

THE ROMANTIC NOVEL AT THE TURN OF THE CENTURY

A study of the romantic novel in England from 1890 to 1900

by

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## PREFACE

It has been my purpose in the following study to discuss the history and influence of the romantic novel in England at the turn of the nineteenth century, and to attempt a critical evaluation of the works of those authors who contributed to the ascendancy of the romantic novel at this time. I have endeavored to limit the authors considered to those who did work of some permanent literary significance in the field of the romantic novel. Single romantic books by realistic writers have not been included. I have also tried to confine my study to those novels produced between the years 1890 and 1900. It has not been possible, however, for me to keep strictly within these time limits.

I wish to acknowledge here my indebtedness to Professor John E. Hankins for his helpful suggestions and assistance to me in this work.

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J. S.

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## THE ROMANTIC NOVEL AT THE TURN OF THE CENTURY

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### CHAPTER ONE

#### INTRODUCTION

Like all other divisions of English literature, the English novel has progressed since its beginning in a series of alternate waves of romanticism and realism. Thus eighteenth century fiction, which began with the realistic novels of Richardson, Fielding, and Smollett, ended with the Gothic romance and a revolt against realism that reached its climax in Scott. This movement was paralleled exactly one hundred years later at the close of the nineteenth century, when, just as the realistic novel seemed to be at its height, there was a vigorous and unexpected revival of romanticism.

When George Eliot died in 1880, realism seemed to be firmly established in English fiction. The great novelists of the mid-Victorian period—Dickens, Thackeray<sup>a</sup>, Trollope, George Eliot, Jane Austen, the Brontës—were, in spite of occasional romantic lapses, predominately realists. Following them, Hardy and Meredith continued the realistic tradition. Zola, who published his treatise on the Experimental Novel in the year of Eliot's death, was, indeed, so confident at this time of the permanence of realism in fiction that he dared announce that Walter Scott would never again be read

by serious and mature readers. <sup>1</sup>

Between the years 1880 and 1890, however, the English novel fell more and more into a state of extreme confusion, as the novelists then writing were affected by the unrest in English life and thought at this time. These years marked the gradual ending of the Victorian age in so far as it is to be considered a distinctive period characterized by definite traits such as insularity, conformity, or emphasis upon morality and respectability. "By the year 1890," writes Mr. Harold Williams, "nearly everything we more peculiarly associate with the genius and achievement of Queen Victoria's reign was passing out of a present into a past. . . ." <sup>2</sup>

During the last decades of the century, a transition was taking place. In part, this change in attitudes and ideas was due to social and political reforms and to new scientific inventions and discoveries. Even more, it was the result of a realization that the mid-Victorian cure-alls such as the Oxford movement, the Broad-Church movement, Positivism, Pre-Raphaelitism and Darwinianism had failed to accomplish what had been expected of them. At this time, also, many people thought that the Darwinian hypothesis had delivered a death blow to religion and perhaps to democracy. So, towards the end of the nineteenth century "democracy and Christianity went bankrupt together. Faith in God and faith in man were

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<sup>1</sup>Zola, Emile, as quoted by Phelps, W. L., The Advance of the English Novel, p. 134

<sup>2</sup>Williams, Harold, Modern English Writers, p. x11

stabbed to death. The world and life remained alone. . . ." <sup>3</sup>

All of this reaction and flux was mirrored in the novel. A fervor for demolition and reconstruction appeared. There was a movement of revolt against the established reserves, repressions, and literary institutions. A new French influence toward realism and impressionism in manner of feeling and expression made itself felt. The English novelists, disgusted with controversy or dismayed at the confusion, each in his own way sought for something to take the place of the faiths and traditions which were being destroyed.

One group of writers turned to the extremes of drab realism. They endeavored to portray life with exact and unshrinking fidelity and to avoid the moral sentiments and idealism of the Victorians. They claimed the right to depict life as they saw it without speculation or interpretation. Hubert Crackenthorpe and George Moore are representative of those who tried to introduce this "slice of life" (sordid life, invariably) type of fiction—a type which did not seem suited to British taste or temperament.

The decadents and aesthetes, following the leadership of Oscar Wilde, escaped from the disquiet of the time by merely ignoring it. Setting up for their standard the formula, "Art for Art's sake", they "stood aside in a sterile attitude of cynical, elegant, and falsely superior detachment." <sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup>Chevalley, Abel, The Modern English Novel, p. 71

<sup>4</sup>Ibid p. 78

Another group of authors took up psychology, and succeeded in making themselves just as unreadable as the realists. Still others, such as Harland and Symons, turned away in despair to impressionism and a symbolism that had nothing in common with real life. Finally some, of whom Gissing is the type, simply resigned themselves to disillusion and hopelessness.

It is not surprising that, under these conditions, the public, weary or disgusted with the drabness and dreariness of realism on the one hand and the impotence and triviality of aestheticism and impressionism on the other, should turn with enthusiasm to the relief offered by the romantic fiction which was being introduced by Stevenson. Reviving the romantic manner of Scott, Stevenson appeared at exactly the right moment to set going a reaction in the English novel. As Burton says, "In 1883, when Treasure Island appeared, the public was gasping for the oxygen that a story with outdoor movement and action could supply: there was enough and to spare of invertebrate subtleties, strained metaphysics, and coarse naturalistic studies. . . . Readers were only too glad to turn from people with a past to people of the past, or to people of the present whose ways were ways of pleasantness. Stevenson substituted a lively, normal interest in life for plotlessness and a surfeit of the flesh." <sup>5</sup> His "immense service to letters was really nothing more nor less than opening the windows of heaven, and sweeping the chambers

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<sup>5</sup>Burton, Richard, Masters of the English Novel, p. 301, p. 302.

of art with air and sunshine." 6

Treasure Island was published in 1883. By the year 1890, the influence of Stevenson commenced to be felt. The public and the critics began to realize that a new force had entered the novel and that a change was taking place. Between the years 1892 and 1894, three English critics independently pointed out the decline of realism and predicted the triumph of the romantic novel. 7 By this time an ever-increasing number of authors were writing novels in which the romantic was given a place of prime importance. Haggard was the first to follow Stevenson in producing romances of adventure. Doyle, Quiller-Couch, Weyman, Hope, Barrie, and Kipling soon joined the new romantic group, adding impetus to the romantic revival. In practically every instance, the first novels of these authors were romantic. In the case of the others, the strength of the movement is demonstrated in the fact that they were forced into producing romances in order to gain a hearing. For example, Weyman's first novel, which was purely realistic, made not the slightest impression. He then turned to historical romance, and found himself immediately famous.

"The year of Stevenson's death, 1894 . . . was the beginning of a tidal wave of romanticism." 8 In the next year,

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6 Phelps, W. L., The Advance of the English Novel, p. 138

7 Saintsbury, in his essay The Present State of the English Novel 1892

Gosse, in his essay The Limits of Realism - 1893

Simonds, in Introduction to the Study of English Fiction - 1894

8 Phelps, W. L., The Advance of the English Novel, p. 142

Hardy and Meredith, refusing to surrender to the current fashion, each published his last novel. This same year saw the publication of the first work by the three writers who rank with Stevenson as the most important romantic novelists of the period. Wells, Hewlett, and Conrad, taking up the romantic novel where Stevenson left it, continued its development and widened its scope.

Until the end of the century, romanticism was triumphant. About 1900, the romantic revival reached its climax. After that, it declined very quickly. By 1905, romanticism in the novel had almost entirely given place to that realism which today dominates the realm of fiction.

In considering the romantic novel at the turn of the century, then, I have for the most part arbitrarily restricted myself to a study of those romantic novels produced between the dates 1890 and 1900, since it was within these years that the romantic revival was really influential. It has not been possible for me to keep absolutely within these limits, of course. In the case of important authors, significant works outside of the period have sometimes necessarily been included. It has also been necessary for me to impose some restriction as to the authors treated. A few men, such as Stevenson, Conrad, Barrie, Hewlett, and Wells, have been included without question. Other writers, such as Haggard, Hope, Weyman, or Doyle, have demanded consideration because of their place or influence in the revival of the romantic novel rather than because of any outstanding literary quality of their work. It has not been possible even to mention many

of the minor writers whose names were well-known and who enjoyed great popularity in the last decade of the nineteenth century, but whose glory has already faded. I have tried to limit myself to those novelists whose work will be of some permanent literary significance.

In classifying the romantic novels of the period, I have considered the subject matter rather than the style or treatment. In general, it seems to me, the novels may be divided into four main classes. First, there are romances of adventure, such as those written by Stevenson, Conrad, Haggard, and Kipling. Secondly, there are the historical novels produced by Hewlett, Weyman, Doyle, and others. In the third place, there are the novels of the regionalists, of whom Barrie and the kailyard school are most important. Finally, there are romances of fantasy and mystery such as are written by Wells and Doyle.

A legitimate question may arise as to whether certain of the authors included in this study should be classified as romantic novelists. No two critics have agreed on the exact definition of that familiar term, "romantic". As I see it, the realistic novel reproduces with minute fidelity the life of every day and of average men, while the romantic novel deals with the unusual in situation or location. So, if an author makes us see some feature of the unusual and the strange in an ordinary city street or country village, he has produced a romantic novel. In the final analysis, it is the element of the unusual, of strangeness, which makes a novel romantic. As Walter Pater says, "It is the addition of strangeness to beauty

that constitutes the Romantic character in art." <sup>9</sup> In the case of questionable novels, then, this view of what constitutes the romantic has been my final standard.

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<sup>9</sup>Walter Pater, as quoted by Phelps, W. L., The Beginnings of the English Romantic Movement, p. 3

## CHAPTER TWO

### THE ROMANCE OF ADVENTURE

As has been pointed out in the previous chapter, the romantic reaction at the close of the nineteenth century was precipitated by the adventure novels of Stevenson. During the years in which this revival of romanticism flourished, the romance of adventure was the predominant and most significant type of romantic fiction produced. Of the novels which may be regarded as of any literary importancy<sup>e</sup>, there were more of this kind than of any other written between 1890 and 1900. Three writers--Stevenson, Kipling, and Conrad--of the six outstanding romantic authors to be considered, did their chief work during this period in the romance of adventure. Moreover, in many of those novels which are not primarily of this classification, the element of adventure nevertheless is given a prominent place. This is true, for instance, of the historical romances of Hewlett and Weyman, and of the Scotch stories of Neil Munro. In this chapter, however, only those novelists will be dealt with in whose books the adventure feature, rather than the historical, regional, or fantastic, receives greatest emphasis.

The romance of adventure which Stevenson introduced was not something new. As exemplified in Sir Walter Scott's lively and vigorous stories, it had attained great popularity at the beginning of the century. It was one of the earliest forms of the novel originated, since, most critics agree, it was invented by Defoe. Prof. F. H. Stoddard would even trace

it back to the old Greek tale, which was a record of the "travels, adventures, and accomplishments of a hero." <sup>1</sup>

"Travels, adventures, accomplishments"—right there, certainly, is the essence of the typical adventure novel. In other words, in a romance of adventure the emphasis is placed upon physical action and incident. Most frequently, moreover, the incidents are unusual and the action is vigorous and swift. Much happens, and that much is exciting. The narrative is made up of a continuous succession of intrigues and perils, of narrow escapes, dark plots, and bloody battles. The reactions and desires of the characters, too, are on a physical rather than on a mental or spiritual plane. This accounts for the fact that the motivating force in so many novels of adventure is a desire to obtain wealth or treasure in some form or other.

Since the emphasis is upon action and incident, a typical romance of adventure is quite sure to be, if nothing else, at least a good, readable "yarn". The adventure novel thus appeals to man's age-old love of a good story. It keeps the reader interested in merely finding out what is going to happen next. The best writers of romances of adventure seem to be natural story-tellers who are possessed of what Mr. Clayton Hamilton calls "the joy of telling tales". <sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Stoddard, F. H., The Evolution of the English Novel, p. 136

<sup>2</sup>Hamilton, Clayton, Materials and Methods of Fiction, p. 49

We enjoy reading their stories because they seem to enjoy telling them.

Usually, too, the authors of adventure romances do not mar their narratives by intruding their own ideas, comments, or interpretations upon the reader. They hold themselves aloof. They tell their stories objectively, without coloring them with their own beliefs or sentiments.

In structure the romance of adventure may vary from the involved complexity of Conrad's novels to the picaresque type of Kim, in which the plot is little more than a series of events. The incidents may be true to life or fantastically impossible. The style may be all or nothing. But however widely they may differ in these other respects, adventure novels have one thing in common. In every case the action, at least part of it, takes place in a strange land amid unusual surroundings and exotic scenes. One of the greatest appeals of the romance of adventure lies in this particular feature of it. The reader is transported to unfamiliar countries where anything may happen and where the most incredible adventures seem sane and believable. In fancy he is able to explore ancient cities and tropical jungles, to sail the Spanish Main, or to visit Africa, India, and the islands of the sea.

The romance of adventure, then, provides a means of vicarious experience, since it takes the reader away from his commonplace and uneventful life and enables him, in imagination at least, to see strange lands and to have adventures such as he would never actually have. It "draws his wearied

soul away from the burden of humdrum life, and leads him out into the carefree realm of adventure and luck<sup>3</sup> where life is joyous and full and worth the living.

Many people are inclined to look down upon the novel of adventure because it does have this appeal, because it is, as they scornfully call it, "literature of escape." Their attitude seems to be that such fiction must be inferior because it so frankly gives pleasure to the reader. Yet is not the giving of pleasure the first aim of art of any kind? Dryden thought it was, at least. "Delight," he said, "is the chief if not the only end of poesy" (by poesy meaning fiction in all its forms, according to Mr. Brander Matthews).<sup>4</sup> Some critics, also, have condemned the romance of adventure because its emphasis is upon incident and action. These men "look down on incident, and reserve their admiration for the clink of teaspoons and the accents of the curate,"<sup>5</sup> forgetting that the fundamental basis, the one essential element of all novels is a story. Indeed, if one follows William Lyon Phelps' definition of a high-class novel as "a good story well told,"<sup>6</sup> then the romance of adventure is a better novel than are, for instance, some of those of Henry James. As Mr. Abel Chevalley

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<sup>3</sup>Holliday, Carl, English Fiction from the Fifth to the Twentieth Century, p. 366

<sup>4</sup>Quoted by Mr. Matthews in the introduction to Hamilton's Materials and Methods of Fiction, p. xvi.

<sup>5</sup>Stevenson, R. L., A Gossip on Romance, The Works of Robert Louis Stevenson, vol. xlIII, p. 137

<sup>6</sup>Phelps, W. L., The <sup>Advance</sup> Adventure of the English Novel, p. 12

puts it, "In the name of an intellectualism which assumes superiority, it is easy to scoff at and disparage this literary genre. But no less for that, it answers to one of the most natural instincts, the instinct for mystery and action; and at least it satisfies, quite as legitimately as do psychological twaddle and social dissertations, certain aspirations of humanity." <sup>7</sup>

The most serious indictment that is brought against the romance of adventure, however, is that it lacks reality, that it skims the surface of life and avoids the profounder feelings and motives of mankind. This is true in a varying degree of the works of minor authors who are minor, perhaps, for this very reason. But it is not true of those adventure novels which are of any permanent literary significance. In the best romances of adventure there is as sure a basis of truth to life and human nature as in any other type of fiction. There are carefully realistic details, as in Kipling. There are interpretations of character and motive, or glimpses of the depths of human emotion and reaction, as in Stevenson and Conrad.

