 7 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1969), pp. 76-7.

[15] Macaulay, Vol. I, Works, p. 26-27.

[16] Macaulay, Vol. I, Works, p. 27.

[17] Macaulay, Vol. VIII, p. 73.

[18] Macaulay, Vol. VIII, p. 73.

[19] Macaulay, Vol. VIII, p. 73.

[20] Macaulay, Vol. VIII, p. 74.

[21] Macaulay, Vol. VIII, p. 75.

[22] Macaulay, Vol. VIII, Works, p. 75.

[23] Macaulay, Vol. VIII, Works, p. 75.

[24] Macaulay, Vol. VIII, Works, pp. 77-78.

THOMAS CARLYLE

Carlyle's major works are the record of a struggle to assert unpopular views in a society of "Philistines." That dialectic which inspired Dante and gave impetus to his vision--the intense personality, the bitter man in exile--must have appeared to Carlyle as acutely accurate representations of his own situation. Indeed, one suspects, in those reflections on Dante's life, that the affinities must have been consciously felt. But the major importance of Dante to Carlyle was as a focal point of ideas that had their genesis in the Eighteen-thirties. Carlyle's major encounter with Dante was in the lecture on the Poet in Heroes and Hero-Worship. There, Carlyle clearly focused on notions which had theoretically been pronounced earlier. Dante was used to bring these ideas into fruition, to particularize them. The abstract notions of the "poet," the "hero," and the "Divine Idea," converge to particularize Carlyle's philosophy. The reflections on Dante are informed by the combination of these ideas which "unveil" the concealed metaphysics behind these reflections. What emerges is an interest in Dante's morality, and life--a concern with Dante's substance, which indicate the continuity of Carlyle's thought with the predominant interest in Dante of other Victorian critics.

Carlyle delivered a series of talks in the summer of 1818 entitled "Lectures on the History of Literature on the Successive Periods of European Culture" in which Dante was of major importance. The implied view of history in the lectures is that a series of prominent men and events appear who embody the spirit of their own times or who supply impetus to history. Thus events shape men and men shape events. An important event in European history is Dante's works. One of Italy's claims to ascendency over the other European nations is that it has produced great men, notably Dante; he is "one of the greatest men that ever lived," says Carlyle. After a brief description of his life and banishment, Carlyle remarks that had it not been for Dante's suffering the world would not have had the Commedia. Dante turned the world to "eternity" and is in the same class as Aeschylus, Homer and Shakespeare, as theirs were utterances out of the great heart of nature. By citing many passages, which were those often referred to, "Paolo and Francesca," "Ugolino," "Farinata," Carlyle expounded his interest in Dante's morality, his cohesive world view at the point of dissolution, and the suffering man who spoke to all ages. These themes are a microcosm of their fuller treatment in Heroes and Hero-Worship.

Carlyle's analysis of Dante in Heroes and Hero-Worship is informed by several aspects of his understanding of the hero, his relation to society and an idealism informed by a series of assumptions. One may term these assumptions

"Carlyle's metaphysics." Carlyle's rejection of "dogmatical" and "skeptical" metaphysics may have been a way of retreating into a vagueness, which nonetheless revealed a definitive set of assumptions about the nature of the world. Dante was absorbed into an elaborate system which showed both Carlyle's genius and the problematics faced by him as a conscious member of Victorian society. For Carlyle the relation between the spiritual world and man's necessary involvement, if he is to live with his own physical universe, gave rise to a problem which involved that important question to all conscientious Victorians. What is man's duty? How must man conduct himself in society? Carlyle responded in Sartor: Work. If one did that work which was at hand, one's next duty was already being defined. "Love not Pleasure" Teufeldrockh proclaimed: "love God. This is the Everlasting Yea, herein all contradiction is solved: wherein whose walks and works, it is well with him."[1] That condition of man, whereby a disparity between the spiritual world and man's relation to it did not offer a smooth synthesis is an important Carlylean theme. Teufelsdrockh as he wanders in search of spiritual salvation, cannot find that life in society or nature which accords with his own spiritual desires. Except for man's devotion to his own duty and work, the "Clothes Philosophy" does not suggest any particular mode of living. Carlyle's interpretation of Dante's life is analogous to Teufelsdrockh in one sense. Forced into exile his life on

earth was a sort of hell though he had penetrated into the mystery of the universe. His inability to find accommodation between that spiritual universe and life on earth attests to the discongruity between spiritual and material "reality." The dilemma was Dante's, it was Teufelsdrockh's and of course it was deeply embedded in the ethos of Victorian England.

In many writings before Heroes and Hero-Worship Carlyle had been delineating the relation between the actual world of events, the spiritual world, and the function of the literary man in this problem. The conception of the hero is closely related to the relationship of these elements.

In the "State of German Literature" (1827) published in the Edinburgh Review, Carlyle outlined a feature of German criticism which may be seen as indicating that sensibility in the essays of literary men in Heroes and Hero-Worship. The grand question of criticism is "properly and ultimately a question on the essence and peculiar life of the poetry itself." This question addresses literature.

> . . . soul and spiritual existence, by which alone can the body, in its movements and phases, be informed with significance and rational life . . . . Criticism stands like an interpreter between the inspired and the uninspired; between the prophet and those who hear the melody of his words and catch some glimpse of their material meaning, but understand not their deeper import. 2

Carlyle's own discussion of Dante aims at bringing forth these assumptions. Dante's penetration into the mysteries of the world is to be revealed. "Poetic beauty" Carlyle continues is assumed as underived; not borrowing its existence from such sources but as lending to most of these their significance and principle "charm for the mind." It dwells and is born from the "inmost Spirit of Man united to all love of Virtue, to all true belief in God . . . . Art is to be loved, not because of its effects, but because of itself; not because it is useful for spiritual pleasure, or even for moral culture, but because it is Art, and the highest in man, and the soul of all Beauty."[3]

Carlyle's understanding of Dante is contingent on these assumptions. Dante did for his time what other poets have done in theirs; Dante is "fixed" in history. The poet who attempts to do what Dante did must fail. We will see that Hallam's assumptions about the nature of poetry were quite different and this difference had important consequences for Hallam's consideration of Dante.

Deriving the notion of the "Divine Idea" from Fichte, Carlyle succinctly states the relation of the literary man to it:

> According to Fichte, there is a 'Divine Idea' pervading the visible Universe; which visible Universe is indeed but its symbol and sensible manifestation, having in itself no meaning, or even true existence independent of it. To the mass of men this Divine Idea of the world lies hidden: yet to discern it, to seize it and live wholly in it, is

> the condition of all genuine virtue, knowledge, freedom; and the end, therefore, of all spiritual effort in every age. Literary Men are the appointed interpreters of the Divine Idea; 4

Here lie many assumptions about the hero and the literary man which form the basis of a scheme and a calculus in which philosophy, society, and poets exist in tension, a philosophy which Carlyle had been discussing for many years prior to the publication of Heroes and Hero-Worship.

"Characteristics" (1831) is in part a treatise on the centrality of mystery in relation to the Divine law and the importance of unconsciousness in various fields of human pursuit. It elucidates many presuppositions about the role of the artist and his relationship to society and to the idealistic doctrines which are presupposed to be the principle of life. As such it is a useful source for identifying ideas, which with some modifications were to reappear in Heroes and Hero-Worship. It also provides a basis for maintaining that Carlyle's doctrines in Heroes and Hero-Worship were part of an elaborate series of reflections which Carlyle was undertaking through the 1830's.

"Characteristics" champions the centrality of "mystery" as the basis of life. It is a "force," a "divine force," albeit an un-understandable one which forms the basis of life. One is misguided if in searching for a purpose of life only the material world is considered, for it,

including nature, only hides the purpose from human understanding. What we can understand of the world: " . . . is essentially the mechanical, small; the great is ever, in one sense or other, the vital; it is essentially the mysterious, and only the surface of it can be understood."[5] Life is thus purposeful, though it is not revealed as such by speculation and inquiry: "The healthy Understanding, we should say, is not the Logical, argumentative, but the Intuitive; for the end of Understanding is not to prove and find reasons, but to know and believe."[6]

The notion of the "Divine Idea" and its relationship to the changing "ephemeral" world, in which nature plays its role in veiling the real principle, implies the centrality of unconsciousness in harmonising with that Idea; for self-consciousness is a form of inquiry which is a symptom of the "disease" brought about by skepticism. 'Man, the implication seems to be, is in harmony with the divine naturally and should not be self-conscious in what he writes; self-consciousness, a symptom visible in every sphere of human endeavor in Carlyle's theme, reveals the incongruity between man and the divine idea. Not only undermining the self-conscious state of mind but having the possibility of relieving man's burden in his material circumstance is faith:

> It is by Faith that man removes mountains: while he had Faith, his

> limbs might be wearied with toiling, his back galled with bearing; but the heart within him was peaceable and resolved. In the thickest gloom there burnt a lamp to guide him . . . . Faith strengthens us, enlightens us, for all endeavors and endurances; with Faith we can do all, and dare all 7

It is Society which informs all values:

> Such is Society, the vital articulation of many individuals into a new collective individual: greatly the most important of man's attainments on this earth; that in which, and by virtue of which all his other attainments and attempts find their arena, and have their value. 8

Carlyle continues: "Every society, every Polity, has a spiritual principle; is the embodiment, tentative and more or less complete, of an Idea."[9]

Society has a "mystic significance" which should not be inquired into. Society, "if perfect, it is there as by necessity, and does not excite inquiry:"[10] Society cannot be reasoned of "except 'musically' or in the language of Poetry, cannot yet so much as be spoken of."[11] The poet penetrates into the mystery. The music metaphor, which appears frequently in Heroes and Hero-Worship, is used to indicate the harmony achieved by the poetry, as there is harmony between the poet and the spiritual center of society. Poetry is opposed to speculation because poetry stems from naturalness and harmony. Once "Thought and the voice of thought were also a unison; thus, instead of

Speculation, we had Poetry; . . . . "For, if the Poet or Priest, or by whatever title the inspired thinker may be named, is the sign of vigour and well-being; so likewise is the Logician, or uninspired thinker, the sign of disease, probably of decrepitude and decay."[12]

The poet's vision is congruous with the mystery of life which moves ultimately towards good and purposefulness. The poet therefore does not partake in "speculation" or dogmatic metaphysics which seek to bring the world under some scheme. Whatever comprehensive view the poet exemplifies in his work stems from the wholeness in society. "Society was what we can call 'whole', in both senses of the word."[13] The poet's harmony with the mystery of "Society" and the manner in which society presented itself revealed an incongruity which implicitly placed the Poet or seer in disunity with his time. This is one of the implications of Dante's own situation as Carlyle sees it in Heroes and Hero-Worship. One of the attractions for Carlyle is Dante as man: a bitter man exiled from his home town because of fierce political involvement in his world and a man capable of envisioning a great moral scheme underlying it.

Another aspect of extreme importance to Carlyle's appreciation of Dante is the implicit relationship between England's present state in the 1830's and the function of literature in society. Many concerns, similar to Carlyle's, were to be uttered in varying forms throughout the century. Carlyle states in "Characteristics:" "Of Literature, and

its deep-seated, widespread maladies, why speak? Literature is but a branch of Religion, and always participates in its character: however, in our time, it is the only branch that still shows any greenness; and, as some think, must one day become the main stem."[14]

At a time when the importance of poetry in the world was being emphasized and the attempt to replace religion by poetry, or have it maintain the same function, was a commonplace of critical thinking, Dante's importance was proclaimed. His marriage of poetry and religion and the great moral edifice on which his Commedia is sustained appealed to many in the early nineteenth century. Hallam tries to "retrieve" Dante and make him relevant for the present. Carlyle, though assuming the past to be "static," attempts something similar. The need for religious sustenance and the important function that literature might play in that role was due to a great void left by the destruction of old dogmas. Carlyle writes:

> "Once in destroying the False, there was a certain inspiration; but now the Genius of Destruction has done its work, there is now nothing more to destroy. The doom of the Old has long been pronounced, and irrevocable; the Old has passed away: but alas, the New appears not in its stead; the Time is still in pangs of travail with the New." 15

As previously stated, "Characteristics" is, in part, a treatise on the centrality of mystery in relation to the purposefulness of life. It offers much insight into the

role that a true poet or seer plays in revealing it. Carlyle's explication of Dante in Heroes and Hero-Worship is a more precise definition of the poet's part in Carlyle's "world." The poet's insight into the heart of the universe seems even greater in Heroes but this seems to be a matter of emphasis rather than a reworking of general ideas and principles.

Carlyle's theory of the hero was developed as a result of many assumptions about man's place in the divine scheme of the world. In Heroes and Hero-Worship, Dante is considered as one of many different heroes which have a similar relationship to the "Divine Idea" and to other people. It is the historical moment the hero finds himself in that makes one a poet or a man of letters. The understanding of the hero as exemplified in the entire series of lectures on Heroes and Hero-Worship is worth exploring: it is important in understanding the relationship between Dante and the ideas to which he is linked.

The first lecture on "The Hero as Divinity" begins: "We have undertaken to discourse hero for a little on Great Men, their manner of appearance in our world's business, how they have shaped themselves in the world's history, what ideas men formed of them, what work they did;"[16] Carlyle goes on to say that "Universal History, the history of what man has accomplished in this world, is at Bottom the History of the great men who have worked here."[17] What we learn

therefore about all great men, who share a common ability to penetrate into the "heart of the Universe" is the principle of nature. History is a movement towards fulfillment of the "Divine Idea" as spurred by the great men who have some ways of penetrating it.

The hero's relation to the divine is similar, though the changing relationship of the divine to other people rearranges the hero who takes on a new guise: "What in such a time as ours it requires a Prophet or Poet to teach us, namely, the stripping off of those poor undevout wrappages, nomenclatures and scientific hearsays,--this, the ancient earnest soul, as yet unencumbered with these things, did for itself."[18]

What all the heroes have in common is stressed over again in different essays: "For at bottom the Great Man, as he comes from the hand of Nature, is ever the same kind of thing: Odin, Luther, Johnson, Burns; I hope to make it appear that these are all originally of one stuff;"[19]

"Hero can be Poet, Prophet, King, Priest of what you will according to the kind of world he finds himself born into."[20] Thus the historical imperative is determinant in giving the hero his form. But what is the hero?

The hero's most important characteristic is that he penetrates "into the sacred mystery of the universe." Mystery is important in the relation to the Divine plan, and this connection with mystery is reiterated as important to the hero in various ways. The hero's "eye" is "Great

Nature's own eye." The hero is in a sense an intermediary between the people who are to worship him because of his powers and the Divine principle which he penetrates in some fashion. The hero "sees" and "brings light." These are two of the major metaphors which inform the essays on heroes. The hero is distinguished not in kind but in degree from other people who are to follow him. "The imagination, which shudders at the Hell of Dante, is not that the same faculty, weaker in degree, as Dante's own."[21]

Several important corollaries follow from Carlyle's idea about the hero's relation to the "Divine Idea." Carlyle develops a concept of "sincerity" which stems from the hero's orientation to reality. The hero's confrontation with the mystery of the universe allows the hero, because of the contact, no choice but to be sincere. If he is not sincere he cannot be a hero for he has lost that relationship. The major characteristic about Carlyle's view of Dante which is important is that there is a hierarchy of ideas, interconnected throughout all the lectures of Heroes and Hero-Worship, which ultimately stem from Carlyle's assumption of the Divine Idea. The hero, in a sense, is a manner of accommodating the notion of mystery to the "insight" of the Great man. The hero mediates between divine principle and earthly actuality. He coalesces the spiritual with the real. He lives and does his work in the real, though he penetrates into the spiritual.

Past and Present, an important text in understanding Victorian medievalism, reveals many traits of Carlyle's thinking important to his understanding of Dante. In contrast to the modern situation, the medieval world is a place in which a cohesive relationship exists between the "outer sphere of semblance and the inner sphere of fact." Life was guided by principles which were true to unified conceptions of the world. In the modern world, this unity does not exist.

> . . . the inner sphere of Fact, in this present England as elsewhere, differs infinitely from the outer sphere and spheres of Semblance. That the Temporary, here as elsewhere, is too apt to carry it over the Eternal. That he who dwells in the temporary Semblances, and does not penetrate into the eternal Substance, will not answer the Sphinx-riddle of Today, or of any Day. 22

The greater cohesion of the Middle Ages was a common theme in Victorian culture which sustains much of Carlyle's work. In Past and Present, Carlyle reflects on the middle ages and its importance. In the present England, the inner "truths" are lost: "The condition of England, on which many pamphlets are now in the course of publication, and many thoughts unpublished are going on in every reflective head, is justly regarded as one of the most ominous, and withal one of the strangest ever seen in this world."[23] So Past and Present begins. But acknowledging the outer sphere of Appearance is much easier than acknowledging the inner sphere of fact: "Foolish men mistake transitory semblance

for eternal fact, and go astray more and more."[24]

The constant movement in Past and Present between acknowledged problems and important eternal truths which lie hidden from most people shows the importance of the synthesis of the middle ages as an example to modern England. It is acknowledged that Dante is a synthesis of Medievalism and that historically his literary achievement cannot be performed now. It is implied, though, that what can be achieved is an analogous accomplishment with respect to the relation between the modern world and the inner truths. The interest in Medievalism was not merely an exotic fling into history, but a guideline for Victorian culture. Others, also, had tried to point to the Middle Ages and particularly Dante as a prescription for modern society. The unification of Christian belief and art was something strived for by many Victorians. In Past and Present the contrast is explicit and forms the main dialectic of its argument.

The essay on "The Hero as Poet" begins by evaluating the qualities of the poet. The status of the poet is different from the Hero as Divinity or as Prophet. The Poet belongs to all ages and the encroachment that science makes in the world does not alter his function. Moreover, all heroes share a quality in common though what they are to become depends on the time they are born.

The Poet is a discoverer, not an innovator. He, like the Prophet, has "penetrated . . . into the sacred Mystery of the Universe, its being." "The Divine Idea of the World," as Fichte calls it " . . . that which lies at the bottom of Appearance." The "Divine Idea," always there and often overlooked, is always susceptible of discovery. The Poet discovers it and makes it "more impressively" known to those who have forgotten the "Divine Mystery." Because the poet lives and knows this mystery, he is compelled to know it, and cannot help but to be sincere. The fundamental qualities the Poet has are innate. The Poet and Prophet share many qualities. The high distinction of the Poet, his importance, is established by "bounding" him to sincerity. Thus the poet must always partake in the presentation of metaphysical principles. If a poet were capable of insincerity his importance could not be established. Plato banished the artist from his ideal society because his relationship to primary form was perverted. What the artist represented as real was not. Carlyle, whose assumption of the "Divine Idea" shares much with the Platonic notion of forms, finds the Poet's relationship to it quite different. His importance is as mediator. The people need to see through the poet's work or they forget. In much of Carlyle's work there is this duplicity of purpose, need for mediation and the "collapsing" of mediation. (Much of the structure of Sartor is built on this necessity.)

Carlyle distinguished the Vates prophet and the Vates poet in their relationship to the moral and aesthetic spheres. One reveals what we are to do and the other what we are to love. The two "run together" as Carlyle points out, since the beautiful subsumes the good. Thus, the apprehension of beauty implies the apprehension of the moral and the poet's high value, along with the preeminent value of the aesthetic is proclaimed. Carlyle had earlier written that Poetry was a branch of religion.

All people are poets, for they have the capacity, to some degree, of seeing into the secret of the Universe: "A Vein of Poetry exists in the hearts of all men . . . . We are all poets when we read a poem well. The 'imagination that shudders at the Hell of Dante,' is not that the same faculty, weaker in degree, as Dante's own?"[25] The category "Poet" is somewhat arbitrary as "A man that has so much more of the poetic element developed in him as to have become noticeable, will be called Poet by his neighbors."[26] Not establishing a qualitative discontinuity between poets and readers, (heroes and hero worshippers), brings all into potential contact with the "Divine Idea." The greater powers of the poet allow him to play the role of mediator, but that function may be obliterated as a reader, because of his own potential, comes to understand the Divine Idea. Even the greatness of a poet is only a matter of degree. To call a poet a "Universal Poet" is an arbitrary distinction, since all men have touches of the universal. In a rather

curious apprehension about the nature of fame, Carlyle writes "Most Poets are very soon forgotten: but not the noblest Shakespeare or Homer of them can be remembered "forever";--a day comes when he too is not!"[27]

Carlyle tries to distinguish between "true Poetry and true Speech not Poetical," and accepts a formulation made by German critics, though he finds it vague: " . . . the Poet has infinitude in him." Carlyle conceptualizes that the term "musical" comprehends that distinction. " . . . musical, not in word only, but in heart and substance, in all the thoughts and utterances of it, in the whole conception of it . . . ."[28] Carlyle states a common theme: "A musical thought is one spoken by a mind that has penetrated into the inmost heart of the thing."[29] "Musical" becomes metaphor by which thought and the Divine Idea coalesce. It refers to more than just the name for a form which embodies thought. It is rather a mode of thought. An utterance must be musical in "heart and substance" to be poetical.

We can see how radically different Carlyle's conception was from the eighteenth century notion that literature was "what was often said but ne'er so well expressed." What is interesting to note in the relationship of these radically different definitions is their relation to Dante. In the eighteenth century Dante's though was extracted from his poetry. Carlyle accepts the poetic "utterance" as different

in kind from prose thought. Thus it is easier to accept what Dante does without accepting what he believes.

Music appears to be an appropriate metaphor for Carlyle's conception of poetry because it brings together various aspects of his thought into union. The "musical" metaphor connotes an "indirect" relationship between poem or poet and referent. Music might be said to embody some aspect or "truth" of its referent rather than simply pointing to it. In Carlylean terms, music may be seen to see behind the "vestures" of what it refers to. One also associates a harmony which music creates which reflects the harmony between Poetry and the Divine Idea. Implied in Carlyle's definition of Poetry and his reflection on metrical language is the idea that the poem's form or that (music) form of thought is in a similar relationship to the Divine Idea as men are. This is quite different from Coleridge's organic notion of poetry and the poem's relationship to the Secondary Imagination. Coleridge's notion of the poem in its relationship to the Secondary Imagination is paradigmatic. Carlyle's notion of the poem's relation to the Divine Idea is not. Coleridge looks to the poem; Carlyle looks through the poem to the man. Carlyle's major interest in the Divine Comedy is what it reflects about Dante's relation to the Divine Idea. The manner in which Carlyle formulates his views of the Poet creates distance between doctrinal belief and the poet's relationship to the Divine Idea. Carlyle is able to assert

Dante's relationship to the Divine Idea without partaking in his dogmatic Catholic doctrines. This distance establishes the commonality of men despite different dogma and implies a broad tolerance of literary achievements. A poet's relationship to some ideal is important, not his relationship to doctrine. Dante may be appreciated for his spirit rather than Dogma. The broadened outlook towards literature and the disjunction of belief from aesthetic and moral appreciation were important components in the appreciation of Dante.

The relation of the music metaphor to the poet is elaborated. The poet is not the only one who sees things poetically. "All passionate language does of itself become musical." The major importance of music is its depth. "All deep things are Song. It seems somehow the very central essence of us, Song." The "depth" of poetry is referred to. "Poetry, therefore, we will call musical Thought." The Poet is he who thinks in that manner . . . it is a man's sincerity and depth of vision that makes him a Poet. See deep enough, and you see musically."[30] The Poet is defined by his powers of insight, not his craft.

The status of the poet remains constant though his value may seem to have diminished because of an altered relationship with his readers. First we was a God, the God inspired, then a beautiful verse maker. The lower status that seems to be placed on the poet is due to the greater status given to the notion of God, causing a greater

distance between God and the Hero. The worship of great men, because of "Skeptical Dillettantism," makes our "reverence for great men, all crippled, blinded, paralytic as it is, comes out in poor plight, hardly recognizable."[31] The reverence for heroism in Carlyle's own times is confirmed by the judgement bestowed on the two poets he deals with, Dante and Shakespeare: "Dante and Shakespeare are a peculiar Two. They dwell apart, in a kind of royal solitude; none equal, none second to them: in the general feeling of the world, a certain transcendentalism, a glory as of complete perfection, invests these two."[32] Carlyle intimates the relationship between the heroes he writes about and their relevance for his own times. Though the hero changes in form, he has a similar relationship to the "Mystery of the Universe." The Poet is very important in Carlyle's time as Literature has an important function to perform and is perhaps the "greenest" branch of religion.

