

Nineteenth-Century Literature Criticism

NCLC

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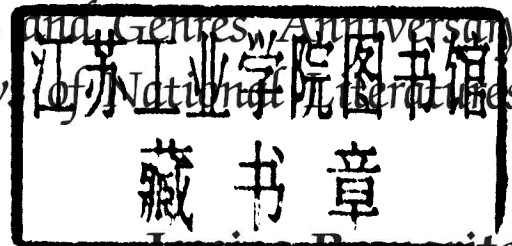
TOPICS VOLUME

Volume 164

Nineteenth-Century Literature Criticism

Topics Volume

Criticism of Various
Topics in Nineteenth-Century Literature,
including Literary and Critical Movements,
Prominent Themes and Genres, Anniversary
Celebrations, and Survey of National Literatures



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Nineteenth-Century Literature Criticism, Vol. 164

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LIBRARY OF CONGRESS CATALOG CARD NUMBER 84-643008

ISBN 0-7876-8648-4

ISSN 0732-1864

Printed in the United States of America

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

Preface

Since its inception in 1981, *Nineteenth-Century Literature Criticism* (NCLC) has been a valuable resource for students and librarians seeking critical commentary on writers of this transitional period in world history. Designated an “Outstanding Reference Source” by the American Library Association with the publication of its first volume, NCLC has since been purchased by over 6,000 school, public, and university libraries. The series has covered more than 450 authors representing 33 nationalities and over 17,000 titles. No other reference source has surveyed the critical reaction to nineteenth-century authors and literature as thoroughly as NCLC.

Scope of the Series

NCLC is designed to introduce students and advanced readers to the authors of the nineteenth century and to the most significant interpretations of these authors’ works. The great poets, novelists, short story writers, playwrights, and philosophers of this period are frequently studied in high school and college literature courses. By organizing and reprinting commentary written on these authors, NCLC helps students develop valuable insight into literary history, promotes a better understanding of the texts, and sparks ideas for papers and assignments. Each entry in NCLC presents a comprehensive survey of an author’s career or an individual work of literature and provides the user with a multiplicity of interpretations and assessments. Such variety allows students to pursue their own interests; furthermore, it fosters an awareness that literature is dynamic and responsive to many different opinions.

Every fourth volume of NCLC is devoted to literary topics that cannot be covered under the author approach used in the rest of the series. Such topics include literary movements, prominent themes in nineteenth-century literature, literary reaction to political and historical events, significant eras in literary history, prominent literary anniversaries, and the literatures of cultures that are often overlooked by English-speaking readers.

NCLC continues the survey of criticism of world literature begun by Thomson Gale’s *Contemporary Literary Criticism* (CLC) and *Twentieth-Century Literary Criticism* (TCLC).

Organization of the Book

An NCLC entry consists of the following elements:

- The **Author Heading** cites the name under which the author most commonly wrote, followed by birth and death dates. Also located here are any name variations under which an author wrote, including transliterated forms for authors whose native languages use nonroman alphabets. If the author wrote consistently under a pseudonym, the pseudonym will be listed in the author heading and the author’s actual name given in parenthesis on the first line of the biographical and critical information. Uncertain birth or death dates are indicated by question marks. Single-work entries are preceded by a heading that consists of the most common form of the title in English translation (if applicable) and the original date of composition.
- The **Introduction** contains background information that introduces the reader to the author, work, or topic that is the subject of the entry.
- A **Portrait of the Author** is included when available.
- The list of **Principal Works** is ordered chronologically by date of first publication and lists the most important works by the author. The genre and publication date of each work is given. In the case of foreign authors whose works have been translated into English, the list will focus primarily on twentieth-century translations, selecting

those works most commonly considered the best by critics. Unless otherwise indicated, dramas are dated by first performance, not first publication. Lists of **Representative Works** by different authors appear with topic entries.

