

THE LITERARY THEORY OF JOHN STUART MILL

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by

CAROLYN JANE HAY, B.A.

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AUTHOR: Carolyn Jane Hay, B.A. (Brock University)
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Abstract

It is the contention of this paper that, contrary to his own belief, John Stuart Mill did not, after his "mental crisis" of 1826, succeed in his attempt to achieve a meaningful integration of the analytical and the affective, through his cultivation of the feelings by poetry. On the contrary, through his subsequent determination to place these two attributes (the analytic and the affective) in a clearly proscribed relation to each other (by virtue of his postulation of the exclusive presence of the former in science or logic and the latter in poetry), Mill only succeeded in creating, in this codification, what we can describe as an image of his (to use T. S. Eliot's somewhat unfashionable phrase) "dissociated sensibility."

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To A. M. H. and J. S. H.

Table of Contents

Introduction.....	1
Part I The Utilitarian, Associational and Empiricist Background.....	23
Part II Mill's "Mental Crisis" and Early Literary Criticism.....	46
Part III Cultivation and Civilization; Poet and Logician; The Literary Theory of Mill's Maturity.....	88
Conclusion.....	131

Introduction

Perhaps in a deeper way than is usual, the subject of this paper is one that requires justification. Such an undertaking as this, an examination of the development of John Stuart Mill's thought on imaginative language and literature, will surely seem at best merely peripheral to an understanding of the literary thought of the nineteenth century. Nor, perhaps, will it seem particularly pertinent to our understanding of Mill. He is far better known, now, as the early male champion of what we, subsequently, call feminism (a claim more easily made than textually substantiated), or as one of the most influential expositors of Philosophic Radicalism, or, most importantly and legitimately, as the advocate of a tolerant, liberal society. When his name does appear on the syllabus for a course in "Nineteenth Century Thought," offered by an English Department, it is the Autobiography that comes up for study, and nothing of the literary criticism beyond the not insignificant discussions of his "mental development" in that area that occur in the Autobiography. Mill's contributions to criticism are not great; they are substantial neither in volume nor in quality. Nor are they presently influential; not, certainly, in the direct sense of being an acknowledged source of contemporary thought. Given such admissions as these, my choice of subject does indeed require a

word of explanation.

It is my contention, first of all, that an understanding of his thought on literature and language is of immediate, central importance to our understanding of Mill. The reasons for this have to do with Mill's own sense of the place of imaginative literature in his life. To a quite extraordinary degree, it is Mill's quite uneventful life, and not his thought, that has become a part of the "collective mind" (J. S. Mill X: 91) of our day. Having once read it, no one seems able to forget the first chapter of the Autobiography, "Childhood and Early Education." The reasons why the "record" of Mill's "intellectual development" (as Mill describes the Autobiography) imposes itself so powerfully upon the imaginations and memories of its readers are not, I think, unconnected from the reasons why the criticism, mostly written in the 1830's, makes such oddly compelling reading: it continues to show forth the reality and the complexity of Mill's struggle to reach beyond his intensely Utilitarian education, and to grasp a way of thinking and a voice in which to speak, that would enable him to experience and express the fullness of a life lived beyond the "bars" of the "iron cage" (J. S. Mill XII: 144) created for him by the educational experiment of Jeremy Bentham and James Mill. The intensity and urgency that are consequently a part of Mill's literary criticism, and what we know to be its place in his life, give to it a depth of interest beyond what it would merit as mere statement. It is within its context in Mill's

life that his literary thought begins to assume genuine significance.

The rigours of Mill's education are common knowledge, and their culmination in his "mental crisis" of 1826 is a pathetic, however familiar, story. The Autobiography tells us that it was that crisis that led Mill to give to literature an importance in his thought that it had not had before:

I now began to find meaning in the things which I had read or heard about the importance of poetry and art as instruments of human culture.... (I: 147)

Leaving aside for the moment the implications of the word "instrument," we can note that it was to the healing powers of poetry that Mill attributed his recovery from this period of terrible despondency. We must examine with care the depth of Mill's recognition of the very real potential of poetry to provide that of which Mill was in such need: a way to the full humanity he sought. By its ability to connect us with what is most deeply human in ourselves, and with the spiritual potency we share as a race, through our common culture, poetry can indeed restore, and Mill seems to have recognized this as a result of his own experiences. But Mill sought, compulsively and out of the habits bred by a long training in systematic logic, to systematize his glimmering recognition, and the new intellectual structure he built around that fragile "spot of time" was, I believe, as limiting as the "iron bars" of the cage James Mill and Jeremy

Bentham had, in their turn, built up around the young child Mill had been. The original impulse of Mill's thought on poetry and imaginative language, his thought on the place of poetry in the life of the individual and the nation, came from something deep and urgent and true in him; what he finally made of that first, at once shattering and unifying perception, was a cumbersome system that ultimately defeated its own purpose, by limiting and trammelling the real importance and meaning of poetry.

In the essay "Bentham," written by Mill for the London and Westminster Review in August of 1838, and republished in Dissertations and Discussions in both 1858 and 1867, Mill wrote that "The first question in regard to any man of speculation is, what is his theory of human life?" Mill continues:

In the minds of many philosophers, whatever theory they have of this sort is latent, and it would be a revelation to themselves to have it pointed out to them in their writings as others can see it, unconsciously moulding everything to its own likeness. (X: 94)

I believe this observation to be true of Mill's own thought. There is frequently a gap between what Mill's prose as statement declares to have been his belief, and what that prose, read with the fullest attention to his language, reveals to have been the deeper reality of his belief. I am not persuaded that Mill did succeed in achieving, as he believed himself to have done--because of his "mental crisis" and through the restorative powers of poetry--a permanent newness of vision. And yet, however much we must

question Mill's self understanding in this regard, and however sceptical we must also be of Mill's subsequent and related claim to be the interpreter of "the poetic" to "the logical," I think we must see that Mill's struggle to integrate his logical and feeling selves, is very much our, twentieth-century struggle. His attempt does engage our intelligence and our imaginations; certainly it ought to command our respect.

And surely, too, this need of Mill's was very much the concern of his time. Mill's remarkable education no doubt made his need more extreme, and yet, the problem of finding a way of being that would deny neither intellect nor emotions was one Mill himself recognized as common to his time. In a letter written by Mill to Thomas Carlyle in March of 1833, he described this incapacity to feel; it

...seems the eternal barrier between man and man; the natural and impassable limit both to the happiness and to the spiritual perfection of...a large majority of our race. (XII: 143-44)

The difficulty of connecting affective with analytical, emotions with mind, and intelligence with feelings, was recognized by many of the writers contemporary with Mill. William Wordsworth, for example, describes his struggle with the problem in The Prelude:

In such strange passion, if I may once more
Review the past, I warred against myself--
A bigot to a new idolatry--
Like a cowed monk who hath forsworn the world,
Zealously laboured to cut off my heart
From all the sources of her former strength;
And as, by simple waving of a wand,

The wizard instantaneously dissolves
 Palace or grove, even so could I unsoul
 As readily by syllogistic words
 Those mysteries of being which have made,
 And shall continue evermore to make,
 Of the whole human race one brotherhood.

What wonder, then, if to a mind so far
 Perverted, even the visible Universe
 Fell under the dominion of a taste
 Less spiritual, with a microscopic view
 Was scanned, as I had scanned the moral world? (ll 75-93)

The effect of this "microscopic view" of "even the visible Universe" is to sever the connections that had existed between men--we have just seen Mill note that the "incapacity to feel" has created an "eternal barrier between man and man." Again like Mill, Wordsworth uses a spiritual idiom to describe his alienation from "the moral world."

Matthew Arnold, in his 1850 "Memorial Verses," written to mourn the death of Wordsworth, also lamented the inability of his generation to connect thought and feelings:

Wordsworth has gone from us--and ye,
 Ah, may ye feel his voice as we!
 He too upon a wintry clime
 Had fallen--on this iron time
 Of doubts, disputes, distractions, fears.
 He found us when the age had bound
 Our souls in its benumbing round;
 He spoke, and loosed our heart in tears.
 He laid us as we lay at birth....
 Our youth returned; for there was shed
 On spirits dried up and closely furled,
 The freshness of the early world.

Ah! since dark days still bring to light
 Man's prudence and man's fiery might,
 Time may restore us in his course,
 Goethe's sage mind and Byron's force;

But where will Europe's latter hour
 Again find Wordsworth's healing power?
 Others will teach us how to dare,
 And against fear our breast to steel;
 Others will strengthen us to bear--
 But who, ah! who, will make us feel? (ll 40-67)

What Arnold calls this "iron time" we have already seen Mill refer to as the "iron bars of my cage," and so it is, that in looking at the means by which Mill sought to break those iron bars, we can gain not only a deeper understanding of Mill, but also of his age--and perhaps of ours.

But there is another way, not unrelated to the areas I have already mentioned, in which an examination of Mill's literary thought is significant to our understanding of his time. To focus on Mill is to see, in a particularly dramatic way, two radically divergent strains of thought, typical of the nineteenth century, brought together in one mind. I am referring of course to the way in which Mill's concern with uniting the analytical and the affective took the form of an attempt to achieve a synthesis of the thought of Bentham and Coleridge. That attempted synthesis took place on a wholly conscious level of thought; on a perhaps less purely rational level there is also the question of the various influences on Mill's thought at different periods of his life.

It is not unusual certainly to consider a writer in terms of the previous or contemporary thinkers under whose influence he or she wrote; with Mill this becomes necessary to

quite an exceptional degree. Indeed, Mill's life can be divided into periods of slavish devotion to completely disparate thinkers. What remains consistent is the nature of these relationships: it is one of extravagant admiration of the other, yoked to an equally excessive self-mistrust and even self-disgust. There are, first and most seminally, his father and Jeremy Bentham, then, with a radical departure from the Utilitarian fold, Thomas Carlyle and Harriet Taylor; finally, after the death of Harriet, her daughter, Helen Taylor. These, because most intimately known, seem to be the most pronounced and proclaimed influences; but there were certainly others, and if one realizes that these included Samuel Taylor Coleridge and Auguste Comte, it becomes evident that a study of Mill's thought is indeed a means of seeing gathered together the most significant strains of thought of the nineteenth century.

In the Autobiography itself, Mill insists that this aspect of his self-examination is of even greater importance than his record of the educational experiment conducted upon himself by his father and Jeremy Bentham:

But a motive which weighs more with me than either of these, is a desire to make acknowledgement of the debts which my intellectual and moral development owes to other persons; some of these of recognized eminence, others less known than they deserve to be, and the one to whom most of all is due, one whom the world had no opportunity of knowing. (I: 5)

Mill's vision of his life tended to be composed of two parts, each

determined and dominated by the prominence of one or the other of the two greatest influences on his thought: James Mill and Harriet Taylor. Indeed, Mill's first conception of the Autobiography was of a book divided into two parts, the first concerned with the "intellectual and moral debts" he owed to James Mill, the second devoted to his even greater obligations to Harriet Taylor. Had Mill followed this plan, the Autobiography would have been divided into a section describing Mill's analytical education, and a section describing his affective development. And if we see, as Mill himself did, James Mill as "the last of the eighteenth century," continuing "its tone of thought and sentiment into the nineteenth" (I: 213), and Harriet Taylor as an equally powerful representative of the forces of the first part of the nineteenth century's reaction against the preceding century's rationalism, we can begin to sense something of the exceptional way in which Mill's mind is representative of his age. Because of this often exaggerated, and even unhealthy, openness to influence,¹ and because the peculiarly binary nature of his thought made him available to influence from radically opposed sources, Mill's work truly gives the student of the period a dramatically focussed re-creation of the most urgent debates of the day: those that came from the profoundly antagonistic, Utilitarian and Romantic ways of seeing literature and life. This is especially the case in those areas where Mill's mind is most susceptible to influence from "Coleridge and the German Transcendentalists," which is to

say, precisely those areas of poetic and aesthetic theory with which this thesis is concerned.

F. R. Leavis comments upon this part of Mill's importance in the "Introduction" to his 1950 edition of On Bentham and Coleridge, a student's edition of Mill's 1838 and 1840 essays on those two thinkers for the London and Westminster Review. Leavis agrees with Mill that in Jeremy Bentham and Samuel Taylor Coleridge we have "'the two great seminal minds of England in their age'" (7). Although I must question Leavis's acceptance of Mill's characteristic assertion that Bentham and Coleridge, taken together, form a wholeness absent from either taken singly, Leavis is unquestionably right to recognize as "remarkable" the fact that one mind (of course it is Mill's) could "appreciate both and see them both as necessary" (8). Remarkable it certainly was, and these essays, I think, are the high point of Mill's criticism of this period. But admirable as the essays are, and the attempt at synthesis was, these two articles are the point at which Mill began to codify the separation of Art from Logic, of thought from feeling, of emotion from intellect, that is at the centre of his literary thought. What is meant as a synthesis, a bringing together, finally becomes a separation, through compartmentalization. After his "mental crisis," Mill could no longer deny the reality of what either Bentham or Coleridge represented; the question became one of finding a way to account for both, and it is my

contention that in attempting to bring Bentham and Coleridge (or thought and feeling, or James Mill and Harriet Taylor) together, and in trying to find a genuine importance for Coleridge (or poetry or culture) Mill ultimately denied the possibility of there being any way in which reasonable thought and emotion could be brought together, in either poetry or prose.

* * * * *

The sources within Mill's writing for such an endeavour as this are various. First, there are his letters, of which in general, Mill wrote to John Sterling in 1832:

It seems to me that there is a very great significance in letter-writing, and that it differs from daily intercourse as the dramatic differs from the epic or narrative. It is the life of man, and above all the chief part of his life, his inner life... exhibited in a series of detached scenes.... ...if such glimpses are numerous, some general tendency shall predominate.... (XII: 98-99)

There are also Mill's articles, written for the Reviews of the day: the Westminster Review, the London and Westminster Review, the Examiner, the London Review, the Monthly Repository--even the Edinburgh Review. J. M. Robson, in his article "John Stuart Mill and Jeremy Bentham, with some Observations on James Mill," cautions against too naive a reading of these articles; Robson is specifically discussing the two essays, "Bentham," and "Coleridge";

Recently, attempts have been made to undermine Mill's assessment, mainly on the grounds that he does almost as little justice to the

range of Bentham's thought in his review article as he does to the subtlety of Coleridge's in the companion article. But these attempts, while useful in directing attention to Bentham, are queerly mistaken in their attitudes towards nineteenth-century review articles, which seldom even pretended to be balanced or analytic accounts of the works supposedly under consideration. (247)

This may be so, and yet surely "balance" was precisely what Mill continually sought to achieve--even between such counter-weights as Bentham and Coleridge. We should also remember Mill's desire that the articles printed in the London Review should be signed in such a way as to permit readers of the Review to see the continuity (or lack of such continuity) in the arguments of the various authors. Mill wrote to Carlyle in this regard, in December of 1833:

The plan (Roebuck's & mine, to which all have at once assented) is, to drop altogether every kind of lying; the lie of pretending that all the articles are reviews, when more than half of them are not; and the lie of pretending that all the articles proceed from a corps, who jointly entertain all the opinions expressed. There is to be no we; but each writer is to have a signature, which he may avow or not as he pleases, but which (unless there be special reasons to constitute an exception) is to be the same for all his articles, thus making him individually responsible & allowing his opinions to derive what light they can from one another. The editor answers only for adequate literary merit, & a general tendency not in contradiction to the objects of the publication. (XII: 202)

Both these remarks, and the tone of Mill's articles, suggest to me that we would do Mill an injustice to question whether he was in fact attempting to achieve a "balanced or analytic" account of

his various subjects.

Finally, there is the Autobiography, a document which gives us the uniquely useful opportunity of seeing Mill's earliest and most youthful thought from the vantage point of his middle age and final years. The necessarily retrospective Autobiography, read together with the articles and letters Mill wrote during the periods he describes in his autobiography, gives as full and complete an image of the development of Mill's thought in those areas with which we are concerned, as it is possible to achieve.

Thomas Carlyle, commenting in 1873 on Mill's Autobiography, wrote that

I have never read a more uninteresting book....
It is wholly the life of a logic-chopping engine, little more of human life in it than if it had been done by a thing of mechanized iron. Autobiography of a steam engine, perhaps, you may sometimes read it. (Willey 142)

This is marvellously scathing, and there is some truth in it, for when Mill revised the Autobiography late in his life, he sought to remove from it as many vestiges of personal disclosure as he could. In his "Introduction" to the Autobiography in Volume I of the University of Toronto's edition of the Collected Works of John Stuart Mill, its Associate Editor, J. M. Robson, points to an "increased objectivity" in these revisions of 1861, and claims that the "revised life is less full, less varied in texture, than that of the Early Draft" and that it has a "more formalized and generalized character" (xxvii). This assessment is the usual

one; Jack Stillinger, in The Early Draft of John Stuart Mill's Autobiography (1961), makes the related claim that

Mill's successive revisions within the early draft show the same kind of progress from private to public, and from public to more public, voice. (15)

This is one source of the difficulties involved in using the Autobiography, but there is another, and that is the popular and even at times acrimonious question of the extent of Harriet Taylor's involvement in the text. In a letter to his wife, written in 1853 and so two years after their marriage, Mill discussed what we now refer to as the Early Draft of the Autobiography:

I certainly do not desire to say more... than integrity requires, but the difficult matter is to decide how much that is. Of course, one does not, in writing a life, either one's own or another's, undertake to tell everything.... Still it va sans dire that it ought to be a fair representation.... (Hayek 194)

This is a rather frank statement of its author's quite definitely editorial role in the autobiographical reconstruction of his life. And Mill's assessment and description of his relationship to Harriet Taylor we have already seen to be of particular significance to a discussion of Mill's literary thought, since it was to her that Mill attributed the development (if not the actual awakening) of his poetic sensibility:

...the first years of my friendship with her were mainly years of poetic culture. It is hardly necessary to say that I am not now speaking of written poetry, either

metrical or otherwise; though I did cultivate this taste as well as a taste for paintings & sculptures, & did read with enthusiasm her favourite poets, especially the one she placed above all others, Shelley. But this was merely accessory. The real poetic culture was, that my faculties, such as they were, became more & more attuned to the beautiful & elevated, in all kinds, & especially in human feeling and character & more capable of vibrating in unison with it. (I: 613)

Leaving aside for the moment any judgement of this view of poetry, it is of immediate importance that we note that this passage comes from the original Part II of the Early Draft of the Autobiography; it was substantially revised by Harriet Taylor, then finally suppressed altogether by Mill from the first (postumous) publication of the Autobiography.

Clearly, no discussion of Mill's thought on literature can afford entirely to ignore Mill's sense of his indebtedness to Harriet Taylor--nor can a study of the Autobiography completely overlook the issue of her involvement in the writing and editing of the Autobiography. Certainly her editorial influence, as Robson describes it (I: xxv), was considerable. However, H. O. Pappé, in John Stuart Mill and the Harriet Taylor Myth, argues intelligently and convincingly against crediting Harriet Taylor with too large an influence over the mind of John Stuart Mill. As far as the Autobiography itself is concerned, many of the editorial difficulties can be circumvented by being aware of them, and by using Robson's edition, in which each alteration is noted and commented upon.

* * * * *

By including the Autobiography fairly prominently in my study of Mill's thought, I am including myself in the majority of commentators on Mill. In fact, the only discussion of Mill that I have seen that fails to make reference to the Autobiography, is Kate Millet's Sexual Politics. The reason for this, I suppose, is that the evidence of the Autobiography runs counter to Millet's claim for Mill as the lucid, intelligent and courageous (the adjectives are Millet's) spokesman (the noun is mine) for women's rights. But with this exception, critics and commentators invariably return to the Autobiography, so that we must wonder why it is that Mill's account of his life is seen to be of such importance to discussions of his thought.

