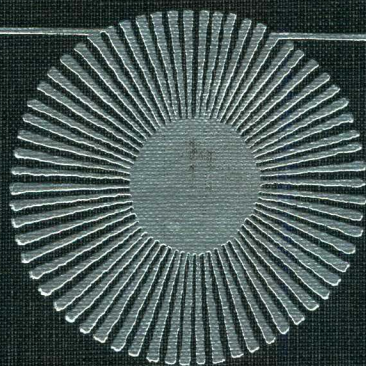

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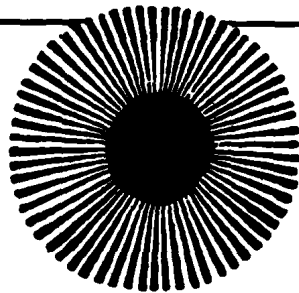
The
CRITICAL PERSPECTIVE

Volume 10

HAROLD BLOOM

General Editor

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General Editor

HAROLD BLOOM

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Acknowledgments for selections used in this
volume commence on page 6385.

CONTENTS

Illustrations	vi
Edward Bellamy	5753
John Ruskin	5761
R. D. Blackmore	5797
Oscar Wilde	5804
Ernest Dowson	5835
Stephen Crane	5841
Charlotte Mary Yonge	5888
Samuel Butler	5895
Bret Harte	5914
Lionel Johnson	5928
Frank Norris	5936
Herbert Spencer	5951
W. E. Henley	5963
George Gissing	5969
Sir Leslie Stephen	5985
Kate Chopin	5995
Lafcadio Hearn	6021
George MacDonald	6028
William Sharp ("Fiona Macleod")	6041
Paul Laurence Dunbar	6051
Francis Thompson	6061
Ouida (Mary Louise de la Ramée)	6072
Joel Chandler Harris	6079
George Meredith	6090
Algernon Charles Swinburne	6129
Sarah Orne Jewett	6174
F. Marion Crawford	6190
J. M. Synge	6195
Mark Twain (Samuel Langhorne Clemens)	6224
Andrew Lang	6272
Mark Rutherford (William Hale White)	6279
Henry James	6290
James Whitcomb Riley	6340
William Dean Howells	6345
Mrs. Humphry Ward	6369
Additional Reading	6377
Acknowledgments	6385

The Index to this series, *The Critical Perspective*, appears in Volume 11.

ILLUSTRATIONS

John Ruskin	<i>facing page 5796</i>
R. D. Blackmore	
Oscar Wilde	
Stephen Crane	<i>facing page 5797</i>
Samuel Butler	
Bret Harte	
Frank Norris	
Herbert Spencer	<i>facing page 5984</i>
W. E. Henley	
George Gissing	
Sir Leslie Stephen	<i>facing page 5985</i>
Lafcadio Hearn	
George MacDonald	
Francis Thompson	<i>facing page 6090</i>
Ouida	
Joel Chandler Harris	
George Meredith	
Algernon Charles Swinburne	<i>facing page 6091</i>
Sarah Orne Jewett	
F. Marion Crawford	
J. M. Synge	<i>facing page 6290</i>
Mark Twain	
Andrew Lang	
Henry James	<i>facing page 6291</i>
James Whitcomb Riley	
William Dean Howells	

EDWARD BELLAMY

1850–1898

Edward Bellamy was born at Chicopee Falls, Massachusetts, on March 26, 1850. He studied at Union College in Schenectady, New York, from 1867 through 1868, and in Germany from 1868 through 1869, and then on returning to the United States began working in a law office in Springfield, Massachusetts. He was admitted to the bar in 1871, but that same year abandoned the practice of law, which he found morally repugnant. After a period in New York spent working as a freelance journalist, Bellamy became an associate editor of the *Springfield Union* in 1872. In 1880 he left to help found the *Penny News* (thereafter the *Daily News*), where he remained until 1884. In 1882 he married Emma Sanderson; they had a son and a daughter.

Bellamy began publishing short stories in 1875. In 1878 he brought out his first novel, *Six to One: A Nantucket Idyll*, followed by *Dr. Heidenhoff's Process* (1880) and *Miss Ludington's Sister: A Romance of Immortality* (1884). Bellamy's best-known work, *Looking Backward 2000–1887*, was published in 1888. In this utopian expository romance a young Bostonian, Julian West, falls into a hypnotic trance in 1887 and awakens in the year 2000 to find a perfectly organized socialist society in which poverty and warfare have been eliminated. The book was an immense grass-roots popular success; "Bellamy Clubs" sprang up around the country, and a Nationalist Party was formed to advocate its principles. In 1891 Bellamy founded the *New Nation* newspaper in Boston to help spread his ideas, but increasing illness forced him to suspend publication in 1894. He continued to work on a sequel to *Looking Backward*, published as *Equality* in 1897. Edward Bellamy died of tuberculosis on May 22, 1898. A posthumous collection of his short fiction, *The Blindman's World and Other Stories*, was published later that year.

DANIEL AARON

From "Edward Bellamy: Village Utopian"

Men of Good Hope: A Story of American Progressives

1951, pp. 94–104

The American 'average,' Howells had written in his appreciation of Edward Bellamy, 'is practical as well as mystical; it is first the dust of the earth, and then it is the living soul; it likes great questions simply and familiarly presented, before it puts its faith in them and makes its faith a life. It likes to start to heaven from home.' Bellamy, according to Howells, was the unwitting interpreter for this average, so 'intensely democratic' and 'inalienably plebeian,' that he seemed able to reflect its aspirations with a kind of will-less fidelity.¹

Bellamy's invincible parochialism and his preference for the village mentality increased his merit in Howells's eyes. Even if he sometimes winced at the commonness of his diction and felt a slight distaste for, it seemed to him, his friend's undue interest in the creature-comforts of the middle class, he recognized the nobility of Bellamy's purpose and saw the ideal gleaming through the gadgetry of his utopia. *Looking Backward* stimulated the appetites of its readers for material things, but it held them out as a bait, as a reward that could be secured only after a thorough-going application of the village ideals of equality and neighborliness. Bellamy, with his unerring insight into the heart of the 'divine average,' knew perfectly well what he was doing, Howells concluded, and 'could not have been wrong in approaching it with all that public school exegesis which wearies such dilettanti as myself.' He knew for a certainty 'what it wished to know, what problem will hold it, what situation it can enter into, what mystery will fascinate it, and what noble pain it will bear.' He spoke always for this middle group, for the villager rather than for the country or city dweller, the unpretentious man with a regular occupation rather than the rich or the poor; it was among this class,

Bellamy believed, that 'the virtues of a people will be always found to dominate.' To Howells, who agreed that 'in this as in everything else we are a medium race,' Bellamy's appreciation for the average made him 'distinctively American' and one of our most deeply rooted writers since Hawthorne.

Henry George, possessing the same insights and predilections, had tried perhaps more consciously than Bellamy to reach the middle classes, but he missed that sizable proportion who could not bring themselves to read even *his* seductive popularization of political economy.² It remained for a novelist to lure the less scholarly. 'Those not able to follow Mr. George's earnest pages,' wrote William T. Harris, the American Hegelian, educator, and antisocialist crusader, 'find themselves quite equal to undertaking the story of the new Rip Van Winkle, who sleeps for a century or more and awakes in a new world at the close of the twentieth century.' Harris declared that Bellamy had simply taken his cue from George and had then proceeded to outdo his master. (. . .)

In trying to recall for his admirers and friends what had prompted him to write *Looking Backward*, Bellamy mentioned several incidents in his life that provided the initial impulses. In 1889 he made the rather startling and wholly inaccurate admission that his book had begun as 'a real literary fantasy' and that he had never before given much thought or sympathy to social reform. Somehow, he explained, he 'stumbled over the corner-stone of the new social order.' A conflicting and more truthful account appeared four years later. In this essay entitled 'How I Wrote *Looking Backward*,'³ Bellamy recollected the 'vivid realization of the inferno of poverty beneath our civilization' which came to him during his European travels in 1868 and 1869 and his early radical effusions before the Chicopee Lyceum. Undoubtedly, as he told Howells, concern for his children's future drove him on. Quite possibly, too, the idea for his industrial army furnished the imaginative catalyst, but these explanations are all arguments after the fact. No one can read through Bellamy's published and unpublished writings without seeing immediately that *Looking Backward*

began to take shape in his mind from the time when he first put pen to paper.⁴

If this assumption is valid, then all of the arguments over Bellamy's sources and the mystery of from what utopia he did or did not borrow become interesting but not particularly relevant. Given his dissatisfaction with the present order and his will to free men and women from thralldom, no further esoteric clues or influences need be dug out. John Macnie's interesting novel, *Diothas*, which preceded *Looking Backward* by five years and which projected the hero into the future by the same device of mesmerism later employed by Bellamy, is perhaps an important source, but here as elsewhere Bellamy selected details that confirmed and complemented his own preconceived ideas. His belief, expressed many times, that we ought to look at ourselves from without rather than from within presages the scheme of looking backward from utopia to the present; and long before he had come across the works of Macnie, Gronlund, Blanc, Cabet, Bebel and the numerous other books he is supposed to have pilfered, he had anticipated his own masterpiece. Sometime in the 'sixties, he conjured up a people living in 'a happier futurity' and looking back 'upon the social barbarism of these times with abhorrence,' and although he had not yet conceived of his hero, Julian West, and the voluble Dr. Leete, Julian's host and guide into the twenty-first century, he was already making preparations for an expedition into what he described then as the 'undiscovered country' of socialism. He had no blueprint for the new economy, he told his Lyceum audience: 'no human foot has ever trod on its shores. But I know that it exists and we must find it. I see the countless difficulties which envelop the task, but I feel this to be the great problem of humanity propounded by the sphinx-like fates which we must solve or perish.'

