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CONTOURS OF REALISM

George Eliot's "Silly Novels by Lady Novelists" (1856)

[1] Silly Novels by Lady Novelists are a genus with many species, determined by the particular quality of silliness that predominates in them—the frothy, the prosy, the pious, or the pedantic. But it is a mixture of all these—a composite order of feminine fatuity—that produces the largest class of such novels, which we shall distinguish as the *mind-and-millinery* species. The heroine is usually an heiress, probably a peeress in her own right, with perhaps a vicious baronet, an amiable duke, and an irresistible younger son of a marquis as lovers in the foreground, a clergyman and a poet sighing for her in the middle distance, and a crowd of undefined adorers dimly indicated beyond. Her eyes and her wit are both dazzling; her nose and her morals are alike free from any tendency to irregularity; she has a superb *contralto* and a superb intellect; she is perfectly well dressed and perfectly religious; she dances like a sylph, and reads the Bible in the original tongues. Or it may be that the heroine is not an heiress—that rank and wealth are the only things in which she is deficient; but she infallibly gets into high society, she has the triumph of refusing many matches and securing the best, and she wears some family jewels or other as a sort of crown of righteousness at the end. Rakish men either bite their lips in impotent confusion at her repartees, or are touched to penitence by her reproofs, which, on appropriate occasions, rise to a lofty strain of rhetoric; indeed, there is a general propensity in her to make speeches, and to rhapsodize at some length when she retires to her bedroom. In her recorded conversations she is amazingly eloquent, and in her unrecorded conversations amazingly witty. She is understood to have a depth of insight that looks through and through the shallow theories of philosophers, and her superior instincts are a sort of dial by which men have only to set their clocks and watches, and all will go well. The men play a very subordinate part by her side. You are consoled now and then by a hint that they have affairs, which keeps you in mind that the working-day business of the world is somehow being carried on, but ostensibly the final cause of their existence is that they may accompany the heroine on her “starring” expedition through life. They see her at a ball, and they are dazzled; at a flower-show, and they are fascinated; on a riding excursion, and they are witched by her noble horsemanship; at church, and they are awed by the sweet solemnity of her demeanor. She is the ideal woman in feelings, faculties, and flounces. For all this she as often as not marries the wrong person to begin with, and she suffers terribly from the plots and intrigues of the vicious baronet; but even death has a soft place in his heart for such a paragon, and remedies all mistakes for her just at the right moment. The vicious baronet is sure to be killed in a duel, and the tedious husband dies in his bed requesting his wife, as a particular favor to him, to marry the man she loves best, and having already dispatched a note to the lover informing him of the comfortable arrangement. Before matters arrive at this desirable issue our feelings are tried by seeing the noble, lovely, and gifted heroine pass through many *mauvais* [bad] *moments*, but we have the satisfaction of knowing that her sorrows are wept into embroidered pocket-handkerchiefs, that her fainting form reclines on the very best upholstery, and that whatever vicissitudes she may undergo, from being dashed out of her carriage to having her head shaved in a fever, she comes out of them all with a complexion more blooming and locks more redundant than ever.

[2] We may remark, by the way, that we have been relieved from a serious scruple by discovering that silly novels by lady novelists rarely introduce us into any other than very lofty and fashionable society. We had imagined that destitute women turned novelists, as they turned governesses, because they had no other “ladylike” means of getting their

bread. On this supposition, vacillating syntax, and improbable incident had a certain pathos for us, like the extremely supererogatory pincushions and ill-devised nightcaps that are offered for sale by a blind man. We felt the commodity to be a nuisance, but we were glad to think that the money went to relieve the necessitous, and we pictured to ourselves lonely women struggling for a maintenance, or wives and daughters devoting themselves to the production of “copy” out of pure heroism—perhaps to pay their husband’s debts or to purchase luxuries for a sick father. Under these impressions we shrank from criticising a lady’s novel: her English might be faulty, but we said to ourselves her motives are irreproachable; her imagination may be uninventive, but her patience is untiring. Empty writing was excused by an empty stomach, and twaddle was consecrated by tears. But no! This theory of ours, like many other pretty theories, has had to give way before observation. Women’s silly novels, we are now convinced, are written under totally different circumstances. The fair writers have evidently never talked to a tradesman except from a carriage window; they have no notion of the working-classes except as “dependents;” they think five hundred a year a miserable pittance; Belgravia and “baronial halls” are their primary truths; and they have no idea of feeling interest in any man who is not at least a great landed proprietor, if not a prime minister. It is clear that they write in elegant boudoirs, with violet-colored ink and a ruby pen; that they must be entirely indifferent to publishers’ accounts, and inexperienced in every form of poverty except poverty of brains. It is true that we are constantly struck with the want of verisimilitude in their representations of the high society in which they seem to live; but then they betray no closer acquaintance with any other form of life. If their peers and peeresses are improbable, their literary men, tradespeople, and cottagers are impossible; and their intellect seems to have the peculiar impartiality of reproducing both what they *have* seen and heard, and what they have *not* seen and heard, with equal unfaithfulness.

[3] There are few women, we suppose, who have not seen something of children under five years of age, yet in “Compensation,” a recent novel of the mind-and-millinery species, which calls itself a “story of real life,” we have a child of four and a half years old talking in this Ossianic fashion:

[4] ““Oh, I am so happy, dear grand mamma;—I have seen—I have seen such a delightful person; he is like everything beautiful—like the smell of sweet flowers, and the view from Ben Lomond;—or no, *better than that*—he is like what I think of and see when I am very, very happy; and he is really like mamma, too, when she sings; and his forehead is like *that distant sea*,” she continued, pointing to the blue Mediterranean; ‘there seems no end—no end; or like the clusters of stars I like best to look at on a warm fine night. . . . Don’t look so . . . your forehead is like Loch Lomond, when the wind is blowing and the sun is gone in; I like the sunshine best when the lake is smooth. . . . So now—I like it better than ever . . . It is more beautiful still from the dark cloud that has gone over it, when the sun suddenly lights up all the colors of the forests and shining purple rocks, and it is all reflected in the waters below.’”

[5] We are not surprised to learn that the mother of this infant phenomenon, who exhibits symptoms so alarmingly like those of adolescence repressed by gin, is herself a phoenix. We are assured, again and again, that she had a remarkably original in mind, that she was a genius, and “conscious of her originality,” and she was fortunate enough to have a lover who was also a genius and a man of “most original mind.”

[6] This lover, we read, though “wonderfully similar” to her “in powers and capacity,” was “infinitely superior to her in faith and development,” and she saw in him “‘Agape’—so rare

to find—of which she had read and admired the meaning in her Greek Testament; having, from her great facility in learning languages, read the Scriptures in their original tongues.” Of course! Greek and Hebrew are mere play to a heroine; Sanscrit is no more than *a b c* to her; and she can talk with perfect correctness in any language, except English. She is a polking polyglot, a Creuzer in crinoline. Poor men. There are so few of you who know even Hebrew; you think it something to boast of if, like Bolingbroke, you only “understand that sort of learning and what is writ about it;” and you are perhaps adoring women who can think slightingly of you in all the Semitic languages successively. But, then, as we are almost invariably told that a heroine has a “beautifully small head,” and as her intellect has probably been early invigorated by an attention to costume and deportment, we may conclude that she can pick up the Oriental tongues, to say nothing of their dialects, with the same aerial facility that the butterfly sips nectar. Besides, there can be no difficulty in conceiving the depth of the heroine’s erudition when that of the authoress is so evident.

[7] In “Laura Gay,” another novel of the same school, the heroine seems less at home in Greek and Hebrew but she makes up for the deficiency by a quite playful familiarity with the Latin classics—with the “dear old Virgil,” “the graceful Horace, the humane Cicero, and the pleasant Livy;” indeed, it is such a matter of course with her to quote Latin that she does it at a picnic in a very mixed company of ladies and gentlemen, having, we are told, “no conception that the nobler sex were capable of jealousy on this subject. And if, indeed,” continues the biographer of Laura Gray, “the wisest and noblest portion of that sex were in the majority, no such sentiment would exist; but while Miss Wyndhams and Mr. Redfords abound, great sacrifices must be made to their existence.” Such sacrifices, we presume, as abstaining from Latin quotations, of extremely moderate interest and applicability, which the wise and noble minority of the other sex would be quite as willing to dispense with as the foolish and ignoble majority. It is as little the custom of well-bred men as of well-bred women to quote Latin in mixed parties; they can contain their familiarity with “the humane Cicero” without allowing it to boil over in ordinary conversation, and even references to “the pleasant Livy” are not absolutely irrepressible. But Ciceronian Latin is the mildest form of Miss Gay’s conversational power. Being on the Palatine with a party of sight-seers, she falls into the following vein of well-rounded remark: “Truth can only be pure objectively, for even in the creeds where it predominates, being subjective, and parcelled out into portions, each of these necessarily receives a hue of idiosyncrasy, that is, a taint of superstition more or less strong; while in such creeds as the Roman Catholic, ignorance, interest, the basis of ancient idolatries, and the force of authority, have gradually accumulated on the pure truth, and transformed it, at last, into a mass of superstition for the majority of its votaries; and how few are there, alas! whose zeal, courage, and intellectual energy are equal to the analysis of this accumulation, and to the discovery of the pearl of great price which lies hidden beneath this heap of rubbish.” We have often met with women much more novel and profound in their observations than Laura Gay, but rarely with any so inopportunistically long-winded. A clerical lord, who is half in love with her, is alarmed by the daring remarks just quoted, and begins to suspect that she is inclined to free-thinking. But he is mistaken; when in a moment of sorrow he delicately begs leave to “recall to her memory, a *depôt* of strength and consolation under affliction, which, until we are hard pressed by the trials of life, we are too apt to forget,” we learn that she really has “recurrence to that sacred *depôt*,” together with the tea-pot. There is a certain flavor of orthodoxy mixed with the parade of fortunes and fine carriages in “Laura Gay,” but it is an orthodoxy mitigated by study of “the humane Cicero,” and by an “intellectual disposition to analyze.”

[. . .]

[20] Writers of the mind-and-millinery school are remarkably unanimous in their choice of diction. In their novels there is usually a lady or gentleman who is more or less of a upas tree; the lover has a manly breast; minds are redolent of various things; hearts are hollow; events are utilized; friends are consigned to the tomb; infancy is an engaging period; the sun is a luminary that goes to his western couch, or gathers the rain-drops into his refulgent bosom; life is a melancholy boon; Albion and Scotia are conversational epithets. There is a striking resemblance, too, in the character of their moral comments, such, for instance, as that "It is a fact, no less true than melancholy, that all people, more or less, richer or poorer, are swayed by bad example;" that "Books, however trivial, contain some subjects from which useful information may be drawn;" that "Vice can too often borrow the language of virtue;" that "Merit and nobility of nature must exist, to be accepted, for clamor and pretension cannot impose upon those too well read in human nature to be easily deceived;" and that "In order to forgive, we must have been injured." There is doubtless a class of readers to whom these remarks appear peculiarly pointed and pungent; for we often find them doubly and trebly scored with the pencil, and delicate hands giving in their determined adhesion to these hardy novelties by a distinct *très vrai*, emphasized by many notes of exclamation. The colloquial style of these novels is often marked by much ingenious inversion, and a careful avoidance of such cheap phraseology as can be heard every day. Angry young gentlemen exclaim, "'Tis ever thus, methinks;" and in the half hour before dinner a young lady informs her next neighbor that the first day she read Shakespeare she "stole away into the park, and beneath the shadow of the greenwood tree, devoured with rapture the inspired page of the great magician." But the most remarkable efforts of the mind-and-millinery writers lie in their philosophic reflections. The authoress of "Laura Gay," for example, having married her hero and heroine, improves the event by observing that "if those sceptics, whose eyes have so long gazed on matter that they can no longer see aught else in man, could once enter with heart and soul, into such bliss as this, they would come to say that the soul of man and the polypus are not of common origin, or of the same texture." Lady novelists, it appears, can see something else besides matter; they are not limited to phenomena, but can relieve their eyesight by occasional glimpses of the *noumenon* and are, therefore, naturally better able than any one else to confound sceptics, even of that remarkable but to us unknown school which maintains that the soul of man is of the same texture as the polypus.

[21] The most pitiable of all silly novels by lady novelists are what we may call the *oracular* species—novels intended to expound the writer's religious, philosophical, or moral theories. There seems to be a notion abroad among women, rather akin to the superstition that the speech and actions of idiots are inspired, and that the human being most entirely exhausted of common-sense is the fittest vehicle of revelation. To judge from their writings, there are certain ladies who think that an amazing ignorance, both of science and of life, is the best possible qualification for forming an opinion on the knottiest moral and speculative questions. Apparently, their recipe for solving all such difficulties is something like this: Take a woman's head, stuff it with a smattering of philosophy and literature chopped small, and with false notions of society baked hard, let it hang over a desk a few hours every day, and serve up hot in feeble English when not required. You will rarely meet with a lady novelist of the oracular class who is diffident of her ability to decide on theological questions—who has any suspicion that she is not capable of discriminating with the nicest accuracy between the good and evil in all church parties—who does not see precisely how it is that men have gone wrong hitherto—and pity philosophers in general that they have not had the opportunity of consulting her. Great writers, who have modestly contented themselves with putting their experience into fiction, and have thought it quite a sufficient task to exhibit men and things as they are, she sighs over as deplorably deficient in

the application of their powers. “They have solved no great questions”—and she is ready to remedy their omission by setting before you a complete theory of life and manual of divinity in a love story, where ladies and gentlemen of good family go through genteel vicissitudes, to the utter confusion of Deists, Puseyites, and ultra-Protestants, and to the perfect establishment of that peculiar view of Christianity which either condenses itself into a sentence of small caps, or explodes into a cluster of stars on the three hundred and thirtieth page. It is true, the ladies and gentlemen will probably seem to you remarkably little like any you have had the fortune or misfortune to meet with, for, as a general rule, the ability of a lady novelist to describe actual life and her fellow-men is in inverse proportion to her confident eloquence about God and the other world, and the means by which she usually chooses to conduct you to true ideas of the invisible is a totally false picture of the visible.

[22] As typical a novel of the oracular kind as we can hope to meet with, is “The Enigma: a Leaf from the Chronicles of the Wolchorley House.” The “enigma” which this novel is to solve is certainly one that demands powers no less gigantic than those of a lady novelist, being neither more nor less than the existence of evil. The problem is stated and the answer dimly foreshadowed on the very first page. The spirited young lady, with raven hair, says, “All life is an inextricable confusion;” and the meek young lady, with auburn hair, looks at the picture of the Madonna which she is copying, and—“There seemed the solution of that mighty enigma.” The style of this novel is quite as lofty as its purpose; indeed, some passages on which we have spent much patient study are quite beyond our reach, in spite of the illustrative aid of italics and small caps; and we must await further “development” in order to understand them. Of Ernest, the model young clergyman, who sets every one right on all occasions, we read that “he held not of marriage in the marketable kind, after a social desecration;” that, on one eventful night, “sleep had not visited his divided heart, where tumultuated, in varied type and combination, the aggregate feelings of grief and joy;” and that, “for the marketable human article he had no toleration, be it of what sort, or set for what value it might, whether for worship or class, his upright soul abhorred it, whose ultimatum, the self-deceiver, was to him THE great spiritual lie, ‘living in a vain show, deceiving and being deceived;’ since he did not suppose the phylactery and enlarged border on the garment to be *merely* a social trick.” (The italics and small caps are the author’s, and we hope they assist the reader’s comprehension.) Of Sir Lionel, the model old gentleman, we are told that “the simple ideal of the middle age, apart from its anarchy and decadence, in him most truly seemed to live again, when the ties which knit men together were of heroic cast. The first-born colors of pristine faith and truth engraven on the common soul of man, and blent into the wide arch of brotherhood, where the primæval law of order grew and multiplied each perfect after his kind, and mutually interdependent.” You see clearly, of course, how colors are first engraven on the soul, and then blent into a wide arch, on which arch of colors—apparently a rainbow—the law of order grew and multiplied, each—apparently the arch and the law—perfect after his kind? If, after this, you can possibly want any further aid toward knowing what Sir Lionel was, we can tell you that in his soul “the scientific combinations of thought could educe no fuller harmonies of the good and the true than lay in the primæval pulses which floated as an atmosphere around it!” and that, when he was sealing a letter, “Lo! the responsive throb in that good man’s bosom echoed back in simple truth the honest witness of a heart that condemned him not, as his eye, bedewed with love, rested, too, with something of ancestral pride, on the undimmed motto of the family—‘LOIAUTE.’”

[23] The slightest matters have their vulgarity fumigated out of them by the same elevated style. Commonplace people would say that a copy of Shakespeare lay on a drawing-room table; but the authoress of “The Enigma,” bent on edifying periphrasis, tells you that there lay

on the table, “that fund of human thought and feeling, which teaches the heart through the little name, ‘Shakespeare.’” A watchman sees a light burning in an upper window rather longer than usual, and thinks that people are foolish to sit up late when they have an opportunity of going to bed; but, lest this fact should seem too low and common, it is presented to us in the following striking and metaphysical manner: “He marvelled—as a man *will* think for others in a necessarily separate personality, consequently (though disallowing it) in false mental premise—how differently *he* should act, how gladly *he* should prize the rest so lightly held of within.” A footman—an ordinary Jeames, with large calves and aspirated vowels—answers the door-bell, and the opportunity is seized to tell you that he was a “type of the large class of pampered menials, who follow the curse of Cain—‘vagabonds’ on the face of the earth, and whose estimate of the human class varies in the graduated scale of money and expenditure. . . . These, and such as these, O England, be the false lights of thy morbid civilization!” We have heard of various “false lights,” from Dr. Cumming to Robert Owen, from Dr. Pusey to the Spirit-rappers, but we never before heard of the false light that emanates from plush and powder.

[24] In the same way very ordinary events of civilized life are exalted into the most awful crises, and ladies in full skirts and *manches à la Chinoise*, conduct themselves not unlike the heroines of sanguinary melodramas.

[. . .]

[37] The epithet “silly” may seem impertinent, applied to a novel which indicates so much reading and intellectual activity as “The Enigma,” but we use this epithet advisedly. If, as the world has long agreed, a very great amount of instruction will not make a wise man, still less will a very mediocre amount of instruction make a wise woman. And the most mischievous form of feminine silliness is the literary form, because it tends to confirm the popular prejudice against the more solid education of women.

[38] When men see girls wasting their time in consultations about bonnets and ball dresses, and in giggling or sentimental love-confidences, or middle-aged women mismanaging their children, and solacing themselves with acrid gossip, they can hardly help saying, “For Heaven’s sake, let girls be better educated; let them have some better objects of thought—some more solid occupations.” But after a few hours’ conversation with an oracular literary woman, or a few hours’ reading of her books, they are likely enough to say, “After all, when a woman gets some knowledge, see what use she makes of it! Her knowledge remains acquisition instead of passing into culture; instead of being subdued into modesty and simplicity by a larger acquaintance with thought and fact, she has a feverish consciousness of her attainments; she keeps a sort of mental pocket-mirror, and is continually looking in it at her own ‘intellectuality;’ she spoils the taste of one’s muffin by questions of metaphysics; ‘puts down’ men at a dinner-table with her superior information; and seizes the opportunity of a *soirée* to catechise us on the vital question of the relation between mind and matter. And then, look at her writings! She mistakes vagueness for depth, bombast for eloquence, and affectation for originality; she struts on one page, rolls her eyes on another, grimaces in a third, and is hysterical in a fourth. She may have read many writings of great men, and a few writings of great women; but she is as unable to discern the difference between her own style and theirs as a Yorkshireman is to discern the difference between his own English and a Londoner’s: rhodomontade is the native accent of her intellect. No—the average nature of women is too shallow and feeble a soil to bear much tillage; it is only fit for the very lightest crops.”

[39] It is true that the men who come to such a decision on such very superficial and imperfect observation may not be among the wisest in the world; but we have not now to contest their opinion—we are only pointing out how it is unconsciously encouraged by many women who have volunteered themselves as representatives of the feminine intellect. We do not believe that a man was ever strengthened in such an opinion by associating with a woman of true culture, whose mind had absorbed her knowledge instead of being absorbed by it. A really cultured woman, like a really cultured man, is all the simpler and the less obtrusive for her knowledge; it has made her see herself and her opinions in something like just proportions; she does not make it a pedestal from which she flatters herself that she commands a complete view of men and things, but makes it a point of observation from which to form a right estimate of herself. She neither spouts poetry nor quotes Cicero on slight provocation; not because she thinks that a sacrifice must be made to the prejudices of men, but because that mode of exhibiting her memory and Latinity does not present itself to her as edifying or graceful. She does not write books to confound philosophers, perhaps because she is able to write books that delight them. In conversation she is the least formidable of women, because she understands you, without wanting to make you aware that you can't understand her. She does not give you information, which is the raw material of culture—she gives you sympathy, which is its subtlest essence.

[40] A more numerous class of silly novels than the oracular (which are generally inspired by some form of High Church or transcendental Christianity) is what we may call the *white neck-cloth* species, which represent the tone of thought and feeling in the Evangelical party. This species is a kind of genteel tract on a large scale, intended as a sort of medicinal sweetmeat for Low Church young ladies; an Evangelical substitute for the fashionable novel, as the May Meetings are a substitute for the Opera. Even Quaker children, one would think, can hardly have been denied the indulgence of a doll; but it must be a doll dressed in a drab gown and a coal-scuttle-bonnet—not a worldly doll, in gauze and spangles. And there are no young ladies, we imagine—unless they belong to the Church of the United Brethren, in which people are married without any love-making—who can dispense with love stories. Thus, for Evangelical young ladies there are Evangelical love stories, in which the vicissitudes of the tender passion are sanctified by saving views of Regeneration and the Atonement. These novels differ from the oracular ones, as a Low Churchwoman often differs from a High Church-woman: they are a little less supercilious and a great deal more ignorant, a little less correct in their syntax and a great deal more vulgar.

[41] The Orlando of Evangelical literature is the young curate, looked at from the point of view of the middle class, where cambric bands are understood to have as thrilling an effect on the hearts of young ladies as epaulettes have in the classes above and below it. In the ordinary type of these novels the hero is almost sure to be a young curate, frowned upon, perhaps by worldly mammas, but carrying captive the hearts of their daughters, who can “never forget that sermon;” tender glances are seized from the pulpit stairs instead of the opera-box; *tête-à-têtes* are seasoned with quotations from Scripture instead of quotations from the poets; and questions as to the state of the heroine's affections are mingled with anxieties as to the state of her soul. The young curate always has a background of well-dressed and wealthy if not fashionable society—for Evangelical silliness is as snobbish as any other kind of silliness—and the Evangelical lady novelist, while she explains to you the type of the scapegoat on one page, is ambitious on another to represent the manners and conversations of aristocratic people. Her pictures of fashionable society are often curious studies, considered as efforts of the Evangelical imagination; but in one particular the novels

of the White Neck-cloth School are meritoriously realistic—their favorite hero, the Evangelical young curate, is always rather an insipid personage.

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[47] Admitting that genius which has familiarized itself with all the relics of an ancient period can sometimes, by the force of its sympathetic divination, restore the missing notes in the “music of humanity,” and reconstruct the fragments into a whole which will really bring the remote past nearer to us, and interpret it to our duller apprehension—this form of imaginative power must always be among the very rarest, because it demands as much accurate and minute knowledge as creative vigor. Yet we find ladies constantly choosing to make their mental mediocrity more conspicuous by clothing it in a masquerade of ancient names; by putting their feeble sentimentality into the mouths of Roman vestals or Egyptian princesses, and attributing their rhetorical arguments to Jewish high-priests and Greek philosophers. A recent example of this heavy imbecility is “Adonijah, a Tale of the Jewish Dispersion,” which forms part of a series, “uniting,” we are told, “taste, humor, and sound principles.” “Adonijah,” we presume, exemplifies the tale of “sound principles;” the taste and humor are to be found in other members of the series. We are told on the cover that the incidents of this tale are “fraught with unusual interest,” and the preface winds up thus: “To those who feel interested in the dispersed of Israel and Judea, these pages may afford, perhaps, information on an important subject, as well as amusement.” Since the “important subject” on which this book is to afford information is not specified, it may possibly lie in some esoteric meaning to which we have no key; but if it has relation to the dispersed of Israel and Judea at any period of their history, we believe a tolerably well-informed school-girl already knows much more of it than she will find in this “Tale of the Jewish Dispersion.” “Adonijah” is simply the feeblest kind of love story, supposed to be instructive, we presume, because the hero is a Jewish captive and the heroine a Roman vestal; because they and their friends are converted to Christianity after the shortest and easiest method approved by the “Society for Promoting the Conversion of the Jews;” and because, instead of being written in plain language, it is adorned with that peculiar style of grandiloquence which is held by some lady novelists to give an antique coloring, and which we recognize at once in such phrases as these:—“the splendid regnal talent, undoubtedly, possessed by the Emperor Nero”—“the expiring scion of a lofty stem”—“the virtuous partner of his couch”—“ah, by Vesta!”—and “I tell thee, Roman.” Among the quotations which serve at once for instruction and ornament on the cover of this volume, there is one from Miss Sinclair, which informs us that “Works of imagination are *avowedly* read by men of science, wisdom, and piety;” from which we suppose the reader is to gather the cheering inference that Dr. Daubeny, Mr. Mill, or Mr. Maurice may openly indulge himself with the perusal of “Adonijah,” without being obliged to secrete it among the sofa cushions, or read it by snatches under the dinner-table.