- Reprinted **Criticism** is arranged chronologically in each entry to provide a useful perspective on changes in critical evaluation over time. The critic's name and the date of composition or publication of the critical work are given at the beginning of each piece of criticism. Unsigned criticism is preceded by the title of the source in which it appeared. All titles by the author featured in the text are printed in boldface type. Footnotes are reprinted at the end of each essay or excerpt. In the case of excerpted criticism, only those footnotes that pertain to the excerpted texts are included. Criticism in topic entries is arranged chronologically under a variety of subheadings to facilitate the study of different aspects of the topic.
- A complete **Bibliographical Citation** of the original essay or book precedes each piece of criticism.
- Critical essays are prefaced by brief **Annotations** explicating each piece.
- An annotated bibliography of **Further Reading** appears at the end of each entry and suggests resources for additional study. In some cases, significant essays for which the editors could not obtain reprint rights are included here. Boxed material following the further reading list provides references to other biographical and critical sources on the author in series published by Thomson Gale.

Indexes

Each volume of *NCLC* contains a **Cumulative Author Index** listing all authors who have appeared in a wide variety of reference sources published by Thomson Gale, including *NCLC*. A complete list of these sources is found facing the first page of the Author Index. The index also includes birth and death dates and cross references between pseudonyms and actual names.

A **Cumulative Nationality Index** lists all authors featured in *NCLC* by nationality, followed by the number of the *NCLC* volume in which their entry appears.

A **Cumulative Topic Index** lists the literary themes and topics treated in the series as well as in *Classical and Medieval Literature Criticism*, *Literature Criticism from 1400 to 1800*, *Twentieth-Century Literary Criticism*, and the *Contemporary Literary Criticism Yearbook*, which was discontinued in 1998.

An alphabetical **Title Index** accompanies each volume of *NCLC*, with the exception of the Topics volumes. Listings of titles by authors covered in the given volume are followed by the author's name and the corresponding page numbers where the titles are discussed. English translations of foreign titles and variations of titles are cross-referenced to the title under which a work was originally published. Titles of novels, dramas, nonfiction books, and poetry, short story, or essay collections are printed in italics, while individual poems, short stories, and essays are printed in roman type within quotation marks.

In response to numerous suggestions from librarians, Thomson Gale also produces an annual paperbound edition of the *NCLC* cumulative title index. This annual cumulation, which alphabetically lists all titles reviewed in the series, is available to all customers. Additional copies of this index are available upon request. Librarians and patrons will welcome this separate index; it saves shelf space, is easy to use, and is recyclable upon receipt of the next edition.

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Berstein, Carol L. "Subjectivity as Critique and the Critique of Subjectivity in Keats's *Hyperion*." In *After the Future: Postmodern Times and Places*, edited by Gary Shapiro, 41-52. Albany, N. Y.: State University of New York Press, 1990. Reprinted in *Nineteenth-Century Literature Criticism*. Vol. 121, edited by Lynn M. Zott, 155-60. Detroit: Gale, 2003.

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Berstein, Carol L. "Subjectivity as Critique and the Critique of Subjectivity in Keats's *Hyperion*." *After the Future: Postmodern Times and Places*. Ed. Gary Shapiro. Albany, N. Y.: State University of New York Press, 1990. 41-52. Reprinted in *Nineteenth-Century Literature Criticism*. Ed. Lynn M. Zott. Vol. 121. Detroit: Gale, 2003. 155-60.

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Buddhism in the Nineteenth-Century Western World

The following entry provides commentary on the reception and study of Buddhism in the Western world during the nineteenth century, including the treatment of Buddhism in philosophical debate and literature.

INTRODUCTION

As critics such as Douglas Brear have pointed out, the treatment of Buddhism by Western scholars and writers in the nineteenth century was often based on misinformation that grew out of cultural bias. Nineteenth-century scholars tended to ignore the importance and role of meditation in Buddhism, and instead focused upon the aspects of Buddhist tradition for which they could find, or often create, parallels to their own religious and philosophical traditions: the Buddha as a divine figure, the moral code of Buddhists, and the metaphysical underpinnings of Buddhism. The cultural, political, and ethical concerns of the nineteenth-century Western world informed Westerners' interest in and various treatments of Buddhism. Proponents of Charles Darwin's theory of evolution centered on the rational and scientific aspects of Buddhism, and some of those who sought to broaden the acceptance of Eastern traditions in the West highlighted similarities between Christian and Buddhist traditions. Other commentators, motivated by their fears that Christianity was being threatened by so-called "false religions," denied altogether the theology and morality of Buddhism and declared it a negative, self-centered, and "godless" philosophy, rather than a religion. Underlying nearly all Western treatment of Buddhism was the assumption that the people, culture, and traditions of the West were superior to those of the East. Nineteenth-century activists who advocated such ideals as greater personal and intellectual freedom, the interdependence of the human and natural worlds, and self-actualization often struggled with what they perceived as Buddhism's denial or negation of self and acceptance of suffering. The figure of the Buddha was described variously by nineteenth-century writers as a hermit, ascetic, and magician; scholars also diverged in their handling of the supernatural or fantastic elements of the Buddha's story, with some regarding the Buddha's enlightenment as a form of divine inspiration and others as an intellectual realization. Comparisons between the Buddha and Jesus Christ were frequent, and such comparisons were often vehemently opposed by critics who objected to the likening of what they considered a divine being (Jesus Christ) to a mortal being (the Buddha).

