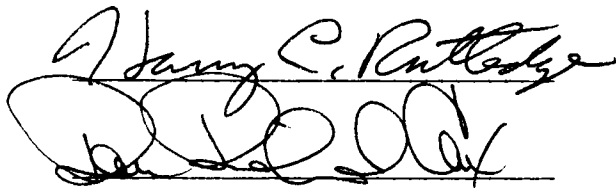


To the Graduate Council:

I am submitting herewith a dissertation written by Evelyn Swanson Kennedy entitled "A Vision Destroyed: The Wasteland Worlds of Augustus and Victoria." I have examined the final copy of this dissertation for form and content and recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, with a major in English.


Richard M. Kelly, Major Professor

We have read this dissertation
and recommend its acceptance:



Bain T. Stewart

Accepted for the Council:


Vice Provost
and Dean of the Graduate School

A VISION DESTROYED: THE WASTELAND WORLDS
OF AUGUSTUS AND VICTORIA

A Dissertation
Presented for the
Doctor of Philosophy
Degree
The University of Tennessee, Knoxville

Evelyn Swanson Kennedy

August 1988

To My Parents

Mr. and Mrs. Godwin Williams, Jr.

ABSTRACT

Literature often presents life in the metropolis not only as a bleak existence bereft of the pleasures associated with the idyllic beauty and innocence of the countryside but moreover as the terrifying reality from which no mortal is allowed to escape. The man in the city knows only penury, suffering, alienation, and the horrors of violence and finally death, and both writers living in Augustan Rome and poets in Victorian England present this frightening picture to their readers. In neither pinnacle of civilization do the sun's rays ever offer the urban inhabitant any consolation since he is doomed to a life of shadows and misery.

This study investigates these feelings expressed by the ancients and the Victorians and reveals strong similarities in their reactions to and portrayals of the wicked, heartless city. Among the Romans discussed are Vergil, Horace, Juvenal, Lucretius, Petronius, and Seneca. The Victorians are represented by Arnold, Tennyson, Clough, and several other poets of lesser renown. Finally, the climax of anti-urban Victorian poetry is reached in James Thomson's The City of Dreadful Night, in which the necropolis becomes the true Lucretian wasteland.

The presentations of the city by these two cultures so separated by time and location are much the same not only because of certain undesirable aspects of the very nature of urban life but also because of the stringent classical background demanded by the educational

system of nineteenth-century England. However, the Victorians convey a depth of compassion for human suffering which the Romans do not openly admit but rather prefer to stand aloof and merely to observe the pain experienced by their fellowmen. Certainly, all of the writers discussed herein depict the metropolis as a place of filth and despair where only the rich and powerful may bask in their vulgar pastimes and lascivious hedonism, yet sincere concern for the victim of the heartless city is more conspicuous in Victorian poetry than in the literature of ancient Rome.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER	PAGE
INTRODUCTION	1
I. LUXURY AND VICE	17
II. PROSTITUTION, DRUNKENNESS, AND CRIME	38
III. POVERTY AND THE MOB	55
IV. HOPELESSNESS AND DESPAIR	84
V. DEATH AND DESTRUCTION	102
VI. DISINTEGRATION AND NIHILISM IN THE NECROPOLIS: THOMSON'S <u>THE CITY OF DREADFUL NIGHT</u>	119
VII. THE SHROUD OF EXISTENCE	152
WORKS CITED	157
VITA	167

INTRODUCTION

Throughout literary history, the simplicity and guileless innocence of the pastoral landscape have been contrasted to the isolation, hopelessness, and ultimate destruction of the stifling urban atmosphere. In fact, the city becomes not only the source of man's sufferings but also the symbol for this condition of human life as the only reality. Such a depiction of alienation and despair may seem understandable in times of widespread disease and war, but why should remarkably prosperous historical epochs such as the Roman Empire and nineteenth-century England under the reign of Queen Victoria share this tone of suspicion and misgivings concerning the city?

Both Augustan Rome and Victorian England were experiencing ages of relative peace and order after great upheaval and chaos, and thus in both societies an innate fear of revolution existed. The resulting psychological impact led to a repression of violent opinion and a desire on the part of the populace to appear scrupulous and to be obsequious to authority, whether to Octavian and Maecenas or to Victoria and Prince Albert. Yet the superior minds of both ages chose to expose the mental confusion lurking beneath the veneer of order and respectability, and therefore, the literature of these two civilizations at the pinnacles of their culture and prosperity portrays the metropolis as the heartless destroyer of man's hopes and aspirations, the place

Where the unholy river gleameth,
 Deep, and cold, and dun,
 Hiding secrets from the sun,
 As an awful dream one dreameth,
 As oblivion.

(Noel, "The Children's Grass" II.143)¹

That the entire Victorian educational system was rooted in and felt deep reverence for the classics is without question, yet often exact reference to specific authors' academic backgrounds is overlooked. Of course, the classical education fostered by Thomas Arnold at Rugby, to which his son Matthew and Arthur Hugh Clough were exposed, is well-documented; in fact, under the older Arnold's tutelage, "the classical languages [became] the basis of the whole curriculum" (Evans 121) of Rugby. Yet with the single exception of Alexander Smith, whose parents' poverty denied him university admission, the Victorian poets who reveal affiliation with classical Roman authors in their attitudes towards the city received academic backgrounds demanding extensive knowledge of the ancients. Clearly, "To be born into the middle or upper classes in England during the earlier decades of the nineteenth century was, in a sense, to be born into the classical tradition" (Anderson, Classical 1).

Not all of these poets, however, had a university education in the strictest meaning of the phrase. As mentioned above, Smith did not attend an institution of higher learning, but he eventually became associated with Edinburgh University. Patmore was privately

¹ Citations for Noel are page numbers since Poems of the Honorable Roden Noel: A Selection does not give line numbers.

educated, yet his credentials later provided him entry as assistant librarian at the British Museum. Physical disability prevented Henley from receiving formal training beyond Crypt grammar school; however, there he was fortunately placed under the academic guidance of Thomas Edward Brown, an Oxford scholar and divine. Thus, even if some of these versifiers were denied university instruction, other aspects of their lives would have necessarily exposed them to the world of ancient Rome.

In fact, even the educational opportunities offered in an inferior grammar school during the first forty years of the nineteenth century would have provided a classical background for a British youth since the dictum of Dr. Johnson remained the final word: "A grammar school was, by Dr. Johnson's definition, 'a school in which the learned languages [Greek and Latin] were taught grammatically,' and that was that" (Ogilvie 115). But an even more stringent ruling forbade that the classics be ignored since "the schools were bound to confine their teaching to classics by their foundation statutes" (Archer 20). When Leeds in 1805 decided to broaden its curriculum, Lord Eldon overruled this wish, citing the illegality of an action which dismissed the wishes of a school's founders. Therefore, every grammar school was forced to provide classical training "even where there was no demand for a classical education" (Archer 83) until the law was relaxed by the Grammar Schools Act of 1840 (Ogilvie 115).

Nevertheless, many of the writers concerned with the city did attend a university, and their choices were quite diverse. Walker,

Noel, and Tennyson attended Cambridge, where Walker's classical skills made him "eminently qualified for the office, to revise and correct the proof sheets" for a translation of John Milton's "De Cultu Dei" and to serve as editor for Charles Knight's Corpus Poetarum Latinorum (W. S. Walker, ed. Moultrie lxxviii). Davidson pursued Latin and Greek at Edinburgh University while Buchanan studied the same type of curriculum at the University of Glasgow after being introduced to Latin at Glasgow High School. Rossetti attended the Royal Academy Antique School for a time, and James Thomson (B. V.) excelled academically at the Royal Military College, Chelsea. Finally, Arnold, Clough, Morris, and Binyon all matriculated at Oxford. Of particular note is the fact that during his university stay, Clough began the first of his contributions to the Dictionary of Greek and Roman Biography and Mythology. Ultimately, Clough wrote seventy-seven items for this massive three-volume work edited by William Smith (Greenberger 56).

Two Victorian poets, however, merit more precise detail concerning their classical training since in their diaries, letters, and critical thought they clearly express their depth of knowledge in Roman literature and its value in their development. As "his father's favorite" (Anderson, "Types" 61), Tennyson began his classical training even earlier than the average Victorian boy since his father was himself a noted Latin and Greek scholar. In fact, before the elder Tennyson would allow his son at six and one-half years old to begin his formal education at Louth, Alfred had to memorize all four books

of Horace's odes in three months (Redpath 105). This early training left such an impression on the poet's mind that "In later life, he wrote on an endpaper of his schoolboy edition of the Iliad, Oxford 1821, 2 vols: ' . . . we followed the same command [i.e. re. Greek] of his [father], writing in our Horaces, Virgils & Juvenals . . . the criticisms of their several commentators'" (Shatto 494).

Certainly, from this young age until the end of his long life, Tennyson "never wavered in his loyalty to the ancients" (Bush, Mythology 199). His favorite Latin authors are quoted as Lucretius, Vergil, Catullus, and Horace (Redpath 106), and substantiation of at least part of this opinion is given through his wife Emily's diaries which record his reading to her every evening in 1853-1854 from Virgil and Lucretius (C. Tennyson 279) and in 1857-1858 from Lucretius and Juvenal (C. Tennyson 307). Yet these readings obviously provided enjoyment for more than the immediate family since upon visiting the Tennyson home Savile Morton once said, "I had no idea Virgil could ever sound so fine as it does by his reading" (C. Tennyson 202). Certainly, Tennyson's "poetry is all the richer for his sensitivity to the Roman mind and the Roman voice" (Pollard 62), and especially because of his love for "dear old Virgil" (C. Tennyson 237), the poet laureate has been designated as "surely the English Vergil" (Hight, Classical 446).

