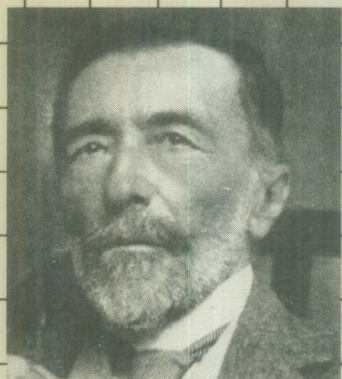
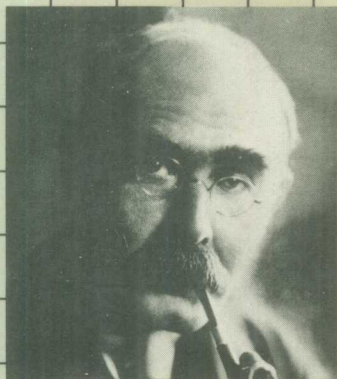
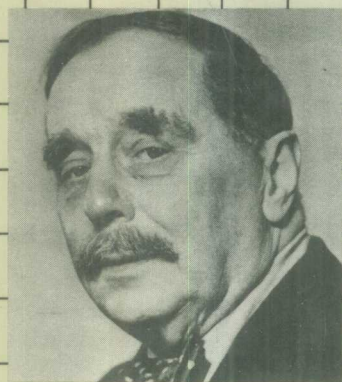
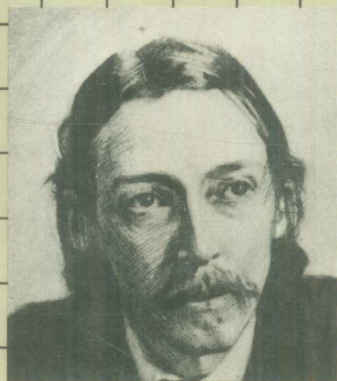


The Critical Cosmos Series

/ Edited and with an Introduction by HAROLD BLOOM

Edwardian and Georgian Fiction, 1880-1914



THE CRITICAL COSMOS SERIES

爱德华时代的
乔治亚时代的
Edwardian and Georgian Fiction,
1880 to 1914

Edited and with an introduction

by HAROLD BLOOM

Sterling Professor of the Humanities

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Editor's Note

This volume of the Critical Cosmos series brings together a representative selection of the best critical essays on British fiction of the Edwardian and Georgian period, 1880–1914. As a book, this forms a companion volume to the Critical Cosmos on Victorian fiction, which covers the years 1830–80. The critical essays are arranged in the chronological order of the authors' birth. I am grateful to Shawn Rosenheim and Susan Laity for their erudition and judgment in helping me to edit this book.

My introduction begins with Thomas Hardy's last novel, *Jude the Obscure*, and then continues with an appreciation of Oscar Wilde's fairy tales and prose poems. I then discuss Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*, *Lord Jim*, and his masterpiece, *Nostromo*, after which I conclude with a reading of Rudyard Kipling's *Kim* and an analysis that centers upon *A Passage to India*, E. M. Forster's most celebrated novel.

Carole Silver discusses three of William Morris's late prose romances—*The Story of the Glittering Plain*, *The Wood beyond the World*, *The Well at the World's End*—with particular emphasis upon his employment of mythology and folklore. The great Edwardian critic, Walter Pater, is then viewed in his critical fiction *Marius the Epicurean* by his disciple, the editor of this volume.

Thomas Hardy, the great transitional figure between Victorian and Edwardian fiction, was represented most fully in the Critical Cosmos volume on Victorian fiction. Here he is studied by Mary Jacobus, who examines the reception of *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* and then charts the ways in which Hardy altered and edited his novel in order to present poor Tess as a "pure" woman. Together with my commentary on *Jude the Obscure* in the introduction, this gives us readings of Hardy's last two major novels, the reception of which caused him to abandon prose fiction and return to the composition of poetry.

An overview on women and the new fiction of this period, by Penny

Boumelha, provides the background for Hardy's final novels by exploring the way in which both male and female writers were examining the issue of "womanliness." Problems of sexuality and class distinctions are involved in Geoffrey Wall's approach to Bram Stoker's famous shocker, *Dracula*.