The information on Dante the person, is a mixture of biographical information, none of which was not available in various sources, along with some general propositions on Dante's character. The observations reveal a keen interest in forming a psychological character sketch. Generalities are formed out of bits of material, most of which seem hardly justified. For instance, a character analysis emerges (supposedly) from Giotto's portrait of Dante at Florence:

> I think it is the mournfulest face that ever was painted from reality; an altogether tragic, heart-affecting face. There is in it, as foundation of it, the softness, tenderness, gentle affection as of a child; but all this is as if congealed into sharp contradiction, into abnegation, isolation, proud hopeless pain. A soft ethereal soul looking-out so stern, implacable, grim-trenchant, as from imprisonment of thick-ribbed ice! Withal it is a silent pain too, a silent scornful one: The lip is curled in a kind of godlike disdain of the thing that is eating-out his heart,--as if it were withal a mean insignificant thing, as if he whom it had power to torture and strangle were greater than it. 33

The actual biography is given only perfunctory treatment touching on Dante's education, Beatrice, and his unhappy marriage: "Dante himself was wedded; but it seems not happily, far from happily. I fancy, the rigorous earnest man, with his keen excitabilities, was not altogether easy to make happy."[34] The miserable life was necessary for the production of the Commedia., "Had he been happy, the world might not have had the Divine Commedy." Dante's exile, its causes and what it reflects about Dante's character is touched on. Carlyle's concern with character is more apparent than his concern with historical fact: "In Dante's Priorship, the Guelph-Ghibelline, Bianchi-Neri, or some other confused disturbance rose to such a height, that Dante, whose party had seemed the stronger, was with his friends cast unexpectedly forth into banishment."[35] Carlyle related Dante's answer to a proposal that he return to Florence. The answer confirms the character portrait

Carlyle has related. "If I cannot return without calling myself guilty, I will never return, nunquam revertar." The "mythologized" account of Dante's bitter exile is recalled. The question posed by Can Grande Della Scala, Dante's Patron, and Dante's reply, were part of the myth of Dante's bitterness in exile. Rossetti would later compose a long and ambitious poem around this bitterness and specific incident: "Is it not strange," Della Scala asked, "that this poor fool should make himself so entertaining; while you, a wise man, sit there day after day, and have nothing to amuse us with at all." Dante's reply, "No, not strange; your Highness is to recollect the Proverb, 'Like to Like.'"[36]

Carlyle's speculations on the relation of Dante's worldly situation to the production of the Commedia leads one to suspect a spiritual kinship between Dante's situation, as Carlyle sees it, and his own situation. The disparity between Dante's unhappy and unsuccessful earthly life and his perception of the Divine Idea are analogous to Carlyle's perception of himself, a fighter against Utilitarianism. Dante's unhappy earthly situation is a prerequisite to his great work in Carlyle's view: "The earthly world had cast him forth, to wander, wander; no living heart to love him now; for his score miseries there was no solace here."[37]

> The deeper naturally would the Eternal
> World impress itself on him; that awful

> reality over which, after all, this Time-world, with its Florences and banishments, only flutters as an unreal shadow . . . . The great soul of Dante, homeless on earth, made its home more and more in that awful other world. 38

The root of this view is the two levels of "reality" that one can understand the earthly, (with its "awful reality") and the world of the "Divine Idea," a world which Dante understood and harmonised with his Divine Commedy, as he burst forth in his "mystical unfathomable song."[39]

In what comes close to being an aesthetic pronouncement on the relation between form and matter Carlyle paraphrases Coleridge, " . . . wherever you find a sentence musically worded, of true rhythm and melody in the words, there is something deep and good in the meaning too. For body and soul, word and idea, go strangely together here as everywhere."[40] The unity of form and matter is consistent aesthetically with the notion of true poetry as song. Song is a union of "true and sincere" perception of the ideal unified with poetic utterance. It is not merely form as an aspect of prosody.

The distinction between "true" and "false song" is not between prose and verse but between a sincere subject united to verse and an "insincere" subject rendered in verse. "Precisely as we love the true song, and are charmed by it as by something divine, so shall we hate the false song, and account it a mere wooden noise, a thing hollow, superfluous, altogether an insincere and offensive thing."[41]

A harmony with the "Divine Idea" renders song a "necessity" and true poetry is therefore an acknowledgment, a betrayal of the man. The "song" reveals an aspect of the man behind it, as interest moves "through" the work to the man. Dante's Commedia is a great work and therefore produced by a great man. The interest in the work is important for its revelation of the man who produced it. Interest in the "aesthetic" object has as its ultimate aim an understanding of the man who produced it.

> I give Dante my highest praise when I say of his 'Divine Comedy' that it is, in all essence, genuinely a Song. In the very sound of it there is a "canto fermo"; it proceeds as by a chant. The language, his "simple" terza rima," doubtless helped him in this . . . . But I add, that it could not be otherwise; for the essence and material of the work are themselves rhythmic. 42

The analysis proceeds from an established hierarchy, originating philosophically from assumptions about the relation of the Divine Idea to the hero and the hero's relation to his work. The "sincere" hero renders his song in the only way possible, given its subject matter, into a poem. Carlyle's pronouncement on the "simple terza rima" reveals how insubstantial his commitment was to the problems of prosody. The implication is that form is in some sense a vehicle for substance.

The musical metaphor as it relates to Dante implies a subordination of parts to whole. This was rarely emphasized

before Carlyle. Previous critics had brought attention to the "wild" parts of the Commedia or at least had focused attention on parts rather than the whole.

> Its depth and rapt passion and sincerity, makes it musical; - go "deep" enough, there is music everywhere. A true inward symmetry, what one calls an architectural harmony, reigns in it, proportionates it all: architectural; which also partakes of the character of music. The three kingdoms, "Inferno, Purgatorio, Paridiso," look out on one another like compartments of a great edifice; a great supernatural, world-cathedral, piled-up there, stern, solemn, awful; 43

The architectural aspect of the poem comes from the sincerity of the author. One causes the other. The Commedia " . . . came deep out of the author's heart of hearts; and it goes deep, and through long generations, into ours."[44] " . . . no work known to me is so elaborated as this of Dante's. It has been as if molten, in the hottest furnace of his soul."[45] Even while writing of the architecture of the work, Carlyle cannot abandon reference to the man. Dante's relationship to the ideal is the cause of the work of art, its form and content. All matters of aesthetics, ultimately refer back to the artist.

Another aspect of the Commedia which stems ultimately from the times and Dante's own character is his intensity, the capacity to penetrate to the essential. "Through all objects he pierces as it were down into the heart of Being. I know nothing so intense as Dante."[46]

Carlyle makes even more explicit the relationship between the man and his work, since the work comes from one's essential faculty: "it is physiognomical of the whole man." The two important characteristics in relation to the work of art are "sincerity" and the capacity to sympathize with the object. Great works come from great men. "A man without worth cannot give you the likeness of any object;"[47] therefore, the relationship between the artist and the work he produces implies the morality of the artist as well. "And how much of 'morality' is in the kind of insight we get of anything; 'The eye seeing in all things what it brought with it the faculty of seeing.'"[48]

Dante's work, which was the "outcome of a great soul" was not only pictorial but displayed great pity and rigour. "I know not in the world an affection equal to that of Dante. It is a tenderness, a trembling, longing, pitying love:"[49] Of Dante's language for Beatrice, Carlyle writes "it is among the purest utterances of affection, perhaps the very purest, that ever came out of a human soul."[50]

Carlyle's interest in the moral aspects of the Commedia are apparent. "Morally great, above all, we must call him; it is the beginning of all."[51] Morality is certainly one criterion for Carlyle's preferences of parts of the Commedia but they are also regulated by an appreciation of the relation between structure and conception.

> I do not agree with much modern criticism, in greatly preferring the

> "Inferno" to the two other parts of the Divine "Commedia." Such preference belongs, I imagine, to our general Byronism of taste, and is like to be a transient feeling. The "Purgatorio" and "Paradiso," especially the former, one would almost say, is even more excellent than it. It is a noble thing, that "Purgatorio," "Mountain of Purification," an emblem of the noblest conception of that age. 52

Carlyle implies the perfection of conception and structure.

> But indeed the Three compartments mutually support one another, are indispensable to one another. The "Paradiso," a kind of inarticulate music to me, is the redeeming side of the "Inferno;" the "Inferno" without it were untrue. All three make up the true Unseen World, as figured in the Christianity of the Middle Ages; a thing for ever memorable, for ever true, in the essence of it, to all men. 53

Though the doctrine was not believed, the essential spirit was. To comprehend beyond the world of fact is an essential aspect of the hero. "The real world, as it is called, and its facts, were but the threshold to an infinitely higher Fact of a World."[54]

The Commedia was a representation of Dante's belief and a "sublime embodiment, or sublimest, of the soul of Christianity." The great achievement of Christianity as reflected in Dante was the "embleming" of the "Law of Human Duty." Paganism had emblemed "chiefly the Operations of Nature."[55] Carlyle's chief concern here is with the

substance of Dante's Commedia, its moral value, what it teaches about human nature, and how these ideas are embodied in a work of art.

In a brief exposition on fame as interpreted by the "clothes-philosophy," Carlyle distinguishes the lasting from the fleeting. What is uttered by the inmost soul "is the same yesterday, today and forever . . . . All cathedrals, pontificalities, brass and stone, and outer arrangement never so lasting, are brief in comparison to an unfathomable song like this:"[56]

In responding to the question "the uses of Dante?", Carlyle finds recourse to stress one of his important doctrines. The notion of Dante and his utility is rejected with the "appropriate" disdain for utilitarian "terminology" though Dante's value is reiterated. "Dante speaks to the noble, the pure and great, in all times and places." The essay on Dante ends with an emphatic stress on the Carlylean conception of work and anti-self-consciousness. While Dante's function in a modern world has been implied, the explicit doctrines on which the essay terminates unveil the ever-present tendency to subordinate consideration of Dante's achievement to the key "metaphysical" doctrines of Carlyle's earlier writings. The form is metaphorically revealing of intention. The end of the essay sounds like Carlyle in Sartor Resartus

> But, at any rate, it is not by what is called their effect on the world by what

> we can judge of their effect there, that a man and his work are measured. Effect? Influence? Utility? Let a man do his work; the fruit of it is the case of Another than he. It will grow its own fruit; . . . . "Let us honour the great empire of Silence, once more! The boundless treasury which we do not jingle in our pockets, or count up and present before men! It is perhaps, of all things, the usefulest for each of us to do, in these loud times." 57

Carlyle's essay on Shakespeare is a counterpart to the Dante essay and forms the complete discussion of the Hero-Poet. Philosophical premises of the two essays are similar; a work of art reflects the artist and his relationships to the "idea of Nature." This dominant idea is augmented by an assumption which may have come from Carlyle's encounter with Dante. " . . . a thoroughly immoral man could not know anything at all! To know a thing, what we can call knowing, a man must first love the thing, sympathize with it, that is to be virtuously related to it."[58]

The two poets form a counterpart, Dante embodying musically the "Religion of the Middle Ages," and Shakespeare the "Outer Life of Our Europe." The categorization is philosophical, as it implies an ideal of which the two poets represent interpretations of different forms which lie beyond the empirical. The poets represent two different world views, or in the context of Carlyle's understanding, two aspects of a singular idea. "Dante has given us the

Faith or Soul; Shakespeare, in a not less noble way, has given us the Practice or body."[59]

In a comparison of the two, Carlyle nominates Shakespeare as the greater. The justification is in the man, though a sense of rationalistic pride, evident throughout the essay, must not be overlooked. Regarding their personal lives:

> Yet I call Shakespeare greater than Dante, in that he fought truly, and did conquer. Doubt it not, he had his own sorrows: Those Sonnets of his will even testify expressly in what deep waters he had waded, and swum struggling for his life;--as what man like him ever failed to have to do. 60

Many critics have cited Carlyle's admonition to the writers of his age to write prose and not poetry. This antagonism to poetry finds no philosophical justification in the lecture on the hero-poet. Indeed Poetry is given not only justification but a profound and important philosophical mission. The essay on Dante derives its key ideas and "metaphysical" presuppositions from earlier works of the Eighteen-thirties. In parts of Sartos Resartus and the essays "Characteristics" and "On the State of German Literature" are found the key conceptual categorizations, ultimately derivable from German idealism of later works including the essay on Dante. The notion of a reality not visible "beyond" the physical and the possibility of understanding in some way the "Divine Idea" hidden there,

form the basis of the philosophical discussion of Heroes and Hero-Worship. An understanding of Carlyle's reception of Dante must comprehend the notion of the hero, a generic classification extrinsic to only the poet. A conjunction of the notion of the hero and the poet's work reveals the capacity of the poet to act as intermediary between the "Divine Idea" and those who worship him. The "hero" and the "hero worshippers" meet on a common ground; they join in comprehending the "Divine Idea" on different levels. The difference in understanding is quantitative, not qualitative.

The primary interest in Dante's work is in what is revealing about Dante the man. Discussion of a text for Carlyle is ultimately revealing of motive: interest in the man and his moral qualities. By delineating stylistic qualities of the Commedia, such as tone and mood, and by demonstrating various incidents in Dante's life, many of them "mythologized" by the Romantics, a portrait of Dante the man emerges.

The essay on Dante in Heroes forms the basis of an argument against utilitarianism and aestheticism. The Commedia informs its readers of a "vision" or "impression" of the "Divine Idea," rendering it forth musically, but it does not perform any specific function. The poem enhances one's culture by "providing" or "embodying" an ideal of life. The concept of function is further dissociated from the experience of the poet by the Carlylean notion of

"unself-consciousness" which distances the poets work from any utilitarian motivation. Dante and Shakespeare carried on their work without self-consciousness and they were, what they could not help but be when confronted with the "ideal" notion of life, sincere.

Carlyle's formulations imply the "ideal" is grasped by the poet and not by the utilitarian. As the "ideal" is given greater philosophical importance than the immediate, the poet is indeed a necessary constituent of culture. In response to the tendency to insulate poetry from ideas and problems, Carlyle pointed to the high mission of poetry, its philosophical and moral substance. For Carlyle, Dante was the focus of these divergent interests.

Notes

[1] Thomas Carlyle, Sartor Resartus, Vol. I of Works (London, 1896; rpt. New York: AMS Press, 1969), pp. 153-54.

[2] Carlyle, Critical and Miscellaneous Essays, Vol. XXVI of Works, pp. 51-52.

[3] Carlyle, Vol. XXVI, Essays, p. 56.

[4] Carlyle, Vol. XXVI, Essays, p. 58.

[5] Carlyle, Critical and Miscellaneous Essays, Vol. XXVIII of Works, p. 3.

[6] Carlyle, Vol. XXVIII, Essays, p. 5.

[7] Carlyle, Vol. XXVIII, Essays, p. 29.

[8] Carlyle, Vol. XXVIII, Essays, p. 12.

[9] Carlyle, Vol. XXVIII, Essays, pp. 13-14.

[10] Carlyle, Vol. XXVIII, Essays, p. 14.

[11] Carlyle, Vol. XXVIII, Essays, p. 14.

[12] Carlyle, Vol. XXVIII, Essays, p. 15-16.

[13] Carlyle, Vol. XXVIII, Essays, p. 15.

[14] Carlyle, Vol. XXVIII, Essays, p. 23.

[15] Carlyle, Vol. XXVIII, Essays, p. 32.

[16] Carlyle, Heroes and Hero-Worship, Vol. V of Works, p. 1.

[17] Carlyle, Vol. V, Heroes, p. 1.

[18] Carlyle, Vol. V, Heroes, p. 9.

[19] Carlyle, Vol. V, Heroes, p. 43.

[20] Carlyle, Vol. V, Heroes, p. 78.

[21] Carlyle, Vol. V, Heroes, p. 82.

[22] Carlyle, Vol. X, Past and Present, p. 13.

[23] Carlyle, Vol. X, Past and Present, p. 1.

[24] Carlyle, Vol. X, Past and Present, p. 8.

[25] Carlyle, Vol. V, Heroes, p. 82.

[26] Carlyle, Vol. V, Heroes, p. 82.

[27] Carlyle, Vol. V, Heroes, p. 82.

[28] Carlyle, Vol. V, Heroes, p. 83.

[29] Carlyle, Vol. V, Heroes, p. 83.

[30] Carlyle, Vol. V, Heroes, pp. 83-84.

[31] Carlyle, Vol. V, Heroes, p. 84.

[32] Carlyle, Vol. V, Heroes, p. 85.

[33] Carlyle, Vol. V, Heroes, p. 86.

[34] Carlyle, Vol. V, Heroes, p. 87.

[35] Carlyle, Vol. V, Heroes, p. 88.

[36] Carlyle, Vol. V, Heroes, p. 89.

[37] Carlyle, Vol. V, Heroes, p. 89.

[38] Carlyle, Vol. V, Heroes, p. 89.

[39] Carlyle, Vol. V, Heroes, p. 89.

[40] Carlyle, Vol. V, Heroes, p. 90.

[41] Carlyle, Vol. V, Heroes, p. 91.

[42] Carlyle, Vol. V, Heroes, p. 91.

[43] Carlyle, Vol. V, Heroes, p. 91.

[44] Carlyle, Vol. V, Heroes, p. 91.

[45] Carlyle, Vol. V, Heroes, p. 92.

[46] Carlyle, Vol. V, Heroes, p. 92.

[47] Carlyle, Vol. V, Heroes, p. 93.

[48] Carlyle, Vol. V, Heroes, p. 94.

[49] Carlyle, Vol. V, Heroes, pp. 94-95.

[50] Carlyle, Vol. V, Heroes, p. 95.

[51] Carlyle, Vol. V, Heroes, p. 95.

[52] Carlyle, Vol. V, Heroes, p. 95.

[53] Carlyle, Vol. V, Heroes, p. 96.

[54] Carlyle, Vol. V, Heroes, pp. 96-97.

[55] Carlyle, Vol. V, Heroes, p. 98.

[56] Carlyle, Vol. V, Heroes, p. 99.

[57] Carlyle, Vol. V, Heroes, p. 100.

[58] Carlyle, Vol. V, Heroes, p. 107.

[59] Carlyle, Vol. V, Heroes, p. 101.

[60] Carlyle, Vol. V, Heroes, p. 108.

Arthur Hallam

The corpus of Arthur Hallam's critical writings is rather limited: There are seven essays and reviews in Motter's edition published along with three brief biographical sketches. This relatively small output, however, deals in great part with Dante as poet whose influence would be beneficial to Victorians in formulating an aesthetic for "modern" times. Hallam's interest extends beyond the critical and speculative, and he refers to Dante as exemplar of poetic technique and philosophical substance. At the time of his death in 1833 Hallam was at work on a translation of the Vita Nuova; much of the verse had already been translated. These works form an important component in the ever growing popularity and interest in Dante, and are examples of Victorian aesthetic sensibility in the 1830's. Reacting against the implied threat from science, Hallam championed the notion that poetry could be a moral "guide." Poetry could be meaningful to those of Hallam's generation if "beauty," a predominant motive for writing poetry, could be fused with "substance." One need to look to The Commedia and Vita Nuova as examples. Hallam there anticipates the resistance to both aestheticism and utilitarianism,

important themes in the emergence of Dante as a central figure in criticism.

The essay for which Hallam is best known to the modern reader of Victorian literature is "On Some of the Characteristics of Modern Poetry." Critics have often pointed out its concern with modernism and its "prefigurement" of theoretical concerns of importance to the "aesthetes" of the latter period of Victorian culture. Yeats asserts in "Art and Ideas," "When I began to write I avowed for my principles those of Arthur Hallam in his essay upon Tennyson."[1] Norman Friedman indicates the importance of the essay to later generations of poets. Hallam's doctrines were congenial to their own presuppositions about the functions and uses of poetry. Friedman writes,

> With a slight change of style and in the reference to poets, it could be imagined to have been written only yesterday under the same title, so modern are its basic ideas. 2

In a note to the essay, Houghton and Stange state that the essay defines the two major schools of Victorian poetics:

> The 'Romantic' for a subjective poetry of personal experience... and the 'Classical' taste for an objective poetry dealing with 'palpable interests of ordinary life' and emphasizing religious, moral and political ideas. 3

Hallam's views on Dante in relation to this categorizing might pose some problem, for Hallam appears to place him

within the framework of both schemes in different essays; but Hallam's views are somewhat more complex than pronouncements about his modernism have implied. A profound relationship exists between the "beautiful" as Hallam understands it and the moral. This relationship, which anticipates aspects of the Pre-Raphaelites, is the context that best illuminates what Hallam has to say about Dante. He proposes not a dissociation between beauty and morality but a profound relationship between them. A close reading of the essay reveals the importance of Hallam's aesthetic doctrine, particularly in the way it resists many implications of both Utilitarianism and Aestheticism. This resistance defines much of the Victorian interest in Dante. The essay maintains for poetry its "morality" and "usefulness" and shows how beauty is intertwined with morality. Hallam tries to show how "beautiful" poetry can be "moral." The form of the essay is revealing of its meaning. Particularly important is Hallam's intention in the essay, stated explicitly at the beginning. While Hallam's essay is certainly, as has often been pointed out, a reflection on the reflective and philosophical aspects of poetry and their relation to the "beautiful" or sensuous aspect, the essay's structure is an important clue to modifying what many critics have said about the essay. The intention of the essay, as Hallam states, is to explain why Tennyson's poems have not achieved popularity. The essay

begins and ends with observations on the general question of popularity, while it specifically discusses Tennyson's 1830 Volume of poems. Hallam believes that Tennyson's poems are unpopular because of the complex manner in which they treat "beauty" and "morality."

The essay begins by attacking Mr. Montgomery's "Oxford" which appears to be heading toward extinction. Taking exception to Mr. Montgomery's assessment of his own predicament, "it is the fate of genius...to be unpopular," Hallam is "disposed to agree with him as to its abstract correctness." Thus the essay announces itself as a discussion of popularity, and, as we are to discern from the following line, of the relation between popularity and poetic value. "Indeed, the truth which it involves seems to afford the only solution of so curious a phenomenon as the success, partial and transient though it be, of himself, and others of his calibre."[4] Thus, the main argument of the essay is revealed. Mr. Montgomery's "miserable" magazine is popular because it is not the work of genius. Popularity and genius are opposed. Further elaboration on the general question of genius and its relation to popularity is given by reflecting on Wordsworth's proposition on the matter, which met with great resistence at the time of its utterance.

> When Mr. Wordsworth, in his celebrated Preface to the Lyrical Ballads, asserted that immediate or rapid popularity was not the

> test of poetry, great was the consternation and clamour among those farmers of public favour, the established critics. Never had so audacious an attack been made upon their undoubted privileges and hereditary charter of oppression. 5

Despite the clamour, the proposition about popularity prevailed.

> It was the truth, and it prevailed; not only against the exasperation of that Hydra, the Reading Public, whose vanity was hurt, and the blustering of its keepers, whose delusion was exposed, but even against the false glosses and narrow apprehensions of the Wordsworthians themselves. 6

The introduction of Wordsworth is appropriate for Hallam is about to use the doctrine he espouses as a judgement against Wordsworth's poetry, just as he had use Montgomery's pronouncements against Montgomery. The contrast between Wordsworth's poetry and Tennyson's forms a major part of the argument to follow. In light of the Introduction, the exegesis of Tennyson's poems may be seen as an attempt to justify their value by the very virtue of their unpopularity. To put it differently: Tennyson's unpopularity is an attack on critics and the reading public. Thus, the important distinction made between "reflective" and "beautiful" poetry is motivated in this essay by the desire to comprehend popularity within a scheme beneficial to the notion of value in Tennyson's poetry. The end of the essay reiterates that the argument has been framed as a discussion of popularity.

