Université de Montréal

Widening Gaps, Productive Spaces: The Construction of Victorian Identity in Thomas Carlyle, Lewis Carroll and George Eliot

par

Catherine A. Sheckler

Département d'études anglaises
Faculté des arts et des sciences

Mémoire présenté à la Faculté des études supérieures
en vue de l'obtention du grade de Maîtrise (M.A.)
en études anglaises

Août 2007

Résumé de synthèse

À travers les romans de Thomas Carlyle, Lewis Carroll et George Eliot et en utilisant les théories de Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel et Judith Butler, ce mémoire considère la manière dont les changements dans diverses arènes d'importances pour les victoriens – politiques, industrielles et sociales – ouvrirent une fissure entre une tradition religieuse et un mysticisme spirituel, un comportement normatif dicté par une dimension sociale et un style de vie, les rôles traditionnels masculin et féminin et un débat renouvelé sur la position des femmes dans la société. Faisant attention particulièrement à la construction normative, désir et reconnaissance, ce mémoire explore l'espace fructueux qui existe entre le *status quo* et le futur qui avance rapidement, les efforts pour comprendre comment cet espace est produit et se comporte dans la littérature victorienne.

Mots clefs : littérature victorienne, fissure, espace, perfomative, reconnaissance, attente, Hegel, Butler.

Abstract

Through the novels of Thomas Carlyle, Lewis Carroll and George Eliot and employing the theories of Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel and Judith Butler as a template, this thesis considers the manner in which changes in various arenas of particular import to Victorians – political, industrial, social – opened gaps between religious tradition and spiritual mysticism, socially dictated normative behavior and actual lifestyle, traditional gender roles and a much debated more powerful position for women. With particular attention to performative construction, recognition and desire, this exploration of the fertile space between the status quo and the rapidly advancing future, attempts to understand how space is produced and functions within the literature of the Victorian era.

Key Words: Victorian, gap, space, performative, recognition, expectation, Hegel, Butler.

Table of Contents

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank my husband Sheldon Schafer and my daughters Abigail and Audrey Schafer for their unending patience and support, my friends for their unwavering interest despite my preoccupation with technicalities, and my supervisor Professor Eberlé-Sinatra for his sense of priorities.

Introduction

Tightrope Over the Gulf

In 1869 John Stuart Mill wrote the essay "The Subjection of Women" in which he included the following description of the formation of rules, laws and social policy:

> Laws and systems of polity always begin by recognizing the relations they find already existing between individuals. They convert what was a mere physical fact into a legal right, give it the sanction of society, and principally aim at the substitution of public and organized means of asserting and protecting these rights, instead of the irregular and lawless conflict of physical strength. Those who had already been compelled to obedience became in this manner legally bound to it. (Mill 315)

It is a compelling description of a power structure that lies at the root of any number of systems of government and social regimes even today, a methodology by which to create a legal status for a desired system of associations, thus cementing a set of preferred identities and their surrounding structure of relationships. At my first reading of these words I was struck by the clarity with which this statement delineates the roots of what is often touted as inalienable and represented as a sacred trust regardless of any possibly shady and less than egalitarian origins. However, with that said, what Mill fails to note (likely because it does not serve the purposes of his attempt) is the very aspect of those laws that he is in the midst of employing – the space that exists between the rule and those ruled particularly noticeable when the fit between the two is not tenable and therefore necessitates change or forced acceptance – a space in which changes to customs, ideas and edicts might become nascent.

It is that space or gap that is of interest to me in this work, for the Victorian era, that period that lasted ostensibly (although the first work I will be dealing with slightly predates this timeframe) from Victoria's ascent to the throne in 1837 to her death in 1901, was an era epitomized by "a sudden nationwide disposition toward change" (Mermin & Tucker 3); that change required room in which to occur. Through a consideration of the work of three influential Victorian writers, Thomas Carlyle, Lewis Carroll and George Eliot, and employing a template composed of theories primarily from the work of Georg Wilhelm Freidrich Hegel and Judith Butler, I will be investigating both the occurrence and the effect of the gaps within their texts (and in some cases their lives) in order to understand some of the ways in which the dazzling numbers of radical changes of the Victorian era were powered and implemented. For this first incarnation of a truly global society produced a need to understand a world far more complex then had been previously necessary. This was a world that encompassed a broad spectrum of societies and customs with an equally broad spectrum of questions in need of "solutions" or at least some method with which to address them; this need to adjust placed a figurative hand firmly in the back of the government, certainly, but it is observable as well in the work of many of the era's major thinkers and writers from the very first text categorized as "Victorian."

As Thomas Carlyle's single work of fiction, *Sartor Resartus*, is often considered one of the seminal texts of the Victorian era (McSweeney, Introduction i) and, as such, foundational to Victorian identity, any study discussing breadth and effectiveness of the field of change and its implementation would necessitate both a consideration of this "novel" (a fraught term in this case) and how the work's attempt

to affect others was executed, as well as the level of its achievement. With this in mind and using a template constructed through a consideration of the work of J. L. Austin, Jacques Derrida and Judith Butler, I will be considering the gap between the performative intentions of the author of *Sartor* and the actual performative effects that are attributed to the work. Using the constructions of these three theorists, this chapter will discuss the different methodologies used to construct and implement a performative speech/written act, the way in which that act is disseminated, as well as the final production of that act. Through the delineation of this process and its effect, I will open a discourse on the space necessary to allow for and implement change, both in the policies and laws of the government and the identity of Victorians as a population as well as individually.

Carrying forward this idea of the gaps and spaces that are necessary for change, my second chapter is an approach to both the work of Lewis Carroll and the tension that has recently been hypothesized as existing between his public and private identities. Employing the gap that lies between a new and highly confrontational biography of Carroll written by Karoline Leach and the stories that have composed the accepted biography of Carroll for an hundred years, I will begin my discourse, using both Butler's work on recognition from *Undoing Gender* and Hegel's Master and Slave dialogue from *Phenomenology of Spirit* in an effort to deconstruct the search for identity that takes place in *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*. As well, within this scrutiny of Carroll's investigation of the constructions of identity, I will expand my discourse on the gaps between his public and private personae into a consideration of his textual methodologies and proclivities through which he employs

gaps of meaning in wordplay. The resulting creation offers intriguing reflections of the society within which the work was produced and is suggestive of the rapid changes that epitomize the era.

My final chapter will be on George Eliot's *Middlemarch*, and will focus on not only the gaps between expectations and results that figure so large in this novel, but, as well, with the back side of that consideration. For George Eliot not only emphasized the discontinuity of her character's expectations versus the outcome of their actions, but dealt as well with the ramifications of such misaligned expectations. Hers is a discussion not only of the prudent and productive methodology by which to approach life, but also with the results that occur when the appropriate techniques are not employed. Throughout her work, Eliot is intent on the chasms that open wide at the feet of so many of her characters and, utilizing Hegel and Butler's theories of recognition, I will consider the attempts of her characters to move forward through the maze of their personal and public relations (keeping in mind that these mazes are of their own making) and whether the chasms that open as their expectations are refuted are spaces of productivity or despair – new beginnings with enhanced information, or cul-de-sacs.

Each of these novels with their differing interests and focuses are indicators of the nature of change and its attendant discontinuities, and how that change manifests itself in the author's milieu of interest. For each of these writers different positions, concerns and, consequently, different alterations were considered necessary and important, but what all three have in common is an understanding of the space necessary to affect that change. As England approached sweeping modifications in

the arenas of political reform, women's rights and abolition, to name just a few, how the country was to navigate across each of the gulfs that separated the quaking status quo from the stability that a successful change promised was of paramount importance. Each of these thinkers was presenting their own ideas as to the way in which these dangerous – but necessary – adjustments might be made, with differing ideas about whether their "suggestions" needed to be a solid matrix for the future or merely an indicator of which direction in which it might be best to travel. The combined result of these and other works of the era can be considered as a potential map leading Victorians forward through a frightening, thrilling and unavoidable new world.

Chapter One

Tailoring the Margins: Performative Utterance and the Performative in Thomas Carlyle's *Sartor Resartus*

> Identity is not something planted in us to be discovered, but something that is performatively produced by acts that "effectively constitute the identity they are said to express or reveal." (Butler quoted by Leitch 2487)

> For neither in tailoring nor in legislating does man proceed by mere Accident, but the hand is ever guided on by mysterious operations of the mind. In all his Modes and habilatory endeavours an Architectural Idea will be found lurking; his Body and Cloth are the site and materials whereon and whereby his beautified edifice, of a Person, is to be built. (Carlyle, *Sartor* 28)

How and from what are our identities constructed? Did the Victorians construct theirs differently? Did a Londoner in Dickens' time have more control over his/her identity than a laborer in Sussex? – what about a laborer in Calcutta? These are questions that are apposite today and were, although regarded through a different moral lens, hugely relevant in Victorian England. Ideas regarding the formation of identity, depending on the ideological methodology we use, have ranged from earth in combination with God's intervention, through genetics and/or environmental influences. But it is there, with that word "influence," that I wish to begin this chapter. How Victorians were influenced, how we influence and are influenced today, the methodology by which one human being attempts to adjust another's behavior is foundational to human interaction whether that interaction is violent or coercive – whether it is enacted through enticement or edict. For the Victorians, with imperialism creating a pressing need to influence huge numbers and varieties of peoples in widely dispersed locals while maintaining a recognizable national identity, the question of how influence was effected was of paramount importance.

For Thomas Carlyle wielding that influence was a central motivation. Gerry Brookes notes in *The Rhetorical Form of Carlyle's "Sartor Resartus,"* that "[i]deas, in readily quotable form, lie waiting on every page" (5) of this odd construction that is half lecture, half fantasy.[1] Carlyle intended that his words be portable, able to be inserted into any life and productive of change within that life, a style of influence that smacks of the performative – words before existence. But was *Sartor Resartus* actually intended as a performative text? And if it was, did it produce the influence Carlyle intended? In order to consider these questions we will need to step back and consider the mechanics of influence and performativity.

That we are influenced by forces outside ourselves is an idea that few would question; we see attempted influence (both overt and covert) literally everywhere, including within the performative words used to define us. As Michel Foucault, Louis Althusser, and Judith Butler have all noted, the influences that form our behavior are posited in numerous methodologies: advertisements, laws and punishments, the ideologies through which we interact with the world, in the information we receive from our parents indicating "correct" social behavior that we reenact over and over again. Judith Butler would say that these forces not only influence but construct our behavior, and as well, our identities – that they are the warp and weft of our personae – that, "(s)uch acts, gestures, enactments, generally construed are *performative* in the sense that the essence or identity that they otherwise purport to express are *fabrications* manufactured and sustained through corporeal signs and other discursive means" (*Gender* 185).

---

[1] Brookes' text argues that *Sartor Resartus* is not strictly a vehicle with which to present Carlyle's ideas of a proper life, but for the purposes of this essay, it is that vehicular element of *Sartor* that I am emphasizing.

When Judith Butler wrote *Gender Trouble*, her "key statement on performative accounts of cultural meaning" (Leitch 2485), she was extending and evolving the theory that J. L. Austin had introduced in the 1950s through his lectures at Oxford University. His theory in the form of notes from those lectures was posthumously published as the text *How to Do Things With Words* and in the lecture/essay "Performative Utterances" from the text *Philosophical Papers*. In both texts he defined performative utterances as speech acts that are "*doing* something rather than merely *saying* something" (Austin 222). Jacques Derrida took Austin's ideas and in his essay "Signature, Event, Context" added the concepts of "citation" and "reiteration," presenting us with a performative speech act that, through those methods of citation and reiteration, would shed its intentionality and "split, dissociat(ing) from itself the pure singularity of the event" (326). Dealing with Austin's idea of perlocution (the effect of the utterance), Derrida has to say:

> Differing from the classical assertion, from the constative utterance, the performative's referent. . . is not outside it, or in any case preceding it or before it. It does not describe something which exists outside and before language. It produces or transforms a situation, it operates. . .(321)

From here, Butler would expand Derrida's concept of production and transformation to develop her theory of performativity, demonstrating that we are not "natural" creatures that simply occur, but instead are *constructions* of that hegemony that we reside within. But the idea that we are not creatures that merely occur was not a new one, rather it brings us firmly back to the mid-nineteenth-century and Carlyle.

In September of 1830, when Carlyle first began writing *Sartor Resartus* he was investigating the idea of the construction of both "mankind" and the institutions with which "he"[2] surrounds himself, but both his intention and the text itself went far beyond a simple exploration. I would argue that Carlyle set out to create a performative text that would attempt to direct and define a proper mode of behavior and belief for the British people.[3] Using the theories of Austin, Derrida and Butler as a template, I would like to consider this seminal text of the Victorian era in order to consider Carlyle's intentions and compare those to that which was actually produced as well as the moral implications of that production. It is in the gap between the two that we find the a mode of the performative utterance that Butler discusses in her essay "Contagious Word: Paranoia and 'Homosexuality' in the Military," a version of performativity that institutions have been trying (with varied success) to implement for centuries. In writing *Sartor Resartus*, Carlyle was attempting to apply just such a methodology.

That Carlyle influenced the creation of the Victorian psyche is not in doubt. According to the introduction to the Oxford World's Classic 1999 edition, "*Sartor Resartus* is the seminal expression of the thought of the most influential of the Victorian cultural prophets" (McSweeney, Introduction i). As well, in 1855 George Eliot noted that "there is hardly a superior or active mind of this generation that has not been *modified* by Carlyle's writings; there has hardly been an English book

---

[2] For the purposes of this chapter, in reference to Carlyle's text I will be using Carlyle's referent "man" and the appropriate pronouns.

[3] Vienne Rundle in "'Devising New Means': *Sartor Resartus* and the Devoted Reader" suggests that "the vehemence of readers' responses to *Sartor Resartus* derives in fact from the text's action upon its reader: an action that oversteps the bounds of the conventional contract between text and reader in ways which may be considered unfair, underhanded or even unethical" (13). This suggestion of manipulation implies coercion.

written for the last ten or twelve years that would not have been different if Carlyle had not lived" (Eliot, Essays 213-214 emphasis mine). That designation of "cultural prophet" (the word prophet implies pre-knowledge) and Eliot's characterization of Carlyle's writing as able to "modify" minds proclaims Carlyle as an agent of performativity. There is, as well, no doubt that Carlyle intended to influence a world which he considered as changing quickly, in some distress, and in need of direction – calling the times in which he was writing "mad" in a letter to Emerson (Carlyle, Correspondence VI, 70). Before *Sartor Resartus* was published (even in serial form), Carlyle wrote to his brother John, "I have a notion that I can make rather a good *Book* of it, and one above all likely to produce some *desirable impression* on the world *even now*. . . (Carlyle, Letters V, 215 emphasis mine). So, Carlyle's intent was to sway society or, even further, to write words that would act as a progenitor to a new mode of British behavior and attitude. The question of whether it was a productive attempt (setting aside for the moment any moral ramifications of that intent) would likely be answered quite differently depending on who was asked and where that person perceived the parameters of that performativity to lie. To consider that question I would like to begin with Austin, Carlyle and *Sartor Resartus*.

