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Finding Victorias/reading biographies

Fassiotto, Michael Eugene, Ph.D.
University of Hawai'i, 1992

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FINDING VICTORIAS/
READING BIOGRAPHIES

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ABSTRACT

Using biographies of Queen Victoria as an example, Finding Victorias/Reading Biographies traces the process a reader follows and the problems encountered when reading biographies. For the reader, the first step involves the recognition of the text as biography. This recognition is based on the presence of three attributes: that the text is organized chronologically, that the events discussed are considered "fact," and that the dominant general purpose of the text is to inform. Once the reader has recognized these defining attributes the text is processed through the reader's memory. Normally the reader will process the text using one or more of several perspectives. These perspectives can be classified into three general groups: those of source, those of compositions, and those of meaning. Finding Victorias/Reading Biographies posits that the perspectives are overlapping and that the reader will always use more than one perspective to process a text and because no two readers use exactly the same combination of perspectives in processing the text, each reading of a biography creates a new text.
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Positive, Negative, and Neutral References

Queen Victoria in the First Four Chapters of Greville's Memoirs
This is not a biography. For that the reader is directed to the two lists of biographies contained in the "Bibliography" at the end of this essay. The first list contains the works relevant to this work; the second contains other biographies which are not. I have read all of the biographies on the first list and some on the second. The better ones are mentioned within this text. Because I have read over seventy biographies of one kind or another which focus on Queen Victoria as the central subject—a task I would not wish on any other human being—please accept my word for it: they each tell pretty much the same story.

Second, this is not a work of literary criticism. A book of literary criticism this size, it seems to me, would have to lay out a complete theory of biography. This one does not. While it strays once in a while close to criticism, borrowing ideas eclectically, I like to believe—haphazardly I sometimes think—from many of what George Simson, the editor of Biography: An Interdisciplinary Quarterly has called the current "ivities," it is not a consistent
critical attack. I would refer those interested in biographical criticism again to the "Bibliography" at the end of the book, and, for those interested in developing such a theory, to Dr. Simson's journal.

As encouragement to would-be theorists, I would also like to remind the reader that biography as a genre receives a surprising amount of discussion. Given the number of reviews of biographies, the number of books about biography, the number of periodicals from People and Us magazines to Biography, devoted to biography, and the number of articles about biography appearing in other journals, one would assume that biography as a genre would be a large factor in publishing. According to Publisher's Weekly (March 11, 1988, pp. 30–33), however, biographies make up only about 4% of the hardbound and paperback books published in the United States yearly and a little more than 1.8% of the mass market books published. Given the critical interest, one can assume that the small number of biographies published indicates a big return on the investment or a serious biography-buying public. Perhaps both.

This work is a description of how we read biographies. It makes several points about the reading process as it pertains to biography and I would like to save the busy reader some time by explaining what these points are. First, this book contends that in reading biography, the reader is very conscious of the genre. Readers are consistently aware that the text is based on events
which are assumed to have actually taken place, that the text will be arranged in roughly chronological order, and that the author has provided information about the subject. If these three conditions are not met, readers decide that they are reading something other than biography and change to a reading process other than the one outlined here. If they accept the text as biography, they move to a second step.

The second step involves choosing a perspective from which to process the text. This book discusses seven different perspectives which are divided into three general groups. Two of these perspectives, those of subject and source, deal with the raw material, the evidence of biographical writing. Two deal with the structure and method of the biographer. Three—belief, context, and symbol—deal with the levels of explicit meaning in the text.

The important thing for the reader to understand is that no one actually reads any biography from only one perspective. We mix and match the perspectives as we read the text depending upon the content and difficulty of the reading. For the average reader, whatever is easiest will be the reading method employed. Each reader of biography, then, creates a particular understanding of the text. As a result, each reader of biography discovers a different subject. While the biographer might give several clues or structures which will naturally lead the reader to see the text in a particular way, the actual process is based on the reader's
particular experience and the combination of different perspectives applied to the reading.

Having said all of this, I would like to remind the reader that the text which follows simply elaborates on those ideas. Therefore, should your interest lie in some other direction than reading about reading, I would invite you, again, to use the lists at the back of this book. If, however, you would like to read about reading, and read about my reading of Queen Victoria biographies, I invite you to read on and create your own version of what you read here.
March 27th. Went yesterday to Wilkie to sit for the picture of the Queen's first Council. The likenesses are generally pretty good, but it is a very unfaithful representation of what actually took place. It was, of course, impossible to preserve all the details without sacrificing the effect, but the picture has some glaring improprieties, which diminish its interest, and deprive it of all value as an historical piece.

Charles Greville, Memoirs

You could hear her first: the rush of air as the footman, almost unseen, opened wide the door; the rustle of layers of silk; the soft tap of the cane upon the floor; and there she was on the arm of a tall Indian who looked taller and much slimmer because she was small and rather round.

He helped her across the room to one end of the long, oval, Empire table, the table's edge paralleling the book-laden walls of the
room. After pulling out the chair and settling her into it, with a slight bow, and perhaps a salaam, he disappeared. The doors closed tightly behind him, and she sat alone, quite alone.

At her end of the table, a morocco leather writing surface had been laid out. In front of it was an inkstand. It was not the one her son had given her—the one with her portrait at the bottom of the well—somehow she found it quite unsuitable to drown herself in ink. Instead it was a large, beautiful Empire inkwell, a gift from the former French Emperor. Next to it were several pens with her preferred nibs, a blotter, and many sheets of two types of paper—folded stationery with a sketch of Windsor by Landseer engraved on the upper left-hand corner of the first page and unfolded sheets of the same linen stock. Both types had thick black borders. But she didn't plan to write today; after all, the Munshi was not there to blot her lines. Instead she would read.

Half of the books, those which ranged in precise red and gold morocco covers from behind her around the right side of the room, were her monument. They were the picture she had created of herself. The journals, her daily records of events, both big and small, but all important enough to be recorded, began directly behind her. Next, across the right wall, came the letters: first, the personal letters to her family and friends; then, the notes to her secretary and prime ministers; and last, the official letters, the ones sent out from one office or another of her government. These took up almost one full side of the room. Last were her longer memoranda, her pictures of
things as she chose to see them. She included among them the lives
she had commissioned: the great biographies of him—biographies in
which she had played such an important creative part—and several
of the smaller ones about herself.

On the other half of the shelves were the responses, books
written about her and the reign, readings of her life and those of
others close to her. They were the result of her works and days and
creations. They began with the histories, directly opposite her.
Then, ranging back toward her were the biographies—those in which
she had had no hand. The drama came next—how many times had
she appeared as a character upon the stage? There were poems,
then, not many and none of the others as noble as those of Mr.
Tennyson, but poems nonetheless. Last came the fiction, stories in
which she played the leading, or at least, a major part. They were all
there waiting to be summoned. At a look, an invisible servant would
slide them from the walls and place them on the writing surface
before her.

Today, she would read biography, and, at her nod, a book
quietly left the shelf and lay open in front of her. At another nod,
the book would have opened to a page which would have satisfied
her curiosity, but she opened the book herself anyway, for
sometimes it felt good simply to touch the leather and paper. Within
a few minutes she was reading intently.

As always, she was surprised by how quickly she had been
drawn in. As usual, she was surprised that the record of her days
had a certain sweep. It really wasn't that she was modest; she was very conscious of her position. But she thought of herself as ordinary, as one with her people. She knew that it was almost impossible to talk about her countrymen or her country without talking about herself. She knew that the sweep was in large measure due to the length of her reign. But even though she knew all of this, she was always surprised when she read about herself.

She was perusing a passage about one of her prime ministers, about her relationship with him and how she had reacted to him. As she read it, she seemed puzzled, the eyebrows which were almost gone were raised, then, knit together. She was dumbfounded and, at first, annoyed. This was not how it was; this was not what she meant. Hadn't they read the journal? Hadn't they seen the letters? Where were they finding this? She looked around the room at her own works, then stared emptily at the closed door. After a moment, her mouth opened wide, showing all of her teeth and gums. She began to shake. It was with silent laughter, for ghosts laugh out loud only in the movies.

Most likely Queen Victoria would not really have laughed. It would appear that she had a sense of humor but not when it came to what she considered the honor of the monarchy. She admitted, for example, that her uncle, William IV, was "undignified," "peculiar," and "not highly gifted," but she was furious that Greville said so. Even
more offensive to her was Greville's version of her other uncle, George IV. It was "language not fit for any gentleman to use of any other gentleman or human being, still less of his Sovereign" (III.ii.354). No, most likely she would not have laughed at most of her biographies. She might have frowned at some, and she might have raged at others, but she probably would not have laughed.

Nor probably would she have laughed at Routh's portrait of her walking a cheetah across a Jamaican lawn wearing only the order of the Garter and her widow's cap. She probably would not have laughed at that either. But whether she laughed or not does not really matter. True, what was believed about her probably mattered a great deal to Queen Victoria, but like our own opinion about our own lives, her version of what her life meant is only one "voice" among many possibilities. A biography is a reading of a life, and each reading, including those of the subject and even a given author, are but possible variations.

The possibilities, of course, are finite, but limited only by the number of readers who interest themselves in the life. This is why there have been over 150 versions of Queen Victoria's life published since her death. Each offers a different reading of the life, and each has found an audience to accept, reject, or study that reading.

Each is also unique in some ways. There are political biographies, psychological biographies, historical biographies, even literary biographies, and a whole series of biographies which deal with her relationships with the members of her family: Victoria-and-

While all of these biographies are different, as one reads through them, it becomes obvious that they all have things in common. More or less, they all have the same structure. More or less, they all deal with the same events. More or less, they all have the same goal. And, more or less, these commonalities define biography.

Unlike Queen Victoria's reading of her life, however, the "more or less" here does matter—at least if one believes that the commonalities define the genre. As William R. Siebenshuh has pointed out, the reader "will automatically interpret and respond to a poem or a biography according to basic traditional generic expectations" (116). These expectations are, in fact, the generic limits of biography: limits of organization, content, and purpose. They operate symbiotically, and in recognizing the rhetorical signposts, the reader grants biography its generic validity. Biographers have tried to free the genre from its limitations, but
without the limits, biography ceases to exist. Moreover, the limits give both reader and writer a framework within which to work.

THE MARCH OF TIME

The strongest of these limits on biographical form is the obligatory chronological order of the narrative. This chronological determinant is defined by the "bios" of biography: people are born and eventually die, and the "stories" of their lives are framed by the beginning and the end. In many ways, the organization of the biography is the simplest of its limits to recognize, for when we speak of biographical organization, we are speaking of chronology.

Sometimes, particularly in the shorter biographies, this biographical time line is absolute. The chapters of Collieu's Queen Victoria, for example, are broken down into neat little blocks each of which is titled by dates:

1. "1819-1837"
2. "1837-1841"
3. "1841-1861"
4. "1862-1874"
5. "1874-1901"

The blocks are not equal: the first ("1819-1837"), the life of the Princess Victoria, covers 18 years; the second ("1837-1841"), the
unmarried youth of Queen Victoria, comprises 4 years; the married years ("1841–1861") is a twenty-year block; her withdrawal into mourning for Albert is 12 years ("1862–1874"); and her apotheosis as the symbol of empire covers the last 27 years of her life. The amount of textual space is also unequal: 18 years is reduced to 6 pages of text; 4 years to 9 pages; 20 years to 16 pages; 12 to 10; and 27 to 10. However, even though there is no correlation between the number of years the block covers and the number of pages the block contains, one's concentration from Chapter One through Chapter Five is firmly focused on the inevitable march of time.

Many biographers have tried to break up this narrative march. Elizabeth Longford's *Queen Victoria: Born to Succeed*, for instance, uses overlapping time blocks, as demonstrated by final-chapter headings listed in the *Table of Contents*:

<table>
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<th>Chapter</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>XXXII</td>
<td>&quot;Home Rule 1885–86&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>XXXIII</td>
<td>&quot;The Jubilee Bonnet 1887–91&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>XXXIV</td>
<td>&quot;'Still Endure' 1892–95&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>XXXV</td>
<td>&quot;'The Labourer's Task' 1892–1900&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>XXXVI</td>
<td>&quot;'Mother's Come Home' 1890–1901&quot;</td>
</tr>
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But, even though Chapters Thirty-Five and Thirty-Six overlap, the general picture is predominantly chronological.

Strachey, in his *Queen Victoria*, tries to control or bend time by focusing the chapters on his thematic interest, the men in her life:
I. "Antecedents" [The Duke of Kent, her father; George IV; and William IV]

II. "Childhood" [King Leopold and John Conroy]

III. "Lord Melbourne"

IV. "Marriage" [Albert]

V. "Lord Palmerston"

VI. "Last Years of the Prince Consort"

VII. "Widowhood"

VIII. "Mr. Gladstone and Lord Beaconsfield"

IX. "Old Age"

X. "The End"

The shortest chapters are those without a dominant male figure (Chapters 7, 9, & 10), so that textual time is also uneven. Moreover, Strachey is forced to double back several times to pick up ideas which had appeared earlier on an absolute time line. This return in time is necessitated by the audience's desire to see the different elements of the life on a time scale.

Many biographers, particularly those in the twentieth century, troubled by the chronological restrictions of traditional biography, have often tried to camouflage the time line. Flashforwards or flashbacks are among the most common novelistic techniques used to distort or hide time. The flashback, as used by David Duff in his dual biography, Victoria and Albert, begins with the royal pair's wedding
night: Victoria is lying in the wedding bed; Albert is in the next room playing the piano—"at moments of stress he always turned to music."
The rest of the first part of the book is a long series of flashbacks to explain how the couple arrived there. These unfold with clockwork precision.

The second part describes how Albert achieves the dominant role in the royal ménage. At first glance, it would appear that Duff's treatment of Albert's personality is more analytical than chronological. He discusses Albert's plans for the Royal Family, how the Prince first rid himself of Melbourne, then, the Queen's former governess, the Baroness Lehzen. Then, in turn, Albert's projects as a builder, his role as a parent and his unpopularity with the English aristocracy are discussed.

It happens that each of these areas dominates a part of Albert's married life; that is, first he plans, then the English electorate rids him of Melbourne, then he is able to rid himself of Lehzen, then he reforms the management of Buckingham Palace, and then he builds Osborne House and last he builds Balmoral. The last two chapters seem out of chronological sync—there is no "then" there. But, since Albert was the father of nine children born over almost a twenty-year span, his fatherly projects could fit almost anywhere. Likewise his popularity with the English aristocracy, according to Duff,

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1 Analytics and chronology are not mutually exclusive, and in biography most readers would like them to coexist. But even when they do coexist, one must dominate the other. The biographer's emphasis is either on presenting the events (chronology) or on explaining events (analysis).
progressively decreased the more they grew to know him, so that at the end of his life it was at an all-time low. Furthermore, the second part of the book is sandwiched between "The First Nine Months," a chapter which discusses the early married period, and "A Dream Beyond Recalling," which deals with Albert's death. So again, the overall organization follows the curve of the life.

In an attempt to soften chronology, biographers themselves have tried to fog up the chronological channel by calling time something else. But whether the curve follows a birth-to-death pattern or what Margot Peters has called the "life is short, art is long" pattern of her own group biography of G.B. Shaw and his actress friends, or what Dennis Petrie has called the "retrospective" pattern of Leon Edel's Henry James biography, or the "string of beads" pattern Edel himself describes in the Preface to his House of Lions group biography of Bloomsbury, the pattern is time-based (Peters in Friedson 50; Petrie 196–197; Edel, Bloomsbury 13). In biography, time is a formal barrier, the formal barrier which accounts for all of those depressing last chapters when the great lady breaks down, falls apart, and, in general, is wheeled inexorably toward the grave.

When the author breaks free of the grip of time, what results is generally not biography. Dorothy Thompson emphasizes this defining line in her introduction to Queen Victoria: Gender and Power, her analysis of the effects of the Queen's gender on the political movements of the period. While her book is listed as biography by her publishers, Thompson draws the generic line when
she points out that her text is "not strictly speaking a biography."

Thompson's book treats analytically the Chartist movement, the Queen's marriage, her seclusion and her favorites. Because this is treated analytically and topically, the story moves away from the chronological development of the life.

Embodied within our concept of time is our assumption that it is linear. Second only to this assumption of the linearity of time is our belief that we are the interpreters of time—because "this" has happened, "that" happens later. This cause and effect focus becomes an essential part of biography's structure. Had Strachey, for example, changed his pattern and written a series of chapters discussing the influence of each of the men in Queen Victoria's life, organizationally, he would have moved out of narrative into psychological analysis. He would have described, not the progress of Queen Victoria's life, but the different aspects of her thought. In this sense, he would have been writing political or psychological analysis, not biography.

While these genres often overlap, the emphasis in each is specifically different. Biography is diachronic; analysis synchronic. Biography can be analytical but focuses on what Peters calls the "irresistible curve" of time; analysis freezes the subject out of time. In fact, Peter's "irresistible curve" expresses the common belief that a life is a complete entity, and that each life can have a meaning. Part of biography's attraction is that it confirms our belief in life's meaning. It assures us that life can be discussed as a completed
series of acts, that the life's events total up to something. This is the "bios" of the genre and because "bios" is tied to time, time rather than any other form of organization must dominate the genre.

The chronological narrative achieves three effects. First, it entertains us with the feeling that we are reading a good story. This feeling is further intensified in biography as we watch the unfolding of character over a period of time. This accounts for a great deal of biography's popularity, for the unfolding of character achieves a fiction-like quality. In fact, biography is about as close as history comes to the human fascination with fiction.

Second, the unfolding of the story—the "because of this, that happens"—makes the text developmental. The cliché, "the child is the father of the man," is, after all, a reference to biography. If one looks at the unfolding of time in the Queen Victoria biographies, this developmental aspect of biography is clear, particularly in the earlier works. In most of the early biographies—Strachey's, Sitwell's, and Sidney Lee's—at least two thirds of the texts are devoted to the first half of the Queen's life. It is as if, after the death of Albert, Victoria simply went through the motions and played out the patterns established by her early mentors.

There is also a theoretical assumption in many of the early biographies that the Queen was not molded by events but that her personality is a flowering of gifts granted by the fates before her birth. This is the type of supposition that underlies Dorothy Baynes' relatively late *The Youthful Queen Victoria* (1952) which covers only
the first twenty years of Victoria's life. Baynes argues that after the Queen's marriage, personality developments were simply accoutrements and ameliorations in personality, that the early years "reveal her nature displaying itself with all the fervor and overemphasis of youth" (9). The basic assumption is, then, that by the time she married, the Queen's personality was set.

More recent approaches have benefited from the increased availability of materials concerning the second half of the reign. The last volumes of Victoria's letters did not appear until the end of the twenties, after Strachey had already completed his *Queen Victoria*. Other letters, to and from Gladstone, were not published until the thirties and late forties when his children decided that Gladstone's version of his dealings with the Queen should be told. Moreover, one of the more valuable points of view about Queen Victoria, contained in the official biography of Sir Henry Ponsonby—which introduced many of the unpublished letters and other memoranda by the Queen's Private Secretary during the latter part of the reign—did not appear until 1943.

But aside from the increased documentation, more recent biographers have also tended to accept the premise that one's personality continues to change after age 42. Longford's biography emphasizes this belief by a neat, almost perfect, division between the two halves of the life. Weintraub's *Victoria: An Intimate Biography* which seeks to understand Victoria's emotional life and accepts the possibility of an emotional life after age 40—Queen Victoria herself
thought it strange and odd that Palmerston married after 50—actually spends almost 50 pages more on the second half of the life than on the first. This allows him to discuss the Queen's relationships with both her servant, John Brown, and prime minister, Disraeli. The point is that no matter what the current psychological beliefs may be, all biographies show a personality in the process of development and that development or experience is achieved on a chronological line.

Last, and most important, the chronological development of the narrative creates an aura of credibility for the reader. Most readers equate the historical narrative with truth. There are two reasons for this. First, the average reader sees time as an extra-authorial organizational pattern. There seems to be a supposition which runs through the reading of biography that "God" has made time and, therefore, in biography, the biographer is simply God's scribe. Most readers will see the exposition of the most important points in the life of the Queen of England as less consciously constructed than an argument which would explain why these are the most important

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2 One could also argue that this belief in the objectivity of chronology is why biographers try so often to destroy chronology or to call it by another name. It would seem that modern biographers, in particular, are not content to accept Matthew, Mark, Luke or John as role models, but would prefer to be God Himself or Herself.

On the other hand, there is some justification for the biographer's protest. One finds a belief that somehow biography is a second-class genre and that biographers are, as a result, second-class scribes. Writers from Virginia Woolf to Daniel Maxdenat have railed against this attitude on the part of the reading public, an attitude which is based in part on the belief that the biographer is simply an arranger of "facts."
points in the life of the Queen of England. Obviously, this is not so, for choosing the four points is as author-centered as deciding on the criteria for the choice. But because it appears that an objective force—fate or God or whatever—has organized the life, not the biography, biography becomes a kind of sacred scripture. Moreover, sheer practice and our belief in historical fact have conditioned us to see historical narrative as equivalent to truth. All historical narrative deals with "true" events. This pattern is called "history" and history is "truth." Therefore, the form, in a sense, dictates our belief in the veracity of the details.

JUST THE FACTS

To achieve chronological order, one has to accept the notion that events are clearly defined in space and time. These events, the "facts" of a life, are the second generic limit of biography, for all of the biographies of Queen Victoria, like all biographies, are "fact-conditioned." Like chronology, the "factualness" of biography lends the genre an aura of objectivity and of truth. It follows for most readers that if the events of the story exist independently in time and space, then the matter of biography is truth and the truth become synonymous with fact.

Like the chronological limit, biographical "facts" are not quite as clear-cut as the confidence they inspire, for even what is meant by a "fact" is open to dispute. Many modern critics and readers, for
example, draw a distinction between the "event," that is the moment as it happened in time, the moment which cannot be communicated or experienced, and the "fact," the encoded statement of the event, the communicated or written interpretation of the event. This distinction underscores the concept that the encoding of an event into fact gives the event context and implication.

For example, most biographies treat as "fact" that the future Queen Victoria was christened "Alexandrina Victoria" on June 24, 1819, in the Cupola Room of Kensington Palace. Within this statement of "fact," however, is a series of implications which give the event added social, historical, and political meaning. If we know that Kensington Palace is a royal residence, the site implies a social connection with the royal family. The date sets it at the end of the Hanoverian reign when England was turning toward industrialism and suffrage was becoming universal. Even her names, according to Melbourne, were chosen to annoy the Prince Regent who disliked both the Tsar, from whom the first name was drawn, and the Duchess of Kent, from whom the second name came. The facts, then, are not necessarily the "truth" pure and simple. Unless, however, we find contradictory "facts," we accept them as truth, no matter how subjective and distorted they may be, no matter how heavily they are encrusted with social and historical meaning. They are the basis from which the "life" is constructed.

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3 This point is most completely discussed in William Epstein's Recognizing Biography, (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1989).
The aura of truthful and objective biographical "fact" is further intensified because in most cases the data is secondary and has already appeared in other historical narratives. It is the publication itself which gives even the most speculative source the added aura of "truth." For example, in Strachey's 1921 biography there appear two sentences concerning Albert's parents:

The ducal court was not noted for the strictest of morals; the Duke was a man of gallantry, and it was rumoured that the Duchess followed her husband's example. There were scandals: one of the Court Chamberlains, a clever and cultivated man of Jewish extraction, was talked of; at last there was a separation, followed by a divorce. (135)

Strictly speaking, Strachey has said little. He has clearly stated that his source is rumor and that there was gossip concerning Albert's mother and a Jewish Court Chamberlain. But because of the arrangement of the details and, one would assume, Strachey's reliance on the various prejudices of his readers, the "fact" is loaded with possibilities, loaded enough that for 50 years writers have continued to deal with Strachey's insinuation.

Ten years after Strachey, Bolitho writes in *Albert the Good*:

Even if Lieutenant von Hanstein had been of Jewish extraction, the letters of Luise [the Duchess of Coburg, Albert's mother], the diaries of her mother-in-law, and the most confidential family letters and papers preserved at Coburg, none of which have been withheld from the biographer by the present Duke,
coupled with the fact that the Prince Consort was four years old when these things happened, remove all possible doubt as to his legitimacy and the purity of his blood. The family portraits show that many of the early Coburgs had heavy features and faintly semitic noses; the Prince Consort's grandmother had almost Jewish features. (18)

It is not exactly clear whether Bolitho is more concerned here about the legitimacy or the purity. From the final explanation, one would assume the latter. Strachey's insinuating bait has found its fish.

Longford's 1964 biography dismisses the idea of Albert's illegitimate and partly Jewish parentage as a fabrication which attempts to account for Albert's differences with his father and brother:

A story survived late into the reign of Queen Victoria and was believed by many of her Court that Prince Albert was illegitimate, probably with a Jewish father. His extraordinary unlikeness to the two Ernests, father and brother, both in character and looks, may partly account for the insistency of a tradition without apparent foundation. (129)

Longford in paying enough heed to the "story"—thus, classifying it as fiction—to dismiss it, gives it more prominence. She also implies that it was no longer repeated by the end of the reign, skipping over Strachey, whose earlier portrait of the Queen Longford has not only read but called "inimitable."
Stanley Weintraub's 1987 biography attacks Strachey and the "fact" head-on:

Only in 1921 did an allegation appear, in a publication in Berlin, that Albert may have been fathered by someone other than Duke Ernest—not the romantic lieutenant [Hanstein], but the Jewish court chamberlain, Baron von Mayern. The following year Lytton Strachey seized the baseless calumny, suggesting bitchily that the young Duchess followed her husband's scandalous example, and that the Jewish court chamberlain had been "talked of." The Duke had indeed charged his wife with infidelity long before her flight from Coburg with Hanstein, even naming the guilty party as Count Solms, but the Duke was only deflecting more serious allegations about his own morals. (130)

Weintraub not only labels the "calumny" anti-Semitic but also removes it from the good, safe days of the nineteenth century to the more insidious Berlin of the twenties. Also in a sense, he dismisses what he sees as Strachey's anti-Semitism as homosexual "bitchiness."

Albert's rumored illegitimacy and Jewishness give to Strachey's biography a destructive irony. His irony is not necessarily and certainly not singly directed against the Royal Family, but it surely makes a target of those who would hold the Royal Family a symbol of the best and purest that are England. For Strachey these rumored "facts" are a device to mock the reader's belief in the purity of the Victorian age, of Victoria's court, of the Royals themselves. The
responses to Strachey, whether as defenses of the purity of the bloodlines of Albert's descendants, as attempts to set the record straight, or as attacks on Strachey's artistic method, ignore, for the most part, the essential point that the circumstances of Albert's birth do not seem to have affected very deeply his conduct as an adult.⁴

Even more important, Strachey's published use of the idea of Albert's Jewish parentage seems to establish it as a "fact." Strachey himself never cites his source. None of the books listed in the bibliography contain the reference. In order to deal with it, Longford and Weintraub create sources for the fact—for Longford the source is nineteenth-century court rumor, for Weintraub an "anti-Semitic tract." However doubtful the accuracy of the source, the publication itself makes the source "factual." This validation is compounded when the responders react to this very shaky inference as if it were fact.⁵

⁴ Albert seems to have been supportive of his father and brother most of his life, having shed many tears when Ernest I died in 1844. His brother, Ernest II, whom Longford labels as morally as black as his father, brought Louise's body back to Coburg after her death. She lies there today in a tomb next to her first husband. Moreover, Victoria and Albert's fourth daughter, Princess Louise, was named for her paternal grandmother.

⁵ This use of inference as fact, inference which becomes more factual because it has been published, reaches a kind of glorious apotheosis in David Duff's dual biography, Victoria and Albert. Duff's book seeks to show that Albert was a more negative force in the marriage than most biographers grant and that Albert was part of a greater Coburgian plot—instigated by King Leopold of the Belgians, Victoria and Albert's common uncle—to secure the fortunes of the Coburg family. Duff's rather complicated argument begins with the supposition that most biographers have wasted their time looking for the Jewish father:

1. Albert was not the son of a Jewish court chamberlain.
2. Instead of having a large family as was traditional for the Coburgs, the Duchess Louise stopped at two boys.
Publication, then, gives almost any idea the illusion of truth; it also lends the same sort of "truth" to any authorial opinion. A good example of this occurs in two biographies which discuss the descendants of Queen Victoria. In his *Recollections of Three Reigns*, Frederick Ponsonby, the son of Queen Victoria's Private Secretary and himself Assistant Private Secretary to Victoria, Edward VII and George V, discusses his trip to the Danish Court with Edward VII:

The King was wonderful. I knew he was quite as much bored as we all were at the stiff formality of the Danish Court and yet he never showed it but on the contrary seemed to be quite happy, and did his utmost to please Queen Alexandra, who was

3. The Duchess had flirted and made the Duke very jealous even before Albert's birth.
4. The Duchess made it plain that Albert was her favorite child.
5. Albert was very different from his father.

Therefore, while Albert’s father is not the Jewish Court Chamberlain, a father other than Ernest I is possible.
1. King Leopold, then Prince Leopold, was in Coburg nine months before Albert was born.
2. Queen Victoria, who knew better, left this event out of Theodore Martin's authorized biography of the Prince Consort.
3. Leopold and the Duchess got on very well together. The Duchess even after her divorce often wrote asking to be remembered to Leopold.
4. The Duchess parted with her children easily and gave up much for her divorce.
5. Leopold was particularly careful to make sure that Albert, not any of the other Coburgs, married Victoria.

Therefore, Leopold is Albert's true father.

It is a conclusion, however complicated and circumstantial, which makes Duff's reading of both Albert's and Victoria's lives work. It is treated as fact in the text and Duff's book would be less interesting if it were not mentioned. It is also another example of the artistic use of inference—sort of Strachey gone wild. The whole thing is based on the original publication of Strachey's implication which gives the idea the semblance of fact.
in seventh heaven and delighted to be in her old home surrounded by friends of her youth. (267)

Theo Aronson in *Grandmama of Europe: The Crowned Descendants of Europe* remarks in passing:

In the Amalienborg Palace in Copenhagen there might occasionally be some entertaining but in the country castles of Bersdorf and Fredensborg everything was on the homeliest scale. The most illustrious royal guests were obliged to live *en famille*. (117)

Here lies a contradiction growing obviously from different tastes and backgrounds. It is a contradiction based on assessment not on fact, but it is treated as fact by each of the authors.

Ponsonby is habituated to life at the court of Edward VII. Whether life at the Danish Court was formal or not, it is *different* for him. His boredom could be an entirely natural response to this change. Edward's life was also divided between Queen Alexandra and his various mistresses. Alice Keppel, his *maîtresse en titre*, for example, is mentioned by Ponsonby as being in the party whenever the Queen is away. It is, therefore, possible that the family life of Edward VII was simply less "interesting" to his associates than his other social life. Moreover, one would assume that an Assistant Private Secretary would not have had much to do when the King was staying with relatives. One could also assume that sitting around
waiting to be called could be boring. Finally Ponsonby could also be 
transferring his own admitted boredom to the Prince and the Court.\footnote{Another aspect of this problem, the question of context, will be treated 
extensively in Chapter Seven.}

Aronson, on the other hand, finds the Danish Court homey, 
friendly, and "unaffected" and sees in the games and family 
conversation a reflection of *gemütlich* informality. His examples of 
life among the happy Danes include breakfasts which were not 
served but set out in a buffet for the guests; afternoons filled by 
riding bicycles and horses and by playing practical jokes, and after­
dinner entertainment—dinner was served at the unfashionably early 
hour of six—consisting of card and parlor games. What Ponsonby 
finds "boring," Aronson finds "unaffected." Neither view is, strictly 
speaking, factual, but each is treated as such in the respective texts.

If the "facts" themselves are a matter of opinion, what is 
important as fact in life-writing is also a matter of authorial 
subjectivity. In Hector Bolitho's *Victoria: The Widow and Her Son*, 
there are constant reminders of colonial affairs in New Zealand and 
Australia. While information concerning the Royal Family and the 
colonies is undoubtedly interesting to colonials, there is little in 
Queen Victoria or Edward's life which is directly concerned with the 
South Seas; neither made the voyage out. When we read that Bolitho 
was a travel writer of books on both Australia and New Zealand, 
suddenly his use of what seems like irrelevant facts makes sense. 
One could assume that he had the material left over from other
studies or that his personal interest led him to give increased importance to information which does not generally relate to the life.\footnote{The biographer's personal interest can also develop a tangential study which can serve to highlight a secondary aspect of Queen Victoria studies. For example, Weintraub's attack on Strachey calls attention to the number of Jews who are mentioned in his book and not in other biographies. His is the only biography of the seventy or so under scrutiny which discusses Moses Montefiore, a wealthy philanthropist, who once gave Princess Victoria a key to his garden, a key which the Queen still possessed some 60 years later. Montefiore is again mentioned some 400 pages later when the Queen suggests that his baronetcy become hereditary. Nathaniel Rothschild is also mentioned several times irrelevantly—he once gave £1000 less than the Queen to a charity for the starving Irish—and sometimes relevantly—he financed the purchase of the Suez Canal. And the Dreyfus affair, which rates one sentence each in Lee and Longford and nothing at all in Strachey and most of the other non-French biographies, is developed twice. Once because a Russian diplomat made the remark that Jews were "nothing but dirt and rags" at the Queen's table—the Queen's response was not recorded and it is not even clear if she heard it—and once because the Queen sent telegrams deploring Dreyfus' guilty verdict to her Prime Minister and Ambassador to France. Both telegrams were sent without cypher so that they became public pronouncements. What seems to be happening here is that the author's personal interest determines what data, however secondary it is to the life, will be included.}

A more common use of points which seem irrelevant are Bolitho's several references to Prince George, the Duke of York, who eventually became George V. We discover, for instance, Victoria's impression of his wedding and what happened the day a photo session including Victoria, the Prince of Wales, Prince George, and Prince Edward, the last three of whom became Edward VII, George V, and Edward VIII, was arranged. One is reminded that until the death of his older brother Albert Edward, Duke of Clarence and heir to the throne in 1892, Prince George was fairly insignificant in the royal drama. Sidney Lee, whose biography appeared shortly after
Victoria's death, mentions the Duke and Duchess of York only once—as the parents of Edward, the future Edward VIII whose birth created a succession to the fourth generation. Bolitho's is, however, a question of hindsight finding something interesting for the present. It is also a good example of details chosen not because they necessarily illuminate a life but because they are interesting to the reading public of a later generation.

While, then, we say that biography is "fact-conditioned," we have to remember that these "facts" are often purely artistic, inferential, emotional, or economic constructs. Yet, unlike poetry which is also a mental construct, biographical facts are seen by most readers as having real-time referents, as having been experienced. Biographers, however, as often as not, have a different definition of fact; a biographical fact is not seen as experiential but as evidence. By using this definition, hearsay, opinion, and inference all can be considered "factual." This definition not only opens up the possibilities of the factual basis of biography but allows for various readings of the life and varying emphasis on events.

Because of the reader's definition, the major narrative thread of a given life remains surprisingly consistent from biography to biography. Variations occur only in the minor data—Albert's parentage—and in the perspective or spin on the reading—the importance of George V to Queen Victoria. The main scenes—the scramble of the royal dukes to propagate an heir to the throne; Victoria's birth, youth, accession to the throne, friendship with
Melbourne, marriage to Albert, and widowhood; the Queen's warm relations with Disraeli and her cold relations with Gladstone; the Jubilee years; and her final years—are invariably present from one biography to another. They are what Virginia Woolf has called the granite of life writing. When we say that biography is fact-conditioned or fact-based, we mean that these key events of a life are not alterable. What matters most is not the nature of the facts but the facts or events chosen by the biographer. For the biographer's reading can only be made manifest when the reader reviews the facts.

INFORMING THE READER

If biographies were only facts presented within the historical narrative, it would seem that generically biographies would not be very different from historical fiction or drama. This, however, is not the case because the purpose of biography, unlike that of fiction, is so much more narrowly defined. Joseph P. Dagher has identified, for composition students, five dominant general purposes that pertain to all writing: to entertain, to convey an impression, to inform, to persuade, and to actuate (70). Biographies can be entertaining and often do convey impressions of the people, places, objects, and times they discuss, but neither of these two purposes can dominate, because entertainment primarily seeks to involve the reader's emotions, while impressionistic writing seeks to involve the senses.
These two types of understanding, emotional and perceptual, are holistic rather than rational. Biography, because it evolves from the relationship of evidence to inference, is rational and, as a thought process, primarily linear rather than holistic.

As a result of this rationality, most biographies seek to have us come to an understanding of the facts and conclusions presented. Others, particularly those that seek to set aside accepted opinion, are designed to persuade the reader through argument. A still smaller group seeks not only to inform and persuade, but also to convince readers to perform some action based on this insight, to write to their representative, to join the party, to burn down the bank.

Predominantly, biography is an expository form; it asks readers to follow the writer’s explanation of the facts. We might laugh or we might see or feel what the author discusses, but the dominant general purpose of the biographical text is always to involve the reader’s sense of understanding through reason.

This is why the biographical plays of Laurence Housman, united under the title *Victoria Regina: A Dramatic Biography*, are not, strictly speaking, "biography." While Housman has used the diaries and letters of the Queen to construct his dramas, the purpose of the plays is primarily to entertain, to involve us emotionally. A great deal of this entertainment value comes from the interplay between the audience’s knowledge of Victoria as symbol and our discovery of Victoria as "person." As a result, the entertainment value of any of the 53 plays in the cycle is based on our knowledge
of Queen Victoria's historical position and how the plays show her as "ordinary."

In "Morning Glory" we overhear a bit of conversation between Victoria and Albert the morning after their wedding night:

ALBERT Oh yes . . . You have come to see me shave to-day—for the first time. That pleases—that excites you. But it will not always excite you as much as to-day. You will not come, I think, to see me shave every day—for the next twenty years.

THE QUEEN Why not?

ALBERT Because, Dearest, you will have too much else to do. Also you will know so well what it looks like, which to-day you see only for the first time. So, that it should become less of a spectacle, is only reasonable.

THE QUEEN I don't want to be reasonable with you?

ALBERT But you will want—in time, I hope, Vicky. So shall I.

You have a great life of duties to perform, in which I am to share. Is that not so?

THE QUEEN We can't share everything, Albert. Some things I shall do alone—affairs of State, in which it would not be right for you to concern yourself.

ALBERT (a little sharply) So?

THE QUEEN Yes. You must take care, Dearest. The English are jealous; and to them you are still a foreigner.

ALBERT And—to you?
THE QUEEN  To me you are everything—life, happiness, peace, and comfort! When I am with you, I shall want to forget everything—except our love. (Victoria Regina 138–139)

In twentieth century terms, we are watching the post-marriage discussion between the female president of a large corporation and her new, "outsider" husband. If it were a scene from American daytime television, or involving any other couple, it would be soap opera. But it is not any other couple, it is "The Queen" as figurehead trying to find a modus vivendi with her new husband "Albert."

Within the scene, Housman crystallizes many of the key themes which will become important to the biographies of both Victoria and Albert: his logical coldness, her devotion to him, their attempt as a couple to balance her duties as a Queen with his demands as a typical nineteenth-century husband are all introduced. It is an attempt to humanize the people who are the symbols of monarchy, to unite the symbolic queen with the person. Normally, then, in fiction and drama, Queen Victoria as a figure functions to involve our emotions through laughter or sympathy. And even though we might discover some new data, the understanding of that data is not important. Understanding data is, however, always important in biography.

Likewise, when the author's impressions dominate the writing, the life curve in biography is lost. Louis Auchincloss in Persons of Consequence, for example, gives us a series of impressionistic sketches of the people around Queen Victoria. The portraits do not give us as much of the lives involved as of their influence, and
therefore, they are not biographies nor were meant to be. Biographies by their very nature as chronological presentations of events are concentrated on the informative.

What can be included as part of biography's informative function is very broad. Bolitho has said that the biographer's task is to "judge, select, and arrange the actions of his subject's life, according to motives and instincts" (Victoria 55). Edel has said that the task is to discover "the figure beneath the carpet" of a subject's life (Writing Lives 163). These are very serious goals. At the other end of the scale, the writer might seek to fulfill the urge of the audience for information about the lives of the rich or famous. When we read biography, we read for information, and when we are not given that information the book fails as biography.

This informational need is supported by the reader's belief in the factuality and objectivity of the data. A good example of how these two aspects work to support the biographical text can be found in a comparison of Edith Sitwell's biography Victoria of England and Jean Plaidy's historical novel Victoria Victorious. Both works are not entirely "fact" in that they add entertaining scenes for which the sources provide no foundation but which could answer questions the reader might have. Many readers, for instance, have undoubtedly asked to know precisely what happened when the Duchess of Kent realized that her daughter, the Queen, was not going to allow her any voice in the new reign. A confrontation scene in the Queen's journal would have been ideal, but, while the Queen refers sometimes to
certain attitudes of her mother, the required scene is not found in
the letters and diaries as we have them. Perhaps, as is often the case
in real life, a scene was not needed; one began to assert her power
and the other realized that her moment of power was over. But both
Sitwell and Plaidy have not been satisfied with this explanation and
have reached for the dramatic ideal to provide their audiences with a
resolution of the question.

