2001

A World of Deference: Paradoxes of Victorian Paternalism in John Ruskin, Charles Dickens, and John Stuart Mill.

Peter Mitchell O'neill
Louisiana State University and Agricultural & Mechanical College

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UMI
A WORLD OF DEERENCE: PARADOXES OF VICTORIAN PATERNALISM
IN JOHN RUSKIN, CHARLES DICKENS, AND JOHN STUART MILL

A Dissertation
Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the
Louisiana State University and
Agricultural and Mechanical College
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
in
The Department of English

by
Peter O’Neill
B.A., West Virginia University, 1979
M.A., West Virginia University, 1989
May 2001
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This work is dedicated to my late mother, Ann Mitchell O’Neill. Though she is no longer here to see the fruits of my labor, her comforting love and encouragement throughout my life no doubt have cultivated in me an aesthetic sensibility and quiet confidence that helped carry me through this literary project. Just as my mother would celebrate the pied beauty of her annual flower garden, I too, for a moment, can stop and smell the roses, knowing not only that I have completed my task but also that my mother, perhaps an unwitting Victorianist, is looking down at me with her well-trained and smiling eye.

My father, Robert O’Neill, also inspired me to dedicate myself to this project. Our weekly conversations, which often included my dissertation progress, inevitably concluded with his version of Tennyson’s robust determination: “to strive, to seek, to find, and not to yield.” In addition, my brothers, Chris and Bo, and my sister Karen maintained faith in my academic efforts. (I even used Bo’s college copy of Charles Dickens’s *Hard Times*, benefiting, at times, from his insightful marginalia).
Along with family, several friends have also made my endeavor more worthwhile, through enlightening discussions and emotional reassurance. Perhaps foremost among these is my close friend Jonathan Morrow. His inimitable wit and broad knowledge of literature spurred me on during some indolent stretches. Eschewing the perfunctory pats on the back, Jonathan buoyed me throughout the writing process by suggesting relevant primary and secondary texts. Another friend, Joe Devore, whom I considered a novice on Ruskin, frequently lectured me, with great enthusiasm, on the applications of Ruskin's political and aesthetic theories. Our many phone conversations became a wonderful intellectual dialogue that further fueled my interest in Ruskin, as well as strengthened my resolve to excel in this study.

Another friend and fellow Victorianist at LSU to whom I am indebted is Cynthia DeMarcus. Having recently completed her dissertation on Victorian literature, Cynthia remained engaged in my topic and often shared her insights into Victorian culture and individual writers, especially Charles Dickens. Remaining generally isolated in Houston throughout my research, I feel fortunate that she was still in Baton Rouge, truly my last student colleague. In addition to her literary knowledge,
Cynthia shared many practical suggestions with me about the dissertation process, such as various administrative steps, that proved helpful in the end. I also thank all of my friends and colleagues at McFall, Glidden, Sherwood & Breitbeil, the corporate law firm where I currently work, for supporting my ambitions and enduring my solipsistic narratives about my dissertation status while I continued my journey.

In terms of academic influences, I am deeply grateful, first, to my former professor and retired editor of the journal Victorian Poetry at West Virginia University, John F. Stasny. In his enlightening seminar on Victorian humanism, Professor Stasny introduced me to Victorian literature. For this class, I recall writing a stylistic analysis of choice poetic passages from John Ruskin’s The Nature of Gothic. That, after twenty years, I am still captivated by this wonderful essay, as well as the genius that is John Ruskin, remains largely a tribute to Professor Stasny. After this class, I took almost every class he taught, occasionally sitting in on some of his undergraduate survey classes to feel the zest with which he approached his subject. The Victorian age has fascinated me ever since.
As a successor to Professor Stasny, Professor Sharon Aronofsky Weltman, who directed my dissertation, deserves the most gratitude for my achievement. It is she, after all, who counseled me through my occasional dilatoriness, carefully guided me through my interpretive struggles, and ultimately became the mentoring force that drove me to complete my dissertation. Seeing her fresh study of John Ruskin, entitled *Ruskin’s Mythic Queen*, on the shelf at the Rice library, where I conducted most of my research, also revealed to me Professor Weltman’s scholarly spirit. This wonderfully tangible result of Professor Weltman’s scholarship, in many ways, propelled me to carry on with my task, hoping that I, too, as a fledgling critic, might experience a similar measure of satisfaction in seeing my thoughts materialize into this modest book.

Along with Professor Weltman, I appreciate the participation and guidance of the other members of my dissertation committee: Professors Rebecca Crump, Jim Borck, Michael Grimes, and David Lindenfeld. All of these professors sharpened my insights, by directly commenting on individual chapters, at times, and providing relevant historical and theoretical texts. Ultimately, my committee’s engagement helped me both to
discover more ideas related to my thesis and to better articulate my interpretive strategies.

In the spirit of my dissertation, I, with a protective paternal hand, also dedicate this study to my daughter Meagan. Writing this dissertation was sometimes isolating. However, hearing my daughter’s voice, discussing with her her own literature projects in high school, and brimming when she talked about her college plans anchored me in my humanity, in my deep love for her. Considering her academic curiosity and imagination, I trust that Meagan will, as I have done, cultivate a passion for a discipline or vocation that suits her identity and thereby brings her much happiness. In a special way, my patience in attaining my doctorate degree is rewarded by the thought that Meagan and I will both be in college during the same year. I hope that I can bequeath to her the love of books and the pleasures that come with many rich forms of learning, which I discovered throughout my long college career.
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ABSTRACT

This study examines the residual paternalist ideology in three canonical Victorian texts: namely, John Ruskin's The Nature of Gothic, Charles Dickens's Hard Times, and John Stuart Mill's Autobiography. In exposing an epistemological tension between paternalist and liberal beliefs—especially a putative concern for the working class—that exists in these texts, this discussion concludes that not only are the cultural forces of benevolent authority insidious in Victorian culture, but that the paradoxes that emerge in these texts may reflect a public ambiguity toward the prevalent structures sustaining Victorian paternalism.

The three texts examined inscribe hierarchical principles—while ironically exposing them—in generally similar ways: through Romantic aesthetics, a "deferential dialectic" (a useful economic model about employer/worker relations), Christian sentiment, and the rhetoric of the sage. By sharing these features of paternalist thinking, the generically diverse works under review maintain a strong intertextual dialogue. To discover the covert paternalism in the texts of three ostensibly liberal reformers reveals how inveterate the habits that
constitute deferential politics remain in mid-Victorian England.

As eminent cultural sages of Victorian England, Ruskin, Dickens, and Mill engaged in rhetorical strategies with their readers, which, at times, mirrored the dynamic between a manager of a textile mill and his dependent operative. While trying to identify with their readers, these prophets, at the same time, differentiate themselves by an unwitting hierarchical positioning. To identify the contradictory messages that are embedded in major literary representations of the Victorian period is to better understand how sage marketers, such as Ruskin, Dickens, and Mill, both inherit and perpetuate the paradoxes of Victorian paternalism.
CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

The general prosperity of Victorian England rested on its ability to adjust to the radical social and economic effects of laissez-faire capitalism. The success of this capitalist transition, oddly enough, often depended on a paternalist ideology. In the nineteenth century, the word "paternalism" referred to a society whose general authority was composed of a diverse network of father figures, including, for example, judges, parsons, magistrates, and factory managers. Previous forms of paternalism, such as patriarchy or patrimony, provided a material grounding for its legitimacy: the male bloodline, for instance, determined marital relationships, which, in turn, would control the inheritance of property. With the new economy, this material ground eroded. Consequently, paternalism became rooted primarily in metaphor; society needed to legitimate the power relations with simulated paternal structures.¹ Paternalism performed this function by introducing into the industrial workplace the notion of a family structure, with the boss playing the role of the benevolent, yet firm, father, while the operatives cultivated a filial loyalty to their paternal head. As the social critic Richard Sennett succinctly observes, "Paternalism is male domination without a contract" (54). To compensate for this lack of contract, the dominant class

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attempted to impose a symbolic familial structure onto society. This metaphorical system served, among other things, to temper and socially control the workings of the growing cash-nexus economy.

Philosophically, Victorian paternalism was based upon various assumptions about society: namely, that authority is necessary for a society to flourish; that this authority was by nature hierarchical; and lastly, that an organic harmony sustained this hierarchy. This last tenet was indeed essential to certifying the authoritative network that managed Victorian life. The bond that tied employer to worker, as well as the duties that came with each person’s job and social status, expressed this putative organicism. However, the language of interconnectedness in Victorian society was, in reality, often a euphemism for the manufacturing class’s need to secure the power relations between employer and operative.

The ideals of this familial makeup in Victorian society were often expressed throughout the cultural discourse of the day by prominent sages, such as Matthew Arnold and Thomas Carlyle. These cultural high priests would often explore in their essays the condition of England, diagnosing the causes of society’s maladies. They would then attempt to prescribe a cure for these problems. For Arnold, poetry was to be the new secular religion,
while Carlyle encouraged a renewed spiritual faith, whose major impetus was assiduous work. In proposing these humanistic projects, many cultural prophets also fashioned a paternalistic bond with their readers. In short, the Victorian sage was a guide and protector of his reader/subject.

In order to stress the role of the sage in forming the deferential habits of Victorian culture, this study, at times, selects significant features of sage activity, as articulated in John Holloway's seminal study, *The Victorian Sage*, and applies them to Howard Newby's idea of the "deferential dialectic." In Holloway's critique, the Victorian sage sustained his authority as a worthy cultural critic by developing a trustworthy persona. The sage's oracular pose was achieved not only by the perspicacity of his cultural assessment or the versatility of his rhetoric, but also by his emotional identification with the reader. The sage gained credibility by displaying a recognizable range of human emotions—one especially thinks of Carlyle's tonal swings from intemperate indignation to avuncular inspiration. As Holloway emphasizes, it is the ability of the sage to control his tone—and thereby allow the reader to experience the sage's "whole personality" while reading a particular essay—that often secures his revered position. In Newby's "deferential dialectic," the employer enacts a
similar practice: as a paternal figure, he tries, ideally, to build trust and respect through identification with his subordinate. At the same time, the employer, mostly by the very nature of his hierarchical leverage, maintains "differentiation," or power over his worker.

A major target of sympathy throughout many sage texts was the struggling industrial worker. The efficacy of benevolent paternalism, these texts averred, would improve the working class and its languishing relationship with the employer class. The Victorian prophet often wished to provide antidotes to what they considered the alienating effects of the political economy. One means to improve these conditions was to recapture a transcendent familial morality and cultivate it in the working culture. In an essay from Unto This Last, John Ruskin, for instance, describes what the proper role of the manufacturer should be in treating his worker:

[I]n his office as governor of the men employed by him, the merchant or manufacturer is invested with a distinctly paternal authority and responsibility. In most cases, a youth entering a commercial establishment is withdrawn altogether from home influence; his master must become his father, else he has, for practical and constant help, no father at hand: in all cases the master's authority, together with the general tone and atmosphere of his business, and the character of the men with whom the youth is compelled in the course of it to associate, have more immediate and pressing weight than the home influence, and will usually neutralize it either for good or evil; so that the only means which the master has of doing justice to the men
employed by him is to ask himself sternly whether he is dealing with such subordinate as he would with his own son, if compelled by circumstances to take such a position. (17.41-42)

This passage is worth quoting in its entirety. For one, it eloquently defines the terms and spirit of paternalism at this time. It also expresses the paradoxical goals of Ruskin as sage marketer of this ideology.

In his depiction here of the manufacturer as father figure, Ruskin appears to be offering an immutable rule that transcends the otherwise relative principles of political economy. As is often the case in Ruskin's economic analysis, he is treating the relationship between employer and worker as more than a practical case of profit and loss. Instead, Ruskin hopes to achieve fundamental justice through this paternalistic structure, especially for the subordinate.

The paradox of Ruskin's paternalism in this passage, however, is that the ideal moral bond inherent in the true father/son relationship does not adequately transfer to an economy in which the power relations seriously determine its success. In this context, the paternal dynamic becomes for the dominant class and reigning discourse—of which Ruskin and other social commentators are agents—a cover for an often unstable and unfair hierarchical relationship. In short, without the material substance of patrimonialism,
for example, the symbolic weight that constitutes paternalism in mid-Victorian England does not hold up. The contract between employer and worker is essentially built on a misplaced and artificially imposed familial trust.

Moreover, in reading Ruskin’s idealistic description, one is tempted to challenge his organicist assumptions about the salutary effects of a natural and harmonious Victorian family. After all, the domestic sphere, as the source of exemplary moral values, drives Ruskin’s premise. In this context, would Ruskin want, for example, the merchant to carry out his fatherly duties in the austere and dysfunctional manner of Ruskin’s own father, or perhaps in the draconian style of James Mill, another notoriously strict Victorian father? Given the tyrannical nature of many Victorian fathers, Ruskin’s implication that the employer should perform a surrogate nurturing is perhaps misplaced: in reality, the employer ultimately often repeats the stern sins of the father. In this sense, the elevation of the model family as a key ingredient of paternalism becomes suspect. Indeed, just as the son inherited his role by the accident of birth, so too did the worker usually inherit his dependent station and class disadvantages. In short, this familial model can strengthen class hierarchies. Ruskin’s passage, in fact,
represents a common strategy among the privileged class to lessen the alienating effects of rabid industrialization.

In light of the paternalist assumptions of an organic familial principle, the writers treated in this discussion reveal a strong reliance on related aspects of Romantic aesthetics. One crucial aspect common to all the texts studied is the use of nature as a mystical region of truth and imagination. As the title of Ruskin’s featured essay implies, there is a transcendent wholeness in Gothic, which in fact, includes for its full definition, an inherent naturalness. To a great extent, the whole essay may be read as an extended illustration of Romantic thought. As a tool of paternalist ideology, this privileging of nature as a seat of uncorrupted innocence and harmony effectively links, or naturalizes, the hierarchical levels of society. Other Romantic traits that help legitimate paternalism in the texts of this study are a nostalgic longing for the medieval past and the role of the imagination. Both features sometimes function as forms of displacement, especially in Ruskin’s *The Nature of Gothic* (1853).

By examining other significant Victorian texts, one may better test the principles, which, to a large extent, define the terms of paternalist ideology around this time. After all, Ruskin’s proposal that the manufacturer treat the worker like his own son becomes a crucial rule for his
refined political economy. In attempting here to humanize an often coldly rational economic system, Ruskin often ends up reinforcing the root problems of social and political inequality. By appealing to ideal family values, Ruskin—as well as other paternalists—naturalizes the superiority of the employer, while engendering an enduring deference in the operative. As this study shows, the familial feature helps constitute a deferential politics, which ultimately served to neutralize labor tensions, not solve them.

Paternal models also exist in the writings of other well-known Victorian reformers, famous for their working-class sympathies. A covert paternalist ideology offsets otherwise enlightening liberal appeals in these Victorian works, revealing the insidious nature of hierarchical authority in society. Though many social and historical commentators have illuminated the workings of paternalism throughout the Victorian period,² few critics have sustained a literary study that identifies an insidious paternalism, in various standard texts, as a significant source of epistemological tension. This tension largely revolved around two general ideologies: an emerging liberalism and an inveterate paternalism. Discovering the "truth" about a particular social or intellectual question could be framed by how these opposing outlooks were reconciled in the process.
To anchor ideas about how paternalist ideology was constructed by the age’s leading social reformers, this study relies on select sociological and aesthetic criticism. In particular, Patrick Joyce’s *Work, Society, and Politics* provides many illustrations of factory culture in northern England during the mid-to-late nineteenth century. Throughout most of his study, Joyce investigates how the work environment in various factories involved the internalization of a paternalist ethos by the worker. Consequently, the workers’ general acceptance of this “culture of subordination” depended on the familial moorings found in their work communities. In essence, the work culture engendered a sense of deference, which became naturalized in the employer/worker relationship. Work was intimately linked to a worker’s mentality. Specifically, the social relations between bosses and operatives greatly determined the efficacy of industrial capitalism at this time in England.

In applying Joyce’s insights, along with relevant aesthetic theory, to three interrelated cultural texts of the Victorian period, one can better comprehend the force of paternalist ideology at this time. Three Victorian texts that reflect these paradoxes of paternalism are John Ruskin’s *The Nature of Gothic* (1853), Charles Dickens’s
Hard Times (1854), and John Stuart Mill’s Autobiography (1873). Though these works appear in different genres, they maintain a strong intertextual dialogue. After all, Ruskin praises Hard Times for its searing critique of industrialism, while Hard Times, in many ways, dramatizes Ruskin’s admonition in The Nature of Gothic that society must strive to make a “thinking being” out of the worker and not an “animated tool.” Further, Mill’s father, James Mill, certainly appears as a source for the satirical thrust of Dickens’s Gradgrind. More broadly, by using three texts from nominally discrete genres, one may appreciate how their generic blurring—especially in the narrative sequences of the two non-fiction works—mirrors the subtle internalization of paternalist ideology by the worker/subject.

In terms of gender, this discussion explores some feminist implications of Victorian paternalism. Along with being an androcentric term in itself, paternalism appears through allegory in the texts examined. For instance, the deferential pose that Stephen takes when in the presence of Rachael in Hard Times exposes perhaps a misplaced reverence for authority, which grows out a deeper cultural submissiveness. In addition, Stephen’s near apotheosis of Rachael constitutes a paternalistic maneuver. Like John Stuart Mill, Stephen—and perhaps, more broadly, Dickens as
narrator—creates a literary construct out of Rachael. The effect of such allegorization is to deny Rachael a real voice, just as she, ironically, tries to muffle his voice amid the labor tensions in the novel. In short, authority, which remains the foundation of paternalism, is more readily secured when real female expression is silenced.

On the other hand, a curious irony exists in terms of gender in each text of this study. Namely, that paternalism paradoxically appears to depend on the idealization of women. The idea that deference relies on the paternalists' respectful elevation of women complicates established definitions of paternalism. One skeptical view of the paternalistic mythologizing of women in these works is that the female gender becomes a literary or philosophical construct used to advance hierarchical agendas. In this sense, the moments of female apotheosis—especially involving Rachael in *Hard Times* and Harriet in Mill's *Autobiography*—involve gender erasure: the female object of reverence ultimately functions as an androgynous metaphor in the political allegory of paternalism.

Another feature that invites a joint study of these canonical texts is the palpable presence of Thomas Carlyle. The earliest of the Victorian sages, Carlyle bridged the Romantic and Victorian periods. Carlyle's Romantic impulses—the richly metaphorical and mystical flourishes in
Sartor Resartus, for example—inevitably affected the thinking and rhetorical approaches of the later prophets of the age. Many of Carlyle’s essays, beginning with the condition of England pieces—such as “Characteristics” and “Signs of the Times”—amount to type of manifesto on paternalism. Though Carlyle cared deeply about the dehumanizing impact of industrialism on the individual worker, his faith in state correctives was sometimes misplaced. Moreover, his mythologizing of entrepreneurial captains, military leaders, and poetic heroes appeared to promote a kind of elitist, secular clerisy. Carlyle’s paternalistic statism infiltrates—and counteracts, at times—the egalitarian ethos that, on the surface at least, distinguishes the texts in this examination.

A last means of justifying the choice of the three works in this discussion is Michel Foucault’s assessment of disciplinary power structures. In his work, Discipline and Punish, Foucault identifies the intricate hierarchy of surveillance that developed in Europe from the middle of the eighteenth century to the beginning of the Victorian age. Instead of the state only physically torturing criminals or aberrant subjects in the eighteenth century, it began to more subtly control citizens’ minds through specific institutional instruments, such as Jeremy Bentham’s Panopticon. This ubiquitous penetration of the
subject's psyche extended beyond the criminal realm, Foucault makes clear, and spread into more civilized areas or professions, such as medicine or the factory. Foucault's trenchant analysis of insidious power structures aptly applies to the rhetorical effects of Ruskin, Dickens, and Mill. In all three texts, for instance, images of controlling gazes or what Foucault calls "hierarchical observation" appear. These images often reflect the ideological power of the sage's discourse. Ruskin's panoramic gaze over the contrasting European landscapes remains perhaps the clearest illustration of Foucauldian power imagery in this study.

While some critics, in an isolated fashion, have recognized ideological tensions in these works—particularly in Dickens—they have rarely uncovered the prevalent patterns that constitute a politics of deference. As stated, the symptoms of a paternalist undercurrent in these works surely undercut the spirit of liberal reform that usually characterizes these works. This fact does not necessarily indict these literary reformers as disingenuous—with their holdover Tory interests; instead, it reveals them as inheritors of a complexly fashioned ideology.

To better define and contextualize the term paternalism in the Victorian age, it is worthwhile to quote
from an earlier political work, Edmund Burke's, *Reflections on the Revolution in France*—in many ways a master narrative of modern paternalism. After pillorying the arrogant *philosophes*, who wanted to create the French government anew, Burke forever reminds his English readers that all the liberties they possess derive from "an inheritance of our forefathers." Burke's rhetorical appeal often rests on this principle of inheritance. To be sure, it forms the basis of his organic view of government and society. This natural succession of authority, Burke asserts, has propelled English politics from the Magna Carta to the reforms of his day. Burke's theory of natural order, in fact, depends on a familial model for its coherence. In one of the many flourishes from *Reflections*, Burke articulates this key element of paternalist theory:

> People will not look forward to posterity, who never look backward to their ancestors. Besides, the people of England well know, that the idea of inheritance furnishes a sure principle of conservation, and a sure principle of transmission; without at all excluding a principle of improvement. It leaves acquisition free; but it secures what it acquires. Whatever advantages are obtained by a state proceeding on these maxims, are locked fast as in a sort of family settlement. (83-84)

In this rousing passage, Burke constructs most of his signature elements of conservative thought--the reverence for antiquity, national pride, and the perpetual inheritance of natural rights--around the formidable and
identifiable structure of the family. Further along in this passage, Burke returns to the familial precedent. With growing conviction, Burke transforms what perhaps was once an analogy into a true foundation of paternalism:

In this choice of inheritance we have given to our frame of polity the image of a relation in blood; binding up the constitution of our country with our dearest domestic ties; adopting our fundamental laws into the bosom of our family affections; keeping inseparable, and cherishing with the warmth of all their combined and mutually reflected charities, our state, our hearths, our sepulchres, and our altars. (84)

Cultivating and preserving the fruits of Burke's organic ideal of society sit the revered "canonized forefathers." These apotheosized patriarchs are rarely far from the minds of the Victorian sages. To trace the paternalism embodied in Burke's passage in select Victorian texts is to identify the paradoxes of Victorian paternalism. This study will examine strains of paternalism as they appear in diverse ways: through a "deferential dialectic"--a useful economic model, Romantic aesthetics, religion, and the discourse of the sage.