As I discussed above, Carlyle clearly intended to have an effect, so, through the lens of Austin's theory of the performative utterance, a speech act that performs an action rather than merely describing that action, Carlyle's performative utterance is posited in the act of proselytizing. In *Sartor* there is a clear description of correct behavior according to a specifically constructed system and, despite the text's refusal to follow a linear form, Carlyle's "new Truth" (Sartor 8) is stated with little

equivocation. This idea of a "new Truth" is relevant to my construction of a performative intention in Carlyle. In Vanessa L. Ryan's essay, "*Sartor Resartus* and the Art of Biography," she discusses the formation of this idea of a "new Truth" through the creation of a connection between biography and fiction, noting that "Carlyle is careful to resolve the possible tension between his defense of the imaginative art of biography and his claim that history is but 'innumerable Biographies.' Fiction, he writes, is 'mimic Biography'" adding that our appetites are only satisfied when such stories "are grounded in reality" (297) and thus grants forgiveness to his own habitual use of fictional characters, while elevating his fiction through its ties to biography. She also notes that, employing his preferred methodological use of fictional characters (a tactic that allows much greater latitude in accurate representation), Carlyle uses a *fictional* character, Professor Gottfried Sauerteig, to make an attack on *fiction*. Sauerteig states that "[f]iction , while the feigner of it knows that he is feigning, partakes, more than we suspect, of the nature of lying" (Carlyle, Essays III, 54). Despite the ironic distortion of boundaries that this blending of fact and fiction creates, Ryan makes the point that "Sauerteig's rigid differentiation [creation of a gap] between fact and fiction enables Carlyle to introduce a third term" (297) – Carlyle's "new Truth, what we can call a Revelation" (*Essays*, vol. 3, 54). It is this "new Truth" that, once freed from the bonds of formal biography, as it is in *Sartor*, acts as both content and platform from which to enact the performative utterance of proselytizing. So now let us consider just how Carlyle structures that action.

Carlyle's protagonist, Teufelsdrockh, is a German philosopher whose ideas are being introduced to the British public through the efforts of the enthusiastic, if occasionally unreliable, narration of the "Editor," who, with some confusion, but a strong instinct that Teufelsdrockh's ideas are important (a new Truth) outlines those ideas for the reader.[4] In the style of Sterne's *The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy*, the text continues through a confusing conglomeration of memory, biographical "evidence" and epiphany. The result is Teufelsdrockh's primary theory, his "Philosophy of Clothes" introduced on page four, in which all extraneous creations of man are labeled as clothes which define, cover and obscure the light of the "soul." And, now, for a moment I would like to step away from structure and consider performative content, as this idea of clothing as construction is an idea which brings Judith Butler to mind.

To compare the performance of gender to the wearing of clothes (the clothes having been produced by an outside force) is a temptation when discussing Butler's theories - a temptation that in most cases should be avoided. However, Sarah Salih, makes the observation that:

> To describe gender as a 'doing' and a corporeal style might lead you to think of it as an activity that resembles choosing an outfit from an already existing wardrobe of clothes. Although Butler explicitly refutes this analogy in . . .*Bodies that Matter* it may serve our purposes to begin. (50)

[4] Brookes notes that the editor is important, because the use of fictional voices allowed Carlyle to "introduce stories of the supernatural ironically in order to make them acceptable to a scientific modern age" (22). Once again we become aware of the latitude which adds credibility to what might otherwise be considered to be a personal rant.

So, keeping in mind that Butler's theory demands an outside construction as the generative force behind that performance of identity (both gender and other) and while not wishing to simplify the complexities of her work, it would be nearly impossible, if not outright irresponsible, to discuss Carlyle's text with its central theme of "the Philosophy of Clothes" through the lens of Butler's theory of the performative and not discuss clothing. For Carlyle, in his own way posits a *similar* theory and uses clothing in order to do so.

Carlyle too presents us with the idea that much of our identity – or at least much of the routine and behavior of our daily lives – is exterior. The work a man does, the political party he joins, the religious institution he attends: all are worn as clothing.

> Men are properly said to be clothed with Authority, clothed with Beauty, with Curses, and the like. Nay if you consider it, what is Man himself, and his whole terrestrial Life, but an Emblem; a Clothing or visible Garment for that divine Me of his, cast hither, like a light-particle, down from Heaven? Thus is he said also to be clothed with a Body. (*Sartor* 57)

In this excerpt the similarities to Butler are clear, but then Carlyle takes goes on to say:

> Thus in this one pregnant subject Clothes, rightly understood, is included all that men have thought dreamed, done and been: the whole external Universe and what it holds is but Clothing; and the essence of all science lies in the PHILOSOPHY OF CLOTHES. (*Sartor* 57-58)

So Carlyle, with his definition of clothes as encompassing not only literal clothing but as well such institutions as religion, governmental structures, social customs, etcetera, parallels Butler's theory of the exterior construction of gender identity. But it is at this point the two part company, as Carlyle, with an agenda of utopian improvement, defines clothes as merely an impediment to wisdom, or as Teufelsdrockh states, "[t]he beginning of all Wisdom is to look fixedly on Clothes or even with armed eyesight, till they become *transparent*" (*Sartor* 52).[5] This would certainly not be Butler's position; for Butler the performative is not so easily bypassed and the clothes never become transparent (rather they must be altered).

It is important to take note of Carlyle's use of rhetorical devices to create authority, starting with the biblical language with which *Sartor Resartus* abounds. Carlyle was conflicted when it came to religion, as were many Victorians. Margot K. Louise makes the point in her essay "Gods and Mysteries: The Revival of Paganism and the Remaking of Mythography through the Nineteenth Century" that "the elevation of Mystery was a very nineteenth-century agenda" and was furthered in "opposition both to rationalism and to a dogmatic Christianity" (329); she follows this statement with Carlyle's passage in which he posits religion in the "froth ocean" that is "LITERATURE" (*Sartor* 191). Certainly, Carlyle could be considered as one of the coterie attempting to elevate Mystery over dogma, and *Sartor Resartus*, as it lumps the church with all other forms of "Clothes," would have to be considered

---

[5] William Keenan credits Carlyle as the progenitor and *Sartor Resartus* as the seminal text that "inaugurated the field of dress studies by giving the subject of clothes its first sustained systematic scrutiny" (2). Although an interesting idea, I would consider Keenan's statement to be something of an inversion, as Carlyle was instructing his readers to see beyond clothing rather than implementing the intense focus that such a field implies and Keenan's text at times fulfills. As G. B. Tennyson notes "Carlyle fashions the clothes metaphor less to apparel society than to denude it" (286).

critical of the religious institutions of the day. Neitzsche made the comment that "[a]t bottom Carlyle is an English atheist who makes it a point of honor not to be one" (198). So, despite the rhetoric Carlyle employs, *Sartor* would not be considered a religious book by religious institutions, rather, the religious language and biblical style are founded in an attempt to garner authority – that platform from which to proselytize that I spoke of earlier – as are many of the rhetorical devices used in the text, for as a persuasive and probably performative text, authority must figure large. But who exactly is it that holds that authority?

In her essay, "Devising New Means: *Sartor Resartus* and the Devoted Reader," Vivienne Rundle makes the statement that Carlyle created a "new mode of narrative authority which questions its own grounds for existence" (19). She notes that by placing the sometimes unreliable Editor between Teufelsdrockh and the reader, shifting the narrative voice between three characters (the Editor, Teufelsdrockh and Heuschrecke) and calling into question the authority of *any* narrative text with the Editor's comment of "what reader expects that, with all our writing and reporting, Teufelsdrockh could be brought home to him. . ." (Carlyle, *Sartor* 21) the bonds tying the "new Truth" are loosened.[6] This "new mode" of narrative authority sets free the underlying point in just the way Carlyle seeks to free the soul from its garments (Rundle 19). In this way, the "philosophy of clothes" is detached from any single character and, embedded with an authority all its own, is allowed to transcend the merely human and (hopefully) ascend to the position of unqualified "Truth." Rundle also discusses the concept of the "negative shape," in

[6] In a similar vein, Ryan makes the statement that Carlyle's "'unreliable editor' emphasizes the artistic and literary aspect of biography, rather than its claim to be the authentic representation of historical facts" (290).

which the babbling of the Editor defines the outline of the *Die Kleider*, Teufelsdrockh's own text (15), stating that this negative space defines and outlines a text too large for words (a return to the destabilized authority of the narrative) (16). Here I would like to point out as well that by filling the negative space Carlyle effectively disallows any interior pressure that might adjust the shape of his ideas – for if the negative space is already filled, where can one adjust to?

All of these powerful and deftly handled rhetorical means were necessary if the text was to accomplish the goal that Carlyle had set out for it. For *Sartor Resartus* can be considered as Carlyle's outline to build a better person – his matrix for a superman with which to construct a superior society. This matrix or mould could not be adjustable if it was to act as a cast with which to build a new "man" for whom Carlyle had a specific criteria. That criteria was constructed around a need to free the soul from earthly institutions (just as Rundle suggests the clothes philosophy is freed from any one narrator's authority) in order that the soul be ready to (here Carlyle quotes Goethe) "[d]o the duty that lies nearest thee" (*Sartor* 148). It is in an effort to present this command – and it is framed as a command – that Carlyle employs all of these stratagem, including the aforementioned biblical language and shifting narrative voice, as well as more novelistic techniques such as humor and romance, to create a book in the tradition that Robert Alter described as "express[ing] its seriousness through playfulness, that is acutely aware of itself as a mere structure of words even as it tries to discover ways of going beyond words to the experiences words seek to indicate" (ix). *Certainly Sartor* is playful, but there is no question that Carlyle – despite all that play – made his edict in earnest.

There has been, over the years, a variety of responses to Carlyle's work. In Blackwell's *A Companion to Victorian Literature and Culture*, Hilary Schor writes about what she calls Carlyle's "insanely didactic *Sartor Resartus*" that contains "fragments of social vision and prophecy" (326). In the same volume, Linda Peterson comments on how his blending of biblical style and rhetoric "helped to formulate the concept of the 'sage writer' [and how] Carlyle drew on the features of Old Testament prophecy (hence the sometimes interchangeable terminology of 'sage' or 'prophet')" (375). All of which lent weight and credibility to Carlyle's potentially performative words, working to build a text that, although certainly hyperbolic, is stirring and, as the quotes I cited at the beginning of this chapter make clear, influential, even if that influence did not ultimately correspond with Carlyle's intent.

So, accepting that *Sartor* was indeed influential, my question becomes, when does the influential become the performative and at what point do proselytizing and performativity blend or part company? Is performativity in the intent, the methodology used, or the produced construction? The least ephemeral answer is in the third choice. As Carlyle had a specific result in mind and was intending that his words bring that result to – in some ways – a material realization, he likely would have declared his text to be unsuccessful in the attainment of his goals. By the "hungry 40s" Carlyle's "earlier generosity of spirit seems to have evaporated in the increasingly shrill harangues" (Poston 16) that were possibly expressing frustration and disappointment with a world that had not lived up to the shining ideas posited within his proselytizing utterance. But in fact, if we slide forward into the more

recent past and the present to the theories of Derrida and particularly Butler, we can look at Carlyle's "utterance" quite differently.

If we, as observers, step away from Carlyle's desire and disappointment in his wish to construct a specific British society in line with his own ideas of what would be best, we can find many suggestions of Butler's theory on both the micro and macro scale in *Sartor Resartus*. Let us begin with the micro – the text itself – specifically with the protagonists name, Diogenes Teufelsdrockh, which translates to god-born devil-shit, and let us consider that name in conjunction with Butler's discussion of excrement. The similarity is not coincidental, but rather is informed by important positions within the texts.

In *Gender Trouble*, Butler discusses bodily contours and boundaries, quoting Mary Douglas' statement that "the body is a model that can stand for any bounded system. Its boundaries can represent any boundaries which are threatened or precarious" (180). Butler goes on to note that Douglas "suggests that all social systems are vulnerable at their margins and that all margins are accordingly considered dangerous" (180). So, Butler hypothesizes, in the case of homosexual intercourse it is both the physical margins and the *societal* margins that are at issue (180). Keeping this in mind, the name Teufelsdrockh takes on a specific meaning. If society is most vulnerable at its margins, the writer who attempts to become a performative agent must approach via those margins in order to affect the norms. Dealing directly with those margins and the idea of excrement, Butler remarks:

> What constitutes through division the "inner" and "outer" worlds of the subject is a border and boundary tenuously maintained for the

> purposes of social regulation and control. The boundary between the inner and outer is confounded by those excremental passages in which the inner effectively becomes outer, and this excreting function becomes, as it were, the model by which other forms of identity-differentiation are accomplished. In effect, this is the mode by which Other's become shit. (*Gender* 182)

Also, in noting Kristeva's discussion of the abject, Butler makes the observation that "[t]his appears as an expulsion of alien elements, but the alien is effectively established through this expulsion" (*Gender* 181). So in order for Teufelsdrockh to approach those vulnerable margins – the position from which change is possible – he must be refigured by expulsion. He is repeatedly expelled: by his adoptive mother; by his love, Blumine; by his own desperation in "The Everlasting Nay"; and, finally, there is his name – "devil-shit" – which could be constituted as a double expulsion. For Teufelsdrockh this series of expulsions are the "excremental passage" through which he must pass in order to become alien and to gain perspective from which to comment.

Boundaries, extremities and perspective are extremely important throughout *Sartor Resartus*. It is important, for instance, that Teufelsdrockh is a German Professor from the town of Weissnichtwo – Know-not-where – suggesting once again a position on the margin. It is important as well that he resides in a Watchtower that:

> . . .might truly be called the pinnacle of Weissnichtwo, for it rose sheer up above the contiguous roofs, themselves rising from the elevated ground. Moreover, with its windows, it looked toward all the four *Orte* [points of the compass] . . .wherefrom, sitting at ease, he might see the whole life-circulation of that considerable City. (Carlyle, *Sartor* 16)

Here, we are presented with the necessary perspective for Teufelsdrockh to become a sage. This positioning on high (keeping in mind that it is accompanied by its opposite – the depths of despair) is certainly purposeful on the part of Carlyle; who better to have wisdom to offer than the sage at the top of some exalted peak, a trope so ubiquitous that today we find it even in comic strips. But what is interesting is that this position also, and rather oddly, conjoins Butler's section on excrement where, after discussing the "Other" as shit, she goes on to say:

> 'Inner' and 'outer' make sense only with reference to a mediating boundary that strives for stability. And this stability, this coherence, is determined in large part by cultural orders that sanction the subject and compel its differentiation from the abject. Hence, 'inner' and 'outer' constitute a binary distinction that stabilizes and consolidates the coherent subject. (*Gender* 182)

This inner/outer stabilization is reflected in the balancing act within which both *Sartor Resartus* as a text and Teufelsdrockh as a character are engaged. This balance or pendulum swing is figured in: Teufelsdrockh's name, god-born devil-shit; the chapter titles "The Everlasting Nay" versus "The Everlasting Yea"; and his rejection by loved ones versus the editor's adulation. Despite the fact that his name, Diogenes, suggests that Teufelsdrockh is central to "God," the one place on *earth* that we never find him is at the center. Rather he swings from one edge to the other, bringing us back to Butler's idea of those vulnerable margins. But it is necessary to Carlyle's construction (not Butler's) that by the time Teufelsdrockh is wise enough to be

counseling the editor and reader, he is at the heights rather than the depths. For Butler, any margin is vulnerable and consequently productive.