In *Looking Backward* and more particularly in its sequel *Equality*, published in 1897, Bellamy nailed down the vision of his youth and illustrated what he had professed to Howells in 1884. The romancer, he declared then, must derive his sustenance from the earth: 'Though he build into the air, he must see to it that he does not seem to build upon the air, for the more airy the pinnacles the more necessary the solidity of the foundations.' (. . .)

The strikes and conflicts that flared up in the months preceding the writing of *Looking Backward* must also have absorbed his attention at this time and suggested to him an appropriate subject for his talents. Certainly his book is filled with an urgency and a sense of crisis which bespeak the times and which reflect not only the anger of the 'toilers of the world engaged in something like a world-wide insurrection,' but also the exasperation and apprehension of his own middle class, in revolt, as he put it, 'against social conditions that reduce life to a brutal struggle for existence, mock every dictate of ethics and religion, and render well-nigh futile the efforts of philanthropy.'

This feeling of crisis, which George also exploited so cleverly, strongly pervades *Looking Backward*. Bellamy himself, in explaining the book's immense popularity, made a great deal of the vague but unmistakable public fear of catastrophe which it articulated; it was 'a bare anticipation or expression,' he wrote, 'of what everybody was thinking and about to say,' interpreting the drift of social conditions and making the movement towards Nationalism 'henceforth a conscious, and not, as previously, an unconscious, one.' To know the truth, however, and to act on it were two different things. As early as 1877 he had quoted Coleridge's remark: 'Truths, of all others the most awful and interesting, are often considered so true, that they lose all power of truth, and lie bed-ridden in the

dormitory of the soul, side by side with the most despised and exploded errors.' Bellamy's mission was to revive these bed-ridden patients, trick them out in new finery, and set them to work again.

He succeeded. *Looking Backward* is a love story as well as a tract. Julian West, engaged in the year 1887 to a Miss Edith Bartlett, retires for the night in his subterranean bedroom, surrenders 'to the manipulations of the mesmerizer,' Dr. Pillsbury (Julian has insomnia), and is put into a deeper sleep than usual. When he awakes 'exactly one hundred and thirteen years, three months, and eleven days' later, Boston and the rest of the world have changed considerably. Julian's introduction to the new society, in which all the problems hitherto plaguing mankind have long been solved, makes up the bulk of the story, but the love affair between the miraculously spared visitor from the nineteenth century and Dr. Leete's advanced and beautiful daughter, also named Edith, is carried on between the Doctor's stupefying revelations, and at the end Julian discovers that his sweetheart is none other than the great-granddaughter of his former fiancée.

Bellamy's trick conclusion, a real touch of genius, must have increased the appeal of his tale and especially beguiled those readers who appreciated it as much for its entertainment value as for its instruction. Julian awakes again in the benighted nineteenth century. The reader as well as the hero believe they have been tricked. Poor Julian, who now knows what the good society is like, berates his friends for their callousness and is just about to be thrown out of Edith Bartlett's dining room by the outraged company when he awakes again and finds that his long sleep was not a dream and that his utopian fiancée is quite real. The last flashback into the horrors of the 1880's gives a final fillip to Bellamy's persuasive book, but Julian's nightmare also dramatizes an early idea of Bellamy's: that no freedom, 'no happiness of the future,' can 'cancel the slavery and sorrow already recorded.'

The style of *Looking Backward* probably had as much to do with its tremendous success as did the plot. He had progressed a long way since the mawkish periods of his early tales and had deliberately prepared himself to write clearly and attractively. It was one of Bellamy's virtues, according to Howells, that he 'never put the simplest and plainest reader to shame by the assumption of those fine-gentlemanly airs which abash and dishearten more than the mere literary swell can think.' That Bellamy himself deplored style for its own sake is borne out by an early entry in his diary:

There is most emphatically such a thing as a too great facility in expression. The taking garb in which this art enables you to invest your ideas deceives you as to their value, conceals their worthlessness. You are in danger of degenerating—till at last gorgeous rhetoric and epigrammatic brilliancy mask mental bankruptcy . . . In exalting eloquence it is too often forgotten how after all she is but the humble handiwork of thought, and otherwise an arrant harlot.

He carefully avoided rhetoric, but his writing, quiet in tone during the long expository passages, takes on an eloquence and fervor when Julian or Dr. Leete is roused by moral considerations. Even the mild-mannered Bellamy cannot entirely remove the rancor and scorn from his words as he expatiates on the ruthlessness, brutality, and waste of cut-throat competition. He rarely employed the oratorical devices of Henry George, who had first produced, said Bellamy, the 'startling demonstration of the readiness of the public for some radical remedy of industrial evils,' but he had George's gift for hitting

off striking metaphors and analogies that pleased the fancies and clarified the ethical credos of his audience.

For these reasons, *Looking Backward* was an instantaneous success and began to sell in the hundreds of thousands. Bellamy was besieged with requests for translation rights, and the letters poured in from all over the world hailing him as the new Messiah, the 'Apostle of Humanity,' the prophet of the 'Golden Century.' An English surgeon with the same name received such a flood of correspondence in all languages that he had to publish a card in the *Times* disclaiming the authorship of *Looking Backward*. Bellamy's enemies and critics attributed his popularity to the economic innocence of a public 'just in that twilight of education in which chimeras stalk.' But Howells read it with enthusiasm, and Mark Twain, according to Hamlin Garland, was 'profoundly touched by *Looking Backward*.' Even a saturnine and distrustful man named Thorstein Veblen read it aloud to his wife. Many who started it as a romance found themselves, according to one reviewer, 'unexpectedly haunted by visions of a golden age wherein all the world unites to do the world's work like members of a family.' (. . .)

Even if Bellamy's readers had some doubts about the speed with which such a transformation could be carried out (Bellamy maintained that the next generation should surely see it, perhaps even his own), he injected thousands with his own confidence in the possibility of social control and the material benefits that would most certainly result. Because both material comfort and spiritual development figured prominently in his panacea, he could appeal, as George had done, to different tastes and sensibilities. Perhaps, as one critic alleged about (Henry George's) *Progress and Poverty*, nine out of every ten readers of *Looking Backward* were incapable of following the arguments of the book and only drank in the 'suggestions of confiscation,' but testimonies of enough men and women remain to measure the inspirational effect of Bellamy's novel. 'Many a man plunging into the political ferment of to-day,' one of his admirers wrote the year of Bellamy's death, 'can look back to some word dropped by some young companion who had been reading *Looking Backward*, or perhaps can remember reading it himself some winter evening on his father's farm.'

Notes

1. William Dean Howells's published writings on Edward Bellamy include "Edward Bellamy," *Atlantic Monthly* LXXXII, June 1898, pp. 253-6; "Mr. Howells on Mr. Bellamy," *Critic*, n.s. XXIX, 11 June 1898, p. 391; "Two Notable Novels," *Century* XXVIII, August 1884, pp. 632-4 (a review of *Miss Ludington's Sister*); "Editor's Study," *Harper's Monthly* LXXVII, June 1888, pp. 151-5 (a review of *Looking Backward*); and the Introduction to *The Blindman's World and Other Stories*, Boston, 1898.
2. *The Complete Works of Henry George*, Library Edition, Garden City, New York, 1906-11, 10 vols.
3. Edward Bellamy, "How I Came to Write *Looking Backward*," *The Nationalist*, May 1889. Also published in *Ladies Home Journal* II, April 1894, p. 2.
4. Unpublished writings of Edward Bellamy are in the Harvard University Library; see Arthur E. Morgan's *Edward Bellamy* (New York, 1944), pp. 421-3, for a complete description of the manuscript collection. Bellamy's letters to William Dean Howells are in the Howells Correspondence collection, also in the Harvard University Library.

DARKO SUVIN

From "Anticipating the Sunburst—Dream and Vision:
The Exemplary Case of Bellamy and Morris"
America as Utopia, ed. Kenneth M. Roemer

1981, pp. 57-77

The great cry that rises from all our manufacturing cities, louder than the furnace blast, is all in very deed for this,—that we manufacture there everything except men; we blanch cotton, and strengthen steel, and refine sugar, and shape pottery; but to brighten, to strengthen, to refine, or to form a single living spirit, never enters into our estimate of advantages.