As the first textual commentary, chapter two discusses how a covert paternalist ideology often works against a humanist plea for working class dignity in John Ruskin's essay *The Nature of Gothic*. Using Howard Newby's "deferential dialectic" as a model for employer/worker...
relations, the chapter argues that Ruskin, as sage narrator, enacts the rhetorical strategies of a pragmatic manufacturer, by appealing to his reader's sympathies. As this model suggests, Ruskin both identifies with and differentiates himself from his subordinate/reader. In building this sage persona, Ruskin helps secure his authoritative role over his reader. Like a patronizing textile manager, then, Ruskin legitimizes traditional power relations. In the process, Ruskin also invokes the nostalgia of medievalism. This Romantic maneuver further strengthens a hierarchical worldview, which often undermines Ruskin's liberalism throughout The Nature of Gothic. Furthermore, Ruskin's use of allegory as an aesthetic mode also serves to repress hierarchical realities. While treating the essay, in fact, as one extended Gothic allegory, the study then applies Paul de Man's paradox of transcendent order and concludes that Ruskin's search for an origin becomes frustrated in the end: that is, the metaphorical Gothic edifice rests on an illusory foundation.

Exploring the fictional mode, Chapter 3 investigates the connection between paternalism and aesthetics in Charles Dickens's Hard Times. In terms of characterization, for instance, Dickens's use of caricature resembles at
times the homogenizing treatment of human beings by paternalists. Leveling humanity in this fashion can reinforce stereotyping and further repress social realities. Dickens’s flat characters, such as the monstrous Bounderby or sentimental figures like Stephen or Sissy Jupe, grow out of a larger Romantic aesthetic, which operates throughout the novel. In addition, Dickens’s facile dichotomy of fact and fancy, when closely examined, reveals ideological tensions. For instance, instead of the circus embodying a richer and expressive imagination, it comes to symbolize a futile escape into a pre-industrial social harmony. In reality, however, the circus often repeats the hierarchical struggles of normal quotidian life. Dickens’s trope falsely reflects a nostalgia at the expense of dealing with real social oppression. In sum, Dickens’s novel, like his character Gradgrind, becomes—to use Althusser’s term—an ideological state apparatus. Like the paternalist state institutions, *Hard Times* denies any resonant voice for the working class. It finally relies on the imagination as a sentimental cure, not as a means to inspire liberal reform. As a type of sage novelist who presides protectively over his readers during homiletic moments in the novel, Dickens ultimately reinforces the paternalistic strategies that filter throughout *Hard Times*. 

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Completing the Victorian texts in this project, chapter 4 examines an unlikely work, perhaps, to charge with paternalist thinking: John Stuart Mill’s *Autobiography*. As a vocal critic of stultifying authority during most of his intellectual and political career, Mill’s life-writing, nevertheless, contains residual paternalist strains. The discussion focuses primarily on the political implications of Mill’s poetics. Mill’s discovery of the restorative power of Romantic poetry during his “mental crisis,” for example, demonstrates his enactment of a common paternalist strategy: confining the imagination to a separate sphere. Like Dickens’s *Hard Times*, Mill’s new-found Romantic aesthetics creates a dichotomy between fact and fiction. Mill, in effect, treats poetry—and generally the imagination—as a cultural “supplement,” to borrow Terry Eagleton’s term. Treating the imagination in this manner can delay or prevent it from becoming a real transformative force in the political consciousness of a dependent subject. The discussion also traces Mill’s life-long deferential habits. More specifically, in transferring his deference from his father James to Harriet, Mill appears to engage in gender stereotyping. In this instance, aesthetics and gender intersect in the *Autobiography*: Mill, in essence, creates a “literary construct” out of Harriet—turning her into a
symbol of sentiment and poetic perfection. As a result, Harriet's identity is diminished, largely shaped by Mill's appropriation of her allegorical image.

The implications of this study of paternalism are the subject of Chapter 5. This study concludes with the assertion that a residual paternalist ideology exists in the three works by Ruskin, Dickens, and Mill. These three canonical writers can be seen bridging the forces between deep-rooted paternalist practices in England and the gathering momentum of liberal individualism, largely galvanized by reformers like John Stuart Mill. Treating these three generically distinct texts as an ongoing intertextual dialogue about how familial models ironically inscribe hierarchical principles alerts us to how cultural representations generally perpetuate ideological structures.

As eminent cultural sages of Victorian England, Ruskin, Dickens, and Mill engaged in rhetorical strategies with their readers, which at times mirrored the dynamic between a manager of a textile mill and his dependent operative. Moreover, while attempting to identify with their readers, on the one hand, these prophets at the same time achieved distance from their subject readers. When applied to the discourse of these select Victorian sages, this "deferential dialectic" reveals paradoxes of
paternalism. For instance, who can truly doubt the authenticity of Ruskin’s deep sympathy and eventual outrage at the treatment of the nineteenth-century worker, when he erupts, claiming that it is not the labor that is divided but the workers themselves? However, with the patronizing effects of his paternalist solutions, Ruskin—as well as Dickens and Mill—remains complicit in fracturing these workers’ identities.

Endnotes

1. For an articulate and concise summary of these paternal systems, see chapter 2 of Richard Sennett’s Authority.

2. For useful discussions on paternalism in the factory life of Victorian England, see Patrick Joyce’s excellent study, Work, Society and Politics. The most illuminating chapters of Joyce’s work include chapter 3, “Deference, Dependence and Community” and chapter 4, “The New Paternalism.” Joyce’s many illustrations document how deference, as a key feature of this culture of subordination, lessened labor tensions and seriously shaped class consciousness in factory culture.


3. In each of the major chapters of this study, I argue that aesthetics become crucial to paternalist ideology. I often rely on Paul de Man’s insights into aesthetic ideology, as well as other deconstructionists and Marxist critics.

4. Howard Newby’s model of the “deferential dialectic,” as articulated in his work, The Deferential Worker, remains instrumental in this study. I apply
Newby's model to John Holloway's idea of the Victorian sage. In this sense, the rhetoric of the Victorian writers in this study largely predisposes the reader to adopt a deferential ethos, in part by constructing deferential moments in their works and also by attempting to appeal to their readers' interests. These forms of cultural representation undoubtedly helped define and reinforce concepts of power relations in Victorian society.
CHAPTER 2

THE DEFERENTIAL DIALECTIC: THE IDEOLOGY OF PATERNALISM IN JOHN RUSKIN'S THE NATURE OF GOTHIC

One stylistic feature of John Ruskin's essay The Nature of Gothic that distinguishes it as a hallmark of Victorian prose is its rich and resonant voice. Throughout the essay, the reader experiences Ruskin's range of emotions. In one sublime passage early on, Ruskin takes the reader soaring above the level of a bird-like Shelley's skylark—to view the beauty of the contrasting European landscapes below. Here, Ruskin illustrates the paradox of his first Gothic trait: savageness. Through his word-painting, Ruskin moves the reader away from the barbaric associations of Gothic and provides instead a prose-poem praising the brutish though imaginative medieval mason. This panoramic passage rivals the most luxuriant passages of Ruskin's Romantic forbears. After experiencing this reverie, the reader may be convinced that not only does this Gothic characteristic deserve "our profoundest reverence," as Ruskin asserts, but so does the majestic prose that imaginatively recreated it. In another later vignette, the reader is quickly plummeted to the earthly horror of a glass bead factory in mid-Victorian England. Here, the reader is castigated by the angry sage-narrator:
for helping to enslave the glass bead maker with endless, soul-scarring drudgery. These digressive flourishes surely animate the essay, but as we shall see, they also may subtly produce more than aesthetic delight for the reader. In *The Darkening Glass*, John D. Rosenberg discusses Ruskin's shifting and paradoxical tone in *The Stones of Venice*. He observes that while Ruskin writes at times like an "angry prophet, rebuking Venice's infidelity and loss of loveliness, he has also composed her Song of Songs" (79). At one level, Ruskin's versatile tone throughout the essay appears impressive. At a more covert level, however, his voice—and all of its rhetorical components—serves ultimately to reinforce a bourgeois ideology about the mid-Victorian worker. While trying to cultivate an egalitarian image of a cultural high priest in championing the struggle for the worker's dignity, Ruskin paradoxically deepens some of the inveterate prejudices that had originally stifled the Victorian laborer. In *The Nature of Gothic*, Ruskin's over-arching paternalism takes various forms. These ideological tools constitute what Howard Newby calls a "deferential dialectic." Understanding this model of economic relationships in mid-Victorian England and applying it to Ruskin's essay will no doubt help
contextualize both the issue of work and the role Ruskin as Victorian sage plays in contributing to the cultural discourse of work.

Since the industrial age, the term deference has generated many definitions by sociologists and political scientists when discussing the condition of the working class in England. Reconsidering this topic in his book The Deferential Worker, Howard Newby creates the phrase "deferential dialectic" to help distinguish his study of British farm workers in East Anglia during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Using this model, Newby treats deference as a structure of relationships between the employer and the worker. In explaining this form of social interaction, Newby is less concerned with building the strident rhetoric of a Marxist class struggle than he is with analyzing the structure of relationships in which the agricultural worker is placed. More specifically, Newby assesses the behavior of those employers who hold power over the worker. One way the employer maintains this power over the worker is by cultivating deference in his operatives. The paradox of this deferential relationship emerges when the dialectical part of it is understood. The dialectic consists of two apparently antagonistic elements:
differentiation and identification. Differentiation essentially describes the social and economic roles of both employer and worker in the class hierarchy. Newby notes that this differentiation of power "is reflected through the differential control over economic resources in virtually every aspect of the farmer's and farm worker's lives. It is perpetuated as such by the distributive aspects of the contemporary system of economic and social stratification" (422). The opposing feature, identification, involves slowly engendering human ties between employer and worker. This element goes beyond mere contractual obligation; the source of identification often derives from the family and the community, as natural extensions of the farm or workplace in general. Together, differentiation and identification ultimately serve to legitimize the hierarchy of employer and worker. The degree to which these opposing features can be managed in this relationship will largely measure the managerial acumen of the employer class, as representatives of traditional authority. Regarding the long-term stability of this dialectic, achieving real identification by essentially nurturing the personal loyalty of workers and
thereby creating mutual trust remains key to this paradoxical process.

As an interpretive guide to The Nature of Gothic, this deferential dialectic helps uncover Ruskin’s ambivalence about the mid-Victorian working class and reveals his own unwitting participation in its stasis. After examining the essay in this manner, one may realize that Ruskin in many ways enacts paternalistic practices existing in mid-Victorian England. In short, Ruskin as inheritor and custodian of cultural authority ironically exposes the ideology that he has helped inscribe. Before analyzing the paternalistic ideology in The Nature of Gothic, it may prove useful to look at John Stuart Mill’s eloquent synthesis of paternalism, or what he calls the "theory of dependence and protection." To quote Mill at length here will help capture the essence of paternalism as it envelops, by its diverse discourses, Ruskin’s own version in the form of artistic criticism. Furthermore, while this articulation may not be the definitive explanation of the paternalistic ideology of this period, it certainly represents its most common features and thus may be used to refer to throughout this discussion. In The Principles of Political Economy, Mill describes the ruling-class
assumptions about the analytical habits of the lower classes:

[T]he lot of the poor, in all things which affect them collectively, should be regulated for them, not by them. They should not be required or encouraged to think for themselves, or give to their own reflection or forecast an influential voice in the determination of their destiny. It is the duty of the higher classes to think for them, and to take the responsibility of their lot, as the commander and officers of an army take that of the soldiers composing it. This function the higher classes should prepare themselves to perform conscientiously, and their whole demeanor should impress the poor with a reliance on it, in order that, while yielding passive and active obedience to the rules prescribed to them, they may resign themselves in all other respects to a trustful insouciance, and repose under the shadow of their protectors. The relation between rich and poor should be only partially authoritative; it should be amiable, moral, and sentimental: affectionate tutelage on the one side, respectful and grateful deference on the other. The rich should be in loco parentis to the poor, guiding and restraining them like children. Of spontaneous action on their part there should be no need. They should be called on for nothing but to do their day's work, and to be moral and religious. Their morality and religion should be provided for them by their superiors, who should see them properly taught it, and should do all that is necessary to ensure their being, in return for labour and attachment, properly fed, clothed, housed, spiritually edified and innocently amused.

(3.759)

Upon first reading The Nature of Gothic, one may not see clearly how Ruskin subscribes to Mill's description of an institutionalized paternalism. However, the ingredients of
this deferential dialectic exist throughout the essay and often add up to an insidious condescension and a naturalizing of a rigid class structure. Ruskin’s mythologizing of the Gothic worker can at some levels be useful and sincerely wrought. But as we shall see, these rhetorical structures also act to repress the social reality beneath them. Thus, allegory becomes a form of repression, a freezing of real individual growth and mobility for the mid-Victorian laborer.

Many critics agree with Proust, who saw Ruskin as "one of the greatest writers of all times and all countries" (84). This judgement derives not only from the breadth of Ruskin’s interests but also from his passionate, and often hypnotic, prose. Of these admiring critics, however, some are tempted to analyze with critical suspicion the stylistic elements of Ruskin’s word-painting, as well as to contextualize his writing. Ruskin’s politics sometimes puzzles critics. For instance, in Culture and Society Raymond Williams admits that at one level Ruskin’s economic critique of laissez-faire society appears socialistic, but after examining Ruskin’s organic theory, these breeding grounds for collectivism become more barren:

The detail of much of Ruskin’s criticism of a laissez-faire society was in fact perfectly
acceptable to socialists; but the ideas of design and function, as he expressed them, supported not a socialist idea of society but rather an authoritarian idea, which included a very emphatic hierarchy of classes. (139-40)

As an early critic of Ruskin’s ambiguous politics, Williams invites later critics to further investigate the connection between Ruskin’s aesthetic and political views, especially as expressed in his famous essay, The Nature of Gothic. Of the dissenting critics who qualify their praise of this essay, the harshest challenge perhaps comes from John Unrau, who mostly tries to undermine Ruskin’s efforts by historicizing the medieval mason, who in Ruskin’s essay remains, after all, a touchstone for the moral dignity of the nineteenth-century English laborer. Other less flattering critics of The Nature of Gothic, such as Patrick Connor, quibble with Ruskin’s six characteristics of Gothic architecture or, Paul Frankl, who dismisses Ruskin’s idealistic conception of the Gothic builder as someone whose job required little expertise and supervision. Despite these helpful studies, much more needs to be said about the ideological discourses that inform The Nature of Gothic. One way to add to the present criticism is through this deferential dialectic. Three general areas of this
dynamic that will be explored in this study include rhetoric, aesthetics, and religion. Though these categories will naturally overlap at times, they represent significant ways that Ruskin expresses his paternalism. When analyzed this way, it becomes clear that in order to be more fully understood as perhaps the most prolific and influential sages of his time, his writings must be contextualized in terms of his versatile rhetoric and the diverse cultural discourses existing in mid-Victorian England. Despite the many isolated humanistic insights found in The Nature of Gothic, Ruskin's rhetorical maneuvering belies a lingering belief in a similar theory of dependency and protection as presented by Mill.

An obvious rhetorical feature that pervades the whole essay is John Ruskin's persona as Victorian sage. Though he is not a subject of John Holloway's early study, The Victorian Sage, Ruskin's stylistic habits and eminent position certainly qualify him as a candidate. In the opening chapter, Holloway discusses how the sages control the tone of their message and thereby slowly shape the reader's reaction to them. Unlike the novelist who speaks through character and dialogue, the essayist--though he can never completely disappear--can modulate his or her tone
"by the quality of his style, by the kind of argument that he most often uses, and by whatever he may do to control the reader's notion of his personality" (15). As with Arnold and especially Carlyle—with his intemperate ravings—Ruskin creates a real personality in The Nature of Gothic. Like an Evangelical preacher of the times, Ruskin's approach ranges from fierce indignation to avuncular soothing. As artistic and spiritual guide, Ruskin smites the reader with guilt and accusation, only to eventually bring him or her back into the fold, into the fellowship of the good English people.

Despite his haunting re-enactments of industrial hell or the domestic pretensions of his English middle-class reader, Ruskin clearly tries to establish an ethos, not by having to announce his authority but by illustrating it early on in the essay. As we shall see, however, while Ruskin builds his credibility through his deep convictions and relentless perceptiveness, he is at the same time establishing an authoritative stance with his reader; moreover, Ruskin is subtly creating a dynamic with the reader that will repeat what, to a great extent, anchors much of his thought throughout his essay: namely, a deferential attitude between operatives and their masters
in the economic and social hierarchy. To see how this works, it may help to examine first the celebrated passage describing the imaginary flight over the European landscapes. The panoramic passage from *The Nature of Gothic* remains perhaps the most memorable for its power and evocative imagery. Just as Yeats printed Walter Pater’s passage on *La Giaconda* in verse form as the first poem of *The Oxford Book of Modern Verse*, so too could one imagine including Ruskin’s bird-flight in an anthology of Victorian poetry. Indeed, the passage is imaginatively arresting, but it nonetheless deserves rhetorical scrutiny for its subtle hints of paternalism. This analysis may help counteract the seductive effects of what the critic John Unrau calls Ruskin’s "verbal sorcery."

In terms of his persona in the passage, Ruskin characteristically relies on redefinition. When discussing aspects of the Victorian sage, George Landow asserts that this device generally allows Ruskin to "restore language to its true meaning" (*Elegant Jeremias* 98). In determining what this "true meaning" is, Ruskin establishes his authority. As Landow observes, Ruskin "asserts his control over the act of discourse by imposing his understanding of crucial terms upon the reader" (98). As we shall see
later, this rhetorical method relates to other key terms in the essay that, through Ruskin’s manipulation, become integral to his organicism. Ultimately, creating ethos through redefinition cultivates a deference in the reader. Before long, the reader becomes dependent upon Ruskin as superior sage. Ruskin further strengthens this sense of superiority as he pilots his English readers in an ethereal flight over Europe. In essence, the flight becomes the key illustration of Ruskin’s extended definition of Gothic. While trying to rescue Gothic from its connotation of "unmitigated contempt," Ruskin admits that though Gothic architecture is "rude and wild," it is precisely because of this that it deserves "our profoundest reverence" (10. 185). In terms of the context of this poetic set-piece that follows, trying to nurture a "profound reverence" in the reader early on is key to Ruskin’s deferential dialectic as it exists throughout The Nature of Gothic. Indeed, versions of this phrase chime in later, most significantly in the telling passage about "noble reverence."

In the first of many digressive flourishes in the essay, Ruskin’s artistic feat in his topographical pictorial becomes in itself another object of the reader’s
reverence. After all, it is Ruskin as Victorian prophet who in this instance must go beyond "the vast amount of knowledge" expressed by "modern science" to imaginatively reveal the Gothic spirit. After the dry cataloguing of Gothic criteria prior to this passage, the reader eagerly rides on the wings of the eagle-eye Ruskin and awaits how he will trace what he calls "this grey, shadowy, many-pinnacled image of the Gothic spirit within us" (10.182). In this sense, Ruskin becomes the omniscient guide who will provide the "broad glance and grasp which would enable us to feel them [that is, the differences between the Northern and Southern countries] in their fulness." Ruskin implies that this knowledge about the contrasting features between the northern and southern countries in Europe does not exist in any other commentary. At this level then, Ruskin achieves differentiation, as part of the deferential dialectic. When he pronounces, "Let us, for a moment, raise ourselves" in order to fly above even the highest-flying birds, Ruskin's invitation has a Christian liturgical ring--"Let us lift up our hearts to God." Here, Ruskin almost engages in self-apotheosis, raising himself up as an arch-angel to the empyrean heaven. Clearly, Ruskin separates himself from his reader as an expert
interpreter, a decoder of the Signs of the Times. As
Landow reminds us, Ruskin and other thinkers attain the
title of sage "precisely because they perceive the central
fact that the phenomena they choose to interpret demand
interpretation" (90). Obviously, the phenomena that Ruskin
reveals is in part shaped by his own distinctive vision or
mythology of this visible world. Elements of this vision
are subtly woven into the essay. For instance, when Ruskin
asks the reader to imagine the Mediterranean as "an
irregular lake," it is not coincidental that his emphasis
on the lake's imperfect dimensions resemble the nobly
imperfect and asymmetrical sculptures produced by the
Gothic mason. For Ruskin, this aesthetic principle of
beauty in imperfection applies both to art and nature.
Humanity, as an extension of nature, forms another key link
in this organic unity.

At the same time he sets himself apart, Ruskin also
tries to form a bond with the reader. This often typifies
the complex dynamic of the Victorian sage's persona.
Similar to the employer in entrepreneurial ideology, Ruskin
tries to erase hierarchical boundaries at times by
fostering a sense of group identity. Phrases such as "Let
us . . . raise ourselves" and the use of the first-person
plural pronoun suggest an attempt to form a communal and spiritual search for this allegorized Gothic spirit. Thus, the imaginary flight becomes an aerial pilgrimage over what often feels like an Edenic paradise. For the most part, Ruskin succeeds in engaging the reader in this quest.

Likewise, paternalism naturalizes power relations. As Howard Newby observes, for example, paternalism "not only consigns its subordinates to a dependent and powerful situation but enables them to endorse the system which achieves this" (425). As a simulation of the economic relationship between employer and worker, then, the sage-reader relationship is sustained by the reader's acquiescence or participation in Ruskin's allegorizing process. This may be viewed as a self-inflicted endorsement of their own subordination. Unwittingly, the reader helps to stabilize this power dynamic with Ruskin, who after all is the author of this influential discourse about the Victorian work ethic. Before this passage, Ruskin remarks that he hopes to discover "what fellowship there is between [the Gothic spirit] and our Northern hearts" (10.182). This language of fellowship, community, and union work well on the surface to build Ruskin's sincerity in finding moral enrichment for Victorian
society. Therefore, as a source of traditional authority in Victorian culture, Ruskin enacts a paternalistic identification with his subject-reader. Regarding the significance of identification by the employer class in Victorian factory culture, Patrick Joyce observes the following:

The special potency of personal relations of master and man within nineteenth-century paternalism can hardly be exaggerated. Indeed, sociologists inform us that it is on this basis that paternalism may be at its most effective, deference being given not to the abstraction of traditionalism but to the embodiment of that ethic. (135)

Ruskin as sage clearly embodies this ethic in this poetic passage. Like an agrarian patriarch, Ruskin manages to validate his superiority yet legitimize his power dynamic with the reader and, by extension, the worker he alleges to represent by transforming this superiority into a moral and aesthetic concern. In short, Ruskin sustains this deferential dynamic by crafting a brilliant medieval morality play about the Gothic worker, giving the reader a key role, and finally appending a coda about the need to humanize the plight of the Victorian laborer.