The Autobiography can be seen simply as a source of information. It was not, as its title might be taken to imply, intended by Mill as a disclosure of the realities of his inner life. On the contrary, Mill begins the Autobiography with this apologetic statement:

It seems proper that I should prefix to the following biographical sketch, some mention of the reasons which have made me think it desirable that I should leave behind such a memorial of so uneventful a life as mine. I do not for a moment imagine that any part of what I have to relate, can be interesting to the public as a narrative, or as being connected with myself. (I; 5)

We are, apparently, to be presented with an autobiography that is not connected, finally, with its ostensible subject. As regards the

real reason for writing the Autobiography, Mill claims

...that in an age in which education, and its improvement, are the subject of more, if not profounder study than at any former period of English history, it may be useful that there should be some record of an education which was unusual and remarkable, and which, whatever else it may have done, has proved how much more than is commonly supposed may be taught. ...there may be somewhat of benefit in noting the successive phases of any mind which was always pressing forward.... (5)

We could take this at face value, and use the Autobiography as a series of expositions of Mill's thought at particular periods in his life. Certainly this is not an entirely uncommon way of reading the Autobiography, but it is one that can lead to such absurdities as this, from D. B. Klein's A History of Scientific Psychology: Its Origins and Philosophical Backgrounds:

At its inception the Autobiography was thus to be in the nature of an impersonal report of a successfully executed educational experiment. The laboratory was home, James Mill the experimenter, and John Stuart Mill the subject. Viewed as an experimental report, it becomes clear why there is no mention of his mother in the Autobiography. She had nothing to do with the experimental venture; hence she could be ignored in the final report. (742)

While Klein seems not unaware that the opening of the Autobiography poses a problem for its readers, his assured understanding and acceptance of Mill's (I think largely false) claims of scientific detachment and accuracy are entirely inadequate. This account was written by Mill in the 1850's, and thus

well after the "mental crisis" of 1826, and Mill's subsequent salvation from unmitigated Utilitarianism by a conversion, through poetry, to an altered form of Philosophical Radicalism. And yet, surely the language of the opening paragraphs of the Autobiography is such as to raise immediate questions about the reality of that conversion experience. In spite of his new awareness of the value of the affective, Mill does not propose to tell us what it felt like to be experimented upon; he does not seem to be in the least critical of the fact that such an experiment was carried out; on the contrary, Mill perceives himself to be of value or interest only to the extent that he can, in his life, produce a record of the results of this valuable experiment. The subject Mill proposes for his autobiography is not his life; rather, the autobiography is to be a dispassionate record of an educational experiment and of the development of a disembodied mind. It is only secondarily that it is also intended to be the acknowledgement of Mill's "intellectual and moral" debts to his father and Harriet Taylor; primarily, the Autobiography was conceived of by Mill as the "report" I have just described.

This is undoubtedly what Mill intended to write, and it is apparently what Carlyle read. The intention itself is most revealing, suggesting as it does that the final result of the conversion (through poetry, into a completed understanding of the whole of life), is not such as to give much credibility even to the conversion experience itself. The proof of a pudding is in

the eating; the vindication of a claim to have achieved an altered way of thinking is surely to be found in an altered use of language, and in the changed awareness of the relationship of the self to the world which will be expressed most finally and revealingly in various aspects of one's words, one's speech. Mill's language here, as he begins to write of his earliest life from the points of view of middle and old age (the Autobiography, although begun in the early 1850's, was revised and re-copied by Mill in 1861, and not completed until the winter of 1869-70) gives at least a strong indication that Mill's deepest loyalties remained with the Utilitarian vision of life.

Coleridge, while in his early twenties, also abandoned his first beliefs, and, moving in a direction opposite to Mill's, accepted the associationism of David Hartley. As he writes in a letter dated December 11, 1794, to Robert Southey,

I am a compleat Necessitarian--and understand the subject as well almost as Hartley himself--but I go further than Hartley, and believe the corporeality of thought, namely--that it is motion--. (I: 137)

I think there is some self-mockery in Coleridge's boasting, but in any case, by 1801, he could write to Thomas Poole of his rejection of "the doctrine of association as taught by Hartley, and with it all the irreligious metaphysics of modern infidels" (II: 706). Coleridge recognized and acknowledged his return; John Stuart Mill remained convinced that he had truly achieved

a new, whole, and integrated vision.

And so, it is with his earliest education, with the subsequent (and consequent) "mental crisis" of 1826, and with the literary theory that emerged from that education and that crisis, that this thesis is primarily concerned. In order to achieve the fullest understanding of Mill's literary thought, it is necessary to look at several essays that were not included in Mill's final publication of his articles and essays, the Dissertations and Discussions of 1859 and 1869, as well as the best known works of the early period of his literary criticism and theorizing. The statements of Mill's later attempts to bring together his new ideas and influences with his earliest beliefs we find in his letters, in the pivotal essays "Bentham" and "Coleridge," in his landmark work A System of Logic, and in the 1867 "Inaugural Address" given at the University of St. Andrews. Finally, in order to see the earliest work on literature from the perspective of Mill's final position, we must return to the Autobiography.

There are thus many threads gathered together in this thesis-- there are many threads in a life. In this gathering, I think we can see something of the reality of John Stuart Mill's life. I will be arguing throughout this thesis that Mill did not succeed in achieving the integration of thought and feeling, of intellect and emotions, of Logic and Art that he believed himself to have accomplished. I would like to state again, that I admire and

respect the attempt, and only lament the failure. If we remember his education, even Mill's first sense that poetry contained something he lacked, and his initial determination to gain (or regain) that something, must be seen as truly remarkable evidence, in an odd way and in a strange place, of the restorative power of poetry.

Notes

1. This openness to influence is discussed by William Thomas in Mill (35-36) and by H. O. Pappe in John Stuart Mill and the Harriet Taylor Myth (5-8); Pappe cites the following passage from R. Borchard's biography, John Stuart Mill, the Man:

Someone had to be his guiding star to whom he could submit his mind, actions, decisions. Without this guidance, he was lost. (Pappe 6n.; Borchard 136)

But Pappe disagrees:

Surely this last conclusion is unwarranted and bad psychology. As anyone from amongst the wide circle of eligible 'guides' would do, Mill's position was a strong one, not a weak one. His danger of being lost was minimal, as he could always put up another oracle to adore. (6n.)

This argument does not diminish my suggestion that there was something unhealthy in this program, but Pappe's argument is useful as a corrective to those critics who use Mill's readiness to be influenced as evidence that Mill's published statements are not necessarily his own beliefs.

Part I

The Utilitarian, Associational and Empiricist Background

There can be no doubt, as I have already suggested, and as is only natural, that Mill's earliest ideas about literature and language came to him through his education. Certainly that would be true of most of us; given the nature of Mill's education, it is not surprising that there should have been, for him, a particularly strong connection between what he was taught, what he believed, and (a matter of even more importance), what came to be his manner of thinking. Given the centrality of that education to our understanding of Mill, and because it was from some of the most fundamental tenets of that education that Mill eventually believed himself to have been emancipated, an acquaintance with some of James Mill's principal beliefs about and attitudes towards education and literature becomes crucial to this account.

James Mill was a Utilitarian, closely (although not entirely harmoniously) associated with Jeremy Bentham. He was a particularly strong advocate of associational psychology, and applied the principles of associationism to his philosophy of education. His Analysis of the Phenomena of the Human Mind (1829; republished and edited by John Stuart Mill in 1869), is the statement of his psychological theories; his educational ideas are put forth at length in his "Essay on Education," written for the

Supplement to the Sixth edition of the Encyclopedia Britannica. Because of its tremendous influence on John Stuart Mill, and because Mill never abandoned associationism (in a slightly, although significantly, modified form, it eventually formed a central part of his poetic theory), I would like to look briefly at associationism, which is the psychology of Utilitarianism. I would like to consider, also very briefly, its empiricist epistemology, and its consequent theory of, and attitude towards, literature.

Leslie Stephen, in The English Utilitarians (1900), describes the general character of the Utilitarian mind:

Desire to reach a solid groundwork of fact, aversion to mere word-juggling, and to effeminate sentimentalism, respect for science and indifference to, if not contempt for, poetry, resolution to approve no laws or institutions which could not be supported on plain grounds of utility, and to accept no theory which could not be firmly based on verifiable experience.... (II: 267)

Certainly this "contempt for" poetry is strongly associated with the Utilitarians. Alba H. Warren, in English Poetic Theory: 1825-1865, states that "In the popular opinion of the early decades of the nineteenth century the Benthamites were notorious enemies of poetry," and concludes that "There was certainly some reason for the belief" (67). And René Wellek, in A History of Modern Criticism: 1750-1950, tells us that "The disparagement of poetry as useless and untrue found, however, a new systematic justification in the utilitarian doctrine" (III: 132). We can note, too, that such significant studies of Utilitarianism as Elie Halévy's The Growth

of Philosophic Radicalism and Ernest Albee's A History of English Utilitarianism, make no mention of such subjects as aesthetics, the imagination, literature, and so on, and it can be demonstrated that there is a connection between the psychology and epistemology that are characteristic of Utilitarianism, and this disregard or contempt for poetry and the poetic use of language.

The ideas of associationism, as they have developed in English psychology, are firmly connected with Utilitarianism and with empirical epistemologies. The earliest significant expression of associationism, in Aristotle's De memoria et reminiscencia, is confined to a description of the way in which the memory functions. However, as the concept continued to be developed by Hobbes and then Locke, Berkely, Hume, and Hartley, associationism became far more broad in its applications and its implications. In A Source Book in the History of Psychology, the editors, Richard J. Herstein and Edwin C. Boring, state that "the Doctrine of Association":

...implies that personal experience is psychologically more important than innate endowment, that the mind is passive during thought, that the complexity of thought can be explained by uncomplicated principles with no loss of any essential properties....

This doctrine of association has always been wedded to a theory of knowledge that holds that the only source of information about the world is sensory experience.... The history of association thus parallels the history of the empiricistic theory of knowledge. (326)

We can note in passing that John Stuart Mill adhered to an

essentially phenomenalist epistemology, particularly in his mature writings; William Thomas notes, in Mill, that:

From the start of the Logic we are conscious of Mill's reliance on the psychology of his father's Analysis with its wholly philosophical account of how the mind works. Sensations are the raw material of our knowledge: 'All we can know of Matter is the sensations which it gives us, and the order of occurrence of those sensations....' This is the doctrine philosophers call phenomenism. Mill's classic statement of it is in the Examination of Hamilton... where he gives the famous definition of external objects as 'permanent possibilities of sensation....' But the Logic has the same doctrine.... (52-3)

Obviously, it is not difficult to place Mill in this tradition; what is more central to our concern is the question of the attitude to language and literature that tends to follow from a phenomenalist and empirical epistemology, and an associational psychology. With that in mind, I would like to look briefly at the empiricism and associationism of Bacon, Locke, Hume, and Hartley. This is obviously not, nor is it intended to be, a comprehensive survey. I have chosen to look at those writers whose thought had the greatest impact on James, and thus John Stuart, Mill, and who are of particular significance in that we will later see certain of their ideas recurring in Mill's thought.

I have included Francis Bacon in this discussion partly because Mill refers to him with such frequency throughout his work, and throughout his entire career (and very nearly always in terms of agreement and in a tone of admiration), and partly because Bacon describes with typical clarity exactly the severance of

language from thought, and of imagination from reason, that is characteristic of the later English associationists--and, of course, of the Utilitarians. Bacon believed that "the real" exists separate from ourselves, that our fullest experience of that reality occurs prior to speech, and that it is the end of thought to find that reality, and then the use of words to describe it. For a man not to so apprehend and transmit his experience of this truth becomes simply to lie, to put forth that which is at variance with the true--the real, the correct, the scientifically (or inductively) verifiable. Bacon differs somewhat from later empiricists in his belief that the mind is active as a perceiving agent, that although the senses "are very sufficient to certify and report truth though not always immediately", "the weakness of the intellectual powers and the manner of collecting and concluding upon the reports of the senses" (Advancement 127) will lead men astray.

To John Locke too, the question, is it true? could only be answered by another, is it real?, and external reality continued to be the final standard of truth. In An Essay Concerning Humane Understanding (1700), Locke asserts that ideas are the "representations of substances, as they really are" (124), and claims that those ideas "are fantastical which are made up of such collections of simple ideas as were never really that is, in the material world united" (124). From this notion of ideas as the representatives of things, Locke turns to the nature of language itself:

...it was necessary that man should find out

some external sensible signs, whereof those invisible ideas, which his thoughts are made up of, might be made known to others.... Thus we may conceive how words...come to be made use of by men, as the signs of their ideas.... The use then of words is to be sensible marks of ideas; and the ideas they stand for are their proper and immediate signification. (161)

Locke writes at length of the various imperfections of words (and not of the limitations of the speaker--it is the nature of language that is at fault), and then concludes that words

...interpose themselves so much between our understandings and the truth, which it would contemplate and apprehend, that, like the medium through which visible objects pass, their obscurity and disorder do not seldom cast a mist before our eyes, and impose upon our understandings. If we consider, in the fallacies men put upon themselves as well as others, and the mistakes in men's disputes and notions, how great a part is owing to words, and their uncertain or mistaken significations--we shall have reason to think this no small obstacle in the way to knowledge.... (266-67)

Certainly language can be used to mislead; for example, in "Politics and the English Language," George Orwell warns against the use of "political speech and writing" to defend "the indefensible. Things like the continuance of British rule in India, the Russian purges and deportations" are made to seem palatable by being described in language that obscures the real value and meaning of the event" (363). But Locke's suspicion of language goes beyond concerns about the ability of individuals to abuse it. Locke (like Bacon) offers us the possibility of suspecting all language: it is the nature of

language to mislead, and language not clearly and demonstrably connected to an immediately verifiable referent will be particularly suspect.

Jeremy Bentham's frequent complaints about the nature of language show clearly how this translates into an attitude towards language that is deeply antagonistic to any imaginative endeavour; consider for example this passage, from Bentham's On the Principles of Morals and Legislation (1789):

There is no speaking of objects but by their names: but the business of giving them names has always been prior to the true and perfect knowledge of their natures.... Change the import of the old name, and you are in perpetual danger of being misunderstood: introduce an entire new set of names, and you are sure not to be understood at all. Complete success, then, is, as yet at least, unattainable. But an attempt, though imperfect, may have its use; and, at the worst, it may accelerate the arrival of that perfect system, the possession of which will be the happiness of some maturer age. Gross ignorance describes no difficulties; imperfect knowledge finds them out, and struggles with them: it must be perfect knowledge that overcomes them. (I: 97)

Bentham's desire to find "neutral expressions" (by which he means words stripped of any connotative meaning) enables him to find the phrase "sexual desire" a satisfactory equivalent for "lust" (I: 49n.). We can, I think, see that this is more than merely a plea for a reasonable language in which to express reasonable thought (that was Bishop Sprat's entirely understandable demand of the members of the Royal Society);¹ this is, if not the culmination, then at least a continuation of what Ian Robinson has described as the search "for a perfect language, guiltless of the emotion

and imprecision of the languages we speak, and capable of making propositions definite enough to be demonstrably true or false" ("D.H. Lawrence and English Prose" 18). And it is certainly a way of thinking that is radically antagonistic to the notion of imaginative thought--a conclusion fully recognized, as we will see, by Bentham.

After Locke, David Hume continued to develop the ideas of empiricism and made the connections between empiricism and associationism more definite. To Hume, the mind could only contain impressions and ideas, ideas being merely the copies of impressions--so that nothing could be in the mind that did not originate in experience (Philosophical Essays 344-45). Hume's associationism was not rigid, but was rather, to him, as a "gentle force" connecting the mind's impressions and ideas (347). One consequence of this is that

These faculties may mimick or copy the Perceptions of the Senses; but they can never reach entirely the Force and Vivacity of the Original Sentiment.... All the Colours of Poetry, however splendid, can never paint natural Objects in such a manner as to make the Description be taken for a real Landskip. The most lively Thought is still inferior to the dullest Sensation. (343)

Hume's ascription of "inferior" to the "most lively thought" makes it clear that he is establishing a hierarchy in which the phenomenal is inherently superior to the nominal. This might seem merely a dull-minded confusion of the fundamental difference in kind

between the immediate experience of viewing a landscape and the different experience of reading the record of that experience contained in a poem. And yet, it is a way of thinking that, at least occasionally, influences many of the Romantic poets and critics--it is a point which permits us to see the influence on the Romantics of a psychology many of them were anxious to repudiate. It is significant of the nature of Mill's poetic theory that, in his most ardent period of reaction against his father and Jeremy Bentham, he never deviated from this conviction that the originals of our impressions must necessarily be more forceful than, and superior to (because closer to the "real") their recreations in poetry.

David Hartley followed Hume with Observations on Man, His Frame, His Duty, and His Expectations (1749), in which he describes the operation of association in far more rigid and deterministic terms:

Any sensations A, B, C &c. by being associated with one another a sufficient Number of Times, get such a Power over the corresponding Ideas a, b, c, &c. that any one of the Sensations A, B, C, &c. when impressed alone, shall be able to excite in the Mind, a, b, c, &c. the Ideas of the rest. (350).

This statement, coupled with Hartley's assertion that "When the Pleasure or Pain attending any Sensations, and Ideas, is great, all the Associations belonging to them are much accelerated and strengthened" (354), provides the basis for the psychology that supports James Mill's educational theory.

James Mill's associationism was, to say the least, extreme. He believed, as indeed the theory, logically extended, implies, that

As ideas are not derived from objects, we should not expect their order to be derived from the order of objects; but as they are derived from sensations, we might by analogy expect, that they would derive their order from that of the sensations; and this to a great extent is the case....

...I have smelt a rose, and looked at, and handled a rose, synchronically; accordingly the name rose suggests to me all those ideas synchronically; and this combination of simple ideas is called my idea of the rose. (366)

Well, this is a far cry from T. S. Eliot's vision of the poets of the seventeenth century, who could (Eliot implies) "feel their thought as immediately as the odour of a rose" ("The Metaphysical Poets" 64). This may not seem to be a matter of great significance--after all, James Mill is writing analytical philosophy, not metaphysical poetry. But we need to remember that these ideas were of very fundamental importance to James Mill--they formed the basis of his psychology and his educational philosophy. Although John Stuart Mill did not entirely accept his father's almost absurdly reductive method, his distance from it was not great. Mill did insist, in A System of Logic (1843), that

...it appears to me that the Complex Idea, formed by the blending together of several simpler ones, should, when it really appears simple, (that is, when the separate elements are not consciously distinguishable in it), be said to result from, or be generated by the simple ideas, not to consist of them... (VIII: 854)

This constitutes a significant departure, but it must not be forgotten that Mill continues:

It may be remarked, that the general laws of association prevail among these more intricate states of mind, in the same manner as among the simpler ones. A desire, an emotion, an idea of the higher order of abstraction, even our judgements and volitions when they have become habitual, are called up by association, according to precisely the same laws as our simple ideas. (856)

The extent of Mill's divergence from his father on this point is difficult to determine. Of particular interest to our discussion is Mill's view of the form of association experienced by the poet. J. Robson, in "J. S. Mill's Theory of Poetry," reminds us that James Mill, following Hartley, consistently asserts that the poet is not constructed any differently from other men; his associations occur precisely as do those of others (425-26). In the Analysis of the Phenomenon of the Human Mind, James Mill argues the point, first showing that the imaginative faculty is possessed equally by all men:

IMAGINATION is not a name of any one idea. I am not said to imagine, unless I combine ideas successively in a less or a greater number....

In this comprehensive meaning of the word Imagination, there is no man who has not Imagination, and no man who has it in an equal degree with any other. Every man imagines, nay, is constantly, and unavoidably, imagining. He cannot help imagining. He can no more stop the current of his ideas, than he can stop the current of his blood. (239)

This forces the conclusion that

The trains of poets, also, do not differ from the

trains of other men, but perfectly agree with them, in this, that they are composed of ideas, and that those ideas succeed one another, according to the same laws, in their, and in other minds. They are ideas, however, of very different things. The ideas of the poet are ideas of all that is most lovely and striking in the visible appearances of nature, and of all that is most interesting in the actions and affections of human beings. ...being trains of pleasurable ideas, they ...have attracted a peculiar degree of attention; and in an early age, when poetry was the only literature were thought worthy of a more particular naming, than the trains of any other class. (I: 242)

According to James Mill, then, there is no escape from the "trains" of our associations. But when John Stuart Mill set himself the question in "Thoughts on Poetry and Its Varieties" (1833), "Whom, then, shall we call poets?" his answer was rather different:

Those who are so constituted, that emotions are the links of association by which their ideas, both sensuous and spiritual, are connected together. This constitution belongs (within certain limits) to all in whom poetry is a pervading principle. (I: 356)

I will discuss these claims more carefully when I look at Mill's literary criticism of the 1830's; here, we can note two things: first, that John Stuart Mill appends no dissenting note to the passages on "Imagination" in the Analysis, and second, that the passage from the Logic cited above, suggests that Mill came at least to a partial modification of his earlier views--that after the 1830's, he moved back to a position much closer to that held by James Mill.

We can, I think, begin to see why it is that an epistemology

based on sensation requires a psychology of association: there has to be a way of explaining the fact that all men seem not to perceive the same reality, and even appear strangely unable to agree upon precisely that about which they should be unable to disagree: the nature of reality. But the Utilitarians encounter a further problem. They are satisfied as to the end all men seek; as E. Halevy points out,

All men seek pleasure and avoid pain; to seek pleasure is at once the necessary and the moral law of all human action, and those actions are obligatory which lead to happiness.
(?)