[48] “Be not a baker if your head be made of butter,” says a homely proverb, which, being interpreted, may mean, let no woman rush into print who is not prepared for the consequences. We are aware that our remarks are in a very different tone from that of the reviewers who, with perennial recurrence of precisely similar emotions, only paralleled, we imagine, in the experience of monthly nurses, tell one lady novelist after another that they “hail” her productions “with delight.” We are aware that the ladies at whom our criticism is pointed are accustomed to be told, in the choicest phraseology of puffery, that their pictures of life are brilliant, their characters well drawn, their style fascinating, and their sentiments lofty. But if they are inclined to resent our plainness of speech, we ask them to reflect for a moment on the chary praise, and often captious blame, which their panegyrists give to writers

whose works are on the way to become classics. No sooner does a woman show that she has genius or effective talent, than she receives the tribute of being moderately praised and severely criticised. By a peculiar thermometric adjustment, when a woman's talent is at zero, journalistic approbation is at the boiling pitch; when she attains mediocrity, it is already at no more than summer heat; and if ever she reaches excellence, critical enthusiasm drops to the freezing point. Harriet Martineau, Currer Bell, and Mrs. Gaskell have been treated as cavalierly as if they had been men. And every critic who forms a high estimate of the share women may ultimately take in literature, will on principle abstain from any exceptional indulgence toward the productions of literary women. For it must be plain to every one who looks impartially and extensively into feminine literature that its greatest deficiencies are due hardly more to the want of intellectual power than to the want of those moral qualities that contribute to literary excellence—patient diligence, a sense of the responsibility involved in publication, and an appreciation of the sacredness of the writer's art. In the majority of woman's books you see that kind of facility which springs from the absence of any high standard; that fertility in imbecile combination or feeble imitation which a little self-criticism would check and reduce to barrenness; just as with a total want of musical ear people will sing out of tune, while a degree more melodic sensibility would suffice to render them silent. The foolish vanity of wishing to appear in print, instead of being counterbalanced by any consciousness of the intellectual or moral derogation implied in futile authorship, seems to be encouraged by the extremely false impression that to write *at all* is a proof of superiority in a woman. On this ground we believe that the average intellect of women is unfairly represented by the mass of feminine literature, and that while the few women who write well are very far above the ordinary intellectual level of their sex, the many women who write ill are very far below it. So that, after all, the severer critics are fulfilling a chivalrous duty in depriving the mere fact of feminine authorship of any false prestige which may give it a delusive attraction, and in recommending women of mediocre faculties—as at least a negative service they can render their sex—to abstain from writing.

[49] The standing apology for women who become writers without any special qualification is that society shuts them out from other spheres of occupation. Society is a very culpable entity, and has to answer for the manufacture of many unwholesome commodities, from bad pickles to bad poetry. But society, like "matter," and Her Majesty's Government, and other lofty abstractions, has its share of excessive blame as well as excessive praise. Where there is one woman who writes from necessity, we believe there are three women who write from vanity; and besides, there is something so antispetic in the mere healthy fact of working for one's bread, that the most trashy and rotten kind of feminine literature is not likely to have been produced under such circumstances. "In all labor there is profit;" but ladies' silly novels, we imagine, are less the result of labor than of busy idleness.

[50] Happily, we are not dependent on argument to prove that Fiction is a department of literature in which women can, after their kind, fully equal men. A cluster of great names, both living and dead, rush to our memories in evidence that women can produce novels not only fine, but among the very finest—novels, too, that have a precious speciality, lying quite apart from masculine aptitudes and experience. No educational restrictions can shut women out from the materials of fiction, and there is no species of art which is so free from rigid requirements. Like crystalline masses, it may take any form, and yet be beautiful; we have only to pour in the right elements—genuine observation, humor, and passion. But it is precisely this absence of rigid requirement which constitutes the fatal seduction of novel-writing to incompetent women. Ladies are not wont to be very grossly deceived as to their power of playing on the piano; here certain positive difficulties of execution have to be

conquered, and incompetence inevitably breaks down. Every art which had its absolute technique is, to a certain extent, guarded from the intrusions of mere left-handed imbecility. But in novel-writing there are no barriers for incapacity to stumble against, no external criteria to prevent a writer from mistaking foolish facility for mastery. And so we have again and again the old story of La Fontaine's ass, who pats his nose to the flute, and, finding that he elicits some sound, exclaims, "*Moi, aussie, je joue de la flute*"—a fable which we commend, at parting, to the consideration of any feminine reader who is in danger of adding to the number of "silly novels by lady novelists."

Point for Reflection: does "Mr. Gilfil's Love Story" avoid the criteria Eliot uses to malign the mind-and-millinery species of fiction? What of the oracular species? The white-kneecloth school?

THE PURPOSE(S) OF ART

J. Ruskin's *The Stones of Venice* (1851-53), on "savageness" in Gothic architecture, Vol. 2, chp. 6

§ VII. 1. SAVAGENESS. I am not sure when the word "Gothic" was first generically applied to the architecture of the North; but I presume that, whatever the date of its original usage, it was intended to imply reproach, and express the barbaric character of the nations among whom that architecture arose. It never implied that they were literally of Gothic lineage, far less that their architecture had been originally invented by the Goths themselves; but it did imply that they and their buildings together exhibited a degree of sternness and rudeness, which, in contradistinction to the character of Southern and Eastern nations, appeared like a perpetual reflection of the contrast between the Goth and the Roman in their first encounter. And when that fallen Roman, in the utmost impotence of his luxury, and insolence of his guilt, became the model for the imitation of civilized Europe, at the close of the so-called Dark ages, the word Gothic became a term of unmitigated contempt, not unmixed with aversion. From that contempt, by the exertion of the antiquaries and architects of this century, Gothic architecture has been sufficiently vindicated; and perhaps some among us, in our admiration of the magnificent science of its structure, and sacredness of its expression, might desire that the term of ancient reproach should be withdrawn, and some other, of more apparent honorableness, adopted in its place. There is no chance, as there is no need, of such a substitution. As far as the epithet was used scornfully, it was used falsely; but there is no reproach in the word, rightly understood; on the contrary, there is a profound truth, which the instinct of mankind almost unconsciously recognizes. It is true, greatly and deeply true, that the architecture of the North is rude and wild; but it is not true, that, for this reason, we are to condemn it, or despise. Far otherwise: I believe it is in this very character that it deserves our profoundest reverence.

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§ VIII. The charts of the world which have been drawn up by modern science have thrown into a narrow space the expression of a vast amount of knowledge, but I have never yet seen any one pictorial enough to enable the spectator to imagine the kind of contrast in physical character which exists between Northern and Southern countries. We know the differences in detail, but we have not that broad glance and grasp which would enable us to feel them in

their fulness. We know that gentians grow on the Alps, and olives on the Apennines; but we do not enough conceive for ourselves that variegated mosaic of the world's surface which a bird sees in its migration, that difference between the district of the gentian and of the olive which the stork and the swallow see far off, as they lean upon the sirocco wind. Let us, for a moment, try to raise ourselves even above the level of their flight, and imagine the Mediterranean lying beneath us like an irregular lake, and all its ancient promontories sleeping in the sun: here and there an angry spot of thunder, a grey stain of storm, moving upon the burning field; and here and there a fixed wreath of white volcano smoke, surrounded by its circle of ashes; but for the most part a great peacefulness of light, Syria and Greece, Italy and Spain, laid like pieces of a golden pavement into the sea-blue, chased, as we stoop nearer to them, with bossy beaten work of mountain chains, and glowing softly with terraced gardens, and flowers heavy with frankincense, mixed among masses of laurel, and orange and plummy palm, that abate with their grey-green shadows the burning of the marble rocks, and of the ledges of porphyry sloping under lucent sand. Then let us pass farther towards the north, until we see the orient colors change gradually into a vast belt of rainy green, where the pastures of Switzerland, and poplar valleys of France, and dark forests of the Danube and Carpathians stretch from the mouths of the Loire to those of the Volga, seen through clefts in grey swirls of rain-cloud and flaky veils of the mist of the brooks, spreading low along the pasture lands: and then, farther north still, to see the earth heave into mighty masses of leaden rock and heathy moor, bordering with a broad waste of gloomy purple that belt 157 of field and wood, and splintering into irregular and grisly islands amidst the northern seas, beaten by storm and chilled by ice-drift, and tormented by furious pulses of contending tide, until the roots of the last forests fail from among the hill ravines, and the hunger of the north wind bites their peaks into barrenness; and, at last, the wall of ice, durable like iron, sets, deathlike, its white teeth against us out of the polar twilight. And, having once traversed in thought its gradation of the zoned iris of the earth in all its material vastness, let us go down nearer to it, and watch the parallel change in the belt of animal life: the multitudes of swift and brilliant creatures that glance in the air and sea, or tread the sands of the southern zone; striped zebras and spotted leopards, glistening serpents, and birds arrayed in purple and scarlet. Let us contrast their delicacy and brilliancy of color, and swiftness of motion, with the frost-cramped strength, and shaggy covering, and dusky plumage of the northern tribes; contrast the Arabian horse with the Shetland, the tiger and leopard with the wolf and bear, the antelope with the elk, the bird of paradise with the osprey: and then, submissively acknowledging the great laws by which the earth and all that it bears are ruled throughout their being, let us not condemn, but rejoice at the expression by man of his own rest in the statutes of the lands that gave him birth. Let us watch him with reverence as he sets side by side the burning gems, and smoothes with soft sculpture the jasper pillars, that are to reflect a ceaseless sunshine, and rise into a cloudless sky: but not with less reverence let us stand by him, when, with rough strength and hurried stroke, he smites an uncouth animation out of the rocks which he has torn from among the moss of the moorland, and heaves into the darkened air the pile of iron buttress and rugged wall, instinct with work of an imagination as wild and wayward as the northern sea; creations of ungainly shape and rigid limb, but full of wolfish life; fierce as the winds that beat, and changeful as the clouds that shade them.

There is, I repeat, no degradation, no reproach in this, but all dignity and honorableness; and we should err grievously in 158 refusing either to recognise as an essential character of the existing architecture of the North, or to admit as a desirable character in that which it yet may be, this wildness of thought, and roughness of work; this look of mountain brotherhood between the cathedral and the Alp; this magnificence of sturdy power, put forth only the

more energetically because the fine finger-touch was chilled away by the frosty wind, and the eye dimmed by the moor-mist, or blinded by the hail; this outspeaking of the strong spirit of men who may not gather redundant fruitage from the earth, nor bask in dreamy benignity of sunshine, but must break the rock for bread, and cleave the forest for fire, and show, even in what they did for their delight, some of the hard habits of the arm and heart that grew on them as they swung the axe or pressed the plough.

§ IX. If, however, the savageness of Gothic architecture, merely as an expression of its origin among Northern nations, may be considered, in some sort, a noble character, it possesses a higher nobility still, when considered as an index, not of climate, but of religious principle.

In the 13th and 14th paragraphs of Chapter XXI. of the first volume of this work, it was noticed that the systems of architectural ornament, properly so called, might be divided into three:—1. Servile ornament, in which the execution or power of the inferior workman is entirely subjected to the intellect of the higher:—2. Constitutional ornament, in which the executive inferior power is, to a certain point, emancipated and independent, having a will of its own, yet confessing its inferiority and rendering obedience to higher powers;—and 3. Revolutionary ornament, in which no executive inferiority is admitted at all. I must here explain the nature of these divisions at somewhat greater length.

Of Servile ornament, the principal schools are the Greek, Ninevite, and Egyptian; but their servility is of different kinds. The Greek master-workman was far advanced in knowledge and power above the Assyrian or Egyptian. Neither he nor those for whom he worked could endure the appearance of imperfection in anything; and, therefore, what ornament he 159 appointed to be done by those beneath him was composed of mere geometrical forms,—balls, ridges, and perfectly symmetrical foliage,—which could be executed with absolute precision by line and rule, and were as perfect in their way when completed, as his own figure sculpture. The Assyrian and Egyptian, on the contrary, less cognizant of accurate form in anything, were content to allow their figure sculpture to be executed by inferior workmen, but lowered the method of its treatment to a standard which every workman could reach, and then trained him by discipline so rigid, that there was no chance of his falling beneath the standard appointed. The Greek gave to the lower workman no subject which he could not perfectly execute. The Assyrian gave him subjects which he could only execute imperfectly, but fixed a legal standard for his imperfection. The workman was, in both systems, a slave.

§ X. But in the mediæval, or especially Christian, system of ornament, this slavery is done away with altogether; Christianity having recognized, in small things as well as great, the individual value of every soul. But it not only recognizes its value; it confesses its imperfection, in only bestowing dignity upon the acknowledgment of unworthiness. That admission of lost power and fallen nature, which the Greek or Ninevite felt to be intensely painful, and, as far as might be, altogether refused, the Christian makes daily and hourly, contemplating the fact of it without fear, as tending, in the end, to God's greater glory. Therefore, to every spirit which Christianity summons to her service, her exhortation is: Do what you can, and confess frankly what you are unable to do; neither let your effort be shortened for fear of failure, nor your confession 160 silenced for fear of shame. And it is, perhaps, the principal admirableness of the Gothic schools of architecture, that they thus receive the results of the labor of inferior minds; and out of fragments full of imperfection, and betraying that imperfection in every touch, indulgently raise up a stately and unaccusable whole.

§ XI. But the modern English mind has this much in common with that of the Greek, that it intensely desires, in all things, the utmost completion or perfection compatible with their nature. This is a noble character in the abstract, but becomes ignoble when it causes us to forget the relative dignities of that nature itself, and to prefer the perfectness of the lower nature to the imperfection of the higher; not considering that as, judged by such a rule, all the brute animals would be preferable to man, because more perfect in their functions and kind, and yet are always held inferior to him, so also in the works of man, those [animals] which are more perfect in their kind are always inferior to those [humans] which are, in their nature, liable to more faults and shortcomings. For the finer the nature, the more flaws it will show through the clearness of it; and it is a law of this universe, that the best things shall be seldomest seen in their best form. The wild grass grows well and strongly, one year with another; but the wheat is, according to the greater nobleness of its nature, liable to the bitterer blight. And therefore, while in all things that we see, or do, we are to desire perfection, and strive for it, we are nevertheless not to set the meaner thing, in its narrow accomplishment, above the nobler thing, in its mighty progress; not to esteem smooth minuteness above shattered majesty; not to prefer mean victory to honorable defeat; not to lower the level of our aim, that we may the more surely enjoy the complacency of success. But, above all, in our dealings with the souls of other men, we are to take care how we check, by severe requirement or narrow caution, efforts which might otherwise lead to a noble issue; and, still more, how we withhold our admiration from great excellences, because they are mingled with rough faults. Now, in the make and nature of every 161 man,

however rude or simple, whom we employ in manual labor, there are some powers for better things: some tardy imagination, torpid capacity of emotion, tottering steps of thought, there are, even at the worst; and in most cases it is all our own fault that they are tardy or torpid. But they cannot be strengthened, unless we are content to take them in their feebleness, and unless we prize and honor them in their imperfection above the best and most perfect manual skill. And this is what we have to do with all our laborers; to look for the thoughtful part of them, and get that out of them, whatever we lose for it, whatever faults and errors we are obliged to take with it. For the best that is in them cannot manifest itself, but in company with much error. Understand this clearly: You can teach a man to draw a straight line, and to cut one; to strike a curved line, and to carve it; and to copy and carve any number of given lines or forms, with admirable speed and perfect precision; and you find his work perfect of its kind: but if you ask him to think about any of those forms, to consider if he cannot find any better in his own head, he stops; his execution becomes hesitating; he thinks, and ten to one he thinks wrong; ten to one he makes a mistake in the first touch he gives to his work as a thinking being. But you have made a man of him for all that. He was only a machine before, an animated tool.

§ XII. And observe, you are put to stern choice in this matter. You must either made a tool of the creature, or a man of him. You cannot make both. Men were not intended to work with the accuracy of tools, to be precise and perfect in all their actions. If you will have that precision out of them, and make their fingers measure degrees like cog-wheels, and their arms strike curves like compasses, you must unhumanize them. All the energy of their spirits must be given to make cogs and compasses of themselves. All their attention and strength must go to the accomplishment of the mean act. The eye of the soul must be bent upon the finger-point, and the soul's force must fill all the invisible nerves that guide 162 it, ten hours a day, that it may not err from its steely precision, and so soul and sight be worn away, and the whole human being be lost at last—a heap of sawdust, so far as its intellectual work in this world is concerned; saved only by its Heart, which cannot go into the form of cogs and

compasses, but expands, after the ten hours are over, into fireside humanity. On the other hand, if you will make a man of the working creature, you cannot make a tool. Let him but begin to imagine, to think, to try to do anything worth doing; and the engine-turned precision is lost at once. Out come all his roughness, all his dulness, all his incapability; shame upon shame, failure upon failure, pause after pause: but out comes the whole majesty of him also; and we know the height of it only, when we see the clouds settling upon him. And, whether the clouds be bright or dark, there will be transfiguration behind and within them.

§ XIII. And now, reader, look round this English room of yours, about which you have been proud so often, because the work of it was so good and strong, and the ornaments of it so finished. Examine again all those accurate mouldings, and perfect polishings, and unerring adjustments of the seasoned wood and tempered steel. Many a time you have exulted over them, and thought how great England was, because her slightest work was done so thoroughly. Alas! if read rightly, these perfectnesses are signs of a slavery in our England a thousand times more bitter and more degrading than that of the scourged African, or helot Greek. Men may be beaten, chained, tormented, yoked like cattle, slaughtered like summer flies, and yet remain in one sense, and the best sense, free. But to smother their souls within them, to blight and hew into rotting pollards the suckling branches of their human intelligence, to make the flesh and skin which, after the worm's work on it, is to see God, into leathern thongs to yoke machinery with,—this it is to be slave-masters indeed; and there might be more freedom in England, though her feudal lords' lightest words were worth men's lives, and though the blood of the vexed husbandman dropped in the furrows of her fields, [163](#) than there is while the animation of her multitudes is sent like fuel to feed the factory smoke, and the strength of them is given daily to be wasted into the fineness of a web, or racked into the exactness of a line.

§ XIV. And, on the other hand, go forth again to gaze upon the old cathedral front, where you have smiled so often at the fantastic ignorance of the old sculptors: examine once more those ugly goblins, and formless monsters, and stern statues, anatomiless and rigid; but do not mock at them, for they are signs of the life and liberty of every workman who struck the stone; a freedom of thought, and rank in scale of being, such as no laws, no charters, no charities can secure; but which it must be the first aim of all Europe at this day to regain for her children.

§ XV. Let me not be thought to speak wildly or extravagantly. It is verily this degradation of the operative into a machine, which, more than any other evil of the times, is leading the mass of the nations everywhere into vain, incoherent, destructive struggling for a freedom of which they cannot explain the nature to themselves. Their universal outcry against wealth, and against nobility, is not forced from them either by the pressure of famine, or the sting of mortified pride. These do much, and have done much in all ages; but the foundations of society were never yet shaken as they are at this day. It is not that men are ill fed, but that they have no pleasure in the work by which they make their bread, and therefore look to wealth as the only means of pleasure. It is not that men are pained by the scorn of the upper classes, but they cannot endure their own; for they feel that the kind of labor to which they are condemned is verily a degrading one, and makes them less than men. Never had the upper classes so much sympathy with the lower, or charity for them, as they have at this day, and yet never were they so much hated by them: for, of old, the separation between the noble and the poor was merely a wall built by law; now it is a veritable difference in level of standing, a precipice between upper and lower grounds in the field of humanity and there is pestilential [164](#) air at the bottom of it. I know not if a day is ever to come when the nature of right freedom will be understood, and when men will see that to obey another man, to labor

for him, yield reverence to him or to his place, is not slavery. It is often the best kind of liberty,—liberty from care. The man who says to one, Go, and he goeth, and to another, Come, and he cometh, has, in most cases, more sense of restraint and difficulty than the man who obeys him. The movements of the one are hindered by the burden on his shoulder; of the other, by the bridle on his lips: there is no way by which the burden may be lightened; but we need not suffer from the bridle if we do not champ at it. To yield reverence to another, to hold ourselves and our lives at his disposal, is not slavery; often, it is the noblest state in which a man can live in this world. There is, indeed, a reverence which is servile, that is to say, irrational or selfish: but there is also noble reverence, that is to say, reasonable and loving; and a man is never so noble as when he is reverent in this kind; nay, even if the feeling pass the bounds of mere reason, so that it be loving, a man is raised by it. Which had, in reality, most of the serf nature in him,—the Irish peasant who was lying in wait yesterday for his landlord, with his musket muzzle thrust through the ragged hedge; or that old mountain servant, who, 200 years ago, at Inverkeithing, gave up his own life and the lives of his seven sons for his chief—and as each fell, calling forth his brother to the death, “Another for Hector!” And therefore, in all ages and all countries, reverence has been paid and sacrifice made by men to each other, not only without complaint, but rejoicingly; and famine, and peril, and sword, and all evil, and all shame, have been borne willingly in the causes of masters and kings; for all these gifts of the heart ennobled the men who gave, not less than the men who received them, and nature prompted, and God rewarded the sacrifice. But to feel their souls withering within them, unthanked, to find their whole being sunk into an unrecognized abyss, to be counted off 165 into a heap of mechanism, numbered with its wheels, and weighed with its hammer strokes;—this nature bade not,—this God blesses not,—this humanity for no long time is able to endure.

§ XVI. We have much studied and much perfected, of late, the great civilized invention of the division of labor; only we give it a false name. It is not, truly speaking, the labor that is divided; but the men:—Divided into mere segments of men—broken into small fragments and crumbs of life; so that all the little piece of intelligence that is left in a man is not enough to make a pin, or a nail, but exhausts itself in making the point of a pin, or the head of a nail. Now it is a good and desirable thing, truly, to make many pins in a day; but if we could only see with what crystal sand their points were polished,—sand of human soul, much to be magnified before it can be discerned for what it is,—we should think there might be some loss in it also. And the great cry that rises from all our manufacturing cities, louder than their furnace blast, is all in very deed for this,—that we manufacture everything there except men; we blanch cotton, and strengthen steel, and refine sugar, and shape pottery; but to brighten, to strengthen, to refine, or to form a single living spirit, never enters into our estimate of advantages. And all the evil to which that cry is urging our myriads can be met only in one way: not by teaching nor preaching, for to teach them is but to show them their misery, and to preach to them, if we do nothing more than preach, is to mock at it. It can be met only by a right understanding, on the part of all classes, of what kinds of labor are good for men, raising them, and making them happy; by a determined sacrifice of such convenience, or beauty, or cheapness as is to be got only by the degradation of the workman; and by equally determined demand for the products and results of healthy and ennobling labor.

§ XVII. And how, it will be asked, are these products to be recognized, and this demand to be regulated? Easily: by the observance of three broad and simple rules:

1. Never encourage the manufacture of any article not 166 absolutely necessary, in the production of which Invention has no share.

2. Never demand an exact finish for its own sake, but only for some practical or noble end.

3. Never encourage imitation or copying of any kind, except for the sake of preserving record of great works.

The second of these principles is the only one which directly rises out of the consideration of our immediate subject; but I shall briefly explain the meaning and extent of the first also, reserving the enforcement of the third for another place.

1. Never encourage the manufacture of anything not necessary, in the production of which invention has no share.

For instance. Glass beads are utterly unnecessary, and there is no design or thought employed in their manufacture. They are formed by first drawing out the glass into rods; these rods are chopped up into fragments of the size of beads by the human hand, and the fragments are then rounded in the furnace. The men who chop up the rods sit at their work all day, their hands vibrating with a perpetual and exquisitely timed palsy, and the beads dropping beneath their vibration like hail. Neither they, nor the men who draw out the rods, or fuse the fragments, have the smallest occasion for the use of any single human faculty; and every young lady, therefore, who buys glass beads is engaged in the slave-trade, and in a much more cruel one than that which we have so long been endeavoring to put down.

But glass cups and vessels may become the subjects of exquisite invention; and if in buying these we pay for the invention, that is to say for the beautiful form, or color, or engraving, and not for mere finish of execution, we are doing good to humanity.

§ XVIII. So, again, the cutting of precious stones, in all ordinary cases, requires little exertion of any mental faculty; some tact and judgment in avoiding flaws, and so on, but nothing to bring out the whole mind. Every person who wears cut jewels merely for the sake of their value is, therefore, a slave-driver.

But the working of the goldsmith, and the various designing 167 of grouped jewellery and enamel-work, may become the subject of the most noble human intelligence. Therefore, money spent in the purchase of well-designed plate, of precious engraved vases, cameos, or enamels, does good to humanity; and, in work of this kind, jewels may be employed to heighten its splendor; and their cutting is then a price paid for the attainment of a noble end, and thus perfectly allowable.

§ XIX. I shall perhaps press this law farther elsewhere, but our immediate concern is chiefly with the second, namely, never to demand an exact finish, when it does not lead to a noble end. For observe, I have only dwelt upon the rudeness of Gothic, or any other kind of imperfectness, as admirable, where it was impossible to get design or thought without it. If you are to have the thought of a rough and untaught man, you must have it in a rough and untaught way; but from an educated man, who can without effort express his thoughts in an educated way, take the graceful expression, and be thankful. Only get the thought, and do not silence the peasant because he cannot speak good grammar, or until you have taught him his grammar. Grammar and refinement are good things, both, only be sure of the better thing first. And thus in art, delicate finish is desirable from the greatest masters, and is always given by them. In some places Michael Angelo, Leonardo, Phidias, Perugino, Turner, all finished with the most exquisite care; and the finish they give always leads to the fuller accomplishment of their noble purposes. But lower men than these cannot finish, for it requires consummate knowledge to finish consummately, and then we must take their

thoughts as they are able to give them. So the rule is simple: Always look for invention first, and after that, for such execution as will help the invention, and as the inventor is capable of without painful effort, and no more. Above all, demand no refinement of execution where there is no thought, for that is slaves' work, unredeemed. Rather choose rough work than smooth work, so only that the practical purpose be answered, and never imagine there is reason to be proud of anything that may be accomplished by patience and sandpaper.