Yet perhaps of all the Victorians, none was so completely ensconced in the classical culture as was Matthew Arnold: "There are surely few men outside the profession of teaching the classics who

have been so firmly convinced as Matthew Arnold that in the classics are all the essentials of a liberal education" (Montgomery 533). And in a situation similar to Tennyson's, Matthew's life at home was responsible to a large degree for his strong classical affiliations. In the Arnold household, "Schooling began as soon as the child could walk" (Anderson, Classical 2), and, of course, included was the study of Latin since Thomas Arnold firmly believed in using "the events of antiquity to illuminate the present, which he saw as a reflection of the past" (Anderson, Classical 1). Indeed, this environment made a lasting impression, one which could scarcely have been accomplished otherwise:

Matthew Arnold learned from his father two things that no one else could have taught him so well. The first was the sense of classical antiquity as a heart-shaking presence; the second, an awareness of moral analogies that fused past and present into a single paradigm.

(Anderson, "Types" 61)

Although his early education may have been spent "in the enforced company of Vergil and Horace" (Anderson, Classical 133), the experience was well-justified since at nine years old Arnold openly acknowledged "the beauty of poetry" (Bush, Arnold 3) upon his reading of Vergil's fourth Eclogue after "having been flogged through the preceding" ones (Anderson, "Arnold" 264). He continued his studies of the classics upon entering Winchester at thirteen since "Greek and Latin dominated the curriculum. Little else was studied; nothing else was considered important" (Anderson, Classical 5). Then, during his matriculation at Oxford, Arnold's assignments on Balliol's Examination Register for 1841-1844 included Latin (Anderson, "Arnold" 266), a

course of study which demanded the reading of Vergil, Horace, and Juvenal with Lucretius as an option (Honan 52). Certainly, Arnold's background in Latin was quite broad even though specific mention of his reading of Lucretius does not appear until a notebook dated 1845 (Tinker & Lowry 341).

As a staunch advocate of precision, "Arnold believed Latin the best of all grammars for the promotion of habits of exactness" (Montgomery 535), and several of his critical works support this conviction. "On the Modern Element in Literature" displays his acute knowledge of Horace, Vergil, and Lucretius and is surely "an exposition of the critical spirit of genuine, timeless classicism" (Bush, Arnold 13). Yet two of his other essays even more specifically pronounce his adherence to the doctrine of the classical tradition. In "Literature and Science," one clearly hears the voice of Arnold's father:

When I speak of knowing Greek and Roman antiquity, therefore, as a help to knowing ourselves and the world, I mean more than a knowledge of so much vocabulary, so much grammar, so many portions of authors in the Greek and Latin languages, I mean knowing the Greeks and Romans, and their life and genius, and what they were and did in the world; what we get from them, and what is its value. That, at least, is the ideal.

(Prose, X 324-325)

And again in "A Speech at Eton," Arnold espouses the ideal:

It seems to me, firstly, that what a man seeks through his education is to get to know himself and the world; next, that for this knowledge it is before all things necessary that he acquaint himself with the best which has been thought and said in the world; finally, that of this best the classics of Greece and Rome form a very chief portion, and the portion most entirely satisfactory.

(Prose, IX 176-177)

Finally, in his correspondence with Clough, Arnold expresses his feelings concerning the comparison between the deterioration of contemporary times and the supremacy of the ancient worlds. He realizes that the ideal is not within his grasp and that he must accept the fate of the citizen of the later Roman Empire for whom the glories of the past are but a dream. His letter dated June 7, 1852, confesses that he envisions himself as "a gifted Roman falling on the uninigorating atmosphere of the decline of the Empire" (Anderson, Arnold 158). Indeed, only an individual with a truly deep knowledge of the classical tradition would be aware of such a correlation.

Thus from their education background, the fact is clear that the Victorians knew well that beneath the surface picture of Vergil's Troy and Lucretius' Athens lay the desperation and death in Augustan Rome. As a result, the classics provided the model for the Victorian representation of the city as the symbol for the inescapable horror of life itself. The Victorians felt that patterning their poetry on the Roman masters of prose and verse gave it a higher stature; indeed, they could well refute Everard Hall in Tennyson's "The Epic":

Why take the style of those heroic times?
For nature brings not back the Mastodon,
Nor we those times; and why should any
Remodel models?

(35-38)

These authors strongly believed that their mission was to reveal the actualities of corrupt and brutal nineteenth-century London, and the standard from which they often selected their images and even vocabulary was the classical literature which reflected not the glory but the terror that was Augustan Rome.

Upon his ascension to the throne in 30 B.C., Augustus ushered in a period of long-sought peace following the years of panic and destruction resulting from the civil wars. This time became known as the Augustan Age, the symbol of prosperity and achievement, and at its center proudly stood imperial Rome. The pomp of Augustus' court was intended to represent the hope of all Romans, and Maecenas, Augustus' chief minister of propaganda and patron of the arts, encouraged writers to glorify this image. Certainly, obeisance to the will of the Emperor was to these authors' advantage, and such a desire to please is exemplified by Vergil's dedication of the Aeneid to Augustus. Banishment from the court and even exile were the fate of any who chose to behave otherwise, and Ovid's Tristia reflects such a destiny. Therefore, much literature of the period depicts the glorification of the Empire and is an obvious endeavor to present the city of Rome as a source of unlimited accomplishment and wealth, "an imperial capital, a metropolis" (Williams 48).

Similar to the prestige and flourish experienced under Augustus, the reign of Victoria certainly deserves its acclaim as one of the most productive and foremost ages in the history of man, and the queen herself remains the symbol of this prosperity. The royal household is known for its projection of propriety to the outside world and its familial devotion and conjugal love idealized by the marriage of Victoria and her consort Prince Albert. At that time, the city of London stood as "the capital of an Empire and the centre of world trade" (Bradbury 180), and its control extended to every

inhabited continent. Why, then, is such a time of advancement and power so often regarded as hypocritical and even destructive?

Clearly, these two major eras in man's development merit praise for their attainments, but to the majority of citizens in these worlds so separated in time and location, the city itself was not emblematic of refinement and progress but a place of filth, crime, and avarice which felt no remorse for the victims of its selfish materialistic goals. The masses of people were denied even the basic necessities for existence, and the wealth which benefitted the elite only served to accentuate the poverty of the mob. Indeed, the citizens of both environments knew well the habitat so aptly described by John Ruskin in his address entitled "Work," which he delivered to the Working Man's Institute at Camberwell:

So all that great foul city of London there, - rattling, growling, smoking, stinking, - a ghastly heap of fermenting brickwork, pouring out poison at every pore, - you fancy it a city of work? Not a street of it! It is a great city of play; very nasty play, and very hard play, but still play. It is only Lord's cricket ground without the turf, - a huge billiard table without the cloth, and with pockets as deep as the bottomless pit; but mainly a billiard table, after all.

(Works, XVIII 406)

Instead of the affluence and grandeur of the court, the average man experienced rampant crime and accepted disease and pestilence as a part of daily existence. In addition, he knew too well that altering his position was hopeless:

overweening hopes stalk abroad in cities, and trembling fears. One, sleepless, haunts the haughty vestibules and unfeeling doors of his rich patrons.

(Seneca, Hercules Furens 161-166)

Perhaps, as in the case of Augustan Rome, the wiser and more thoughtful members of nineteenth-century English society realized that Victoria and Albert were not living as was the crowded populace in the gutters of the Seven Dials, and the severity of class distinctions is aptly conveyed in the verse of an anonymous nineteenth-century balladeer:

In St. James's the officers mess at the club,
In St. Giles's they often have messes for grub;
In St. James's they feast on the highest of game
In St. Giles's they live on foul air just the same.
(S. M. Smith 16)

Certainly, the fact that Victorian poets who wished to convey the despair of the homeless and destitute often reveal a commonality between their land and that of Rome is accurately presented by the words of J. A. Froude:

The tendency of people in the later stages of civilization to gather into towns is an old story. Horace had seen in Rome what we are now witnessing in England - the fields deserted, the people crowding into cities. He noted the growing degeneracy. He foretold the inevitable consequences.
(Oceana 9)

Like the Roman populace whose vision was limited to "the gloomy Esquiline" (Horace, Satire II.vi.32-33), where criminals and paupers were buried in mass graves, and "the entrance [faucibus] of the Subura, where the blood-stained scourges of the executioners hang, and many a cobbler faces the Potters' Field" (Martial, II.xvii.1-3), the Victorian observers of the overall conditions of the rat-infested slums and unrestrained industrialism were horrified to the point that "most of the great nineteenth-century writers hated and despised the world in which they lived" (Highet, Classical 439).

Inevitably, insightful minds in both Rome and England vividly depict the plight of the masses existing in the squalor and "the weary waste of the town" (Morris, "Mother and Son" 5) beneath the veneer of prosperity and purported respectability. Some, unwilling to invite the anger of the rich and powerful, paint the horrors of the city through worlds completely removed from the capital. Like Vergil's portrayal of a fallen Troy or Lucretius' frightening description of a plague-ridden Athens, Alexander Smith singles out Horton and Glasgow, whose "atmosphere of murk, fog and smoke creates a particularly northern hell" (M.J.W. Scott 103). In a similar manner, Tennyson watches Camelot consumed in the flames of its own licentiousness, and Buchanan experiences an endless nightmare in the megalopolis through The City of Dream and The Wandering Jew. In contrast, other authors openly denounce the corruption and despair lying before them. Like the Romans witnessing "the superciliousness of Mistress Rome" (Martial, I.iii.3), several Victorians wish to speak directly to their fellowman and address the reality of his existence. As a result, they follow the Juvenalian tradition in their precise denigration of the existing conditions in the city of London itself. Roden Noel ominously pronounces the destructive influences and "hopeless human suffering in London" (Thesing, London Muse 110) in "The Red Flag" while Arnold expresses his revulsion in such poems as "Kensington Gardens," "an earthly version of the New Jerusalem which has fallen, producing lust and alienation, disorder and immorality" (Sharpe 82). But regardless of their choice of locales, these writers are keenly aware of the fate

of the city's victims: "In what gloom of life, in how great perils is passed all your poor span of time!" (Lucretius II.15-16).