—JOHN RUSKIN

Is the Earth so?
Let her change then.
Let the Earth quicken.
Search until you know.
(Bertolt Brecht)

Was it a vision, or a waking dream?
Fled is that music:—do I wake or sleep?
(John Keats)

I have argued elsewhere that the gloom and recantation of science fiction (including utopian or social-science fiction) writers from Mary Shelley and Herman Melville to Jules Verne and Villiers de l'Isle Adam reflected the increasing closure of bourgeois horizons.¹ Yet simultaneously, during the nineteenth century the thirst for *anticipations*—fictional pictures of an excitingly different future—rose sharply (one statistic puts their frequency in 1871-1916 at about thirty-five times the pre-1870 rate of publication).² In science fiction, a literary genre concerned with humanity's farthest horizons, the radical alternative of a socialist dawn erupted even more strongly than in the contemporary political surge in Germany, Britain, the United States, and elsewhere: In addition to its thematic and ideational appeal, this alternative had the merit of solving the racking dilemmas opened by the time of the radical Romantics such as Blake—movement forward versus the closed circle, wish versus realization, freedom versus brotherhood, skepticism versus belief, individual versus society. A whole century had dealt with these dilemmas by ingenious or feeble evasions within a spatial symbolism and had in the plot endings washed its hands of the cognitive reason for the story's existence. Therefore, the science fiction narrations of Mary Shelley, Herman Melville, Jules Verne, or Villiers de l'Isle Adam culminated in destructions and murders as the logical end and outcome of the quantitative, individually anguished Faustian quest, as opposed to the qualitative, collectively subversive Promethean quest of earlier utopian and science fiction writers, from More and Cyrano to Percy Shelley. Even Goethe felt he could avoid such an outcome only by tacking on to his *Faust* a religious happy ending incompatible with the wager that had set the whole story off. The socialist version of a classless Paradise on Earth was thus a solution both to the ideational and to the formal problems of nineteenth-century science fiction. It flourished for a brief time in Bellamy and Morris, the absence of its open horizon explains Mark Twain's impatience and despairing failure in *A Connecticut Yankee*, and at the end of the century it provided one of the basic ingredients for Wells's ambiguous synthesis. This essay will deal only with Bellamy and Morris, though Twain's disenchanting retraction of such a sunburst would be necessary for a full account of the horizons in late Victorian social-science fiction.

In *Looking Backward 2000-1887* (1888) Edward Bel-

lamy³ started not only from the widespread Victorian observation that, as Disraeli put it, the rich and the poor were two nations, but also from the observation that "the working classes had quite suddenly and very generally become infected with a profound discontent with their condition, and an idea that it could be greatly bettered if they only knew how to go about it."⁴ Bellamy was willing to show them how, for it was not "only the toilers of the world who are engaged in something like a world-wide insurrection, but true and humane men and women, of every degree, are in a mood of exasperation, verging on absolute revolt, against social conditions that reduce life to a brutal struggle for existence" (LB, 285). In *Equality* (1897), a sequel that set out to plug the gaps left by the first novel, he added to these sources of discontent the ruin of prairie farmers by capitalist mortgages, the degradation of women fostered by economic exploitation, the recurrent economic crises of the last third of the nineteenth century, the concentration of three-quarters of all national wealth in the hands of 10 percent of the population. Bellamy's utopianism was the point at which all these deep discontents—which in the decade of the Chicago Haymarket trial ran the whole gamut between bankrupt smaller businessmen and striking industrial workers (almost 6,000 strikes per year)—met with the earlier utopian-socialist tradition of American religious and lay associationism and with the experiences of the nineteenth-century socialist movement in Europe. As a spokesman of the American "immense average of villagers, of smalltown-dwellers," Bellamy believed in "modern inventions, modern conveniences, modern facilities"⁵—in Yankee gadgetry as a white magic for overcoming drudgery. This perspective differed from the Populist revolt, which inveighed in the name of the smallholder against the financial trusts of Wall Street that were enslaving the countryside by means of railways. Bellamy accepted the trusts as more efficient and—following their own logic—condemned only their private character as economically too wasteful and politically too dangerous to tolerate. Instead of the corporate tyranny, his practical and democratic streak of "Yankee communism, or, to be more precise, 'Associationism'"⁶ led him to envisage "the nation . . . organized as the one great corporation . . . , the sole employer, the final monopoly . . . in the profits and economies of which all citizens shared" (LB, 48).

Bellamy's new frontier, replacing the West traversed by the irreversible rails, is the future. It offers not only better railways, motor carriages, air-cars, telephones, and television, but also a classless social brotherhood of affluence that will make these means of communication generally accessible and socialize all other upper-class privileges, including culture. Comfort and security are the ends of Bellamy's utopia, and economic reorganization the means. In this pragmatic socialism, unhappiness is ethical waste: *Looking Backward* shows forth "the economy of happiness."⁷ This is brought about by universal high education, universal industrial service from the twenty-first to the forty-fifth year, equal and guaranteed income (in nontransferable yearly credits—there is no money) for every citizen including the old, children, and the sick, a flexible planning adjusting workloads and production according to demand, and a highly developed system of public bestowal of honors. Government is reduced to the operations of the Great Trust or—because the economy is run on the lines of universal civic service analogous to the military service—the Industrial Army. In it, every citizen rises through the ranks as far as his capacity will carry him. The generals of each guild or industrial branch are, however, not appointed from above but chosen by all the retired members or alumni of the guild, and so on up to the head of the army, who is president of the

United States. Doctors and teachers have their own guilds and regents outside this army, and a writer, artist, journal editor, or inventor can be exempted from it if a sufficient number of buyers sign over a part of their credit to support him. In *Equality* Bellamy adds that economic equality gives free play to the greatest possible expansion of individuality, that there is a reservation for Thoreau-like objectors to "work out a better solution of the problem of existence than our society offers"⁸ (a recurring escape hatch of later utopias), that the population of the cities has drastically shrunk, and that all tools are electrically powered and garments made from disposable paper.

Bellamy's economic blueprint is integrated into the story of Julian West, who wakes from a mesmeric sleep begun in 1887 into the year 2000, is given information about the new order by Dr. Leete, and falls in love with Leete's daughter Edith. Further, all this is a "romantic narrative" (LB, 6) by an anonymous historian writing in the festive year 2000 to instruct his readers in the contrasts of past and present by "looking backward." This system of mirrors and receding vistas in time is memorably reactualized in the nightmarish ending, when Julian dreams of awakening back in the capitalist society of 1887. He encounters its folly and moral repulsiveness with an anguished eye, which goes the Romantics such as Shelley or Baudelaire one better by supplying to each spectral place and person a counter-possibility. This utopian estrangement culminates in the hallucination about "the possible face that would have been actual if mind and soul had lived" (LB, 275), which he sees superimposed upon the living dead of the poor quarter. The lesson is that living in this nightmare and "pleading for crucified humanity" (LB, 281) might yet be better than reawakening into the golden twenty-first century—as, in a final twist, Julian does.

Thus, *Looking Backward*—intimately informed by Bellamy's constant preoccupation with human plasticity, with memory and identity (concerns of his tales *Dr. Heidenhoff's Process*, 1880, and *Miss Ludington's Sister*, 1884, as well as a number of his short stories), with brute reality and ideal possibility—reposes on a symbolic balance of time horizons. Its plot is, in fact, Julian's change of identity. In two of Bellamy's later science-fiction stories, the improvident and "improvident" Earthmen, sundered from their neighbors and self-knowledge, are contrasted to worlds of brotherhood and transparency where men are "lords of themselves" ("The Blindman's World" and "To Whom This May Come," 1898). Julian West, the idealistic and insomniac rich idler with a revealing name, becomes an apostate from such a life in the West of 1887 through his education into a citizen of 2000 by a healer's reasonable lectures and his daughter's healing sympathy and intercession. *The construction of a social system for the reader is also the reconstruction of the hero.* This innovation in the utopian tradition responds to the epoch-making—if implicit—challenge of *Gulliver's Travels* that a different kind of Man is indispensable if one wants a different World, and is therefore a pointer to all future science fiction. It is an insight that came up precisely with the American Revolution and its radical-democratic paradigm of dynamic changeability, of new Adamic figures (for example, Blake). It can thus be considered a specifically American contribution to utopian and science fiction.

However, Bellamy immediately retreated from this discovery. Just as Julian is the mediator between two social systems for the reader, so Edith Leete—the descendant, projection, and as it were reincarnation of Julian's fiancée from 1887—is the steadying emotional mediator in his passage to a new world, a personal female Christ of earthly love and

brotherhood. Bellamy's is an ethical socialism, abhorring violence and hatred. The "sunburst" of the new order, "when heroes burst the barred gate of the future" (LB, 240–41), is validated equally by economics, ethical evolution, and Christian love; unethical economics was for him unworkable. Such a millenary future brings a different, purified space as well as man. The sheltering house of Dr. Leete stands on the burned-down remnants of Julian's house and on top of his underground shelter, which has to be excavated as a feat of archeology for the twenty-first century. For Julian, the Leete household is the hearth of the spacious, reasonable, clean, classless Boston of the year 2000, and Edith is not too far from an image from his favorite writer Dickens, the cricket on the hearth. The hard-headed civic pragmatism is only the obverse of a soft-hearted petty-bourgeois romance or "fairy tale of social felicity."⁹

This fairy-tale character is most evident in Bellamy's sanguine expectation of a nonviolent, imminent, and almost instantaneous abandonment of private capitalism through universal recognition of its folly. With telling effect he extrapolated bourgeois rationality, ethics, and institutions to a logical end-product of universal public ownership. But this consistent pedagogic starting from the known signifies a sanitizing of capitalism to ensure the freedom, equality, brotherhood, and abundance of the Rationalist or Jeffersonian dreams. Bellamy remained limited by such ideals, which form an important part but by no means the final horizon of a socialist future. It is perhaps unfair to judge his fascination with the army as a model of rational organization by the normative ethical reaction toward armies today, for he acquired it in Lincoln's days and translated it into peaceful and constructive terms, just as Fourier did. Further, any self-respecting utopia before automation had to ensure its working by a certain harshness for recalcitrants, and Bellamy—possibly learning from Morris—clearly evolved toward greater openness and participatory democracy in *Equality*, where all officials are subject to recall. Nonetheless, his stress on a blend of state mobilization and "public capitalism,"¹⁰ his patronizing dismissal of "the more backward races" (LB, 119) and of political efforts by narrow-minded "workingmen," and above all his faith in technocratic regimentation within economic production as the obverse of liberal classless relations outside them strike an alienating note, in the tradition of Saint-Simon and Cabet rather than Fourier and Marx. That note is out of harmony with the basic libertarian preoccupations and introduces into his romance a cold and static element.