Alastair Fowler, distinguished Scottish critic, discusses Robert Louis Stevenson, centering upon *Treasure Island* and *The Ebb-Tide* and their moral ambiguities. A social analysis of the rather different receptions accorded to Oscar Wilde's short stories and to his novel *The Picture of Dorian Gray* is provided by Regenia Gagnier.

In a consideration of three novels of the 1880s by the realist George Gissing, John Goode compares Gissing to Dickens as a portraitist of the London lower classes. Joseph Conrad, surely the major novelist of his era, receives three essays, in addition to the coverage in this volume's introduction. Aaron Fogel discerns in the great mid-period of Conrad's fiction a preoccupation with what he calls "coercion to speak": the forcing of dialogue between characters, seen with particular clarity in *Heart of Darkness*. Robert Penn Warren follows with his classic appreciation of Conrad's masterpiece, *Nostromo*, while the eminent Marxist critic Fredric Jameson centers upon the *Patna* episode in *Lord Jim* and concludes that Jim does attempt to learn from history.

The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes by Arthur Conan Doyle is read by Stephen Knight both as a unified collection and as individual stories. Rudyard Kipling receives two critiques, the first by Robert L. Caserio on the undervalued *The Light That Failed*, seen here as related to Swinburne's vision of William Blake, and the second by Stephen Prickett, who considers the fantasy world of Kipling's fiction in conjunction with the fantasies of E. Nesbit, since both fantasists create deep social commentaries in their visionary projections. Another fantasist, the utopian H. G. Wells, is examined by Frank McConnell, who concentrates upon the relation of *The Time Machine* to Romantic literary tradition.

Arnold Bennett's *The Old Wives' Tale* is defended for its realistic fidelities by John Lucas, while James Gordin analyzes John Galsworthy's *The Man of Property*, the first novel in *The Forsyte Saga*. *Zuleika Dobson*, a work of delight, is read by Robert Viscusi as a grand instance of Max Beerbohm's notions of **Form**, after which Stephen Medcalf gives us an overview of the entire achievement of G. K. Chesterton, rather surprisingly comparing the English Catholic master of paradox to the much stronger Danish Protestant ironist, Søren Kierkegaard.

Barbara Rosecrance centers upon E. M. Forster's *Howards End*, with some consideration of *A Passage to India*, in a study of their common subject: a growing sense of existential impasse. P. G. Wodehouse's early fiction is examined by Richard J. Voorhees, who finds in Wodehouse's Edwardian novels the prototypes for Bertie Wooster, Freddie Threepwood, and even Jeeves. This book then ends fittingly with Kate Fullbrook's exegesis of the early, feminist short stories of Katherine Mansfield, who carries us into a different world, that of World War I and its aftermath.

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Introduction

I

For Arthur Schopenhauer, the Will to Live was the true thing-in-itself, not an interpretation but a rapacious, active, universal, and ultimately indifferent drive or desire. Schopenhauer's great work, *The World as Will and Representation*, had the same relation to and influence upon many of the principal nineteenth- and early twentieth-century novelists that Freud's writings have in regard to many of this century's later, crucial masters of prose fiction. Zola, Maupassant, Turgenev, and Tolstoy join Thomas Hardy as Schopenhauer's nineteenth-century heirs, in a tradition that goes on through Proust, Conrad, and Thomas Mann to culminate in aspects of Borges, and Beckett, the most eminent living writer of narrative. Since Schopenhauer (despite Freud's denials) was one of Freud's prime precursors, one could argue that aspects of Freud's influence upon writers simply carry on from Schopenhauer's previous effect. Manifestly, the relation of Schopenhauer to Hardy is different in both kind and degree from the larger sense in which Schopenhauer was Freud's forerunner or Wittgenstein's. A poet-novelist like Hardy turns to a rhetorical speculator like Schopenhauer only because he finds something in his own temperament and sensibility confirmed and strengthened, and not at all as Lucretius turned to Epicurus, or as Whitman was inspired by Emerson.