It should always be remembered that while all romances of adventure are possessed of certain typical characteristics which have been mentioned above, and while those of minor importance have only these characteristics, the best adventure novels have these features and something more. The something more may be a reading of life, character portrayal, atmosphere,

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<sup>7</sup> Chevalley, Abel, The Modern English Novel, p. 122

or merely style. In any case, although it is the adventure element which makes these books interesting, it is the something more which makes them literature.

#### Minor Novelists

Those novelists whose work in the romance of adventure is of outstanding literary importance are few. There are, however, a number of writers of adventure fiction who, while not producing novels of great value, have nevertheless told engrossing stories and told them well. They have given pleasure and entertainment to great numbers of readers. Because of this, one cannot omit some mention of them in a discussion of the romance of adventure.

Of this group, one of the most important is "Anthony Hope" (Sir Anthony Hope Hawkins, 1863-), whose breezy romances were very influential in forwarding the romantic movement at the close of the century. His two best known novels, The Prisoner of Zenda (1894) and Rupert of Hentzau (1898), both of which were tremendously successful at the time of their publication, started a fashion for stories of romantic exploits in imaginary kingdoms. Although they are typical adventure stories in that they deal with intrigues, conspiracies, and hair-breadth escapes, they have a certain dignity and individuality which differentiates them. They stand apart, as Weygandt says, by reason of a "cleanness and lightness and surety of handling." <sup>8</sup>

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<sup>8</sup>Weygandt, Cornelius, A Century of the English Novel, p. 328

Hope wrote a number of other adventure novels, such as The God in the Car (1894) and Phrosé<sup>2</sup> (1897), but none of these were as good as The Prisoner of Zenda and Rupert of Hentzau. In fact, although he has continued to write up to the present day, all of his books of any importance were produced between 1894 and 1900. When the romantic revival subsided, Hope's fame declined.

It is one of "life's little ironies" that an author who graduated from Balliol with highest scholarly honors, and whose taste and really excellent talent were for the witty and realistic depiction of modern social life such as that in his Dolly Dialogues (1894) and Quisanté (1900), should be known to most people as a writer of undiluted and very extravagant romance. It was his romances of adventure, however, that made Hope a popular writer. In all probability, moreover, it is by them that he will continue to be known, since they have, in spite of their extravagance, a lightness and ease, a wit and wholesome charm all their own.

Another minor author of some importance is Sir Henry Rider Haggard (1856-1925). Haggard was the first to follow Stevenson's lead in producing romances of pure adventure, beginning with King Solomon's Mines in 1885. During his lifetime he turned out a great number of gory, fantastic, hair-raising novels.

Haggard's stories are kept from being ordinary by the vigor and vividness with which they are written and by their atmosphere of reality, the impression they give of accuracy and actuality even when their plots are incredible. Haggard

is able to obtain these effects, Mr. Abel Chevalley thinks,<sup>9</sup> because he lived an active life and had wide experience in the world of affairs. Certainly he was no sedentary man of letters. While yet in his teens he went to Africa as secretary to Sir Henry Buchner, Governor of Natal. Two years later he saw service in Transvaal. He studied life in many lands. Finally he became an agriculturalist in England. But though he wrote of a great many things--of farming, and gardening, and Salvation Army labor colonies--he is known as an author of exciting romances of adventure.

Haggard is at his best in his tales of peril and adventure in Africa. The first of these was King Solomon's Mines, the plot of which is built around a search for King Solomon's Ophir in Central Africa. There are some memorable descriptions of desert and snow-capped mountains in this book. It was followed by other stories laid in Africa. Outstanding among these are the weird and fantastic She (1887) and Ayesha (1905); Allan Quartermain (1888), a sequel to King Solomon's Mines which is equally thrilling in its tale of the discovery of a hidden nation in the heart of Africa; The People of the Mist (1894), which Haggard himself called a "record of barefaced and flagrant adventure";<sup>10</sup> and Swallow, A Tale of the Great Trek (1898).

Haggard did not confine himself to Africa, however. In Montezuma's Daughter (1894), a story of the Spanish Inquisition

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<sup>9</sup>Chevalley, Abel, The Modern English Novel, p. 125

<sup>10</sup>In the dedication to The People of the Mist.

and Cortez, he shifted to Mexico. The Heart of the World (1896) is another story of adventures encountered in the wild interior of Mexico in an endeavor to reach a pre-Aztec city. Cleopatra (1889) goes back to ancient Egypt, while Eric Brighteyes (1891), a romance of the vikings, has its setting in Scandanavia.

All of Rider Haggard's stories are characterized by blood-curdling perils, extraordinary escapes, and the most unusual and improbable situations. Nevertheless, his books invariably met with phenomenal success, because they appealed to thousands of readers who found in them a means of escape from the monotony of life. None of his books, as Mr. Harold Williams points out, possess long-enduring qualities, but within their range they "are not without their distinctive merits." <sup>11</sup>

Another writer of adventure novels whose settings vary widely in "Henry Seton Merriman" (Hugh Stowell Scott, 1862-1903). Although his books won great popularity, they seldom rose above the ordinary. Among his best known works are With Edged Tools (1894), The Sowers (1896), and In Kedar's Tents (1897).

Sir Arthur Thomas Quiller-Couch (1863 - ) is a scholar of ability, widely acquainted with English literature, whose anthology, The Oxford Book of English Verse, is one of the best ever collected. He was turned by the fascination of

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<sup>11</sup> Williams, Harold, Modern English Writers, p. 332

Stevenson's romanticism, however, to the writing of adventure novels such as Dead Man's Rock (1867) and The Adventures of Harry Revel (1903), similar to those of Stevenson. So well did he succeed that he was chosen in 1897 to complete Stevenson's unfinished romance, St. Ives. Much of the same joy of life and spirit of adventure as well as the felicitous style of Stevenson's books reappear in the adventure romances of Quiller-Couch.

For some reason, Australia has been neglected by the novelists. Only one worthy of mention has written of it. A Bride from the Bush (1890), The Boss of Taroomba (1894), The Belle of Toorak (1900), and similar tales of Australian life by William Ernest Hornung (1866-1921) derive their romance from the wonders of this country. Apart from this feature there is little to distinguish them.

George Lewis Becke (1848-1913), like Stevenson and Conrad, found adventure and romance in the South Seas. Since he spent much of his life as a trader among the islands, his novels, while weak in construction, have a more definite and careful background of Pacific life than do those of Stevenson. His Native Wife (1896) and Edward Barry, South Sea Pearler (1900), sensational stories with a background of nautical and native life, are typical of Becke's work.

Finally, one ought to mention the sea stories of Frank Thomas Bullen (1857-1915) and Sir Max Pemberton (1863- ). Bullen, who served on a whaler for fourteen years in his youth, wrote with the knowledge of experience, painting the scenes he knew vividly and telling his stories in a simple,

straight-forward manner, in such novels as The Cruise of the Cachalot (1898) and The Log of a Sea-Waif (1899). Pemberton, a prolific writer, has produced sea stories "of the good old Scott and Cooper type"<sup>12</sup> in The Iron Piróte (1894), The Sea Wolves (1896), and The House Under the Sea (1902).

The novels of all those authors that have just been mentioned have some merit of one kind or another. None, however, are to be compared in influence or literary value with the productions of three other men who wrote romances of adventure during this period. The works of Stevenson, Kipling, and Conrad in this field are so outstanding that they must be examined in greater detail.

#### Robert Louis Stevenson (1850-1894)

It has been the fashion in recent years to disparage the work of Stevenson and to minimize his importance. Reacting against the extravagant praise heaped upon him in the years immediately after his death, modern critics have been unable to find anything at all good to say about him. They will allow him no originality, sincerity, power, or merit beyond the felicities of his style (which they cannot well deny). They even carry their censure so far as to say, as does Swinnerton, that if romance is dead, "Stevenson killed it."<sup>13</sup> Certainly these accusations are biased and unfair. More than any other man, Stevenson was influential in bringing romance

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<sup>12</sup> Holliday, Carl, English Fiction from the Fifth to the Twentieth Century, p. 386.

<sup>13</sup> Swinnerton, Frank, R. L. Stevenson, A Critical Study, p. 209

to life again, temporarily at least, at the close of the century. Nor can one with justice deny that he was a real master of the adventure novel, or that in the field of romance he was not only a worthy successor to Scott, but superior to him.

With the exception of The Master of Ballantrae and the fragmentary Weir of Hermiston, all of Stevenson's novels that really count are romances of adventure. Of them the first, Treasure Island (1883), is also the best. It is written with a zest, a verve and spontaneity which Stevenson never quite attained again, perhaps because he never again wrote a book, as he did in this case, solely to please himself. It is a mistake for anyone to think that Treasure Island is nothing more than a boy's story about fights, pirates, and buried treasure—a sort of dime novel glorified by being well written. Here is a book capable of charming and delighting mature readers as well as children. It not only appeals to the child in all of us, but it also contains scenes of true dramatic power and vividly realized characters.

Kidnapped (1886) and David Balfour (1893), the sequel to it, in spite of the emphasis placed in them upon historical background and Scotch setting, are really romances of adventure. Although the historical conditions of the period succeeding the Jacobite rebellion of 1745 are pictured, and although there is a great deal of Scotch local color, all of this is subordinated to the recital of the perils, narrow escapes, and enterprises of the boy David Balfour. Like

Treasure Island, these romances are full of dramatic episodes, but they have fewer memorable characters.

In The Wrecker (1892) and The Ebb-Tide (1894), both of which were written in collaboration with his step-son, Lloyd Osbourne, Stevenson takes us to the South Seas for more adventure. The Wrecker, however, is one of his most faulty books. He himself called it "less a romance than a panorama."<sup>14</sup> It is episodic and disjointed. Although it is a mystery story, the mystery does not even appear until after some one hundred and forty pages. The first quarter of The Wrecker, dealing with the hero's boyhood and his student life in Paris, ought to have been omitted, for it has nothing to do with the real plot and it spoils the proportions of the story. In addition, this part is noticeably below Stevenson's usual artistic level. It has the very "insincerity and shallowness of tone"<sup>15</sup> which he condemned in the ordinary mystery story and the avoidance of which he sought by approaching the real plot of The Wrecker so circuitously. After the main action is reached, the story runs along with the usual Stevenson verve and vividness. As for the characters, none of them seem to be real people except Captain Nares. The rest are vague or overdrawn.

The least pleasant but one of the most powerful of Stevenson's romances is The Ebb-Tide, which has the subtitle

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<sup>14</sup>Stevenson, R. L., epilogue to The Wrecker, The Works of Robert Louis Stevenson, vol. xxi, p. 421.

<sup>15</sup>Ibid, p. 422

A Trio and a Quartette. It is not like his other adventure novels. With all of the reality of detail, one feels that the world of Treasure Island or Kidnapped or The Wrecker is not quite real, is at least partly make-believe. In spite of murders, crimes, and buckets of blood, there is a lightness and brightness about these stories. This is not true of The Ebb-Tide. There are the usual hazardous exploits and exciting incidents of the adventure romance in it. But at the bottom it is a grim and sordid story, having to do with the subtle stages of moral degradation as exemplified in four men. In it, too, the emphasis is not upon the action but upon the characters. These characters, unlike those in the typical romance of adventure, are all weak in one way or another. None of them are admirable. All of them, however, are clearly and forcefully drawn. In its restraint, proportion, and unity of artistic effect, The Ebb-Tide is more like a short story than a novel.

With the exception of this one book, the interest in Stevenson's romances of adventure is centered upon the action rather than upon the character, for his first object always was to tell a good story. How well he succeeded any one of his novels will illustrate. There are no dull moments. The narrative moves constantly forward, and we are swept along with it, intrigued and fascinated, from chapter to chapter. As Mr. Carl Holliday says, "Stevenson's" admirable ability in the use of action and suspense carries us on and on; while a certain Defoe-like display of accuracy makes the narrative seem 'just so'; we could not possibly wish it to be other-

wise." <sup>16</sup> This is true despite the fact that the plots for the most part are episodic, "a sewing together of patches sometimes brilliant and sometimes commonplace." <sup>17</sup> Mr. Swinnerton advances the theory that this is a result of Stevenson's lack of physical stamina and his consequent impatience and inability to endure prolonged mental application. <sup>18</sup>

Even this hostile critic is willing, however, to praise the "exciting, impressive, and splendidly vivid scenes" <sup>19</sup> which occur in all of Stevenson's work. One could mention any number of them, such as the fatal interview between Silver and Tom on the island in Treasure Island, Alan Breck's fight in the Round House in Kidnapped, the massacre of the ship's crew in The Wrecker, or the climactic scene in The Ebb-Tide when the final attempt of Huish and Davis against Attwater fails. In every case, these scenes record themselves in the mind with the definiteness of brightly painted pictures; they are presented with such dramatic power that they are remembered even when all the rest is forgotten. Stevenson thus succeeded in his desire to "embody character, thought, or emotion in some act or attitude that shall be remarkably

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<sup>16</sup>Holliday, Carl, English Fiction from the Fifth to the Twentieth Century, p. 367

<sup>17</sup>Knight, Grant C., The Novel in English, p. 228

<sup>18</sup>Swinnerton, Frank, R. L. Stevenson, A Critical Study, p. 160

<sup>19</sup>Ibid, p. 155

striking to the mind's eye", <sup>20</sup> the doing of which, in his opinion, was the greatest purpose of literature.

It is not to be thought, however, that merely because he emphasized action, Stevenson had no power of character portrayal. This charge has often been brought against him because he preferred to "embody character" in "act or attitude" rather than to discuss and analyze it. Instead of stopping his story to talk about his characters, Stevenson shows them to us in action. He lets us receive our impressions of them as we do of people in real life, through what they say and do. Apparently, what some critics really object to is his presentation of character through dramatic action rather than by psychological analysis. As Mr. G. K. Chesterton points out, 'his characters are charged with having no internal feelings because their internal feelings are so strong they result in action. <sup>21</sup>

"I do not see," Chesterton comments at another time, "why he should be covered with cold depreciation merely because he could put into a line what other men put into a page; why he should be regarded as superficial because he saw more in a man's walk or profile than the moderns can dig out of his complexes and his subconscious." <sup>22</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Stevenson, R. L., A Gossip on Romance, The works of R. L. S., vol. XIII, p. 137

<sup>21</sup> Chesterton, G. K., Robert Louis Stevenson, p. 172

<sup>22</sup> Ibid, p. 121

Stevenson, as this suggests, had the rare ability to describe a character in a phrase, and to make us so entirely acquainted with him in a paragraph that he is a distinct personality to us ever afterwards. It is true, nevertheless, that while we get to know his characters, we do not get to know all of a thousand little inconsequential details about them, as we do of the characters in Thackeray or Dickens, for instance.

