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# SENSATION POETRY AND SOCIAL IMAGINATION

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*for my Mother*

**Abstract**

"Sensation Poetry and Social Imagination" unearths a vital but forgotten chapter in the history of British aesthetics, through neglected writings of four major figures: William Hazlitt, John Keats, Arthur Hallam, and Alfred Tennyson. Claims in modern criticism for the social value of aesthetics, like the claim that aesthetics is an ideology enabling exploitation, tend to rely on terms that have evolved from 1890s aestheticism. This dissertation joins other recent attempts to recover a more textured account of Romanticism's many and competing ideals of the beautiful in nature and art. It tracks the development of eighteenth-century moral philosophy into early physiology, and reveals surprising motivations behind certain "extreme" or "immature" Romantic experiments with the resources of verse history.

Arthur Hallam coined the phrase "sensation poetry" in his famous 1831 Tennyson review to describe poems by Hunt, Keats, Shelley, and the young Tennyson that use novel formal design to emphasize the sensorial effects of reading. From Yeats to Isobel Armstrong, this review has been held up as an anticipation of art-for-art's-sake ideals, but I contend that Hallam's theory engages ethical debates that extend back through Hazlitt, Adam Smith, Hartley, Hume, and Shaftesbury. As the belief in innate moral sense became widely challenged in the later decades of the eighteenth century, moral philosophy's oldest and most vexing question returned with renewed urgency: how can self-interest and benevolence be reconciled? In writing a poetry that, in Keats's words, must be "proved on the pulses," sensation poets attempt to show that we are bound together by something more basic than selfhood: the nervous system, and immersion in a shared social world.

Hazlitt claimed that our capacity for action—the imagination of future pleasure or pain—also makes it natural to empathize with others in the present. This argument not only contributed to Keats's theories of poetic imagination, in which the mind is "continually

informing and filling some other body," but also licensed his most radical formal improvisations. My first two chapters show how Keats developed these theories, testing them through thought experiments on dream skepticism, in which the mind cannot distinguish sense from sense-simulation, and through innovations of Augustan couplet style in his longest and most important dream poem, *Endymion* (1818). My third chapter uses Hallam's lesser-known writings to show that his famous advocacy of sensation poetry is part of a broad Christian materialism and history of rhyme, which he was developing at the time of his premature death. In Chapter 4 I examine Tennyson's early imitations of Anacreon, the Greek poet of wine and love. These imitations transpose Italian rhyme contours against eighteenth-century norms for English Anacreontics as a way of affirming Hallam's belief that enriched English must draw on the sensuous "sources of Southern phraseology" exemplified by Tuscan poets.

By placing sensation poetry in a revised history of moral philosophy, and by specifying the resources of verse history this poetry attempted to recover and sustain, my project challenges longstanding assumptions about Romantic aesthetics and the Victorian Aestheticism it inspired. The conceptions of poetry and art I highlight in Hazlitt and Hallam, and in the practices of Keats and Tennyson, return us to a moment before Aestheticism simplified the terms of artistic judgment and moral feeling, and separated art from social life. They represent roads not taken that can help us forge a more sensitive and historically discriminating criticism today.

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# INTRODUCTION

"Sensation Poetry and Social Imagination" unearths a vital but forgotten chapter in the history of British aesthetics, through neglected writings of four major figures: William Hazlitt, John Keats, Arthur Hallam, and Alfred Tennyson. Hallam coined the term "sensation poetry" in his famous 1831 review, "On Some of the Characteristics of Modern Poetry, and on the Lyrical Poems of Alfred Tennyson," to describe poems that use intricate formal design to heighten sensory effects. I argue that this poetry and the critics who championed it were responding to ethical dilemmas brought about by the rise of physiology, which presented a picture of the mind (and of action) in purely material terms. This picture brought new urgency to moral philosophy's most vexing question: *how can natural self-interest and benevolence be reconciled?* Sensation poetry answers that we are bound together not by abstract moral precepts, but rather by the nervous system, and immersion in a social world.

The narrative I outline here bears little resemblance to those that have made Romantic poetry, and especially the lush and sensuous poetry of someone like Keats, a common starting point for ideology critique. My project aims to reopen these narratives. It is at once a revisionary history and a call for critical self-examination. The

identification of aesthetics as an ideology masking painful social reality too often gives transhistorical weight to a definition of aesthetics that emerged only in the latter half of the nineteenth century. It is more than a historical side-note that *aesthetic* did not become a common word in the English lexicon until this point, and that this new word carried connotations that prior British writings on "taste" had not.[1] The absence of a dominant, systematic philosophy of the beautiful in Romantic England has often made it tempting to supply its terms retrospectively. Alexander Baumgarten defined aesthetics in 1735 as the "science of sensuous cognition," but with further specifications that indicate the development of an enterprise distinct from the philosophy of sensation (from the Greek *aesthesis*) broadly: "Aesthetics (as the theory of liberal arts, as inferior cognition, as the art of beautiful thinking, and as the art of thought analogous to reason) is the science of sensuous cognition."[2] Core questions in modern aesthetics are already contained in this first modern definition: *how is beautiful thinking like rational thinking? how do we know that one kind of thinking is subordinate or inferior to the other?* Baumgarten's speculations were developed by German philosophers through the end of the eighteenth century into a form we now take for granted—that is, aesthetics came to refer primarily to art, and also to the independent faculty for judging it.[3]

[1] See Raymond Williams, *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1985), p. 31–33.
[2] Baumgarten first defined aesthetics in his 1735 master's thesis. This quotation is from his 1750 treatise *Aesthetica*, an excerpt of which appears in translation in *The Bloomsbury Anthology of Aesthetics*, edited by Joseph Tanke and Colin McQuillan (New York: Bloomsbury, 2012), p. 158–162.
[3] Even in Germany, there were important dissents to the common use of aesthetics to refer primarily to art. Hegel's 1818 lectures on fine art, for example, begin by noting that " 'Aesthetics' means, more precisely, the science of sensation, of feeling…[T]he proper expression for our science is *Philosophy of Art* and, more definitely, *Philosophy of Fine*

This specific understanding of aesthetics was not clearly elaborated until Immanuel Kant's *Critique of Judgment* (1790), however, which was essentially unknown in Britain through the early decades of the century except among Germanophiles such as Coleridge and Henry Crabbe Robinson. In England, it remained the case generally that aesthetics was a branch of moral philosophy, anchored by the central question of how subjective judgments of any kind (taste, morals) could have objective force. Anthony Ashley Cooper, the third Earl of Shaftesbury, and Frances Hutcheson had early in the eighteenth century argued that innate "moral sense" revealed to us what is beautiful as well as what is good. In some form or another, this idea resurfaced over and over in the decades that followed, including in Hume (who was so important for Kant).[4] For these philosophers, knowledge that something is beautiful is not fundamentally different from knowledge that something is hot; both are given, and derived from sense data. The important difference is that internal sense provides glue for social order, through sympathy "in the breast."[5]

In the final decades of the British eighteenth century, internal-sense theory was challenged by an increasingly potent materialism derived from Hume's contemporary,

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*Art*." *Aesthetics. Lectures on Fine Art*, trans. T. M. Knox, Vol. 1 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975), p. 4

[4] For a thorough treatment of moral and aesthetic philosophy in Shaftesbury and Hutcheson, and of its influence, see Peter Kivy's *The Seventh Sense: Frances Hutcheson and Eighteenth Century British Aesthetics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003). On Hume specifically, see Timothy M. Costelloe, *Morals and Aesthetics in the Philosophy of David Hume* (New York: Routledge, 2007).

[5] It's important to note that internal-sense philosophy usually suggests the need for cultivation, so that the feeling that something is beautiful or good can be sharpened with practice. Thus, in Hume, the "true critics" proposed as arbiters of taste in "Of the Standard of Taste" have a counterpart in what Costelloe calls the "moral expert" in Hume's moral philosophy. See his second chapter in *Philosophy of David Hume*, "Aesthetic Beauty and Moral Beauty."

David Hartley. Hartley's *Observations on Man* (1749) combined John Locke's theory of association with Isaac Newton's theory of matter to argue that sensation and thought are equally mechanical, and that both are produced by entirely physical phenomena on the surface of the brain. The difference between what David Hume called "impressions" and "ideas" is in Hartley the difference between original vibrations, transmitted to the brain from an external source, and secondary vibrations ("vibratiuncles") that recur there purely as the result of association. In Hartley, the concept of the mind or consciousness, and certainly of an "inner self" making independent judgments, comes to look almost mystical; all mental events are explained in strictly epiphenomenal terms. With the help of the famous Dissenter and scientist Joseph Priestley, who published an abridged version of Hartley's (sometimes opaque) text in 1775, this theory became broadly influential. While some embraced new mind science and others strongly opposed it, no serious thinker could ignore what had changed. The age of sensibility had been altered by the rise of physiology. Ethics as well as theories of taste now had to contend with the possibility that judgment and action rely on the five "external" senses alone.

This dissertation does not attempt anything close to a comprehensive account of this evolution of ideas, even among poets.[6] But my detailed attention to the influential and misunderstood case of sensation poetry highlights the need for more nuanced accounts of Romantic poetry and society than are typical at present. According to

[6] Jerome McGann compellingly argues that the poetry of sensibility was invested in a kind of mind-in-body materialism well before the poetry of sensation. The difference between the two, as I see it, is that the former uses charged affective language as well as representations—of blushes, sighs, sorrow, and so on—to elicit sympathetic response, while the latter appeals more sharply, through formal effects as well as through the "language of sense," to the nerves. See McGann's *The Poetics of Sensibility: A Revolution in Literary Style* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1996).

Hallam, these "poets of sensation, rather than reflection" were "susceptible of the slightest impulse from external nature," and as a result "their fine organs trembled into emotion at colors, and sounds, and movements unregarded by duller temperaments."[7] Hallam saw sensation poetry as a potential cure for what he took to be the fatal ailment in modern society, weakened sympathetic capacities. Importantly, Hallam describes sympathy in physiological terms derived from Hartley, so that the ability to recognize oneself in others "can never be *physically* impossible" (188), even in an age of poisoned ideas (and bad poems). Sensation poets, he wrote, demanded of their readers a kind of "exertion" that the "careless cravers for excitement" (191) were not prepared to give to them. For this reason, sensation poets could not at first be popular among the reading public ("that hydra," 184). But the change these poems would work in individual bodies of would eventually spread—"in music they find a medium through which they pass from heart to heart" (195)—and alter the social body as well.

"Characteristics" has often been cited as the ur-text of Victorian poetics specifically, and of Aestheticism more broadly.[8] Yet the fact is that most Victorians never read a word Hallam wrote. When the review was plucked from obscurity in the 1890s as a description of an "Aesthetic School" (in Yeats's words), it was used to confirm the transhistorical validity of ideas whose historical boundary is now easier to see (and easier to critique).[9] What Yeats meant by *aesthetic*—a turn away from the world into the isolated purity of Art—would have perplexed Hallam, who (with the philosophers of the

[7] *Writings of Arthur Hallam*, ed. T. H. Vail Motter (New York: MLA, 1943), p. 186.
[8] For more details, see my third chapter below.
[9] *The Collected Works of W. B. Yeats, Vol. III: Autobiographies,* ed. William H. O'Donnell and Douglas Archibald (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2010), p. 361.

prior century) understood *aesthetic beauty* and *moral beauty* to be indissolubly linked. This is not to say that sensation poets (especially Keats) did not, in fact, strongly influence the "Spasmodics," Swinburne and the Pre-Raphaelite "Fleshly School," and *fin de siècle* poetry, as Jason Rudy and others have suggested.[10] But the common identification of these later movements' ideals in the review itself is anachronistic, and this misreading has been especially problematic because "Characteristics" has been so foundational as a marker of period and genre categories.

In *The Physiology of the Novel* (2007), Nicholas Dames argues that the apparently new idea of thinking about composition and reading from the perspective of cognitive science in the late decades of the twentieth century "had, in fact, already been practiced in Britain a century earlier" by critics, scientists, and intellectuals who "brought the experimental study of human physiology to bear upon the facts of novel-reading, as part of an attempt to theorize the force of the novel form in culture."[11] In fact this way of thinking about novels in the era of sensation fiction was already being practiced nearly a century before that, in relation to poems. Critics have noted that gothic novels represent an important precursor to sensation fiction; the use of formulaic plot devices to produce spine-tingling effects and the concern among gentleman reviewers about the corruption of the growing reading public (especially women) seem especially important in this

[10] *Electric Meters: Victorian Physiological Poetics* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2009). See Kirstie Blair's similar argument, and survey of similar approaches, in "Poetry and Sensation," in *A Companion to Sensation Fiction*, ed. Pamela K. Gilbert (New York: Wiley, 2011), p. 107–122.
[11] *The Physiology of the Novel: Reading, Neural Science, and the Form of Victorian Fiction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), p. 3.

comparison.[12] But novels were not taken as seriously early in the century as they were later on, and for this reason sensation poetry fills an important gap in our understanding of the history of science and literature to which Dames and other critics have drawn attention.[13] The language of physiology appears in the writings of late eighteenth century poets such as Erasmus Darwin before it appears in Hallam's review—or in Shelley's *Defence*, or for that matter in Wordsworth's "Preface" to *Lyrical Ballads*, which clearly influenced Hallam despite his assertion that the "new school of reformers" stand in opposition to the "rhetorical" Lake School cohort (185). Hallam echoes Wordsworth's idea of the poet as one who is unusually susceptible to pleasure and pain; who must create the taste by which he will be judged; and whose social role is to restore, through pleasures of "vivid sensation," the "voluntary exertion" a reader might willingly undertake in an age whose cheap stimulations have reduced the discriminating mind to an "almost savage torpor."[14]

Yet even if it is true that the language of physiology was everywhere in poetry and criticism at the time, as Noel Jackson and others have convincingly shown, it is important to distinguish between those who saw new poetry as a mimetic reflection of

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[12] For useful summaries and bibliographies, see Patrick R. O'Malley, "Gothic," in *Companion to Sensation Fiction, p. 81–93*; Laurence Talairach-Vielmas, "Sensation Fiction and Gothic," in *The Cambridge Companion to Sensation Fiction* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), p. 21–33.

[13] In addition to Rudy and Dames, see the *Victorian Poetry* special issue, "Science and Victorian Poetry," ed. Gowan Dawson and Sally Shuttleworth, Vol. 41, No. 1 (Spring 2003); Kirstie Blair, *Victorian Poetry and the Culture of the Heart* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2006); Daniel P. Brown, *The Poetry of Victorian Scientists: Style, Science, and Nonsense* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013); and Benjamin Morgan, *The Outward Mind: Material Aesthetics in Victorian Science and Literature* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, forthcoming 2017).

[14] *Lyrical Ballads*, edited by R. L. Brett and A. R. Jones (New York: Routledge, 2002), p. 241, 249.

new science, and those who saw new science as a powerful way of understanding poetry's (conventional, age-old) effects on the body.[15] An important example of this difference comes in my third chapter, where I compare Hallam's theory of sensation poetry to the materialist poetic theory of the Benthamite social progressive W. J. Fox. For Fox, the progress of poetry into new registers of sense pleasure was a sign of social progress, and also a means of ushering in future perfection. For Hallam, sensation poetry represented a recovery of lost materials in language and poetic form. He clearly believed that new science made it possible to describe poetry's power in new ways, and shared Fox's materialist framework. But where Fox looked to the future, Hallam looked to the past—and more specifically, to the history of poetry and its role in former social orders.

In slightly different terms, this division in Romantic-era criticism surfaces in recent scholarship as well, especially when it turns to form. On one side, critics rush to ground formal properties in cultural narratives or "social forms." No one would contest that such things as the rise of electricity, or new theories of heart function, or imperial battle drums, are likely to provide new cues for composition and reading. There is clearly value in identifying such connections. But why is the value of interpreting a poem's conventional relation to tradition not equally clear? Even Jackson's study, which contains more evidence of physiological language in Romantic poems and poetic theory than one could reasonably expect of ten books on the topic, and which mostly avoids simplistic mimetic interpretation, evinces the worry implicit in much of the "historicist" criticism of recent years: that poems, especially lyric poems, are somehow *not social*, or not

[15] See Jackson's *Science and Sensation in Romantic Poetry* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008) and Alan Richardson's *British Romanticism and the Science of the Mind* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001).

historically aware or political enough, and that our interest in them (especially their formal character) should need to be justified always by reference to something else. Thus, his attempt to salvage Romantic poetry from the repeated "charges" of aesthetic ideology over the twentieth century, from Lúkacs to Bourdieu and into the present, replaces the idea that it derives "pretensions to social efficacy from the supposedly representative character of the poet's sensibility" with the idea that it "acquires an explicitly social dimension from its close relationship to contemporary sciences with whose theorists and practitioners Romantic poets shared an acute interest in the organs and activities of human sense perception."[16] As my project shows, however, the interest in the organs and activities of human sense perception in Romanticism is a development of the interest in what the eighteenth century called sentiment, or moral feeling. The aesthetic ideology Jackson attempts to defend by supplementation is actually an aesthetic ideology from another time—specifically, the age of Aestheticism yet to come.

If interpretation at one extreme might seem always to argue that poetic form represents cultural patterns, at the other extreme it might seem only to claim that poetic form represents poetic form. Simon Jarvis's ongoing theorization of verse-cognition is susceptible to the latter charge, since it bets everything on technique. As he puts it in *Wordsworth's Philosophic Song* (2007), "instead of being a sort of thoughtless ornament or reliquary for thinking, verse is itself a kind of cognition, with its own resistances and difficulties."[17] The difference between philosophic system and philosophic song, according to Jarvis, is that its drive to truth occurs "less by top-quality rationation than by

[16] *Science and Sensation*, p. 3.
[17] *Wordsworth's Philosophic Song* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), p. 4

attention to problems of poetic *making*: provided that such making be understood not as sheer craft, but as itself already a cognitive matter" (4). Arrangements of sound within a language, and within further constraints of meter and rhyme, can never be fully explicated in the way a proposition can, Jarvis claims, for these arrangements are matters of sense (or *sensuous cognition*).

I am sympathetic to this position, as the chapters that follow make clear. But I sympathize with some of the worries about it as well, and want to acknowledge them. One worry is that in a critical approach of the kind Jarvis recommends, everything that cannot be isolated as top-quality rationation might collapse into the same heap, so that no meaningful distinction can be made between kinds of thinking (*making*) in different kinds of poems. This is in part a question about value, or the standard of taste. Who decides that Milton's verse-thinking is different, or more significant, than the verse-thinking of his many soporific imitators? Why is the most unbearable seventh-grade love sonnet not as good as any other poem for theorizing formal cognition? The primary answer to this question—poets think with material they inherit in language and poetic tradition, not with random arrangements that strike them as pretty—calls up another worry: is Jarvis suggesting that distinctions *can* be made between kinds of poet and poem, but only by someone whose ears have been tuned? In other words, is he saying that content only becomes truth-content when a properly trained arbiter confirms it exists there?

These questions haunt formalism broadly, not only Jarvis's Adornean formalism. Questions about form's value tend to be questions about meaning; that is, formal features are made to pay off hermeneutically or are bracketed. Whether we are talking about historically mediated truth-content (Adorno) or Cleanth Brooks's well-wrought urn, a

leap of faith is required to commit to form that does not serve hermeneutics. It is often the case, of course, that leaps of faith are quickly pounced on as ideological lapses. Yet we might pause to ask: what kind of ideology guides the conviction that explication in propositions is the sole test of knowledge (and, in many cases, of value)? Jarvis's theory asserts the significance of language's fine-grained sensuous features. He convincingly demonstrates that the tendency to "historicize" such features exclusively in either the recorded response of other readers in historical patterns is only a contemporary instance in the long history of attempts to reduce matters of judgment to matters of law. Jarvis would indeed say that someone with more experience reading poems is better equipped to judge the worth, the cognitive richness, the truth-content, of a line of verse. This is quite different from saying that any one reader has a monopoly on such judgment.

> To scan a line of verse is not to describe the properties of an object. It is, instead, to make a diagram of a performance, of an interpretation, and of an experience. If scansion […] does not in some way record some salient elements of some particular performance, vocalized or silent, of that line, it is contentless, an aprioristic fantasy. But no diagram of a performance, of an interpretation, or of an experience can be adequate to them.[18]

Even as Jarvis embraces subjectivity, he also forcefully resists the idea (common at present) that meter is entirely relative, somehow detached from phonological rules as well as anything like universal apprehension of rhythm. Scansion is a performance of an interpretation that attests to an experience; it is also, crucially, an attempt to persuade. The fact that such interpretation remains open-ended is appealing to Jarvis, for it keeps the poem on the page alive, in new bodies.

[18] "For a Poetics of Verse," *PMLA*, vol. 125, no. 4 (October 2010): 933.

It is instructive to compare Jarvis's approach to the one outlined in Motlu Konuk Blasing's underappreciated book, *Lyric Poetry: The Pain and Pleasure of Words* (2007). Blasing also emphasizes the social power of poetry's sensuous content. What makes her argument different is its psychoanalytic basis, which names the entry into subjectivity through language as a source of abstraction and pain. Poetry, and especially highly musical or sensuously rich poetry (lyric), is a "culturally sanctioned discourse that allows us to remember—without remembering—the history we are. In poetry we recognize ourselves in an uncanny return of something long forgotten, our origins in the passage into symbolic language." In this account, poetry is "a social medium safeguarding a personal experience of language" but also a threat to any rationally ordered society, including Plato's Republic: "What imperils rational language is what enables it: a nonrational linguistic system that is logically and genetically prior to its rational deployment. The mimetic theory of poetry is a disciplinary suppression of the emotional and nonrational *public* power of the linguistic code" (2). What Blasing's theory lacks, in my view, is an account of poetry as an art, and of art itself as a history of making, with a "language" of its own that is much larger than any one poet or reader.[19] As Jarvis puts it: "the 'historical' 'contexts' necessary to a consideration of any modern poetry extend back through centuries, and even millennia, rather than decades" (*Philosophic Song*, 6).

The most important point I want to emphasize in relation to these two contemporary critics, however, is how much they share with the Romantic-era movement I identify in this project. While their theoretical commitments are most strongly anchored

[19] Jarvis directly address the "music" of language outside of verse in "How To Do Things With Tunes," *ELH*, Vol. 82, No. 2 (June 2015): 365–83.

by twentieth-century theory, both of them identify poetry's effects on the body in social terms. In fact, these critics affirm a conviction I have developed, by trial and error, during the course of this project: that our real mistake is to assume in the first place that social or cultural or historical content is somehow not already in the experience of reading, including the first-person phenomena we have difficulty talking about.

My first chapter, "Keats's Hazlitt: Dream Skepticism and Disinterested Imagination," shifts the established focus of William Hazlitt's influence on Keats from his literary criticism to his early philosophical treatise, *An Essay on the Principles of Human Action* (1805). This treatise argues that Empiricist epistemology inevitably leads to a flawed ethics. According to Hazlitt, voluntary action is possible only because the mind is endowed with a capacity ("imagination") that enables projection into future states. Hazlitt claims that this sense of the future has nothing at all to do with experience, and in fact runs counter to memory. This makes imagination a moral faculty that, in Hazlitt's words, "must carry me out of myself into the feelings of others by one and the same process by which I am thrown forward as it were into my future being, and interested in it."

Although Hazlitt believed that modern social conditions had made disinterested imagination difficult to achieve, his use of dreams as an analogy for this capacity of mind struck a chord with Keats. Hazlitt used this analogy in his writings on Shakespeare, comparing the highest forms of dramatic imagination to the mind's peculiar ability to stage dream scenarios in which our own invention—conversations, surprise, terror—appear somehow ahead and outside of us. For Hazlitt, however, this claim never went beyond analogy. It is essential to his theory of action that waking and sleeping

imagination remain distinct, lest the apparent lack of agency in dreams suggest that waking action, too, is mechanical. (This would defeat one major claim in the *Essay*, even if it retains its metaphysics.) Keats worked to erase this distinction, and thereby to forge a path into disinterested imagination in his vocation as a poet. He did so using intricate dramatizations of false awakening and dreams within dreams, especially in his longest and most important dream poem, *Endymion* (1818). For Keats, living a "life of sensation rather than thought" meant following sense and sense-simulation equally, at the edge of experience, where the self we think we know is continually met by a world we do not. If disinterest is possible in dreams, he suggests, it might also be possible in poems.

My second chapter, "On Cockney Coupling: Keats's Form of Identity," identifies in Keats's peculiar habit of composing quickly and "in a kind of trance-state" (David Bromwich) an attempt to activate Hazlitt's theory in material terms. I focus on Keats's "Cockney couplets" (John Croker, *Quarterly Review*), tracing their development from the example of his most important contemporary influence, Leigh Hunt, into early couplet poems such as *Sleep and Poetry* (1816) and finally into *Endymion* (1818). By comparing the published text with the unpublished fair-copy draft now housed at the Morgan Library, I reveal the poem's savaging of Augustan couplet style to be even more extreme than has commonly been thought: Keats's editor and printer silently added hundreds of end-stops and internal caesurae to slow and order the poem's style. With their wild forward propulsion, evident especially to the ear tuned to Augustan style, these couplets enact what Hazlitt's theory could only describe—they throw the mind continually into the future's horizon, the space of dreams and self-dissolution in which the poet (or reader) "has no Identity" and "is continually informing and filling some other body."

In chapter three, "Arthur Hallam's 'Characteristics of Modern Poetry' and Pleasure's Moral Sense," I use Hallam's lesser-known writings to reveal the roots of his famous 1831 Tennyson review in engagements with the materialist mind science of thinkers such as Joseph Priestley and David Hartley. Like Hazlitt, Hallam argues in his that the same capacity that enables us to imagine our own future mind makes it natural to empathize with others in the present. But he argues that this projection occurs mechanically rather than by a special endowment of imagination, by "the same impulse that leads a monkey to mimic the gestures of a man." Hallam justifies his picture of mechanical sympathy by the surprising argument that God Himself is subject to mechanical law. What links us together also, in Hallam's theory, links us to the Father and Son: the automatic pursuit of pleasure. In Hallam's literary writings, these densely interwoven theories of mind, morals, and theology correspond to a history of rhyme. He suggests that the appearance of rhyme in modern language corresponds with the rise of Christianity, as evidenced most powerfully in the great poets of Renaissance Italy. With this broader background in mind, Hallam's argument in "Characteristics" that Tennyson writes in a "thorough and sterling English" that draws, like Shakespeare before him, on "sources of Southern phraseology," is clarified. For Hallam, new sensation poetry reasserts a specifically Christian moral pleasure by approximating the linguistic harmony of Italian Renaissance poets, and of England's "Italian" moment in the Elizabethan era.

My final chapter, "Sterling English and Sources of Southern Phraseology: Anacreontic Tennyson," identifies an affirmation of Hallam's rhyme history—and, by extension, of his sensation poetics—in the Anacreontic odes Tennyson wrote in his early career. Such odes in imitation of Anacreon, the Greek poet of wine and love, were hugely

popular throughout Europe from the 1550s through the mid-1800s. Tennyson's Anacreontics turn strongly against formal conventions that had been in place since Metaphysical poets popularized the genre for English readers, especially the recent translations of Thomas Moore. In place of this English tradition, Tennyson erected one that *might have been* using formal resources developed by seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Italian poets writing in the Anacreontic mode, most importantly Gabriello Chiabrera. While many of these poems at first look hypermetrical, I show that this is the natural result of Tennyson's transposition of Italian prosody into English, especially the varied rising and falling rhymes common in Italian. It is also partially a result of the fact that these Italian poems were formative in the history of opera, and made their way into England as aria in which some degree of performed tonal variation would have been expected. Tennyson's emulation of this tradition is an attempt to enrich English with forms of feeling and thought Hallam believed were made possible by Italian poets writing in the Tuscan vernacular.

The conceptions of poetry and art I highlight in Hazlitt and Hallam, and in the practices of Keats and Tennyson, return us to a moment before Aestheticism simplified the terms of artistic judgment and moral feeling, and separated art from social life. They represent roads not taken that can help us forge a more sensitive and historically discriminating criticism today.

# CHAPTER ONE

## KEATS'S HAZLITT:

## DREAM SKEPTICISM AND DISINTERESTED IMAGINATION

**I.**

William Hazlitt worked for almost a decade on his first publication, *An Essay on the Principles of Human Action* (1805). It "fell still-born from the press," as he put it, selling only a few copies.[1] Yet Hazlitt always maintained that the *Essay* was his most important work, and some philosophers have come to agree.[2] Raymond Martin and John Barresi, for example, suggest that if the *Essay* had "received the attention [it] deserved, the *philosophical* discussion of personal identity may well have leaped ahead one hundred and fifty years and the *psychological* discussion been significantly advanced."[3]

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[1] "On the Causes of Popular Opinion" (1828), in *The Collected Works of William Hazlitt: Fugitive Pieces*, Vol. 12, ed. A. R. Waller and Arnold Glover (London: J. M. Dent, 1904), p. 319.

[2] In "Popular Opinion," for example, Hazlitt writes that the *Essay* "contains a metaphysical discovery, supported by a continuous and severe train of reasoning, nearly as subtle and original as anything in Hume or Berkeley" (*Collected Works*, 319). During the 1820s, Hazlitt also made several attempts at repackaging the *Essay*'s main arguments in shorter and more digestible form. See "Self-Love and Benevolence," "Mind and Motive," "On Personal Identity," and "Characteristics." These essays are contained in Jon Cook's edition of Hazlitt's essays, *Selected Writings* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009).

[3] *Naturalization of the Soul: Self and Personal Identity in the Eighteenth Century* (London: Routledge, 2000), p. 159.

Moreover, recent work on the *Essay* has convincingly shown that in crucial ways it "shapes all of his writing" that follows.[4] This applies not only to explicitly philosophic work such as the *Lectures on English Philosophy* (given in 1812), but also to the criticism and essays that would occupy most of Hazlitt's later career.[5]

Among the few contemporaries who owned and admired the *Essay* was Keats's friend Benjamin Bailey, who recommended it to the poet in the summer of 1817 (Keats went on to purchase his own copy). Keats was also reading Hazlitt's *The Round Table* (1817) and *Characters of Shakespeare's Plays* (1817) at the time, and not long after he attended Hazlitt's lectures on English poets.[6] Because Keats took in Hazlitt's obscure early treatise and his literary writing at the same time, the connections between them would have been more readily apparent to him than they have been to later readers. With these connections in view, our understanding of Hazlitt's well-known influence on Keats is altered in crucial ways.

I suggest in this chapter that Keats extended into the domain of dreams the *Essay*'s theory of "disinterested imagination." Hazlitt claimed that this single innate faculty naturally propels the mind beyond memories and association, into a future of sympathetic interest in others. Although Hazlitt more than once refers to dreams as an

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[4] Tom Paulin, "Forward" to *Metaphysical Hazlitt: Bicentenary Essays*, ed. Uttara Natarajan, Tom Paulin, and Duncan Wu (New York: Palgrave, 2005), xiii. This collections contains several valuable essays on the *Essay*. Also see Natarajan's *Hazlitt and the Reach of Sense: Criticism, Morals, and the Reach of Power* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998).

[5] See Stephen Burley's thorough discussion of the *Essay*'s continuing importance to Hazlitt's early writings in *Hazlitt the Dissenter: Religion, Philosophy, and Politics, 1766–1816* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2014), Chapter 3.

[6] See Walter Jackson Bate, *John Keats* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1963), p. 215; 255–262.

analogy for this form of imagination in his Shakespeare criticism, he never goes so far as to suggest that imagination in dreams is in reality the same as waking imagination. The reason for this seems to lie in the way Hazlitt understood action. The *Essay*'s argument that imagination enables the mind to weigh possible future scenarios before acting is directed against the view that action arises mechanically from impressions and ideas passively received and stored in the mind. But Hazlitt's argument implicitly assumes at least one innate faculty in addition to imagination: judgment, or the power to sort and rank the scenarios imagination proffers. In *Endymion* and the subsequent dream poetry, Keats tests the consequences of Hazlitt's analogy between dreams and disinterested imagination, following out the *Essay*'s claim that imagination is entirely separate from experience. Rather than seeing imagination as the faculty that makes action possible, Keats makes imagination and will coextensive. This experiment had significant consequences on Keats's composition practice and style, matters I will consider more closely in the next chapter. Here I consider Keats's development of Hazlitt's key principles from a theoretical vantage, primarily in *Endymion* (1818) and in correspondence.

Although Keats was always interested in the connection between dreams and poetry, this interest manifests itself differently in the poems that come after his introduction to Hazlitt's writings. An instructive example is the March 1818 verse epistle to J. H. Reynolds, falling as it does at the mid-way point between early dream poems such as "I stood tip-toe upon a little hill" or *Sleep and Poetry* (both composed 1816) and the late abandoned epic *Hyperion—A Dream* (1819–20). As in *Endymion,* which Keats

was polishing at the time, the epistle displays a charming commitment to first impulses, through stretches of grandeur, humor, and even mediocrity.