But if Bellamy is a pragmatist who is not comfortable when depicting sweeping processes of change, he is at his strongest in the shrewd treatment of the economics of everyday life—of the dressing and marriage, the distribution of goods, the cultural activities—and in the brilliant passages on making democratic supply-and-demand work outside a capitalist framework, for example, in organizing a journal or in solving brain drain between countries. On such occasions, Bellamy is quite free from a state socialism regulating everything from above. When contrasting such warm possibilities with the irrationality and dead-end character of private competition, his clear and attractive, though not infrequently pedestrian, style rises to little parabolic inserts of great force, as the initial allegory of the Coach, the parables of the Collective Umbrella and of the Rosebush, or (in *Equality*) the parables of the Water Tank and of the Masters of the Bread. All such apologies, exempla, and parables come from a laicized and radical pulpit style, openly displayed in the sermon on the sunburst from *Looking Backward*. It is within this New England oral and public tradition,

from the Bible and the Platonic dialogues and not from the genteel literature of Gilded Age mandarins, that Bellamy's rhetorics arise as a respectable and sometimes splendid accomplishment of its kind. Such addresses were at the time primarily meant for middle-class women, and Julian's sentimental plot as well as the whole ethical tone of *Looking Backward* addressed itself to them—and generally to that part of the educated classes that felt insecure and unfree in bourgeois society. Thus, Bellamy's homely lucidity made his romance, with all its middle-class limitations, the first authentically American socialist anticipation tale.

Bellamy's success can—as always in significant science fiction and, indeed, in all significant fiction—be expressed in terms of a creative fusion of various strands and traditions. These were not only literary but reached back to the hundreds of religious or lay utopian communities in the young United States. Though all of them finally collapsed *qua* utopian communities under the violent pressures of an inimical environment, their legacy to American thought from the Puritans through Hawthorne and Melville to our days is larger than commonly assumed. An attenuated lay vision of the glorious City had now and then crossed from the oral and tractarian into the written fictional tradition, in works such as Mary Griffith's feminist, abolitionist, and technological anticipation "Three Hundred Years Hence" (1836), Edward Kent's and Jane S. Appleton's future Bangor in *Voices from the Kenduskeag* (1848), and several descriptions by Edward E. Hale culminating in "My Visit to Sybaris" (1869) and *How They Lived in Hampton* (1888).¹¹ Although Howells exaggerated when he claimed for Bellamy "a romantic imagination surpassed only by that of Hawthorne,"¹² Bellamy did interfuse these narratively helpless precursors—to whom one should add some French and British utopian writers—with an effective Romantic system of correspondences. In particular, the conclusion seems inescapable that he drew on a number of important elements from John Macnie's *The Diothas* (1883), such as a utopia with an industrial army, love with a descendant of the nineteenth-century sweetheart named Edith like her ancestress, or the use of radio.¹³ But, most important, Bellamy was the first to go all the way with such a lay millenarianism. Therefore, his ending—which refuses the easy alibi of it all being a dream, a norm from Mercier's *L'An 2440* (1770; translated in the United States in 1795) and Griffith to Macnie—marks the historical moment when this tradition came of age and changed from defensive to self-confident. The new vision achieves, within the text, a reality equal to that of the author's empirical actuality. This ontological claim translates into historical cognition Hawthorne's psychological fantasy and especially the long sleep of Irving's Rip van Winkle, itself cognate to folk tales such as the Sleeping Beauty or the Seven Sleepers (Hawthorne and Irving are the only American authors in Dr. Leete's library). Bellamy thus links two strong American traditions: the fantastic one of unknown worlds and potentialities and the practical one of organizing a new world, both of which avail themselves of powerful biblical parallels while translating them from religion to economics. His materialist view of history as a coherent succession of changing human relationships and social structures was continued by Morris and Wells, and thence lay into the fundamentals of subsequent science fiction. The same holds for the plot, which educates the reader into acceptance of the strange locus and its values by following the puzzled education of a representative protagonist. Modern science fiction, although it has forgotten its ancestor, builds on *Looking Backward* much as Dr. Leete's house was built on Julian's burned-down ruins and on

top of the hermetically sealed sleeping chamber under its foundations.

Particular traits from Bellamy's other works also found their way into science fiction, such as the cosmically exceptional blindness of Earthmen into C. S. Lewis or the transferral by spirit to Mars into Edgar Rice Burroughs (from "The Blindman's World"), and the despotic oligarchy as alternative to revolution into Wells and London (from *Equality*). Most immediately, the immense political echo of *Looking Backward* reverberated through Howells, Twain, and numerous writers of sequels and rebuttals. Bellamy had hit exactly the right note at a time of widespread search for alternatives to ruthless plutocracy, and between 100 and 200 fictional utopias expounding or satirizing social democracy, state regulation of economy, a Populist capitalism, or various uncouth combinations thereof were published in the United States from 1888 to World War I. Though none of them approached Bellamy's coherence, the most notable were Ignatius Donnelly's melodramatic *Caesar's Column* (1890) and Howells's politely satirical discussions in *A Traveler from Altruria* (1894). Bellamy's fame spread to Germany, where Hertzka had just published *Freiland* (1889), and inspired at least three dozen works there too. But the perfect complement and answer to *Looking Backward* was written by William Morris.

Like so many other utopian works, Morris's *News from Nowhere* (1890)¹⁴ was, among other things, a direct reply to *Looking Backward*. Reviewing it, he had denounced Bellamy's "unhistoric and unartistic" temperament, which "makes its owner (if a socialist) perfectly satisfied with modern civilization, if only the injustice, misery and waste of class society could be got rid of" and whose ideal of life "is that of the industrious professional middle-class man of today, purified from [the] crime of complicity with the monopolist class"; whence it follows "that he conceives of the change to Socialism as taking place without any breakdown of that life, or indeed disturbance of it." Morris especially objected to Bellamy's stress on both technological and social machinery, leaving the impression "of a huge standing army, tightly drilled," to the corresponding "State Communism" as opposed to direct participatory democracy, and to the reduction of labor instead of its change to work as pleasure, work blended with an art that "is not a mere adjunct of life . . . but the necessary and indispensable instrument of human happiness."¹⁵

Accordingly, it is direct, sensual relationships of people to each other and to nature—a different civilization where useful work is pleasure—that provide the fundament of *News from Nowhere*. It adopts the frame of *Looking Backward*, beginning with the narrator's falling asleep and waking up in the future house built on the site of his own home, and ending with his terrible return to his own time. But from the very beginning, Morris's story is a counterproject to Bellamy's. It is presented neither as a safe retrospective from the year 2000 nor as the voice of a lone member of the upper class, but as one privileged voice and vision of the future among several others possible and indeed held within the socialist party of which Morris was a member and in whose periodical *News from Nowhere* was published.¹⁶ The whole story is informed by the tone of a man displaying his personal vision for consent to potential comrades in bringing it about and yet very aware of its distance in the future. This approach blends collective validity and personal heartbreak. It is much richer than the easy Christian Socialist resolution of Julian West's private anguish by means of a resurrected bride, for it takes into full consideration both the collective difficulty of arriving at and the personal impossibility of setting up an abode in the promised classless land: The

narrator William Guest—Morris's *persona*—is in the position of Moses walking through a vision of Canaan. Therefore, the narration adds to the obligatory Mercier-to-Bellamy tradition of outlining the future (the ride from Hammersmith to the British Museum, that repository of collective memory) two further and historically new elements. First, it introduces an account of the revolution that led to the future. Today this account may still seem too naive and optimistic, but it is of a different order of credibility than the sudden wholesale social conversions depicted by previous writers in this tradition up to and including Bellamy. Second, the bittersweet rowing up the Thames shows what the future might have meant to the author-narrator in terms of a personally more satisfying, nonalienated life. Together with the ubiquitous guide Dick, the average Nowherean, Guest's main partner and interlocutor in the first part of the story is Old Hammond, the custodian of history, and in the second Ellen, the incarnation of the "pleasure of life" of the future present.

(. . .) Morris bequeathed to science fiction several key elements. He endowed Bellamy's suffering narrator in the new country with philosophical and poetic value. He transferred a believable revolution from political tracts into fiction, fathering a line that stretches from Wells's *When the Sleeper Wakes* through Jack London, Alexei Tolstoi, Shaw, and Heinlein to the flood of science-fiction revolts in the last thirty-five years. His utopian pastoral or Earthly Paradise had had less success than Jefferies's neobarbarism or Hudson's titillating escapism, though it can be felt as the endangered alternative from Wells's *Elloi* to C. S. Lewis's *Venus* or Le Guin's *The Word for World Is Forest*. But his dialectic, tragic, and victorious socialism remains the mature horizon of all science fiction that draws on hopes for an open future of men and of the earth. Nobody has yet surpassed Morris in his intimate understanding that "times of change, disruption, and revolution are naturally times of hope also."¹⁷ Nobody in nineteenth-century utopian or science fiction, and few outside it, have embodied this understanding in such lucid and warm prose.