Stevenson did not avoid the analysis of character because he was not capable of it. Occasionally he shows us that he does have the power of searching into men's souls, of interpreting their inmost emotions, motives, and reactions. There is that passage in The Ebb-Tide, for instance, in which he analyzes the thoughts and emotions of Herrick, who, in bitter self-contempt, tries to drown himself.

Why should he delay? Here, where he was now, let him drop the curtain, let him seek the ineffable refuge, let him lie down with all races and generations of men in the house of sleep. It was easy to say, easy to do. To stop swimming: there was no mystery in that, if he could do it. Could he? And he could not. He knew it instantly. He was aware instantly of an opposition in his members, unanimous and invincible, clinging to life with a single and fixed resolve, finger by finger, sinew by sinew; something that was at once he and not he--at once within and without him; the shutting of some miniature valve in his brain, which a single manly thought should suffice to open--and the grasp of an external fate ineluctable as gravity. To any man there may come at times a consciousness that there blows, through all the articulation of his body, the wind of a spirit not wholly his; that his mind rebels; that another girds him and carries him whither he would not. It came now to Herrick, with the authority of a revelation. There was no escape possible. The open door was closed in his recreant face. He must go back into the world and amongst men without illusion. He must stagger on to the end with the pack of his responsibility and his disgrace, until a cold, a blow, a merciful chance ball, or the more merciful hangman, should dismiss him from his infancy. There were men who could commit suicide; there were men who could not; and he was one who could

not. . . . His smile was tragic. He could have spat upon himself. <sup>23</sup>

Stevenson is not a great creator of character. His characters are not complex. But assuredly some of them, such as Herrick and Captain Nares, <sup>A</sup>Olaf Breck and Daniel Balfour and his uncle Ebenezer, Blind Pew and Long John Silver, are real and vital figures, worthy to take their place along side other memorable characters of literature.

There is one point, at least, upon which all of the critics of Stevenson agree, and that is that he was the master of one of the most remarkable prose styles possessed by any English novelist. He introduced something entirely new--romance of thrilling adventure written with the utmost polish and artistry. This is done with such apparent ease that one does not realize the skill back of it unless he tries rephrasing, for example, one of those colorful descriptions such as that of the old seaman, in the second paragraph of Treasure Island, or that of the storm in The Wrecker, or of the tropic daybreak in The Ebb-Tide. Then he discovers what an expert Stevenson was at getting effects from word combinations, at using just exactly the right word. Stevenson sought for the original and unusual way of expressing himself. Yet his style is not flowery or ornamental, but plain, lucid, harmonious always. "His style has ease, suppleness, limpidity, felicity--every virtue <sup>v</sup>same that of strength." <sup>24</sup>

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<sup>23</sup>The Ebb-Tide, The Works of Robert Louis Stevenson(N. Y., 1925), vol. XXIV, p. 138.

<sup>24</sup>Cunliffe, J. W., English Literature During the Last Half Century, p. 94

Mr. Grant C. Knight accuses Stevenson of being "platitudinously Victorian"<sup>25</sup> when he attempted to think. If by this he means that there is a certain moral seriousness underlying Stevenson's novels, he is right. The "something of the Shorter-Catechist"<sup>26</sup> in Stevenson has often been remarked upon. He never philosophizes or moralizes directly, but nevertheless he is interested in the right moral solution for his stories. Although these stories are full of crime and intrigue and bloodshed, Stevenson is not, as some of the more modern novelists seem to be, in sympathy with the criminals. As he shows in the little Fable attached to Treasure Island, in which the characters discuss themselves and the story, he is on the side of right and of the old, simple virtues such as courage, loyalty, and devotion to duty.

It may be also that Stevenson is "platitudinously Victorian" because he refused to join in the prevalent pessimism and hopelessness of his contemporaries, but instead insisted on finding life happy and worth while. As Mr. Chesterton says, "he stood up suddenly amid all these things and shook himself with a sort of impatient sanity; a shrug of skepticism about skepticism,"<sup>27</sup> and turned to romance to escape from the cynicism in comparison to which his wildest imaginings seemed sensible. The relief with which the public welcomed his rebellion has already been discussed. Thus

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<sup>25</sup>Knight, Grant C., The Novel in English, p. 231

<sup>26</sup>From Apparition, by W. E. Henley.

<sup>27</sup>Chesterton, S. K., Robert Louis Stevenson, p. 71

Stevenson was a romanticist by choice. As a student, he, like the other young writers of his day, had zealously studied the French realists and experimentalists. His careful accuracy of detail, his ability to invest the most incredible adventures with an atmosphere of reality, an occasional psychological analysis such as the one quoted above, or a scene like that depicting the squalid beach-combers stricken with influenza, in the first chapter of The Ebb-Tide, indicate that he had the power to write realistically if he chose. He deliberately turned to romance because he could find nothing that he considered worth his while in that ultra-realism of his contemporaries which made man's life consist solely "of mud and of old iron, cheap desires and cheap fears." <sup>28</sup>

Stevenson was not a great genius. Certainly, however, he did more than "make the novel a toy when George Eliot had finished making it a treatise." <sup>29</sup> It seems evident now that, while he is not one of the major English novelists, he is quite sure to have a permanent place as a minor one, if for no other reason than because of the historical importance of his influence on the English novel at the end of the century, but also because of the charm and entertainment of his stories, and the excellence of the style in which they are written.

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<sup>28</sup>Stevenson, R. L., The Lantern-Bearers, The Works of Robert Louis Stevenson, vol. XIII, p. 182.

<sup>29</sup>Swinnerton, Frank, R. L. Stevenson, A Critical Study, p. 208.

Rudyard Kipling (1865- )

In the year 1890, that year in which the revival of romanticism in the English novel began to make itself definitely felt, there returned to England from India a young writer whose fame had already preceded him, and who helped to further this movement because he brought to the naturally active, energetic, and practical Englishman congenial stories of vigor, strength, and action as a substitute for the pessimism and aestheticism offered by the decadents. Like Stevenson, Rudyard Kipling cared more about life than about "art for art's sake."

Kipling's novels are not an important part of his total work. His great fame and influence as a short story writer, however, have made him so significant a figure that perforce some attention must here be given to his novels.

Including every possibility, Kipling has written only five books that can be termed novels, for he is naturally a writer of the short story, "which by pulling fore and aft he sometimes stretched into a novel."<sup>30</sup> All of these are romances of adventure, having to do with perils, exciting exploits, and unusual enterprises, and with the characteristic emphasis upon the action and the story.

Stalky and Co. (1899), a tale of school life, is not much more than a series of short stories. As a novel it is negligible, not important enough to deserve William Lyon Phelps's

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<sup>30</sup>Cross, W. L., The Modern English Novel, p. 13

scathing criticism that it is "probably the worst novel ever written by a man of genius. It is on a false pitch throughout, and the most rasping book of recent times. The only good things in it are the quotations from Browning." 31

In Captains Courageous, A Story of the Grand Banks (1897), Kipling attempts, not very successfully, to write a boy's story of fishermen on the Newfoundland Banks. There is scarcely any plot. The characters are barely distinguished from one another. Local color is so overemphasized that it becomes unbearably monotonous. In general, the whole book is of very little literary consequence.

Kipling's real contribution as a novelist, then, is to be found in his three remaining works--The Naulahka, A Story of West and East (1892), The Light That Failed (1891), and Kim (1901).

The Naulahka (written with Walcott Balestier) is simply a good romance of adventure having to do with the exploits of an audacious young Westerner who sets out to obtain a priceless necklace, the Naulahka, belonging to the crown jewels of a small Indian native state. This necklace is to be given to the wife of a railroad magnate in exchange for her influence in getting a much-coveted railroad brought to the town of Lopez, Colorado. Obviously, the whole basis of the plot is incredible, but one does not have to believe the story in order to enjoy it for what it intends to be and is--a good, entertaining "yarn", full of action, leavened with humor,

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31Phelps, W. L., Essays on Modern Novelists, p. 223

and colored with the fascination and mystery of ancient India.

Of all Kipling's novels, there has been most disagreement over the merits of his first one, The Light That Failed. Some critics have said that it is only an elongated short story; others claim that it is his most outstanding novel. At any rate, the tragic story of an artist who becomes blind, loses his one masterpiece and the woman he loves, and finally returns to find death in the Sandon where he first began his career, is told with power and restraint. In its details the book is almost brutally realistic, but the general conception and tone are romantic. Especially is the romantic element prominent in those parts where the action shifts to Egypt and the Sandon. Helder's experiences as a war artist and correspondent in these regions also furnish the adventure features of the book. The Light That Failed is a much deeper and more serious work than The Naulahka, but in it also the interest is centered in the story. Incidentally, it is rather surprising to find Mr. Kipling writing a book such as this one, based upon the idea that love is everything.

By far the most successful and outstanding of Kipling's novels is Kim. In structure it is simply a picaresque story with no especial beginning or end, having to do with the numerous and unusual adventures which befall Kim, the little English waif who has grown up with the natives in India. But, as Mr. Clayton Hamilton points out, all India happens to Kim.<sup>32</sup> Through his eyes we see a representative cross section of

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<sup>32</sup>Hamilton, Clayton, Materials and Methods of Fiction, p. 65.

Indian life. So the book is really a comprehensive picture of the whole of modern India, with its native and Anglo-Indian life, its many mingled races and castes, its conflicting beliefs and superstitions, its age-old customs and cultures. In Kim we become acquainted with all sorts of strange and interesting people; we are shown the crowded and infinitely varied life of India's cities, the beauty of India's rivers and jungles and snow-clad mountains; we are made to feel all the glamour and fascination of this ancient country. "No other single book in English may be compared with Kim in its wide and comprehensive representation of the mystery, colour, and crowded life of the East."<sup>33</sup> Here indeed is romance.

Two things distinguish Mr. Kipling as a novelist—his ability always to tell a good story in an interesting and entertaining way, and his power to recreate the atmosphere of strange and unusual places. Kipling's romances of adventure have no underlying philosophy, contain no reading of life. Neither do we find in them any great power of character portrayal. Only in Kim has Kipling succeeded in creating vital and unforgettable personalities such as Kim, the lama, Hurree Babu, Lurgan Sahib, and Mahmet Ali. In The Light That Failed, Maisie, Dick, and the Red-haired Girl are definite enough figures, but we become only slightly acquainted with them. With the exception of Tarvin and Sitabhai, all of the people in The Naulahka are type characters. Kipling is, however, an inimitable story-teller. He has a feeling for the dramatic

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<sup>33</sup>Williams, Harold, Modern English Writers, p. 306.

situation. He knows how to pack a great deal of incident and emotion into a small space by suppressing everything that might retard the narrative. He tells his stories with vigor, originality, and freshness. Like Stevenson, he frankly intends to entertain.

Above all, Kipling has the power to make his readers feel the romance of picturesque and unfamiliar places. He has the ability to recreate with the utmost vividness scenes of burning desert and deep, forbidding jungle and century-old, deserted cities, and to invest these scenes at the same time with a glamour and mystery which casts a spell over the reader. Here is the source and secret of all that is romantic in the novels of Kipling. It might be epitomized in the following paragraph from The Light That Failed:

What do you think of a big, red, dead city built of red sandstone, with raw green aloes growing between the stones, lying out neglected on honey-coloured sands? There are forty dead kings there. . . . You look at the palaces and streets and shops and tanks, and think that men must live there, till you find a wee gray squirrel rubbing its nose all alone in the market-place, and a jewelled peacock struts out of a carved doorway and spreads its tail against a marble screen as fine as pierced joint-lace. Then a monkey—a little black monkey—walks through the main square to get a drink from a tank forty feet deep. He slides down the creepers to the water's edge, and a friend holds him by the tail in case he should fall in. . . . Then evening comes, and the lights change till it's just as though you stood in the heart of a king opal. . . . Then the night-wind gets up, and the sands move, and you hear the desert outside the city singing, "Now I lay me down<sup>34</sup> to sleep," and everything is dark till the moon rises.

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<sup>34</sup>Kipling, Rudyard, The Light That Failed (Garden City, N. Y., 1924), p. 102-3.

Joseph Conrad (1857-1924)

When Stevenson died in 1894, there seemed to be no one among the contemporary romantic writers capable of taking his place. As if in answer to this need, there appeared in 1895 Almayer's Folly, the first book by Joseph Conrad. Its publication heralded the arrival in the field of English literature of a writer who, born in Poland, and an Englishman only by adoption, was nevertheless to prove to be not only "the heir of Stevenson"<sup>35</sup> in carrying on the romantic revival, but also a great original force in English fiction.

Although he later turned more and more to the analytical and psychological novel of James, Conrad began his artistic career with four great romances of adventure—Almayer's Folly (1895), The Outcast of the Islands (1896), The Nigger of the Narcissus (1897), and Lord Jim (1900). Nothing was more natural than that he should start with the adventure novel. As a child and youth, he had had a passion for books of travel and exploration; his imagination had been peopled with old sea-dogs and adventures. Later, for twenty years he had lived the most adventurous kind of a life as a sailor. And since he drew the material for his first novels from what he had seen and heard during those twenty years, quite naturally these books were romances of adventure.

All of the elements of the usual romance of adventure are to be found in the four novels mentioned above. Dealing with

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<sup>35</sup>Phelps, W. L., The Advance of the English Novel, p. 199

life in the South Seas and the Malayan archipelago, they have all of the romantic lure of lustrous sea and breathless jungle, of strange lands and exotic surroundings. They are full of the violent action of theft, murder, shipwreck, piracy, and petty war, and of the fierce emotions of unrestrained love and hate, jealousy, greed, and despair. As stories alone they are extraordinarily interesting.

One does not usually think of these novels as being romances of adventure, however, simply because they are so far from being merely that. For to Conrad, "the strange and sinister things that people do are never so strange as what people are."<sup>36</sup> He is concerned with why people do the things they do. Consequently he is interested not so much in incidents in themselves as in the effect of these incidents upon his characters, or the revelation of his characters through the incidents. As a result, when one thinks of Conrad's novels, his first thought is not, "This is a story of a sea voyage," or "This is a story of a struggle for the possession of the wealth of a secret river in Borneo," or "This is a story of how a white man became lord of a native village," but in every case, "This is the story of a man." It may be that it is the story of a man who married a Malay girl for the sake of the money that went with her, and who slowly degenerated in a savage community, as in Almayer's Folly. It may be the story of a man who became a thief and a traitor through his love for a native

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<sup>36</sup>Follett, Helen Thomas and Wilson, Some Modern Novelists, p. 315.

woman, as in The Outcast of the Islands, or of a man who held a magnetic influence over an entire ship's crew, as in The Nigger of the Narcissus. Or perhaps it is the story of a man who through temporary cowardice lost his self-respect, but who finally found it again, as in Lord Jim. At any rate, although the plot in each instance is invariably full of dramatic force, the characters are even more absorbing and interesting.