The true precursor for Hardy was Shelley, whose visionary skepticism permeates the novels as well as the poems and *The Dynasts*. There is some technical debt to George Eliot in the early novels, but Hardy in his depths was little more moved by her than by Wilkie Collins, from whom he also learned elements of craft. Shelley's tragic sense of eros is pervasive throughout Hardy, and ultimately determines Hardy's understanding of his strongest heroines: Bathsheba Everdene, Eustacia Vye, Marty South, Tess

Durbeyfield, Sue Bridehead. Between desire and fulfillment in Shelley falls the shadow of the selfhood, a shadow that makes love and what might be called the means of love quite irreconcilable. What M. D. Zabel named as "the aesthetic of incongruity" in Hardy and ascribed to temperamental causes is in a profound way the result of attempting to transmute the procedures of *The Revolt of Islam* and *Epipsychidion* into the supposedly naturalistic novel.

J. Hillis Miller, when he worked more in the mode of a critic of consciousness like Georges Poulet than in the deconstruction of Paul de Man and Jacques Derrida, saw the fate of love in Hardy as being darkened always by a shadow cast by the lover's consciousness itself. Hugh Kenner, with a distaste for Hardy akin to (and perhaps derived from) T. S. Eliot's in *After Strange Gods*, suggested that Miller had created a kind of Proustian Hardy, who turns out to be a case rather than an artist. Hardy was certainly not an artist comparable to Henry James (who dismissed him as a mere imitator of George Eliot) or James Joyce, but the High Modernist shibboleths for testing the novel have now waned considerably, except for a few surviving high priests of Modernism like Kenner. A better guide to Hardy's permanent strength as a novelist was his heir D. H. Lawrence whose *The Rainbow* and *Women in Love* marvelously brought Hardy's legacy to an apotheosis. Lawrence, praising Hardy with a rebel son's ambivalence, associated him with Tolstoy as a tragic writer:

And this is the quality Hardy shares with the great writers, Shakespeare or Sophocles or Tolstoi, this setting behind the small action of his protagonists the terrific action of unfathomed nature; setting a smaller system of morality, the one grasped and formulated by the human consciousness within the vast, uncomprehended and incomprehensible morality of nature or of life itself, surpassing human consciousness. The difference is, that whereas in Shakespeare or Sophocles the greater, uncomprehended morality, or fate, is actively transgressed and gives active punishment, in Hardy and Tolstoi the lesser, human morality, the mechanical system is actively transgressed, and holds, and punishes the protagonist, whilst the greater morality is only passively, negatively transgressed, it is represented merely as being present in background, in scenery, not taking any active part, having no direct connexion with the protagonist. (Oedipus, Hamlet, Macbeth set themselves up against, or find themselves set up against, the unfathomed moral forces of nature, and out of this unfathomed force comes their death. Whereas Anna Karenina, Eustacia, Tess, Sue, and Jude find themselves up against the established system of human government and morality, they cannot detach themselves, and are brought down. Their real tragedy is that they are unfaithful to the greater unwritten morality, which would have bidden Anna

Karenina be patient and wait until she, by virtue of greater right, could take what she needed from society; would have bidden Vronsky detach himself from the system, become an individual, creating a new colony of morality with Anna; would have bidden Eustacia fight Clym for his own soul, and Tess take and claim her Angel, since she had the greater light; would have bidden Jude and Sue endure for very honour's sake, since one must bide by the best that one has known, and not succumb to the lesser good.

(Study of Thomas Hardy)

This seems to me powerful and just, because it catches what is most surprising and enduring in Hardy's novels—the sublime stature and aesthetic dignity of his crucial protagonists—while exposing also his great limitation, his denial of freedom to his best personages. Lawrence's prescription for what would have saved Eustacia and Clym, Tess and Angel, Sue and Jude, is perhaps not as persuasive. He speaks of them as though they were Gudrun and Gerald, and thus have failed to be Ursula and Birkin. It is Hardy's genius that they are what they had to be: as imperfect as their creator and his vision, as impure as his language and his plotting, and finally painful and memorable to us:

Note that, in this bitterness, delight,
Since the imperfect is so hot in us,
Lies in flawed words and stubborn sounds.

II

Alone among Hardy's novels, *Jude the Obscure* has three strong figures, all triumphs of representation: Sue, Jude, Arabella. Unfortunately, it also has little Father Time, Hardy's most memorable disaster in representation. Even more unfortunately, it is a book in which Hardy's drive to go on telling stories gives way to his precursor Shelley's despair that there is one story and one story only, the triumph of life over human integrity. As the most Shelleyan of Hardy's novels (except perhaps for *The Well-Beloved*, which precedes it in initial composition, though not in revision and publication), *Jude the Obscure* has a complex and perhaps crippling relation to *Epipsychidion*. Sue Bridehead is more Shelleyan than even Shelley's Emilia in that poem, and would have been better off married to Shelley than to Jude Fawley, which is not to say that poor Shelley could have survived the union any better than the unhappy Jude.