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§ XX. I shall only give one example, which however will show the reader what I mean, from the manufacture already alluded to, that of glass. Our modern glass is exquisitely clear in its substance, true in its form, accurate in its cutting. We are proud of this. We ought to be ashamed of it. The old Venice glass was muddy, inaccurate in all its forms, and clumsily cut, if at all. And the old Venetian was justly proud of it. For there is this difference between the English and Venetian workman, that the former thinks only of accurately matching his patterns, and getting his curves perfectly true and his edges perfectly sharp, and becomes a mere machine for rounding curves and sharpening edges, while the old Venetian cared not a whit whether his edges were sharp or not, but he invented a new design for every glass that he made, and never moulded a handle or a lip without a new fancy in it. And therefore, though some Venetian glass is ugly and clumsy enough, when made by clumsy and uninventive workmen, other Venetian glass is so lovely in its forms that no price is too great for it; and we never see the same form in it twice. Now you cannot have the finish and the varied form too. If the workman is thinking about his edges, he cannot be thinking of his design; if of his design, he cannot think of his edges. Choose whether you will pay for the lovely form or the perfect finish, and choose at the same moment whether you will make the worker a man or a grindstone.

§ XXI. Nay, but the reader interrupts me,—“If the workman can design beautifully, I would not have him kept at the furnace. Let him be taken away and made a gentleman, and have a studio, and design his glass there, and I will have it blown and cut for him by common workmen, and so I will have my design and my finish too.”

All ideas of this kind are founded upon two mistaken suppositions: the first, that one man's thoughts can be, or ought to be, executed by another man's hands; the second, that manual labor is a degradation, when it is governed by intellect.

On a large scale, and in work determinable by line and rule, it is indeed both possible and necessary that the thoughts 169 of one man should be carried out by the labor of others; in this sense I have already defined the best architecture to be the expression of the mind of manhood by the hands of childhood. But on a smaller scale, and in a design which cannot be mathematically defined, one man's thoughts can never be expressed by another: and the difference between the spirit of touch of the man who is inventing, and of the man who is obeying directions, is often all the difference between a great and a common work of art. How wide the separation is between original and second-hand execution, I shall endeavor to show elsewhere; it is not so much to our purpose here as to mark the other and more fatal error of despising manual labor when governed by intellect; for it is no less fatal an error to despise it when thus regulated by intellect, than to value it for its own sake. We are always in these days endeavoring to separate the two; we want one man to be always thinking, and another to be always working, and we call one a gentleman, and the other an operative; whereas the workman ought often to be thinking, and the thinker often to be working, and both should be gentlemen, in the best sense. As it is, we make both ungentle, the one

envying, the other despising, his brother; and the mass of society is made up of morbid thinkers, and miserable workers. Now it is only by labor that thought can be made healthy, and only by thought that labor can be made happy, and the two cannot be separated with impunity. It would be well if all of us were good handicraftsmen in some kind, and the dishonor of manual labor done away with altogether; so that though there should still be a trenchant distinction of race between nobles and commoners, there should not, among the latter, be a trenchant distinction of employment, as between idle and working men, or between men of liberal and illiberal professions. All professions should be liberal, and there should be less pride felt in peculiarity of employment, and more in excellence of achievement. And yet more, in each several profession, no master should be too proud to do its hardest work. The painter should grind his own colors; the architect work in the mason's yard with his men; the master-manufacturer be himself a more skilful operative than any man in his mills; and the distinction between one man and another be only in experience and skill, and the authority and wealth which these must naturally and justly obtain.

§ XXII. I should be led far from the matter in hand, if I were to pursue this interesting subject. Enough, I trust, has been said to show the reader that the rudeness or imperfection which at first rendered the term "Gothic" one of reproach is indeed, when rightly understood, one of the most noble characters of Christian architecture, and not only a noble but an essential one. It seems a fantastic paradox, but it is nevertheless a most important truth, that no architecture can be truly noble which is not imperfect. And this is easily demonstrable. For since the architect, whom we will suppose capable of doing all in perfection, cannot execute the whole with his own hands, he must either make slaves of his workmen in the old Greek, and present English fashion, and level his work to a slave's capacities, which is to degrade it; or else he must take his workmen as he finds them, and let them show their weaknesses together with their strength, which will involve the Gothic imperfection, but render the whole work as noble as the intellect of the age can make it.

§ XXIII. But the principle may be stated more broadly still. I have confined the illustration of it to architecture, but I must not leave it as if true of architecture only. Hitherto I have used the words imperfect and perfect merely to distinguish between work grossly unskilful, and work executed with average precision and science; and I have been pleading that any degree of unskilfulness should be admitted, so only that the laborer's mind had room for expression. But, accurately speaking, no good work whatever can be perfect, and the demand for perfection is always a sign of a misunderstanding of the ends of art.

§ XXIV. This for two reasons, both based on everlasting laws. The first, that no great man ever stops working till he has reached his point of failure; that is to say, his mind is always far in advance of his powers of execution, and the latter will now and then give way in trying to follow it; besides that he will always give to the inferior portions of his work only such inferior attention as they require; and according to his greatness he becomes so accustomed to the feeling of dissatisfaction with the best he can do, that in moments of lassitude or anger with himself he will not care though the beholder be dissatisfied also. I believe there has only been one man who would not acknowledge this necessity, and strove always to reach perfection, Leonardo; the end of his vain effort being merely that he would take ten years to a picture, and leave it unfinished. And therefore, if we are to have great men working at all, or less men doing their best, the work will be imperfect, however beautiful. Of human work none but what is bad can be perfect, in its own bad way.⁵⁸

§ XXV. The second reason is, that imperfection is in some sort essential to all that we know of life. It is the sign of life in a mortal body, that is to say, of a state of progress and change. Nothing that lives is, or can be, rigidly perfect; part of it is decaying, part nascent. The foxglove blossom,—a third part bud, a third part past, a third part in full bloom,—is a type of the life of this world. And in all things that live there are certain, irregularities and deficiencies which are not only signs of life, but sources of beauty. No human face is exactly the same in its lines on each side, no leaf perfect in its lobes, no branch in its symmetry. All admit irregularity as they imply change; and to banish imperfection is to destroy expression, to check exertion, to paralyse vitality. All things are literally better, lovelier, and more beloved for the imperfections which have been divinely appointed, that the law of human life may be Effort, and the law of human judgment, Mercy.

Accept this then for a universal law, that neither architecture 172 nor any other noble work of man can be good unless it be imperfect; and let us be prepared for the otherwise strange fact, which we shall discern clearly as we approach the period of the Renaissance, that the first cause of the fall of the arts of Europe was a relentless requirement of perfection, incapable alike either of being silenced by veneration for greatness, or softened into forgiveness of simplicity.

Thus far then of the Rudeness or Savageness, which is the first mental element of Gothic architecture. It is an element in many other healthy architectures also, as in Byzantine and Romanesque; but true Gothic cannot exist without it.

Points for Reflection

1. why does Ruskin spent so much time detailing the geographical and animal differences between northern and southern climes across Europe (156-57)?
2. how does Ruskin distinguish among what he calls “servile ornament,” “constitutional ornament,” and “revolutionary ornament” in architectural design (159-60)? Into which category does Ruskin place contemporary English architecture and furniture (162-63)?
3. why does Ruskin so highly praise the medieval or “Christian” system of architectural ornamentation (160-61)?
4. why exactly does Ruskin value both imperfection and stylistic variation in Gothic architecture (160-63)?
5. Ruskin deprecates the division of labor, a basic principle of industrialization (166). Why?
6. according to Ruskin, noble labor requires obedience to three basic rules (166-67). What are they?
7. what does Ruskin think of glass beads and cut gems (167)? Are you breaking his proposed rules?
8. Ruskin allows that only artistic “masters” should be encouraged to work on finishing something perfectly (168), though he admits that with certain masters, like Leonardo da

While she looks—no one's: very dear, no less.
 You smile? why, there's my picture ready made,
 There's what we painters call our harmony!
 A common grayness silvers everything,— 35
 All in a twilight, you and I alike
 —You, at the point of your first pride in me
 (That's gone you know),—but I, at every point;
 My youth, my hope, my art, being all toned down
 To yonder sober pleasant Fiesole. 40
 There's the bell clinking from the chapel-top;
 That length of convent-wall across the way
 Holds the trees safer, huddled more inside;
 The last monk leaves the garden; days decrease,
 And autumn grows, autumn in everything. 45
 Eh? the whole seems to fall into a shape
 As if I saw alike my work and self
 And all that I was born to be and do,
 A twilight-piece. Love, we are in God's hand.
 How strange now looks the life he makes us lead; 50
 So free we seem, so fettered fast we are!
 I feel he laid the fetter: let it lie!
 This chamber for example—turn your head—
 All that's behind us! You don't understand
 Nor care to understand about my art, 55
 But you can hear at least when people speak:
 And that cartoon, the second from the door
 —It is the thing, Love! so such things should be—
 Behold Madonna!—I am bold to say.
 I can do with my pencil what I know, 60
 What I see, what at bottom of my heart
 I wish for, if I ever wish so deep—
 Do easily, too—when I say, perfectly,
 I do not boast, perhaps: yourself are judge,
 Who listened to the Legate's talk last week, 65
 And just as much they used to say in France.
 At any rate 'tis easy, all of it!
 No sketches first, no studies, that's long past:
 I do what many dream of all their lives,
 —Dream? strive to do, and agonize to do, 70
 And fail in doing. I could count twenty such
 On twice your fingers, and not leave this town,
 Who strive—you don't know how the others strive
 To paint a little thing like that you smeared
 Carelessly passing with your robes afloat,— 75
 Yet do much less, so much less, Someone says,
 (I know his name, no matter)—so much less!
 Well, less is more, Lucrezia: I am judged.
 There burns a truer light of God in them,
 In their vexed beating stuffed and stopped-up brain, 80
 Heart, or whate'er else, than goes on to prompt

This low-pulsed forthright craftsman's hand of mine.
 Their works drop groundward, but themselves, I know,
 Reach many a time a heaven that's shut to me,
 Enter and take their place there sure enough, 85
 Though they come back and cannot tell the world.
 My works are nearer heaven, but I sit here.
 The sudden blood of these men! at a word—
 Praise them, it boils, or blame them, it boils too.
 I, painting from myself and to myself, 90
 Know what I do, am unmoved by men's blame
 Or their praise either. Somebody remarks
 Morello's outline there is wrongly traced,
 His hue mistaken; what of that? or else,
 Rightly traced and well ordered; what of that? 95
 Speak as they please, what does the mountain care?
 Ah, but a man's reach should exceed his grasp,
 Or what's a heaven for? All is silver-gray
 Placid and perfect with my art: the worse!
 I know both what I want and what might gain, 100
 And yet how profitless to know, to sigh
 "Had I been two, another and myself,
 Our head would have overlooked the world!" No doubt.
 Yonder's a work now, of that famous youth
 The Urbinate who died five years ago. 105
 ('Tis copied, George Vasari sent it me.)
 Well, I can fancy how he did it all,
 Pouring his soul, with kings and popes to see,
 Reaching, that heaven might so replenish him,
 Above and through his art—for it gives way; 110
 That arm is wrongly put—and there again—
 A fault to pardon in the drawing's lines,
 Its body, so to speak: its soul is right,
 He means right—that, a child may understand.
 Still, what an arm! and I could alter it: 115
 But all the play, the insight and the stretch—
 Out of me, out of me! And wherefore out?
 Had you enjoined them on me, given me soul,
 We might have risen to Rafael, I and you!
 Nay, Love, you did give all I asked, I think— 120
 More than I merit, yes, by many times.
 But had you—oh, with the same perfect brow,
 And perfect eyes, and more than perfect mouth,
 And the low voice my soul hears, as a bird
 The fowler's pipe, and follows to the snare— 125
 Had you, with these the same, but brought a mind!
 Some women do so. Had the mouth there urged
 "God and the glory! never care for gain,
 The present by the future, what is that?
 Live for fame, side by side with Agnolo! 130
 Rafael is waiting: up to God, all three!"

I might have done it for you. So it seems:
 Perhaps not. All is as God overrules.
 Beside, incentives come from the soul's self;
 The rest avail not. Why do I need you? 135
 What wife had Rafael, or has Agnolo?
 In this world, who can do a thing, will not;
 And who would do it, cannot, I perceive:
 Yet the will's somewhat—somewhat, too, the power—
 And thus we half-men struggle. At the end, 140
 God, I conclude, compensates, punishes.
 'Tis safer for me, if the award be strict,
 That I am something underrated here,
 Poor this long while, despised, to speak the truth.
 I dared not, do you know, leave home all day, 145
 For fear of chancing on the Paris lords.
 The best is when they pass and look aside;
 But they speak sometimes; I must bear it all.
 Well may they speak! That Francis, that first time,
 And that long festal year at Fontainebleau! 150
 I surely then could sometimes leave the ground,
 Put on the glory, Rafael's daily wear,
 In that humane great monarch's golden look,—
 One finger in his beard or twisted curl
 Over his mouth's good mark that made the smile, 155
 One arm about my shoulder, round my neck,
 The jingle of his gold chain in my ear,
 I painting proudly with his breath on me,
 All his court round him, seeing with his eyes,
 Such frank French eyes, and such a fire of souls 160
 Profuse, my hand kept plying by those hearts,—
 And, best of all, this, this, this face beyond,
 This in the background, waiting on my work,
 To crown the issue with a last reward!
 A good time, was it not, my kingly days? 165
 And had you not grown restless... but I know—
 'Tis done and past; 'twas right, my instinct said;
 Too live the life grew, golden and not gray,
 And I'm the weak-eyed bat no sun should tempt
 Out of the grange whose four walls make his world. 170
 How could it end in any other way?
 You called me, and I came home to your heart.
 The triumph was—to reach and stay there; since
 I reached it ere the triumph, what is lost?
 Let my hands frame your face in your hair's gold, 175
 You beautiful Lucrezia that are mine!
 "Rafael did this, Andrea painted that;
 The Roman's is the better when you pray,
 But still the other's Virgin was his wife"—
 Men will excuse me. I am glad to judge 180
 Both pictures in your presence; clearer grows

My better fortune, I resolve to think.
 For, do you know, Lucrezia, as God lives,
 Said one day Agnolo, his very self,
 To Rafael ... I have known it all these years... 185
 (When the young man was flaming out his thoughts
 Upon a palace-wall for Rome to see,
 Too lifted up in heart because of it)
 "Friend, there's a certain sorry little scrub
 Goes up and down our Florence, none cares how, 190
 Who, were he set to plan and execute
 As you are, pricked on by your popes and kings,
 Would bring the sweat into that brow of yours!"
 To Rafael's!—And indeed the arm is wrong.
 I hardly dare... yet, only you to see, 195
 Give the chalk here—quick, thus the line should go!
 Ay, but the soul! he's Rafael! rub it out!
 Still, all I care for, if he spoke the truth,
 (What he? why, who but Michel Agnolo?
 Do you forget already words like those?) 200
 If really there was such a chance, so lost,—
 Is, whether you're—not grateful—but more pleased.
 Well, let me think so. And you smile indeed!
 This hour has been an hour! Another smile?
 If you would sit thus by me every night 205
 I should work better, do you comprehend?
 I mean that I should earn more, give you more.
 See, it is settled dusk now; there's a star;
 Morello's gone, the watch-lights show the wall,
 The cue-owls speak the name we call them by. 210
 Come from the window, love,—come in, at last,
 Inside the melancholy little house
 We built to be so gay with. God is just.
 King Francis may forgive me: oft at nights
 When I look up from painting, eyes tired out, 215
 The walls become illumined, brick from brick
 Distinct, instead of mortar, fierce bright gold,
 That gold of his I did cement them with!
 Let us but love each other. Must you go?
 That Cousin here again? he waits outside? 220
 Must see you—you, and not with me? Those loans?
 More gaming debts to pay? you smiled for that?
 Well, let smiles buy me! have you more to spend?
 While hand and eye and something of a heart
 Are left me, work's my ware, and what's it worth? 225
 I'll pay my fancy. Only let me sit
 The gray remainder of the evening out,
 Idle, you call it, and muse perfectly
 How I could paint, were I but back in France,
 One picture, just one more—the Virgin's face. 230
 Not yours this time! I want you at my side

To hear them—that is, Michel Agnolo—
 Judge all I do and tell you of its worth.
 Will you? To-morrow, satisfy your friend.
 I take the subjects for his corridor, 235
 Finish the portrait out of hand—there, there,
 And throw him in another thing or two
 If he demurs; the whole should prove enough
 To pay for this same Cousin's freak. Beside,
 What's better and what's all I care about, 240
 Get you the thirteen scudi for the ruff!
 Love, does that please you? Ah, but what does he,
 The Cousin, what does he to please you more?

I am grown peaceful as old age to-night.
 I regret little, I would change still less. 245
 Since there my past life lies, why alter it?
 The very wrong to Francis!—it is true
 I took his coin, was tempted and complied,
 And built this house and sinned, and all is said.
 My father and my mother died of want. 250
 Well, had I riches of my own? you see
 How one gets rich! Let each one bear his lot.
 They were born poor, lived poor, and poor they died;
 And I have labored somewhat in my time
 And not been paid profusely. Some good son 255
 Paint my two hundred pictures—let him try!
 No doubt, there's something strikes a balance. Yes.
 You loved me quite enough, it seems to-night.
 This must suffice me here. What would one have?
 In heaven, perhaps, new chances, one more chance— 260
 Four great walls in the New Jerusalem,
 Meted on each side by the angel's reed,
 For Leonard, Rafael, Agnolo and me
 To cover—the three first without a wife,
 While I have mine! So—still they overcome 265
 Because there's still Lucrezia,—as I choose.

Again the Cousin's whistle! Go, my Love.

Points for Reflection

1. does Robert Browning wish us to sympathize with the titular speaker of "Andrea del Sarto"? Be ready to provide evidence to support your claim.
2. what subtle types of evidence does del Sarto insert into his monodram that suggests his marriage is in trouble?
3. why is it that del Sarto believes his paintings, though more accurate than his peers' work, do not lift him towards heaven?

4. why does del Sarto consider himself one of the "half-men"?
5. is del Sarto more popular in Italy than he was in France?
6. why do you imagine that Lucrezia married del Sarto in the first place?
7. does del Sarto reveal what he might need forgiveness from King Francis for doing?
8. identify the inherent irony lacing lines 250-57.
9. what type of relationship does Lucrezia apparently have with her cousin/relative?
10. what strategy does del Sarto employ to deal with his pain?
11. search online for some paintings by Adrea del Sarto. Do any particular elements of his artistic practice get captured by Robert Browning's poetic depiction of the artist?

Walter Pater's *Studies in the History of the Renaissance* (1868; 1873), excerpts

PREFACE

Many attempts have been made by writers on art and poetry to define beauty in the abstract, to express it in the most general terms, to find a universal formula for it. The value of these attempts has most often been in the suggestive and penetrating things said by the way. Such discussions help us very little to enjoy what has been well done in art or poetry, to discriminate between what is more and what is less excellent in them, or to use words like beauty, excellence, art, poetry, with a more precise meaning than they would otherwise have. Beauty, like all other qualities presented to human experience, is relative; and the definition of it becomes unmeaning and useless in proportion to its abstractness. To define beauty, not in the most abstract, but in the most concrete terms possible, to find, not a universal formula for it, but the formula which expresses most adequately this or that special manifestation of it, is the aim of the true student of aesthetics.

"To see the object as in itself it really is," has been justly said to be the aim of all true criticism whatever; and in aesthetic criticism the first step towards seeing one's object as it really is, is to know one's own impression as it really is, to discriminate it, to realise it distinctly. The objects with which aesthetic criticism deals—music, poetry, artistic and accomplished forms of human life—are indeed receptacles of so many powers or forces: they possess, like the products of nature, so many virtues or qualities. What is this song or picture, this engaging personality presented in life or in a book, to ME? What effect does it really produce on me? Does it give me pleasure? and if so, what sort or degree of pleasure? How is my nature modified by its presence, and under its influence? The answers to these questions are the original facts with which the aesthetic critic has to do; and, as in the study of light, of morals, of number, one must realise such primary data for oneself, or not at all. And he who experiences these impressions strongly, and drives directly at the discrimination and analysis of them, has no need to trouble himself with the abstract question what beauty is in itself, or what its exact relation to truth or experience—metaphysical questions, as unprofitable as metaphysical questions elsewhere. He may pass them all by as being, answerable or not, of no interest to him.

The aesthetic critic, then, regards all the objects with which he has to do, all works of art, and the fairer forms of nature and human life, as powers or forces producing pleasurable sensations, each of a more or less peculiar or unique kind. This influence he feels, and wishes to explain, analysing it and reducing it to its elements. To him, the picture, the landscape, the engaging personality in life or in a book, *La Gioconda*, the hills of Carrara, Pico of Mirandola, are valuable for their virtues, as we say, in speaking of a herb, a wine, a gem; for the property each has of affecting one with a special, a unique, impression of pleasure. Our education becomes complete in proportion as our susceptibility to these impressions increases in depth and variety. And the function of the aesthetic critic is to distinguish, analyse, and separate from its adjuncts, the virtue by which a picture, a landscape, a fair personality in life or in a book, produces this special impression of beauty or pleasure, to indicate what the source of that impression is, and under what conditions it is experienced. His end is reached when he has disengaged that virtue, and noted it, as a chemist notes some natural element, for himself and others; and the rule for those who would reach this end is stated with great exactness in the words of a recent critic [critique] of Sainte-Beuve:—*De se borner a connaitre de pres les belles choses, et a s'en nourrir en exquis amateurs, en humanistes accomplis.* ["To confine themselves to knowing beautiful things intimately, and to sustain themselves by these, as sensitive amateurs and accomplished humanists do." / Charles-Augustin Sainte-Beuve]

What is important, then, is not that the critic should possess a correct abstract definition of beauty for the intellect, but a certain kind of temperament, the power of being deeply moved by the presence of beautiful objects. He will remember always that beauty exists in many forms. To him all periods, types, schools of taste, are in themselves equal. In all ages there have been some excellent workmen, and some excellent work done. The question he asks is always:—In whom did the stir, the genius, the sentiment of the period find itself? where was the receptacle of its refinement, its elevation, its taste? "The ages are all equal," says William Blake, "but genius is always above its age."

Often it will require great nicety to disengage this virtue from the commoner elements with which it may be found in combination. Few artists, not Goethe or Byron even, work quite cleanly, casting off all debris, and leaving us only what the heat of their imagination has wholly fused and transformed. Take, for instance, the writings of Wordsworth. The heat of his genius, entering into the substance of his work, has crystallised a part, but only a part, of it; and in that great mass of verse there is much which might well be forgotten. But scattered up and down it, sometimes fusing and transforming entire compositions, like the Stanzas on Resolution and Independence, and the Ode on the Recollections of Childhood, sometimes, as if at random, depositing a fine crystal here or there, in a matter it does not wholly search through and transform, we trace the action of his unique, incommunicable faculty, that strange, mystical sense of a life in natural things, and of man's life as a part of nature, drawing strength and colour and character from local influences, from the hills and streams, and from natural sights and sounds. Well! that is the virtue, the active principle in Wordsworth's poetry; and then the function of the critic of Wordsworth is to follow up that active principle, to disengage it, to mark the degree in which it penetrates his verse.

The subjects of the following studies are taken from the history of the Renaissance, and touch what I think are the chief points in that complex, many-sided movement. I have explained in the first of them what I understand by the word, giving it a much wider scope than was intended by those who originally used it to denote only that revival of classical antiquity in the fifteenth century which was but one of many results of a general excitement

and enlightening of the human mind, of which the great aim and achievements of what, as Christian art, is often falsely opposed to the Renaissance, were another result. This outbreak of the human spirit may be traced far into the middle age itself, with its qualities already clearly pronounced, the care for physical beauty, the worship of the body, the breaking down of those limits which the religious system of the middle age imposed on the heart and the imagination. I have taken as an example of this movement, this earlier Renaissance within the middle age itself, and as an expression of its qualities, two little compositions in early French; not because they constitute the best possible expression of them, but because they help the unity of my series, inasmuch as the Renaissance ends also in France, in French poetry, in a phase of which the writings of Joachim du Bellay are in many ways the most perfect illustration; the Renaissance thus putting forth in France an aftermath, a wonderful later growth, the products of which have to the full that subtle and delicate sweetness which belongs to a refined and comely decadence; just as its earliest phases have the freshness which belongs to all periods of growth in art, the charm of asceticism [the exercise of self-discipline], of the austere and serious girding of the loins in youth.

But it is in Italy, in the fifteenth century, that the interest of the Renaissance mainly lies,—in that solemn fifteenth century which can hardly be studied too much, not merely for its positive results in the things of the intellect and the imagination, its concrete works of art, its special and prominent personalities, with their profound aesthetic charm, but for its general spirit and character, for the ethical qualities of which it is a consummate type.

The various forms of intellectual activity which together make up the culture of an age, move for the most part from different starting-points, and by unconnected roads. As products of the same generation they partake indeed of a common character, and unconsciously illustrate each other; but of the producers themselves, each group is solitary, gaining what advantage or disadvantage there may be in intellectual isolation. Art and poetry, philosophy and the religious life, and that other life of refined pleasure and action in the open places of the world, are each of them confined to its own circle of ideas, and those who prosecute either of them are generally little curious of the thoughts of others. There come, however, from time to time, eras of more favourable conditions, in which the thoughts of men draw nearer together than is their wont, and the many interests of the intellectual world combine in one complete type of general culture. The fifteenth century in Italy is one of these happier eras; and what is sometimes said of the age of Pericles is true of that of Lorenzo:—it is an age productive in personalities, many-sided, centralised, complete. Here, artists and philosophers and those whom the action of the world has elevated and made keen, do not live in isolation, but breathe a common air, and catch light and heat from each other's thoughts. There is a spirit of general elevation and enlightenment in which all alike communicate. It is the unity of this spirit which gives unity to all the various products of the Renaissance; and it is to this intimate alliance with mind, this participation in the best thoughts which that age produced, that the art of Italy in the fifteenth century owes much of its grave dignity and influence.