Whether it be in a full length portrait, such as that of Tuan Jim, or in a brief sketch, such as that of Charley, the ship's boy in The Nigger of the Narcissus, Conrad cannot touch a character without making us feel and see him. We come to know the people in his books intimately. Not only do we become familiar with the most minute details of their appearance, but we are also allowed to share their inmost thoughts and emotions. "No writer of our time," as Mr. Abel Chevalley says, "is gifted with a power of moral and mental dissection superior to that displayed by Joseph Conrad."<sup>37</sup> Conrad's characters are always individuals, never types. In particular, his main characters stand out as unique and original personalities, each presenting his own peculiar problem in human behavior and psychological reaction.

If Conrad fails anywhere in the depiction of character it is, critics seem to agree, in his portrayal of women. In his first novels, as in his later books, the feminine char-

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<sup>37</sup>Chevalley, Abel, The Modern English Novel, p. 184

acters such as Nina, Aissa, and Jewel, are women of strong, passionate nature, capable of deepest feeling, who nevertheless are never able fully to express themselves. Tragic, mute, enigmatical, they suffer because they are not understood. "They have," comments William Lyon Phelps, "an endless capacity for suffering with no power of articulation. Most women that I have known suffer less and talk more." 38

The fact that he is concerned primarily with "the devious ways of human behavior," 39 with the revelation of character rather than with mere incident, accounts for Conrad's peculiar method of telling a story--a method which is apt to be at first most annoying to the reader who is used to the straight-forward manner of Scott or Stevenson. As Mr. Harold Williams puts it, Conrad progresses by "beginning in the middle and catching up the tags of the past, while he meanders toward the future." 40 For example, Almayer's Folly opens when the end of the actual series of events is already in sight. The majority of the chapters which follow have to do with filling in missing links. Here and there, however, a chapter is inserted which carries the story forward a bit from where it was at the beginning of the book. As a result of this method, Conrad's narratives seem to advance in a series of overlapping loops. He tells his stories in this way, however, in order that he may bring in incidents where they will weigh most in the gradual dis-

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38 Phelps, William Lyon, The Advance of the English Novel, p. 212.

39 Cross, Wilbur L., Four Contemporary Novelists, p. 35

40 Williams, Harold, Modern English Writers, p. 390

closure of character. This is one of the reasons why Conrad's characters so impress themselves upon the mind that they are unforgettable. At the same time, when the story is ended the plot miraculously straightens itself out in the reader's mind in perfect chronological order, complete with a surprising multiplicity of incident.

The natural setting is at times almost as much an actual presence in Conrad's novels as are his characters. Nature often seems to be endowed with sentient life, with a character of its own. Especially is this true when Conrad writes of the jungle, brilliant, sinister, heavily perfumed, or of the sea, mysterious, alluring, ever changing yet changeless. The natural surroundings, too, not only influence the moods and reactions of the characters, but even determine the whole course of their lives. Often there is an emotional harmony between setting and incident. The storm at the climax of The Outcast of the Islands, for instance, harmonizes with and symbolizes the storm in William's mind.

When Conrad writes of nature, he produces descriptive passages of such disturbing beauty that they in themselves are enough to make these romances memorable. Such passages, too, illustrate the splendour of his style at its best. It has never ceased to be a cause for wonder that a man who did not learn English until he was twenty, and who did not begin to write until he was forty, should write as Joseph Conrad did, in a style which entitles him to rank with the great masters of the language. His is a style rich, glowing, rhythmic,

mical, flexible, at times sombrely magnificent. There is an incessant appeal to the senses. Conrad is "as scrupulously precise in naming a colour, in tracing a line, and in describing a sound, a taste, or a smell, as Meredith in polishing an aphorism, or Henry James in analyzing a manner." <sup>41</sup>

Conrad's style is the conscious result of his artistic creed, which influenced all of his novels from the very first, and which he formulated definitely in the preface to his third book, The Nigger of the Narcissus. Not only does this preface express clearly Conrad's own artistic aims and the means by which he strove to accomplish them, but it also is an important contribution to literary theory. As Prof. Gunliffe says, "The preface he wrote for The Nigger of the Narcissus may be closed with de Manpassant's preface to Pierre et Jean among the permanent contributions to literary theory, especially as it affects the art of modern fiction" <sup>42</sup>

In this preface, Conrad is first of all concerned with the qualities of that literature which is truly artistic. It must, he says, "make its appeal through the senses, if its high desire is to reach the secret spring of responsive emotions. It must strenuously aspire to the plasticity of sculpture, to the colour of painting, and to the magic suggestiveness of music—which is the art of arts." <sup>43</sup> One needs only to

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<sup>41</sup> Gunliffe, J. W., English Literature During the Last Half Century, p. 167

<sup>42</sup> Ibid p. 163

<sup>43</sup> Conrad, Joseph, preface to The Nigger of the Narcissus

turn to any of Conrad's own work to find brilliant illustration of the effectiveness of such art.

The artist, continues Conrad, "speaks to our capacity for delight and wonder, to the sense of mystery surrounding our lives."<sup>44</sup> By saying this he identifies himself unquestionably with the romantics, for certainly an appeal to delight and wonder is the very basis of romance. However, Conrad does not openly align himself with any school. In fact, he says that the writer ought to rid himself of the artistic dogmas of realism, naturalism, romanticism, and so on, as well as of the philosophic ones such as pessimism and optimism. Moreover, he should keep himself, his prejudices, and his comments entirely out of his work. In his own writing Conrad is very careful to do this. He holds himself entirely aloof. He neither praises nor blames his characters. He does not interrupt his narrative with philosophical dissertations or preachments. Thus he is at the very opposite end of the scale from such authors as Dickens and Thackeray. This striving for complete detachment accounts also for a device which he hit upon first in Lord Jim and later used a great deal—that of having his story told by one or more intervening persons, such as Marlow in Lord Jim. The effect of this method is to eliminate the presence of the author to an even greater extent and thus to make the narrative seem to come directly from the characters. An extraordinary effect of life and actuality is the result.

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<sup>44</sup>Conrad, Joseph, preface to The Nigger of the Narcissus.

Since he believes that the writer should hold himself aloof, Conrad condemns all thesis or purpose novels--novels in which the author endeavors to teach or preach, to champion some reform or hold up some ideal. This does not mean that he would prohibit the novel from presenting any ethical or moral problems. Such problems are involved in all of his books. He merely says that the author should not dictate the answer. Nor does it mean that Conrad is believer in art for art's sake alone. Rather, he believes that the ultimate aim of any art is the revelation of the truth of human life. Art should attempt to find what is fundamental and enduring, to reveal the truth of our common human experience. It is the author's business to do this by showing us life, rather than by talking about it to us.

Conrad's own philosophy of life, his interpretation of and search for the enduring truths of human experience, makes itself felt in his novels in spite of all his aloofness, but in the whole tone and treatment rather than in specific statements. The great amount of space devoted in any complete or lengthy treatment of his work to a discussion of his philosophy of life shows what an important influence it has been in his work. Since it remained practically the same in all of his novels, and may be discovered in his first romances of adventure as well as in his later psychological works, it may be summed up briefly here.

In the first place, Conrad sees each human being as inevitably isolated from every other. He feels man's essential

loneliness, realizes that no person is ever fully revealed to another, and that in the end every being is inexplicable and inexpressible. Thus the leading characters in his romances of adventure are tragic because they are forever lonely, living in the midst of their fellows yet cut off from them by the results of their own weakness.

Yet in spite of this isolation of every person from every other, in spite of all the forces tending to divide, Conrad believes that men eternally struggle for fellowship and human brotherhood, and so are bound together by the bonds of their common humanity. "Conrad. . . stands revealed by his work as a prophet of one great truth: the solidarity of the human race, masked by social distinctions, forgotten in national prejudice, terribly rent by selfishness and greed, but eternally indestructible."<sup>45</sup> He expresses this belief in the preface to his very first book, Almayer's Folly. "There is a bond between us and that humanity so far away."<sup>46</sup> Again he speaks of it in the preface to The Nigger of the Narcissus, referring to "the latent feeling of fellowship for all creation" and the "subtle but invincible conviction of solidarity that knits together the loneliness of innumerable hearts. . . which binds men to each other, which binds together all humanity—the dead to the living and the living to the unborn."<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>45</sup>Cunliffe, J. W., English Literature During the Last Half Century, p. 175.

<sup>46</sup>Conrad, Joseph, preface to Almayer's Folly.

<sup>47</sup>Conrad, Joseph, preface to The Nigger of the Narcissus.

Anything that turns man against this bond of fellowship and solidarity is evil. Greed especially is the great destroyer. Greed causes Lord Jim to sail in a rotten ship. It is greed that destroys Almayer and starts the downfall of Willems.

Finally, Conrad seems to feel that there is no ethical purpose in the universe, no ethical meaning in life. Human life is petty, insignificant. Human beings are small and infinitely unimportant in the greatness of the world. For all that, life after all is a good thing. Conrad is not a pessimist. He finds the world a wonderful spectacle, full of mystery and delight, not dully monotonous as the realists would have it. It is "a spectacle for awe, love, adoration, or hate, if you like—never for despair."<sup>48</sup> One must not despair, one must not give up, says Conrad. Or, as he has Capt. Linguard express it in An Outcast of the Islands, "By God! life is foul! Foul like a lee forebrace on a dirty night. And yet. And yet. One must see it clear for running before going below—for good."<sup>49</sup>

In general, the one great thing which fascinates and perplexes Conrad is, as Cross says, "the mystery of man's conduct and fate."<sup>50</sup> Even in his adventure novels, one feels that Conrad is concerned about all with the great enigma of man, standing small and alone in the vastness of the universe.

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<sup>48</sup> Conrad, Joseph, as quoted by Cross, Wilbur L., Four Contemporary Novelists, p. 47

<sup>49</sup> Conrad, Joseph, An Outcast of the Islands, p. 170

<sup>50</sup> Cross, Wilbur L., The Modern English Novel, p. 14

"Conrad stands above in modern fiction, belonging to no school, and under the influence of no group." <sup>51</sup> As Prof. Weygandt points out, <sup>52</sup> he is one of the "beginnings" of modern fiction, influencing innumerable writers who have come after him. Before turning to more psychological studies, he vivified, enlarged, and transformed the romance of adventure. He did the unprecedented thing of writing adventure novels which were deeply tragic. He introduced a psychological and symbolic element, and a new method of narrative. These first romances of adventure are in no wise to be looked upon as merely products of Conrad's literary apprenticeship. An apprenticeship was not necessary for him. He expressed himself with literary mastery from the very first. In fact, many critics would rank The Nigger of the Narcissus as his masterpiece. If Conrad had written only the four adventure romances which have been discussed, he would still be a great original force in English literature, because in these novels alone there is all that makes for greatness—richness of style, splendour of setting, stories which are individual and distinctive, characters which haunt and fascinate us, and underlying all a deeply poetic vision of life.

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<sup>51</sup> Phelps, W. L., The Advance of the English Novel, p. 207.

<sup>52</sup> Weygandt, Cornelius, A Century of the English Novel, p. 379

### CHAPTER THREE

#### THE HISTORICAL ROMANCE

Among the various types of romantic fiction produced during the revival of romanticism at the close of the century, the historical romance enjoyed a popularity and literary importance second only to that of the romance of adventure. Indeed, between the years 1890 and 1900 any story whose action took place in the past was sure of at least gaining the attention of the public.

A tale of the past is not necessarily a true historical novel, however. It may be an adventure story like Montezuma's Daughter by Haggard; it may be a regional romance such as Caine's The Deemster. It is a true historical novel, as Brander Matthews points out, "only when the historical events are woven into the texture of the story."<sup>1</sup> That is, a true historical romance is not merely an account of events which take place in the past. It is a story in which the novelist is primarily concerned with interpreting and vivifying some historical character or by-gone epoch. The true historical novelist endeavors to recreate the life and people, the very spirit and atmosphere of the past so that it lives again for modern readers.

Every historical novel worthy of the name must be true

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<sup>1</sup>Matthews, Brander, *The Historical Novel and Other Essays*,  
p. 21

to the past with which it deals. This truth to the past, however, may be expressed in one of two different ways. The writer may attempt to be in his story absolutely faithful to real historic facts. He may try to present with absolute honesty actual conditions, to reconstruct with complete and accurate detail an event or an era. On the other hand, an author may endeavor to interpret history rather than to reconstruct it, to be true to the spirit rather than to the letter of the past. In this case he may change the facts of history in the interest of art. He may even, like Dumas, invent historical incidents which never really occurred. Yet he may recreate the life and atmosphere of a period with greater verity than does one who adheres strictly to the factual truth.

Most historical romances, no matter in which of these two ways they are true to the past, have a number of features in common. In all of them, as in the romance of adventure, emphasis is placed upon physical action. Historical romances are sure to be full of crusades and battles, intrigues and persecutions, escapes, adventures, and all sorts of valiant and noble deeds. In the second place, as the name would suggest, the plot of an historical romance is usually connected with or based upon actual historic events; historic personages appear either in the background or as main characters in the story. This is not absolutely essential, however. One may have an historical romance such as The Forest Lovers in which the author interprets a period solely by means of imaginary

events and characters typical of that period. Often peculiarities of costume and custom are stressed. Carlyle's comment concerning Scott's romances may apply generally in this respect. "Much of the interest in these novels results from what may be called contrasts of costume. The phraseology, fashion of arms, of dress and life, belonging to one age, is brought suddenly with singular vividness before the eyes of another." <sup>2</sup> Finally, most historical novelists are inclined to attempt to get an archaïd effect in their style of writing.

Mr. Brander Matthews, who evidently considers the historical romance an inferior type of fiction, points out that its greatest weakness lies in the fact that a writer of one age cannot truly reproduce the thoughts and feelings of men and women of another age. "The fact is," he says, "that no man can step off his own shadow. By no effort of the will can he trust himself backward into the past and shed his share of the accumulations of the ages, of all the myriad accretions of thought and sentiment and knowledge stored up in the centuries that lie between him and the time he is trying to treat. Of necessity he puts into his picture of days gone by more or less of the days in which he is living. . . . A man can no more escape from his race than he can escape from his century; it is the misfortune of the historical novelist that he must try to do both. . . . The really trustworthy historical novels are those which were a-writing while the

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<sup>2</sup>Carlyle, Thomas, as quoted by Weygandt, Cornelius, A Century of the English Novel, p. 48

history was a-making." <sup>3</sup> While all that Mr. Matthews says is true, it must also be remembered that human nature is fundamentally always the same. And so it is not impossible to have a searching study of human character and reactions in an historical romance.