> Dear Reynolds, as last night I lay in bed,
> There came before my eyes that wonted thread
> Of Shapes, and Shadows, and Remembrances
> That every other minute vex and please:
> Things all disjointed come from North and south:
> Two witches eyes above a cherub's mouth,
> Voltaire with casque and shield and Habergeon,
> And Alexander with his night-cap on—
> Old Socrates a tying his cravat;
> And Hazlitt playing with miss Edgworth's cat;
> And Junius Brutus pretty well so, so,
> Making the best of 's way towards Soho. (1–12)[7]

Rhyme forges reason in these lines, to dream-like effect. Time and distance shrink, with icons of ancient philosophy (Socrates), treachery (Caesar's assassin), and heroic battle (Alexander the Great) all bathetically placed in mild contemporary scenes, joined by the (perhaps sexual) image of Hazlitt tickling Miss Edgeworth's cat and the comic image of Voltaire dressed in armor. Other associations that might peep through a dreamer's curtains follow: a "hellish nose"; boar "tushes" (tusks); mermaid's toes; flowers "bursting with lusty pride"; personified (and young, no less) Aeolian harps; a milk-white heifer sacrificed under a "pontiff's" knife; and mariners rounding a "green-head cliff" to hymn with counterparts on land. This final image lands Keats on a peculiar description of Claude's "Enchanted Castle" as a "dream" in which the doors seem to open themselves; the windows seem to be latched by fays and elves; and, echoing the mariner's arrival, a

[7] My line numbers refer to Jack Stillinger's standard edition (*Complete Poems* [Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1978]), but I have reverted to the original spellings and punctuation. Unless noted, all other poems quoted here are also from this edition.

"golden galley in silken trim" has approached and now disappeared into the castle walls. The sullen figure of Psyche in the foreground of Claude's painting here becomes a "poor herdsman" filled with terror by the "echo of sweet music" emanating from the castle after the golden galley's arrival: "He tells of the sweet music and the spot / To all his friends, and they believe him not" (65–66).[8]

To this point, the poem has succeeded in Keats's stated object of "cheering [Reynolds] through a moment or two." It is sustained by novelty, leaping from surface to delicate surface as new cracks appear. But when the poem turns to the herdsman's report of doubted music, a shift occurs in the poem's music as well. The playful banter suddenly buckles, in a particularly inscrutable and bleak verse-paragraph:

> O that our dreamings all of sleep or wake
> Would all their colours from the sunset take:
> From something of material sublime.
> Rather than shadow our own Soul's daytime
> In the dark void of Night. (67–71)

Keats longs for dreams, sleeping or waking, that take their colors from sublime material: that is, not simply majestic and uncommon things, but things in transition ("material sublime" calls up vapor through a pun, as Stuart Sperry notes [112]). This is different from wishing for oblivion or death, the more common figure for sleep in the period. It is also different from valorizing sleep's illogical rearrangement of the mind's stores, an effect Keats has already mimicked quite easily. Between the settled daylight soul or self and the settled shadow it throws at night, a transition occurs. These lines name that

[8] Stuart Sperry suggests that the link from Titian to Claude, and perhaps also Keats's thoughts about the painting, may owe something to Hazlitt's descriptions in "On Gusto." See *Keats the Poet* (Princeton: Princteon University Press, 1973), p. 112.

transition as a source of power, but also, potentially, of danger. What is that force, or law of earth, or law of heaven, that acts on and transforms the mind when it sinks to sleep or rises from its depths? What does it mean to think of the mind as something acted on, rather than something that chooses to act?

> Things cannot to the will
> Be settled, but they tease us out of thought.
> Or is it that Imagination brought
> Beyond its proper bound, yet still confined,—
> Lost in a sort of Purgatory blind,
> —Cannot refer to any standard law
> Of either earth or heaven—It is a flaw
> In happiness to see beyond our bourn—
> It forces us in Summer skies to mourn:
> It spoils the singing of the Nightingale. (76–85)

While thought, will, and imagination's proper bound are concepts Keats encountered in the *Essay*, the insertion of dreams into the equation marks an important difference. The familiar mortality crisis (we see beyond our bourn, but not to the bourn from which no traveler returns) proceeds in the poem from more basic epistemological problems (how do we know what we know, and prove that we know it?). As in other dream poems, which end as fragments (the *Hyperion* poems), Keats leaps in the epistle away from the skeptical doubts his poem has raised. By contrast, *Endymion* embraces this doubt. In the poem's dizzying false awakenings and dreams within dreams, we find Keats puzzling over a problem that had haunted Empiricism since the beginning: how can I prove that "I" am the product of experience if I can't verify the existence of the mind-independent world?

The refutation of this problem in its most famous formulation, Cartesian dream skepticism, forms the basis of Locke's sense philosophy and its legacies. Keats needn't

have been familiar with the history of debate on this topic in order to be gripped by its consequences. As we will see, that debate lies open and unanswered on the surface of Hazlitt's theory, which is firmly grounded in (even as it expands on) Empiricist conceptions of mind and identity. When Hazlitt adds a metaphysical faculty—imagination—to the Empiricist picture, he reopens a can of worms Locke had hoped to seal off by grounding thought in sense experience, and the "soul" or mind in the body. This problem in Hazlitt (if it is a problem) turned out to be extremely fruitful for Keats, as we will see.

I begin with a close examination of the *Essay*, then trace the persistence of its theory of disinterested imagination in later literary writings. Hazlitt's comparison of disinterested or "dramatic" imagination to the mind in dreams is echoed unmistakably in *Endymion*, which insistently returns to the question of what it means to think in sleep, and of whether "dreamless sleep" is "stupid sleep" or itself a simulation (of blankness). For Keats, I suggest, the answer to these questions lie beyond his poem and its puzzles, in the bodies of readers who will bring it back from the page.

**II.**

The *Essay* is best understood as an attempt to refute Hobbesian self-interest, but through a more direct refutation of recent mind science espoused by David Hartley and his

followers, notably Joseph Priestley and Thomas Belsham, Hazlitt's tutors at New College at Hackney.[9]

Joining Locke's theories of mental association and Newton's theories of matter, Hartley had argued that mental association is a purely physical phenomenon that occurs first when sensations cause *vibrations* on the brain's surface, and later when those vibrations reoccur there as *vibratiuncles*. Put in more familiar terminology, Hartley's vibrations and vibratiuncles correspond respectively to what Hume called impressions and ideas, the important difference being that in Hartley's theory nothing mental is non-physical.[10] The virtue of this materialist theory of mind is that it does away with certain epistemological problems Hume highlighted during the same period (but apparently without knowledge of Hartley's work). Hume was not satisfied with Locke's claim that we can know the world, if only partially, through sense organs. What is it, "out there," that we (partially or fully) know? Hume argued that it is best to accept that we cannot verify the correspondence between our ideas and the world, since ideas are derived from sense impressions "whose ultimate cause is, in my opinion, perfectly inexplicable by human reason."[11] This skepticism is tempered somewhat by Hume's suggestion that although we might not be able to prove the truth of impressions, we can at least prove the

[9] See Burley's discussion of Hazlitt's college years, and of their importance for the *Essay*, in *Hazlitt the Dissenter,* Chapters 2 and 3. Hazlitt tends not to call out specific thinkers or citations in the body of the *Essay* itself, but Hume and Hartley in particular are present throughout, down to the level of terminology. Hazlitt directly takes up Hartley, along with the French materialist Helvétius, in an appendix.

[10] For a more detailed discussion of Hartley's theories, see my discussion in the next chapter.

[11] *A Treatise of Human Nature*, ed. by David Faye Norton and Mary Norton, Vol. 1 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2007), p. 59. Volume and page number are hereafter given in the text. Cf. *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*, ed. by Tom L. Beauchamp (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2006), §VII.

coherence of thought built upon them by tracing complex ideas to simpler component ideas, and finally to the impressions from which those simple ideas are derived. (This is in his proposed test for truth-content.) But Hartley's account makes this shuttling between mental and physical events feel almost mystical, since everything in the end boils down to matter, including emotion and action. As Hartley puts it: "Desire and Aversion, are factitious, and generated by Association, *i.e.*, mechanically; it follows from this that the will is mechanical also."[12]

Hazlitt found this conclusion troubling for ethics, and he worried that any Empiricist theory of the mind would ultimately be unable to avoid it. His theory therefore introduces a strain of metaphysics. Hazlitt concedes that the mind of the present is "self-interested," but only in the unremarkable sense that the matter it sorts is drawn from experience. To the categories of memory and present consciousness, Hazlitt adds a third, future-directed faculty: *imagination*. Because this faculty is not conditioned by experience, it evades the circuit of self-interest.

> [T]hat which is future, which does not yet exist can excite no interest in itself, nor act upon the mind in any way but by means of the imagination. The direct primary motive, or impulse which determines the mind to the volition of any thing must therefore in all cases depend on the *idea* of that thing as conceived of by the imagination, and on the idea solely. For the thing itself is a non-entity. By the very act of its being *willed*, it is supposed not to exist. (I, 3)

Compare the above to Hume's description of imagination in the *Treatise*:

> Since nothing is ever present to the mind but perceptions, and since *all ideas are deriv'd from something antecedently present to the mind*, it follows, that 'tis

[12] *Observations on Man, His Frame, His Duty, and His Expectations*, Vol. 1 (London, 1749), p. 4. My citations are to a reprint of the original edition (New York: Garland, 1971).

> impossible for us so much as to conceive or form an idea of any thing specifically different from ideas and impressions. Let us fix our attention out of ourselves as much as possible; let us chase our imagination to the heavens, or to the utmost limits of the universe; *we never really advance a step beyond ourselves, nor can conceive any kind of existence, but those perceptions, which have appear'd in that narrow compass.* This is the universe of the imagination, nor have we any idea but what is there produc'd." (*Treatise,* I: 49; my italics)

*What* Hazlitt calls "future impressions" are not merely automated projections inferred from past impressions. This sort of mechanical stocktaking is precisely what he is out to dispel. Instead, the workings of imagination furnish imaginary "internal impressions" (I, 24) that are as significant, from the perspective of mental operations, as ideas formed by experience.[13] In fact, more so: without imagination, there would be no such thing as will. Where Empiricism portrays a passive mind impressed (and thereby formed) by external events, its most "creative" act being the combination of simple to more complex ideas, Hazlitt suggests that the mind is capable of creating ideas whole cloth.

In this theory of mind there is no longer any binding connection between self-interested consciousness—that is, the mechanically sorting mind of the present—and action. Since "all voluntary action must relate solely and exclusively to the future," all "impressions and ideas with which selfish, or more properly speaking, personal feelings must be naturally connected are just those which have *nothing at all* to do with the motives of action." (I, 37, my italics.) My present self-interest is an existential reality, not a matter of will; it "can[not] be altered, for better, or worse" (I, 3). Action is a matter of

[13] Hume also uses the phrase "internal sensation," but in a different sense. For Hazlitt the term implies a capacity that supercedes experience, whereas for Hume it seems to be a simpler version of *idea*. Internal impressions are in Hume associated with the passions and emotions, yet they are reliant on external impressions for their formation. (See *Treatise,* "Of the other qualities of space and time, 27); also see *Enquiry* §V.ii).

will because it requires the exercise of imagination. Crucially, this process of imagination, "by means of which alone I can anticipate future objects, or be interested in them, must carry me out of myself into the feelings of others by one and the same process by which I am thrown forward as it were into my future being, and interested in it" (I, 3). I have a direct interest in my present and past, to put it plainly, only because I experienced and am experiencing. The future is different. Through imagination, the mind projects itself beyond "the insurmountable barrier fixed between the present, and the future (I, 11). The same faculty that "carries me out of myself…into my future being" and enables self-interested action *also*, by the very same operations, provides access to "the feelings of others." My future interests and those of others are equally real (or, as it were, imaginary). As Hazlitt puts it: "I could not love myself, if I were not capable of loving others" (I, 3). One might slightly alter this to read, "If I were not capable of loving others, I could not act."

It is easy to confuse Hazlitt's "disinterestedness" with run-of-the mill altruism. However, Hazlitt's argument is that natural interest is neutral, not that it is selfish or unselfish. Hazlitt puts this rather starkly in the opening pages of the *Essay* when he suggests that the "fundamental principle" behind "disinterested benevolence" also moves "self-love" (I, 3). According to Hazlitt, disinterestedness is anterior to selfish or unselfish proclivities. In fact, as an innate, experience-neutral feature of mind, disinterestedness precedes the formation of selfhood entirely, and its effect on mental content, the basis of self-interest and identity, is dissolution. The illusion that the "future imaginary self is, by a kind of metaphysical transubstantiation, virtually embodied in his present being" lies at

the root of "mechanical self-love" (*mechanical* being the dirty word here, not *self-love*) (I, 28).

Hazlitt's theory is clearly influenced by Hume's claim that identity is "nothing but a bundle or collection of different perceptions, which succeed each other with an inconceivable rapidity, and are in a perpetual flux and movement" (*Treatise*, I:165). But it is once again his emphasis on the mind's free play in an open, contingent future that makes it distinct. Hazlitt contends that we wrongly "attribute a real identity of interests to the same person" because we have "an indistinct idea of extended consciousness, and a community of feelings as essential to the same thinking being." (I, 6). For Hume the self is a (perhaps necessary) fiction; For Hazlitt, the self is real but *dispersed,* born from a codependent past into a future that naturally binds persons together. "I can only…take an interest in my future being in the same sense and manner in which I can go out of myself entirely and enter into the minds of feelings of others" (I, 37).

Hazlitt is aware that his argument is not intuitive, and he uses a variety of approaches to make his case. These approaches take the form of metaphor ("The size of the river as well as its taste depends on what has fallen into it. I cannot roll back its course, nor can the stream next the source be affected by the water that has fallen into it. Yet we call both the same river" [I, 37]); of "catechism" ("You are necessarily interested in your future sensations? Yes. And why so? Because I am the same being. What do you mean by *the same being*?" [his italics; I, 28]); and even, in the *Essay*'s concluding pages, of testimony. "I do not think," he writes, "I should illustrate the foregoing reasoning so well by any thing I could add on the subject as by relating the manner in which it first

struck me." Hazlitt here shifts abruptly from dry philosophic prose to a grander, more intimate register:

> There are moments in the life of a solitary thinker which are to him what the evening of some great victory is to the conqueror and hero – milder triumphs remembered with truer and deeper delight. And though the shouts of multitudes do not hail his success, though gay trophies, though the sounds of music, the glittering of armour, and the neighing of steeds do not mingle with his joy, yet shall he not want monuments and witnesses of his glory, the deep forest, the willowy brook, the gathering clouds of winter, or the silent gloom of his own chamber, 'faithful remembrances of his high endeavour, and his glad success,' that, as time passes by him with unreturning wing, still awaken the consciousness of a spirit patient, indefatigable in the search of truth, and the hope of surviving in the minds of other men. (I, 42–43)

While the solitary thinker's goal of surviving in the minds of other men rings of conventional claims to poetic fame, it has a separate resonance at the close of the *Essay*. If identity is composed of sensations and ideas that extend into the future, into one's own and other minds equally, the "wide and absolute distinction" between minds is an illusion, and immortal survival has a surprising literality.

Hazlitt's evening of solitary triumph originated, in his telling, from a thought experiment about the renewal of consciousness after death:

> When this self may be multiplied in as many different beings as the Deity may think proper to endue with the same consciousness, which if it can be renewed at will in any one instance, may clearly be so in an hundred others. Am I to regard all these as equally myself? Am I equally interested in the fate of all? Or if I must fix upon some one of them in particular as my representative and other self, how am I to be determined in my choice? – Here then I saw an end to my speculations about absolute self-interest, and personal identity. I saw plainly that the consciousness of my own feelings which is made the foundation of my continued interest in them could not extend to what had never been (I, 44)

This "metaphysical discovery" made it clear, Hazlitt writes, that "this conscious being may be decompounded, entirely destroyed, renewed again, or multiplied in a great number of beings" without "the least alteration of my present being." The future self and the present self are distinct, as are those selves extending into the finite moments of the past. And since, as we have seen, Hazlitt does not make a distinction between projecting into one's imagined future self and into other minds, the problem of determining whom to prioritize among multiple replicated selves can be thought of in parallel relation to Hobbesian self-interest and its legacies. The argument against unitary selfhood—even the qualified variety set forward by Hume—suggests that moral action can be measured only by reference to a mental operation that is "constantly outstripping the progress of time" (I, 41).

**III.**

Recent critics who have recognized the important connection between disinterested imagination and what Hazlitt calls "dramatic imagination" in the literary criticism have puzzled over why it is so that even if "in a literature—Shakespeare's—Hazlitt finds the fulfilment of the imaginative potential for disinterestedness, he grapples constantly with its defeat in reality."[14] Hazlitt seems to have believed, in writing the *Essay*, that he could remove modern impediments to natural disinterest if he dispensed with "the idea of self

[14] Uttara Natarajan, "Introduction" to *Metaphysical Hazlitt*, 10.

[that] habitually clings to the mind of every man, binding it as with a spell, deadening its discriminating powers, and spreading the confused associations which belong only to past and present impressions over the whole of our imaginary existence" (I, 4). He seems to have held a similar hope for his Shakespeare criticism, which highlights varieties of dramatic power he believed modern poetry could no longer achieve.

It is important to note that *dramatic* is not a genre category in the way Hazlitt uses it to refer to imagination. Dramatic imagination refers to objective character, whether in a sonnet or epic or play. Among his contemporaries, Hazlitt saw Walter Scott as the best dramatic poet, but he writes in the 1818 lectures that his poetry is "merely entertaining" and has "neither depth, height, nor breadth in it; neither uncommon strength, nor uncommon refinement of thought, sentiment, or language" (II, 306). The poets Hazlitt named in these lectures as his most original and imaginative contemporaries, Wordsworth and Byron, inversely reflect the limitations of the present age: they are consumed by "devouring egotism." Hazlitt writes that the Lake poet "sees nothing but himself in the universe," turning to nature only because "it can enter into no competition with him." (*Selected Writings*: II, 316). For a similar reason, this poet turns to the "commonest…peasants, pedlars, and village barbers" as "oracles and bosom friends," projecting on their feeble figures his own image. If the "love of nature is the first thing in the mind of the true poet" and "the admiration of himself the last" (II, 298), in Wordsworth we see nature warped by self-interest. His imagination is "the reverse of the dramatic…The power of his mind preys upon itself" (II, 114). This image also appears in Hazlitt's assessment of Byron:

> [His is] a mind preying upon itself, and disgusted with, or indifferent to all other things. There is nothing less poetical than this sort of unaccommodating selfishness. There is nothing more repulsive than this sort of ideal absorption of all the interests of others, of the good and ills of life, in the ruling passion and moody abstraction of a single mind, as if it would make itself the centre of the universe, and there was nothing worth cherishing but its intellectual diseases. It is like a cancer eating the heart of poetry. (II, 306)

In Hazlitt's present, dramatic poets are weak and unoriginal, and the most powerful imaginative poets offer only the "moody abstraction of a single mind."

By contrast, Shakespeare embodies both an ideal moral model and a poetic ideal. Hazlitt's description of Shakespeare as a poet capable of roving among minds "like the same soul successively animating different bodies" bears obvious affinities with the *Essay*'s discussions of disinterested imaginative projection and manifold identity. "The striking peculiarity of Shakspeare's mind was its generic quality, its power of communication with all other minds…He was just like any other man, but that he was like all other men. He was the least of an egotist that it was possible to be. He was nothing in himself; but he was all that others were, or that they could become" (II, 208). It has long been noted that comments such as this one are reflected in Keats's own poetic musings. Consider for example the famous October 1818 letter to Richard Woodhouse on the "poetical Character":

> As to the poetical Character itself, (I mean that sort of thing which, if I am any thing, I am a Member; that sort distinguished from the wordsworthian or egotistical sublime, which is a thing per se and stands alone) it is not itself—it has no self—it is everything and nothing—it has no character—it enjoys light and shade; it lives in gusto, be in foul or fair, high or low, rich or poor, mean or elevated—It has as much delight in conceiving an Iago as an Imogen. What shocks the virtuous philosopher, delights the camelion Poet. It does no harm from its relish of the dark side of things any more than from its taste for the bright one; because they both end in speculation. A Poet is the most unpoetical of any thing

> in existence; because he has no Identity—he is continually informing and filling some other Body.[15]

If the use of Shakespeare characters to illuminate a discussion of mean/elevated extremity, or the descriptions of the "wordsworthian" poet as "egotistical" and the ideal poet as one who is "continually informing and filling some other body," do not clearly enough mark Hazlitt's presence in these lines, the final straw must be the presence of the virtually trademarked "gusto."[16] What is notably different about Keats's formulation is that he implicitly aligns himself with Shakespeare, against self-interested contemporary poets. That is, he asserts that he is (or will become) the dramatic poet Hazlitt does not expect to arrive.

Keats's ideas about accomplishing this ambition seem to have been invited by Hazlitt's comparison of Shakespearean imagination and the mind's natural imaginative capacity in dreams.

> As, in our dreams, we hold conversations with ourselves, make remarks, or communicate intelligence, and have no idea of the answer which we shall receive, and which we ourselves make, till we hear it; so, the dialogues in Shakespear, are carried on without any consciousness of what is to follow, without any appearance of preparation or premeditation. In the world of his imagination, every thing has a life of its own![17]

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[15] *The Letters of John Keats 1814–21*, ed. Hyder E. Rollins., Vol. 2 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1958), p. 387.

[16] David Bromwich notes that Keats uses the word as early as December 1817, in the article "On Edmund Kean as a Shakespearean Actor," in a sentence "easily mistakable for Hazlitt": "There is an indescribable gusto in his voice, by which we feel that the utterer is thinking of the past and the future, while speaking of the instant." *Hazlitt: The Mind of a Critic* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983), 367.

[17] From "Schlegel on the Drama" (1816), *Selected Writings* (I, 216). See further discussion of the relevance to Shakespeare (including the lectures Keats heard) in " 'The Future in the Instant': Hazlitt's *Essay* and Shakespeare," in *Metaphysical Hazlitt*, 45. Compare this to a section from the later essay "On Dreams" (1825): "It is an odd thing in sleep, that we not only fancy we see different persons, and talk to them, but that we hear

The use of dreams to make a point about "objective" imaginative power might seem strange, since dreams would seem to be made up of nothing but the experience of a single mind (something more like what he complains we find in Wordsworth). Yet if it is true, as Hazlitt claims, that imagination furnishes the mind with "imaginary ideas" not derived from experience, it is not necessarily true that dreams are exclusively made up of sense remnants. The mind imagines there, too, with a power that may far exceed common estimation. Since in Hazlitt's account imagination flows always ahead of memory and present experience, it is uncontaminated by identity—and, importantly for the modern poet seeking to escape a modern problem, uncontaminated as well by self-interest.

**IV.**

"Do I wake or sleep?" This question, posed famously at the Nightingale Ode's conclusion, emerges over and over in Keats's dream poetry, especially in *Endymion.* It is difficult to distinguish dreams from waking (and visions from waking dreams) in this poem, not only because its "real" settings are not very realistic; more importantly, the

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them make answers, and startle us with an observation or a piece of news; and though we of course put the answer into their mouths we have no idea beforehand what it will be, and it takes us as much by surprise as it would in reality" (*Selected Writings*: VIII, 19) It is notable that Hazlitt here takes a standard Empiricist position about dreams, making clear that at least by this time he does not subscribe to the more radical position Keats takes with regard to imagination.

poem's various dreams often bleed into or occur within others. In fact, it is not clear that Endymion is ever awake. When we first encounter him, at the festival of Latmian shepherds, he remains under the influence of the "silent entangler," sleep: "in the self-same fixed trance he kept / Like one who on the earth had never stept: / Aye, even as dead-still as a marble man" (I: 403–405) Seeing him thus, his sister Peona guides him to her bower, where he recollects the source of his despair: a dream. After following a winding forest river to a nook beyond the overhanging leaves, in which the sky and setting sun was reflected, he recalls, "There blossom'd suddenly a magic bed / Of sacred ditamy, and poppies red" (I: 554–55). While he sat wondering at this sudden "flowery spell,"

> through the dancing poppies stole
> A breeze, most softly lulling to my soul;
> And shaping visions all about my sight
> Of colours, wings, and bursts of spangly light;
> The which became more strange, and strange, and dim
> And then were gulph'd in a tumultuous swim:
> And then I fell asleep. (I: 565–72)

In this sleep, Endymion lay "watching the zenith" and its moon when a second dream erupted, of his first journey with and ravishment of his "second self," Diana ("Dream within dream!" Peona exclaims).[18] Endymion recounts that this layered dream was also interrupted, and joined by yet another layer, a dream about dreamless and dark-pinioned Sleep:[19]

[18] Keats refers to Diana later by other names (Phoebe and Cynthia). To avoid confusion, I always refer to her as Diana.
[19] In the published text "sleep" does not receive the capitalization of a proper noun, but it does in the fair-copy text. This is clearly a printer's error (*his* pinions dark).

> Why did I dream that sleep o'er-powered me
> In midst of all this heaven? Why not see,
> Far off, the shadows of his pinions dark,
> And stare them from me? But no, like a spark
> That needs must die, although its little beam
> Reflects a diamond, my sweet dream
> Fell into nothing—into stupid sleep. (I: 672–77)

In the domain of *Endymion*, then, it is possible to dream that sleep overpowers a waking self that is itself a projection in a dream. Dreamless "stupid sleep" is only one ring in the mind's nested visions, a simulated darkness. Peona chides Endymion for dwelling on "thoughts so sick": "how light / Must dreams themselves be; seeing they're more slight / Than the mere nothing that engenders them!" (I: 746–59) But this was not just any dream, Endymion replies: "these things are true, / And never can be born of atomies / That buzz about our slumbers, like brain-flies, / Leaving us fancy-sick." The question is how one would tell the difference.

The obvious answer, that one needs to be awake to know the dream—or as the case may be, dreams within dreams—is undercut immediately. Endymion tells Peona that sometime after his first dream (but before the festival) he had a second encounter with Diana. Was it real? He isn't able to say: "my waking sight / Has made me scruple whether that same night / Was pass'd in dreaming." Love-sick and aimlessly wandering, Endymion recalls, he had visited a familiar well in a "deep hollow" and gazed into its surface, "contemplating the figures wild / Of o'er-head clouds melting the mirror through." Drawn momentarily by the reflection of a "cloudy Cupid" and rising to "follow it upon the open plain," Endymion is drawn back to the water by the appearance of the "same bright face I tasted in my sleep, / Smiling in the clear well." When this reflection also moves "as if to flee," as the cloudy Cupid had before, Endymion finds himself

refreshed from the chase in "Dew drops, and dewy buds, and leaves, and flowers…Aye, such a breathless honey-feel of bliss / Alone preserved me from the drear abyss / Of Death, for the fair form had gone again." (I: 900; 903–905).

But memory cuts both ways in *Endymion.* The desire to taste again the bright face from his sleep drives him, "Sleepy with sleep foretasting" (as a magnificent but cancelled manuscript line puts it), down mantling paths of flowers, ore, light, and song. If the hero is saved from the drear abyss by his pursuit of this desire, it is also true that the same desire sustains that abyss. The poem is essentially a long chain of visions that lightly vary the ones recounted to Peona in Book I, restaged in narrative episodes separated by wandering through the earth, under the sea, through middle and upper air, and finally back to the forested site of his original dream at the poppy-rich river nook. What these episodes share is that they all place Endymion on the razor's edge between what Hazlitt would have called egotism and disinterest, so that the "self-destroying" spell of Diana (I: dangerously approaches the self-consumed spell of Narcissus. Keats uses the depth of layered dreams to foreground a question Hazlitt left unanswered in his comparison of dreams and dramatic imagination: how can a world of simulated sense, made up of one individual's experience, represent the height of objective imagination? For Keats, as we will see, the answer seems to be that the will's dissolution in dreams gives imagination rein to move untethered there, functioning with the mind's material, but just beyond its control.

In Book II, we find Endymion elbow deep in a shady spring, out of which rises a rose tree, a bloom from which he plucks and dips in the water to produce new buds encircling a butterfly "upon whose wings / Must surely be character'd strange things"

(61–62). He chases the butterfly (rather than a cloudy Cupid) to a fountain and pool (rather than a well), from which emerges a nymph to inform him that he has far yet to wander. The nymph then disappears, leaving him staring at his own reflection, and aloud reflecting, until a voice from the deep commands him to descend. Endymion finds a subterranean "dusky empire" made up of familiar invention metaphors: "lines abrupt and angular" (II: 328) lead through "winding passages, where sameness breeds / Vexing conceptions of some sudden change" (II: 235–36); fantastic domes in air and caves of ice rise over "waterfalls whose voices come / But as the murmuring surge" (II: 342–43); and a temple waits holding mysterious echoes and images of time immemorial. Having reached the temple, Endymion finds a shrine to and statue of Diana, which serves only to remind him of his solitude, represented here by a "wide outlet, fathomless and dim" (II: 272). For the first time under the earth, new wonders cease to float before Endymion's mind, making room for "thoughts of self":

> And thoughts of self came on, how crude and sore
> The journey homeward to habitual self!
> A mad pursuing of the fog-born elf,
> Whose flitting lantern, through rude nettle-briar,
> Cheats us into a swamp, into a fire,
> Into the bosom of a hated thing. (II: 275–80)

The fair copy renders the final three lines above somewhat differently:

> Whose flitting Lantern, through the nettle-Briar
> Cheats us into a Swamp, cuttings and shreds
> Of old Vexations plaited to a rope
> Wherewith to drag us from the sight of hope,
> And fix us to our earthly bating ring.

Recalling Hazlitt's theory helps us make sense of these lines. Memory draws Endymion onward as the solution to the drear abyss it has itself created, but the "goal of consciousness" (II: 283) cannot be to attain fixed harmony with the bundle of memories ("old vexations plaited to a rope") that extend into the past. Instead Endymion must "o'erleap / His destiny" and continue into the unknown. As he had previously chased his own transformed image in the water, here he chases his own transformed voice, which returns as an echo over the surface of stone offering "refreshment": "flowers, and wreaths, and ready myrtle crowns / Up heaping through the slab" (II: 342–43).

Following these new growths, Endymion passes through a "thousand mazes" before entering a bower where Adonis lies in a "winter-sleep," since with Venus's power his "Death has been medicined to lengthened drowsiness, / The which she fills with visions" (II: 484–85). Mortal Adonis awakens from dreams to find his beautiful Goddess above him, a clear parallel to Endymion's first "dream within dream" of Diana. After Venus gives Endymion her blessing, the lovers leave him "in twilight lone" to continue the chase through chasms, fountains, columns, and fretwork of every variety until, with the help of a Jove-sent eagle, he rises through "middle air" to yet another bower. After finding this bower's innermost recess, he is endued with the "power to dream deliciously." Again he dreams of Diana; again he awakes devastated.

But is he awake? Memories of life before his first dream of Diana now pass "like a dream before him" (II.1023), without clear distinction. As he had earlier, Endymion follows echoes away from memory (identity). When he emerges, it is not in the forest but under the sea, the primary location of Book III. The Adonis vision has its counterpart here in Keat's distended retelling of Ovid's story of the ancient fisherman Glaucus,

whom Endymion finds while chasing glimmery paths under the surface. Glaucus recounts having transformed himself into an underwater being, and having pursued the nymph Scylla when he heard her beautiful song. Instead of finding Scylla, however, Glaucus was sent into a swoon by Circe, with whom he thereafter awakened in a "twilight bower" (by now a familiar scene) to her enchanting music. Glaucus recalls that he was happy for a time in this new forest shade, but soon awoke in the bower alone (also, by now, a familiar scene). Searching for Circe, he followed a "sound of moan, an agony of sound" (III: 485) and discovered her surrounded by humans she had transformed, now pleading for death. Her true identity discovered, Circe cursed Glaucus to live a thousand years in the body of an old man. He returned to the ocean, and to the grim discovery of Scylla's corpse, a victim of Circe.

The story gets stranger (and less Ovidian): Glaucus recalls sitting on a rock sometime after the curse, watching a ship and its crew blown "to pale oblivion" in a storm. An old man's hand emerged from the water holding a magic wand and a scroll containing a promise: if Glaucus piously gathers the bodies of drowned lovers, a youth, "*by heavenly power lov'd and led*" (III: 708), will eventually appear and restore them as well as Scylla to life. Endymion obeys Glaucus's request to read out the mysterious "charactery" on a shell blank to all others, to break the magic wand at his shrine to Scylla, and finally to scatter fragments of the scroll over the dead lovers. The lovers rise and "Scylla, blushing sweetly from her dream" (III: 509), leads them all to an assembly in the palace of Neptune where they stand together "in dreams" until, at Triton's horn, they awaken and greet Venus. As she had in Adonis's bower, Venus gives Endymion her blessing, and promises he will find Diana if he continues. He swoons, he sleeps, he is

transported to a "crystal bower far away," while to his "inward senses" Diana's voice tells him to awaken and be gathered into immortality (III: 1005–27). And he does awaken, back in the forest.

But again, is he awake? Or was the journey underground and through the sea only a dream populated with other dreamers and dreams? Late in this fourth book, Endymion tells Peona that he has since they last met in Book I's bower scene "been wide awake / Night after night, and day by day" (IV: 855–56). This is strange. Even if we assume that anything in the poem has happened outside of dreams, it is certainly the case that the hero has slept on his journey. Moreover, the narrative of Book IV preceding the siblings' reunion is itself made up of dream layers so dense and peculiar that it is hard to say when (or whether) Endymion awoke in the forest. Back on what appears to be solid ground at the beginning of this book, Endymion discovers an Indian Maid lying asleep on the grass and is struck with "kindred pain" to see "her eyes in swimming search / After some warm delight, that seems to perch / Dovelike in the dim cell lying beyond / Their upper lids" (IV: 61–64). He is for a time hopeful that this dreamer might suffice as an earthly alternative to his celestial dream lover. Caught between the memory of Diana and the hope for this memory's erasure, Endymion becomes a "triple soul," in a formulation strongly reminiscent of Hazlitt's triadic scheme of past, present, and future.