The various aspects of the city which authors in both civilizations denounce are in some cases rather trivial, and sometimes the peculiar and rather vulgar tastes of the wealthy provide an opportunity to satirize one's peers. Yet such a trend toward luxury is usually the forerunner of more serious character flaws, and both Romans and Victorians are aware that passion often overrides more desirable standards of ethical conduct. Thus, in exposing the immorality of their capitals, the authors invariably witness the competition of the crowds rushing to satiate their materialistic appetites, and the literature displays not only disgust and even horror because of the dangers of the mob but also sympathy for the poor who inevitably suffer from the metropolitan environment. Therein follows an examination of the successive stages of degradation for the urban inhabitant, for his victimized status can produce only intense feelings of alienation and the ensuing despair. He may pray for death to escape his miserable existence, and as both Roman and Victorian authors suggest, ultimately his wish will be fulfilled. Unfortunately, in the city death is most often associated with some supreme horror.

Although other writers may depict man's existence as that of "A foil'd circuitous wanderer" (Arnold, "Sohrab and Rustum" 888) in the stony and bleak metropolis, the epitome of this type of literature appears in the unforgettable necropolis of James Thomson's The City

of Dreadful Night, sometimes cited as "the greatest single pessimistic poem in English, or perhaps in any literature" (Meeker 86). Certainly, this poem's publication date of 1874 does not chronologically warrant its designation as the climax of anti-urban poetry, but any reader cannot avoid being immediately struck by Thomson's utter desolation and horror unrivalled by other denunciations of the metropolis. Thomson seems able to verbalize all the threats and terrors of the city in a single presentation of anguish and complete despair:

The City, in short, became for some the image not only of "man's inhumanity to man," but was also intimately related to the urgent search for individual values and a sense of identity in a world made increasingly "alien," not only by materialism and rationalism, but also, and more importantly because the established incorporation of Man in the traditional cosmological trinity with God and His Nature had been dislocated. This was in essence the "city" of dreadful night through which James Thomson (B. V.) and some of his disconsolate contemporaries walked.

(Forsyth, "Self-Image" 72)

Clearly, an empire at its apex, driven only by its desire for more luxury, gold, and power, is inevitably doomed for destruction:

The stone Colossus "Cosmopolis" stands at the end of the life's course of every great Culture. The Culture-man whom the land has spiritually framed is seized and possessed by his own creation, the City, and is made into its creature, its executive organ, and finally its victim. This stony mass is the absolute city.

(Spengler, II 99)

And such is the fate of London as it indeed becomes The New Rome:

Doth not the parallel strike home?
Is not the Empire of today
Another and a lewder Rome?
Is not this Realm, whose flag unfurl'd
Flies now where'er the surges roar,

Even as that wonder of the world
 Sung by your Juvenal of yore?
 (Buchanan, II 312)²

The resemblances certainly exist, and like a visitor to Rome in the first century A.D., Carlyle, on his first trip to London, notes the heedlessness of the individual towards his fellow citizen: "Each must button himself together, and take no thought (not even for evil) of his neighbor" (Froude, Carlyle II 168), a statement which obviously echoes Juvenal's indictment of the city's vitium (cf. Ch. I, p. 33). The concern of both civilizations is sincere regarding the deleterious conditions of city life, and the aspects of this environment which the Romans vociferously denigrate are distinctly apparent in Victorian poetry. Men long for the past when "one day did not then send to destruction [exitio] many thousands of men in the battle-field" (Lucretius V.999-1000) and dream of the respite of the countryside to escape the fumes of industry and the rush of the mob. Vice prevails, poverty and loneliness undeniable facts of life, and death a feared but often desirable alternative: "One aspect of urban alienation [is] a desperate loneliness. . . . Another aspect of urban alienation [is] a distressing sense of immersion in a ruthless struggle for survival" (Trudgill 134). Some writers, in fact, appear to share the attitude of one particularly indignant Victorian:

You must think of me as not belonging to the present system
 of society, but as one looking with the greatest delight to

²Citations for Buchanan are page numbers since The Complete Works of Robert Buchanan (2 Vols.) does not give line numbers.

its entire annihilation, so that ultimately not one stone of it shall be left upon another.

(Owen, I xxii)

Thus, the Victorian poetic depiction of the metropolis exhibits strong similarities to the literature of Augustan Rome. Both cultures firmly believe that the city is the center and source of the afflictions of mankind. Unfortunately, however, no other option is possible since "those who enter never can return" (Davidson, "Epilogue to Fleet Street Eclogues" 7).

CHAPTER I

LUXURY AND VICE

The literature of the Romans and the Victorians depicts a love for extravagance in both personal appearance and possessions, and such ostentatious taste demands large amounts of cash. The competition for gain thus becomes quite intense as each individual's psyche echoes the Spirit's refrain in Clough's "Dipsychus": "How pleasant it is to have money, heigh ho!/How pleasant it is to have money" (e.g., IV.134-135). This status seeking and materialism often lead to obsession with luxury which, in turn, encourages wantonness and vice. Such a trend toward decadence in the city is a major issue confronted by several authors in both eras. They praise simple country pleasures which stand in stark opposition to the urban marathon for gold and often contrast the idyllic, perhaps excessively sentimentalized vision of rural life to the city, "the inevitable moral and physical antithesis of the country" (Johnston 11). But the city ultimately becomes more than just a playground for the wealthy whose prodigality knows no bounds, and writers foresee the inevitable doom awaiting a society for which excess breeds only a desire for more. As a result, Victorian poets, like their Latin predecessors, denounce the corruption stemming from this obsession with wealth. The capitals of both cultures are destroying themselves from within, and the poetry of the Victorians addressed to their contemporaries echoes Propertius' warning to the

Romans: "Rome is being shattered by her own prosperity" (III.xiii.60).

Obviously, the Romans were not lacking in affectation and social climbing. The literature shows that they often wished to appear more youthful than their actual age and aspired to a cultural level which, if their wealth allowed, their backgrounds did not. Thus, their pretentiousness and vulgar ostentation merely intensified their boorishness and ignorance.

Martial's denigration of false values is gentle, but he succinctly portrays the vanity of the Romans in his Epigrams. The reader is quick to recognize the man at the theater who pretends to belong there but in actuality does not have a seat: "Thence with his head buried in a cowl he peers out, and views the show indecently with one eye" (V.xiv.6-7). The man's behavior is certainly evidence of his crude background.

But Martial seems to enjoy even more exposing those people whose failed efforts to disguise their age merely accentuate their ridiculous appearance. He blatantly accuses both Laetinus and Phoebus of lying: "You falsely ape [mentiris] youth, Laetinus, with dyed hair" (III.xliii.1), and "You fob us off [mentiris] with fictitious hair by means of ointment, Phoebus, and your dirty bald scalp is covered with locks represented in paint" (VI.lvii.1-2).

In a similar vein, he refuses to let Fabulla and Marinus get away with their efforts to hide their balding heads. He questions Fabulla when she "swears that the hair she buys is hers" (VI.xii.1)

and mocks Marinus: "From the one side and the other you gather up your scanty locks and you cover, Marinus, the wide expanse of your shining bald scalp with the hair from both sides of your head" (X.lxxxiii.1-3). Such hypocrisy may appear trifling, but it clearly displays a type of vanity which can endanger more important aspects of character. Ultimately, Martial's "total picture adds up to an indictment of social sham in all of its manifestations" (Hadas 287).

Perhaps the most outstanding Roman portrayal of urban sham and feigned culture is Trimalchio's feast in Petronius' Menippean satire the Satyricon. Trimalchio exemplifies the nadir of crudity as he publicly "relieved himself and called for a basin, dipped in his hands and wiped them on the boy's head (sec. 27). But what other behavior can his guests expect from a host who says, "Of course, as far as I am concerned, anyone may relieve himself in the dining-room" (sec. 47)?

Trimalchio epitomizes the ignorance fostered by city life when he claims that Troy's conquerer was Parentium, a small town in Istria (sec. 59), and thinks that his house is protected by a mural above the door: "a great dog on a chain was painted on the wall and over him was written in large letters 'Beware of the dog'" (sec. 29). In fact, as Encolpius, the narrator of the story, explains, "There were only two things in the world that he [Trimalchio] could watch with real pleasure, acrobats and trumpeters; all other shows [to him] were silly nonsense" (sec. 53).

Finally, Encolpius cannot forbear to describe Trimalchio's utter lack of taste:

On the little finger of his left hand he had an enormous gilt [subauratum] ring, and on the top joint of the next finger a smaller ring which appeared to me to be entirely gold, but was really set all around with iron cut out [ferruminatur] in little stars. Not content with this display of wealth, he bared his right arm, where a golden bracelet shone, and an ivory bangle clasped with a plate of bright metal [lamina].
(sec. 32)

Of course, to monitor this braggadocio's behavior is the stereotypical fishwife Fortunata: "this lynx-eyed woman [lupatria] has a plan for everything . . . she has a nasty tongue, and henpecks him on his own sofa [pica pulvinaris³]" (sec. 37). Despite her concern for material gain, however, Fortunata obviously condones Trimalchio's vulgar ostentation which continues throughout the dinner. She ignores "a chairman . . . [as he sweeps] out the silver with a broom among the other rubbish" (sec. 34) while her husband "picked [perfodit] his teeth with a silver-quill" (sec. 33).