D. H. Lawrence, inevitably, was Sue's most articulate critic:

Her female spirit did not wed with the male spirit: she could not prophesy. Her spirit submitted to the male spirit, owned the priority of the male spirit, wished to become the male spirit.

Sue needs no defense, least of all in 1986 when she has become prevalent, a subtle rebel against any dialectic of power founded wholly upon

mere gender. Yet, within the novel, Sue is less a rebel than she is Jude's Shelleyan epipsyche, his twin sister (actually his cousin) and counterpart. She can live neither with Jude, nor without him, and their love is both narcissistic and incestuous, Hardy's metaphor for the Will to Live at its most destructive, because in Jude and Sue it destroys the most transcendent beings Hardy had ever imagined.

It will not suffice to call *Jude the Obscure* a tragedy, since what is most tragic in Jude and Sue is their Shelleyan transcendence. When Shelley attempted tragedy in *The Cenci*, he succeeded only by diverting the form into a lament for the descent of Beatrice Cenci to her father's level. But Jude and Sue cannot be said to descend, any more than Eustacia, Henchard, and Tess descend. The Will to Live in Hardy's cosmos is too terrible and too incessant for us to speak of it as debasing its subjects or victims. In a world dominated by drive, a spirit like Jude's is condemned to die whispering the Jobean lament: "Let the day perish wherein I was born." *Jude the Obscure* is Hardy's Book of Job, and like Job is too dark for tragedy, while unlike Job it is just the reverse of theodicy, being Hardy's ultimate declaration that the ways of the Immanent Will towards man are unjustifiable.

Few interchanges in literature are at once so pathetic and so charming as the intricate, Shelleyan dances of scruple and desire intertwined that involve Sue and Jude:

He laughed. "Never mind," he said. "So that I am near you, I am comparatively happy. It is more than this earthly wretch called Me deserves—you spirit, you disembodied creature, you dear, sweet, tantalizing phantom—hardly flesh at all; so that when I put my arms round you, I almost expect them to pass through you as through air! Forgive me for being gross, as you call it! Remember that our calling ourselves cousins when really strangers was a snare. The enmity of our parents gave a piquancy to you in my eyes that was intenser ever than the novelty of ordinary new acquaintance."

"Say those pretty lines, then, from Shelley's 'Epipsychidion' as if they meant me," she solicited, slanting up closer to him as they stood. "Don't you know them?"

"I know hardly any poetry," he replied, mournfully.

"Don't you?" These are some of them:

"There was a Being whom my spirit oft
Met on its visioned wanderings far aloft.

.
A seraph of Heaven, too gentle to be human,
Veiling beneath that radiant form of woman . . . "

"Oh, it is too flattering, so I won't go on! But say it's me!—say it's me!"

"It is you, dear; exactly like you!"

"Now I forgive you! And you shall kiss me just once there—not very long." She put the tip of her finger gingerly to her cheek, and he did as commanded. "You do care for me very much, don't you, in spite of my not—you know?"

"Yes, sweet!" he said, with a sigh, and bade her good-night.

It is Sue, right enough, and it is disaster. The true epigraph to *Jude the Obscure* comes at the climax of *Epipsychidion*:

In one another's substance finding food,
Like flames too pure and light and unimbued
To nourish their bright lives with baser prey,
Which point to Heaven and cannot pass away:
One hope within two wills, one will beneath
Two overshadowing minds, one life, one death,
One Heaven, one Hell, one immortality,
And one annihilation.

That "one will beneath" the "two overshadowing minds" of Sue and Jude is the Immanent Will of Thomas Hardy, and it indeed does become "one annihilation."

III

Oscar Wilde was essentially a man of action displaced into a man of letters. In some curious sense, there is a sickness-unto-action in Wilde's life and work, a masked despair that led him to the borders of that realm of fantasy the Victorians called "nonsense" literature, the cosmos of Edward Lear. Wilde stands between a doctrine of momentary aesthetic ecstasies, phantasmagoric hard gemlike flames, and a vision of lyric simplification through aesthetic intensity, what Yeats called the Condition of Fire. Nonsense is the truest rejection of mere nature, and the strongest program for compelling nature to cease imitating itself and to imitate art instead.