Sitwell inserts hers right after Victoria orders that her bed be
removed from her mother's room—until the day she became Queen,
Victoria had slept in her mother's room. Most of the biographies deal
with the incident and make it clear that the Duchess was not even
near the Queen when the move was ordered. Sitwell uses the
evidence up to a point but follows the Queen's order out of the room
to an imaginary scene where she pictures the Duchess alone for the
moment of realization.

When the Duchess heard the order, her plump, rather
inexpressive hands sank into her lap apathetically, her
feathers, her silks no longer flew like banners on a wind of
hope. It was for this, then, that she had laboured for eighteen
years, for this she had dedicated her life to the moulding of her
daughter's character. She had hoped, she had intended to be
the virtual ruler of England; it was because of this hope that
her daughter had been educated with such rigidity, watched
over with so much care. (76)
Plaidy's description takes place a little later the same day. The Queen has just dismissed John Conroy—the Duchess's advisor—from her own service. The Duchess comes to plead for her friend and in the process reproaches Victoria for forgetting all her mother has done for her. The Queen answers:

I said coldly: 'Mama, you saw that I was fed and clothed, but your goal was to become regent through me. That was why I was so important to you . . . not for my sake . . . but for your own. Always you pushed me aside—ridiculously often at ceremonies when people had come to see me. They called my name and you took it as homage to you. It never was. Not to me either. It was to the Crown. Let us be fair. Let us be honest. I am now the Queen. I will not have Sir John Conroy in my household, and not be told by you what I must do. You have your apartments here and I must ask you to keep to them unless you are invited otherwise.

I turned and went out of the room, leaving her deflated and bewildered. (167)

Both of these scenes are plausible. And given the figurative language of the Sitwell, Plaidy's might even seem a bit more "realistic." But from a biographical standpoint only Sitwell's can work. First, there is evidence for the spirit of Sitwell's scene. According to Madame de Lieven, the wife of the Russian ambassador, the Duchess moaned to all who would listen, "Il n'y a pas d'avenir pour moi. Je ne suis pour rien." Sitwell even mentions this note from the Princess de Lieven's
journal later on the same page. On the other hand, there is not very much evidence to support Plaidy's treatment. In fact, one could argue that given the Queen's penchant for avoiding face-to-face confrontation, she probably would have avoided such a scene.

Second, and probably more important for most readers and writers, we expect the biographer to take a stance outside the subject. We accept Sitwell's imagining of the Duchess's state of mind because she stands outside of that mind and tries to look in. Moreover, Sitwell's imagining, even if it seems to linger on the comeuppance, adds necessary information to the life. We are going to ask, "Well, how did the Duchess feel about this?" And Sitwell has answered that question.

Plaidy's first person narrative does not work because we know that it is false. It did not happen, at least not in Plaidy's first person narrative; as a result it is fiction. Moreover, her purpose is not so much to push the story forward as to add emotional resonance to this part of Victoria's life, to dramatize the break between mother and daughter. She needs the cadence before she can move on. We can accept Sitwell's distanced guess. But the subjective "I" intrudes between the subject and the reader; the text moves from the informational to the emotional; it abandons history for fiction.

Unlike the chronological and factual limits of biography which are immediately recognizable, this last limit, the limit of purpose, is dependent upon the reader's recognition of the informative function through the writer's use of language. Sitwell's biography, for
example, is certainly among the quirkiest of the Queen Victoria biographies. She spends as much textual time discussing the Queen's relationship with Tennyson as she does discussing the relationship between Victoria and Disraeli and Gladstone combined. Instead of developing Victorian reactions to the Chartist movement, she includes a tone poem on the march of industrialism.

What is this feeble sound, this hopeless whispering of multitudes, so faint it seems the despairing prayer of those about to die? It is the voice of Pottery Workers in the grip too of their industrial disease. (169)

In comparing the solidity of Victoria with the fashionable beauty of Eugénie, the Empress of the French, Sitwell rhapsodizes in "Fashionable Intelligence" with a long (almost 375) word sentence evoking the fragrances of Guerlain.

Late that night, like a white rose-tree in her muslim peignoir, the Empress will spend two hours before her dressing-table, that waterfall of muslin; outside the window are the darkened sea and the sound of the sleepy waves, and the little dark airs will blow away the scents of Guerlain that are spread upon that dressing-table, amongst the pastes and the washes and powders, the Essence Ethérée Balsamique, the Bouquet de Fürstenburg, the Baume de Judée, Ruban de Bruges, Papier de Vienne, Bois d’Aloës, Gomme d’Olivier, Amidine de Guimauve, Ethiops Martial, Crépon, Spanish Woll, Lait des Perles, Crème de la Mecque, Poudre de Cygne, Poudre de Cypris, Lait d’Amandes,
Portugal Water, Moss Roses, Myrte Fleuri, Ocymum Dulce, Orange de Chine, Pao Rosa, Palomis Aspienia, Polyante Suaveolens, Sweet Briar, Thymelia Volcameria. (230)

There is nothing comparable to this technique in any other of the more pedestrian accounts of the Queen's life. However, this very specialness of the text often calls more attention to Sitwell and her technique than it does to the story or the personality of Queen Victoria. It becomes a kind of borderline biography—all of the pieces fit but not exactly—something closer to fiction than biography. As a result, Sitwell's is mentioned more often in regards to the passages which seem to mirror Strachey's than as a competent biography of Queen Victoria.

Yet while the biographer must not intrude, the reader is always aware that the biographer is standing over the material. This would seem to contradict one of the more popular arguments of modern reading theory that the author has died, that the author's intent is irrelevant to the reading. This can work in fiction and drama, but it is difficult to forget the author in biography or, for that matter, any "non-fiction" writing. We come to a biographical text with an added dimension; we believe the events of the biography are based on events which have actually taken place. Biography asks the reader to compare the writer's presentation of events and character with what is already known about these same events and characters.

In reading fiction, the agreement between the writer and the reader excludes others. The writer creates a fictional world,
certainly one which makes reference to the "real," but both writer and reader realize it is a made-up world nonetheless. Readers of fiction make associations between that world and their own experience. Even if the fiction is, like Plaidy's fictional biography of Queen Victoria or Evelyn Wilde Meyerson's rendering of the marriage of Princess Beatrice, based on "real" events, the realness of the events does not matter much. In Meyerson's novel, *Princess in Amber*, one accepts as fiction that Princess Beatrice and Prince Henry, the Queen's daughter and son-in-law, made love in the Queen's railway car while Victoria thought that they were dressing for dinner or that Henry and Princess Louise, another of Victoria's children, made love in the boat house at Osborne. It is not important if these events really happened. If one discovers later that they did, there is an added dimension, but a superfluous dimension nonetheless. In one way, reading fiction is, as Georges Poulet says, a process of absorption. We can become one with the text and forget the outside world.

One can read a Shakespearian history play, *Richard III* for example, and realize that Richard can be seen as both evil incarnate and tragically sympathetic. The average reader will not be troubled by such a response because, even if the drama is based on historical fact, it is intended to be seen as drama, a dramatized fictionalization of history. On the other hand, one could not read a biography of Hitler and disregard a similar feeling of sympathy. If the idea is not due to some quirk in our own personality, we will ask ourselves
what in the text makes us sympathize. If we discover that our reaction does grow from notions inherent in the text, then, we will want to know why the biographer expects us to feel sympathy for the subject. The response is more troubling because it is not abstract, it forces us to respond to concrete events.

To move from Hitler to Queen Victoria, there are several good examples which make us wonder why a given biographer treats the Queen in a particular way. In 1884, for example, Queen Victoria announced the engagement of her youngest daughter Beatrice to Prince Henry of Battenberg. Since Beatrice had been raised to be the Queen's companion, we can imagine that the engagement was somewhat troubling for the Queen. But because Prince Henry had agreed not to remove his future wife from the Queen, it would appear in most readings, to have been a minor family crisis.

In measured tones, Elizabeth Longford devotes a paragraph to the Victoria's feelings about Princess Beatrice's engagement:

It was . . . with something like panic that she [Queen Victoria] heard from Princess Beatrice of her wish to marry Prince Henry of Battenberg. For months the Queen refused even to discuss the idea, telling herself that it was nothing but an aberration which would never have happened if Princess Beatrice had not lost her dear brother Leopold. In time, however, she realized the strain of this situation on her daughter's health. Prince Henry came to England and having promised to make his future home with the Queen so as not to
deprive her of Princess Beatrice's services, received her consent. The engagement was announced on 30 December 1884. Four days later Ponsonby reported: 'She [the Queen] is beaming and proud of him.' (478)

With Longford's description, we understand the Queen's stress, and because there are no details, we can even sympathize.

Dorothy Marshall's treatment of the same scene is a bit more ominous:

It was a great shock to Victoria when Beatrice fell in love with the handsome Prince Henry of Battenberg. Beatrice met him at the marriage of his brother Louis to Princess Victoria of Hesse in 1884. The mere idea of losing her last unmarried daughter came as a blow. For a time she refused to face the possibility, but finally gave her consent on condition that Beatrice and her husband, nicknamed 'Liko' in the royal family, live with the Queen. As Victoria explained to the Duke of Grafton 'it would have been quite out of the question for her ever to have left the Queen; and she would never have wished it herself, knowing well how impossible it was for her to leave her mother'. To modern ears such demanding possessiveness has an unpleasant ring; in extenuation of Victoria's selfishness, it must be remembered that Victorian daughters were expected to sacrifice their own happiness to that of their parents. To contemporaries the Queen's attitude would not have seemed unreasonable. (205)
Marshall's explanation, which amounts to an apology, hints at a more extreme attitude on the part of the Queen, but, like Longford's, does not develop specific actions. Had the biographer not appealed to context to explain the Queen, the paragraph might have passed, as does Longford's, as simply a minor annoyance in the Queen's old age.

David Duff, on the other hand, covers all of the details of the imbroglio:

[Back at Windsor after her niece's wedding, Princess Beatrice] blurted out that she wished to marry Prince Henry. There followed one of the outstanding examples of the calculated ruthlessness of Queen Victoria. From May to December, she never addressed a word to the daughter with whom she lived. All communication between them was channeled through notes pushed across the breakfast table. It is difficult to understand how such conditions could have been tolerated for eight months. Part of the answer came in the words of the Princess's daughter, Queen Victoria Eugenia of Spain, some sixty years later: 'She [Princess Beatrice] had to be in perpetual attendance on her formidable mother. Her devotion and submission were complete. . . .'

It was not the marriage that worried the Queen, but the fear that Prince Henry would insist on continuing his military career and take the Princess away to Potsdam. She had tried the same trick with Alice, attempting to make her and Louis live with her in England. That clever Princess had escaped the
net by planting John Brown at Osborne. There was no such alternative for Beatrice. (Victoria Travels 257)

A number of questions arise from Duff's treatment of the Queen. First, this is one of the few non-fiction references to this strange eight months in which the Queen and her personal companion kept up the façade of a united family, but communicated, even when they were in the same room, by note. The natural question would be to ask why so many other biographers have glossed over the details.

This can be answered several ways. In Longford's case, it is possible that she did not feel that incident was important enough to develop. In Marshall's case, the incident is probably too strong for the type of popular biography she is writing. For both it would contradict their opinions that, despite everything, Victoria was a loving mother. That the incident could be too strong for their audience and too unimportant in the general scheme of the biography could be possible for each of the books.

Then, however, one is forced to ask, why Duff mentions it at all, particularly in a book which purports to present the details from the Queen's journals and letters about her travels. One also begins to wonder why Duff has described the incident in such strong terms. None of these questions occur to the reader of Meyerson's novel. We accept the novel as complete in itself. Duff's biography makes us question his motivation for giving us that information. As a biographer, he has fewer creative givens; the biographer's contract with the reader demands that informative directions be included in
the text to provide keys to intentions. The biographer, then, does not intrude on the data; the reader's need for the fact, for narrative development, and for information, makes the biographer secondary to the subject. But at the same time, the biographer must present clear signposts to the reader indicating the informative way.

DISCOVERING BIOGRAPHY

As a genre, then, biography, at its simplest, is an extended, fact-conditioned, narrative essay intended to inform. This definition is general enough to allow both biographer and reader a margin of workspace. Within its limits the biographer is free to pick over, select, and create a reading of a life. Likewise, the limits themselves allow readers the means to recognize the genre. They also allow for biographers' attempts to stretch and sometimes change the limits and for reader's expansion and contraction of the genre for their own pleasure. On the whole, this fact-time-informative model with only very minor variations has worked for well over two thousand years.

8 Biographers have, for example, stretched and changed the concept of what constitutes "fact" almost from the beginning. The Venerable Bede's acceptance of the miracles performed by St. Jerome probably would not pass muster with even the most lax modern. Readers, too, are not very constant. A critical anecdote in a biography is often viewed as "true" or "untrue" depending upon the sympathies of the reader.

9 Virginia Woolf, in her essay "The New Biography," points out that "Truth of Fact and Truth of Fiction are incompatible." Woolf argues that after Strachey, the biographer-novelist "is now more than ever urged to combine them." (Later she will try to combine them in Orlando; at this stage, she believes it is impossible.) Woolf is correct in marking Strachey as a turning point in modern biography but, like many modernists, she seems to forget that the past
The biographical process has, like all communication processes, several steps. First, the writer collects and processes data to form a text. Next, the text in its turn is processed by the reader for some kind of response. In a sense, there are four elements in this model: The writer, the message or text, the reader, and the response. Much study has gone into the relationship of the first two parts of this model: the writer and the text. Little study has been devoted to the latter parts: to the relationship between the text, the reader, and the reader's response. Even the reader/response critics who have done much with the reading of fiction seem, for the most part, to have ignored biography. For the individual reader, however, the study can be very valuable.

The reader of a biography is in much the same situation as the biographer creating the text. In fact, the intellectual process is exactly the same. Like the biographer analyzing the data, the reader, before the text, regards something which is in itself meaningless. The events, like the text itself, which need not be "real" or observable, are simply the stimulus which provokes processing. Text is as Jane Thompkins has pointed out "the space within which the reader/critic performs his role" (206).

consists of many examples of artists who have attempted to create biography from details we would no longer consider factual. The important thing to remember is that the readers of the original hagiographies and chronicles, for example, believed that the events presented were fact. When belief in the facts ceases, so, too, does the recognition of the genre. If the events described do not show a life in the process of development, the reader's recognition of the genre stops. And if one is not learning about the life, one is not, strictly speaking, reading a biography.
Like the data for the writer, the text as stimulus is received into the reader's brain and reworked by memory. Much of what happens in memory is determined by individual experience. Each of us, biographer as well as reader, is a discrete composite of habitual perceptions and of certain symbols. As a result, our interest makes us absorb different chunks of stimuli. Consequently, just as each biographer of Queen Victoria creates a different reading of the life, each reader of a biography creates a different reading to the text.

To create that reading, readers are armed with the knowledge that they are indeed reading biography, secure that they can hold the biographer responsible for the details, and sure that the text is unalterable. But even as secure as that, readers are aware that no text can be totally incorporated into one reading. Instead, as we read, we look at the text from a single perspective which allows us to focus on one aspect of the text. There are several of these types of perspectives but for convenience sake they can be divided into three general types: perspectives which focus on subject and sources, perspectives which focus on the text, and perspectives which focus on meaning. These perspectives overlap and are not mutually exclusive, but they help organize the reading of biography.

For many, the center of the biography is the subject and in Queen Victoria biographies if this is the reader's focus, the reader must determine how the Queen has presented herself and how the biographer views her. One must ask similar questions when processing the text from the perspective of the sources: Who are the
sources? Why have they chosen to discuss the subject? Moreover, hundreds of people have written about Queen Victoria. Some have fawned. Some have ridiculed. Some have tried to create a balanced portrait within their means. How the biographer treats those sources within a text will matter a great deal to how the reader perceives both the subject and the biography.

Because a subject like Queen Victoria offers so much to choose from, the reader must pay attention not only to what the writer chooses but more importantly to how those details are arranged within a text. This is the perspective of structure. There is a biography, for example, *Queen Victoria was Amused*, in which the biographer purports to show that Queen Victoria had a sense of humor. While interesting, the resulting catalogue of anecdotes and apocrypha can only show one aspect of a personality, which, being human, undoubtedly had many more sides. Not only is the structure of detail important but the careful reader must be aware of how characters are constructed within the text. Is the approach to character primarily deductive, that is, has the biographer set out to form the personality around a fixed thesis? Or does the thesis come inductively at the end as the biographer has tried to make the reader discover the central character from the text?

Last, we may look directly at meaning. A careful reader will be interested in several perspectives. It would be hard to imagine a Marxist biography of Queen Victoria, but it would be possible to write one. Certainly her romantic view of her subjects was just as
cruel as indifference. Yet, in reading that Marxist biography, the biographer's ideology and our view of that ideology would play a major part in our evaluation of the work. The reader would need to understand how that ideology works within the social and intellectual context of the period. These two ideas come together to achieve a life's meaning. Finally to understand a life, the reader must see what it stands for, what it symbolizes.

A sustained reading from any one of these perspectives could probably only be achieved by a most tenacious critic, for it would be very difficult to keep the perspective continually in the forefront of the reading process. Readers who could or would concentrate their way through a major biography of Queen Victoria thinking only of the biographer's attitude toward the subject, for instance, would be few. Hardly anyone has that kind of dogged determination.

Most readers jump from perspective to perspective as they move from passage to passage throughout the text. Whatever perspective or strategy seems appropriate for a given moment is the one which is implemented. And because the rule of ease operates in reading, whatever perspective is easiest for a given reader to apply to a particular passage, that is the perspective which will be used.

It is not necessary, then, to read several biographies to obtain different portraits of the same character. If one could bear it, and the biography were interesting enough, re-reading the same biography would give the same effect. We do read other biographies
though because, while the important life events are the same, the
nuances, the shadows and the colors will vary from text to text.

From biography to biography, Queen Victoria changes, becomes
a different person, and a different character. Can we ever know the
real character? Not likely. But we can see her as others see her, and
we can discover how many characters and biographies we can
construct in our own minds. For the space of the text, for the time it
takes to read, we create our own portraits of people, places and
events of other worlds.
CHAPTER II

ART IS LONG

THE QUEEN We are redder than that, Monsieur.

CONSTANT Ah! but does your Majesty's gracious complexion never vary—a leetle?

THE QUEEN Never as much as that, Monsieur.

CONSTANT Ah, c'est dommage!

THE QUEEN A little more colour, Monsieur, could easily be added.

CONSTANT But then, Madame, what will have to become of my collar-scheme—that is, my picture?

THE QUEEN But this is a portrait, Monsieur, of Me.

CONSTANT Yes, but of the imagination—all my own. I had no sittings from your Majesty.

THE QUEEN Now that you have seen me, you will be able to correct it.

Laurence Housman, "The Blue Ribbon"

As a subject, Queen Victoria has certainly been generous to her biographers. By the time she died in 1901, she had written millions
of words not only about the important events and people of her time but also about many of her emotions, perceptions and opinions. The treasure trove left at the time of her death, described as without parallel in English history (Woodham-Smith 88), is a rich lode from which the biographer might recreate her personality. Her journal, begun in 1832 when she was 13, contains regular daily entries until a few days before her death 69 years later. Most nights she would record highlights of the day's events in the journal. These evening entries, sometimes as long as 2500 words, as a collected product, filled 122 volumes when she died.

Each day she also wrote an extraordinary number of letters and telegrams both personal and official. The authorized selection from her letters and journals, published in three series from 1907 to 1930, contains nine volumes of over 600 pages each. Much of this is due to the enormous number of letters to her family, fellow monarchs, and friends. In the early years of the reign, for example, she wrote regularly to her Uncle Leopold, the King of the Belgians, and, from 1841 through 1889, also corresponded with Augusta, Queen of Prussia, who eventually became the Kaiserin of united Germany.

As her children married and settled throughout Europe, they too became recipients of her letters. The most extensive of these collections is her correspondence with her daughter the Crown Princess Frederick to whom she wrote at least twice a week from 1858 until her death over forty years later. Roger Fulford, the editor
of these letters, has said that just for the period between 1858 and 1861, the Queen's side alone contains over 300,000 words (Dearest Child 4). On top of this, she either wrote daily or instructed her Private Secretary to write to her ministers and ambassadors discussing political problems or actions. The first editors of her letters estimated that publication of the complete letters and memoranda of her reign would take several hundred volumes (iv).¹

There are at least four reasons for this prolific legacy. First, there was a new historical consciousness which led to the preservation of royal papers. Prior to the nineteenth-century, the value of historical papers was not an important, perhaps even a conceivable, idea. This was one of the reasons why the supposedly age-old ceremony of Victoria's reign was, in fact, so expediently improvised; there were just not many records of how anybody did things in the past.² Records of the past, except for those of constitutional debate and perhaps of legal and financial matters, just did not matter.³ However, with the rise of interest in the past, an

¹ Because of the huge number of materials, the journals and letters have never been published in their entirety. Only recently have archivists begun to microfilm them. Therefore, in this text whenever I have used an entry that does not appear in the standard edition (See "Victoria, Queen of England," in the Bibliography) I have cited the biography in which it appears.


³ A good example of this lack of interest and perceived value in the past centers on a manuscript of the Roman de Silence by Heldris de Cornualle
awareness that they were making history gripped many. So conscious was Prince Albert of the value of the Queen's papers that he had them carefully arranged in chronological order and, until his death, annotated, indexed, and supported by pages from the journal.4

Second, writing was the technology of the day; the Queen had no other means to convey her feelings or opinions to those who were not with her. She did telegraph official messages during the second part of the reign, but essentially the written message was the polite form of communicating interpersonally. Custom and good manners forced the Queen to write when she communicated with her distant family and friends and mostly when dealing with her government.

Third, the transfer of power from the monarchy to Parliament meant that the Queen was no longer the center of government. As a result, when she sought to distance herself from London and Windsor—first under the tutelage of Albert and, then, under her own obsession with mourning—that is when she left for Osborne on the Isle of Wight or Balmoral in the Scottish highlands, the government did not move with her but stayed in London. While a minister always attended the Queen—a task dreaded by most of the members of the Cabinet—writing was the way the Queen and her ministers

which was found early in this century in the attic of Wollaton Hall along with letters from Henry VIII in a box marked, "Old Papers—No Value."

4 After Victoria's death it was discovered that her archivist had, for over forty years, done little more than keep her letters in neat stacks. Albert's system of annotation and indexing ended at his death.
kept in touch, and, because she was still sovereign, it seemed necessary that the Queen keep in touch.\footnote{According to Frank Hardie, it was not until the reign of Edward VII that the monarch returned to London for a Parliamentary crisis, and not until the reign of George V that the king was simply informed of a crisis by telephone.}

Fourth, and the most important reason of all, was that the Queen was truly industrious. She had been conditioned to express her opinions in writing. True, it was physically quite easy for the Queen to write. She not only had several rooms of her own but also was not plagued by the minor inconveniences most writers can imagine to avoid writing. When she entered her study—she never opened the door, a footman did that—she could go directly to her desk and find paper, pen, and ink prepared for her. In the early days of her marriage, Albert used to blot her lines; after Albert's death, John Brown, then, her Indian Secretary, the *Munshi*, continued the Prince's practice even more thoroughly. If she wanted something said and did not want to write it, she simply directed her Private Secretary to write for her.

But it was not only the ease with which she could write that accounted for the vast number of words she left behind; Queen Victoria seems to have had an almost manic need to write. Even during the long period of mourning, she managed to spend a great deal of each day setting her ideas down on paper. Frank Hardie has compared her to Florence Nightingale, who lay on her invalid's bed from morning until night composing and peppering the Army
Administration with letters detailing administrative incompetence (British Monarchy 55). But Queen Victoria was not on her couch. While she moaned a great deal about her health and mental distress, she led a more or less normal life in her far away palaces, receiving and entertaining, up to a point, her various guests. Nor was her correspondence, like Nightingale's, a one-note samba; it ranged over all of the issues of her time.

According to Hardie, for many people, one letter a day was not enough. Lord Elphinstone, the governor of her son the Duke of Connaught, once received six letters in 48 hours, and one day during the Egyptian campaign of 1882 the Secretary of State for War received 19 messages from either the Queen or her Private Secretary. Disraeli said that during one crisis, she wrote or telegraphed to him almost every hour, and Phillip Guedalla, the editor of the Gladstone papers, has said that that collection contains 571 letters and 241 telegrams from the Queen, 900 from her private secretary, and 4500 return messages from Gladstone (v). It is no wonder that Gladstone complained that keeping up the correspondence with the Queen was the death of him. Obviously, she was a compulsive writer and one for whom the act of writing provided a variety of outlets.

All this writing should give us a clear picture of the reign. In many ways it does. Surely we know as much about actual events, at least from the royal perspective, as we do about preceding reigns.
We also know who was talking with whom and what many of the central concerns and issues were. But when it comes to determining Queen Victoria's motives, the documents can often be confusing and contradictory. First, for each letter that offers one opinion, there are several others that offer often contradictory opinions. More important, at least in determining motivation, one can see, while reading the letters and journals of Queen Victoria, just how a subject can become a mystifying force in her own biography. In all, Queen Victoria's writing demonstrates some of the problems the reader encounters while looking at the text from the first perspective, that of the subject.

WHAT SHE WROTE

The Queen's writing seems to have had very specific purposes. As would be expected, the journals are the most personal record of daily events. It has been said that the journal of the later part of her life was used to vent her feelings concerning her family, but as we have it, it is mostly a record of the important events of the day. Moreover, while the quality of her entries varies, what we have of it is always interesting. Louis Auchincloss' summary of her work is not an overstatement:

The Queen, quite simply, was a great journalist. She had all the qualifications: a sharp eye, a total recall, a searching curiosity,
a capacity for strong reaction, an overdeveloped ego and a
matchless grandstand seat for the panorama of history. (174)

On the whole, even though it does cover the domestic routine of
the Queen's life, it does not fit Julia Kristeva's notion of *écriture
féminine* in that it does not reflect "monumental" or "cyclical time"
but is more clearly linear. Her visit to the Empress Eugénie after
the death of Napoleon III is typical.

WINDSOR CASTLE, 20th Feb, 1873.—A very foggy, raw day. At
quarter past ten, left Windsor Castle for Chistlehurst, by the
South-Western, Beatrice, Jane C., and Colonel Maude
accompanying me. We passed through London, which was
wrapped in a thick yellow fog. Drove straight from the station
in a closed landau, Colonel Maude riding, to the small Roman
Catholic Chapel of St. Mary, a pretty little place, quite a village
church, a good deal smaller inside than Whippingham. To the
right of the altar, or rather below it, behind a railing, in the
smallest space possible, rested the earthly remains of the poor
Emperor, the coffin covered with a black velvet pall,
embroidered with golden bees, and covered with wreaths and
flowers of all kinds, many of which are also piled up outside, to
which Beatrice and I each added one. The banner of the French
"Ouvriers" was placed near the wreaths. Father Goddard, the

6 As Valerie Sanders has said, citing Virginia Woolf, Kristeva's notion of
*écriture féminine* does not necessarily apply to nineteenth-century women
journalists simply because nineteenth-century women generally used the
same models as men (22).
priest, a quiet youngish man, showed us round and also showed us the plan of the small private chapel, which is to be added on.

The Sydneys met us there. (II.ii.243)

The morning is recorded as a chronological series of events. The closest we get to the Queen's feelings is in her emotionally mirroring descriptions of the weather ("the foggy, raw day") and the atmosphere (the "thick, yellow fog") and her reaction to the remains ("the poor Emperor"). Her later description of the Empress, too, transfers her personal feelings to her subject.

She [Eugénie] cried a good deal, but quietly and gently, and that sweet face, always a sad one, looked inexpressibly pathetic." (II.ii.244)

On the whole, one could argue that the content of the journals, because it is domestic, is feminine. But it is not always domestic and there is not much stylistically to characterize it as more intensely personal or feminine than those of other diarists, Greville for example.

This does not mean that she discusses only her public thoughts in her journal. Four days after Albert's death, she wrote:

How am I alive after witnessing what I have done? Oh! I who prayed daily that we might die together & I never survive Him! I who felt when in those blessed Arms clasped & held tight in the sacred Hours at night—when the world seemed only to be ourselves that nothing could part us! I felt so vy [sic] secure—I always repeated: "And God will protect us!" though
trembling always for his safety . . . I never dreamt of the physical possibility of such calamity—such an awful catastrophe—for me—for All. (Longford 307)

Later her feelings of physical aloneness would again be discussed in the journal.

_What_ a dreadful going to bed! _What_ a contrast to that tender lover's love. _All Alone! Yet_—The blessings of 22 years _cast_ its reflection! (Longford 308)

The feelings are definitely emotional and very intimate, but no more emotional than the letter she wrote to her daughter two days after Albert's death.

God's will be done! A heavenly peace has descended. . . it cannot be possible. . . Oh! God! Oh! God! . . . but I feel I can bear it better today. . . I don't know what I feel. . . (Longford 307)

And no more intimate than her other letters to the Princess Royal.

In reading the letters and the journal, one discovers that the amount of self-disclosure in the journal seems equaled by that of the personal letters. This could mean that Queen Victoria was an exceptionally open woman, one who spoke of herself with a remarkable freedom. It could also imply that the Queen was not aware of the implications of what she wrote. This would be supported by the comments of those around her that the Queen either did not or refused to understand how her heartfelt expressions could be misinterpreted. After the death of John Brown, for example, her efforts to publish a personal memoir of her servant
were thwarted by her family and staff because they believed the text was too personal and could add fuel to the already burning fire of gossip. Victoria gave in but not with easy grace.

The consistent degree of self-disclosure in her journal and personal letters could also mean that the Queen knew exactly what she was saying and that she controlled even her most personal writing just as she sought to control all the events of her life. It took her over two years to compose her husband's death scene in the journal even though she had made notes shortly after his death. Taking such time implies not only that the subject was painful but that she wanted to be careful in her composing—to get it just right. Lastly, it is probably also important to remember that none of these three possibilities is mutually exclusive of the others. All three could have been operating.

"VICTORIA"/"THE QUEEN"

Whatever her awareness of her writing, both the personal letters and the journal allow one to listen in on the conversation of an interesting important person, for her personal letters also are filled with chatty gossip and observations both personal and official. A good example is her letter to her uncle in which she discusses among other things an attack on her as she left Cambridge House.

My Dearest Uncle—... By my letter to Louise [The Queen of the Belgians] you will have learnt all the details of this certainly
very disgraceful and very inconceivable attack. I have not suffered except from my head, which is still very tender, the blow having been extremely violent, and the brass end of the stick fell on my head so as to make a considerable noise. I own it makes me nervous out driving, and I start at any person coming near the carriage, which I am afraid is natural. We have alas! now another cause of much greater anxiety in the person of our excellent Sir Robert Peel, who as you will see has had a most serious fall, and though going on well at first, was very ill last night; thank God! he is better again this morning but I fear still in great danger... (Early Letters 168)

Another good example is this extract from her letter to Tennyson thanking him for a few lines he had composed to honor John Brown.

I felt deeply touched by your kindness to me and your true sympathy! I do need it, for few have more trials and none have been or still are in such an exceptionally solitary and difficult position. It has been my anxious wish to do my duty to my country, though politics never were congenial to me and while my dear Husband lived I left as much as I could to him. Then when He was taken I had to struggle on alone. And few know what that struggle has been! (Tennyson 103)

Two interesting aspects of the Queen's writing are demonstrated by this letter. The first is intrinsic in that we see her creating the persona of the poor widow upon whom the duties of this world have
been thrust by a cruel fate. She seems to ignore that the record—as already written in her journal and letters—would seem to discount her disinterest in politics.

The letter is also interesting because it is the first the Poet Laureate received in which the Queen used the personal "I" rather than the third person "She." For the Queen, and one would suppose for Tennyson, this is an important distinction. Within her writing, there is an attempt to differentiate clearly between what one might call "Victoria" and another personality called "The Queen." Like her journal, her personal letters use the first person subjective "I." Her official letters almost consistently refer to herself as "the Queen" and "She." Greville notes this, suggesting that this convention was not always used by her predecessors in their personal communications with their ministers (IV.174). But until her death, Queen Victoria does make the distinction.

One can assume it was a convenient way of classifying communication; when she wrote "I," she spoke from her household, and when she used "The Queen," she spoke from the throne. It also creates two identities: a domestic and an official persona. This desire to create two identities would be in consonance with the reports from many of the early reign's commentators. In private meetings, almost all have remarked her timidity and her overreaction to any release of tension—when she laughed, she laughed loudly and showed her teeth and gums. In her public appearance, all remarked on her great dignity, grace, and self-
possession. Her deliberate use of point of view, that is her separation of the "I" self and "The Queen" self, is both reinforcement and creation of this double identity. And it is a careful reinforcement and creation, for, as several readers have remarked, there are hardly any errors of spelling or grammar in the journals or letters which are written in her hand.

At first the queenly persona was not necessarily natural for her. On the first real crisis of her reign, when Melbourne, her favorite, had been defeated in Parliament and the Queen was forced to ask Peel, whom, at the time, she disliked, to form a new government, the identities were often confused. Cecil Woodham-Smith has remarked that Greville's summary of at least one of the letters to her ministers at this time is reminiscent in tone of Queen Elizabeth's Tilbury Speech in which Victoria's predecessor addressed the troops before their encounter with the Armada (174). Some of that can be gleaned from the close of the Queen's letter to Melbourne:

The Queen trusts Lord Melbourne will excuse this long letter, but she is very anxious he should know all. The Queen was very much collected, and betrayed no agitation during these two trying Audiences. But afterwards all gave way. She feels Lord Melbourne will understand it, amongst enemies to those she relied on and esteemed, and people who have no heart; but what is worst of all is being deprived of seeing Lord Melbourne as she used to do. (I.159)
As her letter suggests, her bouts with Peel over the composition of the Ladies of the Bedchamber—almost all of whom were the wives of opposition Whig politicians—were interspersed with fits of despair and tears and fits of writing and reconstruction. Even this letter to Melbourne, in which she tries to create a dignified queenly self, cannot sustain the third person pronouns, for a few sentences later she has slipped in a series of "I's." In her journal, she describes her conversation with Peel in more dramatic terms.

. . . I said I could not give up any of my Ladies, and never had imagined such a thing. He asked if I meant to retain all. "All," I said. "The Mistress of the Robes and the Ladies of the Bedchamber?" I replied, "All." (Longford 111)

WHY SHE WROTE

Victoria had few living role models for queenly behavior. She was intelligent and tasteful enough to reject both her uncles and mother. Only her aunt, Queen Adelaide, could have provided much of model, but William IV's wife had never been a reigning monarch. Instead, Queen Victoria had to construct such models from history and art. As Elizabeth Longford has pointed out, the strongest influence on Victoria's artistic tastes in the first years of the reign was the opera. She attended the opera sometimes as many as three times a week and she thrilled to the noble actions of the Rossini, Bellini, and Donizetti heroines that she loved. Much of this operatic
quality comes into her writing. For example, in the midst of her conflict with Peel over the Ladies and after her realization that, given her adamant behavior, Peel would probably be unable to form a government, she rushed off a note to Melbourne:

I was calm but very decided and I think you would have been pleased to see my composure and great firmness. The Queen of England will not submit to such trickery. Keep yourself in readiness for you may soon be wanted. (112)

The last two lines could have come from any early nineteenth-century opera seria. Moreover, what happens here is that writing creates a course of action. She actually drafts her role.

In later years, as she masters her technique, she creates a rhetorical presence that sends fear and trembling throughout the Court. When Gladstone and her own children pressured her to make more public appearances, she wrote to Lord Hatherly, the Lord Chancellor:

What killed her beloved Husband? Overwork & worry—what killed Lord Clarendon? The same. What has broken down Mr. Bright & Mr. Childers & made them retire, but the same; & the Queen, a woman, no longer young is supposed to be proof against all & to be driven & abused till her nerves & health will give way with this worry & agitation and interference in her private life.
She must solemnly repeat that unless her ministers support her & state the whole truth she cannot go on & must give her heavy burden up to younger hands.

Perhaps then those discontented people may regret that they broke her down when she might still have been of use. (Guedalla 329-331)

Given her generally blooming health and the submissiveness of her personal physician, most of those who knew her probably had trouble believing in her physical weakness, but it is quite possible that she believed the medical reports she had fabricated. Yet, no matter how emotionally involved she is, she is not entirely carried away with her rhetoric, for she manages to close with a threat. In case her reader does not believe in her poor health, she gives threatens ultimate disaster, her abdication and the accession of the, then unpopular, Prince of Wales. Writing, as a result, becomes a way of instituting her will.

Eventually, the need for a presence, rhetorical or otherwise, grew in importance; that is, as she withdrew from the public duties of the monarchy, her will became presence. Writing, in turn, became a way to avoid physical confrontation of any kind. The Queen rarely talked with her ministers, choosing instead to send written thunderbolts from one of her castles. Her retirement, into what Arthur Ponsonby, in his biography of his father, has called "the luxury of woe," was supported by her constant writing (116). As
Private Secretary, Henry Ponsonby reported that the Queen's method of communication so infected the Court that any disagreement between courtiers meant that until the conflict was resolved the participants would only communicate in writing.

The Queen carried this withdrawal-through-writing to an extreme. Business within the royal household, for example, was carried on by note. "In what known establishment," Arthur Ponsonby asks, "do persons in the same building communicate with one another by letter?" (116) He describes the atmosphere at the various royal palaces as being closer to a school than a residence. Frederick Ponsonby, Henry Ponsonby's son, recalls receiving a note from the Queen reflecting on his introduction of a forbidden topic during dinner conversation—he mentioned someone's marriage before the still unmarried Princess Beatrice, a topic which was strictly verboten. Even when she complained about the various faults of her children, Queen Victoria did not speak to them directly or even write to them directly. Instead they received notes from her ministers or private secretaries outlining their errors.

Queen Victoria is probably one of the more extreme cases of the writer who has discovered that the written word puts her in control of her environment: the Royal Word became during her reign the Royal World. Throughout the reign she was able to construct her identity through writing until finally, she was able to withdraw from the world altogether and leave her writing as a replacement, a stand-in for the royal person.
The need to establish her own identity is a theme which runs throughout Queen Victoria's life. As a child she was almost forgotten in the battle between her uncles who had successively worn the crown and her mother who sought recognition as the mother of the heir apparent. She seems to have been excellent at hiding what she really was thinking. Greville wrote shortly before her accession:

What renders speculation so easy, and events so uncertain, is the absolute ignorance of everybody, without exception, of the character, disposition, and capacity of the Princess. She has been kept in such jealous seclusion by her Mother (never having slept out of her bedroom, nor been alone with anyone but herself and the Baroness Lehzen), that not one of her acquaintance, none of the Attendants at Kensington, not even the Duchess of Northumberland, her Governess, have any idea what She is, or what She promises to be. (III.369)

Cut off from others by what the Duchess of Kent and John Conroy termed the "Kensington System," she wiled away much of what she termed her "lonely childhood" dressing and playing with her immense collection of 132 dolls. The dolls, with which she played until a rather late age, provided several types of release. First, they were probably fun. She had no friends and few visitors her own age with whom to play. The dolls provided companionship.
She also must have found a kind of romantic release in playing with the dolls which were all named and patterned after historical figures, characters from romantic novels, and, above all, characters from Italian operas. Simone de Beauvoir has said that, for many little girls, playing with dolls is a means of achieving eminence (318). For the young Princess Victoria, this need to achieve control must have been increasingly important since, as a pawn in adult power games, she had very little public identity of her own. In fact, that she even had a concept of self resulted in a major surprise when she began to play, so perfectly, her role as Queen.

Throughout her reign, there would be efforts by the royal household to assert the presence, if not the monarchial identity of the Queen. The Court Circular was a primary means of informing her subjects and, most importantly, the press of the Royal comings and goings. After Albert's death, the Court Circular became extremely important in establishing the Royal presence because its record of royal activity as published in the newspapers was all most of her subjects saw of the Queen. The Court Circular became a reassuring record that the Queen was about the business of state. And even when she was not, the Circular said that she was. Weintraub points out, for example, that during the last days of the reign, while the
Queen was lying comatose at Osborne, the *Court Circular* reported her riding out with her ladies in the park (632).\(^7\)

The rise of the press and the penny press in particular led to a new interest in public relations, a field in which the Queen became somewhat of an expert. When Gladstone, his Liberal Cabinet, and the press complained that she was not showing herself in public enough, she not only wrote to him and her ministers, she sent off an unsigned though not entirely anonymous letter to the *Times* in which she pressed her case. In other instances more indirect methods were needed. For example, at the height of the debate over the *Royal Titles Bill*, a bit of legislation she asked Disraeli to introduce, she wrote to her literary advisor, Theodore Martin, later *Sir* Theodore Martin, the author of the authorized and closely edited life of Prince Albert, designing a public relations strategy:

WINDSOR CASTLE, 14th March 1876.— The Queen is sure that Mr. Martin (though he has _not_ mentioned it) is as shocked and surprised at the conduct of the Opposition, and the sort of disgraceful agitation caused thereby, on the subject of her additional title—by which she has _always_ been called in India, and often by people here, who, including the Dean of Westminster, thought she _had_ officially adopted it, viz. *Empress of India*. The reason the Queen now writes to Mr.  