Clearly, Martial's caricatures and Petronius' descriptions of tawdry vulgarity depict a society whose concern with appearance replaces more respectable values. One's trying to cover his balding head is a minor display of vanity, and Trimalchio's behavior does not exhibit a deep-rooted corruption, yet Roman literature reveals sincere pleasure in exposing such human failings, and some examples from Victorian poetry indicate the same relish in mocking petty human foibles. Clough in "The Latest Decalogue" jeers at the man whose religious practices are merely for show: "At church on Sunday to

³Literally, "a magpie belonging to the sofa" - Heseltine (trans.) fn., 57.

attend/Will serve to keep the world thy friend" (7-8). More satirical, however, is Tennyson's "Northern Farmer, New Style," which "was founded on the story that a rich farmer in Tennyson's neighborhood was in the habit of saying, 'When I canters my 'erse along the ramper [highway], I 'ears proputtty, proputtty, proputtty'" (Marshall 165). Similarly, in the poem the farmer's advice to his son emphasizes the man's single preoccupation with wealth; nothing else in life is of any importance to him:

Luvv? what's luvv? thou can luvv thy lass an' 'er munny too,
 Maakin' 'em goa tigither as they've good right to do.
 Could'n I luvv thy muther by cause o' 'er munny laaid by?
 Naay - fur I luvved 'er a vast sight moor fur it.
 (33-36)

Truly, the farmer's words, "Proputtty, proputtty's ivrything" (43), indicate an attitude which has much in common with that of Petronius' Trimalchio.

Yet in the main, Victorian poets overlook the seemingly petty weaknesses of their peers because greater concern lies in the more deleterious conditions of city life. They do not consider hypocrisy as simply a mortal flaw to be ridiculed but as an actual deadly vice and the veneer of "moral propriety as a mask for avarice and plunder" (Leroy 129). Unlike the Romans, they are unable to laugh at ostentation and crudeness because they know that underneath lies "the threat of catastrophe, of which . . . [they are] acutely aware" (Leroy 56).

The stance taken by Horace toward urban luxuriousness is more clearly echoed in Victorian poetry. From his Sabine farm, the ancient

peacefully muses about the tranquility provided by the countryside in contrast to the restlessness of the money-hungry city:

Happy the man who, far away from business cares, like the
pristine race of mortals, works his ancestral acres with his
steers, from all money-lending [faenore] free.
(Epode II.1-4)

He questions, "Is the water purer which in city-streets struggles to burst its leaden pipes than that which dances and purls adown the sloping brook?" (Epistle I.x.20-21). Horace gratefully acknowledges his distance from the "wretched place-hunting" (Satire II.vi.18) of city life and cautions those who seek their fortune there: "Cease to wonder at the smoke, the riches, and the din of wealthy Rome" (Ode III.xxix.11-12).

Horace knows that material gain makes a person desire more and can only result in unhappiness: "Yet as money grows care and greed for greater riches follow after" (Ode III.xvi.17-18). Instead, he praises the man who finds satisfaction in solitude and moderation, who "avoids the Forum and proud thresholds of more powerful citizens" (Epode II.7-8). Accepting the brevity of life, he questions the values of those who waste their span in the pursuit of wealth: "Why do we strive so hard in our brief lives for great possessions?" (Ode II.xvi.17-18).

Both Patmore and Tennyson seem to reflect the gentle rebukes of Horace toward the city in some of their poetry celebrating the virtues of rural simplicity. Patmore feels oppressed by the urban atmosphere and longs for the purity of the country: "As seen from smoky street,

the thymy head/Of some high hill alone with the sweet sun" (fragment 492).⁴ In a similar manner, Tennyson depicts the contrast between the two landscapes in such poems as "The City Child" and "The Talking Oak." The child's innocence, like Horace's "pristine race of mortals" (cf. p. 22), parallels the simplicity of the life she seeks "All among the gardens, auricules, anemones,/Roses and lilies and Canterbury-bells" (4-5). The speaker's attitude in "The Talking Oak" is much the same:

Beyond the lodge the city lies,
 Beneath its drift of smoke;
 And ah! with what delighted eyes
 I turn to yonder oak.
 (5-8)

Also, "The dust and din and steam of town" in In Memoriam (lxxxix.8) merely paraphrase Horace's description of "wealthy Rome" (cf. p. 22).

Vergil also praises the simplicity and happiness afforded by rural life and gives "pointedly contrasting glimpses of luxury and corruption in imperial Rome" (Johnston 8). However, his indictment of the city is stronger than that of Horace because he sees luxury as the ultimate source of blood-thirsty destruction:

One wreaks ruin [excidiis] on a city, and its hapless homes,
 that he may drink from a jewelled cup and sleep on Tyrian
 purple another, open-mouthed, is carried away by
 the plaudits of princes and of people, rolling again and
 again along the benches. Gleefully they steep themselves in
 their brothers' blood [gaudent perfusi sanguine fratrum].
 (Georgics II.505-506, 508-510)

⁴Citations for Patmore are page numbers since The Poems of Coventry Patmore does not give line numbers.

Thus, whereas Horace's gentle warnings are directed toward the individual, Vergil sees urban luxury as "related to larger patterns of social and city disorder" (Johnston 12). To him, personal greed will bring disaster to the entire city populace.

Like Vergil, Morris voices a stronger denunciation in his contrast between the city and the country through images which are pointedly critical of the urban conditions. Perhaps his depiction is the result of his "profound distaste for the age in which he lived" (Stansky 45) as he addresses his readers:

Forget six counties overhung with smoke,
 Forget the snorting steam and piston stroke,
 Forget the spreading of the hideous town;
 Think rather of the pack-horse on the down,
 And dream of London, small, and white, and clean.
 (The Earthly Paradise, ii "The Wanderers" 1-5)

Morris obviously believes that although one may not physically withdraw from the city, he may attempt some escape through his reverie.

A similar withdrawal from the tensions of modern life is presented in Tennyson's "The Lotos-Eaters." The wanderers experience a tranquility impossible in their former lives, for in this utopian world "There is sweet music here that softer falls/Than petals from blown roses on the grass" (46-47). This land of dream frees them from "Clanging fights, and flaming towns" (160) and allows their imaginations "To muse and brood and live again in memory" (110). Such an existence clearly denies reality, but the constraints of modern life make the fantasy one much to be desired:

How sweet it were, hearing the downward stream,
 With half-shut eyes ever to seem
 Falling asleep in a half-dream!
 (99-101)

In "Lines Written in Kensington Gardens," Arnold reveals another persona caught in "the opposition between the peaceful and innocent life of the country and the discordant impiety of urban existence" (Roper 50). But unlike the romantic dreams of flight from the city's congestion painted by Morris and Tennyson, this narrator, who "Was breathed on by the rural Pan" (24), is entrapped and expresses an actual fear of the environment: "The danger the speaker feels is . . . [that] of a spiritual death inflicted in a modern city" (Madden 64) because of the corruption and tumult:

I, on men's impious uproar hurled,
 Think often, as I hear them rave,
 That peace has left the upper world
 And now keeps only in the grave.
 (25-28)

But the tone remains relatively subdued and does not take on the Juvenalian outbursts of other Victorian poets. The speaker accepts his fate as an urban dweller, and his sensitivity encourages him to look for "psychological survival and harmonious integration in the city" (Thesing, Muse 74). He seeks an inner serenity which ignores the deplorable conditions of city life:

Calm soul of all things! make it mine
 To feel, amid the city's jar
 That there abides a peace of thine,
 Man did not make, and cannot mar.
 (37-40)

Another of Arnold's personae, however, cannot adapt to the confines of society and flees even his former friends to find solace in the countryside. "The Scholar-Gipsy" tells

The story of the Oxford scholar poor,
Of pregnant parts and quick inventive brain,
Who, tired of knocking at preferment's door,
One summer-morn forsook
His friends,
But came to Oxford and his friends no more.
(33-37, 40)

Far away from "this strange disease of modern life,/With its sick hurry, its divided aims,/Its heads o'ertax'd, its palsied hearts" (203-205), the young man has discovered the happiness unattainable in the crowded streets of the city and has been enabled to escape the passage of time and the alterations in life which weary even the most stalwart of men:

No, no thou hast not felt the lapse of hours!
For what wears out the life of mortal men?
'Tis that from change to change their being rolls;
'Tis that repeated shocks, again, again,
Exhaust the energy of strongest souls
And numb elastic powers.
(141-146)

Clearly, for some individuals removing themselves completely from the urban environment is the only means to assure peace and restful calm. Unfortunately, such fantasies as those which "The Scholar-Gipsy" exemplifies are merely "temporary excursions into a nostalgically regarded past" (Foakes 165) and deny the reality of urban life which each individual must inevitably face.

Although Propertius' own promiscuity is well-known, this poet faults the city for his girlfriend Cynthia's behavior. The glamour

of Rome has caused her to demand for herself "such worthless [vilia] gifts as glitter on the Sacred Way" (II.xxiv.14). More important, however, he feels that the wealth of the city is responsible for both her and all women's downfall and laments the immorality for which they are not to blame:

Would that no men at Rome were wealthy and that our lord and master himself dwelt in a thatched cottage. Never then would one's mistress sell herself [venales essent] for a gift, but girls would grow grey in the house of one lover only. Never wouldst thou lie far from me for seven nights long, thy white arms lapped about so foul [foedo] a lover.
(II.xvi.19-24)

In fact, Propertius believes that the thirst for riches has destroyed all sense of shame:

Clear and undoubted is the cause of such vast ruin; the path of luxury is grown overfree [nimum] piety is vanquished and all men worship gold. Gold has banished faith, gold has made judgment to be bought and sold, gold rules the law, and, law once gone, rules chastity as well [sine lege pudor].