Examining Ruskin’s ethos in this essay, however, reveals more covert motives. To approach cultural problems in this engagingly aestheticized manner proves disingenuous
at times. With this deft manipulation of his reader, Ruskin sometimes insidiously appeals to the culturally privileged position of his readers, only to chastize them later for their indifference to dehumanizing industrialism. After panning across the "variegated mosaic" below, Ruskin observes the distinct geography and vegetation of the landscapes. The neat juxtaposition of the habitat and animal life of the contrasting regions further suggests a Providential design in nature. This sense of order also implies a natural hierarchy of humanity. In fact, it is telling that Ruskin and his readers are looking down upon the "inferior minds" of the Gothic laborers. The spatial perspective in this passage, then, reinforces both Ruskin's own doctrine of correspondences and his patronizing tone in general. Ruskin--with keen cinematic instinct--zooms in on the Gothic laborers at work. While caught up in this sublime description of the dreamy landscapes and their respective menagerie of creatures, the reader is predisposed now to perceive the human "creatures" as blending in with the surrounding nature. In this way, Ruskin shapes his organic vision by naturalizing the environment and activity of the Gothic worker. In presenting all the pied beauty and Darwinian diversity of
nature, Ruskin lulls the reader into an aesthetic trance. After becoming both enamored and overwhelmed by nature's fecundity, the reader, with humble obeisance, assents to Ruskin's organic idealism. Ruskin asks the reader in effect to submit to a type of Providential or natural law governing the work of these "wild and wayward" creatures below:

[And then, submissively acknowledging the great laws by which the earth and all it bears are ruled throughout their being, let us not condemn, but rejoice in the expression by man of his own rest in the statutes of the lands that give him birth. Let us watch him with reverence as he sets side by side the burning gems... but not with less reverence let us stand by him, when, with rough strength and hurried stroke, he smites an uncouth animation out of the rocks. (10.187)]

On the surface, the readers identify with the fallen creatures below. Ruskin implies that we are all beings who must admit the ubiquitous presence of natural law, which rules "the earth and all it bears." Though we all may be fallen creatures, one senses a charitable Christian smugness by Ruskin and his readers. As he looks down from what one critic calls his "angelic perspective," Ruskin achieves differentiation. The cadence and diction used in the above excerpt resemble the profound grasp and pontificating phrases of an Old Testament prophet. For example, the refrain, "let us not condemn, but rejoice," as

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well as a verb such as "smites," surely echoes the hortatory style of the Bible. The Biblical rhetoric no doubt appeals to his Anglican readers and helps to win them over. However, Ruskin's role as secular prophet appeals to his Christian readers not simply because of their devout faith but also because they share with Ruskin the privileged position of being the elect or the civilized. Hovering above their kind but brutish brethren below, the reader essentially renews a sense of Gothic brotherhood and participates with Ruskin in the task of humanizing the oppressed nineteenth-century worker, but not without first being scolded by Ruskin about sharing the blame for their degradation.

Soon after this bird flight, Ruskin indeed chastizes his English reader and thereby complicates the nature of his sage persona. In this famous illustration, Ruskin directly asks his reader to examine "this English room of yours." One senses that Ruskin addresses the reader in his or her salon or in some other domestic room. That he does not specify which room, however, makes the symbol that much more encompassing. Ruskin accuses his reader of misplaced pride in exulting over the "accurate mouldings" and "perfect polishings" adorning this room. In the previous
paragraph Ruskin describes abstractly how the English mind's bent for perfection has stripped the soul from the Victorian laborer. The sage offers a choice, then, to the reader: "You must either make a tool of the creature, or a man of him" (10.192). In this present passage about the English system of ornamentation, Ruskin sees signs of this insidious "unhumanizing" and delivers the stinging paradox:

Alas! if read rightly, these perfectnesses are signs of a slavery in our England a thousand times more bitter and more degrading than that of the scourged African, or helot Greek. Men may be beaten, chained, tormented, yoked like cattle, slaughtered like summer flies, and yet remain in one sense, and the best sense, free. But to smother their souls with them, to blight and hew into rotting pollards the suckling branches of their human intelligence, to make the flesh and skin which, after the worm's work on it, is to see God, into leathern thongs to yoke machinery with, --this is to be slave-masters indeed. (10.193)

Here, Ruskin oddly enough continues to build his credibility. Though he mocks his readers' English pride in perfection, Ruskin nonetheless still presents the problem as being collective: the "English room of yours" later becomes "signs of slavery in our England" (italics mine). Furthermore, the course of human emotion can also define the sage's ethos. Unlike the dispassionate prose of John Stuart Mill, for example, Ruskin often displays his volatile temperament. This can constitute a momentary
weakness of control, but it is also an emotional response with which the reader can identify. As George Landow points out, another means of creating the sage's ethos is through "brilliant interpretations, particularly of inappropriate material" (162). To see slavery in the otherwise ordinary decor of an English drawing room surely shows one's perceptiveness. Such discernment of this paradox unseen by the average eye and the wit in expressing it reveal Ruskin's unique vision. Also, in feeling Ruskin's rage, the reader witnesses the authenticity of both Ruskin's experiences and his moral reaction to Gothic architecture as a significant Sign of the Times. Again, Ruskin's role is not unlike the employer in a paternalistic regime: while the employer must reward the worker with economic goods to maintain deferential control, so too must Ruskin reward his occasionally alienated reader with aesthetic delight, moral reassurance, and a sense of collective responsibility for the social ills of Victorian England in order to sustain his trustworthiness. Unhappily, the cost of this rhetorical mission is often the marginalization of various individuals and social classes.

Another widespread ingredient of Ruskin's rhetoric in The Nature of Gothic is slavery. Throughout the essay,
Ruskin uses slavery as a metaphor when describing the constraints of industrialism. Though in one sense Ruskin’s pleas on behalf of the worker appear to derive from real compassion, there is also a disturbing, perhaps unintended, effect of this figurative use of slavery. In the above passage, Ruskin reads the “perfectnesses” of the domestic decor as “signs of slavery in our England a thousand times more bitter and more degrading than that of the scourged African, or helot Greek” (10.193). As a facile response, one could say that Ruskin’s comparison involves his usual hyperbole for rhetorical effect. However, in his allegorical scheme, Ruskin commits a perverse exploitation: while ironically defending the integrity of the abused Victorian laborer, Ruskin appropriates abolitionist rhetoric to rationalize, in true paternalistic fashion, the actual slavery, which had been legally abolished only a couple of decades earlier in England’s colonies—though its structural practices lingered. How does someone who is “beaten, chained, tormented” and “yoked like cattle” remain in the “best sense” free? Is Ruskin to have us think that the souls of England’s slaves and their countless colonial victims were not “smothered” or “blighted”? As if players in a Biblical parable, the real slave counterparts to the
nineteenth-century glass bead workers are marginalized yet again through convenient stereotyping and humanistic rhetoric. By labelling the black slave "the scourged African," Ruskin practices a typical strategy of hierarchical discourse: in creating an allegorical type Ruskin both deflects the reader's attention away from the abhorrent conditions of real slavery in England as well as robs the real slaves of any subjectivity or any real voice.

In short, the real slave becomes an epithet—the "scourged African." Furthermore, in linking this epithet with another one far more removed in history—the "helot Greek," Ruskin attempts to repress the unsavory facts of Victorian imperialism by displacing them. In this paternalistic discourse, then, human beings and real conditions are absorbed into types that fit into a hierarchical rank. Thus, the schematic representation bypasses the historical truth of individuals within a class at a given time in history. In paternalist ideology, maintaining the power relations remains essential to its success. By rationalizing slavery through the apparently innocuous means of allegory and displacement, Ruskin subtly legitimizes slavery—after all, the ultimate extension of the concept of hierarchy.
In this passage about the "English room," Ruskin also appeals indirectly to nationalism. Though Ruskin chides his readers for a misplaced pride, he nonetheless intimates a collective spirit pride that once existed in medieval England. Ruskin reminds his readers that compared to present Victorian society "there might be more freedom in [medieval] England, though her feudal lords' lightest words were worth men's lives, and though the blood of the vexed husbandman dropped in the furrows of her fields" (10.193). This nostalgia for a medieval ideal allows Ruskin to more easily connect the martyred suffering of the "scourged African" to the sacrificial loyalty of the medieval serf. Through this mythic maneuvering, Ruskin once again escapes history and remains unaware that his paternal ideology has helped bring about the domination and enslavement still plaguing England. Surely, it is more palatable for Ruskin's generally privileged readers to allegorize slavery since they largely come from the dominant class and thus do not have counterparts who have been conquered or enslaved.

Ruskin's aestheticizing of slavery also appears in his earlier art criticism. At least ten years earlier, Ruskin poetically described Turner's painting "The Slave Ship." Like the prose-poem about the imaginary flight in The
Nature of Gothic, Ruskin’s majestic prose is clearly inspired by the magnificent object of his study: in this case, a sea painting upon which Ruskin would “rest Turner’s immortality.” Throughout his carefully wrought description, Ruskin shows far more interest in the aesthetic features of what he considers the “noblest sea that Turner has ever painted” than he does in the historical referent—namely, slavery. While Ruskin suggests the horror of the scene, he remains more enamored of the Burkean elements of Turner’s sublime scene:

Purple and blue, the lurid shadows of the hollow breakers are cast upon the mist of night, which gathers cold and low, advancing like the shadow of death upon the guilty ship as it labors amidst the lightning of the sea, its thin masts written upon the sky in lines of blood, girded with condemnation in that fearful hue which signs the sky with horror, and mixes its flaming flood with the sunlight, and cast far along the desolate heave of the sepulchral waves, incarnadines the multitudinous sea. (1.572)

The imagery surrounding the “guilty ship” is indeed haunting. It clearly points to a collective guilt of those managing an evil practice. But as with the metaphorical use of slavery in The Nature of Gothic, Ruskin’s allegorical approach to his subject here exists mostly to serve his aesthetic ends, instead of the other way around.
Curiously, Ruskin’s preoccupation with the sublime aesthetic in the above excerpt prompts him to recall Macbeth: Ruskin re-imagines Turner’s ship as it “incarnadines the multitudinous sea.” That Ruskin associates the sanguinary imagery of Shakespeare’s great tragedy reveals the elevated aesthetic mode in which he interprets Turner’s painting. It is as if Ruskin’s immersion in the vortex of Turner’s sea exalts his own thoughts and poetic expressions. As critic, Ruskin feels inspired to reflect and enhance the power and awe of the painting. Ironically, Macbeth’s intense guilt provoking this imagery derives from killing the king—the highest rank of the earthly realm in the Elizabethan cosmic hierarchy, whereas Turner’s dead remain the faceless corpses of discarded slaves. Ruskin’s interpretation of “The Slave Ship” undoubtedly creates an unsettling mood of both fear and wonder but lacks the real suggestion of social correlatives. In allegorizing Turner’s noble sea, Ruskin again represses the cultural memory of this vile historical event and more aptly echoes, instead, Lady Macbeth’s description of murderous denial: “These deeds must not be thought/ After these ways; so, it will make us mad” (2.2. 35-36). If, as Ruskin says, the greatest art is
defined by "the greatest number of the greatest ideas," then the reader is tempted to ask why Ruskin in this case, and in others, fails to explore many more of the artist’s ideas. Just as the corpses are jettisoned from the tempest-tossed ship, so too are the specific moral referents sacrificed by Ruskin in favor of the mystifying elements of Turner’s “deep, illimitable Sea.” Ruskin’s commentary on “The Slave Ship,” of course is still deeply moving, but like the symbol-laden ship in The Rime of the Ancient Mariner, the reader asks at times to be led out of the fog of an often inscrutable allegory.

Ruskin maintains his allusions to slavery for a while in The Nature of Gothic. In the pontificating “glass beads” passage, Ruskin implicates the Victorian consumer in engaging in the slave-trade also. First, Ruskin describes, with a deftly lumbering cadence, how the workers’ hands are “vibrating with a perpetual and exquisitely timed palsy” when chopping up the rods to make the glass beads, which are “dropping beneath their vibration like hail.” Essentially, these workers are mere machines: “they . . . have the smallest occasion for the use of any single human faculty” (10.197). The power of Ruskin’s language in this section again demonstrates the sincerity of his feelings
and his moral outrage at the workers’ conditions. Engaging in hyperbole once again, Ruskin concludes this description by observing that “every young lady, therefore, who buys glass beads is engaged in the slave-trade, and in a much more cruel one than that which we have so long been endeavoring to put down” (10.197). Here, Ruskin’s jarring comparison morally connects the act of consuming with the conditions of production. Further, Ruskin exposes the serious shortcomings of laissez-faire economics, showing that the mere sale of a product to a buyer does not necessarily constitute an amoral act. Despite this sound economic critique, the use of slave imagery in this case again may be seen as a paternalistic strategy. By now in the essay, the rhetoric of slavery has formed a pattern: it has passed from a figural mode to a truthful assertion for Ruskin. Unfortunately, the effect of this is to lessen the significance of real slavery in English history and to also perpetuate the myth that slavery had ended when it was abolished in England. Regarding the reference to the young lady’s “slave-trade” being “a much more cruel one than that which we have endeavoring to put down,” Ruskin’s editors even chime in with a sanitized footnote. With scholarly disinterestedness, Cook and Wedderburn remind the
reader of the dates of the abolition of slavery both in England (1807) and in its colonies (1833). While the reader feels England's ameliorative momentum in suppressing the slave trade, the editors contextualize the slave-trade: Cook and Wedderburn tell us that "[t]he anti-slavery movement then took a further development, being directed toward treaties with other countries regarding the right of search and other measures for the suppression of the trade" (10.197). Clearly, the editors are complicit with Ruskin in crafting a dissembling colonialist rhetoric, which through figurative means, serves to cover over the graver issue of lingering slavery—despite its formal abolition—in British colonies, such as India, Africa, and the West Indies.

By repeatedly using slavery in his versatile rhetoric, Ruskin ultimately expresses a class ambivalence toward this issue. To an extent, its prevalence in the essay belies a class guilt; perhaps Ruskin's art criticism shows an oblique way of expiating the sins of slavery. Re-channeling this collective guilt into a campaign to restore the dignity of the nineteenth-century worker may represent a positive outlet. Consequently, Ruskin repeats the insidious trick of colonialist discourse: he turns the
lowest rung of his hierarchical ladder into a trope. In short, this practice helps perpetuate the official memory, while preventing the "counter-memory," as Foucault calls it (Language, Counter-Memory, Practice 160), to slowly undermine--through its sordid facts--the reigning account of England’s cultural history. In discussing The Stones of Venice, John D. Rosenberg notes that the reader must eventually ask what kind of history is being read (85). In trying to answer this question, Rosenberg points out what Ruskin said about history in a manuscript draft of the opening chapter of The Stones of Venice: “The history of every people ought to be written with less regard to the events of which their government was the agent, than to the disposition of which it was the sign” (86). Though many leading new historicists would agree with Ruskin’s impulse, the danger of his project is illustrated by his re-packing of slavery in order to help shape his cultural history.

In constructing his archetypal history, Ruskin’s aesthetic system remains essential. As suggested already, Ruskin’s theories of art and beauty subtly underpin the rhetoric of deference. In fact, The Nature of Gothic is written in a predominantly allegorical mode. Appealing to
Ruskin as another epistemological medium, allegory has significant ideological effects. Privileging allegory allows Ruskin to fashion a network of Romantic aesthetics and ultimately to achieve an appearance of transcendental truth. Though Ruskin’s allegorical vein has been touched on in discussing his rhetoric, it may help to examine how allegory as a distinctive mode of representation functions in the overall essay. From there, it may prove fruitful to analyze how other elements of Ruskin’s aesthetics—particularly, organicism and the sublime—operate in the paternalistic scheme that has been traced so far.

The very title of Ruskin’s essay *The Nature of Gothic* anticipates allegory. The term “Gothic” itself was not necessarily one of “unmitigated contempt,” as Ruskin observes, but one that suggested perhaps mystery, the supernatural, and personifications of good and evil, based on the Romantic novels of Scott and the general revival of the flourishing eighteenth-century gothic genre. Furthermore, “nature” in his title denotes an essence, which in turn indicates a truthful or transcendent quality.

At the outset of his essay, Ruskin in fact states that he will try to give the reader an “idea . . . of the true nature of Gothic architecture . . . not of that of Venice
only, but of universal Gothic” (10.181). Ruskin’s gallant assertion exemplifies, to a degree, what Paul de Man, among others, sees as the epistemological problematic of the aesthetic as a mode of cognition. De Man describes the common attraction of the aesthetic:

> [T]he aesthetic is not a separate category but a principle of articulation between various known faculties, activities, and modes of cognition. What gives the aesthetic its power and hence its practical, political impact, is its intimate link with knowledge, the epistemological implications that are always in play when the aesthetic appears over the horizon of discourse. (Rhetoric 264-65)

For Ruskin, Gothic becomes an extended allegorical definition, which constitutes the structure of his aesthetic framework throughout the essay. Moreover, Ruskin’s claims of universality give his discourse a privileged status, “an intimate link with knowledge,” which in many cases it does not possess. Throughout his essay, this allegorical aesthetic often reinforces the already existing parabolic structure of Ruskin’s Christian typology. Thus, by drawing on his Anglican reader’s typological reading habits, Ruskin strengthens the persuasiveness of his spiritual and economic pleas.

Charging the Gothic spirit throughout is Ruskin’s organism. This Romantic ideal represents the web of
interrelated forces that propel Ruskin's Typical Beauty and determine the unity and variety that is so vital to Ruskin's art criticism. Regarding his Gothic model, Ruskin admits early on that his task will be challenging to carry out:

[I]t is so in a far greater degree to make the abstraction of the Gothic character intelligible, because that character itself is made up of many mingled ideas, and can consist only in their union. That is to say, pointed arches do not constitute Gothic, nor vaulted roofs, nor flying buttresses, nor grotesque sculptures; but all or some of these things, and many other things with them, when they come together so as to have life. (10.182)

Like other aesthetic theorists before him, Ruskin stressed the beauty of unity. As the passage of above indicates, beauty can consist of unity and variety. Not unlike Hopkins' "Pied Beauty," Ruskin's idea of Gothic is galvanized by a vital inscape, which depends on a synthesis of its disparate parts. Nonetheless, it remains significant that the foundation of Ruskin's whole task in *The Nature of Gothic* assumes this mystified vision of universal order. For instance, in the above passage, Ruskin reveals the deconstructive tension of his aesthetic project. Moving away from assigning referentiality to the individual architectural features and moving instead toward a hazy synthesis reflects the growing irreconcilability of
his system. To some degree, Ruskin's tentative approach to building abstractions out of these "mingled ideas" derives in part from his waning religious faith around the time of the research and composition of The Nature of Gothic. In short, the role of design and universal order in Ruskin's aesthetic becomes opposed by the tenuous organic ideal.

Since many of Ruskin's economic and social conclusions are determined by his aesthetics, the problem of representation in his essay demands close attention. In questioning representation in his essay "Pascal's Allegory of Persuasion," Paul de Man asks, "Why is it that the furthest reaching truths about ourselves and the world have to be stated in such a lopsided, referentially indirect mode?" (2). De Man's own answer to this question may apply to Ruskin's Gothic Paradise Lost: namely, that the object of the representing signs is ultimately lost or unknown. In this sense, Ruskin's Gothic cathedral, as the ruling metaphor of his essay, represents for him an attempt to recover an imaginary Protestant ideal in England. However, his struggle in this quest becomes clear when individual difference gives way to this larger organic aesthetic. In effect, the aesthetic model--which remains, as Sprinker reminds us, a "powerful ideology itself"--becomes a
homogenizing political force. In this light, Stephen Greenblatt observes that "one discovers that allegory arises in periods of loss, periods in which a once powerful theological, political, or familial authority is threatened with effacement. Allegory arises, then, from the painful absence of that which it claims to recover" (Allegory viii). Given the eroding influence of Christianity, which would culminate in Arnold's admonitory opening to The Study of Poetry later in the century--"There is not a creed which is not shaken"--it is fitting that Ruskin would undertake a mission to help restore the souls of the English, as well as his own.

As the most obvious allegorical feature in the essay, the Gothic cathedral illustrates de Man's paradox of transcendent order. In Ruskin's search for an origin while constructing his Gothic edifice, he enacts the illusory search for a foundation of truth. For example, in the imaginary flight sequence, Ruskin places the medieval mason among the creatures of a luxuriant Eden below. Here, Ruskin's Gothic allegory appears embedded in another allegory--a myth of creation. Ruskin asks his reader to "rejoice in the expression by man of his own rest in the statutes of the lands that gave him birth." In this
instance, Ruskin tries to imagine an origin of man, which for the most part, can be interpreted typologically as the garden of Eden—the "bird of paradise" a conspicuous presence. Building one myth on another exemplifies de Man's idea that allegory "denies any necessary or natural relationship between a sign and its referent" (Sprinker 27). That is, the target of the sign—in this case, a prelapsarian purity—is often once removed. De Man is helpful again in explaining the lack of direct signification in allegory:

[I]t remains necessary, if there is to be allegory, that the allegorical sign refer to another sign that precedes it. The meaning constituted by the allegorical sign can then consist only in the repetition (in the Kierkegaardian sense of the term) of a previous sign with which it can never coincide, since it is of the essence of this previous sign to be pure anteriority. (Blindness 207)

The core, therefore, of Ruskin's Gothic spirit breaks down. It lacks a truthful provenance. Ruskin's Gothic cathedral becomes a house of repeated imaginary structures that lack a discernable foundation. In terms of political ideology, this allegorical repetition inherent in the image of the Gothic cathedral resembles the imaginary political structures that have produced the deferential dialectic informing Ruskin's architectural discourse. The cathedral
is, after all, a building for religious worship, a place where the fallen subject submits to God, who sits supreme in the hierarchical order. As a fitting symbol, Gothic architecture becomes a discourse that re-enacts the medieval mason's--and his counterpart, the Victorian glass bead worker's--repeated subordination through humble service to the master mason, the architect, the patron, and ultimately, to God. Unrooted in a stable or legitimate deferential relationship, Ruskin's organic design dissolves. Now, Ruskin's seductive "mountain brotherhood between the cathedral and the Alp" soon becomes suspect in its referential truthfulness.

Deconstructing the allegorical aesthetic in this way helps to show the arbitrariness of Ruskin's hierarchical system. After all, Ruskin's social insights rest on his waning Christianity, and, more specifically, on the typological aesthetics of the Bible. It is not coincidental that during the research and writing of The Stones of Venice Ruskin began questioning the language of the Bible. As with many Victorians, the advances in geology, among other causes, had affected his Christian faith. Ruskin expressed his religious frustration to Henry Acland in 1851: "If only the Geologists would let me
alone, I could do very well, but those dreadful Hammers! I hear the clink of them at the end of every cadence of the Bible verses” (qtd. in Landow The Aesthetic and Critical 266). In short, Ruskin’s weakening faith in the theology supporting his symbolic structures helps subvert the Gothic as an appropriate trope for the plight of the Victorian laborer.