> O thou could'st foster me beyond the brink
> Of recollection! Make my watchful care
> Close up its bloodshot eyes, nor see despair!
> Do gently murder half my soul, and I
> Shall feel the other half so utterly!— (IV: 305–310)

Murder the past, Endymion asks, and I shall find in you a future. But what at first looks like the solution to Endymion's entrancement with a celestial dream memory, a new earthly love on steady ground, is dashed when a voice (Diana's voice?) rises through the forest—*Woe! Woe to that Endymion! Where is he?* (IV: 321)—and two steeds with blue wings emerge from the turf. Together Endymion and the maid mount the steeds and rise, surrounded in the form of a "sleepy dusk" (IV: 362) by Sleep himself, who has traveled from the "old womb of night" (IV: 372) because for the first time Sleep has had a dream—*of Endymion*.

In Book I, Endymion tells Peona that he had dreamed of *dreamless* Sleep from within other dream layers, and was sent by this dark-pinioned figure into a simulated "stupid sleep." Here, Sleep sends the steeds into a "slumber dead," while on their back Endymion is sent into a dream of moving among gods while the moon rises "crescented":

> He looks, 'tis she,
> His very goddess: good-bye earth, and sea,
> And air, and pains, and care, and suffering;
> Goodbye to all but love! Then doth he spring
> Towards her, and awakes—and, strange, o'erhead,
> Of those same fragrant exhalations bred,
> Beheld awake his very dream. (IV: 430–36)

Awake, Endymion beholds his dream, and finds himself caught again between Diana and the "sweet sleeper" beside him. Diana's light confounds him, falling over the body of his earthly lover:

> Slowly she rose, as though she would have fled,
> While to his lady meek the Carian turn'd.
> To mark if her dark eyes had yet discern'd
> This beauty in its birth—Despair! despair!
> He saw her body fading gaunt and spare

> In the cold moonshine. Straight he seiz'd her wrist;
> It melted from his grasp: her hand he kiss'd
> And, horror! kiss'd his own—he was alone. (IV: 502–510)

Recall the early scenes of Endymion gazing on the surface of pools. Cupid, nymphs, and the image of Diana all move there *as if to flee,* leaving his image alone. In this sequence as in those earlier ones, Endymion's desire skirts the edge of narcissism, but fosters him instead beyond the brink of recollection.

In this fourth book, Endymion himself embodies Adonis's "winter-sleep," as the drowned lovers of the Glaucus episode had before. After the Indian Maid disappears the steed drops "hawkwise to the earth" and to the Cave of Quietude, where death and dreams are roughly equivalent, and equally comforting:

> Happy gloom!
> Dark Paradise! Where pale becomes the bloom
> Of health by due; where silence dreariest
> Is most articulate; where hopes infest;
> Where those eyes are the brightest far that keep
> Their lids shut longest in a dreamless sleep. (IV: 537–42)

For the first time since he glimpsed Diana, Endymion is "content," even "happy"—but he is past pain or pleasure. When the steed (not Endymion) is spurred from the Cave of Quietude by the mysterious sound of trumpets and song celebrating Diana's "wedding and festivity," he is left on a green hill, and again awakens. Out of thin air, the Indian Maid has returned, along with his maddening fickleness: he tells her he has "lov'd a nothing, nothing seen / Or felt but a great dream" and declares: "Caverns lone, farewel! / And air of visions, and the monstrous swell / Of visionary seas!" (IV: 651–53).

Soon after, the newly reunited (but not exactly happy) lovers meet Peona, and Endymion decides (again) that he cannot forget Diana. He will instead remove himself to a hermit's "mossy cave" and be content with dreams. But the trio are already caught, together, within something close to the imagined world to which Endymion longs to escape.

> As feels a dreamer what doth most create
> His own particular fright, so these three felt:
> Or like one who, in after ages, knelt
> To Lucifer or Baal, when he'd pine
> After a little sleep: or when in mine
> Far under-ground, a sleeper meets his friends
> Who know him not. (IV: 889–895)

The echo in these lines of Hazlitt's analogy of Shakespeare and dreams is striking: the sleeper creates his own fright, and finds friends who know him not. But whose imagination is at work in this invention? We have by this point in the poem no doubt come to assume that we have access to a privileged narrative "inside," in Endymion himself. If this is so, no matter how wild the poem gets we are always able to attribute this wildness to one dreamer. At the poems conclusion, however, Keats calls this grounding frame into question as well: "the spirit-blow / Was struck, and all were dreamers" (IV: 899–900). With this, the table is set for the poem's bewildering conclusion: after the two women wander off "dizzily" and with "wild stare," Endymion falls into a different kind of sleep, "as he a corpse had been" (IV: 919). When he meets Peona and the Indian Maid a few lines later (we are now quickly approaching the 4,000 lines Keats set out to write), the face of the Indian Maid dissolves and merges with Diana's. Abruptly, the lovers disappear, in what feels like an echo of Endymion's earlier

dreams, which left him awake (or apparently awake) and alone. The difference is that here the lonely, dazed wanderer is Peona, who travels in the final line "through the wood in gloomy wonderment" (IV: 1003), apparently stricken with the dreaming sickness she once attempted to cure. Endymion's mind is gone. We have a new dreamer, and new labyrinths, on the blank bottom of the page.

**V.**

What is the end-point of this circular and exhausting dream narrative? There is no outside (of dreams, or even of a single character's mind) from which to answer this question, and that might be the point. While Keats was always interested in the relation between dreams and poetry, Hazlitt's use of dreams as an analogy for the highest kind of dramatic imagination, in Shakespeare, opened a new way of thinking about the office of the poet, and a new way of conceiving a means by which he might overcome the egotism and self-interest of the modern mind. Why should dreams not be regarded *literally* as imagination's fruits, since even self-interested modern poets—or for that matter any self-interested modern person—so easefully access their domain?

Such an idea goes beyond Hazlitt's claims into a thicket he clearly wished to avoid: Descartes's worry that it might not be possible ever to prove that one is really sitting by the fire, or at a movie or in this library terminal, instead of lying in bed dreaming it up. This argument has special force because, unlike most skeptical thought experiments, it feels so familiar. We all know what it is like to believe, wrongly, in a

dream. Starting from the simplest truths that one might derive from sense, Descartes writes:

> [H]ow could it be denied that these hands or this whole body are mine? Unless perhaps I were to liken myself to madmen, whose brains are so damaged by the persistent vapours of melancholia that they firmly maintain they are kings when they are paupers, or say they are dressed in purple when they are naked or that their heads are made of earthenware, or that they are pumpkins, or made of glass. But such people are insane, and I would be thought equally mad if I took anything from them as a model for myself.[20]

The trouble is not that one "sleeps at night, and regularly experiences the same things while asleep as madmen do when awake," but that "there are never any sure signs by means of which being awake can be distinguished from being asleep." The only truth Descartes believes is beyond the reach of this skeptical doubt is the cogito, which (he claims) is present whether we are dreaming or awake, whether we really have hands or are inventing them, whether the external world is real or merely an illusion we (or perhaps an evil genius controlling our thoughts) are projecting there, and even when we sleep without dreaming.

On this final point, the idea of dreamless sleep, Locke believed he had caught Descartes in a contradiction. In *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, he argues that the fact that we do not always dream (or at least cannot remember dreams to confirm that we have had them) suggests that the mind does not always think, and that even short periods of dreamless sleep prove that sleep states are easily distinguished from waking states. Locke insists that we are either conscious ("sensible") of our thoughts or are,

[20] *Meditations on First Philosophy*, ed. and trans. by John Cottingham (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 25.

literally, unconscious. Even if in crucial respects dream thinking is not like thinking while awake—judgment seems to be missing there, we do not reflect on our senses because in fact we are simulating sense and reflection at one and the same time—the mind is still doing some kind of work. But Locke's sarcastic rebuttal of dream skepticism through dreamless sleep anticipates in striking ways the conclusions Hazlitt reached in the *Essay*.

> Let us…suppose the Soul of *Castor* separated, during his Sleep, from his Body, to think apart. Let us suppose too, that it chuses for its Scene of Thinking, the Body of another Man, *v.g. Pollux*, who is sleeping without a Soul: For if *Castor*'s Soul can think whilst *Castor* is asleep, what *Castor* is never conscious of, 'tis no matter what Place it chuses to think in.[21]

The consequence of Hazlitt's addition to Empiricism is that the mind always, as a matter of necessity, finds scenes of thinking (and feeling) in other bodies. We saw earlier that in the *Essay* Hazlitt claims that this faculty makes voluntary action possible. By refusing to distinguish between waking and sleeping imagination in *Endymion*, Keats removes will from the equation. To do so replaces the materialist's account of will with an equally mechanical metaphysical one, and this is likely why Hazlitt resisted it. But if disinterested imagination is a priori, it does not rely on reflection as Locke describes it, nor on the Cartesian cogito. On the contrary, disinterested imagination turns away from the mind's cogitations entirely, affirming itself by a continuously interrupted and incomplete extension into others. Self-knowledge here requires dissolution, or what Keats

[21] See *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975), p. 109–16.

called “self-annihilation,” in poetic ideals that have long been recognized as a borrowing or elaboration of Hazlitt’s own.

It is still not clear, however, how poetry fits into this picture of the mind as something more than an analogy for the “objective” imagination of the rare poet such as Shakespeare. The answer to this question, which I’ve suggested *Endymion* tentatively discovers and tests, becomes explicit in the opening lines of *Hyperion—A Dream*.

> Fanatics have their dreams, wherewith they weave
> A paradise for a sect; the savage too
> From forth the loftiest fashion of his sleep
> Guesses at heaven; pity these have not
> Trac’d upon vellum or wild Indian leaf
> The shadows of melodious utterance.
> But bare of laurel they live, dream, and die;
> For Poesy alone can tell her dreams,
> With the fine spell of words alone can save
> Imagination from the sable charm
> And dumb enchantment. (I: 1–11)

If identity is preceded by imagination, it cannot be the case that imagination in dreams, or in madness or pre-civilizational ignorance, is wrong; it might, however, be the case that it is unreadable. If this is so, it is only because identity distorts or obscures imagination. The goddess Latona tells the dreamer-poet of Keats’s fragment that the “poet and the dreamer are distinct, / Diverse, sheer opposite, antipodes. / The one pours out a balm upon the world, / The other vexes it” (I: 199–202). According to this prelude, poetry makes imagination speak, embalming and transmitting disinterested feeling that in dreams alone can extend only back to the originator’s mind.

But how does poetry do this? Hazlitt’s *Essay* upends Hobbesian self-interest by pointing to the self’s codependent relation to others; he might have offered the same

answer to the skeptic. In the final analysis, this involves a leap of faith. If one is willing to accept that imagination (as Hazlitt defines it) is innate, the skeptic's arguments cease to matter. This is because the truth of what we are and what we do could only be realized in the future selves we share, weirdly, as our own. A poem makes this ideal material, in the sense that it can only be "proved on the pulses" of a reader. The final lines of the second *Hyperion*'s prelude put it this way: "Whether the dream now purposed to rehearse / Be Poet's or Fanatic's will be known / When this warm scribe, my hand, is in the grave" (I.16–18).

A few months before the verse epistle I considered in the first section above, Keats wrote in a separate letter to Reynolds that "Memory should not be called Knowledge."

> Many have original minds and do not think it; they are led away by Custom. Now it appears to me that almost any Man may like the Spider spin from his own inwards his own airy Citadel. The points of leaves and twigs on which the Spider begins her work are few and she fills the Air with a beautiful circuiting. Man should be content with as few points to tip with the fine Webb of his Soul and weave a tapestry Empyrean, full of Symbols for his spiritual eye, of softness for his spiritual touch, of space for his wandering, of distinctness for his Luxury. (February 19, 1818).

This letter has become famous as a statement of "Romantic imagination" describing "the creator's self-sustaining power."[22] But the influence I've argued Hazlitt's *Essay* exerted on Keats allows us to specify this claim in a more detailed way. Rather than a fantasy of self-enclosing aestheticism, Keats might be describing a fantasy of thought opening continuously in a continuous present, away from the self. Again, Hazlitt's description of

[22] Kathryn Syllivan Kruger, *Weaving the Word: The Metaphorics of Weaving and Female Textual Reproduction* (Selinsgrove: Susquehanna University Press, 2001), 32.

Shakespearean imagination in "On Posthumous Fame," an essay Keats knew well, is illuminating: "In the mingled interests and feelings belonging to this wide range of imaginary reality, in the tumult and rapid ransitions of this *waking dream*, [Shakespeare] could not find time to think of himself, nor wish to embody that personal identity" (my italics; II, 26). Philip Davis nicely describes this ideal as one "not founded upon what we already *think* we think, [but rather on] immersion in the midst of action, [on] present time reaching imaginatively towards a future for itself which is as yet by definition unknown, uncreated and untried."[23] In the *Essay*, present consciousness automatically sorts memory's stores, while imagination draws this consciousness always forward. As I've suggested, however, Hazlitt seems to assume the presence of innate judgment in the waking mind, something that would enable action by discriminating among possible futures. As in *Endymion*, this letter seems to be suggesting something more radical, that imagination alone is the basis of moral action. A mind always leaping beyond itself would be capable of the most fecund and easeful kind of imagination, something close to dreaming. The few points necessary for tipping the web of a tapestry empyrean, the web's minimal structural basis, is the mind reduced by the greatest extent possible to what we share innately, rather than what we have experienced.

Keats anticipates a worry that the "wandering" "Luxury" he describes, in its turn to private "Symbols," may itself seem a prescription for egotism: "the Minds of Mortals are so different and bent on such diverse Journeys that it may at first appear impossible for any common taste and fellowship to exist between two or three under these suppositions." Yet, he asserts, the reality of the matter is "quite the contrary": "Minds

[23] " 'The Future in the Instant," *Metaphysical Hazlitt*, 45.

would leave each other in contrary directions, traverse each other in Numberless points, and at last greet each other on the Journey's end. An old Man and a child would talk together and the old Man be led on his Path, and the child left thinking." Memory should not be called knowledge, nor should the "sparing touch of noble Books be any irreverence to their Writers." The right kind of reader, Keats suggests, is one who lifts the "Page of full Poesy or distilled Prose" into a watchful, indolent, luxurious life by wandering, musing, reflecting, prophesying, and dreaming upon it: "Let us not therefore go hurrying about and collecting honey-bee like, buzzing here and there impatiently from a knowledge of what is to be arrived at; but let us open our leaves like a flower and be passive and receptive."

The significance of these comments have to do with the way Keats thought of poems brought to life differently by different readers, and especially a long and labyrinthine poem like *Endymion*. Early in the poem's composition he wrote to Bailey: "I have heard Hunt say and I may be asked – why endeavor after a long poem? To which I should answer – Do not the Lovers of Poetry like to have a little Region to wander in where they may pick and choose, and in which the images are so numerous that many are forgotten and found new in a second Reading: which may be food for a Week's stroll in the Summer?" In the letter to Reynolds, Keats writes that he was led to his thoughts by "the beauty of the morning operating on a sense of Idleness."

> I have not read any books. The morning said I was right. I have had no Idea but of the morning, and the Thrush said I was right, seeming to say:
>
> > "O thou whose face hath felt the Winter's wind,
> > Whose eye has seen the Snow clouds hung in Mist
> > And the black-elm tops 'mong the freezing Stars;
> > To thee the Spring will be a harvest-time.

O thou whose only book has been the light
Of supreme darkness which thou feddest on
Night after night when Phoebus was away;
To thee the Spring shall be a tripple morn.
O fret not after knowledge—I have none
And yet my song comes native to the warmth.
O fret not after knowledge—I have none
And yet the Evening listens. He who saddens
At thought of Idleness cannot be idle,
And he's awake who thinks himself asleep."

The experience of birdsong (note the quotation marks around what the thrush *seemed* to say) told Keats he was right not to read any books, and he calls this rhymeless sonnet a "mere sophistication" to excuse his indolence. Like his sonnets generally, this one builds a rhetorical shell, but the contents of the shell are puzzling. The first and second quatrains parallel one another: in the first case, winter cold is followed by springtime harvest, an idea as difficult to imagine as is the "light / Of supreme darkness," compensated for in the second quatrain by spring's "tripple Morn." The third quatrain echoes the parallel structure established in the first two, but in half the number of lines. "O fret not after knowledge—I have none" is followed by "and yet" clauses that announce natural song—the kind of song made possible by knowing nothing. What is claimed as valuable here is what the mind does, not what it knows. One needn't worry about being idle or asleep: to have the thought is to be active and, at least in some sense, awake.

It is significant that the allusions littered throughout the letter—the spider, the bee, and certainly the books receiving and imparting pleasures—are to Swift's *Battle of the Books*. The spider in both Keats's and Swift's texts spin their "Citadel" (Swift uses the same word), but in Swift the spider's inwards have an external source: the flies he captures in his web, which also provide him with the poison to capture his next meal. By

contrast, what the bee gathers from "nature" produce gifts of sweetness (honey) and light (wax). In Swift, the spider and bee are a parable within a parable: the moderns prey on the ancients, who in turn write from the book of nature. In Keats's letter, however, the roles of spider and bee are neutralized. The "pleasant life" is the product of a weirdly mutual relation between readers and books, as though they, like flowers and spiders, would die without visitors. Keats's sonnet is a description of an experience and, like the letter itself, grounds for another experience in a reader. It doesn't matter whether his speculations in the letter are right or wrong, he tells Reynolds, so long as they suffice "to lift a little time from your shoulders."

*Endymion*'s famous opening lines provide the first of many protective bowers in the poem.

> A thing of beauty is a joy for ever:
> Its loveliness increases; it will never
> Pass into nothingness; but still will keep
> A bower quiet for us, and a sleep
> Full of sweet dreams, and health, and quiet breathing. (I: 1–5)

A thing of permanence—a poem of the type Keats sets out to write—stores a sleep for "us" and also, separately, keeps itself "a sleep" and full of sweet dreams, and health, and quiet breathing. This chiasmus implies the same kind of reciprocation identified in the letter above. Like the poem's figures arrested in sleep—Endymion himself; the drowned lovers of the Glaucus episode; Adonis in his bower—the poem awaits reanimating breath. In that breath and body, it moves anew. For this reason the most significant feature of *Endymion* may not be its representations of dissociated dreaming but rather the reading practice these representations invite. My next chapter considers this possibility through

an analysis of style. I've suggested that Keats came to believe that dreams might reveal imagination in a pure state by suppressing the self-affirming, or self-dependent, aspect of the will. The question for him as a poet writing in a modern moment that Hazlitt had claimed made disinterested imagination impossible is how to achieve something like dream consciousness while awake. From the earliest reviews forward, the wild and forward-flowing couplets of *Endymion* have been seen as undisciplined, reckless, and indulgent. They might be all of these things, but perhaps they are something else as well. Perhaps they represent a way of propelling the mind always ahead of itself, through the experience of composition or reading, following sense at its farthest horizon and at all costs resisting the embankments of memory. I turn to these couplets now.

# CHAPTER TWO

## ON COCKNEY COUPLING:
## KEATS'S FORM OF IDENTITY

**I.**

My first chapter argued that Hazlitt's literary ideals, and those Keats developed out of Hazlitt, were grounded in his somewhat obscure early attempts to answer ethical dilemmas presented by Empiricism and the new mind science of figures such as David Hartley and Joseph Priestley. The most pressing among these dilemmas involved agency: if the mind in the present is nothing more than the sum of past impressions and ideas, how can action be regarded in moral terms? Hazlitt resisted the familiar answer to this problem, which would posit the existence of moral sense along with the senses five. Instead, he argued that the mind has a metaphysical capacity: it naturally projects into the future, making action possible by "disinterested imagination." The idea that action is guided by deliberation of possible future scenarios is familiar, but the way Hazlitt defined imagination is not. He argued that this sense of the future has nothing at all to do with experience, and in fact runs counter to memory and the illusion of stable selfhood. This makes imagination a moral faculty that, in Hazlitt's words, "must carry me out of myself

into the feelings of others by one and the same process by which I am thrown forward as it were into my future being, and interested in it."[1]

Hazlitt's literary criticism discusses "dramatic imagination" in terms nearly identical to those the philosophy uses to describe disinterested imagination. Although Hazlitt seems not to have believed that dramatic imagination was possible under modern social conditions, his use of dreams as an analogy for the highest form of dramatic imagination, in Shakespeare, hints at a means of overcoming the illusion that Hobbesian self-interest is natural. The mind in dreams easefully projects beyond itself, beyond the stores of memory; we hold conversations, receive news, encounter terror, make discoveries; we receive our own inventions as though they lie ahead and outside of us. As I pointed out, Hazlitt's claim that imagination produces "internal sensations" not based in experience suggests that he need not have abided by Empiricism's view of dreams as spectral reconfigurations of waking life, in which sense remnants surface willy-nilly in the absence of the mind's ordering powers. The reason Hazlitt did abide by this distinction seems to be that he was uncomfortable with the idea that imagination drives action even in the absence of the "reasonable" waking mind.[2] His theory implicitly assumes the presence of judgment, a kind of relay-point on the way from imagining to acting. I argued that Keats seems to have wanted to remove this relay-point. Using intricate dramatizations of false awakening and dreams within dreams, especially in *Endymion,* he asserted the priority of imagination: what matters is the mind's capacity

[1] *The Selected Writings of William Hazlitt,* Vol. 1. *An Essay on the Principles of Human Action* and *Characters of Shakespear's Plays,* ed. Duncan Wu (London: Pickering & Chatto, 1998), p. 3.
[2] The clearest indication of Hazlitt's thought about dreams and will comes in "On Dreams" (1825), about which I say more in the final section below.

rather than its contents. Living a life of sensation rather than thought for Keats meant following sense and sense-simulation equally, at the edge of experience, where the self we think we know is continually met by a world we do not.

In this chapter, I make the case that Keats attempted to enact this abstract ideal in material terms, through composition methods. In ways that will become clearer below, this argument addresses the concerted effort in recent decades to unearth a politics beneath the poet's lush stylistic surfaces.[3] Of course, one major reason Keats has appeared to require such remedy is that he didn't leave many clues. There is among his works no "London, 1802" or "England in 1819," and certainly no cache of charged partisan prose. The voluminous body of letters includes barely a mention of contemporary events outside his circle of family and friends.[4] This political obscurity, and the feeling so many have shared that (to quote Paul de Man) "in reading Keats we are reading the work of a man whose experience is mainly literary" and are "on very safe ground when we derive our understanding primarily from the work itself," is precisely what drew Jerome McGann to the poet in "Keats and the Historical Method in Literary Criticism" (1979), an essay that has set the terms for subsequent debate.[5] By reading

[3] In addition to work by Jerome McGann and Marjorie Levinson discussed in the body of the text, see Susan Wolfson's special issue of *Studies in Romanticism*, "Keats's Politics: A Forum"; Nicholas Roe's *John Keats and the Culture of Dissent* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997) and his edited collection, *Keats and History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995); Jeffrey N. Cox's *Poetry and Politics in the Cockney School: Keats, Shelley, Hunt and* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998); Richard Cronin's *The Politics of Romantic Poetry* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2000); and Ayumi Mizukoshi, *Hunt, Keats, and the Aesthetics of Pleasure* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2010).
[4] Richard Cronin identifies two letters that place Keats "on the liberal side of the question," but for me at least the thinness of evidence in these letters makes them exceptions that prove the rule. See *Politics of Romantic Poetry*, 199.
[5] I cite the lightly revised version published in *The Beauty of Inflections: Literary Investigations in Historical Method and Theory* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985).

Keats in a "highly specified historical frame of reference," McGann argued, we can recover "the aesthetic domain which Cockney verse attempted to conquer" and "describe precisely not merely the abstract *characteristics*, but the felt *qualities* of its poetic structure" (28).

The idea that poems cannot be read (or even felt) appropriately without hypercontextual reconstitution has become common enough that we might not immediately recognize it as strange.[6] Even if we welcome the ambition—who doesn't want context?—it's hard to know where to start methodologically, and also where to stop. Should we prioritize biography? The things poets said about process or poems? Draft versions and print history? Contemporary response? Subsequent receptions and remediations? In different ways for different poems, all of these things matter. But McGann's call for a flexible new historicism has often been read (incorrectly, in my view) as a call for suppressing evaluative judgment. Thus, in one of the most influential attempts to answer McGann's essay, Marjorie Levinson's *Keats's Life of Allegory* (1988), one reads hundreds of pages on the topic of style with only scant excerpts of the poetry.[7] Levinson sought to reverse the effects of Keats's "aesthetic" critics, who would on her account obligate us to treat his remains as relics sealed off from context and best illuminated by close reading. She offers a sociological reading instead, through reviews

[6] What McGann called the "traditional problem" of "conflicts between formal or stylistic analyis and historical scholarship" has if anything grown more acute during pitched debate between formalists and historicists (and every imaginable hybrid) over the last forty years. At present, this debate is especially live around "historical poetics." For a brief overview, see my introduction (with Joshua Adams and Joel Calahan) to the "Historical Poetics" special issue of *MLQ*, Vol. 71, No. 1 (March 2016): 1–12.
[7] *Keats's Life of Allegory: The Origins of a Style* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1988).

and private judgments from contemporaries, but also through an impressive array of twentieth-century interpretations.

It is notable, however, that Levinson's sociological reading closely parallels the development-of-a-poet arc common in much of the criticism she seeks to upend. That is, Levinson's account basically agrees with "aesthetic" precursors that young Keats (roughly 1815–1818) is forgettable, or of interest primarily as an anticipation of the poet Keats would become. The meaning of Keats's style, she argues, lies broadly in its two varieties of badness: "The early poetry is bad in the commonplace colloquial sense; accidentally or passively imperfect…The poetry we call great is that which *signifies*—indeed, fetishizes—its alienation from its representational objects and subjects, and thus, from its audience." What makes Keats a "greatly bad" poet in his later phase is for Levinson that he captures the despair of a Regency middle class able only to produce "a bad representation of its adjacent orders" and "continually remake itself in / as / against the projected image of those orders" (176). Levinson suggests that in Keats's reception we overhear the meaning of poetry about nothing but the canon it imitates (first, naively; later, with design) and the literary culture from which it is excluded.

Levinson refers only passingly to Leigh Hunt, also middle class and arguably the most important contemporary influence on Keats's style. This is apparently because she views Hunt in the same merely bad, merely pedestrian category as she does early Keats. Where Levinson identifies Keats's stylistic movement away from Hunt as a development of tools for critique, her predecessors saw movement away from the kind of day-to-day political squabbles Hunt was known for, and into the artifice of eternity. By all accounts, however, Hunt was a much more involved political figure than Keats. The very fact that

he left behind troves of political prose makes it tempting to see his Cockney style as a representation of these politics. To do so is only to follow the lead of Hunt's contemporary reviewers. It is no coincidence that the orchestrated attacks on Cockney writing, which eventually extended to Keats, began with reviews of Hunt's *Story of Rimini* (1816), a couplet poem he began writing while imprisoned for insulting the Prince Regent. The stylistic innovations of *Rimini*, which joins loose and low diction with the sustained fraying of end-stopped lines, medial caesurae, and regular stress alternation that had become standard after Pope, were seen then, as they often are even now, as "an exact image of his reformist politics" (William Keach).[8] The logic here is that Hunt wanted to do to the national social order what he wanted to do to its national measure, uproot and recast it. But Hunt's stated object of returning to the more "various" meter and rhyme that preceded Pope could just as easily be seen as conservative.

As for Keats, the fact that his politics (such as they were) are obscure doesn't mean that his couplets lack political content. This assumes a strangely narrow understanding of the word "political," and a strangely mechanical view of writing poems, in which even dry policy positions correspond to rhythms and rhymes. In fact I *do* want to argue what Keach has suggested that no one would want to, that Keats's "extravagant experiments in couplet writing are in themselves expressive of political convictions more radical and anarchic than those of liberals like Hunt" (190). I make this argument with the proviso that, as Keach himself notes, "the poet's attitude to the self, as reading Hazlitt helps us see, is implicitly political in deep and complicated ways" (193).

[8] "Cockney Couplets: Keats and the Politics of Style," *Studies in Romanticism*, vol. 25, no. 2 (Summer 1986): 183.

From the distance of two centuries, long after the heroic couplet Hunt tried to revive has officially met its demise as a popular form, and indeed long after the words "popular form" have ceased to apply to poetry in general, it is difficult to imagine couplet style (of all things) creating much of a stir. As I've already suggested, however, the strangeness of Hunt's couplets could not in isolation have been seen as politically liberal; they became so when they were attached to the liberal Hunt. In the next section, I try to specify Hunt's couplet ideals by looking at his writings on the topic, and by considering how he tried to realize those ideals in his own couplets. I then turn to Keats, isolating features that make his couplets distinct from Hunt's, especially the couplets of *Endymion*. The feeling these couplets induce, of tilting headfirst through first impulses, contrasts with Hunt's careful illustrations of harmony in variety.

I highlight this style by reference to the fair-copy draft of *Endymion*, now housed in the Morgan Library. The printer and Keats's editor, John Taylor, significantly altered the text before publication. The thousands of alterations include the correction of "accidentals" such as misspellings; the normalization of orthography, punctuation, and capitalization; adjustments of meter and rhyme; and even excisions and introductions of entire lines. These adjustments offer valuable evidence not only of the period ear, through sympathetic contemporaries closely sifting the poem, but also of just how extreme Keats's couplet style actually was. In this extremity, I argue, Keats sought to create a kind of self-suspension garden, using the devices of rhyme and meter to throw the mind continuously forward, at the edge of sense.

This argument comes dangerously close to the cardinal sin of reading form mimetically, in the fashion of the undergraduate for whom iambs always represent hoof-

beats, heartbeats, or waves. In the case of *Endymion*, however, the proximity to mimetic interpretation is unavoidable, since the poem continuously courts it. The chapter's final section uses some of the poem's pronounced allegories of composition to make the case that Keats sought to draw readers into an experience very much like the one he sought to capture in writing the poem.

**II.**

If Simon Jarvis is right that "couplet-writing after Pope is in part a history of the slow and necessary deafening which alone would allow anyone to write couplets after him," we should blame Pope's unimaginative imitators (including Dr. Johnson, who warned that attempting to improve Pope's versification would be "dangerous") for the form's nineteenth-century diminishment.[9] But Hunt believed there was an earlier, better couplet, before Pope "spoil'd the ears of the town / With his cuckoo song verses, half up and half down."[10] While contemporary poets such as Southey and Coleridge and Wordsworth were happy to let the couplet pass away, Hunt's goal was to "restore the true principle of its music, – variety" (*Hunt* 5: 44) from which "Pope and his rhyming facilities have so

[9] "Archaist Innovators: The Couplet from Churchill to Browning," in *A Companion to Romantic Poetry*, ed. Charles Mahoney (New York: Wiley, 2011), p. 28.
[10] *The Selected Writings of Leigh Hunt*, Vol. 5 (Pickering & Chatto), p. 33. Volume and page numbers are hereafter given in the text.

long withheld us" (*Hunt* 5: 48).[11] In his account, the couplet from Chaucer to Dryden was "as different from Pope, as the church organ is from the bell in the steeple, or, to give him a more decorous comparison, the song of the nightingale, from that of the cuckoo" (*Hunt* 4: 167). To dismiss Pope in this way was also to denigrate, in one fell swoop, more than a half-century of long poems that either consciously imitated or by osmosis took on his demanding couplet rules, including some very popular poems of the present.[12]

Hunt's 1812 satire *The Feast of the Poets* opens with Apollo contemplating aloud why he hasn't bothered of late to celebrate English poets:

> since Dryden's fine verses, and Milton's sublime,
> I have fairly been sick of their sing-song and rhyme.
> There was Collins, 'tis true, had a good deal to say;
> But the rogue had no industry,--neither had Gray:
> And Thomson, though best in his indolent fits,
> Either slept himself weary, or bloated his wits (*Hunt* 5: 33, l. 11–16)

In notes Hunt added to the poem in 1814, he sourced the weary, indolent, bloated quality of these esteemed eighteenth-century poets to their most famous precursor: "the words *music* and *harmony*," he wrote, had come to be "tossed about with utter forgetfulness of their meaning," so that "every where, in the writings of the last hundred years, we meet with nothing but the music and harmony of Pope,--in versifiers, in critics, in philosophers, in historians, in small men and great." These readers "adhere to their love

[11] For more one Lake School attitudes to the couplet, see David Fairer, "Southey's Literary History" in *Organising Poetry: The Coleridge Circle 1790–1798* (Clarendon: Oxford, 2009) and Robert J. Griffin, "Wordworth's Pope," in *Wordsworth's Pope: A Study in Literary Historiography* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995).
[12] William St. Clair has noted that Samuel Rogers's *The Pleasures of Memory* (1792) was more widely read than Wordsworth in the early decades of the century. Cited in Jarvis, "Archaist Innovators," 25.

of Pope's versification, from the very principle which it wants, that of contrast; – they take up a poet for relaxation after their toils…and finding their ear at its ease in common with the rest of their faculties, are content with the indolence it enjoys, and care not to enquire why it is satisfied" (*Hunt* 5: 45-47).