\(^7\) Weintraub also points out that when P.T. Barnum and Tom Thumb appeared before the Royal Family at Windsor, Barnum asked and was allowed to write the *Court Circular*'s account of his visit.
Martin is to ask whether he cannot get inserted into some papers a small paragraph to this effect, only worded by himself: "There seems very strange misapprehension on the part of some people, which is producing a mischievous effect; viz. that there is to be an alteration in the Queen's and Royal family's ordinary appellation. Now this is utterly false. The Queen will always be called 'the Queen' and her children 'their Royal Highnesses,' and no difference whatsoever is to be made except OFFICIALLY ADDING after Queen of Great Britain, 'Empress of India,' the name of which is best understood in the East, but which Great Britain (which is an Empire) never has acknowledged to be higher than Queen and King." Her own Ministers and Viceroy's have constantly called her "Empress of India," and she believes it is a mere attempt to injure Mr. Disraeli, but which is most disrespectful and indecorous. The Queen sends in confidence the accompanying papers as they may help. Mr. Martin will easily believe that the Queen and her Government will not yield to mere clamour and intimidation! In the City and Whitechapel on the 7th, she was much struck by one large inscription with these words: "Welcome, Queen and Empress," and two or three smaller ones, "Welcome, Empress of India." Never yield to clamour and misrepresentation—if a thing is right and well considered. The Prince and Queen have always acted on this principle. (II.ii.382)
Well armed with his press kit and the stirring words of his sovereign, Martin was ready to do the Queen's bidding.

The complacent Martin was also the author of the Queen's authorized version of the *Life of the Prince Consort*. As a kind of defiant reminder to the English that they had treated Albert the Good abominably, she had commissioned Martin to write the life. But this, too, was not a task free of the Royal need to control. She gave him the information and she cut and pasted the result. Her editorial skill can be seen in this letter to Martin:

OSBORNE, 19th Jan. 1874.—... Regarding the passage which she wishes omitted (and which opinion is strongly shared by a friend to whom she showed the charmingly written chapter), she feels and knows how much such an allusion might hurt the feelings of faithful servants, which she thinks should always be as much considered as our own. It may be that some footman who was out with her did not understand her, and the dogs did not (most certainly) obey her as she well remembers, but this sweeping observation would be quoted and do great harm. She therefore must ask that it be omitted, which she is sure Mr. Martin will agree in, when he reads this explanation. . . .

She fears Mr. Martin will think the Queen rather tenacious and troublesome. (II.ii.301)

David Duff's argument concerning the parentage of the Prince Consort is highly circumstantial, but his point that the Queen knew most things and deliberately edited anything which might be construed as
uncomfortable, is certainly confirmed in the Queen's correspondence with Martin.

Those around Queen Victoria saw her as quite guileless, particularly when it came to her own writing. But, it is possible, that they judged her writing from a sophisticated viewpoint and saw subtexts which the average subject did not see. For example, when she tried to publish *The Early Years of the Prince Consort*, the creation over which the Queen, Weintraub tells us, exercised almost complete artistic and editorial control, the nominal author, Sir Charles Grey, felt some reluctance to publish more than a private edition of the work. In discussing the work with Grey, Professor Adam Sedwick of Cambridge wrote that publication "would exalt the love and loyalty of all true-hearted Englishmen. Where everything is so lovely, and so true, why should not our beloved Queen lay open the innermost recesses of her heart and thereby fix forever the loyal sympathy of all who have faith in what is good?" (Weintraub 337). As Sedwick saw it, as the Queen saw it, and as many of her middle-class readers saw it, the Queen's publication reinforced and added to the myth she was constructing.

Her later publication of *Leaves from the Journal of Our Life in the Highlands* and *More Leaves from the Journal of Our Life in the Highlands* did more than anything to popularize her version of her domesticity. Not only, as Valerie Sanders has said, did it justify and popularize the genre of the diary for many women in the nineteenth century (12), but it also relieved somewhat the pressure the Queen
was receiving for spending too much time in her highland seclusion. Arthur Ponsonby described the public relations effects of the publication of both books:

The publication of *Leaves from the Highlands* and *More Leaves* which had an enormous circulation was of great assistance to her, not that there was the smallest deliberate intention on her part to delude the public. Whatever the merits or demerits of these volumes may be, they present an innocent and rather sentimental picture of purely domestic events, expeditions, family goings and comings, little ceremonies, country scenes and deaths, births and marriages. It would not require more research, however, to pick out a date recording some colourless, unimportant incident and to find her in correspondence on the same day some letter to her Prime Minister or the Private Secretary expressing in her most vehement language her desire to interfere in high matters of national importance. But this was all excluded from the volumes and the general public, including radicals, and even republicans for a short time were satisfied there could be no harm whatever in a monarch who spent all of her days so innocently in her Scottish retreat. (124) Ponsonby here makes the Queen the innocent benefactor of her own public relations coup. It is quite possible that her supposed guilelessness contained a bit more guile than that for which she is generally credited.

Her letters to her daughter seem to indicate this knowledge.
January 11, 1868. . . . It [her book] has been most affectionately received by the public and you will be gratified and touched by the articles in The Times and Daily Telegraph. Good Mr. Helps [her editor] says "It is a new bond of union" between me and my people; that I was "immensely loved before" but "will be still more so now". (Your Dear Letter 169)

And seven days later she wrote:
I send you again several newspaper articles about the book, the effect produced by which is wonderful, and will I know gladden your heart from the extreme loyalty it displays. From all and every side, high and low, the feeling is the same. The letters flow in, saying how much more than ever I shall be loved, not that I am known and understood, and clamouring for the cheap edition for the poor—which will be ordered at once. 18,000 copies were sold in a week. It is very gratifying to see how people appreciate what is simple and right and how especially my truest friends—the people—feel it. They have (as a body) the truest feeling for family life. (171)

And again on the 22nd of January:
Newspapers shower in—the poorest, simplest full of the most touching and affectionate expressions. (172)
There is more than simply authorial vanity here. The Queen not only is pleased by her coup, she understands that her book has created a bond with her "people."  

CREATING QUEEN VICTORIA

Queen Victoria always knew that someone would read her diary. During the six years from when she began it until she became Queen, the writing was read by both her mother and her governess. While some have seen in the Queen's prose a clear differentiation between the duty of a daughter to her mother and a young girl's more genuine affection for her governess (Auchincloss 19), it takes a fairly sophisticated master of stylistics and a great deal of historical knowledge, to make such distinctions even in young Victoria's accounts of her youth. She became even more sensitive to this need for readability. In order to create a readable portrait of Albert's death bed scene, she waited two years before she composed it from her notes.

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8 Much of the so-called guilelessness attributed to the Queen was based on objections by other members of the Royal Family because they were the subject matter of much of the Queen's writing. Roger Fulford has commented on this in Your Dear Letter, his edition of the correspondence between the Queen and her daughter the German Empress for the years 1865-1871. He points out that while many of Queen Victoria's letters seem to be fishing for compliments, her daughter is silent. "We find ourselves involuntarily exclaiming as we read the letters, 'For goodness sake say something friendly about the Queen's book.' But nothing comes" (Fulford, xi).
Even after her death, her myth was entrusted to one who carried out, if not her wishes, at least her personality. Princess Beatrice, her youngest daughter, became her literary executor and industriously copied out the parts of the journals she found valuable and burnt the rest. Only the first volumes remain in the Queen's hand but even they have had whole sections ripped from them. All volumes covering the years after 1837, when she became Queen, have been destroyed. Beatrice's conflagration has been called historical vandalism and stupid, narrow-minded destructiveness. "That this treasure trove should have been turned over to the tender mercies of a warped acolyte," Auchincloss writes, "is one of the tragedies of literature" (174). But as Auchincloss has also pointed out, Beatrice, the editor, had been trained by Victoria, the writer. One wonders when the old Queen realized that a not very smart nor sensitive but dutiful daughter could do the ruthless editing she herself had neither time, strength, nor heart to do?

FINDING THE VICTORIAS

And so because of the contradiction and inconsistencies in the writings, all attempts to find the motivation for Queen Victoria in her writing, including this one, are creative constructions. This one is an argument which is neither expressed nor necessarily contradictory to

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9 Estimates of how much of the diary was destroyed have ranged from one half to two thirds of the Queen's version.
any expressed by the many biographers who have tackled the subject. It is but one sketch in a very large portrait gallery. One attempts to arrange the "facts" into a credible portrait. It would seem that this is all a biographer can really do.

In speaking of the materials of biography in The Nature of Biography, John Garraty has warned the biographer against accepting or swallowing whole any personal writing:

Personal material of this kind must be handled with understanding and insight. A nineteenth-century cynic once said that a biographer wishes instinctively to conceal his ignorance, whereas a man who writes about himself has a "secret desire" to "conceal his knowledge." Perhaps, the cynic exaggerated, but no matter how honest the writer, complete candor is rare in personal documents. (179)

Garraty might have gone farther, for complete candor is not only rare, it is next to impossible. It is impossible for any writer to understand all of the subject's motives, just as it is impossible for any of us to know always exactly why we attribute motives to another. In order to determine motives, her biographer must wade through the selection of Queen Victoria writing and finally make a judgment as to why the Queen acted or wrote as she did.

Among Queen Victoria's letters, for instance, is one to the Prince of Wales regarding the Tsar's offer of a Russian Regiment for the Prince:
With respect to the Russian Emperor's offer of a Regiment, I had no doubt myself as to its not being advisable for you to accept it. But I consulted Lord Granville before answering you, who entirely agrees.

You will remember that the question occurred some years ago already when the Emperor of Austria thought of offering you one, and it was not thought right to accept it.

The same thing had been intended for dear Papa who would have liked to accept it, but the government and everyone said it would be quite unpopular in this country, and he quite agreed. This precedent applies much more strongly to you who are not a German Prince, as dear Papa was by birth, and it was refused then . . . (II.ii.295)

It could be argued that the Queen's account is essentially accurate, that she simply remembers a precedent in which her husband, years before, had been told to refuse the offer of a foreign regiment. Conscientiously, she checked with her Foreign Secretary and was told that the Government's position had not changed. Therefore, she is carefully breaking the news to a son, who is infatuated with honors and uniforms and whom she knows will be disappointed.

It could also be argued that the Queen tried to limit personal honors for the Prince, honors which he loved so well in order to retain some control over his life. There are many other examples in which she refused the Prince any honors except those which she might dole out. If the mind starts to follow this tack, one could ask
what kind of questions she asked Granville regarding the honor: whether she solicited a positive or negative response or whether the question was truly asked as a neutral point of information. One could wonder if she truly sees Albert as the precedent, or if, in her attachment to the memory of the Prince Consort, she refuses the son what the father had been forced to refuse. The point is that sometimes a biographer must decide what the Queen was thinking. When this decision has been made, the biographer has become involved with his subject.

Clark Clifford has said that the most remarkable quality of John F. Kennedy was his ability to stand outside of a situation to make an objective decision as to a course of action. This would suggest the possibility of an objective judgment. Such a possibility, however, if it does exist, is very rare. It would seem almost impossible for the biographer not to become involved with the subject. Leon Edel has written that this involvement with the subject, what he calls transference, is a major problem with biography. According to Edel, Lytton Strachey, after Eminent Victorians, became so involved with his subject that he imagined himself at the center of his book. He was Queen Victoria:

He learned to cope with his own manipulative and assertive homosexuality by becoming the very queens of his stories. In his fertile imagination he could be the mother of his numerous boys—and at the same time their lover. In his androgynous role, wearing the mask of the queenly woman, he became at
times a too-terrifying mother of the young he pursued and embraced. (Writing Lives 78)

That is why it is so difficult, Edel points out, to discern in the famous closing passage of Queen Victoria whether it is the dying Victoria or the living Lytton who is speaking. Edel's Strachey is, of course, like Queen Victoria, an extreme example, but in his extremity, he is any biographer writ large. Just as it is impossible for a reader not to identify in some way—either positively or negatively—with a text, so too is it impossible for the biographer not to identify—either positively or negatively—with a subject. The old adage that it is impossible not to communicate is necessarily apt to the work of the biographer. But what is communicated is based on what the writer knows, thinks, or feels about the subject, the time and the experience.

Just as the subject communicates to the biographer so too does the biographer communicate to the reader. For the reader who is looking for the "true" subject, the process of reading biography is impossible. The reader must look through at least two translucent screens. The first is the author's choice of detail; the second is what the subject has decided to express. Moreover, readers working with the text from this perspective will, like the biographer, identify with the subject in order to create a personal portrait. At best the reader's portrait is a credible likeness of what he or she wishes to believe.
CHAPTER III

"THAT DREADFUL, INFAMOUS BOOK
BY MR. C. GREVILLE"

Dear Augusta,

Today I have only time to write
and tell you that I am sending you
the first volume of my beloved
Albert's biography. It is
admirably written by Mr. Martin
and it has been received with
much joy and appreciation by the
general public. Especially as a
contrast to that dreadful, infamous
book by Mr. C. Greville, which I
will write to you about
later. . . .

Queen Victoria to the
Kaiserin Augusta
December 16, 1874

As most of his commentators have pointed out, Charles
Cavendish Fulke Greville's was truly a transitional life, for he lived
from the heyday of one age to the triumph of another. Greville was
born in 1794 to all of the advantages of the Whig aristocracy.
Through his mother he was descended from the Dukes of Devonshire
and Portland, and from his grandfather, the Duke of Portland, twice
prime minister, he received at age seven the reversion to the
Secretaryship of the Island of Jamaica. At ten he was appointed—undoubtedly also due to his grandfather's influence—to a position as Clerk Extraordinary to the Privy Council. Greville finally entered into the responsibilities of this position in 1821 at the age of 27 and assumed his other sinecure seven years later. After paying a deputy to assume his duties in Jamaica, Greville spent most of his life comfortably in the center of London's political and social swirl as a close observer of the reigns of George IV, William IV, and Victoria. He died in 1865, five years after Prince Albert, aware of and even grudgingly admiring the new Victorian era.

In January of 1814, Greville began to keep a journal and for almost the next half century he continued to write about what he saw, heard and believed concerning the social and political life around him. When he stopped writing in 1860, his diary filled 91 quarto notebooks—for sheer size alone a rival to Queen Victoria's journal. Like Queen Victoria, he often returned to the diary to edit and change, and like Princess Beatrice, he deleted paragraphs and tore out whole pages from the text. Roger Fulford points out that this editing, "together with many hints in the diary itself," suggests "that he hoped it might one day be printed" (Greville I.vii). And it was printed, first in 1874 in an expurgated version edited by Greville's friend and literary executor, Henry Reeve, and, after several other versions, in 1938 in a complete edition edited by Lytton Strachey and Roger Fulford.
It is a remarkable work in many ways. In comparing them to the *Creevey Papers*, Joanna Richardson has summed up the Greville *Memoirs*:

They cover a longer period and give a wider view of men and events. They form a continuous panorama; they are written by one man with much more balance, style and dignity [than Creevey]. Their author may reveal his own political opinions, but his comments, though sharp, are not distorted by his indignation; he chronicles his contemporaries with a certain patrician ease. Above the fray, yet absorbed in events, he proves himself the greatest political diarist that England has ever seen. (19)

Greville's writing often reminds one of the Duc de Saint-Simon whom, along with the Roman life-writers, Shakespeare, and Boswell, Greville cites as a model. Like Saint-Simon, Greville is particularly good at the big set pieces in which he sums up a life in a post-mortem panegyric. His patterning is reversed, however, from that of the little duke of Louis XIV's Versailles, for while Saint-Simon generally ends with the negative aspects of the life—thus rendering it on-the-whole negative—Greville dismisses the negative aspects of the personality and ends with positive sentiments.

Greville is also very good at seeing all sides of the subject's personality. He sees the warmth beneath the imperiousness of Lady Holland. He sees the kindness of Melbourne behind Melbourne's mask of aristocratic diffidence. He also sees Queen Victoria's
infatuation for Melbourne and understands that she is probably too innocent to realize that she is in love.

There is also a kind of eighteenth-century abstraction in Greville, for aside from some major exceptions, he gives very little time to the physical appearance of his characters. Saint-Simon's personalities are always attached to his caricatures: this duchess is bleary-eyed or that princess with the perfect complexion has black teeth; this duke is a hunch-back and that general walks with the gait of a pederast. Greville sees personality and motivation but not bodies or faces. He goes to a redecorated Windsor Castle and says it is stunning, but there is no mention of what it looks like. His is almost entirely an overheard world, overheard from behind a screen.

In comparison with Saint-Simon, Greville is less unified but far more unbiased. In almost every line of his Memoirs, Saint-Simon grinds an ax. He sees the world changing, a sort of peaceful revolution of the old order, but he rages against it. As a result, all of his enemies are ugly and all of his friends are almost handsome. He is creating a text with a unified thesis. Greville, too, sees the old order passing, but he attempts to record its history not to form it. We see his bias, but, as we read it, it is not as if every line were a deliberate effort to prove a thesis.

While he tries to make it sound like a day-to-day chronicle of life at Versailles, Saint-Simon's Memoirs are written well after he left Court. This, of course, allows him the censorious judgment of hindsight. Greville is much more immediate. He is writing about the
now, and though he often returns and corrects the journal, the immediacy predominates. In this, he is more often like Queen Victoria.

Like the Queen's journal, Greville's Memoirs bog down a bit when he discusses himself rather than the world he observes. Some of the more empty sounding passages deal with self-disgust because of his addiction to horse racing. Also his complaints about the wasted course of his life seem more like obligatory romanticism than deeply sincere. But when he is interested, his picture of nineteenth-century life is fascinating. As Richardson says: "The Greville Memoirs are the outstanding source for the history of British politics in the first half of the nineteenth century" (19).

Queen Victoria was polite to Greville in life, but as the Memoirs began to appear in the 1870's, she became more and more infuriated with him. Longford writes that at first, the Queen enjoyed the volumes, finding them "very exaggerated" but "full of truth" (398). But as she read, she became less and less happy with the manner in which the Crown was treated. Some of this can be found in a letter Henry Ponsonby wrote to Gladstone:

Her Majesty is just now much occupied with Charles Greville's memoirs and rather annoyed with the manner in which her predecessors and Uncles are treated. (Guedalla 449)

To Disraeli, she wrote with more fury, exclaiming that "the tone in which it speaks of Royalty is . . . most reprehensible," and striking out against the memoirist's "indiscretion, indelicacy, ingratitude.
towards friends, betrayal of confidence, and shameful disloyalty
towards his Sovereign" (Richardson 21). Disraeli commiserated with
his "faery," never telling her that he had borrowed the journals from
Greville and had both read and used sections from them in his
biography of Greville's cousin, George Bentinck.1

According to Dorothy Baynes, writing as Dormer Creston, the
Queen's "disgust and horror" were particularly centered on Greville's
report of a conversation with the Duke of Wellington in which the
Duke supposed that the Duchess of Kent and John Conroy were
lovers. The Duke believed, Greville says, that Victoria's antipathy
toward Conroy and estrangement from her mother were in part due
to having witnessed some familiarities between the two. The Queen
firmly denied any such relationship (134–35). So angry was she, that
she attempted to have the publication "severely censured and
discredited." As a result of the publication and resentment of the
Queen, Strachey points out, the editor and publisher, Henry Reeve,
ever received his expected knighthood when he left public life.
Strachey adds:

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1 Speaking of what he saw as Greville's vanity, Disraeli told an acquaintance,
"I have never witnessed the disease in so violent a form, yet, I have read Cicero
and I know Lord Lytton" (Longford 399). But, according to Fulford, when
Disraeli was seeking a favorable reviewer for his life of Bentinck he also
wrote to the editor of The Times: "It requires for its critic a man up to snuff; a
man of the world and learned in political life—such a man for example as
Charles Greville." It should also be noted that Disraeli's negative comment
about Greville is quoted differently in at least three separate discussions about
the diarist. Both Elizabeth Longford and David Cecil use versions of Disraeli's
bon mot to invalidate Greville. Fulford uses it in conjunction with Disraeli's
letter to The Times to invalidate Disraeli.
Perhaps if the Queen had known how many caustic comments about herself Mr. Reeve had quietly suppressed in the published Memoirs, she would have been almost grateful to him; but, in that case, what would she have said to Greville? Imagination boggles at the thought. (Queen Victoria 197)

GREVILLE AND THE COURT

It is hard to believe that anyone could write a biography of Queen Victoria without using Greville—so close is he to what happens at Court. But the earliest biographies, as uncritical and often as unresearched as they sometimes are, seem to avoid the source. Morris's early (1901) eulogy never mentions Greville, and Sidney Lee's biography (1904) mentions Greville only twice. Even Strachey, who, as chief editor of the complete edition of the Memoirs, eventually came to know Greville as well as anyone, mentions the diarist only three times in his 1921 biography of the Queen. Edward Benson's biography which appeared in 1936 also mentions Greville three times, and Sitwell's 1936 Victoria of England expressly discusses the Memoirs twelve times, though she uses him without acknowledgment in several other places.

After the appearance of the Strachey-Fulford edition of the complete text in 1938, Greville is a key source, almost an Ur-text, for the early years of the reign. Baynes (1954) cites him 46 times with several lengthy passages being simply variations on Greville's commentary. Elizabeth Longford's 1964 Queen Victoria biography uses
Greville 37 times. Cecil Woodham-Smith's book (1972), which discusses the Queen's life only up until the death of the Prince Consort, contains 43 references to the diarist. Weintraub (1987) cites Greville 32 times, with six of these being rather extensive use of quotations. The availability of the materials is a factor in their importance as biographical sources. Obviously, it is much more convenient to leaf through an indexed, clean copy—some of Greville's original was written in a code of numbers and Greek letters—in the biographer's study, than to go grubbing through a dusty manuscript in the British Museum.

Anyone who reads the text, can quickly imagine problems with using it for a biography. In many cases, for example, Greville is simply reporting stories he has heard. He is careful to remind the reader when his sources like Aldolphus FitzClarence, William IV's illegitimate son, are unreliable. And when he hears that a story is inaccurate—for instance, when he reports that the new Queen has done nothing for William IV's bastards—he reports again that he has heard another version—that the Queen had indeed left the Royal Bastards their sinecures. But essentially a good portion of the text is based on hearsay.

A more serious problem, however, occurs when Greville's personal needs color his judgments. One can see this when he terms Lord Melbourne "lazy." This simply does not gyve with the information that Greville has already presented—that besides serving as Prime Minister, Melbourne also holds several other cabinet ministries and acts as the Private Secretary for the Queen. Later we learn that Greville is worried that his position as Secretary for Jamaica will be abolished and wants
Melbourne to act to secure the position. Melbourne commiserates and does not refuse, yet actually does nothing for Greville—though since Greville keeps the sinecure, no help seems needed. For Greville this inaction becomes "laziness." It appears that he creates a "lazy Melbourne" in all things to corroborate his "lazy" Melbourne in one thing.2

GREVILLE AND THE QUEEN

Greville is also accused of negativity, particularly in relation to Queen Victoria. An examination of the text, however, would seem to argue that most of the over 450 references to the Queen in the Memoirs are not negative at all. In fact, as the following table demonstrates, in the first four volumes of the Strachey-Fulford edition, the Queen is mentioned on 133 different days. Most of these are simply neutral comments discussing where she went and what she said or did. The rest are divided almost equally between positive and negative sentiments concerning the Queen.

2 In fairness to Greville, however, David Cecil has pointed out in his biography of the Prime Minister that Melbourne's undeserved reputation for idleness was almost universally spoken of (246). Cecil also says that Melbourne was particularly good at teasing Greville by giving him half bits of knowledge and hinted at promises (263).
Table I: Positive, Negative, and Neutral References to Queen Victoria in the First Four Chapters of Greville's Memoirs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Volume</th>
<th>Positive Entries</th>
<th>Negative Entries</th>
<th>Neutral Entries</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Volume I</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Volume II</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Volume III</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>9</td>
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<td>Volume IV</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>40</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>63</td>
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What this demonstrates is that Greville is negative if you look at the glass as half empty, positive if you see it as half full. Moreover, normally, the positive entries are longer than the negative ones. For example, Greville's discussion of the Queen's first Council Meeting is several pages of praise. His account of her performance at her Coronation is equally praising and equally long.

All of this, however, does not mean that Greville's bonhomnie is infinite. He clearly dislikes the Royal Family. George IV disgusts him, William IV is a buffoon, and Victoria's father is the worst of a bad lot. Almost all of the Queen's biographers point out that Greville describes the Duke of Kent as "the greatest rascal that ever went

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3 The mathematically inclined reader will note that the totals here come to more than 133—the number of days from which the entries were drawn. This is due to Greville's habit of dealing extensively with several ideas in a daily entry. If the Queen is mentioned in more than one context, the attitude is counted twice.
 unhung." Victoria's mother, the Duchess of Kent, Greville sees as pretentious and difficult. Because young Victoria is often mentioned in relation with these characters, she is somewhat tainted by her proximity to them. Yet Greville, as often as not, treats her well simply because she has the good sense to appear embarrassed or at least discomfited by her family's actions.

Greville also is not pleased with her looks. The second entry to mention her—the first concerns the difficulties George IV caused at her christening—refers to her as "short" and "vulgar-looking." Several years later, his opinion has not changed: again, she is "a short, vulgar-looking child." In general, his comments reflect more of an opinion than a true description—unlike his more precise description of Queen Adelaide's complexion, when he refers to her as "her spotted Majesty." But the feeling about Victoria's appearance is consistent, for even when he compliments her looks, he has reservations:

The Queen was magnificently dressed and looked better than I ever saw her. Her complexion is clear and has the brightness of youth; the expression of the eyes is agreeable; if she had a better mouth and did not show her gums and had more shade in her face, she would be pretty. Her manner is graceful and dignified with perfect self possession. (IV.43)

The conditionals tucked into the middle of the passage allow his reservations to be almost, but not quite, overlooked.
The major fault that Greville finds with the Queen is her partisanship in politics. In the early years, she was an adamant Whig, just as after Albert's death she would become an adamant Conservative. Greville truly dislikes her meddling in politics. He believes in a Parliamentary government in which the Queen can advise but is without real power—a view with which most of the political scientists of his day—the indispensable Bagehot included—would have agreed. Moreover, he sees her surrounded by political sycophants. When he describes the Court, he complains that it is "a scene of party and family favouritism, a few chosen individuals being her constant guests, to the almost total exclusion of anyone, however distinguished or respectable of the opposite side." Because of her position, most are powerless to change her attitude. Speaking of the Queen's actions during the Bedchamber Crisis, he writes:

The willful obstinate child of 20 deserves the severest reprehension, but the castigation she merits cannot be administered without impairing the authority, the dignity, the sanctity of the Crown she wears, and it is necessary to spare the individual self for the sake of the institution. (IV.174)

As the Queen backs out of politics, his tone is softened somewhat, but whenever he sees the hand of Victoria, he is apt to be critically on guard.

But even though he is not an uncritical watcher of the Queen, he does give her her due. When the House of Commons, at the instigation of the King of Hanover, the Duke of Cumberland, was
going to debate Albert's precedence, Greville wrote a well-received pamphlet in support of the Queen. It was his opinion that, in England, the Queen could give precedence to whomever she chose. Moreover, even though he finds life at Court boring, he credits Victoria and Albert for creating at Balmoral a style of life which is morally sound and comfortable.

Also, in Greville's favor is that his sentiments, however subjective, seem to be verified by other sources. When Greville speaks of the Queen's unpopularity—that she is hissed here or not given a very warm welcome there—he seems to be supported by accounts in the press. Furthermore, the ups and downs of the Queen's political life as they are presented in her biographies are mirrored by the attitudes that Greville reports about her in the Memoirs.4

Greville's general comments on the Queen's appearance are also supported by others. Sarah Coles Stevenson, the wife of the American Ambassador to the Court of St. James, an unabashed fan of the Queen,5 in a letter to her family, presents a positive version of Greville's sketch:

Her face, though not beautiful, has a look of spirituality, so bright and yet so tranquil that one feels involuntarily

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4 It is, of course possible, that the ups and downs of the Queen's early political life as they appear in her biographies mirror Greville, but since most other sources support Greville's assessment of the Queen's popularity, we may assume that Greville is a mirror of public opinion or, at least, of aristocratic opinion.

5 I am validating here a technique to which I will refer later in this chapter.
impressed with an idea that a good and pure spirit dwells within. . . (107)

Stevenson's later, more precise description of the Queen's face, also supports Greville:

Her eyes are blue, large, and full, her mouth, which is her worst feature, is generally a little open, her teeth small and short, and she shows her gums when she laughs which is rather disfiguring. (107–108)

Surely, Victoria's are history's most discussed gums.

Even Queen Victoria offers some support for Greville's accuracy. The Windsor library copy of the Memoirs, according to Strachey and Fulford, contains ten comments believed to be in the hand of the Queen (I.517). Only one of these doubts Greville's veracity. When Greville writes that the Duchess of Cumberland was "severely mortified" at the contrast between her reception and that of her sister-in-law [the Duchess of Cambridge], the Queen responds: "I believe this is pure invention."

Of course, the Queen can only "believe" since the incident happened a year before she was born.

The other nine comments for which the Queen had more or less first hand knowledge, seem to confirm Greville. On the Duchess of York's friendship with Princess Charlotte, the Queen writes, "The Duchess of York kept up this friendship with Prince Leopold till her death." On the difficulties caused by George IV at her christening, she adds, "This I believe is true, but when the King refused to let her [sic]
be called Georgiana with Alexandrina my Father gave me my mother's name which stood second." And later she writes, "Quite true." And so on, through all the comments the general impression is that while the Queen might have disliked what Greville had to say, she did not dispute most of his accuracy.

Finally, if imitation is a confirming nod, then many of the portraits of many of the characters around the Queen found in the biographies would confirm Greville. His Melbourne, intelligent, witty, and given to aristocratic poses, is a portrait that is consistent with almost all of the biographies. His Peel, intense, but awkward and shy, is the Peel of most of the books. And the supreme figure, his Wellington, honest, solid, a little deaf, yet dependable and noble, is the Wellington of each of the biographies of the Queen. And while her character in her biographies is always softer than the picture Greville gives us, Greville's Queen Victoria comes across as a credible model for the Queen's other biographers.

GREVILLE AND THE QUEEN'S BIOGRAPHERS

Essentially Greville is used in several ways by these same biographers. The vast majority of the times that he is cited, he is used as fact. When Dorothy Baynes writes of Wellington's comments about the Duchess of Kent, she treats this hearsay as if it were fact:

The Duke of Wellington told Charles Greville that Victoria's dislike of Conroy "was unquestionably owing to her having
witnessed some familiarities" between him and her mother. "What she had seen she repeated to the Baroness Spaeth [sic], and Spaeth not only did not hold her tongue but," so the Duke believed, "remonstrated with the Duchess herself. The consequence was that they got rid of Spaeth, and they would have got rid of Letzen [sic] too if they had been able; but Letzen, who knew very well what was going on, was prudent enough not to commit herself, and she was besides powerfully protected by George IV and William IV so that they did not attempt to expel her."

Greville says regarding the Duke that one could have "the certainty that every syllable" he said "was strictly true," and this information which he [the Duke] passed on to Greville is of moment in clarifying the tense situation within the walls of Kensington Palace. (156)

Greville is mentioned twice: as the object of the telling and as teller. In no case does Baynes imply that this story, for which we have only Greville's word, could possibly be a distortion or perhaps a fabrication. Greville's credibility is assumed. Of the 43 times that Greville is mentioned in the text, 27 are as a similar confirming source for hearsay. Most are variations of "Greville said," "Greville writes," or "comments Greville." There are five citations of Greville reporting what has been reported to him ("told Greville"). There are 33 such qualifiers in Cecil Woodham-Smith's biography. Clearly, in each we are expected to see Greville as accurate.
However, not all biographers treat him as accurate, for he is also used as an invalidating source. The most extensive of these disconfirming usages occurs in E.F. Benson's *Queen Victoria*. He labels Greville as a scandal monger and sets out to discredit the source: The estrangement of the Queen and her mother long existent, and accentuated by the new dispositions in Buckingham Palace, with the Queen's long dislike of Conroy, underlined by her dismissal of him, was naturally grist for the scandal-monger, and Charles Greville, Clerk of the Privy Council, made note of it in his amusing and malignant Diary. He never let an opportunity slip of saying something disagreeable about the Duchess of Kent and about Conroy, and his mind might be classed as of the "anti-filter" type: the filter, that is to say, exercising a purifying function on what is put in, while Greville's mind could be calculated to contaminate it. (38)

He follows this with a discussion of Wellington's comments about the Duchess of Kent and John Conroy. He mentions the malignant contaminant, mostly, we must assume, because he feels scholarship demands the discussion.

Later he will continue to undermine the source: Now this account is uncorroborated Greville: none of the very free-spoken and scandalous gutter publications of the day, which made a bee-line for anything discreditable about the Royal Family, have any mention of the connection, and
uncorroborated Greville, as a thousand instances shew, is not always to be relied on. (38)

And later:

... we may dismiss Greville's unsupported disclosure (for we only learn of the Duke's remarkable disclosure through him) as a pure fabrication. It was fiction founded on suggestive facts. (39)

And again later, he will dismiss Albert's grande battue—in the "worst German style"—of 300 fallow deer in Germany—a slaughter in which the animals were driven past the hunters who simply pointed straight ahead and shot, with those deer missed being clubbed to death—as an extermination of these pests which "were very destructive to the gardens." Greville presents this as an example of the Queen's—who viewed the whole thing—hard-heartedness, and writes that the whole affair had been "severely commented on in several papers, and met by a very clumsy (and false) attempt [in the Court Circular] to persuade the people that she was shocked and annoyed" (V.230). Even though the newspapers did discuss it and there are Punch cartoons illustrating the Prince's idea of sportsmanship, Benson dismisses the whole experience as a Grevillian fabrication:

As, however, Greville seems the sole authority for this, it may well be exaggerated or untrue.

Because of the previously discrediting comments about "uncorroborated Greville," the incident is mentioned but set aside.
One interesting aspect of this use of Greville is that the hunting incident, one assumes, had been forgotten by most people by 1936 when Benson published the book; it need not even have been mentioned. One can assume, however, that its inclusion adds tension to a normally flat tale.

Few of the Queen's biographers, however, go as directly for the jugular as does Benson. Baynes, for example, invalidates Greville with irony. For example, she calls his comment concerning the Duke of Kent one of his "occasional lurches into overstatement." Of the Bedchamber Crisis, she says that "he amused himself by adjudication of the principal characters." When she speaks of the rumor that John Conroy wanted Victoria locked up until she would sign an agreement making her mother Regent until her daughter was twenty-one, Baynes repeats the story but qualifies it with "if Greville is to be believed." The irony has a tendency to soften the tale, at the same time allowing the writer to tell it.

A more objective sounding method is that used by Woodham-Smith who simply underlines the source's bias ("Greville, who disliked the Duke of Kent . . . "). In this case, the writer builds up her own credibility by warning the reader of the lack of reliability of the source. If she warns us this time, we can trust her later.

Invalidation, then, serves several purposes. First it allows the biographer to set aside either received opinion or commonly quoted myth. At the same time it permits the biographer to mention contrary material and thus create a kind of "factual" tension in the
text. It also develops a line of credibility between author and reader. Finally, in each of these cases, invalidation softens opinions that readers might form on their own. If one chooses to mention that the Duke of Kent was removed from his military assignments in both Gibraltar and Canada because of the excessive harshness of his command, or that he discarded a mistress of 22 years on the possibility that he might father a royal heir, or that he lived the greater part of his adult life outside of his country because of his inability to manage his own affairs, a reader just might begin to draw strongly negative opinions about the Duke. The softening might, therefore, be necessary.

Often, even in the same books in which Greville has been invalidated as a source, the biographer chooses in some passages to validate him as a source. Benson, for example, after developing Greville's lack of credibility, makes him a credible source when the diarist writes of life in the Scottish Highlands:

Even Greville who never lost an opportunity to disparage and ridicule them could spy no target for his acidities when in 1849 he was summoned to Balmoral for a Council and found only a charming simplicity and ease "as of gentlefolk." (156)

Here, Greville receives a kind of super-credibility—"if he said it, it must be so."

Woodham-Smith, who uses Greville more judiciously than most, always includes a reminder of why she considers him a good source. For example, when he speaks of the Duke of York, she uses Greville
to confirm the generally accepted opinion about this most respected of George III's children.

However, Greville, the celebrated diarist, who had excellent opportunities of observation, as he was Clerk of the Privy Council, distinguished the Duke of York from the other royal Dukes as being the only one who had the feelings of an English gentleman. (5)

That he is a celebrated diarist is a kind of credential and that he could see with his own eyes as Clerk of the Council is added justification.

Generally, rather than appeal to super-credibility, she uses a more subtle technique of inserting relative clauses and qualifying phrases after Greville's name:

Charles Greville, however, who a few years later became one of the young Queen's devoted admirers, was not so much impressed by the 12-year-old Princess. (87)

Greville, who was present in his official capacity as Clerk of the Privy Council, wrote . . . (139)

Charles Greville, who in his post as Clerk of the Privy Council had many opportunities of observing her, commented. . . (141)
The Queen was nervous, so nervous that Greville, present as Clerk of the Privy Council, observed her hand trembled so much that she could hardly hold the paper. (194)

Greville, an authority on procedure now, however, wrote a pamphlet giving it as his opinion that the Queen, by exercise of the royal prerogative, was entitled through letters patent to confer whatever rank or precedence she chose on the Prince, next to herself if she wished, except in Parliament and at the Privy Council. (199)

Greville, with penetrating judgment, considered the dismissal of Palmerston over the coup d'état was a 'pretext' as the real cause was undoubtedly the Radical deputation from Finsbury and Islington and his conduct in the Kossuth affair. (305–307)

On 8th March 1850 judgment was given at the Privy Council Office. Greville, as Clerk of the Privy Council, was present. (321)

The qualifying phrase which follows Greville's name in each case not only establishes the comment as fact but, more subtly than in Benson, increases the "fact's" importance.

Baynes uses this validation process also, but again her use of irony tempers the effect. For example, Greville's opinion of the Baroness Lehzen is treated both seriously and mockingly by Baynes:
Charles Greville, who for conversation demanded a worthwhile companion, wrote in his diary after a royal evening. "Sat next Baroness Lehzen at dinner, a clever, agreeable woman." (310) On one level her relative clause can be taken at face value and thus justify the judgment concerning Lehzen. On yet another level, we find that Baynes is disparaging her source so that his pretentiousness is clarified.

She uses this ironic approach later when she has Greville peer into an ante-chamber to see who is waiting for the Queen.

At last, the business over, she [the Queen] rose, and the Council this time had a moment's view of a demure nape of neck beneath smoothly brushed-up hair as she glided away through the double doors, and Charles Greville, interestingly peering, notes, "I could see that nobody was in the adjoining room." (233) Here we are being told both that the Queen was indeed alone (as she writes in her diary) and that a nosy Greville was nosy enough to peer into the room as the Queen leaves.

Something else is also happening; Baynes is in the process of making Greville a character in her story—a chorus expressing the opinions of her subject's life. This fourth technique adds a new dimension to both text and source, for the source ceases to be a reporter of events but a character and commentator in the text. It is a technique which Strachey uses effectively in his biography even
though Greville is only mentioned three times. His Greville is, like Benson's, an acid-tongued dilettante.