Critics have noted the influence of Buddhism and the presence of ideas and approaches to the world that resemble those found in Buddhist traditions in the works of several nineteenth-century philosophers and authors. Vijitha Rajapakse compares John Stuart Mill's ideas with Buddhist teachings, noting various similarities and differences between the two, and Stephen Batchelor surveys the impact of what Friedrich Schlegel called, in 1803, the "Oriental Renaissance," a period during which Western authors and thinkers engaged in the translation and scholarly appreciation of ancient Eastern texts. Batchelor illustrates how this interest in Eastern thought led Arthur Schopenhauer to develop his ideas of overcoming the self and focusing on the material, and how Schopenhauer's interpretation of Buddhism influenced such thinkers as Friedrich Nietzsche. Batchelor also chronicles the founding of the Theosophical Society, an organization that actively promoted Buddhist thought and practices that was founded in New York in 1875 by Colonel Henry Steel Olcott and Helena Petrova Blavatsky. Charles Crittenden has shown how the Mahayana Buddhist concept of *tathata*, or "suchness" is used by Ralph Waldo Emerson and Henry David Thoreau to support their own Transcendentalist beliefs about the importance of turning away from the "false" strictures and classifications offered by society and embracing the simple truths learned through careful observation of the natural world.

REPRESENTATIVE WORKS

Hannah Adams

An Alphabetical Compendium of the Various Sects which Have Appeared in the World from the Beginning of the Christian Aera to the Present Day (history) 1784

William Rounseville Alger

"The Brahmanic and Buddhist Doctrine of a Future Life" (essay) 1858; published in the journal *North American Review*

A Critical History of the Doctrine of the Future Life (essays) 1859

Anonymous Works

"Buddhism: Mythical and Historical" (essay) 1856; published in the journal *Westminster Review*

"Buddhism and Its Influence" (essay) 1866; published in the journal *National Quarterly Review*
 "Schopenhauer and His Pessimism" (essay) 1876; published in the journal *Methodist Quarterly Review*

Edwin Arnold

The Light of Asia; or, The Great Renunciation; Being the Life and Teaching of Gautama (history) 1879

Jules Barthélemy Saint-Hilaire

Le Bouddha et sa religion [*The Buddha and His Religion*] (history) 1860

Helena Petrova Blavatsky

Isis Unveiled (theology) 1877

"The Light of Asia" (essay) 1879; published in the journal *Theosophist*

"New York Buddhists" (essay) 1881; published in the journal *Theosophist*

Secret Doctrine (theology) 1888

Eugène Burnouf

L'Introduction à l'histoire du buddhisme indien (history) 1844

G. T. Candlin

"What Should Be Our Attitude toward the False Religions?" (essay) 1892; published in the journal *The Chinese Recorder*

Lydia Maria Child

The Progress of Religious Ideas through Successive Ages. 3 vols. (history) 1855

"Resemblances between the Buddhist and Roman Catholic Religions" (essay) 1870; published in the journal *Atlantic Monthly*

James Freeman Clarke

"Buddhism; Or, The Protestantism of the East" (essay) 1869; published in the journal *Atlantic Monthly*

Ten Great Religions (essays) 1871

M. Simpson Culbertson

Darkness in the Flowery Land; or, Religious Notions and Popular Superstitions in North China (history) 1857

T. W. Rhys Davids

Buddhism: Being a Sketch of the Life and Teachings of Gautama, the Buddha (history) 1877

"On Nirvāṇa" (essay) 1877; published in the journal *Contemporary Review*

"The Ancient Buddhist Belief Concerning God" (essay) 1880; published in the journal *The Modern Review*