Using the opening lines of Canto II from *The Rape of the Lock* as his illustration, Hunt suggests that one could "take any dozen or twenty lines from Pope at a hazard" and find "that they have scarcely any other pauses than at the fourth or fifth syllable, and both with little variation of accent," upon which "the poet is eternally dropping his voice."

| | |
|---|---|
| Not with more glories, in th' ethereal plain, | Not with more glories – in th' ethereal plain, |
| The Sun first rises o'er the purpled main, | The sun first rises – o'er the purpled main, |
| Than, issuing forth, the rival of his beams | Titan issuing forth – the rival of his beams, |
| Launch'd on the bosom of the silver Thames. | Launch'd on the bosom – of the silver Thames. |
| Fair Nymphs, and well-drest Youths around her shone, | Fair nymphs and well-dress'd youths – around her shone – |
| But ev'ry eye was fix'd on her alone. | But ev'ry eye – was fix'd on her alone. |
| On her white breast a sparkling Cross she wore, | On her white breast – a sparkling cross she wore |
| Which Jews might kiss, and Infidels adore. | Which Jews might kiss –and infidels adore. |
| Her lively looks a sprightly mind disclose, | Her lively looks – a sprightly mind disclose, |
| Quick as her eyes, and unfix'd as those: | Quick as her eyes – and as unfix'd as those: |
| Favours to none, to all she smiles extends; | Favours to none – to all she smiles extends |
| Oft she rejects, but never once offends. | Oft she rejects – but never once offends. |
| Bright as the sun, her eyes like gazers strike, | Bright as the sun – her eyes the gazers strike, |
| And, like the sun, they shine on all alike. | And like the sun – they shine on all alike. |
| Yet, graceful ease, and sweetness void of pride | Yet graceful ease – and sweetness void of pride, |
| Might hide her faults, if Belles had faults to hide: | Might hide her faults – if belles had faults to hide: |
| If to her share some female errors fall, | If to her share – some female errours fall, |

| | |
|---|---|
| Look on her face, and you'll forget 'em all. | Look on her face – and you'll forget them all. |

Hunt's intrusive reproduction of Pope's lines is as illuminating as his commentary. Compare his version, on the right, to William Warburton's standard 1751 text:

If we first read the Warburton, which except for a few regularizations of italics and capitalization follows Pope's 1714 text exactly, it is clear that Hunt brings a frame constructed in advance. Dashes are inserted at mid-line, and commas at points other than the fourth or fifth syllable are removed. Hunt even mishears the opening word in line three, on his way to mishearing the pronounced (and, in Pope, peculiar) pause after the first syllable (*Than, issuing* becomes *Titan issuing*). He comments:

> Out of eighteen lines, we have not less than *thirteen* in *succession* which pause at the fourth syllable, -- to say nothing of the four *ies* and the six *os* which fall together in rhymes; and the accent in all is so unskillfully managed, or rather so evidently and totally forgotten, that the ear has an additional monotony humming about it, –
>
> Quick as her eyes,
> Favors to none,
> Oft she rejects,
> Bright as the sun. (*Hunt* 5: 47)

In fact medial caesurae are not especially strong over the first nine of these eighteen lines, and their prominence in the highlighted lines of "humming monotony" appears to me quite graceful. Pope's own observation that "in any smooth English verse of ten syllables, there is naturally a pause either at the fourth, fifth or sixth syllables" included the caveat that "to preserve exact harmony and variety, none of these pauses should be continued above three lines together."[55] In these lines, Pope violates one of his own fundamental metrical rules—placing identical pause for *nine* lines together ("Quick as her eyes" to "Look on her face")—in order to highlight dense miniatures within the description of Belinda. We progress in half-line stills from Belinda's quick and singular eyes to the

[55] Letter on versification to Henry Cromwell, November 25, 1710, in *Letters of Alexander Pope*, edited by John Butt (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1960).

cultivated grace and sweetness that hides female error to a face so beautiful that questions of such error are beside the point.

Hunt returned to the same lines to illustrate Pope's "see-saw" style three decades later, in the essay "What is Poetry?" Here he offered more detail than he had previously done about the variety he so often complained Pope had wrung out of English verse:

> *Variety* in versification consists in whatsoever can be done for the prevention of Monotony, by diversity of stops and cadences, distribution of emphasis, and retardation and acceleration of time; for the whole real secret of versification is a musical secret, and is not attainable by any vital effect, save by the ear of genius. (*Hunt* 4: 34).

Hunt's focus on such features as cadence, music, and speed, not only emphasis and pause, attest to his understanding of meter in terms of duration, in contrast to the syllable-counting norms of the eighteenth century. Measured in *time*, Hunt argues, one may fit "not only ten and eleven, but thirteen or fourteen syllables in a rhyming, as well as blank, heroical verse." Hunt is not, however, arguing that poets should emulate classical quantity in English. His examples of language employed in naturally musical form are chants and psalms, whose performers "retard or precipitate the words…according as the quantity of its notes…conspire to demand it." Hunt suggests that the prevailing English verse systems appear, by contrast, to have been learned from "the first drawling and one-syllabled notation of the church hymns," creating the illusion that there is "no alternative for us between our syllabical uniformity and the hexameter or other special forms unsuited to our tongues" (*Hunt* 4:31–32). Somewhere between classical measure and Pope's modern "cuckoo-song" lies a lost English music—flowing, open, and sweet.

Hunt's primary examples of this music in heroic measure come from Dryden and Milton. This is surprising not only because it shows that for Hunt there is no absolute conflict between rhyming and blank heroic verse, but also because he does not follow the tendency among contemporaries to associate these features with the poets' respective politics. Milton, the Puritan radical, and is put on equal footing with Dryden, who went over the space of about two years from eulogizing Cromwell to panegyrizing Charles II.[56] The much more common Romantic literary history identifies Dryden as the source of Augustan artifice associated with all things un-English: feminine, Papist, artificial, French. This association tends to go hand in hand with the Romantic amplification of Milton's radicalism, against the domesticated figure that Andrea Brady traces in dominant eighteenth-century receptions of the poet.[57]

The variety Hunt finds in Dryden comes in surprising rhymes (including partial and sometimes "falling" rhyme); the occasional triplet or alexandrine; the varying number and placement of caesurae; and in the way couplets are sometimes "run one into the other," as in this excerpt from *Theodor and Honoraria*:

> Whilst listening to the murmuring leaves he stood
> More than a mile immers'd within the wood –
> At once the wind was laid. | – The whispering sound
> Was dumb. | – A rising earthquake rock'd the ground.
> With deeper brown the grove was overspread –
> A sudden horror seized his giddy head –
> And his ears tinkled – and his color fled. (*Hunt* 4:32)

[56] *Heroick Stanzas* (1659) and *To His Sacred Majesty* (1661).
[57] "From Grief to Leisure: 'Lycidas' in the Eighteenth Century," *MLQ*, Vol. 71, No. 1 (March 2016): 41–63.

Hunt again provides an idiosyncratic scansion, with adjustments to punctuation, dashes, and vertical bars scoring the original text. But even without Hunt's markings it is easy to see what he likes about the lines. Four of them include no internal caesurae at all, while the others lay it at unique points in the line (after the sixth, second, and fifth syllable, respectively). Apart from metrical virtuosity, this excerpt also includes virtuosic rhymes. All of these rhymes fall on *d*-terminating words that avoid vowel repetition, culminating in a triplet.

In Milton's heroic lines, where rhyme is not part of the equation, the placement of accents and caesurae takes on greater significance. Lines of only three stresses can muscle forth in blank verse, even in cases where the line is extended beyond its usual length. Here is one twelve-syllable example, with Hunt's scansion (*Hunt* 4:25):

ˋ U U U ˋ U U U
Abominable – unutterable – and worse

Another twelve-syllable line, this one of four stresses, is also striking.

ˋ U U U ˋU U U
Wallowing unwieldy – enormous in their gate

Although he doesn't mark each syllable, the first line seems to be divided isochronously around its three peaks: *x / x x x | x / x x x | x / |*. The second line, with *un-wi-el-dy* pronounced as a four-syllable word, is notable for its clusters of triple offbeats: */ x x x / x x | x / x x x /*. Note that Hunt retains limp strings of three and even four contiguous unaccented syllables, instead of resolving them with relative accents and elisions, as foot-

substitution rules would have us do. In both lines, the distension of unaccented syllables is further exaggerated by the caesura between unaccented positions.

As the "crowning specimen of variety of pause and accent," Hunt offers the following lines from *Paradise Lost* (again, with obsessive and idiosyncratic scansion marked out):

> There was a plàce,
> (Nòw nòt – though Sìn – not Tìme – first wroùght the chànge,)
> Where Tiìgris – at the foot of Pàradise,
> Into a gùlf – shòt under ground – till pàrt
> Ròse up a foùntain by the Trèe of Lìfe,
> *In* with the river sunk – and *wìth* it ròse
> Sàtan – invòlv'd in rìsing mìst – then soùght
> Whère to lie hìd. – Sèa he had searched – and làǹd
> From Eden over Pòntus – and the pòol
> Maeòtis – *ùp* beyond the river *Ob*;
> Dòwnward as fàr Antàrctic; – and in lèngth
> West from Oròntes – to the òcean bàrr'd
> At Dàriën – thènce to the làǹd whère flòws
> Gànges and Indus. – Thùs the òrb he ròam'd
> With narrow search, – and with inspèction deep
> Consìder'd èvery crèature – whìch of àll
> Mòst opportùne mìght sèrve his wìles – and foùnd
> The Sèrpent – sùbtlest bèast of all the fièld. (*Hunt* 4: 32–33)

Hunt's scansion emphasizes not only the highly various placement of internal caesurae, but also their highly various number, from none (*Rose up a fountain by the Tree of Life*) to three (*Now not – though Sin – not Time – first wrought the change*). Hunt's marking of accent, though sometimes peculiar to my ear, emphasizes the characteristic slowing and

compacting effect of Milton's inversions within lines, while enjambment (eleven of seventeen lines here) pulls them powerfully into the next.

An extreme example of Hunt's attempts to realize such variety of pause and accent is the little-known 1825 poem "Velluti to His Revilers," written in the voice of Giovanni Velluti, an Italian castrato maligned by London reviewers that same year.

> Alone! Alone! No cheek of love for me,
> No wish to be wherever I may be
> (For that is love): no helpmate; no defence
> From this one, mortal, undivided sense
> Of my own self, wand'ring in aching space;
> No youth, no manhood, no reviving race;
> No little braving playmate, who belies
> The ruffling gibe in his proud father's eyes;
> No gentler voice – a smaller one – her own –
> No – nothing. 'Tis a dream that I have known
> Come often at mid-day. – I waked, and was alone.
> Not on the stage, not amidst heaps of eyes –
> Half kind – half scornful, my true comfort lies
> But where 'tis humblest of humilities. (*Hunt* 6: 53)

This emulation feels overdone in part because it lacks the Latinate syntax that churns always through through Milton's lines. In order to achieve the number of internal pauses characteristic of *Paradise Lost*, Hunt has to insert en-dashes of the kind he often employs in his scansions. As for the rhymes, Hunt also overdoes Dryden, inserting two triplet rhymes consecutively.[58]

*Rimini* is of course more important than "Velluti," or than other of Hunt's couplet poems that were more widely read, such as "Hero to Leander" (1818). This is not only because *Rimini* was so influential on other poets (including Keats), but also because Hunt

[58] Dryden avoids consecutive triplets. See Conrad A. Balliet's detailed statistical analysis in "The History and Rhetoric of the Triplet," *PMLA*, Vol. 80, No. 5 (Dec. 1965): 528–34.

offered the poem as an explicit attempt to "reduce to practice" his critical descriptions of "the various and legitimate harmony of the English heroic." (*Hunt* 5: 32). This practice was, as he saw it, an affirmation of something old rather than an introduction of something new—"a revival, not an innovation" (*Hunt* 6: 84). One often feels in reading the poem that Hunt is circling in red ink the features he is "resurrecting," as in the following Drydenesque run-together lines:

> And then a second interval succeeds
> Of stately length, and then a troop of steeds
> Milkwhite and unattired, Arabian bred,
> Each by a blooming boy lightsomely led. (*Hunt* 5: 174; II: 227–30)

At other moments, it is evident that Hunt is attempting to chip away at tired norms by exposing them to irregularities. An example of this comes in Canto III's description of the poem's starring brothers, Giovanni and Paulo. Here Hunt submits regular stress alternation and pronounced end-stops to desecration with a nearly comic strand of double rhymes.

> Taste had he, in a word, for high-turned merit,
> But not the patience, or the genial spirit;
> And so he made, 'twixt virtue and defect,
> A sort of fierce demand on your respect,
> Which, if assisted by his high degree,
> It gave him in some eyes a dignity,
> And struck a meaner deference in the many,
> Left him, at last, unloveable with any.
>
> From this complexion in the reigning brother,
> His younger birth perhaps had saved the other.
> Born to a homage less gratuitous,
> He learned to win a nobler for his house. (*Hunt* 5: 184; III: 91–98)

The poem's strongest moments more easefully put into play the verse ideals Hunt's criticism describes, so that one actually gets a sense of the kind of "music" he wants to achieve through "diversity of stops and cadences, distribution of emphasis, and retardation and acceleration of time."

> With **var**ious **earn**estness the **crow**d ad**mire**
> **Horse**men and **horse**, the **mo**tion and the at**tire**.
> Some **watch**, as **they** go **by**, the **ri**ders' **fa**ces
> **Look**ing com**po**sure, and their **knight**ly **gra**ces;
> The **life**, the **care**lessness, the **sud**den **heed**,
> The **bod**y **curv**ing to the **rear**ing **steed**,
> The **pa**tting **hand**, that **best** persu**ades** the **check**,
> And **makes** the **quarr**el **up** with a **proud neck**,
> The **thigh broad pressed**, the **span**ning **palm** up**on** it,
> And the **jerked feath**er **swal**ing in the **bon**net.

As in the lines Hunt isolated from *Paradise Lost*, these string together offbeats and stresses to produce slowing and acceleration in surprising places. The latter half of line two, for example, features four light syllables before it rises to its rhyme, slowing the line considerably at the end. In a different way, the contiguous stressed syllables of the final three lines slow movement through recurring unsounded beats: ***proud | neck; thigh | broad | pressed***; ***jerked | feath****er*. Two of the five couplets here use double rhymes (*faces : graces / upon it : bonnet*); another, *admire : attire*, hovers somewhere between. Metrically, no two lines scan alike, and caesural placement varies widely.

Referring to *Endymion* in one of the attacks on Cockney writing, John Lockhart wrote that while Keats's had clearly adopted the "loose nerveless versification and Cockney rhymes the poet of *Rimini*," the "defects of the system are tenfold more

conspicuous" in Keats.[59] With this complaint as an important cue, and with this section's examples from Hunt's couplet theory and practice in mind, I turn now to Keats.

**III.**

*Rimini* appeared soon after Keats first met Hunt, in March 1816, and the poem spurred an immediate change in Keats's style. What had been a distant admiration for the elder poet's periodical sonnets became studied imitation in a series of couplet poems: "Specimen for an Induction to a Poem" and "Calidore, a fragment" (both spring 1816); "To My Brother George" and "To Charles Cowden Clarke" (both August 1816); "Sleep and Poetry" (November 1816); "I stood tip-toe upon a little hill" (December 1816); and, most importantly, *Endymion* (April–November 1817). W. J. Bate's classic study, *The Stylistic Development of Keats* (1958), shows that much of this imitation can be measured statistically. "Throughout the handling of these couplets," Bate observes, "there is a continual and chronologically progressive working towards freedom and perhaps even laxity of structure, stress, and pause."[60] Taking Hunt's example to new extremes and seeking "rapidity of flow" above all else, Keats "occasionally violated all traditional English metrical practice" through stress-failure (more than two consecutive unaccented syllables), feminine rhymes, "vowel-gaping" (infelicitous placement of consecutive

[59] Qtd. in Keach, "Politics of Style," 189.
[60] *The Stylistic Development of Keats* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press), p. 20.

vowels), and "excessive" trisyllabic feet. Bate calls this versification "undisciplined," but he also notes that Keats often revised to achieve these effects, and the fact that his statistical analysis reveals a chronologically progressive development of "laxity" suggests that there is method of some kind at work.

The question of Hunt's influence is complicated. Hunt's mostly positive review of the 1817 volume observes that its couplet poems fall into "mere roughness and discords for their own sake, but not for that of variety and contrasted harmony" (*Hunt,* 4: xx). He would later write that *Endymion* "had no versification" (*Hunt,* 2: 154). In a letter to Benjamin Bailey written during the final stages of *Endymion*'s composition, Keats wrote that Hunt's "corrections and amputations shall by the knowing ones be trased in the Poem."[61] The context of this comment is important. It follows a story reported to Keats by Reynolds, in which Hunt apparently joked, upon hearing that Keats was nearing his goal of 4,000 lines, that "had it not been for me they would have been 7000!" In fact Keats kept most of the poem from Hunt after receiving a negative response to the draft of the first book.[62] What does Keats mean, then, when he says that Hunt's corrections and amputations will be traced in the poem? Much of the letter is spent asserting independence and originality, and when Keats refers to the "knowing ones" who will assign him the "Reputation of Hunt's Eléve," he seems to be acknowledging that Hunt has cleared the ground for him only to claim he has moved beyond him.

In this section, I consider *Endymion*'s style by focusing on a few corners of its labyrinth at close range, comparing the fair-copy draft to the 1818 published text.

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[61] *The Letters of John Keats 1814–21,* ed. Hyder E. Rollins., Vol. 2 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1958). Oct 8, 1817.
[62] Walter Jackson Bate, *John Keats* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1963), p. 186.

Although the kind of synoptic analysis Bates offers through statistical evidence is powerful, it depends necessarily on a degree (or two) of separation from the material under consideration. It is useful to the points I make in this section to note, for example, that a remarkable 47% of *Endymion*'s lines are enjambed. But the *feel* of the poem is hard to communicate by numbers alone. There is the also the fact that no definitive copy-text exists, so that statistical evidence is less stable and precise than it might appear. Attending to family matters during his brother Tom's illness, Keats was forced to turn most of the late-stage press responsibilities over to friends. He had limited contact with his editor, John Taylor, during most of this period, and saw proofs for only the first of the poem's four books. Thousands of adjustments were made to the fair copy before it was printed, and no other drafts survive. Some of the changes to the text are more consequential than others. One might argue that Keats would have expected and accepted the printer's standardization of capitalization, spelling, punctuation, and hyphenation, since the printed versions of his earlier poems were also normalized in this way. Adjustments of meter and rhyme, and even, in a few cases, the addition or excision of entire couplets, is more obviously intrusive. But which among these changes should we accept? If we restore a deleted couplet, are we not also bound to restore the original punctuation and orthography?[63]

Most editors follow the 1818 text, including Jack Stillinger in his standard edition of the poems. Stillinger argues that Keats understood the poem as a "collaboration," though if this is true one might question the logic behind this edition's reversal of some

[63] See Simon Jarvis's discussion of these issues in "*Endymion*: The Text of Undersong," in *Constellations of a Contemporary Romanticism* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2016): 142–66.

but not all of Taylor's changes.[64] Margaret Ketchum Powell argues, by contrast, that the pre-press text, including Taylor's but not the printer's adjustments, best represents Keats's intentions.[65] She notes that the printer's changes center on matters such as punctuation and suggest a concern with clarity, while Taylor focuses on "aesthetic" features such as meter and rhyme. Because Taylor's markings often come in the form of check marks or brackets in pencil, only some of which are ratified in ink, Powell infers that he hoped to consult with Keats about adjustments to the poem. Keats trusted Taylor and he was a careful editor, she argues, so we should trust him, too.[66]

There is no easy solution to these textual problems. To begin with, there is the matter of editorial ethics, which becomes especially complicated when the author is a Keats or a Clare, who for reasons of class and literary politics were forced to rely on sponsors. Further, my own opinion is that it isn't always possible to distinguish Keats's markings from Taylor's in the manuscript, especially where the evidence of handwriting is thin (punctuation marks, for example). Producing a reading text is a practical matter, of course. But whether one insists on retaining Keats's manuscript or chooses to accept minor adjustments, valuable information evident in comparing the texts will be lost. An example: Taylor's marginal brackets and squiggles, which seem generally to indicate discomfort. Sometimes these marks seem to refer to the insinuation of something

[64] See Stillinger's 1978 edition. For more on Keats's place in a broader theory of collaborative writing, see his *Multiple Authorship and the Myth of Solitary Genius* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), Chapter 2.
[65] She constructs this text by inference, comparing the published version to the fair copy. See her PhD dissertation, under the name Margaret Shaw Ketchum, 'An Edition of Keats's "Endymion" ' (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, 1980). References to this edition are hereafter given in the text.
[66] "Keats and His Editor," *The Library*, 1984.

unsuitable for ladies, as Taylor later judged the scene of Madeline undressing in the first draft of *The Eve of St. Agnes*.[67] One such example comes in Keats's description of Adonis on display:

> Not hiding up an apollonian curve
> Of neck and shoulder; nor the tenting swerve
> Of Knee from Knee, nor ankles pointing light
> But rather giving them to the fill'd sight
> Officiously. (Morgan; 1818 II: 539–43)

In other cases, Taylor's brackets seem to refer to a rhyme that is too cloying for him to stomach. Other examples include:

> His poor temples beat
> To the very tune of Love—how sweet, sweet sweet
> (Morgan; 1818 II: 766)

*

> To Amphitrite: all my clear-eyed fish,
> Golden, or rainbow-sided, or purplish (Morgan; 1818: II: 671)

My primary interest in these squiggles and brackets, as in the more obvious textual interventions, is in what they tell us about style. Taylor was a sympathetic reader, trying to preserve the distinctiveness of a poem he obviously admired while at the same time toning down its most eccentric features. While it is impossible to know which adjustments Keats would have accepted, he surely would not have accepted all of them. Taylor attempted to cut the following passage from Book I, for example, but Keats was

[67] See Stillinger, *Poems of Keats*, p. 454–56.

still available to consult at this point, and the "Stet" in the margin indicates that the poet asked it to be restored.

> O kindly Muse! Let not my weak tongue faulter
> In telling of this goodly company,
> Of their old Piety, and of their glee:
> But let a portion of ethereal dew
> Fall on my head and presently unmew
> My soul; that I may dare, in wayfaring,
> To stammer, where old Chaucer used to sing. (Morgan; 1818: 128–34)

Taylor has placed a bracket beside all of these lines on the right, with an additional bracket, on the left, over the final three. It isn't difficult to imagine what he was worried about. These lines invite ridicule, admitting weakness and potentially embarrassing ambition alongside the desire to stammer from a soul unmewed. But it is also true that Taylor pressured Keats to rewrite his original preface advertising the poem as a youthful product of "thick-sighted" ambition. One doesn't need all the details about influence, reception, and Cockney politics to see that lines such as these contain something of the "undersong of disrespect" in the original preface. This attempt at archaist-innovation" can throw sand in the eyes of respectable readers because it is licensed, as a feverish attempt if not a thing accomplished, by canonical examples. Beyond the (allegedly archaic) style of *Rimini*, Keats drew on such examples as Chapman's Homer, George Sandys's *Metamorphoses* (1626), and Michael Drayton's own retelling of Endymion, *The Man in the Moone* (1609). But Keats pressed these examples near the point of breaking, so that even Hunt would not accept them as experiments in the tradition he had worked to renew.

The fact remains that virtually every description of *Endymion*'s eccentricity, including Hunt's own, refers to a version of the poem that has been significantly tamed.

Consider the appearance of the priest in Book I's festival of shepherds, first in the fair-copy version:

> From his right hand there swung a milk white vase
> Of mingled wines out sparkling like the stars
> And in his left he held a basket full
> Of all sweet herbs that searching eye could cull:
> Wild thyme, and valley lillies white as Leda's
> Bosom, and choicest strips from mountain Cedars.[68]

These lines display some of the moves Keats learned from Hunt, including liberal enjambment and partial rhyme (*vase* :: *stars*; *Leda's* :: *Cedar's*). They also nicely demonstrate Keats's primary departure from Hunt: the suppression of medial caesurae. Hunt rarely deploys more than two consecutive lines without strong internal pause, just as his lines rarely place these pauses in the same position consecutively. Keats's couplets often toss the reader through brambles of extended clauses over four or five lines, as in the first four above, without a single stop. In Hunt, balanced variety is emphasized, sometimes to the point of tedium. In Keats, the couplets prioritize speed.

This difference of speed is evident, for example, in the contrasting way the poets handle word-to-syllable ratio. Both embrace monosyllabic words for their metrical ambiguity (or, one might say, metrical flexibility). But when ten (or eight or nine) words creep in one dull line, Hunt marks that line with quoit-like steps from those surrounding, which in their distinct ways tumble, race, rise, or fall. Here is another slice from *Rimini's* description of parading horses:

> In every limb is seen their faultless race,
> A fire well tempered, and a free left grace:

[68] Morgan fair-copy. These lines correspond to 1:153–58 of 1818.

> Slender their spotless shapes, and meet the sight
> With freshness, after all those colours bright:
> And as with quoit-like drop their steps they bear,
> They lend their streaming tails to the fond air.

It would be difficult to find any six-line stretch in *Endymion* that moves so gingerly. To return to the section I've been discussing, we might begin by noting that it exactly matches the high word-to-syllable ratio of Hunt's lines above: two of ten syllables, two of eight, one of seven, and one of nine. But Keats's lines are not harmonized by the kind of variety Hunt so carefully measures out. Where to pause, where to place accents, where to speed and slow, are all more ambiguous in Keats. I would venture the following scansion, well aware that these lines accommodate a variety of possibilities.

> From his **right** hand there **swung** a **milk white vase**
> Of **min**gled **wines** out **spark**ling **like** the **stars**
> And **in** his **left** he **held** a **bas**ket **full**
> Of **all** sweet **herbs** that **sear**ching **eye** could **cull**:
> **Wild thyme**, and **val**ley **lil**lies **white** as **Le**da's
> **Bo**som, and **choic**est **strips** from **moun**tain **Ce**dars.

After a galloping start of two anapests, the final stresses of line one clot together—"**milk white vase**"—forcing a pause between each of the final three syllables. Of course, one might demote *white* and regularize the line, as foot-substitution rules would have us do. But if we set aside abstract pattern, this syllable's stress is asserted through *material* patterns that follow soon: "**min**gled **wines**" parallels the silent off-beat in the first line (**milk** [pause] **white**), and the appearance of internal rhyme (*like, eye, thyme, white*) in every case receives stress. Lines three and four are unusually regular (as *Endymion* goes). We might now feel released from the metrical tension that precedes them, as we might from the tension produced in the previous rhyme (*vase / stars*). Here is a true rhyme—*full*

:: *cull*—and the colon provides a pause for breath and cognitive regathering. This regularity doesn't last long. Because the next line's caesurae comes after two accented syllables, and immediately following the first end-stopped line in this section, it feels especially marked. From this pause, we launch thereafter into three falling disyllabic breaks, at the rhymes in each line (at eleven syllables) and at the final line's strong pause, also after the second syllable.

Taylor's interventions produce a more manageable trail:

> From his **right** hand there **swung** a **Vase** milk **white**,
> Of **min**gled **wine**, out **spark**ling **gen**erous **light**;
> And **in** his **left** he **held** a **bas**ket **full**
> Of **all** sweet **herbs** that **sear**ching **eye** could **cull**:
> **Wild thyme**, and **val**ley **lil**lies **whit**er **still**
> Than **Le**da's **love** and **cre**sses **from** the **Rill**.

Throughout, adjustments to rhyme achieve the effect of closing paired couplets by strengthening the pause after the second rhyme word. The first pauses are added at the end of lines one and two, not only by the addition of commas but also, more notably, by the addition of a rhyme: Taylor flips "vase" around before its adjective, and replaces "like the stars" with "generous light." I noted the relative regularity of the third and fourth lines, and Taylor doesn't touch them. He really goes to work in the final two lines, however. He removes the metrical hiccups of line five, and the suddenly regular sixth line is his entirely. Yet even this altered text is different from the version of the poem history knows. In the printed text, "Milk-white" becomes a compound adjective and "valley-lillies" a compound noun; capitalization is normalized; commas have been added for clarity. As is usually the case with the printer's adjustments, the punctuation has the most significant effect, producing further slowing and regularization in the first and final lines:

From his right hand there swung a vase, milk-white,

*

Than Leda's love, and cresses from the rill.

Even when Taylor is restrained, the printer's adjustments always weight the lines. For example, here is the fair-copy description of sleeping Adonis from Book II:

Above his head
Four lilly stalks did their white honors wed
To make a coronal, and round him grew
All tendril green, of every bloom and hue,
Together intertwin'd and trammel'd fresh,
The vine of glossy sprout; the ivy mesh
Shading its ethiop berries, and Woodbine
Of velvet leaves and bugle-blooms divine;
Convolulus of streaked vases flush;
The Creeper mellowing for an autumn blush,
And virgin's bower trailing airily
With others of the Sisterhood. Hard by
Stood serene Cupids watching silently.
One kneeling to a Lyre, touch'd the Strings,
Muffling to death the pathos of his wings.

Taylor's only adjustment to these lines was to replace *of* with *in* at *Convoluvus of streaked vases flush.* Although this change tones down line's peculiar vowel repetitions—the *o* and *u* sounds that begin in *convoluvus*, with its sharp *v* consonants and terminating sibilant, are powerfully drawn through the short-*a vase* and especially the rhyming *blush*—it looks very minor beside the printer's punctuation additions, which I include in brackets below:

Above his head[,]
Four lily stalks did their white honours wed

> To make a coronal[;] and round him grew
> All tendril green, of every bloom and hue,
> Together intertwin'd and trammel'd fresh[;]
> The vine of glossy sprout; the ivy mesh[,]
> Shading its Ethiop berries; and woodbine[,]
> Of velvet leaves and bugle-blooms divine;
> Convolulus of streaked vases flush;
> The creeper, mellowing for an autumn blush;
> And virgin's bower[,] trailing airily[;]
> With others of the sisterhood. Hard by[,]
> Stood serene cupids watching silently.
> One, kneeling to a lyre, touched the strings[,]
> Muffling to death the pathos with his wings. (1818 II: 207–21)

In the manuscript, six of the fifteen line-endings indicate pause with punctuation; the 1818 text brings this total to thirteen. Attempting to make Keats's list of flora uniform, the printer changes six of Keats's commas to semi-colons, slowing the lines further, and in one case mangling sense.[69]

Other comparisons yield similar results; these excerpts must stand here as representative examples. Again, my object is not to make the case for prioritizing either the fair copy draft or the 1818 text absolutely: the difference between them is more valuable for my purposes here. Instead of descriptions of the poem, we have clipping and brushwork that indicates at a granular level how these couplets felt to their two closest early readers.

[69] Virgin's Bower is a "climbing shrub" (the OED entry includes Keats's usage). In the manuscript, this shrub is trailing the tendrils and creepers of earlier lines with "others of its sisterhood," while in the 1818 text it is unclear to which plant the pronoun *it* belongs.

**IV.**

In this final section, I return to the beginning: How does Keats's couplet of speed relate to Hazlitt's theory of mind, as I have suggested it does? We can begin to answer this question by turning to David Bromwich's suggestion that Hazlitt's essay "On Dreams" (1825) might be read as a "commentary on Keats's preferred manner of composition from *Endymion* to the odes." The relevant section of Hazlitt's essay comes in his comparison of sleeping and waking.

> The difference […] between sleeping and waking, seems to be that in the latter we have a greater range of conscious recollections, a larger discourse of reason, and associate ideas in longer trains and more as they are connected with one another in the order of nature; whereas in the former, any two impressions, that meet or are alike, join company, and then are parted again, without notice, like the froth from the wave. So in madness, there is, I should apprehend, the same tyranny of the imagination over the judgement; that is, the mind has slipped its cable…

Bromwich summarizes Hazlitt's argument as follows:

> It is the conscious link between our ideas that organizes our experience into a consistent mass, and creates in us the abstract idea of self. We need this idea and this link if we are to be masters rather than servants of our associated ideas, and use the power of imagination. Yet in sleep, or the kind of trance that slips the mind's cable, we are at the mercy of every chance link that may happen to connect our ideas…[and] are thus robbed of the idea of a coherent self which seems to endow us with more than accidentally formed associations, and from which we gain the conviction of our power as agents. The waking imagination, no less than the judgment, requires the support of some such conviction.

Whether Hazlitt's essay indeed reflects his reading of Keats, its answer to a question he had previously passed over in silence—what happens to imagination in dreams?—

directly contradicts the answer Keats had given. It also contradicts Hazlitt's own theory of imagination, which Keats was following out. As we have seen, Hazlitt claimed that imagination runs counter to memory; not only does it not require the conviction from a "coherent idea of self," it helps to dissolve the illusion of selfhood that lies at the root of self-interested modern social life.