But this leads to a difficulty:

Now although it may easily be admitted that all men agree on the end to be sought, it is clear that they cease to agree with regard to the means to be adopted in order to attain this necessary end. This is because everyone does not connect happiness with the same ideas, or, in other words, because the association of ideas vary from individual to individual. (?)

The problem becomes further complicated if one believes the nature of man to be fundamentally egotistical, in which case the pleasure sought will not necessarily be a pleasure that will be capable of being shared by society at large. Bentham's principal work is his Principles of Morals and Legislation; its title, suggesting as it does that morality requires to be legislated, indicates at once that Bentham's Utilitarianism was primarily of the egotistic variety. Halevy shows conclusively that this is, in

fact, the case (14-18). When we connect this with the deterministic rigidity of associationism, we have before us a grim view of human nature and society, and we can see the truth in the frequently made joke about John Stuart Mill--that he was attracted to Positivism mainly because it wasn't negative. We can see two needs arising from this; first, a means must be found whereby individuals can be made to associate pleasure with those ends most beneficial to society, and second, a way is needed to enable isolated individuals to achieve some kind of connection with each other. It is to the first of these needs that James Mill's theory of education is addressed; the second became one of the concerns of his son.

James Mill's theory of education, derived, as I have suggested, largely from Hartley's conception of the association of ideas, is expressed most fully in the article on education written by James Mill for the Supplement to the Sixth edition of the Encyclopedia Britannica. It has been summarized by Alexander Bain, in his 1882 James Mill: A Biography, described by Michael St. John Packe in his Life of John Stuart Mill, and discussed by W. H. Burston in James Mill on Philosophy and Education. Bain speculates that the article was written in 1818 (247), and cites James Mill's assertion that the "end of Education, is to render the individual, as much as possible, an instrument of happiness, first to himself, and next to other

beings'" (247). As Burston points out, when James Mill speaks of "happiness" or "pleasure" it is not any form of happiness or pleasure he intends, and Burston continues by citing Mill's unpublished draft of a dialogue on Drama:

It is not the givers of any kind of pleasure that should have our esteem, but the givers of certain kinds of pleasure....
There is then a gradation of pleasures and according as the pleasure is more noble is the artificer more entitled to our esteem.
(emphases Burston's, 99)

Burston notes that "Most of this dialogue is negative," and quotes Mill's description of the actor as one who, "violating the truth," corrupts "all principles of honour in a man's breast" (100). Apart from this brief reference to drama, it is interesting to note that Burston's index lists no literary subjects, and hardly surprising to find John Stuart Mill commenting, in his Autobiography, that his father's reason for having the young boy write in verse was the cynical and utilitarian one "that people in general attached more value to verse than it deserved, and the power of writing it was, on that account, worth acquiring" (I: 19). We can sense the reason for this mistrust of imaginative literature in these remarks, cited from the "Essay on Education," again by Alexander Bain:

'Children ought to be made to see, and hear and feel, and taste, in the order of the most invariable and comprehensive sequences, in order that the ideas which correspond to their impressions, and follow the same order of succession, may be an exact transcript of nature, and always lead to just anticipations

of events. Especially, the pains and pleasures of the infant, the deepest impressions which he receives, ought, from the first moments of sensation, to be made as much as possible to correspond to the real order of nature. (250)

It is important that we recognize that James Mill's practice was somewhat less draconian than his precepts; in the Autobiography Mill tells us that

Of children's books, any more than of playthings, I had scarcely any, except an occasional gift from a relation or acquaintance; among those I had, Robinson Crusoe was preeminent, and continued to delight me through all my boyhood. It was no part however of my father's system to exclude books of amusement, though he allowed them very sparingly. Of such books he possessed at that time next to none, but he borrowed several for me; those which I remember are, the Arabian Nights, Cazotte's Arabian Tales, Don Quixote, Miss Edgeworth's Popular Tales, and a book of some reputation in its day, Brooke's Fool of Quality. (I: 13)

Bain, continuing his summary of James Mill's article, notes that Mill proceeds by claiming that the psychology of the mind must be understood by one who would wish to "act upon the mind" (247), and that he continues with a history of the "Doctrine of Association" from Hobbes, through Locke and Hume, to Condillac (248). Bain notes, and disagrees with, James Mill's belief that "the mass of mankind are equal as to their susceptibility of mental excellence" (249). It is interesting to note (as William Thomas does, in Mill 25), that this is what John Stuart Mill believed of himself, to the end of his life: that without the extraordinary advantage of his education, he would have accomplished nothing out

of the ordinary (I: 33).

Michael St. John Packe, after noting the associational basis of James Mill's educational theory (15-16), concludes his account with this rather daunting summary:

In short, all that an educator need hope to do was to help a child to reason accurately: for that granted, it would act unerringly towards its own final happiness, which was good.... Finally, it was necessary...to prevent a child from cluttering its youthful brain with...idle emotions and dreams.... (16)

To the frequent (and, I think, quite justified) expressions of horror over this method of education, Raymond Williams, in Culture and Society provides a corrective that is perhaps needed; he notes that when he reads such expressions of outrage, he wants

...always to enter the marginal note: 'yet the system, after all, produced John Stuart Mill.' For good or ill--and surely, in the main, it is for good--the severe training produced a fine example of a very fine kind of intelligence; that it is not the only kind is agreed. (55)

But the remark that occasions William's response here, we should note, is Mill's own assessment of his education, and when we come finally to a close reading of the Autobiography, I think we will have to conclude that Mill was correct to lament the purely analytical nature of his training. That the happiness of his son was James Mill's goal, I think we cannot doubt; it is of course notorious that happiness was not what resulted for John Stuart Mill--what resulted was the 'mental crisis' of the middle 1820's.

Before I proceed to a discussion of that crisis and the

poetic theory that developed out of it, I would like to consider, more closely but very briefly, the poetic theory that preceded it, as expressed by Jeremy Bentham.

We have already seen something of the dismissiveness that characterizes Bentham's (and James Mill's) comments on literature and language used for non-discursive purposes; in The Rational of Reward (1825) Bentham states some of his most famous ideas about the nature of poetry and its place in the lives of individuals and the nation. The "fine arts" Bentham classifies as "the arts and sciences of amusement," and claims that these

...are useless to those who are not pleased with them: they are useful only to those who take pleasure in them, and only in proportion as they please.

We recognize this, of course, as another application of the standard of utility; it should perhaps be noted explicitly that there is nothing hedonistic about this statement of the "pleasure principle." Bentham, and James Mill, are engaged in a most sincere and serious search for a system of morality that can be implemented through legislation. The mania for measurement, however, leads to a devaluation of what cannot be quantitatively measured; Bentham continues with this, his best-known (and most notorious) statement on the "value" of art:

The value which they [poems] possess, is exactly in proportion to the pleasure they yield. Every other species of pre-

eminence which may be attempted to be established among them is altogether fanciful. Prejudice apart, the game of push-pin is of equal value with the arts and sciences of music and poetry. If the game of push-pin furnish more pleasure, it is more valuable than either. Everybody can play at push-pin; poetry and music are relished only by a few. (II: 252)

I think it at least possible that we have here an example of Bentham's always ponderous (but nonetheless rather charming) wit, but be that as it may, the thrust of the statement remains entirely antagonistic to the seriousness of poetry, and Bentham follows it with what is clearly and unequivocally an indictment of poetry. The grounds of his criticism are familiar; they come directly from the language theories of the empirical philosophers:

The game of push-pin is always innocent; it were well could the same be asserted of poetry. Indeed, between poetry and truth there is a natural opposition: false morals, fictitious nature. The poet always stands in need of something false. When he pretends to lay his foundations in truth, the ornaments of his superstructure are fictions; his business consists in stimulating our passions, and exciting our prejudices. Truth, exactitude of every kind, is fatal to poetry. The poet must see everything through coloured media, and strive to make every one else do the same. (252-53)

By equating "truth" with "exactitude," Bentham is able to equate "fiction" with "falsehood." Such falsehoods are reprehensible in themselves, but there is worse: the "existence of that party which is opposed to war," according to Bentham, we can blame on "the

cultivation of the arts and sciences. ...it has received its birth amid the occupations and pleasures furnished by the fine arts" (253). This sort of logic is so familiar as to require no comment.

It is significant that when Mill, in "Bentham" (1838), discusses Bentham's claims that "push-pin is as good as poetry" and "All poetry is misrepresentation," he does not disagree with the substance of the latter complaint:

Bentham's charge is true to the fullest extent; all writing which undertakes to make men feel truths as well as see them, does take up one point at a time, does seek to impress that, to drive that home, to make it sink into and colour the whole mind of the reader or hearer. It is justified in doing so, if the portion of the truth which it thus enforces be that which is called for by the occasion. All writing addressed to the feelings has a natural tendency to exaggeration; but Bentham should have remembered that in this, as in many things, we must aim at too much, to be assured of doing enough. (X: 114)

Mill is not disagreeing with Bentham's observations, but only with the conclusions he draws on the basis of those observations. The argument is side-stepped rather than countered.

It is a cliché of criticism that the past two thousand years of poetic theory have been dominated by various attempts to refute (or confirm) Plato's dismissal of imitative poetry from his Republic, and certainly Bentham's arguments echo those of Book X of The Republic. There, Socrates first asserts the value of "the arts of measuring and numbering and weighing," which

...come to the rescue of the human understanding--there is the beauty of them--with the result that the apparent greater or less, or more or heavier, no longer have the mastery over us, but give way before the power of calculation and measuring and weighing. (10)

He concludes that "that part of the soul which has an opinion contrary to measure...is probably an inferior principle in our nature," and then comments:

This was the conclusion at which I was seeking to arrive when I said that painting or drawing, and imitation in general, are engaged upon productions which are far removed from truth, and are also the companions and friends and associates of a principle within us which is equally removed from reason, and that they have no true or healthy aim. (11)

Once again, because he defines the true as the empirically verifiable, imitative poetry (that is to say, poetry which has as its immediate referent external reality--this is important) becomes a source of confusion about the nature of reality; further, "it feeds and waters the passions instead of drying them up; she lets them rule, although they ought to be controlled if mankind are ever to increase in happiness and virtue" (14). The virtue of temperance ranked very high on the list of virtues of the English Utilitarians also, and we can sense that their agreement thus far with Plato would be complete.

But we must remember that Plato concludes Book X of The Republic on a very different note:

Notwithstanding this, let us assure the

poetry which aims at pleasure, and the art of imitation, that if she will only prove her title to exist in a well-ordered State we shall be delighted to receive her--we are very conscious of her charms; but it would not be right on that account to betray the truth. (15)

Poetry (designated as feminine) "charms," and Plato recognizes this art as a "delightful" one. As we look at John Stuart Mill's literary criticism, we can see in it his attempt to answer Plato's challenge, and establish the grounds on which poetry can be admitted into the Republic of right reason. Whether the grounds are ultimately advantageous to poetry is another question, and I will argue that the means by which poetry is given the right "to exist in a well-ordered State" are finally as damaging to poetry as Plato's notorious condemnation.

Notes

1. In his History of the Royal Society, Bishop Sprat complained about the extravagance of the language of some of the members; They make the fancy disgust the best things if they come sound and unadorned; they are in open defiance against reason, professing not to hold much correspondence with that, but with its slaves, the passions.... Who can behold without indignation how many mists and uncertainties these specious tropes and figures have brought on our knowledge? (1704)

His plea for the reform of the language is well-known: They have...been most rigorous in putting into execution the only remedy that can be found for this extravagance; and that has been a constant resolution to reject all the amplifications digressions, and swellings of style, to return back to the primitive purity and shortness, when men delivered so many things in almost the same number of words. They have exacted from all their members a close, naked, natural way of speaking; positive expressions, clear senses, a native easiness bringing all things as near the mathematical plainness as they can; and preferring the language of artisans, countrymen, and merchants before that of wits or scholars. (1705)

The Wordsworthian conclusion is notable--like Wordsworth after him, Sprat is responding to real abuses; however, the possibility that his plea for "mathematical plainness" might result in a notion of English prose as being entirely the vehicle for rational enquiry (and poetry left as the domain of "the passions") has unfortunately been largely realized.

Part II

Mill's "Mental Crisis" and Early Literary Theory

In 1823, John Stuart Mill, then only seventeen years of age, gave a speech on "The Utility of Knowledge" to the Mutual Improvement Society, of which Jeremy Bentham was the honorary President. In this speech, Mill mocks the "ascetic sophistry of the fanatic Rousseau," who, according to Mill, had maintained that "the progress of civilization is in fact the progress of barbarism, and that the Hurons and the Iroquois are the happiest and the most enlightened of mankind" (267). This is a firmly anti-Romantic attitude, and Mill continues with the familiar Utilitarian complaint against the imprecision of the English language:

In reasoning on these general questions a want of precision in the use of language is the principal engine of sophistry. Here the confusion lies in the word knowledge, a word so vague and indefinite as to be an easy instrument in the hands of mala fide arguers, being capable of signifying just as much or as little as they please. (260)

This could have been written by either Jeremy Bentham or James Mill, who both believed, as F. Parvin Sharpless notes, in The Literary Criticism of John Stuart Mill,

...that many of the intellectual errors and false opinions which stood in the way of social reform were caused by a use of language which confused the

understanding, which reinforced political prejudices and strengthened bad political institutions. (25)

There is no doubt that it is within this tradition that Mill is working as he speaks on the "utility" of specifically scientific knowledge in this speech.

In the following year, 1824, Mill wrote an essay for the Westminster Review, which was essentially a continuation of an article begun by his father. Of this article, "Periodical Literature: Edinburgh Review," Mill tells us in the Autobiography that it "was written by me under my father's eye, and...was of little or no value" (I: 95n.). Certainly Mill did not choose to republish it in Dissertations and Discussions; however, it is useful to us in establishing how closely Mill subscribed to his father's and Bentham's views on poetry. Mill's main objections to the literary criticism of the Edinburgh Review have to do with its lack of moral concern; Sharpless notes that this is typical of Utilitarian criticism (53-55). In the following passage, Mill is discussing the Edinburgh Review's treatment of Shakespeare:

We should be sorry to be suspected of affecting prudery. It is one thing to be a moralist, another to be a poet; and a high degree of excellence in the one capacity is not incompatible with great deficiency in the other. But we assert that in a species of writing which admits so easily of being made subservient to morality, to be without a moral object is one of the greatest of defects; and we do say, that amid all the praises which the Edinburgh Review has lavished upon

Shakspeare, its never having uttered even a wish that the moral tendencies of his plays had been more decided, gives the lie direct to all its professions of zeal for morality. (I: 319)

Mill proceeds by attacking once again his version of the Romantics:

So strong are their sympathies, so distressing their sensibility, that their reason is completely mastered, and it would be impossible for them to withstand the irresistible strength of their emotions, as to resist the action of the elements, or to overcome the force of gravitation. (322)

The emotions are the great antagonists of the reason, which alone is capable of leading man to truth. Mill continues with a further distinction; this time between the feelings and actions:

It is not difficult to trace this sort of affectation to its cause. It originates in the common practice of bestowing upon feelings that praise which actions alone can deserve. By properly regulating his actions, a man becomes a blessing to his species. His mere feelings are a matter of consummate indifference to them. (323)

In his brief discussion of this article, Sharpless notes that Mill is throughout reiterating two common Utilitarian objections to the affective (these objections can be extended to poetry, which is directed to the feelings); these are first, that "feelings possess no intrinsic value," and secondly, that "if too much attention is paid to feeling, then the proper object of concern, the consequences of action, will be neglected" (Sharpless 56). Although we can concede that such concerns are not without merit, we have also to note the extremity of Mill's opposition of "reason" to "emotions," and to recognize that to the excesses at

least potential in some Romantic thought, Mill is offering another, equally limited, standard on which to base moral judgments. Virtue is not the exclusive domain of either the feelings or the actions; to suggest that either is so, and to support by so doing the notion that there exists a necessary and inevitable separation of the two, is, I think, to put forth a false (or at least very limiting) conception of what it is to be fully human.

Eight years after the publication of this article, we find Mill writing a piece for the Monthly Repository (the Unitarian review, of which William Johnson Fox was editor); the rather surprising title of the article is "On Genius," and in it we find Mill arguing for the other side of this dubious coin:

You judge of man, not by what he does, but by what he is. For, though man is formed for action, and is of no worth further than by virtue of the work which he does; yet (as has been often said, by one of the noblest spirits of our time) the works which most of us are appointed to do on this earth are in themselves little better than trivial and contemptible; the sole thing which is indeed valuable in them, is the spirit in which they are done. (I: 329)

When we realize that by "one of the noblest spirits of our time" Mill is referring to Thomas Carlyle, we can see that Mill has moved from a scathing mockery of Rousseau in 1824 to an extravagant endorsement of Thomas Carlyle in 1832. The statements Mill makes in this article are certainly radical, but they are also entirely at odds with Utilitarian thought. What makes them especially

noteworthy, of course, is that they are the remarks of John Stuart Mill, the product of an educational experiment in applied associationism.

What exactly happened to Mill between the years of the publication of these two articles, and the correct way to take Mill's essays and articles of the early 1830's, are subjects of considerable debate. The event that eventually enabled Mill to write as he did in "On Genius," was, of course, the "mental crisis" of 1826, but beyond a consensus that Mill's interest in literature began with this "crisis," there is very little agreement on the value and importance of the literary theory and criticism that followed. As William Thomas notes,

...though...in the years between the mental crisis and his father's death in 1836, Mill wrote a good deal about the work and opinions of his various mentors, it is very hard to be sure whether his comments are to be read as expressions of open rejection, covert criticism, or merely the reaffirmation of one part of his heritage against another.
(Mill 33-34)

I think Thomas is intentionally exaggerating this difficulty--Mill was not, in this period, merely writing "about the work and opinions of his various mentors;" the simple fact that the most significant of the essays of the period ("What is Poetry?" and "The Two Kinds of Poetry") were both republished as "Thoughts on Poetry and Its Varieties," in Dissertations and Discussions, as well as Mill's frequent and emphatic use of the first person singular in his work of the period, suggest that Mill did, as

indeed we might expect of a writer of his integrity, mean what he said. But I do not entirely disagree with Thomas's final remark, that in these "comments" we might find "the reaffirmation of one part of his heritage against another," although here, Thomas is minimizing a difficulty--Mill may not be repudiating Utilitarian thought to the extent he appears to be doing so, but he is doing considerably more than "merely" reaffirming "one part of his heritage against another." As I have implied, Thomas endorses the final option he offers: "This last possibility...is also the most likely." Here, with some qualifications, Thomas is in accord with other such commentators as Robson, Raymond Williams, Alan Ryan, and Leavis. One of the bases of disagreement within this position is, of course, the popular question of the extent to which Mill, in the 1830's, remained within the Utilitarian camp. Thomas, somewhat inconsistently, admits to a development in Mill's thought (from the "sharpest" "criticism" of the 1830's, to a later conviction that "the ideals he had been taught had been, at least in essentials, right" 34); Sharpless maintains a somewhat different position, claiming that, at least on the crucial issues of empiricism versus intuitionism, Mill consistently rejected the latter (143, 143n.). Robson similarly sees a considerable degree of continuity in Mill's thought (he speaks, for example, in "John Stuart Mill and Jeremy Bentham with some Observations on James Mill," of John Stuart Mill's "seeming

desertion of the Benthamite ship in the 1830's" 246, my emphasis).

In opposition to these assertions that there is a considerable consistency in Mill's Utilitarianism even throughout the period of the 1830's, and for a statement of the view that Mill's intellectual career can be split into two very separate compartments, we can turn to Gertrude Himmelfarb's chapter on "The Other John Stuart Mill," in Victorian Minds. I am inclined to think that Himmelfarb overstates her case (she makes far too much, I think, of Mill's admittedly provocative claims for Harriet Taylor's influence), and to agree with certain qualifications with the "developmentalists." Mill himself, in the Autobiography, insisted strongly on the continuity of his views.

As we look at these comments, we must remember that the Autobiography was written in the 1850's and revised in the 1860's; his remarks on this subject are, I would suggest, somewhat revisionist in nature. In 1833, Mill wrote to Carlyle of the

...gloom and morbid despondency, of which
I have had a large share in my short life,
and to which I have been indebted for all
the most valuable of such insight as I have
into the most important matters.... (XII: 149)

Since it was insight into literature that Mill acquired through his crisis, this is to ascribe a large importance to poetry; it is here seen as one of "the most valuable matters." In 1834, Mill wrote to Carlyle again, commenting on the years immediately following the breakdown of 1826:

I was then, and had been for some years, in

in an intermediate state--a state of reaction from logical-utilitarian narrowness of the very narrowest kind, out of which after much unhappiness and inward struggling I had emerged, and had taken temporary refuge in its extreme opposite. (XII: 204)

This point of view is substantiated by the following passage.