Lectures on the Origin and Growth of Religion as Illustrated by Some Points in the History of Indian Buddhism (lectures) 1881

William Davies

"Buddhism" (essay) 1894; published in the journal *Atlantic Monthly*

Joseph Edkins

The Religious Condition of the Chinese (history) 1859

Frank F. Ellinwood

"Buddhism and Christianity—A Crusade Which Must Be Met" (essay) 1891; published in the journal *Missionary Review of the World*

Oriental Religions and Christianity (lectures) 1892

Ralph Waldo Emerson

Nature (essay) 1836

Phillippe Edouard Foucaux

Doctrines des bouddhistes sur le nirvana (history) 1864

John Gmeiner

"The Light of Asia and the Light of the World" (essay) 1885; published in the journal *The Catholic World*

R. Spence Hardy

Eastern Monachism: An Account of the Origin, Laws, Discipline, Sacred Writings, Mysterious Rites, Religious Ceremonies, and Present Circumstances (history) 1850

A Manual of Buddhism in Its Modern Development (history) 1853

The Legends and Theories of the Buddhists (history) 1866

Thomas Wentworth Higginson

The Results of Spiritualism: A Discourse Delivered at Dodsworth Hall, Sunday, March 6, 1859 (pamphlet) 1859

"The Buddhist Path of Virtue" (essay) 1871; published in the journal *The Radical*

"The Sympathy of Religions" (essay) 1871; published in the journal *The Radical*

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*This lecture was published in the collection *Religious Systems of the World; a Contribution to the Study of Comparative Religion. A Collection of Addresses Delivered at South Place Institute, Now Revised and in Some Cases Rewritten by the Authors, Together with Some Others Specially Written for This Volume*, 1890.

†These essays were published in Müller's *Chips from a German Work-shop* (4 vols.), 1867.

‡This work was completed in 1888, but was not published until 1895, when it appeared in volume 8 of *Nietzsches Werke: Großoktavausgabe* (15 vols.), 1894-1904.

OVERVIEWS

Douglas Brear (essay date autumn 1975)

SOURCE: Brear, Douglas. "Early Assumptions in Western Buddhist Studies." *Religion* 5, part 2 (autumn 1975): 136-59.

[In the following essay, Brear surveys the scholarly treatment of the "Buddha, Buddhist morality, and Buddhist metaphysics" during the nineteenth century.]

I

In an address to an audience at the Midland Institute, Birmingham, in 1860, we find William Sargent admitting that, 'until lately, if I had been called upon to make an enumeration of the various religious systems of the world, Buddhism would not have found an important place in my catalogue',¹ whilst Max Müller quotes a friend of his who remembered 'the time when the name of Gautama, the Buddha, was scarcely known, except to a few scholars, and not always well spoken of by those who knew it; and now—he is second to one only'.²

The growth of interest in Buddhism from the second quarter of the nineteenth century is particularly fascinating, illuminating, as it does, two disciplines. As regards general intellectual history, it exemplifies a situation in which it is possible to trace the reaction of those within a cultural tradition, which was at a particularly confident and self-conscious period of its history, to the values and standards of a completely novel tradition—a tradition, moreover, based on very different presuppositions and having very different aims. Furthermore, since the tradition in question was a religious one, the more specific field of the study of religion is enriched by the opportunity afforded for the examination of a particular case of the way in which a non-Semitic religious tradition was approached, and of the bases and methods of this approach.

It is a truism that the unwary student may find simply that for which he searches, and further examples of the vitiation of scholarship by predilection or prejudice would be superfluous; in any case, the assessments of Buddhism presented at the end of this article speak for themselves. To illustrate this point is a simple task—in order to throw significant light on the general and the particular disciplines named above, a degree of refinement beyond this is required. The approach must, naturally, begin with a description of the characteristic emphases, and of the modes and standards of judgment; however, these having been isolated, a further set of questions presents itself: whether any particular pattern may be traceable therein; whether there be any areas in which there is a greater degree of agreement than elsewhere—and if there be, the identification of these areas; and, finally, whether it may be possible to explain the underlying reasons behind what is discovered.

Three main areas will be discussed below—the figure of the Buddha, Buddhist morality, and Buddhist metaphysics. Within this general framework, there are, naturally, points at which agreement or disagreement prevails, at which a general type of evaluation presents or does not present itself. Thus, for instance, regarding the latter, the status of the Buddha was a point which was variously interpreted, as was the nature of Buddhist morality: this, of course, is not at all surprising, for interpretation of such points depends on fairly easily-identifiable preconceptions and biases.