Her bearing at her first Council filled the whole gathering with astonishment and admiration; the Duke of Wellington, Sir Robert Peel, even the savage Croker, even the cold and caustic Greville—all were completely carried away. (70)

Baynes' Greville is a more developed character, a scolding moralistic old uncle:

"All this," groaned Charles Greville, [referring to William IV's refusal to allow Prince Leopold to drink water at dinner] "is very miserable and disgraceful." (188)

As for the King, these last years of his reign were made wretched by the rough usage he received from some of his illegitimate offspring, to whom he was so devoted: those "good-for-nothing bastards" Greville dubbed them. . . . Munster had a long standing quarrel with William IV; the King constantly sending him friendly messages which Munster would fling aside, saying that "by holding out he shall make better terms"; ("Money," sneers Greville, "being his object.") Charles Greville concluded his scoldings on the impropriety of the whole proceeding. . . . (350)

Greville in his upbraidings. . . . (350)
Greville sitting there with his reproving face, began complaining to Melbourne that. . . (386)

And as Victoria and Albert are married, Greville turns to Baynes on the last page of her book and "scolds" that "they went off in a very poor and shabby style". . . (405)

Hers is probably the most extensive use of the source as character, but most modern biographers have done so. Woodham-Smith's Greville, for example, is a crotchety old bachelor whom everybody jokes about behind his back:

The fashion in which the newly married couple departed was not approved by Greville who was earning himself his subsequent nickname of 'Grumpy.' (204)

Greville, still grumpy, told Lady Palmerston that the wedding night had been too short. (205)

Greville went over to Osborne for a Council on the 14th September 1845, found the trip—special train to Gosport in 2 1/4 hours and Black Eagle steamer to East Cowes—'very agreeable' but Osborne itself 'a miserable place and such a vile house' . . . (275)

The death of the Duke evoked unexampled national grief. Even 'Grumpy' Greville was devoted to him and wrote . . . (325–26)
Greville whose grumpiness did not soften with advancing years, called him a 'military ruffian'. . . . (394)

According to Fulford and Longford, Greville's nickname was, in fact, "The Gruncher"—he was also nicknamed "Punch." It would seem that this change of sobriquet is Woodham-Smith's adaption to a modern audience's vocabulary and its need for simple characterization.

SOURCE AND PERSPECTIVE

We like to think of sources as the basis of the biographer's art, and, of course, they are. Michael Holroyd has pointed out, for example, that to render Albert an essentially admirable personality and to fit him into a schema from which Strachey can develop his thesis, Strachey overlooked much of the evidence that depicts Albert as cruel, condescending and supercilious (417). As Holroyd reminds us, even Albert's brother wrote of the Prince: "Of mankind in general he was contemptuous." To create that sympathetic portrait, Strachey uses predominantly Albert's own letters and the adoring memoirs of Albert's mentor and advisor, Baron Stockmar. Stockmar had been advisor to King Leopold before he took up that position with Albert and Victoria. His devotion to the family and to the Prince were constant. As a result, the negative comments that Duff finds in the

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6 Greville was from his earliest years partially deaf, a deafness which grew progressively worse. Part of his reputation for grumpiness might in fact be due to his inability to hear what went on around him.
popular press and in the writing of those around the court are almost totally ignored by Strachey.

Likewise, the Queen Victoria who waltzes through Theo Aronson's double portrait, *Victoria and Disraeli*, is nothing like the autocratic dowager at the end of Jeffrey Lant's history of the Queen's Jubilees. Aronson relies almost entirely on the half amused and half impressed letters of Disraeli. Each of these authors chooses a particular source to obtain a particular effect.

Greville, then, is just one source. However, because he attended so many of the important events in the early part of the reign and was familiar with many of the leading participants, he is an excellent source for details to fill out the biographical picture. He is used, primarily though, not because of the accuracy of his memories but simply because he has mentioned the details and the personalities in his journal.

Greville is a good example of the source who is fairly neutral. Because he is on the whole so neutral, the biographer can use him for whatever purposes are necessary to tell the story effectively. This is why he is at once a validating and an invalidating source. He can also become a character within the story, a character who acts as a chorus of public opinion, as a stand-in for the author, or, just as validly, as a foil for the biographer.

The sources, then, are the basis of biography in the same way that stones are the basis of the mosaicist's art. The artist need not choose all of the stones to make the design, but certain stones will
help create certain patterns and certain stones, themselves, become
the subject of the mosaic. So it is with biography. For the reader it is
important to know what stones are used, and equally important to
realize the pattern in which the stones are laid out.
The Queen, I'm sorry to say, has lost much of her popularity since the sad affair of Lady Flora Hastings. The papers I suppose have informed you all about it.

Sarah Coles Stevenson to her sisters

On January 10, 1839, Lady Flora Hastings, a lady of the Duchess of Kent's household, came into waiting at Buckingham Palace. It soon became obvious that something was wrong with Lady Flora; she complained of constant dyspepsia and her stomach began to swell. Palace rumor circulated that Lady Flora was pregnant. To protect her good name, she submitted to a physical examination conducted by the Queen's private physician, Sir James Clark, and a well-known specialist in women's diseases, Sir Charles Clarke, who happened to be in the palace at the time. Both testified that Lady Flora's virginity was still intact. The story might have ended there, but Lady Flora's uncle published his niece's letters to him in which she complained of her treatment by Clark and her suspicion that the gossip had been started by Baroness Lehzen, the Queen's German governess. The press, particularly the Tory press, was censorious. The Queen was
castigated for her unfeeling behavior and for allowing the backbiting. Lady Flora died of liver cancer at Buckingham Palace on July 5.

* * *

By the way, her Majesty has been in great trouble. She accepted the resignation of her ministers and sent for Robert Peel, who insisted, if he accepted office, that she should give up her ladies, especially the Baroness Lehzun [sic], who is every thing [sic] to her—mother, nurse, friend, companion. In short, the poor little girl I suppose, would feel lost without this early friend and faithful attendant, who has declined all honor and distinction but that of being near her beloved pupil. It was a cruel situation for this young and innocent creature, but she met it with Jacksonian firmness—refused to give up her ladies and re-installed her old ministry.

Sarah Coles Stevenson to her sisters

In May of 1839, the government of Lord Melbourne, the only Prime Minister the Queen had known and also the only Personal Secretary she had ever had, fell. According to her journal, she cried the entire day, but she called in the Duke of Wellington to form a new, Tory government. The Duke refused, giving his age, his
infirmity, and his near deafness as reasons. The Queen, then, called for Sir Robert Peel, the actual Tory leader in the House, to form the new government. Peel and the Queen were able to reach agreement on most of his agenda, but when he began to make changes in the members of the Queen's household—most of whom were the wives of important Whigs, the opposition party—the Queen balked, refusing to allow any changes at all. Peel argued that without these changes he would be unable to form a government, but the Queen stood firm. The Tory leadership refused to form a government, and, to the howls of the Tory press, Melbourne was returned to power.

* * *

What makes me feel for her, is, that there is no doubt that she is not on such terms with her Mother, as Mother & Daughter ought to be—and from what I can learn, the Duchess of Kent is to blame, however this is all en trenues [sic]...

Sarah Coles Stevenson to her sisters.

In June of 1839, the Duke of Wellington, who after 1815 seems to have served as a personal advisor to almost all of the Hanoverians, was able to persuade John Conroy, the Master of the Duchess of Kent's Household, to retire and to leave the country for Italy. Sir John was not liked by the Queen who had known him since he had been appointed to his position by her father's will. It is obvious from
the Queen's correspondence and journal entries of this period that much of the coldness existing between the Queen and her mother, the Duchess, was due to their disagreements concerning Conroy. With a pension of £3,000 a year, a baronetcy, and Melbourne's promise of a future Irish peerage, Sir John left for Italy where he would die in 1854 still waiting for the Queen to fulfill the promised peerage.

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There are several reasons most biographers of Queen Victoria treat these three events at some length in their works. For example, the retirement of John Conroy indirectly and the Lady Flora Hastings affair and the Bedchamber Crisis very directly are the foundation for the first documented public criticism of the Queen personally. Until 1839, she had been treated with both gentleness and understanding by the press. Coming as it did after almost a century of the last three Hanoverians, the accession of Queen Victoria to the crown had been greeted with almost universal praise. Moreover, the alternative to the young queen was her uncle, the aged and rather autocratic Duke of Cumberland, whom most saw as malign and half-mad. A cartoon of the period shows images of the two, side-by-side, the Queen looking sweet and demure while the Duke scowls outward. The heading reads, "The Contrast." As the Queen's advisor, the German Baron Stockmar, wrote to her of possible critics, "Your immediate
successor, with the mustaches, is enough to frighten them into the most violent attachment to you" (Weintraub 94).

Second, for the biographer who must deal somewhat with the feelings of the subject, Victoria herself considered all three events important. Sixty years later she would write in her journal of both the Hastings Affair and the Bedchamber Crisis as follies of her youth. That she mentioned the two situations so much after the fact is testimony to what she saw as their importance. Her estrangement from her mother and her blame for that estrangement on John Conroy are themes she discussed several times in her journals and in her letters to her own children. In fact, Conroy does not disappear from her writing until 1874, when, with the publication of Greville's Memoirs, one of his children wrote to the Queen enclosing a memorandum explaining Conroy's position.

Last, simply in terms of narrative interest, it is easy to see that the affair of Lady Flora Hastings, the Bedchamber Crisis, and the retirement of John Conroy are artistically convenient breaks in the smooth narrative of the years between the accession of Victoria to the throne in 1837 and her marriage to Albert in 1840. Without these breaks there would be little narrative tension in her story. Horseback rides with the Prime Minister and happy progresses through the realm are not the matter from which an exciting tale is constructed.

But far more important to the reader of biography than the choice of these subjects is how these events are presented in the text.
We might assume that because of interest and concentration, each reader reads a different text, but the text itself, at least in the given edition of a book, does remain the same. The reader interprets the biographer's intent by processing the information as it is presented in the text. The order and spacing between ideas within the text have much to do with this processed meaning. In fact, we are able to view the text as an assemblage of events from which to derive meaning, and that meaning is similar for most readers simply because the ideas are presented in a particular order or are separated or joined in a particular manner. To see how this works, one has only to look at how these three events from Queen Victoria's life in 1839, as presented in four different biographies of the Queen, can express varied meanings.

LEE AND THE ANALYTICS OF DECORUM

Sidney Lee's *Queen Victoria: A Biography* is the first, almost official life. Appearing in 1903, two years after Victoria's death, it is based on Lee's previously published article in the *Dictionary of National Biography* and letters and journal entries provided by Edward VII. Part of the interest in Lee's book for a study of biographical treatment lies in the exemplary manner in which he separates and joins events to give meaning. For example, John Conroy's resignation is handled in one sentence:
The Queen only asserted herself by requesting that Sir John Conroy, the master of her mother's and her own household, whom she never liked, should retire from her service; she gave him a pension of 3,000 a year, but refused his request for an order and an Irish peerage. (64)

It is a succinct, though not entirely accurate, presentation of the situation, but most interestingly it occurs 40 pages before the discussion of the Lady Flora and Bedchamber incidents, both of which happened chronologically prior to it. The placement within the text would seem to suggest that Conroy's leaving Court occurred sometime in 1837 not in June 1839.

The obvious assumption one can make for this juggling of chronology is that Lee separates the Conroy material from the period in which it happened for political reasons. While Edward VII was more or less unconcerned about scholarly examination of the affairs of his mother, others in the royal family were not. Princess Beatrice, for example, was already at work fixing her mother's myth. It is, then, entirely possible that the Queen's dislike of John Conroy and whatever suspicions she might have had about him were reason enough to separate the material. To bring Conroy into 1839 and to introduce Conroy's involvement with the Lady Flora incident—Conroy brought Lady Flora to Court—would simply have opened a very old can of worms.

An equally plausible answer for this rupture in Lee's strict chronology, and probably a more accurate answer for what does
happen, lies in Lee's analytical method. In organizing his material, Lee uses the life itself as an example of his conclusions. Linguistically, in this biography, both the Lady Flora affair and the Bedchamber Crisis are two examples of Victoria's "girlish" inexperience. Lee's emphasis on Victoria's reasonable assertiveness—she "only" asserted her will on this one issue—in the Conroy passage would contradict the youthful, willful, "girlish" inexperience he is trying to convey in the latter discussion.

Moreover, he underlines this analytical approach by his use of transitional elements. For example, his discussion of the Lady Flora episode begins with a limiting topic sentence:

The first crisis was the result of a train of circumstances which it was extremely embarrassing for a young lady to be confronted with. (93)

The emphasis of the sentence's content is on the Queen's youth and "Victorian" innocence. The word "first" separates this crisis from the second crisis, the Bedchamber Affair. A heading at the side of the page introduces "The episode of Lady Flora Hastings." Lee's choice of the neutral word "episode" rather than the more highly charged "scandal" or "tragedy," even "affair," removes all emotional appeal from the example. What follows is a chronological discussion of the incident up until Flora Hastings' death. He then gives one paragraph of summation in which he excuses the Queen's actions on her youth. No other ideas are presented. As a result, the incident is not
confused with other issues. This is reinforced with Lady Flora's death which definitely closes the subject.

Likewise, Lee's discussion of the Bedchamber Crisis is treated as a separate but interesting factor in the Queen's intellectual development.

The second Court crisis of 1839 was due to precisely opposite causes—to the Queen's peremptory and unprompted exercise of her personal authority and to her active interposition in business of the State without seeking advice. (95)

The subject of this sentence—"the second Court crisis of 1839"—clearly delineates this as a new and entirely separate issue from the Flora Hastings situation. Moreover, the two examples support his major premise that "both the crises through which the Queen and her Court passed in the first half of 1839 were attributable to her youth and inexperience" (93). They come together to support a logical whole.

The logical whole, then, makes a kind of artistic sense for the analytical biography. Lee tampers with the chronological development of the life because the piece does not fit. Instead, the life is rearranged around a logical need—the need to show the Queen's intellectual development under the tutelage of Lord Melbourne and, later, of Albert. Just as the two incidents of 1839 are joined under a general classification of youthful folly, they are joined between an introduction of about five pages concerning the Coronation, and one page which discusses the positive lessons
learned by the Queen. Thus, the negative impact of the three pages concerning Flora Hastings and of the five pages of the Bedchamber discussion is lost between the positive pap. Coming as they do between the positive hope of the Coronation and the near fulfillment of that hope with the marriage to Albert, these two early incidents demonstrate not the petty negativeness of the British parliamentary system but a crisis in learning for the Queen. Lee closes the chapter:

Increase of years and the good counsel of a wise husband were needed to teach the Queen to exercise with greater tact those habits of imperious command and self-reliance which were natural to her, and to bring under firmer control the impatience and quickness of temper. (103)

His "analytical method" essentially, then, shows the development of the Queen from head-strong and disobedient young girl, who would interpose her will without seeking advice, to thoughtful ruler of the most powerful nation on earth, who seeks the advice and counsel of her obviously wiser male advisors. Each "event" in her life is another step toward her ultimate fulfillment as imperialist symbol. This is a bildungsroman approach to biography.

STRACHEY AND DRAMATIC BIOGRAPHY

Like Lee, Lytton Strachey in Queen Victoria also assumes a patriarchal position which shows the development of the Queen from headstrong young woman to Victorian matron. Strachey attempts to
show that Victoria's two crises of 1839 were due to a lack of good counsel from a strong man. Strachey, however, is less interested in the "events" themselves than in the influence those events have on the psyche of his subject. In Strachey's view, the "strong man" replaces for Victoria the father who died when she was one and whom she idealized and idolized. Strachey's thesis in *Queen Victoria* is that the Queen worked best with those "strong men" like Melbourne, Albert, and Disraeli who fulfilled her need for paternal guidance. His, then, is a story of learning, but it concentrates on the reader's learning about Queen Victoria's psycho-sexual self—it is an early attempt at a freudian portrait.

By the time she ascended the throne, for example, Strachey sees the Queen as more or less psychologically formed. As a result, the actions of the subject are separated in the text while those concepts which are basic to the interior self are joined. For example, the Flora Hastings situation and the Bedchamber Crisis are external issues and are, thus, separated. This separation is most clearly underlined by the typography: the Flora Hastings episode is physically separated from the Bedchamber Crisis by a neat, neutral heading "VII." Linguistically, Strachey's separation is achieved by bringing the Flora Hastings episode almost to a complete close before moving on to the next selection. "VI," for example, closes with a discussion of Melbourne's influence on the Queen and concludes with a transitional sentence which moves the reader to the next episode:
And then suddenly, another violent crisis revealed more unmistakably than ever the nature of the mind with which he had to deal. (114)

The three adverbial modifiers, "then," "suddenly," and "another," work together to achieve closure and move the passage to the new topic. Moreover, the sentence also sets up Melbourne as a surrogate for the reader in that he, like we, will discover the results of the Queen's feeling concerning her father's death.

Lord Melbourne's paternal influence is, in this sense, the chapter's unifying device. The chapter in which each of these pieces is found is itself entitled "Lord Melbourne," and Melbourne's handling of the various crises is the general classifier for all of the material. John Conroy, on the other hand, is worked into the text as a thematic device to pull the pieces together. More specifically Conroy is used to introduce the Lady Flora Hastings episode and Lady Flora, having borrowed from the association with Conroy, is used to introduce the political controversy. Both Lady Flora and Conroy are used to conclude the chapter.

Strachey begins by relating Lady Flora to Sir John. One day Lady Flora found the joke turned against her. Early in 1839, travelling in the suite of the Duchess, she had returned from Scotland in the same carriage as Sir John. A change in her figure became the subject of an unseemly jest; tongues wagged; and the jest grew serious. (111)
Strachey, off again into the realm of innuendo, of course, implies that Sir John has something to do with the change in Lady Flora's figure. This conclusion would be inescapable for most readers since the proximity of the two points means that they share a common fate.

Whether the Queen believed that Lady Flora was pregnant by Conroy or not is irrelevant. In Strachey's biography, whenever Lady Flora is mentioned, she is associated, henceforth, with Conroy for the reader. Conroy himself has been used as the symbol of the Queen's assertion of self against her mother. If, psychologically, we all must break from our parent, Conroy is seen by Strachey as the primary symbol of Victoria's revolt from her mother. Earlier in the text, Strachey has shown that the first official act of the Queen in regards to her domestic arrangements was to move her own bed from her mother's room. And as she moved from Kensington to Buckingham, her second was to remove Conroy from his position as Master of her Household and to cut off any personal communication between them (75).

Conroy is brought back again near the end of the chapter, after the discussion of the Bedchamber Crisis when "happiness had returned with Lord M." Part of this happiness is created by the resignation and retirement of John Conroy, and while the death of Lady Flora began the discussion of the controversy in the press again, for Victoria, according to Strachey, that did not matter. He says, "Nevertheless, Lord M. was back, and every trouble faded under the enchantment of his presence and conversations." The
implication here, of course, is that all of Victoria's actions—including both the Flora Hastings and the Bedchamber crisis—were the result of her attachment to Melbourne.

In a sense, then, what happens is that Victoria's attachment to her suave mentor, or as Strachey calls him, the "old epicure," is given as reason for the first two crises of her reign. She is forgiven for the specifics of the problems. In summing up the Hastings affair, Strachey remarks:

As for Victoria, she was very young and quite inexperienced; and can hardly be blamed for having failed to control an extremely difficult situation. That was clearly Lord Melbourne's task; he was a man of the world, and with vigilance and circumspection, he might have quietly put out the ugly flames while they were still smoldering." (114)

By the end of the chapter Melbourne's influence is passed to Albert. So Strachey's placement of the motifs in this chapter, by beginning and ending with "strong men," suggests that while the Queen's psychological character was formed, it would actualize itself only in reaction to the men who guided her.

LONGFORD'S POLYCAUSAL PORTRAIT

Of the four texts under discussion, the most extensive is Elizabeth Longford's which ranges over more than 50 pages and covers three separate chapters. In terms of narrative, it is also the
most complicated. Both Lee and Strachey fix responsibility for both the Flora Hastings and the Bedchamber Crises on single factors—Lee laying responsibility for both squarely upon Victoria's refusal to listen to wiser counsel and Strachey seeing Melbourne's *laissez-faire* attitude as the central cause. Longford, on the other hand, sees multiple causes and presents a long list of people and coincidents which lead to each crisis.

For the Flora Hastings incident, she begins with the Queen's estrangement from her mother and dislike of Sir John. She adds to it the constant conversation of Baroness Lehzen, who felt threatened by the Duchess and Sir John. On top of this is the direct meddling of two of the Queen's ladies, Lady Portman and Lady Tavistock, who sought to end the gossip and only made it worse. Longford agrees with Strachey that Melbourne did nothing to calm the situation but points out that the Prime Minister continued to believe Lady Flora pregnant even after the examination because Clark, the physician, told him that there were non-religious precedents for pregnancy even when the hymen was intact.

Likewise, Longford's list of "causes" for the Bedchamber Crisis is equally complex. She argues that most of the main motivations of the Flora Hastings affair play a part in the Bedchamber affair, and she adds to these factors personality quirks inherent in the four main "actors" involved.
1. **Victoria:** A) Because Victoria distrusted her mother and Conroy and because her mother and Conroy were Tories, she distrusted Peel and the Tories in general.
   B) Victoria began her negotiations with the Tories actually believing that there would be no changes in her Household. She was, therefore, not prepared for the idea of change.
   C) Because of her attachment to Melbourne, Victoria did not want to cooperate with Peel and the Tories.

2. **Melbourne:** A) Melbourne had not thought through the problem of the Household. He did not see the Household as a political issue, even though, having been chosen by him, it was composed mostly of Whig ladies.
   B) One of his memoranda to the Queen, while not obviously intended to mislead, did exactly that. It suggested that there would be no changes in the Household. This set the Queen's expectations for no changes.

3. **Peel:** A) Even to his friends, Robert Peel appeared cold and distant when compared with the more amiable Melbourne. Although Victoria—with
Robert — would later consider Peel one of her best Prime Ministers, at this point, it appeared that Peel was almost destined to offend the Queen.

B) Peel himself felt ill-at-ease with the Queen and was always adamant or bumbling when with her.

4. The Press: The Tory press, which sided with the Duchess and Sir John on the estrangement of the Duchess with the Queen, was itching for an issue to knock the Queen from the public pedestal.

According to Longford, then, each of the incidents was the result of many motivating factors. Some of these factors, like many of those listed above, were based on the personalities of the individuals involved, but others, like Melbourne’s letter to the Queen or Clark’s conversation with Melbourne concerning Flora Hastings’ pregnancy, were simply coincidental; still others, like the weakness of the Whig government or Flora Hastings’ relationship with the Tories and the search of an issue in the Tory press, were political. In this biography, then, the Queen is not a Carlylian great personality directing events nor can her story be reduced to her search for a father figure. Instead, Longford presents the interrelationship of the subject with the external world.
Since there is no single motivation for action or reactions, nothing can be separate. Flora Hastings, for example, as Longford points out, was indeed the appointee of John Conroy; Flora Hastings was also the sister of the Marquis of Hastings, the leader of one of the most important Tory families in the country; Lady Flora, besides writing sentimental poetry, also had a keen wit, a sharp tongue and a cool personality. None of this could have endeared her to the Queen.1

Because of this joining of personal motivation and historical incident, Longford's narrative is, then, by far the most difficult to separate thematically while reading. What she achieves is a complex knot in which no single thread stands alone. What happens in the text is something very similar to what psychologists refer to as the figure/ground effect in visual representation (Arnheim 27). All of the lines or themes are clearly visible or present in the long passage, but each changes into something else when looked at from a slightly different perspective. None of the lines can, however, be separated from the mass of detail.

Because of the complexity of her narrative, Longford's separation of incident is arbitrarily logical. Basically, the period between the Coronation and the engagement visit of Albert is handled in three parts: "Disenchantment" (Chapter VII), "Mama's Amiable Lady" (Chapter VIII), and "Ladies of the Bedchamber" (Chapter IX). The first part serves as a prologue to the others. It

1 The irony, Longford points out, was that Lady Flora was appointed so that Victoria could have someone closer her own age in waiting.
recounts the Queen's personal malaise—she was gaining weight and felt worn down by the constant squabbling between her mother's and her own staff. Not only was she under the pressure of her relationship with her mother, but also her father's family felt they were being slighted in favor of her mother's German relatives. Melbourne's government was at best shaky, and she knew that as much as she respected him, his position in her household—he had moved his office into Buckingham Palace—would be short lived. Moreover, the Tories and the Tory press were looking for a chance to bring the government down. The personal, social, and political threads presented here provide an introduction to the details recounted in the Flora Hastings affair and the Bedchamber Crisis. But, Longford reminds us:

It must not be forgotten that the Flora Hastings affair was the matrix in which the Bedchamber Plot grew; the two did not just synchronize or overlap; they sustained each other with an interchange of suspicion and hatred. (114)

This interchange, which Longford recreates by inextricably joining all of the elements, leaves a text in which the Queen's relationship with her mother and John Conroy, the illness and death of Lady Flora Hastings, and the Bedchamber Crisis become what she calls "the most disastrous episode" of the Queen's early reign (123). They are a single episode. All of the elements, then, are arbitrarily separate and never quite separated.
The most obvious contrast to Longford's strategy of continual combination, and to Strachey's and Lee's strategy of analysis through combination and separation of ideas, is Stanley Weintraub's in *Queen Victoria: An Intimate Biography*. Weintraub treats each event as one chronological step in the life span of the Queen. While the pieces are united by the life dates, in themselves each piece is separated by the forward movement of time within the text.

Time is the most important organizing concept in Weintraub's approach. For example, of the first 17 sentences of opening paragraphs of the chapter, 9 move the narrative from one time zone to another. The time is variable. Sometimes the difference is only a few hours—between her being awakened by the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Lord Chamberlain and her breakfast with Stockmar; sometimes the difference is several days. But there is always a feeling of forward movement, a sort of chronological march toward the conclusion of the story. The reader comes to expect this chronological movement so that when the march is slowed as it is for two paragraphs between Victoria's refusal to allow John Conroy at the Proclamation ceremony and the actual ceremony, the text seems almost to stop.² Weintraub makes some attempt to provide

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² This is an example of what psychologists call "the effect of good continuation." When we read and see a repeated pattern, we expect that pattern to continue indefinitely. The writer's breaking that pattern can cause the reader much disquiet.
connection by overlaying the text with metaphor. The title of the chapter, "The Virgin Queen," with its echoes of Elizabeth and Spencer, and the chapter's opening sentence—"An imprisoned young princess released from confinement on the death of a grumpy king, to become queen of the most sprawling empire on earth—the stuff of a fairy tale, or the essence of legend"—with its direct reference to both fairy tale and legend, are attempts to force the reader into giving a larger meaning to the story. Later in the chapter, Weintraub will make literary comparisons by comparing at length the relationship of Melbourne and the young Victoria to that of Shaw's Caesar and Cleopatra. All of these comparisons tend to soften what could seem a logical disconnection in the text. The text itself begins to take on the form of the medieval chronicles and romances, and this further adds a softening patina.3

There are two interesting results of this absolute linearity. First, textual time changes the values of the events themselves. For example, in the other biographies under discussion, each author considers the Bedchamber Crisis to have had a more important consequence than either the Queen's feelings about John Conroy or the Flora Hastings scandal. As a result, in each of these texts, the

3 In fact, Weintraub makes an even more direct comparison between the real life and fictional political leader-teacher/queen relationships. "The play's Caesar," he writes, "has Melbourne's mannerisms and vanities, his eagerness to instruct and his tendency to coin cynical aphorisms. Shaw's Cleopatra has Victoria's youth, innocence, terrible temper, and ambition to be more than an empty title. Foreign policy issues deliberately echo a later decade—the English 1870s. Perhaps it was as close as one could comment on the Victoria-Melbourne relationship in an age when the Lord Chamberlain's office censored plays for their politics and their allusions to the sovereign" (105).
Bedchamber Crisis is given more textual space than the others. But in Weintraub's biography, the Flora Hastings episode, because it returns with Lady Flora's death after Melbourne has been reinstalled as Prime Minister, takes 14 paragraphs of presentation, while the Bedchamber Crisis takes 9. Even John Conroy's retirement which reappears throughout the chapter takes 6 paragraphs. This certainly is far higher proportion of textual time than the one sentence offered by Lee. If textual time can be equated to importance, linear separation not only changes values but, moreover, diminishes the importance of cause and effect as biographical outcomes, for, if all things are equally important in the life, all things must be considered equally important "causes" in the outcome of a life. This reduces the biography's role as analytical history.

This chronicle-like approach also reduces the value of all individual events. Of the 126 paragraphs in "The Virgin Queen" chapter of the Weintraub biography, 29 are devoted to the Flora Hastings, Bedchamber and John Conroy episodes of the Queen's life during this period. This insignificance is most strongly contrasted to the long chapters developed in the Longford biography, but it also works in other more minor ways. Victoria's half-brother Charles, for example, who lived with her for long periods, is mentioned 10 times in the text, and Weintraub's caractère fétiche, Moses Montefiore, whom she met twice, is mentioned three times. The proportion does not equal the importance. Events, then, become more or less equal in the text. This equality not only reduces the importance of their
logical cause and effect value but also reduces the value of the subject's psychological reaction to the events. In a sense what happens is that Weintraub's biographical subject moves through a world without much reasonable basis.

TIMELY MIXING

How we read the biographer's combinations and separations of ideas within the life-story, then, is the third perspective from which we process a text, and can lead to several sorts of conclusions. Separating ideas, as Lee separates the dismissal of Conroy from the Flora Hastings and Bedchamber Affairs, disassociates relationships. This is particularly appropriate if the author wishes to disengage what could be seen by the reader as possible causes from events. When events are naturally distanced from each other as, for example, Albert's birth is separated from his marriage to Victoria by 19 years, the separation can be de-emphasized by foreshadowing. This is why so many of Queen Victoria's biographers remind us that the Duchess of Kent's midwife left almost immediately after the birth of Victoria for Coburg to attend at the birth of Albert; the pre-mention reminds us of the marriage later.

Just as separation, then, disengages causes, conjunction associates them. All Strachey needs to do is to bring up Flora Hastings and John Conroy in the same sentences and the two characters are forever linked in the reader's mind. Again, Victoria
and Albert are more strongly linked in the early text by the midwife who delivered them than by their shared bloodlines.

Still another technique which will determine how we read the text is the order of events. Particularly if we are first time readers, the first and last positions are the most emphatic. Most readers cannot shake off the first impression, so that what we process first stands out in our mind. The last piece of information we process before closure is also extremely important—it stays as a lingering after effect. What this means is that unless the biographer is consciously making an effort to highlight or call our attention to information given in the middle of a text or of a passage, we are likely to overlook it.

Finally, the importance of a topic can also be determined by how much information is given about it. None of the three events discussed here are very important in terms of their long term political or historical repercussions—although the Bedchamber Crisis marked the last time that the British monarch caused enough difficulties that a government could not be formed. But the number of lines given to each reflects the biographer's impression of the importance these events have on the subject's life. The one line which Lee devotes to John Conroy's dismissal reduces its significance to almost nothing. The pages that Longford devotes to it increase the significance.

Spacing, then, can create narrative tension and direct how we are to read the text. In this sense, what we see as narrative
credibility in biography is determined by the order in which the events are laid before us. Truth becomes, then, a matter of space.
CHAPTER V

PORTRAITS OF REAL VICTORIAS

I have discovered that every book, good or bad, on Albert is dull and that every book, good or bad on the Queen is alive. Her vitality is astonishing.

Louis Auchincloss, *Persons of Consequence*

She was middle-aged, a Rumanian. Although she was small, her gestures were big, so they supported the large stones hanging from around her neck and the gold bracelets rattling on her arms. They were not top-of-the-line jewels; she was Rumanian and nobody expected top-of-the-line. But she was fun and told good stories and presented herself in a kind of upper-middle class bohemian sort of way. It was a Rumanian tradition; she could have modeled herself after other Rumanian upper-class bohemians—Rumania's nineteenth-century queen, Carmen Silva, or Queen Marie, Carmen Silva's daughter-in-law and Queen Victoria's granddaughter. She carried it off very well. "Darling," she said with a wave of her hand, "My life is a novel, a real novel."

As she saw it, the war, her escape from the communists, the months in Switzerland, the years in Rio, were a fantastic adventure, an adventure at once exciting and sad, never part of the planned
course of her life. And undoubtedly, to herself and her family, what
had happened, during and after the war, was unimaginable to their
young selves. There were probably other stories just as fantastic,
and if one thought about it, her life was similar to many; in fact, it
might have been easier than many. In extraordinary times, it was
probably not even very extraordinary. Yet, when she talked about it
and played it through her mind, it was a novel; it was as intense and
as compressed and as rich an experience as any novel ever written.

She told it well. She had a good eye for detail and an excellent
feel for the drama of events. Best of all she had created from herself
a sometimes dramatic, a sometimes ironic, and an often times comic
heroine who acted and reacted to the events in such a way that her
listeners were always entertained. In her personal biography, she
was the subject, and while she did not always come off best, her
persona was always in the process of learning about the foolishness
of mankind, her central theme. While she would never admit it, her
stories were fashioned for effect, and her listeners did not care
whether the stories were true or not, what really mattered was the
sigh, the laugh, the gulp at the end. The plot of her biography was
always the same—how her central character, herself, was involved in
the events which surrounded her.

Our Rumanian friend reminds us that all lives are novels: how
interesting these lives are depends on the novelist or the biographer,
on the choice of detail which creates a character operating within the
world. In this sense biographies present characters whose lives are
heightened by the intensity of the detail. In good biographies, the laundry list is never mentioned unless it is very important. What we read is an intense vision of a personality's life; all of the tedious and irrelevant day-to-day experience has been erased. This heightened personal reality is why, of all of the non-fictional genres, it is closest to fiction; both good biography and good fiction are intense looks into another's life. Biography, then, is a non-fiction novel.

Moreover, in good biographies, as in good fiction, readers do not just wait for the subject's resumé to unroll but, more importantly, actively participate in the unfolding of the personality itself. The careful reader will notice the patterns and changes that the author has used in creating a personality and will try to construct an intellectual scaffold from which to build a character. As readers build, they create, and in biography they create a personality to move through the life's events. The personality created is, as always, based on what the writer has presented and how the reader processes the information given by the biographer.

To help process the information gathered from the perspective of the character or personality, readers can ask themselves at least two questions about the biography. First, they can pay close attention to how the subject's personality is presented within the text: is the subject as presented meant to represent a complete person or is it meant to represent a theme? Second, the careful reader will watch how the biographer has treated the subject in the text: is the characterization a substantial personality or is it a
shadow? In answering these questions the reader is able to determine the credibility of the character and credibility is one important key to biographical character.

PATTERNING BIOGRAPHY

Undoubtedly, one of the main reasons that there are so many books dealing with Queen Victoria is that she is a mass of interesting and lively contradictions. While a firm believer in the value of the doctrine of the Established Church, for example, when one clergyman wrote her as consolation for Albert's death that she ought to think of herself as the bride of Christ, she wrote on the letter's margin: "That is what I call twaddle!" Most of her contemporaries remarked on her sometimes blunt truthfulness—when she was having trouble writing a sympathy note to Mrs. Gladstone on the death of her husband, she is reported to have said to one of her ladies, "How can I say I am sorry, when I am not." (Hardy 103) Yet, during the Boer War when every day she was reading the grim dispatches, she allowed only the recitation of jingoes in her presence. And while she refused to accept divorced women at Court and ranted about the infidelities of the Prince of Wales, she could write to her older daughter about how narrow she thought one German Royal Family to be when they

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1 This idea is developed to its greatest extent in the conclusion of Lady Longford's biography of the Queen. In fact, the main organizing principle, the thesis, if you will, of her biography is that the Queen is a mass of contradictions.
refused to speak to a daughter who found herself pregnant by a footman. In many senses, she was both everything and nothing Victorian.

Many of these contradictions grow out of her very long reign of 64 years—the longest of any British monarch. What she expresses at 19 when she came to the throne is liable to be quite different from what she expresses at 82 simply because of the accumulation of years. Until the moment she became Queen, her life under the Kensington System devised by the Duchess of Kent and John Conroy had been very limited. She had never been very far out of the sight of either her mother or her governess and she had chosen neither her acquaintances nor her activities. As a result, the young Queen was grateful and looked forward to whatever changed her routine. At 82, the old Queen had not only dealt with nine Prime Ministers and countless other new and often difficult people, she rigidly controlled every facet of her daily life and objected to any change in the course of her days.

Even the facts of her life changed over time. In her journal, for example, she noted on December 30, 1838, that she was reading Oliver Twist, and on New Year’s Day, 1839, she wrote that she had discussed the novel with Melbourne (Weintraub 117). In 1897 she remarked to Lady Lytton that she had never read a novel until after she was married in 1840 (Bulwer-Lytton 123). Whether she had forgotten her dolls named after characters from Scott and her pre-Albertine reading or whether she simply wanted to create a more
exemplary youth, we will never know, but for the biographer the contradictions can create complications.

Philip Guedalla has solved the problem of her longevity by crowning three queens: Victoria I, the young and exuberant young girl who begins the task of queenship at 19 and marries shortly after; Victoria II who reigns from the Queen's marriage to Albert in 1840 until the first ministry of Disraeli in 1868; and Victoria III who ascends the Imperial Throne in 1876 and continues as Queen/Empress until her death (8–14). But the Queen's life was more than a political life, and Guedalla's neat categories work only in a very general way when applied to other aspects of her life-course.

A second factor contributing to the contradictions in Queen Victoria's story are the wide number of first hand accounts of her. There are, of course, her own and to these are added those of her family. The diaries of various of her ladies-in-waiting as well as the memoirs and papers of the men on her staff have by now mostly all appeared. She is also mentioned in most of the other important diaries and letters of the day. Each of these gives an often intimate and always subjective version of events. While a cabinet minister might attack the long trip to Balmoral or Osborne as a difficulty fabricated by a selfish and obstinate old lady, the lady-in-waiting, just as unhappy with the trip, makes the journey as an act of love to an adored Queen who needs her. Neither is necessarily wrong, but as creations of different points of view they tend to complicate the biography.
Perhaps some biographer has experienced working with the ideal life, the one in which there are just enough details to create a credible portrait of the subject. The vast majority of biographers, one must assume, have dealt with less than these ideal conditions: either there are not many details so that the portrait must consist predominantly of conjecture, or, as in the case of Queen Victoria, so many details that a consistent portrait is difficult to sort out. In either case, the biographical portrait created is always limited, for biographies are lives limited by the author's evaluation of the events and by the selection of the life's details presented in the text.

Biographers and biographical critics have argued that the process of writing biography is always deductive: the writer determines the meaning of a life by choosing those details which best support the interpretation. However, for the reader, the personality of the character can unfold in the text either deductively or inductively. In deductive biography, a theme is clearly laid out and the reader's interest grows from how the personality fits into the parameters of the theme. In inductive biography, a personality develops as the text progresses and the writer attempts to pull all of these details together with a concluding and, most often, general summation.
"DEDUCING" CHARACTER

Of the two types of character presentation, the deductive model is the older. Most of the earliest biographies were attempts to depict the lives of heroes—their predominant purpose was the presentation of character for emulation. By the time of Rome, the genre had been refined to the point that Plutarch in the Parallel Lives was able to compare Greek and Roman leaders, demonstrating how the latter were almost always inferior to the former. The deductive, then, can be used for both positive and negative effects. For the most part, however, the respectful model held as the dominant biographical mode until well into our own century. Throughout the middle ages, the hagiography, as found in the Lives of the Saints, was the dominant positive biographical type. The Lives of the Saints were used as instructive guides to the life of Christ. As a result, not only was the basic organizational plan fixed chronologically but also the details presented had to correspond as closely as possible to those of Christ's life.

Many of the first biographies to appear after the death of Victoria were a type of modern hagiography. In these cases, however, it was not the emulation of the Christ-like life but basic nineteenth-century middle-class values which were enthroned. Charles Morris's The Life of Queen Victoria and the Story of Her Reign, immodestly subtitled A Beautiful Tribute to England's Greatest
Queen in Her Domestic and Official Life, was one of the first of these hagiographies to race into print after the Queen's death. Morris's goal is to depict a character who in "moral elevation and nobility of character" rose above all other rulers of England. This moral elevation is due, says Morris in his introduction, to her personification of the "domestic virtues" and her status as "the pattern and paragon of womanhood" (xii). Morris's Victoria is devoted to her husband, warm in maternal love and representative of all the "homely virtues," and in chapters such as "The Queen as Mother," "The Busy Woman," and "Lonely Days of Widowhood" he finds some, interprets some, and makes up some events to demonstrate his conclusion.

A more general use of the deductive method is in the eulogistic and dyslogistic biographies. In both cases the thesis is very general but still exclusionary: this subject is very good, or that subject is very bad. Mostly, Queen Victoria biographies of this type have been eulogistic. G. Barnett Smith's, The Life of Queen Victoria: 1819–1901 follows this positive pattern. It begins with a very direct expression of thesis:

I propose in the following pages to relate the life of Queen Victoria, and not the history of her reign, which may be read in various forms elsewhere. Nevertheless, the personal narrative will necessarily be interwoven with public events, for a monarch, beyond all other persons, cannot escape the pressure and burden
of the times. An ideal sovereign, besides his or her private joys and sorrows, bears in remembrance those of her people; and such a sovereign was Queen Victoria, from the time when, still youthful in years, she assumed her high destiny as ruler of these realms, to the last years of her memorable reign. (3)

For 549 pages Smith pours on the goodwill and graciousness of his ideal sovereign whose love and concern for her subjects goes even so far as to improve the sewage system of Manchester.