> In presenting this young poet to the public as one not studious of instant popularity, nor likely to obtain it, we may be thought to play the part of a fashionable lady who deludes her refractory mate into doing what she chooses by pretending to wish the exact contrary. 7

The essay ends,

> We confess, indeed we never knew an instance in which the theoretical abjurers of popularity have shewn themselves very reluctant to admit its actual advances. So much virtue is not, perhaps, in human nature; and if the world should take a fancy to buy up these poems, in order to be revenged on the 'Englishman's Magazine,' who knows whether even we might not disappoint its malice by a cheerful adaptation of our theory to 'existing circumstances?' 8

Hallam asserts that the value of that poetry whose "predominant motive" is "the desire of beauty," has a great commitment to morality and substance, its unpopularity derived from the complex nature of the relationship of beauty to morality (and other "substantive" concerns), not to its dissociation. Hallam's essay on Italian literature stresses the philosophical content of Dante; "On some of the Characteristics of Modern Poetry" implies the subordination of those qualities to beauty. Thus Dante figures in both essays as exemplar of different aspects of one problem. The stress on Dante's "substance" in the essay on Italian literature and the emphasis on Dante's sound in the Tennyson essay are not paradoxical considerations or pronouncements

but complementary assertions. The need to stress both reveals metaphorically one of the characteristic dilemmas in which Dante was to play a great part: The need to preserve literature's independence from utilitarian concerns (its need to have beauty as predominant motive) and the need to preserve the importance of literature by showing its moral and philosophical content. Both tendencies anticipate critical and poetic reactions to Dante in the latter part of the century.

Hallam makes a distinction between types of poetry which becomes the basis for his major points about modern poetry, its characteristics, and its popularity; poetry which is reflective and that whose predominant motive is the desire of beauty. Expressions of poetry which are "acute or profound" are probably not beautiful. Beauty and reflection take on slightly different connotations throughout the essay. The reflective mode takes a "reasoning turn," the desire for beauty finds "congruity of the sentiments" to which ideas refer. The former manner of thinking results in thoughts piled in "a rhetorical battery." One mode convinces, the other enraptures. This reflective poetry is rhetorical and aims at convincing, while "beautiful" poetry, which appeals to the senses and enraptures, arranges its materials in a pattern dictated by feeling. Hallam is concerned with how the artist expresses himself and the effect of his poetry on an audience. The poem, therefore,

reflects how the author thinks. This concept is used to sever the reflective from poetry altogether. Wordsworth is an example: "much has been said by him which is good as philosophy, powerful as rhetoric, but false as poetry."[9]

Hallam proceeds by making finer distinctions within the beautiful type of poetry, distinctions which show the different philosophical outlooks and temperaments that the beautiful can accommodate. In reflecting on two true poets, Shelley and Keats, one is able to see how two vastly different temperaments were able to achieve "true" poetry. In viewing what is common to those poets whose "predominant motive is beauty" and in seeing how different they can be, one is able to understand how Dante, whose morality is stressed by Hallam elsewhere, is nevertheless a poet whose predominant motive is beauty.

> Shelley and Keats were indeed opposite genius; that of the one was vast, impetuous, and sublime, the other seemed to be 'fed with honeydew' and to have 'drunk the milk of Paradise." . . . Shelley . . . has no patience for minute beauties unless they can be massed into a general effect of grandeur. On the other hand, the tenderness of Keats cannot sustain a lofty flight; he does not generalize or allegorize Nature; his imagination works with few symbols and reposes willingly on what is given freely. 10

What Hallam finds important and similar about Shelley and Keats is that "they are both poets of sensation rather than reflection." What Hallam means by sensation is probably

also what he means by beauty. The poets of sensation are those whose predominant motive is the desire for beauty.

> Susceptible of the slightest impulse from external nature, their fine organs trembled into emotion at colors, and sounds, and movements, unperceived or unregarded by duller temperaments. Rich and clear were their perceptions of visible forms; full and deep their feelings of music. So vivid was the delight attending the simple exertions of eye and ear, that it became mingled more and more with their trains of active thought, and tended to absorb their whole being into the energy of sense. Other poets seek for images to illustrate their conceptions; these men had no need to seek; they lived in a world of images; for the most important and extensive portion of their life consisted in those emotions which are immediately conversant with the sensation. 11

Their mode of perception has its implications for their art.

> This powerful tendency of imagination to a life of immediate sympathy with the external universe, is not nearly so liable to false views of art as the opposite disposition of purely intellectual contemplation. 12

To dispel the notion that the poetry of sensation is lacking in "substance" or has forfeited other areas such as ethics, or metaphysics, Hallam explains the complex relationship that exists between "beauty" or "sensation" and these other qualities. The notion is far from the concept of "art for art's sake" and certainly does not dispense with the idea of the "good" at the expense of beauty. This complexity explains how Dante's ethics are considered and how the

Pre-Raphaelites, particularly Rossetti, were to view Dante later. Far from embracing beauty at the expense of other areas of human concern, as proposed for instance in Buchanan's "The Fleshly School of Poetry," Rossetti's poetry may be seen as a plan for embracing spiritual qualities through a poetry of sensation. Rossetti might have embraced Hallam's analysis of the relationship:

> For where beauty is constantly passing before 'that inward eye, which is the bliss of solitude;' where the soul seeks it as a perpetual and necessary refreshment to the sources of activity and intuition; where all the other sacred ideas of our nature, the idea of good, the idea of perfection, the idea of truth, are habitually contemplated through the medium of this predominant mood, so that they assume its colour, and are subject to its peculiar laws, there is little danger that the ruling passion of the whole mind will cease to direct its creative operations, or the energetic principle of love for the beautiful sink, even for a brief period, to the level of a mere notion in the understanding. 13

The development of the "poetic spirit" is important. Those who are tempted to wander from the cultivation of this "aesthetic" spirit, even if they are guided by "elevated" passions, are misled. "Not the gross and elevated passions, of our nature, but the elevated and less separable desires, are the dangerous enemies which misguide the poetic spirit in its attempts at self cultivation."[14] It is the poets who are effected by nature in a manner in which it is difficult

to assess cause to, which have a most powerful effect on the reader.

> We are therefore decidely of opinion that the heights and depths of art are most within the reach of those who have received from nature the 'fearful and wonderful' constitution we have described, whose poetry is a sort of magic, producing a number of impressions, too multiplied, too minute, and too diversified to allow of our tracing them to their causes, because just such as the effect, even so boundless and so bewildering, produced on their imaginations by the real appearance of nature. 15

Hallam has stated the conditions under which a poetry of "sensation" is able to have moral and philosophical substance and has set the conditions by which poetry's popularity may be considered in relation to its value. The complexity which the new poetry produced was a reason for "the new school's" unpopularity.

> How should they be popular, whose senses told them a richer and ampler tale than most men could understand, and who constantly expressed, because they constantly felt sentiments of exquisite pleasure or pain, which most men were not permitted to experience? The public very naturally derided them as visionaries, and gibbeted in terrorem those inaccuracies of diction occasioned sometimes by the speed of their conceptions, sometimes by the inadequacy of language to their peculiar conditions of thought. 16

Therefore there is a disparity between the "new poets" of sensation and their fame. The public is not severed from

the poet, for the roots of art "are in daily life and experience." But the reader must make a special effort to follow the poet's mind. It is this exertion which readers are not likely to make which makes the "truer" poets less popular:

> For since the emotions of the poet, during composition, follow a regular law of association, it follows that to accompany their progress up to the harmonious prospect of the whole, and to perceive the proper dependence of every step on that which proceeded, it is absolutely necessary to start from the same point, i.e. clearly to apprehend that leading sentiment of the poet's mind, by their conformity to which the host of suggestions are arranged. 17

It is "physically possible" to make this exertion for every man has the "simple elements" of which art is the sublimation. However, it may be "normally impossible" to attain the author's vision on account of the readers' habits and prejudices. The most fashionable poems, therefore, are those which are "mere rhetoric," not pure compositions, and those which have as their subject the "usual" passions of the heart. It is not ideas which "corrupt" poetry but it is accession to their predominance which leads to rhetoric and "false" poetry. "Beautiful" poems have ideas too, but one must make a greater effort to arrive at them. The major reason for this discourse on fame is to show that it is Tennyson's type of poetry which has not made him popular.

Hallam states that certain easily accessible subjects arouse an inferior power of composition. How does one explain, than, the pleasure and popularity derived from Shakespeare, Dante and Homer? For

> those eminent spirits find no difficulty in conveying to common apprehensions their lofty sense and profound observation of Nature. They keep no aristocratic state, apart from the sentiments of society at large; they speak to the hearts of all, and by the magnetic force of their conceptions, elevate inferior intellects into a higher and purer atmosphere . . .
>
> Geniuses of the most universal order, and assigned by destiny to the most propitious era of a nation's literary development, have a clearer and a larger access to the minds of their compatriots than can ever open to those who are circumscribed by less fortunate circumstances. 18

Dante thus is universal, "speaks to the heart of all," and communicated to those of his own era. Any claim for Dante in Victorian times must, therefore, be based on his universality.

Hallam relates the general propositions about poetics to his own time, finding a particular problem in the manner of the Romantic reaction against eighteenth-century rationalism. A similar argument appears in the essay on Italian literature in which Dante is recommended as exemplar to Victorian poets. Poetry has been weakened by "the French contagion and the heresies of the Popian school," but the reaction resulted in other problems.

> With the close of the last century came an era of reaction, an era of painful struggle to bring our over civilized condition of thought into union with the fresh productive spirit that brightened the morning of our literature. But repentence is unlike innocence; the laborious endeavor to restore has more complicated methods of action than the freedom of untainted nature. 19

A dissociation has occurred between "the energies of Sensitive, of Reflective, of Passionate emotions, which in former times were intermingled, and derived from mutual support an extensive empire over the feelings of men, were now restrained within separate spheres of agency."[20] As each individual component function strove to "reproduce the regular power which the whole had once enjoyed," melancholy and a "habit of seeking relief in idiosyncrasies rather than community of interest" had ensued. Though in modern life the poet may find new areas of interest, he will not necessarily be surpassed. "The French Revolution may be a finer theme than the war of Troy; but it does not so evidently follow that Homer is to follow his superior."[21] This sounds very much like a defense of classicism and refers to elements in defense of neo-classicism; the subject matter of poetry should partake of man's general nature. It also reminds one of Arnold's 1853 Preface, in which the poet's own "Empodocles" is attacked, not because of its subject matter, but because the poem does not find a vent in action.

Poetry makes its greatest appeal, therefore, not through its subject matter or by depicting the modern situation, but through its appeal to man's nature. This aesthetic forms a general basis by which Dante may be accepted, though he does not treat modern situations. Yet the essay on Italian literature recommends Dante's authority, though not specific subject matter, to the Victorian poets of his time. Perhaps the most important appeal Dante makes to the early Victorian writers is showing how the dissociation in art, brought by the Romantic reaction against the eighteenth century, may be brought back into cohesion. This appeal, this cohesion, is essential to the early Victorians. Whereas the major Romantics had stressed the dramatic, the episodic, as reflected in the great interest in particular cantos and episodes of the Commedia, the Victorians were more likely to think of the Commedia as a unity or at least as unified by a cohesive world view. Thus the appeal of Shakespeare, Milton and Dante, after a phase of "idiosyncratic" interest to the Romantics, began to emerge in the wholeness of their world view to the Victorians. The major problem of modern poetry, for which Dante in the essay on Italian literature is recommended as exemplar, is that ". . . modern poetry in proportion to its depth and truth is likely to have little immediately authority over public opinion."[22] The argument, it must be remembered, has not strayed from its concern with

fame. The "idiosyncratic" and the easily acceptable have more adherents than the beautiful. If the "beautiful" results from a great genius at a propitious moment, the result may be a universal appeal.

A brief summary of excellences Hallam finds in Tennyson reveals the criteria which he finds necessary for great poetry: luxuriance of imagination, power of embodying himself in ideal characters, vivid, picturesque dilineation of objects, variety of lyrical measures, and elevated habits of thought. Most of the criteria are aesthetic and philosophical. The fifth, coming closest to what Hallam recommends readers to find in Dante, approximates the major concern for modern poetry in the essay on Italian literature. Though even this consideration is qualified, to make it more aesthetic, a concern with thought manifests itself in comments on the poems, as they are careful to stress the importance of the predominant idea. Although Hallam does not stress the importance of particular doctrine, he does imply the complexity involved in dissociating the sense from the meaning. In "Recollections of the Arabian Nights" Hallam declares,

> Amidst all the varied luxuriance of the sensations described, we are never permitted to lose sight of the idea which gives unity to this variety, and by the recurrence of which, as a sort of mysterious influence, at the close of every stanza, the mind is wrought up, with consummate art, to the final disclosure. 23

Hallam is careful to discuss meaning as well as the appeal the poem makes to the senses. Commenting on the Ballad of Oriana:

> The last line, with its dreamy wildness, reveals the design of the whole. It is transferred, if we mistake not, from an old ballad (a freedom of immemorial usage with ballad-mongers, as our readers doubtless know) but the merit lies in the abrupt application of it to the leading sentiment so as to flash upon us in a few little words a world of meaning, and to consecrate the passion that was beyond cure or hope by resigning it to the accordance of inanimate Nature, who, like man, has her tempests and occasions of horror, but august in their largeness of operations, awful by their dependence on a fixed and perpetual necessity. 24

Hallam finds that poems in the middle of the volume

> display more unrestrained fancy and are less evidently proportioned to their ruling ideas than those which we think of later date. Yet in "The Ode to Memory"--the only one which we have the poet's authority for referring to early life--there is a majesty of expressions, united to a truth of thought, which almost confounds our preconceived distinctions. 25

The comments on the 1830 poems consistently reflect on the ideas they express and their relation to the modern reader.

> The 'Confessions of a Second-rate, Sensitive Mind' are full of deep insight into human nature, and into those particular trials which are sure to beset men who think and feel for themselves at this epoch of social development. 26

Although stressing the importance of ideas, Hallam makes certain to reiterate his thesis that ideas should not be in the foreground. Reflecting on the poem "Adeline" he asks, immediately after the poem itself has been printed, "Is not this beautiful?" This is the primary concern of the poet; this beauty merely shows how meaning "locates" itself in the poem. "We could expatiate on the deep meaning of this poem . . ." For Hallam, if the poem is beautiful, the meaning is "deep." To reiterate the thesis of the relationship of ideas to the other elements of the poem Hallam writes:

> Mr. Tennyson's mode of 'rating' is different from ours. He may esteem none worthy of the first order who has not attained a complete universality of thought, and such trustful reliance on a principle of repose which lies beyond the war of conflicting opinions, that the grand ideas "qui planent sans cesse au dessus de l'humanite" cease to affect him with bewildering impulses of hope and fear. We have not space to enter further into this topic; but we should not despair of convincing Mr. Tennyson that such a position of intellect would not be the most elevated, nor even the most conducive to perfection of art. 27

But though this is not the primary consideration, it is necessary, and a poetry lacking in a fundamental framework is not great poetry. Dante, as Hallam perceives his coherent world view, may be seen as affecting this framework.

In the discussion of the "Ballad of Oriana" we have a clue as to how a poem or poetic type of the past can have

influence on a poem of the present. The comment is important for understanding Hallam's comments on Dante, for in the essay on Italian literature the specific manner in which Dante may be influential is not explicit.

> Let us draw near and read 'The Ballad of Oriana.' We know no more happy seizure of the antique spirit in the whole compass of our literature; yet there is no foolish self desertion, no attempt at obliterating the present, but everywhere a full discrimination of how much ought to be yielded and how much retained. The author is well aware that the art of one generation cannot become that of another by any will or skill; but the artist may transfer the spirit of the past, making it a temporary form for his own spirit, and so effect, by idealizing power, a new and legitimate combination. 28

It is in this sense that Hallam seems to be recommending Dante, and also in this sense that the later Victorians, particularly Rossetti, were to view Dante; not as escape, but as a way to vary one's immersion in the present.

Hallam's concern is with the present predicament and the way in which literature is to be relevant, not merely for men's entertainment, but in a manner which clarifies his involvement with the ideas and predicaments of his own time. The relation Hallam recommends with Dante and past literature, to the modern reader, is with its spirit, not its dogmatic authority.

"Oriana" seems to be the kind of poem Hallam wished Victorians to write. It has something in common with medieval Italian poetry.

> The characters that distinguish the language of our lyrical from that of our epic ballads have never yet been examined with the accuracy they deserve. But, beyond question, the class of poems which in point of harmonious combination 'Oriana' most resembles, is the Italian. Just thus the meditative tenderness of Dante and Petrarch is embodied in the clear, searching notes of Tuscan song. These mighty masters produce two-thirds of their effect by "sound." Not that they sacrifice sense to sound, but that sound conveys their meaning where words would not. There are innumerable shades of fine emotion in the human heart, especially when the senses are keen and vigilant, which are too subtle and too rapid to admit of corresponding phrases. The understanding takes no definite note of them; how then can they leave signatures in language? Yet they exist; in plenitude of being and beauty they exist; and in music they find a medium through which they pass from heart to heart. The tone becomes the sign of the feeling; and they reciprocally suggest each other. 29

The subordination of sense to beauty is one sign of the greatness of beauty. The proposition, therefore, that Dante communicates through sense is not contradictory to the reflection made on the essay on Italian poetry. There, the meaning is emphasized, here, the complex manner in which the meaning is portrayed. The meaning is not simply embodied by the verse; it is achieved through it. Dante is not only an example of what poetry should be about, but also how it is to do its business. To arrive at meaning one is to

understand how it is embodied in the tone of the work, as well as what is stated in the words. Our sense of the tone, our sensitivity to the sound of the poem, is therefore a prerequisite to understanding the meaning of the poem.

The essay is of fundamental importance in understanding Hallam's reaction to Dante. Different in stress, though not contradicting the postulates found in other essays, these observations about Tennyson's poetry reveal Hallam's concern with the breaking down of modern poetry into three distinct components, once united: the Sensitive, the Reflective, and Passionate Emotion. Separating these components has resulted in a poetry of idiosyncrasy which has no authority with its readers. In short, there are many indications of the importance Dante occupied in dealing with the crisis poetry was in. Hallam's major concern is with his own time, and the poetic form of expression appropriate for it. The consciousness of the present, its problems, and the solutions to those problems were of major concern to the Victorians.

Hallam looked to the past with neither nostalgia nor an interest in resurrecting it for its own sake, but hoping to regain from it what may have been of use in dealing with contemporary problems. Hallam's position may be viewed as a theoretical explication of Rossetti's position regarding Dante; it would be simplistic to view Rossetti's encounter with Dante as a form of escapism. It should not be

forgotten that the essay explicitly states that it is about the relation of poetic value to fame. In making a distinction between the poetry of reflection and contemplation, Hallam is able to explain how Tennyson is unpopular because of the very complexity in which his ideas are intermingled with sensation. It is as an essay on poetic fame in which various ideas coalesce to form cohesive propositions on poetics. In clarifying Hallam's aesthetic position, the essay aids in understanding the major attention Hallam gives to Dante in the essay on Italian literature.

"Oration, on the Influence of Italian Works of Imagination on the Same Class of Compositions in England" was delivered at Trinity College, Cambridge, on Commemoration Day, December 16, 1831. An important statement on the value of Italian literature for England as manifested in the past, it also looks to the future while discussing the importance and relevance of Dante. As the title indicates, the essay is a challenge to the assumed "insularity" of a literature. Macaulay's lectures were but one instance of such an assumed "insularity." Hallam considers historical needs as an important determinant in literature and is able to propose Dante's literary achievement as an exemplar for early Victorian England. Dante is particularly important in supplying a "substance" to a literature trying to construct itself after the

problems the Romantics faced when they rejected eighteenth-century notions of poetry. This theme, also stated in the essay on Tennyson, is only one of the many points of reference which they share. The major propositions about history and poetry are consistent, though there is a distinctly different emphasis in the two essays. The essay on Tennyson, in its consideration of fame, tries to show the superiority of the poetry of "sensation" over the poetry of reflection, distinguishing poetry from other intellectual pursuits, such as philosophy. The essay on Italian literature, while not rejecting these notions, emphasizes the lack of "substance" in contemporary poetry. Indeed, the discussion of Tennyson's poems had been greatly in terms of substance, and it is useful to think of the two essays as complements in forming a fully articulated "aesthetic."

Hallam begins the essay with a general discussion of the causes for viewing ones own national literature as insulated from influence. The prime factors result from the proclivities of our own nature: the "remarkable habit" of preferring the simple to the complex. Pride, however, accounts for the major reason, for in assuming ones own literature to be independent of influence one is flattered rather than being forced to accept the insignificance that cause and dependence imply. This departure from the limited explication which studies of English literature that did not

consider other European influences assumed to be sufficient, signals an important point in the appreciation of Dante and justifies the serious and "pragmatic" look at Italian literature. Hallam prepares the way to look at Dante, not only as a figure interesting in and of himself but as offering a guide to Victorians. The major basis of the argument is historical. In effect, the essay is an early exercise in comparative literature. In "The Crisis of Comparative Literature" Wellek states the merit of the comparative method. The opening of Hallam's essay accords with the merits as Wellek sees them. "Comparative Literature has the immense merit of combating the false isolation of national literary histories: it is obviously right in its conception of a coherent Western tradition of literature woven together in a network of innumerable interrelations."[30] Wellek continues: "Comparative literature arose as a reaction against the narrow nationalism of much nineteenth century scholarship, as a protest against the isolationism of many historians of French, German, Italian, English, etc. literature."[31]

Hallam traces the causes for appreciating the simple notion of the insular vs. the more complex one of influence. Patriotism and chauvinism are to blame, for in trying to show that a nation's literature has grown "like a set of larches, each in its unbending perpendicular, and never encroaching on the measured interval that separates it from

its neighbor they have erected 'monumentum aere perennus' to the character of human society." The tendency Hallam speaks of was by no means rare; it continued throughout the century and was attacked in many guises, notably by Arnold as exemplified in his attacks on the Philistines.

The capacity to break down these barriers is manifest in nature and reflected in commercial enterprises:

> But widely different from their fancy is the method of nature. Far more sublime is that process by which the few original elements of society are dashed and mingled with one another, severing forever and coalescing within a crucible of incessant operation, and producing at each successive point new combinations, which again, as simple substances, are made subservient to the prospective direction of the Great observant Mind. Is it wonderful that, for the collection of comforts and luxuries, the spirit of commercial enterprise has levelled the barriers of countries, and triumphed over the immensity of ocean? As we commend commercial enterprise must we not also commend that commerce of the mind that . . . receives and gives alteration? 32

Hallam justifies his venture by stating the importance of a detailed analysis of a national literature. The appeal is not made on the basis of "knowledge is its own end" but rather the practical is kept in mind.

> Surely the consideration of this universal and always progressive movement should make us examine the component parts of any national literature with no exclusive and limited feeling (for the literature of a people is the expression of its character), and to ascertain, by correct analysis, the number and relative proportion of its elements; 33

As Hallam points out, the pleasure of learning of foreign influences

> may be freshly drawn from the most obvious books, and even the common parlance of conversation; for we need only look to the different aspects of language to be perpetually reminded of those diverse influences by which the national character has been modified. 34

By pointing to the influence on the English language from other tongues, Hallam opens the way to a discussion of Italian literature. An elaborate justification is needed and one may assume that the attempt to bring Dante into the discussion, to point to his relevance, particularly to contemporary Victorians, was in part responsible for this justification. This justification is based on an historical understanding of the English language. "And is it not a noble thing, that the English tongue is, as it were, the common focus and point, of union to which opposite beauties converge."[35] Hallam also feels the bonds to another temperament. This different temperament was indeed the great attraction felt by many Victorians for it was not new intellectual schemes which the Victorians looked to Italy for, but for a different emotional dispensation towards modern problems. One senses that Hallam's encounter with Italy was more emotional than intellectual.

> I am yet proud to confess that I look with sentiments more exulting and more reverential to the bonds by which the Law of the Universe

> has fastened me to my distant brethren of the same Caucasion race; to the privileges which I, an inhabitant of the gloomy North, share in common with climates imparadised in perpetual summer, to the universality and efficacy resulting from blended intelligence, which, while it endears in our eyes the land of our fathers as a seat of peculiar blessing, tends to elevate and expand our thoughts into communion with humanity at large. 36

The important factor in the study of Italian literature and, as Hallam implies, literature in general, is its relation to its historical moment. It is a particular set of historical circumstances which makes Dante relevant. In Hallam's view, Dante is to be seen for what he did for his time. Hallam sees the importance of literature as an intellectual activity capable of comprehending philosophical and spiritual problems and organizing them. Because he emphasizes the preservation of literature and its importance to his contemporaries, he never regards it as merely "pleasurable."