(III.xiii.3-4, 48-50)

Obviously, the populace needs no other instructor to guide its materialistic inclinations since "there is Rome to teach its luxury (luxuriae Rome magistra suae)" (III.xii.18).

Recalling Propertius' attitude toward the corruptive city is Buchanan's condemnation of the metropolis which contrasts to the innocent purity of the country. His London Poems survey many aspects of the city, and inevitably the picture is depressing at the least and outright hellish otherwise. For example, "Jane Lewson" makes clear Buchanan's "underlying hostility to the city through oblique nostalgia for the simplicity of the countryside" (Forsyth, "Dilemma" 650). Then

in "To the Moon," the speaker laments his existence but finds solace in the heavenly crescent which he believes to care about his fate:

Yet here I linger in London City,
Thinking of meadows where I was born -
And over the roofs, like a face of pity
Up comes the moon, up her dripping horn.
(I 161)

But the city becomes a veritable corruptor in "Edward Crowhurst." Like Propertius' Cynthia who cannot be blamed for her overindulgence (cf. p. 27), Edward too is not culpable since he is merely a pawn of the city's debauchery. Involuntarily, he is "coaxed . . . up to London" (I 143), and after his brief stay

when he came from London, he was changed.
His eyes look'd wild, his cheek was pale, his step
Unsteady; when he enter'd, I could smell
Drink in his breath.

Indeed, such people's failings are not derived from inner weakness but from the overpowering immorality which the city espouses.

In "Bexhill, 1866" Buchanan reminisces about his childhood days in Scotland now that he has been confined in London as "the dark city [gathers] on [his] brain" (I 114). He has wanted to compose his verses on the capital in the urban environs but found himself incapable of doing so; "the blackness of the streets" has blocked his ability to write. Thus, by withdrawing to this rural suburb, he has regained his gift for poetics and is able to show the contrast between the two landscapes. Yet the poet remains "depressed by thoughts of the wretchedness of the distant metropolis, [and] he explains that, if he tends to sing in melancholy strains, the reason lies in his sad reflections about London" (Cassidy 88):

The terrible city loom'd from far away
 And gather'd on me cloudily, dropping dews,
 Even as those phantoms of departed days
 Had haunted me in London streets and lanes.
 (I 115)

Through the words of the hoary executioner who has retired to the country in "The Last of the Hangmen; A Grotesque," Buchanan again reveals his desire to flee the vicious life of the city. Removed from the horrors of his former occupation, the speaker has found peace and tells his listener: "soon, as you proceed, the busy sound/ Of the dark City at your back is drowned" (I 177). He knows the dangerous back alleys and has smelled the fumes of industry. Now in the sunny hills,

Instead of smoke, you breathe the pleasant Spring;
 And shading eyes dim from street dust you mark,
 With soft pulsations soaring up, the LARK,
 Till o'er your head, a speck against the gleam,
 He sings, and the great City fades in dream.

Finally, Buchanan's lament concerning the urban conditions is epitomized in London Poems by "Pan: Epilogue," his remorseful dirge on the loss of innocence in the city. The youthful god protecting all nature and its beautiful pleasures is addressed as "O piteous one!" (I 185) since he has become a shadow, "a Shade" wandering the darkened streets like an old man: "Thy gray head bowed,/Dimly thou flutterest o'er the crowd,/With a thin human cry." Instead of the warm breezes and unsurpressed happiness associated with the ancient deity,

On rainy nights thy breath blows chill
 In the street walker's dripping hair;
 Thy ragged woe from street to street
 Goes mist-like, constant day and night.

In addition to the obvious humor of the Satyricon, Petronius' characterization of Trimalchio paints a vivid description of the deterioration of moral character resulting from luxurious urban living and its excess. Among the pictures at the entrance of his house,

Trimalchio was there with long hair, holding Mercury's staff,
Minerva had him by the hand and was leading him into Rome.⁵
(sec. 29)

His materialism is emphasized the more by the ostentation of the dishes, each of which bears "Trimalchio's name and their weight in silver engraved on their edges" (sec. 31). His guests are repeatedly oppressed by his "filthy [putidissimam] bragging" (sec. 73) about his possessions while his avaricious wife Fortunata proudly "counts her money by the bushel" (sec. 37). Yet she is not alone in her gluttony for gold. As Ganymede, a guest at the dinner, points out, today people "all shut their eyes and count their own goods" (sec. 44).

The rampant quest for wealth continues to be an issue in the Satyricon after the guests escape from Trimalchio's feast. As they are about to enter Croton, a farm-bailiff tells Encolpius and his friends about the materialism in the town before them:

if you profess to be men of a superior stamp and thorough-paced liars [sustinetis semper mentiri], you are on the direct road to wealth. In this city the pursuit of learning is not esteemed, eloquence has no place, economy and a pure life do not win their reward in honour; know that the whole of the men you see in this city are divided into two classes.

⁵"Mercury, as the god of business, was Trimalchio's patron." - Heseltine (trans.) fn., 43. Ironically, Mercury was also the patron of thieves.

They are either the prey of legacy-hunting or legacy-hunters themselves [Nam aut captantur aut captant].
(sec. 116)

Clearly, existence in Croton denies simplicity and is based solely on a lust for money.

In Rome, however, avarice is even more prevalent and becomes a type of urban insanity. The travelers are told that

the true-born Roman is bought, and changes his vote for plunder and the cry of gain [ad praedam strepitumque lucri]. The people are corrupt [venalis], the house of senators is corrupt, their support hangs on a price. The freedom and virtue of the old men [have] decayed, their power . . . swayed by largess, even their dignity . . . stained by money and trodden in the dust [auro corrupta iacebat].
(sec. 119)

Thus, gold is lord, the only voice which is heard, and no one is safe from its authority: "Not a house is safe, not a man but mortgaged [sine pignore]" (sec. 119). Even Dis, the god of the underworld and patron of wealth, is aware of this madness and foresees its power to destroy the people:

See, everywhere they squander their spoils, and the mad use of wealth brings their destruction [censum in damna furentem].

(sec. 120)

"In the Great Metropolis" exposes Clough's "consistent undertone of sincere but suppressed disgust" (Timko 117) toward the rapacious contest he witnesses in the city. The inhabitants may easily be compared with Petronius' division of men in Croton (cf. p. 30), for in London "Each for himself is still the rule" (1). And the refrain emphasizes that every individual cares only for his own welfare: "The devil take the hindmost, O!" (e.g., 3).

Yet Clough's more severe indictment of urban materialism appears in the sonnet "To the Great Metropolis." As in Croton where virtue is ignored (cf. p. 30), here "sovereign symbol of the Great and Good,/True Royalty, and genuine Statesmanhood,/Nobleness, Learning, Piety [is] none" (6-8). In this "characterization of a city dominated by 'Traffic'" (Timko 116), Clough stresses the influence of "Competition and Display" (3) in the Victorian capital and openly condemns this urban symbol of prosperity "with all the glitter, then, coming from its attributes of shiny, hard cash" (Timko 117). Certainly, this metropolis is "Anything but a mighty Nation's heart" (14).

Tennyson expresses a like contempt for the materialism of his age in "Locksley Hall." Having been rejected by his girlfriend Amy for an obviously wealthier man, the speaker realizes his inability to succeed in a land where "Every door is barred with gold, and opens but to golden keys" (100). He feels that he has been denied the promises of happiness allotted to youth and openly reprehends the society which acknowledges and even favors the competition for physical comforts and wealth:

Cursed be the social wants that sin against the
strength of youth!
Cursed be the social lies that warp us from the
living truth!
Cursed be the sickly forms that err from honest
Nature's rule!
Cursed be the gold that gilds the straitened
forehead of the fool!
(59-62)

Yet among the Romans, Juvenal's denunciation of the metropolis is the most biting. He blatantly rejects the flagrant displays of wealth and pronounces, "All vice [vitium] is at its acme" (I.149). The city cares nothing for morality, but instead a man's status is based solely on his pocketbook: "The first question asked will be as to his wealth, the last about his character" (III.140-141). And once a person proves himself acceptable, he is forced to live above his income to keep up with the fashion, and the means whereby to achieve this aim do not matter:

In Rome, everyone dresses smartly, above his means, and sometimes something more than what is enough is taken out of another man's pocket. This failing [vitium] is universal here: we all live in a state of pretentious poverty. To put it shortly, nothing can be had in Rome for nothing [omnia Romae/cum pretio].

(III.180-184)

Business success is the only ambition for a Roman, and the city promotes this indulgence and encourages deception to achieve materialistic goals: "Nowhere is it so easy as at Rome to throw an old client overboard" (III.125). In fact, Juvenal carefully details the process the citizens follow to get whatever their thirst desires:

The regular stages are these: money is borrowed in Rome and squandered before the owner's eyes; when some little of it is still left, and the lender's face grows pale, these gentlemen give leg bail, and make off for Baiae and its oyster beds - for in these days people think no more of absconding from the Forum than of flitting from the stuffy [ferventi] subura to the Esquiline.

(XI.46-51)

Certainly Juvenal's third satire gives his most "elaborate indictment of the capital" (Mackail 223), but throughout, the Satires refer to the luxury and wanton living in Rome. The simplicity of the

past has been destroyed by "wealth [which has] enervated and corrupted the ages with foul indulgences" (VI.299-300); character and morality have no value in a society where prodigality reigns. Indeed, "wasteful [prodiga] Rome sets no limits to extravagance" (VII.138).