Smith's final lines sum up this long eulogy:

Her life, prolonged far beyond the allotted span, was long, strenuous, and glorious; her name and fame will descend to countless generations; and whenever the representatives of the Anglo-Saxon race may be found, there will her memory be cherished as that of the great and good Queen Victoria. (549)

Dorothy Marshall's *The Life and Times of Victoria* (1974) is a more modern version of this deductive pattern. Marshall depicts the Queen as a modern corporate consultant:

Victoria is the forerunner of the modern career woman, dovetailing the role of devoted wife and mother with that of chief consultant to a large international concern, which grew steadily in its resources and magnitude throughout the years of her stewardship. Moreover, the dual role had to be lived in the fierce light of national publicity. Victoria had to be at once a wife, mother and a queen. This is the dilemma that provides the vital thread through the labyrinth of her life. (12)
These sentences from the first chapter of her book sum up the Marshall's story. Her thesis is remarkably succinct. In most deductive biography, one finds the thesis just as tightly stated some place in the introduction, for it is the framework onto which the biography is hung.

Strachey's, the most famous deductive biography of Queen Victoria, does not have a directly stated thesis, but does use a deductive model to work out the telling of the Queen's life. In this case, the framework is extratextual but is clearly there. His is the first biography to express the idea that the Queen's life quest was a search for a strong father-figure. Not only are the chapters organized around this theme but within its limits, Strachey is able to develop his own concerns about sexual relations. Strachey's Albert is not in love with Queen Victoria although she is passionately in love with him (104). In fact, says Strachey, Albert sees his own marriage as self-sacrifice. Furthermore, while Strachey never says it directly, Albert in *Queen Victoria* is undoubtedly homosexual. "He had a marked distaste for the opposite sex," Strachey writes (136). Strachey toyed with the idea of expressing Albert's homosexuality more openly, but, given his own times, decided against it (Merle II.598). Albert's sublimation of this sexuality makes him, to his biographer, a sympathetic but clearly neurotic character.

Strachey is fascinated with the confusion of sexual roles in the marriage. "Was he the wife and she the husband? It almost seemed so" (158). And also as Holroyd points out, Strachey works out his
dominant man theme by depicting the Queen as totally subjugated to Albert's masculinity.

Time and pressure of inevitable circumstances were for him; Every day his predominance grew more assured—and every night. (122)

Moreover, the myth of the Queen's insatiable sexual appetite probably comes out of Strachey:

It was no longer a mere pleasure, it was a positive necessity to go to bed as early as possible. (186)

The psychological theme, then, allows Strachey to develop a myth of the cold, distant male and the insatiable, pleading woman. By using a "freudian" approach to the relationship, he is able to imply the sexual level without stating it. He is able to organize this large body of material under a fairly tight thematic organization simply by using the deductive method.

"INDUCING" CHARACTER

While the deductive is the earlier form of character presentation in biography, the inductive method has almost as long a pedigree; Suetonius' Lives of the Twelve Caesars, for example, presents each of the Caesars following this model. For the most part, however, until the publication of Boswell's Life of Johnson, the inductive model was ignored for most of biography's long history. After Boswell, an accumulation of detail used to make readers see
the character became extremely popular. Yet, often the accumulation was the only technique adapted from Boswell so that in the nineteenth century, the three to five volume deductive eulogy was not uncommon. There were some inductive works, and the best of these "lives and times," volumes like Mrs. Gaskell's *Charlotte Bronte* or Froude's *Carlyle*, attempt to give as complete a picture of the subject as possible. But because the inductive treats the celebrated "warts-and-all" of the subject, many nineteenth century biographers avoided the technique. Froude, for example, was bitterly attacked by Carlyle's family for implying that the Master might have been difficult to live with.

Elizabeth Longford's *Queen Victoria: Born to Succeed* (originally published in Great Britain as *Victoria R. I.*) and Cecil Woodham-Smith's *Queen Victoria from Her Birth to the Death of the Prince Consort* are among the more extraordinary inductive biographies of Queen Victoria. Both are long books; both use an accumulation of detail to present a character. When the reader finishes either, there is a feeling that one has spent time with the Queen. They present varied central characters who are not only believable but seemingly complete.

One can see how the inductive can reveal character and theme by comparing two passages in these works which treat the same event. In April 1855, the Emperor of France, Napoleon III, and his Empress Eugénie paid a state visit to England. For Queen Victoria, the visit offered personal difficulties—her Uncle Leopold, the King of
the Belgians, was married to the daughter of Louis Philippe, the King whom Napoleon had overthrown. It also presented diplomatic difficulties since the British Cabinet had suggested the visit in an effort to dissuade the Emperor from his plan to take personal command of the Allied Troops in the Crimea. Longford uses the episode to develop Queen Victoria's personality.

The visit was something of a diplomatic success . . . Indeed a major reason for inviting him to England was to extinguish this Napoleonic dream. Queen Victoria knew very well that her army would never take orders from a Bonaparte. Through the Empress Eugénie, Queen Victoria at first tactfully suggested that the Emperor's precious life must not be risked. Afterwards at a council of war between the Emperor and the British Cabinet which the Queen attended, she boldly asked him not to go. He appeared to accept her advice with the face-saving observation that of course he could not leave Paris for fear of what his uncle, Prince Jerome, and his cousin Prince Napoleon might be up to.

The council of war was another highlight in Queen Victoria's experience. She considered it 'one of the most interesting things I ever was present at. . . ' It made her feel right inside the war.

A week after Napoleon's return home, vows that all he now wanted was 'de prendre Sébastopol et puis de recevoir Votre Majesté à Paris', he had a miraculous escape from an
assassin's bullet: 'a pistol, thank God!' observed the Queen, 'hardly ever seems to succeed.' The pistol succeeded, however, in finally convincing him that a journey to the Crimea would be unwise. (251-252)

For Longford, the visit is a chance to emphasize the Queen's personal diplomacy. Queen Victoria's discussions first with Eugénie and, then, with Napoleon himself show Victoria working to achieve the goals of the Cabinet. Victoria's interest in the War Council ("one of the most interesting things") also demonstrates her general interest in political and governmental affairs, an interest she will deny when she is in her grieving widow period. We are also shown her matter-of-factness ("a pistol thank God!"), her practical—even if oversimplified—view of one of the hazards of queenship or, more to the point, emperorship. Lastly, Longford makes us concentrate on personality because the ironic close of the passage ("the pistol succeeded, however, in finally convincing him") reminds us that most diplomatic negotiation is not truly important in the long run of things; life and personality are.

The Queen's personality, at least in the corresponding passage in Queen Victoria, is of less importance to Woodham-Smith. In fact, her discussion emphasizes the negotiations themselves and the personality of the Emperor.

On Monday, 16th April 1855, the Emperor Napoleon III and the Empress Eugénie landed at Dover, and were received by the Prince and escorted to London. It was noted with approval
that as the carriage drove through St. James's Street the Emperor pointed out to the Empress the small house in King Street where he had lived during the most poverty-stricken years of his exile. The Queen herself received him at the grand entrance of Windsor Castle, while bands played the famous song written by the Emperor's mother and adopted by the French army almost as their national anthem, 'Partant pour la Syrie'. The Queen was moved: 'I cannot say what indescribable emotion filled me,' she wrote in her journal, 'how much all seemed like a wonderful dream. I advanced and embraced the Emperor, who received two salutes on either cheek from me having first kissed my hand. I next embraced the very gentle, graceful and evidently very nervous Empress.' At dinner, magnificent in St. George's Hall, conversation turned to the war immediately and the Emperor said the French generals were always afraid of taking responsibility, which was why he wanted to go out. When the Queen urged the distance and the danger, the Emperor remarked there were dangers everywhere. Indeed attempts to assassinate him were so frequent that it appeared a regular stream of would-be murderers were passing to France after being supplied with a refuge in England. 'You know,' the Emperor had told Lord Malmesbury, 'I am neither fanciful, nor timid, but I give you my word of honour that three men have been successively arrested within fifty yards of me armed with daggers and
These men all came straight from England and had not been twelve hours in France. Your police should have known it and given me notice." (357–358)

The inherent openness of Victoria's personality is suggested here by her recognition of the historical significance—the state visit of an Emperor Napoleon to his British allies—when she mentions her emotions. Again, we also see her attempts to convince the Emperor to forget the idea of leading the troops. However, in terms of characterization, the passage is not predominantly Victoria's but the Emperor's. We read of his adventurer's youth, of his mother the talented Queen Hortense, and of his own argument with British civil liberties. This last point is discussed elsewhere in Longford's biography, but in the passage cited from her work, she keeps away from Napoleon so that she can highlight Victoria's personality. While Woodham-Smith does develop the character of Victoria elsewhere in her text, here she is more interested in showing the personalities of those around the Queen. She mentions, for example, two paragraphs previous to this passage that Albert was impressed with Eugénie's wardrobe, a detail not discussed in the Longford's treatment.

Both of these passages make readers work harder for meaning than they must in the deductive biographies. In a deductive biography, the reader is given the framework and then asked to apply the framework to the text. As a puzzle, then, the answer is in

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2 The Emperor seemed to forget that his principal occupation in impecunious exile on King Street, London, was plotting the overthrow of the then French government.
its beginning. In inductive biography, the answer comes at the end of the quest. The writer gives indications by the preponderance of detail, suggestive linguistic nudges, and, when the point is obscure, outright expository analysis.

Both Longford and Woodham-Smith, for example, go to great lengths to paint Albert in as positive a light as possible. After the birth of Prince Leopold, in 1853, a birth which marked the first time the Queen used "that blessed Chloroform" during childbirth and the first time that haemophilia occurred in one of the Royal children,3 Queen Victoria suffered from what has been variously called a "crisis of nerves" and "a nervous breakdown" and probably from what we now term "post-partum depression." This was one time when the Queen was given to emotional scenes; Albert, on the other hand, who like Victoria, most times, hated scenes and adored writing, insisted that they put their arguments on paper; the Queen disagreed. The picture we find in several of the biographies is of Albert running from room to room at Windsor Castle looking for a desk, paper and pen, while the Queen charges after him looking to have it out.4

The result of all of this is a remarkable memorandum from Albert to the Queen in which he, "father-figurly," addresses her as

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3 While Leopold was the only one of Victoria and Albert's nine children to have the disease, he and three of his sisters, the Princess Royal, Princess Alice, and Princess Beatrice transmitted the disease to most of the Royal Houses of Europe.

4 Several biographers have suggested that Albert, in fact, avoided arguing with his wife, because he believed that strong anger would tip her over the brink of madness. Strong emotions, he believed, had brought on the madness of Victoria's grandfather George III.
"My Child." In the letter, Albert draws a fine logical and semantic distinction between being the "occasion for her sufferings... but not the cause." He goes on to outline the three courses of action open to him: 1.) he might attempt to reason with her; 2.) he can turn a deaf ear; and 3.) he can get away from her. Obviously he finds the last the most successful. As if to show his resolve, he concludes: "I don't want an answer."

Woodham-Smith sympathizes with Albert but does not enter into the argument. We discover her sympathy because she nudges, first telling us that the problem was the result of the Queen's "nervous hysterical crisis" and the fact that the Queen made a "series of scenes." And later that Victoria and Albert's life together improved when the Queen's nerves improved. For the most part, even though the long memo seems a bit fatuous, Woodham-Smith allows Albert to be the victim.

Longford, however, uncharacteristically, jumps into the middle of the argument and points out Albert's inherent ridiculousness.

Poor Albert. The contradictions in his letter (he deprecated the Queen's wish to 'have it all out, while advising her not to bottle it up) showed that he was no tactician in the field of feminine emotions. (236)
The biographer then goes on to explain her own pop-psyche interpretation of the incident.
All Victoria wanted was an explosion followed by a good cry, kiss and make up. Albert's advice to write, if speech seemed too daunting, was really addressed to himself. (236)

Yet, Longford seems to feel troubled enough by the document and its implications to add a disclaimer so that the reader does not move too far from her central argument concerning the marriage of Albert and Victoria:

None of this is incompatible with the most successful of marriages and when the Prince wrote of getting back to 'normal' he meant getting back to their normal state of happiness. (236)

In inductive characterization whether the biographer nudges as does Woodham-Smith in this passage or explains as does Longford, the explanation is limited to just the one incident; rarely is it expanded to pertain to all of the details of a life. It is up to the reader to piece the larger puzzle together.

"DEDUCING" OR "INDUCING"?

For the reader, neither deductive nor inductive biography is "better" or "worse"; each is simply different. Deductive biography, for example, is, more often than not, thesis driven; inductive biography is generally character driven. For the reader, this means that watching the central organizing theme is the key to understanding character in a deductive biography. In inductive
biography, watching the character in the process of developing is the central interest. Likewise, when we read a deductive biography, we enter into a controlled world where each detail takes on a heightened meaning. These details, in being chosen by the biographer, have already been invested with meaning so that the formal meaning they attain in deductive biography creates an intense reading experience. There is little doubt that Strachey chose the deductive because it gave him the kind of formal control that he sought in his work.5

When one looks for the great sweep of a life, the inductive method generally works better. Each detail does not need to fall so tightly into a prescribed place. As a result, the characters can make all of the unexpected twists and turns that they would in life. Finally, because of the control derived from the thesis, deductive biography normally gives the reader a more intense look into a smaller area, a view which in the larger scheme of things one would tend to overlook. In inductive biography, on the other hand, the scope gives a feeling of completeness; one might not see all of the trees but one certainly knows the forest.

When carried to an extreme all of these aspects can, of course, become negative. Too much thematics makes us doubt the possibility of such a world; too much control makes the reading stifling; too limited a scope makes the reading seem a waste of time. One the other hand, too much character development can overwhelm

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5 This question of control is discussed at length in George K. Simson's *Strachey's Use of His Sources in “Eminent Victorians.”*
the reader so that the value and meaning of a life are lost; too much sweep can lead to diffuseness, and too much completeness can make for very tedious and boring reading.

SUBSTANCES AND SHADOWS

A second feature important to the reader when evaluating a biographical character is how the character is used within the text. If the biography is character centered, such as Longford's, then the reader expects the biographical subject to be as complete as possible. If the biographical vision is limited to one aspect of the character's life, it stands to reason that the character can be the embodiment of the theme within the work. Dorothy Marshall's "corporate consultant" Victoria is a good example of the thematic use of character in biography. Marshall never really tells us the how of Queen Victoria's juggling act, but she does show it. We see the wife, the mother, the executive, and the woman on almost every page of the text.

Another example of this thematic construction is the Queen Victoria of Dorothy Thompson's *Queen Victoria: Gender and Power*. While the book is not, as has been said before, strictly speaking, a biography, it is a good example of how an individual woman, a woman who is in fact separated from most others by power, position, and fortune, can come to represent the concept "Woman." Thompson's Queen Victoria demonstrates the effects of the Queen's
gender on the monarchy and government, but is not, nor one would assume is meant to be, a "complete character."

Sometimes, the same central characters can play a secondary role in other stories. The little old lady who whizzes past the crowds in Jeffrey L. Lant's history of the Queen's two jubilees is such a figure: a shadow used predominantly to highlight a point. Lant pictures the central figure of each of the jubilees as obstinate (she refuses to make any concession as to the date of the first jubilee and "her dislike of her capital and of Buckingham Palace deprived working men of a long weekend's holiday" [156]), mean (she continually fusses about expenses from her privy purse [155]), and selfish (instead of riding to the ceremony in one of the gilded state coaches, she chose to "whirl along the route at the brisk pace she liked" in her landau [154]). Anyone who has read enough about the Queen realizes that, from one point of view, the picture is believable, and can be supported but that this is only one of the shadows of the entire portrait. Lant has needed an ironical portrait to demonstrate that the confusion of the ceremony was not helped by the difficulty of the central figure.

Sometimes these secondary or shadow characters serve as foils to another character in the book. The Victoria in David Duff's *Victoria and Albert* never quite comes alive because Duff attempts to focus on Albert's disagreeable qualities in the text. In fact, if Albert is not entirely credible because Duff manages to pile on so many of Albert's negative traits, Victoria ceases to be credible because she
appears in his story as such a shrinking violet. However, if Duff's conception of Albert is to work within the text, Victoria must recede from the foreground. Almost exactly the opposite occurs in Bolitho's dual biography, *Victoria: The Widow and Her Son*. Here Victoria dominates the text so much that the prince (perhaps as in life), becomes a shadow next to his mother. In some of these cases the shadowy side of Queen Victoria is deliberate. When clearly used as either a stock character or as a leit-motif, the credibility of the character does not come into question.

**CREDIBLE PICTURES**

A character in one biography will be different from the same character in another for several reasons. The reader while looking at the text from this perspective, must consider three things. First one has to determine the writer's attitude toward the subject. Queen Victoria has been lucky in that most of her biographers have looked with a kindly eye on her foibles and crotchets. Once we know how the biographer generally sees the character, we must determine secondly if the character is meant to be a "real" person or a thematic presence. Depending on what the author is trying to do, we use different intellectual criteria to evaluate the text. Third, it is important to know if the character is of primary or secondary

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6 However, we are also reminded often that when a character who, as Auchincloss says, is filled with vitality, is reduced to a non-figure for the reader, the biography can be considered a failure. It is possible even for a secondary character to have credibility.
importance in the text. If the character is secondary, does it serve as a leit-motif or as a foil to another or is it a shadow without substance? Given the answers to these questions, we still have to decide if the biography presents a credible picture of the life.

One of the assumptions of this theory is that biography is about people, and, because of that, how the people are presented within the text is important to the reader. It would almost, but does not quite, follow that if the biography is about characters, then the most complete presentation of the character would make for the best biography. This second assumption does not work simply because the yardstick for completeness is the work itself. Within Queen Victoria, Strachey's central character, however one might find it limited, is possible. Nor is accuracy necessarily a measure. The reader assumes that the information presented by the biographer is accurate, but that does not mean that the biographer has not stacked the details concerning the character. Stacking the case is part of the biographer's job. Unless the reader has read several different accounts of the subject, the portrait created need not even be accurate.

In the last analysis, all that really matters for the reader is credibility—a word that has been mentioned more than once in these pages. Biographical characters can only be credible or not credible. If readers accept the characters within the context of the work, credibility is achieved; if they do not, it is not. The credibility of the portrait is determined by several criteria. The first guideline can be
stylistic, that is the portrait just might appear right, balanced and clearly stated; the guidelines can come from the sources, the portrait seems complete and accurate; finally, narrative force can determine credibility, the story sounds plausible. All of these somewhat vague criteria are applied to the choice of details made by the biographer. For it is the biographer who makes the life both believable and interesting.

Critics sometimes argue that certain lives should not be written, that these life courses somehow lack the drama necessary to be interesting. But in most of these dramaless biographies, the real problem is not the life; it is the biographer. It is neither naive nor overly sentimental to see that all people are inherently interesting. What really matters in biography is the presentation of the details within the text. Holroyd, for example, argues that Strachey's fascination with Queen Victoria was based on the incongruity between "her total mediocrity taken in conjunction with her grossly artificial position as Queen of England." He goes on to say that the book appeals to the "megalomania" in all readers.

'Just like ourselves,' middle-aged ladies from the circulating libraries could reflect with satisfaction after glancing through Lytton's flattering portrait of an essentially humdrum subject.

Holroyd's point that the Queen was essentially humdrum indicates only his evaluation of her life. Many of her own biographers have found the same life fascinating. It is not the life itself which is
necessarily humdrum. A formulating spirit needs to organize the life to achieve that picture.

Likewise when Simson suggests that Strachey chose Queen Victoria because she, like Manning, Arnold, and Gordon, was a "second-rater" and like these influential eminent Victorians her taste, intellect, and accomplishments were "lacking in excellence," he is implying a set of personal criteria fixed on another's life (6–7). Some of her biographers, for example, have argued that, given her situation and the situation of her times, Victoria's taste was impeccable. The Queen, for example, draped in black became the center of attention simply because she stood out from all of the glitter which surrounded her. Most would agree that she rarely synthesized ideas, but just as many have said that she grasped issues and their implications much faster than many of her ministers. Finally, while the official power of the monarchy declined during her years on the throne, many have also argued that during her long reign she not only managed to avoid the revolutions and counter-revolutions which swept Europe, but was also able to leave the monarchy essentially stronger than when she began her reign. Excellence, too, depends upon the point of view of the judge.

The point of view of the judge is what a reader evaluates in a biography. The good judge will see the essential drama in a life. This is what our Rumanian friend determined when she saw her own life—the essential drama. Fashioning that drama into a narrative is
what gives the life its novelesque characteristics. All "lifes" then are novels; the better biographer convinces readers of that.
CHAPTER VI

WHO SAVED THE CROWN?

Soon after my arrival in England, at a table where all the company were gentlemen by rank and position, there were constant references to and jokes about "Mrs. Brown". Confounding her with Arthur Sketchley's heroine in "Fun", I lost the point of all the witty sayings, and should have remained in blissful ignorance throughout the dinner had not my host kindly informed me that "Mrs. Brown" was an English synonym for the Queen...

I have been told that the Queen was not allowed to hold a review in Hyde Park, because Lord Derby and the Duke of Cambridge objected to John Brown's presence; that the Prince of Wales took a special train for Osborne to remonstrate with his royal mother when the Tomahawk's Brown Study was published; that the Queen was insane, and John Brown was her keeper; that the Queen was a spiritualist, and John Brown was her medium—in a word, a hundred stories, each more absurd than the other, and all vouched for by men of considerable station and authority.

*from "English Photographs by an American" Tinsley's Magazine, October, 1868*

During the nineteenth century, while the map of Europe was continually being redrawn by war and revolution and crowns and
their possessors were constantly in a state of flux, Queen Victoria seemed to sail through the century with progressively imposing majesty. When she succeeded to the throne in 1839, there was some doubt as to whether the monarchy would survive for long. Greville, in 1831, speculating on the possible deaths of William IV and Victoria, and the succession of the Duke of Cumberland, spoke of "dispensing with the regal office" (II.110). By 1901, when Victoria died, however, most historians and all of her biographers have agreed that she left a stronger, though less politically powerful, institution.

During Queen Victoria's reign, the monarchy was seriously threatened only three times: in the earliest years, by a movement to apply the Salic law which, had it triumphed, would have denied a woman the right of succession and effectively removed Victoria from the throne; in 1848, by the Chartist movement; and in the 1870s, by complaints concerning the Queen's long period of mourning for Prince Albert. Strangely enough each of these "crises" dissipated without ever coming to a head.

The question of a male succession, given Victoria's possible successor, the unloved Duke of Cumberland, was never seriously pursued.¹ Even the Duke himself was somewhat of a disbeliever in

¹ According to Roger Fulford (The Royal Dukes), it was popular gossip that the Duke of Cumberland had murdered his valet when the valet discovered that the Duke had been sleeping with his wife. So that this story would have artistic balance, another rumor contended that the Duke's wife had poisoned her previous husbands. In a letter to Queen Victoria many years later, Sir
the movement. Immediately after the death of William IV, the Duke of Wellington suggested that Cumberland leave for Hanover where he was to become king so that he would not, as an English duke, have to swear fealty to his niece. But Cumberland disregarded the advice and, with his brothers, swore his loyalty oath to Victoria. Later, the English were to breathe a collective sigh of relief that a reasonable Victoria was on the throne, when the Duke, as King of Hanover, abolished the liberal constitution granted by William IV.

The so-called Chartist Rebellion was a more serious affair. The Chartists, a loose confederation of labor groups united after the Reform Bill of 1832, sought to implement the six points of their People’s Charter. These included manhood suffrage, the ballot, payment for Members of Parliament, abolition of the property qualification for members, equal constituencies and annual Parliaments. In April of 1848, spurred on by continental unrest, the Chartists planned a huge demonstration to carry their petitions to Parliament. To calm the fears of the ruling classes, fears which have been described as almost universal, Wellington prepared for the

John Conroy’s daughter justified her father’s treatment of Victoria before she was Queen, his essential imprisonment of the princess, by declaring that he was only trying to protect the young Victoria from the evil machinations of the Duke. Queen Victoria dismissed all of these rumors as nonsense.

2 This discussion of the Chartist Movement is based on the thorough presentations of Cecil Woodham-Smith in Queen Victoria, Asa Briggs in Chartist Studies, and Elic Halévy in The History of the English People in the Nineteenth Century: The Victorian Period.
Chartist demonstrations as if he were expecting Napoleon.\(^3\) In the end, however, the Chartist manifestation did not amount to much. The Chartist leaders, realizing that they were greatly overpowered, persuaded the crowds to disperse.\(^4\) Instead of being accompanied by a mob of working class demonstrators, the petitions were delivered to the House of Commons through the more conventional, not to say prosaic, means of three cabs. The Queen, when informed, wrote to her Uncle Leopold:

> Thank God! The Chartist meeting & Procession has turned out to be a complete failure; the loyalty of the people at large has been very striking & their indignation at their peace being interfered with by such wanton & worthless men—immense.

(Woodham-Smith 289)

While the succession and Chartist affairs were not necessarily anti-monarchical, the crisis over the Queen's withdrawal from public life was a more openly republican movement. After the death of Albert in 1861, the Queen, more and more, sought to avoid the ceremonial duties of her position. She did not, however, plan to give up any of her powers or privileges and made it clear to the various

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\(^3\) One of the ironies of Wellington's preparations for the Chartist demonstration was that he commanded a Napoleon. Prince Louis Napoleon, the future Emperor of the French, living in exile in London, enlisted, as did most of the gentlemen in London, in the Duke's special constabulary.

\(^4\) The Chartist leader, Feargus O'Connor, estimated the size of the crowd at 500,000. *The Times*, on the other hand, suggested 20,000 as being closer to the mark, and Lord John Russell, the Prime Minister, gave the number as somewhere between 12,000 and 15,000 (Woodham-Smith 288).
ministries with which she had to deal that the Queen's work was getting done and by the Queen. What was not getting done, according to the critics, were the Queen's ceremonial duties. From 1861 to 1870, for example, Victoria opened Parliament only twice and since these ceremonial showings corresponded with the need for a dowry or allowance for one of the Royal Children, neither politicians nor the public looked on them as a generous giving of the royal time. Moreover, the Queen refused to let her children, particularly the Prince of Wales, the heir and logical choice, fill in for her.

Republican politicians used the Queen herself to argue against the monarchy. As they saw it, she was not fulfilling her function as ceremonial head of state. Furthermore, the public was, they said, paying for more than the ceremony in that it was responsible for the upkeep of the entire Royal Family, and the Royal Family, instead of being involved in useful work, spent its time mostly in pleasure, in German family life, and in scandal. In fact, a presidency, ran the republican argument, would cost 40 times less than the monarchy. The Queen, therefore, was taking advantage of the public, or, in late twentieth-century terms, the public was not getting much bang for its pound.

5 After Albert's death, Queen Victoria never again read the government's address from the throne. Instead, she sat while a government dignitary read it for her.
Criticism of the Queen's mourning grew. Even as early as 1865, *The Times* gently reminded the Crown of its ceremonial duties by publishing a cartoon of the Queen as Hermione with a caption quoting Shakespeare, "'Tis time! Descend; be stone no more." Yet, while public criticism from Republican members of Parliament heated up, aside from arguing against the inclusion of critics in the government, the Queen kept to her dark mourning.

By the end of 1870 the popularity of the monarchy had dropped to a low not experienced since the days of Queen Victoria's un lamented uncles. But in 1871, she made some effort. In February, she opened Parliament for the first time in four years—and only for the third time in ten years. The republicans, however, pointed out that the double whammy of Princess Louise's dowry and Prince Arthur's annuity was before Parliament. There was some return on this Parliamentary investment, though: Princess Louise's marriage to the Marquis of Lorne was celebrated with what Longford has called "the maximum of visible and palpable pomp" (382). Moreover, the Queen attended the opening of a bridge and gave the Prince of Wales some unofficial responsibility—he attended an investiture. Yet, when Gladstone asked her to postpone her annual visit to Balmoral for a few days until after Parliament had adjourned, she refused
adamantly, claiming illness and fatigue and implying she had done enough already.6

Queen Victoria really was sick although the seriousness of her illness was not known until after she arrived in Scotland. She suffered a severe infection and abscess under her arm and her doctors operated. The Queen's constitution was generally excellent, but, in this case, her recovery was long. And to make matters worse, while she was recovering, rumors about her relationship with her Scottish servant John Brown began to circulate in earnest.7

Moreover, a pamphlet, entitled *What Does She Do With It?*, anonymously written by a Liberal MP, asserting that the Queen hoarded, on the average, £200,000 annually from the Civil List she was paid by Parliament, was published.

The Queen was personally protected from most criticism by an order from her doctor—an order which was objected to by both the Prime Minister and members of the Royal Family—that she not be shown any critical articles from the newspapers. This prompted Disraeli to remark, "How can one drag the Monarch's chair from the

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6 Gladstone wrote to Sir Henry Ponsonby a few days after her departure for Scotland: "Worse things may be imagined but smaller and meaner causes for the decay of Thrones cannot be conceived. It is like the worm which bores the bark of a noble oak tree and breaks the channel of its life" (Guedalla 334).

7 The Tomahawk's cartoon "A Brown Study" depicting John Brown looking at the symbols of state had appeared in 1867. By 1871, she was referred to openly in some of the more popular pamphlets as Mrs. Brown or the Empress Brown. For a more complete discussion of the gossip and scandal surrounding the Queen and her highland gillie, the reader is referred to Tom Cullen's *The Empress Brown*. 
fire . . . if the Doctor forbids you to touch the chair" (Longford 388). Things, however, finally came to a head in November when the Queen did see a newspaper report of a speech by a Radical Member of Parliament, Sir Charles Dilke, in which he was reported to have said she should be deposed for dereliction of duty and replaced by a republic.

Queen Victoria had no sooner sent off her demand that the Government repudiate Dilke, when another series of those fortunate circumstances which seemed to happen throughout her reign arrived to alleviate the crisis. First, the much maligned and hardly innocent Prince of Wales came down with a life-threatening case of typhoid almost ten years to the day of his father's death from the same result of inadequate sewers. The Queen left Balmoral for the Prince's home at Sandringham and nursed him through his illness. The public was touched by the Queen's solicitude and by the coincidence, and the palace was swamped with letters of sympathy. As a result, in February of 1872, the Queen with the Prince of Wales attended a public service of Thanksgiving at St. Paul's Cathedral. The day after the public service, another attempt was made on her life. Again, there was an outpouring of public support. From this time forward, republicanism seemed to wither away as a possibility for the British.

Given the hindsight of over one hundred years, the details which make up each of these monarchical crises seem almost trivial. It does not take much to realize that, like most of the hottest political issues of our own day, the importance of these events seems to have
been inflated by the emotion the participants invested in them at the time. Moreover, each ends with such a resounding whimper that their insignificance seems emphasized. The curious reader will ask how a petition of over a million and a half signatures could have resulted in only 20,000 demonstrators or how ten years of pent up feelings of neglect could have evaporated before the illness of an unloved dandy. The answers are, of course, never precise, but depending on the writer involved they can be divided into two groups: 1) historical reasons which seek political, social, and economic causes for events and 2) what we will call biographical causes which seek reasons in the personalities involved. In the case of the British monarchy during Queen Victoria's reign, good arguments can be made for both positions. Moreover, how these arguments are used in biography helps to explain how biographers use cause, both historical and biographical, to lead a reader to explicit meaning.

HISTORICAL CAUSES I: THE SPIRIT OF REFORM

While biographers find it convenient to pinpoint individual personalities as having done the most to save the monarchy, historians point to the political, social, and economic movements throughout the century which help mitigate any anti-monarchical feelings within the country. Historians generally give three essential reasons for the resistance of the English to republican institutions.
First, there was a spirit of reform which, unlike in other European countries, seemed to permeate nineteenth-century Britain. For example, since Catholic Emancipation in the 1820s, reform had been an essential part of British political life. Governments were elected and fell on the issue. Radicals introduced it, the forces of reaction fought it, and, eventually, reforms came into being. The Chartist Movement, for example, found its inspiration in the Reform Bill of 1832 which gave the vote to the middle class but not to labor. As some complained, reform would only beget more reform, and eventually labor, too, got the vote. What the reform movement actually did was create a release for pent up aspirations. In eighteenth-century France where there seemed no hope for the middle class to obtain power, a revolution appeared to be not only inevitable but necessary. In nineteenth-century England, that revolution came about much more peacefully. As the century unfolded, political reform meant that a stable system of obtaining social revolution was possible.

Even the radical political leaders of the period were not radically in favor of republicanism. Joseph Chamberlain, who was continually raising the Queen's ire because of anti-monarchical statements—statements she termed "democratic"—made a speech in 1874 as Mayor of Birmingham which most carefully summed up the common view of republicanism:

If to be a Republican is to hold, as a matter of theory at all events, that that is the best government for a free and intelligent
people in which merit is preferred to birth, then I hold it to be an honour to be associated with nearly all the greatest thinkers of the country and to be a Republican. But if a Republican is one who would violently uproot existing order, who would thrust aside the opinion and affront the sentiment of a huge majority of the nation, merely to carry to a logical conclusion an abstract theory, then I am far from being a Republican as any man can be. I have never, in private or in public, advocated Republicanism for this country. We may be tending in that direction, but I hold that the time has not arrived yet—even if it ever arrives—and I hold also that Radicals and Liberals have quite enough to occupy their best energies without wasting their time in what seems to me a very remote speculation. At the same time, gentlemen, there may be an exaggerated loyalty as well as an exaggerated Republicanism. (Hardie, *The Political Influence Queen Victoria* 217)

Even though the Queen would continue to write to Gladstone about injudicious remarks made by Mr. Chamberlain concerning the monarchy, his comments more or less sum up the popular political feeling. And when we look at the radicals of nineteenth-century England, we are reminded of the conservative anarchists of the 1950s, that group of absurdists who professed belief in anarchy but claimed to realize that it would never happen. It is generally agreed that of all the defects in nineteenth-century Britain's republican fervor, perhaps one of the strongest was the lack of one politician
with a clear, systematic approach to republicanism. Without that consistent leadership, historians contend, republicanism had nowhere to go.

**HISTORICAL CAUSES II: THE EVERYONE-LOVES-A-LORD MENTALITY**

Still another factor, a social factor, which protected the monarchy was the inherent social deference within the English character of which Bagehot and so many other historians speak. While there might not be a deferent gene in the Anglo-Saxon chain, and while not everyone in England necessarily loved his lordship, there was a close enough relationship between the landed gentry and the people to make the overthrow of the social system a personal rather than a purely philosophical movement.

Unlike in France, again, where the average aristocrat since the days of Louis XIV had spent most of the time in Paris and consequently had few ties with those who worked the lands, there was a close tie between British landowners and people who worked for them. Even today, as one goes through the villages of England, one can see the close relationship of the country house or manor and the village surrounding it. Placards indicating that this building or that fountain was a gift of this lord or that are reminders of the close ties between the gentry and the people. That is not to say that these ties were necessarily harmonious, just that they existed.
Moreover, the squirarchy in England held power for so long, even long after the Industrial Revolution had taken away the basis of that power, because, as W.J. Reader has said, "country society . . . had a close knit texture. The land, the Church, and Parliament, all were caught up and held together in an intricate web of family relationships which outsiders found hard to penetrate" (45). The landed gentry, then, most of whom Queen Victoria and particularly Prince Albert distrusted—Albert referred to the English aristocracy as "The Foxhunters"—provided a social and economic buffer between the people and the monarchy.

Furthermore, the Reform Act of 1832 had successfully driven a social wedge between the middle class and the poor. The tactic of the Whigs, according to Lord Grey, the Prime Minister who devised it, was "to associate the middle with the higher orders of society in the love and support of the institutions and government of the country" (F.M.L. Thompson 16). As Grey said, the middle class formed "the real and efficient mass of public opinion, and without whom the power of the gentry is nothing." (F.M.L. Thompson 19). And once associated with the upper classes, the middle-class mentality sought a definition into which it would be included. "They were quite ruthless about that," says Reader, "the old social order must be modified—but, once modified, they wanted to inhabit it, not to overthrow it. . . ." (146).

Moreover, there seemed to be the possibility of upward mobility. If Disraeli could get to what he called "the top of the greasy
pole," anyone could. The rise of the middle class and middle-class aspirations meant that still another buffer existed between the dispossessed and the monarchy. As long as there was the possibility that people could reach the top in one or two generations, there was no need to change the status quo, for the status quo contained the ideal to which the middle class aspired. Deference, then, was a necessity for the preservation of the path to upward mobility.

There was one more class, not a financial class but an employment class which made deference an article of faith—domestic servants. In 1871, for example, 16% of all employed people in England were employed in domestic service. About one in seven of those employed in London was in domestic service (Hibbert, *Daily Life in Victorian England* 23). This meant two things. To overthrow the social order would throw many of these people out of work, and while the work was hard and often thankless, it was a living which provided a way out of the countryside where there was no work. This was a particularly important outlet for young women. Domestic service also provided those involved in it with domestic models to follow. Domestic servants often sought to emulate their employers and aspired to a home, if not as rich as the employer's, at least as well-run and respectable. Domestics, then, became another buffer between the poor and the monarchy.

Together, the closeness of the squirarchy to the people, the possibility of social mobility for the middle classes, and the imitation of the upper classes by the lower, added up to a fairly stable society.
Historians have commented that individual freedom was much greater in the nineteenth century than in our own day. But at that same time there was also much more authority, and, for the most part, this authority was patriarchal. Queen Victoria was perhaps the greatest exception—perhaps the only exception—to this social rule. But as all in the family deferred to the father, each member of the greater society deferred to the greater symbol of the authority. The aristocracy and eventually the Queen (in her "male" role as leader of the state) were at the top of the social heap.

**HISTORICAL CAUSES III: THE CALL OF MAMMON**

As in most free market economies, in nineteenth-century Britain there was a huge gap between the top incomes and those at the bottom. The Duke of Westminster, for example, from his London property alone, received about £300,000 a year; a dishwasher, who had just started in domestic service earned about £2 annually. It was estimated in the 90s that about a third of the population could be living in poverty. A journeyman laborer, what the Victorians called an "artisan," earned about £65 a year. Artisans considered themselves above the poor who earned anything less than £54.

The bottom line seems a bit grim, but, while prices rose from 1842 to 1872, so too did wages (Reader 122). Later in the century, while salaries did not rise, prices fell. On the whole, says Reader, quoting the early twentieth-century population specialist, Charles
Booth, the £11 difference between the poor and the "respectable" working class was very important in terms of lifestyle. It was also small enough to provide the possibility for a worker who was motivated to improve living conditions. Moreover, low wages kept all costs down so that one could live well on fairly little. The Carlyles, for example, who lived in London on £150 a year, were able to employ two domestics.

Finally, although it does not seem that way from the figures, there was more money around. While imperialism eventually was a costly drain on the British economy, in the nineteenth century it provided access to raw materials and a possibility for making new fortunes. Furthermore, industrialism which moved the employment centers from the farm to the city, created new jobs and new money. Because social unrest on the Continent hindered European manufacturing, markets for British goods were ever expanding. This brought more money into being for the top two thirds. There is a great deal of argument over whether all classes, particularly the poor, were increasingly better off during Victoria's reign, but it is almost unanimously agreed that the top two thirds of society was far better off. Therefore, the complacency of the majority of the British during the reign is understandable.

These three are generally given as the most important causes of the enduring strength of Victoria's reign. Each of these historical causes seeks to find meaning in the general forces of a time. None of them focus on the individual so much as on the group. As such,
historical cause is rarely at the center of biography. Instead it provides a backdrop for the personal relationships which dominate the foreground in biography. Nonetheless for all intents and purposes, it is impossible to separate the subject's life from time. As a result, when the nuances provided by historical cause are missing, the biography appears flat, like an famous person's obituary waiting in the newspaper's files for the occasion to be published.

BIOGRAPHICAL CAUSES I: THE MEN IN HER LIFE

The biographical reasons for the survival of the British monarchy in the nineteenth century, unlike the historical causes, develop the relationship of personality to events. Whether the subject controls the events of the life or is the victim or the fortuitous beneficiary of events, the subject is the central focus in biographical cause. In the Queen Victoria biographies the personal relationships are reflected in a mix between those biographies which the Queen dominates and those in which she is the recipient of protective domination. This occurs because, along with the Queen herself, at least four men are often given credit for protecting Victoria and the monarchy throughout the nineteenth century. These four include her husband, Prince Albert, and three of her prime ministers, Melbourne, Gladstone and Disraeli. Each also provides an example of how biographical cause performs a narrative
function in the life-story of the subject by clearly joining cause to personality.

There are interesting parallels in the relationships of the Queen with each of her "protectors." Queen Victoria had strong emotional ties with all of them, for example, and in most cases those ties were positive. Greville says that she was unknowingly in love with Melbourne; it was obvious that the great love of her life was her husband; and her relationship with Disraeli was as close to being flirtatious as her position and personality would allow. Only with Gladstone did she have a strong antipathy, but the emotional relationship was still strong nonetheless. All of these men were also what we would, today, consider intellectuals. Melbourne read Greek, Latin, French and Italian; Albert was fascinated with the idea of progress and with working out a system for an ideal monarchy; aside from his political pamphlets, Gladstone worked hard on several publications discussing religious questions; and Disraeli was, of course, a successful novelist before he became an even more successful politician. Again, with the exception of Gladstone, Victoria delighted in being with them and hearing their ideas.