In his collection of stories, I turn with pleasure to Wilde at nearly his most delightful, the nine fairy tales published originally as two volumes, *House of Pomegranates* and *The Happy Prince and Other Tales*. "The Young King" is a visionary narrative in the mode of Walter Pater's *Imaginary Portraits*, and suffers from being both too ornate and a touch too sentimental. But its hero, questing always for beauty crossed by the shadow of mortality, is one of Wilde's luminous Christ figures, and almost redeems the story from its baroque elaborations. Far better is the cruel and provocative "The Birthday of the Infanta," where the dancing dwarf's first sight of his own reflection is necessarily self-destructive, and represents Wilde's great theme of the narcissistic element in the death drive, beyond the pleasure principle. The story's closing outcry, the Infanta's "For the future let those who come

to play with me have no hearts," can be considered one of Wilde's veracious if ironic mottoes.

"The Fisherman and His Soul," a much more ambitious story, is one of the authentic weird tales in the language, worthy of E. T. A. Hoffmann and better than anything by Poe. Its great figure is not the young Fisherman but his equivocal and dangerous Soul, or shadowy double, and its most ironic and telling moment, extraordinary in context, is the reunion between self and soul in the act of dying:

And his Soul besought him to depart, but he would not, so great was his love. And the sea came nearer, and sought to cover him with its waves, and when he knew that the end was at hand he kissed with mad lips the cold lips of the Mermaid, and the heart that was within him, brake. And as through the fulness of his love his heart did break, the Soul found an entrance and entered in, and was one with him even as before. And the sea covered the young Fisherman with its waves.

The last story to appear in *A House of Pomegranates*, "The Star-Child," may invest too much of its intensity in pathos, yet the hidden meaning redeems the hyperbolic sentiment, as this is clearly one of Wilde's allegories of his own malaise and quest for the mother. Freud's reading of the psychosexuality of Leonardo da Vinci is wholly relevant to "The Star-Child," where the child is Oscar and the mother is a displaced version of Lady Jane Wilde, who wrote poems and revolutionary articles for the Irish cause under the name Speranza and who was famous as the author-translator of *Sidonia the Sorceress*, a dubious work yet greatly admired by William Morris.

Freud, in his study of Leonardo, remarks that all great men must retain something of the infantile throughout their whole life, and certainly this was true of Wilde. But the sublime Oscar knew this of himself; what after all, whether of himself or others, did he not know? This may account for the marvelous bitterness that ends the tale of "The Star-Child." Though reconciled to this mother, and his father, the star-child Oscar cannot live and rule happily ever after:

Yet ruled he not long, so great had been his suffering, and so bitter the fire of his testing, for after the space of three years he died. And he who came after him ruled evilly.

IV

Four of the five fairy stories in *The Happy Prince and Other Tales* are Wilde's masterpieces in this genre, being short, swift, and eloquently ironic. Only "The Devoted Friend" yields to its own bitterness, while "The Happy Prince" and "The Remarkable Rocket" are perfectly balanced between irony and pathos, and "The Nightingale and the Rose" and "The Selfish Giant"

are more mixed successes, the first inclining too much to disillusion, while the second falls finally into Wilde's Christological obsessions.

The title story, "The Happy Prince," is consistently superb, but my own favorite passage in it comes with the introduction of the hero, the insouciant little Swallow, who comes upon a beautiful Reed and is "so attracted by her slender waist" that, for a time, he falls in love with her:

"Shall I love you?" said the Swallow, who liked to come to the point at once, and the Reed made him a low bow. So he flew round and round her, touching the water with his wings, and making silver ripples. This was his courtship, and it lasted all through the summer.

"It is a ridiculous attachment," twittered the other Swallows, "she has no money, and far too many relations"; and indeed the river was quite full of Reeds. Then, when the autumn came, they all flew away.

After they had gone he felt lonely, and began to tire of his lady-love. "She has no conversation," he said, "and I am afraid that she is a coquette, for she is always flirting with the wind." And certainly, whenever the wind blew, the Reed made the most graceful curtsies. "I admit that she is domestic," he continued, "but I love travelling, and my wife, consequently, should love travelling also."