Paradoxically, Ruskin also uses the idea of Christian imperfection to advance his organic system. He eloquently describes the elevating effects of Christian humility:

That admission of lost power and fallen nature . . . the Christian makes daily and hourly, contemplating the fact of it without fear, as tending, in the end, to God’s greater glory. Therefore, to every spirit which Christianity summons to her service, her exhortation is: Do what you can, and confess frankly what you are unable to do; neither let your effort be shortened for fear of failure, nor your confession silenced for fear of shame. And it is, perhaps, the principal admirableness of the Gothic schools of architecture, that they thus receive the results of the labour of inferior minds; and out of fragments full of imperfection, and betraying that imperfection in every touch, indulgently raise up a stately and unaccusable whole. (10.190)

The egalitarian appeal of Ruskin’s Christian rendering here serves as an apparatus of paternalistic ideology, as Louis Althusser would describe it. According to Althusser, the sources in culture of “the reproduction of the conditions
of production" exist in what he calls Ideological State Apparatuses, such as churches and schools. In some ways, Ruskin, in adopting the language of Christianity, becomes an agent for the dominant ruling class. On the surface, Gothic architecture becomes the equal opportunity employer charitably serving Christianity. But Ruskin’s Gothic version is another example in The Nature of Gothic of a patronizing attempt to explain away what the author assumes to be an innate inferiority of a certain class of individuals. Ruskin essentializes both the medieval mason and the nineteenth-century operative. Then, by taking that inferiority and transforming it into a Christian aesthetic of imperfection, Ruskin’s rhetoric undermines his cause. All the rhetoric about the “freedom” and “liberty” of the medieval worker becomes not only hypocritical, but, as some critics have shown, simply distorted.  

Throughout the essay, Ruskin leaves little room for any true advancement for the worker; he or she is fated to that given station. To an extent, Ruskin exploits the concept of original sin, first to explain the worker’s inferiority and then to rationalize the worker’s frozen rank. With characteristic condescension, Ruskin entertains some hope for the manual laborer of his age:
Now, in the make and nature of every man, however rude or simple, whom we employ in manual labour, there are some powers for better things; some tardy imagination, torpid capacity of emotion, tottering steps of thought . . . . But they cannot be strengthened . . . unless we prize and honour them in their imperfection. (10.191)

In this passage, and in many others instances, Ruskin conceives of the Victorian laborer as a curious mixture of a predestined, Calvinistic operative and a Romantic noble savage, who despite his "inferior mind," can nonetheless "raise up a stately and unaccusable whole" in Ruskin’s organic fellowship. Ruskin embodies here that combination of nurturement and condescension expressed by the mid-century employer. To appreciate the similarity, it may help to listen to the sentiments of Lord Joseph Wilson, who managed the Rand Brothers’ Bradford Mills (Bradford being a city ironically where Ruskin lectured big employers in the late 1850's). Wilson speaks with empathy for his workers:

I tried to understand the worker’s point of view and lean to his side . . . . in times of depression I felt that I must lose rather than the worker, whom I treated as belonging to me. I loved them individually and so could not cheat them: I must try to serve them and do what I can for them, so that my whole business life has been on the lines that have yielded comfort and peace, and the assurance that my methods would bear investigation on the basis of the highest standard. (qtd. in Joyce 141-42)
The language of this benevolent employer echoes Mill’s depiction of the paternalist as protector. Like Ruskin’s prizing of his laboring subject’s imperfections, Wilson too offers succor to his ailing worker. As is common, however, in the deferential dialectic, there is still an undercurrent of proprietary interest. Wilson sees his worker as “belonging” to him. The dialectic equation thus materializes: as a means of identification, his worker becomes his son; in terms of differentiation, the worker remains an economic subject. In this excerpt, Ruskin offers little hope for a more fully developed identity; he always qualifies or limits his compliments of the manual laborer. Unfortunately, Ruskin brands an individual as this or that type. His phrase used above, “the make and nature of every man” implies some—but seriously limited—potential. This limited potential can be achieved not by the worker’s self-initiative but only by the earnest coddling of the privileged hand of the bourgeois paternalist. This view ensures the employer class’s domination over the worker. One must remember that beneath Ruskin’s apparently modern, socialist sensibility lies a more fundamental old-school Toryism. Instead of a true friend of the working class, Ruskin’s opinions operate
within a larger, more authoritarian set of beliefs. Thus, the complexity of this deferential dialectic clearly anticipates the problem of real freedom versus authoritarian control for the worker. In the end, real freedom gets lost in the bourgeois rhetoric; it is hardly realized.

In light of Ruskin's patronizing approach to the worker, the critic John Unrau imagines how close empathy is to arrogance in Ruskin's flattering appeal to this middle-class reader:

By this time the readers have been manipulated into a frame of mind--it must have been irresistible to many of them--in which it is not only permissible, but their Christian duty, to luxuriate in the fantasy of playing God to their inferiors. To them has been granted the divine power of breathing the breath of artistic life into the clodish 'working creature,' to 'make a man of him' who 'was only a machine before, an animated tool.' (43-44)

Unrau's view of the readers' collective apotheosis points to Ruskin's success in interpellating his Gothic collaborators. This again shows the implications of Ruskin's paternalism. Ruskin puts a twist on Mill's theory of dependence, when he observes that the lower ranks "should be called on for nothing but to do their day's work, and be moral and religious. Their morality and religion should be provided for them by their superiors,
who should see them properly taught it" (364). Ruskin surely fulfills this function also, but perhaps in a more imaginative way. Despite his fanciful mythologizing and religious allegory, one can still argue that there is a paternal dogmatism underlying his prose-poetry.

Of all the passages in The Nature of Gothic manifesting a paternalistic ethos, the quintessential expression remains Ruskin's description of "noble reverence." After attacking the readers for being unwitting slave-drivers in demanding perfection in their domestic decor, Ruskin reverts to the sage pose, offering what Mill refers to as "affectionate tutelage" (The Principles of Political Economy 3.759). In trying to discover the cause of the shaken foundations of the present society, Ruskin finds it in the relentless dehumanization of the operative. Ruskin denies that the problem lies in the class division: "Never had the upper classes so much sympathy with the lower, or charity for them, as they have at this day, and yet never were they so much hated by them" (10.194). Coming at the question with a Tory sensibility, Ruskin is blinded to the deep-rooted inequality between the noble and the poor. In many ways, the charitableness of the upperclass in the form of paternalistic practices
derives from a class guilt as well as a strategy to perpetuate its economic domination. Ruskin goes on in the passage to explore the nature of reverence. This section captures the essence of the deferential dialectic as practiced in Victorian England:

> I know not if a day is ever to come when the nature of right freedom will be understood, and when men will see that to obey another man, to labour for him, yield reverence to him or to his place, is not slavery. It is often the best kind of liberty,—liberty from care. The man who says to one, Go, and he goeth, and to another, Come, and he cometh, has, in most cases, more sense of restraint and difficulty than the man who obeys him. The movements of the one are hindered by the burden on his shoulder; of the other by the bridle on his lips: there is no way by which the burden may be lightened; but we need not suffer from the bridle if we do not champ at it. To yield reverence to another, to hold ourselves and our likes at his disposal, is not slavery; often it is the noblest state in which a man can live in this world. There is . . . a noble reverence, that is to say, reasonable and loving; and a man is never so noble as when he is reverent in this kind. (10.194-95)

As in previous passages, such as his tirade about the glass bead workers, Ruskin denies that what he is describing is slavery. It appears to be case of admission through repeated denial. Surely, the language is right out of the mouths of apologists of slavery, even down to the unsettling comparison of the worker with a domesticated work horse. Ruskin cautions the yoked operative to accept
stoically his subservient state. In many ways, this is also an apt metaphor for the Calvinistic idea of the calling, as it is integrated into the paternalistic scheme. This Christian stoicism informs what is clearly an unequal relationship between employer and worker. In trying to legitimize this deferential relationship, Ruskin relies on class-defined sources of traditional authority--notably, a charitable Christianity and a natural class order. In terms of the exchange between master and subordinate, Ruskin accepts the condition as natural and thus equitable.

In challenging this relationship, Howard Newby focuses on the real context of deference:

[D]eference relationships are concerned with some such exchange, but the point that needs to be emphasized is that this exchange is not the coming together of two free agents who then proceed to negotiate the outcome of their interaction on the basis of a priori parity... [D]eference relationships occur within a context of pre-existing inequality. ... [T]his exchange cannot be viewed as ‘free,’ for the dominant party is always capable of defining--and in the last analysis, imposing--the prevailing ‘rate of exchange.’ (426)

Ruskin mimics the entrepreneur in that he, as cultural arm of the dominant bourgeois ideology, helps to define the “rate of exchange.” Ruskin’s status as a leading Victorian sage gives him power to control the reigning cultural discourse about the nature and function of the worker in
Victorian society. This influence sustains and ultimately institutionalizes deference in his culture. Surely, Ruskin is accurately called a reformer. In fact, today he is claimed by the Labor party in England as one of its founders. Nevertheless, to what degree Ruskin is a radical reformer is questionable. That is, his ideological principles appear to sometimes strengthen the status quo economic structures.

Considering Ruskin's *The Nature of Gothic* as an essential element in defining economic relationships enables us to see the paradoxes of the sage's discourse. Like all Victorian sages, Ruskin's capital— to use an entrepreneurial metaphor— is his rhetoric. The philosophical assumptions underpinning this rhetoric demands scrutiny. As perhaps the most gifted prose stylist of the Victorian sages, Ruskin can easily persuade. His words can seduce readers by the mere beauty of their cadence. His wonderfully meandering digressions are liberating, the loftiness of his thoughts inspiring. Amid Ruskin's enlightening flourishes, however, are strange contradictions. In discussing how to show our love for great authors in "Of Kings' Treasuries," Ruskin asserts that the "right feeling" to have is "'How strange that is!"
I never thought of that before, and yet I see it is true.'" (qtd. in Wilmer 261). In tracing the deferential dialectic in *The Nature of Gothic*, we apply Ruskin’s sound readerly habits to him, assenting to its strangeness, yet finally pronouncing, "yet I see it is not all true."

To approach Ruskin reflexively once again in "Of Kings’ Treasuries," he describes a good author’s oblique way of presenting meaning: "Not that he does not say what he means, and in strong words too; but he cannot say it all; and what is more strange, will not, but in a hidden way and in parables, in order that he may be sure that you want it" (18.63). As demonstrated in this discussion, Ruskin’s parabolic form in *The Nature of Gothic* is allegory. Despite Ruskin’s insight about the strangeness of literature, allegory is not an autonomous aesthetic. As Paul de Man cogently shows, the aesthetic cannot escape history; indeed, the aesthetic has its own ideology, especially for Ruskin, who inherits so many aesthetic structures--along with their epistemological history. To analyze these “hidden patterns” in literature is a project Ruskin would applaud, believing so strongly that a good reader must earn entrance into the eternal "aristocracy of companionship," which great books represent. One of the
hidden patterns we find in Ruskin's *The Nature of Gothic* is a ubiquitous allegory of paternalism. To understand how Ruskin's architectural discourse adds to what Rosenberg calls his "archetypal history" is to understand the subtle ways in which history, religion, and art are interwoven to help shape and carry out cultural practices.

**Endnotes**

1. Newby, in alluding to Mill's passage, takes it out of context and assumes mistakenly that Mill advocates this "elaborate web of paternalistic relationships," when in fact Mill is merely describing this institutionalized dependency. Moreover, Mill believes that paternalism, as practiced, had become outmoded. Soon after this passage cited above, Mill questions the efficacy of this protective theory: "What is there in the present state of society to make it natural that human beings, of ordinary strength and courage, should glow with the warmest gratitude and devotion in return for protection? The laws protect them, wherever the laws do not criminally fail in their duty" (3.761).

2. The phrase is a variation from this passage in *Macbeth*:

   What hands are here? Ha! They pluck out mine eyes!
   Will all great Neptune's ocean wash this blood
   Clean from my hand? No. This my hand will rather
   The multitudinous seas incarnadine,
   Making the green one red. (2.2.77-81)

3. For an engaging discussion of Ruskin's use of romance in his social criticism—including the *The Stones of Venice*—see Jefrey Spear's *Dreams of an English Eden*. In terms of this study of paternalism, Spear's chapter on Carlyle, entitled "Papa Carlyle," demonstrates how Carlyle's writings, such as *Sartor Resartus*, helped shape Ruskin's own version of what Spear calls the tradition of "realized romance": that is, to quote Spear, "Ruskin applied to society itself the redemptive pattern of romance, combining his literal interpretation of biblical
ethics with the application of an ideal feudal order and chivalric manners to modern circumstances."

4. Unrau highlights the historical errors Ruskin commits by citing Paul Frankl’s book, The Gothic: Literary Sources and Interpretations through Eight Centuries. Frankl sneers at some features of Ruskin’s essay, namely, the section dealing with the "mental tendencies of the builders," which he describes as "utter vagueness and dilletantism." Also, he provides customs of masonic lodges that undermine Ruskin’s Romantic view of the mason’s creative license to perform their building tasks.

Essentially, one infers that there was in fact little room for imperfection and artistic imperfection for the medieval mason. In fact, Unrau concludes that the jobs performed by the "roughmasons" and "hardhewers" were in fact comparable to that of some Victorian factory workers, in terms of the minimal mental ability and the repetitiveness of their job.
CHAPTER 3

DEFERENTIAL POLITICS: COKETOWN’S CAPTAINS OF INDUSTRY IN HARD TIMES

At one point in the chapter “Men and Masters” from Hard Times, the paternalist Bounderby asks Stephen Blackpool how he himself would fix the “muddle” of the workers’ condition in Coketown. In a telling moment, Stephen responds with resignation:

I donno, sir. I canna be expecten to’t. ‘Tis not me as should be looken to for that, sir. ‘Tis them as is put ower me, and ower aw the rest of us. What do they tak upon themseln, sir, if not to do’t? (115)

Directly before this passage, Stephen asserts his indignation over the workers’ plight in the presence of the Parliament gentleman Harthouse. Characteristic of him throughout the novel, however, Stephen here again quickly lapses into irresolute deference. Stephen’s reaction in this instance, and in many other moments in the novel, cannot be explained by treating him as only a caricature in an industrial morality play. More than a cursory case study of the alienated Victorian factory worker, Stephen embodies the ideological effects of a pervasive paternalism. With almost everyone he encounters, Stephen seeks authoritative direction, or at least some sense of guardianship. His deference toward others in the novel
becomes almost involuntary, the result of a cultural conditioning culminating in a predictable reflex. This institutionalized paternalism is most personified in Bounderby, one of the novel’s reigning paternal heads. Though Dickens clearly satirizes Bounderby for his callousness and mocks him as a star pupil of the Samuel Smiles school of self-help, the author at times ends up perpetuating some of Bounderby’s patronizing practices. After all, Dickens, as both journalist and novelist, had contributed to the paternalist discourse that helped define the relationship between the Victorian employer and worker. In this sense, tracing Stephen’s character and investigating other symptoms of the novel’s deferential politics reveal significant patterns. Like Ruskin, who thought Hard Times was the author’s greatest work, Dickens also unwittingly inscribes bourgeois positions, which he at the same time exposes. For example, just as Ruskin’s glass bead workers ultimately become aestheticized when measured against their idealized counterpart, the medieval mason, Dickens’s “Hands”—a version of what Ruskin calls “animated tools”—also become allegorized and supposedly redeemed by the martyrdom of Stephen and the eventual conversion of Gradgrind.
After analyzing the rhetoric and other aesthetic components of paternalism in *Hard Times*, the reader will better understand not only Stephen’s submissiveness but the hierarchical roles of other characters and situations in the novel. As an early critic of *Hard Times*, George Bernard Shaw points to a disturbing political paradox of the novel, which relates to this idea of deference:

[Dickens] turns his back frankly on Democracy, and adopts the idealized Toryism of Carlyle and Ruskin, in which the aristocracy are the masters and superiors of the people, and also the servants of the people and of God. (qtd. in Monod 338)

Though Shaw’s criticism may appear harsh here, there is more evidence that supports his view. Following Shaw’s jab at Dickens here, critics have long parried over the sincerity of Dickens’s radicalism in *Hard Times*. After F.R. Leavis’ attempt to solidify the canonical place of *Hard Times*, John Holloway effectively refuted Leavis’s assessment of the novel as a great “moral fable.” Holloway concludes that ultimately Dickens’s novel suffers from too much sentimentality and bourgeois shallowness to make any significant defense of the working-class. Holloway observes that, in essence, Dickens “stood much too near to what he criticized in the novel, for his criticism to reach a fundamental level” (159). Though overstated, Holloway’s
claims of Dickens’s lingering Toryism in Hard Times can be strengthened. In terms of rhetoric and aesthetics, for instance, Dickens’s populist defense of the worker in Hard Times often gives way to a paternalist ideology. To trace the source of Dickens’s paternalism in Hard Times, it may prove useful to begin by following up Shaw’s allusion to Carlyle.

Like his pupil Ruskin, Carlyle inveighs against the dehumanizing effects of industrialism. Critics such as Michael Goldberg and William Oddie have convincingly shown Dickens’s indebtedness to Carlyle in these social reformist efforts. That these critics have not exhausted the examples from Carlyle’s writings indicates the abundant force of Carlyle’s thought throughout Hard Times. For example, one early source perhaps for Dickens’s anti-mechanistic ideas is Carlyle’s Condition of England essay, “Signs of the Times” (1829). In the following passage, Carlyle describes the mechanically driven age in England:

> Were we required to characterize this age of ours by any single epithet, we should be tempted to call it, not an Heroical, Devotional, Philosophical, or Moral Age, but, above all others, the Mechanical Age. . . . Nothing is now done directly, or by hand; all is by rule and calculated contrivance. For the simplest operation, some helps and accompaniments, some cunning abbreviating process is in readiness. Our old modes of exertion are all discredited, and thrown aside. On every hand, the living
artisan is driven from his workshop, to make room for a speedier, inanimate one. The shuttle drops
from the fingers of the weaver, and falls into iron fingers that ply it faster. . . . There is no end to machinery. (34)

In this instance, Carlyle could easily be describing the palsied fingers of the weaver Stephen Blackpool in Hard
Times. Indeed, Hard Times dramatizes Carlyle's Mechanical Age, with Gradgrind as the soulless "mechanist" whom
Carlyle endlessly pillories in his essay. Furthermore, Bounderby may be cast as a "Captain of Industry" gone astray.

Along with Ruskin's glass bead worker passage, as well as other moments in The Nature of Gothic, Hard Times
contains passages that resemble moments in Carlyle's social criticism. In one scene, for example, Dickens describes
workers toiling monotonously in the infernal factories of Coketown:

Their wearisome heads went up and down at the same rate, in hot weather and cold, wet weather and dry, fair weather and foul. The measured motion of their shadows on the walls, was the substitute Coketown has to show for the shadows of rustling woods; while, for the summer hum of insects, it could offer, all the year round, from the dawn of Monday to the night of Saturday, the whirr of shafts and wheels. (85)

When describing the worker's sheer drudgery and flagging vitality in this passage, Dickens captures the spirit of
Carlyle. Even Dickens's cadence here—the deft staccato phrasing offset by lilting alliteration—derives in part from Carlyle's versatile prose. This description of the Coketown workers also suggests a Carlylean refrain from *Signs of the Times* that "We war with rude Nature" all too much. Dickens's shadows of sweating automatons are, he laments, the pathetic "substitute" for the "shadows of the rustling woods." Here, Dickens appeals to the Romantic idea of an uncorrupt nature. As with Ruskin, Dickens implies an infinite beauty and mystic strength in nature, especially when compared to a deadening industrialism.

Like Carlyle, Dickens often sets up rhetorical oppositions around these privileging centers: in this case, the mechanical versus the natural. Beneath this particular dialectic lies the troublesome organicism of much paternalist thinking. Later on in *Signs of the Times*, Carlyle discusses what he calls the "Dynamical" nature of man, which underlies his organic idealism:

There is a science of Dynamics in man's fortunes and nature, as well of Mechanics. There is a science which treats of, and practically addresses, the primary, unmodified forces and energies of man, the mysterious springs of Love, and Fear, and Wonder, of Enthusiasm, Poetry, Religion, all of which have a truly vital and infinite character. (42)
In this instance, Carlyle carefully builds his rhetoric around this facile duality between dynamism and mechanism. While this neat dichotomy may be polemically seductive, it becomes reductionist thinking. To a great extent, Dickens repeats this strategy in *Hard Times*: Utilitarianism, a largely “unnatural” philosophy, is first demonized through allegorized oversimplification. In time, this practice is given some redemptive hope with the sentimental awakening of Gradgrind to a spirit of fellow-feeling. In short, Gradgrind undergoes a Carlylean conversion: the scapegoated mechanist transforms into a man of feeling. This is effected, we are to believe, because the previously untapped spontaneous energy, so long strangled by the mechanical vise of facts, is slowly released: Gradgrind begins to find his pure, instinctive nature. Dickens’s Romantic privileging of the natural also appears in his depiction of the wholesome and imaginative circus child, Sissy Jupe. Dickens’s association of the natural with moral goodness undergirds paternalist thinking throughout the novel. That is, Dickens’s often uses children as symbols of innocence; again, they can serve to cover over the more basic structural inequalities of society by appealing to the reader’s conditioned ideas about children’s purity. In
addition, since the child is still very inexperienced about the world, it allows the novel or narrator to function in loco parentis. Along these lines, Terry Eagleton observes that while the child is able "to embody a powerful criticism of the official social order . . . it is not able to articulate such a criticism for itself, and must leave it to others, like Dickens, to act as spokesperson for it" (325-26). These transcendent features in Dickens's narrative slowly create a surrogate father role for the narrator. When considered in this way, Hard Times's debt to Carlyle becomes more of an insidious collaboration by Dickens with his sage mentor to reinforce, in effect, paternalistic cures that frustrate, instead of free, the Victorian factory worker.