Taken from the Early Draft of the Autobiography, it was marked for deletion by Harriet Taylor, and subsequently struck from the Autobiography by Mill:

In this part of my life I was in such a state of reaction against sectarianism of thought or feeling, that those in whom I recognized any kind of superiority I did not judge or criticize at all; I estimated them by that side of their qualities or achievements by which they were admirable or valuable to me, while whatever I saw that seemed criticizable was not a per contra to be deducted, but was simply uncounted and disregarded. (I: 182n.)

If, however, we look at Mill's final account of these years, we find primarily a desire to connect this period of his life to his earliest beliefs and final thought. Mill consistently insists that he had never been unfaithful to Utilitarian principles:

I found the fabric of my old and taught opinions giving way in many fresh places, and I never allowed it to fall to pieces, but was incessantly occupied in weaving it anew. I never, in the course of my transition, was content to remain, for ever so short a time, confused and unsettled. When I had taken in any new idea, I could not rest till I had adjusted its relation to my old opinions, and ascertained exactly how far its effect ought to extend in modifying or superseding them. (I: 163-65)

I would like to urge the truth of both of these contradictory ways of understanding Mill's work through these years, and on these subjects. In the criticism of the early 1830's, I would suggest, we can see a continued assertion of certain fundamental Utilitarian tenets, and an almost unconscious adherence to the standard Utilitarian divorce of intellect and emotion. But we must also acknowledge that there is a strong reaction against Bentham's thought, and at least a partial acceptance of intuitionism. Robson, in "J. S. Mill's Theory of Poetry," claims that "if any part of his life is distinct from the rest it is the early years when he was a logic machine, not the years following his mental distress" (420). There is some truth in this; certainly the arrogance of Mill's prose in the 1820's is unlike the generous and lucid intelligence of tone that characterizes his subsequent work. However, the moral theory that Robson, and J. R. Hains (in "J. S. Mill's Examiner Articles on Art") postulate as a point of consistency between the earliest and the latest of Mill's thought on poetry, is a later development; it is this that makes the criticism of the later 1830's superior to what H. O. Pappé, in John Stuart Mill and the Harriet Taylor Myth describes as the "philandering irresponsibility" (12) of the earliest criticism. Mill's subsequent articles on Tennyson, Bentham, and Coleridge reveal, I will argue, a movement away from this early reaction, and contain some of Mill's best work on the subjects of poetry and its place in society--although even these articles are flawed by Mill's inability to find a way of uniting intellect and emotion. His final

thought on poetry I consider to be, as I have already suggested, largely a retreat from his earliest attempts to assert a genuine importance for poetry--and as I hope to show, the basis of this later position is to be found even in the first, most extravagant articles of the 1830's. This is because Mill never deviated from one central tenet of Utilitarian (and Platonic) thought; he consistently believed poetry to be radically at odds with reasonable thought. As we look at the criticism of the early 1830's, we can recognize the impetus behind it to be Mill's desire to establish the grounds on which poetry could be admitted into the Republic of right reason, and see in his solution a new basis for a denial of the intellectual value of poetry. But before we can turn to the criticism and theorizing of the 1830's, we must look at the event that precipitated Mill's involvement with literature: the "mental crisis" of 1826.

* * * * *

It is common knowledge (although it is not a matter of common consent) that Mill believed his recovery from the crisis of 1826 to have been brought about in significant part by his reading of Wordsworth's poetry. Mill's description of the crisis itself, in the Autobiography, makes compelling reading:

It was the autumn of 1826. I was in a dull state of nerves, such as everybody is occasionally liable to; unsusceptible to enjoyment or pleasureable excitement; one of those moods when what is pleasure at other times, becomes insipid or indifferent; the state, I should think, in which converts to Methodism usually are, when smitten by their first 'conviction of sin.' (I: 137)

Mill's language here is frequently commented upon, but never with such vigour as by A. W. Levi, in his influential article, "The 'Mental Crisis' of John Stuart Mill." Levi's is a psychoanalytic account of the mental crisis; he sees in Mill's language here ("smitten by their first 'conviction of sin'") an implicit admission of guilt--because of a subconscious desire to kill his father (86). This is perhaps extreme, but Levi then quite reasonably focusses our attention on the following passage of Mill's autobiographical account of his moment of recovery from his "dull state of nerves":

...a small ray of light broke in upon my gloom. I was reading, accidentally, Marmontel's Memoirs, and came to the passage which related his father's death, the distressed position of the family, and the sudden inspiration by which he, then a mere boy, felt and made them feel that he would be everything to them--would supply the place of all that they had lost. A vivid conception of the scene and its feelings came over me, and I was moved to tears. From this moment my burthen grew lighter. (I: 145)

Levi comments on this passage; his thesis is "admittedly Freudian":

The real cause of the breakdown was those repressed death wishes against his father, the vague and unarticulated guilt feeling which he had in consequence, and the latent, though still present dread that never now should he be free of his father's domination. (98)

Certainly we cannot read Mill's account without astonishment at its (to our post-Freudian eyes) transparency,¹ and the soundness

of Levi's interpretation is without exception accepted by contemporary reviewers. And yet, we must not forget Mill's own assessment of the causes of his breakdown. It is highly perceptive, and of genuine interest to our discussion. In the Autobiography, Mill claims that as a result of the crisis he

...now saw, or thought I saw, what I had always before received with incredulity-- that the habit of analysis has a tendency to wear away the feelings.... (I: 141)

Following this line of thought, Mill continues, a few paragraphs on:

My education, I thought, had failed to create these feelings in sufficient strength to resist the dissolving influence of analysis.... I was thus, as I said to myself, left stranded at the commencement of my voyage, with a well-equipped ship and a rudder, but no sail; without any real desire for the ends which I had been so carefully fitted out to work for.... (143)

Mill's recognition that his education, by concentrating entirely on developing his powers of analysis, had failed to develop the affective faculties, is a convincing one. His fear that he had been left incapable of emotion was effectively dispelled by his spontaneous and highly emotional response to the celebrated passage from Marmontel's Memoirs.

In the Autobiography, Mill draws our attention to what he sees as the two most significant "mental developments" that came about as a direct result of the crisis. The first was that these "experiences"

...led me to adopt a theory of life, very

unlike that on which I had before acted, and having much in common with what at that time I certainly had never heard of, the anti-self-consciousness theory of Carlyle. I never, indeed, wavered in the conviction that happiness is the test of all rules of conduct, and the end of life. But I now thought that this end was only to be attained by not making it the direct end. (145)

The wisdom of this is, I think, undeniable, and Mill concludes his statement of his "anti-self-consciousness theory" with the remark that "I still hold to it as the best theory...for the great majority of mankind" (147). The second consequence is the one most central to our discussion; Mill tells us that

I...for the first time, gave its proper place, among the prime necessities of human well-being, to the internal culture of the individual. I ceased to attach almost exclusive importance to the ordering of outward circumstances, and the training of the human being for speculation and for action. I had now learnt by experience that the passive susceptibilities needed to be cultivated as well as the active capacities, and required to be nourished and enriched as well as guided. (147)

Associationism stresses, of course, "the ordering of outward circumstances;" the result of this exclusive emphasis, especially when combined with a Utilitarian view of human nature as essentially egotistic and self-serving, was to leave Mill alienated from his self and his fellows. His incapacity to feel desire for the attainment of the reforms he had been "trained" to work towards was both a personal and a larger problem:

...though my dejection...could not be called other than egotistical, produced by the ruin... of my fabric of happiness, yet the destiny of mankind in general was ever in my thoughts, and could not be separated from my own. I felt the flaw in my life, must be a flaw in life itself; that the question was, whether, if the reformers of society and government could succeed in their objects, and every person in the community were free and in a state of physical comfort, the pleasures of life, being no longer kept up by struggle and privation, would cease to be pleasures. (149)

It is typical of the quality of Mill's thought and character that his self-concern should translate so immediately and anxiously into world-concern. It is his recognition of this need to "find some better hope than this for human happiness in general" that prompted Mill to begin to develop a theory of literature. We could as easily describe it as a "theory of the affective," or a "theory of the emotions," for it was by developing the feelings (this done through the agency of poetry) that the necessary ends of reform could be made to be desirable. And so, in the Autobiography, Mill moves directly from his statement of the problem to this comment:

This state of my thoughts and feelings made the fact of my reading Wordsworth for the first time (in the autumn of 1828) an important event in my life. (149)

* * * * *

The most influential statements of Mill's poetic theory are contained in the two essays, "What Is Poetry?" and "The Two Kinds of Poetry," published in January and October of 1833 in

the Monthly Repository; as I have already mentioned, these were both republished by Mill in Dissertations and Discussions as "Thoughts on Poetry and Its Varieties." The article that led up to those two essays, Mill chose not to republish; however, given its importance as a precursor to these central essays, I would like to look, briefly, at "On Genius."

In this article, Mill sets himself the problem of establishing "what are really the intellectual characteristics of this age;" he wonders whether "our mental light--let us account for the fact as we may--has not lost in intensity at least part of what it has gained in diffusion" (I: 320). Mill is cautious in his treatment of the source of this "mental light," for which we must account "as we may." This is of course a crucial point--the intuitionists would obviously account for the source and presence of this light in quite a different way than the sensationalists would. Mill is less equivocal on another point--he is prepared to insist that material progress without "higher endowments" is useless. Mill later, in "Tennyson's Poetry," came to argue for the specifically spiritual benefits of poetry; here he only argues that what is needed to balance, and make truly valuable, the material achievements of the age is not an increase in a particular kind of knowledge, but rather an influx of a particular way of knowing. This is the way of genius; it consists in not taking anything on trust;

Is genius any distinct faculty? Is it not
rather the very faculty of thought itself?

And is not the act of knowing anything not directly within the cognizance of our senses (provided we really know it, and do not take it upon trust), as truly an exertion of genius, though of a less degree of genius, as if the thing had never been known by anyone else? (330) 2

This process of knowing is initiated by "discovery" (330); Mill elaborates:

...if I would know it, I must place my mind in the same state in which he has placed his; I must make the thought my own thought; I must verify the fact by my own observations, or by interrogating my own consciousness. (331)

In this, Mill is close to intuitionism, all the more so when we realize that this "discovering" process is most important to our knowledge of "supersensual things" (331). On two occasions in the article, Mill seems to equate the terms "feel and know" (333) and "feel and understand" (334)--although he also establishes (or at least, implies) a hierarchical relationship between the elements of the latter pair, with the understanding being above feeling: "Without genius, a work of genius may be felt, but it cannot possibly be understood" (333). Here Mill, ironically, maintains a very un-phenomenalist approach to knowledge while asserting the importance of the rational faculty (in Coleridgian terms)--the understanding. We cannot praise Mill for his consistency throughout this article. It seems that, from an acceptance of the Utilitarian ideal of the perfect language as one that embodies a series of precise correspondences between words and things, Mill has fallen

into the opposite error, and clarity is lost in the midst of careless usage, hyperbolic statement, and an annoyingly excessive use of italics.

Apart from this flirtation with intuitionism, the most important points Mill makes in the article have to do with the importance of feelings, as opposed to actions, in making moral judgements, and with the necessity of there being a supra-rational concomitant to material progress. In addition to these ideas, Mill introduces his conception of the relation of the poetical to the logical. In "On Genius," the representative of the poet is Christ:

The interpretation of the Gospel was handed over to grammarians and language-grinders. The words of him whose speech was in figures and parables were iron-bound and petrified into inanimate and inflexible formulae. Jesus was likened to a logician, framing a rule to meet all cases, and provide against all possible evasions, instead of a poet, orator, and vates, whose object was to purify and spiritualize the mind, so that, under the guidance of its purity, its own lights might suffice to find the law of which he only supplied the spirit, and suggested the general scope. (37)

Today, of course, a similar argument is made by the liberation theologians; here, we must note particularly that the poet is unequivocally exalted, and the logician definitely denigrated.

Whether Mill was thinking of Bentham as the type of the logician (since the logician is here defined as one whose speech is "iron-bound and petrified into inanimate and inflexible formulae," this is at least possible) is not crucial. What matters is that

it is the role of the poet as prophet to enable his readers to "find the law." How this law is superior to the one already derived by the Church from Christ's teaching, and the point of finding a law at all, Mill does not make clear. We can perhaps deduce the nature of the law (and thus confer upon the essay a more distinctly moral purpose) from Mill's claims for the "intimate connexion of intellectual with moral greatness" and "of all soundness and comprehensiveness of intellect with the sublime impartiality resulting from an ever-present and overruling attachment to duty and truth" (335). We can sense in these phrases a desire to connect intellectual endeavours with a moral purpose; the means by which this can be accomplished are not made clear in this article, although we can assume that this is the function being postulated for the poet, whose "object" is to purify and spiritualize the mind. But these are concerns Mill begins to deal with more carefully in the two essays, "What is Poetry?" and "The Two Kinds of Poetry."

In my discussion of these essays, I will be using the text of the final republication of the articles as "Thoughts on Poetry and Its Varieties." There are few substantive differences between the 1833 and 1859 and '67 versions; Robson does comment on Mill's frequent "substitutions of a less extreme modifier" (I: xxxvi); along the same lines, many of the italicized words are given without emphasis in the later editions. Robson also

suggests that the structure of the essay follows "the movement of the speaker's mind" (xliv); however, I am more inclined to agree with M. H. Abrams, who, in The Mirror and the Lamp, describes its structure as "careful" (23). The prose does give a sense of a rather wandering, associative structure, but in fact the essay is constructed with great care, and according to a clear logic. In the first part of the essay, Mill sets out to define what poetry is, by contrasting it with what it is not. In doing so, he is following the method of Jeremy Bentham--who derived this way of proceeding, according to Mill, from Plato and Bacon. In "Bentham," Mill describes Bentham's habitual technique; he

...begins by placing before himself the whole of the field of inquiry to which the particular question belongs, and divides down till he arrives at the thing he is in search of; and thus by successively rejecting all which is not the thing, he gradually works out a definition of what it is. (X: 88)

Thus, for Mill, poetry is variously not philosophy, not narrative (or story), and not eloquence. In the second part of the essay, Mill addresses himself to the two sub-classifications of poetry; these are the poetry that comes from the poetic nature, and the poetry of culture. It is primarily in the second half of the essay that Mill begins to conceive the means by which poetry can be given a specifically moral function.

Mill begins the essay by extending Wordsworth's recognition³ that all "metrical composition" is not necessarily poetry. Mill

claims that that which "the word poetry imports," "may exist in what is called prose as well as in verse." It is "something which does not even require the instrument of words, but can speak through the other audible symbols...and even the visible ones" (I: 343). Mill is moving further from the sensationalist notion of words as representatives of things, to an opposed conception of language (at least to the possibility of some language) being able to "speak" as symbol to its hearers. Of course, both Bentham and James Mill in a sense recognized this as a possibility of language, but to them, this was precisely the sort of consequence of a poetic use of language to be deplored-- certainly it would not be singled out as a quality in language to be praised.

Mill continues by stating the determination we have already noted:

Let us then attempt, in the way of modest inquiry, not to coerce and confine nature within the bounds of an arbitrary definition, but rather to find the boundaries which she herself has set, and erect a barrier round them; not calling mankind to account for having misapplied the word poetry, but attempting to clear up the conception which they already attach to it, and to bring forward as a distinct principle that which, as a vague feeling has really guided them in their employment of the term. (344)

We now have Mill contrasting such terms as "distinct principles" and "vague feelings," and the possibility of feeling, or emotion, being rendered with precision is, by implication, denied. In this

essay, we find adjective matched to noun, and pairs of oppositions balanced with the precision absent from Mill's prose in "On Genius"-- this is already a more reasonable and competent writer than the Mill of "On Genius."

Mill's first statement of this desired "distinct principle" becomes (in the words of "On Genius") the "leading and central idea or purpose" of the entire essay. Although in establishing this definition Mill cites Wordsworth, there is an important distinction to be made between the two theorists. Here is Mill:

The object of poetry is confessedly to act upon the emotions; and therein is poetry sufficiently distinguished from what Wordsworth affirms to be its logical opposite, namely, not prose, but matter of fact or science. The one addresses itself to the belief, the other to the feelings. The one does its works by convincing or persuading, the other by moving. The one acts by presenting a proposition to the understanding, the other by offering interesting objects of contemplation to the sensibilities. (344)

Certainly Wordsworth does put forward as "the more philosophical" the contradistinction between "Poetry and Matter of Fact, or Science" ("Preface" 135n.). But Mill goes further than Wordsworth, and in this passage he decisively separates poetry from rhetoric (that which convinces or persuades) and contrasts the operation of science (which works by "presenting a proposition to the understanding") with that of poetry (which offers "interesting objects of contemplation to the sensibility"). Science addresses itself

to "the belief;" poetry to "the feelings." This constitutes, on Mill's part, a full acceptance of the Utilitarian proposition that poetry has no connection to the understanding; poetry is not directed to the reasoning faculty. Mill makes no attempt to refute Bentham's claims that poetry is not a medium in which sense can be made; rather, he side-steps Bentham altogether, claiming for poetry a different kind of truth as its object:

Poetry, when it really is such, is truth; and fiction also, if it is good for anything is truth: but they are different truths. The truth of poetry is to paint the human soul truly.... The two kinds of knowledge are different, and come by different ways. (346)

He continues:

Great poets are often proverbially ignorant of life. What they know has come by observation of themselves; they have found within them one highly delicate and sensitive specimen of human nature, on which the laws of emotion are written in large characters, such as can be read off without much study. (346)

Wordsworth's argument is very different from this. He does not suggest for the poet a particular portion of truth, or an exclusive right to only one part of the domain of knowledge. He offers instead this possibility:

If the labours of the Men of science should ever create any material revolution, direct or indirect, in our condition, and in the impressions which we habitually receive, the Poet...will be ready to follow the steps of the Man of science.... The remotest discoveries of the Chemist, the Botanist, or Mineralogist, will be as proper objects of the Poet's art as any upon which it can be employed.... ("Preface" 141)

Mill, however, limits poetry entirely to the "delineation of states of feeling" (347), which in turn are addressed to "the feelings" of the reader.

In a frequently cited passage, Mill claims that "descriptive poetry consists...in descriptions of things as they appear, not as they are;" he continues by echoing Wordsworth; poetry

...paints them not in their bare and natural lineaments, but seen through the medium and arrayed in the colours of the imagination set in action by the feelings. (347)

In this we can also find an echo of Plato's (dismissive) comment: "For I am sure that you know what a poor appearance the works of the poet make when stripped of the colours which art puts upon them, and recited in simple prose" (The Republic, Book X 8). And Bentham too has warned that "The poet must see everything through coloured media, and strive to make every one else to do the same" (Works II: 253). But Wordsworth also tells us that the "poet...will feel that there is no necessity to trick out or to elevate nature ("Pre-face" 139), whereas Mill expands his argument into this famous claim (and we note that although Mill disagrees with Plato's and Bentham's conclusions, he accepts their premises):

If a poet describes a lion, he does not describe him as a naturalist would, nor even as a traveller would, who was intent upon stating the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. He describes him by imagery, that is, by suggesting the most striking likenesses and contrasts which might occur to a mind contemplating the lion, in the state of awe, wonder, or

terror, which the spectacle naturally excites, or is, on the occasion, supposed to excite. Now this is describing the lion professedly, but the state of excitement of the spectator really. The lion may be described falsely or with exaggeration, and the poetry be all the better; but if the human emotion be not painted with scrupulous truth, the poetry is bad poetry, i.e. is not poetry at all, but a failure. (347)

What is convincing in these remarks is so mingled with what is simply confused (and confusing) that the statement is difficult to judge, and has provoked much comment. Ryan argues that "What Mill means to say is, of course, that the poet expresses his emotion rather than describes it" (51), but this doesn't seem to clarify matters at all. Abrams takes Ryan's point a little further (and makes it a little more clearly); he claims that

Poetry characteristically expresses, rather than describes the poet's emotion; and though it describes--or makes reference to--external matters of fact, it is not its office to make assertions about them.... For both the poet and reader of poetry, therefore, poetry is properly non-propositional, and its assertional truth or falsity is not a relevant consideration. (322)

Sharpless in his turn cites Abrams, and agrees that "Mill's difficulty seems to lie in the ambiguous use of the word 'describe' to indicate the action of both the naturalist and the poet in relation to the lion" (76). And yet surely Mill is using the word he wants; he is postulating a point-to-point use of language again--but the referent is, not the external lion, but instead,

the internal emotion excited by the presence of the lion. Poetic language is not language that validates or proves the truth of the lion-as-it-is perceived by the poet (for that sort of truth we go the presumably objective, scientific naturalist); rather, it is language that can accurately describe emotion. At the very least we must recognize that Mill exaggerates the division between the need for truth to "the human emotion," and the irrelevance of any need to be true to the lion. Characteristically, Mill splits perception into two parts and two kinds--scientific and poetic truth to fact, and truth to emotion. He fails (and again, this is a characteristic weakness) to recognize the interdependence of these "two" truths--the value of the emotions will depend on their connection to the lion. What the lion is, is an integral part of our judgement of the poet's expression of the emotional experience caused by the lion.