A further criticism of the historical novel is made by Prof. Stoddard, who says, "Fiction is the underlying basis of the novel; fact is the underlying basis of history. The historical novel apparently becomes a novel by virtue of departure from history, and in so far as it is history it is less than perfect as a novel. Either bad history or bad fiction must be the result." <sup>4</sup> After all, however, the historical novelist is not attempting to teach history but to tell of individuals who lived in times of historic interest. Furthermore, it must be admitted that he often makes the past much more real to his readers than does the historian. Although Prof. George Saintsbury says that "the true historical novelist employs the reader's presumed interest in historical scene and character as an instrument to make his own work attractive," <sup>5</sup> much more often the historical scene and character are made interesting because the novelist can present them so attractively.

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<sup>3</sup> Matthews, Brander, The Historical Novel and Other Essays, pp. 13, 16, 17.

<sup>4</sup> Stoddard, Francis Honey, The Evolution of the English Novel, p. 85

<sup>5</sup> Saintsbury, George, as quoted by Matthews, Brander, The Historical Novel and Other Essays, p. 21

The historical novel did not become an important literary form until the nineteenth century. Rev. Thomas Leland had indeed produced a genuine historical romance in Longsword (1762). After that several others appeared. Sir Walter Scott, however, was really the father of the historical novel. His success summoned into the field many imitators such as Horace Smith, William Harrison Ainsworth, S. P. R. James, and Mrs. Anna Bray. Later, the great Victorians evidently could not resist the temptation to try at least one historical novel, and so we have Kingsley's Westward Ho, Dicken's Tale of Two Cities, Eliot's Romola, and Thackeray's Henry Esmond.

With the revival of romanticism in the novel at the end of the nineteenth century, the historical romance once more became a form of great importance. Writing in 1897, in his essay on the historical novel to which reference has already been made, Mr. Matthews says, "We might suggest that the liking for historical fiction is now so keen that the public is not at all particular as to the veracity of the history out of which the fiction has been manufactured." <sup>6</sup> "Historical romances became amazingly popular; so long as they were 'costume novels', whose characters talked a jargon of obsolete oaths, and had a sentimental love story, with a historical royal personage as 'deux ex machina', it mattered not if their historical foundation betrayed ignorance, nor if their style was crude." <sup>7</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Matthews, Brander, The Historical Novel and Other Essays, p. 4

<sup>7</sup> Phelps, W. L., The Advance of the English Novel, p. 147

### Minor Novelists

Of the many who attempted to write historical romances, only one, Maurice Hewlett, succeeded in producing novels of distinctive and original power and real literary significance. There were a number of minor authors, however, who wrote historical romances of considerable merit. Some of them, like Weyman and Parker, did their most important work in this field.

Stanley Weyman (1859— ) was one of the most well known and widely read of the lesser historical novelists. He began to write historical fiction in 1890 with The House of the Wolf, a romance dealing with the massacre of St. Bartholomew. This was followed by The Story of Francis Cludde (1891), which had to do with the times of Bloody Mary. With the appearance of A Gentleman of France (1893) and Under the Red Robe (1894) ("a romance," says Weygandt "that many of us sat up to finish")<sup>8</sup> Weyman won general recognition as a writer of talent. Among the best of his later books are The Red Cockade (1895), Shrewsbury, (1898), The Castle Inn (1898), and Sophia (1900).

Weyman possessed an unusual ability to incave a fascinating plot and to make his stories alive and colorful. His novels are the kind that can not be put down until they are finished. His characters are well delineated and his style is good. Yet it cannot be denied that his books certainly come under the classification of "light fiction." In the preface to the new edition of his works Weyman admits that

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<sup>8</sup>Weygandt, Cornelius, A Century of the English Novel, p. 323.

in his romances he has tried to do nothing more than give entertainment to the public and perhaps brighten a few lonely hours. Surely he more than succeeded in doing this.

The name of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle (1859-1928) is usually associated with the detective story, yet Doyle did his work of greatest literary value in the field of historical romance. Compared with the many who read his Sherlock Holmes stories, however, only a few are acquainted with his really excellent historical novels such as Micah Clarke (1888), The White Company (1890), The Refugees (1891), or The Great Shadow (1893).

The White Company is an especially entertaining and well written story having to do with the adventures of a company of English bowmen in France and Castile during the Hundred year's war. In this book Doyle "takes us from the New Forest to France, and to and fro in France, with good comrades that afford us entertainment all the way."<sup>9</sup> Nor should one forget to mention The Exploits of the Brigadier Gerard (1896) and The Adventures of Gerard (1903) which record the experiences of a conceited soldier in Napoleon's Army with the introduction of considerable humor and a great deal of action.

Doyle has created no character in his historical romances to compare with Sherlock Holmes of the detective tales, but he has shown in them that he has a real power to recreate the past and at the same time tell a good story.

Another minor author of considerable importance is Sir

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<sup>9</sup>Weygandt, Cornelius, A Century of the English Novel. p. 324

Gilbert Parker (1862— ), whose best novels, such as The Trail of the Sword (1895) and The Seats of the Mighty (1896), deal with the history of Canada during the struggle between England and France for possession of that country. Parker is a careful and accurate historical romancer. He painstakingly gathers the material for his books from maps and records and works it up with scholarly care. At the same time he is capable of excellent characterization, colorful description, and emotional appeal. Especially is he skillful in reproducing the atmosphere of a past time in his stories. Although the popularity of the historical romance died out with the decline of the romantic revival, Parker has continued to write them until the present time.

The adventure romances of Sir Arthur Thomas Quiller-Couch have already been mentioned. Quiller-Couch also wrote a number of historical tales, among the best of which are The Splendid Spur (1889), a romance of the great civil war in England; The Blue Pavilion (1891), a record of a crowded chapter in a young man's life during the reign of William III; The Westcotes (1902), a story of Somersetshire in 1810; and Fort Amity (1904), which has to do with the contest for Canada between England and France. The historical romances of Quiller-Couch are well-written, pleasant, and readable, but of no literary significance.

Sir John Henry Newbalt (1862— ) was a novelist who was particularly gifted with the ability to grasp the significance of an historical event or period. His three most important historical romances, Taken from the Enemy (1892), The Old

Country (1906), and The New June (1909) are bound together by a common theme—that of the continuity of history and the unchanging nature of man's ideals and hopes. Newbolt's style is simple and effective, but his plots are often poorly constructed and his characterization weak. His greatest fault, however, is that he is too much inclined to use an historical setting as merely a framework for a moral or religious lesson.

This same fault marred the work of Father Robert Hugh Benson (1871-1914) and often led him into exaggeration and sensationalism in his novels. In such books as The Queen's Tragedy (1906) and By What Authority (1904), Benson showed that, though his plots were weak, he had power of imagination and a fine style.

Among the most successful of those novelists who brought to their writing the methods and knowledge of the antiquarian, and who tried faithfully and accurately to reproduce historical events or conditions, were Sir Walter Besant (1836-1901) and the Rev. Sabine Baring-Gould (1834-1924). Besant was the better novelist of the two. He was able to make the past more real, he could tell a better story, with more vividness and animation, than could Baring-Gould. He preferred to deal with England of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, as he does in Dorothy Forster (1884), The World Went Well Then (1887), For Faith and Freedom (1888), and The Orange Girl (1899), which are representative of his best work. Baring-Gould, although he sometimes wrote of England, was more especially interested in ancient and medieval times in other countries. Noéme (1895), for instance, is a story of medieval

France; Perpetua (1897) has to do with the persecution of Christians at Nimes around 213 A. D.; Domitia (1898) is a picture of court life in Rome during the reign of terror under Domitian; and Pabo the Priest (1899) pictures Wales in the time of Henry 11.

One might mention any number of other authors whose work was sincerely and carefully done, whose books were interesting and readable, but who made no memorable contribution of any kind to literature. The names of Samuel Rutherford Crockett (1860-1914), Mary E. Coleridge (1861-1907), and Frank Frankfort Moore (1855-- ) should be included in this group. There were also several well-known writers whose chief work was done in another type of fiction but who helped further the popularity of the historical romance by producing one or two books of this kind. Stevenson, for instance, wrote The Master of Ballantrae (1889), Hope Simon Dale (1898), while Neil Munro turned from the regional to the historical novel in John Splendid (1898).

The work of one man, however, far overshadows the production, excellent as they are in their way, of these other writers who have been discussed. Maurice Hewlett's historical romances surpass any of those written during the romantic revival, and entitle him to be considered as one of the six important romantic novelists of this period.

Maurice Hewlett (1861-1923)

Excepting only Sir Walter Scott, no English writer of modern times has been able to make the long ago so live again in the pages of a book as has Maurice Hewlett. Quickened by

the power of his historical imagination, the dead and dusty past becomes alive and glowing, and historical characters who were merely names become real people of flesh and blood who love and hate and suffer. High adventure and pure romance, too, are to be found in his novels. Recreated there are all the glamour and pageantry as well as all the crudity and harshness of

"Old, unhappy, far-off things  
And battles long ago."

To Maurice Hewlett the past is "a pageant and a poem."<sup>10</sup>

Hewlett found the inspiration for his historical romances in books. His father had been Keeper of His Majesty's Land Revenues, Records, and Enrollments, so that he early became acquainted with the work of the historian and antiquarian. Later he himself held this same position for four years. During this time he studied history, philosophy, and art. He filled his mind with myths and legends and the classics, both ancient and modern. His work, therefore, is based upon scholarship and careful study. The Forest Lovers, for instance, owes much to Malary. A chanson de geste furnished material for Richard Yea and Nay. And before he wrote The Queen's Quair, Hewlett read all of the state papers relating to Mary.

Although he had previously written poems, essays, and idylls, Hewlett did not win recognition as a writer until his first historical romance, The Forest Lovers, appeared in 1898. This book was awarded a prize by the London Academy as one

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<sup>10</sup>Williams, Harold, Modern English Writers, p. 402

of the three best productions of the year, along with Sir Sidney Lee's Life of Shakespeare and Joseph Conrad's Tales of Unrest. It is the story of the wonderings and adventures in the New Forest of the thirteenth century of the gay youth Prosper and the peasant girl Goult whom he marries to save from death. The novel begins as a picaresque romance. Later the author becomes more interested in studying the characters of Prosper and Goult, and in solving the problem of "how love gets into the man." <sup>11</sup> The comedy and tragedy, the cruelty and gallantry, the whole spectacle of the Middle Ages are in this book. It is, as Mr. Milton Bronner says, "pure romance, laid in that no man's land of dreams which is sometimes the most real of all lands." <sup>12</sup>

The unusual success and popularity of The Forest Lovers encouraged Hewlett to write The Life and Death of Richard Yea and Nay (1900). This sympathetic and memorable interpretation of Richard Coeur de Lion proved beyond a doubt that here was a novelist who brought to the historical romance a distinctive and original power.

Richard Yea and Nay has all of the qualities that go to make up a truly great historical novel. There are in it passages of moving beauty. The atmosphere and spirit of the age are recreated vividly and truthfully. Hewlett depicts the pageantry and glamour of the past, but also does not attempt

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<sup>11</sup> Hewlett, Maurice, in a letter to his wife, 1897, The Letters of Maurice Hewlett edited by Laurence Binyon, p. 37.

<sup>12</sup> Bronner, Milton, Maurice Hewlett, p. 41

to conceal the fact that it was a time when the veneer of civilization was thin indeed. Scenes of dramatic and emotional power such as that at the death of Richard occur throughout the book. Crowded with action, it is therefore interesting as a story. At the same time the emphasis is always upon revelation of character rather than upon plot. In fact, the purpose of the whole novel is to portray and explain the character of Richard. As Hewlett himself says, "Differing from the Montuan as much in sort as degree, I sing less arms than the man, less the panoply of some Christian king offended than the heart of one in its urgent, private transports." <sup>13</sup> Only at the very end is the story spoiled by a note of irony which is rather jarring.

Of Richard Yea and Nay Hewlett wrote, "Longest shot I have ever made. I'll do that sort of thing again before I'm done, but better." <sup>14</sup> He fulfilled this prediction in The Queen's Quair (1904). "It is a flaunting, challenging book, dealing royally with a great theme, blazoning forth the glory and the shame and the pity of the crowning years of Mary of Scotland. Crucial times for England and Scotland, great issues and great lives are its material." <sup>15</sup>

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<sup>13</sup>Hewlett, Maurice, as quoted by Bronner, Milton, Maurice Hewlett, p. 75

<sup>14</sup>Hewlett, Maurice, in a letter to Royal Cortissoz, Nov. 18, 1900, The Letters of Maurice Hewlett, p. 57

<sup>15</sup>Weygandt, Cornelius, A Century of the English Novel, p. 394

The story begins with Mary in France just before she leaves for Scotland; it ends with her imprisonment. Between the opening and closing chapters, dramatic events crowd upon one another. A host of characters appear, all of them vividly drawn. We see Mary in all of her moods—gay and sad, hopeful and despairing, triumphant and defeated. We are made aware of her motives and of the temperament responsible for them. We follow from first to last the tragedy of her life.

Hewlett wrote of The Queen's Quair, "I swear it is good history. The real woman is in it."<sup>16</sup> The real woman is indeed in it, and it is good history. It carefully follows actual historical records. Nothing of importance is omitted. Its truthfulness and sincerity, together with its artistry and moving power, make it the greatest of Hewlett's romances.

Referring to The Queen's Quair in a letter of Frederick Harrison, Hewlett mentions his method of "illuminating history from within."<sup>17</sup> This phrase graphically describes that peculiar quality about his historical romances that differentiates them from all others. Hewlett gets to the heart of history and then interprets it with realism and convincing truth.

Because he always tries to be true to the past, Hewlett shows not only that which is bright and beautiful, but also that which is ugly and cruel in the times of which he writes. He can not, therefore, be prudish. On the other hand he is

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<sup>16</sup>Hewlett, Maurice, in a letter to Milton Bronner, Dec. 29, 1907. The Letters of Maurice Hewlett, p. 84

<sup>17</sup>Ibid, p. 76

not "fleshy," as some critics have asserted, although, as Milton Bronner says, "his men and women are veritable flesh, subject to its passions and lusts, and in its gratification often hurled down life's precipices." <sup>18</sup>

Hewlett's style alone would make his work notable. He is master of a style which is like perfume and velvet and the rich glow of jewels. It is ornate, decorative, sonorous. Some critics, indeed, consider it too elaborate, too artificial. But many agree with Max Beerbohm, who wrote, "For sheer artistry in the use of words, Mr. Hewlett beats anyone since Robert Louis Stevenson and Walter Pater." <sup>19</sup> It is impossible for one to gain an appreciation of Hewlett's style from any brief excerpt, but perhaps an example will serve to illustrate something of what it is like.

She sat on the floor, and had his head at rest on her lap. Her hands were upon him, and so he rested. The great tears fell fast and wetted his hair.