It is the former case—that in which broad unanimity of opinion, or correspondence of evaluation, obtains—which is of greater interest. Two examples of this may be found—in the first place, although there may be room for disagreement over the particular good or bad qualities of the Buddhist moral framework, there was never much doubt that this framework required more extended discussion than almost anything else. In the second place, there are specific points of doctrine on which general unanimity of opinion is clearly shown:

the description of *anattā*, or the assessment of the *pat-icasamuppāda* formula are cases in point.

What follows is a description, and an analysis which makes three suggestions. The justification for presenting the description is that it has, as far as the writer is aware, not yet been done in a thorough way, and a preliminary sketch such as this may not be out of place; on the basis of the works consulted, their treatments of the three above areas will be described, with particular indication of those features which proved to be of especial interest, or which, as it turned out, presented the greatest problems for sympathetic understanding.

The suggestions made are, first, that nineteenth century treatments of Buddhism not only, and obviously, manifest the individual presuppositions of the author, but that the way in which unanimity of approach and of evaluation appears in certain areas reveals their more general cultural presuppositions; second, that these areas are precisely those in which the authors either were in fact in possession of applicable categories of interpretation, or, more importantly, were under the impression that they were so, and that these latter were those in which commentators fell into error. In other words, the more certain commentators were that they understood the nature of their data, the less justice they in fact did to it. A key, therefore, to the identity of the particularly intransigent aspects of Buddhism is gained. Not only, however, can we see more clearly into the treatment of the material, but, and this is the third suggestion, these findings suggest that the process of selection itself may be governed by these factors. The three areas which will be discussed are precisely the areas on which most of the literature concentrates. The meditative dimension is infrequently described, rarely discussed, and hardly ever understood, and this is the sphere *par excellence* in relation to which there were no clear categories of interpretation available, no elements of experience in the light of which a consideration and an evaluation could be made.³

With reference to the disciplines mentioned at the beginning of the introduction, it is hoped that, from the point of view of general intellectual history, pursuit of this approach may identify the cultural presuppositions operating in a particular situation in which one tradition is seeking to understand another, and at a particularly significant point in history; and that it may reveal a little more clearly the way in which these presuppositions affected and conditioned this attempt at understanding.

From the point of view of the study of religion, there will be the more specific illustration of these general functions, which, it is hoped, may serve, first, to describe the impact of one novel religious tradition on the West, by means of a delineation of the salient features

of contemporary studies; second, to focus on the particular religious and philosophical presuppositions operating in an attempt to come to terms with specifically religious phenomena; and third, to throw some light, through the medium of one historical situation, on the broader field of the method of the study of religions.

The points on which this article concentrates are not, of course, exhaustive, and a complete treatment would need to consider several other related points, with which there is no opportunity to deal here. The first of these is the matter of Esoteric Buddhism, which, though popular, was treated with scorn by most scholars, together with the whole field of the conversion of Westerners to Buddhism.⁴ There is also the involved discussion, carried on throughout the period, of the possible mutual influence of east and west, which included speculation on how the obvious similarities between Buddhism and Roman Catholicism may have come about.⁵

Throughout the whole period there were, within the Christian tradition, significant theological re-evaluations, which involved reassessments of Christology, and of the nature of revelation, and which, therefore, had repercussions on the way in which non-Christian religious traditions were approached, especially by missionary bodies. This is reflected in a whole spectrum of attitudes, from the condemnation of Buddhism as idolatry and superstition (frequently accompanied by description, more or less simplistic, of 'idolatrous practices'), through to the open and sympathetic approaches of such as Beal and Richard, or the later important missionary experiments of Reichelt.⁶ This relates, of course, to the development of missionary theology as a whole, and to the question of the amount of 'comparative religion' which was available to missionaries.⁷ Finally, no attempt has been made to relate the history of the development of Buddhist studies, although the availability of literary evidence has been taken into account in any criticism of particular stances.