T. S. Eliot's phrase "objective correlative" is cited by Sharpless (77) as a descendent of Mill's notion, and Abram's makes a similar, but larger connection between Mill and "the practice of symbolists from Baudelaire through T. S. Eliot" (25). But it should be remembered that for Eliot, the objective correlative (Mill's lion) does matter:

The only way of expressing emotion in the form of art is by finding an 'objective correlative;' in other words, a set of objects, a situation, or chain of events which shall be the formula of that particular

emotion; such that when the external facts, which must terminate in sensory experience, are given, the emotion is immediately evoked.... The artistic 'inevitability' lies in this complete adequacy of the external to the emotion.... ("Hamlet" 48)

I cannot wholly agree with the mechanistic nature of this description of the poetic process (Eliot makes poetry seem merely the inevitable end product of an act of deliberate selection), but we can also note that Eliot is aware, as Mill is not, that there is an important (indeed, essential) connection between the emotion and the "objective correlative" that excites that emotion.

Mill, as I have mentioned, also distinguishes in this essay between poetry and eloquence, claiming in what is the essay's other well-known passage, that while "eloquence is heard, poetry is overheard." "Poetry," Mill continues, "is feeling, confessing itself to itself in moments of solitude" (348). (Here, we inevitably think of Shelley: "A poet is a nightingale, who sits in darkness and sings to cheer its own solitude" "Defence" 116.)

If we think of Mill's distinction between poetry and eloquence as having to do with the difference between poetry and propaganda, it seems a good one:

But when he turns round and addresses himself to another person; when the act of utterance is not itself the end, but a means to an end--viz. by the feelings he himself expresses, to work upon the feelings, or upon the belief, or the will, of another,--when the expression of his emotions, is tinged also by that purpose, by that desire of making an impression upon another mind,

then it ceases to be poetry, and becomes eloquence. (349)

But while poetry is undoubtedly not simple didacticism, and is not propositional, surely it must not be separated so definitely from the "desire of making an impression upon another mind" and from matters of "belief" as Mill here attempts to separate it. Further, by separating poetry from its audience, Mill seems to deny to poetry the possibility of having any moral function. What is not heard can hardly be of benefit to anyone except, perhaps, the poet himself.

We should note that Mill precedes this passage on which I have just commented with these concessions:

What we have said to ourselves, we may tell to others afterwards.... But no trace of consciousness that any eyes are upon us must be visible in the work itself.... A poet may write poetry not only with the intention of printing it, but for the...purpose of being paid for it; that it should be poetry, being written under such influences, is less probable; not, however, impossible.... (349)

But what is produced will only be poetry to the extent that the poet succeeds in "excluding from his work every vestige of such lookings-forth into the outward and everyday world;" he must "express his emotions exactly as he has felt them in solitude." Of this passage, Robson claims (in "J. S. Mill's Theory of Poetry") that the "personal end" of the poet thus becomes a "social means;" because the poet can reproduce his soliloquy for public consumption, the poem has a moral purpose. But Mill continues:

But when he turns around and addresses himself to another person; when the act of utterance is not itself the end, but a means to an end--viz. by the feelings he himself expresses, to work upon the feelings, or upon the belief, or the will, of another,--when the expression of his emotions, or of his thoughts tinged by his emotions, is tinged also by that purpose, by that desire of making an impression upon another mind, then it ceases to be poetry, and becomes eloquence. (349)

Any beneficial effects of poetry, then, are purely accidental; as Sharpless contends, this section of "Varieties" "divorces" poetry from any effective "social action" (79). If the "accident" is intended (if the poet has a moral purpose) then the "poem" ceases to be a poem and becomes merely "eloquence." The poet, in so far as he is truly a poet, cannot have a moral purpose, although his poem can conceivably have a moral effect. Abrams comments on this sense of the irrelevance of the audience as a characteristic of "expressive" theories of poetry (24); certainly at this point, we can place Mill firmly within that tradition of criticism.

Another consequence of this way of thinking is to separate the poem from its maker--to the extent that the poem is "useful" to its audience, it is so because its maker was ignorant of this usefulness. What the poem is to the poet, and what it can become to us, are things of two different orders. Wordsworth would have it that the poet "is a man speaking to men;" Mill here seems to suggest that the poet is a poet, speaking to himself--although men may use his poem. How they may do so--what is the special moral function of poetry--Mill does not establish in this part

of "Thoughts on Poetry and Its Varieties."

It is the relative indifference to ascribing to poetry a clear moral function that connects this part of the essay with "On Genius;" it is this point that separates "What is Poetry?" from the slightly later piece, "The Two Kinds of Poetry"-- Part II of "Varieties." There was little more than half a year separating the publication dates of the two articles, and Mill's subsequent republication of both pieces under one title suggests that he did not see the second as representing a significant alteration or development in his thought. And yet, as Mill begins to pursue his notion of the "two kinds" of poetry, we can see him shifting his emphases on several crucial points.

In this section of "Varieties," Mill contrasts two kinds of poetry (and two poets); the types of poetry are the poetry of the poetic nature and the poetry of culture. The representative poets are Shelley and Wordsworth, or, as Ryan has pointed out, Harriet Taylor's favourite poet, and Mill's (52). It is interesting to note that Mill also compared Taylor to Shelley:

In general spiritual characteristics as well as in temperament and organization I have often compared her, as she was at this time, to Shelley; but in thought and intellect Shelley, so far as his powers were developed in his short life, was but a child to her.
(I: 619)

This passage was rejected from the first publication of the Autobiography, but as we consider the qualities for which Shelley is

praised in "Varieties," it is interesting to keep these lavish comments in mind.

As one of Mill's earliest critics, W. Minto, pointed out in his 1873 article, "John Stuart Mill: His Place as a Critic," "Varieties" does not "contain any notable new idea not previously expressed by Coleridge, except perhaps the idea, that emotions are the main links of association in the poetic mind" (51). The influence is not difficult to find--it is present, for example, in Mill's use of the Coleridgian distinctions between fancy and imagination. Even more significantly, we can see Coleridge behind Mill's opening claim that the poet is "one of the spiritual benefactors of mankind" (355). This is a more direct statement of the poet's peculiarly spiritual function than Mill made in "On Genius." What Mill means by "spiritual" he makes more clear in his 1835 review, "Tennyson's Poems;" there, he offers "the word spiritual as the converse of sensuous," and adds that "It is scarcely necessary to say that we do not mean religious" (I: 415n.). We can make some sense of the distinction if we assume that by "religious" Mill intends dogmatism to be understood--the specific beliefs of a particular creed.

Mill continues by claiming that poetry is not confined to "intuitive truths" (thus implying that poetry is capable of expressing "intuitive truths"), and states that the poet has no means of "communicating these other than by words, every one of which derives all its power of conveying a meaning, from a whole

host of acquired notions, and facts learned by study and experience" (355). It is not made clear to whom the "acquired notions" belong (the poet? his reader? the word?), and Mill doesn't seem to recognize that it is only the poet who can limit or extend the meaning of the words he uses--that it is possible both to accept the connotative nature of language and use language with care and precision.

The two kinds of poetry with which Mill is concerned in this part of "Varieties" are, as I have already stated, the poetry that emanates from the true poet, and the poetry that comes as a result of careful cultivation. It is true poetry that comes from the poet "who is a poet by nature," but Mill limits his praise for such poetry:

It may not be truer; it may not be more useful;
but it will be different; fewer will appreciate
it, even though many should affect to do so; but
in those few it will find a keener sympathy,
and will yield them a deeper enjoyment. (355)

How it will be different (if not by being "truer" or "more useful") than the poetry of culture is the problem to which Mill devotes much of the remainder of the essay. We have already seen in Minto's comments, and my early discussion of associationism, something of the answer Mill gives; it is his theory of the unique manner of the association of ideas experienced by the poet. Simply put, the links that form the chains of associations for the poet are feelings:

Thoughts and images will be linked together,
according to the similarity of the feelings

which cling to them. A thought will introduce a thought by first introducing a feeling which is allied with it. At the centre of each group of thoughts or images will be found a feeling; and the thoughts or images will be there only because the feeling was there. (357)

This is somewhat unclear (and certainly not particularly convincing): why is it that a thought has to introduce another thought by first introducing a feeling "which is allied with it"? And how is one to distinguish so clearly between what Mill designates as "thoughts" and "feelings"? The attempt to separate emotion from thought we can recognize; it is the burden of Mill's song, but the distinction is not yet clearly worked out.

The poet of culture is not organized differently from other men; he may write poetry, but with this difference--"however bright a halo of feeling the thought may be surrounded and glorified, the thought itself is always the conspicuous object; while the poetry of a poet is feeling itself, employing thought only as the medium of its expression" (357). In order to clarify his meaning, Mill offers examples of each of the two kinds of poet; Wordsworth is an example of a poet of culture, Shelley is a poet of nature. Ironically, Mill uses arguments borrowed from Wordsworth's "Preface" to reach this judgement. And so, "In Wordsworth, the poetry is almost always the mere setting of a thought" (358), and what Wordsworth is "impressed with, and what he is anxious to impress, is some proposition, more or less distinctly conceived, some truth, or something he deems such." According to "What is

Poetry," this must be merely eloquence, and not poetry at all. Mill does conclude his discussion of Wordsworth's poetry by declaring it "essentially unlyrical;" it is not "eminently and peculiarly poetry," as is the poetry of the poetical nature. But in spite of these failings, Wordsworth's poetry has this value:

But he has not laboured in vain; he has exercised, and continues to exercise, a powerful, and mostly a highly beneficial influence over the formation and growth of not a few of the most cultivated and vigorous of the youthful minds of our time, over whose heads poetry of the opposite description would have flown, for want of an original organization, physical or mental, in sympathy with it. (358)

Shelley's poetry, on the other hand, is "obviously written to exhale, or perhaps to relieve, a state of feeling, or of conception of feeling, almost oppressive from its vividness" (360); to Shelley "unity of feeling" is the harmonizing principle which a central idea is to minds of another class. The value of this sort of poetry Mill describes at the close of the essay:

...that capacity of strong feeling, which is supposed to disturb the judgement, is also the material out of which all motives are made; the motives, consequently, which lead human beings to the pursuit of truth. The greater the individual's capacity of happiness and misery, the stronger interest has that individual in arriving at truth; and when once that interest is felt, an impassioned nature is sure to pursue this, as to pursue any other object, with greater ardour; for energy of character is commonly the offspring of strong feeling. (363-64)

Poetry, it is clear, can play a necessary part in the Utilitarian

scheme, by virtue of what to Bentham had been its greatest flaw: its propensity to nurture the feelings. Mill, as a consequence of his "mental crisis" had come to recognize that without feeling, there will be no desire for reform; poetry addresses the feelings (poetry only addresses the feelings); therefore, poetry is necessary to the republic of right reason. This, it seems to me, is an inherent and consistent weakness in Mill's position: although he recognizes that poetry is a good, and a necessity, he ascribes its goodness entirely to its ability to nourish the feelings. Poetry is, in order to be part of a reformed, Utilitarian society, seen to be divorced from reason, but capable of strengthening the emotions.

But we have also noted that Mill recognizes an efficacy in a kind of poetry that is (in terms of Part I of "Varieties") tinged by eloquence, and not disconnected from thought. Such poetry is not, however, valuable as a consequence of the presence of the thought. On the contrary, its value comes from the same source as does the value of the poetry of poetical natures. The difference is solely this: the poetry of the poet of culture is, by virtue of being less poetical, more accessible to other, equally unpoetical, natures. Thus, although its influence is necessarily less powerful, it is quantitatively larger--Wordsworth's poetry can affect more people than can Shelley's. It will affect each one less, but it will affect more. Mill does not, however, conclude here that Wordsworth's poetry is therefore more useful--although,

by applying Utilitarian mathematics, he could easily do so.

The most valuable and interesting of Mill's claims and recognitions in "Varieties" is his suggestion that the poetry of the poet of nature is capable of being improved through the education of the poet, if that education is intended to train "up to its proper strength the corrective and antagonistic power" (361). What this "antagonistic power" is, isn't made immediately clear, nor does Mill explain why or how this "power" is "antagonistic" to the poetic power of linking associations by feelings. It seems to be yet another expression of the radical separation of reasonable thought from feeling (the first the domain of prose; the latter of poetry); yet Mill here is attempting to find a way to unite the two in poetry--not merely to account for each, separately. Mill thus postulates the existence of a "philosopher-poet." In 1833, Mill offered Milton and Coleridge as examples, in 1859 and 1867, he merely mentions "some of our older poets;" in these poets, "a poetic nature has been united with logical and scientific culture" (364). But although Mill begins by suggesting a union of the poetic nature with "logical and scientific culture," he moves quickly to a position more usual for him; "the peculiarity of association arising from the finer nature...alternates with the associations attainable by commoner natures trained to higher perfection." There is an attempt here to find a way to recognize the possibility of real thought occurring in imaginative writing, but

as is so often the case with Mill, his predisposition against such a possibility draws him away from making a clear argument in its favour.

The essay on Tennyson, written for the London Review in July of 1835, however, develops this notion of a poetry in which emotion is linked to reason. Mill begins by noting an improvement in Tennyson's poetry from his first to his second book of poems; he gives the following explanation of this development:

The imagination of the poet, and his reason, had alike advanced: the one had become more teeming and vigorous, while its resources had been brought more habitually and completely under the command of the other. (I: 397)

Mill develops this into a "distinct principle," claiming that "There are in the character of every true poet, two elements, for one of which he is indebted to nature, for the other to cultivation," and then that "in order to construct anything of value to anyone but himself," "systematic culture of the intellect" (413) is a necessity. Clearly, this is both a continuation and a strengthening of these aspects of Mill's earlier thought. The following statement is particularly fine:

Every great poet, every poet who has extensively or permanently influenced mankind, has been a great thinker;--has had a philosophy...has had his mind full of thoughts, derived not merely from passive sensibility, but from trains of reflection, from observation, analysis, and generalization.... (413)

However, Mill continues by re-asserting his central, and, I think, limiting, idea: "the noble end of poetry as an intellectual

pursuit" is to act "upon the desires and characters of mankind through their emotions" (my emphases 414). I believe that Mill's insistence, of which this statement provides an example, on connecting poetry to the emotions, and prose to logic and science, to be falsely limiting to poetry. Using Mill's (admittedly deleted) references to the poetry of Milton as an example of the poetry possible from one both naturally poetic and highly cultivated, it becomes impossible to understand how Mill could so steadfastly continue to separate the reasoning and the poetical-emotive faculties. It becomes inevitable that we should wonder if Mill himself was unaware of the implications of his attempt to assert a real significance for poetry--in his anxiety to find an importance for the emotions, he seems not to have considered the implications of a scheme which assigns emotion to one form of writing, and rational thought to another.

Later in "Tennyson's Poems" Mill puts forward another "highest object of poetry;" this is "to incorporate the everlasting reason of man in forms visible to his sense, and suitable to it" (416). Mill gives this description of the "exalted purpose" of poetry:

To render his poetic endowment the means of giving impressiveness to important truths, he must, by continual study and meditation, strengthen his intellect for the discrimination of such truths; he must see that his theory of life and the world be no chimera of the brain, but the well-grounded result of solid and mature thinking;--

he must cultivate, and with no half devotion,
philosophy as well as poetry. (417)

This, of course, also reminds us of Wordsworth:

...Poems to which any value can be attached
were never produced on any subjects but by
a man who, being possessed of more than
usual organic sensibility, had also thought
long and deeply. ("Preface" 127)

But while Wordsworth simply has it that the poet must think,
"long and deeply," on the subjects on which he then writes, Mill
would have the poet think carefully, in order that he may be
able to discriminate between various theories of life put forward
by others. Mill further suggests that the poet is at a particular
disadvantage here; by virtue of his very nature, he is prone to
error in this regard, tending to embrace

...as truth, not the conclusions which are
recommended by the strongest evidence, but
those which have the most poetical appearance;--
not those which arise from deductions of im-
partial reason, but those which are most
captivating to an imagination, biassed perhaps
by education and conventional associations. (417)

What Mill concedes to the poet with one hand, he so frequently
takes away with the other. Mill continues by claiming that "what
ever philosophy" (my emphasis) the poet "adopts" will, however,
"leave ample materials for poetry," and concludes that

Whatever is comprehensive, whatever is
commanding, whatever is on a great scale,
is poetical. Let our philosophical system
be what it may, human feelings exist; human
nature, with all its enjoyments and sufferings,
its strugglings, its victories and defeats,
still remain to us; and these are the materials of
all poetry. (417)

Mill's final assertion comes directly from his own experience:

Whoever, in the greatest concerns of human life, pursues truth with unbiassed feelings, and an intellect adequate to discern it, will not find that the resources of poetry are lost to him because he has learnt to use, and not abuse them.
(417)

Mill, of course, is precisely such a one--even with his exclusively analytical education, he has been able to learn to "use" the "resources" of poetry.

As we have seen, there are two strains of thought being woven together here and through Mill's work of this period: on the one hand, a beneficial and impressive recognition that the poet (now poetry) has something of value to give to individuals (now to individuals in society), but on the other hand, there is a potentially damaging and limiting notion that poetry is the product of and is addressed solely to, the feelings. It is not, Mill has come to believe, unimportant that the poet be cultivated, but the fact remains that the poet does not think in his poetry. He may think before it (although his poetical nature hinders rather than aids him in this), but he is a thinker only to the extent of judging the systems presented to him by others. He may then embody these ideas in poetry--but even here Mill suggests that the poet's greatest service is to depict "human feelings" and "human nature." The effect of this is, once again, to separate the imagination from reason, feelings from intellect--poetry from thought.

Throughout the late 1830's and 1840's, Mill works to clarify these notions. His interest in poetry seems to decrease as he codifies his distinctions between Logic and Art; his recognition of the importance of poetry to culture becomes expressed as a recognition of the importance of culture to society. I would like now to turn to those works in which these ideas are dealt with; these are the essays on Bentham and Coleridge, the work in the Logic on the relation of Art to Logic, Mill's correspondence on that subject with Thomas Carlyle, and finally the "Inaugural Address to St. Andrew's."

Notes

1. Alexander Bain, for example, overlooks the Marmontel passage completely, in his discussion of Mill's "mental crisis" in John Stuart Mill: A Criticism with Personal Recollections (1882).

Bain puts forward the sensible notion that the crisis was caused by overwork. He notes that the "physical counterpart" to the "spiritual or mental" aspects of the crisis is "wholly omitted" from Mill's account. Bain continues:

Nothing could be more characteristic of the man. There was one thing he never would allow, which was that work could be pushed to the point of being injurious to either body or mind. That the dejection so feelingly depicted was due to physical causes, and that the chief of these causes was over-working of the brain, may I think be certified beyond all reasonable doubt.... Fifteen or twenty years later was soon enough to readjust his scheme of enjoyment, by delicate choice and variation of stimulants, by the cultivation of poetry and passive susceptibility. (38)

Bain's common sense provides a useful check to some of the more extravagant interpretations of the crisis, but I think we can also see from Mill's own account that there was more involved than merely "over-working of the brain."

2. In the Autobiography, Mill gives an intriguing account of such an experience. We know, of course, how long and how familiar was Mill's acquaintance with Bentham's theories; however, he describes his reading, in 1821, of Dumont's redaction of Bentham, Traites de legislation civile et penale, as "an epoch in my life; one of the turning points in my mental history" (I: 67). In spite of Mill's familiarity with Bentham's ideas, "in the first few pages...it burst upon me with all the force of novelty." Mill attributes his sense of joy to the assurance he now received that what he had before thought of as the essentially inchoate realm of "reasoning in morals" was in fact also subject to "accurate classification" through the application of the Benthamite principle of "Pleasurable and Painful Consequences" (69). Mill's prose here is remarkable, reminding us as it does of a description of a religious conversion: "The feeling rushed upon me," "I felt taken up to an eminence from which I

could survey a vast mental domain," "It gave unity to my conceptions of things," "And the vista of improvement which he did open was sufficiently large and brilliant to light up my life, as well as to give a definite shape to my aspirations" (69).