Bromwich notes that in the early poems Keats cultivated the "lawless drift of fancy" by writing in "in a kind of trance state" in order to overcome "habitual trains of thought" (*Hazlitt*, 384). In this discussion, Bromwich comes very close to suggesting that Keats used form to will dissociation, but in accepting the priority of judgment over imagination as Hazlitt describes it in "On Dreams," he overlooks the potential power of this insight. Keats wanted writing to be *like* a dream, not only to be about dreams, because Hazlitt's own theory had led him to hope that dreams are naturally disinterested, objective, dramatic. Keats's earliest critics were onto something when they complained that the "melodious arrangement" of his couplets "seems so often to engross the Author's attention, as to suspend altogether the exercise of rational faculties which we term *thinking*"; their logic seemed to be dictated by accident, like a game of *bouts-rimés* that goes on far too seriously and long.[70] In privileging sense impulse rather than recollection in tranquility, Keats attempted to lure what Hazlitt believed must naturally be the self-interested modern mind away from itself, thinking without thinking, or thinking in verse at an extreme that would make the familiar form-content distinction impossible.

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[70] Anonymous review in *Eclectic Review* (September, 1817). Reprinted in Lewis. M. Schwartz,, ed. *Keats Reviewed by His Contemporaries: A Collection of Notices for the Years 1861–21*. (Metuchen, NJ: Scarecrow Press, 1973), p. 85. The *bouts-rimés* comment was common in early reviews, as Keach points out in his sampling of critical response (see "Politics of Style").

Keats wrote in a letter as he was beginning work on *Endymion* that the poem would be a "test of my Powers of Imagination, by which I must make 4000 Lines out of one bare circumstance and fill them with poetry."[71] In the end, Keats exceeded his goal by 50 lines, and in just over the narrow scope of six months he had optimistically allotted himself when he began. We know from the poet's letters and from the records of friends that composition took place with a combination of daily discipline and headlong abandon.[72] He wrote quickly and revised hardly at all. This was not simply a test of whether he could write a long poem, but of whether he could do so out of a worn myth and under a deadline. It might thus be thought of as one of Keats's many "contest" poems, but on a monstrous scale (usually they were sonnets).[73]

This poetry about poetry, from a man whose experience is mainly literary, has looked damningly self-indulgent to many readers (Byron's "self-frigging," Yeats's boy at the sweet-shop window). But Keats was less interested in what poems are about than in what they do. Dedicated to the master antique forger Chatterton and announcing with its Shakespearean epigraph the object of stretching (metrically, but in "content" as well) antique song, the poem invites us to read Endymion's journeys as parables of

[71] To Benjamin Bailey, Oct. 8, 1817. *The Letters of John Keats*, ed. Hyder E. Rollins, Vol. 1 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1958), p. 168. Letters are hereafter cited by date in the text.

[72] For example, Bailey recalls that during their stay together in September 1817 Keats "sat down to his task,—which was about 50 lines a day,—with his paper before him, & wrote with as much regularity, & apparently with as much ease, as he wrote his letters." Qtd. in Stewart Sperry, *Keats the Poet* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1973), 93.

[73] Although there is no other evidence to suggest it to be the case, Thomas Medwin claimed that "Shelley told me that he and Keats had mutually agreed, in the same given time, (six months each,) to write a long poem, and that the *Endymion* and *Revolt of Islam* were the fruits of this rivalry." *The Life of Percy Bysshe Shelley*, Ed. H. Buxton Forman (London: Oxford University Press, 1913), p. 178–79.

composition. The circumstances of this composition are sewn into the dramatic arc of the narrative itself.

> Many and many a verse I hope to write,
> Before the daisies, vermeil rimm'd and white,
> Hide in deep herbage; and ere yet the bees
> Hum about the globes of clover and sweet peas,
> I must be near the middle of my story.
> O may no wintry season, bare and hoary,
> See it half finished; but let Autumn bold,
> With universal tinge of sober gold,
> Be all about me when I make an end.
> And now at once, adventuresome, I send
> My herald thought into a wilderness:
> There let its trumpet blow, and quickly dress
> My uncertain path with green, that I may speed
> Easily onward, through flowers and weed. (1818, I: 49–63)

In this opening invocation, the poem submits to a "wilderness," not a muse. Imagery reminiscent of this passage returns several times, as Keats implicitly aligns the difficulty of the task before him, and the possibility of failure, with Endymion's chase. As I suggested in the final pages of the prior chapter, we as readers are invited down the mantling path as well. The difficulty of following that path, not only in narrative terms but also, more intensively, at the level of individual lines and rhymes, requires that we participate in its invention, recomposing in performance. Where Hunt sought to illustrate how couplets could be different according to a set of (well-earned) maxims, Keats offered his readers a poem that had to be "proved on the pulses" if it was to live. The deep pleasures and continuing vitality of *Endymion* have to do with the impossibility of mapping its boundaries once and for all.

I close with a section of the poem I find particularly thrilling—a section that ended up in the trash. It seems that Taylor found the eccentricities here to be one or two

steps beyond the pale, and urged Keats to revise. This section originally appeared in the midst of the scene I identified in my prior chapter as the one that forms a pattern the rest for the poem's major narrative sequences, and in which self-absorption and self-dissolution are often difficult to distinguish. Staring into a forest well at his own image, "contemplating the figures wild / Of o'er-head clouds melting the mirror through," Endymion sees Diana's face appear and merge with his own:

> My heart did leap
> Through the cool depth.—It moved as it to flee—
> I started up, when lo! refreshfully,
> There came upon my face, in plenteous showers,
> Dew-drops, and dewy buds, and leaves, and flowers,
> Wrapping all objects from my smothered sight,
> Bathing my spirit in a new delight.
> Aye, such a breathless honey-feel of bliss
> Alone preserved me from the drear abyss
> Of death, for the fair form had gone again. (I: 884–905)

In the manuscript, Keats dwells at greater length on the refreshing preservation that Diana's image provides.

> Gods that keep,
> Mercifully, a little strength of heart
> Unkill'd in us by raving, pang and smart;
> And do preserve it, like a lilly root
> That, in another spring, it may outshoot
> From its wintry prison; let this hour go
> Drawling along its heavy weight of woe
> And leave me living! 'Tis not more than need
> Your veriest help. Ah! How long did I feed
> On that crystalline life of Portraiture!
> How hover'd breathless as the tender lure!
> How many times dimpled the watery glass
> With Kisses maddest Kisses; and, till they did pass
> And leave the liquid smooth again, how mad!
> O 'twas as if the absolute sisters bad
> My life into the compass of a Nut;

> Or all my breathing minished and shut
> To a scanty straw. To look above I fear'd
> Lest my hot eyeballs might be burnt and sear'd
> By a blank naught. *It moved as if to flee* (Morgan)

Reading these lines is more like falling than it is like sprinting, as gravity does what it must despite the presence of stones, roots, and sinkholes on the path. Embracing first impulses within a tradition of couplet writing would for most poets look like run-of-the mill competency. Keats follows the impulse to disrupt what is familiar in the material of sound, with the question of whether he is writing well or badly as a thought for another day. The reason to give the utmost seriousness this discarded section, like the other "extreme" sections I have highlighted in Keats's extreme formal experiment, is that it dramatically illustrates what I have been arguing is true of *Endymion* generally: the closer one looks into its surface, the more difficult it becomes to separate one's own poem from the one buried in the page. If we choose to restrict our account of this poem or of the young Keats to things that others have said, we have at best a collection of mummies to compare (not that mummies aren't real and worthy of our time). To read the poem itself is to have an experience, and accounts of an experience with verse (like accounts of a painting or a piece of music) can be better or worse than others, but not right or wrong. Even if it were possible to gather all responses to a poem in one place, such an assemblage of receptions would be incomplete—missing the reader with the poem in her hand.

# CHAPTER THREE

# ARTHUR HALLAM'S "CHARACTERISTICS OF MODERN POETRY" AND PLEASURE'S MORAL SENSE

## I.

Halfway through Tennyson's "Recollections of Arabian Nights," time tilts off the sundial and into a song. The story stalls. The hero turns to an imagined scene within the poem's imagined scenes, of a solitary singer hidden from view:

> VII.
> Far off, and where the lemongrove
> In closest coverture upsprung,
> The living airs of middle night
> Died round the bulbul as he sung.
> Not he: but something which possessed
> The darkness of the world, delight,
> Life, anguish, death, immortal love
> Ceasing not, mingled, unrepressed,
> Apart from place, witholding time,
> But flattering the golden prime
> Of good Haroun Alraschid.

In this stanza, the poem's many figures of fruit-bearing constraint appear as a balance of opposition: what is far off is closest (nearest); what is closest (most cramped) gives way to upspringing; living airs of middle night die as others rise; delight and anguish, life and

darkness, death and immortal love all mingle, unrepressed, in music. The mishmash of real and imagined poetic echoes in this stanza alerts us to the possibility that we are reading a poem about poetry, if we have not already been so alerted by our hero's Shelleyan shallop, his moonlit Keatsian wandering, and his journey's *imprisoning sweets*, *fretted gold*, and *diamond rillets musical.* It might be tempting to go a step further and suggest that this is a *lyric* about *lyric* poetry: as the solitary speaker travels deeper into darkness, "another night in night," we overhear his revelatory encounter with his own projection, the overheard bird.

Certainly, an argument like this one is familiar. But it should matter to us that it would have confused Tennyson, relying as it does on cues and categories that didn't exist in 1830. John Stuart Mill's essays on poetry had not even been written, and it would be some time before his idiosyncratic views would combine with New Criticism's emphasis on impersonal speakers to form the dominant conception of lyric (and, to some degree, of poetry generally).[1] A glance at early reviews of Tennyson's poems reminds us that lyric's figural relation to music or song remained the strong feature uniting its varieties. Tennyson's masterful innovations of inherited models in *Poems, Chiefly Lyrical* are strongly rooted in this dimension of the genre, from neoclassical odes and sonnets to light airs and Anacreontics.[2]

If we take these musical connotations seriously, it becomes apparent why the interpretation I offered above is flawed. Tennyson's stanza is not overheard speech about overheard song. It is *song in itself*, a melodic description of melody—or rather, of several

[1] See Virginia Jackson and Yopie Prins, *The Lyric Theory Reader* (Johns Hopkins, 2014).
[2] I will consider some of these reviews and the wide variety of Tennyson's early lyrics in the next chapter, with special consideration of his Anacreontics.

competing melodies. We see the bulbul and upspringing coverture and lemongrove by echolocation, but we receive no clue about which tune to privilege as our guide. The new-fledged airs felling those of middle night are not of the bulbul, or not of him alone, but of *something* that possesses *everything* and remains unnamed and unknown. These songs nest within each other like Chinese boxes, enclosed finally by the song we must as readers make. As the description of the bulbul scene dissolves into the description of enveloping music, this music we perform shifts as well. The breezy iambic swell of the first four lines, reinforced by an equally breezy *abcb* end-rhyme arrangement, becomes suddenly more complex in the four that follow. These lines throw their internal weight erratically as the envelope rhymes *possessed* and *unrepressed* open dramatic caesurae on *darkness*, *anguish*, and especially *death*. The sodden movement that results is further emphasized by the extraordinary metrical inversions and expansion (to five stresses) in lines 7 and 8—***Life***, ***an****guish*, ***death***, *im****mort****al* ***love*** */* ***Ceas****ing* ***not***, ***min****gled*, ***un****re****pressed***—and by the onslaught of ten commas across four lines. The latter "quatrain" has brought us quite some distance from the first one, despite what the identical metrical moorings—***Far off,*** *and* ***where*** *the* ***lem****on****grove*** *//* ***Not he****: but* ***some****thing* ***which*** *poss****essed*****—**had promised the ear.

The end-rhymes that make these lines feel like two quatrains are not subtle. On closer inspection, other patterns come into view: the eye rhyme of *love* and *lemongrove* and the true rhyme of *night* and *delight* make these "quatrains" look more like an interleaved octave. This kind of ghost-stanza surfacing and submersion is common in the poem, whose fourteen stanzas each have a distinct rhyme scheme in the first eight lines. (More on this below.) But this stanza is particularly powerful because the interaction

between the first and second "quatrains" produces a dramatic melody that alters the sound of everything that comes before and after in the poem. After the familiar cadence of the first quatrain, the second emerges to describe and exemplify song that defies absolute measure; it must either be embraced or kept at bay with wax and ropes. Attention to the way these lines play over and against one another within the stanza *and* within the rest of the poem reveals an extraordinary prosodic flexibility. Very few lines in the poem forcefully resist a thumping iambic overlay, especially when read in isolation. But neither do these lines fall naturally into this rhythm without prodding. The musically dense lines describing the singer's song teach us to look for this variety in less obvious places, and to read the poem with the keen attention it demands.

This kind of reading, combining *pleasure* and *exertion*, was celebrated by Tennyson's intimate friend Arthur Hallam in his review of the 1830 volume, which names "Recollections" as his favorite poem. Although this review was the "hasty product of the evenings of one week" and was "so execrably printed that every line contains an error," it has been hugely influential for twentieth-century criticism. This is only partially explained by the obvious interest the review holds for those seeking evidence of Tennyson's own ideals. Hallam's celebration of sensation and feeling over reflection and rhetoric has found sympathetic ears among readers who have seen it as an "early expression of aestheticist, symbolist, or modernist principles."[3] However, not all critics have seen this as something to celebrate. The suggestion that the review is a "textbook example of aestheticist self-aggrandisement that is one of the legacies of romanticism" is

[3] Eileen Tess Johnston, "Hallam's Review of Tennyson: Its Contexts and Significance," *Studies in Literature and Language*, vol. 23, no. 1 (Spring, 1981).

a common position among recent critics.[4] This description is accurate if it refers to the review's second life in the hands of Yeats and others at the turn of the twentieth century.[5] It does not accurately describe its first and much less influential life in the era we now call Romantic. In this chapter I examine the review in relation to overlooked source material and Hallam's lesser-known writings to reveal the importance of eighteenth-century mind science to the review's theory of "sensation poetry." I further link this theory to a broad Christian materialism and history of rhyme that Hallam was constructing at the time of his premature death.

At the center of Hallam's thought lies moral philosophy's most vexing question: by what process does the naturally pleasure-seeking and pain-averting individual come to act for the sake of others? With David Hartley and a few controversial figures who followed (Erasmus Darwin, Joseph Priestley, the younger Coleridge, Shelley), Hallam claimed that motivations are mechanical, and therefore in important ways not different from the "motivations" of plants and brutes. However, Hallam differs from these figures in that he also believed mechanical law might illuminate human understanding of the Christian God. I will say more about Hallam's theological speculations below; the essential thing to note here is that his description of God as a being who has evolved over time through actions compelled by pleasure makes it unnecessary to justify pleasure-

[4] Seamus Perry, Tennyson and the Legacies of Romantic Art," *Romanticism*, no. 14, vol. 1 [2008]: 1–12. Also see Angela Leighton's "Tennyson and Aestheticism" in *On Form* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 55–73 and James Chandler's "Tennyson, Hallam, and the Poetry of Sensation: Aestheticist Allegories of the Counter-Public Sphere," *Studies in Romanticism*, vol. 33 (Winter 1994).

[5] Yeats, who rescued the review from obscurity in the 1890s, ascribed "Aestheticism" to Hallam. See *The Collected Works of W. B. Yeats*: *Autobiographies,* Vol. 3, eds. William H. O'Donnell and Douglas Archibald (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2010) p. 361; and *Early Essays*, Vol. 4, eds. Richard J. Finneran and George Bornstein (2007), p. 250–56.

pursuit as the basis of moral action. Pleasure is holy. This drastically changes the way we interpret the review's claims for sense pleasure as poetry's highest value. It also changes the way we interpret Hallam's observation that modern society, which he believes is in moral decay, will receive with antagonism the sensuous poetry he champions in Hunt, Keats, Shelley, and the young Tennyson.

My reading draws throughout on four lesser-known essays Hallam wrote during roughly the same period as the review: "On Sympathy"; "Essay on the Philosophical Writings of Cicero"; "Theodicaea Novissima"; and "The Influence of Italian Upon English Literature."[6] I begin with an important source-text for all these pieces, James Mackintosh's *Dissertation on the Progress of Ethical Philosophy: Chiefly During the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries* (1830). It's clear that Hallam learned from Mackintosh's capsule summaries of major Western philosophers, and that he followed his broad historical outline of social decay and renewal.[7] However, Hallam was skeptical about the moral sense philosophy that Mackintosh champions in the *Dissertation*, and David Hartley's physicalist account of the mind provided an essential complement.

[6] These pieces were all written over the space of roughly a year (in their order here). Editions of the *Remains* appeared in 1834, 1862, 1863 and 1869 ("Theodicaea" was removed from the latter three editions). In 1893 a selection of Hallam's poems with the review appended was printed in a boutique edition. My citations all refer to the only twentieth-century edition, T. H. Vail Motter's *Writings of Arthur Hallam* (New York: MLA, 1943).

[7] This outline compares the fall of Platonic love in antiquity to the fall of Christian love in post-Restoration England (more on this below). In a footnote to the "Cicero" essay, Hallam calls the *Dissertation* "the most important contribution, in my very humble judgment, which, for many years, has enlarged the inductive philosophy of mind" (157). He also refers to Mackintosh in "On Sympathy" and throughout the essays uses near-parallel phrases to characterize philosophers and their positions.

In the second section I compare Hallam's applications of Hartleyan mind science to those of the influential social reformer and Unitarian minister W. J. Fox. Fox's reviews of Tennyson have frequently been contrasted with "Characteristics," following Isobel Armstrong's influential study of the period's poetry and politics.[8] I suggest that the identification of Hartleyan materialism at the root of both these critics' poetic theories complicates Armstrong's account, especially her alignment of Hallam with late-Coleridge and German metaphysics. Both Fox and Hallam claim that poetry's appeal to the physical mind makes it an instrument of social progress. What sharply distinguishes them is their conception of literary tradition's role in advancing this progress. Fox thinks of the important new poetry as a product of new scientific knowledge, while Hallam thinks of it as a recovery of great poetry of the past. New mind science enables powerful description of this new poetry's effects, in Hallam's view; it does *not* enable the production of the poetry itself. According to Hallam, the poetry of Renaissance Italy and Elizabethan England affirmed moral feeling already accessible in their respective cultures. By contrast, modern English society has stunted moral feeling with its "over-civilized condition of thought" ("Characteristics," 190). Hallam claims that sensation poetry might renew these earlier forms of feeling by renewing lost or discarded language and poetic form. My final section delves into this argument by examining Hallam's literary history in more detail, particularly the significance of Italian poetry in this history and Hallam's association of rhyme with the rise and decay of Christian moral pleasure.

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[8] See especially Isobel Armstrong, *Victorian Poetry: Poetry, Poets and Politics: Poetry, Poetics, Politics* (London: Routledge, 1993), but also see the notes and analysis in Armstrong's *Victorian Scrutinies: Reviews of Poetry, 1830–1870* (London: Athlone Press, 1972).

**II.**

The core claim of Mackintosh's *Dissertation*, echoed in Hallam's review and his other writings, is that modern philosophy has annexed and subordinated feeling to intellect, just as in former times Platonic love was torn asunder with the "rise and conflict of the Stoical and Epicurean schools" (*Dissertation,* 68).[9] Hobbes is identified as the modern promulgator of this error because his theory of cooperative self-interest extends "the laws of the intellectual part of our nature over that other part of it, hitherto without any adequate name" (78). Mackintosh believes that the ethical philosophy roused by Hobbes—that is, both dissents and endorsements—has been caught in advance by this snare, confusing the "theory of moral sentiments with the criterion of moral actions" (160). In another age, moral sentiment would not be a *theory* at all, and its role in moral action would be self-evident. What makes this difficult to see, according to Mackintosh, is the claim that self-interest rather than benevolence is natural. This is why Mackintosh's critique of philosophers as different as Hobbes and Adam Smith and Bentham in the end amounts to the same thing: their theory "renders all morality *relative*." Mackintosh combats these positions using Bishop Joseph Butler's distinction between self-interest understood as selfishness and as "rational self-love":

[9] All quotes from the *Dissertation* refer to the third edition (Edinburgh, 1862).

> Self-love seeks things as means of happiness; the private appetites seeks [*sic*] things, not as means, but as ends. A man eats from hunger, and drinks from thirst; and though he knows that these are necessary to life, that knowledge is not the motive of his conduct….No pursuit could be selfish or interested, if there were not satisfactions first gained by appetites which seek their own outward objects without regard to self; which satisfactions compose the mass which is called a man's interest….The desire that another person may be gratified, seeks that outward object alone, according to the general course of human desire. (146; cf 197–208)

In this formulation it is not until appetites are satisfied that they are known and become desires, after which they are consolidated under the "mass which is called a man's interest." Prior to this formation of the interested self, all appetites have an object "without regard to self." This distinction between appetites and desires makes it possible to argue that benevolence, at least in its original form, is as natural, *and* as separate from self-interest, as hunger or thirst. If this is so, rational self-love and selfishness alike belong in a category raised above appetites to a plane on which action is more than a matter of instinct. On this plane it is possible to be rationally self-interested yet also to act for others' sake.

Empiricist conceptions of selfhood are difficult to reconcile with this position. It doesn't make sense to talk about interest accruing to the self unless one believes in some version of identity prior to experience. The moral sense serves an important role here. Rational self-love (as opposed to cooperative self-interest) is premised on the belief in an innate "principle in man" that "surveys, approves, or disapproves the several affections of our minds and actions of our lives" (146). If one accepts that "the mind has its own 'sense,' its own eye and ear" that naturally leads to revulsion or pleasure when presented with beauty or deformity, including admirable and depraved acts, explanations of moral

action follow naturally.[10] This faculty is, for Butler and for Mackintosh with him, the "tie which holds together Religion and Morality" (194), forming something like the soul at the self's core.

Although Hallam uses the language of feeling and thought in ways that echo the *Dissertation* throughout his essays, he does not distinguish between appetites (with objects) and desires (with objects joined by self-interest). From this perspective, Mackintosh's representation of the superintending moral sense looks a lot like the extension of intellect over feeling he claimed to be out to dispel in the first place. Hallam replaces moral sense with "moral desire," which offers a "peculiar pleasure, differing in kind from every other" ("Cicero," 166). This distinction places moral knowledge within the framework of mechanical law, as is made clear in Hallam's comment that Epicurus laid "the basis of morality in the right quarter" in recognizing that "pleasure is the mainspring of action" ("Cicero," 167, 165). The mistake Epicurus made, Hallam argues, is that he came to see this mainspring of action as an end in itself, rather than as the essential basis of sympathy, knowledge, and identity. Hallam's comment that the philosopher's investigations of human nature, while imperfect, "elicited results of great importance to the science of mind, and conformable to studies of modern analysis"

[10] James Chandler, *An Archeology of Sympathy: The Sentimental Mode in Literature and Cinema* (Chicago University of Chicago Press, 2013): 235. Mackintosh acknowledges that the concept of the moral sense is originally found in the writings of Shaftesbury, but argues that "whoever carefully compares their writings, will without difficulty distinguish the two builders, and the larger as well as more regular and labored part of the edifice, which is due to Butler" (145).

("Cicero," 162) hints at an alternative ethics that would literalize feelings in the breast by locating them in the brain.[11]

This alternative view reflects the "plunges into [David] Hartley" Hallam told Tennyson he was taking in the months before he wrote "On Sympathy," the earliest essay under consideration here.[12] This essay's physicalist application of Hartley's principles differs from the popular Hartleyan associationism that was enshrined between James Mill's *Analysis of the Phenomena of the Human Mind* (1825) and William James's *Principles of Psychology* (1890).[13] These theories are concerned primarily with the means by which the mind makes associations already acquired from physical experience, but Hartley had insisted there was no such distinction between mental and physical experience in the first place. In *Observations on Man* (1749) and *Various Conjectures On the Perception, Motion, and Generation of Ideas* (1746), Hartley explicitly anchors mental association in Newton's laws of particle vibration, so that "objects stimulating the sensory organs cause a chain reaction of vibrations involving infinitesimally small particles, first in the nerves, next in the spinal cord, and then in the medullary substance"

[11] In the "imperfect condition of humanity," Hallam writes, "[t]o excite the desire of happiness, or rational self-love…in order to produce a *return* to virtue is laudable." But in the model of love Christ represents, and which he makes possible, the "act of loving another excludes self-love" even though it is based in desire. "The one sublime love would embrace the whole range of desirous susceptibility in the mind" ("Cicero," fn23, 166).

[12] See *The Letters of Arthur Hallam*, ed. Jack Kolb (Columbus: Ohio State UP, 1981): 379. A separate letter to Tennyson laments that little of philosophical significance had been done in the previous century, but that "something perhaps remains to do by following out the discoveries" of Hartley (*Letters,* 520).

[13] An instructive comparison of Hartley's and other associationist theories is offered in Hugh W. Buckingham and Stanley Finger's "David Hartley's Psychobiological Associationism and the Legacy of Aristotle," *Journal of the History of the Neurosciences*, Vol. 6, No. 1 (1997): 21–37.

on the brain's surface.[14] According to Hartley, "whatever Changes are made in this [medullary] Substance, corresponding Changes are made in our Ideas; and *vice versa*."[15] This correlation obtains even after the external object of sensation (say, a candle) is removed and the primary vibrations on the medulla cease. This is because these primary vibrations leave behind in the brain's matter miniature vibrations, or "vibratiuncles," that become permanent with repetition and vibrate (today we might say "fire") when called upon by memory. Vibratiuncles are thus, in Empiricism's more familiar terms, "the physical equivalents of ideas, just as vibrations are the physical equivalents of sensations."[16]

This theory extends to "voluntary" (also called "secondarily automatic") action through a related theory of "motory vibrations and vibratiuncles" located in the muscles. In concert with vibrations and vibratiuncles in the brain, these motory vibrations and vibratiuncles form arrays of association that express as actions.[17] For example, the child first grasps blindly, but soon grasps a rattle. He thereafter associates the pleasure of

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[14] "David Hartley's Psychobiological Associationism," 30. Cf. *Observations* 1.1.4; *Conjectures*, prop. 4. My citations are to a reprint of the original edition of *Observations* (New York: Garland, 1971) and to Robert Palmer's translation of *Conjectures* (Los Angeles: Augustan Reprint Society, 1959). For a detailed look at Hartley's use of Newtonian science, see C. U. M. Smith, "David Hartley's Newtonian Neuropsychology," *Journal of the History of the Behavioral Sciences* (April, 1987), 123–36.

[15] *Observations*, 1.1.1–2. Cf. *Conjectures*, Prop. 2.

[16] " 'Emotion' and 'Motivation' in the Development of English Psychology: D. Hartley, James Mill, A. Bain," *Journal of the History of the Behavioral Sciences*, vol. 2., no, 2 (April 1966): 124.

[17] See *Observations*, Chap. 1, Sect. 3: "Of muscular Motion, and its two Kinds, automatic and voluntary; and of the Use of the Doctrines of Vibrations and Associations, for explaining these respectively."

holding this rattle with the original grasp and imitates his own prior actions.[18] This process of imitation and self-imitation occurs mechanically, as indeed *all* learning and behavior falls within a mechanical paradigm for Hartley, including speech and other sophisticated skills such as playing a musical instrument. As Theodor Mischel explains, "voluntary movements differ from automatic ones only in being stimulated by ideas rather than sensations, and since both can be explained physiologically, rational human behavior may be regarded as the 'output' of a very complex mechanism."[19]

Signed but undated notes Hallam made during his years at Cambridge clearly show Hartley's influence. They begin with a series of questions:

> A mind chooses to act. Why?
> Because it chose so to act. Why?
> Because it chose so to choose.
> How absurd to allege this for a reason, when it is evident it will lead one on ad infinitum!

Hallam's answer to the problem of agency in these private jottings, as in his public speculations, is that what leads the mind to act is the strength of pleasurable perceptions passively received and stored by memory:

> Suppose two opposite modes of action have been perceived by the mind in successive states, by which will the mind be determined to the ultimate state, that of choosing to act? By the most vivid of the two perceptions; for to these two states will succeed one of remembrance, to link the two; and in that the most vivid will so preponderate as to bring the mind into the ultimate state of being pleased or choosing, or willing to act that mode of action of which the perception was the most vivid.[20]

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[18] See *Observations*, Chap. 1, Sect. 3: "Of muscular Motion, and its two Kinds, automatic and voluntary; and of the Use of the Doctrines of Vibrations and Associations, for explaining these respectively."
[19] " 'Emotion' and 'Motivation,' " 129.
[20] Trinity College Library Special Collections.

Here action is the consequence of automatic physiological processes, pleasure-pursuit and pain-aversion, associated in increasingly complex layers through nothing more than contiguous temporal relation.[21] In "On Sympathy," Hallam explicitly links this picture of action to the development of moral feeling: "we imitate our previous acts in order to establish our very earliest knowledge. Through the medium of imitation alone, automatic notions become voluntary. It is then possible that through the desire to feel as another feels, we may come to feel so" ("On Sympathy," 136). Hallam suggests that this principle of sympathy obtains "alike for the lisping infant in the cradle to the old man on the verge of the grave," and is moreover "not confined to human, or even animal exertions, but appears to be co-extensive with organic life" ("On Sympathy," 136).[22]

It is not difficult to see why many considered Hartley's theory to be heretical. Taken to the logical conclusion Hartley himself had resisted, the reduction of mind to matter leaves no room for the soul. As Hartley's most important proponent, Joseph Priestley, put it in the preface to his 1775 abridgment of the *Observations*: "man does not consist of two principles, so essentially different from one another as *matter* and *spirit*…insomuch that, properly speaking, my mind is no more in *my body*, than it is in the

[21] Hartley's associationism is based only in time, a key distinction from most associationist theory. Again, see "Psychobiological Associationism and the Legacy of Aristotle."

[22] Hartley had suggested that animals are susceptible to vibrations "in a manner analogous to that which takes place in us" and have "intellectual faculties" comparable to children. See *Observations*, 1.3.7, "On the intellectual Faculties of Brutes." Hartley even acknowledges a possibility that "it does indeed follow from this theory [of the "mechanism of the mind"], that matter, if it could be endued with the most simple kinds of sensation, might also arrive at all that intelligence of which the human mind possessed" (*Observations*, 4.3.6).

moon."[23] Yet Priestley argued that materialism made Christianity more, not less, compelling. His Unitarian view of Christ as a created rather than pre-existent physical being is part of his larger argument for an all-powerful God. For Priestley the resurrection of Christ, like the eventual resurrection of humanity, marks the return of material from emptiness rather than the return of the spirit to the body. It is, in other words, an echo of the original act of creation and an affirmation of God's power and separateness from the matter he organizes.

Like Priestley, Hallam felt that the full acceptance of Hartley's theory demanded a materialist defense of Christianity. His portrait of Christ as a "being of like thoughts, feelings, sensations, sufferings, with ourselves" ("Theodicaea," 210) would not have troubled Priestley's religious or his scientific convictions. However, from this point Hallam's theological speculations radically diverge. Hallam criticizes Deism for its claim to find evidence of God without relying on revelation or scripture, but he also argues, "leaning on the Bible," that God's existence as well as His motives for creating the Son and universe might be illuminated by reference to mechanical laws at work in human action.[24] Just as "we consider human thought, design, volition, &c, as images of qualities somehow resembling these, though at infinite distance, in the Divine Mind" Hallam

[23] *David Hartley on Human Nature* (London, 1775): xx. The defense of Hartley in the introduction to this volume takes the form of a treatise in Priestley's *Disquisitions on Matter and Spirit* (1777). Further specific discussion of Hartley comes in the addendum to *The Doctrine of Philosophical Necessity Illustrated* (London, 1777), "Answer to the Author of Letters on Materialism and on Hartley's theory of the Mind."

[24] For Hallam's argument against natural philosophy, see "Theodicaea," 201-02; "Cicero," 161. Priestley is clearer than Hallam in avoiding this step: "Upon the whole, it is plain, that no proof of the materiality of man can be extended, by any just analogy, to a proof or evidence of a similar materiality of the Divine nature" (*Disquisitions*, 142). Hallam's claim that Christ attains equality (or near-equality) with God would also have bothered Priestley, of course.

writes, so erotic feeling with a "view to more complete union" represents a "principle equally eminent in the Supreme Character" ("Theodicaea," 206, 203).

> [W]e talk of the supreme happiness of God, and doubtless He hath within Himself a capacity of infinite pleasure; but I say, leaning on the Bible, the full satisfaction of this capacity is future, not actual…Is not God love? And is not privation essential to that feeling, until it hath passed out of the sphere of desire into that of gratification? Moreover, pain is a component part of all desire; and were we to substitute any other motive of creation…it would remain equally true, that the sense of need or privation is part of the creative spirit. ("Theodicaea," 206)

In Hallam's account, this weirdly carnal conception of God explains the theodical problem of the "Universe as it exists, full of sin and sorrow" ("Theodicaea," 205). Conceding to conventional emanation doctrine that "whatever personality is generated by God out of His substance must be essentially subordinate" ("Theodicaea," 205), Hallam also holds it as an obvious truth that for Christ to reciprocate God's love he must attain equality (or at least something close to that).