The images in London Poems clearly depict the vicious conditions of urban life juxtaposed to the innocence of the natural countryside. However, Buchanan becomes clearly Juvenalian in some of his other poetry which calls for his mentor's return so that "The New Rome" will become aware of the inherent dangers and make redress for its errors. In "To Juvenal," Buchanan tells his poetic forebearer, "Thou shouldst be living here today!" (II 348), since the obsession with money and the consequences of this proclivity are much the same as Juvenal has recorded: "Here is the City, as you drew it/In those forgotten day [sic] of old" (II 349). Like prodigal Rome (cf. above), in London today "To Plutus and his harlot Fortune/We kneel with largess-seeking hand." The pretentiousness of ancient Rome (cf. p. 33) is clearly echoed through the Victorians' ostentation: "Mere basin, frying pan, and kettle/Are fashioned from the head of brass!" Character again is of no significance; only the size of a person's wallet (cf. p. 33) is valued: "Honour and glory cease to shine, . . ./But Gold is evermore divine." Ultimately, this single preoccupation with materialism has thoroughly corrupted the citizenry now "Selling our very souls for Gold."

A culture which allows, and even encourages, vulgarity and ostentation is the forerunner of greater indulgence, and the revulsion

felt by the Romans towards the corruptive luxury and greed in the city is explicitly conveyed in Victorian poetry. The authors in both civilizations firmly believe that luxurious urban living is doomed for disaster. Sometimes the similarity in attitude is shown by Horatian echoes of city versus rural living as in Laurence Binyon's "The Bathers." The purity and innocence of the workers on vacation in the country are distinctly different from their normal existence:

Hither, from thirsty day
And stifling labour and the street's hot glare,
To twilight shut away
Beyond the soft roar, under hovering trees,
Hither the gleeful multitudes repair.
(33)⁶

Unfortunately, the simple pleasures of the country are forgotten amid the mad pursuit for gold which competition in the city demands, and more base corruption and sin are soon to follow. Thus in other Victorian poems, the thrust reaches the more denigrative tone of Petronius and Juvenal as in "Dipsychus," wherein Clough presents Venice as the blatant symbol of "corruption, ease, and luxury" (Greenberger 176) where money is the only goal. The writers in both pinnacles of human development know that luxury is merely an illusion and that the competitive market for wealth is certain to end in disaster. For both the Romans and the Victorians, "their wealth is tasteless and ephemeral, their leisure is sensationally monotonous, and their pathetic felicity is tainted by constant, well-justified

⁶Citations for Binyon are page numbers since London Visions does not give line numbers.

anticipations of violence and sudden death" (Mumford 546), an attitude which becomes quite clear in other works by some of the aforementioned authors and their contemporaries.

Yet although Victorian poets follow the pattern of their predecessors in their ominous warnings of the dangers ahead for the extravagant city immersed in its lust for gold, differences in the presentations of authors from the two civilizations do exist. The Romans usually tend to be less vitriolic in their rebukes and employ satire merely as a means to expose the ignorance and weaknesses of the people around them. Certainly, Petronius and Juvenal are unrelenting in their rant against the obsessive materialism which they witness in the city, but the Romans in general do not consider luxury as the malevolent force of Buchanan's nineteenth-century London. Granted, Vergil may insinuate that concern for wealth may indeed lead to fratricide (cf. p. 23), but nowhere does the reader find an attitude such as that of Tennyson which openly curses the ability of gold to destroy men's lives (cf. p. 32). Thus, both eras clearly denounce "the whole great wicked artificial civilized fabric" (Clough, "The Bothie of Tober-Na-Volich" 105) where every man "easily violates virgin Truth for a coin or a cheque" (Tennyson, "The Dawn" 15), but the Romans do not exhibit the Victorians' depth of hatred for the city since the ancients do not see the urban environment as a physical threat whose single ambition is to corrupt its inhabitants through excessive indulgence and prodigality. On the other hand, poets in nineteenth-century Britain seem to personify the metropolis

as a haunting figure who purposely tracks down his human victims in order to bring about those individuals' damnation (cf. e.g., Buchanan p. 29).

CHAPTER II

PROSTITUTION, DRUNKENNESS, AND CRIME

Close upon the footsteps of ostentation and obsession with luxury follow the criminal acts often necessary to achieve such goals. In order to amass "heaps of gold and silver" (Buchanan, The Book of Orm, I 278), too frequently "the bad man [treads] on human necks" and "The silken-natured woman [becomes] a bondslave;/[whom] The gross man foul'd." Such a loss of a strict moral code allowed corruption to overwhelm both the Roman and the Victorian capitals as minor vices became deep-rooted profligacy. Prostitution appears to have been an accepted part of social life in both cities; public drunkenness, a feature of daily existence; and every person, a possible victim of crime. Exemplifying the epidemic proportions of lawlessness in London is the fact that in 1850 over 8000 prostitutes had records on file at Scotland Yard. Consequently, many writers voice their disgust at the bordellos, gin halls, and haunts of the desperados, and Victorian poets often seem to repeat the warnings of their Roman forebearers: "the tempests [tempestatibus] of the town" (Horace, Epistle II.ii.85) are the omen of destruction. At the height of both civilizations, "stains there are to blot thy brightest page" (Arnold, "Alaric at Rome" VII.37), and daily existence in the city makes the citizens victims of "the unnumbered difficulties, contradictions, and corruptions of the heated and crowded, busy, vicious, and inhuman town" (Forsyth, Pattern 164).

Among the Romans, Horace and Petronius are rather gentle in their rebukes towards the activities considered acceptable in the urban environs, but their depictions of city life clearly convey their disgust. Horace feels the weight of depravity in the city and says, "[I] depart in gloom, whenever hateful business drags [trahunt invisa negotia] me to Rome" (Epistle I.xiv.16-17). He cannot understand why a man would desire to leave the countryside for the urban atmosphere unless the man is lured by sin:

'Tis the brothel, I see, and greasy cookshop that stir in you
a longing for the city, and the fact that that poky spot will
grow pepper and spice as soon as grapes, and that there is no
tavern hard by that can supply you with wine and no flute-
playing courtesan, to whose strains you can dance and thump
the ground.

(Epistle I.xiv.21-26)

Petronius is not bitter about Trimalchio's inebriated state, but whereas this author usually seems to enjoy vulgarity, his picture of the host's condition is no longer a reason for amusement but for aversion. The scene is "perfectly sickening [ad summam nauseam], [with] Trimalchio, now deep in the most vile drunkenness [ebrietate turpissima]" (sec. 78). Clearly, Trimalchio's ignorance, vulgarity, and ostentation cause a smile, but his stupor cannot be condoned.

Taking on a more personal tone, however, Propertius regrets his lover Cynthia's propensity toward excessive luxury and laments that he "cannot save [his] mistress from her nights of shame" (I.xvi.9). Yet the sin is not hers alone since in Rome "the race of brides is faithless" (III.xiii.23). She has the image of Lesbia's behavior to follow, and every woman conducts herself "as her fellows do" (II.xxxii.44).

Propertius knows that the trend is irrevocable and that no man has the power to control the "open wantonness" (II.v.2) in the city:

Sooner shalt thou have power to dry the waters of the deep and
pluck down the lofty stars with mortal hand, than bring it to
pass that our maids should refuse to sin.
(II.xxxii.48-51)

In Propertius' eyes, women thrive on their lust and are unwilling "to cease from living more vilely [turpior] than the vileness of a wanton age" (I.xvi.12). Prostitution is the fashion, and this "traffic [has the] power to corrupt the heart of woman [indigna merce puella perit]" (II.xvi.16).

Although distance is often the end of a relationship, Propertius welcomes Cynthia's departure from Rome since it will remove her from this urban depravity; the country offers no such temptations:

In those chaste fields thou shalt find no seductive [corruptor]
youth whose flatteries shall not permit thee to be honest . . .
nor shall thy slumber be made bitter by cries upon thy name.
(II.xix.3-4, 6)

He obviously feels that her behavior is beyond her own control and that her only salvation lies in rural life where "no games have power to corrupt thee, no temples, most frequent cause of all thy sins" (II.xix.9-10). In Rome, harlotry is inevitable since there morality does not exist.

Although the Victorians are harsher in their condemnation of prostitution, they share Propertius' belief that the women of the night are not responsible for their apparently unavoidable fate but have been driven into their trade by the conditions in the heartless metropolis. For example, Clough clearly views the city as the source

of humans' grievous errors. He echoes "the great sinful streets" (1) in "Easter Day II" and depicts the criminal elements as "misusers of night" ("Bothie of Tober-Na-Volich" IX.84) in

the dissolute city,
Where dressy girls slithering-by upon pavements
give sign for accosting,
Paint on their beautilless cheeks, and hunger and
shame in their bosoms;
Hunger by drink, and by that which they shudder
yet burn for.

(IV.155-158)

As in Rome, these women refuse to ignore the pleasures which they know are the cause of their downfall.

In A Life-Drama Alexander Smith also despairs of the harlotry practiced in the city and presents the metropolis as an "arena of terrible conflicts and temptations" (Thesing, Muse 60). Reflecting Cynthia's "nights of shame" (cf. p. 39), in scene IV the main character Walter speaks of the "evening city with its boom of sin" (Bogue 52).⁷ Among the influences beckoning Walter to evil are atheism and prostitution, and he is aware of their ubiquitous powers of seduction:

I meet sin-bloated faces in the streets,
And shrink as from a blow. I hear wild oaths,
And curses spilt from lips that once were sweet,
And sealed for Heaven by a mother's kiss.
(Bogue, scene IX 154-155)

⁷Citations for Smith are page numbers since neither publication used herein gives line numbers. However, the two sources are differentiated throughout by publishers' names.