3. Wordsworth distinguishes "poetry" from "verses;" he cites Dr. Johnson's stanza beginning "I put my hat upon my head," and then "one of the most justly-admired stanzas of the "Babes in the Wood;" he concludes:

Whence arises this difference? Not from the metre, not from the language, not from the order of the words; but the matter expressed in Dr. Johnson's stanza is contemptible. The proper method of treating trivial and simple verses, to which Dr. Johnson's stanza would be a fair parallelism, is not to say, this is a bad kind of poetry, or this is not poetry; but, this wants sense.... ("Preface" to Lyrical Ballads 155)

Mill, of course, goes considerably further than this.

Part III

Cultivation and Civilization; Poet and Logician; The Literary Theory of Mill's Maturity

As we examine the work of Mill's maturity, we will find, as I have already suggested, two strains of thought that are of particular interest to us; these are the development of Mill's sense of the necessity of the cultivation of the individual, and his deepening interest in establishing the distinctions between the logician or scientist and the artist. In both of these areas we can, I think, see evidence that the union of sensibility that Mill hoped he had achieved after his mental crisis did not in fact take place. Instead, in Mill's thought in these areas we can see him in effect constructing a model whereby the affective and the analytical are recognized as important but (and this is the important point) radically and necessarily separate compartments of the human intellect. The particular importance Mill ultimately ascribes to poetry follows from his original impulse (the impulse came from his profound need) to view poetry as first the product, and then productive, of emotion--both the effect and cause of a specifically emotional well-being. This emotional well-being is not, as we have seen, merely necessary to the health of the individual, but is also essential to the progress of the state. In the Autobiography, in the chapter entitled "Youthful Propagandism.

The Westminster Review," Mill adversely criticizes his early radicalism for failing to recognize the social necessity of the cultivation of the feelings:

What we principally thought of, was to alter people's opinions.... While fully recognizing the superior excellence of unselfish benevolence and love of justice, we did not expect the regeneration of mankind from any direct action on those sentiments, but from the effect of educated intellect, enlightening the selfish feelings....

From this neglect both in theory and in practice of the cultivation of feeling, naturally resulted among other things an undervaluing of poetry, and of Imagination generally as an element of human nature. (I: 113-15)

From the late thirties on, we can see Mill struggling to counter-balance this "neglect" and "undervaluing;" Mill does this in the two ways I have already identified, and so it is on Mill's thought on the place of poetry in the national (and not merely the individual) life, and on the distinct roles of the Arist and Scientist in the life of the intellect, that I propose to concentrate our attention in this section of this thesis. The first of these concerns we find dealt with most extensively in the 1836 essay "Civilization," and the 1838 and 1840 essays, "Bentham" and "Coleridge;" the second receives its clearest statements in Mill's correspondence with Carlyle and in Book Six of A System of Logic. In the "St. Andrew's Address," we find both concerns brought together in an eloquent statement that reveals both the very real strengths and the considerable weaknesses of Mill's thought in these areas. In the Autobiography, Mill admits that he experienced

"no further mental changes" (I; 229), and in fact in these years we do not see the introduction of any more new ideas; rather, we observe a codification of the new (the recognition of the importance of poetry) and the old (the Utilitarian tradition). We will not see Mill "weaving" together the old and the new ideas; rather, we will see him admitting the necessity of the new, while constructing the means of permanently separating the two.

One consistent characteristic of Mill's essays throughout the 1830's is their concern for the state of education in Great Britain. In "On Genius," Mill made a point that he was to insist on throughout his subsequent comments on the subject, including his final statement in the "Inaugural Address" he gave at St. Andrew's University in 1867. In 1832, Mill described the present state of English education as a process of "grinding down other men's ideas to a convenient size, and administering them in the form of cram." That Carlyle-like statement is from "On Genius;" Mill continued by describing what education ought to accomplish: it "must form the thinking faculty itself, that the mind, being active and vigorous, might go forth and know" (I: 335). Thirty-five years later, in the "Inaugural Address," and in a prose that now resonates with echoes of Coleridge, Mill makes a similar point; the "object" of the University is to make

...capable and cultivated human beings....
 What professional men should carry away with
 them from an University, is...that which
 should direct the use of their professional

knowledge, and bring the light of general culture to illuminate the technicalities of a special pursuit. Men may be competent lawyers without general educations, but it depends on general education to make them philosophical lawyers--who demand, and are capable of apprehending, principles, instead of merely cramming their memories with details. (XXI; 218)

The point at which Mill's concern with education connects with our concern for Mill's literary theory is, of course, this emphasis on "general culture" and "cultivated human beings."

As I have just suggested, we find Mill's first sustained discussion of the expressly social importance of the cultivation of the individual in his 1836 essay, "Civilization." Published in the Utilitarian London and Westminster Review, and republished in the 1859 edition of Dissertations and Discussions, this essay has not provoked a great deal of comment. However, it is of interest both in its own right and as a precursor to the very well-known essays on Bentham and Coleridge which Mill wrote a few years later. Alexander Bain does mention "Civilization," but only to disparage it. Assuming the correct Utilitarian stance, Bain thus describes the article in John Stuart Mill: A Criticism with Personal Recollections:

He regards as consequences of our civilisation, the decay of individual energy, the weakening of the influence of superior minds, the growth of charlatanerie, and the diminished efficacy of public opinion, and insists on some remedies for the evils; winding up with an attack on the Universities. To my mind, these topics should have been detached from any theory of Civilisation,

or any attempt to extol the past at the cost
of the present. (48)

Bain's position was, of course, once shared by Mill; we have already seen Mill insisting on the material benefits of civilization in the 1824 article, "Periodical Literature: Edinburgh Review." Here, Mill acknowledges this, the Radical, view of civilization, but admits the possibility of there being another view. This definition of civilization has the word denoting "that kind of improvement only, which distinguishes a wealthy and powerful nation from savages or barbarians;" this is a usage that enables us to "speak of the vices or the miseries of civilization" (XVIII: 119). Thus, Mill is using the word in something of the way in which Coleridge uses it in On the Constitution of Church and State (1830). Mill's contradistinctions between "civilization" and "cultivation" in both this essay and the slightly later pieces on Bentham and Coleridge can profitably be compared with Coleridge's work in this area-- certainly the influence of Coleridge resonates through these essays.

Bain's summary of the article is accurate, and Mill opens the essay with the recognition that with

...the natural growth of civilization, power passes from individuals to masses, and the weight and importance of an individual, as compared with the mass sink into greater and greater insignificance. (XVIII; 126)

The consequences of this are both political and moral, and the two are connected. The "triumph of democracy" Mill defines as "government of public opinion," and warns that such government is an

inevitable consequence of "the natural laws of the progress of wealth...the diffusion of reading, and the increase of the facilities of human intercourse" (127). At the same time as the "progress of civilization" is ensuring the rule of "the masses," this same progress is ensuring that the individuals of which the mass is composed are becoming less fit to govern:

One of the effects of a high state of civilization upon character, is a relaxation of individual energy; or, rather, the concentration of it within the narrow sphere of the individual's money-getting pursuits. (129)

What is needed is a "system of cultivation adapted to counteract" (132) this "moral effeminacy" (131). Earlier in the essay, Mill gives this description of what must be done by one recognizing these negative effects of progress; at this point the word "cultivation" is not used:

...he will exert his utmost efforts in contributing to prepare them; using all means, on the one hand, for making the masses themselves wiser and better; on the other, for so rousing the slumbering energy of the opulent and lettered classes, so storing up the youth of those classes with the profoundest and most valuable knowledge, so calling forth whatever of individual greatness exists or can be raised up in the country, as to create a power which might partially rival the mere power of the masses, and might exercise the most salutary influence over them for their own good. (127)

This "power" Mill does not satisfactorily define; however, later in the essay he does turn his attention to the means by which the defects of civilization can be corrected.

Mill begins the final third of the essay with this claim:

Those advantages which civilization cannot give-- which in its uncorrected influence it has even a tendency to destroy--may yet coexist with civilization; and it is only when joined to civilization that they can produce their fairest fruits. (135-36)

He continues by identifying the two "evils" of civilization; these are related to those he has already noted: "the individual is lost and becomes impotent in the crowd, and...individual character itself becomes relaxed and enervated." The first of these evils was to become a central concern for Mill (On Liberty is his best-known statement on the subject), but it is the second problem that becomes connected with Mill's literary theory. Here, Mill puts forward the following solutions to these evils of civilization:

For the first evil, the remedy is, greater and more perfect combination among individuals; for the second, national institutions of education, and forms of polity, calculated to invigorate the individual character. (136)

Mill had already, and with some self-contradiction, claimed that "the diffusion of even such knowledge as civilization naturally brings, has no slight tendency to rectify, though it be but partially, the standards of public opinion" (132). However, at odds with this natural tendency of civilization to provide precisely that which it is supposed to vitiate, are the "national institutions of education." Mill asks

Are these the places of education which are to send forth minds capable of maintaining a victorious struggle with the debilitating

influences of the age, and strengthening the weaker side of Civilization by the support of a higher Cultivation? (143)

Obviously the present system is not sufficient to perform its necessary function, and Mill advocates improvements in "the national institutions of education," in order to enable those institutions to fulfill their role of bringing about "the regeneration of individual character" (138).

The true ends of education Mill defines as

...the recognition of the principle, that the object is to call forth the greatest possible quantity of intellectual power, and to inspire the intensest love of truth: and this without a particle of regard to the results to which the exercise of that power may lead, even though it should conduct the pupil to opinions diametrically opposite to those of his teachers. (144)

Within such an education, "Ancient literature would fill a large place;" this is because "it brings before us the thoughts and actions of many great minds...tenfold more calculated to call forth high aspirations, than in any modern literature" (144). This is consonant with Mill's recognition of the importance of developing the national character; here, this goal can be attained through instruction in the written records of noble lives from the ancient past. History should also be taught, and for the same reason; "it is the record of all great things which have been achieved by mankind" (145). It is under the heading of "History" that modern literature can be taught. The implicit suggestion is that modern literature can best be studied as evidence of the

state of society--Mill has already claimed that it gives little encouragement to "high aspirations" through providing noble examples. There will also be a department of "pure intellect," where "the highest place will belong to logic and the philosophy of the mind" (146). Finally, the sciences and the "philosophy of morals, of government, of law, of political economy, of poetry and art, should form subjects of systematic instruction" (145).

Of particular interest to us in this scheme is the relative unimportance of instruction in literature as literature, and particularly the slight interest Mill has in "the literature of our own and other modern nations." The poetry of Wordsworth may have been instrumental to Mill in assisting him to develop the feelings to the degree necessary to sustain his concern for reform; in a national scheme of education, poetry has no place save as a stock of uplifting examples of the noble lives of great men. It is difficult to see precisely how the power of cultivation could be sufficiently developed by this education, to enable it to counterbalance the evils of civilization. Why will educating a portion of the population, even in this way, bring about the desired (and necessary) uplifting of the general populace? And how will such an education make up for what Mill recognizes as the failure of "every institution for spiritual culture which the country has"? Mill hopes, it is clear, that by an education which regenerates "the character of the higher classes" there will be a possibility of guidance and emulation, but he fails to offer the means by which

this transfer can occur, and as we read this essay, we must wonder at the extent to which Mill has really grasped the Coleridgean distinctions with which he is working.

* * * * *

The contradistinctions made by Coleridge between civilization and cultivation are justly famous. The following statement is taken from On the Constitution of Church and State:

But civilization is itself but a mixed good, if not far more a corrupting influence, the hectic of disease, not the bloom of health, and a nation so distinguished more fitly to be called a varnished than a polished people; where this civilization is not grounded in cultivation, in the harmonious development of those qualities and faculties that characterize our humanity. We must be men in order to be citizens. (33-4)

It is interesting to notice Coleridge's use of metaphor to make his meaning. The images do not merely ornament his thought; they show the process of Coleridge thinking. In this passage alone, the words and phrases "corrupting," "hectic of disease," "bloom of health," "varnished," "polished," "grounded," and "harmonious" all contribute to the precision of our understanding of Coleridge's use of the words "civilization" and "cultivation." Without rendering his **usage** sterile or pendent (in fact, they accomplish the opposite), these words make Coleridge's meaning precise and clear. Perspicuity is attained, but not at the expense of the life of the language. Mill's use of metaphor is often merely cliché, often uncomfortable; it is not surprising to find that, in Book V of the

Logic, he insists that metaphor cannot further meaning, but can only ornament or describe it:

Metaphors, for the most part, therefore, assume the proposition which they are brought to prove; their use is, to aid the apprehension of it; to make clearly and vividly comprehended what it is that the person who employs the metaphor is proposing to make out; and sometimes also, by what media he proposes to do so. For an apt metaphor, though it cannot prove, often suggests the proof. (XIII; 800)

Here, the proof remains something of an essentially different order; in Coleridge's prose, the metaphor surely is the meaning, is being used to make the meaning, not merely employed to clarify a sense made elsewhere, in a radically different kind of language. But these observations are parenthetical to our present concern--although not to our larger purpose; we must return to our immediate subject.

The way in which Coleridge is using the word "cultivation" is defined by the Oxford English Dictionary as "The developing, fostering, or improving (of the mind, faculties, etc.) by education and training; the condition of being cultivated; culture, refinement." What is particularly notable about this is the close connection between the process of cultivation, and the consequent state of cultivation. Coleridge was not the first to use the word in this way (the OED cites a 1716 usage); certainly, though, he gave the useage greater force and currency.

In Church and State, Coleridge postulates the presence of

a teaching class, the clerisy. This group ensures that civilization receives cultivation, that no "part or division" of the nation is left "without a resident guide, guardian and instructor." Each member of this educated clerisy, then, would be assigned to a section of the country--the parallel with a parish and its priest is obvious, but it must be remembered that the clerisy's function is not (at least, not essentially) religious. The "final intention of the whole order" is

...to preserve the stores, to guard the treasures, of past civilization, and thus to bind the present with the past; to perfect and add to the same, and thus to connect the present with the future; but especially to diffuse through the whole community, and to every native entitled to its laws and rights, that quantity and quality of knowledge which was indispensable both for the understanding of those rights, and for the performance of the duties correspondent. (34)

The clerisy will secure the "permanence" of the state; the forces of civilization will ensure that it **remains** "progressive." Coleridge is very clear, not only as regards the "final intention" of the clerisy; he knows what kind of knowledge is needful. The clerisy, he tells us, was, "in its primary acceptance and original intention" (in other words, in its ideal form) composed of the "learned of all denominations" or disciplines, but "at the head of all," was Theology. The "theological order had precedence indeed...but not because its members were priests." Coleridge gives quite different reasons for this "precedence," and the most important of these is that Theology forms the "ground-knowledge, the prima scientia as it

was named,--PHILOSOPHY, or the doctrine and discipline of ideas" (36). Here, Coleridge inserts a rather lengthy note; it is of great importance to our understanding of Coleridge's line of thought and to our grasp of how and where Mill differs from Coleridge:

This is, of knowledge immediate, yet real, and herein distinguished in kind from logical and mathematical truths, which express not realities, but only the necessary forms of conceiving and perceiving, and are therefore named the formal or abstract sciences. Ideas, on the other hand, or the truths of philosophy, properly so called, correspond to substantial beings, to objects whose actual subsistence is implied in their ideas, though only by the idea revealable. To adopt the language of the great philosophic apostle, they are "spiritual realities that can only spiritually be discerned," and the inherent aptitude and moral pre-configuration to which constitutes what we mean by ideas, and by the presence of ideal truth, and of ideal power, in the human being.... For try to conceive a man without the ideas of God, eternity, freedom, will, absolute truth, of the good, the true, the beautiful, the infinite. An animal endowed with a memory of appearances and of facts might remain. But the man will have vanished.... (36n.)

It is only by the "guiding light from their philosophy, which is the basis of divinity" that "either the community or its rulers" can "fully comprehend, or rightful appreciate, the permanent distinction, and the occasional contrast, between cultivation and civilization" (36-7).

Coleridge's meaning is, I think, clear: philosophy has as its object a kind of idea different from those capable of logical or mathematical expression. But the distinction is not, for

Coleridge, between what can be known by reasoning and what by feeling; there are not two kinds of truth. Instead, Coleridge suggests that logic and mathematics deal with ways of "conceiving and perceiving;" they do not deal with actual truths, which exist both as ideas and (by correspondence) as realities. Thus, for the idea of freedom which I possess, there is a corresponding Idea of Freedom. It is the presence of these ideas (and they are taught us by the clergy, and made known by Theology) in our lives that renders us human--without these ideas of "God, eternity, freedom, will, absolute truth, of the good, the true, the beautiful, the infinite," we would merely be animals, "endowed with a memory of appearances and of facts." And it is the presence of these ideas, not connected to any religious creed or any particular dogmatic formulation, that enables both rulers and community to perceive the first requirement for the preservation of the State: the cultivation of its members.

This, then, is something of what Coleridge means by "cultivation," and we have seen something of the means he envisioned for ensuring that the process could be maintained. Mill, in "Civilization," is obviously working with these ideas, and with Coleridge's distinctions, and yet his scheme for a reformed education fails to offer the means of effecting the reforms, or the ideas that could give life and value to his recognition that a counterbalancing power to that of the masses is needed.

* * * * *

Mill dealt again with these subjects in his two best known pieces of this period. Both "Bentham," in 1838, and "Coleridge," in 1840, were published in the London and Westminster Review, but unlike "Civilization," these essays are often discussed, most frequently in an attempt to establish precisely the extent to which Mill deviated from orthodox Utilitarianism. Certainly this is an interesting and an important question, but to look at these essays only, or even primarily, as sources of evidence for either side of this argument is to ignore their substance. I would suggest that, like "Civilization," these essays are best read as statements of Mill's recognition of the need to the state of the cultivation of its members. Thus, although Mill scarcely refers to poetry in either of these essays (the passage in which he comments on Bentham's "peculiar opinions on poetry" has already been cited, in Part I of this thesis; his comments on Coleridge's poetry are so slight as to require neither citation nor comment), they remain valuable to our enquiry.

For our purpose, and in itself, Raymond Williams' discussion of these essays in Culture and Society is particularly interesting, the more so since Williams does not engage in the popular debate over the issue of Mill's orthodoxy (or heterodoxy) in these essays. In fact, we can set that particular issue to rest by noting Mill's own, acute, estimation of the essays in that regard. In the Autobiography, Mill "defends" himself against the charge that he "might be thought to have erred by giving undue prominence to the

favourable side" of Coleridge's opinions, as he "had done in the case of Bentham to the unfavourable" (I: 227). Mill explains that since he was writing for an audience of "Radicals and Liberals," he had an obligation "to dwell most on that in writers of a different school, from the knowledge of which they might derive most improvement" (227). We can deduce from this that there is something in Coleridge's thought which is absent from, but necessary to (it is knowledge from which the Radicals would "derive...improvement") the Benthamite school. Mill also here admits that while the essay on Bentham concentrates on what is absent from that system, the essay on Coleridge focusses on the corresponding presence of this unnamed element.

Williams, without citing this passage from the Autobiography, recognizes this movement in the essays themselves. He notes as "what is perhaps his central judgement on Bentham," Mill's assertion that

A philosophy like Bentham's...can teach the means of organizing and regulating the merely business part of the social arrangements.... It will do nothing (except sometimes as an instrument in the hands of a higher doctrine) for the spiritual interests of society; nor does it suffice of itself even for the material interests.... (Williams 57; Mill "Bentham" X: 99)

Williams follows this by citing two passages in which Coleridge quite explicitly criticizes the Utilitarians; here are Williams' comments (the phrase he quotes is from Table Talk):

What Mill seized on in Coleridge is fairly

indicated by the phrase 'disjoined from all principle or enlarged systems of action.' For Mill was far too intelligent to suppose that the deficiencies of a particular system--here Benthamism--were any sort of argument against system as such.... What appealed to Mill, in his reconsideration of Benthamism, was the emphasis implied in Coleridge's key word enlarged. He wanted principle, or enlarged systems of action as an improvement on a system competent only in 'the merely business part of the social arrangements....'
(58-9)

Williams does not mention Mill's own use of the word "enlarged;" it occurs frequently in the Autobiography to describe Mill's understanding of the effects of his reading of poetry on his opinions: "I had enlarged...the basis of my intellectual creed" (I: 115). The "new principle, or enlarged system," which Mill takes from Coleridge, is, Williams contends, his "emphasis on Culture" (60). Williams notes that "This idea of Cultivation, or Culture, was affirmed, by Coleridge, as a social idea, which should be capable of embodying true ideas of value," and adds that "Cultivation, in fact, though an inward was never a merely individual process" (62).