(. . .) there is no doubt that the political surface or indeed backbone of a utopian tale is of a high and possibly central significance to it. That level is, however, isolatable from the whole of the narration only at the expense of not treating it as what it primarily and irreducibly is—a *narration*. In fact, other structural levels—such as the fictional treatment of characters, time, and space—and the degree of their congruence with the ideologicopolitical level largely account for the success or failure of the tale, including its message. Thus, Bellamy's "colder" political stance is accompanied by a closed and often oppressive narrative structure, whereas an open and airier structure is fully homologous to Morris's warmer, less regimenting politics. A striking and symbolical example is that of the dining room. Dr. Leete's private room in the communal dining house stands for Bellamy's general treatment of the public whole as a sum of rationalized and sanitized private elements, no doubt spatially transposed and regrouped but qualitatively unchanged. It is a dining room for a monogamous family and its private guests, just as the speech, furniture, dress, maidenly blushes, and so forth—in short the whole life-style of the future Bostonians—is for all practical purposes simply extrapolated from the style of "their cultured ancestors of the nineteenth [century]" (LB, 38). Furthermore, the whole narration of *Looking Backward* progresses as a retrospective series of West's topographical and ideological sallies into the new Boston from the individual, monogamous hearth of the Leetes and under their reassuring guidance. Any unaccompanied personal venture from this safe cocoon immediately

provokes in West a "horror of strangeness" (LB, 40), an existential or indeed existentialist nausea that is—most revealingly—quite as violent in the supposedly safe new Boston of the future as in the nightmare of returning to the competitive old Boston of the past. There is a strong agoraphobic air about Bellamy's millennium, a panic fear for which only the closure of space, of ideas (that is, state socialism), and of the narration itself can provide a remedy. The underlying metaphoric cluster of his book is one of static healing, whereas in Morris's book it is one of dynamic gazing during a journey. That is why, though Bellamy came within an ace of returning his narrator to the nineteenth century in order to work there for his new vision, and furthermore made it clear that this would have been the ethically proper course to follow, it was left for the more open Morris, with his less hidebound readership, actually to effect this large step. The supreme sacrament of acceptance into Bellamy's society is a mystically subromantic marriage into which the narrator once and for all escapes in a sentimental happy ending of ethical, rather than political, salvation. Quite homologously, Bellamy's fear of existential openness unshielded by a personal savior or vertical hierarchy is also the motivation for his ideological stance, for example, toward industrial organization and a forcible political revolution: In utopian writings, politics is based on the author's simultaneously deeply personal and deeply class-bound psychology.

On the contrary, Morris's dining rooms, such as the Hammersmith one, harbor truly communal feasts, open to the garden and river glimpsed beyond, and with a large nonmonogamous cast of erotically sympathetic and obviously erotically open "neighbors" who transmit information to the narrator and to us by asking him curious questions rather than by simply lecturing him, and us, as affable but omniscient teachers. Morris's narration as a whole is thus not only open-ended, requiring an inner-directed rather than other-directed reader; its whole texture is also much richer. In space/time it has a double movement through "town" (past memory) and "country" (truly changed future existence at least marginally experienced by the narrator). Correspondingly, it not only more than doubles the number of characters (two main women and two main guides instead of one each in Bellamy—plus a great number of subsidiary characters instead of the lone Mrs. Leete and some disembodied voices and faces), it also deepens the overall complexity of their relationships. In brief, Morris transcends Bellamy's model of fraternity under the "fatherhood of God" (LB, 240) and of lay elders (the alumni, the father figure of Dr. Leete) in favor of the youthful, self-governing, and as it were parthenogenetic model of potential lovers. Where Bellamy goes in for a psychological repression of self-determination, equally of the workers at their working place and of the sexual relationships (demurely identical to those in the current sentimental novel), Morris goes in for an extension of sympathy or libido to the whole of gardenlike nature, a sinless Earthly Paradise. The supreme sacrament of acceptance into his society is therefore, dialectically, not sentimentality but the actual journeying and working together, as far as that is realistically feasible for a *guest* to a radically different civilization.

This is not to belittle the achievements of Bellamy or to ignore the gaps in Morris. (< . . >) It is simply to point out that, in some ways, *News from Nowhere* is a sublation or fulfillment of Bellamy's inconsistent attempts or ambiguities. Both writers are deeply committed to an anguished distancing from nineteenth-century capitalism and to a different life. Nevertheless, Bellamy's transfer results mainly in a sentimental dream and a tight and earnest embracing of *security*, where anguish is

discharged upon a series of personal mediators, whereas Morris's journeying results mainly in a painterly vision and an attempt at direct *creativity*, which being open-ended is inseparable from a possible anguish to be resolved only in self-determined practice or praxis. Yet, in other ways, the dreams or visions of Bellamy and Morris can also be treated as complementary: There is, finally, no need to make an exclusive choice between them. The paradox of *Looking Backward* being both more limited than and complementary to *News from Nowhere* is finally the paradox of Christian Socialism itself, simultaneously committed to the patriarchal vertical of the "fatherhood of God" and to the libertarian horizontal of the "brotherhood of Man." Such conflicting Protestant and middle-class abstractions are resolved by Morris: Radically careless of the fatherhood, he explores the meaning and price of brotherhood in terms of an intimate neighborliness. Staying within the bourgeois—or indeed WASP—existential horizons, Bellamy pursued the everyday need for security to its logical end and ended up with the socialist drawn as a safe order of *things*, a *societas rerum*. Reneging on the bourgeois existential horizons but opposing to them unrealistically idealized preindustrial—or indeed bohemian—horizons, Morris pursued the arrested timeless moment, the visionary dream (in all the mentioned senses) of Earthly Paradise to its logical end, and ended up with another aspect of that same dawn, the creative and therefore beautiful *human relations*, a *societas hominum*. Between them, Bellamy and Morris covered the technical premises and sensual horizons of the dawn: In a way each has what the other lacks. For a brief but still exemplary historical moment—which extended to Wells, London, and Zamiatin—the significant literary discussion about darkness and dawn became one inside the international socialist movement.

It might, of course, be fairly easy to fault Bellamy's and Morris's texts in comparison to the norms of nineteenth-century fiction, as a number of critics have already done. But perhaps such fault-finding is not only too easy, and therefore banal, but also wrong-headed. After all—despite both the aesthetic and the political ideologies one suspects are responsible for the negative stance dominant in twentieth-century literary criticism toward utopian and allied fiction in general, and toward nineteenth-century texts in particular—after all, the norms of individualistic fiction from, say, Defoe to James, as well as the critical instruments elaborated therefrom, are themselves historically fleeting and already unsatisfactory. Perhaps the time has come to re-evaluate much hitherto scorned utopian or social-science fiction as being not (or not so much) a series of bad attempts at the individualistic norm but a series of more or less successful attempts at a different, oppositional or submerged, norm. For such a reevaluation it is, to begin with, necessary to tease out of such ideologically and aesthetically heretical texts their own norm.

Notes

1. See Darko Suvin, *Metamorphoses of Science Fiction: On the Poetics and History of a Literary Genre* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1979), Ch. 6 and 7; this essay is part of that book's historical survey of main science fiction models from More to the twentieth century. The case for including utopian fiction in science fiction has been argued in Chapter 3 (earlier in *Studies in the Literary Imagination*, 6 [Fall 1973], 121–45) and in Darko Suvin, "The River-side Trees, of SF & Utopia," *The Minnesota Review*, N.S. 2–3 (Spring–Fall 1974), pp. 108–15. The first of these two arguments is also an attempt at a summarizing discussion of the utopian genre; it cites a number of works relevant to a general approach to it. I am grateful to McGill University for the sabbatical leave of 1973–74, during which the present text was