Finally, in his desire for companionship, Walter accosts an outcast prostitute on the bridge, asking for her prayers to prevent his falling deeper into sin. But instead of granting his request, the girl returns,

Sin crusts me o'er as limpets crust the rocks.
I would be thrust from ev'ry human door;
I dare not knock at heaven's.
(Bogue, scene X 172)

Clearly, this woman is but another victim of the overwhelming viciousness of the city from which she has no escape. Yet even sadder is the fact that by acknowledging her own sin, the harlot apparently accepts her fate and has given up the fight.

Between 1893 and 1895, a journal entitled Fleet Street Eclogues was published in London in order to give contemporary journalists the opportunity to comment on urban problems (Thesing, Muse 192). Among the contributions was "Epilogue to Fleet Street Eclogues," John Davidson's version of the women of the night: "these women: broken chalices,/Whose true aroma of the spring is spilt/In thankless streets and with the sewage blent" (104-106). Yet again similar to Propertius' Cynthia (cf. p. 40), these women are merely slaves to a trade which is beyond their control. They are the pawns of panders and animalism:

The circumstance that most appeals to men:
Eternal siege and ravage of the source
Of being, of beauty, and of all delight,
The hell of whoredom. God! The hourly waste
Of women in the world since time began.
(160-164)

And the city is the foundation from which all such women's plights arise, and neither Clough, Smith, nor Davidson can foresee any rescue from this inferno.

In "The Burden of Nineveh," Rossetti refers to "the London dirt and din" (I 266)⁸ in "this unblest abode" (I 268), but two of his other poems more concretely depict "corruption [as] a consequence of metropolitan existence" (Stange 487) and portray harlotry as a truly dehumanizing aspect of city life. Man is again the guilty party in "Jenny," "a meditation on prostitutes" (Hersey 18), for the girl cannot be blamed for her desperate situation. She has been ruined by an urban environment whose appetite for sex encourages unlimited desires but which abandons the goal after it has been attained:

the hatefulness of man,
Who spares not to end what he began
Whose acts are ill and his speech ill,
Who, having used you at his will,
Thrusts you aside.

(I 85)

The glare from streetlights has burned into Jenny's heart so that she has become one with the metropolitan filth and corruption:

The cold lamps at the pavement's edge
Wind on together and apart,
A fiery serpent for [her] heart.

In fact, the girl's condition has caused her mind to degenerate to the point that she can no longer distinguish one man from another:

⁸Citations for Rossetti are page numbers since The Collected Works of Dante Gabriel Rossetti (2 Vols.) does not give line numbers.

"In her memory . . . lovers have blurred into a faceless mass
populating a dark sewer" (Hersey 24):

For is there hue or shape defin'd
In Jenny's desecrated mind,
Where all contagious currents meet,
A Lethe of the middle street?
(I 87)

The end result of "this which man has done" (I 90), the debasement of a woman into a machine incapable of thought and abused at will, is an existence of "lifelong hell." One might add that perhaps "Jenny" exemplifies the opinion of some nineteenth-century scientists towards human life in general:

If . . . man [is] a mere automation, a physiological
mechanism without free will and without a soul, love for
example [seems] meaningless - self-deluding claptrap like
faith and hope, a pathetic attempt to dignify biological
necessity.

(Trudgill 135)

Rossetti expresses the same attitude towards prostitution in "Found," another poem which describes the plight of a woman victimized by the villainy of the city. Like Jenny, this woman has become so hardened by her situation that all her lovers seem nameless to her: "She cries in her locked heart,/'Leave me - I do not know you - go away!'" (I 363). Inevitably, witnesses to such scenes can only lament with Rossetti that society permits such demoralization of the human species:

But o'er the deadly blight
Of love deflowered and sorrow of none avail,
Which makes this man gasp and this woman quail,
Can day from darkness ever again take flight?

Some writers in these eras, however, choose not to dwell so exclusively on the evils of harlotry but on criminality at large in the metropolis. In the Georgics, Vergil "presents the city as a place where evil is not only a social or moral aberration but a threat to the organic integrity of life itself" (Johnston 15). The poet considers decadence as involuntary in the city and finds relief in the guileless countryside where the fortunatus man (II.493) knows "no power of Rome" (II.498). To Vergil, the capital represents "a general state of disorder, corruption, and violence which verges . . . on madness" (Johnston 13). In contrast, amid his vineyards and herds, the man in the country has not "beheld the iron laws [ferrea iura], the Forum's madness [insanumque forum] or the public archives" (II.501-502).

Similarly, Morris expresses only abhorrence towards the metropolis which he considers a monster engulfing the inhabitants with every imaginable form of villainy. This pernicious habitat must be totally razed since to him "nothing [can] justify the sparing of London as it [exists]" (Thesing, Muse 121). He calls "the town,/ The desert of folly and wrong" ("Mother and Son" 81-82) and describes those living therein as "the dregs of the city sty" (96). He feels

infuriated alike with the yells of ruffianism and the shrieks of the filthy bye-lanes. The brutal faces . . . [fill] him with loathing. It [is] only afterwards, by a reasoning process, that his sense of pity [is] roused to realize that "It [is] my good luck only that has put me on this side of the window among delightful books and lovely works of art, and not on the other side, in the empty street, the drink-steeped liquor shops, the foul and degraded lodgings."

(Noyes 126).

Clearly, Morris can survive only because he is not a participant in such depravity and, like Vergil, must remove himself from the corrupt decadence of the city.

Yet, voices from both cultures speak with even stronger condemnation of the vicious city, and among the ancients, again Juvenal serves as the epitome of the denunciations of life in the capital through his "sustained and explicit catalogue of corruption" (Williams 46). He never veers from his diatribe and "from the first to the last he remains attached, with loathing and loyalty, to the city of Rome" (Highet, Poets 213). In fact, within the first two pages of Satire I, he "puts us in the streets of the rich, busy, corrupt city, energetic, ruthless, cruel, the stony-hearted step-mother" (Highet, Juvenal 50). Without exception, Juvenal's tone encourages rage at the rampant corruption, and his "single note is censorious indignation" (Hadas 287); he openly admits, "Indignation [indignatio] will prompt my verse" (I.79). Juvenal firmly believes that any knowledgeable person cannot fail to see the blatant demoralization in the streets and feels unable to control his pen: "it is hard not to write satire. For who can be so tolerant of this monstrous [iniquae] city, who so iron of soul, as to contain himself" (I.30-31).

For Juvenal, crime lies at the source of all existence in Rome: "It is to their crimes that men owe their pleasure-grounds and palaces, their fine tables and old silver goblets with goats standing out in relief" (I.75-76). Honesty and -fruitful labor have no place

in Rome, and his friend Umbricius' departure is a result of this awareness: "There is no room . . . for honest callings in this city, no reward for labour" (III.21-22). Only the deceitful, those "who turn black into white" (III.30) need remain, for only they can compete in such an atmosphere. Therefore, Umbricius sadly acknowledges his fate: "What can I do at Rome? I cannot lie [mentiri nescio]" (III.41).

Gone are the days when simplicity and lack of material possessions were considered to be reflections of an admirable character; now corruption and lasciviousness have taken the place of pristine virtue: "Since the day when Roman poverty perished, no deed of crime or lust has been wanting to us" (VI.294-295). Yet what is even more lamentable is that the city seems to thrive on its own infamy. No one regrets his behavior, and morality is not only rejected but openly mocked and scorned as well: "Shame is ridiculed as she flees from the city, and few would bid her stay" (XI.54-55).

Roden Noel appears more Juvenalian in tone than some of his contemporaries in his portrayal of "our so monstrous town - her visible sin,/And weight of wan woe, blotting out sweet heaven!" ("London" 242). He vehemently denounces the sin inherent in the giant metropolis as he watches the

Emblems of our human race,
Fallen from their lofty place,
Blind, bewildered, bound within
By the manacles of sin!
("In London" 348)

Unlike the harlots who became inured to their fate, "Cruel Want's degraded daughter" in "Poor People's Christmas" (136) chooses suicide rather than a continuation of falling deeper into her iniquitous means of survival, a decision apparently quite common to many young women in Victorian England. As she approaches "the dark water," she wonders, "Is there a worse hell over there?" Yet this woman knows that she leaves behind "our grief-burdened sisters [who] die/Around us in slow agony." Thus, the prostitutes' alternatives are clear, and either choice promises only a variation of persecution.

Buchanan, however, is perhaps most prolific in his Juvenalian outbursts against the dissolute capital. He realizes the complete lack of an ethical code as an integral part of city life and cannot abide this vision of humanity:

For the pattern of virtually unrelieved gloom and depravity leads to the realization that in Buchanan we have . . . a man morally outraged at the drunkenness, cruelty and prostitution, which are by implication the evil flowers of urban society alone.

(Forsyth, Pattern 80)

In a series of vignettes in London Poems, Buchanan repeatedly emphasizes the horrifying conditions in the giant metropolis by describing the lives of various inhabitants:

I sing of the stain'd outcast at Love's feet -
Love with his wild eyes on the evening light;
I sing of sad lives trampled down like wheat
Under the heel of Lust, in love's despite;
I glean behind those wretched shapes ye see
In the cold harvest-fields of Infamy.

("L'Envoi to London Poems," I 186)

He clearly hopes that this series of degrading autobiographies may

impress upon the reader the deleterious effects of the ubiquitous urban crime.

Buchanan's "The Little Milliner" represents innocence in the city, but the question of whether purity can remain untainted in that environment is suggested as the girl "wanders in the sinful town" (I 115). Is she soon to become another victim of "the heartlessness of the great, impersonal city" (Cassidy 88) and place her own body in the marketplace as the only means of preservation? For in such poems as "Liz" and "Nell," Buchanan portrays sexual promiscuity "as an almost inevitable outgrowth of London slum life" (Cassidy 89). Without exception, however, the harlots in his verse are not accountable for their demoralizing circumstances. Thus, Buchanan is unquestionably "indicting the savagery of the environment that [has] caused the corruption of their innate nobility" (Forsyth, "Dilemma" 650).