Lastly, another influence of Carlyle's thinking that may exist, strangely enough, by omission in Hard Times is his Captains of Industry theory. When discussing Carlyle's influence on Hard Times, critics have not observed that in terms of Carlyle's faith in noble leaders, Dickens may be indeed lamenting in his novel the absence of any exemplary organizers and managers of the working class. This may in part answer Raymond Williams's disappointment that there are no active heroes in Hard Times (96). Just as many critics
complain that Dickens fails to present a strong representative of the working class—Stephen being wholly ineffective—so too does the novel lack any worthy industrialist or union leader who can offer serious hope for the terribly displaced characters in the story. As Carlyle reminds us at the opening of his chapter “Captains of Industry” from Past and Present, “Government can do much, but it can in no wise do all” (162). On whom Carlyle calls to better control a mechanical and money-mongering society also suggests a similar problem for the inhabitants of Coketown:

The main substance of this immense Problem of Organizing Labour, and first of all of Managing the Working Classes, will, it is very clear, have to be solved by those who stand practically in the middle of it; by those who themselves work and preside over work. (162)

As with much paternalistic strategy, Carlyle’s appeal involves, once again, a deferential dialectic: it includes differentiation—the managerial “presiding” over work—and identification—the inclusive idea that the masters must also work themselves. Moreover, Carlyle tries to temper class antagonism here by preaching the gospel of work to all classes and by establishing a diversionary scapegoat: Mammonism. To some extent, the beatified Rachael fulfills this function in Hard Times by helping to foster in Stephen a
repressive work ethic. Carlyle sets the goal for this reformed aristocracy: "To be a noble Master, among noble Workers, will again be the first ambition with some few; to be a rich Master only the second" (163). Carlyle's deft phrasing in "noble Master, among noble Workers" gives the illusion of class parity, an artful attempt by him to bridge class divisions.

As is common in deferential politics, however, Carlyle accepts the overall social and economic hierarchy as being the natural state of society. Carlyle, in effect, doesn't want to completely overhaul the middle-class; he wants to humanize it and ultimately hopes it will attain a heroism that will lead England away from getting and spending and provide, instead, noble guidance and spiritual strength. Carlyle's paternalistic vision, however, can only be achieved at the cost of chronic stagnation for the factory worker. Thus, Carlyle's work gospel becomes a repressive force for the lower orders. For all of his rhetoric about tapping into man's "vital and infinite character," Carlyle's agenda in reinvigorating the aristocracy leaves little room for the average worker even to begin to cultivate his or her "Dynamical" nature. Toward the end of his discussion on the Captains of Industry, Carlyle reveals his strict hierarchical
values in advocating a firm, paternalistic grasp on the progressively restive workers:

Look around you. Your world-hosts are all in mutiny, in confusion, destitution; on the eve of fiery wreck and madness! They will not march farther for you, on the sixpence a day and supply-and-demand principle: they will not; nor ought they, nor can they. Ye shall reduce them to order, begin reducing them. To order, to just subordination; noble loyalty in return for noble guidance. (166)

Carlyle delivers his message here with despotic zeal. His oxymoronic phrase "just subordination" epitomizes the paradox of paternalist ideology: it is "just" in terms of the natural order of things for one class to graciously submit with "noble loyalty" to its existing industrial benefactors.

To benefit this discussion, the above passage may be juxtaposed with Ruskin's plea for "noble reverence" in The Nature of Gothic—quoted in the previous chapter but bears repeating briefly again here. Like Carlyle, Ruskin tries to quell the mutinous stirrings among workers in mid-century England:

To yield reverence to another, to hold ourselves and our likes at his disposal, is not slavery; often it is the noblest state in which a man can live in this world. There is, indeed, a reverence, which is servile . . . but there is also noble reverence, that is to say, reasonable and loving. (10.195)
With characteristic verbal dexterity, Ruskin elevates what one may consider oppression to a spiritual devotion. The stately description becomes a modernized version of comitatus of pagan warriors.

One might conclude that along with Ruskin and Carlyle, Charles Dickens also implicitly calls for a "just subordination" in *Hard Times*, as long as the Coketown workers are led by more worthy paternalists. Again, in the passage quoted at the opening of this chapter, Stephen responds that it is not he who should be expected to fix the workers' muddle, but "them as is put ower me, and ower aw the rest of us" (115). This may be more than another snivelling submission to authority by Stephen. It may represent, in an isolated way, Dickens's acceptance of the ideal responsibilities of these agents within a natural class order. In short, in *Hard Times* Dickens does not fault a paternalistic system itself, but faults the lack of fellow-feeling and moral connectedness between employer and operative that exists in the current system. By first examining Stephen Blackpool's character, we may begin to probe Dickens's assumptions about this capitalistic muddle in *Hard Times*.

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Beginning with John Ruskin, most critics have expressed frustration at Stephen Blackpool's pathetic portrayal in *Hard Times*. Ruskin calls Stephen "a dramatic perfection, instead of a characteristic example of an honest workman" (qtd. in Monod 332). Though Ruskin praises the moral usefulness of Dickens's subject matter, he regrets that Dickens did not "use severer and more accurate analysis"—in effect, more realism perhaps—when handling the question of factory reform and the condition of the working class in England. In some senses a critical successor to Ruskin, F.R. Leavis also qualifies his praise of Dickens's "moral fable" (227) by seeing Stephen as another unfortunate by-product of Dickens's sentimentality: Stephen is "the good, victimized working-man, whose perfect patience under infliction we are expected to find supremely edifying and irresistibly touching as the agonies are piled on for his martyrdom" (235).

Regarding the charge of sentimentality in Stephen's portrayal, more needs to be said. Though Stephen often produces much pathos, especially in his death scene, his generally stagnant position as a relentlessly oppressed worker belies more than Dickens's emotional manipulation of the reader. Stephen's learned passiveness—his
characteristic trait—becomes a conditioned class behavior. Stephen's deference is, indeed, a defining stance in the novel. It not only radiates to other deferential relationships in the story, but perhaps in an odd sense, extends to the author himself. That is, in terms of the narrative, Stephen becomes used up and deferential to the other more developed characters in the plot of *Hard Times*. In freezing Stephen's potential as a character, Dickens diverts the narrative, for the most part, from a class drama to a domestic drama. This turn toward the domestic perhaps allows Dickens to further sentimentalize Stephen's plight, especially in scenes related to his ill-fated marriage. In this light, the critic Anne Smith notes that even though Dickens originally wished to show how Stephen's surroundings corrupted his "natural goodness," the author "eventually allowed himself to slip back into an attitude of rather patronizing benevolence" (163). In this sense, Dickens re-enacts the condescending pity of a manufacturer for his agitated operative. With the exception of a couple of poignant scenes with Rachael, as well as in one of his interviews with Bounderby, Stephen soon fades out of the narrative of *Hard Times*. Moreover, Stephen's ambiguous role in the narrative sometimes gives the novel an

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unevenness, while reinforcing a paternalist ethos in the novel.

The deeper economic roots of Stephen's almost blind faith in Rachael are rarely discussed by critics of *Hard Times*. When considering the subtle psychological effects of deference, however, it becomes clearer that Stephen's bond with Rachael becomes another symptom of the radiating deferential forces in Victorian culture. While wandering the streets after work one evening, Stephen finally sees Rachael and they talk. Stephen's admiration for her transcends romantic fancy; he truly idealizes her. When Rachael implies the dangerous perception others may have of her and Stephen being seen together, he looks at her "with a respectful and patient conviction that she must be right in whatever she did" (50). Stephen's blind trust and respect for Rachael here resembles ideal features in a sound paternalistic hierarchy. One could use Ruskin's term and say Stephen feels a "noble reverence" for Rachael. In short, their relationship becomes a small paternalistic allegory within the master narrative. Rachael becomes for Stephen less of a romantic object than a source of moral and spiritual guidance. In patriarchal terms, Dickens idealizes Rachael, limiting her subjectivity in the novel.
Like Sissy, Rachael's idealization diverts attention from the structural evils of Coketown; instead, the focus is on her mystifying goodness. Though Stephen's selfless worship appears at one level pathetically dependent, it also allows Dickens to isolate Stephen's capacity for compassion and patience.

Furthermore, when Stephen complains to Rachael about the difficulty of seeing each other and about the general milieu, Rachael responds, "Try to think not; and 'twill seem better" (50). Rachael's advice here may be treated as more than a momentary emotional salve for Stephen; it is also a call to defer within the status quo of industrial relations. Rachael, in fact, mimics John Stuart Mill's caricatured benefactor when he asserts that the poor "should not be required or encouraged to think for themselves, or give to their own reflection or forecast an influential voice in the determination of their destiny" (3.759). Like a benevolent manufacturer, Rachael cultivates in Stephen a deferential attitude that helps to keep him down. In essence, Rachael teaches Stephen to know his place in society. Thus, through the cover of a romantic subplot, Dickens idealizes in Rachael traits peculiar to a proper Captain of Industry. In addition,
Rachael’s limited appearance in *Hard Times* adds further mystery to her character. She becomes almost apotheosized by Stephen, an angel visiting the needy of Coketown. Again, Rachael essentially performs the role of emissary of a patriarchal elite, whose function, Mill reminds us, is to think for the lower orders and to nurture in the poor a "passive and active obedience to the rules prescribed to them."

Stephen surely practices this obedience with Rachael. At one point, Stephen clearly expresses his moral submission to Rachael: "thou hast done me so much good, and heartened of me in that cheering way, that thy word is a law to me. Ah lass, and a bright good law! Better than some real ones" (51). Stephen’s suggestion that Rachael embodies laws that are better than "some real ones" reinforces her image as an authoritative advisor. Rachael succeeds in fostering what Mill calls a "trustful insouciance" in Stephen, even though Stephen continues to brood and ponder his way through the rest of the novel. In sum, Rachael unconsciously enacts hierarchical strategies at the cost of Stephen’s real integrity and potential for political activism. Ultimately, Rachael preaches a stoicism that further imprisons Stephen. She tells Stephen
not to "fret" about the laws; she announces, "Let the laws be" (51). Rachael's stoical announcement to Stephen chimes with Dickens's own homiletic passage at the close of *Hard Times*, wherein he implores the reader to "Let them be."

While Dickens's message is ambiguous—possibly referring to Sissy's "imaginative graces and delights" as an antidote to the machinery of the age, it nonetheless resembles Rachael's laissez faire resignation to the ways things are, along with the hope that, like Louisa, humanity will realize its potential for natural fellowship. Given Dickens's general abandonment of any sustained independent voice for Stephen as a representative of the working class, the narrator's blithe refrain, "Let them be" naturally echoes Dickens's saintly creation, Rachael, to "Let the laws be."

As an aside, Dickens as narrator acts as an occasional chorus in *Hard Times*. As participant in the story, then, Dickens collaborates in shaping the paternalist ethos that filters through the novel. Though Stephen at times shows glimpses of an independent and courageous voice, he quickly weakens, giving his signature sigh, "Tis a muddle." In essence, through Rachael, Dickens unwittingly promotes a deference that the sociologist Patrick Joyce describes as
“the social relationship that converts power relations into moral ones, and ensures the stability of hierarchy threatened by the less efficient, potentially unstable, coercive relationship” (92).

In terms of Rachael’s “affective tutelage”—to use another term of Mill, Stephen’s stoicism is engendered within a Christian context. For instance, after the sequence in which Rachael presents Stephen’s wife from poisoning herself, Stephen tells Rachael, “Thou’rt an Angel; it may be, thou hast saved my soul alive!” (68). Stephen’s angelic reference here surely echoes the dominant patriarchal image if the Victorian angel in the house, a rendering that recurs throughout Dickens’s fiction. Furthermore, Ruskin’s own eloquent portrait of the “angel in the house” in a work such as “Of Queens’ Gardens” no doubt remains a significant source of such female idealizing for Dickens. Thus, Rachael has become for Stephen both law and savior. After giving Rachael angelic status, Stephen goes on to agonize about what might have happened had she not been present at his wife’s bedside—such as thoughts of his own suicide. Rachael “put her two hands on his mouth, with a face of terror, to stop him from saying more” (68). Rachael is stifling more than Stephen’s
bout of self-pity; on an allegorical level, she is again taking away his voice—his potential for self-assertiveness. Rachael, after all, is the one to whom he pledges not to join the union. Like a master’s agent, Rachael mediates Stephen’s role in the factory community by continuing to instill in him a work ethic and a respect for the hierarchical status quo.

Rachael’s encouragement of Stephen to forget the “muddle” and to do his duty as weaver perpetuates what Foucault identifies as the “official memory.” The “official memory,” according to Foucault, represents a linear path of history carried on by empowered forces. The “official memory” essentially prevents any subordinate’s development of memory. The subject’s identity is sacrificed to history’s neutral and ineluctable forces. In this sense, the “official memory” represents the imposed subordination of the Coketown factory worker to the manufacturing class, represented by Gradgrind and Bounderby. This official perspective embodies the putative fruits of a Carlylean work gospel, as well as the economic prosperity that it brings to England. Despite her angelic status, Rachael becomes an unwitting agent of the “official memory” or, for the sake of our discussion, the
paternalist's "will to knowledge." Stephen, on the other hand, represents the potential to write what Foucault calls the "counter-memory" of Coketown's history—the lies, the unfair laws, and the inhumane factory conditions that block one's freedom and blunt one's imaginative sensibility. Essentially, Rachael further represses Stephen's "counter-memory" by promoting both a perfunctory work ethic and a veiled Christian stoicism. By adding Rachael to his industrial drama, Dickens essentially advances the deferential politics of Victorian culture. This is true largely because Rachael, in terms of the domestic narrative of Hard Times, embodies compassion and a spiritual mystique. When treated partly as symptomatic of the politics of subordination, the relationship between Stephen and Rachael becomes more revealing, and ultimately pitiable. In his introduction to his book, Work, Society and Politics, Patrick Joyce observes the complex dynamics of work and social relations:

A recognition that the social relations of employer and worker amounted to more than a matter of coercion and resignation alone and involved the internalisation of an entire social reality, in turn suggested forcibly that the history which had brought such a situation about should be looked at again. (xiv)
The relationship between Stephen and Rachael in *Hard Times* suggests many subtle elements--marriage, economics, and religion--that dramatize this process of "internalisation." As this discussion will continue to show, Dickens's novel generally exposes the deplorable conditions of the factory workers, while still perpetuating a hierarchical culture.

Of course, the real object of Stephen Blackpool's deference, at least in terms of the economic significance of *Hard Times*, is Bounderby. As Stephen's employer, Bounderby is apparently far from what Carlyle had in mind as a noble Captain of Industry. In fact, Dickens may consider Bounderby to be an anti-paternalist, an antithesis of what his Carlyle hoped would lead England out of its misery. Despite his patronizing approach toward Stephen, Bounderby's depiction reveals--with perhaps more honesty than Dickens had intended--the troublesome paradoxes inherent in theoretical role of the paternalist employer. In Stephen's interview with Bounderby, in the chapter "Men and Masters" (II, ch. 5), we begin to see most directly the employer/operative dynamic at work. More than any other place in the narrative--save when he addresses his fellow workers--Stephen articulates the complaints that he and his fellow workers have. Though Stephen admits that he cannot express how to improve working-
class tensions--since, he says, it is "above my powers," he does, however, describe what will not fix the problem:

The strong hand will never do't. Vict'ry and triumph will never do't. Agreeing fur to mak one side unnat' rally awlus and for ever right, and toother sideunnat' rally awlus and for ever wrong, will never, never do't. Nor yet lettin alone will never do't. Let thousands upon thousands alone, aw leading the like lives an aw faw' en into the like middle, and they will be as one, and yo will be as anoother, wi' a black unpassable world betwixt yo, just as long or short a time as sitch-like misery can last. (115-16)

In moments like this, Dickens hints at some of his own insights into the social and economic problems of the novel. In Stephen's speech here, Dickens breaks down the parts of the deferential dialectic to uncover their paradoxes. With his homespun oratory, Stephen effectively describes the premise of differentiation in the paternalist equation: that is, unnaturally making one side right and one side wrong. In a sense, Stephen interrogates the unjust hierarchy with his imagery of an ever-widening gulf between classes. Later on in the speech, Stephen also suggests the idea of identification, with unschooled frankness:

Not drawin nigh to fok, wi' kindness and patience an' cheery ways, that so draws nigh to one anoother in their monny troubles, and so cherishes one anoother in their distresses wi' what they need themseln--like, I humbly believe,
as no people the genelman ha’ seen in aw his troubles can beat--will never do’t till th’ Sun turns t’ ice. (116)

In light of Stephen’s folksy insight about industrial relations, his boss Bounderby surely misses the mark: his attempts at familial or emotional ties with those beneath his rank often become unctuous and condescending. For example, Bounderby’s mingling with some of the circus people at the Pegasus Arms degenerates into transparent snobbery. In one scene that epitomizes the class division brought on by industrialists, Bounderby reacts to what he considers the anomalous miscellany of the circus culture: “Nine-oils, Merrylegs, missing tips, garters, banners, and Ponging, eh! . . . Queer sort of company, too, for a man who has raised himself” (24). In a fitting riposte, Kidderminster shoots back, “Lower yourself, then. . . . Oh Lord! If you’ve raised yourself so high as all that comes to, let yourself down a bit” (24). Dickens’s wit in such harlequinades brilliantly pricks the pomposity out of a self-parody like Bounderby.

Clearly, for Dickens, Bounderby personifies the incorrigibly exploitative paternalist. Unlike Gradgrind, Bounderby fails to transform in any significant way. Bounderby also embodies a regenerative myth-making in
industrial England. Not only does Bounderby fabricate his own humble and disinherited origins, but he also helps perpetuate fictions that, in effect, intensify class antagonism. In one scene, Dickens seeringly critiques how Bounderby, as a symbol of English institutions, spreads destructive myths throughout Victorian society:

There was a moral infection of clap-trap in him. Strangers, modest enough elsewhere, started up at dinners in Coke town, and boasted, in quite a rampant way, of Bounderby. They made him out to be the Royal arms, the Union-Jack, Magna Charta, John Bull, Habeas Corpus, the Bill of Rights, an Englishman’s house is his castle, Church and State, and God save the Queen, all put together. (33)

In this passage, Dickens brilliantly describes the pervasive myth-making of the bourgeois class system. To put it another way, Bounderby embodies the “invented traditions”--to borrow Hobsbawms’s phrase--that constitute the paradoxes of paternalist ideology: the nationalism, the imperial pride, the aristocratic pomp, the Providentially-inspired race--it is all inscribed in the caricature of Bounderby. Surely, this is a memorably stinging satire in the novel. However, Bounderby’s self-mythologizing and general fictionalizing call into question Dickens’s privileging of “fancy.” Bounderby’s practices challenge the simple dichotomy between fact and fancy that Dickens’s
is forever building throughout *Hard Times*. Indeed, myth and metaphor can be used as deceitful and oppressive tools in the paternalistic arsenal. As the embodiment and purveyor of Victorian myths, Bounderby remains, as one critic describes him, "a gargantuan mess of fictions" (Cunningham 138). In essence, while continuing to satirize the crude features of a flawed paternalism, Dickens undercuts his own attacks. Generally speaking, Dickens's allegorical project in *Hard Times* is driven by an aesthetic ideology that at times contradicts his overt political sympathies in the novel.

To begin with, Dickens's use of caricature in *Hard Times* enacts a homogenizing treatment of humanity. In many cases, this approach resembles—or at least can lead to—Gradgrind's utilitarian leveling of individuals or, for that matter, Bounderby's blanket condescension toward the working-class. As an early admirer of *Hard Times*, John Ruskin generally defends Dickens's mode of characterization. Ruskin observes that though Dickens often uses "some colour of caricature" in developing his narrative, "the things he tells us are always true" (qtd. in Monod 331). Judging from Ruskin's penchant for allegory, as discussed in the previous chapter, it is not
surprising that he would praise this technique in Dickens. Like Ruskin, Dickens also relies on an aesthetics that ultimately supports the practices of its target paternalists. At one level, Dickens clearly attacks industrialism for eroding individuality and imaginative sensibility. In describing Coketown, for instance, Dickens dramatizes Ruskin’s moral condemnation of corrosive urban drabness:

It was a town of red brick, or of brick that would have been red if the smoke and ashes had allowed it; but, as matters stood it was a town of unnatural red and black like the painted face of a savage. It was a town of machinery and tall chimneys, out of which interminable serpents of smoke trailed themselves for ever and ever, and never got uncoiled. . . . It contained several large streets all very like one another, inhabited by people equally like one another, who all went in and out at the same hours, with the same sound upon the same pavement, to do the same work, and to whom every day was the same as yesterday and tomorrow, and every year the counterpart of the last and the next. (17)

Passages like this help distinguish *Hard Times* as a worthy industrial novel. Dickens shows here how the prosaic buildings of Coketown both mirror and corrupt the workers’ lives. No doubt, passages like these also recall Ruskin’s moral aesthetics of architecture. At first, Dickens tempts us to lament the stifling effects of the Coketown’s austere environment. These grim descriptions often validate
Dickens's reformist convictions. However, the allegorical features in these scenes—the painted savage, the "serpents of smoke," the mad elephant machinery—constitute a style that is sometimes at odds with its political messages. That is, like his flat characters—whether the monstrous Bounderby or sentimental figures, such as Stephen and Sissy Jupe—Dickens's grotesque and fairy-tale descriptions of Coketown grow out of a Romantic creed, which, in turn, often depends on a broader Christian influence throughout the novel. The reader gets only oblique glimpses of the harsh realities of Coketown. Dickens's metaphorical language becomes another strategy of the manufacturing class to mask or transform these realities. For example, some critics have pointed out the paradoxical features of Dickens's metaphor comparing Coketown to the "painted face of a savage." Dickens exploits the rhetorical force of this metaphor, often at the cost of dehumanizing a race or class of people.

In tracing Dickens's authoritarian tendencies, however, these critics have not always adequately identified specific sources of Dickens's metaphors. For instance, the image of the Indian "savage" becomes crucial for Carlyle in Past and Present. In his chapter on the
Captains of Industry, Carlyle uses the savage to show what will result if sloth and anarchy persist in England:

No Working World, any more than a Fighting World, can be led on without a noble Chivalry of Work, and laws and fixed rules which follow out of that—far nobler than any Chivalry of Fighting was. As an anarchic multitude on mere Supply-and-demand, it is becoming inevitable that we dwindle in horrid suicidal convulsion, and self-abrasion, frightful to the imagination, into Chactaw Workers. With wigwams and scalps,—with palaces and thousand-pound bills; with savagery, depopulation, chaotic desolation! (165)

Understanding the metaphorical potency of the Chactaw Workers in Carlyle demands that the reader unpack some the linguistic baggage. This helps define the "wisdom" Dickens inherits from his master. For Carlyle, "laws and fixed rules" that spring from "a noble Chivalry of Work" imply a natural law governing society. In his "savage" metaphor, Dickens also privileges natural law, but perhaps with even more offensive consequences to the figural referent: not only does Dickens address the Indian as "savage," but he also assigns a tawdriness to the stereotype--the "unnatural red and black" of its "painted face." During moments like this in the novel, one is forced to examine the political implications of Dickens's aesthetics. Noting how Dickens further alienates the lower orders of the paternalistic hierarchy through metaphor is not mere critical sniping: it
shows how allegorical elements are naturalized in some Victorian discourses. In terms of representation, the "savage" image in this case had become so deeply allegorized that any real human subject appears lost. For Dickens, then, this metaphor becomes a prefabricated trope to be called upon when rhetorically necessary.