The question of the reasons behind the burgeoning study of Buddhism is, of course, a complicated one to answer, in as much as there were inevitably as many different reasons as there were individual students, intellectual fashions, and interested groups. Thus, for some, the sheer antiquity of the tradition and the vast numbers of its adherents loomed large as an intellectually compelling reason for undertaking the study,⁸ whilst there was the undercurrent of opinion which gave as its motive the removal of false religions from the earth, or the defence of Christianity.⁹ Again, there would be those who would welcome the intellectual freedom and the rationalism of Buddhism, and others whose interest was stimulated by the striking similarities between it and Christianity.¹⁰ There can be no doubt that the analogies between the general tone of Buddhist and of much contemporary nineteenth century thought, or between such

specific features as evolutionary theory and Buddhist cosmology proved to be a strong attraction for many.¹¹

Once study had commenced, however, an apparent difficulty presented itself, arising from what seemed to be an incompatibility between the nature of Buddhism and the available categories of classification, crystallizing into the recurring question of whether or not the object of study were a religion or a philosophy. As the discussion of Buddhism's 'defects', at the end of the article, will indicate, this problem arose, in the main, from the fact that elements which were expected, in accordance with the accepted idea of a religion, seemed to be missing. It was, to Caird, 'a strange fact . . . that we have here what purports to be a system of religious doctrines in which the very idea of God is left out.'¹² One Anglican clergyman was perfectly sure that 'it must be kept in mind that Buddhism is rather a system of philosophy than a creed,' and Monier-Williams agrees: 'Buddhism is no real religion. It has no God, no Supreme Being, no real prayer, no real clergy. It lays no claim to any supernatural revelation.'¹³ On the other hand, there were those who claimed that Buddhism was more than a philosophy, for it was, in the words of a most sensitive and perceptive critic, 'a system founded on self-reliance, with a method of self-conquest and culture, and [with a] goal in self-deliverance, and a refuge in the higher nature.'¹⁴ Whatever correlation may have existed between the stand taken on this question and the general position of the writer, it is clear that the matter of whether or not Buddhism should be considered a religion or a philosophy seemed, to most commentators, to be one worth dealing with, often at length. It was, however, evident to many, that, as Beal expressed it, although 'so far as the abstract principles are concerned,' Buddhism may well appear to be a philosophy, yet 'practically, [it] is a religious system,' or, in Grant's phrase, 'it is useless fighting for a word when the facts are on the other side.'¹⁵

II

The point at which agreement begins is that of the centrality of the character and personal qualities of the Buddha to an understanding of the nature of the tradition. 'His system without himself would soon have been dead. It is almost impossible to over-estimate the power of his personality.'¹⁶ The story of his life, therefore, naturally plays a central part in all treatments of the subject, sometimes told naturalistically and simply, sometimes with the whole range of miraculous happenings included, sometimes with a careful distinction maintained between the two.¹⁷ In addition, there is frequent emphasis upon the romantic element in the story, the 'grand picture of a royal youth, abandoning his home and honours to become the gentle, apt, and sympathetic teacher of the people,' a youth 'at once distinguished for the beauty of his person, and still more for the extraordinary ability he displayed.'¹⁸

The evaluation of the miraculous elements was problematic from the start. For those who approached Buddhism without an adequate grounding, 'What are the very first discoveries made? . . . why, grotesque fables, monstrous, and sometimes puerile, tales concerning all manner of mythological personages and fantastic legends, where the wild imagination of the East plays lawlessly amidst fine poetic dreams and mere barbarous absurdities! I do not at all wonder that such readers are tempted to decide off-hand that there must be either wilful disingenuousness or stupid obstinacy in critics who describe Buddhism as an intellectual system independent of supernaturalism.'¹⁹ In fact, the great majority of students refuse to take these elements seriously, for reasons, no doubt, rooted in assumptions regarding what was or was not 'reasonable', and regarding the inapplicability of merely poetic standards of interpretation to such serious matters as the lives of religious founders. Throughout the period, the same opinions are voiced. The same epithets recur: 'absurd' (an anonymous reviewer), 'lying legends and fables' (Sargant), 'a phantom formed from the brain of ascetics musing under the palm-tree of the Orient, who note down dreams and, attaching to them names, call their records history,' (Hardy), 'the incrustations of idle legend' (Titcomb), 'fantastic grotesqueness puerile to the Western mind' (Soothill).²⁰ The last three words here remind us of the argument which will recur several times in the course of what follows—what might be called the 'oriental mind' argument—that elements which, to the West, seem puerile, absurd, inconsistent, indefinite, and so on, must somehow be accepted as suited to 'the Oriental fancy.'²¹ This was an argument, of course, which not only flattered the Western 'mind' and preserved its character—and its superiority therefore—intact, but which absolved it from any further attempt to penetrate below the surface.