Teufelsdrockh has *visited* the depths, specifically, "thick curtains of Night rushed over his soul, as rose the immeasurable Crash of Doom; and through the ruins as of a shivered Universe, was he falling, falling, towards the Abyss" (Carlyle, *Sartor* 112). Certainly hyperbolic, but it is lines like these which remind us that Thomas Carlyle was, generationally speaking, of the Romantics; this connection is important for this particular discourse because the Romantics were in many ways set apart from their readers. Revering and writing of nature (Carlyle did as well), authors like Wordsworth and Byron were expected to stand apart with emotions and experiences bigger than life, and the poetry and representation of those emotions and experiences were to be handed down from on high. It is here that Derrida's theory of citation and reiteration comes into play, creating an idea of public display – of a public body for whom this re-presentation of an intensely vivid reality would be repeated, performed or publicly read to become a part of who that British public was. The shift that Carlyle made was not in the form of presentation, but in the message – that one should "(d)o the duty that lies nearest thee," an idea that differed a great deal from the leisure preferring, class based society that had existed previously. This message is far more proactive and performative than Wordsworth's wandering "lonely as a cloud," although those images of "lonely clouds" and, particularly, Byron's exotic Turkish Giaour were performative in creating an England that "othered" foreign ideas and peoples. They also informed the adventures of Carlyle's Teufelsdrockh.

Teufelsdrockh has much in common with these hugely popular, but removed, heroes that were embodied in both the texts and the lives of the Romantics, and so, in Book II, Chapter 6 he retreats from his great disappointment in love to the huge and rugged mountains – once again we see that wisdom comes from Butler's "outer" rather than the "inner." Here, it is hard to say whether the wisdom that Teufelsdrockh gains and then compiles into his "Philosophy of Clothes" comes from within himself or from the great unknown, but what is absolutely clear is that it does not come from within society and the social norms. And it is here that I would like to extend our consideration of Butler's theory.

Although Butler figures her "other" as excrement, she also makes clear that even after being expelled, that "other" has limited choice. Going back to Sara Silah's analogy of outfits, Silah notes that within Butler's theory, although expelled, you:

> could not simply reinvent your metaphorical gender wardrobe or acquire an entirely new one . . .[r]ather, you would have to alter the clothes you already have in order to signal that you are not wearing them in a 'conventional' way – by ripping them or sewing sequins on them or wearing them back to front or upside down.(50)

This need to adjust one's "wardrobe" presents us with Butler's theory of subversive acts in which gender identity is transformed in such ways as drag performance or cross dressing – a form of "altering" the "clothes" - in which she states that "[t]his perpetual displacement constitutes a fluidity of identities that suggests an openness to resignification and recontextualization" (*Gender* 188). It is that space between the material gender of the performer's body and the performance of a different gender

that allows for change in perceptions and, consequently, in the dynamic by which social relations are defined. In this way subversive acts become a method by which one can push against that already filled negative space of Rundle's, a way of forcing a gap in the predetermined, normative constructions. In *Sartor Resartus*, it is Teufelsdrockh's disappearances, the gaps in his presence/existence from which he returns with new wisdom. Those gaps allow wisdom to be acquired, just as Butler's gaps allow for resignification. So again we find that on the micro level, in the details, there is a remarkable number of ideas shared by Carlyle and Butler on what constitutes both an "other" and the required site and conditions for change. Now let us go back to the macro level, back to the influential text versus the performative text.

In her essay, "Contagious Word: Paranoia and 'Homosexuality' in the Military," Butler discusses a style of the performative that is far less subtle and, consequently, more directly posited in power and force than the reifying reiterations of social norms. In J. L. Austin's essay "Performative Utterances" he broaches the topic of the performative order such as, "Close the door," "Move your car" or (the fabulously appropriate statement from *Star Trek*'s Jean Luc Picard) "Make it so." Austin approaches this act from the direction of the speaker and, as such, the only performative is the utterance of the order itself (238). But what about the subjective side of the order? If in response to an order an action is produced by another person, does that constitute an expansion of the performative utterance?

With the theory advanced in "Contagious Word" Butler suggests that it might do just that, outlining how in a U.S. Military statement of regulations the words, "'I am homosexual,' do not merely describe; they are figured as performing what they

describe, not only in the sense that they constitute the speaker as a homosexual, but that they constitute the speech as homosexual conduct" (142). It is an interesting position, since in general such utterances would be considered descriptive rather than performative; if I say "I am tired" I am describing my state rather than producing it. So, at first glance, this seems to be an edict about the import of words, but as those words would be spoken by some "other" within the military, has not the spectrum of the performative been expanded? In Butler's words a declaration that one is a "homosexual becomes, within the terms of this law, not merely the representation of conduct. . . but offensive conduct itself" (Contagious 146). The drafters of these regulations appear to be creating a double – possibly triple – performative: the original order; the figuring of words as performative of "homosexual conduct"; and finally, if the words constitute a performative act within the auspices of the military, then the speaker of those words would be making an utterance that performatively produces his/her identity whether or not they have committed a material homosexual act or even truly consider themselves as homosexual. One wonders just how far this might go, if the statement itself is figured as an homosexual act does that include instances when it is spoken in jest or some other deceptive manner? Does the very act of uttering those words construct the speaker as homosexual regardless of circumstance? All of these complications were likely more than the drafters of this regulation bargained for and the regulation was repealed. But it is the attempt that is interesting; for this use of a direct edict to construct an identity within chosen delimitations is an endeavor by the U. S. Military to find a shortcut in the organization and delineation of humanity.

So how does this figure in terms of Carlyle and his text? This performative act by the military is, in fact, the very act that Carlyle appears to have been attempting in his writing of *Sartor Resartus*. If we consider the methodology he employed to gain authority, the positioning of the characters, his comments to friends and family and his growing bitterness, it is reasonable to suppose that Carlyle was not only attempting to indicate (the performative utterance of indicating) his thoughts about appropriate behavior for an Englishman, but as well, was trying to produce an English subject that did "the duty that lay nearest" him in an attempt to create a better England. It is a style of performative speech that institutions have been attempting for a very long time – a methodology that powers the church, government, and many other regulatory institution. It is also a form of performative utterance (or edict) that requires a great deal of control – thus its placement within the military which is defined by strict command over the enlisted. Carlyle, not possessing the power or authority of the military, could merely proselytize, persuade and hope for the best and, as an idealist, was doomed to fall into frustration and bitterness.

In all likelihood, it is only the military or a totalitarian state that can use such overt modes of the performative to construct identities, and then only with limited success. Controlling the actions and identity of the "other" is difficult (not to mention morally suspect), and so, such controls are embedded within our normative social structures through – as Derrida discussed – citation and reiteration. Although I am extrapolating, it seems reasonable that, considering Carlyle's legendary disillusionment and frustration through his later years, his own interpretation of the results of his attempt at creating a performative (our word – not his) text was failure.

With only a limited faith in human nature and an enlightenment based belief in the improvement of mankind to a greater being, he likely was deeply embittered by the continued growth of commerce, industrialism and increasing size of government. Even before *Sartor Resartus* was published his hopes were colored, as he expressed in a letter to James Fraser dated May 27, 1833:

> There are only five persons that have yet read this Manuscript: of whom two have expressed themselves (I mean convinced me that they *are*) considerably interested and gratified; two quite struck, 'overwhelmed with astonishment and new hope' (this is the result I aimed at for souls worthy of hope). . . (Carlyle, Letters VI, 396)

It is the words "souls worthy of hope," with their inherent and inescapable value judgment, that finally lead me to believe in both Carlyle's wish and his intention to create a performative text – to build a new world in which those "worthy of hope" might define and create identities for those "other" unworthy souls. As well, it is those words that convince me of his inevitable disillusionment.

With each reading of *Sartor Resartus*, with its flights of ecstasy and hyperbolic reaches to glory, I become more convinced that Carlyle considered himself as offering freedom to those who understood his words, and for many of his readers he may have been a gift: an opening gap, a widening horizon. But despite any laudable results, I am convinced that Carlyle did not make this gift without attempting to attach strings. Rather, I believed he wished his creation to be understood and used within his own ideas, making his offering one comprised of limited and constricting bonds – the delimited methodology of one man's idea of identity and fulfillment.

It is interesting that Carlyle would share images and ideas with a mind such as Judith Butler's, considering Butler's interest is in reducing and distorting the bonds of constructed and imposed identity, but, in fact, as I have discussed, there are numerous similarities despite their positions on opposite sides of the performative fence. As to which side of the fence Carlyle is on, it is important to remember that, as the above letter indicates, Carlyle did intend his text to build a style of thought - a new and reformed world – and, in fact, it is likely that his command to "(d)o the duty that lies nearest thee" had a serious effect and could, indeed, be considered performative as to the creation of the Victorian persona. Certainly the privileging of work as valuable was a defining characteristic of Victorian England, as Ford Maddox Brown's painting "Work" implies. It is no coincidence that Carlyle himself stands within this image, watching as the "worthy" people below him set to their given tasks. Certainly Thomas Carlyle's words helped craft much of what the Victorians were noted for and, considering the imperial reach of Victorian England, many of the effects with which a large portion of the world would have to cope.

Chapter Two

Between the "I"s: Shifting Identity and Hegel's Theory of Recognition in Lewis Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*

> "Who are *you*?" said the Caterpillar.
> This was not an encouraging opening for a conversation. Alice replied, rather shyly, "I – I hardly know, Sir, just at present – at least I know who I *was* when I got up this morning, but I think I must have been changed several times since then." (Carroll, *Alice* 84)

The cool inquiry of the implacable Caterpillar in Lewis Carroll's groundbreaking volume of children's literature, *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, is a good – and important – question both for Alice and for Victorian society as a whole. Despite Thomas Carlyle's attempts to build a new and cohesive Victorian identity, rapid changes in the areas of science, philosophy and industrialization had destabilized ideas about class, religion, and government, and consequently the identity of Victorians had come into question. Roles that had been dictated and fixed began to shift and change, much like Alice's identity in Carroll's story, leaving gaps and spaces for yet more change to occur. It is with these productive spaces in mind, spaces between comprehended and perceived identities, different word significations and shifting behaviors, that I wish to consider Carroll's text. Using Hegel's theory of recognition as outlined in the "Master and Slave" narrative in his text *Phenomenology of Spirit* and including further work by Jessica Benjamin, Judith Butler and, as well, a biography of Carroll written by Karoline Leach, I would like to consider the destabilizations that creates those spaces between identity and recognition.

It is just such spaces of inquiry that Judith Butler addresses in her influential text, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*, presenting us with the gaps created by the performance of subversive acts. As I discussed in the last

chapter, in Butler's writing on the performance of drag, she states that it "plays upon the distinction between the anatomy of the performer and the gender that is being performed" then adds a paragraph later the excerpt I quoted earlier, "[t]his perpetual displacement constitutes a fluidity of identities that suggests an openness to resignification and recontextualization" (*Gender* 188). The displacement that Butler speaks of exists as a gap between (or a break in the correlation of) the anatomy and the performance of gender within the drag presentation, making it difficult to determine "who" (what gender) the performer is.

For Alice too, "who one is" is not a question that is easily answered, as her reply to the Caterpillar makes clear. Certainly, it is not easy to answer within the shifting locale that Carroll has crafted; his creation, Wonderland, like Butler's subversive act, is a highly unstable environment where little is recognizable and everything is subject to change. Wherever Alice focuses attention, even – or perhaps especially – when that focus falls upon her own identity, the quaking ground of Carroll's constructed space shifts, forming gaps that separate the Alice of yesterday from the alter-Alice of the moment, and thus allowing questions we seldom ask to emerge from their physical or societal restraints demanding to be reexamined. It is this reexamination, as well as the inherent – and productive – gap between the dual persona of Charles Dodgson/Lewis Carroll, that characterizes the text I wish to begin with – Karoline Leach's very fresh representation of Carroll's life.

In 1998 *In the Shadow of The Dreamchild: A New Understanding of Lewis Carroll* was published. Another in a long line of biographies on Carroll, Leach's

work differs from other texts in its refusal to accept the ubiquitous representation that had been evolving over the past 100-plus years – beginning several decades before Carroll's death – of an eccentric, child revering/desiring bachelor. Rather than following her predecessors, Leach takes into consideration the total lack of available prima facie information on Carroll's life up until the 1950s in order to create a new idea of Carroll. Basing her theory on the fairly newly accessible, unexpurgated Dodgson's diaries and a list of the contents of "cut pages" within those diaries that she uncovered during her research among the family papers (Leach 50), Leach suggests that nearly all of Carroll's biographers, with the exception of Collingwood, were working from, at best, hearsay. Collingwood did have his uncle's papers to work from in building his text, but here Leach proposes that we must take into account that, as a non-scholar and member of a family that seemed intent on keeping private much of Carroll's life – after all the diaries were not allowed to be viewed until 50 years after his death and then only in an expurgated version – the text should be considered as probably intended to serve other purposes than that of scholarship, including generating book sales and preserving the family reputation. (Leach 20).[7]

Leach approaches Carroll's life from the assumption that too many, if not most, of the biographies of the past have been based on mythology – if only because of a lack of direct source material – that originated from an innocence-

---

[7] That Collingwood's representation is less than precise is accepted by many biographers, even those who use his text as reference material. In *The Life of Lewis Carroll*, Lennon mentions that Collingwood "failed to note" large gaps in the Carroll's diaries (63). Taylor, in *The White Knight* notes that Collingwood "suppressed all those [facts] which might have given offence" (v). That said, until 1969, Collingwood was the only biographer to have access to unexpurgated diaries and, as such, was an important source.

craving public and was collaborated in by Carroll himself, to be carried on after his death by his family in an effort to maintain the privacy of a life that may not have met public standards and tastes that were already invested in the idea of a pure, child-loving Lewis Carroll.[8] That Collingwood and, almost immediately after, Isa Bowman, wrote with the intent of creating a myth about innocence (regardless of the adjustments Freudians would later make) seems particularly well represented by Collingwood's ad infinitum referencing of Carroll's religiosity (14,51,132. . .), his devotion to children and finally, Collingwood's dedication of the book to all Carroll's "childfriends."[9]

Bowman makes her focus clear when she uses the words "little girl" no less than 8 times in the first 500 words of her text. As well, Bowman claims to have been "no more than ten or eleven years old" in recounting their friendship (19), yet she was 13 years old when the two met and was well over the age of perceived sexual availability for the time (14 years)[10] during most of their relationship, this was despite Carroll's supposed loss of interest in girls over the age of 12 (Leach 25). All of which calls into question the credibility of Bowman's story. Yet, according to Leach it is these first two less than scholarly "biographical" works that have set the stage for the figure of Carroll to saunter away in silhouette, hand in hand with a "little girl." Numerous biographers, including Lennon, Cohen and

---

[8] Stephen Canham notes in his essay, "From Wonderland to the Marketplace: Alice's Progeny," that the "Alice industry. . .began developing almost as the ink was drying on first editions (Carroll himself, of course, did much to impel this industry)" (226).

[9] Collingwood's representation of Carroll as pure even extended to the author's organizational systems: "nest of pigeon-holes neatly labeled, showed his love of order; shelves, filled with the best books on every subject that interested him were evidence of his wide reading" (135).

[10] William Stead's articles "Maiden Tribute of Modern Babylon" published in the *Pall Mall Gazette* in 1885 prompted Parliament to raise the age of consent to 16 (Roberts 208).

Taylor[11] would take what had been written before and would build upon and expand that already extant story.

Leach begins her account differently, taking the stance that stories and guesses that had no material basis 100 years ago have gained no validity in the intervening years, and suggests that in order to understand Dodgson's diaries – which became public in their unexpurgated form in 1969 (except for pages that had been cut and presumably destroyed) and were published in 1993 – it is important to shed the presumptions of past guesswork. In other words, Leach, in her attempt to find "cohesion in the story of his [Carroll's] life" (196) does not assume that the portrait already drawn of Carroll – composed despite a lack of access to his papers – was necessarily founded in the life of Charles Dodgson.