Hallam's analysis of Italian literature never loses sight of the overall purpose, which is to relate it to English literature.

> It is necessary to look abroad, and gather in evidence from events, if we would form a reasonable conjecture how much we stand indebted to any one country for our literary glories, and for that spirit which not only produced them, but in some measure, since we are Englishmen, circulates through ourselves. 37

Dante, as the apex of literary accomplishment in Italy and that figure who most potently exemplifies what contemporary England needs, figures prominently in the two major parts of the essay: the historical survey of Italian literature and the recommendations based on the state of contemporary literature.

Two important implications must be kept in mind to understand fully Hallam's position. One is that Dante was the culmination of a literature that maintained a coherent, moral world view. The other is that the improvement of literatures means the improvement of one's own mind and orientation to the world. Thus, to call for a beneficial literature was an important task, not simply a call for artists to exercise their craft.

Hallam considers the "real" character of Italian literature by giving a brief survey of the development of that language which was "a chosen vessel of some of the most glorious thoughts with which our frail nature has been inspired."[38] Its character may be seen in the manner and circumstance of its development. It was the "municipal spirit" which flourished in various sections of Italy and prevented the coalescence of the various dialects into "regular languages." Whenever it was necessary to "coerce a larger aggregate" the job fell to Latin, distinctly different from the dialects of the villages. The social backwardness, because of the divisiveness of the language,

is implicated in the poor literary output. "The few wretched attempts at poetry that occasionally occur in this period of utter darkness, are always in a Latin form;"[39] At the same time that the new Italian civilization was forming, the Langue d'Oc and Langue d'Oil in France were the forms which were giving expression to a new literature and a new way of approaching the world around them. Hallam stresses the new outlook, or social orientation, of the new poetry as its most formidable achievement.

The development of Romance literature was expressed in four major classes constituting the great elements of modern civilization; Christianity as preserved in Catholicism, the Teutonic principle, the Roman, and the Oriental. Although separate, "it is certain the streams that issued from them had a common tendency, so that each seems only to strengthen what without it might equally have existed."[40] There were two great results of these principles, each of which formed an important basis in the development of the later conventions which were to find their ultimate fruition in Dante: "enthusiasm for individual prowess, and enthusiasm for the female character. Imagination clothed these with form, and that form was chivalry."[41]

Literature transformed character and was found to be an impetus as well as a result of change. It was revealed religion, especially as found in the spirit of Catholicism, which brought in man "a reverence for the weaker sex" and

encouraged in him "those mild and tender qualities which are the especial glory of womanhood." The "esteem for charity and the worship of the Virgin Mary" were important factors in the chivalrous attitude toward woman. "These articles of a most unscriptual, but very beautiful mythology, could not be established in general belief without investing the feminine character with ideal splendour and loveliness."[42]

Besides the humble and devotional aspects of love there were the passionate and energetic, derivative from Italy, Spain and the East. The east gave conventions which were to supply essential elements to the troubadours.

Mohammedanism also had its great influence, as well as Moorish culture which lived side by side with the Christian, and the expedition of the Christians had its effect on the Moors. The crusades, too, had their influence and formed the subject matter of most twelfth and thirteenth century trouvere fiction. Borrowings from the east included the tale, fiction, as well as rhyme, which finds its culmination "in the hands of Dante and Petrarch." Finally the eastern influence coalesced with the Troubadour to enlarge the thinking faculty.

> There may be poverty of thought, in so far as there are few objects of thought, but the character of the thinking faculty is not poor; and hence there is a freshness about the far-fetched combinations of these poets, which makes them true to nature, even when to prosaic eye they seem most unnatural. 43

Hallam finds two reasons, both geographical, which gave Italian "so immeasurable an ascendency over its forerunner." It was the seat of the Catholic religion and the ancient Empire. Recovery of the ancients would naturally take place in the part of the world where they had lived. "Therefore they not only acquired new objects of thought at the revival of literature, but they felt their own thought expanded and miraculously strengthened."[44] Finally,

> This then, I assign as the first reason of the superiority we perceive in Italian that it had a capacity of taking into itself, into its own young and creative vigor, the whole height, breadth, and depth of human knowledge, as it then stood. 45

Dante, as the culmination of this progressive and expansive movement, incorporating the major intellectual tendencies of the medieval mind, forms the apex of literary achievement, both aesthetically and intellectually. He was able, because Italian had inherited those tendencies, to coalesce all these major elements into his comprehensive view.

Along with the outer "form" of Christianity which was supplied by the ceremonial aspects, Hallam looks to its "substance" and implies its necessity for poetry. This "need" is an important and basic assumption. As it is clear that Hallam thought of Italian culture as the "head and front of modern civilization," its precepts were of utmost

importance. Italian poetry embodied "a full and joyous reception of former knowledge into their own very different habits of knowing; the second a deep and intimate impression of forms of Christianity."[46]

Hallam maintains that similar characteristics are still relevant for the poetry of his own contemporaries, finding substance only in religion. Arnold later, perhaps seeing the impossibility of relying for substance in religion, proposes to substitute poetry for religion. Hallam seems to be saying that poetry must have some religious principle and be able to unify the passionate and the spiritual. Thus, beauty is combined with a solid moral base. It is not surprising that Hallam, like Rossetti, was greatly attracted to the Vita Nuova, which he had begun translating at an early age. Both seem to have found it spiritually more congenial than the Commedia. The Vita Nuova could accommodate the conjunction of beauty and spirit by combining the elements of the Troubadour tradition, as enumerated by Hallam, and ending with an assertion to transcend them. Thus, the Vita Nuova is the culmination of a type of poetry, the Commedia a new departure. To the Troubadour poetry the Italians added "a splendid edifice of Platonism, and surmounted it with the banner of the cross." The superiority of the Italian over the Troubadour poetry was seen even before Dante, The Commedia being a culmination of the Troubadour motif.

Through the image of woman it was possible to find a symbol, interrelated with religion, to form a viable poetry.

> But it was not in scattered sonnets that the whole magnificence of that idea could be manifested, which represents love as at once the base and pyramidal point of the entire universe, and teaches us to regard the earthly union of souls, not as a thing accidental, transitory, and dependent on the condition of human society, but with far higher import, as the best and the appointed symbol of our relations with God, and through them of his own ineffable essence. In the Divine Commedy, this idea received its full completeness of form; 47

Christianity is what supplied Dante with his substance and it was the historical moment which was to bring together all the elements which made his poetry possible. The extreme interest in the possibilities that history could offer stemmed from a peculiarly Victorian self-consciousness; a realization of the "spirit of one's own times." A solution to one's aesthetic and social problems must consider what history can offer as viable symbol. To see in woman those spiritual qualities which the troubadours did was not possible, but to see the religious union with Christianity was obviously something Hallam believed in. In the light of his concern with contemporary poetry and what form it should take, Hallam's views on Dante, especially the stress on unity of form and matter, sound like a Victorian yearning for what should be rather than what could be. Dante is the

culmination of a kind of poetry in which a symbol of spiritual power is available.

> I only wish to point him out as an entire and plenary representation of the Italian mind, a summary in his individual self of all the elements I have been describing, which never before had coexisted in unity of action, a signal-point in the stream of time, showing at once how much power was at that exact season aggregated to the human intellect, and what direction was about to be impressed upon it by the 'rushing mighty wind,' the spirit of Christianity, under whose conditions alone a new literature was become possible. 48

Hallam's was a "profound" view of poetry, taking into account aesthetic complexity, more so than implied, for instance, in devotional poetry. Of course, he knew, as clearly delineated in his essay on Tennyson, the distinction between good poetry and good philosophy. How could one bring about a poetry in which beauty or sensation is the primary motive while also having substance? The answer, implied by Hallam, is that one faces a problem of symbol. This dilemma is betrayed by the manner in which Hallam discusses Italian poetry, finding it at its strongest point when beauty and its pursuit comes to symbolize spiritual power: God. Beauty and religion thus coalesce through symbol. The problem of symbol was, of course, a great one for the Victorians. One need only think of Tennyson's use of Hallam in <u>In Memoriam</u>. The most meaningful and positive way Tennyson can think of Hallam is as symbol with religious

implications. Dante, of course, did not have to solve the problem, as symbols were available to him through a rich tradition.

After Dante, poetry is seen as weakened as a different spirit animates it. "Petrarch appears to me a corollary from Dante; the same spirit in a different mould of individual character, and that a weaker mould."[49] In a rather protracted historical view the poetry of the Renaissance is found to be weaker than the Tuscan. The "courtly idiom of Paris" which reigned did not have the seriousness that the Troubadour poetry had.

Speaking of Pulci, Boiardo, Ariosto and Tasso, some of the most reknown writers subsequent to Dante, Hallam finds

> a laxity, a weakness of tone, in the deeper portion of their poetic nature; . . . their efforts are more scattered and seem to obey less one might governing impulse, than was the case with the earlier masters; 50

The impulse necessary for the greatest works of art is historical. Those who write a "weaker" poetry, though their execution may be greater, do not have the historical advantages. Great art is made possible by one's times and response to them. It responds to history, while also transcending it by appealing to a spiritual authority, organizing and comprehending it. Hallam's deepest concern is this lack of authority. The poetry of the Romantics, as Hallam stated in the Essay on Tennyson, has failed to make

this appeal to a "universal" authority, relying instead on individual and esoteric "systems." The tradition and authority which form the basis of the Commedia comprehend the world as it was then understood. Hallam's final statement, in his analysis of the character of Italian poetry, reveals an aesthetic which indicates what is lacking in modern poetry.

> This much, however, seems certain. There is in man a natural life, and there is also a spiritual: art, which holds the mirror up to nature, is then most perfect when it gives back the image of both. 51

This ambitious endeavor for art informs the consideration of Dante. As it was only when art was considered in its most serious, quasi-religious function that Dante was important to Victorians, all those who saw the relevance and greatness of Dante were interested in the seriousness and high aims of poetry, its spiritual capacity. For those who considered art a trivial endeavor Dante had no hold. Macaulay appreciates Dante in the context of Italian literature but does not see his relevance to Victorians.

Hallam proceeds to show the influence of Italian on English poets, concluding that such an influence, beginning with Chaucer, was pervasive and had its affect on language, meter and poetic form. The structure of Shakespeare's sonnets is described as "perfectly Tuscan." Even in the metaphysical poets "there is a fervor and loyalty of feeling

which shew that the impression of the better Italian spirit was not effaced . . ." In discussing the influence of Dante on Milton, Hallam expresses what they were both able to do.

> Well, indeed, did it befit the Christian poet, who was raised up to assert the great fundamental truth of modern civilization, that manners and letters have a law of progression, parallel, though not coincident with the expansion of spiritual religion, to assert this not indeed with the universality and depth with which the same truth had been asserted by Dante, yet with some relative advantages over him, which were necessarily obtained from a Protestant and English position. 52

Hallam prepares the reader for an assertion about the "enlivening" Italian influence on the Victorians as both a possibility--it follows a long tradition in English literature--and as now being of extreme importance. We can look to no literature for the sense of authority that Italian can supply. Certainly the French influence, the most dominant lately, was useful in the eighteenth century, not now. "I would not be understood, in what I have spoken concerning the influence productive of unmixed evil." French literature is not suited to Victorian England. What is needed is what Italian literature supplies, "the direct palpable uses of life." The question of Italian literature and its influence is posed theoretically. Speaking of the Elizabethans:

> Is it certain, then, that we can do nothing but admire what they have been, and lament that they cannot be: or can it perhaps be shown, that although that Italian effluence has gone away into the past, and has been followed by others not more permanent than itself, it has yet a more immediate hold on our actual condition, than either of its successors. 53

Reiterating a theme found also in the essay on Tennyson, Hallam reflects on the present condition of literature and finds its great fault to be a lack of substance resulting from the Romantic reaction against rationalism. This reaction, Hallam feels, must now be reversed. As the reaction against utilitarianism implies certain aspects of aestheticism, there was a program to resist the implications and retain a spiritual function for poetry. In maintaining a balance between the two tendencies, the historical situation is to determine the influence to be sought.

> The close, however, of the last age, and the first quarter of the present, have witnessed a powerful reaction, as well in England as on the Continent, against the exclusive dominion of prosaic, and what are termed utilitarian tendencies in literature. 54

It was the German influence which gave the impetus for reaction against utilitarianism, but that influence was not able to give substance to the poetry it "animated." Hallam reveals the ideal poetry he wishes to see by rejecting the

"high aestheticism" of the Germans. The German influence, lacking "spiritual" substance, is destructive.

> From them we received our good,and from them our evil. They taught us that the worship of Beauty is a vocation of high and mysterious import, not to be relegated into the round of daily amusements, or confined by the superstitious canons of temporary opinion. They held to our merited derision that meagre spirit of systematized imbecility, which would proscribe the most important portion of our human being, as guilty of impertinent interference with evident interest. But the sagacious remark of Bishop Loath, that 'the Germans are better at pulling down than at setting up' is not merely applicable to their historical criticism. It is a good and honorable thing to throw down a form of triumphant wrong, but unless we substitute the right, it had been well, perhaps, had we never stirred. The last state is often worse than the first. 55

Just as the essay has considered literary development in the light of history, so Dante is considered in the light of present time. Those forces which animate literature are currently arranged to accommodate his influence.

German critical philosophy is attacked vehemently, for its superficiality and evasion of the truth. There is a sense of deep distress, as Hallam's plea for this missing element in modern poetics sounds intellectually despairing; furthermore, his plea for rejection of the German critical philosophy is quite a high mission. Hallam feels the moment to be an auspicious one, for the German influence is failing and the time has come for a new one. The tone is Victorian,

rather than romantic, for the attempt to preserve a core of values for art was a deeply felt and often reiterated problem of Victorian aesthetics.

> I do not hesitate to express my conviction, that the spirit of the Critical philosophy, as seen by its fruits in all the ramifications of art, literature, and morality, is as much more dangerous than the spirit of Mechanical philosophy, as it is fairer in appearance, and more capable of alliance with our natural feelings of enthusiasm and delight. Its dangerous tendency is this, that it perverts those very minds, whose office it was to resist the perverse impulses of society, and to proclaim truth under the dominion of falsehood . . . 56

He speaks of those who attest to

> the sanctity of higher principles, which are despised or forgotten by the majority . . . if a digest of intellectual aphorisms can be substituted in their minds for a code of living truths, and the lovely semblances of beauty, truth, affection can be made first to obscure the presence, and then to conceal the loss of that religious humility, without which, as their central life, all these are but dreadful shadows; if so fatal a strategem can be successfully practiced, I see not what hope remains for a people against whom the gates of hell have so prevailed. When the light of the body is darkness how great is that darkness. 57

As the German influence wanes, a new one must take its place.

Hallam concludes that only a spiritual Christianity can support men. The appeal made to religion to support and give substance to poetry now sounds like more of a violation

of one field of human endeavor--the religious--upon another--the aesthetic--than it did then, for the separation was not so distinct. The isolation, even the sanctity of the aesthetic, was in part a development and formulation of problems deeply felt by Hallam and the early Victorians: How could poetry be moral? What claims could it make on our behavior? What distinctions could be made between good philosophy and good poetry? If poetry cannot sustain men spiritually, if it is not a form or substitute for religion, as some attempts have tried to make it, then it must retreat from these important claims of human endeavor. Hallam was deeply concerned with these problems. As the study of Tennyson's poems revealed, value must be assigned on the basis of criteria established on aesthetic, not moral or philosophical, principles. However, Hallam also was very much concerned with maintaining and establishing what the substance of those poems were. His formulation begins to give a perspective to the many problems which were to beset a philosophical position maintaining and asserting the importance of the aesthetic value of poetry. The question is asked, How is poetry to be differentiated from other written forms? If the answer is, by the way it subserves ideas to beauty, than why should one not look solely to poetry for beauty or to philosophy or religion for spiritual and moral guidance? Can poetry take on the responsibilities of religion as religion ceases to hold its authority in

those areas? Hallam is at the crossroads of these considerations, consciously so, and his tone and arguments reveal an anxiety, a great sense of urgency and purpose, in coming to deal with these issues; there is a concomitant abstractness and ambiguity about any solution. The appeal to a spiritual Christianity, in the essay on Italian literature, is not sounded in the context of aesthetic needs but is an appeal for guidance in a confused time. Hallam's ambiguous position is indicative of a disunity between aesthetic and moral aims, each vigorously sought.

> Looking, then to the lurid passages of the times that are coming; believing that amidst the awful commotions of society, which few of us do not expect, - the disruption, it may be, of those common bands which hold together our social existence, necessarily followed by an occurrence on a larger scale of the same things that were witnessed in France forty years ago; the dispersion of those decencies and charities which custom produces and preserves, that mass of little motives, brought into unity and constancy of action by the mechanism of daily life, and far more efficacious in restraining civilized man from headlong misery and crime than his pride is apt readily to acknowledge, that, in such a desolation, nothing possibly can be found to support men but a true spiritual Christianity, I am not entirely without hope, that round such an element of vital light, constrained once more to put forth its illuminating energies for protection and deliverance to its children, may gather once again the scattered rays of human knowledge. In those obscured times, that followed the subversion of Rome, the muses clung not in vain for safety to the inviolate altars of the Catholic Church. 58

The appeal is dramatic and despairing. One aspect of the Victorian ethos is brought into sharp relief: the need for spiritual authority. But what is meant by spiritual Christianity? Hallam refers to the basic human values implied in the Christian moral code, or the spirit of Christian humanism, though no dogmatic set of beliefs is appealed to. His consciousness of present problems, as revealed in other parts of the essay would not have led him to propose any specific dogmas. So, his orientation, as shown in his analysis of Tennyson, is humanistic. The vagueness of the term safeguards against applying, or seeing in it, any doctrinaire position. However, it does manifest, in its broadness, a problem with what exactly poetry should consist of.

Italian poetry achieved this union of a religious and an aesthetic ideal under similar historical circumstances present in Hallam's England. So it is Italian literature that is recommended as a source of inspiration.

> I have endeavoured to point out some of the wonderful and beautiful consequences of this marriage of religion with literature; and I have been the more anxious to do this, as it has appeared to me by no means impossible, that the recurrence of analogous circumstances may produce, at no vast distance of time, a recurrence of similar effects. It is not wholly without the bounds of probability, that a purer spirit than the Roman Catholicism may animate hereafter a loftier form of European civilization. But should this be an idle dream (and indeed my own anticipations seldom incline to so favorable an aspect) it

> will not be the less useful or important, in times of unchristian ascendency, to fix our thoughts habitually on that first development of modern literature, which shews us the direct, and, as it were, natural influence of our religion on our conditions of society, and the expression of this in our inquiring thoughts and stirring emotions. 59

Literature is made the vehicle for this great mission and this, of course, is a great shift in emphasis from the essay on Tennyson. It is chiefly to Dante that one must look.

> An English mind that has drunk deep at the sources of Southern inspiration, and especially that is imbued with the spirit of the mighty Florentine, will be conscious of a perpetual freshness and quiet beauty, resting on his imagination and spreading gently over his affections, until, by the blessing of heaven, it may be absorbed without loss, in the pure inner light, of which that voice has spoken, as no other can:
>
> > 'Light intellectual, yet full of love,
> > Love of true beauty, therefore full of joy,
> > Joy, every other sweetness far above.' 60

As the epitome of Italian literature, Dante signified the greatest achievements of the most beneficial sources from the history of his time. Hallam feels that similar times have made it possible that the same type of poetry may be born in England. The importance of the essay lies in this direct appeal to Dante. Dante was made relevant to a troubled time and he entered into the critical dilemmas that were to be so perplexing to later Victorians. The essay tries to break down the barriers that isolated English from Italian literature. Thus it is an important document in the

study of comparative literature. Hallam calls for a religious poetry; however, the claim must be made tentatively as Hallam was certainly aware of the problems the term connoted. As G. B. Tennyson points out in his introduction to Victorian Devotional Poetry,

> Current usage regarding "religious poetry" remains about as imprecise as that which prevailed in the Victorian age, when religion was not as so separate a department as it is today. 61

Tennyson finally defines religious poetry

> to be that in which a commitment is made or implied to an established belief, or system of ideas, or body of faith, that is, to a religion. 62

In the context of this broad definition, Hallam is certainly calling for a religious poetry.

Hallam's "Remarks on Professor Rossetti's Disquisizione sullo Spirito Antipapale" is an elaborate refutation of the elder Rossetti's theories about Dante. Gabriele Rossetti had caused a controversy when in his "Commento Analitico," an introduction to an edition of Dante published in 1825; he had stated that Dante was a freemason, and heretic opposed to the temporal power of the Pope, and the Commedia was an elaborate political allegory. The theory found some adherents, but it was also met with a great deal of skepticism and some ridicule. In the "Disquisizione sullo

Spirito Antipapale" (1832) Gabriele Rossetti expounds his theories more fully, stating that the Vita Nuova was a later work than the Commedia and intended to be a guide to it. He champions the idea of the political allegory at the expense of all other possible readings. In his review, Hallam is particularly troubled about Rossetti's rejection of the love theme, believing Dante, in the Vita Nuova, to be sincere about his love. In his biography of Dante Rossetti, Oswald Doughty reports how obsessed Gabriele Rossetti was about his "freemason" theory. Rossetti found elaborate political allegories everywhere he looked, both in Italian and English literature. He was also under great delusions about the effect his studies would have on the world, believing at one point they would topple the Pope and hasten Italian independence. Rossetti's political theories, which apparently had little direct effect on his children, were hardly taken seriously except by a few devotees. They may be considered no more than a footnote in the increasing interest in Dante during that time. The major interest in Dante, particularly in the Vita Nuova, focused on the idealized love of Dante for Beatrice. This was important for Hallam, who was working on a translation of the Vita Nuova at the time the review appeared, and later for Dante Rossetti. Hallam's essay remains of interest because it is a study of allegory and Dante; in it, Hallam reiterates major ideas about Dante, stated elsewhere, and indicates the

major areas of interest which were to interest later Victorians.

Rossetti's major fault in amassing all his materials is his lack of discrimination, in knowing which "resemblances" are meaningful and upon which an allegory may be built or not. His methodology is careless and stems, in part, from a lack of "extensive reading."

> He cares for nothing but resemblances, finds them in every hole and corner, and takes them on trust when he cannot find them. The most heterogeneous elements are pressed into the service of his hypothesis with almost tyrannical eagerness. He has one way, and one alone, of accounting for everything strange or unintelligible, or doubtful, in the whole extent of history; nay, for many things hitherto though clear enough, but not agreeing with his fancy. 63

About the tendency to find meaningful associations everywhere, Hallam asserts, "The world is full of coincidences that mean nothing. To find design in everything, is as great madness as to find it not at all." Rossetti's arguments are constantly being punctured by appeal to common sense. In reacting to Rossetti's arguments, one senses a mixture of respectful praise about important points and impatience with some arguments.

What Hallam is most perplexed about is Rossetti's intellectual cynicism about love poetry, particularly with the idea that love poetry could not be a formidable subject for a great poetic mind. Hallam is cautious, common-

sensical, not willing to let extravagant intellectual ventures appear to be anything but exaggeration. It is the very aspect of love and its treatment by Dante and the poets of his time which Hallam finds most attractive. The claims Rossetti makes regarding elaborate political allegories are unproved. Since there is no need to assume that love could not be a consuming topic for great minds there is no basis for assuming that sonnets and canzones were "deceitful forms" for expounding political theories. To the man who looked to Dante for his "spiritual Christianity," nothing could so undermine that source of inspiration as a political, allegorical reading of the Commedia and Vita Nuova, and although Hallam's essay relies mainly on strict analysis of the text, this feeling is revealed at many points in the essay.