It is tempting to search for some line of general development running through the treatments of the life of the Buddha, to assume that the fruits of historical scholarship were reflected in popular writings. This is not, unfortunately, the case. To take a simple example, it is not, perhaps, surprising to find that such a summary as the following could appear in print in 1857: the Buddha 'reformed, and devoted himself to a life of abstraction from the world, and was therefore considered very holy . . . After his death he was worshipped as a god,' or that a reviewer, in 1866, could translate 'Sakyamuni' as 'hermit'. To find an acknowledged scholar, however, describing, as late as 1907, the Buddha as 'a member of the noblest caste, a Brahman of the Brahmins' may give us pause.²² Again, the preconceptions or predispositions which may lie behind such evaluative descriptions of the Buddha as 'this self-elevated hermit', 'the perfect sage, the model ascetic, . . . the wonder-working magician,' or 'a Moral Reformer and Philosopher' cannot be plotted merely on a chronologi-

cal basis.²³ Much depends on factors other than mere scholarship or mere situation in time, and DuBose and Beal, though contemporaries, are worlds apart as far as sympathetic understanding of Buddhism is concerned.

Much depends on individuals, as Miss McDonough's evidence suggests: the 1842 and 1854 editions of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* contain articles on Islam which are markedly less scholarly and more partisan than that produced by Sale for the 1771 edition. With regard to Buddhism, she finds that the entry for the 1880 edition is by 'T. W. R[hys]. D[avids]', and she comments: 'By far the most striking instance of the changed attitude in this edition is the presentation of the life and teachings of Buddha. Knowledge of sources, and ability to imagine how the world would look to a believing Buddhist make this article stand out with startling freshness after so much of the mean-minded, and unimaginative grumbling against other cultures that we have encountered in the earlier editions.'²⁴

Yet it must be emphasised that one of the most highly-respected critics, E. J. Eitel, saw his 'Buddhism: its Historical, Theoretical and Popular Aspects' go into its third edition in 1884, after many of Rhys David's findings and opinions had been published; in this, Eitel, albeit not in a 'mean-minded and unimaginative' manner, is bitterly critical of Buddhism, and he shows very little sympathy with 'how the world would look to a believing Buddhist.' So unequivocal is the tone of this popular work, that its learned reviewer could write, of its first edition, 'it is quite evident that (Eitel) had considerable difficulty in maintaining his impartiality. As popular Lectures . . . they appeal more to the feelings and prejudices of the people than would a treatise written for the study. Mr. Eitel extols Buddhism in a certain sense, but it is plain that he does not like it.'²⁵ Or, to take another example, the strictures on Buddhism delivered in the course of Edkins' 'The Religious Condition of the Chinese' (1859) are retained in his reshaped version, published in its second edition thirty-five years later, 'Religion in China', whatever might have been happening within the scholarly world in general, or within the pages of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* in particular. Moreover, Eitel and Edkins are among the authors most frequently referred to by commentators as having exerted influence upon them.

The question, then, of the status of the mythology in the story of the Buddha is one of those areas in which the available categories of interpretation (which may be inferred to be related to opinions regarding the nature of 'facts', assumptions concerning what may constitute an acceptable method for biography, or the taking of the life of Christ as a paradigm) were agreed, and in the light of which a fairly generally agreed judgment was made. Another example is the enlightenment-experience of the Buddha: the range of interpretations is limited,

there being basically two, either to treat it as a natural experience pertaining to intellectual effort, or as a matter of Divine inspiration. Here again there is a situation in which there seemed to be certain given categories, of which commentators were sure, within which they worked, and whose nature governed the mode of interpretation. Sympathetic treatments of the enlightenment-experience were rare—Rhys Davids' contribution to the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* of 1880 is instanced by Miss McDonough.²⁶ Reflecting in extreme form the *more common* misunderstanding, we find that the Buddha 'had solved an imaginary problem by a theory incapable of verification';²⁷ again, although separated by forty years, both Prinsep and Grant speak in terms of the 'inspiration of the Divine Spirit.'²⁸ The interesting points are that, first, in both these instances, there was a clear assumption, on the part of many commentators, that they held the keys to understanding, and that second, in fact, there was marked misunderstanding.