I have added an essay on Winckelmann, as not incongruous with the studies which precede it, because Winckelmann, coming in the eighteenth century, really belongs in spirit to an earlier age. By his enthusiasm for the things of the intellect and the imagination for their own sake, by his Hellenism, his life-long struggle to attain to the Greek spirit, he is in sympathy with the humanists of an earlier century. He is the last fruit of the Renaissance, and explains in a striking way its motive and tendencies.

[“LA GIOCONDA”]

“La Gioconda” is, in the truest sense, Leonardo's masterpiece, the revealing instance of his mode of thought and work. In suggestiveness, only the Melancholia of Duerer is comparable to it; and no crude symbolism disturbs the effect of its subdued and graceful mystery. We all know the face and hands of the figure, set in its marble chair, in that cirque of fantastic rocks, as in some faint light under sea. Perhaps of all ancient pictures time has chilled it least.* As often happens with works in which invention seems to reach its limits, there is an element in it given to, not invented by, the master. In that inestimable folio of drawings, once in the possession of Vasari, were certain designs by Verrocchio, faces of such impressive beauty that Leonardo in his boyhood copied them many times. It is hard not to connect with these designs of the elder, by-past master, as with its germinal principle, the unfathomable smile, always with a touch of something sinister in it, which plays over all Leonardo's work. Besides, the picture is a portrait. From childhood we see this image defining itself on the fabric of his dreams; and but for express historical testimony, we might fancy that this was but his ideal lady, embodied and beheld at last. What was the relationship of a living Florentine to this creature of his thought? By means of what strange affinities had the person and the dream grown up thus apart, and yet so closely together? Present from the first incorporeally in Leonardo's thought, dimly traced in the designs of Verrocchio, she is found present at last in Il Giocondo's house. That there is much of mere portraiture in the picture is attested by the legend that by artificial means, the presence of mimes and flute-players, that subtle expression was protracted on the face. Again, was it in four years and by renewed labour never really completed, or in four months and as by stroke of magic, that the image was projected?

*Yet for Vasari there was some further magic of crimson in the lips and cheeks, lost for us.

The presence that thus rose so strangely beside the waters, is expressive of what in the ways of a thousand years men had come to desire. Hers is the head upon which all "the ends of the world are come," and the eyelids are a little weary. It is a beauty wrought out from within upon the flesh, the deposit, little cell by cell, of strange thoughts and fantastic reveries and exquisite passions. Set it for a moment beside one of those white Greek goddesses or beautiful women of antiquity, and how would they be troubled by this beauty, into which the soul with all its maladies has passed! All the thoughts and experience of the world have etched and moulded there, in that which they have of power to refine and make expressive the outward form, the animalism of Greece, the lust of Rome, the reverie of the middle age with its spiritual ambition and imaginative loves, the return of the Pagan world, the sins of the Borgias. She is older than the rocks among which she sits; like the vampire, she has been dead many times, and learned the secrets of the grave; and has been a diver in deep seas, and keeps their fallen day about her; and trafficked for strange webs with Eastern merchants: and, as Leda, was the mother of Helen of Troy, and, as Saint Anne, the mother of Mary; and all this has been to her but as the sound of lyres and flutes, and lives only in the delicacy with which it has moulded the changing lineaments, and tinged the eyelids and the hands. The fancy of a perpetual life, sweeping together ten thousand experiences, is an old one; and modern thought has conceived the idea of humanity as wrought upon by, and summing up in itself, all modes of thought and life. Certainly Lady Lisa might stand as the embodiment of the old fancy, the symbol of the modern idea.

Conclusion

*This brief "Conclusion" was omitted in the second edition of this book, as I conceived it might possibly mislead some of those young men into whose hands it might fall. On the whole, I have thought it best to reprint it here, with some slight changes which bring it closer to my original meaning. I have dealt more fully in *Marius the Epicurean* with the thoughts suggested by it.

Legei pou Herakleitos hoti panta khorei kai ouden menei. [Heraclitus says, "All things give way; nothing remaineth" [Pater's translation] Greek philosopher active ca. 500 B.C.]

To regard all things and principles of things as inconstant modes or fashions has more and more become the tendency of modern thought. Let us begin with that which is without—our physical life. Fix upon it in one of its more exquisite intervals, the moment, for instance, of delicious recoil from the flood of water in summer heat. What is the whole physical life in that moment but a combination of natural elements to which science gives their names? But these elements, phosphorus and lime and delicate fibres, are present not in the human body alone: we detect them in places most remote from it. Our physical life is a perpetual motion of them—the passage of the blood, the wasting and repairing of the lenses of the eye, the modification of the tissues of the brain by every ray of light and sound—processes which science reduces to simpler and more elementary forces. Like the elements of which we are composed, the action of these forces extends beyond us; it rusts iron and ripens corn. Far out on every side of us those elements are broadcast, driven by many forces; and birth and gesture and death and the springing of violets from the grave are but a few out of ten thousand resultant combinations. That clear, perpetual outline of face and limb is but an image of ours, under which we group them—a design in a web, the actual threads of which pass out beyond it. This at least of flamelike our life has, that it is but the concurrence, renewed from moment to moment, of forces parting sooner or later on their ways.

Or if we begin with the inward world of thought and feeling, the whirlpool is still more rapid, the flame more eager and devouring. There it is no longer the gradual darkening of the eye and fading of colour from the wall,—the movement of the shore-side, where the water flows down indeed, though in apparent rest,—but the race of the mid-stream, a drift of momentary acts of sight and passion and thought. At first sight experience seems to bury us under a flood of external objects, pressing upon us with a sharp and importunate reality, calling us out of ourselves in a thousand forms of action. But when reflexion begins to act upon those objects they are dissipated under its influence; the cohesive force seems suspended like a trick of magic; each object is loosed into a group of impressions—colour, odour, texture—in the mind of the observer. And if we continue to dwell in thought on this world, not of objects in the solidity with which language invests them, but of impressions unstable, flickering, inconsistent, which burn and are extinguished with our consciousness of them, it contracts still further; the whole scope of observation is dwarfed to the narrow chamber of the individual mind. Experience, already reduced to a swarm of impressions, is ringed round for each one of us by that thick wall of personality through which no real voice has ever pierced on its way to us, or from us to that which we can only conjecture to be without. Every one of those impressions is the impression of the individual in his isolation, each mind keeping as a solitary prisoner its own dream of a world. Analysis goes a step farther still, and assures us that those impressions of the individual mind to which, for each one of us, experience dwindles down, are in perpetual flight; that each of them is limited by

time, and that as time is infinitely divisible, each of them is infinitely divisible also; all that is actual in it being a single moment, gone while we try to apprehend it, of which it may ever be more truly said that it has ceased to be than that it is. To such a tremulous wisp constantly reforming itself on the stream, to a single sharp impression, with a sense in it, a relic more or less fleeting, of such moments gone by, what is real in our life fines itself down. It is with this movement, with the passage and dissolution of impressions, images, sensations, that analysis leaves off—that continual vanishing away, that strange, perpetual weaving and unweaving of ourselves.

Philosophiren, says Novalis, ist dephlegmatisiren vivificiren. [“To philosophize is to cast off inertia, to make oneself alive.”] The service of philosophy, of speculative culture, towards the human spirit is to rouse, to startle it into sharp and eager observation. Every moment some form grows perfect in hand or face; some tone on the hills or the sea is choicer than the rest; some mood of passion or insight or intellectual excitement is irresistibly real and attractive for us,—for that moment only. Not the fruit of experience, but experience itself, is the end. A counted number of pulses only is given to us of a variegated, dramatic life. How may we see in them all that is to be seen in them by the finest senses? How shall we pass most swiftly from point to point, and be present always at the focus where the greatest number of vital forces unite in their purest energy?

To burn always with this hard, gemlike flame, to maintain this ecstasy, is success in life. In a sense it might even be said that our failure is to form habits: for, after all, habit is relative to a stereotyped world, and meantime it is only the roughness of the eye that makes any two persons, things, situations, seem alike. While all melts under our feet, we may well catch at any exquisite passion, or any contribution to knowledge that seems by a lifted horizon to set the spirit free for a moment, or any stirring of the senses, strange dyes, strange colours, and curious odours, or work of the artist's hands, or the face of one's friend. Not to discriminate every moment some passionate attitude in those about us, and in the brilliancy of their gifts some tragic dividing of forces on their ways, is, on this short day of frost and sun, to sleep before evening. With this sense of the splendour of our experience and of its awful brevity, gathering all we are into one desperate effort to see and touch, we shall hardly have time to make theories about the things we see and touch. What we have to do is to be for ever curiously testing new opinions and courting new impressions, never acquiescing in a facile orthodoxy of Comte, or of Hegel, or of our own. Philosophical theories or ideas, as points of view, instruments of criticism, may help us to gather up what might otherwise pass unregarded by us. "Philosophy is the microscope of thought." The theory or idea or system which requires of us the sacrifice of any part of this experience, in consideration of some interest into which we cannot enter, or some abstract theory we have not identified with ourselves, or what is only conventional, has no real claim upon us.

One of the most beautiful passages in the writings of Rousseau is that in the sixth book of the Confessions, where he describes the awakening in him of the literary sense. An undefinable taint of death had always clung about him, and now in early manhood he believed himself smitten by mortal disease. He asked himself how he might make as much as possible of the interval that remained; and he was not biased by anything in his previous life when he decided that it must be by intellectual excitement, which he found just then in the clear, fresh writings of Voltaire. Well! we are all condamnes, as Victor Hugo says: we are all under sentence of death but with a sort of indefinite reprieve—*les hommes sont tous condamnes a mort avec des sursis indefinis*: we have an interval, and then our place knows us no more. Some spend this interval in listlessness, some in high passions, the wisest, at least

among "the children of this world," in art and song. For our one chance lies in expanding that interval, in getting as many pulsations as possible into the given time. Great passions may give us this quickened sense of life, ecstasy and sorrow of love, the various forms of enthusiastic activity, disinterested or otherwise, which come naturally to many of us. Only be sure it is passion—that it does yield you this fruit of a quickened, multiplied consciousness. Of this wisdom, the poetic passion, the desire of beauty, the love of art for art's sake, has most; for art comes to you professing frankly to give nothing but the highest quality to your moments as they pass, and simply for those moments' sake.

Points for Reflection

1. the ideas of which Romantic poet closely prefigure Walter Pater's aestheticism as laid out in *Studies in the History of the Renaissance* (1868; 1873)?
2. when Pater says that a work of art, a vista, a person, or a book are "valuable only for their virtues," what does he mean by "virtue"?
3. which is a more necessary faculty for the effective critic, according to Pater, the right kind of temperament or the right kind of intellect?
4. what characteristics of the Middle Age does Pater praise and also locate in the Renaissance?
5. what do you make of Pater's assertion that a "unity of . . . spirit" pervaded the Renaissance, giving "unity to all the various products" of the period (1509)? Is it ridiculous to assume that any historical era is united by a spirit of the age? Could we identify a predominant spirit encompassing our own age?
6. look carefully at Pater's analysis of Leonardo's "La Gioconda." Upon what variables does Pater's critique rely?
7. Pater's note to the "Conclusion" of this work tells us that he didn't originally publish this last section "as [he] conceived it might possibly mislead some of the young men into whose hands it might fall." About what, exactly, might Pater have been concerned?
8. is it possible to reconcile the following two passages: "There come, however, from time to time, eras . . . in which the thoughts of men draw nearer together than is their wont, and the many interests of the intellectual world combine in one complete type of general culture . . . Here, artists and philosophers and those whom the action of the world has elevated and made keen, do not live in isolation, but breathe a common air, and catch light and heat from each other's thoughts."
9. "Experience, already reduced to a group of impressions, is ringed round for each one of us by that thick wall of personality through which no real voice has ever pierced on its way to us, or from us to that which we can only conjecture to be without. Every one of those impressions is the impression of the individual in his isolation, each mind keeping as a solitary prisoner its own dream of a world."
10. what does Pater identify as humanity's chief failure?

11. if one took the following precept to action seriously, how might one's life change? "To burn always with this hard, gemlike flame, to maintain ecstasy, is success in life."
12. "Not to discriminate every moment some passionate attitude in those about us, and in the very brilliancy of their gifts some tragic dividing of forces on their ways, is, on this short day of frost and sun, to sleep before evening."
13. "For art comes to you proposing frankly to give nothing but the highest quality to your moments as they pass, and simply for those moments' sake."

THE PRE-RAPHAELITES: PURITY & POWER

Dante Gabriel Rossetti's "The Blessed Damozel" (1847; 1850)

The blessed damozel lean'd out
 From the gold bar of Heaven;
 Her eyes were deeper than the depth
 Of waters still'd at even;
 She had three lilies in her hand, 5
 And the stars in her hair were seven.

Her robe, ungirt from clasp to hem,
 No wrought flowers did adorn,
 But a white rose of Mary's gift,
 For service meetly worn; 10
 Her hair that lay along her back
 Was yellow like ripe corn.

Herseemed she scarce had been a day
 One of God's choristers;
 The wonder was not yet quite gone 15
 From that still look of hers;
 Albeit, to them she left, her day
 Had counted as ten years.

(To one, it is ten years of years.
 . . . Yet now, and in this place, 20
 Surely she lean'd o'er me—her hair
 Fell all about my face . . .
 Nothing: the autumn-fall of leaves.
 The whole year sets apace.)

It was the rampart of God's house 25
 That she was standing on;
 By God built over the sheer depth
 The which is Space begun;
 So high, that looking downward thence
 She scarce could see the sun. 30

It lies in Heaven, across the flood
Of ether, as a bridge.
Beneath, the tides of day and night
With flame and darkness ridge
The void, as low as where this earth 35
Spins like a fretful midge.

Around her, lovers, newly met
‘Mid deathless love’s acclaims,
Spoke evermore among themselves
Their heart-remember’d names; 40
And the souls mounting up to God
Went by her like thin flames.

And still she bow’d herself and stoop’d
Out of the circling charm;
Until her bosom must have made 45
The bar she lean’d on warm,
And the lilies lay as if asleep
Along her bended arm.

From the fix’d place of Heaven she saw
Time like a pulse shake fierce 50
Through all the worlds. Her gaze still strove
Within the gulf to pierce
Its path; and now she spoke as when
The stars sang in their spheres.

The sun was gone now; the curl’d moon 55
Was like a little feather
Fluttering far down the gulf; and now
She spoke through the still weather.
Her voice was like the voice the stars
Had when they sang together. 60

(Ah sweet! Even now, in that bird’s song,
Strove not her accents there,
Fain to be hearken’d? When those bells
Possess’d the mid-day air,
Strove not her steps to reach my side 65
Down all the echoing stair?)

“I wish that he were come to me,
For he will come,” she said.
“Have I not pray’d in Heaven?—on earth,
Lord, Lord, has he not pray’d? 70
Are not two prayers a perfect strength
And shall I feel afraid?

“When round his head the aureole clings,
 And he is cloth’d in white,
 I’ll take his hand and go with him 75
 To the deep wells of light;
 As unto a stream we will step down,
 And bathe there in God’s sight.

“We two will stand beside that shrine,
 Occult, withheld, untrod, 80
 Whose lamps are stirr’d continually
 With prayer sent up to God;
 And see our old prayers, granted, melt
 Each like a little cloud.

“We two will lie i’ the shadow of 85
 That living mystic tree
 Within whose secret growth the Dove
 Is sometimes felt to be,
 While every leaf that His plumes touch
 Saith His Name audibly. 90

“And I myself will teach to him,
 I myself, lying so,
 The songs I sing here; which his voice
 Shall pause in, hush’d and slow,
 And find some knowledge at each pause, 95
 Or some new thing to know.”

(Alas! We two, we two, thou say’st!
 Yea, one wast thou with me
 That once of old. But shall God lift
 To endless unity 100
 The soul whose likeness with thy soul
 Was but its love for thee?)

“We two,” she said, “will seek the groves
 Where the lady Mary is,
 With her five handmaidens, whose names 105
 Are five sweet symphonies,
 Cecily, Gertrude, Magdalen,
 Margaret and Rosalys.

“Circlewise sit they, with bound locks
 And foreheads garlanded; 110
 Into the fine cloth white like flame
 Weaving the golden thread,
 To fashion the birth-robos for them
 Who are just born, being dead.

“He shall fear, haply, and be dumb: 115
Then will I lay my cheek
To his, and tell about our love,
Not once abash’d or weak:
And the dear Mother will approve
My pride, and let me speak. 120

“Herself shall bring us, hand in hand,
To Him round whom all souls
Kneel, the clear-rang’d unnumber’d heads
Bow’d with their aureoles:
And angels meeting us shall sing 125
To their citherns and citoles.

“There will I ask of Christ the Lord
Thus much for him and me:--
Only to live as once on earth
With Love,--only to be, 130
As then awhile, for ever now
Together, I and he.”

She gaz’d and listen’d and then said,
Less sad of speech than mild,--
“All this is when he comes.” She ceas’d. 135
The light thrill’d towards her, fill’d
With angels in strong level flight.
Her eyes pray’d, and she smil’d.

(I saw her smile.) But soon their path
Was vague in distant spheres: 140
And then she cast her arms along
The golden barriers,
And laid her face between her hands,
And wept. (I heard her tears.)

Points for Reflection

1. in what ways does D. G. Rossetti's "The Blessed Damozel" (1846; 1850) modify the traditional Christian understanding of the afterlife?
2. does Rossetti's rendering of the feminine constitute an act of idolization, sexism, or something else?
3. make sure you can distinguish among the three different voices woven throughout this poem.
4. does the male appear to be as ready/ripe for heaven as was his deceased, female lover?

5. does earthly, romantic passion here fuse with love of the Divine, or do the two appear to remain separate after death?
6. does time pass at the same rate in heaven as on earth?
7. does the damozel imagine herself teaching her lover, her lover teaching herself, or God teaching them both--once all three are in heaven together?

Neil Gaiman's "How They Met Themselves" (Jan. 2000)

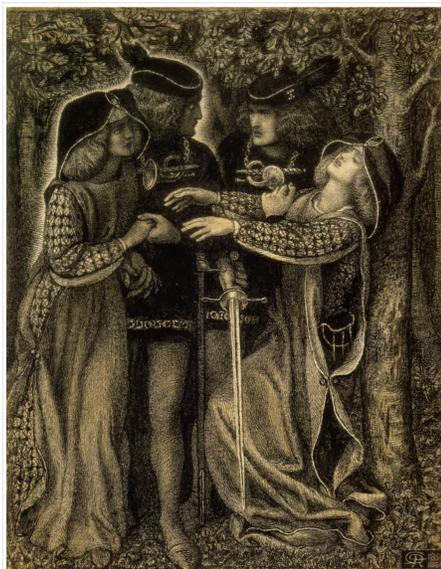
From *Vertigo: Winter's Edge* #3 in Vol. 2 of *The Sandman Omnibus*

The Characters

- **Lizzie Siddal ("Guggums")**: model for DGR for 10 yrs; aspiring artist (financially supported in her endeavors by John Ruskin), and wife to DGR for 2 yrs; died of laudanum overdose
- **Dante Gabriel Rossetti (DGR)**: painter and poet; brother to Christina Rossetti
 - leader of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood (PRB)
 - 1st generation PRB: DGR (painter & poet), William H. Hunt (painter), John Everett Millais (painter), William Michael Rossetti (scribe & historian), etc.
 - 2nd generation PRB: DGR (painter & poet), William Morris (painter & poet), Edward Burne-Jones (painter), Charles Algernon Swinburne (poet)
 - lover to a series of models
 - 1850s model & lover: Elizabeth ("Lizzie") Siddal; married 1860-62
 - 1860s model & lover: Fanny Conforth
 - 1870s model & lover: Jane Burden Morris (wife of William Morris)
 - *Gaiman suggests DGR & model Annie Miller were lovers, w/o proof*
- **Charles Algernon Swinburne**: poet; known for lyrical beauty & extraordinary subject matter (necrophilia, sadomasochism, Keatsian neo-classicism, rejection of traditional mores, etc.)
- **Dream**: the pale-faced, yellow-eyed protagonist of Neil Gaiman's *The Sandman* series, who appears differently (in garb & gender) to everyone he meets in the dreamscape that is his domain; one of the Endless; brother to Death (ironically, her symbol is the Egyptian sign for life, an ankh), Desire, Despair, Delirium, Destiny, & Destruction

Neil Gaiman's Inspiration

- Pre-Raphaelite poetry: Algernon Charles Swinburne's "Dolores" (1866)
- Pre-Raphaelite paintings
 - two illustrations by Dante Gabriel Rossetti entitled "How They Met Themselves"
 - the pen and ink drawing was created in 1851 when he was only 23
 - the watercolor version spawned on his honeymoon with Elizabeth in 1860. A third version was painted in watercolours in 1864. DGR referred to this as his "Bogie Drawing," a bogie being an evil spirit. According to Gothic tradition, meeting one's



double or doppelganger in this way is an omen of death . . .



HE HAD FINISHED THE DRAWING ON THEIR HONEYMOON, TWO YEARS AGO, AND PRESENTED HER WITH A PRINT SHORTLY THEREAFTER.

ALTHOUGH HIS PASSION FOR HER HAD LONG SINCE BEEN SPENT.



SHE FEELS ANOTHER COUGHING SPASM SWELLING INSIDE HER CHEST. EVERY COUGH RIPS THROUGH HER, LIKE A BLOW TO THE HEART.



WHY MUST HE BE SO LONG? HE CANNOT STILL BE TEACHING...

AND, UNBIDDEN, IN HER MIND'S EYE, SHE SEES HIM WITH ANNIE MILLER, HIS DARK HANDS MOVING OVER HER WHITE SKIN, REACHING UP TO CLASP HER FAIR--



~KHOFF!~ ~KHOFF!~ ~KOFF!~

SHE HATES THIS HOUSE. SO DAMP...

...SO CHILL...

THE BOTTLE IS COLD IN HER HAND.



(HALF A TEASPOON, NO MORE.)

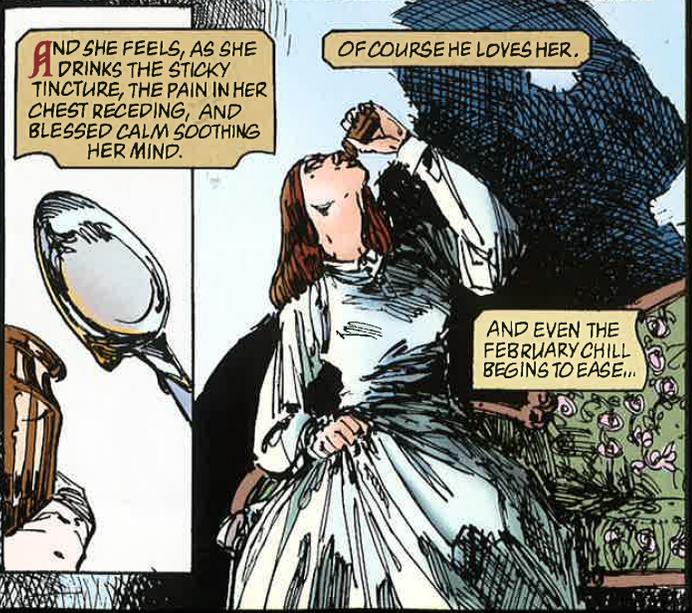


SHE FIGHTS FOR BREATH. HER MIND IS IN A TURMOIL, AND SHE KNOWS THAT THE MEDICINE WILL CALM HER...

BRING HER PEACE...

AND SHE FEELS, AS SHE DRINKS THE STICKY TINCTURE, THE PAIN IN HER CHEST RECEDED, AND BLESSED CALM SOOTHING HER MIND.

OF COURSE HE LOVES HER.