> If these thoughts have any foundation, evil may have been called into existence and power, because it was the necessary and only condition of Christ's being enabled to exert the highest acts of love, that any generated Being could perform, and thereby attaining that high degree of conformity comprised in the Divine Idea of his existence, and that high decree of reciprocate affection required by the eternal love of his Father. ("Theodicaea," 206)

The possibility of a more human God (and God-like Christ) enables Hallam to claim evil as a good insofar as it represents a way for Christ to remedy God's privation, and to imagine God changing as he moves "from eternity into time" and toward the final redemption.[25]

[25] "[T]he only possible thought of God on his own being, must have comprised the thought of the necessity of Christ's existence…but I believe also, that the Godhead of the

According to Hallam, the privation that occasioned the original act of creation is mirrored (if distantly) in the human mind's natural state of longing for completion. The misery of existing "as it were, piece-meal, and in the continual flux of a stream" ("On Sympathy," 138) is the precarious state of the self whose constitutive experience is continually altered and dissolved in the present. *Being* is painful, and pain creates desire. The forms of "union so intimate as virtually to amount to identification" ("Theodicaea," 210) that stanch this pain are expressed by Hallam in the language of Neoplatonic eroticism, but they extend to the most rudimentary sympathetic response. Recall Hallam's description of sympathy above, as a process of automated imitation and self-imitation clearly derived from Hartley. As he puts it in a particularly striking formulation, humans "desire another's gratification from the same impulse that leads a monkey to mimic the gestures of a man" ("On Sympathy," 136). This automated mirroring comes from the mind's natural tendency to see others as "as a separate part of self…existing apart from the present, just as imagined states exist in the future" ("On Sympathy," 137). Sympathy is for Hallam no more mysterious than peristalsis. If we could do away with the illusion that selfhood precedes social existence in the form of "natural" self-interest, he suggests, the materialist basis of morality would emerge with stark clarity. The distinction between self-interested and disinterested action would disappear, and so too

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Son has not been a fixed, invariable thing from the beginning: he is more God now than he was once; and will be perfectly united to God hereafter." It is important not to overlook how bold it was for Hallam to deliver views such as these at Cambridge, even in a meeting of the liberally minded Apostles, at a time when formal acceptance of the Thirty-Nine Articles was still required for enrollment. His discussions of the physiological basis of moral action are milder (but not contradictory) in "Cicero," which was written for a Trinity essay competition.

would the necessity for appeals—like those of Shaftesbury or Butler or Mackintosh—to innate conscience in a theory of morals.

**III.**

I've argued that the *Dissertation* provided an essential starting point for Hallam's moral philosophy. His separate investigations of Hartleyan mind science led to an idiosyncratic Christian materialism that transferred the source of sympathy and moral imagination from an abstract inner sense to the senses five.[26] Although Hallam's theological speculations take the principles of new mind science into exotic territory, these principles were in their basic form a staple in the period's radical poetry criticism (including Shelley's "Defence"). It is for this reason surprising that Hallam's ambitions for social revolution have been obscured in most readings of "Characteristics." I have already noted the dominant twentieth-century reception of the review as a proto-Aestheticist manifesto. Isobel Armstrong's influential 1993 study, *Victorian Poetry: Poetry, Poetics, and Politics* is more rigorous historically, yet still concludes that the review reflects a "politics of privacy" and an "aestheticized politics" she associates with the Cambridge Apostles in the late 1820s and early 1830s. Armstrong contrasts "Characteristics" with the Tennyson

[26] Hallam certainly did not borrow his thinking about Hartley from Mackintosh: the *Dissertation*'s brief account says little about Hartley's physicalism, apart from mockery of the vibrations theory. Like James Mill and many others, Mackintosh was interested in Hartley's associationism as a purely psychological phenomenon.

review W. J. Fox published six months prior to it, arguing that they represent the earliest emanations of a modern cultural divide that J. S. Mill (and later F. R. Leavis and Raymond Williams) sourced to the conservative Coleridge and progressive Bentham.[27] Fox, who championed Browning and Tennyson both, is here associated with Bentham and new mind science, while Hallam is associated with late-Coleridge and German metaphysics then beginning to make its way into Britain.

Although other Apostles read late-Coleridge with enthusiasm, especially *Aids to Reflection*, Hallam's commitment to the materialist model of mind Coleridge spent the last decades of his life attacking should make us wary of aligning them too closely.[28] As for the idea that German philosophy influenced Hallam, there is simply not strong evidence to support it. Armstrong suggests that Schiller deeply shaped Hallam's thought, for example, going so far as to identify "On Naïve and Sentimental Poetry" as the major source for the theory of sensation poetry.[29] But Hallam's references to Schiller are limited exclusively to the poetry, from which he did a few translations while trying to learn German in late 1829 (see *Letters*, 314, 344, 614). In letters from around this time Hallam expresses hope that he will be skilled enough to read Kant "in a year," but as Jack Kolb notes there is no evidence he ever did so (*Letters*, 327). Hallam's knowledge of German philosophers was most likely limited to second-hand print accounts and conversations

[27] *Victorian Poetry*, especially Part I (Chapters 1–5), "Conservative and Benthamite Aesthetics of the Avant-Garde: Tennyson and Browning in the 1830s." Also see Leavis's introduction to *Mill on Bentham and Coleridge* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1950) and Chapter 3 of Williams's *Culture and Society, 1780–1950* (New York: Columbia UP, 1983). Fox's untitled review appeared in the January 1831 issue of *Westminster Review*. My citations refer to the reprinting in *Victorian Scrutinies.*

[28] See John Beer's discussion in the Bollingen edition of *Aids* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), cxii–cxvi.

[29] *Victorian Poetry*, 31-32; 61; 495, fn20.

with friends.[30] By contrast, as I have already argued, the influence of Hartley and British associationism is everywhere in Hallam's writings, just as it is in Fox.[31]

The intellectual genealogy I have sketched complicates Armstrong's theory of Victorian poetry as a kind of second-order critique of Romanticism. Perhaps the most influential part of her study is the argument that Victorian poetry makes Romantic lyric self-aware by folding within it an ironizing vantage—the "lyric within the lyric" or "double poem" that "re-orders lyric expression as drama…to introduce the possibility of interrogation and critique."[32] This "double-poem" model has been especially influential as a theory of dramatic monologue, but for Armstrong it applies to all significant Victorian poems.[33] Thus, even before Tennyson graduates to a critique of the "decadence of the poetry of sensation" (77) in the years after Hallam's death, his own early sensation poems self-consciously critique canonical Romantic predecessors by deploying

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[30] Hallam's friend and fellow Apostle John Kemble was deeply interested in all things German, and very likely passed some of that interest on to Hallam. The most substantive reference to German philosophy in Hallam's writings comes in a comment that basically restates Mackintosh's judgment of Kant: "I incline to a conviction, that, with regard to the Extent of Human Knowledge, no real advance has been made beyond Hume and Berkeley; with regard to its Modes, something has been done by Reid & Kant, & still more by Hartley, & something perhaps remains to do by following out the discoveries of this last philosopher" (*Letters,* 521; cf *Dissertation,* 338-41).

[31] Fox understood associationism in strictly physiological terms inherited from Priestley, his predecessor in the Unitarian clergy. See Francis Mineka's discussion of this lineage in *The Dissidence of Dissent:* The Monthly Repository, *1806–1838* (University of North Carolina Press, 1944).

[32] *Victorian Poetry,* 12. My page numbers refer to the 2006 printing.

[33] Related arguments about dramatic monologue and Romantic lyric appeared in Loy Martin's *Browning's Dramatic Monologue and the Post-Romantic Subject* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1985) and in Herbert Tucker's landmark essay, "Dramatic Monologue and the Overhearing of Lyric," in *Lyric Poetry: Beyond New Criticism*, eds. Patricia Parker and Chaviva Hošek (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1985), 226–43, and book *Tennyson and the Doom of Romanticism* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1988).

"contrived and strangely inaccessible naivete" as a way of "making strange the nature of the poetic act itself and revealing it as artifice" (45-6). Similarly, in Hallam's review the "unself-conscious, simple and unreflective feeling of the naïve poet he discovered in Schiller is being contrived by the highly self-conscious reflective poet of a sophisticated modern culture. The poetry of sensation is being created by the poetry of reflection by a ruse which returns the poem to dramatic status" (31-2).

One might complain that Armstrong valorizes Victorian poetry only by embracing straw-man shorthand for Romanticism and lyric. Yet more capacious genre and period categories would not solve the deeper problem of which they are a symptom. Lyric and drama stand in here for a range of binary coordinates—privacy and politics, feeling and knowledge, among many others—in a modern origins myth that pits aesthetics against progress. Primary or "naïve" experience, especially pleasure, is in this account unable to guard against or reflect upon ideology that constructs and propels it. In essence, this view of experience places artworks in one of two categories: those in need of ideology critique and those that confirm it in advance. [34]

By specifying Hartleyan materialism at the root of both Fox and Hallam's poetic theories, I am not only emending intellectual history but also pointing to an alternative conception of aesthetic power. Their theories represent a largely forgotten hope for poetry's social possibility, imagined in physiological terms. Even the whiffs of Utilitarian perfectionism that appear in Fox's reviews are ultimately grounded in Hartley, and his

[34] Armstrong's theory of aesthetic critique in *Victorian Poetry* corresponds in important ways to the more expansive theory in *The Radical Aesthetic* (New York: Blackwell, 2000), where art is defined as a "representation of mediation" between affect and cognition, experience and reflection. See Chapters 1 ("The Aesthetic and the Polis"); 2 ("Writing from the Broken Middle"); and 4 ("Thinking Affect").

vision of poetry actually contradicts Bentham's belief that "between poetry and truth there is a natural opposition."[35] Consider this description from his 1831 review:

> The most ignorant talk poetry when they are in a state of excitement; the firmly-organized think and feel poetry with every breeze of sensation that sweeps over their well-tuned nerves….The only question is, whether there be any reason why these *permanent* elements should not be wrought into their combined form, in the future, with a facility and power which bear some direct ratio to the *progress of society* [my emphases]. So far as poetry is dependent upon physical organization; and doubtless it is to some extent so dependent; there is no reason why it should deteriorate…. Nervous systems vary from the finest degree of susceptibility down to the toughness of a coil of hempen cable. *Poeta nascitur* in a frame the most favourable to acute perception and intense enjoyment of the objects of sense; and it would be difficult to show that poets are not, and will not continue to be, produced as excellent as they have been, and as frequently. (72)

Fox's talk of "well-tuned nerves," which recalls a famous analogy between nervous and musical vibrations in the *Observations,*[36] is political in nature. If poetic power varies with nervous systems rather than artificial social structures, the type of experience we associate with poetic production and enjoyment crosses social classes, race, and gender.[37] Even as Fox's framing of poetic power in physiological terms allows him to argue for continuity with poets of the past, he is able to argue that the type of modern poetry he sees in the young Tennyson is unique in history, for a simple reason: it evidences "our ever-growing acquaintance with the philosophy of mind and of man, and the increasing facility with which that philosophy is applied." That is, poetry is for Fox not only connate with the origin of man but the instrument as well of his progress and perfection. As

[35] See *The Rationale of Reward*, Book III, Chapter 1: "Art and Science—Divisions"
[36] *Observations,* Sec. 2 Proposition 8.
[37] Virtually all of his reviews include moments where such links are made, but there were sustained arguments, too, such as his essay: "The Poor and Their Poetry" (*Monthly Repository*, Vol. 6 (June, 1832): 189–201. As editor of the *Repository* Fox published numerous women and working-class writers.

opposed to older applications of scientific thought in poetry, "from Lucretius down to Akenside," the new poetry engages in "moral dissection" by offering experience in place of abstract elaboration (76).

Armstrong links Fox's description of the way poetry might do this to dramatic monologue: "[Tennyson] seems to obtain entrance into a mind as he would make his way into a landscape; he climbs the pineal gland as if it were a hill in the centre of the scene."[38] But the use of the Cartesian pineal gland, the seat of the soul, as a metaphor here suggests that something slightly different is at work. Fox's references to a poem that has historically been cited as one of the earliest dramatic monologues ("Supposed Confessions of a Second-Rate Sensitive Mind Not in Unity With Itself") come amid discussion of Tennyson's ability to "personate…angels and grasshoppers" and "such elemental beings as Syrens, as mermen and mermaidens" (77). In other words, this "personation" is less like the adoption of a voice than it is like the inhabitation of a foreign (often non-human) body.

> He does not merely assume their external shapes, and exhibit his own mind masquerading. He takes their senses, feelings, nerves, and brain, along with their names and local habitations; still it is himself in them, modified but not absorbed by their particular constitution and mode of being. In *The Merman* one seems to feel the principle of thought injected by a strong volition into the cranium of the finny worthy, and coming under all of influences, as thinking principles do, of the physical organization to which it is for the time allied: for a moment the identification is complete; and then a consciousness of contrast springs up between reports of external objects brought to the mind by the sense and those which it has been accustomed to receive. (77)

[38] See Chapter 4 of *Victorian Poetry*. Gregory Tate has more recently analyzed this approach in terms of mind science in *The Poet's Mind: The Psychology of Victorian Poetry* (Oxford: Clarendon, 2013). Although he acknowledges the intellectual debt to Hartley in both Hallam's and Fox's reviews, he directly applies Armstrong's genre terms and reads Tennyson's early poems as (disembodied) psychological experiments conducted through dramatic voicing.

Note that the thinking principle—a term of art more or less interchangeable, depending on context, with *spirit* or *mind*—retains its prior constitution during the temporary alliance with a grasshopper or finny worthy's physical organization. The way that Fox describes the recognition of contrast here is significant: the distinction between the kind of thought in the human organism we typically associate with souls and selves and that of the imaginary or brutish organism does not emerge until the latter produces a contrasting set of sense reports. The poet is himself in them, yet modified, yet not absorbed. It seems this is what Fox means by the "moral dissection" a poem can offer, a simulated experience of other minds, including animal and imaginary minds. The question whether such simulated experience is "lyrical" or "dramatic" is secondary, if not misleading and beside the point.

Hallam's concept of sympathetic identification in sensation poetry shares important features with Fox's account. For both of them the apparent impossibility of bridging the gap to another mind is dissolved by shared physiological capacities. Hallam's description of sympathy in mechanical imitative response, evident from plants and apes to men on the verge of the grave, extends in the review to a phenomenology of reading in which one might try on the poet's head, like a hat.[39] By embracing poetry's "physical" aspect, Hallam argues, readers are able to trace the "emotions of the poet, during composition, which follow a regular law of association":

[39] See Oren Izenberg's discussion of the twentieth-century debate about poetry's origins in heads and/or hats: "Poems Out of Our Heads," *PMLA* Vol. 123, No. 1 (January, 2008), 216–222.

> For very many…it has become *morally* impossible to attain the author's point of vision, on account of their habits, or their prejudices, or their circumstances; but it is never *physically* impossible, because nature has placed in every man the simple elements, of which art is the sublimation. ("Characteristics," 188, Hallam's italics)

As Empiricist psychology understands it, the unique contents of an individual mind make it impossible to attain an author's (or for that matter, anyone's) point of vision: circumstances and habit and prejudice owe everything to experience. In the account of reading here, Hallam proposes a solution: sensation's anteriority to associated ideas enables the formation of new, shared associations through an object of sense. This suggestion thins the line between composition and reading, and offers some indication of what Hallam means when he argues that the poetry of sensation places a "demand on the reader for activity" ("Characteristics,"188). This demand rewards with pleasure, whereas the kind of passive reading performed by "the stupid readers, or the malignant readers, or the voracious readers, or the readers after dinner!" ("Characteristics," 198) will at best affirm artificial commonplaces of a society in disrepair. The poetry of sensation is not concerned with ease or entertainment but with developing new channels of feeling, through which one might achieve the "communicative tendency in mind" ("Characteristics," 189) that is for Hallam the moral imperative of poetry.[40]

Hallam's readings in the review treat poems not as objects of analysis but as records of mental experience framed and awaiting reactivation. "Recollections of Arabian Nights" is put forward as the rare kind of poem that enables the reader to "*start from the*

[40] Armstrong's reading of this section of the review is insightful, but strangely suggests that Hallam samples from associationist psychology "in order to sustain his position" derived from Schiller (62; cf 33-4).

*same point*" and thereby apprehend the "leading sentiment of the poet's mind, by their conformity to which the host of suggestions are arranged" ("Characteristics," 192; Hallam's italics).

> The first stanza places us at once in the position of feeling, which the poem requires […] and as poem proceeds, all is in perfect keeping. There is a solemn distinctness in every image, a majesty of slow motion in every cadence, that aids the illusion of thought. ("Characteristics," 193)

The sublimated elements of sense laid onto the page are returned to their material dress by a reader, whose physical nature makes it possible to experience the authentic illusion of thought unfolding through poetic effects. Here is the stanza to which Hallam refers:

> I.
> When the breeze of a joyful dawn blew free
> In the silken sail of infancy,
> The tide of time flowed back with me
> The forwardflowing tide of time;
> And many a sheeny summermorn,
> Adown the Tigris I was borne,
> By Bagdat's shrines of fretted gold,
> Highwalléd gardens green and old;
> True Mussulman was I and sworn,
> For it was in the golden prime
> Of good Haroun Alraschid.

In Hallam's description, the poem draws the experiences of reader and poet together through two related strategies. The first is the use of a common cultural artifact, a work virtually any contemporary would have read as a child, to appeal to subjective memory. As the "happy ductility of childhood returns for a moment" ("Characteristics," 192), readers' own recollections of *Arabian Nights* are entangled with recollections that comprise the fantasy narrative of this poem. Hallam notes, for example, the way that

Tennyson's lush garden descriptions return him to a peculiar sensuous experience of them as a child: "even in plain prose, [they] made my mouth water for sherbet, since luckily we were too young to think much about Zobeide!" ("Characteristics," 192). Where the adult feels a sexual charge, the child longs for sherbet, and the poem makes it possible to separate and compare these pleasures, as it were, out of time.

The second strategy Hallam identifies is formal. Through the poem's fourteen eleven-line stanzas, the rhyme scheme never repeats. Hallam's comment that the refrain gives unity to this variety with its clockwork re-presentation of "good Haroun Alraschid" is typical of the way he associates poetic and mental effects: by "the recurrence of [the refrain], as a sort of mysterious influence, at the close of every stanza, the mind is wrought up, with consummate art, to the final disclosure" ("Characteristics," 193). Another way of putting this would simply be to say that the poem draws parameters of shared sense experience in its formal materials: the surprise and tension each stanza brings with its new rhyme patterns find rest at last in the refrain. And with rhyme's continually evolving pulse, the poem presses with equal weight the other way, chasing echoes and disintegrations of the unique prior arrangements to create a temporal suspension equal to Tennyson's wandering narrative. It is fitting, then, that the poem's single broken broken refrain comes in the *first* stanza (above), where *time* appears in line four rather than in line nine; we only know that time forward-flowing has migrated backward retrospectively, after the refrain builds force in the stanzas that follow.

Fox's claims for the relation of poetry to mind never approach this kind of formal specificity, which might partially be explained by his lack of interest in literary history. His hope in the 1830 review that the "permanent elements" of physical organization

might in the present be combined with "a facility and power which bear some direct relation to the progress of society" is stated in new terms in his second review of Tennyson, which appeared shortly before Hallam's death:

> The author is a mental philosopher, as the greatest poets have ever been, and as every poet of these later ages must be, to take distinguished or permanent rank. The first onset of poetry conquered the external world, and erected as trophies descriptions of object and action never to be surpassed: but observation has yielded the foremost place to reflection, in ministering to poetical genius. The classic portrayed human character by its demonstrations and influences on the material objects of sense; the modern delineates the whole external world from its reflected imagery in the mirror of human thought and feeling.[41]

Fox's choice of "sense" and "reflective" here suggests that he might have been responding to Hallam's review, as Hallam had earlier responded to him. But Fox's core argument was already in place in 1830. The powerful modern poet inhabits a "frame the most favourable to acute perception and intense enjoyment of the objects of sense," just as powerful poets always have. What distinguishes the modern poet is his knowledge of new mind science. He uses this knowledge to reflect through the mirror of human thought and feeling the whole external world previously registered only by animal sense.

Hallam's signed marginalia beside this paragraph in a copy now housed at the Tennyson Research Center in Lincoln offer some indication of the way he might have responded given the chance.

> Much too broadly stated. Gnomic poetry was carried to as high a point of perfection by the ancients as by any modern. As for the inward workings of passion, & the complicated ingredients of character, I suspect Homer & the Dramatists & Theocritus not to say Virgil & Horace knew something of those matters. It is true, the Xhan religion & its attendant effect, the {indecipherable} of the Bible, have opened a new sphere for modern poetry—a sphere of subtle

[41] *Monthly Repository* Vol. 13 (January, 1833): 33.

> imagery produced & sanctioned by {minute?} affinities of feeling. But this does not justify the sweeping assertions in the text.[42]

Where Fox claims that significant new poetry is created out of newly discovered scientific principles, Hallam argues that they confirm truths *already present* in the great poetry of great nations (especially great Christian nations). If in fact there is a "subversive conservativism" in Hallam's thought, as Armstrong suggests, it is most clearly evident in this understanding of poetic history. Hallam's review takes issue with Fox's argument that by virtue of its proximity to modern life the French Revolution makes a finer theme than the war of Troy: it "may be a finer theme…but it does not so evidently follow that Homer is to find his superior" ("Characteristics," 190). Hallam's and Fox's respective reasons for identifying in Tennyson's poetry a hope for social revolution are nearly inverted, since Fox believes that tradition is molting from modern poetry as it becomes an instrument of new mind science while for Hallam tradition is the repository of lost moral feeling his exemplary poets might renew. It is thus not surprising that Hallam's literary history is much more detailed than Fox's own. I turn to this history now, and to the place of Hallam's sensation poets within it.

[42] Tennyson Research Center, Lincoln.

**III.**

In the opening pages of "The Influence of Italian Upon English Literature" Hallam offers an illustration of "pure English" through a kind of bibliomantic philology. "I open at hazard a volume of Shakspeare," he writes, "and I take for an instance the first passage that occurs." In sixteen lines from *Henry IV* he finds

> twenty-two words of Romane formation, and but twenty-one (excluding connective words) of Teutonic. Of the former, again five are proper to French; the rest having probably passed through the medium of that language, but derived from a classical source. Among these last, only one is Greek; the others bear the imperial stamp of Rome. The whole is a beautiful specimen of pure English, and falls with complete, easy, uniform effect on the ear and mind. In this instance, and probably in any other we should select from the great master, the equipoise of Southern and Northern phraseology creates a natural harmony, a setting of full bass and keen treble, to destroy which altogether would be one inevitable consequence of altering the proportion of these two elements. ("Italian," 214)

For Hallam, in contrast to many others in the period and in the decades that followed, the collision of Southern and Northern phraseology is not an adulteration of Anglo-Saxon purity from which modern English has slowly devolved. It is instead the event that makes English *English* and England *England*. But note the care that Hallam takes to marginalize modern French above. The Southern phraseology he refers to has a quite specific source in Italy, which is set in opposition to modern France. These sources respectively correspond to English poetry's highest point of achievement, in the Elizabethan era, and to its subsequent decay, from the moment "Dryden led up the death-dance of Parisian foppery and wickedness" to the "heresies of the Popian school" that includes even a poet

like Gray.[43] Modern "French contagion" has effaced the "Italian character" of English most clearly evident in its great poets: Chaucer, Surrey, Sidney, Spenser, Shakespeare, Milton, and "that strange tribe of poems inappropriately styled by Johnson the metaphysical" ("Italian," 216).[44] The review's well-known claim (because it seems to have rubbed off on Eliot) that the mid-seventeenth century saw the separation of the "different powers of poetic disposition, the energies of Sensitive, of Reflective, of Passionate emotion which in former times were intermingled" ("Characteristics," 190) is a literary as well as moral one. With Mackintosh, Hallam understands the Hobbesian concept of self-interest under absolute sovereignty to have stunted natural fellow feeling and initiated an "over-civilized condition of thought," and for Hallam this is mirrored in and reinforced by post-Restoration English poetry.

Although Wordsworth and "the Lakers" are identified in the review as the first English resistance to this "contagion," Hallam believes they have continued to rely too heavily on cold intellect: their poems are "good as philosophy, powerful as rhetoric, but false as poetry" ("Characteristics," 185). They are poets, one might say, and they think; but they do not feel their thought as immediately as the odor of a rose. By contrast, Shelley and Keats (and the young Tennyson) so vividly delight in "the simple exertions of eye and ear" that these exertions are "mingled more and more with their trains of

[43] "Of Pope, Thomson, Young, Goldsmith, Akenside, nothing can be said. The tessellated mind of Gray is partly made up of Italian reading, but there is too little vitality" ("Italian," 214).

[44] Hallam clarifies his attacks on French in a footnote: "I hope my readers will bear in mind that I have been speaking on this occasion of two separate Frances: the one, the country of William de Lorris and Froissart, justly venerated by our Gowers, our Lydgates, and the other racy thinkers of Norman England; the other a much later invention, retaining few features" ("Italian," 214).

active thought, and tend to absorb their whole being into the energy of sense" ("Characteristics," 186). These sensuous powers are not simply gifts of nature; the poetry of the prior century demonstrates that gifts of nature can be suppressed. Hallam's poets write newly, but using tools of *aged* music. Their poems "contained more genuine inspiration, and adhered more steadily to that portion of truth which it embraced, than any *form* of art that has existed in this country since the days of Milton" ("Characteristics," 185) because they turned to resources that had been eroded. In Hallam's account, the Cockney "caposetta" Leigh Hunt "pointed the way" past two centuries of stale habit and thought, to the great poetry of moral and sensuous power in Italy.

Hallam's paired 1828 sonnets to Shelley and Keats render this point in stark terms, transporting us to "A Burial-Ground at Rome by Moonlight" to contemplate the English reading public's expulsion of its two greatest living poets to foreign deaths and graves.[45]

> Young bard, whose lay was of Endymion,
> Here is thy rest: the world has done its worst:
> Calm like that fabled youth, sleep on beneath the moon. (I, 12–14)

> Strong too with musical law man's legioned thoughts to bind:
> Shelley, what marvel if thy course was brief!
> Thou wert a delicate line of earth-traced light,
> Barred by encroaching shades that hate the moon. (II, 8–11)[46]

[45] In 1829 Hallam oversaw the first British edition of *Adonais*, reprinted from the original Pisan edition he purchased during his travels in Italy. See Martin Blocksidge, *A Life Lived Quickly: Tennyson's Friend Arthur Hallam and His Legend* (Sussex: Sussex Academic Press, 2011), pp. 125–26.
[46] *Writings*, 6.

The flame these poets preserved in English originated in the soil where "their ashes lie together" (*Letters*, 357), as did the "Italian tone of sentiment in those great [Elizabethan] writers to whom we owe almost everything" ("Italian," 229). The implication in the review, of course, is that Tennyson carries this flame now.

Hallam identifies the origins of rhyme in Eastern languages and traces its migration into medieval French, but his rhyme genealogy moves from this point to its perfection in the hands of Petrarch and Dante. Modern French is pointedly excluded, and even compared to rhymeless Latin as "an organ not of genial and original thinking, but of thoughts accumulated, set in order, smoothed down, and ready for diffusion" ("Italian," 232). The implication throughout Hallam's discussion of modern French verse, and of post-Restoration English verse, is that the regularized use of rhyme here serves reason to the degree that it becomes invisible.[47] The "Arabian" and then medieval French poetry Hallam identifies at the root of Italian poetry, and therefore of all significant English poetry, is put forward as a limit-case of the opposite kind: heavy on rhyme thinking and light turns of fancy, light on philosophic thinking.

> The subtlety of perception, and, at the same time, the sportiveness, that were requisite for the management of these compositions, is not the less curious and admirable in itself, that it was employed on classes of resemblance, which our more enlarged knowledge considers as unsubstantial and minute. […] Where the intellect waxes vigorous, without any large support from what has been termed "bookmindedness," it cannot but spend its vivacity on repeated and fantastic modifications of its small capital of ideas. 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; hence there is a freshness about the far-fetched combinations of these

[47] As he puts it in a coded dismissal of couplet form: "the dullest senses can perceive an identity in [the recurrence of termination], and be pleased with it; but the partial identity, latent in more diffused resemblances, requires, in order to be appreciated, a soul susceptible to musical impression" ("Italian," 222, fn).

> poets, which makes them true to nature, even when to the prosaic eye they seem most unnatural. ("Italian," 222)

As he does in the review's comments on "Recollections," Hallam here collapses resemblance as a category of mental association and as a category of rhyme. What contemporary readers might regard as an "unsubstantial and minute" complexity of rhyme structure is singled out as evidence of a kind of vigorous intellection true to nature but opaque to the prosaic eye of the present. With fewer objects, this rhyme thinking maintains strength of character through powerfully organized repetition, modification, and combination.

Hallam sees in the recurrent structures of "all verse, all harmonized sound" an "appeal to Memory and Hope," the past that is lost and the future that might be. In this way the experience of reading or writing poetry mirrors the recurrence of privation, desire, and pleasure that drives the mind to action. But rhyme emerges with modern language as a distinctive kind of recurrence Hallam associates with forms of Christian feeling and erotic love: "The ancients disdained a mode of pleasure, in appearance so little elevated, so ill adapted for the effects of the art: but they knew not, with their metrical harmonies, perfectly suited, as these were to their habitual moods of feeling, nor were they likely to know, the real capacities of this apparently simple and vulgar combination" ("Italian," 222fn). Dante and Petrarch inherit the rhyme traditions innovated by Eastern poets and troubadours, but join its powers of pleasure with Christianity: "upon [it] they have reared a splendid edifice of Platonism, and surmounted it with the cross" ("Italian," 224). Echoing his theodicy, Hallam argues that the perfected poetry of rhyme in Christian Italy, especially in the *Divine Comedy*, reveals "love as at

once the base and pyramidal point of the entire universe, and teaches us to regard the earthly union of souls…as the best and the appointed symbol of our relations with God" ("Italian," 224).[48]

Without careful attention to Hallam's lesser-known essays, it is impossible to grasp the significance of his generally overlooked assertion that Tennyson's "thorough and sterling English" reflects the "fertility of expression and variety of harmony which 'the speech that Shakespeare spoke' derived from the sources of Southern phraseology" ("Characteristics," 198). This is not a hyperbolic comparison of Tennyson's youthful poems to those of the "great master." It is an assertion that his poetry attains, by artifice, the vitality once natural to the language—vitality that is for Hallam specifically Christian in its pleasures, and historically specific in its emergence and decline.[49] "Ours in necessarily a compound language," Hallam writes, and "as such alone it can flourish and increase" ("Characteristics," 198). For this reason Hallam is willing to accept even the occasional "unauthorized" use of a word. Commenting on what he considers to be the improper use of "redolent" in a passage from "Recollections," he writes that "the melody

[48] "Philosophers who have fallen in love, and lovers who have acquired philosophy by reflecting on their peculiar states of consciousness, tell us that the passion is grounded on a conviction, true or false, of similarity, and consequent irresistible desire of union or rather identification, as though we had suddenly found a bit of ourselves that had been dropt by mischance as we descended upon earth… this erotic feeling is of origin peculiarly divine, and raises the soul to heights of existence, which no other passion is permitted to attain" ("Theodicaea," 203).

[49] In his remarks on Dante Rossetti's *Analytical Commentary* of the *Divine Comedy*, Hallam remarks the "distinguishing character of Hebrew literature, which separates it by so broad a line of demarcation from that of every ancient people" is the "sentiment of *erotic devotion* which pervades it.…[God] is for them a being of like passions with themselves, requiring heart for heart and capable of inspiring affection because capable of feeling and returning it." Hallam reserves special praise for the *Psalms*, but concludes: "what is true of Judaism is yet more true of Christianity" (*Writings*, 269–70).

of the passage, as it stands, is beyond the possibility of improvement, and unless he should chance to light upon a word very nearly resembling this in consonants and vowels, we can hardly quarrel with Mr. Tennyson if…he retains the offender in his service" ("Characteristics," 193). The difference between modern sensation poets and those who precede the dissociation of sensibility Hallam describes is that they come "late in our national history, and repentance is unlike innocence" ("Characteristics," 189). Unpopularity will meet this poetry because it points away from modern habits of mind, "repenting" through novel redeployments of linguistic and formal resources that have decayed. But popularity is not for Hallam the sign of poetry's social power. This power is "easier felt than described" ("Characteristics," 191) because it is grounded in Hallam's account of morals and the mind, its appeal to sense running deeper than custom, habit, and identity itself.

# CHAPTER FOUR

## STERLING ENGLISH AND SOURCES OF SOUTHERN PHRASEOLOGY: ANACREONTIC TENNYSON

**I.**

In 1831, between *Poems, Chiefly Lyrical* (1830) and *Poems* (1832), Tennyson published a lightweight lyric in the popular literary annual *The Gem*:

> ANACREONTICS
> With roses muskybreathed
> And drooping daffodilly,
> And silverleaved lily,
> And ivy darkly-wreathed,
> I wove a crown before her
> For her I love so dearly,
> A garland for Lenora.
> With a silken cord I bound it.
> Lenora, laughing clearly
> A light and thrilling laughter,
> About her forehead wound it,
> And loved me ever after.