The universal approbation accorded to the life of the Buddha simply as a human life is easy to understand, that life affording points of contact with available thought-forms so evident as to require no discussion. 'There can be no doubt of Sakya's sincerity'; 'his zeal, his rigid self-renunciation, combined with serene gentleness and benignity, his wisdom and eloquence, and even, it is said, his personal dignity and beauty, gave strange force to the stern doctrines he taught, and won men's hearts wherever he went.'²⁹ In relation to other religious founders, 'with respect to personality, probably a higher claim has been made for Gautama than for either (Muhammad or Confucius).'³⁰ 'Shall we err,' asks Grant, 'in giving the name of the Spirit of God to the power that enables one man so to transform others?''³¹

Some were led to compare him with Jesus Christ, either from an estimation of his character and teaching, or because of those outward similarities between the lives of the two which were part of that wider parallel noted above.³² Sometimes the comparison is simply implicit in the language used: 'The "six teachers", like the Scribes and Pharisees, tried on every public occasion "to entangle him in his talk"', or 'The priestly caste . . . despised him . . . and said sneeringly, "He and his disciples teach even mean and criminal men, and most wrongfully admit them to a state of grace."''³³

Criticism of this stance was made from both historical and theological points of view,³⁴ and Mrs. Macdonald comments coolly on such comparisons: 'We are face to face with an amiable blunder that has done a great deal to produce misapprehensions and disappointment . . . , the suggestion that in Buddha we have an Indian Christ . . . Now, no more unsatisfactory and unsatisfying view can possibly be taken of the teaching of Buddha than the one derived by [sic] studying this religion from the

above standpoint.' 'The Buddha,' she says elsewhere, 'is no Saviour able to take men's sins upon his shoulders . . . he is merely a human teacher.'³⁵

If there was recognition of the Buddha's essentially human dimension and significance, there was widespread interpretation of this significance in terms of radically reforming activity, of conscious rebellion against entrenched sacerdotalism; it appeared to some that his determination to found a new religion arose from his horror at Brahmanical hypocrisy (Feudge), or their tyranny (*B.O.R.*), or from his disillusion at their failure to lead people to God,' (the anonymous author of *Influence*).³⁶ To Liddon, Buddhism was 'a social and doctrinal rebellion . . . Socially, it rebelled against the system of caste; it protested in the name of Justice that all had a right to the knowledge and the privileges which were monopolized by the Brahmins. Doctrinally, it attempted to provide an escape for the human soul from the miseries of transmigration to another body after death'.³⁷

The obvious parallel was drawn: 'He was not so much the founder of a new sect as the Martin Luther among the Brahmins . . . The Brahmins opposed him throughout his career, and several times he was summoned to discussions before an Oriental Diet of Worms.'³⁸ Such flights of historical fancy apart, the basic comparison is not unusual, occasionally associated with assertions that he abolished caste-distinctions.³⁹ However, no doubt, wishful-thinking had not a little to do with the wilder assertions concerning the Buddha's 'political and democratic protest'⁴⁰ and there were many who were not so misled, and who agreed with Rhys Davids, that the Buddha was rather an earnest thinker than a social and religious reformer.⁴¹

The impact made by the sincerity of the Buddha has been noted; what further impressed many was the integrity of his personal example—'irreproachable' was St. Hilaire's epithet⁴²—the manner in which he embodied those moral standards and principles which 'constituted a great part, if not the main substance, of his teaching'.⁴³ Here we reach another of those points which most commentators could understand and to which general approval could be given—'the strength and glory of Buddhism', its 'singular merit', the 'one bright spot in the darkness'—its moral teaching.⁴⁴ Even critics who were scornful of its metaphysics or of its 'idolatry' admitted both the centrality and the general validity of its moral system.⁴⁵ Descriptions, more or less full, of the Four Noble Truths, the Precepts, the *Pāramitās*, and so on, are always prominent, and not surprisingly, there is little variation in character among them.⁴⁶

The point of general agreement was that, in Caird's words, Buddhism 'taught a comparatively pure and elevated morality.'⁴⁷ After this, disagreement shows itself: some critics approve of the details, emphasizing its