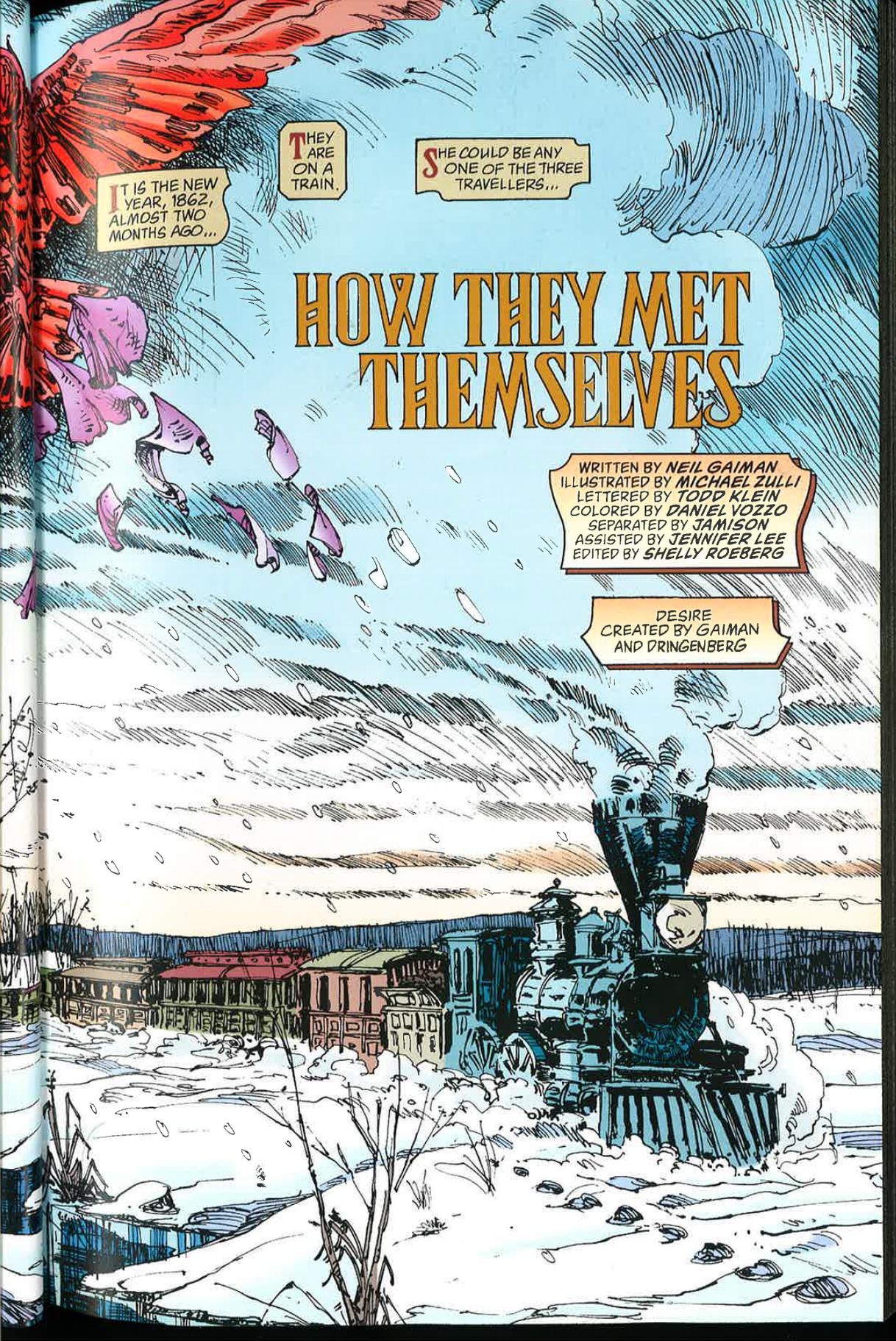


AND EVEN THE FEBRUARY CHILL BEGINS TO EASE...

AS THE LAUDANUM TAKES HER INTO ITS HEART, LIZZIE FINDS HERSELF LOSING ALL SENSE OF TIME AND PLACE.

AND IDENTITY. SHE DINED THIS EVENING IN LEICESTER SQUARE WITH HER HUSBAND AND A YOUNG POET.





IT IS THE NEW YEAR, 1862, ALMOST TWO MONTHS AGO...

THEY ARE ON A TRAIN.

SHE COULD BE ANY ONE OF THE THREE TRAVELLERS...

HOW THEY MET THEMSELVES

WRITTEN BY NEIL GAIMAN
ILLUSTRATED BY MICHAEL ZULLI
LETTERED BY TODD KLEIN
COLORED BY DANIEL VOZZO
SEPARATED BY JAMISON
ASSISTED BY JENNIFER LEE
EDITED BY SHELLY ROEBERG

DESIRE
CREATED BY GAIMAN
AND DRINGENBERG



I...I DO NOT WISH TO COMPLAIN, ALGERNON, BUT THE SMOKE, AND THE COLD...

...IF YOU COULD CLOSE THE WINDOW, I WOULD BE SO GRATEFUL.

GUGGUMS, YOU'RE MAKING A FUSS ABOUT NOTHING.

NOTHING? I SUPPOSE YOU DO NOT CARE IF I... IF I DIE.

GUGGUMS, YOU ARE NOT GOING TO DIE.

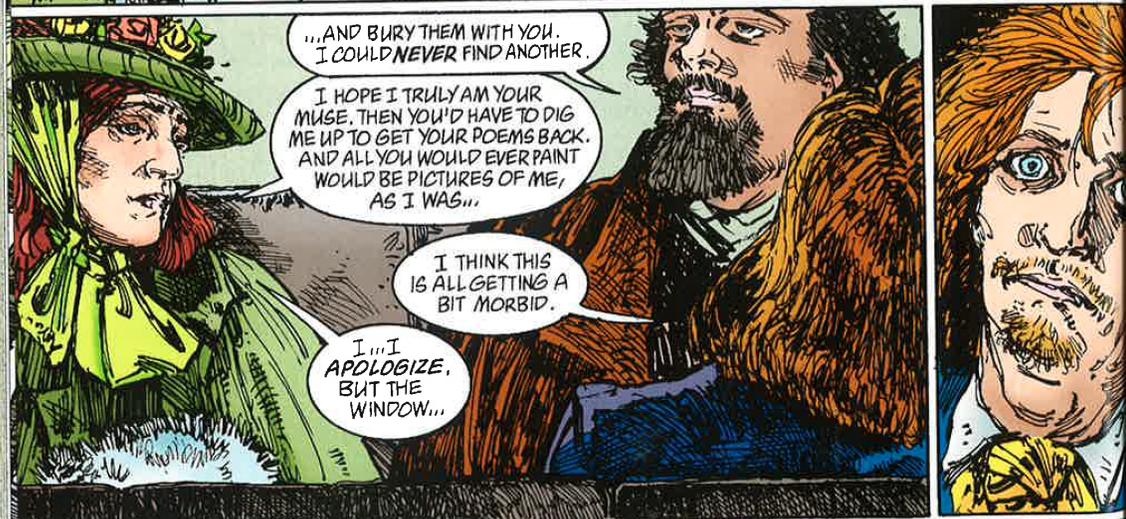


NO? ~~≠KHOFF≠~~ ~~≠KHOFF≠~~

NO, YOU HAVE A TOUCH OF LONDON CHEST, GUGGUMS. HALF OF LONDON HAS IT. WHEN I TEACH THE RUDE MECHANICALS, DOWN AT THE INSTITUTE, THE SOUND OF COUGHING PRACTICALLY SHAKES THE BUILDING. IT'S A WONDER THAT ANY OF THEM CAN DRAW A STRAIGHT LINE.

AND IF I DID DIE, YOU'D SCARCELY NOTICE.

IF YOU DIED I WOULD NO LONGER BE ABLE TO PAINT. I WOULD NO LONGER BE ABLE TO WRITE POETRY. YOU ARE MY MUSE. I WOULD PILE MY PAINTINGS AND POEMS INTO YOUR COFFIN...



...AND BURY THEM WITH YOU. I COULD NEVER FIND ANOTHER.

I HOPE I TRULY AM YOUR MUSE. THEN YOU'D HAVE TO DIG ME UP TO GET YOUR POEMS BACK. AND ALL YOU WOULD EVER PAINT WOULD BE PICTURES OF ME, AS I WAS...

I THINK THIS IS ALL GETTING A BIT MORBID.

I...I APOLOGIZE, BUT THE WINDOW...



DO ANY OF YOU MIND IF I SIT IN THIS CARRIAGE?



YOUR EYES!

I'M SORRY?

THEY ARE A REMARKABLE COLOR. Hmm. NO, NO, SAY NOTHING... YOUR EYES ARE THE COLOR OF A GLASS OF TAWNY TOKAY WINE, WITH THE SUNLIGHT UPON IT.



AND YOU ARE A... WINE MERCHANT?

I AM AN ARTIST.



AH, ONE OF THOSE. AND YOU ARE AN ARTIST ALSO?

NO, WELL, I PAINT A LITTLE. AND I DRAW TOO. BUT REALLY I'M JUST A WIFE. I WAS ONCE AN ARTIST'S MODEL, BUT...



AND I--



--I ACTUALLY AM A POET.

WHO PUBLISHES YOU?

WELL, NO ONE. NOT YET, BUT ONE DAY.



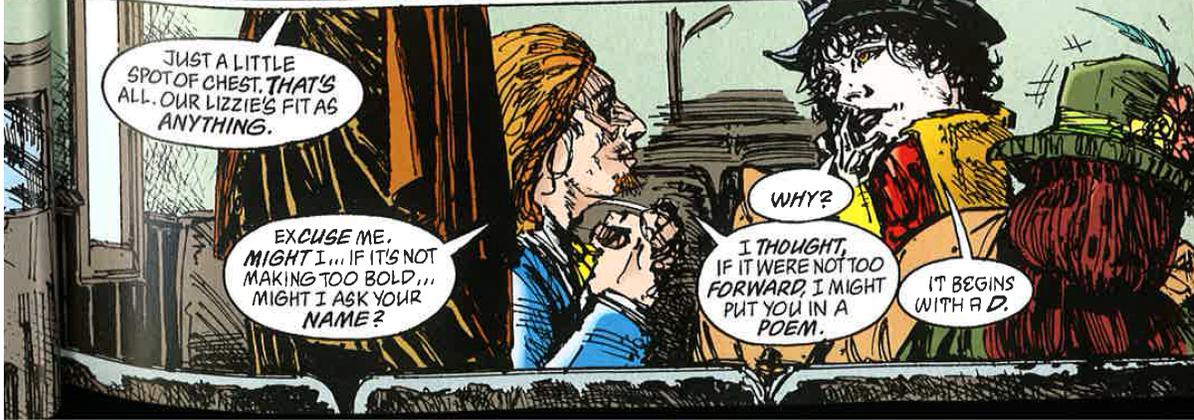
SO, WHERE ARE YOU YOUNG PEOPLE GOING, ON THIS WINTER'S DAY?

JUST TO THE NEXT STATION. IN A MOMENT OF ARTISTIC MADNESS, WE TOOK IT INTO OUR HEADS TO SEE THE COUNTRY AND THE SNOW.

TO HAVE A PICNIC.

~KHUFF!~
~KHUFF!~

ARE YOU CERTAIN THAT THE YOUNG LADY IS FIT TO TRAVEL?



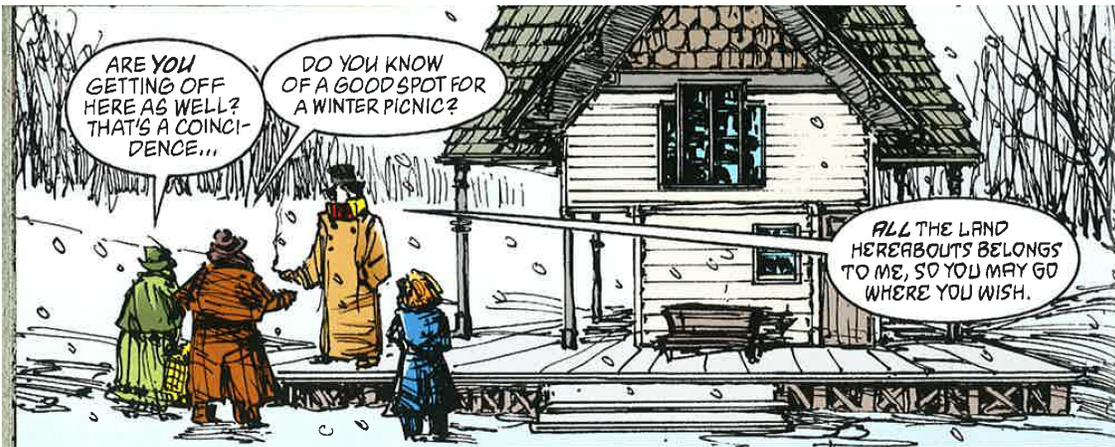
JUST A LITTLE SPOT OF CHEST. THAT'S ALL. OUR LIZZIE'S FIT AS ANYTHING.

EXCUSE ME. MIGHT I... IF IT'S NOT MAKING TOO BOLD... MIGHT I ASK YOUR NAME?

WHY?

I THOUGHT, IF IT WERE NOT TOO FORWARD, I MIGHT PUT YOU IN A POEM.

IT BEGINS WITH A D.



ARE YOU GETTING OFF HERE AS WELL? THAT'S A COINCIDENCE...

DO YOU KNOW OF A GOOD SPOT FOR A WINTER PICNIC?

ALL THE LAND HEREABOUTS BELONGS TO ME, SO YOU MAY GO WHERE YOU WISH.



THERE IS A WOOD AT THE END OF THE LANE, WHERE THE WEATHER IS ALWAYS KIND AND GENTLE.

THEY SAY THAT IF YOU GO THERE, YOU WILL MEET YOUR TRUE LOVE.

I KNOW MY TRUE LOVE.

WELL, THIS IS WHERE I SHALL TAKE MY LEAVE OF YOU.

A D? I HAVE IT!

I SHALL CALL YOU DOLORES, FOR LIFE WITHOUT YOU WOULD BE SORROW INDEED.



IF I DIDN'T KNOW YOU BETTER, MY DEAR, I WOULD HAVE THOUGHT YOU WERE FLIRTING WITH THAT YOUNG MAN.

YOUNG MAN? WHICH YOUNG MAN?

THE BEAUTIFUL ONE, THE ONE WHO PROMISED US A GLIMPSE OF OUR TRUE LOVES, IN THE WOOD.

WHAT, THE "STUNNER"? THAT WAS NO YOUNG MAN, SILLY GUGGUMS. I THINK I KNOW A LADY WHEN I SEE ONE.



WASN'T SHE A STUNNER, EH, ALGY?



DON'T KNOW, DON'T CARE. DOESN'T MATTER. CAN YOU IMAGINE WHAT IT WOULD BE LIKE TO BE TIED TO A WALL BY HER--HIM, IF YOU WILL--AND THEN LASHED WITH A BIRCH UNTIL THE FLESH ON YOUR BACK AND BUTTOCKS IS BUT A FRETWORK OF BLEEDING WELTS...



STEADY OLD MAN. I PRESENT

NOW, THERE'S A THING.



IT CERTAINLY HAS WARMED UP, HASN'T IT? WHAT A PLEASANT LITTLE PLACE. REMINDS ME OF SOMEWHERE...

BUT WHERE DID ALGY GO?

WE CAN'T BE LOST ALREADY. WE'VE ONLY BEEN HERE... BEEN HERE...



HOW LONG HAVE WE BEEN HERE?



HULLO. I HOPED YOU'D COME BACK...

UM. D'YOU FANCY A LITTLE WINE?

IT'S RED.



THERE ARE PEOPLE OVER THERE!

HEY! OVER HERE!

NO, DEAREST, DON'T, PLEASE DON'T! DON'T MAKE THEM COME HERE!



HOLD MY HAND.



LOVE YOU? OF COURSE I LOVE YOU. YOU ARE MY DOLORES, MY MUSE...



"BY THE HUNGER OF CHANGE AND EMOTION BY THE THIRST OF UNBEARABLE THINGS, BY DESPAIR, THE TWIN-BORN OF DEVOTION, BY THE PLEASURE THAT WINCES AND STINGS..."



"THE DELIGHT THAT CONSUMES THE DESIRE, THE DESIRE THAT OUTFRUNS THE DELIGHT, BY THE CRUELTY DEAF AS A FIRE AND BLIND AS THE NIGHT."



"...REALLY, I JUST WANT YOU TO HURT ME."

OH, SAID DESIRE IN HIS MIND, AMUSED, I ALWAYS DO THAT.



WE HAVE MET OUR TRUE LOVES IN THE WOOD, THEN?

YES.

THEY SAY IT IS ILL-LUCK TO MEET YOUR DOUBLE. IT PORTENDS AN EARLY DEATH.

PERHAPS, BUT NOT FOR YOU.



SO, YOU ARE MY TRUE LOVE?

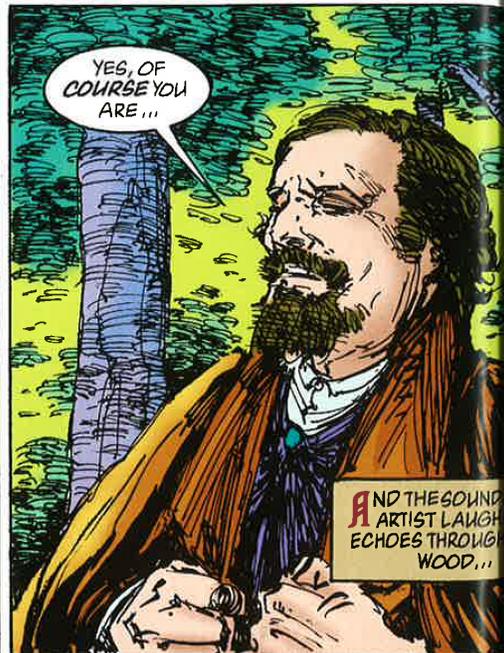


ONCE, PERHAPS, BEFORE WE WERE BEFORE THE STILL BIRTH OF OUR SON. NO LONGER.



THEN--?

I AM YOUR ONE TRUE LOVE.



YES, OF COURSE YOU ARE ...

AND THE SOUND OF THE ARTIST LAUGH ECHOES THROUGH THE WOOD...

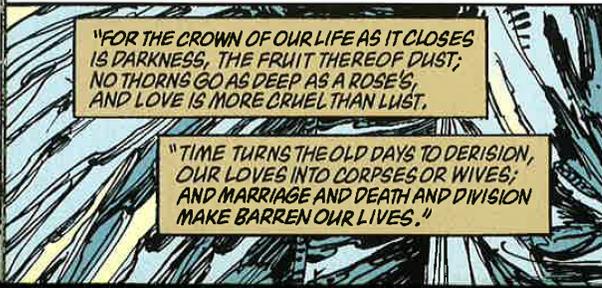


SHE FEELS HIM LAUGHING, AS THE WORLD FALLS ON HER WHITE AND COLD LIKE SNOW, SOFT AS FEATHERS, AS SHE FEELS HERSELF, CRUMPLED ON THE LEAVES IN THE WOOD...

(ON THE CHILLY SOFA IN CHATHAM PLACE, HER BREATH COMING SLOWER AND SHALLOWER).



AND SOMEWHERE SHE HEARS A LOVE SONG OF LITTLE ALGY THE POET AS HE SINGS TO DESIRE



"FOR THE CROWN OF OUR LIFE AS IT CLOSES IS DARKNESS, THE FRUIT THEREOF DUST; NO THORNS GO AS DEEP AS A ROSE'S, AND LOVE IS MORE CRUEL THAN LUST.

"TIME TURNS THE OLD DAYS TO DERISION, OUR LOVES INTO CORPSES OR WIVES; AND MARRIAGE AND DEATH AND DIVISION MAKE BARREN OUR LIVES."



HER HUSBAND HAD WORKED AT THE MECHANICS INSTITUTE THAT NIGHT, BUT HE STILL CAME HOME WITH THE SCENT OF ANNIE MILLER'S SECRET PLACES ON HIS FINGERS, A SHARP AND HEADY PERFUME...

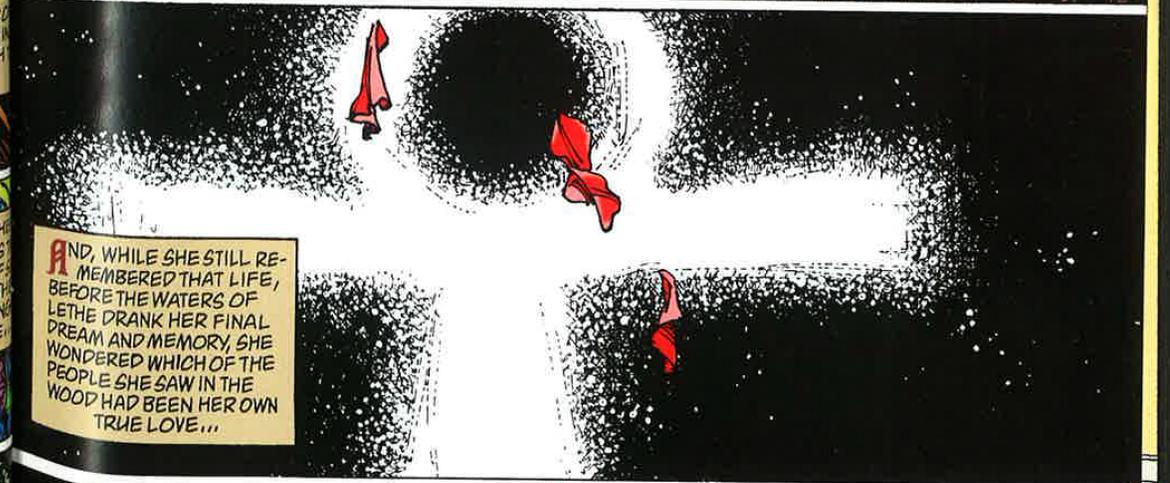
LIZZIE WAS STILL WARM WHEN HE FOUND HER, BUT THERE WAS NO BREATH LEFT IN HER BODY.



IT CAME AS LITTLE SURPRISE TO HER WHEN HE PLACED HIS POEMS IN THE GRAVE BESIDE HER, AND EVEN LESS SURPRISE WHEN HE HAD HER COFFIN DUG UP, A DECADE LATER, TO TAKE HIS POEMS BACK.

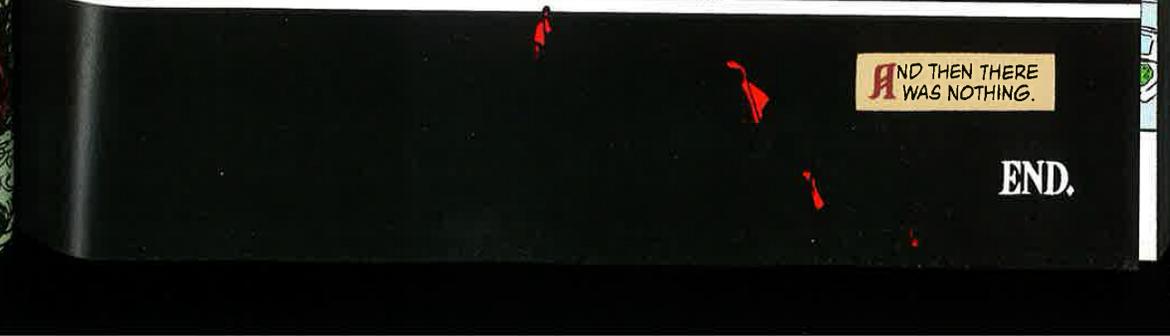


AND, WHILE SHE STILL REMEMBERED THAT LIFE, BEFORE THE WATERS OF LETHE DRANK HER FINAL DREAM AND MEMORY, SHE WONDERED WHICH OF THE PEOPLE SHE SAW IN THE WOOD HAD BEEN HER OWN TRUE LOVE...



AND THEN THERE WAS NOTHING.

END.



Christina Rossetti's "Goblin Market" (1859; 1862)

1 Morning and evening
2 Maids heard the goblins cry:
3 "Come buy our orchard fruits,
4 Come buy, come buy:
5 Apples and quinces,
6 Lemons and oranges,
7 Plump unpeck'd cherries,
8 Melons and raspberries,
9 Bloom-down-cheek'd peaches,
10 Swart-headed mulberries,
11 Wild free-born cranberries,
12 Crab-apples, dewberries,
13 Pine-apples, blackberries,
14 Apricots, strawberries;--
15 All ripe together
16 In summer weather,--
17 Morns that pass by,
18 Fair eves that fly;
19 Come buy, come buy:
20 Our grapes fresh from the vine,
21 Pomegranates full and fine,
22 Dates and sharp bullaces,
23 Rare pears and greengages,
24 Damsons and bilberries,
25 Taste them and try:
26 Currants and gooseberries,
27 Bright-fire-like barberries,
28 Figs to fill your mouth,
29 Citrons from the South,
30 Sweet to tongue and sound to eye;
31 Come buy, come buy."

32 Evening by evening
33 Among the brookside rushes,
34 Laura bow'd her head to hear,
35 Lizzie veil'd her blushes:
36 Crouching close together
37 In the cooling weather,
38 With clasping arms and cautioning lips,
39 With tingling cheeks and finger tips.
40 "Lie close," Laura said,
41 Pricking up her golden head:
42 "We must not look at goblin men,
43 We must not buy their fruits:
44 Who knows upon what soil they fed
45 Their hungry thirsty roots?"
46 "Come buy," call the goblins
47 Hobbling down the glen.

48 "Oh," cried Lizzie, "Laura, Laura,
49 You should not peep at goblin men."
50 Lizzie cover'd up her eyes,
51 Cover'd close lest they should look;
52 Laura rear'd her glossy head,
53 And whisper'd like the restless brook:
54 "Look, Lizzie, look, Lizzie,
55 Down the glen tramp little men.
56 One hauls a basket,
57 One bears a plate,
58 One lugs a golden dish
59 Of many pounds weight.
60 How fair the vine must grow
61 Whose grapes are so luscious;
62 How warm the wind must blow
63 Through those fruit bushes."
64 "No," said Lizzie, "No, no, no;
65 Their offers should not charm us,
66 Their evil gifts would harm us."
67 She thrust a dimpled finger
68 In each ear, shut eyes and ran:
69 Curious Laura chose to linger
70 Wondering at each merchant man.
71 One had a cat's face,
72 One whisk'd a tail,
73 One tramp'd at a rat's pace,
74 One crawl'd like a snail,
75 One like a wombat prow'd obtuse and furry,
76 One like a ratel tumbled hurry skurry.
77 She heard a voice like voice of doves
78 Cooing all together:
79 They sounded kind and full of loves
80 In the pleasant weather.

81 Laura stretch'd her gleaming neck
82 Like a rush-imbedded swan,
83 Like a lily from the beck,
84 Like a moonlit poplar branch,
85 Like a vessel at the launch
86 When its last restraint is gone.

87 Backwards up the mossy glen
88 Turn'd and troop'd the goblin men,
89 With their shrill repeated cry,
90 "Come buy, come buy."
91 When they reach'd where Laura was
92 They stood stock still upon the moss,
93 Leering at each other,
94 Brother with queer brother;

95 Signalling each other,
96 Brother with sly brother.
97 One set his basket down,
98 One rear'd his plate;
99 One began to weave a crown
100 Of tendrils, leaves, and rough nuts brown
101 (Men sell not such in any town);
102 One heav'd the golden weight
103 Of dish and fruit to offer her:
104 "Come buy, come buy," was still their cry.
105 Laura stared but did not stir,
106 Long'd but had no money:
107 The whisk-tail'd merchant bade her taste
108 In tones as smooth as honey,
109 The cat-faced purr'd,
110 The rat-faced spoke a word
111 Of welcome, and the snail-paced even was heard;
112 One parrot-voiced and jolly
113 Cried "Pretty Goblin" still for "Pretty Polly;"--
114 One whistled like a bird.