MELBOURNE

The earliest of the Queen's male mentors, William Lamb, Viscount Melbourne, was Prime Minister when she ascended the throne. Melbourne in his 50s was an attractive and, for a very
innocent young woman of 19 as Queen Victoria was, a slightly dangerous figure. His marriage to Caroline Lamb whose affair with Byron had been a major scandal and his liaison with Mrs. Norton were major topics of gossip. He was also interested in art and literature. Greville describes an evening at Holland House where the conversation ranges from sixteenth-century French court affairs, through the nineteenth-century Church, early reformers, the Cathari, and the early Christian persecutions of each other, to Shakespeare, and etymologies. Greville points out that Melbourne quotes Vigilantius's letter to Jerome, the dialogue between the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Bishop of Ely at the beginning of Henry V, and the "Diversions of Tooley" by Tooke, all of which he seemed to have at "finger's ends" (III.81). It was common knowledge that outside of Parliament or Buckingham Palace, he rarely discussed politics.

Melbourne began to serve as Victoria's private secretary and moved his office into Buckingham Palace almost immediately after Victoria became Queen. If anything, his laissez faire policy, for Melbourne believed that the best action of government was inaction, guided the Queen through the first years of the reign. His belief that most "situations" went away in their own given time, in most cases, worked, though the Flora Hastings scandal and the Bedchamber Crisis have often been blamed on Melbourne's inaction. But even in these cases, his calm "wait-and-see" attitude seemed as good a way as any to weather the political and personal storms.
Most people have seen his influence as positive. In the early part of the reign, much opposition did not get started simply because the Queen never treated it as opposition. Melbourne did not worry about the Duke of Cumberland and implied that worry would only legitimate the Duke's supporters.

Strachey, however, criticizes the influence of Melbourne arguing that "the whole unconscious movement of his character had swayed her [Queen Victoria] in a very different direction" from the path of moderation Melbourne intended. Instead of seeing the advantages of wisdom and moderation, "the secret impulses of self-expression, of self-indulgence even, were mastering her life."

For a moment the child of a new age looked back, [he goes on] and wavered toward the eighteenth century. It was the most critical moment of her career. Had those influences lasted, the development of her character, the history of her life, would have been completely changed. (128)

Strachey here is probably more enamored with his theme than with the evidence. He would rather a stoic Albert be a major influence on Victoria than an epicurean Melbourne. In any case, it was probably neither who developed in Victoria her propensity for hard work and her conscientiousness to duty. These had been inculcated into her early by her mother and Baroness Lehzen. Furthermore, as Queen she never got over her inclination for self-indulgence which she saw as a reward for hard work. After all, what was her long period of mourning but self-indulgence?
What Victoria learned from Melbourne was a habit of working with her Prime Ministers. In private, she might indulge her anger and sweep the profusion of knickknacks from her desk, but in public she was ever the ideal constitutional monarch. One way of looking at it would be to say that Melbourne justified her belief that style was almost as important as substance.

For the biographer, Melbourne also represents an important type of relationship, for he provides a dramatic bridge between the Queen's assumption of the crown and her marriage to Albert. In dramatic terms, if he did not exist, he would need to be invented. While we see him as one of the reasons for the continuation of the monarchy, he also serves as an important character function in the Queen's story. He will foreshadow her relationship with Disraeli and will mark the pattern with which she will deal with most of her prime ministers. The Queen, on the other hand, while an important figure in Melbourne's life, does not hold a reciprocal place in his biographies. Melbourne serves, then, as a predominantly dramatic function. Often his influence on the Queen is discounted by biographers or is treated as a prefiguring of the later guidance of Albert.

"LOVELY AL"

It was not until Melbourne left office in 1843 that what we now see as the essential character of the new monarchy was
provided by Prince Albert and, through Baron Stockmar, Queen Victoria's uncle Leopold, the King of the Belgians. Albert did have a theory of monarchy; he believed firmly that the monarchy should be above politics, and he worked very hard to convince his wife, who was always avidly partisan, to carry out that ideal.

"Lovely Al," as he was referred to in one music hall song, also did much to carry out the ideal. As the trust between them grew, they developed a kind of partnership in which he handled many of her duties. As the partnership between them continued and she was more than periodically out of the way because of the impending birth of another of her nine children, Albert was indeed almost a king in all but name.

Albert also deflected much of the criticism aimed at the monarchy by being the public's scapegoat for attacks against the monarch. Because, Dorothy Thompson has shown, most of her subjects considered a woman incapable of thinking about politics, there were always more personal attacks against Albert than against Victoria. Even the *Punch* cartoon which depicts the Royal Family as beggars looking for a parliamentary handout to enlarge Buckingham Palace, pictures Albert in the center or focal point. This was indicative of an accepted belief that a woman was incapable of being

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8 Queen Victoria rebuffed most of her uncle's direct attempts to interfere in British politics. He learned quickly that Stockmar through Albert was a more effective means.

9 Given Victorian treatment of pregnancy among the upper classes, Queen Victoria was "lying in" for almost half of her married life.
at the center of power. Moreover, much of Albert's unpopularity was based on the notion that since a woman was incapable of participating in politics, any meddling from Buckingham Palace must, therefore, be his meddling. During the Crimean War, when the rumor spread through London that the Royal Family had been leaking information to the Prussians, people came to the Tower of London to see Albert locked up, not Victoria.

Finally, as Hardie says, Albert's personality, careful, staid, and somewhat aloof, did much to make the public identify with the monarchy:

Men like Leopold I of Belgium and the Prince Consort made Monarchy respectable. They showed the middle classes that a sovereign could behave like a middle-class gentleman. *(Queen Victoria 195)*

The interesting thing about Hardie's supposition is that it does not give the Queen much credit for humanizing the monarchy. It does, however, point out one important factor in the Victoria/Albert equation. Victoria was the Queen, the monarch; in the English eyes, Albert was the second son of a minor German princeling. As such he was never accepted by the British aristocracy (Duff, *Victoria and Albert* 236–245). His appeal, then, was not to the upper classes but to the middle. In this sense, Albert was as responsible as the Queen for making the monarchy middle class.

So in terms of saving the monarchy, Albert served three functions: he helped develop a standard of monarchy in which the
monarch was above politics; he took much of the flak which could have been directed toward the Queen; and he appealed to the middle classes to which political power in England was shifting.

As a biographical cause Albert's story is so closely intertwined with that of Victoria that he remains to her biographers the Queen's shadow. As a subject, Albert's position is dependent upon Victoria. Had he not married the Queen of England, there would have been far fewer biographies focused on him. In this sense the English critics were correct: he was only the younger son of a minor and rather dissolute German Prince. Albert becomes over and over again a foil to Victoria's personality. If she is lively, he is lifeless; if she is active, he is intellectual; if she is emotional, he is reasonable. Albert functions then as the referent we use to determine Victoria's humaness.10

10 After Albert's death and at Victoria's insistence, almost all of his deeds were given a remarkable gloss, so remarkable that the shine exists even in our day. Albert's reform of Buckingham Palace, for example, in which he insisted on the re-use of candles instead of allowing the servants to take them away is considered a major reform in almost all of the biographies which mention Albert's efficiencies. Readers need to remind themselves, continually, that a similar economy today would be rewarded with a letter of commendation and perhaps a handshake. Because of Victoria's public relations work, it is difficult, even for the modern reader, separated from the hagiographic tradition by time, to determine just exactly what was the value of Albert's accomplishments.
"THE PEOPLE'S WILLIAM"

A third personality credited with saving the monarchy in the nineteenth century was Queen Victoria's Prime Minister and bête noire, William Ewart Gladstone. Unlike her relationships with Melbourne and Albert, the relationship between the Queen and Gladstone has been described as a tragedy. However, it is only tragic if one views as tragic the inability of two people who must work together to do so harmoniously. With Gladstone, the Queen seemed to forget all that she had experienced with both Melbourne and Albert.

In most treatments of the story, the Queen comes off the worse. Longford, for example, assumes that Victoria's antipathy was probably due to jealousy—"Jealous in a way that only women already in a position of power are jealous of men" (528). Gladstone himself believed that the coldness between them was due to Disraeli who had probably told Her Majesty untrue stories about Gladstone's work with London prostitutes (Birrell 121). In any event, there was a rift that grew wider as the two grew older so that when Gladstone died, the Queen not only had trouble writing a letter of sympathy to Mrs. Gladstone, but was furious with the Prince of Wales for not only serving as a pallbearer at Gladstone's funeral but also for kissing Mrs. Gladstone's hand afterwards.
Albert admired and liked Gladstone, and while this was usually a solid recommendation for the Queen's approval, she chose to ignore that recommendation in this case. A probably apocryphal story claims that the Queen once said that Gladstone treated her like a public meeting. However doubtful the story, there is enough in Gladstone to give it a semblance of truth. The Queen, for the most part, was straightforward and simple; Gladstone was, as often as not, tortuous and intellectual. This was a man who resigned his office rather than support a bill which went against something he had once written even though he no longer believed in what he had written. This was a man who was so careful of qualification that he once said in a speech to his tenants, "It is within the power of every man to make money by breeding poultry, and if I may say so, from eggs" (Birrell 20). There was much, then, in the personalities of each which would make estrangement inevitable.

Moreover, the Queen felt that Gladstone was not consistent in his treatment of her. On one hand, he treated her with exaggerated politeness and, on other, with too much diffidence. He had to be reprimanded for leaving Balmoral during the day before the Queen—something which was never done. And when he left office, he refused to come to Balmoral to take his leave. The Queen, again, was shocked:

I asked Mr. G. to come here, [she told her doctor, Sir James Reid] and he refused. He said he had to prepare to remove from his house, and he coolly wishes me to come South at once. He is
most impertinent, and forgets I am a Lady. He seems to think I am just a machine to run up and down as he likes. (Reid 76)

In the 1880s she wrote to Ponsonby:

The Queen does not the least care but rather wishes it should be known that she has the greatest possible disinclination to take this half crazy and really in many ways ridiculous old man—for the sake of the country. (Reid 80)

When Gladstone returned to the premiership in the 90s, they hardly spoke and when they did it was about trivialities. Gladstone recorded a list of conversational topics after one of his visits to the Queen:

1. Inquiry for the Queen's health.
2. The fogs of London and Windsor.
4. The Dowager Duchess of Sutherland . . .
5. The Roumanian marriage . . .
6. Lord Acton: not yet personally known to the Queen.
7. Condition of Lady Kimberly.
8. Mrs. Gladstone still a nephew who is a master at Eton?
10. The Dean of Peterborough.
12. Agricultural distress (H.M. seemed half inclined to lay it upon 'large importations.').
13 Commission thereupon (not desired).
These are all or nearly all the topics of conversation introduced at the audience to-night. From them may be gathered in some degree the terms of confidence between H.M. and her Prime Minister. Not perhaps with perfect exactitude, as she instinctively avoids points of possible difference. But then it seems that such are now all points. (Guedalla 148)

It has been said that probably the only point on which Her Majesty and her Prime Minister agreed and were willing to work together to achieve was that Tennyson should be persuaded to become the Poet Laureate. On almost all other issues, they were diametrically opposed. While not a High Churchman, Gladstone accepted High Church ritual—the Queen thought he was a secret follower of the Oxford Movement and was intent on turning her Low Church services into Papist orgies; he believed in disestablishment of the Irish Church—she was a rabid antidisestablishmentarian who saw disestablishment as a taking away of one of her prerogatives; he staked his career on Home Rule for the Irish—she saw this as radically dangerous. Phillip Guedalla has pointed out, as both grew older, the Queen grew more and more reactionary while Gladstone grew more and more radical (139). Politically, the two were bound to disagree eventually.

One thing, however, that the Queen recognized and, in fact, played on, was Gladstone's love for the monarchy. As a result, no matter how insulting in her polite way she could be, Gladstone took
it, not from fear, but with suffering. Though she never expressed gratitude for it, the Queen seemed to recognize that Gladstone would not use his power against her. Many would argue that this was his great contribution to the monarchy: he loved it enough not to destroy it. Mary Ponsonby, the wife of the Queen's Private Secretary, wrote about Gladstone and the Royal Family, in particular the Queen, "If they don't take care Gladstone will show his teeth about Royalty altogether, and I wouldn't answer for its lasting long after that" (Hardie, Queen Victoria 18). Those who knew his powers felt that he could have destroyed the monarchy. His biographer, Francis Birrell, has written, "Had he wished he could have shaken the throne to its foundations" (121). Most of the Queen's biographers would agree.

But he did not wish, and despite the failure of his relationship with the Queen, it can be argued that he forged a new monarchy, one that Phillip Magnus, Gladstone's biographer, and Elizabeth Longford, the Queen's, have seen as an enduring success:

Gladstone cut a new pattern of constitutional monarchy. The Queen rejected it, but the nation adopted it, and all subsequent British Sovereigns and Prime Ministers have followed the pattern Gladstone cut . . . It transformed the Crown politically into a rubber stamp, but it enhanced to an incalculable degree the force of its moral and emotional appeal. (428)

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11 Palmerston was the only Prime Minister who actually snubbed the Queen and that occurred mostly when he was a cabinet member not Prime Minister. Gladstone usually fumed and raged in silence.
But according to Longford, "No woman cares to consider herself a rubber stamp, however great her moral appeal, and the Queen loudly proclaimed her intention to abdicate rather than become one" (529).

As an agent of biographical cause, Gladstone also serves as an antagonist in the latter half of the Queen's story. He is, however, an antagonist who is, according to a later generation's assessment, correct. Perhaps, it would, then, be better to see him as a moral scourge who provides the heroine with a tribulation. Strangely enough, however, when this happens in the biographies, the narrative does not quite come together, because there is little in the evidence to show that Victoria learned anything in her encounter. She wins during her lifetime simply because she lives longer. This is why in his own biography, Gladstone becomes a moral scapegoat who triumphs over the Queen simply because he accepts the unfair suffering she inflicts.

THE FAERY QUEEN AND HER MOST ADORING KNIGHT

If the relationship between Queen Victoria and Gladstone can be described as a tragedy, then that between the Queen and Disraeli has all the elements of romantic comedy. Unlike Gladstone who treated the Queen with extreme politeness, Disraeli treated her with extreme devotion. When he presented himself to her as Prime Minister for the first time, the seventy something Disraeli cast himself onto one gouty knee and, as he kissed the Royal hand, pledged his "loving
loyalty and faith" (Aronson, *Victoria and Disraeli* 105). At first, the Queen found him "very strange" but interesting; eventually she would refer to him as her "devoted friend." He was to describe her privately as "The Faery" a half-mocking, half-romantic picture of their relationship.

Some have argued that Disraeli's success with the Queen was due purely to his ability to flatter her. "You have heard me called a flatterer," he told Matthew Arnold, "and it is true. Everyone likes flattery and when you come to royalty, you should lay it on with a trowel" (Longford 401). After the publication of one of her books he addressed her in one of his letters, "We authors, Ma'am." But while flattery was undoubtedly a part of their relationship, Disraeli treated her with warm affection. After he had ushered through the Public Worship Regulation Act which the Queen had forced him to introduce in order to purge church service of Roman ritual, Disraeli rushed to Osborne to inform the Queen. Afterwards he wrote to Lady Bradford

one of the most famous portraits of the Queen:

The Faery sent for me the instant I arrived. I can only describe my reception by telling you that I really thought that she was going to embrace me.

She was wreathed in smiles, and as she tattled, she glided about the room like a bird. (Moneypenny 342)

Moreover, unlike the relationship with Gladstone, the Queen and Disraeli had some common ground. He was a widower and she a
widow. Both professed great love for their departed spouses. Both disliked public display and preferred to be alone. But mostly, both enjoyed each other's company. While Gladstone, even in very old age, stood through all of his interviews with the Queen, the Queen always made sure there was a comfortable chair made available for Disraeli. While her conversations with Gladstone were a torture, her discussions with Disraeli, often about the same mundane topics, were a joy. They talked about flowers, weather, and family in a natural way and sometimes not at all about politics. "Twenty minutes over luncheon time!" he wrote after one meeting. "Considered a miracle by the court." And when they did talk politics, he was always a careful listener. "I never refuse her," he wrote, "I never contradict—but I sometimes forget" (Tisdale 136). In a language half-amused and half-awed, Disraeli seems to have genuinely liked the Queen, and, as a result, Queen Victoria was lucky to meet up with Disraeli at this part of her life because he became more than just a minister: he was her friend.

Biographers, particularly his biographers, have shown that Disraeli's friendship helped the Queen and the monarchy. First she began to show herself more in public. For example, of the six times she opened Parliament in the 40 years after Albert's death, three of them occurred while Disraeli was Prime Minister. He understood her

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12 Some of her biographers have contended that she was jealous of Gladstone's happy marriage.
dislike of public display and never forced her. But, perhaps because she was not forced and because she wanted to do things for Disraeli, she volunteered. In fact, when she opened Parliament in 1880, it was primarily to throw her support behind Disraeli's government.

Of more long term importance to the monarchy was the Royal Titles Bill of 1878 which made Victoria Empress of India. Generally acknowledged to be the Queen's idea which, at first, Disraeli opposed (as had Gladstone), the Bill was literally pushed through both houses by Disraeli. The Queen was much pleased and, though the Bill actually only gave her the right to the imperial title in India she ever after signed herself "Victoria R. I." ("Regina" and "Imperitrix") or, more simply, "V. R. I."

The imperial title automatically associated the monarchy with British imperialist ambitions and grandeur. As a result, for many of her subjects, Queen Victoria was Empire. Moreover, her relationship with Disraeli made her a symbol of the government. Not everyone saw this as necessarily good. Mary Ponsonby, for example, wrote to her husband:

I do think Dizzy has worked the idea of personal government to its logical conclusion, and the seed was sown by Stockmar and the Prince. While they lived, the current of public opinion, especially among the Ministers, kept the thing between bounds, but they established the superstition into the Queen's mind about her own prerogative, and we know her, know also how the superstition, devoid as it is of even a shadow of real political
value, can be worked by an unscrupulous Minister to his advantage and the country's ruin. (Hardie, *Queen Victoria* 55)

Mary Ponsonby was wrong about two things. First, such an association between the monarch and her Prime Minister had existed before both Albert and Stockmar, with the close partnership of Melbourne and the Queen. Second, in terms of the monarchy it was not necessarily a negative thing. People began to see the Queen as their government, and whether Gladstone or Disraeli were Prime Minister, unless they were to cast off the governmental system, the monarchy, because it was part of the system, would remain.

So Disraeli too is often credited with saving the monarchy. He is, however, a special figure in that he is outside the normal realm of Victoria's experience. His specific contribution to the monarchy, the Imperial Crown, no longer exists, but the overall prestige it invested the British monarchy continues. What is most fascinating about Disraeli is that even during his lifetime his contribution was looked on as somehow suspect—he is in her story a political piccaro.

A famous cartoon of the period, for example, depicts him as an Arab merchant peddling the Imperial Crown to the Queen. Disraeli's support of the Imperial Titles Act allowed the institution of the monarch to represent the patriotic aspirations of the middle class as well as raise the monarchy above the standards which were applied to her merely mortal subjects. The monarch becomes then a deity in whose image are created her subjects. Disraeli, the magician and the piccaro, does that and the result is comedy.
In Victoria's biographies, it would appear that the agents of biographical cause other than the subject serve character functions as well. This is true for all biographies because the central focus is on personality. In Victoria's case, the characters also perform archetypal roles. Again, this is because meaning must be conveyed through character in biography. What happens is that characters are envisioned either consciously or unconsciously by the biographer as capable of carrying certain messages. They become, then, both the cause and means of conveying the idea of cause.

BIOGRAPHICAL CAUSES II:
THE QUEEN SAVES THE QUEEN

Finally, the most important personality biographers have used in explaining the resilience of the monarchy during Queen Victoria's reign is the Queen herself. Her biographers have given at least three general factors to account for the success: her personality, her longevity, and, more recently, her gender.13

Her personality is always the easiest to discuss because, as ordinary as she sometimes appears, almost everyone around her was affected by its force. In the early years it was simply a force of contrast. Whereas her predecessors were remembered as old and

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13 Dorothy Thompson's *Queen Victoria: Gender and Power* most clearly makes this argument.
profligate, the young Queen Victoria was young and innocent. Her grandfather had died a madman and her uncles, particularly William IV, were famous for their rages and erratic behavior; almost all remarked on her dignity and poise. Everyone who knew her or saw her, from English courtiers to foreign diplomats, remarked that she was, in general and in every way, more admirable than the previous three Hanoverians.

As she grew older, this contrast grew stronger. Discussions concerning the reign of her uncle, George IV, would inevitably turn to talk about his extraordinary misalliance with Caroline of Brunswick, his uncrowned queen, who was locked out of his coronation and who was subjected to a spectacular divorce proceeding before Parliament, a trial which ended in defeat for the King. Likewise, conversation about William IV inevitably turned to the FitzClarences, the flock of Royal Bastards fathered by the King with Mrs. Jordan, an actress. Greville, for example, was shocked when William IV went into mourning for the husband of one of his illegitimate daughters, a breech of protocol and decorum Greville found excessive (II.134).

14 The trial of the uncrowned Queen Caroline was held before the House of Lords because the adultery of the monarch's spouse, which George IV was claiming, had been considered an act of treason since the days of Henry VIII. The irony, of course, was that George IV, who lived at Windsor with his mistress Lady Conygham, was the original Regency rake. As a result, one of the few long term effects of the trial was the mockery it made of the monarchy.
Queen Victoria, on the other hand, was viewed by the public as an ideal wife and mother. No matter what the reality of the Queen's relationship with her children, the exemplary quality of her private life was in direct contrast to the very public extravagance and profligacy of her uncles. As a result, the Queen came to represent what was best in Victorian family life; there is little doubt that many of her middle-class subjects found in her a representation of their own ideals. Basically then, Albert, Leopold and Disraeli might have worked to make the monarchy attractive to the middle classes, but they had in Victoria a Queen who lent herself to such an interpretation.

If her personality made her a safe monarch, even one who could be admired, the longer she reigned the more secure became her throne. At her death, she was the only monarch most of her subjects had known, and the more than half a century from her accession to her death represented the life of the people. For many, the monarchy was an essential measuring point in their lives. After the illness of the Prince of Wales, this consciousness of the symbolic value of the Royal Family seemed to settle on the public. This value was clearly demonstrated in the festivities surrounding the Thanksgiving for the recovery of the Prince. When, during the Thanksgiving Procession, the Queen lifted, then kissed the hand of her son, she, in fact, made the Royal Family, the British family.

Dorothy Thompson has added a great deal to the discussion of how Queen Victoria's gender affected the monarchy. Thompson has
shown that even from the earliest days, critics of the monarchy had to attack the throne through the nineteenth century's concept of "Womanhood" and that such attacks were not always easy to make. John Bright, the Radical Member of Parliament, whom Frank Hardie has described as the suggested "first President of the second English Republic," for example, defended the Queen's seclusion on the basis of her womanhood:

Mr. _______ referred further to a supposed absorption of the sympathies of the Queen with her late husband to the seclusion of sympathy for and with the people. I am not accustomed to stand up in defence of those who are possessors of crowns. But I could not sit and hear that observation without a sensation of wonder and pain. I think there has been, by many persons, a great injustice done to the Queen in reference to her desolate and widowed position. And I venture to say this, that a woman—be she Queen of a great realm, or the wife of one of your labouring men—who can keep alive in her heart a great sorrow for the lost object of her life and affection is not at all likely to be wanting in a great and generous sympathy with you. (Cited in Hardie, *Queen Victoria* 206)

The Queen's mourning, excessive even for the period, was forgiven by Bright and by a great many others as simply a manifestation of the ideal wife's grief. Her retreat from public life was far more acceptable than George IV's. As King, this last of the Hanoverian Georges, realizing that he was no longer the handsome young rake
but a fat, be-rouged, and be-wigged old man, insisted that the streets of London be cleared of people before he went out so that he was sure to remain unseen.

Bagehot, probably nineteenth-century England's most important political analyst, pointed out, and probably rightly, that having a woman on the throne lowered it and at the same time made it secure:

A family on the throne is an interesting idea. It brings down the pride of the sovereignty to the level of petty life. No feeling could seem more childish than the enthusiasm of the English at the marriage of the Prince of Wales. . . But no feeling could be more like common human nature as it is, and as it is likely to be. The women—one half of the human race at least—care fifty times more for a marriage than a ministry. (Cited in D. Thompson 139)

As has been pointed out earlier, the Queen's gender isolated her from criticism. While Albert was criticized, the Queen herself became apolitical. In truth, Queen Victoria was probably the last British Monarch to hector, browbeat and scold her ministers—rather than be hectored, browbeaten, and scolded—but because, as a woman, she was believed incapable of participation in politics, her political meddling was largely overlooked. This is why Bagehot describes her as the perfect constitutional monarch, one who was above politics, and the present edition of the Encyclopedia Britannica assumes she made no political impact after the death of Prince Albert. Moreover,
the impression continued to exist that the monarchy was above politics and what Thompson has called the trivialization of the monarchy resulted in a stronger institution.

Queen Victoria, then, as the central character in her biographies always means more than herself. In these cases, she is representative of family, age, and gender. Only the first of these categories is necessarily deliberate—Queen Victoria as we shall see later quite consciously developed the legend of her happy family. The others are but quirks of nature. And in these quirks, biographers have found meaningful cause and effect relationships. "Cause is cause" the logician should argue, but biographical cause is different from historical cause essentially because it finds its representation in character and personality.

LEVELS OF MEANING I:
IDEOLOGY AND BIOGRAPHY

Everything in the reading process has meaning. While it is difficult to differentiate between types of meaning, for the sake of this discussion we will call meaning which is derived from perceived attitudes toward subject and sources and the structure of the text as implicit meaning. That meaning which is derived from the words in the text itself, we will call explicit. It is, of course, important to remember that much of what we understand from the text comes from the implied level. Communications analysts, for example, have
said that as much as 90 percent of the spoken message is derived from non-verbal factors. In writing, however, the verbal, that is, the words as they appear on paper, plays a larger percentage. But one must always keep in mind that, as often as not, the verbal message of any text is always formed by often unstated factors.

Three factors influence the meaning we process from the words of a text. At its most basic, the text is formed by the biographer's system of belief, what will call ideology. Ideology is next combined with context—the biographer's, the subject's and the reader's. Finally these two factors combine again, this time with the symbolic value of the subject. The complexity of reading biography derives from this combining and recombining of types of meaning. At its most complex, the biography's meaning is probably too variable even for the biographer to understand. To work on just one level is to deconstruct the text.

Cause, as we have discussed it, is most closely related to the biographer's system of belief. In some ways this ideological perspective is probably the easiest for most readers to understand. First, it is generally easy for the reader to see how the biographer's method form the meaning. For example, the argument which begins this chapter essentially summarizes two approaches to understanding the threats to the nineteenth-century British monarchy: the historical and the biographical. The essential difference between the results of each type of method is that historical causes emphasize themes while biographical causes
emphasize personality. Probably, because they are broader, historical causes can best explain effects. Yet, while historians argue the empiricism and purity of their field in contrast to the nebulous psychological wanderings of biographers, one must remember that both causes are arguments, that is, human constructs.

All logical arguments are based on discretion. For example, the particular argument presented here treats the Queen's relationship with John Brown as part of a greater republican outburst. It assumes that the poor, who might have most benefited by the establishment of a republic, were powerless and too intent on making their own ends meet to seriously threaten the monarchy. It also assumes that the middle class looked to the monarchy for moral leadership.

Another analysis would show that almost as much ink was spilled on the John Brown scandal as on the Queen's seclusion. It could also show the repressive measures taken by the government to put down demands for social and economic justice by the poor and the general indifference of the aristocracy toward working class people. When a cargo ship sank off Cowes, for example, Lady Lyttelton, the governess to the Queen's children, remarked, "My indifference about colliers is prodigious. Now if it had been a wrecked warship..." (Longford 574). The argument also disregards John Walvin's excellent point that the provincial middle classes were uninfluenced by both the aristocracy and the monarchy (158).

Furthermore, it ignores the importance of the press which by the end of the 1870s no longer printed articles critical of members of
the Royal Family—although _Punch_, as late as the 80s, would refer to the children of the fecund Battenbergs as the "Battenbunnies." And finally, it does not take into account the influence of what A.O.J. Cockshut has called the "classless elite," people like Carlyle, Dickens, George Eliot, Newman, and Thackeray who were "nobodies by birth," yet who clearly brought all of the examples necessary for reform before the public (64).

Moreover, in emphasizing certain data, the point of view is also changed. Halévy takes about fifty pages discussing the Chartist movement and hardly ever mentions the Queen. Strachey consistently credits Albert for the theoretical basis of the Victorian monarchy. Magnus just as consistently credits Gladstone. Because of the nearness of the writer to the subject, ideology will emphasize one perspective over another. Longford combines all of these people including Victoria to make her argument.

Other pre-choice personal suppositions also are acting in any biographical or historical writing. The arguments presented above, for example, are essentially late twentieth-century, liberal constructs. Emphasizing different data they could have presented a conservative argument, or a radical argument, or a reactionary argument. The author, in constructing it, chose those details which seemed most right to the ideology he brought to the reading. In one sense, there is a kind of play—in a very post-modern sense—in the way biographies are constructed. Biographers have a series of details which reflect their point of view concerning the subject and
they must find some pleasant or unpleasant pattern in which to arrange them. The details are almost always chosen in the first case by ideology.\textsuperscript{15}

Biographers in discussing their craft and biographical critics in writing about biography have a tendency to overlook the importance of ideology in the choice of data. Perhaps it is simply understood by the writer or the critic, but, for the average reader, it is important to remember that personal ideology, those political, economic, social, and philosophical beliefs that one holds, are as important to the formulation of a biographical text as an author's personal reactions to the subject.

Choices are never, in fact cannot be, objective decision. Preference is inherent. In terms of history, Gouverneur Paulding has summed up the subjectivist's view succinctly:

The past has no existence other than that which our minds can give it. That is why the historian, whether he intends to or not, molds the past in the image of his own personality—Gibbon, Michelet, Churchill—and that is why the historian differs only in degree, not in the openness of his intervention, from the historical novelist. (Cited in Clifford 99)

\textsuperscript{15} We will see in the next chapter that they are chosen, in the second case, by context.
Biographers and historians would argue that there is some objectivity in their work, but the reader should know, as Paulding points out, that this is simply a matter of degree.

We can only judge the effectiveness of the biographer's or the historian's argument. Does the argument, given the "facts," stand up? The knowledgeable reader will always have a wider range of "fact" to draw upon than are presented within the argument. For this reader, then, biographical validity is simply a question of presentation. For the unknowledgeable reader, biographical credibility is a question of balance. If it seems real, the argument could possibly be real, and the biographer has succeeded. When it becomes too fantastic, ideology becomes distortion.

Ideology, then, is the first forming factor of meaning in a biography. It is the simplest and the most raw because it is in at the beginning. Ideology, however, is always tempered in the biography, not by truth, but by other types forming factors, the complexities of context and the romance of symbol. Ideology is only the beginning; we must understand how each of the other factors of meaning is layered atop ideology before we can reach our own understanding of the life.
CHAPTER VII

THE MOTHER OF US ALL

"You were very naughty, but it is all true."

Princess Louise to an author who had written an article critical of her father

There are several ways to get to the Isle of Wight and Queen Victoria's Osborne House. The Queen would have come by yacht from Gosport across the Solent to Cowes and then by carriage to the castle. Nowadays one can make the same trip, but normally those without access to a yacht take a ferry from the mainland to one of several stops and then either drive or bus across the island to Osborne.

For the foreigner, the double-decked bus is always a delight as it weaves across the island down narrow country lanes, taking parts of overhanging trees and shrubbery with it. From the top of the bus, one gets a good view of the island's picturesque fields, cottages, and gardens and of Newport, the somewhat seedy little city at the island's center. A transfer at Newport and the trip is just a few minutes to the castle. As the second, smaller bus rolls along, the road becomes a little wider, the houses a little more modern, and discreet
industrial parks begin to dot the landscape. The bus stops near the front entrance and just a short walk up to Osborne House.

People who go expecting Blenheim or Longleat are generally disappointed by Osborne. It is a huge Victorian pile designed by Albert and the builder Thomas Cubitt in a pseudo-Italian style. However, if one keeps in mind Salisbury's comment that he had never seen anything as ugly as Osborne until he had seen Balmoral, and does not expect much, Osborne itself is fun and the setting is magnificent. The Prince hired a small army to move the earth and grade the parterres at Osborne and the effort is well worth the effort put into it. The views of the house from the gardens and of the gardens and Solent from the house are all charming and sometimes almost breathtaking.¹

The house is essentially three structures. The main building where guests, the Queen's older children, and, in the early years, the Duchess of Kent stayed, is now a veterans' retirement home. The smaller, though still imposing Pavilion, separate though part of the main mass, was built to accommodate the Royal Family. The State Apartments and Durbar Room, the major public area of the complex forms a third wing. While the Durbar Room, a later addition, is decorated in the Indian-style now made familiar by import stores, the private quarters are very British and filled with Victoria's family

¹ According to Winslow Ames (Prince Albert and Victorian Taste) the setting of Osborne House increased its influence, for, overlooking the Solent as it does, it was quite prominently seen by almost all passengers on the Cunard liners arriving or departing from Southampton.
bric-à-brac. Here one sees the lift installed when the Queen would no longer countenance the indignity of being carried up and down stairs. Here, also, in the first floor bedroom, is the bed which Victoria shared with Albert and in which she died. A picture of Albert still hangs on one side of the headboard as was always the case when the widowed Queen was in residence.

Above the bedroom is the children’s nursery. As the children grew older, they slept in rooms of their own in the main wing, but in their early years, they shared the nursery, a large room filled with scaled down furniture, beds from cradles and cribs to single day beds and tiny tables and chairs made for tiny people as well as full-sized armoires and changing tables. The puffy-looking plaster casts of the children’s limbs, for which the Queen had a fascination, are a bit macabre to a modern viewer, but on the whole the furnishings in the room would be familiar to any modern parent. There is, however, so much that one is reminded, as in the Durbar room, of a show room at Harrods.

Not far from the house, a short walk away, is the Swiss Chalet which was prefabricated and shipped to Osborne in 1853. Here, the guide says, the children were taught gardening with Albert buying their produce at market prices. The gardening tools engraved with the names of various princes and princesses are still in front of the

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2 The widowed Victoria also traveled with a plaster cast of Albert’s hand which was, one would suppose, always within reach. The hand was one of the many memento mori that Queen Victoria instructed her personal physician, Dr. James Reid, to place in her casket.
tool shed waiting for a modern-day Albert Edward or Beatrice to collect them and begin rural toil. The Chalet has two floors. The top floor is devoted to a workshop, the guide points out, used by the boys. The downstairs kitchen, equipped, one architectural critic has said, with "some of the most advanced kitchen fittings of the period or indeed of any period before plastics and aluminium," was used, again according to the guide, by the girls (Ames 69). It is an almost perfect, almost too perfect, setting.

Later, taking tea in the garden next to the cafeteria, three visitors from Birmingham are talking to another couple who might be American. The man from Birmingham is pointing out that people just do not know how to work anymore. It is the same thing in the United States the other man says. Yes, it must be a world-wide dilemma, remarks one of the ladies. Yes, they all agree, young people just don't know enough about hard work. That is why the Chalet and nursery were so impressive; they expressed such good and solid Victorian values. Can one imagine Albert coming down to the garden to pay off the children? Can one imagine Queen Victoria going upstairs to the nursery to walk a teething Princess? Can one imagine the perfect Victorian world of the Victorian Royal nursery and bedroom at Victorian Osborne House?

And suddenly it becomes difficult to imagine any of that. Perhaps the imaginative function of the brain is limited; perhaps the mind is numbed by the self-satisfied smugness of the speakers. But it is hard to imagine any child growing a garden without some kind
of supervision. Was there a gardener charged with seeing that the little plots were weeded? Surely Albert did not take the children to the garden. Perhaps once, but how many other times did the paterfamilias roll up his sleeve and hoe the row? It is hard to imagine either Victoria or Albert starting off their days with breakfast prepared by one of their daughters. And it is harder to believe that Victoria herself was very involved in the children's care.

One story tells us that the Duchess of Kent remarked on Victoria's ability to let the children cry. The Queen supposedly answered her mother that if she had had as many children as her daughter, she would have learned to let children cry. And yet, as charming as that all is, it is hard to imagine the Queen walking the nursery floor when opium-laced "Quietness," a popular children's remedy, and more than a squadron of housemaids were available. The whole familial thing at Osborne seems a bit empty, like an idealization in a film, Shirley Temple as Heidi running up the mountain path to a teary-eyed Jean Hersholt as the Grandfather.

One is reminded by biographer after biographer that Osborne "became especially the children's home," and that "there, free from the influence of the stately but tiresome etiquette of Windsor, they reigned supreme" (Morris 166). And yet one is always faced with the strange contradiction that shortly after his mother's death Edward VII had an altar erected in the chapel in memory of his parents, a museum made of the private apartments, and a retirement home for veterans made of the rest of the place. The new King, who
also ignored his father's given name for his own reign, did not seem to cherish these same fond, youthful memories.

But once in a while one has to be brought back to irreality, to the imagined world, by literature. Dorothy Marshall, for example, in her biography of the Queen, describes the joy that the house brought to Albert and Victoria:

By 1843 Albert and Victoria were discussing the possibility of finding a permanent holiday home for themselves and in consultation with Sir Robert Peel, negotiations were started to purchase Osborne House, a small property on the Isle of Wight: early in 1845 this had been acquired. In the years to come it was to afford the whole family much happiness and to give them a home near enough to London and yet private enough for the enjoyment of an informal holiday. In replanting the grounds and gardens Albert had full scope for one of his favorite hobbies while Victoria revelled in the house's privacy. Over the years Osborne, which Victoria had first described to her uncle as a little comfortable house, was rebuilt and enlarged as the family grew and visitors came. Nevertheless, it remained a family home where family treasures were gathered round them. Today tourists, wandering round its overcrowded rooms, replete with every kind of family memento and gifts that came to the Queen from every corner of the world, can catch the atmosphere of a life long departed. (129)
Obviously Marshall's and the beginning autobiographical description overlap. Both visits admire the results of one of "Albert's favorite hobbies." They also acknowledge the logic of separating the Pavilion from the main house block and feel the atmosphere of a life forever gone. But while the biographical visit sees the happiness of a symbolic family, the autobiographical visit sees that warmth as perhaps a little forced—as an effort to convince the visitor that the Royals were, after all, "just folks." The autobiographical picture was probably helped by the Osborne House cafeteria's gluey pastry and tasteless, tepid tea. The biographer's description arises from the need to see Osborne as a symbol of the happy Victorian family life which surrounded Victoria and Albert. The autobiographer's text is based on authorial comfort; the biographer's grows out of thematic necessity. Both can be accounted for by an examination of their contexts, for, when authorial attitude is combined with authorial ideology and both are placed in time, the result is context, one of the most important keys to reading biography.

Context is, of course, situational. If ideology is a system of beliefs developed and held prior to reading the text, context is a reaction to immediate pressures. In biography, the reader's context is dependent upon so many variables that it is almost impossible to recognize or even to control. An uncomfortable chair, a heavy lunch, a fight with one's spouse, all of these can affect the reader's response to the text. Given the individual nature of context, a specific reading response is almost impossible to predict. But, in general, readers
interpret a text in very similar ways. This is because most readers will find those areas in which the text itself has been formed by extrinsic and intrinsic contextual factors.

HOW COMFORTABLE IS THE BIOGRAPHER?

Often, one of the more readily accessible areas of context is that which is brought to the text by the biographer. There are at least two forces which move the biographer to develop the context of a biography: one is personal and the second, we shall call, social. The personal context is most often embedded within the biographer's reasons for writing. A good example of this personal context can be found by comparing the two versions Sir Sidney Lee created to explain the Queen's feelings about her successor, the Prince of Wales, particularly her feelings for the Prince just after the death of Prince Albert.

Even before Albert's death, Queen Victoria was skeptical of the accomplishments of her heir. She and Albert had been disturbed by the Prince of Wales' inability to apply himself to the program planned for him. It only occurred to Victoria much later and probably only dimly that the failure of the educational system Albert designed for his older children had as much to do with the inadequacy of the plan itself as with the inadequacy of Albert Edward. In any event, the main goal of Albert's educational scheme was to turn out intellectual clones of himself, and in the case of the
Princess Royal, it worked. But, as Victoria saw it, in the case of the Prince of Wales, it had created an embarrassingly weaker image of herself. Moreover, her second child seemed unable to concentrate or to work hard. For Victoria, the Prince was a trial. "Poor Bertie," she wrote to his older sister, "I pity him; but I blame him too for that idleness is really sinful" (Dearest Child 248).