Furthermore, Dickens's own journalistic articles and editorially-approved pieces in Household Words, such as "Cain in the Fields" and "The Noble Savage," reveal Dickens's ambivalence toward the English rustic and laboring class in general. When considering Dickens's disdainful--and at times racist--views of the lower orders, William Oddie describes the lamentable predicament for the reader of some of Dickens's writings:

The admirer of Dickens must face the unpalatable fact that his views about black and brown people, though humanitarian at the beginning of his career, grew progressively more illiberal, and that his utterances on the subject on more than one occasion reached depths of savagery never plumbed by Carlyle even in "Modern Prisons." (135)

This observation is far from being just a politically correct remark; it clarifies the structure of Dickens's imaginative antidotes to industrial capitalism. Though this "savage" metaphor appears anomalous at first, it may be considered a paternalist metaphor--indeed, part of a
more wide-ranging repertoire of leading prose stylists of the day.

Enveloping this metaphor comparing Coketown to an Indian "savage" is the more encompassing Christian typology contained in this passage. In the excerpt above, for example, the image of the coiling snake of industrial smoke cannot help but evoke the Christian serpent. Linked to the serpent imagery is the demonic "savage." Implicitly, then, industrialism is connected to "savagery"; they constitute as evil forces in what once was perhaps a more pastoral community. Casting the moral dilemma of urban life in this Christian manner--with occasional Gothic flourishes--becomes diversionary; it ignores the real issues affecting the worker's subjectivity. This Christian imagery also prepares the reader for other moments in the novel when Dickens surrenders to Christian palliatives. For instance, Stephen's complex dilemma in the narrative is conveniently resolved by having him fall down a mineshaft and perish. The thought that Stephen is going to "his Redeemer's rest" provides only a fleeting solace. Such Christian allegorizing typifies paternalistic maneuvering. In killing Stephen off in this manner--or, rather, allowing him to achieve a Christian martyrdom, like his Biblical
namesake—Dickens practices a disturbing avoidance. Fittingly, Anne Smith notes that "The apotheosis of Stephen does not offer much hope for the future. What hope there is in the novel, is faint and ambiguous" (169). Like Ruskin’s "The Slave Ship," Dickens’s *Hard Times* often allegorizes personal and class agonies. This approach leads to murky, novelistic impressionism. Consequently, the reader rarely experiences, in any direct and sustained way, the deadening sensory assaults Stephen receives, for instance, as a loom weaver; the reader, in fact, is never allowed into the cotton factory where Stephen works. Thus, when Ruskin tell us there is much truth in Dickens’s "circle of stage fire," one must challenge this assertion and ask how exactly Ruskin defines this truth, for in many ways it would help clarify the targets of Dickens’s satire in *Hard Times*.

Though Dickens’s continually treats fancy as an instrument of individual expression in *Hard Times*, his own imaginative techniques often undermine this theme. For example, even though Dickens appears to express his fear of class stereotyping through Stephen’s plaintive speeches, Dickens frequently limits his characters’ subjectivity. Kate Flint refers to these covert maneuvers as a “double
movement” in Dickens’s rhetoric. She illustrates Dickens’s rhetorical undercutting when she discusses the homogenous population of Coketown:

In emphasizing the individuality of each human being, Dickens finds himself awkwardly caught. On the one hand, he wants to stress that education, upbringing and environment form people: if the environment of Coketown is one of grimy monotony, it thus follows that there will be a certain monotony about its population. (Flint xxii)

This homogenizing effect, however, is contradicted at times by imaginative signs and impulses present in Coketown. That is, the ever-present existence of metaphor—even in the expression of the paternal heads of Hard Times—subverts Dickens’s overt painting of a prosaic, literal Coketown. In his study In the Reading Gaol, Valentine Cunningham also recognizes this obvious rhetorical tension in Hard Times:

One of the major discernible overt functions of Hard Times is that it’s written to undermine the literal, the factual, the metonymic, the purely worldly way of reading the world, and to urge in place of any such harsh vision or practice the counter-importance of the fanciful, the figurative, the metaphoric, the fictional mode of seeing. (133)

Unhappily for the Coketowners, the saturation of metaphor and fancy in their culture does not ultimately wash away hierarchical barriers. Though Dickens hails fancy and
wonder as humanizing sources, their subtle manipulation by the present Captains of Industry in Coketown can in fact legitimize the power relations between the employer and the operative. Dickens’s novel itself—largely an allegory filled with fairy tale images and personifications of good and evil—could perhaps be found in the Coketown library, which, considering the dearth of rich cultural resources in the town, becomes one of its bright spots. Moreover, given the general docility of Stephen and any other potentially radical voice in *Hard Times*, one imagines that Dickens’s novel would effectively temper any serious political activism among the Coketown workers. That is, in Althusserian terms, *Hard Times* might fortify Coketown’s library as another educational state apparatus. In Althusser’s view, the driving force behind the system of relationships in industrial capitalism lies with those who, in Althusser’s words, determine “the reproduction of the forces and relations of production” (qtd. in Brantlinger *Crusoe’s Footprints* 92). These exploitative agents constitute what Althusser calls ideological state apparatuses. The most effective ideological arm of this network in securing social control is the educational state apparatus. In one scene, Gradgrind contemplates the
library's potential to seduce the reader into the world of fancy:

It was a disheartening circumstance, but a melancholy fact, that even these readers persisted in wondering. They wondered about human nature, human passions, human hopes and fears. . . . They sometimes, after fifteen hours' work, sat down to read mere fables about men and women, more or less like themselves, and about children, more or less like their own. (38)

Just as Carlyle emphasizes a sense of wonder in his humanistic science of Dynamics, Dickens also ironically inculcates a more controlled wonder than readers of Hard Times may at first imagine. In this sense, there exists throughout the novel this fascinating reflexiveness for the reader. Watching Coketown's characters being shaped by the educational and cultural institutions naturally begs the reader of Hard Times to examine his or her own readerly habits. The novel particularly asks us to re-evaluate terms like "wonder," "fancy," and "imagination." In fact, it is through the reader's scrutiny of these aesthetic concepts that Dickens's own ambivalence about fiction comes to light. Dickens's views about the role of fancy and cultural practices in general can also be usefully studied when juxtaposing his casual or journalistic observations with his fictional representation. For instance, Kate Flint observes that in American Notes, Dickens, in praising the
factories in Lowell, Massachusetts, was intrigued specifically with the apparently enriching ways the employees of these factories spent their leisure. Dickens notes that the stories they read from the circulating libraries are often about working class folks. Dickens was pleased that these tales served to "inculcate habits of self-denial and contentment, and teach good doctrines of enlarged benevolence" (qtd. in Flint American Notes 117-18). Perceptively, Flint does not view the factory workers' reading habits as truly liberating; instead, she sees them as encouraging an acquiescence to their station in life. Flint sees a likeness between the libraries in Lowell and those in Coketown:

Dickens implicitly seems to be endorsing identificatory, rather than oppositional modes of reading: there is no sense that any literary encounters made in the Coketown library are going to lead the workers towards any active challenging of the system they inhabit. (Introduction xxiv)

This complacency cultivated by such reading habits is surely evident in Stephen. He exemplifies the self-denial and patience that Dickens feels are the suitable traits for a worthy working class. The world of wonder, then, has its limits for the worker. Instead of an open, self-exploratory channel, the imagination for Dickens is
paradoxically a closed aesthetic system. Moreover, Dickens's prescribed idea of imagination translates at times into a superficial and ephemeral form of entertainment, an extension of Sleary's creed that we must be amused in life. Ideally, reading the approved fiction will promote the identification that is vital to the deferential dialectic. Speculating about the reading habits of the workers in the novel tempts us to consider how *Hard Times* cultivates political ideas. That is, *Hard Times*--as an act of the imagination--cannot escape its political import. Given the novel's tepid approach to real working-class reform, one cannot help but conclude that though it exposes some grim effects of industrial capitalism, the novel nevertheless instills middle-class Victorian values.

Lastly, another subtle way *Hard Times* re-enacts the dynamics of benevolent authority is through omniscient narration. The narrator's role in *Hard Times* is complex. At once a disinterested observer, the narrator, in another instance, may speak directly to the reader with fatherly ease. Following a dramatic scene, he may also directly address a character with earnest sermonizing. This protean narration may be partly explained again by the deferential
dialectic. That is to say, this model may help reconcile, for example, the motif of surveillance with the hearth-inspired guidance of the narrator that closes the novel.

Throughout *Hard Times*, Dickens's simultaneously positions his narrator as both accessible to the reader and authoritative in his sage-like wisdom. In the opening scene, for instance, Dickens's narrator gives stage directions in a sense, as he describes the school setting and its paternal overseer, the imposing Gradgrind:

> The scene was a plain, bare, monotonous vault of a schoolroom, and the speaker's square forefinger emphasized his observations by underscoring every sentence with a line on the schoolmaster's sleeve. The emphasis was helped by the speaker's square wall of a forehead, which had his eyebrows for its base, while his eyes found commodious cellarage in two dark caves, overshadowed by the wall. The emphasis was helped by the speaker's mouth, which was wide, thin, and hard set. The emphasis was helped by the speaker's voice, which was inflexible, dry, and dictatorial. (1)

After Gradgrind's opening monologue, beginning with the famous line, "Now, what I want is, Facts," the narrator proceeds here with both detachment and engagement. Though informative, the stage directions are also, in a sense, editorialized by metaphor and a heavy-handed cadence, which in this case simulates the dogmatic style of the novel's paternal head. With metaphorical elan and psychological insight, the narrator establishes himself indeed as an
omniscient and keen observer. With is artistry and insight, the narrator begins to achieve some distance, or differentiation.

At other moments, the narrator of *Hard Times* drops his mask as fabulist and explains his craft. In these scenes, the point of view sometimes shifts from third to first person. Early in the novel, for instance, the narrator describes the domestic training of the young Gradgrinds:

The first object with which they had an association, or if they had a remembrance, was a large black board with a dry Ogre chalking ghastly white figures on it.

Not that they knew, by name or nature, anything about an Ogre. Fact forbid! I only use the word to express a monster in a lecturing castle, with Heaven knows how many heads manipulated into one, taking childhood captive, and dragging it into gloomy statistical dens by the hair. (7)

In this instance, the narrator identifies more with the reader. For instance, he shows a self-consciousness about his metaphorical method; he also shares with the reader his creative process. Furthermore, the shift to first person and his exasperated tone toward Gradgrind’s autocratic style of child-rearing add a humaneness and intimacy to the narrator’s persona. The narrator’s sarcasm builds in this brief passage; his detachment gives way to felt conviction.

The paradoxical nature of the omniscient narration in
scenes like this suggests the contradictions inherent in Victorian paternalistic structures—fathers, headmasters, industrial managers, and novelists, all dominating while also protecting their subjects. While discussing omniscience in nineteenth-century fiction, Audrey Jaffe observes its empowering effects:

> If omniscience is linked to scientific objectivity and public knowledge, however, it is at its most characteristic when demonstrating its knowledge of what (as Dickens’s narrators frequently comment) “no one” knows: what goes on in private, within the family, and in the minds of characters. Unseen observation grants narrators a power and mobility that characters do not possess. (*Vanishing Points* 9)

Jaffe’s point here relates to the role of the sage in Victorian culture. Like Carlyle and Ruskin, Dickens’s narrator assumes the persona of a cultural decoder, interpreting the signs of the times—whether de-mystifying utilitarianism or crafting a well-honed conceit about squalid industrialism. Deviating at times from the conventions of omniscient narration, Dickens further highlights the versatility and apparent clairvoyance of his narrator.

Dickens complicates the omniscient narrator in *Hard Times* when he has the narrator address a character. For example, at the end of the chapter “Murdering the
Innocents," the narrator, disgusted by the schoolmaster's pedagogic dogmatism, speaks to him:

Say, good M'Choakumchild. When from thy boiling store, thou shalt fill each jar brim full by and by, dost thou think that thou wilt always kill outright the robber Fancy lurking within--or sometimes only maim him and distort him! (6)

Like a choric figure whispering an aside behind the arras, the narrator participates in his own narrative; he is both creator and player in the novel. Such narratorial participation both engages the reader's own involvement in the story, while also calling attention to his fictionalizing practice. In this manner, Dickens attempts to invite the reader's trust as a sympathetic ear of the victimized students of Gradgrind and also to strengthen his appeal as an authoritative force for reform. Though these shifts in point of view are intrusive and indeed jarring at times, the narrator nevertheless is humanized by these displays of emotion. Just as Ruskin builds his sage persona by his temperamental outbursts against his Philistine readers in The Nature of Gothic, Dickens's narrator fluctuates between an all-knowing host and a mobile, tendentious reformer. Despite these narratorial breaks, the image of the omniscient teller as benevolent
protector ultimately remains dominant and nurturing for Dickens's middle-class readers.

As a last example of Dickens's fascinatingly complex point of view in *Hard Times*, the narrator--like a true Victorian prophet--closes his story by looking into his characters' future. In this case, the narrator provides "unseen observation" not only for the novel's readers but also for the yet unlived lives of his characters. Dickens's narrator builds his credibility as he surveys--with brilliant verisimilitude--the future of several major characters. Though the scene may recall the sentiment in Dickens's futuristic excursion in *A Christmas Carol*, the narrator's roving eye at the close of *Hard Times* also suggests a vigilance that undercuts the treacle of Sissy's domestic bliss. This perspicacious gaze of Dickens's narrator at the end, and throughout much of the novel, embodies the ubiquitous paternalism operating in the novel.

In speculating about the complex dynamics of reform in the novel, Cynthia Malone asserts that one common tactic *Hard Times* borrows from the Utilitarians, whom the novel denounces, is surveillance. While also including the circus as a figure ironically fraught with watchfulness, Malone concludes that "*Hard Times* represents a system of
disciplinary scrutiny, a hierarchical system of multiple gazes that enforce docility and obedience" (15). Though not discussed in her trenchant study, the omniscient narrator also constitutes this elaborate system of surveillance. For it is Dickens's—or his narrator—who, in idealizing the family as a source of virtue and radiant imagination, emerges ultimately as the surrogate father/narrator offering succor and hope to his characters and his extended family of readers.

Examining the paternalistic structures in Dickens's *Hard Times* reveals how the reformist impetus of the novel is seriously countered by the inherited rhetoric and aesthetic traditions of Victorian middle-class culture. In probing desperately crucial social issues of the day in this novel, Dickens's often resorts to Romantic conventions. These conventions—privileging nature, idealizing childhood, and elevating the imagination—all constitute paternalistic maneuvers. In many ways, Dickens's novel demonstrates the contradictions of this model of authority in Victorian society, while at the same time showing its efficacy in appealing to the sensibilities of his middle-class readers.

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Though other critics have commented on some of the social and political paradoxes in Hard Times, no one has connected these strategies to a more systematic paternalism. In particular, applying the deferential dialectic to the relationship between some characters—as well as to the role of the narrator—helps clarify how Dickens, as a type of sage novelist, carries out allegorical methods found in other paternalistic discourses of Victorian culture. At the end of the novel, we are left with no exemplary authority figures. Though Gradgrind has reformed somewhat, the narrator’s final portrait of him is hardly flattering. Aside from the buoyant depiction of Sissy, the reader is left with the soothing and protective words of the narrator to do our duty, nurture our imaginative graces, and strive for the hearth-inspired, familial warmth embodied in the final picture of Sissy surrounded by her children. But, as with other cloying moments in Hard Times, the collective spiritual strength at the end of the novel appears imposed or contrived.

Essentially, the worker is left with no voice in Hard Times. Dickens’s reliance on fancy as a means to a cure is misplaced. This point is reflexive in the novel: Hard Times, like Dickens’s treatment of the imagination, proves
how art—like the superficial side-show that is the circus—only delays the problems of the working classes. Instead of a political force, the imagination for Dickens in *Hard Times* is a temporary refuge from the torpor and alienation of unfulfilling work. Unlike Shelley in his “Ode to the West Wind,” wherein he hopes to inspire political reform through creative power, Dickens unhappily lacks this animating spirit in *Hard Times*: that is, while Shelley wishes to scatter the sparks of his message “from an unextinguished hearth,” Dickens blithely encourages his readers, in effect, to engender the same sense of duty that Sissy embodies. Unlike Shelly’s source of inspiration, the domestic hearth of Dickens’s reader is extinguishing, waiting to be to be rekindled by a more radical reform, before the ashes of the fire indeed “turn grey and cold.”

**Endnotes**

1. While Goldberg documents Carlyle’s hovering presence in *Hard Times* with several juxtaposed quotes, Oddie plays down Carlyle’s direct influence on *Hard Times* by acknowledging, for example, the broader Romantic traditions.

2. Derek Johnson in *Pastoral in the Work of Charles Dickens* effectively exposes Dickens’s intolerant views toward the lower classes and non-white races by quoting from some of his non-fiction articles published within a few years of *Hard Times*. It provides a useful source for anchoring his “savage” metaphor and his paternalist metaphors in general.
3. Catherine Gallagher in *The Industrial Reformation of English Fiction* studies the social paternalists' metaphor throughout *Hard Times* and concludes convincingly that despite Dickens's attempt "to make social relations personal, to advocate that the relations between classes become like the cooperative associations of family life, both novels [Hard Times and Gaskell's North and South] ultimately propose the isolation of families from the larger society" (148).

4. Terry Eagleton (Methuen edition of *Hard Times*, 1987), in observing the circus as an extended family, qualifies his idealization of this enterprise as a refuge of "utopian social order" by noting that "Like most of the families which Dickens admires, it is a rowdy, dishevelled, chaotic muddle rather than a straightlaced set-up, and its proliferation of small children is a covert smack at the Malthusian economists who denounced the improvident breeding of the poor" (333).

5. Cynthia Northcutt Malone sees the circus not simply as a refuge of fancy but as ironically mirroring society. Noting that *Hard Times* is preoccupied with watching, Malone maintains that the circus "serves as a figure in small for the pervasive, multi-layered system of surveillance at work in the novel as a whole" (15).
CHAPTER 4
FALSE LOVE: AMBIGUITIES OF PATERNALISM IN JOHN STUART MILL'S AUTOBIOGRAPHY

Of the writers examined in this study, John Stuart Mill appears perhaps the least likely to be linked to Victorian paternalism. Mill, after all, is famous for articulating principles of individuality in essays such as On Liberty, which, to a great extent, expresses the corrosive and homogenizing effects of too much authority in society. That is, as a strong liberal voice, Mill often struggled against paternalist measures in Victorian society. As demonstrated thus far in this examination, however, paternalism permeates the social habits and diverse discourses of the period. By analyzing Mill's Autobiography, one can see how in narrating the events of his life Mill maintains paternalistic features.

As an intertextual link to Dickens's Hard Times, Mill's Autobiography reveals, in many ways, a real reference point, not only for the stifling pedagogy of utilitarianism but for the relentless paternal authority that James Mill exercised over his prodigious son, John. Moreover, the restorative power Mill finds in poetry and in his beloved Harriet suggests a Romantic aesthetic. Consequently, Mill's aesthetics feed an organicism, which
ultimately helps to shape a crosscurrent of paternalist ideology in his Autobiography. With this approach, Harriet becomes more a literary construct that embodies Mill’s poetics than a model of feminist achievement. Instead of acting primarily as a redeemer figure for Mill, then, Harriet—like James Mill—inspires a deferential ethos in John Stuart. This ongoing tension between submission and assertion of identity provides a significant subtext of the Autobiography. In light of these gender and aesthetic issues, Mill’s domestic narrative becomes an allegorical expression of a public ambiguity about Victorian paternalism. Though Mill is most remembered for his fervent call to achieve individual freedom by escaping the effects of outmoded institutions and an obsolete aristocracy, his signature libertarianism is compromised, at times, by his frequent prescriptions for what an ideal and cultivated individual should be. Reading the Autobiography reveals the sources of these qualifications and ultimately contextualizes the paradoxes in Mill’s political thought.

In terms of the rare dramatic moments in his otherwise dispassionate Autobiography, John Stuart Mill’s “mental crisis” episode no doubt remains most memorable. As Mill takes us through the rigors of his early intellectual
training, the reader may long for a narrative jolt. After all, by the time Mill reaches his epiphany, he has both impressed and saturated us with his ascetic regimen of learning: notably, the endless list of books he was reading and the relentless flow of scholarly house guests he was exposed to while under his father’s tutelage.

Consequently, at this point in the reminiscence, both Mill and the reader may desire, like Macbeth, “some sweet oblivious antidote” to cure this atrophying analysis. The deconversion not only invigorates the Autobiography, but it also reveals Mill’s appropriation of a Romantic aesthetic inherited from the “Culture and Society” tradition, embodied in the writings of Carlyle, Arnold, and Ruskin.¹ Examining this deconversion shows how Mill’s personal crisis becomes, through his autobiographical discourse, a public enactment of a tension between a bourgeois organism and a libertarian heterodoxy, which characterizes much of Mill’s thinking. By drawing on a Romantic humanism to help restore his mental health and, in effect, pronouncing his refined theory of happiness, Mill expresses veiled paternalistic maneuvers. Before elaborating on these effects, it may help first to revisit

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the significant passages of Mill’s breakdown and subsequent recovery in chapter five of the Autobiography.

The first event that helped cure Mill of his melancholia in the winter of 1826-27 was, ironically, a passage he read from an autobiography:

I was reading, accidentally, Marmontel’s Memoirs, and came to the passage which relates 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. (1.145)

Here, Mill palpably experiences the inspiration of literature: his rush of tears are followed by a slow unraveling of burdensome guilt and oppressive analysis. Given the uneventful tone of much of the Autobiography, this passage has no doubt been romanticized. It is perhaps a natural reaction by a reader, who has witnessed a rare display by the autobiographer. Furthermore, it is not unlikely that given his reputation—and, of course, the tribute to him later in the chapter—Wordsworth, instead of Marmontel—is often remembered by many readers as first effecting Mill’s emotional reawakening. As a result, this crucial chapter becomes easily oversimplified, lumped together into one dramatic transformation for Mill. Indeed,
this literary "ray of light" in Mill's recovery also represents, in part, a stock moment in the autobiographical genre. Given the desultoriness and list-making that often characterizes Mill's account, this revelatory chapter provides a crescendo to a stylistically flat score. Once senses, then, that the description and placement of Mill's "mental crisis" was far from accidental—unlike his reading of Marmontel.

However, in reading Marmontel, Mill finds a real point of reference: namely, the role of his own father. As one of the first critics to read an early draft of the Autobiography, A.W. Levi offers an illuminating Freudian reading of Mill's crisis. While dated, the interpretation deserves to be revisited by any serious scholar examining the Autobiography. Levi contends that the catharsis Mill experiences while reading Marmontel derives less from a vague cultivation of the feeling than from an abreaction based on the specific psychological struggle with his overbearing father: that is, by reading about the death of Marmontel's father and anticipating his own surrogate role of father in his household, Mill releases repressed anger and perhaps develops a death wish against his father.