Her grief was silent and altogether gentle. Still as she sat there, looking before her with wide unwinking eyes and lips a little parted, she was unconscious of what she was suffering or had suffered: all about her was the blankness of dark, and without her knowledge the night fell; the dusk like a vast cloak gathered round about her, fold over fold; and still she sat and looked at nothing with her wide unwinking eyes. Slowly they filled and brimmed, and slowly the great tears, as they ripened, fell. There were no other forms of grief, none of grief's high acts: only their bitter symbol--lamentation embodied in tears, and nakedly there. <sup>20</sup>

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<sup>18</sup>Bronner, Milton, Maurice Hewlett, p. 200

<sup>19</sup>Ibid, p. 206

<sup>20</sup>Hewlett, Maurice, The Queen's Quair, (N. Y., 1912), p. 504

After writing The Queen's Quair Hewlett, who loved variety, became tired of history. So he turned to the novel of manners and of modern life, and took Meredith and Hardy for his guides. In 1911 he tried to go back to the historical romance in Brazenhead the Great and Song of Renny, but the old glow and glamour of his earlier volumes were lacking. None of his later books were quite as good as his first historical romances. In them he showed a feeling for atmosphere, an historical sense, a dramatic power, and a mastery of style which made him one of the foremost writers of his day and one who is assured of having a permanent place among English novelists.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### THE ROMANCE OF THE REGIONALISTS

The term "regional novel" is so elastic that it is difficult for one to state exactly all that it denotes. In general, the regional novel is concerned to a large extent with the portrayal of the distinguishing peculiarities of the life of one certain geographical region. The regional novelist devotes his efforts to interpreting this certain region, endeavoring to show to his readers not only the outward physical aspects of the section, such as its landscape, or how its people dress and talk, but also such things as its inhabitants' temperament and attitude of mind, or the factors of custom, tradition, lack of opportunity, and so on, which have contributed to making the region what it is. That is, the regional novelist does more than depict mere surface differences, emphasizing them to the neglect of all else. Because this is so, I have purposely avoided the term "local color," for too often it is applied to this portrayal of surface differences alone, and consequently might seem to imply lack of depth. "Regional novel" is a broader term than "local color novel." An example may make the distinction clear. Thomas Hardy is a regionalist. He has devoted all of his effort as a novelist to the interpretation of one small region, Wessex. But one would scarcely call his books local color novels, although this term would fit perfectly G. W. Cable's The Grandissimer, for instance.

Some of the novelists who wrote during the romantic

revival were regionalists primarily. Such a one was Barrie. On the other hand, Stevenson, for example, although he found inspiration in the history, life, and people of his beloved Scotland, was first of all a weaver of fascinating tales of adventure. So most of his novels are only secondarily historical and regional.

Sir Walter Scott, in his unforgettable stories imbued with Scotch tradition, character, and scenery, first made the regional novel an important form. Other writers, such as Susan Ferrier and John Galt followed in his steps immediately. Maria Edgeworth's Irish stories were also being written at this time. Later there were the Scotch romances of George Macdonald, and Blackmore's tales of west country life. During the last quarter of the nineteenth century, Hardy and then Phillpotts took over the regional novel, treating it realistically. When the revival of romance at the end of the century began, however, the romantic regionalists once more started to flourish. This was to be expected, since the regional novel offers to the romanticist unusual opportunities for the use of queer customs, odd characters, out of the way places, and like romantic material.

The greatest number of regional novelists who belong to the romantic revival were concerned with life in the Highlands and Lowlands of Scotland; a few devoted themselves to Ireland; Sir Hall Caine found a new and undeveloped field in the Isle of Man; and finally some turned for material to picturesque sections of England itself.

### England

Of those regionalists who chose to study various interesting sections in England, the most important is Sir Arthur Quiller-Couch. Quiller-Couch is a very versatile writer, one who has written fiction of several different types. His romances of adventure and historical tales have already been discussed. It is in his novels of Cornish life, however, that he has done his work of greatest literary value.

Besides a number of volumes of short sketches and tales dealing with the region and its people, Quiller-Couch wrote during the romantic revival three full length novels of Cornwall. The first of these, The Astonishing History of Troy Town (1883), is really not much more than a series of connected sketches describing happenings at the quaint little seaport of Troy, in Cornwall. The gentry and lesser people are depicted with humor and truth to life.

Ia (1896) is the story of a strong-natured Cornish girl who courts and wins a weak young preacher, only to send him away from her, and afterwards proudly face out the village alone with her child. In the end she goes to America to give the child a better chance, leaving desolate a good man who has been constant and devoted to her without reward throughout the years.

The biography of a Cornwall lad, a dreamer who, like many dreamers, becomes a powerful man of action, is recorded in The Ship of Stars (1899). There is a strong poetic element in this story.

In these novels, Quiller-Couch shows himself to be not an outstanding writer, but one of talent. He is "the faithful painter of a county and its types."<sup>1</sup> There are gaiety and humor, poetry and grace, romance and happy optimism in his stories of Cornwall.

The Reverend Sabine Baring-Gould produced, besides hymns, sermons, histories, and historical novels, also a great many stories depicting rustic and agricultural life in the west of England. These stories for the most part, however, lack distinction and are without proportion or artistry. As Prof. Weygandt points out,<sup>2</sup> this is due to the fact that Baring-Gould was first of all an antiquarian. He was more interested in recording folklore, in retelling old legends, in presenting some queer custom, than in making his characters live or in developing a well-rounded and artistically presented novel. So his stories, though full of information, of local lore and custom, of strange people and striking situations, nevertheless seem to be only bits of life because they have not been given significance of any kind. John Herring (1883) was the first of Baring-Gould's west country novels. Representative of the best of them are Cheap - Jack Zita (1893), The Broom Squire (1896), and Guavas, the Tinner (1897).

Derbyshire forms the setting for almost all of the romances of Murray Gilchrist (1868-1917). Gilchrist's books are often weak in construction, but his characters are well drawn.

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<sup>1</sup>Chevalley, Abel, The Modern English Novel, p. 123

<sup>2</sup>Weygandt, Cornelius, A Century of the English Novel, p. 278

His descriptions of the countryside are especially pleasing. At times they reach an almost lyric beauty. Among Gilchrist's romances of Derbyshire are Willowbrake (1898), and The Labyrinth (1902). The best of them, however, is The Courtesy Dame (1900), a story dealing with the love of a young inn-servant for an aged peer. There is more than ordinary power and a strange beauty in this novel.

Finally, one ought to at least mention Owd Bob (1898),<sup>3</sup> the well-known classic by Alfred Ollivant (1874)--- ). This novel is much more than a fine story of canine life, of Owd Bob, the chivalrous grey dog of Kenmuir, and his enemy Red Wull. It is also a sympathetic, sincere portrayal of the rough life and the simple, stalwart character of the Cumberland dalesmen. Since in addition it contains beautiful descriptive passages, dramatic situations, tenderness, pathos, and poetic feeling, this book is assured of having a permanent place in literature.

#### The Isle of man

The death in 1931 of Sir Hall Caine (1853-1931) called the attention of the public once more to a novelist who at the close of the nineteenth century made the Isle of Man familiar to thousands of readers. To Caine was given the unique opportunity of studying and portraying a region which no other novelist had found before him. This region, the Isle of Man, was a most interesting and at the same time little known section, untouched by the more highly developed civilization around it, standing apart with its own race,

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<sup>3</sup>Published in America under the title Bob, Son of Battle.

laws, government, and customs.

Caine spent his boyhood and youth in the island, where his father was an obscure farmer and blacksmith. As a youngster he passed many hours in listening to tales of the sea and of the Manx country told by the old inhabitants. He absorbed the traditions, legends, and history of the Manx people. As a result, when he began to write he had ready at hand a great store of material from which he could draw.

Caine did not at once look to man for his literary inspiration, however. After practicing architecture for several years in Liverpool, he came to London and entered the literary group there. First he attempted verse and criticism, and wrote for various literary papers. In 1885 he took up fiction. Almost immediately he achieved great popularity with two sensational romances of Cumberland--The Shadow of Crime (1885) and The Son of Hagar (1887). Then, upon the advice of his friend Rossetti, he began to produce stories about the Isle of Man. These not only were for better artistically than the first two, but also won even greater success.

The first of Caine's novels of life in Man was The Deemster (1887). Its plot has to do with a homicide who, in accordance with ancient usage, is tried by his own father, the Bishop. He is sentenced to live alone in a desolate corner of Man. Here through suffering and self-sacrifice he works out his own redemption. The Deemster pictures with fidelity and vividness the people and the life and customs of Man in the eighteenth century. The story is handled with more restraint

and closeness to reality than is any other of Caine's romances.

Much more use of the dramatic and sensational is made in The Bondman (1890) which followed, picturing life in Man and Iceland in the days of the Napoleonic wars, when battles were fought with Norway. Here again the reader is shown a world widely and picturesquely different from the modern and civilized, with ancient laws and unusual customs. Characters of uncurbed, elemental nature act out a drama of vengeance and reconciliation against a background of wild, impressive scenery. There is a dramatic ending with volcanic eruptions and earthquakes brought in to assist in the spectacle.

The theme of The Manxman (1894) is an old one, having to do with a man who is left in charge of his friend's sweetheart, and the betrayal of the friend by the man and the girl. The first two parts of this book are well done, with true characterization and some skillfully presented dramatic situations. The last part, however, is pure melodrama, and the final scene, intended as an impressive climax to the whole, is simply a less effective reproduction of the famous public confession of Dimmesdale in The Scarlet Letter.

A strong religious influence is always evident in Caine's novels. Not only are there frequent Biblical allusions, but also the central situations of the stories are often drawn from the Bible. Thus The Deemster resembles the story of the prodigal son, The Bondman that of Esau and Jacob, and The Manxman that of David and Uriah. Because of the great response of the public to these works, Caine evidently came to believe that it was his appointed duty to preach in his novels.

So he abandoned Man and turned to the evils of the modern social order in London in The Christian (1897), and to the moral and religious life of Rome and of the future in The Eternal City (1901). These books are characterized by crude melodrama, high pitched theatricality, and a predominant moral tone.

After The Eternal City, Caine's popularity decreased. With the passing of the romantic revival, he became outmoded. Realizing this, he was wise enough to lessen his literary output, continuing to produce a novel only occasionally. Although at one time his books were "best sellers," in constant demand at the libraries and produced almost immediately upon the stage, it is probable that at the time of his death many readers were not even familiar with his name.

Despite the fact that The Christian and The Eternal City both had a stupendous success in book form and on the stage, Caine's best work and real literary contribution is to be found in his novels of life in the Isle of Man. He brought to light this unusual and little known region, with its rugged scenery, ancient customs and laws, and unspoiled people. It is to be regretted that he did not make more use of his opportunity, that he did not confine himself to what he found in Man, devoting himself to its study, rather than turning to the thesis novel.

Caine's stories are often marred by a superficial treatment of character, by excessive melodrama and sensationalism, by prolixity and overemphasis, rhetoric, exaggeration, lack of verisimilitude, and preoccupation with morals. These faults

are least evident in his romances of the Isle of Man. On the other hand, he has skill in developing a complicated plot, undoubted dramatic power, and a virility which overshadows many of his defects.

### Ireland

It would seem that no country could be any more richly endowed with material for the novelist—especially the romantic regionalist—than Ireland. In the early years of the nineteenth century, indeed, the example of Maria Edgeworth set many Irish ladies to writing romances about Irish people and places. The productions of these ladies, however, were negligible from an artistic standpoint. Even considering the work of Miss Edgeworth, Lady Morgan, Charles Lever, William Carleton, and other minor authors, the fact remains outstanding that Irish material was used very little by English novelists. Although the Celtic renaissance was just beginning in Ireland at the time of the romantic revival in the novel, its influence was confined almost exclusively to drama and poetry at this time. Consequently, only three minor novelists who wrote romances dealing with Irish life during the period under consideration need even be mentioned here.

The Hon. Emily Lawless (1845-1913) produced two good novels of the Irish peasantry in Hurrish (1886) and Granica (1892). The customs of the people and their sombre and imaginative temperament are very well portrayed.

In books such as Kerrigan's Quality (1894) and The Founding of Fortunes (1902), Miss Jane Barlow (1857-1917) wrote of

Irish country life, both that of the peasants and of the gentry, with considerable skill and humor. Her stories are marred, however, by a loose, rambling construction and a too labored rendering of dialect.

Mrs. Katharine Tynan Hinkson (1861-- ) has written a great number of romances of Irish life, beginning during the romantic revival with such books as The Handsome Brandons (1893), The Dear Irish Girl (1899), and A Daughter of the Fields (1900). Usually the chief character in these tales is a gracious and charming Irish girl; there is a sentimental love story, some portrayal of Irish life, and always a final happy ending. Mrs. Hinkson prefers to deal with pleasant and agreeable subjects; her range of themes is limited; her novels have no particular force or depth. One can at least be sure of finding in them, however, wholesome sentiment and a graceful, poetic style.

#### Scotland

After the time of Sir Walter Scott, the Scotch novel, made by him so significant, was notably represented by only Galt and McDonald until the time of Stevenson. Stevenson was reared in the Scotch traditions of both the Balfour and Stevenson families. He read Scotch literature and history eagerly. A great deal in his work, consequently, was inspired by his native land. He had a feeling for the romance of Scottish scenery, Scottish characters, and Scottish history. He used all three of these in such books as Kidnapped, David Balfour, and The Master of Ballantrae. Yet Stevenson was not primarily

a regionalist. Weir of Hermiston (1896) is his one distinctively Scotch novel.

It is to be deeply regretted that this book was left uncompleted at Stevenson's death, for critics agree that it undoubtedly contains his best work. In it, he was approaching the romantic novel of real life. The two Kirsties, the elder Weir, Dandie, and Archie show conclusively that he could handle character as well as invent episodes. In this fragment, indeed, Stevenson displays a surer power of portraiture and analysis, a better handling of Scot scenery and characters, a greater emotional depth and dramatic power, and a firmer grasp of reality than in any of his previous novels. In the words of Mr. Sidney Calvin, "the wide range of character and emotion over which he sweeps with so assured a hand" and his "vital poetry of vision and magic of presentment" are evidence that in Weir of Hermiston we have the result of the "seizing and penetrating power of the author's ripened art." <sup>4</sup>

But Stevenson, as Mr. Abel Chevalley points out, "expressed little more than the powerful and human virility of southern and central Scotland. . . . He knew nothing of the quasi-pagan mysticism of the western isles and peninsulas." <sup>5</sup> Among the Scotch regionalists, "Fiona Macleod" (William Sharp, 1855-1905) was most in sympathy with the Celtic spirit in its mystical aspects. His novels recreate the myths and super-

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<sup>4</sup>Calvin, Sidney, in an editorial note to Weir of Hermiston, p. 261.

<sup>5</sup>Chevalley, Abel, The Modern English Novel, p. 137

stitutions, the fatalism and sombre melancholy of the Scottish Gael. Especially notable are his descriptions of highland scenery and the Hebrides, such as may be found in Pharais: A Romance of the Isles (1894) or Green Fire (1896). The people of his books, however, belong to the other wordly realm of the spiritual rather than to the actual world of reality. He "abandoned the world of drab realities for a region of mystic romance set in an environment of Gaelic folklore and myth."<sup>6</sup> In fact, even though his settings and characters are Scotch, and though he well interprets the Gaelic temperament, Sharp's novels are so deeply imbued with mysticism, allegory, and symbolic action that he must be considered as much a writer of fantasy as a regionalist. His work will therefore be considered further in the chapter dealing with the novel of fantasy.