Working from letters and diaries and Carroll's body of work, Leach's portrait of the man is very different from other biographies. She suggests that Carroll had a series of both active and untraditional (sexually speaking) relationships with many grown women, which probably began with a romantic relationship with Alice Liddell's mother, Lorina Liddell. This relationship, Leach claims, would give context and "cohesion" to what we know of his life at the time of his intimacy with the Liddells, his state of mind and the highly sexualized (and guilt-ridden) poems he was writing at the time; a prime example of which is "Stolen Waters" (Leach 195-196). She also suggests, that although he enjoyed the company of children (both boys and girls) his relationships with women were certainly at

---

[11] Taylor's complex work with Carroll's chess game and the word play in both the *Alice* books is juxtaposed with his representation of Carroll's odd relationships with little girls. On page 196 of *The White Knight* he makes the statement that Carroll "carried . . . toys and puzzles as *bait*" (my emphasis) to attract little girls he met on trains or at the beach.

least equally important and very adult; Leach quotes a letter to a female friend in which he states "Child-society is very delightful to me: but I confess that grown-up society is much more interesting!" (228).[12] Taking all this into account, Leach's position is that Carroll himself, following a general public image, encouraged and possibly originated much of the Carrollian myth, as purity and child love (pre-Freud) was what Victorians preferred as the life of the author of the *Alice* books. In other words, Leach looks into the gaps in the publicly accepted story of the eccentric life of Lewis Carroll and uses that productive space to consider new ideas. Within the world of Carrollian scholarship, not everyone agreed with her.[13] In fact, her text caused an uproar when it was published, an uproar which is arguably still roiling.

It is not my intent to take on the opponents of Leach's text, despite my opinion that any work so firmly rooted in research, assessing both the work of the author and information that is now – somewhat newly – available to create a representation must be considered seriously. Rather, for the purposes of this chapter, I would like to assume that Leach is correct and that Lewis Carroll and Charles Dodgson parted company insofar as public identity is concerned. Accepting that assumption, the personae of Charles Dodgson/Lewis Carroll become two parts of a triad of Author, Writer, and Text. This essay will investigate that

---

[12] I find Leach's interpretation of this letter acceptable if not absolutely definitive. The letter is part of a correspondence between Carroll and the mother of a 13-year-old whom Carroll was inviting to one of his tête-à-tête dinners, all of which raises the possibility of a manipulated presentation to the parent. Supporting Leach's interpretation, is the fact that the quote is from the final letter in the correspondence (the dinner with the 13-year-old had already occurred) and is embedded in a dinner invitation to the mother. The invitation was accepted. (Carroll, Letters 1104)

[13] Donald Rackin, Professor Emeritus of English at Temple University calls Leach's suggestion of a love relationship with Lorina Liddell "sensational" (651). I find this an interesting response when juxtaposed to the claim that this supposed love relationship would be refuting – that of child love – and the post-Freudian implications thereof.

triad as it is represented within *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* in an Hegelian search for recognition in which a loss of self for Alice opens a productive gap not unlike the gap within that dual identity of Lewis Carroll/Charles Dodgson.

That identity and recognition is at issue in *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* is quite clear. Alice poses the question of her identity and how very unrecognizable she is – even to herself – from the beginning and in a direct manner. In the second chapter she considers this odd self she has become, wondering about several other children and whether or not she might have become one or the other of them:

> "Dear, dear! How queer everything is to-day! And yesterday things went on just as usual, I wonder if I've changed in the night? Let me think: *was* I the same when I got up this morning? I almost think I can remember feeling a little different. But if I'm not the same, the next question is 'Who in the world am I?'" And she began thinking of all the children she knew that were of the same age as herself, to see if she could have been changed for any of them.
> "I'm sure I'm not Ada" she said, "for her hair goes in long ringlets, and mine doesn't go in ringlets at all; and I'm sure I can't be Mabel, for I know all sorts of things, and she, oh, she knows such a very little!" (Carroll, *Alice* 10)

Even for what would have to be considered an odd book, this is an odd response, and should be noted. In general, despite the most confusing of circumstances, the last thing we question are our own identities. As well, in many ways Alice is quite sure of her identity: she is fairly sure that she is a little girl and knows that she owns a cat named Dinah; she knows that she is not Mary Anne, the White Rabbit's maid; she knows and states firmly a great many things, pointing out the March

Hare's incivility in offering wine when there is none to be had and the Hatter's rudeness in making personal remarks, so her nearly immediate assumption of a change of identity is noteworthy. In a Hegelian model of the three phases of recognition, this questioning of self is right on schedule, but while keeping this in mind, we should also note that Alice has been to some degree, the agent of her own change.

Alice's Adventures in Wonderland is presented as a dream and this presentation (as with Carlyle's fictional characters) allows for a great deal of latitude in verisimilitude, yet it is still notable that Alice is both open-minded and intrepid when it comes to her adventure. It is her following of the White Rabbit that originally takes her down under ground, and she willingly drinks and eats anything put in her way, at first out of curiosity, but later out of a definite intent to change her size in order to continue the adventure. "Oh dear! I'd nearly forgotten that I've got to grow up again! Let me see – how is it to be managed? I suppose I ought to eat or drink something or other; but the great question is 'What?'" (Carroll, *Alice* 32) We can look at this willingness to shift size as attempt to regain a Lacanian identity, a "recognized place in the social order, by passing into the Law (the culture's signifying order)" (Leitch 2485); as the world she has entered clearly runs by different rules, perhaps Alice is attempting to "pass" into the "Law" of the land. We can also, and simultaneously, consider her shifting size along with her questioning of "who" she is – Mabel or Ada or "other" – as an example of the first phase of the Hegelian theory of recognition.

In what appears to be a very Hegelian moment, Alice bites into the little "eat me" cake and seems to veritably split apart as she grows so quickly that she loses sight of her feet, musing:

> [H]ow funny it'll seem, sending presents to one's own feet! And how odd the directions will look!
>
> *Alice's Right Foot, Esq.*
> *Hearthrug,*
> *near the Fender,*
> *(with Alice's love).* (Carroll, *Alice* 9)

In Robert Williams' discussion of the Hegelian theory of recognition, "The Concept of Recognition in Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit,*" he states that "[t]he other, or the confrontation with the other, both shatters the natural solipsism of the self and 'pulls' it out of its natural solipsism. The analysis of recognition therefore is also and at the same time a story of *self-overcoming*" (64). Working with Hegel's theory of recognition, Jessica Benjamin, in her text *Shadow of the Other: Intersubjectivity and Gender in Psychoanalysis*, states that "in the dialectic between recognition and negation the negating aspect is equally crucial" (xviii). Hegel makes the statement that self-consciousness "has come *out of itself*. . . first, it has lost itself, for it finds itself as an *other* being" (sec. 179). In all three of these quotations a form of a gap or break is presented. Alice's break is clear in her questioning of both her identity and material completeness. With Wonderland playing the part of the "other," in her consideration of the possibility of a changed identity and her consequent negation of self (the Ada/Mabel cum division from physical self question), she

attempts to recognize both Wonderland and herself within it. The fluidity with which she considers her identity and the changes which she quite willingly agents (with the help of cakes and bottles of tasty liquids) are enacted in an attempt to complete this act of recognition.

Hegel states in *Phenomenology of Spirit* that the "[s]elf-conscious exists in and for itself when, and by the fact that it so exists for another; that is, it exists only in being acknowledged" (sec. 178). For Hegel recognition is a process of three phases: initial confrontation with the other, creating an abrupt self-transcendence and consequent loss of self; followed by an attempt at eliminating or diminishing the other in an effort to regain that self; the final phase is that of mutual absolution (Williams 67). From her first entrance into Wonderland, Alice searches for both the recognizable and recognition. Her desire to enter the beautiful garden seen through the tiny door is because that garden is recognizable as a place of beauty and safety.[14] It is her wish to gain access to the garden that motivates her actions for a large portion of the first half of the book, urging her on as she drinks and eats, but it is her wish for recognition that creates much of her interaction with the inhabitants of this odd world.

After her initial loss of self in the hallway, in which she questions her destabilized identity and finds herself physically changing, she meets a series of characters who do not recognize her. Rather, most of the inhabitants of Wonderland treat her as an object, and although Alice recognizes the forms of these creatures – mouse, bird, fish – she does not recognize them fully in their changed and

---

[14] In the end, the garden is not what Alice expects, and it may be that this final disillusionment produces Alice's rejection of Wonderland. Amy Billone notes in her essay "The Boy Who Lived: From Carroll's Alice and Barrie's Peter Pan to Rowling's Harry Potter" that "the lovely Edenic garden that she glimpses after she tumbles down the rabbit hole turns out to be an illusion. Her resulting rage, which augments throughout the book, causes her physically to grow out of her nightmare" (179).

anthropomorphized forms. Consequently she makes endless mistakes. Finding herself swimming beside a mouse, she chatters on about her cat Dinah in an effort to make contact, not recognizing that for the "other" these references to Dinah elide any ability for the creature to recognize Alice as anything except a threat. Because she is a threat, she is constantly being negated and resignified by the inhabitants who often have no interest in the process of recognition. For the most part these characters seem to exist within a state of "pre-ethical desire" in which the "pattern[s] of desire predominate" (Williams 66). Consider her discussion with the pigeon:

> "Ugh, Serpent!"
> "But I'm *not* a serpent, I tell you!" said Alice. "I'm a – I'm a –"
> "Well! *What* are you?" said the Pigeon. "I can see you're trying to invent something!"
> "I – I'm a little girl," said Alice, rather doubtfully, as she remembered the number of changes she gone through that day.
> "A likely story indeed" said the Pigeon, in a tone of the deepest contempt. "I've seen a good many little girls in my time, but never *one* with such a neck as that! No, no! You're a serpent; and there's no use denying it. I suppose you'll be telling me that you never tasted an egg!"
> "I *have* tasted eggs, certainly," said Alice, who was a very truthful child; "but little girls eat eggs quite as much as serpents do, you know."
> "I don't believe it," said the Pigeon; "but if they do, then they're a kind of serpent: that's all I can say." (Carroll, *Alice* 41)

Here, in one fell swoop, the Pigeon refuses recognition and, in a rather impressive denial of the Cartesian concept of the duality of mind and body (Leitch 1285), resignifies Alice according to her appearance and actions. The Pigeon accepts the information before her only as it is relevant within her "pre-ethical desire" to keep her eggs safe, thus refusing to allow any gap in her essentialist understanding of the

world. If Alice has a serpent-like neck and eats eggs, then Alice is a kind of serpent. Recognition is refuted; Alice is an object rather than a subject and must take the form that is relevant to the observer. Just as she is the maid servant, Mary Anne, to the White Rabbit to the Pigeon, Alice is a serpent. This refusal of recognition is played out over and over again throughout Wonderland, creating a destabilization of Alice's identity – a gap – within which she questions that identity, inviting us to question it with her. But as to Hegel's second phase of recognition, it is the workings of the court and the royal couple that we must observe.

The Queen of Hearts is a character caught in a permanent spiral that lies within the second phase of recognition. In her essay, "'All Sorts of Pitfalls and Surprises': Competing Views of Idealized Girlhood in Lewis Carroll's Alice Books," Jennifer Geer characterizes the Queen as "childish and despotic" (9). This is a depiction that I would certainly agree with, but it is important to remember that even a spoiled child is seeking to fulfill a need. The Queen is seeking a position from which to be recognized and (like the child playing king-of-the-hill) in order to gain the style of recognition that she craves she diminishes the subjectivity of those around her by ordering executions. Here we should note that those executions are never apparently followed through; either those ordered executed are hidden, or the King follows behind pardoning all and sundry. It is the "Master and Slave" dialogue in the flesh.

As the Queen herself never verifies that the executions are carried out, it seems quite clear that she does not really desire anyone's death. If she actually achieved even a portion of the executions that she orders she would quickly run out of

people to execute and, then too, who would recognize her as their Queen? As Williams defines Hegel's second phase: "[t]he struggle is not simply directed toward the elimination of the other; it is over recognition and relation. The allegedly 'absolute self' needs the other to recognize and confirm it. That is why the death of the opponent would be self-defeating" (67-68) So although it is important to the Queen that she be able to order executions those orders are merely a display of her powers; a display that reifies the master/slave relationship and the recognition of her position.

Hegel felt that this relationship was ultimately unfulfilling:

> [T]he unessential consciousness is for the lord the object, which constitutes the truth of his certainty of himself. But it is clear that this object does not correspond to its Notion, but rather that the object in which the lord has achieved his lordship has in reality turned out to be something quite different from an independent consciousness. What now really confronts him is not an independent consciousness, but a dependent one. He is, therefore, not certain of *being-for-itself* as the truth of himself. On the contrary, his truth is in reality the unessential consciousness and its unessential action. (Hegel sec. 192)

Although I find this construction of the Master/Slave relationship compelling, it does not inform our conclusion about the Queen of Heart's level of fulfillment. Rather, although seriously cranky, she appears content with the limited intercourse between herself and her slave/subjects, as well as her "unessential action." But "unessential action" is the norm for many of the inhabitants of Wonderland.[15] For these inhabitants there is no gap, no schism in identity, rather they reify their nonsensical

[15] The Mad Hatter's tea party is an example of "unessential action." Nothing is achieved or concluded, rather, because of an argument between the Hatter and Time, the three participants are caught in a permanent – and accepted – round of dirty dishes and unanswerable riddles.

world and thus open gaps for Alice, who is striving to recognize rather than reify, by insisting that she re-evaluate the most basic of questions (are babies the same as pigs?). All of this leaves us to conclude that most of Wonderland requires only a modicum of recognition similarly to the way in which the Dormouse's murmurs that he is awake largely satisfy his companions. Perhaps it is this refusal of recognition that informs the Cheshire-Cat's characterization of all inhabitants of Wonderland as "mad" (Carroll, *Alice* 50). Regardless of this solipsistic response of the majority of inhabitants, it is not true of absolutely all the characters. Let us move on to the next phase of Alice's search, which is achieved by Alice and two of those inhabitants.

Only very occasionally does Alice find some being with whom she manages a conversation in which she seems to have some effect. Two notable instances are the Caterpillar and the Cheshire-Cat, whose characterization of his co-inhabitants is so apt, and even these conversations are frustrating. The Caterpillar is the first character in Wonderland who actually asks Alice to identify herself. That she is a subject rather than an object is made clear in the passage I quoted at the start of this chapter. She not only has an identity, but the Caterpillar wishes to recognize her, and despite the less than cozy tone of the conversation, information is offered and accepted as the Caterpillar considers Alice's problems:

> "So you think you're changed, do you?" said the Caterpillar.
> "I'm afraid I am, Sir," said Alice. "I can't remember things as I used – and I don't keep the same size for ten minutes together!"
> "Can't remember *what* things?" said the Caterpillar.
> "Well, I've tried to say '*How doth the little busy bee,*' but it all came different!" Alice replied in a very melancholy voice.
> "Repeat '*You are old, Father William,*'" said the Caterpillar. (Carroll, *Alice* 35)

It is clear that the Caterpillar both sees Alice as a subject and – in a laconic manner – attempts to discover her problems. Then, having defined at least one those problems, he offers her the solution to controlling her changing size by indicating the uses of his mushroom. When eaten, one side of the mushroom causes her to grow, the other to shrink; with this information Alice takes more control and thus increases her agency over her size within Wonderland. So by handing Alice agency and control, the Caterpillar treats Alice as a subject and moves off to live his own life. It is an example of the third phase of Hegelian recognition: mutual absolution.