115 But sweet-tooth Laura spoke in haste:
116 "Good folk, I have no coin;
117 To take were to purloin:
118 I have no copper in my purse,
119 I have no silver either,
120 And all my gold is on the furze
121 That shakes in windy weather
122 Above the rusty heather."
123 "You have much gold upon your head,"
124 They answer'd all together:
125 "Buy from us with a golden curl."
126 She clipp'd a precious golden lock,
127 She dropp'd a tear more rare than pearl,
128 Then suck'd their fruit globes fair or red:
129 Sweeter than honey from the rock,
130 Stronger than man-rejoicing wine,
131 Clearer than water flow'd that juice;
132 She never tasted such before,
133 How should it cloy with length of use?
134 She suck'd and suck'd and suck'd the more
135 Fruits which that unknown orchard bore;
136 She suck'd until her lips were sore;
137 Then flung the emptied rinds away
138 But gather'd up one kernel stone,
139 And knew not was it night or day
140 As she turn'd home alone.

141 Lizzie met her at the gate
142 Full of wise upbraidings:

143 "Dear, you should not stay so late,
144 Twilight is not good for maidens;
145 Should not loiter in the glen
146 In the haunts of goblin men.
147 Do you not remember Jeanie,
148 How she met them in the moonlight,
149 Took their gifts both choice and many,
150 Ate their fruits and wore their flowers
151 Pluck'd from bowers
152 Where summer ripens at all hours?
153 But ever in the noonlight
154 She pined and pined away;
155 Sought them by night and day,
156 Found them no more, but dwindled and grew grey;
157 Then fell with the first snow,
158 While to this day no grass will grow
159 Where she lies low:
160 I planted daisies there a year ago
161 That never blow.
162 You should not loiter so."
163 "Nay, hush," said Laura:
164 "Nay, hush, my sister:
165 I ate and ate my fill,
166 Yet my mouth waters still;
167 To-morrow night I will
168 Buy more;" and kiss'd her:
169 "Have done with sorrow;
170 I'll bring you plums to-morrow
171 Fresh on their mother twigs,
172 Cherries worth getting;
173 You cannot think what figs
174 My teeth have met in,
175 What melons icy-cold
176 Piled on a dish of gold
177 Too huge for me to hold,
178 What peaches with a velvet nap,
179 Pellucid grapes without one seed:
180 Odorous indeed must be the mead
181 Whereon they grow, and pure the wave they drink
182 With lilies at the brink,
183 And sugar-sweet their sap."

184 Golden head by golden head,
185 Like two pigeons in one nest
186 Folded in each other's wings,
187 They lay down in their curtain'd bed:
188 Like two blossoms on one stem,
189 Like two flakes of new-fall'n snow,
190 Like two wands of ivory
191 Tipp'd with gold for awful kings.

192 Moon and stars gaz'd in at them,
193 Wind sang to them lullaby,
194 Lumbering owls forbore to fly,
195 Not a bat flapp'd to and fro
196 Round their rest:
197 Cheek to cheek and breast to breast
198 Lock'd together in one nest.

199 Early in the morning
200 When the first cock crow'd his warning,
201 Neat like bees, as sweet and busy,
202 Laura rose with Lizzie:
203 Fetch'd in honey, milk'd the cows,
204 Air'd and set to rights the house,
205 Kneaded cakes of whitest wheat,
206 Cakes for dainty mouths to eat,
207 Next churn'd butter, whipp'd up cream,
208 Fed their poultry, sat and sew'd;
209 Talk'd as modest maidens should:
210 Lizzie with an open heart,
211 Laura in an absent dream,
212 One content, one sick in part;
213 One warbling for the mere bright day's delight,
214 One longing for the night.

215 At length slow evening came:
216 They went with pitchers to the reedy brook;
217 Lizzie most placid in her look,
218 Laura most like a leaping flame.
219 They drew the gurgling water from its deep;
220 Lizzie pluck'd purple and rich golden flags,
221 Then turning homeward said: "The sunset flushes
222 Those furthest loftiest crags;
223 Come, Laura, not another maiden lags.
224 No wilful squirrel wags,
225 The beasts and birds are fast asleep."
226 But Laura loiter'd still among the rushes
227 And said the bank was steep.

228 And said the hour was early still
229 The dew not fall'n, the wind not chill;
230 Listening ever, but not catching
231 The customary cry,
232 "Come buy, come buy,"
233 With its iterated jingle
234 Of sugar-baited words:
235 Not for all her watching
236 Once discerning even one goblin
237 Racing, whisking, tumbling, hobbling;
238 Let alone the herds

239 That used to tramp along the glen,
240 In groups or single,
241 Of brisk fruit-merchant men.

242 Till Lizzie urged, "O Laura, come;
243 I hear the fruit-call but I dare not look:
244 You should not loiter longer at this brook:
245 Come with me home.
246 The stars rise, the moon bends her arc,
247 Each glowworm winks her spark,
248 Let us get home before the night grows dark:
249 For clouds may gather
250 Though this is summer weather,
251 Put out the lights and drench us through;
252 Then if we lost our way what should we do?"

253 Laura turn'd cold as stone
254 To find her sister heard that cry alone,
255 That goblin cry,
256 "Come buy our fruits, come buy."
257 Must she then buy no more such dainty fruit?
258 Must she no more such succous pasture find,
259 Gone deaf and blind?
260 Her tree of life droop'd from the root:
261 She said not one word in her heart's sore ache;
262 But peering thro' the dimness, nought discerning,
263 Trudg'd home, her pitcher dripping all the way;
264 So crept to bed, and lay
265 Silent till Lizzie slept;
266 Then sat up in a passionate yearning,
267 And gnash'd her teeth for baulk'd desire, and wept
268 As if her heart would break.

269 Day after day, night after night,
270 Laura kept watch in vain
271 In sullen silence of exceeding pain.
272 She never caught again the goblin cry:
273 "Come buy, come buy;"--
274 She never spied the goblin men
275 Hawking their fruits along the glen:
276 But when the noon wax'd bright
277 Her hair grew thin and grey;
278 She dwindled, as the fair full moon doth turn
279 To swift decay and burn
280 Her fire away.

281 One day remembering her kernel-stone
282 She set it by a wall that faced the south;
283 Dew'd it with tears, hoped for a root,
284 Watch'd for a waxing shoot,

285 But there came none;
286 It never saw the sun,
287 It never felt the trickling moisture run:
288 While with sunk eyes and faded mouth
289 She dream'd of melons, as a traveller sees
290 False waves in desert drouth
291 With shade of leaf-crown'd trees,
292 And burns the thirstier in the sandful breeze.

293 She no more swept the house,
294 Tended the fowls or cows,
295 Fetch'd honey, kneaded cakes of wheat,
296 Brought water from the brook:
297 But sat down listless in the chimney-nook
298 And would not eat.

299 Tender Lizzie could not bear
300 To watch her sister's cankerous care
301 Yet not to share.
302 She night and morning
303 Caught the goblins' cry:
304 "Come buy our orchard fruits,
305 Come buy, come buy;"--
306 Beside the brook, along the glen,
307 She heard the tramp of goblin men,
308 The yoke and stir
309 Poor Laura could not hear;
310 Long'd to buy fruit to comfort her,
311 But fear'd to pay too dear.
312 She thought of Jeanie in her grave,
313 Who should have been a bride;
314 But who for joys brides hope to have
315 Fell sick and died
316 In her gay prime,
317 In earliest winter time
318 With the first glazing rime,
319 With the first snow-fall of crisp winter time.

320 Till Laura dwindling
321 Seem'd knocking at Death's door:
322 Then Lizzie weigh'd no more
323 Better and worse;
324 But put a silver penny in her purse,
325 Kiss'd Laura, cross'd the heath with clumps of furze
326 At twilight, halted by the brook:
327 And for the first time in her life
328 Began to listen and look.

329 Laugh'd every goblin
330 When they spied her peeping:

331 Came towards her hobbling,
 332 Flying, running, leaping,
 333 Puffing and blowing,
 334 Chuckling, clapping, crowing,
 335 Clucking and gobbling,
 336 Mopping and mowing,
 337 Full of airs and graces,
 338 Pulling wry faces,
 339 Demure grimaces,
 340 Cat-like and rat-like,
 341 Ratel- and wombat-like,
 342 Snail-paced in a hurry,
 343 Parrot-voiced and whistler,
 344 Helter skelter, hurry skurry,
 345 Chattering like magpies,
 346 Fluttering like pigeons,
 347 Gliding like fishes,--
 348 Hugg'd her and kiss'd her:
 349 Squeez'd and caress'd her:
 350 Stretch'd up their dishes,
 351 Panniers, and plates:
 352 "Look at our apples
 353 Russet and dun,
 354 Bob at our cherries,
 355 Bite at our peaches,
 356 Citrons and dates,
 357 Grapes for the asking,
 358 Pears red with basking
 359 Out in the sun,
 360 Plums on their twigs;
 361 Pluck them and suck them,
 362 Pomegranates, figs."--

363 "Good folk," said Lizzie,
 364 Mindful of Jeanie:
 365 "Give me much and many: --
 366 Held out her apron,
 367 Toss'd them her penny.
 368 "Nay, take a seat with us,
 369 Honour and eat with us,"
 370 They answer'd grinning:
 371 "Our feast is but beginning.
 372 Night yet is early,
 373 Warm and dew-pearly,
 374 Wakeful and starry:
 375 Such fruits as these
 376 No man can carry:
 377 Half their bloom would fly,
 378 Half their dew would dry,
 379 Half their flavour would pass by.

380 Sit down and feast with us,
381 Be welcome guest with us,
382 Cheer you and rest with us."--
383 "Thank you," said Lizzie: "But one waits
384 At home alone for me:
385 So without further parleying,
386 If you will not sell me any
387 Of your fruits though much and many,
388 Give me back my silver penny
389 I toss'd you for a fee."--
390 They began to scratch their pates,
391 No longer wagging, purring,
392 But visibly demurring,
393 Grunting and snarling.
394 One call'd her proud,
395 Cross-grain'd, uncivil;
396 Their tones wax'd loud,
397 Their looks were evil.
398 Lashing their tails
399 They trod and hustled her,
400 Elbow'd and jostled her,
401 Claw'd with their nails,
402 Barking, mewling, hissing, mocking,
403 Tore her gown and soil'd her stocking,
404 Twitch'd her hair out by the roots,
405 Stamp'd upon her tender feet,
406 Held her hands and squeez'd their fruits
407 Against her mouth to make her eat.

408 White and golden Lizzie stood,
409 Like a lily in a flood,--
410 Like a rock of blue-vein'd stone
411 Lash'd by tides obstreperously,--
412 Like a beacon left alone
413 In a hoary roaring sea,
414 Sending up a golden fire,--
415 Like a fruit-crown'd orange-tree
416 White with blossoms honey-sweet
417 Sore beset by wasp and bee,--
418 Like a royal virgin town
419 Topp'd with gilded dome and spire
420 Close beleaguer'd by a fleet
421 Mad to tug her standard down.

422 One may lead a horse to water,
423 Twenty cannot make him drink.
424 Though the goblins cuff'd and caught her,
425 Coax'd and fought her,
426 Bullied and besought her,
427 Scratch'd her, pinch'd her black as ink,

428 Kick'd and knock'd her,
429 Maul'd and mock'd her,
430 Lizzie utter'd not a word;
431 Would not open lip from lip
432 Lest they should cram a mouthful in:
433 But laugh'd in heart to feel the drip
434 Of juice that syrapp'd all her face,
435 And lodg'd in dimples of her chin,
436 And streak'd her neck which quaked like curd.
437 At last the evil people,
438 Worn out by her resistance,
439 Flung back her penny, kick'd their fruit
440 Along whichever road they took,
441 Not leaving root or stone or shoot;
442 Some writh'd into the ground,
443 Some div'd into the brook
444 With ring and ripple,
445 Some scudded on the gale without a sound,
446 Some vanish'd in the distance.

447 In a smart, ache, tingle,
448 Lizzie went her way;
449 Knew not was it night or day;
450 Sprang up the bank, tore thro' the furze,
451 Threaded copse and dingle,
452 And heard her penny jingle
453 Bouncing in her purse,--
454 Its bounce was music to her ear.
455 She ran and ran
456 As if she fear'd some goblin man
457 Dogg'd her with gibe or curse
458 Or something worse:
459 But not one goblin scurried after,
460 Nor was she prick'd by fear;
461 The kind heart made her windy-paced
462 That urged her home quite out of breath with haste
463 And inward laughter.

464 She cried, "Laura," up the garden,
465 "Did you miss me?
466 Come and kiss me.
467 Never mind my bruises,
468 Hug me, kiss me, suck my juices
469 Squeez'd from goblin fruits for you,
470 Goblin pulp and goblin dew.
471 Eat me, drink me, love me;
472 Laura, make much of me;
473 For your sake I have braved the glen
474 And had to do with goblin merchant men."

475 Laura started from her chair,
476 Flung her arms up in the air,
477 Clutch'd her hair:
478 "Lizzie, Lizzie, have you tasted
479 For my sake the fruit forbidden?
480 Must your light like mine be hidden,
481 Your young life like mine be wasted,
482 Undone in mine undoing,
483 And ruin'd in my ruin,
484 Thirsty, canker'd, goblin-ridden?"--
485 She clung about her sister,
486 Kiss'd and kiss'd and kiss'd her:
487 Tears once again
488 Refresh'd her shrunken eyes,
489 Dropping like rain
490 After long sultry drouth;
491 Shaking with aguish fear, and pain,
492 She kiss'd and kiss'd her with a hungry mouth.

493 Her lips began to scorch,
494 That juice was wormwood to her tongue,
495 She loath'd the feast:
496 Writhing as one possess'd she leap'd and sung,
497 Rent all her robe, and wrung
498 Her hands in lamentable haste,
499 And beat her breast.
500 Her locks stream'd like the torch
501 Borne by a racer at full speed,
502 Or like the mane of horses in their flight,
503 Or like an eagle when she stems the light
504 Straight toward the sun,
505 Or like a caged thing freed,
506 Or like a flying flag when armies run.

507 Swift fire spread through her veins, knock'd at her heart,
508 Met the fire smouldering there
509 And overbore its lesser flame;
510 She gorged on bitterness without a name:
511 Ah! fool, to choose such part
512 Of soul-consuming care!
513 Sense fail'd in the mortal strife:
514 Like the watch-tower of a town
515 Which an earthquake shatters down,
516 Like a lightning-stricken mast,
517 Like a wind-uprooted tree
518 Spun about,
519 Like a foam-topp'd waterspout
520 Cast down headlong in the sea,
521 She fell at last;
522 Pleasure past and anguish past,

523 Is it death or is it life?

524 Life out of death.

525 That night long Lizzie watch'd by her,

526 Counted her pulse's flagging stir,

527 Felt for her breath,

528 Held water to her lips, and cool'd her face

529 With tears and fanning leaves:

530 But when the first birds chirp'd about their eaves,

531 And early reapers plodded to the place

532 Of golden sheaves,

533 And dew-wet grass

534 Bow'd in the morning winds so brisk to pass,

535 And new buds with new day

536 Open'd of cup-like lilies on the stream,

537 Laura awoke as from a dream,

538 Laugh'd in the innocent old way,

539 Hugg'd Lizzie but not twice or thrice;

540 Her gleaming locks show'd not one thread of grey,

541 Her breath was sweet as May

542 And light danced in her eyes.

543 Days, weeks, months, years

544 Afterwards, when both were wives

545 With children of their own;

546 Their mother-hearts beset with fears,

547 Their lives bound up in tender lives;

548 Laura would call the little ones

549 And tell them of her early prime,

550 Those pleasant days long gone

551 Of not-returning time:

552 Would talk about the haunted glen,

553 The wicked, quaint fruit-merchant men,

554 Their fruits like honey to the throat

555 But poison in the blood;

556 (Men sell not such in any town):

557 Would tell them how her sister stood

558 In deadly peril to do her good,

559 And win the fiery antidote:

560 Then joining hands to little hands

561 Would bid them cling together,

562 "For there is no friend like a sister

563 In calm or stormy weather;

564 To cheer one on the tedious way,

565 To fetch one if one goes astray,

566 To lift one if one totters down,

567 To strengthen whilst one stands."

Points for Reflection

1. is the type of temptation offered by the goblins specific to a particular time of day (l.1)?
2. consider Rossetti's choices of diction throughout the poem. Why, for instance, might she use "cry" in line two instead of "call," "shout," or "moan"? Why "tramp" in line fifty-five instead of "walk," "run," or "skip"?
3. why does Lizzie "blush" at the call of the goblins (l.35)? How does her reaction differ from that of her sister?
4. lines 38-39 and 184-98 establish the sisters' physical intimacy; do these lines, or other events in the story, suggest any sexual intimacy between the siblings?
5. does the fact that Lizzie's fingers are "dimpled" (l.67) suggest her age, or her girth?
6. do some of the animals present a greater temptation than others (ll.71-80, 92-114)?
7. what do the various similes used to describe Laura suggest about both her person (body) and her impending actions (ll.81-86)?
8. after the initial pleasures given by the fruit, what is Laura's first response upon finishing the food given her (ll.138-39)?
9. why does the narrator draw attention to Laura's and Lizzie's status as "maidens," and is it significant that none of the goblins are female (ll.144-46)?
10. why might no grass grow over Jeanie's grave (ll.158-59)? What killed her (ll.312-19)?
11. what tasks do the sisters perform around the house (ll.199-208), and at what point does Lizzie cease to perform these domestic duties?
12. does it matter that these encounters with goblins occur near a running stream (l.216)?
13. why do the goblins fail to return once Laura has eaten their fruit (ll.230-41)?
14. why won't the goblins accept the coin Lizzie proffers for fruit (ll.366-67)? What do they want from her?
15. of which of the seven deadly sins do the goblins accuse Lizzie (l.394)?
16. what kind of abuse does the goblins' treatment of Lizzie resemble?
17. does Lizzie consume any of the fruit?
18. is Lizzie's flight from the goblins motivated by fear (ll.455-63)?
19. Christina's brother Michael wrote of this poem, "'I have more than once heard Christina aver that the poem has not any profound or ulterior meaning--it is just a fairy story; yet one can discern that it implies at any rate this much--that to succumb to temptation makes

one a victim to that same continuous temptation; that the remedy does not always lie with oneself; and that a stronger and more righteous will may prove of avail to restore one's lost estate" (Mackenzie Bell, Christina Rossetti, 207). Does this seem an apt summary of the poem's ethical import, or can you identify more specific motifs and morals?

20. does the evidence support the assertions of Lorraine Janzen Kooistra in "Visualizing the Fantastic Subject" that "Rossetti invites her readers to contemplate the ways in which her hero, Lizzie, has the power to be both spectator and spectacle without forfeiting her individual subjectivity" (Culture 141)? Kooistra reiterates this point late when she claims "Rossetti both exploits and subverts the notion that women are objects of the gaze" (Culture 142).

William Morris's "The Defence of Guenevere" (1858)

But, knowing now that they would have her speak,
She threw her wet hair backward from her brow,
Her hand close to her mouth touching her cheek,

As though she had had there a shameful blow,
And feeling it shameful to feel aught but shame 5
All through her heart, yet felt her cheek burned so,

She must a little touch it; like one lame
She walked away from Gauwaine, with her head
Still lifted up; and on her cheek of flame

The tears dried quick; she stopped at last and said: 10
"O knights and lords, it seems but little skill
To talk of well-known things past now and dead.

"God wot I ought to say, I have done ill,
And pray you all forgiveness heartily!
Because you must be right, such great lords; still 15

"Listen, suppose your time were come to die,
And you were quite alone and very weak;
Yea, laid a dying while very mightily

"The wind was ruffling up the narrow streak
Of river through your broad lands running well: 20
Suppose a hush should come, then some one speak:

"One of these cloths is heaven, and one is hell,
Now choose one cloth for ever; which they be,
I will not tell you, you must somehow tell

"Of your own strength and mightiness; here, see!' 25
Yea, yea, my lord, and you to ope your eyes,
At foot of your familiar bed to see

“A great God’s angel standing, with such dyes,
Not known on earth, on his great wings, and hands,
Held out two ways, light from the inner skies 30

“Showing him well, and making his commands
Seem to be God’s commands, moreover, too,
Holding within his hands the cloths on wands;

“And one of these strange choosing cloths was blue,
Wavy and long, and one cut short and red; 35
No man could tell the better of the two.

“After a shivering half-hour you said:
‘God help! heaven’s color, the blue;’ and he said, ‘hell.’
Perhaps you would then roll upon your bed,

“And cry to all good men that loved you well, 40
‘Ah Christ! if only I had known, known, know;’
Launcelot went away, then I could tell,

“Like wisest man how all things would be, moan,
And roll and hurt myself, and long to die,
And yet fear much to die for what was sown. 45

“Nevertheless you, O Sir Gauwaine, lie,
Whatever may have happened through these years,
God knows I speak truth, saying that you lie.”

Her voice was low at first, being full of tears,
But as it cleared, it grew full loud and shrill, 50
Growing a windy shriek in all men’s ears,

A ringing in their startled brains, until
She said that Gauwain lied, then her voice sunk,
And her great eyes began again to fill,

Though still she stood right up, and never shrunk, 55
But spoke on bravely, glorious lady fair!
Whatever tears her full lips may have drunk,

She stood, and seemed to think, and wrung her hair,
Spoke out at last with no more trace of shame,
With passionate twisting of her body there: 60

“It chanced upon a day that Launcelot came
To dwell at Arthur’s court: at Christmas-time
This happened; when the heralds sung his name,

“‘Son of King Ban of Benwick,’ seemed to chime
Along with all the bells that rang that day,
O’er the white roofs, with little change of rhyme. 65

“Christmas and whitened winter passed away,
And over me the April sunshine came,
Made very awful with black hail-clouds, yea

“And in the Summer I grew white with flame,
And bowed my head down: Autumn, and the sick
Sure knowledge things would never be the same, 70

“However often Spring might be most thick
Of blossoms and buds, smote on me, and I grew
Careless of most things, let the clock tick, tick, 75

“To my unhappy pulse, that beat right through
My eager body; while I laughed out loud,
And let my lips curl up at false or true,

“Seemed cold and shallow without any cloud.
Behold, my judges, then the cloths were brought;
While I was dizzied thus, old thoughts would crowd, 80

“Belonging to the time ere I was bought
By Arthur’s great name and his little love;
Must I give up for ever then, I thought,

“That which I deemed would ever round me move,
Glorifying all things; for a little word,
Scarce ever meant at all, must I now prove 85

“Stone-cold for ever? Pray you, does the Lord
Will that all folks should be quite happy and good?
I love God now a little, if this cord 90

“Were broken, once for all what striving could
Make me love anything in earth or heaven?
So day by day it grew, as if one should

“Slip slowly down some path worn smooth and even,
Down to a cool sea on a summer day;
Yet still in slipping there was some small leaven 95

“Of stretched hands catching small stones by the way,
Until one surely reached the sea at last,
And felt strange new joy as the worn head lay

“When both our mouths went wandering in one way,
 And aching sorely, met among the leaves;
 Our hands being left behind strained far away.

“Never within a yard of my bright sleeves
 Had Launcelot come before—and now so nigh! 140
 After that day why is it Guenevere grieves?

“Nevertheless you, O Sir Gauwaine, lie,
 Whatever happened on through all those years,
 God knows I speak truth, saying that you lie.

“Being such a lady could I weep these tears 145
 If this were true? A great queen such as I
 Having sinn’d this way, straight her conscience sears;

“After afterwards she liveth hatefully,
 Slaying and poisoning, certes never weeps,—
 Gauwaine be friends now, speak me lovingly. 150

“Do I not see how God’s dear pity creeps
 All through your frame, and trembles in your mouth?
 Remember in what grave your mother sleeps,

“Buried in some place far down in the south
 Men are forgetting as I speak to you; 155
 By her head sever’d in that awful drouth

“Of pity that drew Agravaine’s fell blow,
 I pray your pity! let me not scream out
 For ever after, when the shrill winds blow

“Through half your castle-locks! let me not shout 160
 For ever after in the winter night
 When you ride out alone! in battle-rout

“Let not my rusting tears make your sword light!
 Ah! God of mercy, how he turns away!
 So, ever must I dress me to the fight, 165

“So: let God’s justice work! Gauwaine, I say,
 See me hew down your proofs: yea all men know
 Even as you said how Mellyagraunce one day,

“One bitter day in la Fausse Garde, for so
 All good knights held it after, saw— 170
 Yea, sirs, by cursed unknighly outrage; though

“You, Gauwaine, held his sword without a flaw.
 This Mellyagraunce saw blood upon my bed—
 Whose blood then pray you? is there any law

“To make a queen say why some spots of red 175
 lie on her coverlet? or will you say:
 ‘Your hands are white, lady, as when you wed,

“‘Where did you bleed?’ and must I stammer out, ‘Nay,
 I blush indeed, fair lord, only to rend
 My sleeve up to my shoulder, where there lay 180

“A knife-point last night’: so must I defend
 The honour of the Lady Guenevere?
 Not so, fair lords, even if the world should end

“This very day, and you were judges here
 Instead of God. Did you see Mellyagraunce 185
 When Launcelot stood by him? what white fear

“Curdled his blood, and how his teeth did dance,
 His side sink in? as my knight cried and said,
 ‘Slayer of unarm’d men, here is a chance!