Hallam maintains that if our common sense notions, those beliefs that scholars have held for hundreds of years, are to be overturned, than proof must be given. Hallam asks,

> But upon what foundation, the astonished reader will inquire, on what foundation does this strange fancy castle repose? Where are the authentic documents which are to reverse the decisions of history? Where the credible witnesses whom we must believe henceforward in contradiction to all our usual media of information? ... We are far from denying that an undercurrent may be discovered of much greater magnitude and importance than has hitherto been imagined; but we require positive proof of its existence in the first

> place, and afterwards of every additional inch of ground assigned to its progress. 64

As Rossetti advances his theories indiscriminately, without asking himself such questions, Hallam rejects the main means by which Rossetti contends that European literature is linked to a "freemason movement." Finding parallel expressions in various works is no proof: "We are not entitled to assume identity of purpose, wherever we find identity of expression . . . Similar circumstances are constantly producing similar results." Similar metaphors are used because of our need for them, not because of "secret conspiracies." The need to go beyond the common understanding and motivation, of an image for instance, is not justified.

> It may happen that more than one Italian poet fixes some leading incident of his story at the first hour of the day, simply because that time of morning has a beautiful, and therefore a poetical character; but there seems no need of recurring for a further explanation of so intelligible a fact to some mystical question in a catechism of American masons. 65

Although Hallam does not accept the view that the Vita Nuova was completed after the Commedia, as a guide to that earlier work, he does indicate a willingness to accept a theory "that should satisfactorily explain the Vita Nuova." Hallam was apparently involved in answering some of the

question he asked about the Vita Nuova as he was translating it at the time of Rossetti's essay.

> No one can have read that singular work without having found his progress perpetually checked and his pleasure impaired, by the occurrence of passages apparently unintelligible, or presenting only an unimportant meaning, in phrases the most laborious and involved. 66

For Hallam, Dante's adoration of Beatrice, as represented in the Vita Nuova and the Commedia, represents the idealization of woman springing from Dante's early desire. To allegorize the figure of Beatrice is to lose this powerful impression. (Dante Gabriele Rossetti's view of the Vita Nuova was similar and found expression in his own work.) Whatever obscurity there may be in the figure of Beatrice, a political allegory is not needed to explain it. Hallam wishes to read Dante in the tradition of the "idealized woman," so integral a part of Victorian interest in medievalism.

> Whatever uncertain shape might, for a few moments, be assumed by the Beatrice of the 'Commedia,' imparadised in overpowering effluences of light and music, and enjoying the immediate vision of the Most High, here at least, in the mild humility and modest nobleness of the living and loving creature, to whom the sonnets and canzones are addressed, we did believe we were safe from allegory. 67

In understanding that mysterious area in Dante, that unexplained region of the Vita Nuova, of Beatrice, Hallam finds sufficient motivation in the circumstances of Dante's life. Knowledge of Dante's life often figured in accounting for aspects of tone and meaning which were perplexing to readers. Hallam's explanation is an attempt to explain the unknown in the man. As with Carlyle's reading, Dante the man looms over his poem.

> Something indeed there was of vagueness and unreality in the picture we beheld: but it never disturbed our faith; for we believed it to arise from the reverential feeling which seemed to possess the poet's imagination, and led him to concentrate all his loftiest sentiments and pure ideas of perfection in the object of his useful passion, consecrated long since and idealized to his heart, by the sanctities of the overshadowing tomb. It was a noble thing, we thought, to see the stern politician, the embittered exile, the man worn by the worlds severest realities, who knew how sharp it was to mount another's stairs, and eat another's bread, in his old age; yet amidst these sufferings and wounded feelings, recurring with undaunted memory to the days of his happy boyhood. 68

In trying to explain a circumstance of the work, Hallam looks to the man.

Hallam cannot accept the view that the Vita Nuova was written after the Commedia, as the ending of the Vita Nuova where Dante speaks of "that higher monument he was about to raise to her whom he had already celebrated with so ample a ritual of melodious eulogy" is taken to be a sincere

utterance. Beatrice's function in the Commedia is Dante's sincere attempt to forge a bridge to religion itself. There is no skepticism in Hallam's assertion.

> Described throughout as most pure, most humble, most simple, most affectionate, and as the personal form in which Dante delighted to contemplate the ideal objects of his moral feelings, is it wonderful that she should become at least for him the representative of religion itself? 69

The essential point about Beatrice is the position she occupies for Dante, and Dante's apparent sincerity in placing her there, though Hallam does agree that for some, her position in the Divine Commedy might seem extravagant. It is the imagination which places her where she is and it has not traversed any illegitimate boundaries in doing so. Part of the great appeal of the Commedia, then, is the expression of Dante's imagination and the relation he has placed himself in, in relation to it. Thus, we might read the Commedia, apart from aesthetic pleasure derived from it, as a record of what a man can do and as the expression of what fiction can do. Indeed it is in this relationship--what use a fiction can be put to by the imagination--which suggests the possibilities of consciously trying to be a certain kind of man, depending on what fiction one created and how one saw himself in relation to it. Hallam makes a clear distinction between a fiction which a reader may not be willing to accept, and a fiction which legitimately

expresses its author's imagination. A reader may not accept a "sincere" fiction.

> Judged by the exact standard of calculated realities, it was no more true that Beatrice deserved the praises of those early sonnets, than that she is worthy to represent the Church, or Religion, in the solemn procession through terrestrial Paradise. Imagination gave her the first; imagination assigns the last. 70

Hallam is here accounting for the representation of Beatrice in terms of Dante the author, as references to his life indicated. Implied is the ability to be sincere but not believable.

Gabriele Rossetti finds in the death of Beatrice further symbolic treatment of Dante's secret sect as he does in the death of Petrarch's Laura and Boccacio's Fiammetta. The whole body of Neo-Platonic literature becomes the object of Rossetti's point; Hallam contests Rossetti's allegorical reading and the limits to be placed on it. As Hallam admits that there is allegory, he asks the question "What is the character of the allegorical part? and what is its extent?" To answer these questions, Hallam refers to Dante's famous letter to Can Grande explaining his intent in the Commedia. Unlike Rossetti, who finds the letter to be written in gergo, Hallam finds its clear statement of intent sufficient proof of the Commedia's use of allegory. Speaking of the letter, Hallam asks,

> Does it not appear from this simple statement, that the principal allegory in the 'Commedia' is of a moral nature, representing the struggles of man with himself, the wretched condition to which his vices condemn him, the glorious difficulties which attend his ascent upon the mountain of virtue, and that perfect peace which, when the good fight has been fought, awaits the religious mind in the enjoyment of unlimited love towards God and man? 71

The political allegory would not have "encroached" on the "free activity" of Dante's imagination.

Hallam reiterates a theme stated in the essay on Tennyson, in rejecting the notion that a critic's main focus of interest should be the "prosaic" content of the poem. The vision of creative minds " . . . reaches far, and embraces all objects within their horizon, without ever passing over those in their immediate neighborhood. To every man, worthy the name of poet, the first object is always the Beautiful."[72] An allegory may be subservient to the Beautiful but never dominates.

Hallam summarizes the basis of his rejection:

> We will yield to facts, but not to conjectures. At present he has given us no more; a heap of odd coincidences, and bewildering dilemmas, but certainly not enough to establish on a solid foundation the brilliant fabric he wishes to erect. 73

Hallam states the importance of the cult of the female in medieval Europe, indicating its historical line of

development. As in the essay on the "Influence of Italian Literature," history is used to indicate and support the love themes which are apparently so prevalent.

> Not to insist on the Teutonic and Arabian elements of that civilization, which bore its first and lavish harvest on the fields of Provence, sufficient causes may be found in the change of manners occasioned by Christianity, to explain the increased respect for the female character, which tempered passion with reverence, and lent an ideal colour to the daily realities of life. 74

History is used to lend probability to Dante and Petrarch's real love for Beatrice and Laura. They are part of an important development in Christianity. Dante's love of woman was a particularly Christian apprehension. Thus an object of desire could be worshipped and given a spiritual justification. This apprehension of woman becomes a powerful synthesis in which physicality and spirituality find a reconciliation, and the artist a subject to fuse spiritual and bodily demands. Hallam's conception of the role of woman in the medieval tradition was one shared by later Victorians, particularly Dante Gabriele Rossetti who used the image of woman, in his poetry and painting, as a means of reconciling tensions of the body and the spirit. The image of woman, as presented by Hallam, was one which predominated in Rossetti's art - his poetry and painting; in

them he found a way to worship beauty, not for its own sake but as a spiritual end.

The power of Christianity was to locate the source of spiritual worship in the wordly.

> The worship of the Virgin soon accustomed Catholic minds to contemplate perfection in a female form. And what is that worship itself, but the exponent of a restless longing in man's unsatisfied soul, which must ever find a personal shape, wherein to embody his moral ideas, and will choose for that shape, where he can, a nature not too remote from his own, but resembling in dissimilitude, and flattering at once his vanity by the likeness, and his pride by the difference? 75

The power that Hallam finds in religion--the possibility of accommodating "erotic devotion"--was a powerful source of artistic energy to the Victorians. Through it they attempted a "spiritual ascent" to God, as other forms of mediation, such as rationalism, were being undermined. He speaks of the relation between the "Christian Religion and the passion of love":

> What is the distinguishing character of Hebrew literature, which separates it by so broad a line of demarcation from that of every ancient people? Undoubtedly the sentiment of erotic devotion which pervades it. 76

The power of Christianity, and it is that power which Hallam finds to be one of the virtues of Dante, is, "to secure at once the warmest enthusiasm in the heart with the

clearest perception of right and wrong in the understanding." Dante is above all a great poet; he is also a Christian poet. "The character of the blessed Founder of our faith became an abstract of morality to determine the judgement, while at the same time it remained personal, and liable to love."[77]

In "The Influence of Italian Literature," Hallam had spoken of the importance of religion as a substantive element in poetry. That claim is reiterated here. Hallam states that the importance of Christianity and its accordance with human nature is an element of poetry. In particular, its elevation of love and its devotional character make it powerful "material" for poetry. These two aspects are the main sources of Dante's art.

> Genius ever nourishes itself with Religion. A new spiritual truth is a pearl of great price to a soul gifted with spiritual power. It is the business of the Poet to number, and measure, and note down every form and fleeting appearance of human feeling. 78

A call to the beautiful was a call to the spiritual. "The Beautiful was everywhere around men, waiting, and, as it were, calling for their love. Is it wonderful that the call was heard." Hallam challenges anyone to consider Dante anything but a "religious poet." "The spirit of Catholic Christianity breathes in every line." As a Catholic poet he is also a devotional poet, venerating beauty.

The essay on Rossetti's theories is an elaborate repudiation of them, following several logical arguments. The lack of "substantive" truth, the misunderstanding of the chief motives which animate the poet, and the lack of historical knowledge of the nature of devotional love motifs in medieval Europe, are some of the resources Hallam calls upon to repudiate Rossetti's theories. Appealing to common sense and caution, Hallam directs attention to the seemingly "literal" understanding of Dante's works, for which ample justification is given to ward off Rossetti's skepticism of the love tradition. For modern readers, the essay is mainly of interest for its comments on Dante and the use of allegory. Rossetti's eccentric theories did have some followers and Hallam's essay was a highly respected refutation. Hallam directs attention to those issues which were to occupy later Victorians in their critical considerations. Stating some points made in other essays, Hallam spoke of the primacy of Christianity to the medieval love tradition of which Dante is the apotheosis. In particular, the veneration of beauty and of woman are shown to be compatible with the spirit of Christianity and intermediaries in the spiritual quest that Dante sought. This moral justification of erotic devotion became important to later Victorians who strove to "idealize" their own human passion. In a culture in which the traditional intermediaries of spiritual salvation were being undermined,

a "look back" at Dante in Hallam's manner was a means of attempting a spiritual bridge borne of human sentiment. No claim is being made for the influence of Hallam's essay, but rather for the sensitivity it indicated, which was later to become so important.

Hallam's essays are an example of Victorian aesthetic sensibility in the 1830's. They reflect the growing concern that recent poetry is not founded on a moral basis and has been "weakened." Implied is the concern that the challenges being made to it by science, as reflected in Macaulay's essays, would undermine the importance of poetry. In order to preserve its status, Hallam looked back at Dante as exemplar. The Commedia and Vita Nuova were poems in which aesthetics and religion were wedded. Thus "beauty" was fused with "substance" and poetry could be meaningful. Hallam anticipates both the resistance to aestheticism and utilitarianism which contributed to the rising status of Dante among critics who looked to models: the implicit and explicit threat from these two tendencies presented a crisis to the "defenders" of the "imagination."

In the essay on Tennyson, structured to reveal the unpopularity of Tennyson's 1830 volume of poems, Hallam elaborates an argument which mediates between aestheticism (art for arts sake) and utilitarian attacks on poetry, by proposing beauty--an appeal to the senses--as the primary force of poetic creation. The moral element, which is

subordinated to it, achieves a more complex treatment and synthesis with the work of art than if the work of art had been readily accessible. Thus, aesthetic consideration or the desire for beauty implies the incorporation of a moral and substantive element. Poetry is not merely an "art for arts sake" exercise. Its expression of morality is quite complex. The chief purpose of art is not to be in competition with science or other forms of knowledge but to express beauty; Dante is supreme exemplar of the achievement to unify religion and poetry in a work of art whose primary motive is the expression of beauty.

The essay on Italian literature reveals historically the place of Dante in the literary canon and emphasizes the importance of comparative literature in influencing the English search for "substance." Pointing to historical precedence, Hallam indicates the points at which Italian literature was influential to the English. He indicates that the present situation is one which can be served by Dante's influence. The explicit appeal is on the basis of Dante's "substance," his morality and religion, those factors which Romantic poetry lacked. In Hallam's time they were necessary. Although the appeals emphasize different aspects of the poetic synthesis of beauty and substance, they are not contradictory and are apposite to the philosophical necessities of establishing a "program" for the preservation of the status of poetry. Both major essays

are explications of poetry in order to establish a program for contemporary literature. Both imply a crisis and a self-conscious attempt to offer or indicate solutions.

The essay on Rossetti's theories, in attempting to repudiate the political "interpretation" of Dante's work, establishes the areas of concern which were to dominate subsequent critical interest. In particular, the importance of love and the veneration of woman, which Hallam maintains as having historical roots in medieval culture, are given a philosophical importance, and undermine Rossetti's skepticism. Ironically, it is Dante Gabriele Rossetti, in rejecting his father's notions, who comes closest to sharing Hallam's sensibility. Both are most attracted to the Vita Nuova with its mixture of sensuous and Platonic attitudes.

Hallam's own knowledge of Italian was an important factor in understanding the complexity of Dante's achievement and his relation to Italian literature. (Hallam could never have referred to Dante's "simple terza rima" as Carlyle did.) The interest in Dante was certainly, to some extent, for its own sake, but the major aim of Hallam's essays was to speak about contemporary times and to use criticism to "prepare the way" for poetry. Finally, one may conjecture on the possible importance of Hallam's essays on the Victorian interest in medievalism. In looking back to medievalism, the Victorians saw a time of artistic and philosophical unity, something many Victorians strove for

and attempted to construct in various manners. They clearly saw how science, culture and the decline of religion were encroaching on this unity. One important difference must be noted between Hallam's interest in medievalism and the later "aesthetes'." Hallam's interest was philosophical, an indication to the artist of how he could engage life and have it coalesce with beauty, and did not partake of those particular aspects of interest which may be termed escapist. In looking to Dante as influence, Hallam indicated how intricately related beauty and morality are.

Notes

[1] William Butler Yeats, Essays and Introductions (New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., Inc., 1961), p. 347.

[2] Norman Friedman, "Hallam on Tennyson: an early Aesthetic Doctrine and Modernism," No. 8 (1975), p. 37.

[3] Walter E. Houghton, G. Robert Stange, eds., Victorian Poetry and Poetics, 2nd ed. (Boston, Houghton Mifflin Company, 1959; rept. 1968), p. 848.

[4] Arthur Hallam, The Writings of Arthur Hallam, ed., T. M. Vail Motter (New York: Modern Language Association of America, 1943), p. 183.

[5] Hallam, pp. 183-184.

[6] Hallam, p. 184.

[7] Hallam, p. 198.

[8] Hallam, p. 198.

[9] Hallam, p. 185.

[10] Hallam, p. 185.

[11] Hallam, p. 186.

[12] Hallam, p. 186.

[13] Hallam, p. 186.

[14] Hallam, p. 187.

[15] Hallam, p. 187.

[16] Hallam, p. 187.

[17] Hallam, p. 188.

[18] Hallam, p. 189.

[19] Hallam, p. 190.

[20] Hallam, p. 190.

[21] Hallam, p. 190.

[22] Hallam, p. 190.

[23] Hallam, p. 193.

[24] Hallam, p. 195.

[25] Hallam, pp. 195-196.

[26] Hallam, p. 196.

[27] Hallam, p. 196.

[28] Hallam, p. 194.

[29] Hallam, pp. 194-195.

[30] Rene Wellek, Concepts of Criticism (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1963; rept. 1976), pp. 282-283.

[31] Wellek, p. 287.

[32] Hallam, p. 214.

[33] Hallam, p. 214.

[34] Hallam, p. 214.

[35] Hallam, p. 215.

[36] Hallam, p. 216.

[37] Hallam, p. 216.

[38] Hallam, p. 216.

[39] Hallam, p. 217.

[40] Hallam, p. 218.

[41] Hallam, p. 218.

[42] Hallam, p. 219.

[43] Hallam, p. 222.

[44] Hallam, p. 223.

[45] Hallam, p. 223.

[46] Hallam, p. 224.

[47] Hallam, pp. 224-225.

[48] Hallam, p. 225.

[49] Hallam, p. 225.

[50] Hallam, p. 226.

[51] Hallam, p. 226.

[52] Hallam, p. 231.

[53] Hallam, p. 231.

[54] Hallam, p. 232.

[55] Hallam, p. 232.

[56] Hallam, p. 232.

[57] Hallam, p. 233.

[58] Hallam, p. 233.

[59] Hallam, pp. 233-234.

[60] Hallam, p. 234.

[61] G. B. Tennyson, Victorian Devotional Poetry: The Tractarian Mode (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1981), p. 3.

[62] Tennyson, p. 4.

[63] Hallam, p. 243.

[64] Hallam, p. 250.

[65] Hallam, pp. 252-253.

[66] Hallam, p. 255.

[67] Hallam, pp. 255-256.

[68] Hallam, p. 256.

[69] Hallam, pp. 256-257.

[70] Hallam, p. 257.

[71] Hallam, p. 261.

[72] Hallam, p. 262,

[73] Hallam, p. 267.

[74] Hallam, p. 268.

[75] Hallam, p. 269.

[76] Hallam, p. 269.

[77] Hallam, p. 272.

[78] Hallam, p. 275.

Matthew Arnold

Matthew Arnold's critical concerns are those which are often cited as emblematic of the England of his time: the relationship between life and literature, between literature and religion, between form and subject matter, the consequences of literature, the problems involved in evaluating literary texts. It is in the context of these problems that Dante figures in Arnold's reaction. For Arnold, Dante occupied an important position within the spectrum of literary creativity; Dante is seen in the context of qualities established by earlier critics. He uses Dante's works as vehicles by which to illustrate well formulated theories. (He is similar to Carlyle in this sense.) By the time Arnold wrote the essays to be considered, those problems about the importance of poetry were at a high pitch. The challenges to literature by science were part of the general dialogue about the humanities in the 1880's, as in Huxley's and Arnold's discussion of the matter with their two famous lectures, "Science and Culture" and "Literature and Science." The latter essay, delivered by Arnold on his American tour as a response to Huxley's lecture, argues for the importance of a classical education as opposed to the

"scientific" or "practical one" proposed by Huxley. "The Study of Poetry" in which Dante figures importantly must be seen in the light of this debate in order to perceive its historical significance.

Arnold's essay "Dante and Beatrice" was a direct reaction to Theodore Martin's 1862 translation of the Vita Nuova. Arnold applies a corrective to Martin's translation and introduction which exaggerate the "human" and "real" element of the poem. Arnold's approach emphasizes the aesthetic problems involved in writing the Vita Nuova, although readers of the essay may have been interested in the psychological relationship between the two, an aspect intriguing to many Victorians. Arnold also refers to important thematic elements of the work. The essay is a statement on the nature of poetry and on a way of reconciling, within the framework of aesthetic concerns, Dante's life and work.

In "The Study of Poetry," Arnold uses lines from the Commedia for his touchstones. His is essentially a rhetorical and not a logical strategy. The touchstones reveal Arnold's literary preferences and indicate favorable and unfavorable characteristics of works. Used several times as an example, Dante fulfills Arnold's requirements which give literature its high mission in life's concerns.

Arnold's interest, in most of his essays, is not with particular poems but with poetry. The importance of poetry

is a central concern, not exegetical study of any particular work. Even the studies of particular poets consider important implications for poetry. Insofar as they give light to general principles poems are important. In "Wordsworth," an essay similar to the "Study of Poetry," in that it concerns evaluative methodology, Arnold sets the critical conditions which are to form the basis for Wordsworth's relative "value." Wordsworth is ranked as a "high" poet because of his concern with life and how to live. Of the English poets, only Milton and Shakespeare are greater, and of the continental poets only Dante, Goethe, and Moliere are "more splendid luminaries in the poetical heaven than Wordsworth." In Arnold's relation to Dante one point is paramount: the manner in which Dante figures is not essentially different from consideration of others--he is used to illustrate general characteristics of poetry. The "touchstone" method is emblematic of the manner Arnold treats particular writers, since particularities of a work are often assumed to be known. Importantly, the attempt to insist on the application of "ideas to life" as a criterion for judging poetry establishes a link to earlier commentators. Because Dante exhibits the characteristics needed to challenge those properties of aestheticism which question the importance of poetry in its engagements with "life," Dante is exemplar for Arnold's own time. Arnold

looks for "morality" as a basis for authority and value, much as Hallam had done.

In considering a broad range of literature, Arnold hoped to establish criteria which could indicate guidelines for the evaluation of poetry. Dante was one writer who appeared in the company of other continental writers considered as predecessors to the main currents of all European literature. The importance of looking to Italian literature as an object of "imitation," which Hallam had attempted to justify historically, is accepted by Arnold and in some cases taken for granted. When Arnold looks to Dante he accepts him as a writer of great literature whose boundaries supercede national barriers. This proposition is both an argued position and an assumption in his various works. Like the earlier critics of Dante, Arnold is concerned, while he reaches into the past and beyond national boundaries, primarily with the "present time."

In following earlier Victorian critics, particularly Hallam, Arnold argues that religion and poetry are not to be dissociated. As Hallam had implied, the preservation of poetry lies in a broad and somewhat ambiguous sense on its being religious, rooted in a "spiritual Christianity." Arnold even more explicitly elaborates this relationship, indicating in his now famous opening of the "Study of Poetry" the possibility of poetry's taking on at least some of the "business" of religion. In a curious paradox Hallam

and Arnold call for the same thing, Hallam wishing to strengthen poetry by religion, Arnold wishing to preserve religious feeling by looking for it in poetry. Both refer to Dante as accomplishing this fusion of aesthetics and religion in a cogent and relevant manner.

Arnold, throughout his literary career, placed a great importance on poetry and religion, implicitly and explicitly discussing their relationship in various essays. Dante's role in clarifying and exemplifying that relationship follows both Hallam and Carlyle in several important respects. As Vincent Buckley points out in his essay "Matthew Arnold: Poetry as Religion," for Arnold "poetry is, in some real sense a religious act" and "Arnold's claims for poetry are religious claims; and they are intimately connected with his expectation of poetry as a moral force."[1] As Buckley argues, particularly in relation to the often stated assertion about Arnold's famous introduction to the "Study of Poetry," he wishes to substitute poetry for religion; poetry, by coalescing religious, moral and aesthetic sentiments, enhances each of these. In the essay on Tennyson, Hallam had argued that "beauty" enhances the moral sense, in effect stating a quite similar doctrine. The notion, of course, in both Hallam and Arnold may be seen as an attempt to free poetry from a seemingly didactic function while preserving its moral authority. Both attempts resist the utilitarian claims, as stated for

instance by Macaulay in "Southey's Colloquies," that great poetry cannot be written anymore because of the greater claims science makes on the establishment of knowledge. Both establish a relationship between aesthetic experience and "scientific" knowledge quite different from that implied by Macaulay by claiming the autonomy of poetry and the subordination of "substantive" elements to "aesthetic" ones; in effect this amounts to a gesture in the direction of "aestheticism." To Hallam "beauty" is the predominant motive in poetry. Arnold's doctrine of "disinterestedness" implies a resistance to "moral" and "doctrinal" formulations. Though their positions are similar, Hallam's essay on poetry is often considered a forerunner of aestheticism, and Arnold, in many of his works, formulates a resistance to many of its implications. Both positions are partially true. The difficulty in determining absolutely their positions regarding these matters is made difficult because of their many qualifications.