Williams continues his discussion by examining what Mill means by the idea of culture or cultivation. He observes that "No doubt Mill thought, as it is common to think, that the idea of culture, which had impressed him in Coleridge, was adequately provided for, in terms of a social institution, by the extending system of national education" (65). Certainly we have seen already that this was so; we have also questioned, on the basis of Mill's

description of a system of education that would facilitate the dissemination of culture through society, to what extent Mill did grasp Coleridge's ideas. At this point in Williams' argument, he turns from "Coleridge" to Mill's final uses of the word "culture" in the Autobiography. We will return to Williams; here, I would like to continue with our discussion of the essay "Coleridge."

Mill discusses Coleridge's thought by dividing it into various categories. Thus, he comments on Coleridge's view "of the grounds of a Church Establishment" (146); he then turns to his "theory of the Constitution" (151), then to his ideas on "political economy" (155), and so on. What strikes me in this method, sensible though it is, is the suggestion it gives of a failure on Mill's part to see that these "categories," which seem so natural to Mill, are not in fact so easily discernible in Coleridge's thought. For example, Mill notes that "in Coleridge's view," the clerisy is not "necessarily a religious corporation" (147), but fails to comment upon the spiritualizing function that to Coleridge was the necessary and essential basis of the importance of the clerisy. We have seen Mill, in his review of Tennyson's poems, and then again in "Civilization," use the word "spiritual" with some uneasiness--he wants to align it with this idea of "culture," but seems unsure how he ought to do so. Coleridge, however, is capable not only of making, but of using, a clear distinction between a spiritual function and a religious function; one consequence of this is that Coleridge's thought on spiritual subjects is of continuous importance to all of

his thought. Thus, Mill's attempt to understand Coleridge by compartmentalizing him leads to an at best partial and limited understanding of Coleridge's whole meaning. Mill's method permits him to see Coleridge simply as a part of a picture completed elsewhere--a picture seen, a puzzle arranged, by the synthesizing intelligence of John Stuart Mill. The other parts of the puzzle, of course, come from Bentham. But as Williams points out, Coleridge,

...in his major emphases...offers something so radically different from Bentham, and so different also from Mill's attempted 'enlargement,' that his influence is not to be construed as that of a 'humanizing' check, but rather, for all its incompleteness of formulation, as an alternative conception of man and society. Still, such a conception 'may be awakened, but it cannot be given.' (70)

Mill's account of culture is, I think, very limited, but it is not, of course, on that account simply wrong. It does constitute an enlargement of Mill's earliest thought, and it is a movement forward from the self-absorption of his earliest work on literary subjects. But it remains a separate element, and Mill's thought on culture does not colour his thought on other subjects. It is an addition, an enlargement, but not by any means a genuine reformation. This becomes clear as we begin to examine the relationship Mill conceived of Art to Science.

* * * * *

These distinctions between science and literature, logic and art, the logician and the artist, preoccupied Mill throughout

the thirties and forties; Mill's concern with the subject forms the substance of many of his letters to Carlyle. As early as July 17, 1832 (and thus only a few months before the publication of "On Genius"), Mill wrote to Carlyle:

My vocation, as far as I yet see, lies in a humbler sphere; I am rather fitted to be a logical expounder than an artist. You I look upon as an artist...the highest destiny of all lies in that direction; for it is the artist alone in whose hands Truth becomes impressive and a living principle of action. Yet it is something not inconsiderable...if one could address the unpoetical majority through the understanding, & ostensibly with little besides mere logical apparatus, yet in a spirit higher than was ever inspired by mere logic, and in such sort that their understandings shall at least have to be reconciled to those truths, which even then will not be felt until they shall have been breathed upon by the breath of the artist. For...the majority even of those who are capable of receiving Truth into their minds must have the logical side of it turned first towards them, that they may see it to be the same Truth in its poetic that it is in its metaphysical aspect.
(XII: 113)

This suggests a hierarchical arrangement, with the artist being placed above the logician. The reason for this is clear: the artist is capable of rendering "Truth...a living principle of action"--he can ensure, for example, that a truth perceived becomes a truth enacted, and that the morally crippling enervation of a purely analytical training does not occur. But a particular kind of logician can play an important role also, for such a one will be capable of addressing the unpoetical majority "through the understanding, & ostensibly with little besides mere logical apparatus,

yet in a spirit higher than was ever inspired by mere logic...." For this act of interpretation to be possible, "Truth" must be understood to have a "poetic" as well as a "metaphysical aspect," and it is such an understanding of Truth that Mill works with here: there is one Truth (and not, as later, two), with two sides, one poetical and one metaphysical. The suggestion is that this Truth can be translated from its poetical expression into a logical expression, with nothing being lost in the translation. And yet, if we can make any sense of this operation at all, surely this amounts to a paraphrase--and if one paraphrases poetry into prose, what is absent from the latter will be precisely the quality that Mill is claiming to be needful: the poetry.

Less than a year later, Mill wrote again to Carlyle, regretting the extremity of his "reaction from the dogmatic disputatiousness of my former narrow and mechanical state...." However, Mill continued with the struggle to achieve a useful distinction between the poet and the logician; on May 5, 1833, he wrote, again to Carlyle,

I conceive that most of the highest truths, are... intuitive; that is, they need neither explanation nor proof, but if not known before are assented to as soon as stated. Now, it appears to me that the poet or artist is conversant chiefly with such truths and that his office in respect to truth is to declare them and make them impressive. This, however, presupposes that the reader... is a person of the kind to whom those truths are intuitive.... But...the more numerous kind of people will consider them as nothing but dreaming or madness: and the more so, certainly, the more powerful the artist, as an artist: The

same person may be poet and logician, but he cannot be both in the same composition....

Mill continues by once again insisting that the "artist's is the highest part," but suggests that his ability to mediate between the poet and "the more numerous kind of people" is of genuine value: "such a person is more wanted than even the poet himself" (163). In 1834, Mill told Carlyle that this "service" is "even more needful now than works of art, because it is their most useful precursor, one might, almost say, in these days their necessary condition" (219).

In this argument, Mill anticipates Matthew Arnold, who similarly claimed that before creative work could occur, there had to be a critical effort, "to make an intellectual situation of which the creative power can profitably avail itself" ("Essays in Criticism" 134). From this basis, Arnold is able to make the following observations:

...the creation of a modern poet, to be worth much, implies a great critical effort behind it; else it must be a comparatively poor, barren, and short-lived affair. This is why Byron's poetry had so little endurance in it, and Goethe's so much; both Byron and Goethe had a great productive power, but Goethe's was nourished by a great critical effort providing the true materials for it, and Byron's was not; Goethe knew life and the world, the poet's necessary subjects, much more comprehensively and thoroughly than Byron. He knew a great deal more of them, and he knew them much more as they really are. (134)

This is substantially different from what Mill is suggesting.

Arnold claims that "creative literary genius does not principally

show itself in discovering new ideas; that is rather the business of the philosopher" (133). But the poet must know these ideas; they are his "materials;" it is with ideas (and not primarily feelings) that the poet is concerned, and it is according to the intelligence with which he is capable of using these materials in a great creative effort that we judge his poetry. Mill is moving towards quite a different relationship between Artist and Logician.

Mill continued to write to Carlyle on this subject; this is one of his most striking discussions of the differences between poetry and logic:

By logic...I meant the antithesis of Poetry or Art; in which distinction I am learning to perceive a twofold contrast--the literal as opposed to the symbolical, and reasoning as opposed to intuition. Not the theory of reasoning, but the practice. In reasoning I include all processes of thought which are processes at all, that is, which proceed by a series of steps or links. What I would say is that my vocation is, I think, chiefly for this last; a more extended & higher one than for any branch of mere "Philosophy of Mind" though far inferior to that of the artist. (173)

This continues to assert a hierarchical arrangement of the kinds of thought. Mill perceives himself to be capable of functioning in the middle of these levels; once again, his vision of himself is as the necessary interpreter of the purely poetic to the merely logical. Here, poetry is clearly and definitely distinguished from "reasoning;" it has no connection (except in so far as a contrast constitutes a form of connection) with the "processes of thought." This ostensibly places poetry in a higher position, and yet the

radical disconnection of poetry from reasonable thought that this hierarchy depends upon, makes the pedestal at best a very shaky one.

* * * * *

Mill devotes the last chapter of the final book of the Logic to a discussion of "The Logic of Practice, or Art; Including Morality and Policy." In this chapter, Mill uses the word "art" not simply to refer to poetry or the fine arts, but rather to denote "Whatever speaks in rules, or precepts, not in assertions respecting matters of fact" (VIII: 944n.). Rather than excluding poetry, Mill is including philosophy, and particularly ethics, in the discussion. Mill's object in the chapter is "to characterize the general Methods of Art, as distinguished from Science" (943); he does so in these terms:

The relation in which rules of art stand to doctrines of science may be thus characterized. The art proposes to itself an end to be attained, defines the end, and hands it over to science. The science...sends it back to art with a theorem of the combinations of circumstances by which it could be produced. Art then...pronounces the end attainable or not. (944)

Art is "imperative," science "indicative;" art "speaks in rules, or precepts, not in assertions respecting matters of fact" (943). The "only one of the premises...which Art supplies, is the original major premise, which asserts that the attainment of the given end is desirable" (944). The "end" is given by science to art; art then deems the end either desirable or not. Clearly, then, "an

ultimate standard, or first principle of Teleology" is necessary, in order that Art can perform its function; Mill asserts that "the promotion of happiness is the ultimate principle of Teleology" (951).

There are clear connections to be made between the assumptions underlying this argument, and those underlying Mill's earlier thought on culture and civilization. In his essay "Coleridge," Mill concludes his discussion of the limitations of the reform-minded philosophers of the eighteenth century with these remarks:

Thus, on the whole, England had neither the benefits, such as they were, of the new ideas nor of the old.... It was sure in no great length of time to call forth two sorts of men--the one demanding the extinction of the institutions and creeds which had hitherto existed; the other that they be made a reality; the one pressing the new doctrines to their utmost consequences; the other reasserting the best meaning and purposes of the old. The first type attained its greatest height in Bentham; the last in Coleridge. (X: 145-46)

Mill continues by insisting upon the necessity of each of "these two sorts of men." The Conservatives, of whom Coleridge is the highest and best example, can show the Reformers what "good...we have a right to expect from things established;" this is a necessary function, since

What is any case for reform good for, until it has passed this test? What mode is there of determining whether a thing is fit to exist, without first considering what purposes it exists for, and whether it be still capable of fulfilling them? (146)

What Mill here claims as the function of Conservative thinkers, in

the Logic Mill isolates as the jurisdiction of Art. It is the same distinction as we have seen Mill make between cultivation and civilization, between poetry and analysis, between feeling and thought: the former exist primarily to give a sense of meaningfulness to the meaning given by the latter. Sensibility comes from the former; sense from the latter.

In the Logic, Mill gives to Art the very specific, and (in view of Mill's personal history alone) the very important but still limited function of ensuring that the ends of action are **desirable**; Art must take as its ultimate standard "the general principle to which all rules of practice ought to conform, and the test by which they should be tried...the promotion of happiness" (951). But he continues, with a statement consistent with the recognition we have seen Mill make as a result of his "mental crisis":

I do not mean to assert that the promotion of happiness should be itself the end of all actions, or even of all rules of action. It is the justification, and ought to be the controller, of all ends, but is not itself the sole end. There are many virtuous actions, and even virtuous modes of action (though the cases are, I think, less frequent than is often supposed) by which happiness in the particular instance is sacrificed, more pain being produced than pleasure. But conduct of which this can truly be asserted, admits of justification only because it can be shown that on the whole more happiness will exist in the world, if feelings are cultivated which will make people, in certain cases, regardless of happiness.

Mill continues the argument:

I fully admit that this is true: that the cultivation of an ideal nobleness of will and conduct, should be to individual human beings an end, to which the specific pursuit either of their own happiness or of that of others (except so far as included in that idea) should, in any case of conflict, give way. But I hold that the very question, what constitutes this elevation of character, is itself to be decided by a reference to happiness as the standard.

There is a circularity to this argument, and Mill's final remarks fail to make his position more clear:

The character itself should be, to the individual, a paramount end, simply because the existence of this ideal nobleness of character, or of a near approach to it, in any abundance, would go further than all things else towards making human life happy; both in the comparatively humble sense, of pleasure and freedom from pain, and in the higher meaning, of rendering life, not what it now is almost universally, puerile and insignificant--but such as human beings with highly developed faculties can care to have. (952)

The development of character once again is of importance; it is not the "paramount end," however, but "a paramount end" (my emphasis). But why this "character" should be even "a paramount end" is not made clear. We can agree that "the existence of this ideal nobleness of character" will "go further than all things else towards making human life happy"--in any sense that makes such happiness worth attaining. But once again, Mill fails to provide the means of rendering this "elevation of character" a thing to be desired in itself--"the cultivation of an ideal nobleness of

will and conduct," he tells us, "should be to individual human beings an end, to which the specific pursuit...of their own happiness...should, in any case of conflict, give way" (my emphases). This depends on a knowledge of what constitutes such "ideal nobleness," and also on "happiness" being a universally recognized **phenomenon**. But a word which admits of so many, and such personal, definitions, is virtually useless as a standard by which to measure conduct. The phrase "ideal nobleness" is equally vague.

Mill's final remarks, in which he defines happiness as "pleasure and freedom from pain" and then as that which renders life "such as human beings with highly developed faculties can care to have,"~~are~~ not particularly helpful. Freedom from pain will not assist in the performance of those "virtuous actions" for which one's immediate happiness has to be sacrificed; the development of these "faculties" seems to depend upon their pre-existence in an already "highly developed" form, for how else is it to be hoped that the pursuit of "ideal nobleness of character" will be recognized as a source of happiness? Certainly in Mill's remarks here we can see an "enlargement" of Bentham's scheme, but Mill's attempts to join the Coleridgian recognition of the spiritual values in which what is truly human in our lives is rooted, with the Benthamite pursuit of happiness, seems destined to failure. Certainly it renders Utilitarianism more humane (as Williams notes), but it also results in the radical separation of the very elements of life Mill intended to unite.

* * * * *

In 1867, Mill was asked to deliver the "Inaugural Address" to the University of St. Andrew's. As we consider the remarks Mill made in this speech, we can see not only the value of Mill's ideas, but, perhaps even more clearly, the culmination of some of the fundamental weaknesses of his position. Mill begins the "Address" with several excellent remarks on the kind of education that ought to be given by a University. I have already cited this passage; here, I will only repeat his conclusion: "What professional men should carry away with them from an University, is...that which should direct the use of their professional knowledge, and bring the light of general culture to illuminate the technicalities of a special pursuit" (XXI: 218). This is excellent, and as needful of statement now as it was in 1867. Mill continues by giving as his purpose in the speech **his desire to**

...offer a few remarks on each of these departments "of general culture" considered in its relation to human cultivation at large...how they all conspire to the common end, the strengthening, exalting, purifying, and beautifying of our common nature, and the fitting out of mankind with the necessary implements for the work they have to perform through life. (220)

There is something startling in the phrase "mental implements;" in the midst of such verbals as "strengthening," "exalting," "purifying," and "beautifying," the phrase sounds sharply prosaic, and a potential contrast is suggested, between work to be done with "mental implements," and this spiritually conceived "common end" of

"exalting" our "common nature."

Mill continues by acknowledging an actual contrast; once again, it is **between literature and science**. Here, Mill demands **of his audience:**

Can anything deserve the name of a good education which does not include literature and science too? If there were no more to be said than that scientific education teaches us to **think**, and literary education to express our thoughts, do we not require both? and is not any one a poor, maimed, lopsided fragment of humanity who is deficient in either? ...we are not so badly off that our scholars need be ignorant of the laws and properties of the world they live in, or our scientific men destitute of poetic feeling and artistic cultivation. (221)

This starts off convincingly--indeed, a "good education" ought to exclude neither literature nor science. But we note that Mill continues by having science teach us to think, while literature teaches us to "express our thoughts" (my emphasis); "scholars" are naturally connected with "poetic feeling and artistic cultivation," and "scientific men" with "the laws and properties of the world they live in." The categories are familiar to us by now; here, we must question whether one group seems to be more reasonable and serious in approach and subject--and surely Mill's idiom suggests that it is the "scientific men," concerned as they are with "the laws and properties of the world they"--and we--"live in," who are of a higher order than those concerned with "poetic feeling and artistic cultivation." The hierarchy seems to have been inverted.

From this point, Mill's discussion focusses on these two

"departments" of education. As was the case in "Civilization," by "literary education," Mill means Classical education:

The only languages, then, and the only literature, to which I would allow a place in the ordinary curriculum, are those of the Greeks and Romans.... That position is justified, by the great value, in education, of knowing well some other cultivated language and literature than one's own, and by the peculiar value of these particular languages and literatures. (225)

Practice in translation leads to greater accuracy in one's own language; beyond that, knowing another language well (and another culture, through its literature) has the following value:

Improvement consists in bringing our opinions into nearer agreement with facts; and we shall not be likely to do this while we look at facts only through glasses coloured by those very opinions. But since we cannot divest ourselves of pre-conceived notions, there is no known means of eliminating their influence but by frequently using the differently coloured glasses of other people: and those of other nations, as the most different, are the best. (226)

Here, Mill accepts the usual empiricist-Utilitarian application of the "coloured glass" metaphor. Mill's formulation of the problem is quite explicitly empiricist: it is with "facts" that we want our "opinions" to agree, and this aspect of the "usefulness" of a literary education is quite explicitly related to its ability to further the pursuits of science. Locke and Bentham also used the image of the distorting glass--a universally knowable object of perception is interfered with by the subjectivity of the process of perception and by the very nature of the language used to express that act of perception. Mill offers this aspect of education as a

means of enabling the student to reach the "facts" that exist beyond "opinions."

It is for instruction in form, or "the artistic perfection of treatment," that Mill regards the ancient literatures to be superior to the modern: "for, as regards substance, I consider modern poetry to be superior to ancient, in the same manner though in a less degree, as modern science: it enters deeper into nature" (231). This is clearly opposed to Mill's view of modern poetry in "Civilization;" there, the moral lessons of "the literature of our own and other modern nations" (XVIII: 145) were seen to be inferior to those found in classical writings. But now, it is for instruction in rhetorical skills, and not for moral guidance, that Mill turns to the classical texts. They can teach the orator "to lead the hearer smoothly and imperceptibly into the state of mind which the orator wishes to produce" (231). This is reminiscent of Mill's account in the Autobiography of his father's principal reason for instructing his son in the Classics:

He not only drew my attention to the insight they afforded into Athenian institutions, and the principles of legislation and government which they often illustrated, but pointed out the skill and art of the orator--how everything important to his purpose was said at the exact moment when he had brought the minds of his audience into the state most fitted to receive it; how he made steal into their minds, gradually and by insinuation, thoughts which if expressed in a more direct manner would have roused their opposition. (I; 23)

This seems to suggest that the first object of a "literary education"

is to teach the student propagandistic skills. We have already seen Mill separate poetry from eloquence, or rhetoric, by denying to poetry the conscious desire of persuading. One effect of this is to separate poetry from speech, which is uttered thought. The object of poetry is truth; the object of speech is persuasion, in Mill's formulation. The dangers of this are obvious: poetry becomes limited to the description or expression of the 'affective'; rhetoric is limited to technical manoeuvres, propagandistic in intention, divorced from any concern with truth.

Mill continues by insisting that all beauty of expression

...must be subservient to the most perfect expression of the sense; ornament which attracts attention to itself, and shines by its own beauties, only does so by calling off the mind from the main object, and thus not only interferes with the higher purpose of human discourse, which ought, and generally professes, to have some matter to communicate, apart from the mere excitement of the moment, but also spoils the perfection of the composition as a piece of fine art, by destroying the unity of effect. (231)

This is a way of thinking that tends to separate image from meaning. There is "beauty of expression" and there is "expression of the sense;" the two are not united. In fact, the former will tend to distract attention from the latter. We can see here a distinction between a prose that is purely prosaic (and thus suited to the needs of the "higher purpose of human discourse") and a prose that is also poetic. Because poetry is seen to be incapable of furthering "the higher purpose of human discourse," to the extent that prose is poetic, it is weakened. Mill is not here

addressing himself to a prose intended to assist in the pursuit of scientific truth--this is a discussion of all discursive prose, and we can see, I think, the larger effects of dividing poetry from rhetoric. It is not only poetry that is weakened by Mill's compartmentalization, but also prose.

After claiming that instruction in classical languages will assist the student "not to be prolix" (231), Mill concludes his discussion of the "literary department" of a complete education:

Much more might be said respecting classical instruction, and literary cultivation in general, as part of liberal education. But it is time to speak of the uses of scientific instruction; or rather its indispensable necessity, for it is recommended by every consideration which pleads for any high order of intellectual education at all. (233)

It is by "scientific instruction" that the student can be taught to know what is true and what not; this seems immediately of greater importance than instruction in expression. Through this branch of learning, "the intellect" can be fitted "for the proper work of a human being;" Mill continues:

Facts are the materials of our knowledge, but the mind itself is the instrument; and it is easier to acquire facts, than to judge what they prove, and how, through the facts which we know, to get to those which we want to know.