Another inhabitant in Wonderland with whom Alice has a third phase relationship is the Cheshire-Cat and it is with the Cheshire-Cat that Alice most clearly achieves, not only the absolution of the third phase of recognition, but some sort of accord. In Hegel's words, "[t]hey *recognize* themselves as *mutually recognizing* one another" (sec. 184). In her response to Jessica Benjamin's work *Shadow of the Other*, Butler too defines recognition as moving past absolution:

> It [recognition] is, rather, a process that is engaged when subject and Other understand themselves to be reflected in one another, but where this reflection does not result in a collapse of the one into the Other (through an incorporative identification, for instance) or a projection that annihilates the alterity of the Other. . . Recognition implies that we see the Other as separate, but as structured psychically in ways that are shared. (Butler, *Undoing Gender* 132)

This process is reflected in the relationship between Alice and the Cheshire Cat, although it begins with some reserve on Alice's part – "it had *very* long claws

and a great many teeth, so she felt that it ought to be treated with respect" (Carroll, *Alice* 49) – the conversation moves into the realm of an interchange of information and ideas quickly:

> "By-the-by, what became of the baby?" said the Cat. "I'd nearly forgotten to ask."
> "It turned into a pig," Alice answered very quietly, just as if the Cat had come back in a natural way.
> "I thought it would," said the Cat, and vanished again.
> * * *
> "Did you say 'pig' or 'fig'?" said the Cat.
> "I said 'pig,'" replied Alice; "and I wish you wouldn't keep appearing and vanishing so suddenly: you make one quite giddy!"
> "All right," said the Cat; and this time it vanished quite slowly, beginning with the end of the tail, and ending with the grin, which remained some time after the rest of it had gone. (Carroll, *Alice* 51)

Here, not only do Alice and the Cat have a discussion in which information is sought and received, but as well, a favor is asked and granted. This is a far cry from most of the interaction Alice has had previously in Wonderland; compared to the Hatter and the March Hare who ask riddles with no answers, who contradict and insult Alice, the Cheshire-Cat is positively cooperative. On Alice's part, she has found the space to accept an unusual form of behavior (disappearance) more readily.

At their next meeting they greet one another as old friends: "she said to herself 'It's the Cheshire-Cat: now I shall have somebody to talk to.' 'How are you getting on?' said the Cat, as soon as there was mouth enough to speak with" (Carroll, *Alice* 68). In the same scene, Alice defends the Cat to the King after the Cat declines to kiss the royal hand. The tone of their conversation, the interest they show in one another, and Alice's defense all seem to speak of a camaraderie that simply does not

exist for Alice with anyone else in Wonderland. Consequently, it is important that the Cheshire-Cat does not appear in Alice's final scene within that dream-space, for it is in that final scene that she gives up all attempts at recognition.

After the Cheshire-Cat fades away to the frustration of the King, who has taken the Cat as a serious threat,[16] and the court is convened in order to try the Knave of Hearts for stealing those very famous tarts, Alice finds herself in the midst of yet another transformation. She is growing (without intending to), and as she grows, her patience wanes. She comments that the jurors are "stupid things" (Carroll, *Alice* 90) and although she apologizes for upsetting the jury box (due to her large size), she notes that it does not "signif[y] much" whether Bill the lizard is upside down or right side up as "he would be *quite* as much use in the trial one way up as the other" (Carroll, *Alice* 96). Size matters, or, as Geer notes, "[i]n Wonderland, power rests not with the rule of law as in the ideal public realm, nor with the affections and conscience as in the ideal domestic realm, but with the individual who can dominate others most successfully" (9-10). So, as her size increases and she is able to dominate, Alice becomes quite assertive in her disparagement of the entire proceedings:

> 'If any one of them can explain it,' said Alice (she had grown so large in the last few minutes that she wasn't a bit afraid of interrupting him [the King]), 'I'll give him sixpence. *I* don't believe there's an atom of meaning in it.' (Carroll, *Alice* 100)

[16] The Cat is the only creature that the King actually tries to execute, which, considering their solidarity, calls into question Alice's safety as well.

As I mentioned earlier, Amy Billone conflates Alice's size with her frustration (179, 185), which tallies with the court scene in which Alice's steady growth occurs in sync with her scathing and unafraid protest over "having the sentence first" (Carroll, *Alice* 102) and her response to the Queen's order for her execution. With that order, all attempts on Alice's side to "recognize" the inhabitants of Wonderland end. "'Who cares for *you*?' said Alice (she had grown to her full size by this time). 'You're nothing but a pack of cards!'" (Carroll, *Alice* 102). Here Alice negates any recognition of an "other," relegates the inhabitants of Wonderland to objects (cards) and forecloses those productive gaps that have allowed her to view the world so differently. With those words, she wakes to find herself in the very familiar lap of her sister.[17]

So how, in all of this, does Karoline Leach's conception of Lewis Carroll's dual identity play out? It is quite possible, even likely considering Dodgson's interests, that Lewis Carroll/Charles Dodgson had read Hegel, especially considering Rosemary Ashton's note that "the upsurge of Hegelianism in England . . . happened predominantly in Oxford" in the mid 1860s (211 n63), approximately the same time that *Alice* was being written. So, it could certainly be true that Carroll was playing with Hegel's idea of recognition when composing *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*. What is definitely clear, is that Carroll was playing with the idea of dual identity if only in choosing a penname for this particular text (he had previously published texts on mathematics under the name of Dodgson), although this choice may possibly have

[17] I would like to note that this final scene is "unrecognizable" within the context of Carroll's tale. Alice's sister's waking dream of Alice as a mother who has retained a child's "loving heart" (Carroll 104) is irreconcilable with the behavior Alice displays throughout her interactions in Wonderland. Geer notes: "[f]rom a logical perspective, this final scene is as nonsensical as anything in Wonderland" (1).

been made in an effort to protect his privacy or reputation as a scholar. What is not possible is that he was playing some the kind of personal game having to do with the fame that Leach speaks of, because it was *Alice* that catapulted Carroll into the public eye. However, Carroll's presentation of Alice's sense of self gives us is an understanding of how his mind worked when it came to the concepts surrounding identity and recognition. Let us consider another piece of Carroll's work which falls outside the realm of object/subject recognition, but in another way has a great deal to do with the space between accepted and perceived meanings. In the following excerpt from Carroll's poem "Jabberwocky" it is the identity of the words that is in question.

> And hast thou slain the Jabberwock?
> Come to my arms, my beamish boy!
> Oh frabjous day! Callooh! Callay!"
> He chortled in his joy.
> (Carroll, *Alice* 124)

Of the 22 words in this stanza six had no meaning (no identity) when the poem was written (including the word "chortled" which slipped from Carroll's poem into standard language), and yet, there seems little question as to the tale that Carroll is telling. In an act that could be considered one of faith in human beings' ability to "recognize" one another on even a destabilized linguistic plane, Carroll wrote an exciting and accessible piece of poetry using words that had no inherent signification. This is the act of a man who understands what it is to recognize the "other" and exhibits great faith in the "other's" ability to return that recognition; it is also the act

of a man who likes to play games with that recognition; and, finally, it is the work of someone who understands just how productive the space between two "knowns" that are not contiguous can be. In a similar manner Carroll uses the multiple meanings of words in the Dormouse's story of the three sisters:

> [Alice] turned to the Dormouse and repeated her question. "Why did they [the three sisters] live at the bottom of a well?"
> The Dormouse again took a minute to think about it, and then said "It was a treacle-well."
> * * *
> "And so these three little sisters – they were learning to draw you know – "
> "What did they draw?" said Alice, quite forgetting her promise.
> "Treacle," said the Dormouse, without considering at all, this time.
> * * *
> "But I don't understand. Where did they draw the treacle from?"
> "You can draw water out of a water-well," said the Hatter, "so I should think you could draw treacle out of a treacle-well – eh, stupid?"
> "But they were *in* the well," Alice said to the Dormouse, not choosing to notice this last remark.
> "Of course they were," said the Dormouse: "well in." (Carroll, *Alice* 59)

Listening to the Dormouse (or any number of other inhabitants from Wonderland) the shifts between meanings of the words that the characters use to tell their stories or express their thoughts literally give the reader pause and consequently create gaps in our receptive process. We must stop and reconsider in an attempt to recognize the signification of something that we thought we understood just moments before, just as Alice must stop and reconsider who she is in her attempts at self-definition and recognition. It is the sliding shifts, the slippage of meaning, the gaps that allow and

require new questions or new consideration of old questions. Like the cut pages in Charles Dodgson's diaries, the gaps left by those shifting significations insist that we consider alternatives to accepted norms.

For the Victorians those gaps and shifts figured large. The Victorian public, a public which Antony Harrison describes as "destabilized by the vertiginous effects of industrialism and the new science" (27), embraced, what Morton Cohen quotes a reviewer as calling, the "delicious nonsense" (xvi) of Carroll's story. But perhaps what the Victorians were also embracing was a reflection of the fluidity and, what must have seemed, nearly alchemical changes within their frightening and exciting era. Perhaps it was those gaps, that Carroll so playfully presents, that resonated with the Victorians. As the structural ground of their daily existence shifted, life sped up and processes changed, gaps were created that allowed and insisted that morals, religious beliefs, human rights and governmental structures all shift too.

If Lewis Carroll was not purposely playing with his own fame, at least not in the writing of *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, does it not appear likely that the mind that composed "Jabberwocky," constructed the Dormouse's story and renamed himself would find a game involving shifting scenes, changing meaning and fluid identity interesting and amusing? Is there not space within what we know of all three of the portions of that triad of Writer/Author/Text to allow for new ideas like, among potentially others, Karoline Leach's? As with Butler's displacement between anatomy and performance, it is that productive space that occurs when the known "is" does not correspond to some other known "is" – or for that matter "is not" – that allows for change: of ideas, of procedures, of perceptions. Carroll's shifts of meaning

and perception bring to mind the gaps and rapid changes that define the Victorians and the age within which they lived.

Chapter Three

Who Goes There: Hegelian Recognition in *Middlemarch*

> Perhaps you will say, "Do improve the facts a little, then; make them more accordant with those correct views which it is our privilege to possess. The world is not just what we like; do touch it up with a tasteful pencil, and make believe it is not quite such a mixed entangled affair. Let all people who hold unexceptionable opinions act unexceptionably. Let your most faulty characters always be on the wrong side, and your virtuous ones on the right. Then we shall see at a glance whom we are to condemn, and whom we are to approve. Then we shall be able to admire, without the slightest disturbance of our prepossessions: we shall hate and despise with that true ruminant relish which belongs to undoubting confidence."
>
> But, my good friend, what will you do then with your fellow-parishioner who opposes your husband in the vestry? – with your newly-appointed vicar, whose style of preaching you find painfully below that of his regretted predecessor? – with the honest servant who worries your soul with her one failing? – with your neighbor, Mrs. Green, who was really kind to you in your last illness, but has said several ill-natured things about you since your convalescence? – nay, with your excellent husband himself, who has other irritating habits besides that of not wiping his shoes? These fellow-mortals every one, must be accepted as they are: you can neither straighten their noses, nor brighten their wit, nor rectify their dispositions; and it is these people – amoungst whom your life is passed – that it is needful you should tolerate, pity, and love: it is these more or less ugly, stupid, inconsistent people, whose movements of goodness you should be able to admire – for whom you should cherish all possible hopes, all possible patience. And I would not, even if I had the choice, be the clever novelist who could create a world so much better than this, in which we get up in the morning to do our daily work, that you would be likely to turn a harder, colder eye on the dusty streets and the common green fields – on the real breathing men and women, who can be chilled by your indifference or injured by you prejudice; who can be cheered and helped onward by you fellow-feeling, your forbearance, your out-spoken, brave justice. (Eliot, *Adam Bede* 176)

The above passage from *Adam Bede* introduces a wide range of concepts from compassion to duty, from the inconsistency of human nature to the nobility that inconsistency can encompass. The excerpt is both clever and endearing, however, after our initial reaction it is important to note that, underlying all her comments about how and why humans behave and respond to one another in the ways they do,

lies George Eliot's foundational statement about recognition. From the wish for a consistent and simplistic (i.e. easily recognizable) form of behavior projected by the elegantly manipulated words of Eliot onto her constructed observers in the first paragraph, to her supposition that it is necessary to comprehend our world as it is in order to best appreciate it, this extract posits the ability to recognize that which constructs our daily lives and relationships as a foundational skill set necessary to successfully make one's way through life. It is through this conception of recognition as necessary to productive decision making, as well as the construction of fruitful personal and community relationships that I wish to approach the final text I will be dealing with in my thesis, George Eliot's *Middlemarch*.

As the above excerpt makes abundantly clear, Eliot holds the need to both recognize and represent that which she perceives in the world as accurately as possible regardless of conflicting interests as the ultimate duty of a writer of prose fiction. In fact, if we consider the gaps between her publicly held views on morality and the manner in which her fiction often fails to support those views (as I will discuss later in this chapter) we can see that this adherence to recognition and faithful representation of that which has been recognized is a precept that she privileges above personal ideology and that ideology's dissemination. Add to that ethic Eliot's mimetic style in which she has none of the freedoms that both Carlyle and Carroll allowed themselves by employing myth and fantasy as the choice of genre, and we find that recognition becomes the foundational block in Eliot's fiction – the success of which dictates the level of her accomplishment and the longevity of her stories. So in this final chapter, it is Eliot's text *Middlemarch* and its position within the context

of my discourse involving Victorian spaces with which I will move forward the idea of recognition that I introduced in my consideration of Carlyle's mis-recognition of his own performative effect and continued with Lewis Carroll's experiments in the *Alice* stories, as well as in his public persona. In the case of *Middlemarch*, I would like to broaden that spectrum to take in as well the attendant complications of a failure to recognize and retain important information. Using the work of Hegel in which (as I discuss in Chapter 2) attainment of the third stage of recognition is dependent on a recognition of not only the "other" but as well the information gleaned from interaction with that "other," a consideration of Eliot's relationship to Feuerbach's theology in which the human soul and God are conflated in mélange of holiness and humanity, and Butler's conception of desire as both a motivation and guide, I will be considering just how recognition of self and community (personal and universal) construct the novel, driving forward the plot and power the ideas.

In her essay "Philosophy in the Bedroom: *Middlemarch* and the Scandal of Sympathy," Hina Nazar states that "*Middlemarch* is often described as a novel about knowledge. . . a novel about marriage and interpersonal relations" (295), and although I understand and accept the ideas underlying this classification,[18] I would argue that Eliot's most highly acclaimed, epic work is as well – if not primarily – a novel that is, on both the macro and micro level of construction, deeply concerned with recognition, mis-recognition and the manner in which cataclysmic alterations occur within the gap between the two. In *Middlemarch*, as in both *Sartor Resartus* and *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, it is the space that lies between two positions that

[18] As Nazar notes, Dorothea's quest for knowledge that leads her to marry Casaubon often suggests this classification of the novel (295), certainly a valid representation if not particularly central to my own thesis.