Arnold follows Carlyle in one important respect: a notion of the complex relationship between religion and poetry is apparent in both. David DeLaura points to Carlyle's statement in "Characteristics" as anticipatory of Arnold's position: "Literature is but a branch of religion, and always participates in its character: however, in our time, it is the only branch that shows any greatness; and as some think, must one day become the mainstream."[2] As

DeLaura states, "This neatly sums up the older view while not quite endorsing the new hope for poetry as a 'religious' vehicle in the assumed breakdown of traditional Christianity."[3] DeLaura sees two forms that aestheticism could take: the first could claim that art is accountable only "to itself" has no ulterior responsibilities to the moral or social order, and hence could avoid the question of poetry's metaphysical status and its claim to speak the 'truth.' More amibitiously, Aestheticism could claim that "aesthetic experience whether in the artist or in the observer, is the highest form of consciousness open to man; and that even in a post-metaphysical universe, it is not only an independent source and discoverer of truth, but can claim the supreme and authoritative position once arrogated by dogmatic religion."[4] It is certainly the latter sense as DeLaura characterizes it which defines Arnold's position. Carlyle and Hallam's response is also characterized as partaking in this more ambitious endeavor. In Carlyle it may be noted as his notion of the "Divine Idea"; in Hallam the metaphysics behind his notions are ambiguous, though his comments on the Romantic tendency to break down a structure that must be rebuilt points to a metaphysics. The notion that the function of poetry is not aesthetic but in some sense religious, a notion theoretically proposed by Carlyle and Hallam, is also then in Arnold. DeLaura believes

"Arnold's religion is greviously defective by the orthodox Christian standards of his day; but the function of poetry in his prediction is, precisely, 'religious' and not simply 'aesthetic.'" Arnold also "not unlike Carlyle . . . continued to assert an ideal balance of art, intellect and religion."[5] Dante figures importantly in Arnold as he had for Carlyle and Hallam, particularly as he relates to that complex aesthetic developed from the notion that there exists an important and necessary relationship between poetry and religion. For Arnold as well as Carlyle and certainly for Macaulay the total ethos of society had become so different from Dante's time, that the fusion of religion and poetry achieved by Dante, and the response it elicited, because of the comprehensive world view it embodied was no longer possible. Arnold did, however, believe that the sentiment of religion could be maintained. Hallam, acknowledging the professed differences between Dante's time and Victorian England, nevertheless believed certain elements in society to be analogous, making a type of poetry like Dante's possible and desirable. In a sense, Dante served as paradigm for what Hallam and Arnold sought: a fusion of high aesthetic value with religious substance (not necessarily subject). Arnold resisted the notion of a post metaphysical universe, believing in a "providential" source of values.

Arnold specified what the needs of society were and did not find Dante's situation analogous to his own time. DeLaura notes that in Arnold's discussion of Goethe, the "archetypal modern poet," a Dante could assume "'the basis of modern spiritual life;' a Shakespeare could allow the 'spectacle of human life . . . to bear its own significance:' neither had to question 'the traditional religion, reformed or unreformed of Christendom.'"[6]

> Dante's task was to set forth the lesson of the world from the point of view of medieval Catholicism; the basis of spiritual life was given, Dante had not to make this anew. Shakespeare's task was to set forth the spectacle of the world when man's spirit re-awoke to the possession of the world at the Renaissance . . . But when Goethe came, Europe had lost her basis of spiritual life; she had to find it again; Goethe's task was,--the inevitable task of the modern poet henceforth is,--as it was for the Greek poet in the days of Pericles, not to preach a sublime sermon on a given text like Dante, not to exhibit all the kingdoms of human life and the glory of them like Shakespeare, but to interpret human life afresh, and to supply a new human basis to it. 7

Hallam had also reacted to the basis of spiritual life that had been taken away; he did believe, like Arnold, that the task of the contemporary poet was to restore it. Both look to Dante in this context, though Hallam is more uncertain about an authoritative metaphysics and what it is to consist of. Hallam's spiritualized Christianity is

echoed by DeLaura's interpretation of Arnold's source of spiritual authority.

> Arnold has already, in 1863 advised: 'And who has not rejoiced to be able, between the old idea (such as special Providence or divine wrath), tenable no longer, which once connected itself with certain religious words, and the new idea (presumably Arnold's "reconstructed" spiritualized Christianity), which has not yet connected itself with them, to rest for awhile in the healing virtue and beauty of the words themselves? 8

Arnold mentions Dante frequently in relation to the effect and uniqueness of his style.

> . . . there are two offices of poetry - one to add to ones store of thoughts and feelings - another to compose and elevate the mind by a sustained tone, numerous allusions and a grand style. What other process is Milton's than this last, in Comus for instance. There is no fruitful analysis of character: but a great effect is produced
> . . . For the style is the expression of the nobility of the poet's character, as the matter is the expression of the richness of his mind: but on men character produces as great an effect as mind. 9

As Dante is consistently included in lists of those who communicate in the grand style, one may wish to reflect on how similar Arnold's contention on the "grand style" is to Hallam's assertion that Dante communicates two-thirds by sound. The statement on style reflects the unwillingness to separate "substance" from poetry. Arnold seeks to relate "substance" to stylistic and prosodic concerns. The

complexity of that relationship attests to the significant role poetry plays in affecting human character. Such discussion of character may be seen in the context of preserving the importance of poetry in a culture which was challenging its authority.

Arnold's three essays on "Translating Homer" are an important statement for figuring the role of style in its relation to, what may be termed the matter, of poetry. What Arnold maintains in a letter to Clough about style--that it can produce great affect on the reader--is implied in his statements on Homer. Intending to give practical advice to a translator of Homer, Arnold engages in a more meticulous discussion of style and prosody than in almost all his other lectures. He advises rapidity, simplicity of style, plainness of thought and nobility as essential characteristics of Homer and those qualities as necessary to the most successful translation. Clearly, Arnold indicates that to achieve such qualities literal meaning must sometimes be sacrificed, indicating the high importance of style in relation to effect. Dante figures prominently in the lectures as a supreme stylist whose full meaning cannot be captured in translation. His uniqueness is indicated: "But I cannot imagine several poets, or one poet, joined with Dante in the composition of his Inferno, though many poets have taken for their subject a descent into Hell."[10] In discussing the incapacity of the ballad measure to render

the affect of the epic poet, Dante's style is again placed beside the supreme stylists of literature.

> Poets who cannot work in in the grand style instinctively seek a style in which their comparative inferiority may feel itself at ease, a manner which may be, so to speak indulgent to their inequalities. The ballad style offers to an epic poet, quite unable to fill the canvas of Homer, or Dante, or Milton, a canvas which he is capable of filling. 11

There is, Arnold continues, a

> convenience which the ballad style purchases by resigning all pretensions to the highest, to the grand manner. 12

Dante is supreme in combining the two types of grand style.

> The best model of the grand style simple is Homer; perhaps the best model of the grand style severe is Milton. But Dante is remarkable for affording admirable examples of both styles; he has the grand style which arises from simplicity, and he has the grand style which arises from severity; and from him I will illustrate them both. In a former lecture I pointed out what that severity of poetical style is, which comes from saying a thing with a kind of intense compression, or in an adhesive, brief, almost haughty way, as if the poet's mind were charged with so many and such grave matters, that he would not deign to treat anyone of them explicitly. Of this severity the last line of the following stanza of the Purgatory is a good example. Dante has been telling Forese that Virgil had guided him through Hell, and he goes on: -
>
> Indi m'hai tratto su gli suoi conforti,
> Salendo e riguardo la Montagna
> Che drizza voi che il mondo fece torti.
>
> 'Thence hath is comfortin aid led me up, climbing and circling the Mountain, which straightens you whom the world made crooked.'

> These last words . . . - for the Mountain of Purgatory, I call an excellent specimen of the grand style of severity, where the poet's mind is too full charged to suffer him to speak more explicitly. But the very next stanza is a beautiful specimen of the grand style in simplicity, where a noble nature and a poetical gift unite to utter a thing with the most limpid plainness and clearness: -
>
> Tanto dice di farmi sua compagna
> Ch'io saro la dove fia Beatrice;
> Quivi convien che senza lui rimagna.
>
> 'So long,' Dante continues, 'so long he (Virgil) saith he will bear me company, until I shall be there where Beatrice is; there it behoves that without him I remain.' But the noble simplicity of that in the Italian no words of mind can render. 13

Arnold did feel, however, the great importance of religion and its serious consequences for literature. The same experience that one had reading Dante as a believer or not was vastly different. In acknowledging the appreciation that comes with shared belief and that which comes with aesthetic appreciation, William Madden states in his study of Matthew Arnold,

> As 'the ground of all joy and greatness in man,' religion could not but have a general bearing on Arnold's view of literature, and in fact its relevance to the poet and to the life of the imagination in particular was for Arnold quite direct and explicit. Citing Shakespeare to the effect that 'if imagination would apprehend some joy it comprehends some bringer of that joy.' Arnold believed that the imagination of a Dante or a Shakespeare could readily conceive such 'bringers' or would have been effectively intelligible to readers who shared their religious beliefs. With the general decline of Christian belief among the educated, these once powerfully effective images--whether of character, event, or

> symbol--were no longer available to the modern poet. 14

As Madden points out,

> "If the most serious use of poetry was religious, this religious use was no longer to be confined to that fragment of the world's poetry which was to be found in the Christian Church. Shakespeare's works were more permanent than the Thirty-Nine Articles; Keats, Milton and Wordsworth, Dante, Moliere, and Goethe, Homer and Sophocles served a religious function of a higher kind than either the 'popular' or the 'scholastic' poetry of Christianity." 15

These assumptions about poetry Madden deduces from Arnold's statements in "St. Paul and Protestantism."

> The approximative part of the prayers and services which he rehearses will be poetry . . . It is a great error to think that whatever is thus perceived to be poetry ceases to be available in religion. The noblest races are those which know how to make the most serious use of poetry. 16

Arnold's various comments on Dante throughout his lectures reveal a continuity with earlier critics, most notably with Hallam and Carlyle. Like Hallam he is concerned with Dante as exemplar for his own time, and like Carlyle he is keenly aware that a particular poet is very much a product of his time and responds to its needs. Certainly many of Arnold's reflections about Dante are about his relation to medieval Europe while others abstract those qualities which make for great poetry and imply that those

qualities are possible. Arnold believed that the effect of Dante could not be preserved in translation. As is apparent in the essays on translating Homer, Arnold was aware of the effect of the terza rima on meaning. The form is no mere container of content.

> The effect of Homer, the effect of Dante, is and must be in great measure lost in a translation, because their poetry is a poetry of metre, or of rhyme, or both; and the effect of these is not really transferable. A man may make a good English poem with the matter and thoughts of Homer or Dante, may even try to reproduce their metre, or to reproduce their rhyme; but the metre and rhyme will be in truth his own, and the effect will be his, not the effect of Homer or Dante. 17

The varied comments on Dante lead to some ambiguity on the point of his uses to the present time. Arnold did feel that present poets could not achieve what Dante did because there was no center of spiritual authority from which to draw on. The ambiguous notion of a "spiritualized Christianity" seems to have been the closest Arnold--like Hallam--came to claiming a basis for morality. In one important sense Arnold follows Hallam: the need for a religious poetry, or at least a poetry which could do what religion had done. The need for a poetry based on some moral basis was urged, though it was often disguised in ambiguous terms. In the essay "Wordsworth," Wordsworth is ranked as a "high" poet because of his concern with life and

how to live. Arnold indicates that application of "ideas to life" as a criterion for judging poetry may exclude "practical" considerations, such as politics; it does, however, imply a concern with morality. He categorizes the moral elements as an important consideration in the question, how to live. Dante is appreciated because of his technical and stylistic perfection and also in the application of an accepted standard of morality.

Dante is one of the most often cited poets in Arnold's work; throughout his career Arnold looked to Dante in light of some of the major questions he was concerned with and mentioned him constantly in "rankings" of great poets. Lines from the Commedia were used as touchstones and as examples of noble sentiments or thoughts. The essay "Ecce, Convertimur ad Gentes" ends with the words Dante has given to Ulysses: "Consider whereunto ye are born! Ye were not made to live like brutes, but to follow virtue and knowledge." Douglas Bush cites these words as an epitaph to Arnold's own works, and they certainly reveal a sensitivity congenial to Arnold's endeavors throughout his life. Dante was one of the figures of European literature Arnold seems to have known best. As Douglas Bush points out, "Apart perhaps from Dante, he had no more than spotty knowledge of European and English culture and literature between Marcus Aurelius and Shakespeare . . . he knew the major and some

minor figures in Greek, Latin, French, German, and Italian in the original languages." [18]

Of all the essays, the ones which deal most formidably with Dante are Arnold's review of Theodore Martin's translation of the Vita Nuova, "Dante and Beatrice" and "The Study of Poetry." A lecture of March 1859 entitled "Dante, the Trubadors and the Early Drama," is mentioned in Arnold's notebooks but has not been published. An 1862 lecture on "The Modern Element in Dante" is also unpublished.

"Dante and Beatrice" appeared in Fraser's magazine in 1863 and is mostly concerned with Theodore Martin's translation of the Vita Nuova, which appeared one year after Rossetti's. Arnold's remarks are apparently directed at Martin's introduction which elaborates the view that Dante's relationship with Beatrice in the Vita Nuova is based on his "real" acquaintance with her. According to Arnold's view there are two erroneous tendencies implied in a translation of the Vita Nuova (and other texts as well): that which Martin is guilty of, and the over-allegorizing of the story. It is characteristic of Arnold's methodology that a proper or desired compromise is to be found between two extremes. Arnold confronts the problem of the nature of the relationship between Dante and Beatrice by referring to the ontological status of poetry and the requisite correspondence between life and literature. The essay is an important statement on the nature of poetry and on a way of

reconciling, within the framework of aesthetic concerns, Dante's life and work. In arguing against those critics who "allegorize the Divine Comedy," Arnold states that "they know nothing of the necessary laws under which poetic genuis works . . ." They who do what Martin has done are also in error: "mistake the human and real element in Dante's poem."[19] Arnold's argument is based on the necessities of poetic endeavor, as an acquaintance with life is necessary for the artist, but only up to a certain point. "Dante saw the world and used in his poetry what he had seen; for he was a born artist."[20] The artist needs a basis of "reality" for his work, from which he draws on.

> Yes, undoubtedly there was a real Beatrice, whom Dante had seen living and moving before him and for whom he had a felt passion. This basis of fact and reality he took from the life of the outward world; this basis was indispensable to him, for he was an artist. 21

The division of "outer" and "inner" worlds suggest the artist's power to create from a basis of fact. Arnold combines assumptions of mimetic and romantic affective criticism, to arrive at an ontology of poetry. It is the assumptions about the nature of poetry which determine what Dante's relationship with Beatrice must have been like to produce the Vita Nuova. The essay, is in part, a discussion of what life's relation to art is.

> Art requires a basis of fact, but it also desires to treat this basis of fact with the utmost freedom; and this desire for the freest handling of its object is even thwarted when its object is too near, and too real.
>
> Thus the conditions of art do not make it necessary that Dante's relations with Beatrice should have been more close and real than the Vita Nuova represents them; and the conditions of Dante's own nature do not make it probable. 22

Besides these necessities--those relationships between the "real" world and the work of art--Arnold believes that Dante had an "impulse" to characterize the inner world. Dante mirrors life and also creates. What Arnold says here of Dante may be one way of seeing how Arnold views the artist as creator, believing that he needs a "critical effort," a basis in "reality" to draw on. Arnold indicates that Martin is

> Not perceiving that the vital impulse of Dante's soul is towards reverie and spiritual vision; that the task Dante sets himself is not the risk of reconciling poetry and reality, of giving to each its due part, of supplementing the one by the other; but the task of sacrificing the world to the spirit, of making the spirit all in all, of effacing the world in presence of the spirit. Dante was essentially aloof from the world, and not complete in the life of the world; for he was a born spiritualist and solitary. 23

The two terms "spiritualist" and "solitary," words constituting a posture towards the world, a means of looking at it, and the resultant behavior which it entails,

metaphorically capture the inner and outer man which Arnold seeks to explain in terms of each other.

Arnold argues that Martin's reflections on Dante's actual life are not accurate, and do not accord with his character:

> The grand, impracticable Solitary, with keen senses and ardent passions--for nature had made him an artist, and art must be, as Milton says, 'sensuous and impassioned--but with an irresistible bent to the inward life, the life of imagination, vision and ecstasy; with an inherent impatience of the outward life of distraction, jostling, mutual concession; 24

Arnold stresses Dante's imagination as the source of artistic endeavor. That "bit" of outward reality which formed the framework for the major events of the Vita Nuova was all that Dante's temperament needed to produce his poetry. Dante's temperament reflects his art, and his art reflects the person he is. All these judgments, however, can only be made because the requirements of art are such that no more than a brief encounter with outward events is necessary for great art to be produced. It is not only the artistic object that seizes the outward event as material, but also the artist himself, who in seizing upon an outward event is able to transform it. Beatrice was a symbol of spiritual longing in the Vita Nuova because she had become so for Dante in life. The Vita Nuova is an accurate reflection of Dante's relation to poetry. For Arnold,

Beatrice was "a vision of his youth, hardly at all in contact with him in actual life, vanished from him soon, with whom his imagination could deal freely, whom he could divinize into a fit object for the spiritual longing which filled him."[25] Thus, Arnold is not cynical about the "spiritualized" Beatrice which emerges at the end of the Vita Nuova, but finds her a reflection of Dante's life. The "conditions" under which art is produced would not make this impossible. Arnold accounts for Boccaccio's assertion about Dante, which arouses Martin, "that Dante's conduct, even in mature life, was at times exceedingly irregular," by finding it to accord with Dante's temperament.

> We know how the followers of the spiritual life tend to be antinomian in what belongs to the outward life: they do not attach much importance to such irregularity themselves; it is their fault as complete men that they do not; it is the fault of the spiritual life, as a complete life, that it allows this tendency. 26

The concept of the "inward" life as an element in Dante's character is the important theme of Arnold's essay and is repeated in various ways throughout.

> But the real truth is, that all the life of the world, its pleasures, its business, its parties, its politics, all is alike hollow and miserable to Dante in comparison with the inward life, the ecstasy of the Divine vision. 27

The essay ends with a consideration of Beatrice and her relation to Dante: "to Dante at fifty, when his character has taken its bent, when his genius has come to its perfection, when he is composing his immortal poem, she is a spirit altogether." 28

Arnold's denial of Beatrice's "reality" towards the end of Dante's life and the constant references to his inner life may not fully accord with what Arnold knew about Dante's involvement with politics and other earthly affairs, but temperament is emphasized in the essay to attack Martin's notions about Dante's involvement with his daily life and their reflections in his work. The essay is as much an ontological assessment of poetry as it is a description of Dante's temperament. In considering the Vita Nuova Arnold tries to assert what poetry is, finding Dante's "spiritualized" Beatrice not superseding the boundaries within which there can be art. Arnold preserves in this essay what, we know from other essays, appealed to him: the "spiritual" Dante who had a "moral" base as authority. In referring to the importance of "the ecstasy of the Divine image," Arnold reveals what he is to imply in "The Study of Poetry" in which Dante figures prominently: art needs a metaphysics to sustain men. It can therefore do, in part, what religion no longer is capable of doing.

"The Study of Poetry" was published in 1880 as the General Introduction to T. H. Ward's <u>The English Poets</u>. It

asserts the immense importance of poetry and proposes a method by which to evaluate it. Dante figures importantly in the essay, for lines from the Commedia appear as "touchstones," a method used previously. Although an introduction to English poets, "The Study of Poetry" proposes a look at the continent for examples of various qualities that poetry should have. Arnold wished English readers to look to Dante when reading English poets. Although the touchstone is essentially a rhetorical strategy, in a subtle manner it also implies that a given "metaphysics" is preferable to others. Though Arnold does not state this as the function of the touchstone, his selection indicates a particular bias as to a preferable subject matter or "substance" for poetry. Arnold's views on the relation of religion and poetry have also caused much controversy, some asserting that Arnold thought poetry could take the place of religion, others offering several modifications and qualifications to this view. The problem is significant and Dante's place is prominent in relation to it. The Commedia represents the coalescence of religious principles in aesthetic form. Dante appeals to the religious and aesthetic needs, though the essay may seem to take a disinterested stance in relation to "metaphysical" presuppositions. Dante appeals because of what he says and how he says it, though Arnold makes a pretense of considering primarily the latter as criterion.

A consideration of Arnold's criteria and methodology in "The Study of Poetry" is necessary in deducing the relative importance of the "touchstone" in order to understand how Dante is used. In the essay, Arnold arrives at a method for testing the standards of poetry through a series of deductions which logically expounds the necessity for having such standards, and initiates his thesis by stating the importance of poetry. He contrasts the possibilities of poetry and science and refers to Wordsworth's judgements.

> More and more mankind will discover that we have to turn to poetry to interpret life for us, to console us, to sustain us. Without poetry, our science will appear incomplete . . . . For finally and truly does Wordsworth call poetry 'the impassioned expression which is in the countenance of all science.' 29

Arnold continues to impress the reader with the importance of poetry by indicating the weakness of philosophy.

> . . . our philosophy, pluming itself on its reasoning about causation and finite and infinite being; what are they but the false shows of knowledge? The day will come when we shall wonder at ourselves for having trusted to them, for having taken them seriously; and the more we perceive the hollowness, the more we shall prize 'the breath and finer spirit of knowledge' offered to us by poetry. 30

In relation to science, poetry is complementary; but in relation to philosophy poetry is seen as capable of supplanting it, of offering a more "satisfying" approach to

knowledge. The statement about philosophy upholds a set of epistemological implications apparently conducive to poetry. The "Carlylian" assumption seems to be that an "intuitive" and not a logical basis lies at the center of knowledge. In avoiding the "logical" arguments of philosophy poetry arrives at "the breath and finer spirit of knowledge." Poetry may be a more viable way of supplying a metaphysics than philosophy. In making poetry responsible for doing what philosophy has done, and by indicating that it can do this better, poetry takes on an enormous burden. It must do more than give pleasure, instruct, and satisfy the impulse to "imitate." It must supply an "authority," which can organize and comprehend knowledge in a meaningful manner. Given these assumptions, could a poetry not founded in a distinct metaphysics have been satisfying to Arnold? The authority sought for was not available from science, nor religion, nor philosophy. The answers to these questions are a clue to what Arnold thought about Dante, a far better one than can be given from Arnold's explicit statements about him.

Though Arnold's speculations on the importance of poetry are provocative in themselves, they do serve a particular function in the essay. Given the assumptions about the importance of poetry, the following is certainly logical:

> But if we conceive thus highly of the destinies of poetry, we must also set our standard for poetry high, since poetry, to be capable of fulfilling such high destinies, must be poetry of a high order of excellence . . . . For in poetry the distinction between excellent and inferior, sound and unsound or only half-sound, true and untrue or only half-true, is of paramount importance. 31

Arnold argues for the necessity of discriminating various levels of poetry, and implicitly for the need of criteria in formulating such discrimination. He distinguishes between different levels of critical appreciation.