Although he later turned to the historical romance, in his earlier stories Neil Munro (1864-- ) followed in the footsteps of Sharp in endeavoring to express the visionary and poetic side of Gaelic character. Munro exhibits an excellent knowledge of the people of the western highlands and of highland village life, together with a poetic and imaginative power, in novels such as The Shoes of Fortune (1901), Doom Castle (1901), and Gilian the Dreamer (1899). Gilian the Dreamer most reflects the influence of Sharp. It is the story of a born poet who, because he is unable to grapple with

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<sup>6</sup>Williams, Harold, Modern English Writers, p. 348

practical matters, is forced to endure humiliation at the hands of inferior men, but who at last finds himself through poetic expression.

It is in the short story, however, rather than in the novel that Munro is at his best. In his novels, he handles character and incidents less surely and easily. And the style, showing the influence of both Sharp and Stevenson, which he employs with beautiful effect in his short stories, in the novels often becomes extravagant. As Prof. Weygandt says, Munro's greatest fault is that "style mastered him and he came to be content with commonplaces dressed up in proud and flaunting words."<sup>7</sup>

The interminable commonplaces of the romances of William Black (1841-1898) are not even thus disguised. Yet his more than forty volumes enjoyed great popularity and earned for their author an enviable reputation at the time of their publication.

Black's rapid rate of production is shown by the fact that he published ten volumes having an average length of about four hundred pages each between 1890 and the year of his death. The first and the last of these are representative of all his work. Both of them have to do, as did most of his novels, with Scotland and Scotch people. In Stand Fast, Craig-Royston (1890), the son of a wealthy English nobleman falls in love with the very poor but very beautiful daughter of an eccentric old

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<sup>7</sup>Weygandt, Cornelius, A Century of the English Novel, p. 301

Scotchman, and finally wins her in spite of the difficulties imposed by his family. The circumstances are reversed in Wild Eelin (1898). Here the heroine is of noble Scotch lineage, and the hero a poor but honest clerk. The girl sacrifices herself to retrieve the family fortunes, but the strain of the situation causes her death.

All of Black's novels are built upon such a formula. Usually the hero and heroine, one of high and the other of low estate, after enduring various trials and tribulations, are at last united. Occasionally, for variation, the author kills off one of the principal characters. He seems to think that he is sounding the depths of pathos and human emotion when he does this. Yet actually one does not really care whether his people die or not, for he never makes them real enough for it to make any difference.

Black's stories are of the slightest, his characters artificial and unlikelike, his style monotonous. He uses love and death as easy means of sentimental appeal, but never really touches life. How, then, are we to account for the popularity of his work? Perhaps it was due to the fact that the unreal world of leisure, culture, and cultivated ease in which many of his characters moved appealed to those whose world was only too real and hard. To these people his noble and gracious ladies, his gallant and high-minded gentlemen represented an ideal. And so, as Ford Madox Ford puts it, "God's Englishman of the novels of William Black--God's drooping-bearded Englishman with his crinolined or he-bustled consort, carrying fly-fishing rods and croquet mallets, became

the type which the whole world sighingly aped." <sup>8</sup>

In spite of the many absurdities and artificialities, it is very evident in all of his work that Black loved Scotland and continually tried in his own way to portray and interpret the country and its people to his readers. His efforts to stimulate interest by interpolating Scotch songs by the dozen and long conversations upon the glories of the country usually fall flat. But in his treatment of life among the common Scotch folk he comes closer to reality than at any other time. Some of his best handling of character is to be found in his portrayals of Scotch peasants. He also manages to make his readers feel something of the beauty of western Scotland. Really fine descriptions of the landscape in the Highlands and Hebrides may be found in any of his Scotch novels. Yet try as he might, William Black could not get into a whole book as much of Scotland as Stevenson or Barrie could get into a few pages.

#### Sir James Matthew Barrie and the Kailyard School

By far the most outstanding of the regionalists of the romantic revival is Sir James Matthew Barrie (1860—). In 1887, Barrie published his first book, Better Dead, a short extravaganza similar to Stevenson's Suicide Club. Soon afterward, he turned his attention to his native Scotland, and it is upon his purely Scotch romances that his fame as a novelist rests.

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<sup>8</sup>Ford, Ford Madox, The English Novel, p. 113

Barrie's first Scotch studies are included in a volume of detached stories and sketches entitled Auld Licht Idylls (1888), in which he pictures with kindly and sympathetic satire the Auld Lights, one of the strictest of Scottish religious sects.

In A Window in Thrums (1889), he continues to depict the pathos and humor of simple village life as it is seen by Jess, the old crippled woman who sits by her window and watches with untiring interest all that goes on in Thrums. Presenting the various episodes as they appear to Jess serves to give the book a rather sketchy plot. Doubtless this was the basis for Mr. Thomas Moulton's assertion that "A Window in Thrums has a clear title to be regarded as a novel."<sup>9</sup>

Five more volumes complete the list of Barrie's Scotch stories. They are The Little Minister (1891), An Auld Licht Manse (1893), Margaret Ogilvy (1896), Sentimental Tommy (1896), and Tommy and Grizel (1900). Of these, An Auld Licht Manse is a collection of sketches and short stories, and Margaret Ogilvy is a remarkable study of the author's mother. The others are novels.

Of these three novels, The Little Minister has been the most popular. This might be expected, since it contains almost pure romance combined with pathos and a great deal of sentimentality. The ending of the book is melodramatic and unreal.

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<sup>9</sup>Moulton, Thomas, in his study Barrie (1928), p. 85, as quoted by Marble, Annie Russell, A Study of the Modern Novel, p. 189.

Stevenson comments upon this in a letter to Barrie. "Your descriptions of your dealings with Lord Rintoul are frightfully unscrupulous. . . . The Little Minister ought to have ended badly; we all know it did, and we are infinitely grateful to you for the grace and good feeling with which you have lied about it. . . . If you are going to make a book end badly, it must end badly from the beginning. Now, your book began to end well. You let yourself fall in love with, and fondle, and smile at your puppets. Once you had done that, your honour was committed--at the cost of truth to life you were bound to save them." <sup>10</sup>

Sentimental Tommy allies Barrie to all those authors who have written stories about boys. In this book he displays an understanding of children, an ability to enter into their world and to see through their eyes, which places him in the company of Twain and Tarkington. He especially exhibits an unusual skill in maintaining the point of view of a child throughout, even in those chapters primarily devoted to the affairs of adults. The character of Tommy is a real creation. As William Lyon Phelps says, "The boy in Sentimental Tommy is just as truly the eternal boy as Tom Sawyer; omit his love for the specific word, he has the charm, the imitiveness, the histrionic view, the vanity, the laziness, the meanness, the colossal selfishness of all small boys." <sup>11</sup> From a literary standpoint,

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<sup>10</sup>Stevenson, R. L., in a letter to Barrie Nov. 1, 1892, as quoted by Sidney Calvin in an editorial note to Weir of Hermiston, p. 249.

<sup>11</sup>Phelps, W. L., The Advance of the English Novel, p. 224.

Sentimental Tommy is the best of Barrie's Scotch romances.

It is more carefully constructed; it has less of sentimentality and more of the author's quiet humor and subdued realism than do the other novels.

The sequel, Tommy and Grizel, which concerns itself with Tommy after he has grown up, is marred by melodrama and mawkish sentimentality. The ending is incongruous and absurd—an obvious makeshift. "It is as though Mr. Barrie were afraid we should not see the moral, should not see our danger, should not see that the destination whither selfishness leads is tragic for both the protagonist and his associates; he therefore, throwing aside subtlety, roared a moral in our ears, pointing to the gibbet like any Hagarth. . . . To have Tommy hanged is like a very bad joke that leaves the whole company in an embarrassed silence." <sup>12</sup>

According to Barrie, Stevenson was the model for Sentimental Tommy. Although there may be some resemblance as to literary temperament, one is inclined to believe that there is much more of Barrie himself than of Stevenson in Tommy. Certainly the love of make-believe and the sentimentality are Barrie's. Indeed, part of the charm of all his stories is due to the fact that they reflect so much of their author's own attractive personality. Barrie has a way of establishing a friendly intimacy between himself and his reader. One might resent the author's thus intruding himself into the story in the case of

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<sup>12</sup>Phelps, W. L., The Advance of the English Novel, p. 225

another writer, but it is part of his unique appeal. And so it is impossible for one to recall Barrie's stories without also remembering the "gentle, whimsical old bachelor"<sup>13</sup> who wrote them—a lovable person, half romancing child with a genius for make-believe, who nevertheless has the sympathy and deep understanding of mature experience.

Barrie never attempted to include in his books any searching interpretations of life such as those which occur, for instance, in the works of Meredith, whom he admired. He did not try to delve into the complexities of human character. He shunned harsh and unpleasant realities. He avoided the heights and depths of human experience. He was content that his novels should be for the most part kindly and sympathetic studies of simple Scotch country folk. Into these studies he put graceful humor, tender pathos, a true knowledge of human nature, and "a charm that holds the reader and lingers in the memory."<sup>14</sup>

Three things especially are peculiar to Barrie's handling of the Scotch novel—a careful realism of detail, a clever humor, and a pervading sentimentality.

The village of Kirriemuir has become, under the name of Thrums, "as well known on the map of literature as Cranford or Casterbridge"<sup>15</sup> because of the careful reproduction in Barrie's

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<sup>13</sup>Weygandt, Cornelius, A Century of the English Novel, p. 269.

<sup>14</sup>Marble, Annie Russell, A Study of the Modern Novel, p. 188.

<sup>15</sup>Williams, Harold, Modern English Writers, p. 351.

stories of even its most insignificant people and the most unimportant events of its daily life. Barrie emphasizes local color and uses dialect liberally for its own sake.

It is impossible for one to describe or analyze Barrie's humor—a humor which has a gay, whimsical flavor all its own. It is to be found at its best in such delightfully amusing chapters as those describing "The Last Jacobite Rising" and "The Siege of Thrums" in Sentimental Tommy.

Prof. Weygant suggests that Barrie's wit and humor are of Celtic origin, while his sentimentality is Lowland Scotch.<sup>16</sup> Certainly Barrie fairly luxuriates in sentimentality at times. It is one of the distinctive characteristics of his fiction. "J. M. Barrie is one of the most remarkable prestidigitators among contemporary novelists," says Mr. Abel Chevalley; "from the realistic hat he brings forth a sentimental rabbit."<sup>17</sup>

In 1900, just as he was becoming a novelist to be reckoned with, Barrie abruptly stopped writing novels. After this time, except for his excursions into the realm of the fairy tale in the Peter Pan stories, he devoted himself exclusively to producing plays. His novels and sketches, however, had already been widely imitated. As a result, those features which distinguished his work also became the typical characteristics of a whole school of Scotch fiction which was dubbed by the poet Henley the "kailyard school." Thus the ordinary

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<sup>16</sup>Weygant, Cornelius, A Century of the English Novel, p. 268

<sup>17</sup>Chevalley, Abel, The Modern English Novel, p. 138

kailyard novel is a portrayal of the peasantry of the Scotch lowlands with an emphasis upon humor, local color, and dialect, and with a great deal of sentimentality.

Perhaps it was in dismay at this flood of sentiment for which he was responsible that Barrie abandoned the novel. One feels a suspicion at times that in Sentimental Tommy and Tommy and Grizel he is laughing at his own sentimentality even while, like Tommy, he cannot escape from it; that in Tommy the sentimentalist he is making sly fun of Barrie the sentimentalist. Sentimentality, however, had already become irreparably associated with his stories. It may be that he therefore preferred to drop fiction entirely and turn to the drama.

Of the lesser members of the kailyard school "Ian Maclaren" (John Watson, 1850-1907) was the most popular and successful. He wrote a number of pleasant and readable books such as Beside the Bonnie Briar Bush (1894), The Days of Auld Langsyne (1895), and Kate Carnegie and those Ministers (1896). These volumes resemble Auld Licht Idylls and A Window in Thrums in that they consist of short stories and sketches roughly connected. Like Barrie, also Maclaren centered his attention upon the life of a single village by the name of Drumtochty.

Samuel Rutherford Crockett wrote romances of adventure and historical tales, but he is remembered because of his connection with the kailyard school. Crockett was a rapid writer, producing fifty volumes in a little more than twenty years. His Scotch stories, such as The Stickit Minister (1893), The Lilac Sunbonnet (1894), Oleg Kelly (1896), and

Kit Kennedy (1898), display the usual kailyard characteristics of pathos, humor, and sentimentality combined with a realistic delineation of the details of everyday Scotch life.

Maclaren, Crockett, and the other minor writers of the kailyard school could imitate Barrie, but they could not endow themselves with his talent. Therefore their local color often became monotonous, their sentimentality insipid. And so, although it had enjoyed great popularity, the kailyard school soon disappeared after Barrie deserted it.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### THE ROMANCE OF MYSTERY AND FANTASY

Turning from the more common sources of romantic material, from strange adventures, unfamiliar times, and unusual regions, one other group of novelists, fewest in number of any of those who helped to further the revival of romanticism at the turn of the century, chose to find romance in the mysterious, the supernatural, and the purely imaginary.

One of the lasting results of the romantic revival is to be found in a new kind of fiction--the mystery story--which was first developed as a distinct type during this period. Although Wilkie Collins had written the first real mystery stories in Woman in White (1860) and Moonstone (1868), and although Poe in America had fascinated readers with his mysterious and macabre tales, it was not until Sir Arthur Conan Doyle set the vogue for the mystery story that it became a definite and significant literary form. From that time until the present, the mystery story has continued to be immensely popular.

The typical mystery story is based upon the occurrence of a series of baffling and incomprehensible events which are finally explained by the revelation of what has been unknown or concealed. Usually there is a good deal of physical action and adventure. A fantastical element is sometimes introduced by means of the supernatural. Frequent use is made of the fearful and horrifying. In its mysterious and blood-curdling aspects, the mystery story is related to the Gothic type of

fiction. Crime in some form or other is usually involved. In the most familiar type, human shrewdness, as exemplified in the person of some clever detective or investigator, is pitted against crime.