I would like to address, but it is important to note the different properties of the space of which I speak. For Carlyle the space lay between the intended and the material effect of his writing and for Carroll between his private and public personas as well as in the pause in communication created by sudden shifts in meaning within his texts; Eliot most closely resembles Carlyle in that communication is never to be taken lightly despite its playfulness. Although she is often playful in a satiric manner (as exampled in the first paragraph of the excerpt from *Adam Bede*), she attempts at all times to make direct contact with her reader through recognizable representations, while presenting that reader with illustrations of how unreliable contact between human beings can be, i.e. mis-recognition, and as well, how catastrophic a miscarriage of that connection often is. For if the productive gap that lies between recognition and mis-recognition is a space in which much can be amended (as with Fred Vincy and his attempts and final success to recognize his position in society), it is as well, a space where much can be lost (as with Lydgate and the consequences of his mis-recognition of Rosamond). Perhaps most importantly, it is that space that dictates for all three authors the effective creation of representations by which they understood themselves and the Victorian public, thus influencing both the public and personal self recognition of Victorians. That George Eliot was influential in the formation of the Victorian conception of self as represented in literature is unarguable (Mermin 138-139), but to begin considering the function of recognition in her work and specifically in *Middlemarch*, as with Carroll, I would like to start with Eliot's constructions surrounding concepts of recognition of her public and private personae before moving on to how those concepts function within her works of fiction.

As a writer who began her career in the late 1860s as she was nearing the age of forty, Eliot had lived through many of the vicissitudes of political reform and the rise of industrialization that epitomized the Victorian era and, consequently, possessed a finely detailed conception of who the public surrounding her was, what had gone into creating that public and an ideology suggesting who they might and (like Carlyle) *should* become. She possessed as well a personal understanding of the gap or space necessary for achievement or change – what she called for herself "'room' into which she c[ould] 'expand'" (Hertz 25). The words "room to expand" within the context of nineteenth-century England with its investment in colonization automatically brings to mind the co-option of space or possessions that belong to some "other," but Eliot's own need for space dealt with an incorporation of a more Lacanian Other, a need we can discover in her various name changes.

Eliot began to contemplate her first name change at the age of 14 when she wrote on her notebook "Marianne Evans" instead of the name she had been given – Mary Anne Evans (Hertz 25); this change is an important choice and I will return to it, but for the moment it is the second name change that I wish to address. Marian Evans' second change of designation[19] was the more public name adjustment that she took on as a writer – George Eliot. As I stated in my chapter on Lewis Carroll, there are practical reasons for a writer to choose a penname. For Carroll, it appears that he wished to delineate between his mathematical (serious) writing and his fantasy writing for children; that bid for serious consideration was likely one of Eliot's motivations as well. Although there were many female writers being published

[19] Different biographers have chosen different spellings for George Eliot's private name: Hertz uses Marian; McSweeney, Mary Ann. As Marian is the preferred choice of name by the novelist herself, I will be using that spelling when referring to her by her private name.

throughout the century[20] and some were well respected (Eliot's own position as "sage writer" is indicative of how high female writers could rise), there was a readiness to dismiss the work of women.[21] Eliot was aware of the bias and, in a discussion of her use of a male pseudonym under which she published articles in the *Westminster Review*, makes the statement (McSweeney, *George* 81): "The article appears to have produced a strong impression, and that impression would be a little counteracted if the author were known to be a *woman*" (Eliot, Letters II, 218). Then too, considering Eliot's less than socially acceptable cohabitation with Lewes (a married man) that was established before she began her fiction career, there was no question that anonymity was the prudent move at least until some reputation had been established; in other words, some form of *recognition* for Eliot's work needed to be accrued before it would have been wise to allow the reading public to know that the author was living a life many found unacceptable. And there it is; Eliot was seeking recognition (in the sense of a "formal acknowledgement as conveys approval or sanction of something" [OED definition 4.a.]) for her work without the potentially tainting influence of her personal life. Here, it is worth noting that Eliot's assuming of the name Mrs. Lewes implies that she desired recognition (sanction) for a state of matrimony that she did not, technically speaking, possess, as it could be argued that this discontinuity informs the formation of Dorothea's character. However, I'll return to that idea later. Meanwhile, what becomes clear is that her choice of using a

---

[20] Richard Altick notes that "of the 878 novelists listed in John Sutherland's *Stanford Companion to Victorian Fiction*, 312 were women" (298).

[21] Eliot's own essay "Silly Novels by Lady Novelist" is indicative of this trend that she herself wished to escape and that was to end in the extremity of the modernist (and largely male) backlash that created what were often exclusionary definitions of work that could be considered "literature" and what could not (Arata 61).

penname is both logical and prudent, and with that said, let us revisit the earlier name change for there is another kind of recognition, less based in logic, that is inherent within that more personal adjustment.

It is certainly a very normal childhood activity, to inscribe a prettier, more adventurous, or more exotic form of name, and certainly many a fourteen-year-old has played in just this way. If Mary Anne Evans had been experimenting with her surname, we might be tempted to impose a traditional assumption of an interest in marriage and the identity change that becoming a wife implies, but playing with a first name suggests a more immediate and personal question of identity and potentially a wish to take control of how one is regarded. Once again, Butler's theory of drag performance and Sarah Salih's interpretation of that theory prove useful in support of my argument. If, as Butler posits, gender is performatively produced, then the name bestowed on a child at birth is certainly a portion of that production. Although names do not absolutely imply a gender signification, in many if not most cases they do, but, moving beyond gender, it appears clear that in conferring a name upon a child a parent is both legally and, if possible, materially attempting to produce (impose?) an identity for his/her child. In changing that name, the child both symbolically and materially recaptures some measure of agency over that identity. One can consider this process as Lacan's Other taking a more privileged position that allows for a greater scope, i.e. a persona to grow into; or perhaps it is a form of Salih's description of Butler's drag performance as an altering of the "clothes" that are one's (gender or other) identity. In Eliot's case in the shift between the plain version of her name, Mary Anne, to the lacier form, Marianne, we can clearly see

Salih's idea of the sewing on of "sequins" (50) in order to create a grander identity. But whichever theory we espouse, this grasping of a control over the name by which we are identified is a methodology used to change the boundaries of character that are imposed (probably necessarily) during childhood. It is as well a creation of a gap, and it was within that gap – between Mary Anne and Marian, between Marian Evans and George Eliot, between the identity that was already defined and one that was more amorphous and allowed for differences – that the space for self realization occurred.

If Maggie Tulliver is an autobiographical portrait, as is suggested by numerous critics including McSweeney (*George* 88) and Hertz (42) and considering the limited freedoms allowed the protagonist of *The Mill on the Floss*, then a space pried away from the predetermined identity of a dictatorial family may have been necessary to allow for Marian Evans to create and George Eliot to publish. By creating that space or gap, these two personae become two sections of a whole mechanism that allowed the writer/author to become *recognized* as a successful producer of literature. And it is clear that recognition was important to Eliot when we consider the way in which recognition or failure to recognize function within the text. To understand that importance we must return to the very basics of how recognition functions in fiction.

How do we "recognize" fictional characters in mimetic fiction? It sounds like an obvious question as, for realism to be considered well written, the characters must be recognizable. But in Catherine Gallagher's essay "George Eliot: Immanent Victorian" she makes the interesting point that fiction is an inversion of our "normal

empirical ways of thinking about the relation between the real and the imaginary, the sensual or experiential," stating that, in fiction "the type is the presumed referent while individuals are presumed to be fictional" (62). Suggesting a construction in which "type," rather than being a methodology by which to organize the actions and thoughts of individuals as it is in life, functions in a directly opposite manner – individuals are constructed from and recognized by type. In other words, our recognition of individuals is dependent on those individuals behaving within a recognized and accepted set of actions belonging to a type. Gallagher goes on to note that Eliot is both fully aware of this inversion and exploits it. Considering Eliot's knowledge of Feuerbach, it seems likely a reflection of his comment that "[i]n life we are concerned with individuals, but in science, with species" (98), and thus the science of writing begins with the species/type, only then moving on to the individuals that evolve out of the type. Gallagher's choice of excerpt in order to illustrate this point falls on Eliot's representation of Mr. Brooke as a conglomeration of "types" (63).

> Mr. Brooke's conclusions were as difficult to predict as the weather: it was safe to say that he would act with benevolent intentions and that he would spend as little money as possible in carrying them out. For the most glutinously indefinite minds enclose some hard grains of habit; and a man has been seen lax about all his own interests except the retention of his snuffbox, concerning which he was watchful, suspicious, and greedy of clutch. (Eliot, *Middlemarch* 6)

Recognition of Mr. Brooke depends on Eliot's comparison of him to several conflicting types, with the "snuffbox clutcher" type (Gallagher 63) winning the day as

is made clear by Brooke's consistent choice to spend as little as possible. But it is Eliot's insistence that we compare Mr. Brooke not only to a single "type" of person we have had dealings with, but in fact several "types" of people we might know that binds us to him. He is both a snuffbox clutcher and the overly permissive Uncle, the stingy landlord and the political liberal, thus indicating a detailed character and an appreciation of the complexity of human beings in general. However, we should remember it is the type that is primary and the combination of these recognizable attributes of type from which the individual, Brooke, evolves, thus allowing us to understand and appreciate him. It is because we have affectionately laughed at other men similar that we are able to like and sympathize with anyone so apparently scattered.

Eliot's understanding and manipulation of shared behavior (i.e. type or typical behavior) consequent to that shared status, resonates and thus allows her to produce recognizable characters. This resonance is an important portion of that which made her fiction relevant during her own life as well as 150 years later. But beyond the construction of recognizable characters, recognition as a mode of connection and construction of relationships is so important to Eliot that she centers the novel's plotline around it and, as well, the *gaps* left by a failure to complete – or even a tardy completion of – that act of recognition. In considering this aspect of the novel I will begin as Eliot did, with Dorothea Brooke Casaubon.

Throughout *Middlemarch*, and particularly in regard to Dorothea and Mr. Casaubon, strength of vision – the principal tool by which we recognize others – plays an important part in indicating a character's ability to recognize and respond to

those that surround them, and consequently to their ability to function.[22] Dorothea is steadily described as being shortsighted and Casaubon, as losing his vision and thus dependant on Dorothea to read to him, an ability that considering his own self definition as a scholar is crucial. Both infirmities are indicative of a failure to recognize – each other certainly – but also themselves and, as well, their respective positions in the world. Dorothea strives to what would be considered a man's position in her designing of cottages and Casaubon spends his life working on a text that is (according to Will Ladislaw and probably Eliot herself considering the importance she placed on German thought) irrelevant due to a refusal to consider the progress that German scholarship had made. However, there are difference in the infirmities bestowed upon the two characters and it is important to note those differences. Although Dorothea is shortsighted, hers is a disability that can be corrected and although perhaps (according to the concepts of the day) her wishes are inappropriate, those wishes are worthwhile and suggest open vistas and increased good for others, whereas Casaubon's loss of sight is permanent and his refusal to consider ideas that are not his own is indicative of a mind that is closed and closing. In that more irredeemable failure of Casaubon – his permanent loss of vision – is posited the hopelessness of his ever being able to understand or appreciate either Dorothea or even his own work.

Edward Casaubon is constantly defined by his inability (his refusal?) to see. For him Dorothea's affection and loyalty are invisible, hidden, as Eliot notes in

[22] In some cases, such as Rosamond Vincy/Lydgate who is constantly presented near or in reference to a reflective surface – Bernard Paris notes the significance of Eliot's using the simile of scratches in a pier glass for Rosamond's habit of thought (129) – the *direction* of vision is as important as the strength.

chapter 42, behind that speck of self that if "very close to our vision [will] blot out the glory of the world, and leave only the margin by which we see the blot" (*Middlemarch* 346). So, rather than seeing Dorothea and what she offers him (despite its admitted limitations), Casaubon sees merely her emerging doubt in himself as a delineation of his own doubts about his ability to finish his "great" *Key to All Mythologies*. The speck that blots out his world is his potential failure and Dorothea, with her doubts, is the negative space at the margins that outlines his own suspicions, bringing them into focus. Within a Hegelian template, if Casaubon is attempting to "Master" Dorothea, thus figuring his wife as "Slave," for him she does not possess an "independent self-consciousness" (Williams 73) and as such cannot offer him "genuinely independent recognition" (Williams 74). So, the doubt he sees in his wife is merely that reflection of his own.

Whether Casaubon's text would be great is, of course, debatable, but even if we assign some value to his work, Eliot creates a scenario in which the importance of his scholarship is questionable, as it is never suggested that Casaubon's thoughts are of value. Rather, even he values only his mountains of researched material; thus we have his attempt to secure a promise from Dorothea to continue the work of organizing that material. It is a request to martyrdom that destroys our sympathy as his attempt to control Dorothea joins the constant lessening of his vision, his ideas and his generosity, and serves to remind us just how small he is. Even the sympathy Eliot manages to evoke for this less than appealing man is created through lessening and loss, specifically his loss of vision and his consequent desperation and fear. In these tangible ways Eliot offers us indications of how this couple is groping about in

the mist, but their problems with recognition do not begin and end with an inability to see clearly or well. In Dorothea's shortsightedness is a representation of a different conception of recognition. In order to consider these other concepts I would like to return to the Hegelian template I use above with Casaubon and consider how Dorothea steps through Hegel's three stages of recognition presented in his "Master and Slave" discourse as neatly as if she is stepping through the proscribed moves of a minuet.

Middlemarch is a novel that is informed by an Hegelian idea of recognition. It is a story in which – as with Hegel's master/slave dialogue – "the concept of spirit" is "constituted through reciprocal recognition" (Williams 61), a world in which Dorothea is the "I that becomes a We" (Williams 60). I would like to begin as I did in regard to Wonderland and Alice, with a step by step consideration of the relationships, beginning specifically with the Dorothea/Casaubon courtship and marriage within the structure of Hegel's theory of recognition. With that in mind, it seems reasonable to begin with the first stage in which that "confrontation with the other" catapults the subject out of his/her solipsism (Williams 64). Although it is tempting to posit Hegel's "confrontation" in the couple's introduction, as that introduction is represented as something of an epiphany for Dorothea, I would argue that both the actors in this particular drama are deep in a solipsistic reverie in which their partner is merely an object and as such does not function as "other" until a moment well into their honeymoon in Rome. As Dorothea has married Casaubon to access knowledge and as a vehicle by which to create for herself a satisfactory

position in life[23] (that of a necessary helpmeet to a great man who is doing great work – thus we have Dorothea's despairing reaction to Will's revelatory comments about Casaubon's work being worthless) it is only when her husband's wish (need) to be left to work alone crosses her own wish (need) to be useful and thus invalidates her intended future, that the confrontation with the "other" occurs. Until that time Casaubon has been an idea rather than an "other."

For Casaubon too, Dorothea exists as an object or idea, she is to be the adoring and largely silent automaton he feels he needs to ease his burden, not fully aware that the greatest portion of his burden is self doubt. The confrontation for Casaubon comes in Rome as well, culminating when it becomes clear that Dorothea has doubts which reflect his own. Once again it is that "fateful" comment of Will Ladislaw about the relevance of Casaubon's work that acts as catalyst in the creation of a mutual recognition of limitations that allows the entrance of doubt, disallowing the negation that they have mutually upheld throughout their previous existence amid pre-ethical and pre-recognition desires. However, each of the players within this marriage has a different reaction to this moment of recognition, and I will begin with Casaubon's reaction, for it is his refusal of recognition that constructs the remainder of the marriage.