- written, to the Canada Council for a Leave Fellowship, and to the services of Cambridge University Library.
2. Calculated by me from Ian Clarke, *The Tale of the Future*, 2d ed. (London: Library Association, 1972).
 3. For the general context of Bellamy's writings see (besides some Ph.D. dissertations) Daniel Aaron, *Men of Good Hope* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1961); Sylvia E. Bowman, *The Year 2000* (New York: Bookman Associates, 1958); Van Wyck Books, *New England: Indian Summer* (New York: Dutton, 1950); Jay Martin, *Harvests of Change* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1967); Arthur E. Morgan, *Edward Bellamy* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1944); idem, *The Philosophy of Edward Bellamy* (New York: King's Crown Press, 1945); Vernon L. Parrington, *Main Currents in American Thought*, Vol. 3 (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1930); Joseph Schiffman, "Edward Bellamy's Altruistic Man," *American Quarterly*, 6 (Fall 1954), 195–209; "Introduction" to *Looking Backward* (New York: Harper's, 1959); and "Edward Bellamy and the Social Gospel," in *Intellectual History in America*, ed. Cushing Strout, 2 vols. (New York: Harper & Row, 1968); Walter F. Taylor, *The Economic Novel in America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1942); and John L. Thomas, "Introduction" to *Looking Backward* (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1967). On Bellamy's connections with science fiction, see H. Bruce Franklin, *Future Perfect* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1968); J. O. Bailey, *Pilgrims through Space and Time* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1972); and Martin, *Harvests*. On his connections with utopian fiction, see note 11 below.
 4. Edward Bellamy, *Looking Backward 2000–1887* (Leipzig: Bernhard Tauchnitz, 1890), p. 15. Hereafter this edition will be cited in the essay parenthetically by the page number, preceded by "LB."
 5. W. D. Howells, "Edward Bellamy," in Edward Bellamy, *The Blindman's World and Other Stories* (London: A.P. Watt & Son, [1898]), pp. vii, ix. On Bellamy's audience and the rhetorical structuring of *Looking Backward*, see David Bleich, "Eros and Bellamy," *American Quarterly*, 16 (Fall 1964), 445–59; Robert J. Cornet, "Rhetorical Strategies in *Looking Backward*," *Markham Review*, 4 (October 1974), 53–58; Virgil Lokke, "The American Utopian Anti-Novel," in *Frontiers of American Culture*, Ray Browne et al., eds. (West Lafayette, Ind.: Purdue University Studies, 1968); Martin, *Harvests*; Bernard Poli, *Le Roman américain 1865–1917* (Paris: Colin, 1972), Ch. 12; Barbara Carolyn Quissell, "The Sentimental and Utopian Novels of Nineteenth-Century America," Ph.D. dissertation, University of Utah, 1973; Kenneth M. Roemer, *The Obsolete Necessity* (Kent, Ohio: Kent State University Press, 1976); and Tom H. Towers, "The Insomnia of Julian West," *American Literature*, 47 (March 1975), 52–63.
 6. Aaron, *Men of Good Hope*, p. 95.
 7. Unlocated quote, apparently from Bellamy's diary, in *ibid.*, p. 97.
 8. Edward Bellamy, *Equality* (New York: Appleton, 1897), p. 41.
 9. Edward Bellamy, "How I Came to Write *Looking Backward*," *The Nationalist*, May 1889.
 10. Bellamy, *Equality*, p. 176.
 11. For the tradition of utopian fiction in the United States and Bellamy's position within it, see Lokke, "Anti-Novel"; Martin, *Harvests*; Quissell, "Sentimental and Utopian Novels"; and Roemer, *Obsolete Necessity*. Roemer supersedes earlier writing on nineteenth-century American utopias except where the previous studies deal with writings earlier than his *terminus a quo* of 1888, such as Allyn B. Forbes, "The Literary Quest for Utopia, 1880–1900," *Social Forces*, 6 (December 1927), 179–89, and Vernon L. Parrington, Jr., *American Dreams* (Providence: Brown University Press, 1947).
 12. Howells, "Bellamy," p. xiii.
 13. Arthur E. Morgan devotes most of his booklet *Plagiarism in Utopia* (Yellow Springs, Ohio: Arthur E. Morgan, 1944) to a refutation of Bellamy's supposed plagiarism from *The Diothas* (see Robert L. Shurter, "The Utopian Novel in America, 1865–1900," Ph.D. dissertation, Case Western Reserve University, 1936, and Taylor, *Economic Novel*). While Morgan examines a number of interesting but rather tangled trails possibly pointing to a personal acquaintance and exchange of opinions, including some tenuous hints at an exchange of manuscripts between Bellamy and Macnie, he does not solve the question. The only hard fact we are left with up to now is that Macnie's book was published five years before Bellamy's, and that there are some major structural similarities, as well as major differences in value and message between the two books. Perhaps literary critics should stop using the bourgeois legal terminology of "plagiarism" when talking about fiction in general and utopian fiction in particular.
 14. For Morris's ideational context see Granville Hicks, *Figures of Transition* (New York: Macmillan, 1939); Lewis Mumford, *Technics and Civilization* (New York: Harcourt, 1963); and Raymond Williams, *Culture and Society, 1780–1950* (London: Penguin, 1961). For a general overview of his work see E. P. Thompson, *William Morris, Romantic to Revolutionary* (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1955); for his writing, G. D. H. Cole, "Introduction" to the selection *William Morris* (London: Nonesuch Press, 1948); C. S. Lewis, "William Morris," *Rehabilitations* (London: Oxford University Press, 1939); and Jack Lindsay, *William Morris, Writer* (London: William Morris Society, 1961). On his use of dream and imagery, mainly in *A Dream of John Ball*, see John Goode, "William Morris and the Dream of Revolution," in *Literature and Politics in the Nineteenth Century*, ed. John Lucas (London: Methuen, 1971); and Jessie Kocmanová, "Two Uses of the Dream-Form as a Means of Confronting the Present with the Past: William Morris and Svatopluk Čech," *Brno Studies in English*, 2 (1960), 113–48. Specifically on *News from Nowhere*, see also Blue Calhoun, *The Pastoral Vision of William Morris* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1975); V. Dupont, *L'Utopie et le roman utopique dans la littérature anglaise* (Toulouse and Paris: Librairie M. Didier, 1941), whose section IV collocated *News from Nowhere* into the context of nineteenth- and twentieth-century English utopias; Tom Middlebro', "Brief Thoughts on *News from Nowhere*," *Journal of the William Morris Society*, 2 (Summer 1970), 8–12; A. L. Morton, *The English Utopia* (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1969); and James Redmond, "Introduction" to the Routledge & Kegan Paul ed. (London, 1972). Parallels between Morris's and Bellamy's utopias are briefly drawn by a number of critics, for example, Morton, but rarely sustained. A somewhat rambling parallel biased toward Bellamy is Peter Marshall's "A British Sensation" in Sylvia E. Bowman et al., *Edward Bellamy Abroad* (New York: Twayne, 1962). The first and so far the most voluminous parallel, Graham Stanhope Rawson's dissertation printed as *William Morris's Political Romance News from Nowhere: Its Sources and Its Relationship to John Ball and Bellamy's Political Romance Looking Backward* (Borna and Leipzig: Noske, 1914), is not very helpful, nor is T. M. Parssinen's article "Bellamy, Morris and the Image of the Industrial City in Victorian Social Criticism," *Midwest Quarterly*, 14 (Spring 1973), 257–66—despite the grandiose titles.
 15. William Morris, "Looking Backward," *The Commonweal*, 22 June 1889, reprinted in *Science-Fiction Studies*, 3 (November 1976), 287–90, together with Morris's introduction to his Kelmscott Press edition of More's *Utopia*.
 16. William Morris, *News from Nowhere* (London and Boston: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1972).
 17. "The Hopes of Civilization" (1885), in *Political Writings of William Morris*, ed. A. L. Morton (New York: International, 1973), p. 159.

JOHN RUSKIN

1819–1900

John Ruskin was born in London on February 8, 1819, the son of a rich wine merchant. He was largely educated at home, and traveled frequently with his parents in Britain and on the Continent. He attended Christ Church, Oxford, between 1837 and 1841, and in 1840, on his twenty-first birthday, began receiving an allowance of £200 a year; upon his father's death in 1864 he became independently wealthy.

Having already contributed poems, stories, critical essays, and nature studies to a variety of periodicals, and having also studied drawing, Ruskin in 1843 anonymously published the first volume of his critical work *Modern Painters*, to which a second volume was added in 1846, a third and fourth in 1856, and a fifth in 1860. In 1848 Ruskin married Euphemia Gray, who divorced him in 1854 on the grounds of impotence and soon afterwards married the painter John Everett Millais. During the years of his marriage to "Effie" Ruskin published two works on architecture, *The Seven Lamps of Architecture* (1849) and *The Stones of Venice* (3 vols., 1851–53); his fairy tale *The King of the Golden River* (1850), originally written for "Effie" in 1841; and his pamphlet *Pre-Raphaelitism* (1851), in which he defended Millais and William Holman Hunt.

In 1853 Ruskin delivered his first public lectures, published the next year as *Lectures on Architecture and Painting*. He taught at the Working Men's College in London during 1854, and in 1855 began an annual series of *Notes on the Royal Academy* (1855–59, 1875), in which he championed the Pre-Raphaelites. *The Political Economy of Art* and *The Two Paths*, published in 1857 and 1859 respectively, were collections of lectures that signaled an increasing interest in socioeconomic questions. The attack on established economic theory that was sketchily developed in these lectures did not assume definite form until 1860, when Ruskin published in *Cornhill Magazine* four essays on political economy, appearing in book form as *Unto This Last* in 1862. In place of a capitalist society based on competition and self-interest, Ruskin advocated a return to a postulated age of heroic feudalism dominated by Christian social values.

This utopian vision was developed over the years in a series of books that made Ruskin a widely known and influential social philosopher. These books, mostly based on lectures, include *Sesame and Lilies* (1865), on education; *The Ethics of the Dust* (1866), on crystallography and other subjects; *The Crown of Wild Olive* (1866), also on education; *Time and Tide* (1867), a series of letters on economics addressed to a workman; *The Queen of the Air* (1869), on Greek myth; and a series of volumes collecting lectures delivered at Oxford, where Ruskin became Slade Professor of Fine Art in 1869, including *Aratra Pentelici* (1872), *The Eagle's Nest* (1872), *Love's Meinie* (1873), and *Ariadne Florentina* (1873–76). In 1871 Ruskin inaugurated monthly "Letters to the Workmen and Labourers of Great Britain," collectively titled *Fors Clavigera*, which he continued with interruptions until 1884. In 1878 he founded a utopian society, the Guild of St. George.

Ruskin resigned his professorship in 1879 after many senior members of the university expressed their distaste for certain of his opinions. In 1881 he suffered the first attack of the mental instability that was to incapacitate him in later life; this instability was characterized in part by an obsession with Rose La Touche, a much younger woman to whom he had unsuccessfully proposed marriage before her death in 1875. Ruskin was reappointed Slade Professor at Oxford in 1883 but resigned again in 1885, having given even more offense than before. In 1885 he published the first volume of his never-completed autobiography, *Praeterita* (2 vols., 1885–89). Ruskin made a last tour of the Continent in 1888, and from 1889 until the end of his life, his mental condition having deteriorated severely, he lived at Brantwood, where he was under the care of Joan and Arthur Severn. Ruskin died on January 20, 1900.