The chief interest of the mystery story lies in its appeal to the wonder and curiosity of its readers. A mystery, a problem is presented. The reader is concerned with finding the solution to the puzzle. His curiosity is not satisfied until the apparently inexplicable occurrences are explained and the last complication is untangled. This puzzle element is the distinctive characteristic of the mystery story as a type. It is this that makes the mystery or detective novel so popular among philosophers, statesmen, and business men, in the opinion of Willard Huntington Wright, who, in his Introduction to The Great Detective Stories, calls this literary form "the youngest, the most complicated, the most difficult of construction, and the most distinctive."<sup>1</sup>

Although the ordinary mystery story is not as a rule of any unusual literary significance, those of Doyle are worthy of special consideration because they established the mystery story as a type and because they are models of the genre. Doyle is, in a way, chief of a school of fiction. In Sherlock Holmes, the amateur detective, he has created a real personality. This adroit investigator, with his love of good music and his quotations from Meredith and Flaubert, has become one of the

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<sup>1</sup>Wright, W. H., The Great Detective Stories (1927), p. 4, as quoted by Marble, Annie Russell, A Study of the Modern Novel, p. 43.

most famous and well known characters in English fiction. His name has become a synonym for unusual power of observation and keen deductive reasoning.

From the time Doyle first introduced the famous detective in A Study in Scarlet (1887) until the publication in 1927 of The Case Book of Sherlock Holmes, the reading public has greeted the Sherlock Holmes stories with enthusiasm. After A Study in Scarlet, the author published during the romantic revival The Sign of the Four (1889), The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes (1891), The Memoirs of Sherlock Holmes (1893), The Hound of the Baskervilles (1902), and The Return of Sherlock Holmes (1904). Although they vary widely in detail, the general design of these books is much the same, involving as it always does gruesome and thrilling incident, ingenious complications of crime, and a final solution of the mystery by the infallible Holmes.

Doyle has shown a real mastery of the detective story. He has handled a difficult type of plot construction ably. His novels are far from being devoid of literary value. As Mr. Abel Chevalley truthfully comments, "Perhaps no other English writer has been more abundantly translated for a score of years, or more copiously imitated and plundered. And here is a fact calculated, beyond doubt, to recall humility to those authors and critics who place the literary and artistic value of a narrative above composition, invention, and action. Conan Doyle and those like him have no other quality than the knowledge of how to arrange facts, create a mystery, and dissipate it. But they have that quality. And it has

proved sufficient for them to captivate, to capture millions of minds that are not all uncultivated." <sup>2</sup>

Unlike the mystery story, which is so universally popular, the romantic fantasy does not appeal to the average reader, who, being unable to appreciate the purely imaginary, labels it "queer" and ignores it for that which is more obvious and more easily understood. In both the mystery tale and the fantasy, indeed, the element of the strange and unusual occurs. No matter how much the author of a mystery story may try to bewilder, mystify, and horrify his readers, however, he endeavors finally to make a rational explanation of it all. Fantasy, on the other hand, is not bounded by the necessity of being logical or reasonable. As E. M. Forster explains, "The other novelists say, 'Here is something that might occur in your lives,' the fantasist says, 'Here is something that could not occur. I must ask you first to accept my book as a whole, and secondly to accept certain things in my book.'" <sup>3</sup>

Even though it be out of the ordinary, the action of a mystery story takes place in the actual and material world. Fantasy usually involves an unreal world—though this world may be made to seem as real as the one in which we live. The mystery story is related to the Gothic novel; fantasy is more nearly allied to the fairy tale, in which the supernatural and

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<sup>2</sup>Chevalley, Abel, The Modern English Novel, p. 125.

<sup>3</sup>Forster, E. M., Aspects of the Novel (1927), p. 159, as quoted by Marble, Annie Russell, A Study of the Modern Novel, p. 42.

impossible become the natural and possible. Nevertheless a fantasy may contain, as much as does any other type of novel, humor and pathos, mental and emotional stimulation, interesting incidents, and characters who are real and living people.

The nearest approach to the purely fanciful is to be found in the fantasies of Barrie and William Morris. Even after he had abandoned the regional romance for the realistic drama, Barrie continued, despite the fact that the romantic revival had declined, to revert occasionally to the romantic in his Peter Pan fairy tales. Peter Pan was published in 1904. It was followed by Peter Pan in Kensington Gardens (1906) and Peter and Wendy (1911). The part of Barrie that is "romancing child to whom make-believe is the half of happiness" <sup>4</sup> comes out in these fairy stories, which are saved from being too pathetic and sentimental by their whimsicality and playfulness.

William Morris (1834-1896) recreates the atmosphere of fairyland, introducing marvelous incidents, supernatural beings, and wondrous unknown lands, in books such as The Wood Beyond the World (1895) and The Well at the World's End (1896). A fantastical element also appears in The Sundering Flood (1898), which is the story of a boy and girl who make love across a river gorge. News from Nowhere: An Epoch of Rest (1891) is an Utopian romance in which the author depicts life as it might be were commercialism destroyed and the love of

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<sup>4</sup>Weygandt, Cornelius, A Century of the English Novel, p. 267

art universal. One can never believe that the people in these novels are real men and women. Morris does have, however, power of imagination, ability to create atmosphere, and a poetical style.

Another kind of fantasy is that in which the supernatural is especially emphasized. Dracula (1897) by Bram Stoker (1847-1912) is of this type, as is The Seven Sleepers of Ephesus (1893) by Mary E. Coleridge (1861-1907). Arthur Machen (1863— ) also belongs to this group. His The Great God Pan (1894) was considered sensational at the time it was published; it is apt to seem rather dull to modern readers. Machen's preoccupation with demonology and supernatural horrors is often carried to such an extreme that it becomes distasteful.

The same sort of fantasy is to be found in Flames: A London Fantasy (1897) and The Slave: A Romance (1900) by Robert Smythe Hichens (1864- 1927). Flames is based upon spiritualistic phenomena and psychic influences, and deals with the way in which a kind of human Mephistopheles seizes one man's personality and seduces another. The Slave is the story of a girl who is swayed by an unnatural passion for jewels. Strangely enough, The Green Carnation (1894), the book with which Hichens first won fame and popular success, was not a fantasy but a witty and pointed satire upon the extravagances of the aesthetic movement. A fantastic and exotic element is present, however, in all of his later romances, among the best of which are The Garden of Allah (1904), The Call of the Blood (1906), and A Spirit in Prison (1908).

The strange and supernatural play an important part, also,

in the three novels by George Du Maurier(1834-1896), the artist and caricaturist. The first of these, Peter Ibbetson (1894), deals with the experiences of a man who discovers a method whereby he may go back into the past and meet with dead people whom he has loved long ago. Novel ideas about pre-existence and the relation of every human life to the past and future are introduced. Lafcadio Hearn calls this book "a wonderful Oriental dream, in a setting of modern life partly English, but much more French."<sup>5</sup>

Hypnotism furnishes the supernatural element in Trilby (1895). Trilby, the heroine, does not know any music, but when she is hypnotized by a great musician, she is able to sing as no one ever sang before. One night while she is singing the master suddenly dies, and after that she cannot sing at all. Such hypnotism, of course, is scientifically impossible. The life of artists and models in Paris forms the background and introduces a sensuous quality in this story.

The Martian (1897), last of Du Maurier's romances, has to do with a visitor from Mars, and contains Utopian suggestions of a nobler race of men.

Du Maurier exhibits an unusually original imagination in his novels. He is possessed of no great dramatic power, however, although his books contain passages of pathos and thnder feeling. His style is dreamy and reminiscent. His characters

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<sup>5</sup>Hearn, Lafcadio, A History of English Literature, vol. 11, p. 793.

are charming, but few of them are memorable. *Tribby* is the most outstanding of them all. For at least a generation she remained one of the well known characters in English fiction. Much of the charm of Du Maurier's stories comes from the author's own pleasant and charming personality which is reflected in them.

There was yet another type of fantasy written during the romantic revival--fantasy with a moral, ethical, or spiritual significance. It is represented in *Dreams* (1891) and *Dream Life and Real Life* (1893) by Olive Schreiner (1855-1921). Its influence also colors her *Trooper Peter Halket of Maskonaland* (1897), a sublimated tract in which Christ as the principal character appears to a trooper lost in the veldt and shows him the evils wrought by Cecil Rhodes and the Chartered Company.

This kind of fantasy is likewise to be found in the works of "Fiona Macleod" such as *The Mountain Lovers* (1895), a tragic pastoral deeply imbued with mysticism and symbolic action, or *The Divine Adventure* (1900), an account of how the Soul, the Will, and the Body go on a pilgrimage to the Hill of Dreams, symbolizing man's quest for a solution of the mysteries of life and death. Macleod has a faculty for creating weird atmospheres, and a singularly beautiful style resembling that of Pater and Hearn. His fantasies are characterized by tenderness, pathos, and spiritual mysticism.

#### H. G. Wells (1866-- )

Of all those novelists who wrote romantic fantasies, by far the most important and well known was H. G. Wells. Wells

began his literary career by writing a kind of fantasy unlike any of those which have been mentioned—a sort of scientific fantasy, in which he makes imaginary excursions into the past and future, to Mars and the moon and strange unknown countries. A large part of the interest in these stories comes from the author's depiction of scientific wonders which may be developed. No matter how unusual or improbable these may be, Wells is very clever in making them seem scientifically plausible.

Prophetic romances such as Bulwer-Lytton's The Coming Race and Bellamy's Looking Backward were in fashion when Wells produced his first fantasy, The Time Machine, in 1895. It also is a picture of the future, but a gloomy and pessimistic one. The reader is transported a thousand centuries ahead of the present, and shown the human race horribly weakened and deteriorated.

In When the Sleeper Wakes (1899), Wells also takes a pessimistic view of the future of civilization. The story has to do with a man who falls asleep in the nineteenth century and wakes up in the London of 2100 A. D. He finds a world of mechanical wonders but of social injustice and moral atrophy, in which his ideas of equality and fraternity have long been defunct.

There is a touch of cynicism in The Wonderful Visit (1895) and The Island of Dr. Morean (1896). The Wonderful Visit is an episodic account of the doings of an angel who visits the earth and who is finally shot by a sporting vicar. In The Island of Dr. Morean a surgeon has succeeded in transforming beasts into men. All of the physical and moral traits of

bestiality are perpetuated, however, and are evident and recognizable in humanity.

In The War of the Worlds (1898) and The First Men in the Moon (1901), Wells has simply allowed his imagination full play. The former deals with the invasion and conquest of England by the inhabitants of Mars. In the latter, men are enabled to visit the moon because of the discovery of a substance which resists gravity. Life on the moon is described in detail.

Until 1900, Wells was absorbed in the writing of these scientific fantasies. After that date, although he continued occasionally to publish a fantasy such as The Food of the Gods (1904), The Days of the Comet (1906), or The War in the Air (1908), he turned more and more to sociological dissertations. Some of these, like Mankind in the Making (1903) and New Worlds for Old (1908), took the form of Utopian romances, but they were really didactic treatises. After 1908, Wells became wholly devoted to the study of contemporary religious, social, and political problems.

Wells' fantasies are similar to those of Jules Verne, but are of greater literary value. His characters are real people, not mere puppets. They do not impress themselves upon the memory, however, because they are subordinate to the incident, which is always extraordinary. Wells has an unusual ability to create an atmosphere of verisimilitude even when he is dealing with the most incredible adventures. He knows how to tell a story well. In his later books he is the reformer; in his fantasies he is not. The fantasies are colored,

nevertheless, by those attitudes and opinions which form the basis for his thesis novels. In them is reflected his feeling that industrialism and the present social order are wrong, that they are weakening mankind, and that they will lead to ultimate disaster. Wells would have, instead, a sane and ordered world ruled by an aristocracy of intellect with science as the controlled instrument of happiness.

## CHAPTER SIX

### CONCLUSION

In the preceding chapters, an endeavor has been made to trace the revival of romanticism in the English novel at the turn of the century, and to discuss those authors whose work helped further this movement. It has been pointed out that the romanticism introduced by Stevenson precipitated a reaction against the excesses of the naturalism, impressionism, and aestheticism current in the novel. The wave of romance which followed reached its climax about 1900. Between 1890 and 1900, the English novel was primarily romantic. Realism was in eclipse. Meredith and Hardy stopped writing. Gissing, Moore, Maugham, and Morrison continued the realistic novel, but they represented the very extremes of realism against which the romantic reaction was directed. The realists were producing little work of any outstanding literary value. On the other hand, a group of remarkably gifted authors were writing romantic novels that were vital and significant. Besides many minor writers of talent, the romantic revival produced six men whose names are assured of a permanent place in English literature. Stevenson, Kipling, Conrad, Hewlett, Barrie, and Wells all entered the field of the novel for the first time during this period. All of them began by writing romances. At least one of them--Joseph Conrad--ranks with the greatest of English novelists.

The revival of romance reached its climax, as has been

said, about 1900. Stevenson had died in 1894. In 1901, Kipling wrote his last novel, Barrie, except for an occasional fantasy, abandoned fiction after 1900 for the drama. After his desertion the kailyard school disappeared, its demise hastened by George Douglas Brown's The House with the Green Shutters (1901), an uncompromisingly realistic Scotch novel which has been called the killer of kailyard sentimentality. The pendulum was swinging back.

Between 1900 and 1905, Wells, Hewlett, and Conrad changed their manner. Wells turned from imaginary worlds and eras to the thesis novel dealing with contemporary political and social problems, and became a propagandist and reformer. This change had already been heralded by The Wheels of Chance (1896) and Love and Mr. Lewisham (1900). Hewlett deserted the historical romance for novels of nineteenth century manners and studies of modern life, and took Meredith and Hardy for his guides. The influence of Henry James caused Conrad to become primarily interested in the psychological novel. Although the stories of these writers continued to be colored by romance for some time, they became more and more realistic.

At the same time that this change was going on in the work of Wells, Hewlett, and Conrad, Galsworthy, Bennett, and May Sinclair were coming into prominence. By about 1905, the romantic movement had entirely declined. Only a few authors, and those of minor importance, persisted in writing romances. Romanticism was continued for the most part in the mystery story and the fantasy, by such authors as Hichens, W. J. Locke, and James Stephens. Most of the lesser writers of the romantic

revival, realizing that the popularity of the romance had declined, but unable or unwilling to change to realism, produced books only occasionally thereafter, or retired entirely from the field of fiction.

From 1905 until the present, realism has been dominant in the English novel. Writers of English fiction have returned from the unusual to the usual, from the far away and long ago to the careful study of their own time and country. Realism today is introspective and psychological. It is characterized by a conscious detachment—the determination to merely present life as it is, and not to interpret it. New ideals of construction, compression, and style have been introduced. There is a general neglect of plot, of the story for the story's sake. Biographical novels—"life histories"—are especially in vogue. But the old realism has not returned. The realism of today is not perverted or despairing. And so the romantic revival, though short, served its purpose. As a reaction against a certain type of realism it proved effective. It "purified the muddy current of realism by a wholesome infusion of the romantic view of life." <sup>1</sup> As William Lyon Phelps says, "Just as you can tell where a vanished stream has been by the bright freshness of the grass, so the influence of the romantic revival. . . was healthful and refreshing. The novel went from realism to naturalism to experimentalism, and that way madness lies; then came a change of weather, and the sultriness departed." <sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Burton, Richard, The Masters of the English Novel, p. 299

<sup>2</sup>Phelps, W. L., The Advance of the English Novel, p. 153

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