Casaubon never fully leaves his pre-ethical desire behind, never fully recognizes Dorothea. Although he is not allowed to remain in his solipsistic "paradise" in which he refuses information as to the position his work will take in the

[23] It is worth noting that both Dorothea and Rosamond's first marriages are enacted by the two women in an attempt to create what each considers an appropriate situation. However they part company with their second marriages as it is suggested that Rosamond continues the trend, whereas Dorothea advances to a different (and in Eliot's estimate better) style of connection.

world of scholarship (and here I conflate his work with his identity – as he does himself), he attempts in a second phase reaction (particularly after discovering his reduced life expectancy) to retain his pre-ethical desire and "consume" the "object" necessary to obtaining that desire (Williams 63). That "object" is of course Dorothea to whom Casaubon makes the request that she "apply [her]self to do what I should desire" (Eliot, *Middlemarch* 394). Although this is not exactly the request that Dorothea assumes it to be, that of dedicating her life to his work – work that she no longer values – but includes as well an attempt to bar her from marriage to Will Ladislaw, both portions of this request are an attempt to negate Dorothea and fulfill Casaubon's pre-ethical desire to complete his work and deny Will that which Casaubon views as his own property (i.e. Dorothea and his estate). Dorothea as a subject does not figure in the request, rather she is elided and consumed in a process in which the "telos" of Casaubon's "satisfaction is the reinstatement of [his] solipsistic identity" (Williams 63), i.e. the reinstatement of his dream of scholarly importance and the "master" relationship that his financial support of Will had allowed him to believe in.

One of the tragedies of this sad, lonely and ungenerous man is that he is unable to recognize that Dorothea, in offering her companionship, is tendering a great gift that might, despite its solipsistic roots, evolve into a real relationship. He is unable to recognize her as anything but that Hegelian reflection of his own doubts and an instrument through which he might revert to an existence in which he would be able to refuse those doubts (or at least ignore them). Dwight H. Purdy, in his essay "The One Poor Word in *Middlemarch*" in which he carefully counts the usage of the

word "poor" as a signification of various states of being of the characters described, notes that "[f]or every 'Poor Dorothea'" there is a "Poor Casaubon" and that Eliot's narrator:

> . . .invests a great deal in the adjective's power to arouse sympathy. Whenever it appears, it comes with a thick array of other rhetorical pleas for compassionate understanding. But, as we will see, the narrator does not get past the last "poor Casaubon," the context of the final references implying an ironic judgment. (811)

Beyond the obvious irony, I would suggest that Eliot does pity Casaubon, not however because of those things he fails to achieve or receive, but rather for his inability to see and recognize. Sympathy for Casaubon is conflated with pity and as such is both permanent and hopeless. Consequently, it is of a different variety than that bestowed on his wife. Pity (rather than sympathy) for Dorothea is far more transient and situational, for Dorothea's difficulties are part of a process and lead to another state of being.

Dorothea too begins her marriage in a state of solipsism, viewing her husband as merely a vehicle to a state she desires. Eliot's opening discourse on Saint Theresa is a roughed out portrait of Dorothea's "soul" and desire for a greatness created through martyrdom, and Casaubon, with his ugly appearance and apparently cerebral life embodied in a devotion to knowledge, provides what she believes to be a perfect stake upon which to impale herself. But there are differences in the two forms of solipsism represented within this couple. Despite Dorothea's wish for martyrdom being less than entirely altruistic – it is after all grounded in a wish for a realization of

some form of greatness and only resorted to because Dorothea feels that, as she states over and over again, as a woman she can do nothing great – yet the very fact that this wish contains an outward gaze (once again we are confronted with sight) and a wish to know and do outside of her limitations and self, places Eliot's protagonist in a position more readily used as a launching pad to a more fully realized identity. As well, once she has managed to recover from the confrontation with the "other" that she discovers in Mr. Casaubon, even within her second stage "opposition of particulars" (Williams 66) her "desire" is for a greater intimacy, once again an outward facing position that presupposes Hegel's construction in which "[s]elf-consciousness achieves its satisfaction only in another self-consciousness" (Hegel sec. 175) and desire becomes "fundamentally a desire for the other" (Williams 64).

Dorothea's desire, which although on some level produces her husband as an object, is posited in a desire for the "other" as is made clear at the beginning of Chapter 28: "When would the days begin of that active wifely devotion which was to strengthen her husband's life and exalt her own?" (Eliot, *Middlemarch* 227). This is not to say, however, that she has reached the third stage of recognition and the mutual absolution that implies full recognition, for although outward facing she still desires to "master" Casaubon, i.e. force him to play the role that fulfills her desire. It is her realization that Casaubon is not going to be the object she has designed in her solipsistic fantasies that creates the anger that is indicative of the second stage of the master/slave dialectic:

> She was in the reaction of a rebellious anger stronger than any she had felt since her marriage. Instead of tears there came words: –

> 'What have I done – what am I – that he should treat me so? He never knows what is in my mind – he never cares. What is the use of anything I do? He wishes he had never married me.' (Eliot, *Middlemarch* 352)

Although this excerpt represents Dorothea as wishing for connection with her husband, a wish that implies a movement toward the third stage of recognition, at this point in the text she is still enmeshed in the second stage for despite the lines above appearing to be (somewhat) altruistic, all Casaubon has done to evoke them is to turn away from her, thus refusing to recognize Dorothea's own ideas of "herself as necessary." It is not my intention, however, to let Casaubon off the hook, for as he realizes his own imminent death, he steps into the battle for mastery with a will, attempting to enslave Dorothea in order that he (his work and estate) may be allowed a form of extended life. In fighting back Dorothea is defending her life in a material way, as is made clear by her illness after her husband's death. Meanwhile, within the battle waged during Casaubon's final weeks, he makes every attempt to take control over his wife's life, i.e. to become her master in the equation of their relationship.

That is not to say that Dorothea has stepped out of the battle, she too is still deep in the second stage in which she wishes to "conquer" her husband and remake him into the man she needs, a man who will respond to her with openness, affection and at least a modicum of camaraderie. It is only after she has spent the night wrestling with her emotions, so that she who began "with a movement towards striking . . .ends with conquering h[er] desire to strike" (Eliot, *Middlemarch* 353), is able to find her way into that third phase of recognition in which she accepts her husband limitations. In "conquering her desire to strike" she finds a necessary space

between her own desires and her anger at his failure to meet those desires. She waits for Casaubon to come upstairs with a calm that has "cost her a litany of pictured sorrows and . . .silent cries" (Eliot, *Middlemarch* 353) but allows her to recognize both Casaubon's sorrow as well as the gentleness of his reaction. It is only in that space she has carved out between her own intense needs and violent reactions that she can absolve her husband. Even so, Dorothea does not yet reach the full fruition of the third stage as, for Hegel, that stage includes "mutual" absolution and absolution is not a realization that is granted Casaubon. Casaubon remains embedded in the second stage of recognition right up until his death and Dorothea is left to make the remainder of the journey with others.

At this stage, a brief discussion of Hegel's theory in terms of a few of those other characters within the text will move my argument forward, as recognition is influential in a number of the different relationships within the plot. The most obvious choice is the other important protagonist in the story, Lydgate. The marriage of Lydgate and Rosamond is a union which is embedded in mis-recognition. Mis-recognition of each other – certainly – but as well, for Lydgate, mis-recognition of himself and his own powers. Lydgate, as a man of science who believes himself to have been made wise and fortified by his experience with the actress Laure and her (in a way generous if chilling) confession to him about her opportunistic killing of her husband, believes he is proof against women. What he is not safe from, of course, is himself and his inability to recognize the side of his nature which is not scientific and logical – that which, because of that inability, constitutes his limitations. Lydgate refuses to recognize that he might be required to do anything he has *decided* he will

not do: thus he gets involved with Bulstrode, and consequently local politics; thus he marries Rosamond although he has sworn not to marry anyone for a number of valid reasons.

So we must recognize that if Lydgate's failure to achieve what he sets out to do occurs partially because Lydgate does not recognize Rosamond (and he does not – he sets out with no conception of the power of her will) and the fact that she is the wrong wife for a man in his position, he also fails because he does not recognize himself and his limitations. This failure to recognize his own parameters models him as a never fully realized consciousness and throws his conflating of Rosamond with the basil plant, which "flourished wonderfully on a murdered man's brains" (Eliot, *Middlemarch* 686) into a different light. For although Lydgate is far more sympathetic than Rosamond (who only once emerges from her pre-ethical desire to do as she pleases), her inability to recognize *any* other person including her husband is no more responsible for Lydgate's failure than his own failure to recognize: Rosamond, his tendency to impulsive action and his position in the world. And that – recognition of one's position in the world – figures large in *Middlemarch*: for Dorothea, whose many frustrations, whether we agree with Eliot's conception of the appropriate limitations applied to women or not, come from an unwillingness to recognize and accept her position; for Lydgate in his refusal to accept that, as a doctor, the world's opinion and money must affect him; and – in an entirely different vein for another couple whom I have yet to mention – Mary Garth and Fred Vincy. In discussing Mary and Fred, for whom recognition is the key ingredient to success, I will begin with this idea of the recognition of one's position in the world.

Mary Garth possesses a full recognition of her position in the world. This recognition is brought home to the reader in the very first scene in which we are introduced to Mary, and it is worth our while to consider this scene carefully, for, except for Mr. Farebrother's regard, nearly every aspect of Mary's position – as well as Mary's clear recognition of that position – is represented. First and most materially, we are presented in this scene with Mary performing a job that is less than attractive, but – to her – more appealing than that of being a governess. She caters to and cares for her unpleasant uncle, Peter Featherstone, fully aware (i.e. recognizing) that, considering her family's financial situation, some sort of job is necessary. Also on a material plane, we are presented with Mary's very clear conception of her physical appearance, specifically with her statement: "What a brown patch I am by the side of you, Rosy!" (Eliot, *Middlemarch* 93). Although certainly not without appeal to at least two gentlemen, Mary is under no illusions as to her claims to beauty. Finally, in this scene we are made fully aware of a fact that Mary recognizes may be of great importance to her – that Fred Vincy loves her. These details make up the parameters of Mary Garth's position in the world: in need of employment, less than beautiful, and beloved by Fred. At first glance, it seems that Mary might jump at the one positive factor in this equation, Fred's love, but her recognition of her position in the world includes a few more – less material – factors that include her family's great affection and respect for her and an ability to recognize and estimate her own worth. It is this recognition that not only keeps Mary safe (refusing Fred until Fred has proves himself able to step beyond the position of dilettante and leach), but as well allows Fred to evolve into a "fine" man rather than a "gentle"man. That

insistence of Mary as to her value gives Fred the time it takes to develop a clear conception of his own position in the world – something that he struggles with.

Fred has been both told and educated to believe that he deserves to be a gentleman of leisure (or at least principally so in the role of a clergyman). Educated to become a member of the clergy and allowed (through the association with wealthy young gentlemen at school) to develop the tastes of a gentleman while assuming that the taste for the clergy will take care of itself, Fred has no understanding of where he belongs in the world. Add to this the complication of a "possible" inheritance from his Uncle Featherstone and Fred is truly in limbo. But limbo is not that productive gap that we have watched so many characters put to use in the consideration of a next step. Rather it is a position from which a next step is impossible. The productive gap only materializes when (through something of a misstep by Peter Featherstone) Fred does not inherit and finds himself between a necessary career in the clergy which he dislikes and Mary refuses to consider as possible for Fred as her husband, and the need to discover some alternative. It is from this untenable[24] position that Fred, with the hand of necessity placed firmly in the middle of his back, discovers his path in life.

Fred succeeds (after a few false starts) in building a life for himself. But why does Fred succeed where others fail? What is it that sets Fred apart from Tertius Lydgate who seems to possess a more sophisticated intellect and yet does not succeed in building a satisfactory life? I would argue that the difference lies in an ability to recognize, for if Fred does not at first entirely recognize his own position in the

[24] I use the word "untenable" with purpose and in direct opposition to the idea of being in limbo. Limbo is defined by lack of movement, i.e. waiting for the action of some other, and untenable is defined by movement made necessary by an inability to maintain within the status quo.

world, he is able to recognize when a place and position is wrong, and, most important, Fred recognizes Mary. Regardless of all other vicissitudes in his life and his mother's dissenting voice, Fred never wavers from his appreciation of Mary and his recognition of her value both to himself and (with a hint from Mrs. Garth) others. This recognition in conjunction with his pleasant temper mitigates Fred Vincy's many failings and allows the scales to balance in his favor. Mary even makes the statement that her reason for loving him is posited in this appreciation, saying to Mr. Farebrother "I should never be quite happy if I thought he was unhappy for the loss of me. It has taken such deep root in me – my gratitude to him for always loving me best, and minding so much if I hurt myself" (Eliot, *Middlemarch* 427).

By the end of the novel, it is Fred and Mary who are represented as most successful. Not only are they "happy" as all "good" couples should be, but success is completely shared. Eliot makes this a point with her description of how when each writes a book (arguably the ultimate achievement for Eliot) the other is given the credit. This blurring of the lines of achievement, although also an ironic chuckle at the townspeople's inability to grant other's their success, is also important in indicating Fred and Mary's ultimate accomplishment as a couple in sync. It is an accord that the Lydgates never even approach and Dorothea and Will never quite achieve. Despite Dorothea's happiness in the marriage there is a suggestion of incomplete fulfillment posited in a failure to reach that original wish for greatness. This failure to present Dorothea's second marriage as a complete success could be considered as indicative of the refusal central to Eliot's own life that I mentioned earlier in this chapter, for, regardless of the motivation behind it – practical or

otherwise, the adoption of her common-law "husband's" name is an irrefutable attention to at least a wish and possibly a need (consider her family background and her traditional attitudes toward gender roles) to be recognized as a member of a socially sanctioned marriage. It seems likely that Eliot's ambivalence about women and the untenable relationship that sometimes existed between the roles open to them and a need for more scope is posited in Dorothea's yearning for greatness, for another irrefutable fact lies in Eliot's statement that Dorothea felt "there was always something better which she might have done" (*Middlemarch* 686).

It is with this yearning in mind that I would like to return to Dorothea to conclude my discussion, still incorporating both Hegel and Butler but from a slightly different angle. In the introduction to Butler's first major work of criticism, *Subjects of Desire: Hegelian Reflections in Twentieth Century France*, there is a remarkable description of attitudes and behavior that would serve as a description of Dorothea Brooke:

> The ideal of an internal integration of reason and desire not only poses an alternative to a naturalistic or positivistic understanding of desire, but promises to expand the very notion of rationality beyond its traditional confines. If desires are essentially philosophical, then we reason in our most spontaneous of yearnings. (Butler, *Subjects* 2)

This is a methodology that Dorothea Brooke learns to implement within the text of *Middlemarch*. Throughout the novel she is represented as a woman who yearns (Eliot uses the word to describe Dorothea in a number of cases including everything from a yearning for knowledge to a yearning for Will Ladislaw). To begin, in her youth and

idealism, she believes that she yearns only in regard to her intellectual self and the duty through which it is realized, as is made clear through her self-righteous dismissal of the material posited in the rejection of her mother's jewels, her inheritance, and Lowick. However, as we saw when applying the Hegelian Master and Slave template to the Casaubon marriage, Dorothea's motivations and desires are not selfless, rather they service her own needs – for intimacy and inclusion. As the novel evolves, however, so does Dorothea. What allows Dorothea to gain success both as a character in the novel and of the novel is her ability to recognize another portion of herself through her recognition of Casaubon and both Will and her desire for Will. Rosemary Ashton makes the comment that "Dorothea, beginning with her disillusion with Casaubon and Rome and the planting of the seed of affection and understanding between her and Will moves towards a 'clearness' of perception about her relation to others in society" (157). In other words within her recognition of her husband, her beloved and her desire, is posited the seeds of her success. Through the recognition and integration of her desire – i.e. her self or consciousness – she is able to finally construct a complete life. Eliot assembles this scenario carefully by making Will a choice of husband which not only the dead Casaubon refuses, but also a marriage disapproved by all her connections. So, in choosing Will, who is a personification of the gap between her present and future, Dorothea cannot pretend to be following anything except her desire. Her final choice becomes not just a choice of husband but a choice which consciously incorporates desire as a guide.