GEORGE BERNARD SHAW

From *Ruskin's Politics*

1921, pp. 7–16

I think Ruskin was more misunderstood as a politician than in any other department of his activity. People complained that he was unintelligible. I do not think he was unintelligible. If you read his political utterances, the one thing that you cannot say of them is that they were unintelligible. You would imagine that no human being could ever have been under the slightest delusion as to what Ruskin meant and was driving at. But what really puzzled his readers—and incidentally saved his

life, because he certainly would have been hanged if they had grasped what he was driving at, and believed that he believed it—was that he was incredible. You see, he appealed to the educated, cultivated, and discontented. It is true that he addressed himself to the working-classes generally; and you can find among the working-classes, just as Mr. Charles Rowley has found in the Ancoats quarter of Manchester, a certain proportion of working-men who have intellectual tastes and artistic interests. But in all classes his disciples were the few who were at war with commercial civilization. I have met in my lifetime some extremely revolutionary characters; and quite a large number of them, when I have asked, 'Who put you on to this revolutionary line? Was it Karl Marx?' have answered,

'No, it was Ruskin'. Generally the Ruskinite is the most thoroughgoing of the opponents of our existing state of society.

Now the reason why the educated and cultured classes in this country found Ruskin incredible was that they could not bring themselves to believe that he meant what he was saying, and indeed shouting. He was even shouting in such terms that if I were to describe it merely as abusive I should underdo the description. Think of the way in which his readers were brought up! They were educated at our public schools and universities; they moved in a society which fitted in with those public schools and universities; they had been brought up from their earliest childhood as above everything respectable people; taught that what respectable people did was the right and proper thing to do, was good form and also high culture; that such people were the salt of the earth; that everything that existed in the way of artistic culture depended on their cultured and leisured existence. When you have people saturated from their childhood with views of that kind, and they are suddenly confronted with a violently contrary view, they are unable to take it in. For instance, to put it quite simply, they knew that there were the Ten Commandments, and that the Ten Commandments were all right; and they argued from this that as respectable people were all right in everything they did they must be living according to the Ten Commandments. Therefore their consciences were entirely untroubled.

I have here a volume of Ruskin which I took up this morning, intending to read it, but had not time. I opened it at random, and happened on a page on which Ruskin gave the Ten Commandments according to which in his conception our polite and cultured society really lives. This is the only passage I shall read today, though I feel, of course, the temptation that every lecturer on Ruskin feels to get out of his job by reading, because anything he reads is likely to be better than anything he can say of his own. Ruskin says:

Generally the ten commandments are now:
Thou shalt have any other god but me. Thou shalt worship every bestial imagination on earth and under it. Thou shalt take the name of the Lord in vain to mock the poor; for the Lord will hold him guiltless who rebukes and gives not; thou shalt remember the sabbath day to keep it profane; thou shalt dishonour thy father and thy mother; thou shalt kill, and kill by the million, with all thy might and mind and wealth spent in machinery for multifold killing; thou shalt look on every woman to lust after her; thou shalt steal, and steal from morning till evening; the evil from the good, and the rich from the poor; thou shalt live by continual lying in million-fold sheets of lies; and covet thy neighbour's house, and country, and wealth and fame, and everything that is his. And finally, by word of the Devil, in short summary, through Adam Smith, a new commandment give I unto you: that ye hate one another.

If anybody is going to tell me, here or elsewhere, that this is unintelligible, I do not know what to think of that person's brains. Nothing could well be clearer. But, as I have said, and repeat, it was profoundly incredible to those to whom it was addressed.

Ruskin's political message to the cultured society of his day, the class to which he himself belonged, began and ended in this simple judgement: 'You are a parcel of thieves.' That is what it came to. He never went away from that; and he enforced it with a very extraordinary power of invective. Ruskin was a master of invective. Compare him, for instance, with Cobbett. Cobbett had immense literary style; and when he

hated a thing, he hated it very thoroughly indeed. Think of Cobbett's writing about the funding system—think of his writing about the spoliation of the Church by Henry VIII—think of his writing about the barrenness of Surrey, which cultured society likes so much and which Cobbett loathed as a barren place—think of what he said about 'barbarous, bestial Malthus'—think of Cobbett at the height of his vituperation. Then go on to Karl Marx. Karl Marx was a Jew who had, like Jeremiah, a great power of invective. Think of the suppression of the Paris Commune in 1871, and then of that terrific screed that Marx wrote, exposing the Empire, denouncing the Versailles generals, execrating the whole order of things which destroyed the Commune so remorselessly. There you have a masterpiece of invective, a thing which, although it was not reproduced in any of the newspapers, or popular literary issues of the day, nevertheless did leave such an effect that when, thirty years after, a proposal was made in the French Chamber to put Gallifet into a public position of some credit, the governing classes having forgotten that a word had ever been said against him, suddenly that terrible denunciation of Marx rose up against him and struck him absolutely out of public life. Yet when you read these invectives of Marx and Cobbett, and read Ruskin's invectives afterwards, somehow or other you feel that Ruskin beats them hollow. Perhaps the reason was that they hated their enemy so thoroughly. Ruskin does it without hatred, and therefore he does it with a magnificent thoroughness. You may say that his strength in invective is as the strength of ten because his heart is pure. And the only consequence of his denunciation of society was that people said, 'Well, he can't possibly be talking about us, the respectable people'; and so they did not take any notice of it.

I must now go on to Ruskin's specific contribution to economics and sociology, because that, as you know, to-day means a contribution to politics. In Ruskin's own time this was not so clear. People did not understand then that your base in politics must be an economic base and a sociological base. We all know it to-day, and know it to our cost; and will know it to our still greater cost unless we find a way out, which, it seems, lies not very far from Ruskin's way. Ruskin took up the treatises of our classical political economy, the books by which our Manchester Capitalism sought to justify its existence. In this he did what Karl Marx had done before; and, like Marx, he did it in a way which I do not like exactly to describe as a corrupt way, because you cannot think of corruption in connexion with Ruskin: nevertheless, he did not take it up as a man with a disinterested academic enthusiasm for abstract political economy. I think we must admit that, like Marx, he took it up because he was clever enough to see that it was a very good stick to beat the Capitalist dog with. Marx took up the theory of value which had been begun by Adam Smith, and developed by Malthus, and, seeing that he could turn it against Capitalism, tried to re-establish it on a basis of his own. Thus we got his celebrated theory of value, which is now a celebrated blunder. What Ruskin did was this. He held up to us the definition of value given by the economists, and said: 'These gentlemen define value as value in exchange. Therefore', he said, 'a thing that you cannot exchange has no value: a thing that you can exchange has value. Very well. When on my way to Venice I go through Paris, I can buy there for two francs fifty an obscene lithograph, produced by the French to sell to English tourists. When I reach Venice, I go to the Scuola di San Rocco and look at the ceiling painted there by Tintoretto, because it is one of the treasures of the world. But that ceiling cannot be sold in the market. It has no exchange value. Therefore, according to John Stuart Mill, the obscene litho-

graph has a higher value than the ceiling, which in fact has no value at all. After that, I have no further use for your political economy. If that is the way you begin, I hesitate to go on to the end; for I know where your journey must land you—in hell. You may be under the impression that after all hell is a thing you can think of later on; but you are mistaken: you are already at your destination: the condition in which you are living is virtually hell.' Then he gave his version of your Ten Commandments. If you had said to him, 'We may be in hell; but we feel extremely comfortable', Ruskin, being a genuinely religious man, would have replied, 'That simply shows that you are damned to the uttermost depths of damnation, because not only are you in hell, but you like being in hell'.

GEORGE P. LANDOW

"Ruskin as Victorian Sage: The Example of 'Traffic'"

New Approaches to Ruskin, ed. Robert Hewison

1981, pp. 89–110

Like Thomas Carlyle and Matthew Arnold, John Ruskin frequently tries to win the assent of his audience by assuming the tone and techniques of the Victorian sage. Although John Holloway did not include the author of *Modern Painters* in his pioneering study of this characteristically Victorian literary mode, Ruskin is in fact one of its greatest practitioners.¹ Holloway, who considers both writers of fiction and nonfiction to be sages, correctly observes that works in this mode do not attempt to convince primarily by means of rational, logical argumentation and that they instead employ indirect, poetical, or rhetorical means. Holloway and subsequent critics who have studied these Victorians in terms of their literary methods have made valuable contributions to the understanding of nineteenth-century prose, but to perceive the defining characteristics of what I take to be an identifiable nonfictional genre, one must analyse more precisely the structures, methods, and manner of proceeding that create the nonfiction characteristic of the Victorian secular prophet.

In particular, by examining Ruskin's strategies in 'Traffic', a neglected masterpiece of this kind of nonfiction, one can perceive the attributes of a literary form that continues to attract major writers down to the present day.² As the discussion of 'Traffic' will demonstrate, one may take the following as a useful working definition of the kind of literature created by the Victorian sage: it is a form of nonfiction that adapts the techniques of the Victorian sermon, neoclassical satire, classical rhetoric, and Old Testament prophecy to create credibility for the interpretations of contemporary phenomena made by a figure, the sage, who stands apart from his audience and society.