> But this real estimate, the only true one, is liable to be superseded, if we are not watchful by two other kinds of estimate, the historic estimate and the personal estimate, both of which are fallacious. 32

Arnold rejects the historic estimate because there is a tendency to overemphasize what is significant in the "course of development" of a literature. Likewise a poem "may count to us on grounds personal to ourselves," and lead to the same tendency. Arnold suggests that the "real" estimate avoids the evaluative problems the other two raises, but he fails to categorize or define the "real" estimate. The "indeterminate" nature of the concept "real" allows Arnold a methodological dexterity; he can attribute a series of ambiguous values, values which he believes to be important, without risking the possibility of logical or interpretive

inconsistency. One suspects that Arnold is accommodating the personal bias implied in the touchstones, while the pretense of "disinterestedness" in metaphysical matters is being rhetorically sustained. Arnold implies what the "real" estimate is by the touchstone method, further refining his critical theory by suggesting that the best poetry has truth and seriousness. For Aristotle, "truth and higher seriousness" were elements for distinguishing poetry from history. Again the touchstone is used to indicate these qualities. Arnold clearly states why he uses the touchstone method and defines it.

> Indeed there can be no more useful help for discovering what poetry belongs to the class of the truly excellent, and can therefore do us most good, than to have always in one's mind lines and expressions of the great masters, and to apply them as a touchstone to other poetry. Of course we are not to require this other poetry to resemble them; it may be very dissimilar. But if we can have any tact we shall find them, when we have lodged them well in our minds, an infallible touchstone for detecting the presence or absence of high poetic quality, and also the degree of this quality, in all other poetry which we may place beside them. Short passages, even single lines, will serve our turn quite sufficiently. 33

Obviously not a logical device, and perhaps unusually irritating to modern readers, the touchstone is nevertheless revealing of Arnold's "taste" and bias for "morally reflexive" attitudes in poetry. Dante is referred to extensively, always in positive terms. In choosing lines

from the Commedia, Arnold is interested in qualities which subsist in poetry, not in poems. The Commedia is not evaluated, but various qualities, which it shares with other works of literature, are. The touchstone method itself implies that the "work of art" is not under scrutiny insofar as certain qualities are apprehended in lines from it. This is another way of saying that if a work is an organic structure, then a few lines of it display characteristics of the whole work but do not account for one of its major significances: its relationship to the rest of the text. If a work is not an organic structure than a few lines may be indicative of certain qualities, but these qualities cannot be "projected" on to the entire work as representative of the "whole." This paradox, which the touchstone method implies when its theoretical implications are considered, ultimately renders it logically futile as a method; it does, however, indicate Arnold's aspirations for what poetry should be and what Dante exemplified.

Dante is used several times as a touchstone, the first three times alongside Shakespeare, Homer and Milton, exemplars of the very highest poetry. The lines from Dante are,

> Io non piangeva; si dentro impietrai
> Piangevan elli . . .
> (I wailed not, so of stone grew I within;--
> they wailed.)
>
> In la sua volontade e nostra pace.
> (In this will is our peace.)

> Io son fatta da Dio, sua merce, tale
> Che la vostra miseria non mi tange,
> Ne fiamma d'esto incendio non m'assale . . .
> (Of such sort hath God, thanked be His mercy made me, that your misery toucheth me not, neither doth the flame of this fire strike me.) 34

The third quotation is repeated two more times. In the first set of touchstones in which the three lines appear, they are used to illustrate the function of the touchstone. Speaking of those lines from Homer, Dante, Shakespeare and Milton, Arnold writes,

> These few lines, if we have tact and can use them, are enough even of themselves to keep clear and sound our judgements about poetry, to save us from fallacious estimates of it, to conduct us to a real estimate.
>
> The specimens I have quoted differ widely from one another, but they have in common this: the possession of the very highest poetical quality. 35

Arnold later uses the line from Dante in a more specific sense after further refining those characteristics which are to be looked for in the best poetry. Though at first Arnold does not mention "substance" as an important criteria he later does.

> Let us add, therefore, to what we have said, this: that the substance and matter of the best poetry acquire their special character from possessing, in an eminent degree, truth and seriousness. We may add yet further, what is in itself evident, that to the style and manner of the best poetry their special character, their accent, is given by their

> diction, and even yet more, by their movement. 36

Arnold later contrasts Dante with Chaucer in order to indicate that Chaucer lacks the accent of the great classics. This reflects the lack of "the high and excellent seriousness, which Aristotle assigns as one of the grand virtues of poetry." Chaucer has a superiority in both "the substance of his poetry and in the style of his poetry. His superiority in substance is given by his large, free, simple, clear yet kindly view of human life."[37] He can "survey the world from a central, truly German point of view." Yet he does not have Dante's accent.

> What is wanting to him is suggested by the mere mention of the name of the first great classic of Christendom, the immortal poet who died eighty years before Chaucer,--Dante. The accent of such verse as "In la sua volontade e nostra pace . . .' is altogether beyond Chaucer's reach; we praise him, but we feel that this accent is out of the question for him. 38

Arnold points to Dante as one who exemplifies a "high seriousness" which can sustain the demands of poetry. One thinks of the opening of "The Study of Poetry" in which poetry is looked to in order to supply what religion no longer can. Poetry can do far more than give pleasure. It can "feed" the spirit.

> The substance of Chaucer's poetry, his view of things and his criticism of life has largeness, freedom, shrewdness, benignity;

> but it has not this high seriousness. Homer's criticism of life has it, Dante's has it, Shakespeare's has it. It is this chiefly which gives to our spirits what they can rest upon; and with the increasing demands of our modern ages upon poetry, this virtue of giving us what we can rest upon will be more and more highly esteemed. 39

Arnold hints at what particular characteristic of poetry is capable of doing what religion has done. "The greatness of the great poets, the power of their criticism of life is that their virtue is sustained."[40]

Dante is again used in contrast to Burns. Dante's seriousness derives from his sincerity, not apparent in Burns. A qualification is added to Dante's line which stresses the importance of aesthetic as well as "substantive" criteria in finding the very best poetry. Dante, of course, is not lacking in any of those qualities apparent in only the highest poetry, and is thus capable of feeding the spirit through a work of art which maintains its integrity as such. Poetry, in giving "comfort" for the spirit is not a substitute for a religion but a work of art which can take over one of the functions that religion performs. Arnold's implied distinction between that which can "feed" the spirit and that which can do so under the conditions of art indicates that he has not reduced the greatest poetry to that which can maintain us spiritually. Dante is a great artist who can be spiritual by comforting.

> But for supreme poetical success more is required than the powerful application of ideas to life; it must be an application under the conditions fixed by the laws of poetic truth and beauty. Those laws fix as an essential condition, in the poet's treatment of such matters as are here in question, high seriousness;--the high seriousness which comes from absolute sincerity. The accent of high seriousness, born of absolute sincerity, is what gives such verse as "In la sua volontade e nostra pace . . .' to such criticism of life as Dante's, its power. 41

Dante's art makes his spiritual message powerful.

DeLaura, in his study "Arnold and Literary Criticism," describes the specific content of the touchstones used in "The Study of Poetry." He traces Arnold's changing attitudes towards religion and their relationship to literature by examining Arnold's touchstones in the Homer lectures and after. The range of subject matter is rather limited, though Arnold does not explicitly state this.

> But as the whole scope of Arnold's succeeding criticism shows, not any serious and sustained subject will fill the bill. For Arnold's continuous use of touchstones, beginning in the Homer lectures, suggests the rather narrow range of specific attitudes and emotions which qualify for inclusion in Arnold's select anthology. 42

DeLaura cites John Eells' study of the touchstones of "The Study of Poetry" which tries to find the predominant state of mind that they reveal. "Eight of the eleven, Eells notes, express varying degrees of melancholy and strong

pathos . . . ."[43] DeLaura asserts that Eells has not accounted for Arnold's "Christianization" in stating the nature of the touchstones, particularly in regard to Dante. Perhaps because of the increased burden that was placed on poetry, Arnold was to find that an "implied" system of values was necessary in categorizing the best poetry. Dante remains a consistently important "touchstone" throughout Arnold's changing conception of the importance of religion in its relation to literature.

> Eells correctly notes that the bulk of the eleven touchstones of 1880 express Arnold's specially favoured emotions of loss, pain, grief, death, the transcience of both glory and happiness. He sees a new 'class' of emotion in numbers 5, 6 and 7, which he calls 'the need for peace' series--especially in the two from Dante, which express, first, gratitude to God for exempting the dead from human misery, and second, the supreme religious attitude of joy in submission to the divine will, the "In la sua voluntade e nostra pace' that Eliot was to make much of years later. Inexplicably, however, Eells seems unaware that these two touchstones are intimately connected with the 'Christianization' of Arnold's thought over the preceding years. 44

In the use of touchstones before the 1880 "Study of Poetry," Arnold's references to Dante were used in a secular spirit, a fight against Victorian complacency.

> This may be called the continuing 'secular' component of Arnold's apprehension of the human condition: for him, it represents--against Victorian activism, complacency, and liberal progressivism--an honest facing of

> the permanent and irreducible contingency, opacity and pain of human life. 45

DeLaura sees in Arnold's use of the touchstone an attempt to supply a view of human life, which can console man. Thus, in pointing to that literature which is to be valued most highly, Arnold is also indicating that literature which can console man, as religion does.

> The bulk of Arnold's supreme touchstones are 'formative' and 'transforming' for human character because, in an un-Victorian and surprisingly 'existential' mood, they repudiate precisely the easier sorts of nineteenth-century consolation, whether religious or rationalistic. The touchstones have frequently been dismissed as simply further examples of Tennysonian or Virgilian melancholy and self-pity; they are, instead, challenges to the softer kinds of palliation. Any authentically 'religious' view of human possibility, Arnold is saying implicitly, must make its way against such a view and, in a sense, can never simply cancel this perception of the quality of human life, faced unflinchingly. 46

In his later writings Arnold seems to find, in those writers whose sensitivity is religious, the highest power to sustain the Victorians of his time. One of the central arguments in the essay on Marcus Aurelius (1863) is "the feeling" that is lacking in the "meditations' which Christianity can supply. DeLaura notes a similar tendency in Arnold's later writings: "classical moralists, enjoining conduct, are played off against Biblical citations, where 'feeling' has been 'added' to conduct." 47

In general, Arnold's use of the touchstone reveals a great deal about the criteria to be used in evaluating literature. Implied is the idea that a poetry which sustains a vision of life in which a "providential framework" informs the poetry is the most capable of comforting men. The great burden placed on poetry necessitated a particular content or "substance." Throughout Arnold's career, he looked to Dante as a supreme exemplar of those secular and Christian values which were conceived to be of importance in the program of presenting poetry as a possible source of spiritual sustenance. Both the manifestation of these values and the "aesthetic" qualities of Dante assured that in seeking a source of values, literature could supply them in a context of high artistic achievement.

Dante figured importantly in Arnold's multitudinous critical attempts at evaluating poetry and indicating its importance. Referred to throughout his career, Dante was an important exemplar of a high style, aesthetic excellence, and perhaps most importantly of the desired relationship between poetry and religion. The famous opening of the "Study of Poetry" implies the most important use of Dante for the public Arnold was addressing. The impossible burden on poetry made it impossible for the moral to be divorced from the aesthetic.

> The future of poetry is immense, because in poetry, where it is worthy of its high destinies, our race, as time goes on, will find an ever surer and surer stay. There is not a creed which is not shaken, not an accredited dogma which is shown not to be questionable, not a recoined tradition which does not threaten to dissolve. Our religion has materialized itself in the fact, in the supposed fact; it has attached its emotion to the fact, and now the fact is failing it. But for poetry the idea is everything; the rest is a world of illusion, of divine illusion. Poetry attaches its emotion to the idea; the idea is the fact. The strongest part of our religion today is its unconscious poetry. 48

Dante had a great hold on Arnold because he was a supreme artist and because he controlled his material in a metaphysics congenial to poetry's high demands. Essentially this metaphysics is Christian. It is not, however, simply the "Christian message" which is important and sustaining in poetry, it is the "feeling" that poetry imparts which is essential. As Vincent Buckley points out, Arnold "speaks of poetry as illuminating man; it does not merely tell him his place in the universe, but it makes him feel it, gives him the sense and sentiment of it."[49] Arnold is drawn to those poets who share several qualities apparent in religion. " . . . the poets whom he most reveres are in a sense religious poets; they are the poets of an ethical-aesthetic sentiment which is, to Arnold's mind, the core of religion."[50]

Hallam and Arnold were concerned with a poetry which could give those of their own generation spiritual sustenance. Hallam believed that only a spiritualized Christianity could sustain men. Though the term is vague, it does indicate that a providential, though not necessarily doctrinal basis of values is needed. Arnold's position throughout his career, most explicitly in the latter part, through that phase DeLaura calls the "Christianized" part, from the 1860's onward, sought a similar ideal. Arnold's reaction to Dante was not constant but his evaluation was. Whether with an eye to aesthetic or religious values, Dante always ranked as one of a very select few.

Notes

[1] Vincent Buckley, "Matthew Arnold: Poetry as Religion," in Matthew Arnold: A Collection of Critical Essays, ed. David J. DeLaura (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1973), p. 153.

[2] Thomas Carlyle, Works, Vol. 28 (London: Chapman and Hall Lmtd., 1899), p. 23.

[3] David J. DeLaura, "Arnold and Literary Criticism," in Matthew Arnold, ed. Kenneth Allott (Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 1975), p. 143.

[4] DeLaura, p. 144.

[5] DeLaura, pp. 144-145.

[6] DeLaura, p. 129.

[7] Matthew Arnold, Lectures and Essays in Criticism, Vol. III of The Complete Prose Works of Matthew Arnold, ed. R. H. Super (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press), p. 381.

[8] DeLaura, p. 129-130.

[9] DeLaura, pp. 130-131.

[10] Matthew Arnold, On the Classical Tradition, Vol. 1, p. 127.

[11] Arnold, On the Classical, p. 128.

[12] Arnold, On the Classical, p. 128.

[13] Arnold, On the Classical, pp. 189-190.

[14] William A. Madden, Matthew Arnold: A Study of the Aesthetic Temperament in Victorian England (Indiana and London: Indiana University Press, 1967), pp. 45-46.

[15] Madden, p. 183.

[16] Madden, pp. 182-183.

[17] Matthew Arnold, Philistinism in England and America, Vol. X, p. 102.

[18] Douglas Bush, Matthew Arnold: A Survey of His Poetry and Prose (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1971), pp. 126-127.

[19] Arnold, Lectures, p. 3.

[20] Arnold, Lectures, p. 4.

[21] Arnold, Lectures, p. 5.

[22] Arnold, Lectures, pp. 5-6.

[23] Arnold, Lectures, p. 4.

[24] Arnold, Lectures, pp. 8-9.

[25] Arnold, Lectures, p. 9.

[26] Arnold, Lectures, p. 9.

[27] Arnold, Lectures, p. 10.

[28] Arnold, Lectures, p. 11.

[29] Matthew Arnold, English Literature and Irish Politics, Vol. IX, pp. 161-162.

[30] Arnold, English Literature, p. 162.

[31] Arnold, English Literature, pp. 162-163.

[32] Arnold, English Literature, p. 163.

[33] Arnold, English Literature, p. 168.

[34] Arnold, English Literature, p. 169.

[35] Arnold, English Literature, p. 170.

[36] Arnold, English Literature, p. 171.

[37] Arnold, English Literature, p. 174.

[38] Arnold, English Literature, p. 176.

[39] Arnold, English Literature, pp. 176-177.

[40] Arnold, English Literature, p. 177.

[41] Arnold, English Literature, pp. 184-185.

[42] DeLaura, pp. 131-132.

[43] DeLaura, p. 132.

[44] DeLaura, pp. 132-133.

[45] DeLaura, p. 133.

[46] DeLaura, p. 133.

[47] DeLaura, p. 134.

[48] Arnold, English Literature, p. 161.

[49] Buckley, p. 159.

[50] Buckley, p. 153.

Walter Pater

Dante's reputation continued to grow throughout the century and numerous translations and studies of his works continued to appear. It was expected that Dante would be mentioned alongside all the great writers of English literature, and most critics had at least some knowledge of most of his works. Dante was particularly significant to Walter Pater and Ruskin at various points in their careers. They championed his centrality and importance when considering almost any literary or cultural movement or in discussions of various elements of literature in the abstract. They refine positions that their contemporaries or predecessors had taken up, and also discuss Dante in a new set of ideas. Pater's copious remarks give perspective to some of the problems in the Victorian view of Dante's relationship to the integrity and high aim of literature and the attempt to resist and accommodate certain aspects of "aestheticism."

In Pater's critical work, Dante, Goethe, and Victor Hugo are the three most mentioned names.[1] In several essays on the Renaissance, Dante is a central figure against whom others are considered. In several other essays he is either one of the central figures, as in the essay on Rossetti, or

at least mentioned several times. One of the more important problems to consider, especially in relation to the central problem of the Victorian view of Dante, is an apparent contradiction between an aesthetic, increasingly popular in later Victorian England, which theoretically favors the lyric, and Pater's appreciation of Dante, apparently greater than for any lyric poet. In earlier critics, for instance Hallam, Dante was considered as exemplar insofar as substance could be reintroduced to a poetry that had lacked it because of the Romantic overreaction against eighteenth century aesthetic principles. One might expect such a point of view to disparage or at least not consider the lyric as the highest form, but in Pater's case the situation is quite different. As Ruth Child points out in a study of Pater,

> His doctrine of 'the perfect identification of matter and form' is the basis of his whole argument in the School of Giorgione, where he deduces from it that every artist must understand and abide by the limitations of the medium in which he is working . . . . On that basis, too, he grounds his argument in the same essay that music is the highest of the arts, since it has in greatest degree the perfect fusion of form and content. This being true, all other arts are striving after the condition of music, that is, after complete identity of form and content, and are artistic insofar as they approach it. As a second corollary, it follows that lyric poetry is higher than poetry of 'moral or political inspiration,' 'because in it we are least able to detach the matter from form, without a deduction of some things from that matter itself.' 2

Child finds the preference for the lyric to be "at variance" with Pater's frequent and enthusiastic reception of Dante. A similar problem was also indicated in Hallam's seemingly contradictory notions regarding the need for a "spiritual Christianity," that which could sustain man, in short a poetry of "substance," and the ideal indicated in the essay on Tennyson, a poetry in which its various elements were subordinated to the beautiful. The apparent contradiction in Hallam indicated a more complex formulation of the relationship of form to matter than the predominance of one. Hallam argued that the subordination of matter to form was a more complex rendering of form than when expounded on the "surface." Pater's arguments are similar. Pater argues for the union of form and matter, but not at the expense of matter. There seem to be two important components to Pater's consideration of the problem of form and matter which have an important connection to Dante. The first is that, as in Hallam's argument, when form and matter are joined, matter is not lost. The second important point is that it is through the form that the work of art is apprehended. As it is the form which makes the "impression" on the viewer, it does not follow from this postulate that matter is not also apprehended. A confusion may arise from Pater's use of music as the ideal medium, because of the collapse of matter into "pure form," but as Pater says, "thus some of the most delightful music seems to be always

approaching to figure, to pictorial definition." A clearer understanding of Pater's position of the poem's ideal relation to form and art may be seen in the major premises of the essay on "Giorgione."

Matter is enhanced by form, not diminished by it. Though the lyric is elevated, it would follow that other forms in which characteristics of the lyric were apparent, would also be elevated. One recalls Hallam's remark that "Dante communicates two-thirds by sound." There, the subordination of matter to the beautiful was made an important criterion for art. In this subordination a more complex arrangement of substance and form enhanced both.

In the essay on "Style" Pater confronts more directly the problems involved in appreciating Dante, within the criteria of an aesthetic which stresses the importance of form in the development of style. Various styles are all indicative of attempts of individuals to expression in their own manner. The "relegation of style to the subjectivity, the mere caprice of the individual" will not lead to mannerism. The precise form of expression will be a matter of precise discrimination to the sensitive person. Pater is here formulating an argument which he may have used to dispel the notion that impressionistic apprehension is capricious and subjective to a sensitive observer. The impression art makes on a sensitive reader is not necessarily subjective. "The style, the manner, would be

the man, not in his unreasoned and really uncharacteristic caprices, involuntary or affected, but in absolutely sincere apprehension of what is most real to him."[3] Following Flaubert's reflection on form, that it is the matter which imposes the form, Pater states that "if the style be the man, in all the colour and intensity of a veritable apprehension, it will be in a real sense 'impersonal.'" In these reflections on style, we find form to be dominant and consuming but in no way does it obliterate matter as the music metaphor may have led some to believe. The relation to music is made more explicit. "Music and prose literature are, in one sense, the opposite terms of art; the art of literature presenting to the imagination, through the intelligence, a range of interests, as free and various as those which music presents to it through sense."[4]

The similarities are here more enlightening than the differences. Here we see that "substance" (interest) is conveyed by the medium in which form and substance cannot be delineated. The confusion which results, not seeing the importance of "matter" in Pater, may result from the dominance form is given, its power to destroy matter. Another confusion may seemingly result from what many may take to be music's power to be "pure form." Pater's use of music, however, clearly rejects these views. If one keeps in mind Pater's assertion on the common ground music and literature share in terms of substance, then an important

perspective or qualification is given to the assertion that all art aspires to the condition of music:

> And certainly the tendency of what has been here said is to bring literature too under those conditions, by conformity to which music takes rank as the typically perfect art. If music be the ideal of all art whatever, precisely because in music it is impossible to distinguish the form from the substance or matter, the subject from the expression, then, literature, by finding its specific excellence in the absolute correspondence of the term to its import, will be but fulfilling the condition of all artistic qualities in things everywhere, of all good art. 5

In light of these speculations the problems involved in appreciating Dante may be stated as follows: Is matter inseparable from form in Dante? Does the Commedia aspire, in some sense to the condition of music? What is it, that makes the Commedia great art? It has often been said that in Dante form and matter are easily separable and each has its relative values. Both, or either, at various times have been stressed as if they were separable. Pater's position, however, is slightly different, as he does not find them separable but complementary. Pater encouraged one of the most "eccentric" attempts at translation by any Victorian. Thomas Shadwell's translation of the Purgatorio into the stanzas used in Marvell's Horation Ode shows how much Pater was willing to concede the "paraphrasable" meaning to find an "appropriate" form. It is a mistake to believe Pater

thought meaning was sacrificed. On the contrary, it was being preserved and expressed through the form. The nature of this debate--Dante's matter and form--was one which was constantly confronted by Victorian translators, some finding it most valuable to translate with as much fidelity as possible, others, making great sacrifices to fidelity in order to preserve either a similar form to terza rima or an English "equivalent."

Pater makes a further, explicit qualification on his speculations on Dante and his relation to these issues, in the conclusion to the essay on style. Child states,

> In view of his other treatments of the subject, however, the concluding remarks of the essay on "Style" are rather surprising. There Pater makes a plea for the importance of 'matter.' The secret of art, he maintains as always, is the perfect identity of form and matter. This is 'the condition of all artistic quality in things everywhere, of all good art.' But it is not the primary test of great art, which depends for its greatness not on its form, but on its content. 6

The conclusion may be jarring for it introduces a new problem into the essay. In its concern with "evaluative" criteria it needs to go beyond those established for a discussion of style. The distinction between good and great must account for elements which were not those important for an understanding of style. In light of the subtle argument presented about the relation of form and matter in the essay, the ending is not contradictory but seems to be an

additional speculation, or a subtle demonstration about the relation between style and evaluation. If one does not accept the importance Pater gives to substance throughout the entire argument, then the ending might certainly seem surprising and contradictory. Through all of Pater's speculations on form, Dante is a major figure and a clue to why is implied in the ending of the essay on style. When applying evaluative criteria considerations must be given to substance, which is not as important in discussions of other sets of problems. Form not being the only element of a work, it could not be otherwise than that subject matter should be an important constituent in determining value. The centrality of Dante should be noted in the conclusion:

> . . . the distinction between great art and good depending immediately, as regards literature at all events, not on its form, but on the matter. Thackery's Esmond, surely is greater art than "Vanity Fair," by the greater dignity of its interests. It is on the quality of the matter it informs or controls, its compass, its variety, its alliance to great ends, or the depth of the note of revolt, or the largeness of hope in it, that the greatness of literary art depends, as the Divine Comedy, Paradise Lost, Les Miserables, The English Bible are great art. Given the conditions I have tried to explain as constructing great art; - then, if it be devoted further to the increase of men's happiness, to the redemption of the oppressed, or the enlargement of our sympathies with each other, or to such presentment of new or old truth about ourselves and our relation to the world as may ennoble and fortify us in our sojourn here, or immediately, as with Dante, to the glory of God, it will be also great art; if, over and above those qualities I summed up as

> mind and soul--that colour and mystic perfume, and that reasonable structure, it has something of the soul of humanity in it, and finds its logical, its architectural place, in the great structure of human life. 7

In the "School of Giorgione" the problem of matter and form is given a different emphasis; however, the theoretical implications are similar to those in the essay on "Style." Moreover, important qualifications to important points should also be considered. Following the famous statement that "all art constantly aspires to the condition of music," Pater proceeds with what appears to be a statement on the unimportance of matter in relation to form.