The Queen was always one to find personal blame, and for a while, she held the Prince of Wales partially responsible for his father's death. On one of his first visits away from the family to an army camp at Curragh, the young Prince managed to escape the parental straightjacket in the arms of Nellie Clifden, the first of his many actresses. Albert probably contracted his case of typhoid about the time of the Prince of Wales' dalliance, and the Queen for a long while related the two.

Albert had been killed, she told Lord Hertford, by "that dreadful business at the Curragh" (Longford 313). According to Lord Clarendon, King Leopold, who had come to comfort his niece after the death of Albert, reported that "the relations between the Queen: & the P: of W: are as bad as ever, if not worse, and that all his efforts to improve them had been fruitless—it seems to be an antipathy that

3 Later she would recognize that Albert himself might have been partially responsible. When, during the following year, her son Prince Alfred was also infected with typhoid, she noted in her journal that, like his father, he seemed to lack the stamina to fight the disease. Even later she would remark, Lord Derby has said, that Albert had died "from want of what they call pluck." Publicly, at least, Victoria saw this lack of a will to live as resignation to God's will—not as a death wish—but as Longford points out "she was human, and in certain moods the 'Coburg melancholy' must have seemed a defect" (313).
is incurable . . . the Queen's conduct in this matter is hardly sane" (Tisdale 56). Palmerston spoke of the Queen's "unconquerable aversion for the Prince of Wales" (Tisdale 56).

In *Queen Victoria*, the more or less authorized version of the Queen's life, Sidney Lee literally skims over the Queen's relationship with the Prince of Wales. The skimming seems to have been due more to decorum than to the availability of sources. In fact, just as the Queen's aversion to her son was common gossip among those surrounding the Court, her attitude about the competence of the Prince of Wales was well known and appreciated by a much larger circle. Within the family she often expressed her *après-moi-le déluge* attitude. As late as 1876, for example, she wrote to her daughter in Germany:

Only think my horror that Bertie without even saying a word to me has invited the Prince of Orange [who Christopher Hibbert has said was "renowned for his dissipation"] to Sandringham. Oh what a contrast to the 'noble life' which now being universally admired and looked upon as the purest and the best! I often pray that he may never survive me, for I know not what would happen. (Hibbert, *Letters and Journals* 244)

Her attitude concerning the possible reign of her successor and the general belief that it was justified was why there was so much bite

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4 Lee's biography was based on his extensive entry in the *Dictionary of National Biography* which had appeared before the Queen's death. In his introduction to the later, separately-published biography, Lee announces that he was given new materials by Edward VII, a comment which would imply, though not expressly state, Royal authorization.
in her various threats of abdication. Probably, the most famous recognition of the Queen's relationship with her son was Max Beerbohm's cartoon "The Rare and Rather Awful Visits of Albert Edward, the Prince of Wales, to Windsor Castle" which pictures a back view of the middle-aged and portly prince, nose turned to the corner, as an obviously angry Queen Victoria sits in the foreground, her hands primly folded in her lap. Lee, however, simply ignores this data. The only mention of Curragh Camp in the Victoria biography is to a family visit the children made their brother, the Prince.

Yet, if Lee had very little to say when he wrote the biography of the Queen, twenty-four years later, as the authorized biographer of the Queen's son, he has much to say about the Queen's position:

In the despondency of her first months of widowhood the Queen often foretold of her early death and her son's early accession to her throne. On such grounds she at times admitted that the Prince ought to become "more and more acquainted with affairs and the way in which they were conducted." Yet, with a feminine lack of logic, the admission had no practical effect on her treatment of her eldest son as one in statu pupillari, who was permanently incapable of adult responsibilities or confidences.

The Queen's expectations of early death were unfulfilled, and through a great part of the remaining forty years of her reign she deemed it her duty rigorously to limit her son's
activities alike in public and in private matters. She convinced herself that she owed him for life that magisterial guidance in all relations which his father would have given him had he lived. Successive Ministers of State, who differed greatly in temperament and political opinion, were at one in questioning the justice of her principle of restraint. Their recurring remonstrances and her questionings of their argument fill a large place in the Prince's history. The passage of time proved that she overestimated her powers of control. The exuberant vitality of her son's manhood sought out all manner of outlets and immersed him, in spite of the Queen's admonitions and discouragements, in all the great streams of affairs. From any share in her constitutional functions of rule, she to the last excluded him; but when at length her years lay heavy on her and her son was well advanced in middle-life she invited at times his counsel and co-operation in political, social and domestic matters which lay outside the constitutional range. Even then she found difficulty in divesting herself of her old conviction that he stood in need of her advice and help rather than that she stood in need of his. (1.129)

In the earlier text, written while both the Queen and the Prince were still alive, Lee, as official biographer, was almost honor bound to slide over any difficulties which might cast a dark shadow on the relationship of his subject to his patron. After Edward VII's death, those restrictions no longer mattered and Lee was able to express his
own opinions. The context of his personal situation had changed, therefore, and he was able to analyze the situation more completely in the second biography. It is interesting to note, however, that Nellie Clifden is not mentioned in the second biography either.

THE BIOGRAPHER’S TIME

What had not changed was Lee’s patriarchal attitude toward the Queen. While not as forcefully presented in Queen Victoria as in Edward VII, the attitude is consistent: because the Queen is female she was incapable of logical thinking ("a feminine lack of logic"). Moreover, the Queen’s distrust of Bertie’s ability to separate his affairs of the heart and affairs of State is looked on as a maternal attempt to emasculate the Prince’s "exuberant masculinity."

Strangely enough, many other historians have judged the Queen’s appreciation of her son’s abilities as correct. They have seen the Prince as shallow, vain, and loose lipped and have concluded that the monarchy was not ready for such a king until the institution had been transformed by Victoria. While there is undoubtedly some right on both sides, the sexism that Lee brings to his evaluation of the relationship between the Queen and her son can be attributed to both Lee’s personal system of beliefs and to an expression of the

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5 After Edward VII’s death, both Ponsonby and Hardie took dim views of his abilities. During his lifetime, several ministers reported that supposedly secret dispatches were openly discussed at Marlborough House by the Prince and his friends.
generally accepted beliefs of his time. This, then, is a second kind of authorial context informing the text. It can be called the author's historical or social context.

As Dorothy Thompson pointed out, Queen Victoria's gender was a major influence on how she was viewed as monarch. Likewise, her gender is an important part of her biographical treatment. Until very recently, for example, most of the biographers who have wanted to create a positive portrait of the Queen have been forced to deal with her not necessarily as an individual but as a comparative point on a scale of accepted feminine virtues. In fact, in the early biographies she is feminine virtue. Charles Morris, for example, in his early biography, makes it clear why Victoria is such a paragon:

Among the many other sovereigns of Great Britain there have been none who lived so noble and pure a life and presided over such a grand era of progress as the royal lady Victoria, whose late decease plunged the nation into such a depth of grief. Of the other women sovereigns—Mary, Elizabeth, and Anne—only one could be called great, and it would be a misuse of words to call any of them noble. Victoria was not great in the sense of Elizabeth, her hand did not guide the ship-of-state, this was left to her famous ministers—Peel, Gladstone, and Disraeli,—but in moral elevation and nobility of character she rose far above them all, and as an example for good, a light in the pathway of right living and thinking,
Victoria had no equal in any of her predecessors on the English throne. (xi)

The key points here are that Victoria has been separated from power—"her hand did not guide the ship-of-state"—and placed firmly in the moral realm. The ethical example, then, becomes feminine while, as with Lee, the logical realm is handled by men.

In trying to reconcile the power of the throne with the occupant's gender, Morris, following the lead of most nineteenth-century political writers Dorothy Thompson would point out, trivializes the Queen's duties:

There was probably no one, no woman at least, [he writes] in all her Empire whose days were more completely filled with successive duties than those of the Queen of Great Britain. For she had not only her private family and the management of her Balmoral and Osborne estates to look after, but also her large family of subjects. And in neither did she throw the responsibility to her agents. It is said of her that no living statesman was so thoroughly conversant with the workings of every departmental machine as the Queen. And every detail in regard to the management of her private estates was laid before her. (184)

Again, as does Smith, Morris equates the royal duties to family duties ("family of subjects") and equates the official nature of government with the management of a family estate. By reducing the scope of
the duties, he reinforces the popularly accepted belief of his time that a woman was incapable of political thinking.

After her death and the return of a king to the monarchy, the need to explain how Victoria was able to reconcile her professional and familial role becomes less of an issue in the biographies in general. In fact, what happens is that in most of the biographies from Strachey forward, the Queen's political role is reduced and the familial, that is her accepted feminine role as "mother," becomes more and more important. This is evidenced by the increased reference to the royal children in the indices of the biographies. For example, from about 100 separate references to the royal children in Lee there are almost 400 in Weintraub.

Much of the increase can be accounted for by the increased general information available. This is certainly the case of the over 100 hundred references to the Prince of Wales in Weintraub. Along with more general information, the availability of specific information such as letters and diaries also grew. This allows the biographer a closer look into the personal life of the Queen. The Queen's letters to her daughter Victoria certainly allow the biographer an intimate look into the relationship between mother and daughter. Many of Weintraub's over 80 references to the Prussian Crown Princess are due to his reading of these letters. Finally, some of these references occur simply because the child—as in the case of Princess Beatrice who was selected by Victoria to serve as her life-long companion—was always around.
The overall increase in references, however, can also be attributed to two areas of context. The first is quite simple: most of the references in Lee refer to public events; most of the references in Weintraub refer to personal events. In Lee's subject index for "Victoria," we see headings referring to her children such as "grants to Princess Louise and Prince Arthur" or "Prince of Wales' tour of India." Along with these public events, the headings in Weintraub also include "motherhood and associated problems," "relations with her children," and "relations with her grandchildren and great-grandchildren." The emphasis has changed to the personal and intimate. Perhaps, this is the biggest change in biographical context in the last ninety years. Biography is no longer a subject of great lives creating great events but of the every day functioning of lives great and small within a social relationship. To create this, the biographer relies more on personal anecdote than on public pronouncement.

The second contextual factor is that social views have changed. References to the Queen's limited feminine logic disappear as we move farther and farther away from the Victorians. It would take a very fine tooth comb to find politically incorrect statements—at least statement that were politically incorrect in the 1980s—in Weintraub. Whatever Weintraub's feelings about women's issues might be—and

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6 The increasing number of references to Victoria's children in her biographies since World War II also reflects the post-war emphasis on children. That we are now a child-centered society is naturally reflected in biography.
one would assume that they might be matched to his rhetoric—his language and rhetoric will also be influenced by the extratextual social forces of his own period. This is the social context.

VICTORIA'S CONTEXT

The biographer's context is just one area with which the reader must deal. Still another type of context which becomes important in evaluating the credibility of a text is the author's understanding of the subject's context. As we have said earlier, it is impossible to determine definitely what motivates one character to act in a given way. In a sense, what biographers do is read into the character their own feelings and motivations. This is another example of what Leon Edel has called biographical "transference" and while biographers rail against the practice, it is both a natural and inevitable process. It is not, however, impossible for the author to create psychological credibility by describing some of the special reasons, both personal and social, why a character might respond to a given situation in a particular way. This is the subject's context and in Queen Victoria's case, because there is so much documentation, the possibilities of finding contextual forces are immense.

Again, one needs only to take as an example her relationship with the Prince of Wales to see how her personal context could influence her regard for the Prince. There are a number of

7 In Chapter Two.
biographical patterns which would suggest reasons for her handling of his situation. First, she really had no admirable models by which to judge children. Her own youth was spent in solitude with her mother and governess. Her playmates, were selected not because of natural affinities but because her mother and John Conroy thought them to be unobjectionable. The Queen herself often remarked on the solitude of her childhood and, with a great deal of distance in regard to herself, noted that this was probably why she did not find the younger children interesting; she had nothing to say to them because she had no idea what to say. This could also account for the personal shyness to which so many writers, including members of her own family, refer. Her grandchildren noticed that this shyness carried over even to them.

Moreover, because of her consciousness of her position, she made loneliness practically an article of faith. She wrote, for example, to her granddaughter Victoria of Hesse, a letter in which she explained the royal position.

You are right to be civil and friendly to the young girls you may occasionally meet, and to see them sometimes—but never make friendships; girl's friendships and intimacies are very bad and lead to great mischief—Grandpa and I never allowed it, and dear Mama was quite of the same opinion. Besides, as you so truly say, you are so many of yourselves that you want no one else. I think also that you are quite right not to have large parties for you and Ella [the Princess's younger sister] are both
decidedly too young for them. And at dinners remember not to talk much and especially not too loud and not across the table . . .

(Hibbert, *Letters and Journals* 264)

In this case the Queen did take her own advice; she had no close woman friends. Her two most important ladies, Lady Churchill and Lady Ely, were considered by most of the household to be afraid of the Queen and trembled lest they be on the receiving end of the Royal Wrath. Queen Victoria reached a point in the 1870s at which she could remark that the last person who could rightfully call her by her Christian name, her father's sister, Princess Augusta, had died. Her only friends were male and after the death of Albert none of these male friends, even John Brown, was in a position to offer her advice concerning her relationship with her son. Certainly Gladstone and Disraeli tried, but Gladstone was rebuffed coldly and Disraeli ended up, according to several of his biographers, making up excuses for his friendship with the Prince.

Without role models and without advice, we should assume she started off somewhat crippled. However, many extremely loving and successful parents have started with similar handicaps. In Queen Victoria's case, there was neither the will, interest, nor probably the time to enjoy parenting as we would call it today. As David Duff has said, Albert was an ideal father as long as the children were too young to have a will of their own (231); for Victoria, as Weintraub

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8 Reid writes in his journal that both were also martinets with the rest of the staff.
points out, it was "a matter of class and rank as well as sheer
disinterest that the Queen and Prince quickly turned over to their
attendants all parental involvement with their infants, short of
formal social occasions" (224).

Later, according to Albert's educational schedule, the Queen
was entrusted with the Princess Royal's religious education, but if the
Queen was not available, as was often the case, the training was
turned over to a governess. The Prince of Wales, on the other hand,
ever recited his catechism to his mother; it was always the
governess's responsibility to hear his lesson. For the most part there
was very little relationship between mother and daughter and
almost none between mother and son. Moreover, since the Prince
was obviously slower than his older sister, when he was with them,
his parents were usually disappointed. According to Woodham-
Smith, from "infancy the Prince of Wales was conscious that he was a
disappointment to his parents, that it was a blow to them that the

9 It is interesting to note that his parents were so concerned about the
Prince that they consulted a phrenologist whose report is cited by Cecil
Woodham-Smith:

... in the Prince of Wales the organs of ostentativeness, destructiveness,
self-esteem, etc. are all large, intellectual organs only moderately
developed. The results will be strong self will, at times obstinacy...
In the prince, self esteem is so large that he will be unusually sensitive to
everything that affects himself, whether in his feelings or his rights, and
the way to moderate this sensibility is not to attempt to lower him in his
own esteem by disrespectful treatment, even when he is in the wrong, not
to force self denial on him or any degree of harsh authority, but kindly yet
softly to show him that he is acting improperly and appeal to his sense of
honour, his dignity, justice, kindness and benevolence ... it may take
hours. (267)

It would seem that the analysis was a fairly accurate description of what
everyone thought about the Prince and that his parents seemed to agree with
it. However, for the most part, they disregarded the advice.
Princess Royal should be noticeably superior in intelligence, and it is a tribute to his character that he grew up devoted to his sister" (267).

Finally, many writers have pointed out that in some ways the Queen's treatment of the Prince of Wales was similar to the treatment almost all the Hanoverian Kings gave their successors. This could, of course, have grown from the Queen's need to control her environment. One notes, for example, in the excerpt from the letter to her grand-daughter, a penchant for giving unasked-for advice. Prussian courtiers after the marriage of the Princess Royal to the Crown Prince asked the British ambassador to suggest that the Queen reduce her instructions to the new Crown Princess; it was like having a foreign agent in court. But none of this seemed to stop Victoria. Since there were very few from whom she could receive advice, she had a habit of dispensing it to all and sundry. In any case, all of these elements can be brought out to attempt some understanding of the personal context of the Queen.

VICTORIAN CONTEXT

Queen Victoria, then, as a biographical subject has her own context. In her biographies, there were even greater areas of context engendered by the social forces outside of her which pressured and formed her reaction to events. For example, as far as we know Queen Victoria probably never saw the similarities between the Kensington System, devised by her mother and John Conroy, which
was planned to create a submissive Queen and from which Victoria rebelled violently, and the system devised by Albert for the education of the Prince of Wales. This aspect of Victoria's personality seems to have been ignored by her biographers.

Like the Prince of Wales after his father's death, the Queen too revelled in her years of freedom between her accession and her marriage. She may not have made the connection for a number of reasons: perhaps she sublimated this uncomfortable area of her youth; she might even have found her education under the Kensington System normal; it is possible—though not probable from what she wrote later—that she did not find her education distressing; and it is also possible that she was totally dominated by Albert in this domestic sphere. Finally, Albert's system, given the times, might have seemed advanced and surely not worse than any other educational system devised for the up-bringing of children.

The nineteenth-century paid a great deal of lip service to the idea of childhood, but as most historians have shown, life for children had not changed much since the previous century. Infant mortality rates did not decline appreciably from the beginning to the end of Victoria's reign and because the type of care given infants did not vary greatly, social class did not do much to change the statistics: almost as many babies of well-off parents died as did those of the poor. That Queen Victoria's nine children all lived to adulthood is very much against the trend.
For the poor, children served an economic function—they would one day be wage earners for the family and, one would hope, a retirement pension for the parents. For the wealthy, they might serve the dynastic function of opening new networks for other members of the family. However, in both cases, young children, especially babies, were more of a burden than a blessing. They had to be fed, clothed, and cared for, and whether the family was poor or rich, that cost money.\textsuperscript{10} Our picture of the nineteenth-century British family is based more often on Dickens than on reality. The Crachitts living and working together in happy harmony were probably a far cry from the overcrowded reality in which most such families lived. And one can be sure that as soon as Bob Crachitt got his partnership with Marley and Scrooge, his new status would have been reflected by a larger house, a couple of maids, and a governess to keep the children out of the way.

Nineteenth-century children were to be neither seen nor heard. This was impossible in the cramped living spaces of the poor, but as families rose in status and wealth, the children were separated as much as possible from their parents and adults in general. F.M.L. Thompson has pointed out that while parliamentarians and clergymen railed against the harm that would come to children of women who going out to work entrusted them to day-care providers,

\textsuperscript{10} Here the Royal Children were the exception that proved the rule. They might have served a dynastic function, but their eventual annuities, like those of the children of George III, were always going to cost the nation some money. The nine children included in the Royal Succession were, therefore, not looked upon as positive additions to the nation's cash flow.
this leaving of children to mother substitutes was exactly what had been happening to upper-class children including the royal children for several centuries.

In upper-class homes, mother-substitutes were the rule. Thompson points out that while the practice of farming out children to a wet nurse declined during the nineteenth century—the Royal Children, however, were all nursed by someone other than their mother though these women all "lived-in"—any family with pretensions would hire a nanny. Later, as the children grew older, a governess would be hired. Any early bonding between child and parent was limited to perhaps one or two hours daily or as in the case of the Royal Children and other upper-class children at even greater intervals. Victoria, for example, claimed that outside of Osborne, she did not see the younger children sometimes for one or two months at a time (Weintraub 224). In this way, the life led by the children of Victoria and Albert was unexceptional and, in some circles, even exemplary.

In larger houses, of course, the separation was not only emotional but physical. Nurseries were located as far from the adult rooms as possible. Not to hear the children was a part of the upper-class utopia. In fact, Osborne was considered a "family" home and a "children's paradise" simply because the younger children were in such close proximity to their parents. And Osborne was only partially the exception, for even here, the Royal Children, like other upper-class children, joined their parents at table only on state
occasions and on major holidays like Christmas. The Marquess of Lorne, the future husband of Princess Louise, distinguished himself on one such occasion when he was young by standing on his hands before the Queen so that she was able to see what was under his kilt. The Queen and his family, whom the Queen was visiting, were reported not to be amused.

Finally, the rule of the nursery, and Albert's was not an exception, was meant to enforce the patriarchal authority system. Young boys, like the Prince of Wales, were separated from their mothers soon after birth and their instruction was generally given over to others far from the mother. As soon as they were old enough, upper-class and wealthy boys were sent off to a public school and saw their parents only on long school holidays. Albert Edward, as a royal prince, did not attend a public school, but instead, was surrounded by a group of male tutors—a retired military man and a clergyman—who took over the direction of his life. He might as well have been in a boarding school.

Given the standards of the time, it is no wonder that there was not a closer relationship between the Prince of Wales and his mother. In fact, it was a relationship which was probably considered normal for the day. He must have objected to it,11 but it would appear that his objections were never open defiance of his parents' wishes, but

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11 It is reported that as a child when he accompanied his parents on a state visit to France, the Prince of Wales asked the Emperor who was paying him much attention, if he could stay. This, of course, can be seen as a mark of rebellion, wishful thinking, or just an effort to please.
simply an ignoring of parental advice. Particularly after his father
died and he became a very wealthy young man, there was really
nothing to stop him from leading the life that he did. He did not
have any reason or encouragement to make himself useful. It was
only much later, sometime after his illness, that the Queen and he
became reconciled to the point at which Bolitho pictures the Queen
and her son sitting on a sofa in Windsor Castle, laughing together
conspiratorially (262). By then, however, it was no longer mother
and son, but two old people who had known each other for a very
long time. Their context had changed.

LEVELS OF MEANING II:
CONTEXT AND BIOGRAPHY

Context, then, is one of the more complicated perspectives from
which to read biography. It is determined by attitudes and itself
determines which events in a life will be treated as fact in the
biography. While the context of a text seems to change with each
reading, there are four principles which remain constant.

1. There are three types of context of which each has two sub
categories; all will affect the reading of a text. The three general
types encompass the reader, the writer and subject. The first
comprises the reader's personal and social context. Because the
reader's personal context is individual, each reader creates a
different reading of a writer's work. Readers are, however,
influenced by the social and intellectual forces of their own period and these forces will determine in great measure how they see the text.

Writers, too, have a personal and social context. Those economic, social and intellectual forces which form the writing process, as well as the exterior historical forces operating on the biographer will influence the choices made by the writer in forming the text. Sometimes, these forces can be made known to the careful reader.

Finally, the subject itself has both personal and social context. How credible the character appears in the text depends in large part on how clearly the biographer has made these contextual forces clear and how accepting the reader is of the biographer's presentation.

2. The various levels of context operating within a biography are accretions of time and personality; it is often almost impossible to tell one type of context from another. Context in biography is like a large group of barnacles encrusted on a clam or abalone shell. Each barnacle has grown into the others and they have all grown into the host shell so that all of the separate parts appear as one. Normally, we would not try to separate encrustation from the shell itself, assuming that the appreciation of the whole is enough. If, however, we have the time, the interest, and the knowledge, we can carefully peel away each layer and determine which fits into which category.

3. Of all types of context, those involving the reader are the most important. In the analysis of the text, it is the reader who does control the evaluation. It is the reader who determines where to fit
the context into which category and if such a process is worth the effort. After the writer has released the work through publication, the reader becomes the controlling artist. In this case, the writer is source and the reader biographer.

4. Because context is changed by time and personality, context is a variable; therefore, biographies of the same subject will be written, sometimes within the same generation and most often from generation to generation. Strachey's Queen Victoria is, in many ways, a modern masterpiece. Like Boswell's Life of Johnson it will probably be re-read for many generations. But that does not preclude another Queen Victoria or another Life of Johnson. Each biography must be judged within its own context and, like any portrait, for its own artistry.
CHAPTER VIII

IN THE YEAR OF THE JUBILEE

"Look! There's Queen Victoria going up to heaven!"

A little girl watching a balloon rise over Hyde Park during the Golden Jubilee festivities

On the morning of June 20, 1887, Queen Victoria set out down the long hill from Windsor Castle to the station where she caught a special train for Paddington in London to prepare for the Golden Jubilee procession, a celebration of her 50 years on the throne. As she left, one of her Windsor servants remarked with a bit of despair that the Queen had gone from Windsor wearing her second best cloak.

The Queen dined that day at Buckingham Palace. It was, she said, a "large family dinner" attended by over fifty Highnesses, royal and otherwise, who included the Kings of Denmark, Greece, and Belgium. She spent that night at Buckingham Palace, one of the few occasions she had been overnight in the Palace since Albert's death.²

² It has been estimated that, all told, she spent less than 30 days in Buckingham Palace in the 40 years after Albert's death, and only for about half of those days did she spend the night.
The next day she participated in the Thanksgiving Service at Westminster Abbey. The streets along the parade route were lined with people, many of whom had spent the night hoping to get a chance to see the spectacle. Things were not as bad as they had been at the opening of the Great Exhibition in 1851 when an equally great number of foreign and country dignitaries descended on a London which was decidedly short of hotel rooms. Frank E. Huggett describes the squares and parks of London filled with expensive horses and heavy coaches in which the owners had spent the night. He cites Mrs. E.M. Ward who, in her Reminiscences, reports her early morning stroll through Berkeley Square on the day the Exhibition opened. There she saw servants, some of them in powdered wigs, serving up breakfast to the gentry who had spent the night in their carriages:

"There was a great clattering of pots and pans and crockery [she recalls] and a perfect babel of voices. Servants were shouting to each other and being shouted at in turn by their masters and mistresses; frail forms in silken gowns and richly-fashioned poke bonnets, with plaintive voices, were crying out for something hot to drink, and whilst distracted footmen were colliding with each other in their frantic efforts to be quick, we heard on all sides, 'Oh, do make haste, James', 'Do tell him to make haste, John', 'I am dying for a cup of tea, I shall faint if it isn't ready soon', and in gruffer tones, 'Come hurry up at once, James, or take a month's notice.'" (7–8)
London had come a long way since 1851. It had been an important commercial center; now it was the center of a huge empire on which the sun never set. With Empire, London had also become decidedly more cosmopolitan. Accommodations and communications had increased so that most people had found rooms somewhere. Even the Queen of Hawaii, Emma, who attended the Jubilee accompanied by the heiress apparent, Liliuokalani, was able to arrange for rooms from so far away at a respectable hotel. So both hotels and streets were packed, and those who could afford it rented spaces in the buildings along the parade route. What they had come to see was the magnificent parade and the little old lady dressed in black with a bonnet, not a crown, on her head.2

The Queen fidgeted too much to appreciate the festivities but perhaps had she been more relaxed as she was at the Diamond Jubilee festivities 10 years later—Jubilees, it seems, can become a habit—she would have written as she did then:

No one ever, I believe, has met with such an ovation as was given to me, passing through those six miles of streets . . . the crowds were quite indescribable, and their enthusiasm truly marvellous and deeply touching. The cheering was quite deafening, and every face seemed to be filled with real joy. (III.iii.174)

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2 As Longford points out it was not one of the Queen's 5 shilling bonnets but a special bonnet gleaming "with white lace and diamonds" (500).
Instead, after a large dinner, a reception for the Indian Princes and Corps Diplomatique, she went to bed "half dead with fatigue," complaining about the street noises of London.

In contrast to the Queen's description of her London nights, George Gissing reports the end of the day from the spectator's point of view:

Along the main thoroughfares of mid-London, wheel traffic was now suspended; between the houses moved a double current of humanity, this way and that.... But for an occasional bellow of hilarious blackguardism, or for a song uplifted by strident voices, or a cheer at some glaring symbol that pleased the passers, there was little noise; only a thud, thud of footfalls numberless, and the low, unvarying sound that suggested some huge beast purring itself into stupid contentment. (v)

The Queen, like many of the elderly, became increasingly self-centered. She even managed to see an incorrect weather report as a personal affront. For example, in 1898, she recorded her complaints about the weather in her journal after a particularly difficult crossing of the Channel:

*Victoria and Albert, Cherbourg—Arrived here at 4:30 after a rough and disagreeable crossing, which tried me a good deal, though I was not sick. We had been told that the sea would be perfectly smooth, but it began rolling soon after I went below, and in the middle of the Channel there was one lurch, just as if*
the ship had had a blow, the port hole burst half open, the sea came in and the stairs were sent spinning. The maids, steward and footman all rushed in, in a great state, and found part of the cabin full of water. I was taken in the rolling chair across to my bedroom, where I got onto to the sofa feeling much upset. I was very thankful when we got to port at last. We had been misinformed about the weather. (Bulwer-Lytton 137)

Since God or Nature would have not dared play a trick on her, the problem obviously lay with the stupidity of the weatherman. Her complaints about a noisy London have the same dogmatism about them, for she had decided early on that London was noisy and thus it should always remain so. Moreover, once her mind was decided on its right course, she refused to compromise; after all, her castles outside of London—Windsor, Osborne, and Balmoral—were far quieter than London. It is this same self-centeredness which allowed her to give a perfunctory nod to acknowledge the crowds massed to see her and, then, to assume she had done her job.

What the "people" saw in her, pleased her if it were positive and, was the result of republican or Irish agitation if it were negative.3 For the most part, the Queen was wrapped up in her own

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3 In all fairness to Queen Victoria, she often had the naive modesty to wonder aloud about what people saw in the monarchy. After the publication of Leves from the Journal of My Life in the Highlands, she wrote to Theodore Martin: Indeed it is not possible for her to say how touched she is by the kindness of everyone. People are too kind. What has she done to be so loved and liked? (II.1.490-491).
little world which sought out good public opinion issue by issue rather than overall for the monarchy. If public opinion ran counter to her own convenience or desires, she claimed not to care.

The people, however, particularly in the last half of the reign, overlooked her indifference and saw more in the monarchy than the Queen herself. Intuitively, they knew what this monarch represented for them. They saw her not as a little old lady dressed in black with a white bonnet on her head, and a plaid shawl around her shoulders but as the celebrated Widow of Windsor, the symbol of everything that was good and holy in England. Like the cross, or perhaps the rose, she was a meta-symbol.

LEVELS OF MEANING III:
SYMBOL AND BIOGRAPHY I

All people are representative. At least, their lives have, in some ways, representative meaning. Biography continually plays on these representative meanings to achieve reader identification. The most common meanings come, in biography, from the position, either class or work related, the subject holds in the society. "He is a street person," or "she is a lawyer" are ideas which make immediate appeals. The more information one has about the subject, the more the subject is representative of a given classification. Like everything else in biography, then, how we read these symbols
depends a great deal on the evidence or facts available for the biographer to sift through.

Generally, there are four types of lives the biographer deals with. The least common for the biographer is the unfamous life supported by little or no data. A life constructed from sociological statistics and guesses about "how life was" might fit into this category. Lady Florence Bell describes one such faceless, life in At The Works:

One's heart aches at seeing a girl of twenty-four or twenty-five, when she ought to be at her best, most joyous, most hopeful—at the age when the well-to-do girl, in these days apt to marry later, is often seen leading a life of amused irresponsibility and enjoyment—already appearing dulled, discouraged, her form almost shapeless, her looks gone. (Cited in Adams, 105)

Here, because there are no individuating details the poor young woman becomes representative of all poor young women.

More precise representatives of class are the Hall sisters, two Victorian women who, like Queen Victoria, kept diaries for over 60 years. The Hall sisters are unfamous subjects with well-documented lives. The over ten million words which make up their diaries give us a very clear picture of their life, and as their editor has suggested, because it is a picture which they kept for their own amusement and not for publication, it is personal though fairly unformed data (Mills vii). Because we know so much about them and because what they tell us about themselves seems so typical of other single women of
the period, they represent not only their class but more specifically a segment of their class—the upper middle-class spinster.

Another category is the famous subject with the undocumented life. Jane Austen, for example, not only represents a specific segment of her class—the unmarried daughter of a gentleman-clergyman—but also the woman artist. Because she is famous and because there is so very little data about her aside from her novels, many of Jane Austen's biographers have tried to make her representative of one segment of her class or another. Her brother, for instance, in his biography, made her a saintly spinster whose writing was merely a sidelight in her life—the family's memorial to her in Winchester Cathedral, for example, makes no mention of the artist's novels. Her favorite niece, Fanny Knatchbull, who had social pretensions of her own, labeled her aunt as vulgar and disagreeable—an upper-class stereotype for a writer.

Queen Victoria represents the last type of biographical subject: the famous subject with the well-documented life. Because there is so much data and she is well known, there are multiple meanings for her life. In fact it would not be difficult to posit that the more data there is to reconstruct the subject, the more specific and less representative the subject becomes. In Queen Victoria's case, for example, the very fact that she is Queen separates her from the norm. For every example of her likeness to a class or group, there are counter examples which separate her.
What also makes her less representative of one group or another is that the level of meanings around her are so large and varied: she becomes symbolic. When we speak of the symbolic nature of Queen Victoria, we are talking about her as a physical object from which emanate meanings much broader and less easily defined than those which emanate from even the most abstract words. Because there is so much data and she is well known, there are multiple symbolic meanings for her life. Unlike with unfamous subjects, readers bring to the reading of her life a collection of specific symbolic references even before they open the book. In our own day, H.K. Fleming uses the idea of the "Queen-who-was-not-amused" in his adventure novel, The Day They Kidnapped Queen Victoria, to set up the climatic scene in which the Queen is trapped in a train which has been captured by Fenians and which is dangling off the docks of Liverpool. And, Jonathan Routh's pictures of the Queen working out with her hula hoop, taking tea at a Jamaican pub while the other patrons are involved in a fist-fight, and walking naked in the grass with her jaguar on a leash are not funny unless we play them off against the symbolic value of the subject.

In defining symbol, M.H. Abrams differentiates between two types: what he terms the "conventional" or "public" symbol and "personal" or "private." While these terms work most effectively for fiction, one can roughly differentiate between the two in biography by designating those symbolic subjects used thematically as closer to what Abrams has called a "private" symbol and those meanings
which come to the subject from outside the text, those meanings which exist before the biographer begins the transformation of subject into text, as "public" symbols.

The symbolic reading of a well-known subject, like Queen Victoria, can often be made difficult because the concepts represented are in conflict with one another. Even during her life, there was a kind of trade off between the power and prestige of the monarchy reflecting on the masses, and the middleclassness of the subjects reflecting on the monarchy. For the modern reader, the same sort of predetermined responses come into play. Ilse Hayden has written of Elizabeth II:

On the one hand she unifies all of her people, while on the other, she is a means of categorization, sorting her subjects into the socially superior and inferior. In this, the Queen resembles other symbols. It is not unusual to find that symbols not only have many referents but that these referents can also be contradictory. This is part of their allure, especially so since the essence of social life is that of paradox. (2)

Queen Victoria's symbolic value grows from two sources. The first is her special charisma; the second is the charisma of her position. It is difficult to think of the little old lady in black as being especially charismatic, at least not in the sense that Max Weber defines charisma as that "certain quality of an individual personality by virtue of which he is set apart from ordinary men and treated as endowed with supernatural, superhuman, or at least specifically
exceptional powers or qualities" (48). But almost everyone who came in contact with the Queen, from Melbourne and Greville in the early days of the reign to Salisbury in the last days, was struck by her charismatic qualities. Some saw it as majesty, her dignity, her poise, her public serenity; others felt it simply as awe. But even those not attracted to her were struck by the force of her personality. Even Bismark, for example, spoke of his nervousness at meeting her.

Thomas Richards who cannot see how the Queen could have been charismatic, explains the Queen's charisma as being based on her position. Using Clifford Greetz's formulation of a type of charisma which grows not from the personality of the subject herself but from her position within the society, Richards claims "Victoria did not have to be personally charismatic to exercise a kind of charisma by becoming a semiotic lodestone for events that occurred around her and conferred charisma on her" (10–11).

Both types of symbolic charisma are operating in reference to Queen Victoria, and because her life has so many referents she symbolizes not only the monarchy but a whole age about which the most modern readers have some feelings. Moreover, as one reviews the symbolic nature of Queen Victoria, one will discover that some of the symbolism was manufactured by the subject and those who

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4 This type of charisma says Greetz involves "the connection between the symbolic value individuals possess and their relation to the active centers of the social order" (122–123).
know of her and some seemed to grow naturally from the reaction of the world around her.

SYMBOLS OF MYSELF

One wonders what Queen Victoria thought about during the Jubilee Parade. Was she simply watching the sights like the *hoi polloi* lining the route? Or was she reviewing the fifty years of her reign? Did she ever think of the huge changes her reign symbolized for her subjects? Did she ever grasp how her presence was a living symbol of the social, political, economic, ideological, and religious ideas of her age? As Queen Victoria blessed the crowd from her simple, open landau—not the State Coach of glass and gold leaf—she might, had she been a biographical critic, have noted that the whole parade was ripe with the symbols of her reign.

Perhaps closest to her heart, because she made such a conscious effort to perpetuate it, was the symbol of the united Victorian family. Riding ahead of her were three sons, the fourth, Leopold, having died in 1884; five sons-in-law; and nine grandsons. Her daughters—except for Alice who had died in 1878—and thirteen granddaughters rode in the carriages around hers. Most splendid of all was Vicky's husband Fritz, the Crown Prince of Prussia, astride a magnificent white charger, looking tall and elegant in his white and

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5 Actually, one may wonder what any famous persons think about during a parade in which they are participants.
gold uniform with the golden eagle atop the helmet. Fritz was a living symbol of the international alliances Victoria's children had created for England. Fritz could barely speak, not because of emotion, but because of the throat cancer which would shortly kill him.

No matter what her problems with her children, Victoria was quite proud of the family legacy. She considered that they were believed to be a model family among her and Albert's greatest legacies to the British public. "Our happy domestic life—which gives such a good example" is one of of the repeated themes of her writing. The picture of her family was, of course, one of the public relation benefits from the publication of the Leaves from the Journals of Our Life in the Highlands and More Leaves. As she grew conscious of this picture, she did much to insure that it was institutionalized. She went so far as to order that whenever her children mentioned her in a public address, she was to be referred to as "My Dearest Mother."

Although her family life was never as serene as she pictured it, she was adamant that any difficulties not be made public. In direct contrast to her grandfather, uncles, and parents, who could not seem to get along with each other either personally or politically and who were continually publicly airing one scandal after another with their infighting, Queen Victoria kept an iron hand on family discipline. In fact, Henry Ponsonby tells us, much of her family lived in fear of her.

Yesterday Haig and I went out toward the garden by a side door when we were nearly carried away by a stampede of
royalties, headed by the Duke of Cambridge [the Queen's cousin] and brought up by Leopold [her son], going as fast as they could. We thought it was a mad bull. But they cried out: "The Queen, The Queen," and we all dashed into the house again and waited behind the door till the road was cleared. When Haig and I were alone we laughed immensely. This is that "one-ness" we hear of. (98)

Ponsonby's "one-ness" refers to the symbolic value of the "Royal Family." His ironic reflection on its core, the fear that motivates the galloping herd, is an attempt to undercut the symbol. His Queen is a Red Queen who does not even have to yell "Off with their heads." In another example, Ponsonby points out that when Prince Arthur, the Duke of Connaught, complained about seeing the Munshi's turban among a group of the aristocracy, Ponsonby suggested that the Duke bring his complaint directly to his mother, the Queen. "This entirely shut him up," Ponsonby records. (131)

As we have seen, some of Victoria's early biographers like Morris and Smith accepted the myth of the perfect family as whole cloth. But that they do not attempt to open the symbol or even to discuss it leads to their lack of credibility as biographers. Even Strachey treats it gingerly, rarely being critical and Bolitho's Queen Victoria: the Mother and Her Son and Nora Epton's Queen Victoria's Daughters do much to regenerate the myth.

There is enough evidence, however, in the works of other memoirists close to the family to tarnish the symbol slightly.
Ponsonby, for example, makes more than the two references previously cited to the fear the family felt before the Queen. A biography based on the notebooks of Sir James Reid, the Queen's physician, informs us in passing that Prince Alfred's erratic temper tantrums might have been due to the acute alcoholism from which he died and that Princess Helena's inability to focus might have been caused by opium addiction. A novel develops the rumor that Princess Louise had an affair with Prince Henry, the husband of her sister Princess Beatrice, a rumor which is hinted at in several of the non-royal memoirs. Whether brother and sister-in-law actually consummated their relations is a matter for biographical debate, but their friendship was a matter of much documented gossip by others close to the royal family and there is a letter from the Duchess of Teck, the Queen's cousin, which says that after Prince Henry's death Louise claimed to one and all that she was his only confidant. The same novel, Evelyn Wilde Mayerson's *Princess in Amber*, suggests that Prince Leopold's death was due to falling down the stairs of a bordello in the South of France.