This poem, not reprinted in the poet's lifetime, draws from a tradition of Anacreontic verse that would at the time have been familiar to most readers, including the largely

female readership of this annual. Although it is comprised of stock imagery and tropes, the poem must nevertheless have felt strange. By long-established convention, Anacreontic verse was written in lines of seven or eight syllables with a terminal accent. The vast majority of these poems used couplet rhyme, with ballad forms as an occasional alternative.[1] Here the uniformly disyllabic rhymes ensure that a stress falls on each line's penultimate syllable, making the turn of each line lighter than is customary. Moreover, the rhymes at line-end are irregularly dispersed—*abba cdce fdef*—and joined with an array of internal echoes and inversions. Note for example the way the parallel noun/adjective structure in the rhymes of lines 1 and 4 (*roses muskybreathed* and *ivy darkly-wreathed*) inverts syntactically as well as aurally in lines two and three (*drooping daffodilly* and *silverleaved lily*). Or consider the density of repetition across the next line's enjambment, *be**for**e her / **For** her*, and continuing into in the stress rhythms of ***for** Len**or**a.* Or, in broader terms, the way the pronounced caesurae created by the doubled accent at the end of line 8—*With a **silk**en **cord** I **bound it***—gives the final four lines the texture of a separate unit. Even with the period in line seven, line eight is the first dramatic pause one must really observe in the poem. A breezy *abcb* "stanza" pattern

[1] Ballad-like stanza forms were common from the earliest period of imitation in France and appear occasionally in English emulations as well (perhaps because of the French example). Examples include Herrick's "Anacrontike" and Rochester's "Upon His Drinking a Bowl." Ballads became more common in England during the latter decades of the eighteenth century, when Anacreontics migrated from textbooks to taverns; drinking songs penned for meetings of such groups as the Anacreontic Society are most often ballads. Note for example that Joseph Ritson's *A Select Collection of English Songs* (London, 1783) collects high literary translations beside anonymous, often bawdy, Anacreontic ballads under the same heading: "Drinking Songs." (My thanks to Elizabeth Helsinger for directing me to Ritson.)

concludes—though in fact the *a* and *c* rhymes carry backward, weaving the two units together.

Why would Tennyson choose to render one of the most simple and conventionalized verse-forms available in such a peculiar and complicated way? This question is at the center of this chapter, and will return. The simple answer is a familiar one: innovation and imitation go together, and the early lyrics all seek innovation by these means. Ranging among the rocks and nodding groves of poesy in the 1830 volume alone we find a Pindaric "Ode to Memory"; an attempted transposition of classical to modern elegiacs; lines written ("early in life") for a chorus of a drama; ballads; patriotic war carols; numerous sonnets; and a variety of songs to animals, women, and prosopopoeic abstractions. In the case of "Anacreontics," however, the simple answer is complicated by the fact that Tennyson is foraging numerous Anacreontic sources, many of them now obscure.

From our privileged historical position, we are prone to read Tennyson's early lyrics as shoots of a nobler music yet to come. Herbert Tucker's observation that the early poetry displays "mastery of certain abstract structures and paradigms that are, in matters of verbal form, analogous to the patterns of muscular coordination, logical consequence, or spatial configuration that challenge the prodigy in other fields" implies as much. According to Tucker, poetry of this kind does not require the "depth and breadth of social experience" the playwright or novelist requires, since its production is essentially a matter of unreflective skill at imitation:

> [This poetry will] exhibit the highest possible ratio of form to content; it will take its subject matter from obviously literary sources and conventional topics; and its original energy will be devoted to an intensity of verbal design that may be boldly

> experimental but must also, if it is to obtain recognition at all, be prodigiously correct.[2]

While critics might endlessly argue (and have) over the symbolic or biographical meaning of poems such as "Mariana" or "Song ['A spirit haunts the year's last hours']," for Tucker their meaning is material; it is comprised of re-arrayed fragments on the young poet's laboratory floor.

This seems right—to a point. It helps to explain why so many of Tennyson's early poems feel at once impenetrable and familiar. It also helps to explain why so many readers—W. H. Auden, for example—have understood Tennyson's musical prowess as a sort of divine idiocy: "Tennyson had the finest ear, perhaps, of any English poet; he was also undoubtedly the stupidest."[3] Although Tucker is trying to compliment Tennyson's early skill, his extension of the non-verbal arts analogy only to "form" makes the early work susceptible to just this sort of judgment. In these terms, even the most gripping verbal design remains a spiritless body until it is joined with *content*—the sort of thing only a certain depth and breadth of social experience can provide. But why should we imagine that highly reflexive verbal art could have any more or less content than highly reflexive non-verbal art, built as both are from inherited materials? Why not say instead that we are dealing here with cognitive arts of arrangement, and that the prodigy simply

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[2] *Tennyson and the Doom of Romanticism* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1988), p. 32.

[3] "Introduction to *A Selection of Poems by Alfred, Lord Tennyson*," in *The Complete Works of W. H. Auden: Prose,* Vol. 2 (Princeton: Princeton University Press), p. 204. Similarly, Eliot's comment that Tennyson had the "finest ear since Milton" is tempered by the qualification that "there are things to be spoken of besides the murmur of innumerable bees or the moan of doves in immemorial elms." "The Music of Poetry," in *Selected Prose of T. S. Eliot* (New York: Harcourt, 1975), p. 112.

*knows* more—or knows better, with greater ease—how to play chess or do math or write poems? As Simon Jarvis puts it in a more specific argument, on Robert Browning's philosophic ambitions in poetry, "thinking need not be an activity which is always already dependent on verbal explication, but one in which there can be musical thinking, painterly thinking, pianistic thinking—and thinking in verse."[4] Innovation and imitation go together, yes; but the innovator will often first be received with bafflement. Before Tennyson changed the sound of English verse, he could not have been mocked as the poet who too prettily sang it, and it is only in retrospect that his experiments of verbal design sound prodigiously correct.

Tennyson's early reviewers noted a "vicious and irregular system in the arrangement of his rhymes" and often compared his style to Metaphysical poets, whose verse, in Johnson's influential phrase, "stood the trial of the finger better than of the ear."[5] In 1833 Coleridge opined that Tennyson had "begun to write verses without very well understanding what metre is."

> Even if you write in a known and approved metre, the odds are, if you are not a metrist yourself, that you will not write harmonious verses; but to deal in new metres without considering what metre means and requires, is preposterous. What I would, with many wishes for success, prescribe to Tennyson, —indeed, without it he can never be a poet in act, —is to write for the next two or three years in none but one or two well-known and strictly defined metres, such as the heroic couplet, the octave stanza, or the octo-syllabic measure of the Allegro and Penseroso. He would, probably, thus get imbued with a sensation, if not a sense, of metre, without knowing it, just as Eton boys get to write such good Latin verses by conning Ovid and Tibullus. As it is, I can scarcely scan his verses.[6]

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[4] "Superversive Poetics: Browning's *Fifine at the Fair*," *MLQ*, Vol. 71, No. 1 (March 2016): 121–41.
[5] *The Spectator*, August 21, 639. Descriptions of Tennyson as "Metaphysical" also appear in Leigh Hunt's review in the *Tatler*, Feb. 24 and 26, 1831, and in W. J. Fox's review of the 1833 volume in the *Monthly Repository*, VII: 30–41 (1833).
[6] *Table Talk*, April 24, 1833.

Before Tennyson can venture something of consequence, let alone make up his own meters, Coleridge suggests, he must labor in verse-forms already established in the language, just as Eton boys labor with Roman masters before they pen their own Latin poems.

Of course, Coleridge didn't know that Tennyson had been imitating poems of every conceivable variety under his father's unforgiving eye since roughly the time he could write his name. Although Tennyson never responded publicly, undated marginalia in a bound copy of the 1830 and 1832 volumes expresses frustration at Coleridge's remark:

> Coleridge who said I ought to write in a regular metre in order that I might learn what metre was—not knowing that in earliest youth I had written hundreds & hundreds of line in the regular Dorian measure—I suppose may have opened the books at random & read these dactyl[ically]—I am a greater rhythmicist than Coleridge…I remember my father (who was himself something of a poet & wrote regular metre) saying to me when in my early teens Don't write always such exact metre. Break it now & then to avoid monotony.[7]

A. A. Markley notes that "Tennyson's exposure to the classics"—in addition to his reading and emulation of modern languages such as Italian and French—"was more rigorous than [that of] most," and that "rhythms and sounds of classical verse echo resoundingly" from his juvenilia to his final poems.[8] In his narrow focus on proven

[7] June Hagen Stephenson, "Tennyson Answers Coleridge's Complaint," *American Notes & Queries*, Vo. 13, No. 6 (February 1975), 86–87.
[8] ibid., 27. For Tennyson's early knowledge of Italian, see *Alfred Lord Tennyson: A Memoir by His Son*, Vol. I (1897), p. 7–8.

English meters, Tennyson implies, Coleridge has failed to recognize the virtuosity of his performances, which draw even on rhythms of dead languages.[9]

What Coleridge saw as hypermetricality is better described as hybrid metricality. With the exception of Swinburne and perhaps Longfellow, no poet of the nineteenth century rivals Tennyson's introduction of foreign (especially classical) tones into English. That such introductions are always interpretive, even metaphoric, is essential to their potential as poetic tools. One might qualify Markley's comment above by pointing out that we don't actually know what the sounds of classical verse were, but this is somewhat beside the point. Whatever Tennyson heard there, his transposition of classical rhythms into the accentual-syllabic frames of English motivated powerful leaps of prosodic invention. Such leaps are also necessary between living languages, of course: even if one knows how to sound something properly in one language, the rules of syntax and phonology can in another one be bent only so far.

In this chapter I argue that Tennyson's early Anacreontic poems repudiate the tradition's prosodic development in English, beginning with Thomas Moore's clear and present example and extending to the Anacreontic's earliest significant entrance into the language, among Metaphysical poets. In place of this history, Tennyson erected a tradition that *might have been*, drawing resources from French and especially Italian poets. I suggest, further, that this imagined, alternative tradition affirms Arthur Hallam's

[9] This seems to be the significance of Tennyson's reference to Dorian measure: there is nothing at all regular about it, apart from rules that combine invented sub-units into larger patterns (the most famous being the Pindaric ode's triadic structure. See M. L. West *Greek Metre* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1982), p. 47; "Classical Prosody: II (Greek)," in *Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics*, Fourth Edition (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2012), p. 261–62.

densely interleaved literary history and moral philosophy, the topic of my last chapter. I argued there that anachronistic readings of Hallam's best-known work, the 1831 Tennyson review, have obscured the broader philosophic program he was constructing at the time of his premature death. "On Some of the Characteristics of Modern Poetry, and On the Lyrical Poems of Alfred Tennyson" is not a proto-Aestheticist manifesto, as has often been claimed over the last century. The review's numerous references to pleasure and immersive sensuality are in fact anchored in ambitious theological speculations that extend David Hartley's materialist mind science to the Christian God. Hallam posits the origins of instinctive pleasure-pursuit and pain-aversion in God's creation of the Son. In this account, this original creative act proceeded from God's erotic desire for union with a separate being, which he compares to human sexual union. Mechanical law requires no defense as the basis for moral feeling from this perspective, since for Hallam automatic pleasure-pursuit is in Christ, humans, and even brutes and plants, merely an echo of an embodied, desiring God.

Hallam's poetic theory gives these exotic theological speculations a concrete historical dimension. He identifies rhyme's emergence in modern language as a specifically Christian innovation of pleasure, evidenced in its perfection among the great poets of Renaissance Italy and in its subsequent Elizabethan flowering. Hallam's argument that the "Italian tone of sentiment in those great [Elizabethan] writers to whom we owe almost everything" burned its last embers among "that strange tribe of poets Johnson styled the Metaphysical" gives a novel twist to what had become a common narrative against post-Restoration verse ("Italian," 229). This is not only because he attributes English poetry's former greatness to a foreign infusion, rather than to the deep

textures of Anglo-Saxon. More importantly, Hallam's history of "Italian English" is also a history of social life in modern England. Modern poetry was for him merely one reflection of a culture in decay. In a formulation that anticipates (and likely influenced) Eliot's "dissociation of sensibility," Hallam saw the Restoration as the moment that separated the "different powers of poetic disposition, the energies of Sensitive, of Reflective, of Passionate emotion which in former times were intermingled" ("Characteristics," 190). The "sensation poetry" of Keats, Shelley, and the young Tennyson represented the potential for renewing access to sensuous feeling in language, by the emulation of lost resources in poetic form.

Obviously, Hallam's interest in poetic sense-pleasure's moral force makes the Anacreontic ode, the lyric of symposiastic revelry, especially relevant to this discussion. But in terms of their alignment with Hallam's theories, the most significant feature of Tennyson's Anacreontic poems is their prosody. It is on this level of lines and rhymes, the level of *sound*, that Italian tradition is most clearly evident. In fact, as I will explain in greater detail below, without these formal promptings it is unlikely that these poems would be recognizable as Anacreontic at all, since the stock themes and iconography of that tradition had in Italy become part of a broader palette of love poetry that included Dante, Petrarch, and classical texts.

I begin with a brief survey of the Anacreontic ode's history, then look more closely at its early nineteenth-century development in the hands of Thomas Moore. In the early decades of the century, Moore's name became synonymous with Anacreon. As John Taylor put it in an 1827 poem appended to his own Anacreontic translations:

> ANACREON, fam'd in ancient times,

To love and wine decreed his rhymes;
Behold him now in British lore,
And full as graceful as before.
With learning, taste, and genius fraught,
Moore all the Grecian's spirit caught,
And Britain hence may well avow,
She boasts her own ANACREON now."[10]

I consider Moore's poetic style and his cultivation of literary celebrity through a series of representative reviews, comparing the form of public poetry he represented with the variety Hallam envisioned his sensation poets bringing about through a revitalization of "Italian English." Section three reads some of Tennyson's Anacreontic poems as an attempt at such revitalization, in relation to Italian Anacreontic poetry and song, especially in the tradition of aria innovated by Gabriello Chiabrera. I conclude by comparing the 1830 and 1842 versions of "The Miller's Daughter," whose accomplished octave stanzas (did Coleridge miss this poem?) are interspersed by Anacreontics. This combination of forms makes "The Miller's Daughter" one of the earliest among Tennyson's attempts at "medley." In this case, I argue that Tennyson's inclusion of Anacreontics represent a commentary on the genre's near-total separation into Italian and English imitations, from the hugely popular French models developed during the latter half of the sixteenth century. Tennyson's implicit valorization of the Italian tradition over the tradition in English, evident in the formal structure of these early poems, is an affirmation of the rhyme history and moral philosophy Hallam was erecting at the time of his premature death.

[10] *Poems on Various Subjects: Miscellaneous effusions. Imitations. Tales. Elegiacs and epitaphs. Addenda. The odes of Anacreon, with fragments of Sappho and Alcaeus.* Vol. 2 of 2 (London, 1827), 7.

**II.**

The sixty odes known as the *Anacreontea*, discovered by Henricus Stephanus (Henri Estienne) in the mid-sixteenth century in an appendix to the Greek Anthology, are the work not of Anacreon (570–30 B.C.), whose writings survive only in fragments, but of numerous imitators spanning "almost six hundred years, from the late Hellenistic or early Roman times to the Byzantine era."[11] Stephanus inferred that these odes were written by the historical Anacreon because of "the overlap of motif and subject matter between Anacreon's [extant fragmentary] works and the new poems, the metrical similarity, and allusions to Bathyllus [Anacreon's lover]" (*Poetics of Imitation*, 3). He edited away inconsistencies in the Greek texts that might have called his single-author theory into question, cutting twenty-nine of the odes entirely. The remaining odes, accompanied by annotations and his neo-Latin translations, were published in 1554 to immediate acclaim. Stephanus's friend Ronsard printed a collection of imitations within the year, followed soon after by his *Pléiade* comrades Remi Belleau and Joachim Du Bellay.[12] Tom Mason notes that translations and imitations spread quickly, eventually reaching "Spain, Italy, Germany, Holland, Sweden, Poland, and Russia," and that "nowhere was Anacreon more

[11] Patricia Rosenmeyer, *The Poetics of Imitation: Anacreon and the Anacreontic Tradition* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006), 3.
[12] The most comprehensive treatment of early French (and neo-Latin) imitations is John O'Brien's *Anacreon Redivivus: A Study of Anacreontic Translation in Mid-Sixteenth-Century France* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1995). Also see Patricia Rosenmeyer, "The Greek Anacreontics and Sixteenth-Century French Lyric Poetry," in *The Classical Heritage in France*, ed. Gerald Sandy (Leiden, Netherlands: Brill, 2002): 393–424.

popular than in England. Poets big and small, classicists and critics, joined in a continuous stream of praise and emulation."[13] The early English emulations range from those in Sidney's first *Arcadia* (1577–80), Robert Greene's *Orpharion* (1589), and Spenser's *Amoretti* (1595), to those of Jonson, Herrick, and Cowley (among many lesser lights).[14]

Tracing the Anacreontic's travels in the eighteenth century, Marshall Brown has argued that these songs of women and wine lie at the "roots of Romantic lyric."[15] This

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[13] "The Wisdom of Anacreon," *Cambridge Quarterly* Vol. 19, No. 2 (1990): 107. Janet Levarie also provides a broad view of the European Anacreontic tradition in "Renaissance Anacreontics," *Comparative Literature*, vol. 25, No. 3 (Summer, 1973): 221–239.

[14] Greene's translation of Ode 31 is not attributed to Anacreon in the text. Spenser's translation of Ode 4 falls among three imitative pieces called "Anacreontics" between the *Amoretti* sonnets and *Epithalamion*. Jonson's poems were emulations, not direct translations; for discussion of their influence on Anacreontic poems by Herrick, Stanley, Cowley, Lovelace, and others, see Kathryn Anderson McEuen, *The Tribe of Ben: A Study of Classical Elements in the Non-Dramatic Poetry of Ben Jonson and His Circle* (Cedar Rapids, IA: Torch Press, 1939), Chapter 7: "Anacreon and the Anacreontea"; and Stella Achilleos "The Anacreontic and the Growth of Sociability in Early Modern England," *Appositions*, vol. 1 (2008): 6–14. Sidney was possibly the first to imitate the odes in English, as early as 1577 in *The Old Arcadia*. A deathbed story that Sidney blushed at the mention of his Anacreontics and urged his brother to burn them is intriguing, but if these poems ever existed they do not survive. See Katherine Duncan-Jones, "Sidney's Anacreontics," *The Review of English Literature*, No. 36, No. 142 (May 1985): 226–28. The most complete bibliography of English translations (it does *not* include imitative poems) is by Stuart Gillespie: "The *Anacreontea* in English: A Checklist of Translations to 1900," *Translation and Literature*, Vol. 11, No. 2 (Autumn, 2002): 149–73.

[15] "Passion and Love: Anacreontic Song and the Roots of Romantic Lyric," *ELH*, Vol. 66, No. 2 (Summer, 1999): 374. Brown's essay covers several national literatures, not only British, and the importance of the Anacreontic mode in other nations (Russia and Germany in particular) has been more frequently noted. See for example David Wellbery's discussion of eighteenth-century Anacreontic poetry in German and its significance for Romantic lyric in *The Specular Moment: Goethe's Early Lyric and the Beginnings of Romanticism* (Stanford: Stanford UP, 1996). Marty Roth gathers a range of critical commentary to support her claim that "no other Greek poet was as instrumental in the development of modern [European] lyric as 'Anacreon' " in " 'Anacreon' and Drink Poetry; or, the Art of Feeling Very Very Good," *Texas Studies in Literature and Language*, Vol. 42., No. 3 (Fall 2000): 314–45.

claim might sound far fetched given the relative neglect of this poetry now, but eighteenth-century readers "accepted that Anacreon, Alcaeus, Sappho, and Pindar together formed the canon of the Greek [lyric] tradition."[16] Excepting Pindar's victory odes, the work of these poets survived only in fragments, and the remaining canonical Greek lyric poets were lost entirely. It is therefore not difficult to understand why the *Anacreontea*'s discovery was so momentous. Before it was shown in the mid-nineteenth century to be itself a tissue of imitations, it appeared to be the purest surviving vein to lyric origins in Greece. [17] Anacreon provided an easeful counterpoint to Pindar's technical virtuosity, and the "mind" on display there seemed to many readers surprisingly modern and personable.

This idealization is evident in Thomas Moore's suggestion that "the soul of Anacreon speaks so unequivocally through his odes, that we may consult them as the faithful mirrors of his heart."[18] The translation of the Palatine manuscript that launched Moore's career, *Odes of Anacreon* (1800), is a strange hybrid of the popular and arcane. It is clear that Moore wanted to appeal to scholarly readers and was anxious to prove his scholarly authority. He had familiarized himself with a wide range of translations in English and other modern languages, and his learned preface and annotations provided

[16] David Fairer, "Lyric and Elegy," in Vol. 3 of *The Oxford History of the Reception of Classical Literature in English*, edited by David Hopkins and Charles Martindale (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), p. 520.
[17] See Rosenmeyer, 9. Johannes Cornelius de Pauw had identified the *Anacreontea* as a collection of imitations in 1732, only to be contradicted by Joseph Spalleti, who published an engraved facsimile in 1781 from the original manuscript (then at the Vatican). *Anacreontis Teii odae et fragmenta, Graece et Latine*, with notes (in Latin) by Johannes Cornelius de Pauw (Utrecht: 1732); *Anacreontis Teii Convivialia Semiambia,* ed. Spalletti, with Latin translations by Joshua Barnes (Rome: 1781).
[18] *Odes of Anacreon* (London: 1800), p. 10.

the most thorough account to date of the odes' provenance and transmission. Although this material can sometimes feel ponderous, as when footnotes describing archaic instruments or competing modern translations of individual lines threaten to eclipse a few light couplets at the top of the page, Moore's scholarly authority bought him license to interpret the poems in a popular mode. As an accomplished singer, he knew that Anacreon had become a figure of convivial celebration in modern drinking clubs, including London's famous Anacreontic Society. As a product of a standard but not glamorous education, he knew that the ubiquity of Anacreontic translation exercises in the British classroom had made them the "sort of insignificant poem any gentleman could write in his hours of leisure" (Brown, 374). His loose translations—even many admirers suggested they might better be described as new poems in an inherited mode—transferred Anacreon from the domain of literary gentlemen to a broader readership, including women and men lacking classical education.

Both negative and positive reviews of Moore's translation tend to focus on the same thing: their sensuous charge. While this may seem a predictable feature of poetry of wine and love, the sensuousness to which these reviewers responded was not typically thematic or topical. Rather, reviewers tend to focus on style. His confectionary additions to Anacreon's plain language often lengthened and complicated the odes. Compare, for example, the rendition of Ode 51 in the first complete English edition, by Thomas Stanley, to that of Moore:[19]

> Though my aged head be grey,
> And thy youth more fresh than May,
> Fly me not; oh! Rather see

[19] My numbering of the odes here and subsequently follows Rosenmeyer's translation.

In this wreath how gracefully
Roses with pale lilies join:
Learn of them, so let us twine.

• • •

Fly not thus my brow of snow,
Lovely wanton! Fly not so.
Though the wane of age is mine,
Though youth's brilliant flush be thine
Still I'm doom'd to sigh for thee,
Blest, if thou couldst sigh for me!
See, in yonder flowery braid,
Cull'd for thee, my blushing maid,
How the rose, of orient glow,
Mingles with the lily's snow;
Mark, how sweet their tints agree,
Just, my girl, like thee and me![20]

The original Greek version is, like Stanley's, six lines long. Moore doubles this length to achieve what his most recent biographer describes, speaking not of this poem but of *Anacreon* generally, as an effect similar to "fine wine on an empty stomach": "The same words endlessly recur ('sweet,' 'sigh,' and 'blush'; 'wanton,' 'wild,' and 'glow'); lips are always 'rosy,' and necks or breasts are 'snowy'….goblets (or 'nectar'd bowls') are quaffed, and doves (unless they are 'winglets' or 'birdlings' for some reason flap their 'humid pinions.' "[21]

This biographer follows a common development arc among Moore's latter-day celebrants, in which the poet overcomes his embarrassing early style to become Ireland's great national poet. But actually the description of *Anacreon* above could be applied to

[20] *The Poetical Works of Thomas Moore*, ed. A. D. Godley (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1929), p. 26.
[21] Ronan Kelly, *The Bard of Erin: A Life of Thomas Moore* (Dublin: Penguin, 2008), p. 168.

the better portion of Moore's oeuvre. The early translation represents only the most obvious phase in a process of poetic self-fashioning as "Anacreon Moore," the title by which he was known in the periodical and society press for the rest of his life. Moore's earliest surviving poems, published in 1793 under the anagram "Romeo," employ Anacreontic themes, as do many of the most famous late songs from *Irish Melodies* (for example, "Blame Not the Bard," "The Wandering Bard," "To Ladies' Eyes") and dozens of poems in between.[22] Consider the 1806 ballad "Anacreontic":

> I fill'd to thee, to thee I drank,
> I nothing did but drink and fill;
> The bowl by turns was bright and blank,
> 'Twas drinking, filling, drinking still!
>
> At length I bid an artist paint
> Thy image in this ample cup,
> That I might see the dimpled saint,
> To whom I quaff'd my nectar up.
>
> Behold, how bright that purple lip
> Is blushing through the wave at me!
> Every roseate drop I sip
> Is just like kissing wine from thee!
>
> But oh! I drink the more for this;
> For, ever when the draught I drain,
> Thy lip invites another kiss,
> And in the nectar flows again!
>
> So, here's to thee, my gentle dear!
> And may that eye for ever shine
> Beneath as soft and sweet a tear
> As bathes it in this bowl of mine (*PW*, 187)

[22] For more on the Anacreontic features of the *Melodies,* see my "Irish Melodies of Anacreontic Balladry," forthcoming in *Victorian Poetry* (February, 2017). Regarding Moore's early translations and imitations and work at Trinity on the odes that would later be gathered in the 1800 translation, see Jane Moore, "Thomas Moore, Anacreon, and the Romantic Tradition," *Romantic Textualities* (Winter 2013): 33–34.

Here Moore uses two famous moments from the *Anacreontea*—the request of Vulcan in Ode 4 to cast a silver bowl on which "Many a rose-lipped bacchant maid / Is culling clusters in their shade" and Ode 22's call for a painting of the absent beloved ("Best of painters! Come portray / The lovely maid that's far away")—to texture tropes of the sentimental love ballad he inherited from earthy songsters like Burns and passed on to poets like James Clarence Mangum and even Yeats:

> Wine comes in at the mouth
> And love comes in at the eye;
> That's all we shall know for truth
> Before we grow old and die.
> I lift the glass to my mouth,
> I look at you, and I sigh.[23]

In Moore's rendition, the mouth and eye feel weirdly like a single organ for breeding and dousing desire: each time the bowl rises, so rises the image of the "dimpled saint," encouraging the return of the bowl to the mouth (and the image to the eye) at the moment each round of nectar is quaffed. But the basic figures are the same.

By the time of his late-career celebrity Moore had eclipsed the *Anacreontea*, whose interest had dropped off precipitously for English readers, and his early translations were often lumped together with his early poems (as they are for the biographer above). But the details of Moore's reception tell a different story. *The Critical Review*'s pronouncement that Moore's translation had fulfilled "a long desideratum of English literature" by offering the first good full translation of the *Anacreontea* is

[23] "A Drinking Song," in *The Collected Works of W. B. Yeats*, Vol. 1 of 14, ed. Richard J. Finneran (New York: Scribner), p. 92.

separated by little more than a year from its condemnation (penned by Robert Southey) of Moore's original poetry debut, the pseudonymous *Poems of Thomas Little, Esq.*: "few ages have been more disgraced by a volume more corrupt in its spirit or tendency….*The Monk* had its spots; this is leprous all over."[24] Although the style and situations of the *Little* poems are so similar to *Anacreon* that reviewers guessed their authorship from the beginning, *Anacreon* was almost universally celebrated while *Little* was almost uniformly condemned. With the mist of antiquity lifted from its Anacreontic scenes and sentiments, *Little* appeared to record the escapades of a contemporary libertine.

Moore seems to have cultivated this reception strategically, as a sort of publicity stunt. The volume's editorial preface, penned by a certain "T. M." otherwise unnamed, presents the volume as juvenilia of a recently deceased poet whose age and humble origins just happened to be identical to Moore's own. This "editor" asks the public to forgive the poet's style as the fruit youthful indulgence.

> Mr Little died in his one-and-twentieth year; and most of these Poems were written at so early a period, that their errors may claim some indulgence from the critic: their author, as unambitious as indolent, scarce ever looked beyond the moment of composition….The "aurea legge, s'ei piace ei lice," he too much pursued, and too much inculcates. Few can regret this more sincerely than myself, and if my friend had lived, the judgment of riper years would have chastened his mind, and tempered the luxuriance of his fancy.

This is a parody of prefatory apologia, with a pointed undersong of disrespect to genteel critics. Moore's performance of regret at Little's wanton stickiness anticipates the judgments that followed in the press—unmanly, indolent, luxuriant—and aligns these

[24] *The Critical Review: Or, Annals of Literature* (1802), p. 205.

condemned qualities with the "golden law" of a great master (Tasso): "what pleases is permitted."

*Little*'s reputation retrospectively colored the way *Anacreon* was read, and set the stage for Moore's future reception as well. A lengthy 1803 essay in *The Edinburgh Review*, for example, quoted from *Little* as part of its conclusion about *Anacreon* that a "style so wantonly voluptuous, is at once effeminate and childish; and it is as unlike the original as it is unmanly in itself."[25] Another reviewer wrote in the *New Annual Register*, " 'The Poetical Works of the late Thomas Little, Esq.' are well known to be the production of Mr. Moore: they posses all the voluptuousness and all the elegant ease of his version of Anacreon, together with an indelicate cupidity which we are sorry to see occasionally indulged by such a writer beyond what is to be found in the glowing Grecian, and which we trust the morality of the age will never countenance."[26] Francis Jeffrey's 1806 review of Moore's second original volume, *Epistles, Odes, and Other Poems* (1806), sounded similar notes, with greater alarm. He explained his strong protest "against this and the former publications of this author" as a duty roused "both from what we hear of the circulation which they have already obtained, and from our conviction that they are calculated, if not strongly denounced to the public, to produce, at this moment, peculiar and irremediable mischief." According to Jeffrey, the quality of Moore's poetry that made it more "insidious" even than Rochester, Dryden, or French "Poesies Erotiques" is that it would appeal to "those classes of society, which it is of most consequence to keep free of contamination": "In this reading and opulent country, there

[25] "Moore's Translation of Anacreon," July 1803.
[26] *New Annual Register, or General Repository of History, Politics and Literature, for the year 1802*, p. 314.

are no fashions which diffuse themselves so fast, as those of literature and immorality: there is no palpable boundary between the *noblesse* and the *bourgeoisie*, as in old France, by which the corruption and intelligence of the former can be prevented from spreading to the latter."

Jeffrey's worry about sensuous poetry corrupting the social order is illuminating to compare to Hallam's assertion that sensation poetry could renew moral feeling there. Marshall Brown's observation that the "Keatsian language of the blush is heavily contaminated with the rhetoric of Anacreon, specifically the often reprinted version of Thomas Moore" was surely apparent from the reviewing desk at the *Edinburgh Review*. Keats must have looked to Jeffrey like the fulfillment of a prophecy: Moore's cheap Hellenism and vulgar sensuality had spread to "those classes of society, which it is of most consequence to keep free of contamination." Although Jeffrey's characterizations of Moore often sound interchangeable with his later and more famous characterizations of Keats, it is is notable that the same public that adored Moore disregarded Keats (at least initially). Hallam called Keats a *sensation* poet, not only a sensuous one, with a specific historical dimension in mind. It didn't matter that Keats didn't know how to read Italian; what mattered is that he drew on the " 'orbs of song' and their noble satellites in " 'great Eliza's golden clime,' " the period of English verse most powerfully marked by Italian poetry and its forms of feeling. Hallam saw it as matter of course that sensation poetry would be received with hostility, and would create the taste by which it would be judged. By contrast, Moore reflects the spirit of his age with easeful plays on formulae already in broad cultural circulation, coating sugary products with colorful candy shells. Moore masterfully entertained "that hydra, the reading public," the "readers after dinner" which

Hallam suggested were unwilling to put forward the pleasurable exertion his sensation poets required.

Hallam wrote in his review that Tennyson's "thorough and sterling English" reflects the "fertility of expression and variety of harmony which 'the speech that Shakespeare spoke' derived from the sources of Southern phraseology" ("Characteristics," 198). Whether Tennyson was moved in his emulation by Hallam's theories or Hallam's theories draw on Tennyson's poems is impossible to know for certain; I suspect some combination of the two. The currents of other places and times in this poetry, specifically on those strange prosodic surfaces Coleridge complained were unscannable and un-English, reflect an attempt to restore, by artifice, vitality once natural to the language.

**III.**

Apart from "Anacreontics," with its obvious cue in the title, Tennyson's clearest link to Anacreontic tradition is "The Grasshopper," a playful emulation of the most famous ode from the *Anacreontea,* which appeared in his 1830 volume. Most of Tennyson's Anacreontics do not directly imitate the originals. Rather, they borrow thematic and formal resources from French and Italian Anacreontics, especially the light "Anacreontea canzonetta" that Chiabrera innovated in the 1590s, and which profoundly influenced Italian verse and vocal music over the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries (more on this

history below). Among Tennyson's poems in this lineage are "Anacreontics," three songs submerged in "The Miller's Daughter" (1832 and 1842), and several of the early poems to eponymous women that Tennyson said "evolved, like the camel, from my imagination."[27] To begin, I put "Anacreontics" back on the table and its sounds back in the air.