> That the mere matter of a poem, for instance its subject, namely, its given incidents or situation--that the mere matter of a picture, the actual circumstances of an event, the actual topography of a landscape--should be nothing without the form, the spirit, of the handling, that this form, this mode of handling, should become an end in itself, should penetrate every part of the matter: this is what all art constantly strives after, and achieves in different degrees. 8

Two important points are helpful in placing these comments in perspective. The reference to "mere" matter refers to matter as it is considered apart from form. It is implied that when form "penetrates matter" matter is transformed into something more profound. Thus when considering Dante, theoretically, the argument may be that the Commedia's matter, which is what makes it great, would

be very little if separated from the form. Also, by juxtaposing Pater's central aesthetic point about the arts--"All art constantly aspires toward the condition of music" with his statement: "thus some of the most delightful music seems to be always approaching to figure, to pictorial definition" his position becomes clearer. When considered together, one must conclude that when art is consumed by form, the matter is most powerfully present. Pater further states: "And the very perfection of such poetry often appears to depend, in part, on a certain suppression or vagueness of mere subject, so that the vagueness of mere subject, so that the meaning reaches us through ways not distinctly traceable by the understanding . . . ."[9] The argument here is similar to Hallam's in the essay on Tennyson: "meaning may be conveyed by form - Dante communicates two-thirds by sound." It should be remembered that in the formulation of the problem of form and matter, Pater's concern is with the impression that the work of art makes--how is the work of art perceived most powerfully by the viewer or reader? That matter and form are considered in this context is made rather explicit,

> Art, then, is always striving to be independent of the mere intelligence, to become a matter of pure perception, to get rid of its responsibilities to its subject or material; the ideal examples of poetry and painting being those in which the constituent elements of the composition are so welded together, that the material or subject no longer strikes the intellect only; nor the

> form, the eye or the ear only; but formal matter, in their union or identity, present one single effect to the 'imaginative reason,' that complex faculty for which every thought and feeling is twin-born until its sensible analogue or symbol. 10

Pater's speculations on form and matter may have theoretically led to the promotion of the lyric as "the highest and most complete form of poetry" and perhaps ultimately such a view is not reconcilable with the comments on great poetry at the end of the essay on style, but there are many indications that Pater's speculations are not theoretically opposed to the notion of Dante as great poet. Of particular importance is Pater's notion of the importance of subject matter as an important evaluative criteria and the enhancement that form gives to matter in the apprehension of art.

One important context in which Dante figures in The Renaissance is in his historical setting as the inheritor of certain ideas which he passed on. Dante, though intellectually a conduit who received and passed on particular notions and forms of sentiment, was nevertheless a consummate artist. This is a common theme to most Victorian critics but in the essays of The Renaissance the idea is given repeated and explicit mention. Thus in "Two Early French Stories," Dante receives from Abelard's poems "with its qualities already well defined, its intimacy, its languid sweetness, its rebellion, its subtle skill in

dividing the elements of human passion, its care for physical beauty, its worship of the body." Inheriting the tradition of Provencal poetry, Dante was "the perfect flower of ideal love." In the essay on "The Poetry of Michelangelo" Dante represents one of two distinct "types" in the "effort to tranquillise and sweeten life by idealising its vehement sentiments." There is the Platonic tradition followed by Michelangelo and that tradition represented by the "pattern of imaginative love" of the Vita Nuova, of whom Petrarca was a follower. Michelangelo though different from Dante in some respects

> learns from Dante rather than from Plato, that for lovers, the surfeiting of desire . . . is a state less happy than poverty with abundance of hope . . . . He recalls him in the repetition of the words 'gentile' and 'cortesia' in the personification of Amor, in the tendency to dwell minutely on the physical effects of the presence of a beloved object on the pulses of the heart. Above all he resembles Dante in the warmth and intensity of his political utterances, . . . For like Dante and all nobler souls of Italy, he is much occupied with thoughts of the grave and his true mistress is death. 11

Elsewhere in the essay, Dante's preoccupation with death is seen as a prominent feature of the thoughts of those from Dante to Savonarola. In Pater's view of historical progression, Dante was an artist through which passed either of several of the dominant forms of expression

of the middle ages. Pater had a distinct, clearly defined idea about Dante's place in this historical expression.

In the various essays that make up "The Renaissance" Dante is viewed as a formal and precise thinker, an adherent to a distinct and inflexible metaphysics. In the essay on "The Poetry of Michelangelo" Dante is placed in direct contrast to the Platonist tradition. "Here, again, Michelangelo is the disciple not so much of Dante as of the Platonists. Dante's belief in immortality is formal, precise and firm, almost as much so as that of a child, who thinks the dead will hear if you cry loud enough."[12] The notion of Dante's moral certitude is used as contrast to those qualities to be admired in Botticelli. In contrast to Dante, Botticelli accepts the "middle world in which men take no side in great conflicts, and decide no great causes, and make great refusals." The concept of an acceptance of the "middle world" is also an important quality of Giorgione and, many say, an integral element of Pater's aesthetic. The importance of art is reflected in the manner it enhances our moments, not in its engagement in great issues. Pater's closing words in the conclusion explicitly bracket out those concerns irrelevant to the importance of art, and in doing so, they reflect the theoretical position of many of the essays. "For art comes to you proposing frankly to give nothing but the highest quality to your moments as they pass, and simply for those moments sake."[13]

The essay on "Botticelli" compares and contrasts various elements in both, positing a distinction between "artistic" and "philosophical" concerns. It is those similarities which make Botticelli the first illustrator of Dante, for Dante's artistic concerns were those which were to find expression in fourteenth century Italy.

"He is before all things a poetical painter, blending the charm of story and sentiment, the medium of the art of poetry, with the charm of line and color, the medium of abstract painting. So he becomes the illustrator of Dante."[14] The shared characteristics almost makes the relationship inevitable. In discussing specifically the reasons for the change that found an illustrator in Dante, Pater notes,

> Giotto and the followers of Giotto, with their almost childish religious aim, had not learned to put that weight of meaning into outward things, light, colour, everyday gesture, which the poetry of the Divine Comedy involves, and before the fifteenth century Dante could hardly have found an illustrator. 15

The attention to detail, the attempt to see the spiritual in the physical, were aspects of Dante which Pater stressed and which were those components of his art which Pater believed to be congenial to the nineteenth century. In other respects, Botticelli was similar to Dante. "He is a visionary painter, and in his visionariness he resembles

Dante." Also similar to Dante is Botticelli's keen sensitivity and concreteness of the physical: "to him, as to Dante, the scene, the colour, the outward image or gesture, comes with all its incisive and importunate reality;"[16] Though these affinities in artistic execution are shared and make Botticelli a proper and natural illustrator of Dante, there is a major difference in philosophical perspective. The capacity for Botticelli to be in the "middle road" is a feature of the Renaissance which is in great contrast to Dante.

> So just what Dante scorns as unworthy alike of heaven and hell, Botticelli accepts that middle world in which men take no side in great conflicts and decide no great causes and make great refusals. He thus sets for himself the limits within which art, undisturbed by any moral ambition, does its more sincere and surest work. 17

This clear distinction between a rigid moral code and a lack of moral ambition is one of the main features of the essay. The possibility and aesthetic which proposed that art flourish without such ambition is clearly analogous with the aesthetic articulated in the latter part of the nineteenth century by which the traditional forms of authority, particularly religious authority, were being undermined. Thus, Pater comments on his time and indicates how the preservation of art is possible and desirable without, as its primary purpose, the desire to espouse a

moral code. But as stated earlier, the major aim of not espousing such a code does not necessarily make the art amoral or immoral. It places morality in the service of beauty which enhances, rather than destroys it. There is nothing in Paters' reflections on Botticelli to indicate immorality or amorality. Thus Dante is contrasted to Botticelli not as reflective of moral and amoral qualities in art, but as indicative of two artists who rendered supreme works of art with vastly different philosophical orientations to morality. In both, form and beauty were the primary concern. This great contrast between Botticelli and Dante forms the touchstone by which the uniqueness of the fifteenth century is focused.

> But he is far enough from accepting the conventional orthodoxy of Dante which, referring all human action to the simple formula of purgatory, heaven and hell, leaves an insoluble element of prose in the depths of Dante's poetry. 18

Pater finds that

> the peculiar character of Botticelli is the result of a blending in him of a sympathy for humanity in its uncertain condition, its attractiveness, its investiture at rarer moments in a character of loveliness and energy, with its consciousness of the shadow upon it of the great things from which it shrinks, and that this conveys into his work somewhat more than painting usually attains of the true complexion of humanity. 19

Pater's attempt here to press the case for the "middle ground" beyond the art built from a framework of conventional orthodoxy may be a reflection of the needs of Pater's contemporaries. Indeed one senses that Pater's reflections are intended to give a philosophical justification for the lack of a concrete or dogmatic moral authority in Pater's time. In stating that art which did not take sides in the great moral issues reflected life more realistically than otherwise, Pater was thinking of his own time. Such a position preserves for art a distinctly important function. Implied is a justification for preserving the high importance of literature, a plan of many earlier critics. The manner in which Pater indicates Botticelli's perception of Dante reflects his own perception of Dante. In separating moral ambition from artistic integrity, both were able to usurp "the data before it as the exponent of ideas, moods, vision of its own."

One apparent paradox remains in the manner in which Dante is perceived in the context of Pater's total aesthetic. In the conclusion to the essay on "Style" Pater calls for a consideration of matter to be the distinguishing feature of "good" and "great" art. In defining this matter as an attempt to "further to the increase of men's happiness, to the redemption of the oppressed," has not a moral criterion been introduced? Is not this moral ambition? Of course the "middle road" is a moral position

itself; in fact as a moral position it is praised as that which accords most with the human condition, so one may say that Pater stressed no "particular" moral position, and if the "middle road" is to be viewed as no particular moral position, the concept of "moral ambition" needs clarification. Pater's view is both similar and dissimilar to earlier commentators on Dante who had looked to him for moral "substance." They--Hallam, for instance--sought a poetry with a particular moral, not necessarily's Dante's. Pater did not look to Dante's particular moral schemata but to his capacity to engage life as he perceived it. Pater and Hallam, and to some extent Macaulay, unlike Carlyle, perceived that Dante's true greatness was as "artist."

Pater's essay on "Dante Gabriel Rossetti" draws a series of similarities between Dante and Rossetti; in part, it is a reflection of Dante's particular characteristics as they are manifest in the nineteenth century. Pater revels in an "exquisite eccentricity" which he finds to be a characteristic of Rossetti's poems. "The Blessed Damozel" prefigures Rossetti's other poems as well as the Pre-Raphaelite movement. In it Pater finds a "quality of sincerity . . . taking effect in the deliberate use of the most direct and unconventional expression, for the conveyance of a poetic sense which recognized no conventional standard of what poetry was called upon to be."[20]

In "The Blessed Damozel" there is a treatment of detail similar to those "pictures of those early painters contemporary with Dante, who have shown a similar care for minute and definite imagery in his verse; there, too, in the very midst of profoundly mystic vision."[21] Pater refers several times to Dante's detailed descriptions, a trademark of the Pre-Raphaelites, and finds them to be a chief attraction for the nineteenth century.

The disparity between the effect of Dante in his own culture and Rossetti in his, is indicated in the incongruence Pater sensed that Rossetti's audience felt between sensuality and vision. "One of the peculiarities of 'The Blessed Damozel' was definiteness of sensible imagery, which seemed almost grotesque to some, and was strange, above all, in a theme so profoundly visionary."[22] Though Dante and Rossetti shared the premise that "the first condition of the poetic way of seeing and presenting things is the particularisation," their effect is necessarily different. Attacks on Rossetti's "sensuality" were commonplace and it is ironic that the aesthetic which prescribed it should have derived from Dante who had been recommended as an influence in an age which lacked substance. Rossetti tried to find aesthetic unity between the spiritual and the sensuous throughout his life though his spirituality was often overlooked. Pater does recognize, in this essay, Rossetti's serious attempt at this

union. In the various conceits that Rossetti uses, Pater sees that

> they are redeemed by a serious purpose, by that sincerity of his which allies itself readily to a serious beauty, a sort of grandeur of literary workmanship, to a great style. Rossetti's sense of lifeless nature, after all, is translated to a higher service, in which it does but invigorate itself with some phase of strong emotion. 23

While explaining how Dante and Rossetti share a philosophical posture regarding matter and spirit, Pater points to a crucial, central difference, one which serves as an analogue to the often stated differences and similarities between Dante and the nineteenth century, or medievalism and Victorianism.

> Practically, the church of the Middle Age by its aesthetic worship, its sacramentalism, its real faith in the resurrection of the flesh, had set itself against that Manichean opposition of spirit and matter, and its results in men's ways of taking life; and in this, Dante is the central representative of the spirit. To him, in the vehement and impassioned heat of his conceptions, the material and the spiritual are fused and blent: if the spiritual attains the definite visibility of a crystal, what is material loses its earthiness and impurity. And here again, by force of instinct, Rossetti is one with him. 24

What Dante arrives at through the authority and strength of a coherent world view, Rossetti must approach through intuition. This is a justified view of the

Victorian situation for Rossetti. Unable to begin with Medieval premises, Rossetti had to construct them in his poetry. Pater justly saw, as implied in his appraisal of Rossetti, that the look back to Medievalism, was not escapist but a serious attempt to arrive intuitively at a union of the material and spiritual in a manner which could no longer be taken for granted. Pater finds in Rossetti a "genuine intellectual structure" and although the effect of Rossetti's poems may have seemed grotesque to some, it is seen by Pater as not aiming to be so. Pater places Rossetti in a relation to Dante which illuminates a central area of the Victorian reverence and sense of intrigue in Dante: the capacity to write from an authoritative and coherent world view, no longer possible. A metaphysics could no longer be defended formally.

In the Rossetti essay Pater indicates an approach to Dante which accounts for an "inseparable" gulf between Medievalism and Victorianism, though metaphysical and aesthetic premises may be shared. For though both Rossetti and Dante know "no region of spirit which shall not be sensuous also, or material, the artistic objects which result from such a premise are necessarily different."[25] In Rossetti's mixture of detail with mystic vision, in his materializing of abstractions, and in his position that spirit and matter are inseparable, he is similar to Dante. The effect of Rossetti's poems as well as Dante's Commedia

was grotesque to many Victorians. The essay offers an understanding of Rossetti's motives as well as Dante's influence on a particular temperament.

Notes

[1] Ruth C. Child, The Aesthetic of Walter Pater (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1940), p. 58.

[2] Child, p. 58.

[3] Walter Pater, Appreciations: With an Essay on Style (1922; rpt. London: Macmillan and Co., Limited, 1889), p. 36.

[4] Pater, Appreciations, p. 37.

[5] Pater, Appreciations, pp. 37-38.

[6] Child, p. 69.

[7] Pater, Appreciations, p. 38.

[8] Walter Pater, The Renaissance: Studies in Art and Poetry ed. Donald Hill (Berkele, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 1980), p. 106.

[9] Pater, The Renaissance, p. 108.

[10] Pater, The Renaissance, pp. 108-109.

[11] Pater, The Renaissance, p. 69.

[12] Pater, The Renaissance, p. 75.

[13] Pater, The Renaissance, p. 190.

[14] Pater, The Renaissance, p.40.

[15] Pater, The Renaissance, pp. 40-41.

[16] Pater, The Renaissance, p. 42.

[17] Pater, The Renaissance, p. 43.

[18] Pater, The Renaissance, p. 42.

[19] Pater, The Renaissance, p. 47.

[20] Pater, Appreciations, p. 206.

[21] Pater, Appreciations, p. 207.

[22] Pater, Appreciations, p. 207.

[23] Pater, Appreciations, p. 210.

[24] Pater, Appreciations, pp. 213-214.

Conclusion

Pater's introduction to Charles Shadwell's 1892 translation of the Purgatorio is both a reflection on the reasons for Dante's appeal in the nineteenth century and a brief--and somewhat gratuitous--appraisal of Shadwell's accomplishment. Pater finds, in the popularity of Dante, more than can be explained by the great interest in medievalism in the latter half of the century. Medievalism appeared as a refuge from the "mere prose" of the century but Dante appealed both because of various affinities between his own art and aspects of Victorian culture and because of aspects which Victorian art lacked. A sense of shared values and a philosophical framework which the Victorians lacked form two important reasons for the influence which was certainly part of the interest in Dante. Pater's treatment of this influence is sketchy and several major factors, which perhaps historical distance makes even more apparent, have not been considered, but Pater does touch on a few apparent reasons for the phenomena which most Victorian commentators, even in their "historical self-consciousness" did not reflect on.

Summarizing the major points of the Victorian interest in Dante, Pater states,

> A minute sense of the external world and its beauties, a minute sense of the phenomena of the mind, of what is beautiful and of interest there, a demand for wide and cheering outlooks in religion, for a largeness of spirit in its application to life: these are the special points of contact between Dante and the genius of our own century. 1

Pater's consideration is rooted in those historical factors which form the basis upon which influence is built. Although Dante was a great poet, "great enough to be independent of the mere mental habits of one age or another . . . he too had to pass through ages with no natural ear for him." The subject matter of Dante's art anticipates certain "tendencies" in Victorian life and therefore promotes them. The detail of Dante's work is congenial to the Victorian manner of perceiving the world, to its tendency to "realism" and accords with the empirical character of the age. Pater speculates that "the essence of art and poetry " in the age of Johnson was towards "abstraction" and "generalization;" a mode alien to the manner of the Commedia. The Victorian age is contrasted to the eighteenth century.

> But the modern artist, the modern student of art, of Dante's art, while he demands it in any record of the external world, will value this minuteness, this minute perfection, even more perhaps in the treatment of mental phenomena, when the intelligence which touched so finely the niceties of visible colour and outline turns to the invisible world, noting there also with a like subtlety the intimacies of the soul. 2

Dante's understanding of the "phenomena of the mind" is congenial to the "subjectivities" of the "characteristic" Victorian student.

> Amid the larger outlooks of the Divina Commedia we are again and again reminded that its author is also the poet of the Vita Nuova. His own sensibility, already so strongly in evidence there, makes him now an equally delicate interpreter of the mental or spiritual ways of others. 3

It is in the Purgatorio, as one might expect, that Pater finds the greatest congeniality to the spirit of his own times. In the hope and pity it offers there is certainly a spiritual affinity to the needs of the Victorian age, to an age of religious skepticism. The fierce morality of the Inferno, the "blinding radiancy" of the Paradiso are spiritually distant from the spirit of Pater's Victorian England.

> An age of faith, if such there ever were, our age certainly is not: an age of love, all its pity and self-pity notwithstanding, who shall say?--in its religious skepticism, however, especially as compared with the last century in its religious skepticism, an age of hope, we may safely call it, of a development of religious hope or hopefulness, similar in tendency to the development of the doctrine of Purgatory in the church of the Middle age. 4

Dante also occupies an historically important position as he foreshadows the sentiment of the Renaissance and modern world. In short, Dante was a humanist.

> And the breadth of Dante's theological horizon connects itself with that generous eclecticism which finds in 'the house of many mansions' due place for Virgil and other sublime spirits of the Pagan world amid the infants unbaptised of the dispensation of Christ.
>
> Dante's large-minded treatment of all forms of classic power and achievement marks a stage of progress from the narrower sentiment of the Middle Age, towards 'humanism' towards the mental attitude of the Renaissance and the modern world. 5

Thus Pater enumerates the major reasons for the appeal of Dante.

Pater's introduction to Shadwell's translation ends with some rather gratuitous remarks about the attempt in which the Horation Ode stanza is said to be an English equivalent to terza rima.

> I have tried to indicate as characteristic of the Divina Commedia, a version singular in its union of minute and sensitive fidelity almost to the very syllables of the original, with that general sense of composure and breadth of effect which gives to the great medieval poem the air of a classic. 6

In finding a fidelity to the original and an equivalent form, Pater seems to indicate a translation which solved two of the most pressing problems in translations--fidelity and equivalent form. It is no wonder that Pater, because of his insistence on the importance, the centrality of form to art, should have been attracted to this bold, but unpopular attempt; but to refer to its faithfulness raises suspicion

about Pater's involvement with the Commedia. The remark is either a gratuitous one on behalf of a friend or reveals Pater's lack of intimacy with the text. If the latter is to be presumed, and Pater frankly states that he speaks as a "general reader," then we should not be surprised, for many of the major Victorian critics may be said to display an apparent lack of intimacy with Dante's text. (One may recall Carlyle's remark about Dante's "simple terza rima.") But what is to account, and how is one to justify the intense interest in Dante, an interest which made him one of the most discussed figures in Victorian criticism? Pater's conclusion indicates a tension between accounting for Dante's greatness on Dante's terms, as a great artist, and those historical factors which make predecessors congenial. It is true that, as Pater implied, there was an interest "inherent" in Dante, that as a great artist, he necessarily had to appeal above the vicissitudes of "local" tastes and fashions; but those aspects which were congenial to the Victorians, overwhelmed for many, the exact and exigetical attention which Dante did get from many scholars. Pater indicated several factors which were to account for the immense popularity and veneration the Victorians accorded Dante, but beyond those factors which even he mentioned are to be found those profounder influences which one, when surveying his own epoch may have trouble determining. It is

only a great historical hiatus that makes the reflection of these broader issues possible.

Indeed, the Victorian age was eclectic. Victorian critics looked to Dante with a keen interest and found a "model" which could serve in the formulation of a poetics which all the major critics participated in, constructing it however consciously they lent themselves to the endeavor. Victorian critics wished to direct poets to write meaningful, substantive, important poetry, which was nevertheless great art. To resist a dogmatic poetry on one hand and a poetry divorced from life's concerns on the other was to walk a fine line, and sometimes to stumble upon contradiction. Dante must be seen in this context if his appeal is to be comprehended.

Translators indicated many of the problems critics also were interested in, for the relation of subject matter to form was central to both. Macaulay, one of the first important critics of Dante, was clear to make fine distinctions between form and matter in Dante and to indicate the importance of Dante in Italian literature. Carlyle channeled his interest in German idealism into his analyses of Dante by apprehending the artist through his art. Carlyle showed how the apprehension of art was not for its own sake, a theme which Victorian critics adhered to in various postures. Hallam argued for the importance of matter, and its enrichment as apprehended in form. He thus

gave a theoretical legitimacy to the claim that "beautiful" art need not be divorced from life's major concerns. In Arnold the attempt to evaluate poetry disinterestedly and to champion its high mission form a dialectic in which Dante as artist and "moral" guide is an important element. Pater follows Hallam's formulation closely, while pointing to the importance of substance in poetry.

Pater in his own reflections on Dante, in the importance he bestowed on him, perceived those larger contexts which were part of the Victorian dilemma: how to preserve the importance and high mission of poetry, how to balance artistic integrity with a basis of spiritual sustenance in a world in which skepticism in many forms was determining the possibility of dogmatic and doctrinal prescriptions as a basis of authority.

Notes

[1] Charles Lancelot Shadwell, trans., Intro. by Walter Pater, The Purgatory of Dante (London: Macmillan and Co., 1892), p. XXIII.

[2] Pater, The Purgatory, pp. XXIII-XXIV.

[3] Pater, The Purgatory, p. XIX.

[4] Pater, The Purgatory, p. XX.

[5] Pater, The Purgatory, pp. XXII-XXIII.

[6] Pater, The Purgatory, p. XXV.

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