On the whole, these details, both the supported and the vague, are rarely mentioned in the biographies. With the exception of David Duff's work, biographers have only carefully gone to the core of the real family as symbolized by the Victorian Royal Family. Part of this uncertain attitude undoubtedly stems from an uncertainty about contexts, for as much as she was feared by her children, Queen Victoria was also deeply loved by them. When the Prussian Empress
Victoria, herself dying of cancer heard of her mother's death she exclaimed, "I wish I were dead too." Edward VII wrote to his sister of the duties he had inherited from "such a Sovereign and such a Mother." And Louise, seemingly the least attached, wrote of her own grief to a friend:

I know the sorrow; it never wears off, at least with me it don't [sic]. And I can never realize that she is gone, only that for a bit I cannot see her. The desire to write to her, and feeling she expects news, is still with me. She was always wanting to hear and to know. (Epton 222)

Perhaps all of these exclamations of love are simply Victorian sentiment, the expected thing to say, but to many modern readers they do seem heartfelt.

It is difficult for biographers to fight these emotions. Longford as usual sums up the general attitude:

Queen Victoria was not the exemplary mother her contemporaries felt bound to call her in defense of the legend of her supernaturally perfect family life. Her failures will not seem extraordinary to most parents even in 'these civilized times'—to borrow one of her phrases. Certain special difficulties of her own—rejection of her physical nature and an overriding impulsion toward father-figures—exacerbated her maternal problems. Nevertheless she loved her children; in her later years she is remembered as hardly moving without a child in tow and the spectacle of six children and seven dogs
romping together on the lawn seemed to her idyllic. She felt 'dreadful' when the nursery was 'broken up' in 1865 and delighted to open it again for her grandchildren: 'I love to hear the little feet & merry voices above.' Unlike many of her contemporaries she did not confine the little feet to 'above'." (569)

Somehow the Queen's self-created symbol has taken on the softening patina of time.

SYMBOLS OF HERSELF

As the parade wove its way down the processional route, Queen Victoria could also admire one symbol which was only partially her creation. Gladstone, who had no place in the Jubilee, had refused Victoria's request to be named Empress of India; Disraeli had agreed to it. Their creation, the Royal Titles Act, had succeeded in changing the way people thought about British government. An overseas empire now mattered, and the mounted Indian Cavalry who surrounded the Queen's landau were the most visible symbols of the exotic and far-flung British Empire.

This particular symbol is viewed by her biographers much in the same way they view her political presence. Lee, for example, points out that she did many little things to encourage the imperialist zeal—she learned Hindustani, she visited several international and colonial exhibitions, and she entertained various Indian visitors.
However, he says, "it was involuntary that she became the central figure of the great imperialist movement. She owed that position to circumstances which lay beyond the scope of any individual control" (484). Lee claims that improved communications between the colonies and London, the acceptance by the Home government of the autonomy of the colonial governments, and the potent imperialist sentiment at home, not any "alteration in the personal conduct of her life," made the crown the symbol of imperial unity (484). It is as if the monarchy played no part in encouraging the imperialist sentiment.

Strachey agrees up to a point, for he says that it was a matter of the public and personal psyches coinciding. "The imperialist temper of the nation invested her office with a new significance exactly harmonizing with her own inmost proclivities." He does much to analyze the symbolic value of Queen Victoria, in particular, and the monarchy, in general.

. . . imperialism is a faith as well as a business; as it grew, the mysticism in English public life grew with it; and simultaneously a new importance began to attach to the Crown. The need for a symbol—as symbol of England's extraordinary and mysterious destiny—became felt more urgently than ever before. The Crown was that symbol; and the Crown rested upon the head of Victoria. Thus it happened that while by the end of the reign, the power of the sovereign had appreciably
diminished, the prestige of the sovereign had enormously grown. (414)

There are two important points that Strachey makes which are fundamental to the symbolic value of the Victorian monarchy. In the first case, he implies, and probably quite rightly, the evangelistic zeal that marked the early part of the century and found its symbolism in the sacred and inviolable monarch, turns at the end of the century into a secular faith in the civilizing mission of British culture. This might not have happened had a monarch not as ostensibly pure as Victoria been upon the throne. Part, then, of the transformation of the monarchy in the nineteenth century occurs because the monarchy becomes a symbol of the pure faith in the nation, a religious figure which makes the beliefs of the later part of the century, the belief in imperial destiny, an article of faith.

The second point that Strachey underlines is that one of the major values of the monarchy is its ability to symbolize the values which people chose to see in it. The monarch's personal belief in the values is irrelevant. Queen Victoria, for example would probably have bridled at the late twentieth century's ability to see her as a feminist symbol. In fact, throughout her reign she made every effort to see herself as a model nineteenth-century wife. It would appear that she accepted the patriarchal system as logical for, as Marshall has written, she was "always careful to impress it on her children that 'beloved Papa' was the head of the family" (124). She saw her
own position as head of the nation as an "anomaly." And according to Sir Theodore Martin, she had no truck with feminists.

The Queen is most anxious to enlist everyone who can speak or write to join in checking this mad, wicked folly of 'Women's Rights,' with all its attendant horrors, on which her poor feeble sex is bent, forgetting every sense of womanly feeling and propriety. Lady ______ ought to get a good whipping. It is a subject which makes the Queen so furious that she cannot contain herself. God created men and women different—then let them remain each in their own position. Tennyson has some beautiful lines on the difference of man and women in "The Princess". Women would become the most hateful, heartless, and disgusting of human beings were she allowed to unsex herself, and where would be the perfection which man was intended to give the weaker sex? (Martin 69–70)

But even if she did not see herself as a symbol of women's rights, many women, during her lifetime, saw her as a reversal of what had been considered the ideal nineteenth-century British wife. H.G. Wells writes, for example, of the effect of the Queen's symbolic self on his mother:

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6 This quote has always struck me as a bit spurious. Frankly it sounds like overstated Victoria. If she were truly that worked up about women's rights why did she not write other letters expressing the same opinion. This appears to be the only one on the subject. It is included here because it is often cited by her early biographers, and none of her contemporaries seems to have argued with it. I also include it as an example of how a "fact," however unbelievable, becomes more credible because of publication.
A favorite book of my mother's was Mrs. Strickland's *Queens of England* and she followed the life of Victoria, her acts and utterances, her goings forth and her lyings in, her great sorrow and her other bereavements, with a passionate loyalty. The Queen, also a small woman, was in fact my mother's compensating personality, her imaginative consolation for all the restrictions and hardships that her sex, her diminutive size, her motherhood and all the endless difficulties imposed on her. The dear Queen could command her husband as a subject and wilt the tremendous Mr. Gladstone with awe. How would it feel to be in that position? One could say this. One could do that. I have no doubt about my mother's reveries. In her later years in a black bonnet and a black silk dress she became curiously suggestive of the supreme widow. (27–28)

It makes no difference, then, if the subject chooses to agree with the symbol or not. The symbol is larger than the subject. As a result, biographical symbols fade and are born, sometimes to fade again and sometimes to be reborn. As the British Empire faded so too did the biographical interest in Victoria as imperial symbol. As values change, so too does the nature of the symbols.

**SYMBOLS OF OURSELVES (THEMSELVES)**

As the Queen approached Westminster Abbey for the Thanksgiving Service she might have considered the people who had
gathered to cheer her, her people as she referred to them. Lord Rosebery wrote to her a few days afterwards that the whole ceremony had "strengthened and deepened the foundations of a monarchy which overshadowed the world, and which represented the union and aspirations of three hundred million people." (Sitwell 333) The Queen heard such compliments often enough that she must have realized that she was a symbol of the whole era's values.

Of course, just precisely what those "Victorian values" are is a reader's determination, for the concepts which make up Victorian values are themselves very general. For some Victorians, those values were a belief system: belief in the path of progress, in religion and faith, and in purity and prudery. There is a great deal of doubt whether Queen Victoria herself believed completely or uncritically in any of these. While she gave lip service to progress, it is clear that she was plagued for much of her life by religious doubt, and, some would argue, was far from being a sexual prude. One could also argue that what has been called Victorianism is, in fact, a later generation's judgment about Victorian beliefs. In writing about "Victorian values" in 1987, James Walvin suggests the problem:

The concept "Victorian values" has entered the vernacular, repeated time and again by politicians and the media. The concept has excited fierce opposition, notably from historians on the left who have challenged the interpretation of Victorian history on which the concept depends. Such critics, however, face distinct difficulties. They argue that Margaret Thatcher
has persuaded the public that the idea of Victorian values is an unassailable fact, a set of indisputable beliefs and virtues, whereas in fact the idea represents a particular, partial and debatable interpretation of nineteenth-century history. We do know, however, that during the Queen's lifetime, she was often seen just as Margaret Thatcher pictures her, as a symbol of social order. It is in the name of Queen Victoria, for example, that the Pirates of Penzance give up their not very wicked ways:

Chorus of Police and Pirates

You
Wel   triumph now, for well we trow

Our mortal career's cut short.

No pirate band will take its stand

At the Central Criminal Court.

POLICE SERGEANT. To gain a brief advantage you've contrived

But your proud triumph will not be long-lived.

PIRATE KING. Don't say you are orphans for we know that game.

SERGEANT. On your allegiance, we've stronger claim—

We charge you to yield in Queen Victoria's name!

KING. [baffled] You do!

POLICE. We do!
We charge you yield in Queen Victoria's name!

[Pirates kneel. Police stand over them triumphantly]

KING. We yield at once, with humble mien,

Because, with all our faults, we love our Queen.

POLICE. Yes, yes, with all their faults, they love their Queen.

GIRLS. Yes, yes, with all their faults, they love their Queen.

[Police, holding Pirates by the collars, take out handkerchiefs and weep.] (153–154)

Both the kneeling pirates and the weeping policemen are indications that even good Victorians like Gilbert and Sullivan realized there was a bit of the overdone in the symbolic value of the Queen. The text recognizes the symbol but recognizes it clearly as symbol.7

Virginia Woolf, who was born a Victorian, develops a more negative version of the symbol in her 1935 version of *Freshwater*. As the play ends, Victoria descends *deus ex machina*-like to crown nineteenth-century respectable art in the guise of Tennyson and the painter Watts:

The Queen. We have arrived. We are extremely pleased to see you both. We prefer to stand. It is an anniversary of our

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7 Shortly after they surrender in the Queen's name, it is discovered that the Pirates really are gentlemen gone temporarily astray, and as soon as they marry the Major General's daughters, they will relapse into happy family life and their seats in Parliament. Gilbert has thus contrived a happy ending for the opera while combining three of Victoria's symbolic meanings—order, class, and family—into two pages of text.
wedding day. Ah, Albert! And in token of that never to be
forgotten, always to be remembered, ever to be lamented
day—
Tennyson. 'Tis better to have loved and lost.
The Queen. Ah but you are both so happily married. We have
brought you these tokens of our regard. To you, Mr.
Tennyson, a peerage. To you, Mr. Watts, the Order of Merit.
May the spirit of the blessed Albert look down and preserve
us all. (Freshwater 44)
The Queen is relevant to the scene only in her symbolic role as
arbiter of Victorian taste.

Negative or not, the mere mention of Queen Victoria has a
symbolic associative value. Peter Gay's The Bourgeois Experience,
Victoria to Freud, for example, uses the Queen's name in the title to
set up an antithesis to the more open sexual discussion symbolized
by Freud. Gay points out in his introduction:

Perceptive historians have noted more than once that Queen
Victoria was not a Victorian; in the same sense, Freud was not a
Freudian: they were not responsible for the myths that have
been woven around their names. I want them to stand as
reminders that bourgeois culture in the 90s was quite different
from bourgeois culture half a century before. (4)

In fact, the myth he dismisses is that Victoria was necessarily a
sexual prude; the symbol he accepts is that she represents sexual
prudery.
For the biographer, the fact that Victoria has this "ourselves-created" dimension, that is a dimension not consciously created either by herself or by others, but a dimension created by a public consciousness, gives biographers several layers to handle when using her as a subject. As with some of her early biographers, when the symbolic nature is ignored and accepted as truth, the text becomes less credible. To compare Lee, who, even one year after her death, is skeptical, to Morris and Smith, who pass off the symbol as fact, is to see the difference between good biography and a public relations tract.

Other biographers have used the picture to rhapsodize on the symbol. Bolitho's *Victoria: The Widow and Her Son* actually attempts to validate the symbol:

The civilized world had been deeply stirred by the events of the [Diamond Jubilee] and in America, France, Germany, Spain and Austria, the Queen's great age and her mellowed character endowed her with something of the power of the oracle. Perhaps the power was more personal than that of the oracle for she seemed to come nearer to the everyday interests and common tasks than when she was younger. She was in a sense the mother of the century. Wherever she went she was acclaimed. (351)

Bolitho, then, goes on to add details. That the Queen Regent of Spain and the Queen of Holland ask Victoria for advice, that "hers was the only hand which could stay the mad onrush of her grandson in
Germany," that the President of the French Republic described her as "aimée par la population," are all signs that Bolitho sees as the truth of her symbolism.

Strachey, too, succumbs to the urge to rhapsodize. After a long chapter, "Old Age," he comes to terms with her symbolic value with a few sentences attempting to find the core of the symbol:

The long journey was nearly done. But the traveller, who had come so far, and through such strange experiences, moved on with the old unaltering step. The girl, the wife, the aged woman, were the same: vitality, conscientiousness, pride, and simplicity were hers to the latest hour. (419)

If the biographer is not going to try to set aside the symbol or to set forth the contradictions between the life and symbol, this is as good a conclusion as any.

LEVELS OF MEANING III:
SYMBOL AND BIOGRAPHY II

The symbolic value of a subject, then, can be manufactured by the subject or by others who use the subject for meaning. It can also grow naturally from general perceptions about the subject made by others. In Queen Victoria's case, and probably in most cases, the symbolic value which has grown naturally is the stronger. The manufactured symbol, such as Queen Victoria's own direction of her symbolism as parent, or the capitalistic symbol of the Queen as
Empire, are in most cases wedded to their times. As a result as the audience's consciousness of what family is or as the Empire disappears over time, the symbolism itself seems to lose luster and disappear. On the other hand, the natural symbol, that is Queen Victoria as representative of her age, seems in this case at least to be heartier and capable of transformation in a new age.

In biography, we can see also that the symbolism of the subject develops like biography itself. In Queen Victoria's case, for example, the symbol begins with the subject. Because of her own self and her position, she radiated meaning. Those who saw her over a period of time cast their own meaning onto the line of her life. As is usually the case, those closest saw the least. This is why she is so human in the diaries and memoirs of her courtiers. But from a distance her symbolic value was increased.

Primarily then, she lends herself to symbolic meaning because she was what she was. Neither of the uncles whom she succeeded were considered necessarily charismatic figures—Strachey, in fact, describes William IV—and remarkably accurately if one examines the portraits—as a red-faced sailor with a head like a pineapple. And her grandfather is generally remembered because he lost the United States as a colony and because he went mad. There were, however, personal qualities in Victoria which lent themselves to the popular consciousness of her time.

The second characteristic needed for any character to become as widely symbolic a figure as Victoria did become is fame. Any
character can be symbolic, but fame makes for widespread diffusion of the subject's symbolic qualities. This diffusion is dependent upon the media and probably no figure in nineteenth-century England received as much media coverage as Queen Victoria. During her lifetime Queen Victoria was mentioned every day in the newspaper. The Court Circular appeared daily as did articles about different members of the Royal Family. Moreover, the Queen entered into everyone's house every day because her picture or name was on so many of the common products within the home. It was not until the reign of Edward VII that a Royal Warrant—the label which reads "By Appointment to His Majesty the King"—became official. Throughout the reign of Queen Victoria, her picture appeared on literally hundreds of products. Robert Opie, for example, in Rule Britannia: Trading on the British Image depicts a wide ranging collection of royal pictures on products which includes foodstuffs (beef extract, bouillon cubes, cocoa, corn flour, condensed milk, mustard, oat crackers, table water, and tea); dry goods (cloths, velveteen, needles, pins, thread, and nibs); laundry products (dye and laundry soap); personal hygiene products (soap and toothpaste); clothes (waterproofs and gloves); furniture (stoves and window blinds); and infant medicine. In every way and in every day, then, the media made the Queen part of her subjects' lives.

As far as we know, she was also accepted by the British as symbolic of their values. Gissing's picture of the crowd wandering the streets after the official event has something ominous about it.
He describes "the low, unvarying sound that suggested some huge beast purring itself into stupid contentment." The beast continued to be there, but it continued to purr and never turned against Queen Victoria. In his eulogy after her death, Salisbury, her last Prime Minister, gave one reason why:

I have always felt that when I knew what the Queen thought, I knew pretty certainly what view her subjects would take, and especially the middle class of her subjects. (Longford 567)

The Queen was not middle class. In fact, she probably did not recognize the middle class as a separate entity. Moreover, as several of her biographers have mentioned, she probably had little understanding of any of the social or intellectual movements of her time. It is also clear, however, that she had very little intellectual affinity with the upper classes. On the whole what she felt probably came closest to what was thought by her average middle-class subject. In part this is what Strachey means when he speaks of the "new significance exactly harmonizing with her own inmost proclivities." Later he describes this identification more clearly:

The middle classes, firm in the triple brass of their respectability, rejoiced with a special joy over the most respectable of Queens. They almost claimed her, indeed, as one of themselves, but this would have been an exaggeration. For though many of her characteristics were most found among the middle classes, in other respects—her manner, for instance—Victoria was decidedly aristocratic. (416)
Strachey was a bit of a snob. He certainly would not want his subject to appear at all middle class, but he clearly outlines the identification the public and later readers have with her. This identification accounts for the fact that many readers of Queen Victoria biographies describe the central figure as ordinary.

Finally, duration, too, matters, and, in Queen Victoria's case, as we have said many times before, the sheer length of her reign made her symbolic to her subjects. At her death, she was the only monarch most of her subjects had known. The more than half-century from her accession to her death symbolized the life of most of her people. The symbolic meaning generated by the sheer quantity of her years was clearly symbolized at the festivities surrounding the Golden and Diamond Jubilees. The Swedish historian Herbert Tingsten's description of the hoopla surrounding the festivities remarkably sums up the crowd's feelings about Victoria:

There were few among the thousands sharing in the rejoicings of 1897 [the Diamond Jubilee] who had not beheld the Queen for the better part of their lives as an enduring symbol of Empire, indeed, most of them had been born under her reign. Other public figures had shone for a while and then vanished, but the Queen lived on, the object from year to year of constant publicity, with the Court Circular and the newspapers announcing daily what she did and whom she received. The long period of her reign had been a fortunate one. There had been progress in every field, democratic government had
increased, there had been peace almost unbroken during which nevertheless, overseas possessions and the nation's might had grown continually. Even the insecure and overworked poor, whose miserable existence was momentarily enlivened by the processional and the pageantry, could share in the feeling that they were citizens of a master race, the most outstanding race of rulers since the Romans. (72)

Whether they were truly a master race did not matter, it was the feeling that her presence represented that did.

Finally because of all of this, her personal and situational charisma, her media exposure, her audience's ability to identify with her, and the duration of her reign, she became a symbol, a sense of meaning larger than herself. To capture that larger than life quality, literally hundreds of larger than life monuments were erected to her. In her introduction to *Queen Victoria and Her Daughters*, Nora Epton describes the effect of all of those statues:

In the course of my travels—Canada, India and Singapore—I have seen the Great Mother figure of Queen Victoria surveying tropical bamboos and northern firs like a goddess dispensing mysterious manna from her orb and sceptre. In an alien land it was somehow reassuring to gaze upon those rotund, maternal and majestic contours, that half-benign, half-chiding expression which seemed to be asking all and sundry: "My beloved subjects, are you doing your duty? Are you leading useful lifes?" Despite myself, I began to look upon her with filial
respect, and it was a great shock to find her removed from plinth and lying on her back in the new Republic of Guyana, her hand still caressing the imperial orb designed as a globe, among a tangle of cast-iron lions and crowns. Close by she continues to be remembered by botanists, for there is a pool full of the world's largest water-lily, named after her: 'Victoria Regina.' (ix)

For Epton the symbolic life is so large she feels the urge to discover the "real" life behind the symbol.

It was George Bernard Shaw, not a biographer, who best complained about this need to take the tiny Queen—she was four foot eleven at her accession and was measured by her doctor as four feet nine when she died—and represent her symbolic self rather than the reality:

It was part of her personal quality that she was a tiny woman, and our national passion for telling lies on every public subject has led to her being represented as an overgrown monster. The sculptors seem to have assumed that she inspired everything that was ugliest in the feminine fiction of her reign. Take Mrs. Caudle, Mrs. Gamp, Mrs. Prig, Mrs. Proudie and make a composite statue of them and you will have a typical memorial of Queen Victoria. (Weintraub 641–642)

The biographer's duty, according to both Shaw and Epton, is to find the little woman behind the statue. It is enough, as Weintraub points out at the end of his biography, that "she was England."
We grovel before the fat Edward—E[ward] the Caresser, as he is privately named. But I mourn the safe and motherly old middle-class queen, who held the nation warm under the fold of her big, hideous Scotch-plaid shawl and whose duration had been so extraordinarily convenient and beneficent. I felt her death much more than I should have expected; she was a sustaining symbol.

Henry James to Oliver Wendell Holmes, Jr.

And so Queen Victoria died, in the arms of her grandson Kaiser William and in the presence of most of her living children—the Dowager Empress, William's mother, was in Germany, herself dying of cancer. As Queen Victoria began to sink, members of her family in attendance softly called out to her their own names. At 6:30 in the evening on January 22, 1901, she ceased breathing.

Before her two surviving sons, Edward, the new king, and Arthur, the Duke of Connaught, placed her in the coffin, Dr. James Reid, her personal physician had already packed the bottom with the
memorabilia she wished to accompany her to her final resting place. This included the Prince Consort's dressing gown, his cloak embroidered by Princess Alice, the Prince's plaster hand, and photographs. After the family had viewed the body and left the room, Reid placed a photograph of John Brown and a lock of his hair in her left hand and covered both by a bouquet of flowers from Queen Alexandra. He, then, covered the body with the Queen's wedding veil (Reid 216).

The casket was carried from Osborne House across the Solent on the Royal Yacht, Alberta, accompanied by a squadron of destroyers with their hulls painted black. It was then mounted on a special train which took it to London. One of Victoria's granddaughters looking out from behind the closed blinds of the train noticed the people kneeling in the fields as the coach passed.

During her life, Queen Victoria had considered herself an anomaly, and in death, Weintraub points out, she remained so:

It was a ceremony for a woman sovereign, but not a woman was visible. The kings and princes and generals on horseback, and the marching troops were accompanied by a half-dozen closed carriages containing the only women in the procession other than the dead Queen—Alexandra and the princesses, riding unseen. (639)

Moreover, as in life, she made herself a dramatic contrast to the scenes which unfolded around her. In a day on which black was the dominant color—the London shops were entirely sold out of black
crêpe—she insisted that she did not want to be surrounded by black. The casket was covered with a crimson pall.

As usual the ceremony was in part much improvised. Frederick Ponsonby records that there were no clear records of what to do at the funeral of a defunct sovereign and although those who should have been planning knew that the Queen was dying, no procedure had been prepared. Only the Queen's instructions—what to place in the casket and what she wanted to happen at her funeral—were clear. "I would wish just to say," she wrote in her funeral instructions, "that a gun carriage is very rough jolting & noisy, one ought to be properly arranged" (Weintraub 639). When the traces of the horses pulling the gun carriage broke, the naval honor guard pulled the carriage up the hill to Windsor Castle. Ponsonby himself devised the procedure for reverse arms (85–93). These traditions, like so many others in the reign, were invented on the spot and have been followed at successive royal funerals.

Even London, the noise of which the Queen had complained about for forty years, was finally silent. Well, almost silent. The Queen, of course, had she heard, would have complained of the booming cannon in the distance, of the muffled rolls on the drum, of the jingling of the horses' harnesses, and of the rattle of the wheels and hooves on the streets.

The effigy of the young Queen by Marochetti, which had been misplaced since 1863 when its companion piece had been installed on Albert's tomb, was found barely in time to be slid next to that of
Albert in the Royal Mausoleum at Frogmore. And with that resonant thump of marble on stone, the Queen went to her final resting place, more or less as she had planned, in a ceremony the details of which she had ordered. She had been Queen for 64 years and from the first day in 1837, when she discovered that she could move out of her mother’s bedroom and, at last, be alone, she had always given the orders. Even when married to Albert and as much as she liked people to believe that she was a model nineteenth-century wife, she insisted on controlling the details of her life. She was the Queen, and until she was buried, her wishes were carried out.

After her death, the new King began to give his orders. The furnishings from Victoria’s time were hastily packed away—Queen Alexandra remarked that most of this was done while she was in Denmark visiting her family—and the furniture from the Regency was brought out. The Indians were shipped back home and the Munshi’s papers were burned. The busts of John Brown were taken from the Royal residences; the large statue erected to him overlooking Balmoral was moved and trees were planted around it. Osborne was closed, and after a suitable period of mourning, the lights of Buckingham Palace were again alive with the entertainments of the new reign and the new King and Queen.

Shortly after he took his oath on the day the Queen died, Edward, with a great deal of tact or honest emotion, proclaimed his new name to the Privy Council:
I have resolved to be known by the name of Edward, which has been born by six of my ancestors. In doing so, I do not undervalue the name of Albert, which I inherited from my ever-to-be-lamented, great and wise father, who by universal consent is I think deservedly known by the name of Albert the Good, and I desire that his name should stand alone.

(Weintraub 637)

The Victorian era was dead, the Edwardian begun.

Yet, interest in Victoria has not died. Almost immediately after her death the biographies began to appear. There were at first a rush—at least 15 in the first year alone. These included Morris's, Smith's rewrite of his 1898 biography, and Marie Corelli's and Mrs. Oliphant's tributes. Lee's full length biography did not appear until 1903. It seemed to satisfy the need for there were only intermittent publications until Strachey's 1921 Queen Victoria. Since then, however, there has been a steady stream with a new biography or a new edition of an old one appearing almost every year. Some years there have been more than one. For example, 1938 was an anno mirabilis with eight new biographies and several re-issues of previous editions. This was almost equaled in 1970, 1972, 1980, and 1987 in each of which seven biographies appeared. The interest in Queen Victoria, at least in terms of publication, has been, therefore, sustained.

Publication, of course, is indicative of audience and one of the neatest ways to classify the many biographies written of the Queen
since her death is in terms of audience. For example, in recent years, the interest in Queen Victoria has been inspired by an interest in Victoriana in general. There are a number of books designed specifically to satisfy this interest. Susan Faludi has suggested that this Victorian revival is due in part to an anti-feminist backlash—that Victorianism represents a return to a patriarchal authority pattern (189). If "traditional" is read for "patriarchal" Margaret Thatcher and all who proclaim the sanctity of Victorian values would undoubtedly agree. The marketers whom Faludi cites contend that the renewed interest has something to do with a return to the "romantic." No matter what the causes, there are magazines devoted to Victoriana, shops with imitation Victorian underwear, and even Victorian superstars—Helen Hayes, for example, who once played the title role in Housman's *Victoria Regina*, has a collection of memorabilia given her while she was playing the Queen.

To the Victoriana groupies one can probably add the royal groupies. As several anthropologists have pointed out, the Royal Family has continued to build on the symbolic relationships started during Queen Victoria's reign.\(^1\) Through well-planned and carefully strategized trips and events and popular—at least with the public—marriages, the British Royal family has continued to attract a worldwide following. The fanatic group of royal watchers which has developed snaps up just about anything with the picture of a monarch or princess on the cover. The multiple editions of *Queen*

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\(^1\) See particularly David Cannadine and Ilse Hayden.
Victoria biographies in some years can be attributed to an interest renewed because of coronation, a jubilee or a royal marriage. Both groups, the Victoriana and royal fans, are probably as much responsible as any other audiences for the fact that at least one "Victoria" biography or new edition has been published every year since 1968. They are possibly also responsible for the surprising number of picture-book biographies of Victoria and her family.

A second general audience includes those historians, amateur and professional, who are interested in the nineteenth century. Readers sometime find that biographies present the sweep of a century in a far easier format than non-biographical history which focuses primarily on events. The subject's life sustains the interest and the events take on a personal and particular perspective. This limited perspective also allows readers of biography a new look at their own period, for we always live in a transitional age. In many ways, the Victorian era is the "deep past" from which the present shakes itself free. Biography leads to understanding of that past by giving the reader a human focus on history. It would appear that these historians and historiophiles are the smallest group of readers of Victoria's biographies, but their forces are solidly testified to by a number of scholarly journals devoted to the Victorian period in particular and the nineteenth-century in general.

One last vast group adds to the readers of Victoria biographies: the average readers, those who read biographies because they find the exercise of reading any biography interesting and of reading a
biography of Queen Victoria fun. Like all readers of biography, this last group of generalists reads for information and for entertainment. The generalist reads to discover new characters trying to come to terms with their environment, their society, their times. These are probably by far the greatest group of biography readers. They are the readers which make biography the popular art form it is.

The remarkable thing about the Queen Victoria biographies is that even though they are designed for different audiences, the main handling of the material is primarily the same. One can go through biography after biography and not find any essential difference in the major events. Part of this sameness is, as was mentioned earlier, because the essential details are the masonry from which every biography is built. Part is also due to the conservative nature of biography. The reader does not have to develop new reading habits in order to understand a new biography. Concepts of what constitutes chronology, fact, or information can change over time, but the changes come over such a long period that while they are happening they seem almost imperceptible. Moreover, while notions of authorship and text change rapidly in non-fiction writing, because of the special baggage the reader brings to reading, these notions have remained fairly fixed in biography. So when people read a biography they look essentially for rather traditional aspects: character, plot, and theme.
FINDING VICTORIA I

Perhaps the most traditional of these aspects is character: we read biography to find out about the subject. Yet, as traditional as character is, just exactly what we look for in examining character in a biography covers a fairly broad area. For many people, the biographical collectors, reading is primarily a source of new details to keep in store. For example, it is interesting to know that Queen Victoria was delighted when her doctor placed her on a diet of Benger's Biscuits, the nineteenth-century equivalent of a high fiber diet. Her doctor was, however, chagrined to discover that Her Majesty was using the crackers not as a dietary substitute but as an hors d'oeuvre to the sometimes immense meals she raced through each evening. It is also interesting to know that when the Queen and John Brown went out for their afternoon carriage ride, the teapot was always filled with whiskey. None of these details matter very much but the biographical fact ferret will find them popping up now and again in the various biographies of the Queen.

At the other extreme is William McKinley Runyon who posits that biography is more than just a psychological hypothesis. Given enough readings, the text becomes the basis of a complete psychoanalytic analysis. With the Queen Victoria biographies, one can see how this can work, as well as where the process could fall apart. Surely the amount of writing accreted around the Queen gives
us a clear picture of the type of person she was. But whether she
acted as she did because she was small, or because she had been
 orphaned, or because she had been relatively poor—for a royal—in
her childhood, depends upon the teller of the tale. We can argue that
the Queen through all of these biographies is the same; what the
biographer gives us is a personal reaction to the character.

Moreover, when we pass the level of fact and begin to interpret
the events of a life we begin to look at the character for some sort of
self-referentiality with the subject. In some passages of some
biographies Queen Victoria can remind us of a loved one: a parent, a
spouse, a child, a friend, an enemy. This does not mean that we must
identify with the subject as Edel has said that Strachey identifies
with Queen Victoria, but in most biographies we see analogous
character types. We all know people who, like Victoria, think they
are calmest in moments of stress—Victoria once wrote in her matter­
of-fact way, "Great events make me calm." We also know people who
cannot understand why their world does not revolve around
themselves. Michael Holyroyd was correct when he said that
Strachey made us identify with the ordinary in Queen Victoria, but
that is the key to almost any biography: if we do not identify in
some way with the central character, we have trouble continuing the
reading process.

We also read biography for the story. At its most simple that
means understanding the chronology of events, the string of events
across a chronological line. The better biographies also involve our
curiosity. We want to know what happened next. In every full life biography of Queen Victoria there is a fascination at what is going to happen after the death of Prince Albert. Sitwell treats it as a peaceful moment:

Later in the evening, the Queen left him for a moment, in order that she might give way to her grief. But when she had been gone for only a little while, Sir James Clark sent a message asking her to return. Entering the room, she knelt by her husband's side. At the foot of the bed knelt the Prince of Wales and Princess Helena and on the other side Princess Alice, while in the shadows of the background stood Prince Ernst of Leiningen, the doctors, the Prince's valet Lohlein, General Grey, and the Dean of Windsor . . . A deep silence filled the room. Then, as the clock of the castle chimed the third quarter after ten, the worn and troubled face of the man upon the bed grew serene and shadowless—beautiful as it had been when, twenty-five years since, a boy of seventeen played in a leafy garden in the Palace of Kensington . . . (245)

Sitwell's version, which closely mirrors the Queen's in her journal, emphasizes the peaceful calm. The ellipsis at the end almost forces the reader to turn the page for more vibrant action.

Weintroub, following the journal of Lady Augusta Bruce, describes a more dramatic moment:
At a quarter of eleven, when the Prince's breathing began to change, Alice whispered to Lady Augusta, "That is the death rattle." Calmly she went for her mother.

"Oh, yes, this is death!" Victoria cried on seeing Albert. "I know it. I have seen it before." She fell upon the still, cold body, and called him by every endearing name she could recall from their life together. Then she allowed herself to be led away. (301)

Weintraub brings down the curtain with a startled cry. But the effect is the same as in the Sitwell: we want to turn the page.

Cecil Woodham-Smith, who did not write the succeeding volume, closes her life with an analysis and yet, with a question, creates the impulse for the reader to continue.

It was impossible for anyone even remotely acquainted with the Queen's character not to recognize it as formidable, a potential whose power was as yet unknown. A wave of national sympathy and affection rushed out to the bereaved Queen. Few members of the crowd who waited outside Buckingham Palace, regardless of the fact that the Prince Consort had died at Windsor, were concerned with the important issue—the effect of the Prince Consort's death on the government of the country. The words on all lips, the feelings in all hearts were: 'What is going to happen now to the poor Queen?' (431)
One of the great regrets we get from reading Woodham-Smith's work is that she did not go on with a second volume. As readers we are willing to follow.

And we are willing to follow because she has created such a strong narrative momentum. When we speak of narrative momentum, we are talking about a rather traditional term, plot, in the sense that Forester defined it, as the structure of the action as it occurs in the text. When the narrative is strong, we are more than interested, we are involved. We become a participant in the story. Queen Victoria and what happens to her matters to us. Not all biographies achieve this level and not all biographies strive to involve the reader, but this involvement is undoubtedly the strongest attraction of many biographies. There are several places in the Queen Victoria biographies when this can easily happen. For example, when General Gordon is trapped in Kartoum, the whole conflict between the Queen and Gladstone over whether to save him can lend such tension to her story that even though we know what happened eventually, for the space of the story we want to find out if Gordon will be saved. If the story is handled well, when Gordon and his forces are finally massacred, we are able to forget over one hundred years and distances in culture and class and live with the moment through Queen Victoria's eyes—however wrong that point of view might be.

Finally, we read biography as an artifact: we admire how well it is put together or put it down because it is not well put together.
This is probably why so many of the Queen Victoria books which are not particularly interesting or well written are so nicely fabricated. They are pretty to hold and one would assume that makes up for their lack of content.

More often, however, we are fascinated by how the biographer has arranged the details of the story. To take a life as long as Queen Victoria's and to arrange the details in a way which is interesting and self-sustaining is always an accomplishment. While one may not agree with Strachey's analysis of the Queen's character, his ability to pull all of his material together into a coherent and cohesive whole makes his achievement admirable. And more remarkable, it is continually interesting. In fact, Strachey's portrait of the Queen evokes responses in many subsequent works. Even Longford's admirable book is on one level only a better researched and more complete version of Strachey's.

Each biography, then, responds to other works on the same subject. The bibliographies which conclude the many Queen Victoria books have a remarkable sameness about them. The only changes concern the publication of new work. Almost all written since 1920 contain Strachey. Those written since 1964 will list Longford. And, one notices, the more recent bibliographies begin to mention Weintraub. Because there are so many, the Queen Victoria biographies are, one could almost argue, a sub-genre.
But all of the Queen Victoria biographies are also a little different. There are differences in evidence: one bases the argument on Stockmar, and other on Victoria herself, still another treats the story from Greville's point of view. One tells us the "We are not amused story"; another pictures the Queen announcing with almost child-like glee at the end of a play, "Now, did you suspect that?" There are differences in the scope; one discusses five years, another twenty, still another encompasses the full eighty-two. There are differences in intent. One wants to show Victoria as the model nineteenth-century wife and mother of nine children. Another seeks to create the strong-willed imperial monarch of the "greatest empire the world has ever known." One seeks to show how she is dominated by the men in her life; another shows a busy career woman who believes that she has a job for life, juggles family and personal responsibility with those of her job, and manages to do a fairly decent job of both. Moreover, these intents have been formed by the time within which they were written. Strachey's biography is dated; when we read it there is something "old" about it. Most biographies written three years ago would not treat events in the same manner as a biography written fifteen years ago, let alone like one from fifty

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2 I am drawing a fine line here between what I have called in the opening chapter the dominant general purpose of all biography, to inform, and the author's specific purpose, to intend.
years ago. Each era has its own values and its own style and biography reflects those values and style in the portraits it presents.

However, it is not necessary to read several biographies to create different portraits of the same character. If one could bear it, and the biography were interesting enough, re-reading the same text would give the same effect. That is because when we read we are also involved in a creative act. We are taking the portrait given us by the biographer and creating our own portrait from it. One of the main points of our discussion has been that when we read, we are selective. We pick and choose the details that most strike our interest at a given moment. The moment is important because, at another moment, the same detail might strikes us quite differently. And as we read we are also continually drawing from our memory other portraits we have created, portraits we have developed either from other texts or from life. This Queen Victoria reminds me of that moment in Benson when... Or that Queen Victoria recalls Bolitho when he says... Moreover we are drawing on our own creations from life. Queen Victoria at this point is just like my twelfth grade history teacher. Queen Victoria there is just like my father-in-law.

So reading biography is fun. We read several biographies of the same subject because while the main life events are the same, the nuances, the shadows and the colors, will vary from text to text. We also read several biographies because the mind will not allow us to make the same picture. The biography is simply a frozen moment.
The moment we begin to read the text, we enter a world, like the one outside the covers of the book, in a state of constant flux.

From biography to biography, Queen Victoria changes, becomes a different person, and a different character. Can we ever know the real character? Not likely. But we see her as others see her and we can discover how many characters and biographies we can construct in our own minds. For the space of the text, for the time it takes to read, we create our own portraits of people, places and events of other worlds.

When the old lady stopped shaking, she reached into her pocket and pulled out a tiny lace-trimmed handkerchief. She placed her book on the table, and dabbed her eyes. She thought for a long moment. They would never get it right, and that made her wonder if it had been worth it. She felt for a moment frustrated and a little sad. But almost as quickly she realized that she had gone over everyone's head.

Replacing the handkerchief in her pocket, she put both her hands on the table and steadied herself as she stood up. She looked around the room and smiled again. It was a nice smile, one which made her look much younger. There was something coquettish and something mischievous in her smile; it was regal but not necessarily majestic.

It was with a sense of resolution that she picked up the book and carried it to the spot from which it had disappeared earlier.
There was no place for it on the shelf, but when she lifted it to its spot, it slid in and became one with the other similarly bound volumes. She smiled again, and took a deep breath. Grabbing a hold onto one of the vertical supports of the shelf, she leaned back, then into it, giving the shelf a mighty push. All of the shelves in the grand oval of the room spun around like a series of roulette wheels stacked atop each other. Because the shelves were not attached and some turned faster than others, some stopped earlier. And when she had finished, the room looked as if it hadn't been touched, but all of the books were in different places on the shelf.

Smiling softly, she stepped back; the doors opened; and the turbaned Indian entered. He presented his arm which she took. The stick appeared silently and didn't even seem real until it began to tap softly along the floor. She was still smiling as she walked away feeling that she had accomplished something.

Several hours later, after the sun had come up, the castle librarian entered the room. Her face was radiant because of the brisk job she had completed through the breezy fields of time. She was carrying a list of appointments and was making sure that the room was ready for the day's visitors. Every day she did the same thing and every day she remarked on her trust as the keeper of the past. Noting that everything was in place, she walked to the door and peered out down the hall. Sometimes there were many people and the list of searchers was long; sometimes, like today there was
no one and the list was short. On days like this she felt she, too, must give history a push.

After she had closed the door, she, too, walked to the shelves and she, too, took hold of an upright support. With a mighty shove, she, too, sent the room rollicking around its careening course, all of the time laughing diabolically. When the room stopped moving, she paused and gave herself a little shake. Then, taking the list in her hand, she left the library and walked down the hall to greet her first biographer.
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This bibliography is divided into four parts. The first three refer to works which are relevant to Finding Victorias/Reading Biographies. The last is a list of biographies in which Queen Victoria plays a major part, but which are not discussed in the preceding text. I include this list for the interested reader.

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