> With roses muskybreathed
> And drooping daffodilly,
> And silverleaved lily,
> And ivy darkly-wreathed,
> I wove a crown before her
> For her I love so dearly,
> A garland for Lenora.
> With a silken cord I bound it.
> Lenora, laughing clearly
> A light and thrilling laughter,
> About her forehead wound it,
> And loved me ever after.

I noted earlier that the vast majority of English Anacreontics, from Herrick's imitations of the 1640s (and possibly earlier) to Moore's 1800 translation, use seven- or eight-syllable rhyming couplets with a strong terminal accent (e.g., Cowley's famed opening lines: "**Ha**ppy **in**sect, **what** can **be** / In **hap**pi**ness** comp**ared** with **thee**?").[28] By contrast,

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[27] *Poems*, I: 199. It's difficult to know when "The Grasshopper" was written—some of the poems in the volume dated to Tennyson's mid-teens, and this particular ode would have been common for schoolboy imitation. But the similarities of form and theme across the poems to young women may be explained by the fact that they were written over a short period, during which time "Anacreontics" was also composed. Tennyson made a list in a copy of the 1830 volume of women's names, apparently titles to continue the cycle of "women poems" he had begun (see Ricks I: 401). Some of these appeared in *Poems* (1832): "Eleänore," "Kate," "Rosalind," "Margaret."

[28] I am thinking of "Born I was to meet with age," "Cupid as he lay among," "Brisk methinks I am, and fine," "Fly me not, though I be gray," and "Maidens tell me I am old." Herrick also uses eight-syllable lines and, in one case, pentameters. ("Methought I saw [as I did dream in bed]"). The imitative poems are metrically similar but occasionally

Tennyson's seven- and eight-syllable lines irregularly disperse falling ("feminine") rhymes. What is he after here?

A. A. Markley, one of the few critics to have commented on the poem, argues that Tennyson is imitating Greek Anacreontic meter against the "Latinate" English norm.[29] Although it is true that Tennyson would have approached the dual-language *Anacreontea* in his father's library (he later purchased one for his own) with greater sensitivity than most imitators, for whom Latin would have been more comfortable than Greek, this argument is not entirely satisfying.[30] Even if we assume a correlation between English stress and syllable-length in classical languages, as Markley does, contemporary instructions for writing Latin Anacreontic meter do not necessarily match the English

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introduce variations that suggest French influence: "Anakreontike," for example, expands the meter across three lines with added rhymes (*aabccb*). Stella Achilleos suggests in "Growth of Sociability" that at least some of Herrick's anacreontics may date to the 1620s and have been influenced directly by Jonson (also see McEuen's intoduction in *Tribe of Ben*); these poems were first printed in *Hesperides* (1648). A thorough discussion of Herrick's Anacreontic poems, imitative and translated, is in Gordon Braden's *The Classics and English Renaissance Poetry: Three Case Studies* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1978), 196–232.

[29] The Latin versions often begin with a long syllable (*– u – u – u –*), while the Greek's two common meters do not: seven-syllable hemiambics (*u – u – u – x*) and eight-syllable anaclasts (*u u – u – u – x*). Markley scans the poem as accentual-syllabic versions of Greek hemiambics (e.g., *With **ro**ses **mus**ky **breath**-ed*) with one anaclast (*With a **sil**ken **cord** I **bound it***) that overturn the Latinate renderings of poets like Stanley (***Though** my **age**-d **head** be **grey**, / **And** thy **youth** more **fresh** than **May***). *Stateliest Measures: Tennyson and the Literature of Greece and Rome* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004): 104–05. See D. A. Campbell's detailed discussion of the *Anacreontea*'s standard meters and acceptable substitutions in *Greek Lyric*, Vol. 2 (Cambridge, MA: Loeb Library), 7–10. An intensive analysis of the meter's development into Latin and subsequently into modern languages can be found in Michael Lapidge, "Theodore and Anglo-Latin Octosyllabic Verse," in *Archbishop Theodore: Commemorative Studies on His Life and Influence*, ed. Michael Lapidge (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), p. 260–80.

[30] Unfortunately, these editions, now housed at the Tennyson Research Center in Lincoln, do not contain marginalia or notes.

norm. For example, one of the most popular Latin manuals of the century's early decades, John Carey's *Latin Prosody Made Easy*, seems to describe "Anacreontic" to a T when it says that that such meter consists of "three iambi, and a catalectic syllable" but flexibly permits substitutions in the first position "and suffers no variation in the final foot."[31]

Moreover, Markley says nothing about Tennyson's conspicuous use of rhyme, a modern resource, to enforce his "classical" meter. William Harmon confidently states in his survey of English rhyme that there are "very few poems that employ nothing but multiple [polysyllabic] rhymes, and all of them are humorous in one way or another."[32] Whether or not Tennyson's exclusive use of polysyllabic rhyme produces the effect Harmon anticipates, these rhymes certainly fall strangely on the ear. Polysyllabic rhyme is uncommon in English (note that Tennyson often uses multiple words, or just invents new ones). By contrast, in French polysyllabic rhymes are frequent, and in Italian almost the norm.[33] Of special significance for this discussion is the way Italian versification measures lines not only by syllable count, as French also does, but also by the position of the final accent in the line. The most frequent line type, *piano* or "plain," receives this accent in the penultimate syllable (e.g. *beáto*), as all of Tennyson's lines do above. A common variation of the *piano* line is the *sdrucciolo* ("slippery") line, whose accent falls on the penultimate syllable (e.g. *intrépido*). Less common—though, as we will see,

[31] *Latin Prosody Made Easy*, fourth ed. (London: 1830): 270.
[32] "Rhyme in English Verse: History, Structures, Fuctions" *Studies in Philology*, vol. 84, no. 4 (Autumn, 1987).
[33] See the discussion of "relational" versus "inflectional" languages in the "Rhyme" section of the *Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics*, 4th ed: "In Fr. and especially It., nearly all rhymes are double or triple."

Chiabrera uses it frequently—is the *tronco* ("truncated") line, which receives its accent in the final syllable (e.g. *amor*). For the purposes of scansion, the *piano* line is standard, so that, for example, a six-syllable *tronco* rhyme has a syllable added to it while an eight-syllable *sdrucciolo* has one taken away in order to count as types of *setenario*, a conventional line of seven syllables.[34]

These rules are of course not simply a matter of poetic convention, but are anchored in Italian phonology. In his diary, Thomas Moore recalls Wordsworth quoting a Tasso stanza "where the double rhymes 'ella,' 'nella,' and 'quella' occurred" to demonstrate how "naturally [Italian] words fell into music of themselves."[35] According to Moore, Wordsworth said that he preferred "rugged" English to "easy and mellifluous" Italian because the latter is too "apt to tempt, by its facility, into negligence and lead the poet to substitute music for thought" (Mortimer, 67). Perhaps this is why Wordsworth's interest in Chiabrera focused not on his Anacreontics but on his unrhymed epitaphs, nine of which Wordsworth translated into blank verse (and which occasioned the three *Essays Upon Epitaphs* of 1810).[36] But Wordsworth's uncollected "Cantata, from Metastasio" (1803), shows him experimenting with such "double rhymes" a few years earlier:

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[34] For a lucid, brief description of Italian prosody for the English reader see Pierluigi Petrobelli's "A Note On Italian Prosody," in *Music in the Theater: Essays on Verdi and Other Composers* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993).

[35] Anthony Mortimer, "Wordsworth as translator from Italian," in *From Wordsworth to Stevens: Essays in Honor of Robert Rehder* (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2005), p. 67.

[36] These essays and six of the translations, along with some commentary on Chiabrera by Coleridge, appeared in *The Friend* over three months in 1810. Hallam refers to one of Coleridge's comments from this series in a footnote to his college poem, "Timbuctoo," and James Nohrberg suggests that Tennyson alludes to this moment in "Ulysses," the coded elegy written in the direct wake of his friend's sudden death. See "Eight Reflections of Tennyson's 'Ulysses,' " *Victorian Poetry*, vol. 47, no. 1 (Spring 2009): 103–04.

Laura, farewell my Laura!
'Tis come, that hour distressing,
How shall I live, my blessing,
So far from thee?
Sorrow will still pursue me,
No good will e'er come to me;
And thou, who knows if ever
Thou wilt remember me?

Let, at least, in the footing
Of my peace that is departed,
Some thoughts heavy-hearted
Thy pursuivants be:
Though far off, still in union,
I will be thy companion;
And thou, who knows if ever
Thou wilt remember me![37]

Treating line-length with flexibility, Wordsworth has strictly preserved the ordering of *piano* and *tronco* rhyme in Metastasio's poem ("Ecco quel fiero istante"), which is for both stanzas $a^{8}b^{8}b^{7}c^{6t}c^{8}c^{8}d^{6t}c^{6t}$. Excepting the fourth line of each stanza, the poem is comprised of seven-syllable lines with "falling" double rhyme and six-syllable lines that use single rhyme to rise: these are what *settenari* sound like in English.

It may be surprising, given its thematic tenor, that this Metastasio song would have been understood as "Anacreontic" within the context of Italian vocal music. The context for this categorization emerged from Chiabrera's Anacreontic innovations, which established the basis for aria at the birth of opera and cantata in the early seventeenth century.[38] These *canzonetta* followed *Pléiade* poets in developing Anacreontic themes

[37] *The Poems of William Wordsworth: A Supplement*, ed. Jared Curtis (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2008), p. 560.
[38] Roger Freitas notes that opera and cantata song "owes its greatest debt to the tradition of Chiabrera. The short, closed forms that served composers as aria texts owe their very existence to Chiabrera's influence, and most passages display the verbal musicality that

and iconography as part of a broader tradition of love poetry, referring "less to an individual subtext than to a topos enshrined within the literary tradition as a whole and traceable in a variety of classical and contemporary writers…'Anacreon' becomes a voice among voices."[39] In this way, Chiabrera's poems realize a primary goal outlined in Du Bellay's *Defense and Enrichment of the French Language* (1549), the *Pléiade's* manifesto, which argues that French poets must attempt to achieve what only Tuscan-language such as Petrarch and Boccaccio had among the moderns: the importation into living dialect of the best classical poets, "transforming themselves into them, devouring them, and, after having thoroughly digested them, converting them into blood and nourishment" for the nation.[40] Chiabrera found in the revolutionary calls and practice of these French near-contemporaries an example for restoring classical literature in "classical" Italian (Tuscan), just as Italian "Arcadian" poets (including Metastasio) did a century later.

The most distinctive feature of Chiabrera's Anacreontic songs is in their metrical experiment, which follows (but also greatly expands upon) those of the *Pléiade*. In some cases the emulation of the French models is relatively straightforward: Chiabrera alternates *tronco* and *piano* rhymes in imitation of the alternating "masculine" and "feminine" rhymes of French convention, for example. In other cases, as Fernando Neri exhaustively demonstrates in *Chiabrera e la pléiade*, the transposition of these French

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was the poet's hallmark." "Singing and Playing: The Italian Cantata and the Rage for Wit," *Music & Letters*, vol. 82, No. 4 (November 2001): 521.

[39] *Anacreon Redividus: A Study of Anacreontic Translation in Mid-Sixteenth Century France* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1995), p. 193.

[40] Joachim Du Bellay, *The Regrets*, ed. and trans., Richard Helgerson (Pennsylvania: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006), p. 336.

models becomes extraordinarily complex, especially in those poems based on the coterie's later work.[41] To take the example of Ronsard, his early Anacreontic imitations in the *Bocages* (1554) and *Meslanges* (1555), which appear as couplets or in stanzas of seven- and eight-syllable lines, give way to more complex formal organization in the Anacreontics of the *Amours* (1555, 1556, and 1559). In these later poems a simple stanza of eight-syllable lines rhyming *aabccb* might introduce, for example, syllabic variations such as $a^8a^4b^8c^8c^4b^8$.

Transposing such stanzas into Italian, Chiabrera sometimes uses what would have been considered acceptable Italian line-types at the time, of five syllables (*quinari*) and seven syllables (*settenari*): $a^7a^5b^7c^7c^5b^7$. But as often he swims against Italian metrical norms. Bernard Bertone notes that in these odes "all meters are allowed, including without restriction lines of even-numbered syllables," which was uncommon at the time and generally considered to be in poor taste.[42] A famous and relatively straightforward example is "Bella rose porporine," in which Chiabrera not only uses lines of even-numbered syllables but also gives these even lines *piano* rhymes:

> Bella rose porporine
> che tra spine
> sull'aurora non aprite
> ma, minister degli Amori,
> bei tesori
> di bei denti custodite,
>
> dite, rose preziose,
> amorose,
> dite, ond'é, che s'io m'affiso
> nel bel guardo vivo ardente,

[41] See *Il Chiabrera e la pléiade* (Torino, 1920), p. 43-98.
[42] *Breve dizionario di metrica italiana* (Milan: Einaudi, 1999), p. 14–16. Trans., Joel Calahan.

voi repente
discioglie te un bel sorriso?

Bertone's exposition of Chiabrera's Anacreontic meter, which lists the most common base stanza forms he borrowed from the *Pléiade* followed by a list of more specific metrical transpositions, is imposing:

> Chiabrera also uses *senari piani* [six-syllable lines with the penultimate syllable accented]…*settenari piani accoppiati* [six-syllable lines with the penultimate syllable accented, in couplets]…unrhymed *settenari sdruccioli* [seven-syllable lines with the antepenultimate syllable accented] alternating in twos with rhymed *settenari tronchi* [seven-syllable lines with the final syllable accented], where the antepenultimate accents create a rhythmical rhyme (*scorgeano : fiorivano*), that is, an antepenultimate rhyme in which the corresponding perfect homophonic rhyme does not count—and therefore is in effect missing—but in which the exceptional nature of the antepenultimate accent is elevated to the level of rhyme, demonstrating the strong rhythmical exposition that the Chiabrerian canzonetta aspires to create.[43]

Neri argues that the height of Chiabrera's sophistication comes in even more elaborate "variations on theme," in which additional lines and rhymes are added to stanza forms he imitates, such as the expansion of octosyllabic lines in six-line stanzas to the following: $a^5a^5b^{11}c^5d^5d^5b^{11}c^5e^5e^5$.

Despite this prosodic intricacy, Chiabrera wanted his Anacreontics to feel easeful. In one of his dialogues on poetry, he writes of the *scherzi musicali,* as the Anacreontics were called when first set to music and collected with other light love songs in the early 1600s:

[43] Ibid., 15.

> Do you not obtain solace from seeing such coquetries [*scherzi*] represented, which require neither art, nor comment, nor explication? …humankind includes the subtlest intellects, as well as pedestrian ones, and all have to be able to sing.[44]

The important point is that is verse for music, with flexibility that may perplex the finger-scanner even as it gives license to the performer and pleases the ear. Ludovico Zuccolo complained in 1623 that because Chiabrera and his followers chose not to write "music that is adapted to verses, but verses, against all right, adapted to music, poetry has lost all modesty, all decorum, and has almost changed from a modest young girl to a wanton strumpet."[45] But by this time, this verse adapted to music had taken on a life of its own. Chiabrera and other early aria writers such as Ottavio Rinuccini established a model that persisted through the eighteenth century: strongly marked strophic stanzas, complex or simple, that use lines of alternating length and rhyme that lend themselves to repetition. Apart from the familiarity with Chiabrera that Tennyson seems to have had through Hallam, he would certainly have been familiar with this tradition of verse-song that Chiabrera initiated.[46] While "Anacreontics" shows determined effort to emulate the aural contour of *settenari* in which early Italian Anacreontic translations were often rendered, including some by Chiabrera, other poems hint at an engagement with the aria tradition that developed from Chiabrera's less regular metrical schemes.

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[44] Qtd. in Massimo Ossi, *Divining the Oracle: Monteverdi's* Seconda Prattica (Chicago: Chicago UP, 2003), 115.
[45] *Discorso delle ragioni del numero del verso italiano* (Venice, 1623). Qtd. translation and discussion by Paolo Fabbri in "Metrical and Formal Organization," *The History of Italian Opera*, Part II, Vol 6 (*Systems*), edited by Lorenzo Bianconi and Georgio Pestelli (Chicago: U Chicago Press, 2003): 161.
[46] See n37.

Metastasio was by far the most famous composer of arias during the eighteenth century, especially in England, and his most frequent aria form regularized Chiabrerean style (or, perhaps more accurately, some of Chiabrera's more exuberant Baroque imitators).[47] The standard Metastasian aria features two stanzas, each including lines of varying length and rhyme type and ending with a *tronco* rhyme corresponding to its partner, as in the Wordsworth translation above. Late in the century "these two-strophe aria texts began to lose ground, whether to three-strophe ones—characteristic of the aria form known as the *rondo*—or to more flexible poetic forms, also with changing meters."[48]

This less regular style, which nevertheless relied on certain core features of earlier aria form, including alternating line-lengths and surprising combinations of rhyme, was in vogue when Tennyson was writing the chiefly lyrical poems of the late 1820s and early 1830s. Hallam's praise of Tennyson's poems for their accommodation of Italianate "keen treble," which he believed had largely disappeared from the language at the Restoration, offer important clues for locating Tennyson's early aspirations. Consider

[47] "Metastasian texts dominated the [eighteenth-century] King's Theatre stage as they did the opera house of Europe at large…Metastasio was the most translated and arguably the most read Italian poet in England in the second half of the eighteenth century, exceeding even Dante and Petrarch." Gillen D'arcy Wood, *Romanticism and Music Culture in Britain, 1770–1840: Virtue and Virtuosity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011).

[48] Tim Carter, *Understanding Italian Opera* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), p. 12. A 1794 explanation for the lay reader notes that the "division of sentences, and the order of the rhymes in the *canzonette Anacreontiche*, cannot be easily determined, so various are the different metres of them." Listing Chiabrera as the formal originator and Metastasio as the most recent innovator of these poems, this explanation notes that the two rules of most significance are: 1) once a stanza is established as a pattern it must not vary; and 2) rhymes should vary in their proximity within each stanza, to please the ear with variety.

"Claribel," which risks bathos to achieve the effect of *settenari* in its six-, seven-, and eight-syllable variations:

Where Claribel low-lieth
  The breezes pause and die,
    Letting the roseleaves fall;
But the solemn oaktree sigheth,
    Thick-leaved, ambrosial,
  With an ancient melody
  Of an inward agony,
Where Claribel low-lieth.

At eve the beetle boometh
  Athwart the thicket lone:
At noon the bee low-hummeth
  About the mossed headstone:
At midnight the moon cometh,
  And looketh down alone.
Her song the lintwhite swelleth,
The clearvoiced mavis dwelleth,
  The fledging throstle lispeth
The slumbrous wave outwelleth,
  The babbling runnel crispeth,
The hollow grot replieth
Where Claribel low-lieth.

The final lines of this poem might at first bring to mind Wordsworth's worry about the ease of double rhyme, and the effect of mellifluous Italian on the kind of thought English enables. But if one can accept the image of a crisping runnel, and that crispeth is a word, and that this word's archaic verb tense should serve as the rhyme across thirteen lines (three of them identical), there is something remarkable about the logic of reanimation on display: Claribel low-lieth, yet an ancient melody of an inward agony sigheth (in sympathy?), and prompts echoes from the unpeopled world around the mossed headstone.

Another important example, and one that makes use of a wider range of lines and rhymes, is “Lilian”:

Airy, fair Lilian,
Flitting, fairy Lilian
When I ask her if she love me,
Claps her tiny hands above me,
Laughing all she can;
She’ll not tell me if she love me,
Cruel little Lilian.

When my passion seeks
Pleasance in lovesighs
She, looking through and though me
Thoroughly to undo me,
Smiling, never speaks;
So innocent arch, so cunning-simple,
From beneath her purfled wimple,
Glancing with blackbeaded eyes
Till the lightning laughters dimple
The baby-roses in her cheeks,
Then away she flies.

Prythee weep, May Lilian!
Gaiety without eclipse
Wearieth me, May Lilian:
Through my very heart it thrilleth
When from crimsonthreaded lips
Silvertreble laughter trilleth:
Prythee weep, May Lilian.

Praying all I can,
If prayers will not hush thee,
Airy Lilian
Like a roseleaf I will crush thee,
Fairy Lilian.

This poem’s irregular meter is notable, including stanzas that without repetition incorporate lines of four, five, six, seven, eight, and ten syllables. But the most striking feature may be the use of polysyllabic rhymes. These rhymes lend the poem what it has

by now become tempting to call an "Italian effect," which might alter the way the way we choose to scan the poem. For example, it is worth noting that although line-length varies Tennyson generally matches rhymes by their rising or falling movement, as Wordsworth does in the translation included above. Take the second stanza alone, for example: $a^{5t}b^{5t}c^{7}c^{7}a^{5t}d^{8}d^{8}b^{7t}d^{8}a^{8t}b^{5t}$. Such scansion could be performed for the entire poem, with the return, in the final stanza, of airy fairy Lilian, and of identical meter and rhymes (e.g. ***When** I **ask** her **if** she **love** me* / ***Like** a **rose**leaf **I** will **crush** thee*). An important exception to this rule comes in the key rhyme word, the title itself, whose pronunciation is left open throughout by the use of minor metrical shifts. Does *Lilian* correspond to the "*tronco*" rhymes of ***Laugh**ing **all** she **can*** and ***Pray**ing **all** I **can***, or does the more common pronciation, ***Lil** – i – an*, apply? To answer a question like this one demands performance, and that performance, forcing one to commit either to "English" or "Italian" rhyme, reveals Tennyson's masterful accommodation of both at once.

Hallam's disapproving characterization of Augustan rhyme—"the dullest senses can perceive an identity in [the recurrence of termination], and be pleased with it"—is contrasted with the rhyme style of Elizabethan poets and their Italian exemplars: "the partial identity, latent in more diffused resemblances, requires, in order to be appreciated, a soul susceptible to musical impression." ("Italian," 222fn). This investment of significance in rhyme as the fundamental basis of "musical impression," and in the idea of song in an age when it has faded, casts new light on the irregular rhyme arrangement of Tennyson's early songs on the page. More than two centuries after Zuccolo complained that Chiabrera's little songs had damaged Italian meter, Coleridge was

puzzling over the invented stanzas and rhyme arrangements that are so common in Tennyson's first two volumes. In the final section below, I turn to a special instance of Tennyson's Anacreontic imitation, in which these songs are vested with greater self-reflexivity by virtue of their placement within the long narrative poem, "The Miller's Daughter."

**IV.**

Given the widespread influence of Ronsard's Anacreontics, it is not surprising that those few critics who have noticed that the famous song in "The Miller's Daughter" ("I wish I were here earing") is an imitation have assumed that Ronsard is Tennyson's source.[49] As usual, however, a closer inspection suggests that Tennyson has his eye and ear turned on more than one predecessor. In fact there are two songs in the poem that might be called Anacreontic, and a third song added in the poem's 1842 revision. These songs interrupt the monologue that comprises the poem, in which the unnamed narrator reminisces to his wife, Alice, about their early love affair, pausing twice to ask her to sing. In this final section I argue that these songs implicitly contrast the Italian and English traditions derived from French Anacreontic poets. I argue that Tennyson's songs valorize the Italian

[49] E.g., Louis Du Pont Syle, *From Milton to Tennyson: Masterpieces of English Poetry* (Boston, 1894), p. 154; Morton Luce, *A Handbook to the Works of Alfred, Lord Tennyson* (London, 1906), p. 121.

tradition that Chiabrera initiated—a tradition of living song—and parody English Anacreontic verse, a page tradition that had become mind-numbing in its "weary sameness," to borrow from the 1842 version of the poem.

Before I turn to the first song, compare Patricia Rosenmeyer's literal line-by-line translation of the Greek ode's relevant stanzas to Ronsard's version:

> But would that I were a mirror
> so that you would always gaze at me;
> if only I were a cloak
> so that you would always wear me.
> I wish I were water
> So that I could wash your skin;
> If only, my lady, I were perfumed myrrh
> So that I could anoint you.
> And a fillet at your breast,
> And a pearl at your neck,
> And a sandal I would be;
> All I ask is that you step on me.[50]

• • •

> Mais je voudrais estre miroir
> A fin que tousjours tu me visses;
> Chemise je voudrois me voir,
> Afin que souvent tu me prisses.
>
> Volontiers eau je deviendrois,
> Afin que ton corps je lavasse ;
> Estre du parfum je voudrois,
> Afin que je te parfumasse.
>
> Je voudrois estre le riban
> Qui serre ta belle poitrine;
> Je voudrois estre le carquan
> qui orne ta gorge yvoirine.
>
> Je voudrois estre tout autour

[50] *Poetics of Imitation*, 249.

Le coral qui tes lèvres touche,
Afin de baiser nuit et jour
Tes belles lèvres et ta bouche.

*But I would want to be a mirror*
*So that always you saw me;*
*A shirt I wish you saw me as*
*So that often you wore me.*

*Gladly water I'd become*
*So I might wash your body;*
*I'd wish to be a perfume*
*So that I could cover you in scent.*

*I'd want to be the ribbon*
*That cinches round your breasts;*
*I'd want to be the collar*
*That trims your ivory throat.*

*I'd want to be all over*
*The coral that touches your lips,*
*So as to kiss all night and day*
*Your fair lips and your mouth.*[51]

Ronsard's only substantive departure from Anacreon comes in his substitution of lipwear for footwear. Tennyson's departures are numerous. This is a song in the spirit of the original:

SONG.

I wish I were her earring,
Ambushed in auburn ringlets sleek
(So might my shadow tremble
Over her downy cheek,)
Hid in her hair, all day and night,
Touching her neck so warm and white.

I wish I were the girdle
Buckled about her dainty waist
That her heart might beat against me,
In sorrow and in rest.

[51] Translation provided by Josh Adams.

I should know well if it beat right,
I'd clasp it round so close and tight.

I wish I were her necklace,
So might I ever fall and rise
Upon her balmy bosom
With her laughter, or her sighs.
I would lie round so warm and light
I would not be unclasped at night. (1832 version)

Tennyson's stanza form shows evidence of his acquaintance with the French poets who first popularized the odes, with the alternation of "masculine" and "feminine" rhyme being particularly notable. But the sounded (rather than visual) English rendering of these rhymes is again strongly reminiscent of Chiabrera's Italian adaptations of the French versions. Tennyson is incorporating features of both foreign traditions, themselves styled on classical norms, in English.

This song appears nineteen octave stanzas into the poem, after the narrator has recalled in vague terms his early life as the heir of a local squire, waking each morning to purposeless animal ease. This ease is broken by the peculiar romantic encounter of stanza eleven, when the careless youth, lounging with his fishing pole beside a stream and millpool, has his attention diverted by a "water-rat" to a "troubled image" reflected in the water: "Upon the dark and dimpled beck / It wandered like a floating light, / A full fair form, a warm white neck, / And two white arms—how rosy white!" In the image, the daughter is leaning over her window-ledge gazing at the water. When she rises to meet the narrator's eyes she sends him into a spell of wandering the nearby wolds and woods, watching her window from afar. In the midst of this wandering the narrator records another encounter with an image in a stream:

XV

The white chalkquarry from the hill
Upon the broken ripple gleamed,
I murmured slowly, sitting still
While round my feet the eddy streamed:
"Oh! that I were the wreath she wreathes,
The mirror where her sight she feeds,
The song she sings, the air she breathes,
The letters of the book she reads."

This first entry of Anacreontic sentiments, which comes five stanzas before the song I've already quoted, transforms the primary trope of the original ode, the desire to be an object the beloved touches or sees, into narcissism. The daughter "feeds" at her own image, but only in the imagined scene called up by the narrator's own feeding (at his own image) in the stream.

The song enters the monologue by way of sense memories with which it shares a pattern of association—the emergence, from noise, of a voice:

XVIII.

Remember you the clear moonlight,
That whitened all the eastern ridge,
When o'er the water, dancing white,
I stepped upon the old millbridge.
I heard you whisper from above
A lutetoned whisper, "I am here;"
I murmured, "Speak again, my love,
The stream is loud: I cannot hear."

XIX.

I heard, as I have seemed to hear,
When all the under-air was still,
The low voice of the glad new year
Call to the freshly-flowered hill.
I heard, as I have often heard
The nightingale in leavy woods
Call to its mate, when nothing stirred
To left or right but falling floods.

In its hallucinatory strangeness, this scene rivals stretches of *Maud.* Perhaps the daughter really is "above" (in the miller's house?), audible through the stream's steady sound. Or perhaps the narrator only seems to hear her, as he has seemed to hear the new year calling to the freshly flowered hill. What matters for my purposes here is that the pattern established by these memories—a voice emerging from noise—is replicated by reference to a sound that *is*, in the present of the poem, and to sounds that *seem to be*, in memory, when the narrator asks the daughter to sing the "song I gave you on our marriageday": "I shall seem / The while you sing that song, to hear, / The millwheel turning in the stream, / And the green chestnut whisper near."

The song referenced in these lines is the first of two the narrator asks Alice to sing. Each performs a different function, as instances of what Elizabeth Helsinger has called Tennyson's "poem-including-song." Helsinger observes in a wide range of poems across Tennyson's career the insertion of song as a way of representing the experience of collapsed temporality, both for individual characters and across larger expanses of cultural memory. These songs are in many cases framed as "alien elements…belonging to others, or to no one," like folksongs whose origins have worn away.[52] In the case of the song already quoted, Helsinger's description applies literally. That is, this is an actual adaption (rather than simulation) of anonymous song that has passed through many hands and no longer has a known source—not quite Ronsard, or Chiabrera, or Moore, or "Anacreon," but rather an expansion of imitations upon imitations of an original

[52] *Poetry and the Thought of Song in Nineteenth-Century British Poetry* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2015), p. 44.

anonymous ode, an ode that itself is really only an emulation an imagined poet and poetic ideal.

In 1842, Tennyson removed the stanza in which the narrator gazes into his reflection, haunted by the earlier reflection of the daughter and repeating the Anacreontic sentiments that reaffirm this blurring of images and selves. It was replaced by the thought of controlled and reciprocal affections: " 'Oh, that I were beside her now! / O will she answer if I call / O would she give me vow for vow, / Sweet Alice, if I told her all?' " In this revision, the sight of the daughter has led the narrator away from boyhood foolishness. Additionally, Tennyson inserted the following new stanza before the spine-strengthening vision of the daughter.

> A love-song I had somewhere read,
> An echo from a measured strain,
> Beat time to nothing in my head
> From some odd corner of the brain.
> It haunted me, the morning long,
> With weary sameness in the rhymes,
> The phantom of a silent song,
> That came and went a thousand times.

In Tennyson's description, the love song *read* is the phantom that remains after music has been silenced. Reduced to text, such "songs" only echo or memorialize measured strains that are no longer accessible.[53]

[53] Helsinger shows that the way that poem-songs detach from their tunes over time was a source of anxiety as well as power for nineteenth-century poets. See "Poem into Song," in *New Literary History*, Vol. 46, No. 4 (Fall 2015): 669–90.

The two versions of the song the narrator made, before he met the daughter, offer two different examples of bad love poetry, whose weary sameness of rhymes beats time to nothing.

SONG.

All yesterday you met me not
My ladylove, forget me not.
When I am gone, regret me not,
But, here or there, forget me not.
With your arched eyebrow threat me not,
And tremulous eyes, like April skies,
That seem to say, 'forget me not.'
I pray you, love, forget me not.

In idle sorrow set me not;
Regret me not: forget me not:
Oh! leave me not; oh, let me not
Wear quite away;--forget me not.
With roguish laughter fret me not
From dewy eyes, like April skies,
That ever *look*, 'forget me not,'
Blue as the blue forget-me-not. (1832)

• • •

Love that hath us in the net,
Can he pass, and we forget?
Many suns arise and set.
Many a chance the years beget.
Love the gift is Love the debt.
Even so.
Love is hurt with jar and fret.
Love is made a vague regret.
Eyes with idle tears are wet.
Idle habit links us yet.
What is love? For we forget:
Ah, no! no! (1842)

Both of these songs strictly abide by the "rising" rhyme norms of the Anacreontic tradition in English, first in the eight-syllable and then in the seven-syllable variations. They look like schoolboy imitations of poetry on topics that boys know nothing about, wine and love. Tennyson is contrasting the kind of imitation Coleridge seems to have wanted him to undertake with the kind of innovation he wanted to achieve: English enriched with "Southern Phraseology," the lost music of another, better age.

"I wish I were her earing" now stands as one of the best-known poetic songs in English, but the particular verse and music traditions on which it is grounded have all but disappeared. Hallam wouldn't have minded. What he specified in Tennyson's music, through dense speculations in theology and materialist moral philosophy, was there to be felt on its own, and "easier felt than described" ("Characteristics," 191). The metrical hybridity of Tennyson's Anacreontic odes, and in particular his replacement of modern English conventions with an imagined Italian English, attempted to *enact* Hallam's principles in the material of poetic form. In this way, Tennyson's "archaist-innovation" is not so different from the variety evident in Keats, despite these poets' very different language skills and poetic training. As I argued in my first two chapters, Keats emulated of pre-Restoration couplet style (as he understood it through Hunt, as well as his own study of "classical" English) with the aim of renewing lost resources. He did so with a specific end: to make possible thought guided by what Hazlitt called imagination—the sense of one's future experience, and of other minds in the present—rather than memory. All these figures shared the conviction that social feeling, like axioms of philosophy, must be proved along the pulses. Poetry pointed the way.

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