The Victorian sage is, above all else, an interpreter, an exegete, one who can read the Signs of the Times. His essential, defining claim is that he understands matters that others do not—and that his understanding is of crucial value to those who see with duller eyes. Indeed, Ruskin, Carlyle, and Arnold are sages or secular prophets precisely because they perceive the central fact that the phenomena they choose to interpret demand interpretation. Many of the phenomena they urge upon us as instances of significant fact seem the natural and obvious materials to command the attention of one who would speak or write as a sage. Carlyle's *Chartism* fulfils our expectations when it urges upon the reader the crucial need of understanding the 'bitter discontent of the Working Classes',

and Arnold similarly introduces an important subject when *Culture and Anarchy* opens the question of how England approaches the disestablishment of the Irish Church.³ Ruskin's many discussions of truth, morality, and greatness in art, like his examinations of the labour question and fundamental problems of political economics, likewise strike one as precisely the kind of question to which the would-be sage must direct his supposedly higher vision. However, one of the factors that distinguishes the pronouncements of the Victorian sage from ordinary political speeches, essays, and other discussions of such subjects is that the sage also frequently draws our attention to apparently trivial phenomena, to facts that only he at first perceives can embody meanings important to his listeners. Carlyle thus explains the significance of the 'amphibious Pope' and 'that great Hat seven-feet high, which now perambulates London Streets' in *Past and Present*, while in 'The Function of Criticism at the Present Time' Arnold similarly draws our attention to Wragg's murder of her illegitimate child and to 'the natural growth amongst us of such hideous names,—Higginbottom, Stiggins, Bugg!'⁴ In his introduction to *The Crown of Wild Olive* Ruskin similarly urges upon us the crucial significance embodied in the way a wrought-iron fence outside a newly built pub has affected its surroundings. In fact, the characterizing procedure of Carlyle, Ruskin, Arnold and other sages, such as Thoreau, is this identification and subsequent interpretation of trivial phenomena as the embodiments of essential truth. This procedure necessarily entails grave rhetorical risks, since the writer can thus easily lose the confidence of his audience, but it also ensures that, when successful, the writer will have established his unique claims to authority and credibility—claims that are essential in an age of transition and shaken belief. By showing the members of his audience that truth resides in unexpected places and that he, and only he, can reveal it to them, the sage convinces them to give a hearing to his views of man, society, and culture that might at first seem eccentric and even insane.

In 'Traffic', as so often throughout his career, Ruskin self-consciously dons the mantle of the Victorian prophet to support his interpretations of contemporary phenomena. Therefore, perhaps the most effective way to begin a critical analysis of his manner of proceeding as a Victorian sage would be first to examine what portions of that method derive from the prophetic books of the Old Testament. Once one has determined how Ruskin draws upon this aspect of his religious heritage, one can observe where he diverges from it. Ruskin ends 'Traffic', a lecture he delivered in Bradford on 21 April 1864, with one of those familiar passages of heightened prose with which he generally closes brief works and sections or chapters of longer ones. Like a great many such Ruskinian closing flourishes, this one is set in a visionary mode and draws heavily upon biblical rhetoric, structure, and image.

Ruskin, who is engaged to convince his listeners that they must change their society if they wish to improve its architecture, sets his social, political, and aesthetic pronouncements within the context of the prophetic scriptures of the Old Testament, both by alluding to specific texts and by employing the patterns of those who gave warning to both the children and enemies of God. After charging England with worshipping the Goddess of Getting-on, he points out that both pagan and Hebrew wisdom warn of the inevitable consequences of such a false religion. He cites the *Critias*, a dialogue Plato left incomplete, and then quotes at length the judgment of the Olympian Gods upon the inhabitants of Atlantis, who had fallen from godlike love of virtue to an all-too-human worship

of power and material wealth. Plato's condemnation of such blind devotion to worldly success forms, says Ruskin, the:

Last words of the chief wisdom of the heathen, spoken of this idol of riches; this idol of yours; this golden image, high by measureless cubits, set up where your green fields of England are furnace-burnt into the likeness of the plain of Dura: this idol, forbidden to us, first of all idols, by our own Master and faith; forbidden to us also by every human lip that has ever, in any age or people, been accounted of as able to speak according to the purposes of God. (18.457-8)

Having criticized, harangued, and mocked his listeners previously in this lecture for their devotion to the Goddess of Getting-on, Ruskin calls upon the testimony of the ages to emphasize that he follows eternal, not transitory, standards. Zeus's pointed condemnation of the Atlanteans also serves to indict Victorian England, and Ruskin makes clear that he takes the mythical Atlantis, as he had earlier in his career taken Tyre and Venice, to be a type of his own nation. Then, having established that even the pagans realized that such spiritual blindness inevitably brings a nation to destruction, he turns to the Bible and likens England now to Nebuchadnezzar's Babylon. The allusion to the third chapter of Daniel, in which Nebuchadnezzar erects an idol on the plains of Dura, reduces the inhabitants of Bradford to the moral and spiritual stature of the inhabitants of Babylon. Next, he alludes briefly to Christ's warning that cupidity—or the worship of the Goddess of Getting-on—is the root of all evil, after which he emphasizes that all men, whether pagan, Hebrew, or Christian, have always recognized that such worship is forbidden. Ruskin thus employs the first part of the familiar tripartite pattern of Old Testament prophecy—an initial reminder of the nature of divine law which the prophet's listeners have either forgotten or consciously disobeyed.

Next, he proceeds to the traditional second part of prophetic structure, the warning that continued deviation from the true path leads directly to horrible punishment and destruction. 'Continue to make that forbidden deity your principle one,' he warns his audience, 'and soon no more art, no more science, no more pleasure will be possible. Catastrophe will come; or, worse than catastrophe, slow mouldering and withering into Hades' (18.458). Having already alluded to the fates of Atlantis and Babylon, Ruskin has anticipated the final terrible destruction of any nation that lives as England is living. Specifically, he warns that his nation's end can come in the form of catastrophe or a slow mouldering into hell—either as a bang or a whimper—but since he has already charged that his listeners have turned the once 'green fields of England . . . furnace-burnt into the likeness of the plain of Dura', itself a type of hell, he suggests that England is already well on the way to destruction. Ruskin, one must observe, warns about more than the final destruction of England as a nation and civilization, for like so many modern prophets, such as Lawrence and Mailer, he is also speaking about the death of pleasure, of all pleasure, of that which gives one joy and will to live. As he warns that soon there will be no more 'art, no more science, no more pleasure', he descends through the Ruskinian hierarchy of human faculties, for he is warning about the death of imagination and emotions that produce art, the intellect that produces science, and the bodily affections that are the seat of pleasure.⁵ His prophet's curse upon the people, succinct as it is, is complete and pronounced with care.

Then, again following the tripartite pattern of biblical prophecy, Ruskin attempts to inspirit his listeners with a vision

of that good which will come from returning to the ways of God and nature, for having expounded the law and stated the prophet's warning, he reassures them:

But if you can fix some conception of a true human state of life to be striven for—life, good for all men, as for yourselves; if you can determine some honest and simple order of existence; following those trodden ways of wisdom, which are pleasantness, and seeking her quiet and withdrawn paths, which are peace;—then, and so sanctifying wealth into 'common wealth,' all your art, your literature, your daily labours, your domestic affection, and citizen's duty, will join and increase into one magnificent harmony. You will know then how to build, well enough; you will build with stone well, but with flesh better; temples not made with hands, but riveted of hearts; and that kind of marble, crimson-veined, is indeed eternal. (18.458)

Alluding to Proverbs 3:17, a text which employs the full pattern of Old Testament prophecy, Ruskin offers his listeners a vision of life-giving harmony if they return to divine law. Then, rather than build commercial exchanges, they will build places of truer 'exchange'—places of community and commonwealth, rather than edifices to house competition and the worship of the Goddess of Getting-on. Rather than traffic in the Temple, they will worship there and elsewhere correctly, vitally, pleasurably.

As he employs each of the three stages of this prophetic structure Ruskin also follows another manner of proceeding learned from Daniel, Jeremiah, Isaiah, and other Hebrew prophets, for like them he adroitly positions himself in relation to his audience. Only once—when he mentions that such worship of golden idols or idolized gold is forbidden to 'us'—does Ruskin place himself in the same position as his listeners. Only then does he permit them to take him as a man like them. This employment of the first-person-plural pronoun, however, serves as his only gesture of community and commonality during this closing section of 'Traffic'. On the other hand, gestures of opposition, rhetorical strategies that place him at a distance from his listeners, occur frequently in the course of his attack upon his audience and what he terms 'this idol of yours' (18.457), and this opposition of speaker (or writer) and audience in fact characterizes the pronouncements of the Victorian sage. Such risky rhetorical strategies both set off this genre from most other literary forms and inevitably require special techniques to avoid alienating the sage's intended audience. In other words, the crucial difficulty in thus positioning the prophetic voice outside and above the society of the prophet's intended listeners is that he must find a way to be superior to them, and to convince them that he is superior to them, without alienating them. Or, to state this fundamental problem in slightly different terms: the Victorian audience is only willing to pay attention to someone extraordinary and set apart from the majority of men, but any claim that one possesses special insight threatens to drive it away.

This characteristic positioning of himself as sage in relation to his listeners appears earlier in 'Traffic' when Ruskin first instructs them that England will inevitably pass away and then, moving to solace his listeners, he reassures them that they have come to such a dilemma only because they have been deluded by those Others, by the false prophets of *laissez-faire* capitalist economics. Ruskin opens this attack by forcing his listeners to realize that worshipping material success inevitably impoverishes a large portion of English society, after which he anticipates his audience's objections, openly admit-