While Mill may use this event as a step to a revised view
of literature and the imagination, an ambiguity lingers about what part the "cultivation of the feelings" plays in his evolving aesthetic creed. Apparently, Mill takes a reading whose therapy originates in intense empathy and begins formulating a Romantic theory of the arts, particularly poetry. Then, Mill tries to integrate this aesthetic into his social philosophy. This synthesis is expressed in his autobiography, especially when his life-writing is viewed as an educational exemplum. A key feature of Mill's education, after all, is the restorative power found in Romantic literature. However, like Dickens in *Hard Times*, Mill often treats the imagination, ultimately, as a refuge from the real world, instead of an instrument of social reform. This point may be clearer when considering Wordsworth's influence on Mill.

Mill's therapeutic reading of Marmontel, in fact, prepares him for the more formidable effect of Wordsworth. More than any other poet or artist in general, Wordsworth becomes for Mill the poet who permanently shapes his new aesthetic sensibility. Though his overall enthusiasm for Wordsworth's poetry appears sincere, Mill's resulting aesthetics, as expressed in his autobiography, leads to a view not unlike Dickens's idea of fancy--most clearly
embodied in the circus—in *Hard Times*: that is, treating art as a temporary form of amusement, a welcome sanctuary from the real issues of life. Mill’s description of Wordsworth’s influence reveals this oppositional rhetoric.

When he first presents Wordsworth in the *Autobiography*, Mill still appears highly conditioned to treat poetry simply as a soothing agent. Mill relates that he “took up the collection of his poems from curiosity, with no expectation of mental relief from it, though I had before resorted to poetry with that hope” (149). Given the general context of his discussion of poetry in this section of the chapter, Mill continues to “resort” to poetry during what he admits was a period in which he “seemed to have nothing left to live for.” In his assessment of Wordsworth, Mill continues to advance a simplistic Utilitarian view of the imagination: namely, that cultivating the imagination can temporarily assuage some of the amoral workings of the political economy. For the most part, then, Wordsworth’s poetry becomes an emotional refuge for Mill. Unlike Shelley, for instance, Mill does not treat the poet—not even his healer Wordsworth—as one of the “unacknowledged legislators of the world.” Even when considering Mill’s more humanized Utilitarianism—that is, no longer equating
push-pin to poetry--it is doubtful still that Mill could exalt poetry, as Wordsworth himself does in his *Preface to Lyrical Ballads*, to "the first and last of all knowledge."

The political implications of Mill's conception of poetry involve his view of individual subjectivity. Despite his sentimental embrace of Wordsworth, Mill still expresses a Benthamite distrust of poetry. Instead of integrating the imagination into one's whole personality, Mill divides subjectivity into discrete departments. As a result, the imagination is weakened as a tool of political enlightenment. Raymond Williams articulates these paternalistic effects of Mill's poetics in the *Autobiography*. In *Culture and Society*, Williams notes that the "very culture of feelings" that Mill attributes to Wordsworth's poems reinforces the Romantic idea of poetry as a "kind of false attachment." Williams also reminds us that while Mill relishes the imaginative sympathy Wordsworth's poems engender, Mill also qualifies these poetic pleasures as having "no connection with struggle or imperfection." In this sense, Mill continues to conceive of poetic sensibility as a separate sector of the mind. Williams discusses the political freight of Mill's poetics in this case:
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 feelings, in the ordinary sense, is irrelevant to its operations. (67)

While Mill has clearly softened the Utilitarian distrust of poetry, Benthamite traces remain in his thinking about poetry. In the theorizing that follows his emotional awakening, Mill fails to convincingly incorporate one's aesthetic sensibility into his or her complete identity. Like Ruskin's Romanticized medievalism or Dickens's exalted fancy, Mill also promotes an unsatisfactory idealism, wherein the imagination is consigned to its own sphere.

Furthermore, during his pivotal mental crisis in the Autobiography, Mill's view of culture resembles Dickens's depiction of fancy in *Hard Times*: in both authors, the concept of culture becomes, to use Terry Eagleton's complete term, a mere supplement, instead of a more integral means of personal and social reform. Eagleton sees Mill reinforcing the facile antithesis between material existence and "culture":

Political economy addresses itself to the external, material conditions of humanity; culture takes care of our inward well-
being. . . . Mill is quite unable to recognize that this mechanical duality is part of the problem, not of the solution. Culture is a mere supplement, left over or excess, the imponderable inwardness which statistics are unable to encompass; there is no sense in which it can figure, as it does for William Morris, as a transformative social force. (298-99)

While poetry becomes an emotional balm for Mill during the drama of his breakdown, the aesthetic ideology that drives Mill's observations must be examined. Though Mill expresses the need for poetry and the arts in other essays and speeches—see his Inaugural Address, for instance—his concerns often remain distantly theoretical. This tone, no doubt, results from his lingering rationalist disposition as a utilitarian thinker. Unconsciously perhaps, Mill indeed promotes the "mechanical duality" that characterizes the "Culture and Society" thought.

While composing his life story, Mill again re-synthesizes his aesthetic beliefs. Mill's narrative method in the Autobiography belies a careful construction of a refined Romantic aesthetic. This well-crafted narrative structure supports the derivativeness of Mill's poetics and lessens the spontaneity of his conversion and general convictions that appear throughout his mental crisis. That is, in a strange sense, Mill is working backward: in the Autobiography he may be taking his crystallized theories
and imposing them onto his earlier beliefs, making these
formed ideas appear more inchoate than perhaps they truly
were. Examining Mill’s methods of composition while he
discusses his emotional recovery through poetry helps to
contextualize his aesthetic beliefs.

Mill’s reconstructive narration often undermines, to
some extent, the authenticity of his effusive praise of
Wordsworth. Mill’s explanation of the restorative effects
of Wordsworth’s miscellaneous poems often reads like a
bland paraphrasing of Wordsworth’s Preface. Despite the
emotional intensity of the moment, Mill describes
Wordsworth with the colorless detachment of one of his
economic treatises. Instead of a truly cathartic moment in
his life, Mill’s love of Wordsworth ends in theoretical
cataloguing. Just as Wordsworth emphasizes “the manners of
rural life in his Preface,” Mill likewise tells us that
Wordsworth’s poems appeal “to one of the strongest of my
pleasurable susceptibilities, the love of rural objects and
natural scenery” (151). Mill goes on to say that
Wordsworth’s poetry has not only provided much pleasure in
his life, but had given him badly needed “relief” from his
recent depression. Soon after this, Mill provides an
aesthetic precis of Wordsworth’s poetry:

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What made Wordsworth's poems a medicine for my state of mind, was that they expressed, not mere outward beauty, but states of feeling, and of thought coloured by feeling, under the excitement of beauty. (151)

This observation, of course, is hardly original. In his edition of Mill's *Autobiography*, Jack Stillinger observes that Mill is largely paraphrasing here from Wordsworth's *Preface*. It is as if Mill, while recounting his poetic epiphany, was using Wordsworth's treatise as a reference guide. Thus, Mill’s derivative approach to such a poignant moment in his life again undercuts the sincerity of this famous chapter.

Not only does Mill's abstract style undercut his account at times; the nature of Mill's memory in his *Autobiography* also leads sometimes to less conventional views of his noteworthy work. A curious tension exists, for instance, between Mill's associative thinking and a more constructed literary effect that takes place throughout his mental crisis. Chapter five is meant to be a central chapter highlighted by Mill's literary conversion. However, when interrogating the process of Mill's composition, especially in this chapter, one may conclude that the associative mind of Mill is often carefully constituted by contrived elements. The studied
nature of Mill’s allusions in chapter five reflect, among other things, an attempt to carry out a didactic motive for his life-writing: that is, his life as educational exemplum. Indeed, the Autobiography might have been renamed The Education of John Stuart Mill. Mill, in fact, expresses in his opening page an overriding impulse behind his account:

[I]t 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 to be taught, and well taught, in these early years, which in the common modes of what is called instruction, are little better than wasted. (5)

One should keep in mind Mill’s intention here. That there is little memorable drama in Mill’s account in many ways misses the point. Mill, throughout most of the Autobiography, sacrifices self-indulgent reminiscence for moral and intellectual development. When viewed from this educational perspective, the Autobiography becomes another means of promoting a relentlessly canonical and classical education. In this sense, Mill’s narrative may be seen as a paternalistic text, which privileges the wisdom of the past and strengthens, at times, the hierarchical barriers that Mill ironically fought to break down. In chapter five, Mill enacts the effects of his canonical training. This
training had clearly affected his associative thinking. To probe Mill's associations in this chapter helps contextualize his epiphany; this, in turn, clarifies the ideological reverberations of Mill's poetics.

The literary associations Mill experiences during his mental crisis deserve more attention. For one, there is a staged spontaneity about them. After explaining how he vainly "sought relief" in some of his "favorite books," Mill confesses that there also was no person to whom he could turn for sympathy, not even his own father. In his desperate search for advice at this point, Mill tells us that he often thought of Macbeth's words to the physician. In his edition, John Stillinger quotes the relevant excerpt from Macbeth:

Canst thou not minister to a mind diseas'd,  
Pluck from the memory a rooted sorrow,  
Raze out the written troubles of the brain,  
And with some sweet oblivious antidote  
Cleanse the stuff'd bosom of that perilous stuff  
Which weighs upon the heart? (5.3.40-45)

One wonders, of course, whether Mill truly thought of Macbeth at the time of his malady or if he recalled these lines while he was composing this episode in his life. After all, a few lines earlier Mill associates his irremediable grief with lines from Coleridge's poem "Dejection." Though Coleridge's sentiments aptly describe Mill's condition, Mill admits "I was not then acquainted
with them" (139). Further along, Mill quotes Coleridge again, when contemplating his melancholy winter of 1826-1827—"Work without hope draws nectar in a sieve, and hope without an object cannot live" (145). Mill notes that these lines "were often in my thoughts, not at this time (for I had never read them), but in a later period of the same mental malady" (143). Despite Mill's questionable memory in these instances, he is developing literary associations both around the time these events occurred and also while he recalls these vital moments.

One other effect of Mill's reconstructive memory in this chapter is that it further aestheticizes his epiphany. Mill, to a degree, builds upon a version of the stock moment in a spiritual autobiography, wherein the subject undergoes a key transformation. Moreover, despite Mill's embrace of Carlyle's anti self-consciousness theory in this section (again, Mill has yet to hear of Carlyle's theory), Mill ironically engages in a self-conscious attempt to present his revelation in a way that suits his de facto poetics. In a sense, Mill aestheticizes his mental crisis by enacting a type of touchstone process of association. Mill dramatizes the effects of an education steeped in canonical literature. Though he maintains that his
"favourite books" had failed to heal him, Mill nonetheless interweaves into his account canonical texts as he examines his plight. While recalling Macbeth's words to the physician, for instance, Mill unwittingly creates a literary reference point, whose efficacy he, at the same time, denies. As with Ruskin's allusion to Macbeth in his discussion of Turner's "The Slave Ship," Mill's invoking of the same play also reveals telling ideas about the interplay between aesthetics and authority in the Autobiography. Namely, Mill's illustrations of literary moments involve authoritative, canonical texts. The spontaneous means by which these works are introduced in Mill's memoir, to some extent, help naturalize them in the literary canon. In this sense, Mill, as a great English reformer, reinforces and certifies a hierarchy of texts in Victorian culture. His unraveling of the literary works that shaped his life also becomes at one level a legitimation of their worth.

Mill's casual association of his dilemma with the mad grief of Lady Macbeth belies a more serious domestic and cultural flaw in Victorian society. In this small instance, Mill falls victim to the domineering, prescriptive father, whose intense intellectual training
leaves his son still bereft of real paternal affection. Lacking any natural ties, Mill’s literary associations fail to help Mill "minister to himself," to quote Macbeth’s doctor’s final advice. After recalling Macbeth’s words to the physician, Mill admits to what a lost soul he was at this time:

But there was no one on whom I could build the faintest hope of assistance. My father, to whom it would have been natural to me to have recourse in any practical difficulties, was the last person to whom, in such a case as this, I looked for help. (139)

In essence, Mill concludes that his father was not the physician who could "Pluck from the memory a rooted sorrow." For it was indeed his father who planted this injurious root. Early on in the Autobiography, John Stuart Mill discusses how, as a boy, he enjoyed the "voluntary exercise" of composing various histories of past cultures:

My father encouraged me in this useful amusement, though, as I think judiciously, he never asked to see what I wrote; so that I did not feel that in writing it I was accountable to any one, nor had the chilling sensation of being under a critical eye. (17)

This passage is revealing. The "critical eye," the reader may surmise, is more than just an innocuous metaphor here. It suggests the vigilant presence of Mill’s father.
throughout his life, and more significantly, throughout the composition of his memoir.

Though Mill's invoking of Macbeth appears involuntary, there remains an intriguing motive. Just as guilt determines the sorrow gnawing at Lady Macbeth for killing the king, Mill's association may also unconsciously portend the guilt he experiences when he clearly realizes his father's failed experiment with him. Added to this guilt is a mixture of sadness and shame when Mill articulates his alienation from his father during this reminiscence. Soon after this Shakespearean allusion, Mill becomes vicariously relieved by the father's death in Marmontel's Memoirs. Despite the cathartic effect of this abreactional parricide, however, the weight of a lingering deference still encumbers Mill. This deference is expressed not only through the forcefulness of James Mill's intellect and presence during and after his life but also through the moral and intellectual habits cultivated by James Mill. The austere conditions imposed by James Mill on his son, while often appearing bizarre and even inhumane, were, in some ways, carried over from a cultural disposition that continued to be driven by a broad paternalist ideology. When relentlessly—and at times dictatorially—implemented,
these features slowly produced in John Stuart a noble reverence, to borrow Ruskin's phrase.

One curious source of Mill's bouts of self-effacement and adulation of others is the ascetic strain of James Mill's veiled Calvinism. Despite his proclaimed agnosticism, James Mill clearly maintained the demeanor of a Scottish Presbyterian preacher, a vocation he once studied for at the University of Edinburgh—his son reminds us—but later abandoned. One aspect of James Mill's training of his son that grows out of religious roots is a stern work ethic. It is true that James Mill was at one level using his son to prove the efficacy of Utilitarianism. However, one cannot escape the pervasive effect of the work gospel in Victorian England. All of the elements that made up this work ethic—self-denial, a sense of personal and national duty, and relentless industriousness—largely derived from Protestant sources. While the young Mill describes his father's philosophy behind fashioning his son's character, one often detects a Calvinistic undercurrent. For example, Mill's discussion of his father's admonitions about self-image recalls the Christian sin of pride:

One of the evils most liable to attend on any sort of early proficiency, and which often fatally blights its promise, my father most
anxiously guarded against. This was self-conceit. He kept me, with extreme vigilance, out of the way of hearing myself praised, or of being led to make self-flattering comparisons between myself and others. From his own intercourse with me I could derive none but a very humble opinion of myself; and the standard of comparison he always held up to me, was not what other people did, but what a man could and ought to do. (1.35)

Such passages evoke the pontifications of a Methodist minister on the subject of vanity. Surely, the spirit—if not the precise theoretical aim—of Protestant self-denial and industry often propels James Mill’s pedagogical project for his son.

Furthermore, in light of his father’s covert Calvinism, John Stuart’s unstinting devotion to work may be viewed not necessarily as the specific regimen of his father’s Utilitarian project, but as representative of a Protestant work ethic flourishing in Victorian England. With his relentless industry, Mill exemplifies the gospel according to Thomas Carlyle. Moreover, Mill executes his tasks—both at the East India Company and in his political writing—with the humility of one who is performing his work for its intrinsic worth and altruistic effects. Rarely does Mill display any vanity in his achievements. Throughout, Mill maintains the ascetic work habit of a serious, earthly Puritan soul. This Puritan spirit that
helps characterize Mill is surely shaped by the unsuspecting Evangelical features of his agnostic father. In short, Mill’s self-portrait in the Autobiography reflects the evolution of a liberal mind that is paradoxically determined by more conservative cultural forces. Beneath the agnosticism and general liberal aims often lie opposing ideologies, which must be identified in order to understand the complexity of Mill’s political projects.

To a great extent, Mill’s deference is never wholly extinguished; it is only transferred to his beloved Harriet. Thus, Mill’s progress toward becoming an autonomous, intellectual reformer remains a complex process. In short, Mill achieves a self-identity that largely depends on paternalistic structures. In one sense, Harriet becomes another means for Mill to carry on his Romantic aesthetic, which was largely crystallized during his Wordsworthian conversion. In essence, Harriet becomes an embodiment of Mill’s general Romantic ideology. At a deeper level, Harriet also represents another authority figure to whom Mill defers. In this sense, Harriet replaces James Mill. Harriet’s role, however, may be oversimplified at times. She can easily be interpreted as
a kind of earth mother deity who rescues Mill from the stern father. For example, Avrom Fleishman describes Harriet as "An ideal figure of life and fruitfulness [who] replaces a patriarchal authority of law and order" (149). This view may be misleading; for while Harriet does indeed sustain the Shelleyean inspiration Mill cultivated after his breakdown, she also becomes for Mill a life-long object of reverence. In other words, it is not just that Mill has replaced one authority figure with another; it is that he has become so needy of an authority figure at all. Mill's deference toward Harriet not only derives from the emotional void she fills for Mill; it reflects a deep-rooted need in him to fulfill a dutiful obedience to an authoritative force.

Critics often joust about the legitimacy of Mill's excessive praise of Harriet. While the critical debate can sometimes enlighten us about the intellect and writings of each thinker, it also often overlooks a fundamental feature of their relationship. That is, throughout most of his Autobiography, Mill is often searching for authority figures. These individuals supply Mill with urgently needed guidance. To an extent, one can read the Autobiography as a list of lofty personalities who inspired and ultimately
shaped Mill's life. While these individuals are rarely personalized in any memorable way, they nonetheless form a pattern of relationships that helps define Mill. Starting with his father, Mill moves from one authoritative source to the next—Sterling, Austin, Wordsworth, Carlyle—finally culminating with his beloved Harriet. In most cases, these figures become mentors for Mill, exemplary intellectuals who also embody human sympathy. Throughout his account, Mill defines his identity and individual progress in relation to the inspiration and tutelage of these revered figures. One is reminded of a noble quality that Mill's mentor Thomas Carlyle cherished in his work *On Heroes*. At one point, Carlyle praises Samuel Johnson not only for his rugged self-initiative but also for his distinctive humility in the presence of powers higher than himself. Based on Johnson's exemplary trait, Carlyle makes a universal claim for humanity:

Great souls are always loyally submissive, reverent to what is over them; only small mean souls are otherwise. . . . [T]he sincere man was by nature the obedient man. (5.179)

In his reverence for Harriet and many other figures throughout the *Autobiography*, Mill appears to have taken to heart Carlyle's sentiment here. Though Mill feels moderately confident in his intellectual acumen throughout
his account—save his occasional self-effacement—he forever thrives on these fits of praise; they serve, finally, to whet his own intellectual appetite and drive his reforming zeal. One may also juxtapose with Carlyle’s quote Ruskin’s eloquent passage from *The Nature of Gothic*, wherein he asserts that while there is a “reverence which is servile,” there also is a “noble reverence.” Clearly, Mill epitomizes Ruskin’s paternalistic feature here.

Mill’s “noble reverence” toward worthy individuals and institutions derives not only from humility and a reformist spirit. It also rests on more theoretical grounds, which often place him near conservative camps. For instance, one theoretical essay by Mill that contributes to the “condition of England” genre—popularized by such works as Carlyle’s *Signs of the Times* series—was his “The Spirit of the Age.” Though ultimately excluded from Mill’s collection, *Dissertations and Discussions*, this unfinished essay contains many philosophical ideas that may help explain the paternalistic remnants found in Mill’s *Autobiography*. Written only five years after Mill’s breakdown, “The Spirit of the Age” reveals how in the *Autobiography* Mill views his own status in the context of his theory of historical change.
At one point in "The Spirit of the Age," Mill discusses the differences between "natural" and "transitional" periods in history:

Society may be said to be in its natural state, when worldly power, and moral influence, are habitually and undisputedly exercised by the fittest persons whom the existing state of society affords. (22.252)

Growing out of an organic Darwinian hierarchy, Mill’s description of the "natural" state sounds idealistic indeed. In fact, Mill appears to accept the legitimate goodness of this condition of society. It is easy imagine Mill longing for this well-ordered and cultivated society for his own age. Nonetheless, this rule by an elite reveals Mill’s ongoing struggle to solve the challenging problem involving individual freedom and authority in Victorian England. Mill’s further assessment of the "natural" period comes close to an endorsement of such a reigning elite:

[Th]ose whose opinions the people follow, whose feelings they imbibe, and who practically and by common consent, perform, not matter under what original title, the office of thinking for the people, are persons better qualified than any others whom the civilization of the age and country affords, to think and judge rightly and usefully. (22.252)

Undoubtedly, Mill appeals here to a nostalgic yearning for such a neat, dynamic society. Like Ruskin’s treatment of Gothic laborers, Mill invokes a Romantic medievalism in his
philosophy of history. Further along in "The Spirit of the Age," Mill emphasizes the unifying power of the Catholic clergy during the medieval period, concluding that "during a part of the Middle Ages, not only worldly power . . . but moral influence also, was indisputably exercised by the most competent persons; and that the conditions of a natural state of society were then fully realized" (22.306). Unhappily, however, Mill invites suspicions with such a network of benevolent authority. The role of Mill's "fittest" clerisy, he asserts, would be that of "thinking for the people." While Mill, of course, is not prescribing a specific social plan here, he does portend a paternalistic socialism, the ultimate effect of which would be to compromise the subjectivity, and thereby identity, of its citizens.