"Will you come away with me?" he said finally to her; but the Reed shook her head, she was so attached to her home.

"You have been trifling with me," he cried. "I am off to the Pyramids. Good-bye!" and he flew away.

Delicious in its urbane control, the passage belongs to the higher sphere of nonsense literature, with Edward Lear and Lewis Carroll and *The Importance of Being Earnest*. What Wilde wrote of his greatest play is true also of the story of the Swallow and the Reed: "It is exquisitely trivial, a delicate bubble of fancy, and it has as its philosophy . . . that we should treat all the trivial things of life seriously, and all the serious things of life with sincere and studied triviality."

In "The Nightingale and the Rose," as I have already intimated, Wilde unfortunately concludes by treating all the trivial matters trivially and all the serious issues too seriously, so that the tale falls short of the sublimities of true Nonsense. "The Selfish Giant" is better, if slighter, and has about it the Paterian sadomasochism that always attends Wilde when he celebrates "the wounds of Love." Bitterness, never much below the surface of Wilde's work, breaks through too strenuously in "The Devoted Friend," which, however, is saved by its beginning and end, where we inhabit the cosmos of the old Water-rat, the Duck, and the Green Linnet. In that world, prophetic of *The Wind in the Willows*, the divine Oscar cannot go wrong.

I am delighted to conclude my consideration of these stories with Wilde

at his strongest, in "The Remarkable Rocket," perhaps the best of all his fairy tales. With earnest originality, Wilde places us in the psychic realm of royal fireworks, where we listen to the conversation of Roman Candles, Catherine Wheels, Squibs, Bengal Lights, and the Remarkable Rocket himself, a veritable paragon of vainglory and self-importance. The Remarkable Rocket cannot be bothered to keep himself dry, since he is too concerned with giving pleasure only to himself: "The only thing that sustains one through life is the consciousness of the immense inferiority of everybody else, and this is a feeling that I have always cultivated."

Incapable of going off at the right time, the Remarkable Rocket fails to shoot up into the sky at the royal fireworks display. In a descending slide worthy of Thomas Pynchon, the Remarkable Rocket goes out to no effect whatsoever:

Then he began to feel a curious tingling sensation all over him.

"Now I am going to explode," he cried. "I shall set the whole world on fire, and make such a noise, that nobody will talk about anything else for a whole year." And he certainly did explode. Bang! Bang! Bang! went the gunpowder. There was no doubt about it.

But nobody heard him, not even the two little boys, for they were sound asleep.

Then all that was left of him was the stick, and this fell down on the back of a Goose who was taking a walk by the side of the ditch.

"Good heavens!" cried the Goose. "It is going to rain sticks"; and she rushed into the water.

"I knew I should create a great sensation," gasped the Rocket, and he went out.

The great line of Nonsense writers, from Lear and Carroll through Perelman and Pynchon, would not disown this grand epiphany, this fit conclusion to the narcissistic ego's orgy of self-love. Freud, who has his own recondite place among the seers of Nonsense, taught us that the ego must fall in love with an object other than itself in order to avoid becoming very ill indeed. "The Remarkable Rocket" is Wilde's parodistic presentation of this dark Freudian truth, and certainly is part of Wilde's permanent literary legacy, worthy of the genius who also gave us *The Importance of Being Earnest* and "The Decay of Lying."

V

The prose-poem is a notoriously difficult genre to transpose into English, and Wilde, at his best, superbly understood that to succeed in English it must become more parable than poem. His first prose-poem, "The Artist," fails because it lacks parabolic force, since its insight is too obvious. The

reader performs no labor of understanding in moving from the image of "The Sorrow that Endureth for Ever" to the new image of "The Pleasure that Abideth for a Moment," or more simply, from the ideology of realism to the humane hedonism of Walter Pater.

But the next prose-poem, "The Doer of Good," is an extraordinary parable, celebrated by Yeats, though he regretted that Wilde may have spoiled it in the passage from oral recital to the ornate diction of the text. Jesus comes to four people he had healed or saved—the leper, the blind man, Mary Magdalen, and Lazarus—and they reply to the Christ in unanswerable paradoxes. The healed leper, now a reveler and a drunkard, asks: "How else should I live?" The cured blind man, now an idolator of the forgiven Magdalen, asks: "At what else should I look?" The Magdalen, who will not walk the way set forth by the normative Torah, is beyond asking anything and laughs that her own way "is a pleasant way." Finally, the resurrected Lazarus asks the overwhelming rhetorical question "What else should I do but weep?"