“‘Setter of traps, I pray you guard your head, 190
 By God I am so glad to fight with you,
 Stripper of ladies, that my hand feels lead

“‘For driving weight; hurrah now! draw and do,
 For all my wounds are moving in my breast,
 And I am getting mad with waiting so.’ 195

“He struck his hands together o’er the beast,
 Who fell down flat, and grovell’d at his feet,
 And groan’d at being slain so young—‘At least,’

“My knight said, ‘Rise you, sir, who are so fleet
 At catching ladies, half-arm’d will I fight, 200
 My left side all uncovered!’ then I weet,

“Up sprang Sir Mellyagraunce with great delight
 Upon his knave’s face; not until just then
 Did I quite hate him, as I saw my knight

“Along the lists look to my stake and pen 205
 With such a joyous smile, it made me sigh
 From agony beneath my waist-chain, when

“The fight began, and to me they drew nigh;
Ever Sir Launcelot kept him on the right,
And traversed warily, and ever high 210

“And fast leapt catiff’s sword, until my knight
Sudden threw up his sword to his left hand,
Caught it and swung it; that was all the fight;

“Except a spout of blood on the hot land,
For it was the hottest summer; and I know 215
I wonder’d how the fire, while I should stand,

“And burn, against the heat, would quiver so,
Yards above my head; thus these matters went,
Which things were only warnings of the woe

“That fell on me. Yet Mellyagraunce was shent, 220
For Mellyagraunce had fought against the Lord;
Therefore, my lords, take heed lest you be blent

“With all his wickedness; say no rash word
Against me, being so beautiful; my eyes,
Wept all away to gray, may bring some sword 225

“To drown you in your blood; see my breast rise
Like waves of purple sea, as here I stand;
And how my arms are moved in wonderful wise,

“Yea also at my full heart’s strong command,
See through my long throat how the words go up 230
In ripples to my mouth; how in my hand

“The shadow lies like wine within a cup
Of marvelously colour’d gold; yea now
This little wind is rising, look you up,

“And wonder how the light is falling so 235
Within my moving tresses: will you dare
When you have looked a little on my brow,

“To say this thing is vile? or will you care
For any plausible lies of cunning woof,
Where you can see my face with no lie there 240

“For ever? am I not a gracious proof?—
‘But in your chamber Launcelot was found’—
Is there a good knight then would stand aloof,

“When a queen says with gentle queenly sound:
‘O true as steel, come now and talk with me,
I love to see your step upon the ground” 245

“Unwavering, also well I love to see
That gracious smile light up your face, and hear
Your wonderful words, that all mean verily

“The thing they seem to mean: good friend, so dear 250
To me in everything, come here to-night,
Or else the hours will pass most dull and drear;

“If you come not, I fear this time I might
Get thinking over much of times gone by,
When I was young, and green hope was in sight: 255

“For no man cares now to know why I sigh;
And no man comes to sing me pleasant songs,
Nor any brings me the sweet flowers that lie

“So thick in the gardens; therefore one so longs 260
To see you, Launcelot; that we may be
Like children once again, free from all wrongs

“Just for one night.’ Did he not come to me?
What thing could keep true Launcelot away
If I said, ‘Come?’ there was one less than three

“In my quiet room that night, and we were gay; 265
Till sudden I rose up, weak, pale, and sick,
Because a bawling broke our dream up, yea

“I looked at Launcelot’s face and could not speak,
For he looked helpless too, for a little while;
Then I remember how I tried to shriek, 270

“And could not, but fell down; from tile to tile
The stones they threw up rattled o’er my head
And made me dizzier; till within a while

“My maids were all about me, and my head 275
On Launcelot’s breast was being soothed away
From its white chattering, until Launcelot said—

“By God! I will not tell you more to-day,
Judge any way you will—what matters it?
You know quite well the story of that fray,

“How Launcelot still’d their bawling, the mad fit 280
That caught up Gauwaine, all, all, verily,
But just that which would save me; these things flit.

“Nevertheless you, O Sir Gauwaine, lie,
Whatever may have happen’d these long years,
God knows I speak truth, saying that you lie! 285

“All I have said is truth, by Christ’s dear tears.”
She would not speak another word, but stood
Turn’d sideways; listening, like a man who hears

His brother’s trumpet sounding through the wood 280
Of his foes’ lances. She lean’d eagerly,
And gave a slight spring sometimes, as she could

At last hear something really; joyfully
Her cheek grew crimson, as the headlong speed
Of the roan charger drew all men to see, 285
The Knight who came was Launcelot at good need.

Points for Reflection

1. hero or villain? Exonerated or condemned? Sympathetic or worthy of disdain? How does William Morris characterize King Arthur's unfaithful wife, Guenevere?
2. is Guenevere's case convincing? What tools does she employ in her self-defense?
3. trace the shifts in Guenevere's voice--her volume as well as her tone.
4. does the narrator himself betray his opinion of Guenevere at any point?
5. is Morris's use of a *terza rima* verse form appropriate given the poem's contents?
6. to what does Guinevere allude when she admits fearing to die (l.45)?
7. does the poem provide a portrait of a lady "brave," "glorious," and "fair" (l.56)?
8. what does “I grew white with flame” connote, and why might this state prompt Guinevere to bow her head (ll.70-71)?
9. what did Guinevere think would always revolve around her (ll.84-85)?
10. what threat does Guinevere level at Gauwaine with, “let me not scream out / For ever after, when the shrill winds blow / ‘Through half your castle-locks!’” (ll.148-60)?
11. does Guinevere indeed “hew down” (l.167) the proofs Gauwaine brought against her?
12. does Guinevere perjure herself when she declares “All I have said is truth” (l.286)?

WHAT IS REAL?

Henry James's "The Real Thing" (1892)

WHEN the porter's wife (she used to answer the house-bell), announced "A gentleman—with a lady, sir," I had, as I often had in those days, for the wish was father to the thought, an immediate vision of sitters. Sitters my visitors in this case proved to be; but not in the sense I should have preferred. However, there was nothing at first to indicate that they might not have come for a portrait. The gentleman, a man of fifty, very high and very straight, with a moustache slightly grizzled and a dark grey walking-coat admirably fitted, both of which I noted professionally—I don't mean as a barber or yet as a tailor—would have struck me as a celebrity if celebrities often were striking. It was a truth of which I had for some time been conscious that a figure with a good deal of frontage was, as one might say, almost never a public institution. A glance at the lady helped to remind me of this paradoxical law: she also looked too distinguished to be a "personality." Moreover one would scarcely come across two variations together.

Neither of the pair spoke immediately—they only prolonged the preliminary gaze which suggested that each wished to give the other a chance. They were visibly shy; they stood there letting me take them in—which, as I afterwards perceived, was the most practical thing they could have done. In this way their embarrassment served their cause. I had seen people painfully reluctant to mention that they desired anything so gross as to be represented on canvas; but the scruples of my new friends appeared almost insurmountable. Yet the gentleman might have said "I should like a portrait of my wife," and the lady might have said "I should like a portrait of my husband." Perhaps they were not husband and wife—this naturally would make the matter more delicate. Perhaps they wished to be done together—in which case they ought to have brought a third person to break the news.

"We come from Mr. Rivet," the lady said at last, with a dim smile which had the effect of a moist sponge passed over a "sunk" piece of painting, as well as of a vague allusion to vanished beauty. She was as tall and straight, in her degree, as her companion, and with ten years less to carry. She looked as sad as a woman could look whose face was not charged with expression; that is her tinted oval mask showed friction as an exposed surface shows it. The hand of time had played over her freely, but only to simplify. She was slim and stiff, and so well-dressed, in dark blue cloth, with lappets and pockets and buttons, that it was clear she employed the same tailor as her husband. The couple had an indefinable air of prosperous thrift—they evidently got a good deal of luxury for their money. If I was to be one of their luxuries it would behove me to consider my terms.

"Ah, Claude Rivet recommended me?" I inquired; and I added that it was very kind of him, though I could reflect that, as he only painted landscape, this was not a sacrifice.

The lady looked very hard at the gentleman, and the gentleman looked round the room. Then staring at the floor a moment and stroking his moustache, he rested his pleasant eyes on me with the remark:

"He said you were the right one."

"I try to be, when people want to sit."

"Yes, we should like to," said the lady anxiously.

“Do you mean together?”

My visitors exchanged a glance. “If you could do anything with *me*, I suppose it would be double,” the gentleman stammered.

“Oh yes, there’s naturally a higher charge for two figures than for one.”

“We should like to make it pay,” the husband confessed.

“That’s very good of you,” I returned, appreciating so unwonted a sympathy—for I supposed he meant pay the artist.

A sense of strangeness seemed to dawn on the lady. “We mean for the illustrations—Mr. Rivet said you might put one in.”

“Put one in—an illustration?” I was equally confused.

“Sketch her off, you know,” said the gentleman, colouring.

It was only then that I understood the service Claude Rivet had rendered me; he had told them that I worked in black and white, for magazines, for story-books, for sketches of contemporary life, and consequently had frequent employment for models. These things were true, but it was not less true (I may confess it now—whether because the aspiration was to lead to everything or to nothing I leave the reader to guess), that I couldn’t get the honours, to say nothing of the emoluments, of a great painter of portraits out of my head. My “illustrations” were my pot-boilers; I looked to a different branch of art (far and away the most interesting it had always seemed to me), to perpetuate my fame. There was no shame in looking to it also to make my fortune; but that fortune was by so much further from being made from the moment my visitors wished to be “done” for nothing. I was disappointed; for in the pictorial sense I had immediately *seen* them. I had seized their type—I had already settled what I would do with it. Something that wouldn’t absolutely have pleased them, I afterwards reflected.

“Ah, you’re—you’re—a—?” I began, as soon as I had mastered my surprise. I couldn’t bring out the dingy word “models”; it seemed to fit the case so little.

“We haven’t had much practice,” said the lady.

“We’ve got to *do* something, and we’ve thought that an artist in your line might perhaps make something of us,” her husband threw off. He further mentioned that they didn’t know many artists and that they had gone first, on the off-chance (he painted views of course, but sometimes put in figures—perhaps I remembered), to Mr. Rivet, whom they had met a few years before at a place in Norfolk where he was sketching.

“We used to sketch a little ourselves,” the lady hinted.

“It’s very awkward, but we absolutely *must* do something,” her husband went on.

“Of course, we’re not so *very* young,” she admitted, with a wan smile.

With the remark that I might as well know something more about them, the husband had handed me a card extracted from a neat new pocket-book (their appurtenances were all of the freshest) and inscribed with the words “Major Monarch.” Impressive as these words were they didn’t carry my knowledge much further; but my visitor presently added: “I’ve left the

army, and we've had the misfortune to lose our money. In fact our means are dreadfully small."

"It's an awful bore," said Mrs. Monarch.

They evidently wished to be discreet—to take care not to swagger because they were gentlefolks. I perceived they would have been willing to recognise this as something of a drawback, at the same time that I guessed at an underlying sense—their consolation in adversity—that they *had* their points. They certainly had; but these advantages struck me as preponderantly social; such for instance as would help to make a drawing-room look well. However, a drawing-room was always, or ought to be, a picture.

In consequence of his wife's allusion to their age Major Monarch observed: "Naturally, it's more for the figure that we thought of going in. We can still hold ourselves up." On the instant I saw that the figure was indeed their strong point. His "naturally" didn't sound vain, but it lighted up the question. "*She* has got the best," he continued, nodding at his wife, with a pleasant after-dinner absence of circumlocution. I could only reply, as if we were in fact sitting over our wine, that this didn't prevent his own from being very good; which led him in turn to rejoin: "We thought that if you ever have to do people like us, we might be something like it. *She*, particularly—for a lady in a book, you know."

I was so amused by them that, to get more of it, I did my best to take their point of view; and though it was an embarrassment to find myself appraising physically, as if they were animals on hire or useful blacks, a pair whom I should have expected to meet only in one of the relations in which criticism is tacit, I looked at Mrs. Monarch judicially enough to be able to exclaim, after a moment, with conviction: "Oh yes, a lady in a book!" She was singularly like a bad illustration.

"We'll stand up, if you like," said the Major; and he raised himself before me with a really grand air.

I could take his measure at a glance—he was six feet two and a perfect gentleman. It would have paid any club in process of formation and in want of a stamp to engage him at a salary to stand in the principal window. What struck me immediately was that in coming to me they had rather missed their vocation; they could surely have been turned to better account for advertising purposes. I couldn't of course see the thing in detail, but I could see them make someone's fortune—I don't mean their own. There was something in them for a waistcoat-maker, an hotel-keeper or a soap-vendor. I could imagine "We always use it" pinned on their bosoms with the greatest effect; I had a vision of the promptitude with which they would launch a table d'hôte.

Mrs. Monarch sat still, not from pride but from shyness, and presently her husband said to her: "Get up my dear and show how smart you are." She obeyed, but she had no need to get up to show it. She walked to the end of the studio, and then she came back blushing, with her fluttered eyes on her husband. I was reminded of an incident I had accidentally had a glimpse of in Paris—being with a friend there, a dramatist about to produce a play—when an actress came to him to ask to be intrusted with a part. She went through her paces before him, walked up and down as Mrs. Monarch was doing. Mrs. Monarch did it quite as well, but I abstained from applauding. It was very odd to see such people apply for such poor pay. She looked as if she had ten thousand a year. Her husband had used the word that described her: she was, in the London current jargon, essentially and typically "smart." Her figure was, in the same order of ideas, conspicuously and irreproachably "good." For a

woman of her age her waist was surprisingly small; her elbow moreover had the orthodox crook. She held her head at the conventional angle; but why did she come to *me*? She ought to have tried on jackets at a big shop. I feared my visitors were not only destitute, but “artistic”—which would be a great complication. When she sat down again I thanked her, observing that what a draughtsman most valued in his model was the faculty of keeping quiet.

“Oh, *she* can keep quiet,” said Major Monarch. Then he added, jocosely: “I’ve always kept her quiet.”

“I’m not a nasty fidget, am I?” Mrs. Monarch appealed to her husband.

He addressed his answer to me. “Perhaps it isn’t out of place to mention—because we ought to be quite business-like, oughtn’t we?—that when I married her she was known as the Beautiful Statue.”

“Oh dear!” said Mrs. Monarch, ruefully.

“Of course I should want a certain amount of expression,” I rejoined.

“Of *course!*” they both exclaimed.

“And then I suppose you know that you’ll get awfully tired.”

“Oh, we *never* get tired!” they eagerly cried.

“Have you had any kind of practice?”

They hesitated—they looked at each other. “We’ve been photographed, *immensely,*” said Mrs. Monarch.

“She means the fellows have asked us,” added the Major.

“I see—because you’re so good-looking.”

“I don’t know what they thought, but they were always after us.”

“We always got our photographs for nothing,” smiled Mrs. Monarch.

“We might have brought some, my dear,” her husband remarked.

“I’m not sure we have any left. We’ve given quantities away,” she explained to me.

“With our autographs and that sort of thing,” said the Major.

“Are they to be got in the shops?” I inquired, as a harmless pleasantry.

“Oh, yes; hers—they used to be.”

“Not now,” said Mrs. Monarch, with her eyes on the floor.

II.

I COULD fancy the “sort of thing” they put on the presentation-copies of their photographs, and I was sure they wrote a beautiful hand. It was odd how quickly I was sure of everything that concerned them. If they were now so poor as to have to earn shillings and pence, they never had had much of a margin. Their good looks had been their capital, and they had

good-humouredly made the most of the career that this resource marked out for them. It was in their faces, the blankness, the deep intellectual repose of the twenty years of country-house visiting which had given them pleasant intonations. I could see the sunny drawing-rooms, sprinkled with periodicals she didn't read, in which Mrs. Monarch had continuously sat; I could see the wet shrubberies in which she had walked, equipped to admiration for either exercise. I could see the rich covers the Major had helped to shoot and the wonderful garments in which, late at night, he repaired to the smoking-room to talk about them. I could imagine their leggings and waterproofs, their knowing tweeds and rugs, their rolls of sticks and cases of tackle and neat umbrellas; and I could evoke the exact appearance of their servants and the compact variety of their luggage on the platforms of country stations.

They gave small tips, but they were liked; they didn't do anything themselves, but they were welcome. They looked so well everywhere; they gratified the general relish for stature, complexion and "form." They knew it without fatuity or vulgarity, and they respected themselves in consequence. They were not superficial; they were thorough and kept themselves up—it had been their line. People with such a taste for activity had to have some line. I could feel how, even in a dull house, they could have been counted upon for cheerfulness. At present something had happened—it didn't matter what, their little income had grown less, it had grown least—and they had to do something for pocket-money. Their friends liked them, but didn't like to support them. There was something about them that represented credit—their clothes, their manners, their type; but if credit is a large empty pocket in which an occasional chink reverberates, the chink at least must be audible. What they wanted of me was to help to make it so. Fortunately they had no children—I soon divined that. They would also perhaps wish our relations to be kept secret: this was why it was "for the figure"—the reproduction of the face would betray them.

I liked them—they were so simple; and I had no objection to them if they would suit. But, somehow, with all their perfections I didn't easily believe in them. After all they were amateurs, and the ruling passion of my life was the detestation of the amateur. Combined with this was another perversity—an innate preference for the represented subject over the real one: the defect of the real one was so apt to be a lack of representation. I liked things that appeared; then one was sure. Whether they *were* or not was a subordinate and almost always a profitless question. There were other considerations, the first of which was that I already had two or three people in use, notably a young person with big feet, in alpaca, from Kilburn, who for a couple of years had come to me regularly for my illustrations and with whom I was still—perhaps ignobly—satisfied. I frankly explained to my visitors how the case stood; but they had taken more precautions than I supposed. They had reasoned out their opportunity, for Claude Rivet had told them of the projected *édition de luxe* of one of the writers of our day—the rarest of the novelists—who, long neglected by the multitudinous vulgar and dearly prized by the attentive (need I mention Philip Vincent?) had had the happy fortune of seeing, late in life, the dawn and then the full light of a higher criticism—an estimate in which, on the part of the public, there was something really of expiation. The edition in question, planned by a publisher of taste, was practically an act of high reparation; the wood-cuts with which it was to be enriched were the homage of English art to one of the most independent representatives of English letters. Major and Mrs. Monarch confessed to me that they had hoped I might be able to work *them* into my share of the enterprise. They knew I was to do the first of the books, "Rutland Ramsay," but I had to make clear to them that my participation in the rest of the affair—this first book was to be a test—was to depend on the satisfaction I should give. If this should be limited my employers would drop me without a scruple. It was therefore a crisis for me, and naturally I was making special

preparations, looking about for new people, if they should be necessary, and securing the best types. I admitted however that I should like to settle down to two or three good models who would do for everything.

“Should we have often to—a—put on special clothes?” Mrs. Monarch timidly demanded.

“Dear, yes—that’s half the business.”

“And should we be expected to supply our own costumes?”

“Oh, no; I’ve got a lot of things. A painter’s models put on—or put off—anything he likes.”

“And do you mean—a—the same?”

“The same?”

Mrs. Monarch looked at her husband again.

“Oh, she was just wondering,” he explained, “if the costumes are in *general* use.” I had to confess that they were, and I mentioned further that some of them (I had a lot of genuine, greasy last-century things), had served their time, a hundred years ago, on living, world-stained men and women. “We’ll put on anything that fits,” said the Major.

“Oh, I arrange that—they fit in the pictures.”

“I’m afraid I should do better for the modern books. I would come as you like,” said Mrs. Monarch.

“She has got a lot of clothes at home: they might do for contemporary life,” her husband continued.

“Oh, I can fancy scenes in which you’d be quite natural.” And indeed I could see the slipshod rearrangements of stale properties—the stories I tried to produce pictures for without the exasperation of reading them—whose sandy tracts the good lady might help to people. But I had to return to the fact that for this sort of work—the daily mechanical grind—I was already equipped; the people I was working with were fully adequate.

“We only thought we might be more like *some* characters,” said Mrs. Monarch mildly, getting up.

Her husband also rose; he stood looking at me with a dim wistfulness that was touching in so fine a man. “Wouldn’t it be rather a pull sometimes to have—a—to have—?” He hung fire; he wanted me to help him by phrasing what he meant. But I couldn’t—I didn’t know. So he brought it out, awkwardly: “The *real* thing; a gentleman, you know, or a lady.” I was quite ready to give a general assent—I admitted that there was a great deal in that. This encouraged Major Monarch to say, following up his appeal with an unacted gulp: “It’s awfully hard—we’ve tried everything.” The gulp was communicative; it proved too much for his wife. Before I knew it Mrs. Monarch had dropped again upon a divan and burst into tears. Her husband sat down beside her, holding one of her hands; whereupon she quickly dried her eyes with the other, while I felt embarrassed as she looked up at me. “There isn’t a confounded job I haven’t applied for—waited for—prayed for. You can fancy we’d be pretty bad first. Secretaryships and that sort of thing? You might as well ask for a peerage. I’d be *anything*—I’m strong; a messenger or a coalheaver. I’d put on a gold-laced cap and open carriage-doors in front of the haberdasher’s; I’d hang about a station, to carry

portmanteaus; I'd be a postman. But they won't *look* at you; there are thousands, as good as yourself, already on the ground. *Gentlemen*, poor beggars, who have drunk their wine, who have kept their hunters!"

I was as reassuring as I knew how to be, and my visitors were presently on their feet again while, for the experiment, we agreed on an hour. We were discussing it when the door opened and Miss Churm came in with a wet umbrella. Miss Churm had to take the omnibus to Maida Vale and then walk half-a-mile. She looked a trifle blowsy and slightly splashed. I scarcely ever saw her come in without thinking afresh how odd it was that, being so little in herself, she should yet be so much in others. She was a meagre little Miss Churm, but she was an ample heroine of romance. She was only a freckled cockney, but she could represent everything, from a fine lady to a shepherdess; she had the faculty, as she might have had a fine voice or long hair.

She couldn't spell, and she loved beer, but she had two or three "points," and practice, and a knack, and mother-wit, and a kind of whimsical sensibility, and a love of the theatre, and seven sisters, and not an ounce of respect, especially for the *h*. The first thing my visitors saw was that her umbrella was wet, and in their spotless perfection they visibly winced at it. The rain had come on since their arrival.

"I'm all in a soak; there *was* a mess of people in the 'bus. I wish you lived near a stytion," said Miss Churm. I requested her to get ready as quickly as possible, and she passed into the room in which she always changed her dress. But before going out she asked me what she was to get into this time.

"It's the Russian princess, don't you know?" I answered; "the one with the 'golden eyes,' in black velvet, for the long thing in the *Cheapside*."

"Golden eyes? I *say*!" cried Miss Churm, while my companions watched her with intensity as she withdrew. She always arranged herself, when she was late, before I could turn round; and I kept my visitors a little, on purpose, so that they might get an idea, from seeing her, what would be expected of themselves. I mentioned that she was quite my notion of an excellent model—she was really very clever.

"Do you think she looks like a Russian princess?" Major Monarch asked, with lurking alarm.

"When I make her, yes."

"Oh, if you have to *make* her—!" he reasoned, acutely.

"That's the most you can ask. There are so many that are not makeable."

"Well now, *here's* a lady"—and with a persuasive smile he passed his arm into his wife's—"who's already made!"

"Oh, I'm not a Russian princess," Mrs. Monarch protested, a little coldly. I could see that she had known some and didn't like them. There, immediately, was a complication of a kind that I never had to fear with Miss Churm.

This young lady came back in black velvet—the gown was rather rusty and very low on her lean shoulders—and with a Japanese fan in her red hands. I reminded her that in the scene I was doing she had to look over someone's head. "I forget whose it is; but it doesn't matter. Just look over a head."

“I’d rather look over a stove,” said Miss Churm; and she took her station near the fire. She fell into position, settled herself into a tall attitude, gave a certain backward inclination to her head and a certain forward droop to her fan, and looked, at least to my prejudiced sense, distinguished and charming, foreign and dangerous. We left her looking so, while I went down-stairs with Major and Mrs. Monarch.

“I think I could come about as near it as that,” said Mrs. Monarch.

“Oh, you think she’s shabby, but you must allow for the alchemy of art.”

However, they went off with an evident increase of comfort, founded on their demonstrable advantage in being the real thing. I could fancy them shuddering over Miss Churm. She was very droll about them when I went back, for I told her what they wanted.

“Well, if *she* can sit I’ll tyke to bookkeeping,” said my model.

“She’s very lady-like,” I replied, as an innocent form of aggravation.

“So much the worse for *you*. That means she can’t turn round.”

“She’ll do for the fashionable novels.”

“Oh yes, she’ll *do* for them!” my model humorously declared. “Ain’t they had enough without her?” I had often sociably denounced them to Miss Churm.

III.

It was for the elucidation of a mystery in one of these works that I first tried Mrs. Monarch. Her husband came with her, to be useful if necessary—it was sufficiently clear that as a general thing he would prefer to come with her. At first I wondered if this were for “propriety’s” sake—if he were going to be jealous and meddling. The idea was too tiresome, and if it had been confirmed it would speedily have brought our acquaintance to a close. But I soon saw there was nothing in it and that if he accompanied Mrs. Monarch it was (in addition to the chance of being wanted), simply because he had nothing else to do. When she was away from him his occupation was gone—she never *had* been away from him. I judged, rightly, that in their awkward situation their close union was their main comfort and that this union had no weak spot. It was a real marriage, an encouragement to the hesitating, a nut for pessimists to crack. Their address was humble (I remember afterwards thinking it had been the only thing about them that was really professional), and I could fancy the lamentable lodgings in which the Major would have been left alone. He could bear them with his wife—he couldn’t bear them without her.