Even though Mill's theoretical musings in "The Spirit of the Age" exist as evolving thoughts at the time of their composition, they bear revisiting when evaluating the idea of authority in the Autobiography—both in Mill's domestic and legislative struggles. Mill's mental breakdown, for instance, may be viewed not only as the result of his austere upbringing but as a dramatized symptom of the disorder produced during the other possible state of
society that Mill outlines in "The Spirit of the Age"—the transitional period—which Mill found himself in, particularly at this pivotal moment of his life. Mill describes the transitional period as rudderless:

Society may be said to be in its transitional state, when it contains other persons fitter for worldly power and moral influence than those who have hitherto enjoyed them: when worldly power, and the greatest existing capacity for worldly affairs, are not longer united but severed; and when the authority which sets the opinions and forms the feelings of those who are not accustomed to think for themselves, does not exist at all, or, existing, resides anywhere but in the most cultivated intellects, and the most exalted characters, of the age. (22.252)

While recounting in the Autobiography the strong influences of Auguste Comte and the St Simonians regarding historical change, Mill tells us that the "chief benefit" he found in the political thought of these writers was finding a "clearer conception than ever before of the peculiarities of an era of transition in opinion, and ceased to mistake the moral and intellectual characteristics of such an era, for the normal attributes of humanity" (1.173). Soon after this, Mill expresses his hope for more progress in his age: "I looked forward, through the present age of loud disputes but generally weak convictions, to a future which will unite the best qualities of the critical with the best of the organic periods" (1.173).
In positing his theory of history in "The Spirit of the Age" and reviewing these ideas again in the Autobiography, Mill, at one level, is trying to understand his own life. In light of Mill's philosophy of history, the critic William Stafford sees Mill internalizing his theory in the Autobiography: "He [Mill] is surely thinking of his mental crisis as a phenomenon at the micro level intimately bound up with the strains and uncertainties of a society in 'critical' [transitional] phase at the macro level (37). Regarding his personalized drama, Mill begins to transcend the transitional state by finding Harriet. In many ways, she becomes the eclectic mix of qualities in both states of history that Mill wishes to discover in his own life and in his society. This connection between Mill's theories of social progress and his personal happiness with Harriet is suggested in the final chapter of the Autobiography. Discussing the state of progress in his age, Mill again implies the need for a more stable and organic period:

I am now convinced, that no great improvements in the lot of mankind are possible, until a great change takes place in the fundamental constitutional modes of their thoughts. The old opinions in religion, morals, and politics, are so much discredited in the more intellectual minds as to have lost the greater part of their efficacy for good, while they have still life enough in them to be a powerful obstacle to the

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growing up of any better opinions on those subjects. (1.245,247)

The language of this passage echoes Mill’s description of the anarchic conditions of the transitional state of society in “The Spirit of the Age.” Though Mill’s hope was dim, at first, for any significant change in Victorian society, at this point in his reminiscence, he does note soon after this that “More recently a spirit of free speculation has sprung up, giving a more encouraging prospect of the gradual mental emancipation of England” (1.247). Directly following this more cheerful note, he mentions his marriage to Harriet in 1851 as one of “the most important events of my private life” (1.247). It is indeed appropriate that after reviewing the prospect of hope for England, his thoughts would turn to the person in whom he invests all his hope for a better age. As Mill asserts earlier in the Autobiography, to him “Her memory is to me a religion.” Harriet, in Mill’s eyes, embodied authentic wisdom and a sense of natural authority. Moreover, Harriet herself personifies the best constituted commonwealths of antiquity, which Mill praises in “The Spirit of the Age.” To a great extent, she represents the moral energy that galvanized the most fruitful societies of Greece and Rome. Lastly, in his praise of Harriet
throughout the Autobiography, Mill enacts a deep reverence for a moral authority, which was once in force but in his time was lost.

Thus, in the Autobiography, Mill’s memorable moments of reverence for the inspiring figures around him find theoretical nourishment in some of his more philosophical essays, such as “The Spirit of the Age.” Mill’s famous essay on “Coleridge” also reveals Mill’s attraction to the deferential benefits of a cultivated elite. Coleridge’s role of the clerisy in his ideal society deeply impressed Mill and no doubt strengthened Coleridge’s role as lifelong intellectual mentor. As R.P. Anschutz points out, Mill’s mentors provide him with a “perpetual love of loving—‘the need,’ as he [Mill] defines it, ‘of a sympathising support or of objects of admiration or reverence’” (74). Of all of these sources, however, Harriet remains the most prized—at times, apotheosized—by Mill. Thus, treating Harriet as one in a pattern of significant authority figures in Mill’s life helps clarify the personal and cultural roles Harriet plays for Mill.

As Mill lists all of Harriet’s esteemed qualities, he often drops gender-distinct language. Generally, Harriet’s role as a woman gives way to a universal nobility, which
remains cloaked, however, in male attributes. Gradually, Harriet is elevated to a sage, a vestige of an embedded Victorian paternalism. For Mill, Harriet exemplifies traditionally male virtues:

The same exactness and rapidity of operation, pervading as it did her sensitive as well as her mental faculties, would with her gifts of feeling and imagination have fitted her to be a consummate artist, as her fiery and tender soul and her vigorous eloquence would certainly have made her a great orator, and her profound knowledge of human nature and discernment and sagacity in practical life, would in the times when such a carrière was open to women, have made her eminent among the rulers of mankind. (1.195)

By projecting these masculine traits—in Victorian terms—onto Harriet, Mill again constructs another oracular object to whom he can defer. In short, Mill identifies another protector to look after him.

Though Mill’s elevation of Harriet in the Autobiography appears sincere, her treatment has patriarchal implications. Acknowledging Mill’s obsequious praise of Harriet, several critics have observed, for instance, that in describing Harriet, Mill has created an allegorical symbol.4 These critics, however, have failed to fully address that Mill’s mythologizing, in many ways, compromises Harriet’s identity, as well as repeats the paternalistic appropriation of the female gender for
ideological ends. The hyperbole that Mill uses to describe Harriet ironically dims her subjectivity. For example, rarely does Mill detail Harriet’s daily acts of kindness or elaborate on her specific endeavors. What the reader recalls is Mill’s grand admiration for Harriet. In some ways, Mill’s tribute to Harriet becomes, in the patriarchal tradition of spousal dedication, an extended acknowledgment of an inspiring, devoted wife.

Mill’s treatment of Harriet, in fact, invites a feminist critique on the nature of authority in the dominant discourse. The critic Kathleen Jones, for instance, asserts that “the very definition of authority as a set of practices designed to institutionalize social hierarchies lies at the root of the separation of women qua women from the process of ‘authorizing’” (120). To Jones, authority is largely a “form of male privilege”; women who are associated with compassion are, on the other hand, mostly excluded from the rational, normalizing discourse that orders our existence. While Jones’s critique suffers from foundationalism—linking male with rationality and women with compassion—her point that the dominant discourse on authority “secures authority by opposing it to emotive connectedness” applies to Mill’s rational political
writings and his dispassionate autobiography. Even though there is a note of liberation in Mill’s exalted portrait of Harriet as a synthesis of feelings and intellect, Mill overwhelmingly characterizes Harriet in the Autobiography as an exemplar of humanizing compassion. Leading up to her comparison to Shelley, Mill observes Harriet’s bountiful sentiment:

In her, complete emancipation from every kind of superstition . . . and an earnest protest against many things which are still part of the established constitution of society, resulted not from the hard intellect but from strength of noble and elevated feeling, and co-existed with a highly reverential nature. (1.195)

As Ruskin does in “Of Queen’s Gardens,” Mill clearly appears to privilege Harriet’s power of sympathy—in androcentric terms, a province of the female gender. In an earlier version of the Autobiography, Mill again emphasizes the emotional side of his beloved:

Her unselfishness was not that of a taught system of duties, but of a heart which thoroughly identified itself with the feelings of others, and often went to excess in consideration for them, by imaginatively investing their feelings with the intensity of its own. The passion of justice might have been thought to be her strongest feeling, but for her boundless generosity, and a lovingness ever ready to pour itself forth upon any or all human beings who were capable of giving the smallest feeling in return. (1.195)
From a feminist perspective, it may be telling that in this instance Mill uses the word "type" to describe Harriet. Despite Mill’s qualifying remarks about Harriet’s strong intellect, the "type" of companion Mill prefers, for the most part, draws on significant attributes from the non-authoritative and emotive construction of women.

This feminist view of Harriet also involves the role of Mill’s aesthetics in the Autobiography. As a symbol, Harriet, in part, helps constitute Mill’s Romantic aesthetic, which began with Mill’s reading of Marmontel and Wordsworth. In fact, Harriet becomes the culminating cure in Mill’s cultivation of feelings. As with Dickens’s depiction of Rachel in *Hard Times*, Mill’s allegorizing of Harriet reinforces a long-standing paternalistic result: the achievement of a narrative and ideological effect at the cost of suppressing female subjectivity. Ultimately, Harriet’s voice is denied, despite Mill’s glowing account of her in the *Autobiography*. Despite her significant essay, “Enfranchisement of Women” and her collaborative work in “The Subjection of Women,” Harriet Mill will, nonetheless, be identified by the voice—and the broader cultural canon—of her husband John.
While Mill often stresses the need for individuality and non-conformity in the Autobiography, he at the same time continues to enact an almost filial desperation for guidance. One might go so far as to say that Mill’s descriptions of Harriet indeed resemble Carlyle’s fustian moments in On Heroes. After all, to Mill, Harriet exceeds Shelley’s intellect; she is fit to be a “consummate artist” or “a great orator”—indeed, well-credentialled by her disciple and partner to be “eminent among the rulers of mankind.”

Though Harriet’s image often transcends gender boundaries in Mill’s ultimate portrait of her, an awareness of her difference still lingers. Ironically, Harriet becomes an object of what she herself identifies as an annoying trait of her husband. In a letter to Mill, she upbraids him thus:

I now & then find a generous defect in your mind or yr method—such is your liability to take an overlarge measure [Harriet’s emphasis] of people—having to draw in afterwards—a proceeding more needful than pleasant. (The Complete Works of Harriet Taylor Mill 338)

Harriet, of course, becomes the object of her husband’s “generous defect,” leaves one to ponder the irony of her husband’s rhetorical flights in her honor.
In essence, Mill appears to have constructed intellectual alter egos throughout his life; it became integral to his philosophical exploration and subsequent re-evaluation of his ideas. In response to this, Mill built a kind of encomiastic repertoire that he would deploy when he discovered yet another intellectual fount. In some instances, Mill's laudatory rhetoric for one admirable subject often resembles his praise for another worthy individual. Though his sincerity appears intact, Mill invests his closely held beliefs or exemplary traits, such as self-improvement, into a figure, who, for him, embodies a given quality. For instance, when discussing his "most valuable friendship" with Harriet in the *Autobiography*, Mill often identifies her as a paragon of progress:

It is not to be supposed that she was, or that any one, at the age at which I first saw her, could be, all that she afterwards became. Least of all could this be true of her, with whom self-improvement, progress in the highest and in all senses, was a law of nature. (1.193)

For Mill, then, Harriet is at once a practical hero and an abstraction—in this case, an ideal of progress. This progress emanates from her joint writings with Mill; these significant works, Mill tells us, were, the product of "one mind." More significantly, it was Harriet's mind that was "preeminently practical in its judgments and perceptions of
things present, as it was high and bold in its
anticipations of a remote futurity” (114). Though one does
not doubt Mill’s genuine admiration for Harriet in this
instance, his paean becomes a mode of rhetoric when
compared with other cases of Mill’s veneration. For
example, Mill delivers a high estimate of Thomas Carlyle
for his humaneness and general perspicacity about mankind:

He [Carlyle] has by far the largest & widest
liberality & tolerance . . . that I have met with
in any one; & he differs from most men who see as
much as he does into the defects of the age, by a
circumstance greatly to his advantage in my
estimation, that he looks for a safe landing
before and not behind: he sees that if we could
replace things as they once were, we should only
retard the final issue, as we should in all human
probability go on just as we then did, & arrive
again at the very place where we now stand.
(12.85)

Like Carlyle, then, Harriet also becomes a decoder of the
signs of the times in Victorian England. She embodies
futurity, the age of human progress. But, again, when
Mill’s words of tribute are juxtaposed with similar
sentiments, Harriet becomes one in a company of Romantic
torchbearers searching for utopian dreams. In a sense,
Harriet symbolizes for Mill the inspirational search for
his savior Wordsworth’s lament, “Whither has fled the
visionary gleam/ Where has it gone, the glory and the
dream.”

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There are other instances where Mill’s praise of the leading influences of his life can be interchanged with few noticeable differences. The best example may be Mill’s treatment of Helen Taylor, Harriet’s daughter. In a passage that was omitted from the final version of the Autobiography, Mill hails Helen with a noble reverence rivaling that which Mill held for her mother Harriet:

Miss Helen Taylor, the inheritor of much of her [Harriet’s] wisdom, and of all her nobleness of character, whose ever growing and ripening talents from that day to this have been devoted to the same great purposes, and have already made [her name] better and more widely known than was that of her mother, though far less so than I predict, that if she lives it is destined to become. Of the value of her direct co-operation with me, something will be said hereafter, of what I owe in the way of instruction to her great powers of original thought and soundness of practical judgement, it would be vain to give an adequate idea. Surely no one ever before was so fortunate, as, after such a loss as mine, to draw another prize in the lottery of life—another companion, stimulator, adviser, and instructor of the rarest quality. Whoever, either now or hereafter, may think of me and of the work I have done, must never forget that it is the product not of one intellect and conscience but of three, the least considerable of whom, and above all the least original, is the one whose name is attached to it. (qtd.in Pappe 6)

In this case, Mill’s sentiments begin with a balanced deference, increase in rhetorical strength, and ultimately express the ineffable greatness of Helen’s mind. Helen becomes for Mill a desperate connection to his beloved
Harriet. He also provides Mill with another chance to exalt another talented figure while again humbling himself. John Robson perhaps best articulates the Romantic role Harriet plays in John Stuart Mill’s life:

Harriet was for Mill the perfection of the poetic temperament: she began with the highly sensitive physical constitution typified by Shelley, and went on to develop her philosophic powers until she became the outstanding, if non-productive, example of the cultivated poet. (181)

Robson’s qualified praise of Harriet here suggests the unintended ideological effects of Mill’s apotheosis of her. Harriet’s intellectual authority, as described by Mill, has been seriously questioned by many notable critics, such as John Robson. Consequently, such arguments have surely compromised her as a strong collaborative force in Mill’s enduring essays. Though Harriet was no doubt a true inspiration to Mill, she appears most of all a figure whose emotional significance developed into a useful means to shape his political and social dreams.

In addition to remaining a distinctive record of another great Victorian mind, John Stuart Mill’s Autobiography exists also as a paradoxical document. Notorious as an account of a peculiar Utilitarian experiment in educational rigor, the Autobiography nonetheless sees its victimized subject eventually succeed
in becoming a leading voice for liberal reform in Victorian England. The journey to achieve this status for Mill, however, involved a mental breakdown, which forms the climax of memoir. The reason for this fit of depression can be readily attributed to the plodding pedagogy of a tyrannical father. But in Mill's Autobiography there is a broader cultural allegory about Victorian paternalism. Along with John Ruskin's The Nature of Gothic and Charles Dickens' Hard Times, Mill's Autobiography demonstrates the insidious forces that constitute paternalist ideology. Though Mill certainly achieves an individual voice and identity in his life, he never escapes the authoritative stare of his father. With the figure of James Mill comes many of the inveterate habits and institutions of England's hierarchical features. Despite Mill's renowned liberalism, his thought remains significantly shaped by these paternalist forces: a Romantic aesthetic, natural law, and a deference to authority, and a general reverence for wisdom of the past.

Endnotes

1. In his work Culture and Society, Raymond Williams traces the line of British cultural criticism. He describes the political consequences of the Romantic aesthetics espoused by writers like Shelley and Coleridge and, to a large degree, carried on by Victorian humanists, such as Thomas Carlyle, John Ruskin, and Matthew Arnold. Williams sees an ambivalent result of the poetics growing
out of this tradition: "The negative consequence was that it tended, as both the situation and the opposition hardened, to isolate art, to specialize the imaginative faculty to this one kind of activity, and thus to weaken the dynamic which Shelley proposed for it" (43). Though responding directly to Shelley, here, Williams surely implies other writers he discusses who significantly shaped paternalist ideology.

2. Buckley also cites Carlyle’s _Sartor Resartus_ as a likely source for the design and literary imagery found in Mill’s crisis episode.

3. In his chapter on John Stuart Mill from his excellent study _Figures of Autobiography_, Avrom Fleishman traces James Mill’s “stock Puritanical aspects,” which oddly enough place him in the Judeo-Christian tradition. Fleishman suggests that the theology of grace and its defining idea of predestination, for example, inform James Mill’s view of the exceptional advantages that had fallen to his son’s lot.

4. Among various critics, Jack Stillinger notes that Mill attempts to make Harriet “into a symbol of the perfect mind.” Avrom Fleishman calls Harriet a “literary construct whose closest analogues are not other historical or fictional personages but the symbolic deities of Romantic poetry—Asia, Moneta, Astarte.” Following Fleishman’s Romantic models for Harriet, Jerome Buckley observes that “One of the poems Mill elsewhere quotes with great admiration is the rhapsodic ‘Epipsychidion,’ Shelley’s salute to Emilia Viviani as the soul’s complement and ultimately warrant of being. In it, I suggest, he has found a sanction for his final view of Harriet Taylor Mill as the ideal woman bringing to bear the highest poetic sensibility upon his own practical intellect.”
CHAPTER 5
CONCLUSION

Given that paternalism remained perhaps the most widespread social outlook in mid-Victorian England, a study of its workings in some standard cultural texts of the period can help in many ways. Since paternalism lacks a codified doctrine, it is illuminating to examine how this ideology is shaped and then internalized by individuals in society. As this study shows, literary and cultural commentators perform this task, often unwittingly. The rhetorical obliqueness with which the Victorian authors examined in this study expressed a residual paternalist ideology points to a political paradox. That is, even though Ruskin, Dickens, and Mill overtly articulated many liberal principles in their works, they also undermined their reformist spirit by reinforcing opposing hierarchical views. In essence, the paternalist features that linger in The Nature of Gothic, Hard Times, and Mill's Autobiography may reflect a wider, public ambiguity about the diverse cultural projects that this social outlook inspired during the Victorian age, from Jeremy Bentham's Panopticon to Samuel Smiles's self-help movement. Taken together, these paradoxes constitute a redefinition of paternalism as a form of benevolent authority. The various paternalist
ingredients discussed in this study often reveal—or else lead to—an impulse to supervise and control individual subjects, especially the dependent worker. In this sense, under the guise of a protective agent, the dominant apparatuses become a network of inspection, instead of protection.

The more subtle means of surveillance in Victorian society that the cultural texts in this study reveal suggest the observations of Michel Foucault. In Discipline and Punish, for instance, Foucault investigates how the punishment of criminals between 1757 and the 1830's changed from torture to more psychologically invasive forms of control by state institutions. The development of this new penal system leads Foucault into many discussions about how other ubiquitous agents of social authority—for example, public education, medicine, and the workplace—control individual subjects.

This study of paternalism may be strengthened in future scholarship by applying Foucault's well-documented analysis of the instruments of disciplinary power in society. As maintained throughout this discussion, Ruskin, Dickens, and Mill often expose while inscribing ideological forces. Regarding Foucault's genealogy of power, these
Victorian commentators uncover, in various ways, the piercing gaze that epitomizes Foucault’s idea of hierarchical observation. One goes back, for instance, to Mill’s “chilling sensation” of his father’s “critical eye.” This hovering eye may also be seen in Ruskin’s panoramic gaze over the European landscape. While not overtly projecting authoritarian malevolence, Ruskin’s eye, nevertheless, can suggest the paternalist’s overarching power and omniscience. Finally, Gradgrind’s gimlet glances at the wary students, during the opening of *Hard Times*, dramatizes how the educational apparatus normalizes judgements, to use Foucault’s terms. Taken together, these instances or motifs of Foucault’s “normalizing gaze” serve to link these texts, and help expose the more covert disciplinary power of Victorian paternalism. As shown throughout, the Victorian humanists discussed in this study become cultural practitioners of this collective normalizing gaze in Victorian society.

Furthermore, a significant and more covert paternalistic feature that all three texts share is an organicist aesthetics. Implicit in the Romanticism of these writers is a universalizing tendency, whereby transcendent harmony underlies the narrative. For example,
as an extended definition of the Gothic spirit, Ruskin's essay ultimately depends for its argument on the Gothic cathedral. This religious structure becomes a materialization, in part, of Ruskin's ideal fellowship of humanity. Ruskin's Romantic aesthetics in The Nature of Gothic also depends on another force behind hierarchical values: religion. The Edenic imagery of the panoramic flight over the Mediterranean, for instance, builds on a spirituality, which the cathedral image first cultivates. There are also ascetic strains of Christian stoicism in Mill's account, which, this examination observes, were in part passed down from the Puritanical austerity of James Mill. In addition, John Stuart Mill's relentless work ethic resembles the Evangelical work gospel, also associated with another notorious Victorian paternalist, Thomas Carlyle. Dickens's Hard Times also relies on Christian sentiment, especially moments of pathos, such as Stephen Blackpool's death. This study argues that in each text under discussion religion plays some part in shaping paternalist features.

In terms of gender, the texts reviewed—particularly Hard Times and Mill's Autobiography—show that paternalism, in a significant way, depends on the idealization of women.
This implication of Victorian paternalism deserves fuller examination by future critics. For it is indeed ironic that this authoritative ideology, which is driven by deference, also largely defers to women by elevating them to angelic models of perfectability. One feminist explanation may be that this idealization—essentially compromising women’s identity—conforms, in the end, to the strict principles of power relations that characterize paternalism. That is, by allegorizing women, paternalists turn women into a utility in order to secure their own dominance. Nonetheless, this gender paradox exposed in these texts certainly complicates the nature of this ubiquitous paternalist outlook in Victorian culture.

The paradoxes of paternalism in these works are also reinforced by the versatile rhetoric of each sage. The model of the “deferential dialectic” demonstrates how writers like Ruskin or Mill cultivate an identification with their reader, only to step back and certify their authoritative stance as a decoder of the condition of England. Like a factory manager, the Victorian sage deploys an avuncular tone as a means of social control. In this way, these three writers become rhetorical marketers of a paternalist ideology.
To complement Marxist and other historical criticism of Victorian society, more attention should be paid to paternalism as a source ideological tension. Familial models and metaphors usually contain embedded hierarchies and universal truths. In Victorian England, these paradigms became tools of securing power relations in everyday life and in the philosophical discourses of the day. In an immediate sense, paternalism imposed a false love onto individual workers and readers. This fact accounts for much public ambivalence about the nature of authority in Victorian life.
WORKS CITED AND CONSULTED


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VITA

The author of this study is a native of Scarsdale, New York, who received his bachelor of arts degree from West Virginia University in 1979. After several years as a copy editor for an insurance trade association in Washington, D.C., he returned to West Virginia University, receiving a master of arts degree in 1989.

In 1991, the author entered the doctoral program of the English Department at Louisiana State University, Baton Rouge, where he has specialized in both Southern and Victorian literature. Throughout his graduate study, he has delivered several conference papers on various writers, such as William Faulkner and John Ruskin. He will receive the degree of Doctor of Philosophy from Louisiana State University in May, 2001.
Candidate: Peter O'Neill

Major Field: English

Title of Dissertation: A World of Deference: Paradoxes of Victorian Paternalism in John Ruskin, Charles Dickens, and John Stuart Mill

Approved:

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Major Professor and Chairman

_____________________

Dean of the Graduate School

EXAMINING COMMITTEE:

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Date of Examination:

12/12/2000