Yeats may have been too concerned about the ornateness of diction to have seen how subtly Wilde has arranged this poem in prose. Each time, Jesus touches again the person he has healed, saved, or resurrected by a previous laying on of hands, but each time the touch is different. He touches the former leper on the shoulder, the restored blind man on the hand, the Magdalen on her painted raiment, and the resurrected Lazarus, most erotically, on "the long locks of his hair." Each touch is precise, because each is a clear displacement of desire, as though Wilde's Jesus were restrained by his normative Judaic allegiances from yielding to his own true nature. The leper's shoulder is a displacement of his Dionysiac mouth or lips, now freed of sores, while the hand of the man formerly blind substitutes for his eyes. Painted raiment and the long hair of Lazarus manifestly become fetishes, in each case for sexual parts. Drink, sexual excess, despair of life itself; these are the reality that the Christ himself cannot abolish, the reality everywhere underlying Wilde's fantasy and wit.

Oscar Wilde's best prose poem, "The Disciple," written in 1893, represents the consummate expression of Wilde's psychological and spiritual sense of the abyss. It is difficult to see how a poem in prose could be better. The diction and prose rhythm, far from being ornate, are of a limpid clarity, graciously mitigating the savage irony of "The Disciple's" awareness of both natural and human limits.

When Narcissus died the pool of his pleasure changed from a cup of sweet waters into a cup of salt tears, and the Oreads came weeping through the woodland that they might sing to the pool and give it comfort.

And when they saw that the pool had changed from a cup of sweet waters into a cup of salt tears, they loosened the green tresses of their hair and cried to the pool and said, "We do not

wonder that you should mourn in this manner for Narcissus, so beautiful was he."

"But was Narcissus beautiful?" said the pool."

Who should know better than you? answered the Oreads. "Us did he ever pass by, but you he sought for, and would lie on your banks and look down at you, and in the mirror of your waters he would mirror his own beauty."

And the pool answered, "But I loved Narcissus because, as he lay on my banks and looked down at me, in the mirror of his eyes I saw ever my own beauty mirrored."

Kierkegaard might have called this "The Case of the Contemporary Disciple Doubled." Narcissus never saw the pool, nor the pool Narcissus, but at least the pool mourns him. Wilde's despair transcended even his humane wit, and could not be healed by the critical spirit or by the marvelous rightness of his perceptions and sensations. Wilde, like Pater both a contemporary of Freud and a Freudian before Freud, as it were, anticipates the fundamental Freudian formula. All love initially is self-love, and can return to the ego when the object is withdrawn. The ego is always a bodily ego, and is necessarily a narcissistic ego, and so partly unconscious or repressed. These realizations, which in Pater and Freud led to Stoicism, in the more emotional and flamboyant Wilde could lead only to authentic despair.

Something of the same despair oddly vitalizes "The Master," where the despair mounts up to become a horror, where the homoerotic and masochistic would-be Christ weeps not for Jesus but for himself: "All things that this man has done I have done also. And yet they have not crucified me." Wilde, having rushed towards his own crucifixion by British society, in his long letter to Lord Alfred Douglas from Reading Gaol, January-March 1897 (*De Profundis*, as we now call it), insisted that Jesus, like Wilde himself, had created his own catastrophe out of profound imaginative need:

And it is the imaginative quality of Christ's own nature that makes him this palpitating centre of romance. The strange figures of poetic drama and ballad are made by the imagination of others, but out of his own imagination entirely did Jesus of Nazareth create himself. The cry of Isaiah had really no more to do with his coming than the song of the nightingale has to do with the rising of the moon—no more, though perhaps no less. He was the denial as well as the affirmation of prophecy. For every expectation that he fulfilled, there was another that he destroyed.

This Jesus is High Romantic rather than nihilistic, as though Wilde does not quite dare wholly to assimilate the Christ to himself. The fifth prose-poem, "The House of Judgment," embraces nihilism, when the Man assures God that he cannot be sentenced to Hell by the Deity "because in