He had too much tact to try and make himself agreeable when he couldn’t be useful; so he simply sat and waited, when I was too absorbed in my work to talk. But I liked to make him talk—it made my work, when it didn’t interrupt it, less sordid, less special. To listen to him was to combine the excitement of going out with the economy of staying at home. There was only one hindrance: that I seemed not to know any of the people he and his wife had known. I think he wondered extremely, during the term of our intercourse, whom the deuce I *did* know. He hadn’t a stray sixpence of an idea to fumble for; so we didn’t spin it very fine—we confined ourselves to questions of leather and even of liquor (saddlers and breeches-makers and how to get good claret cheap), and matters like “good trains” and the habits of small game. His lore on these last subjects was astonishing, he managed to interweave the station-master with the ornithologist. When he couldn’t talk about greater

things he could talk cheerfully about smaller, and since I couldn't accompany him into reminiscences of the fashionable world he could lower the conversation without a visible effort to my level.

So earnest a desire to please was touching in a man who could so easily have knocked one down. He looked after the fire and had an opinion on the draught of the stove, without my asking him, and I could see that he thought many of my arrangements not half clever enough. I remember telling him that if I were only rich I would offer him a salary to come and teach me how to live. Sometimes he gave a random sigh, of which the essence was: "Give me even such a bare old barrack as *this*, and I'd do something with it!" When I wanted to use him he came alone; which was an illustration of the superior courage of women. His wife could bear her solitary second floor, and she was in general more discreet; showing by various small reserves that she was alive to the propriety of keeping our relations markedly professional—not letting them slide into sociability. She wished it to remain clear that she and the Major were employed, not cultivated, and if she approved of me as a superior, who could be kept in his place, she never thought me quite good enough for an equal.

She sat with great intensity, giving the whole of her mind to it, and was capable of remaining for an hour almost as motionless as if she were before a photographer's lens. I could see she had been photographed often, but somehow the very habit that made her good for that purpose unfitted her for mine. At first I was extremely pleased with her lady-like air, and it was a satisfaction, on coming to follow her lines, to see how good they were and how far they could lead the pencil. But after a few times I began to find her too insurmountably stiff; do what I would with it my drawing looked like a photograph or a copy of a photograph. Her figure had no variety of expression—she herself had no sense of variety. You may say that this was my business, was only a question of placing her. I placed her in every conceivable position, but she managed to obliterate their differences. She was always a lady certainly, and into the bargain was always the same lady. She was the real thing, but always the same thing. There were moments when I was oppressed by the serenity of her confidence that she *was* the real thing. All her dealings with me and all her husband's were an implication that this was lucky for *me*. Meanwhile I found myself trying to invent types that approached her own, instead of making her own transform itself—in the clever way that was not impossible, for instance, to poor Miss Churm. Arrange as I would and take the precautions I would, she always, in my pictures, came out too tall—landing me in the dilemma of having represented a fascinating woman as seven feet high, which, out of respect perhaps to my own very much scantier inches, was far from my idea of such a personage.

The case was worse with the Major—nothing I could do would keep *him* down, so that he became useful only for the representation of brawny giants. I adored variety and range, I cherished human accidents, the illustrative note; I wanted to characterise closely, and the thing in the world I most hated was the danger of being ridden by a type. I had quarrelled with some of my friends about it—I had parted company with them for maintaining that one *had* to be, and that if the type was beautiful (witness Raphael and Leonardo), the servitude was only a gain. I was neither Leonardo nor Raphael; I might only be a presumptuous young modern searcher, but I held that everything was to be sacrificed sooner than character. When they averred that the haunting type in question could easily *be* character, I retorted, perhaps superficially: "Whose?" It couldn't be everybody's—it might end in being nobody's.

After I had drawn Mrs. Monarch a dozen times I perceived more clearly than before that the value of such a model as Miss Churm resided precisely in the fact that she had no positive stamp, combined of course with the other fact that what she did have was a curious and inexplicable talent for imitation. Her usual appearance was like a curtain which she could draw up at request for a capital performance. This performance was simply suggestive; but it was a word to the wise—it was vivid and pretty. Sometimes, even, I thought it, though she was plain herself, too insipidly pretty; I made it a reproach to her that the figures drawn from her were monotonously (*bêtement*, as we used to say) graceful. Nothing made her more angry: it was so much her pride to feel that she could sit for characters that had nothing in common with each other. She would accuse me at such moments of taking away her “reputytion.”

It suffered a certain shrinkage, this queer quantity, from the repeated visits of my new friends. Miss Churm was greatly in demand, never in want of employment, so I had no scruple in putting her off occasionally, to try them more at my ease. It was certainly amusing at first to do the real thing—it was amusing to do Major Monarch’s trousers. They *were* the real thing, even if he did come out colossal. It was amusing to do his wife’s back hair (it was so mathematically neat,) and the particular “smart” tension of her tight stays. She lent herself especially to positions in which the face was somewhat averted or blurred; she abounded in lady-like back views and *profils perdus*. When she stood erect she took naturally one of the attitudes in which court-painters represent queens and princesses; so that I found myself wondering whether, to draw out this accomplishment, I couldn’t get the editor of the *Cheapside* to publish a really royal romance, “A Tale of Buckingham Palace.” Sometimes, however, the real thing and the make-believe came into contact; by which I mean that Miss Churm, keeping an appointment or coming to make one on days when I had much work in hand, encountered her invidious rivals. The encounter was not on their part, for they noticed her no more than if she had been the housemaid; not from intentional loftiness, but simply because, as yet, professionally, they didn’t know how to fraternise, as I could guess that they would have liked—or at least that the Major would. They couldn’t talk about the omnibus—they always walked; and they didn’t know what else to try—she wasn’t interested in good trains or cheap claret. Besides, they must have felt—in the air—that she was amused at them, secretly derisive of their ever knowing how. She was not a person to conceal her scepticism if she had had a chance to show it. On the other hand Mrs. Monarch didn’t think her tidy; for why else did she take pains to say to me (it was going out of the way, for Mrs. Monarch), that she didn’t like dirty women?

One day when my young lady happened to be present with my other sitters (she even dropped in, when it was convenient, for a chat), I asked her to be so good as to lend a hand in getting tea—a service with which she was familiar and which was one of a class that, living as I did in a small way, with slender domestic resources, I often appealed to my models to render. They liked to lay hands on my property, to break the sitting, and sometimes the china—I made them feel Bohemian. The next time I saw Miss Churm after this incident she surprised me greatly by making a scene about it—she accused me of having wished to humiliate her. She had not resented the outrage at the time, but had seemed obliging and amused, enjoying the comedy of asking Mrs. Monarch, who sat vague and silent, whether she would have cream and sugar, and putting an exaggerated simper into the question. She had tried intonations—as if she too wished to pass for the real thing; till I was afraid my other visitors would take offence.

Oh, *they* were determined not to do this; and their touching patience was the measure of their great need. They would sit by the hour, uncomplaining, till I was ready to use them; they

would come back on the chance of being wanted and would walk away cheerfully if they were not. I used to go to the door with them to see in what magnificent order they retreated. I tried to find other employment for them—I introduced them to several artists. But they didn't "take," for reasons I could appreciate, and I became conscious, rather anxiously, that after such disappointments they fell back upon me with a heavier weight. They did me the honour to think that it was I who was most *their* form. They were not picturesque enough for the painters, and in those days there were not so many serious workers in black and white. Besides, they had an eye to the great job I had mentioned to them—they had secretly set their hearts on supplying the right essence for my pictorial vindication of our fine novelist. They knew that for this undertaking I should want no costume-effects, none of the frippery of past ages—that it was a case in which everything would be contemporary and satirical and, presumably, genteel. If I could work them into it their future would be assured, for the labour would of course be long and the occupation steady.

One day Mrs. Monarch came without her husband—she explained his absence by his having had to go to the City. While she sat there in her usual anxious stiffness there came, at the door, a knock which I immediately recognised as the subdued appeal of a model out of work. It was followed by the entrance of a young man whom I easily perceived to be a foreigner and who proved in fact an Italian acquainted with no English word but my name, which he uttered in a way that made it seem to include all others. I had not then visited his country, nor was I proficient in his tongue; but as he was not so meanly constituted—what Italian is?—as to depend only on that member for expression he conveyed to me, in familiar but graceful mimicry, that he was in search of exactly the employment in which the lady before me was engaged. I was not struck with him at first, and while I continued to draw I emitted rough sounds of discouragement and dismissal. He stood his ground, however, not importunately, but with a dumb, dog-like fidelity in his eyes which amounted to innocent impudence—the manner of a devoted servant (he might have been in the house for years), unjustly suspected. Suddenly I saw that this very attitude and expression made a picture, whereupon I told him to sit down and wait till I should be free. There was another picture in the way he obeyed me, and I observed as I worked that there were others still in the way he looked wonderingly, with his head thrown back, about the high studio. He might have been crossing himself in St. Peter's. Before I finished I said to myself: "The fellow's a bankrupt orange-monger, but he's a treasure."

When Mrs. Monarch withdrew he passed across the room like a flash to open the door for her, standing there with the rapt, pure gaze of the young Dante spellbound by the young Beatrice. As I never insisted, in such situations, on the blankness of the British domestic, I reflected that he had the making of a servant (and I needed one, but couldn't pay him to be only that), as well as of a model; in short I made up my mind to adopt my bright adventurer if he would agree to officiate in the double capacity. He jumped at my offer, and in the event my rashness (for I had known nothing about him), was not brought home to me. He proved a sympathetic though a desultory ministrant, and had in a wonderful degree the *sentiment de la pose*. It was uncultivated, instinctive; a part of the happy instinct which had guided him to my door and helped him to spell out my name on the card nailed to it. He had had no other introduction to me than a guess, from the shape of my high north window, seen outside, that my place was a studio and that as a studio it would contain an artist. He had wandered to England in search of fortune, like other itinerants, and had embarked, with a partner and a small green handcart, on the sale of penny ices. The ices had melted away and the partner had dissolved in their train. My young man wore tight yellow trousers with reddish stripes

and his name was Oronte. He was sallow but fair, and when I put him into some old clothes of my own he looked like an Englishman. He was as good as Miss Churm, who could look, when required, like an Italian.

IV.

I THOUGHT Mrs. Monarch's face slightly convulsed when, on her coming back with her husband, she found Oronte installed. It was strange to have to recognise in a scrap of a lazzarone a competitor to her magnificent Major. It was she who scented danger first, for the Major was anecdotically unconscious. But Oronte gave us tea, with a hundred eager confusions (he had never seen such a queer process), and I think she thought better of me for having at last an "establishment." They saw a couple of drawings that I had made of the establishment, and Mrs. Monarch hinted that it never would have struck her that he had sat for them. "Now the drawings you make from *us*, they look exactly like us," she reminded me, smiling in triumph; and I recognised that this was indeed just their defect. When I drew the Monarchs I couldn't, somehow, get away from them—get into the character I wanted to represent; and I had not the least desire my model should be discoverable in my picture. Miss Churm never was, and Mrs. Monarch thought I hid her, very properly, because she was vulgar; whereas if she was lost it was only as the dead who go to heaven are lost—in the gain of an angel the more.

By this time I had got a certain start with "Rutland Ramsay," the first novel in the great projected series; that is I had produced a dozen drawings, several with the help of the Major and his wife, and I had sent them in for approval. My understanding with the publishers, as I have already hinted, had been that I was to be left to do my work, in this particular case, as I liked, with the whole book committed to me; but my connection with the rest of the series was only contingent. There were moments when, frankly, it *was* a comfort to have the real thing under one's hand; for there were characters in "Rutland Ramsay" that were very much like it. There were people presumably as straight as the Major and women of as good a fashion as Mrs. Monarch. There was a great deal of country-house life—treated, it is true, in a fine, fanciful, ironical, generalised way—and there was a considerable implication of knickerbockers and kilts. There were certain things I had to settle at the outset; such things for instance as the exact appearance of the hero, the particular bloom of the heroine. The author of course gave me a lead, but there was a margin for interpretation. I took the Monarchs into my confidence, I told them frankly what I was about, I mentioned my embarrassments and alternatives. "Oh, take *him!*" Mrs. Monarch murmured sweetly, looking at her husband; and "What could you want better than my wife?" the Major inquired, with the comfortable candour that now prevailed between us.

I was not obliged to answer these remarks—I was only obliged to place my sitters. I was not easy in mind, and I postponed, a little timidly perhaps, the solution of the question. The book was a large canvas, the other figures were numerous, and I worked off at first some of the episodes in which the hero and the heroine were not concerned. When once I had set *them* up I should have to stick to them—I couldn't make my young man seven feet high in one place and five feet nine in another. I inclined on the whole to the latter measurement, though the Major more than once reminded me that *he* looked about as young as anyone. It was indeed quite possible to arrange him, for the figure, so that it would have been difficult to detect his age. After the spontaneous Oronte had been with me a month, and after I had given him to understand several different times that his native exuberance would presently constitute an insurmountable barrier to our further intercourse, I waked to a sense of his heroic capacity. He was only five feet seven, but the remaining inches were latent. I tried

him almost secretly at first, for I was really rather afraid of the judgment my other models would pass on such a choice. If they regarded Miss Churm as little better than a snare, what would they think of the representation by a person so little the real thing as an Italian street-vendor of a protagonist formed by a public school?

If I went a little in fear of them it was not because they bullied me, because they had got an oppressive foothold, but because in their really pathetic decorum and mysteriously permanent newness they counted on me so intensely. I was therefore very glad when Jack Hawley came home: he was always of such good counsel. He painted badly himself, but there was no one like him for putting his finger on the place. He had been absent from England for a year; he had been somewhere—I don't remember where—to get a fresh eye. I was in a good deal of dread of any such organ, but we were old friends; he had been away for months and a sense of emptiness was creeping into my life. I hadn't dodged a missile for a year.

He came back with a fresh eye, but with the same old black velvet blouse, and the first evening he spent in my studio we smoked cigarettes till the small hours. He had done no work himself, he had only got the eye; so the field was clear for the production of my little things. He wanted to see what I had done for the *Cheapside*, but he was disappointed in the exhibition. That at least seemed the meaning of two or three comprehensive groans which, as he lounged on my big divan, on a folded leg, looking at my latest drawings, issued from his lips with the smoke of the cigarette.

“What's the matter with you?” I asked.

“What's the matter with *you*?”

“Nothing save that I'm mystified.”

“You are indeed. You're quite off the hinge. What's the meaning of this new fad?” And he tossed me, with visible irreverence, a drawing in which I happened to have depicted both my majestic models. I asked if he didn't think it good, and he replied that it struck him as execrable, given the sort of thing I had always represented myself to him as wishing to arrive at; but I let that pass, I was so anxious to see exactly what he meant. The two figures in the picture looked colossal, but I supposed this was *not* what he meant, inasmuch as, for aught he knew to the contrary, I might have been trying for that. I maintained that I was working exactly in the same way as when he last had done me the honour to commend me. “Well, there's a big hole somewhere,” he answered; “wait a bit and I'll discover it.” I depended upon him to do so: where else was the fresh eye? But he produced at last nothing more luminous than “I don't know—I don't like your types.” This was lame, for a critic who had never consented to discuss with me anything but the question of execution, the direction of strokes and the mystery of values.

“In the drawings you've been looking at I think my types are very handsome.”

“Oh, they won't do!”

“I've had a couple of new models.”

“I see you have. *They* won't do.”

“Are you very sure of that?”

“Absolutely—they're stupid.”

“You mean *I* am—for I ought to get round that.”

“You *can't*—with such people. Who are they?”

I told him, as far as was necessary, and he declared, heartlessly: “*Ce sont des gens qu'il faut mettre à la porte.*”

“You've never seen them; they're awfully good,” I compassionately objected.

“Not seen them? Why, all this recent work of yours drops to pieces with them. It's all I want to see of them.”

“No one else has said anything against it—the *Cheapside* people are pleased.”

“Everyone else is an ass, and the *Cheapside* people the biggest asses of all. Come, don't pretend, at this time of day, to have pretty illusions about the public, especially about publishers and editors. It's not for *such* animals you work—it's for those who know, *coloro che sanno*; so keep straight for *me* if you can't keep straight for yourself. There's a certain sort of thing you tried for from the first—and a very good thing it is. But this twaddle isn't *in* it.” When I talked with Hawley later about “Rutland Ramsay” and its possible successors he declared that I must get back into my boat again or I would go to the bottom. His voice in short was the voice of warning.

I noted the warning, but I didn't turn my friends out of doors. They bored me a good deal; but the very fact that they bored me admonished me not to sacrifice them—if there was anything to be done with them—simply to irritation. As I look back at this phase they seem to me to have pervaded my life not a little. I have a vision of them as most of the time in my studio, seated, against the wall, on an old velvet bench to be out of the way, and looking like a pair of patient courtiers in a royal ante-chamber. I am convinced that during the coldest weeks of the winter they held their ground because it saved them fire. Their newness was losing its gloss, and it was impossible not to feel that they were objects of charity. Whenever Miss Churm arrived they went away, and after I was fairly launched in “Rutland Ramsay” Miss Churm arrived pretty often. They managed to express to me tacitly that they supposed I wanted her for the low life of the book, and I let them suppose it, since they had attempted to study the work—it was lying about the studio—without discovering that it dealt only with the highest circles. They had dipped into the most brilliant of our novelists without deciphering many passages. I still took an hour from them, now and again, in spite of Jack Hawley's warning: it would be time enough to dismiss them, if dismissal should be necessary, when the rigour of the season was over. Hawley had made their acquaintance—he had met them at my fireside—and thought them a ridiculous pair. Learning that he was a painter they tried to approach him, to show him too that they were the real thing; but he looked at them, across the big room, as if they were miles away: they were a compendium of everything that he most objected to in the social system of his country. Such people as that, all convention and patent-leather, with ejaculations that stopped conversation, had no business in a studio. A studio was a place to learn to see, and how could you see through a pair of feather beds?

The main inconvenience I suffered at their hands was that, at first, I was shy of letting them discover how my artful little servant had begun to sit to me for “Rutland Ramsay.” They knew that I had been odd enough (they were prepared by this time to allow oddity to artists,) to pick a foreign vagabond out of the streets, when I might have had a person with whiskers and credentials; but it was some time before they learned how high I rated his accomplishments. They found him in an attitude more than once, but they never doubted I

was doing him as an organ-grinder. There were several things they never guessed, and one of them was that for a striking scene in the novel, in which a footman briefly figured, it occurred to me to make use of Major Monarch as the menial. I kept putting this off, I didn't like to ask him to don the livery—besides the difficulty of finding a livery to fit him. At last, one day late in the winter, when I was at work on the despised Oronte (he caught one's idea in an instant), and was in the glow of feeling that I was going very straight, they came in, the Major and his wife, with their society laugh about nothing (there was less and less to laugh at), like country-callers—they always reminded me of that—who have walked across the park after church and are presently persuaded to stay to luncheon. Luncheon was over, but they could stay to tea—I knew they wanted it. The fit was on me, however, and I couldn't let my ardour cool and my work wait, with the fading daylight, while my model prepared it. So I asked Mrs. Monarch if she would mind laying it out—a request which, for an instant, brought all the blood to her face. Her eyes were on her husband's for a second, and some mute telegraphy passed between them. Their folly was over the next instant; his cheerful shrewdness put an end to it. So far from pitying their wounded pride, I must add, I was moved to give it as complete a lesson as I could. They bustled about together and got out the cups and saucers and made the kettle boil. I know they felt as if they were waiting on my servant, and when the tea was prepared I said: "He'll have a cup, please—he's tired." Mrs. Monarch brought him one where he stood, and he took it from her as if he had been a gentleman at a party, squeezing a crush-hat with an elbow.

Then it came over me that she had made a great effort for me—made it with a kind of nobleness—and that I owed her a compensation. Each time I saw her after this I wondered what the compensation could be. I couldn't go on doing the wrong thing to oblige them. Oh, it *was* the wrong thing, the stamp of the work for which they sat—Hawley was not the only person to say it now. I sent in a large number of the drawings I had made for "Rutland Ramsay," and I received a warning that was more to the point than Hawley's. The artistic adviser of the house for which I was working was of opinion that many of my illustrations were not what had been looked for. Most of these illustrations were the subjects in which the Monarchs had figured. Without going into the question of what *had* been looked for, I saw at this rate I shouldn't get the other books to do. I hurled myself in despair upon Miss Churm, I put her through all her paces. I not only adopted Oronte publicly as my hero, but one morning when the Major looked in to see if I didn't require him to finish a figure for the *Cheapside*, for which he had begun to sit the week before, I told him that I had changed my mind—I would do the drawing from my man. At this my visitor turned pale and stood looking at me. "Is *he* your idea of an English gentleman?" he asked.

I was disappointed, I was nervous, I wanted to get on with my work; so I replied with irritation: "Oh, my dear Major—I can't be ruined for *you*!"

He stood another moment; then, without a word, he quitted the studio. I drew a long breath when he was gone, for I said to myself that I shouldn't see him again. I had not told him definitely that I was in danger of having my work rejected, but I was vexed at his not having felt the catastrophe in the air, read with me the moral of our fruitless collaboration, the lesson that, in the deceptive atmosphere of art, even the highest respectability may fail of being plastic.

I didn't owe my friends money, but I did see them again. They re-appeared together, three days later, and under the circumstances there was something tragic in the fact. It was a proof to me that they could find nothing else in life to do. They had threshed the matter out in a dismal conference—they had digested the bad news that they were not in for the series. If

they were not useful to me even for the *Cheapside* their function seemed difficult to determine, and I could only judge at first that they had come, forgivingly, decorously, to take a last leave. This made me rejoice in secret that I had little leisure for a scene; for I had placed both my other models in position together and I was pegging away at a drawing from which I hoped to derive glory. It had been suggested by the passage in which Rutland Ramsay, drawing up a chair to Artemisia's piano-stool, says extraordinary things to her while she ostensibly fingers out a difficult piece of music. I had done Miss Churm at the piano before—it was an attitude in which she knew how to take on an absolutely poetic grace. I wished the two figures to “compose” together, intensely, and my little Italian had entered perfectly into my conception. The pair were vividly before me, the piano had been pulled out; it was a charming picture of blended youth and murmured love, which I had only to catch and keep. My visitors stood and looked at it, and I was friendly to them over my shoulder.

They made no response, but I was used to silent company and went on with my work, only a little disconcerted (even though exhilarated by the sense that *this* was at least the ideal thing), at not having got rid of them after all. Presently I heard Mrs. Monarch's sweet voice beside, or rather above me: “I wish her hair was a little better done.” I looked up and she was staring with a strange fixedness at Miss Churm, whose back was turned to her. “Do you mind my just touching it?” she went on—a question which made me spring up for an instant, as with the instinctive fear that she might do the young lady a harm. But she quieted me with a glance I shall never forget—I confess I should like to have been able to paint *that*—and went for a moment to my model. She spoke to her softly, laying a hand upon her shoulder and bending over her; and as the girl, understanding, gratefully assented, she disposed her rough curls, with a few quick passes, in such a way as to make Miss Churm's head twice as charming. It was one of the most heroic personal services I have ever seen rendered. Then Mrs. Monarch turned away with a low sigh and, looking about her as if for something to do, stooped to the floor with a noble humility and picked up a dirty rag that had dropped out of my paint-box.

The Major meanwhile had also been looking for something to do and, wandering to the other end of the studio, saw before him my breakfast things, neglected, unremoved. “I say, can't I be useful *here*?” he called out to me with an irrepressible quaver. I assented with a laugh that I fear was awkward and for the next ten minutes, while I worked, I heard the light clatter of china and the tinkle of spoons and glass. Mrs. Monarch assisted her husband—they washed up my crockery, they put it away. They wandered off into my little scullery, and I afterwards found that they had cleaned my knives and that my slender stock of plate had an unprecedented surface. When it came over me, the latent eloquence of what they were doing, I confess that my drawing was blurred for a moment—the picture swam. They had accepted their failure, but they couldn't accept their fate. They had bowed their heads in bewilderment to the perverse and cruel law in virtue of which the real thing could be so much less precious than the unreal; but they didn't want to starve. If my servants were my models, my models might be my servants. They would reverse the parts—the others would sit for the ladies and gentlemen, and *they* would do the work. They would still be in the studio—it was an intense dumb appeal to me not to turn them out. “Take us on,” they wanted to say—“we'll do *anything*.”

When all this hung before me the *afflatus* vanished—my pencil dropped from my hand. My sitting was spoiled and I got rid of my sitters, who were also evidently rather mystified and awestruck. Then, alone with the Major and his wife, I had a most uncomfortable moment. He put their prayer into a single sentence: “I say, you know—just let *us* do for you, can't

you?" I couldn't—it was dreadful to see them emptying my slops; but I pretended I could, to oblige them, for about a week. Then I gave them a sum of money to go away; and I never saw them again. I obtained the remaining books, but my friend Hawley repeats that Major and Mrs. Monarch did me a permanent harm, got me into a second-rate trick. If it be true I am content to have paid the price—for the memory.

Points for Reflection

1. at what moments does James employ his story's title, and how does its meaning and value change over the course of the story? What artistic theory slowly emerges, tied to the title?
2. how does the narrator respond to the Major's and his wife's efforts to show off their respective figures? How does a 21st-century audience respond (OER 72-73)?
3. does the Monarch marriage appear ideal in any way?
4. what does the narrator mean by his claim that he has "an innate preference for the represented subject over the real one" (OER 74)?
5. what types of jobs has the Major applied for in the recent past, and how "low" are he and his wife willing to descend by the end of the story?
6. does the narrator's opinion of Raphael Sanzo dovetail with that of the Pre-Raphaelites, and does his implied estimation of Leonardo da Vinci gel with either Pater's or Ruskin's opinion of the Renaissance painter (OER 79)?
7. does HJ's reproduction of Miss Charm's Cockney accent either elevate or denigrate her?
8. do the Monarchs evince any virtues unrelated to their relative (small) value as models?
9. after meeting the Monarchs, Jack Hawley calls them "ridiculous" and reiterates his claim that they have "no business in a studio" (OER 84). Why, exactly, is he so dismissive?
10. attributes would you assign the narrator in a character sketch?