...we all require the ability to judge between the conflicting opinions which are offered to us as vital truths.... (234)

The question then must be how these truths can be found and known; Mill suggests these methods:

Now, however different these searches for truth

may look, and however unlike they really are in their subject-matter, the methods of getting at truth, and the tests of truth, are in all cases much the same. There are but two roads by which truth can be discovered; observation, and reasoning.... The processes by which truth is attained, reasoning and observation, have been carried to their greatest known perfection in the physical sciences. As classical literature furnishes the most perfect types of the art of expression, so do the physical sciences of the art of thinking. (234)

Mill moves from these general observations to a more detailed discussion of the uses of the various sciences for arriving at the desired knowledge; he concludes this part of his discussion with some observations on Psychology, which,

...in truth, is simply the knowledge of the laws of human nature. If there is anything that deserves to be studied by man, it is his own nature and that of his fellow-men; and if it is worth studying at all, it is worth studying scientifically.... (242)

Human nature Mill had once put forward as an object of poetic knowledge; now, however, even knowledge of human behaviour demands a scientific approach.

But there is still the problem of transforming knowledge into action: "Knowing our duty, and our work in life" is "but half the work of education; it still remains, that what we know, we shall be willing and determined to put in practice" (247). This, of course, was precisely the problem that first led Mill to take poetry seriously: it presented a way of connecting knowledge with desire, the intelligence with the will. In 1867, however, Mill is more confident that knowing "the truth is already a great way towards

disposing us to act upon it. What we see clearly and apprehend keenly, we have a natural desire to act out" (247). However, it is still "a very imperfect education which trains the intelligence only, but not the will." The training of the will "is either moral or religious" and "it is beyond" the abilities of the Universities "to educate morally or religiously. Moral and religious education consist in training the feelings and the daily habits" (247); these are best taught in the home and by the family. But although the University cannot provide a "moral and religious education," it can "make known" to its students "what mankind at large, their own country, and the best and wisest individual men, have thought on the great subjects of morals and religion" (248). The end of this teaching is to direct the student "towards the establishment and preservation of the rules and conduct most advantageous to mankind" (248).

This moral and religious department of education is not inspired, as was the scientific department, by a desire to reach truth, but rather by a desire to acquaint the student with the varieties of opinion available, so that he may choose for himself which to believe (250).

The last five pages of the "Address" Mill gives over to a discussion of a third "division" of "human culture;" this is

...the aesthetic branch; the culture which comes through poetry and art, and may be described as the education of the feelings, the cultivation of the beautiful. (251)

We have had intellectual (classical and scientific), and moral education; now we can add to these the education of the feelings, or, as Mill puts it a little further on, "the cultivation of the sentiments" (253). The English have traditionally relied upon their consciences, and not their sentiments, to tell them what they ought to do, but here Mill argues that

It is quite possible to cultivate the conscience and the sentiments too. Nothing hinders us from so training a man that he will not, even for a disinterested purpose, violate the moral law, and also feeding and encouraging those high feelings, on which we mainly rely for lifting men above low and sordid objects, and giving them a higher conception of what constitutes success in life. If we wish men to practice virtue, it is worth while trying to make them love virtue.... (253)

This seems closely connected with the goal of moral and religious education, and this new branch of education, the aesthetic, will train the student "to feel, not only actual wrong or actual meanness, but the absence of noble aims and endeavours, as not merely blameable but also degrading..." (254). It is poetry that can teach us so to feel;

Now, of this elevated tone of mind the great source of inspiration is poetry, and all literature so far as it is poetical and artistic. We may imbibe exalted feelings from Plato, or Demosthenes, or Tacitus, but it is in so far as these great men are not solely philosophers or orators or historians, but poets and artists. (254)

This is of course entirely consistent with Mill's previous thought on the subject.

Now, however, Mill is not exclusively concerned with these high and noble sentiments:

Nor is it only loftiness, only the heroic feelings, that are bred by poetic cultivation. Its power is as great in calming the soul as in elevating it--in fostering the milder emotions, as the more exalted. It brings home to us all those aspects of life which take hold of our nature on its unselfish side, and lead us to identify our joy and grief with the good or ill of the system of which we form a part; and all those solemn or pensive feelings, which, without having any direct application to conduct, incline us to take life seriously, and predispose us to the reception of anything which comes before us in the shape of duty.... All the arts of expression tend to keep alive and in activity the feelings they express. (254)

The importance of poetry lies not so much in its ability to express feelings (although this is the source of its importance) but rather in its ability to cultivate those feelings in its audience, even in a quiet form. By keeping alive the affective compartment of the human psyche, poetry ensures that character is "elevated," inclines us "to take life seriously," and ensures that our duty will not only be known, but subsequently done. Poetry can ensure the **liveliness of the** feelings necessary to the efficacy of moral and religious instruction; poetry is the means by which the ends of cultivation can be achieved.

But however important this relationship between poetry and morality seems to make poetry, it must be remembered that this very significance depends upon the separation of poetry itself from

reality, from life:

The more prosaic our ordinary duties, the more necessary it is to keep up the tone of our minds by frequent visits to that higher region of thought and feeling, in which every work seems dignified in proportion to the ends for which and the spirit in which, it is done; where we learn, while eagerly seizing every opportunity of exercising higher faculties and performing higher duties, to regard all useful and honest work as a public function, which may be ennobled by the mode of performing it. (255)

This is an almost pious approach to poetry--we retire to it as we once left our daily toil to attend Sunday services. The dignity thus accorded to poetry is obviously a dangerous one. What is so separate from ordinary life and thought, may well become difficult to take seriously.

We have frequently seen Mill insist upon the need for examples of noble characters engaged in great actions, and in this "Address," Mill expands this concept:

There is...a natural affinity between goodness and the cultivation of the Beautiful, when it is real cultivation, and not a mere unguided instinct. He who has learnt what beauty is, if he be of a virtuous character, will desire to realize it in his own life--will keep before himself a type of perfect beauty in human character, to light his attempts at self-culture. (255)

Art will enable us to know what this "beauty" is:

Art, when really cultivated, and not merely practised empirically, maintains, what it first gave the conception of, an ideal Beauty, to be eternally aimed at, though surpassing what can be actually attained; and by this idea it trains us never to be completely satisfied with imperfection in what we ourselves do and are: to

idealize, as much as possible, every work we do, and most of all, our own characters and lives.
(256)

This is, of course, a Platonic circumvention of Plato's objection to poetry. Mill is claiming that Art is imitative, but of "ideal Beauty;" thus, rather than leading man away from realities, it reminds him always of the existence of the highest form of Beauty and Goodness, and ensures his continued commitment to a life-long attempt to attain this "ideal Beauty."

There is a quality in Mill's prose in this final section of the "Address" (it is often present when Mill deals with these subjects) that I find regrettable. At its best, his style is a model of balance and reason, of good sense and clarity. Mill is capable of making the plainest statement of logical relationship verge on eloquence; this is from "Bentham":

Nobody's synthesis can be more complete than his analysis. If in his survey of human nature and life he has left any element out, then, wheresoever that element exerts any influence, his conclusions will fail, more or less, in their application. (X: 89)

This is clear, lucid, forceful, and intelligent. Certainly even at its best, Mill's prose does suffer from the defects of its virtues; James Olney, in his discussion of Mill's Autobiography in Metaphors of Self, gives the following description of Mill's prose:

Whatever did change, Mill's style, one to one with his education, continued cerebral to the end.... For all his massive and synthesizing intelligence, it would be fair to say of Mill that he lacks somewhat in humour as well as stylistic verve.... In its rational clarity,

in its high and dry thinness, Mill's prose is quite emptied of affective feeling; in its emotional poverty, it offers no hook, no variation of texture, for the reader's sensory imagination. The mind might be fed on sensation, as Mill claimed, but somehow, in its typical functioning, the mind must retain all its sensory detail, for none of it turns up on the page in Mill's writing. The reader of Mill must be content with the ratiocinative product since Mill offers him so little of the felt, raw material of thought. It is certainly true that his reader very seldom dares to disagree with Mill, but he equally seldom gives a total... assent, or feels his will moved by the argument, for the fact is that Mill very infrequently makes a total--i.e., more than intellectual--appeal. (242-43)

Olney's remarks are compelling, and we have commented already on the absence of image in Mill's discursive prose. But it is well that we should remember that if Mill's prose does suffer from the defects of its virtues, it also boasts the virtues of its defects, and remains admirable for its "rational clarity," its balance, and its generous commitment to reasoned fairness.

But in these final pages of the "Inaugural Address," Mill's diction alters--words such as "noble," "exalted," "loftiness," "heroic," "elevating," and so on suddenly abound. As we read this section of the "Address," we realize that we are being taken into another region--it is manifestly (although not dogmatically) a spiritual region. Mill's prose here is, I would suggest, the worst possible advertisement for the very values he is attempting to inculcate. There is an imprecision and a vagueness that suggest that Mill has ceased to think, in his anxiety to feel. Beyond any

question, Mill is sincere, and yet, how much more convincing were Mill's lucid, rational opening remarks about the ends of a University education. Mill concluded that section of the "Address" by urging that "Education makes a man a more intelligent shoemaker, if that be his occupation, but not by teaching him how to make shoes; it does so by the mental exercise it gives, and the habits it impresses." This is, I suppose, by comparison with the lofty sentiments of the close of the "Address" merely prosaic--but it is also concise, not without wit, clear, and convincing. The absence of "affective emotion" that limits Mill's rational prose is far less debilitating than the absence of reasonable thought that weakens Mill's attempts to discuss aesthetics in a prose designed to express the affective.

Mill's attempt to unite poetry and spirituality is not unusual in the Victorian period (Matthew Arnold of course also suggests a spiritual or spiritualizing function for poetry); as Mill formulates the idea, it seems to be merely vague and uncertain. What is clear is the underlying claim that poetry, by nourishing the feelings, ensures the continual efficacy of the actual thought done by the sciences in their various disciplines. Poetry is the necessary ancillary of science; the emotions it "maintains" ensure that meaning is kept meaningful, and that desire does not fail. The prose in which Mill expresses this compartmentalization of function provides a perfect image of the dissociated sensibility, feeling now and thinking then, but, as Olney, echoing Wordsworth, notes, it is a prose incapable of carrying "the subject alive by passion into

the heart" (244). It is a prose both consequent upon, and symptomatic of, Mill's failure to find a way to bring together the rational and the emotional in a truly new and sustaining harmony.

Conclusion

It is the contention of F. Parvin Sharpless, in The Literary Criticism of John Stuart Mill, that "Mill's literary criticism represents an unceasing search for the philosopher-poet, an attempt to discover the ideal man...whose work and life reconcile the opposites of fact and feeling..." (220). It is true that, in "Thoughts on Poetry and Its Varieties," Mill insists that "superiority will naturally be on the side of the philosopher-poet" (I: 364)--or, on the side of the poet who unites the qualities of the poet of nature with the education and abilities of the poet of culture. However, as we have seen, Mill follows this with an assertion that he is describing a collaboration of two faculties, and not their union: "two endowments are better than one...truth is more certainly arrived at by two processes, verifying and correcting each other, than by one alone" (364). Sharpless believes that the attempt failed only in the 1850's and 1860's, that "In the last two decades of his life, Mill comes to doubt the whole possibility of the philosopher-poet, to doubt the possibility of the reconciliation which it implied, and the unity of mind, spirit, head and heart, which it would have validated" (222). Thus, Sharpless sees a steady concern, a sustained interest in poetry, and a search for the union of philosophy and poetry that is abandoned only late in Mill's career in favour of a statement of the necessity of poetry

to the inevitably separate endeavours of philosophy.

J. M. Robson, in the "Introduction" to the literary essays contained in Volume I of the Collected Works of John Stuart Mill, comments rather differently that

There is little evidence that Mill read poetry later in life, and it is probably best, in the over-all view, to say that where, before the mental crisis, he had been "theoretically indifferent" to poetry [I: 115], ever afterwards he was theoretically in favour of it--still, however, almost entirely on the level of theory.
(xlv)

A just assessment lies, I think, between these two views. The urgency of the breakdown having passed, Mill seems to have lost the intensity of interest that characterizes his earliest attempts to think about poetry. Perhaps in "Varieties" we do see Mill combining thought and feeling--certainly in that essay we have a logical structure combined with an often highly emotional (particularly if we concentrate on the 1833 versions) prose. Regrettably, however, the evidence of feeling is usually found in italics, overstatement, and dubious reasoning. What Sharpless seems not fully to recognize is the extent to which Mill's attempts to "unite" philosophy and poetry depended, from the beginning, upon the separation of philosophy from poetry--as even the discrepancies in tone between the style and structure of "Varieties" suggest. It is, I think, only in the essay on Tennyson that Mill persuasively suggests a real union of thought and feeling, but Mill chose not to republish "Tennyson's Poetry" in Dissertations and

Discussions.

After noting Mill's doubts about the possibility of reconciling logic and poetry, Sharpless comments that

This does not, however, result in a rejection of the artist. On the contrary, Mill insists more than ever in these years on the importance of cultivation of the feelings through art. It is the philosophy half of the poet-philosopher which is discarded, and as it is, the poetic half becomes even more important. (222)

These remarks pose difficulties, largely because Sharpless seems to accept, rather uncritically, the possibility of a poetic theory that splits poetry into a philosophical component (its prose sense--that which can be paraphrased), and a poetic component (its emotive force). Consequent upon this theory is the possibility of being able to "discard" either "half" of the equation while still retaining something called poetry. We note Sharpless's reliance on the adjective and the proper noun ("poetic" and "poet")--the poem is less important than either the poet or "the poetic." It is "the poetic" in poetry that results in the "cultivation of the feelings through art" which is identified here by Sharpless as Mill's consistent concern. I have commented fairly extensively on this notion of cultivation; I would like to conclude this thesis by considering the concept a little further; to do so, I would like to return our attention first to Raymond Williams' discussion of the term in Culture and Society, and then to the Autobiography and Mill's description there of the "mental crisis" that began the interest in poetry with which this thesis is concerned.

By virtue of the fact that that account is autobiographical, it is retrospective; as such, it enables us to see the beginning from the perspective of the end--the earliest thought is described by (filtered through) the consciousness of the mature mind. As such, it is a particularly appropriate place to conclude this discussion.

Williams comments, as we have seen, on Mill's determination to "enlarge" Benthamism by including in it Coleridge's "emphasis on Culture" (Williams 60); I hope I have also shown that Mill's notion of the meaning of cultivation differs from Coleridge's. There is of course nothing inherently wrong in that; to take an idea from Coleridge does not necessitate its continued expression in the same form. However, I would again urge (as indeed Williams does) that Mill's use of the word "cultivation" limits and weakens the value of Coleridge's insight and solution. Furthermore, it is a usage, an understanding, directly connected to the split of poetry from logic, and of emotion from reason, that we have been examining throughout Mill's writing on poetry.

We have recognized already that Mill turned to poetry to find that which would nourish the emotions, which had (in Mill's own life) been stunted by the entirely analytic nature of his education. Poetry, by "cultivating" the emotions, could ensure that desire for reform--for life itself--would remain active. As Williams notes, this is because poetry, as "Mill describes it" in the Autobiography, "is 'the very culture of the feelings,' but it is not only this; 'it has no connexion with struggle or imperfection'---

that is to say, it is a separate, ideal sphere" (Williams 67; Mill I: 151). It is precisely by virtue of the separation of poetry from life (from the realities of "struggle or imperfection") that it is "useful," and this of course is the argument of the St. Andrew's "Address." Williams' comments on this way of thinking (he makes reference only to the Autobiography) are acute:

The basic objection to this way of regarding poetry is that it makes poetry a substitute for feeling. It does this because the normal method of intellectual organization, in minds of this kind, is a method which tends to deny the substance of feelings, to dismiss them as 'subjective' and therefore likely to obscure or hinder the ordinary march of thought. If the mind is a 'machine for thinking,' then feeling, in the ordinary sense, is irrelevant to its operations. Yet the 'machine for thinking' inhabits a whole personality, which is subject, as in Mill's case, to complex stresses, and even to breakdown. (67)

Williams continues by noting that this type of mind will, by virtue of its subjection to "complex stresses...and even breakdown," recognize its need for "an additional 'department,' a special reserve area in which feeling can be tended and organized." Furthermore, this "mind" will at once conclude that "such a 'department' exists in poetry and art, and...considers that recourse to this reserve area is...an 'enlargement' of the mind." Thus, poetry becomes specialized to the "function of 'a culture of the feelings'"--and this specialization can thus be seen "as part of the same movement which produced the characteristic rational narrowness of Utilitarian thought" (67). This seems to me to be

precisely the point that needs to be made. I am not fully convinced that Mill ever wanted a genuine synthesis, a true union of emotion and intellect, of poetry and philosophy. As I hope to show, the evidence of the Autobiography suggests that he did not. Mill was forced to account for the emotions; he did so by including them (by way of poetry) in his intellectual scheme--but the inclusion even from the beginning tends to take the form of an additional "department" or "compartment" of the mind. Mill's solution is that poetry should be used, privately, to nourish the emotions, thus facilitating the actual (public) work done by the other "departments" of the mind.

In Mill's autobiographical description of his first recognition of his emotional needs and subsequent reading of Wordsworth's poetry in 1828, we can see evidence of his later revisions of his first sense of the profound importance of poetry. Mill's prose, as he recounts the effects of his reading of the Lyrical Ballads, is heavily qualified: "They seemed to be the very culture of the feelings.... In them I seemed to draw from a source of inward joy.... From them I seemed to learn..."(my emphases; I: 151). Indeed, phrases such as "or thought I saw," "I thought," "as I said to myself," and so on, are interjected throughout this account, and all conduce to one effect; that of distancing the older from the younger man. This tends to make the passage less convincing, and Mill's idiom, as he attempts to recreate his experience of those

years, further detracts from the validity of his claims for the deep importance of poetic cultivation. Coleridge, we remember, urged that cultivation was essential to the "health" of the State; he did not, however, offer such testimonials as these: "What made Wordsworth's poems a medicine for my state of mind," or "And I felt myself at once better and happier as I came under their influence" (151). Poetry is to Mill a "medicine;" it provides a tonic that can brace the sufferer against the "dissolving influence of analysis" (143). Recognizing after the ennui of the crisis that it was the feelings that needed tending, Mill turned, as Williams points out, to the appropriate "department" to find the necessary corrective. He "resorted to" Byron first, in hopes of finding "mental relief," but "got no good" from him--"The poet's state of mind was too like my own." However, "while Byron was exactly what did not suit my condition, Wordsworth was exactly what did," and the 1815 edition of Lyrical Ballads "proved to be the precise thing for" Mill's "mental wants at that particular juncture" (149-51). To say the least, this is reductive. Mill does not suggest that Wordsworth is a better poet than Byron, only a more effective one, and remembering Mill's distinctions between Shelley and Wordsworth, we must recognize this particular instance of Wordsworth's efficacy as more evidence that although Wordsworth is inferior as a poet, he is superior in the consequent efficacy of his poetry on "unpoetic" natures. We must also in fairness remember, however, that this account is retrospective. Mill is writing this years after the crisis, and in this fact we can, I think, find evidence of the failure of his enterprise.

Mill's language in these passages from the Autobiography suggests that poetry need be accorded only an ancillary significance--it is a "medicine" that can be taken when needed, and "with culture of this sort, there was nothing to dread from the most confirmed habit of analysis" (153). There is "nothing to dread," because the antidote--poetry--is always at hand. Poetry, as well as being an antidote, is also a region, and we remember that in the St. Andrew's "Address" Mill describes this haven to which we can retire when the actual work of life has drained our energies.

Thus, once again, we see that Mill's initial attempt to find a place for the emotions and poetry remained just that, and never resulted in a genuine deepening of Mill's conception of what it is to be fully human. And yet, his Philosophic Radicalism is more humane, more comprehensive than either his father's or Jeremy Bentham's--although its superiority in a sense makes it more dangerous; because it does represent an enlargement, it can more easily be mistaken for a true image of a way of thinking that unifies intellect and emotions in an intelligent and responsible manner. In fact, as I hope I have shown, Mill offers no such synthesis, but only a model of separation and dissociation. The attempt we must judge a failure, but we must also recognize, with J. M. Robson, that the "endeavour made him a broader, deeper and more complex thinker and writer than he had been before" (I; xlv). And however much we must regret his failure, we can only admire his attempt, and hope to achieve as great a sincerity and diligence in our own efforts.

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