This, however, is merely the last step in the incorporation of the two, Dorothea has been using desire as a guide all along. In this choice she is at first humored and

dismissed as innocent and slightly foolish as: Mr. Brooke ignores her ideas about cottages; Lydgate, her ideas about charity; and everyone, her choices of husbands. And at the beginning those choices are often incorrect or misguided; it is consciousness of her desire and the blending of that desire and her intellect that finally allow Dorothea agency and respect. Only after she has tread the path of recognition which culminates in her recognition of Will's love and a interweaving of her intellectual and emotional selves does Dorothea begin to make consistently correct choices (at least in regard to her own happiness).

Dorothea's desire may never have been an entirely pre-ethical desire such as Rosamond's, but as she learns to recognize others her desire evolves into that moral and philosophical desire of which Butler speaks, the desire that acts as a motivating guide for the complete soul. It is through this "integration of reason and desire" that Eliot models Dorothea as the most admirable of beings who "expand[s] the very notion of rationality" to include compassion and recognition. However misguided Dorothea appears to be at the outset of the novel, there is always a vague awareness of the "other" and a grain of goodness, generosity and aspiration in Dorothea's choices. It is, after all, Dorothea that "knows" Lydgate is innocent of any wrong doing in the Bulstrode/Raffles affair. It is indicative of Eliot's own atheistic moralism which Ashton calls a "gain in clarity" (157), of Feuerbach's statement that "[w]hat man calls Absolute Being, his God, is his own being" (102) and of the parallel thrust of the moral and the rational that powered so many of the thinkers of Victorian England. Using the productive gap between: husbands, anger and acceptance, knowledge and desire, Dorothea manages to evolve past her shortsighted

inability to recognize to a clear-sighted knowledge and an understanding of just "what everything costs" (Eliot, *Middlemarch* 667).

Conclusion

It is with that final promise to "learn what everything costs" that I would like to finish this thesis. For in so many ways that was the lesson that many Victorian thinkers were trying to incorporate into their politics, their foreign policy, their relationships between men and women; so many of their constructions were attempts to discover and redistribute the costs of the various policies utilized to govern the lives lived under English sway. It is the costs – to relationships, community and individuals – that J. S. Mill was assessing and attempting to redistribute in his discussion of the rights of women in his essay "The Subjection of Women." Amy Levy's "Magdalen" bears witness to the cost extracted from any woman not shrewd enough to negotiate her contract with the man she loves *before* rather than after "favors" have been granted. Although the costs are different, it is the same attempt to at least bring those cost to the attention of the world that Elizabeth Barrett Browning is involved with in poems like "The Cry of the Children" and "A Runaway Slave at Pilgrim's Point."

I find it fascinating that, although Carlyle was neither an abolitionist nor a proponent of women's rights (rather, he held views quite contrary to both ideas) and did not approve of many of the other changes that occurred in his lifetime (thus we have his notable bitterness toward the end of his life), in an odd way we can consider some of these texts as springing from his call to duty. With his push away from dogma and his need to approach the margins in order to offer his less than orthodox opinion, Carlyle opened a space that he probably never intended for the use it was put to. In the space that existed between the necessary breaking of norms in order to

reach for new and revelatory concepts and his failure to dictate the manner in which those new ideas would manifest themselves we find the fertile ground in which Victorian identity began to evolve.

In Carroll's case, the goals seem not to have been so universal. Rather, if we are to believe Leach, what appears to have a steady push against the margins of social structures – and perhaps even reality if we consider his subject matter – were employed in an attempt to build a position from which he could live the life he found rewarding with the woman he had chosen. However, regardless of whether we agree with Leach or not, those spaces both separating and *linking* different ideas, milieus, and social conventions clearly intrigued him and he spent years investigating what it is that lies between what is acceptable and what is actually accepted, and that which is desired versus that which is understood. For many if not most of the characters that inhabit Wonderland the cost of their pre-ethical desires is a inability to engage or even see the "other." The cost to Alice in her demand for a logical world in which rational policy holds sway and is recognized as the methodology by which we all best negotiate our understanding of each other and the world surrounding us is the loss of Wonderland, for in the final court scene lies a clear message that to refuse inanity is to refuse Wonderland itself. All of which leaves me to wonder what was it that defined the space that Carroll left behind and what were the costs of that leave-taking? Perhaps Leach is correct in her suggestion that Carroll was mourning a forbidden love that could only exist outside societal attention, or perhaps his leave-taking, like Eliot's, was posited in his loss of faith and inability to fully take clerical orders.

The costs involved in Eliot's spiritual leave-taking are well documented in both her personal letters and her fiction, her disagreement with her beloved father over the church and her need of a penname, at least partially prompted by her choice of lifestyle, are just two of those payments. Certainly, just the sheer volume of work entailed in the several translations of German thinkers such as Strauss and Feuerbach that Eliot completed imply an understanding of dedication and investments of effort, as well as a need to surmount difficulty. So, having read *Middlemarch* many years before studying the text, when I entered my first class in Victorian literature, I was surprised to hear the professor and many of the students describe Eliot's text as a novel about loss and resignation. For it is also, certainly, a story of enlightenment – a tale of recognition: of one person of another; of the costs that are inherent in every choice we make; and of the methodology by which each of us best makes our way through the world. When Dorothea makes the statement that she will learn "what everything costs," although it is embedded in a conversation of finances and is ostensibly about the "cost" of "things," we are to understand that she is also referring to the cost of a poor choice of life partner and, as well, the costs of privileging a dream over the need to recognize what is before one's eyes.

Recognition was the foundation that underlay many of the changes attempted by the Victorians – recognition of cost to a community versus a refusal to recognize that which other's are paying for your gain. Political reform, women's rights, abolition were all forms of the recognition of the costs paid by those not holding the reins of power, and despite the many failures of equity within the colonial world of Victorian England, I find the movement forward toward a more equitable society to

have taken place at a breathtaking speed. If Carlyle was displeased by his failure to perfomatively create the Englishman of whom he would approve, his words did open doors and motivate many to strive for a revised form of spirituality and/or – perhaps – a new and greater humanity. If we now no longer view humanity with that enlightenment based conception of utopian improvement, the least that the changes within Victorian England offered was both a foundation for the way in which we view the world today and a spectacular pageant of just how much can be achieved.

I would like to finish this work with one final image – that of a constellation of ideas. Imagine if you will, each thinker's work as an image on a transparency and each of those transparencies piled one atop the other until any projection of the result would appear as a constellation in which all the points of intersection might indicate the shape of the Victorian persona with its attendant concerns and hopes all laid out before us. Admittedly there would be gaps or spaces between each point of intersection, after all a constellation is composed of points, yet still we are given a sense of form and, as well, within those gaps between those junctures lay potential, with the faint lines of each single image suggesting the shading which might further define our conception of just who the Victorians were. In the case of Victorian literature, created at a moment poised between the old world and the new, within those points and gaps lay past, present and future, and, as well, the sense of the host of beings behind the ideas offered in the words that compose the texts we still read today.

Works Cited

Alter, Robert. *Partial Magic: The Novel as a Self-Conscious Genre*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1975.

Altick, Richard. "1848." *A Companion to Victorian Literature & Culture*. Ed. Herbert F. Tucker. Malden, Mass: Blackwell Publishing Ltd., 1999.

Arata, Stephen. "1848." *A Companion to Victorian Literature & Culture*. Ed. Herbert F. Tucker. Malden, Mass: Blackwell Publishing Ltd., 1999.

Ashton, Rosemary. *The German Idea: Four English Writers and the Reception of German Thought 1800 – 1860*. N.Y.: Press Syndicate of the University of Cambridge, 1980.

Austin, J. L. "Performative Utterances." *Philosophical Papers*. London: Oxford University Press, 1961.

Benjamin, Jessica. *Shadow of the Other: Intersubjectivity and Gender in Psychoanalysis*. New York and London: Routledge, 1998.

Billone, Amy. "The Boy Who Lived: From Carroll's Alice and Barrie's Peter Pan to Rowling's Harry Potter." *Children's Literature: Annual of the Modern Language Association Division on Children's Literature and the Children's Literature Association* 32 (2004): 178-204.

Bowman, Isa. *Lewis Carroll as I Knew Him*. New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1972.

Brookes, Gerry. *The Rhetorical Form of Carlyle's Sartor Resartus*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1972.

Butler, Judith. "Contagious Word: Paranoia and 'Homosexuality' in the Military." *Queer Theory: Readers in Cultural Criticism*. Eds., Ian Morland and Annabelle Willox. New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2005.

---. *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*. New York: Routledge, 2006.

---. *Undoing Gender*. New York: Routledge, 2004.

---. *Subjects of Desire: Hegelian Reflections in Twentieth-Century France*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1987.

Canham, Stephen. "From Wonderland to the Marketplace: Alice's Progeny." *Children's Literature: Annual of the Modern Language Association Division*

on Children's Literature and the Children's Literature Association 28 (2000): 226-231.

Carlyle, Thomas. *The Collected Letters of Thomas and Jane Welsh Carlyle*. Eds. Charles Richard Saunders and Kenneth J. Fielding. Durham NC: Duke University Press, 1976.

---. *The Correspondence of Thomas Carlyle and Ralph Waldo Emerson 1834-1872*. Ed. James Osgood. Boston: University Press, 1883.

---. *Critical & Miscellaneous Essays*. vol. 3. New York: AMS Press, Inc., 1974.

---. *Sartor Resartus*. New York: Oxford University Press Inc., 1999.

Carroll, Lewis. *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland & Through the Looking-Glass*. New York: Bantam Dell, 2006.

---. *The Letters of Lewis Carroll*. Ed. Morton Cohen. London: Macmillan, 1979.

Cohen, Morton. "Introduction: Lewis Carroll and the Alice Books." *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland & Through the Looking-Glass*. New York: Bantam Dell, 2006.

Collingwood, Stuart Dodgson. *The Life and Letters of Lewis Carroll (Rev. C. L. Dodgson)*. Detroit: Gale Research Company, 1967.

Derrida, Jacques. "Signature, Event, Context." *Margins of Philosophy*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1972.

Eliot, George. *Adam Bede*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1996.

---. *Essays of George Eliot*. Ed. Thomas Pinney. New York: Columbia University Press, 1963.

---. *The George Eliot Letters*. Ed. Gordon S. Haight. London: Yale University Press, 1954.

---. *Middlemarch*. Ware, Hertfordshire: Wordsworth Editions Limited, 1994.

Feuerbach, Ludwig. *The Fiery Brook: Selected Writings of Ludwig Feuerbach*. Ed. Zawar Hanfi. Garden City, N.Y.: Anchor Books, Doubleday and Company, 1972.

Gallagher, Catherine. "George Eliot: Immanent Victorian." *Representations* 90 (2005): 61-76.

Geer, Jennifer. "'All Sorts of Pitfalls and Surprises': Competing Views of Idealized Girlhood in Lewis Carroll's Alice Books." *Children's Literature: Annual of the Modern Language Association Division on Children's Literature and the Children's Literature Association* 31 (2003): 1-25.

Harrison, Antony. "1848." *A Companion to Victorian Literature & Culture*. Ed. Herbert F. Tucker. Malden, Mass: Blackwell Publishing Ltd., 1999.

Hegel, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich. *Phenomenology of Spirit*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977.

Hertz, Neil. *George Eliot's Pulse*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003.

Keenan, William J. F. "*Sartor Resartus* Restored: Dress Studies in Carlylean Perpective." *Dressed to Impress: Looking the Part.* Ed. William J. F. Keenan. New York: Berg, 2001.

Leach, Karoline. *In the Shadow of the Dreamchild: A New Understanding of Lewis Carroll.* London: Peter Owen Publishers, 1999.

Leitch, Vincent B. ed. *The Norton Anthology of Theory and Criticism*. New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2001.

Lennon, Florence Becker. *The Life of Lewis Carol (Victoria Through the Looking Glass)*. 3rd ed. Toronto: General Publishing Company Ltd., 1972.

Louise, Margot K. "Gods and Mysteries: The Revival of Paganism and the Remaking of Mythography through the Nineteenth Century." *Victorian Studies* 47.3 (2005): 329-363.

McSweeney, Kerry. *George Eliot (Marian Evans) A Literary Life*. London: Macmillan Academic and Professional Ltd., 1991.

McSweeney, Kerry and Peter Sabor. Introduction. *Sartor Resartus*. Thomas Carlyle. New York: Oxford University Press Inc, 1999.

Mermin, Dorothy and Herbert Tucker, eds. *Victorian Literature 1830 – 1900*. Boston: Thomson Heinle, 2002.

Mill, John Stuart. "The Subjection of Women." *Victorian Literature 1830 – 1900*. Eds. Dorothy Mermin and Herbert Tucker. Boston: Thomson Heinle, 2002.

Nazar, Hina. "Philosophy in the bedroom: *Middlemarch* and the Scandal of Sympathy." *The Yale Journal of Criticism* 15.2 (2002): 293-315.

Nietzsche, Friedrich. *The Anti-Christ, Ecce Homo, Twilight of the Idols.* New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005.

Paris, Bernard J. *Rereading George Eliot: Changing Responses to her Experiments in Life.* Albany: State University of New York Press, 2003.

Peterson, Linda. "Sage Writing." *A Companion to Victorian Literature & Culture.* Ed. Herbert F. Tucker. Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing Ltd., 1999.

Poston, Lawrence. "1832." *A Companion to Victorian Literature & Culture.* Ed. Herbert F. Tucker. Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing Ltd., 1999.

Purdy, Dwight H. "'The One Poor Word' in *Middlemarch.*" *Studies in English Literature, 1500 - 1900* 44.4 (2004): 805-823.

Rackin, Donald. "*In the Shadow of the Dreamchild: A New Understanding of Lewis Carroll* is Reviewed." *Victorian Studies: An Interdisciplinary Journal of Social, Political, and Cultural Studies* 43.4 (2001): 650-653.

Roberts, Adam C. *Victorian Culture and Society: The Essential Glossary.* New York: Oxford University Press Inc, 2003.

Rundle, Vivienne. "'Devising New Means': *Sartor Resartus* and the Devoted Reader." *The Victorian Newsletter* 82 (1992): 13-22.

Ryan, Vanessa L. "The Unreliable Editor: Carlyle's *Sartor Resartus* and the Art of Biography." *The Review of English Studies* 54 (2003): 287-307.

Salih, Sara. *Judith Butler: Routledge Critical Thinkers Essential Guides for Literary Studies.* New York: Routledge, 2002.

Schor, Hillary. "Fiction." *A Companion to Victorian Literature & Culture.* Ed. Herbert F. Tucker. Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing Ltd., 1999.

Taylor, Alexander L. *The White Knight.* Ipswich: W. S. Cowell Ltd., 1952.

Tennyson, G. B. *Sartor Called Resartus: The Genesis, Structure, and Style of Thomas Carlyle's First Major Work.* Princeton, N. J.: Princeton University Press, 1965.

Williams, Robert R. "The Concept of Recognition in Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit.*" *New Critical Essays: Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit.* Ed. Alfred Denker and Michael Vater. Amherst, N.Y.: Humanity Books, 2003.