The main character in "Liz," a nineteen-year-old girl on her deathbed, recounts her life's story to a minister. Her lover Joe Purvis knows nothing of her whereabouts nor that she has just given birth to their illegitimate son. To such an individual as Liz, the experience of childhood is an incomprehensible fantasy:

It does not seem that I was born. I woke,
 One day, long, long ago, in a dark room,
 And saw the housetops round me in the smoke,
 And, leaning out, look'd down into the gloom,
 Saw deep black pits, blank walls, and broken panes,
 And eyes, behind the panes, that flash'd at me,
 And heard an awful roaring, from the lanes,
 Of folk I could not see.
 (I 120, Part IV)

Nor can she understand happiness of any sort. Liz relates that once earlier in her life, she ventured into the country, seeking an escape from the accepted urban immorality. But for her, the rural atmosphere is now only a dream, "an unreal place, merely which happens to be outside the city" (Forsyth, Pattern 82). So even though she remains an outcast in the metropolis, Liz knows that she had to return: "So back to London town I turn'd my face/And crept into the great black streets again" (I 123, Part XIII).

Perhaps the most despairing aspect of Liz's downtrodden existence is that while she considers other prostitutes driven into their trade, she views herself from a totally different perspective. She feels deep compassion for the other women:

The pretty ones, poor things, what could they do,
Fighting and starving in the wicked town,
But go from bad to badder - down, down, down -
Being so poor, and yet so pretty, too?
(I 121, Part VI)

In contrast, Liz believes that she herself deserves no mercy for her sins because of her evil nature. She says, "I like the smoke and noise - I am so bad" (I 123, Part XIV). Clearly, such a picture of the effects of harlotry nursed by the city creates "the very image, economically, socially and spiritually, of man's inhumanity to man" (Forsyth, "Nature" 397).

Similar to "Liz," "Nell" presents the story of another illegitimate birth given by a dying young girl. But the incrimination of society is two-fold here. Certainly, Nell has been driven to prostitution by the heartless metropolis, but her recently executed

lover Ned has also been the city's victim. In the slums he has been tempted with alcohol, and his stupor has been responsible for the murder for which he has just been hanged. Throughout the poem the reader is aware that Buchanan's emphasis lies upon the fact that "the real culprit is not Ned, not Nan [sic], not alcohol, but society because of its easy toleration of the conditions rendering such crimes inevitable" (Cassidy 90).

A section of Thro' the Great City entitled "Sisters of Midnight" is another of Buchanan's exposes of immorality in the capital, yet here he even goes as far as to blame the Almighty for the curse of whoredom. The prostitutes believe that by God's very creation, "He damn'd us in making us,/Cast us like carrion to men, then forsaking us,/Smiles from His throne on these markets of Hell!" (II 347). And no one cares or perhaps even notices the death of "One more unfortunate . . ./Lost in the gulf of the desolate City." Instead, "Let the flood cover her, while we walk over her." Undoubtedly, this poem and others, such as "The Lost Women," are Buchanan's plea to society to realize that it is the demon responsible for the harlots' condition; their "degradation [is] a measure of the city's cruel inhumanity" (Forsyth, "Nature" 405). As Jane Lewson recounts, "All round/The life of London shifted like a cloud,/Man sinned, and women fell" (I 126).

Buchanan's classical affiliations are certainly evident in The New Rome, "his maledictory . . . [accusing] Britain of being guilty of all the evils of pagan Rome" (Cassidy 88). Herein, the Poet

proclaims the Victorian era as "This monstrous Age of shams and lies" (II 312), the harsh but true mirror of Roman malignancy and corruption:

Since as a tigress suckling cubs unclean
The Imperial City fed its fiefs with sin,
Full circle round the Wheel of Time hath rolled,
And lo! another Rome, like Rome of old,
Heir of the ages.

The Poet asks the reader to "Pursue the parallel" (II 313) and admit that London is merely a reproduction of Rome. And the warning is clear: A society which chooses "To keep the word of promise to the ear/And break it - to the Soul" (II 312) is corrupt to its core, and greater disaster is certain to befall. The evil in ancient Rome caused its demise, and the same is the fate of London.

Clearly, Juvenal's "eloquence of denunciation [is] unrivaled for its sustained power" (Hadas 287). He "describes his world of Rome as he sees it [He] cannot sleep for thinking of the boiling corruption of his city, Rome the capital of the world wherever you look there is vice triumphant" (Hight, Juvenal 49-50). And in his final poetic endeavor, Buchanan perhaps epitomizes the Victorian reflection of such an attitude towards the city's profligacy and criminality. But other writers too deserve recognition for their denigration of the lustful, drunken populace. Propertius vividly describes the "wanton [lascivum] Forum" (IV.76) while Horace, Vergil, and Morris seek to avoid the corruption of the metropolis. Although Petronius' Trimalchio does not live in Rome, his drunkenness is still the result of his association with urban values, and Walter's experiences in Glasgow (Smith, A Life-Drama) again prove that any

metropolitan environment is demoralizing. Clearly, both the ancients and their literary successors depict the "corrupt heart" (Highet, Juvenal 163) of the city and express a like disgust for the wretched urban conditions promoting sin and villainy.

Nevertheless, while the unfortunate message rings throughout much of Victorian poetry that as was Rome, "So is our England now!" (Buchanan, The New Rome, II 312), some variations are readily apparent regarding the attitudes that the two cultures take concerning ethical standards in the metropolis. Certainly, Roman authors convey their indignatio (cf. p. 46) towards the urban corruption and blame that environment for the unprincipled activities it encourages. But as in the case of luxury, again the ancients seem to be merely reporters of the sensuality and crime in the city, and the purpose of their satire is only to expose vice rather than to seek redress for the gross incontinence. In contrast, the Victorians express an ethical concern for the victims of metropolitan society, especially for those whose lack of moral standards is the result of their life in the slums. For example, such solicitude as appears in the poetry of Rossetti (cf. pp. 43-44) displays a marked change in attitude from the raging diatribe of Juvenal. And the lament of the Victorians becomes even more pronounced through the dramatic monologues of Buchanan (cf. pp. 49-51), in which the victimized women are allowed to relate the circumstances of their own shamed and abandoned existences. Thus, even though both ages consider many aspects of depravity as the results

of the city life, the Victorians place greater significance on the effects of immorality than do the Romans.

CHAPTER III

POVERTY AND THE MOB

Both Roman and Victorian literatures demonstrate the realization that "the huge, impersonal city is simply a 'place' where a mass of unassorted atoms is collected together for greater business efficiency" (Houghton 79). Unfortunately, in an environment obsessed by competitive advancement, someone is the inevitable underdog, and Martial represents the opinion of writers who depict the fate of the impoverished: "Neither for thought, *Sparsus*, nor for quiet is there any place in the city for a poor man" (XII.lvii.3-4). The rush of the multitudes does not promote prosperity but instead allows lawlessness to replace order and the less fortunate to be trampled. And to fan the fires of mass violence, rumor finds ready access among these large numbers of people who are both easily swayed by popular opinion and enjoy broadcasting the unverified facts. As a result, literature often depicts the city as the home of rumor in order to intensify the dangers lurking in the crowded streets. Here, the individual has no control over his destiny amid the onslaught of the masses, and, quite naturally, "the little people come off badly; for the jaws of the upper classes are always keeping carnival [*Saturnalia*]"⁹ (Petronius

⁹"*Saturnalia*, a festival in honour of Saturn, as the mythical king who brought agriculture and a new morality to primitive Italy." - Heseltine's (trans.) comment in *Index of Names*. Ironically, the simplicity originally associated with Saturn's reign is ignored by the

sec. 44); the poor become "the crowd who die/Unmentioned" (Smith, "Horton," Crowell 21). And if the poverty-stricken masses manage to survive, the conditions in which they live are so demoralizing that their vices grow stronger and corruption thrives the more:

The main population of the city . . . [lives] in cramped, noisy, airless, foul-smelling, infected quarters, paying extortionate rents to merciless landlords, undergoing daily indignities and terrors that [coarsen] and [brutalize] them, and in turn [demand] compensatory outlets. These outlets [carry] the brutalization even further, in a continuous carnival of sadism and death.

(Mumford 221)

This description of the dangerous brutality in ancient Rome may be applied to any vast metropolis, and Henley accurately portrays the similar circumstances appearing in nineteenth-century London's Seven Dials. In stark contrast to the innocence of two young girls dancing in the street,

The music reels and hurtles, and the night
Is full of stinks and cries; a naphtha-light
Flares from a barrow; battered and obtuse
With vices, wrinkles, life and work and rags
Each with her inch of clay, two loitering hags
Look on dispassionate - critical - something 'mused.
("In the Dials" 105)¹⁰

And to emphasize the extent of such squalor, one may quote Carlyle upon the occasion of his taking the American Ralph Waldo Emerson through a London slum. "With deep intensity he demanded, 'Do you believe in the devil now?'" (Buckley 37).

mob, and the feast to celebrate his rule becomes an excuse to accentuate the destitute condition of those victimized by the frenzy of the herds of people in the streets of Rome.

¹⁰Citations for Henley are page numbers since Poems does not give line numbers.

As a result of observing such an inferno, writers often stress the necessity of escaping from the threatening masses in the metropolis. Horace presents the mob in the city as something the wise should avoid: "I hate the uninitiate crowd and keep them far away [Odi profanum vulgus et arceo]" (Odes III.i.1). He cannot comprehend why a man wishes to be swept by the masses and is "rushing to ruin in [his] wicked frenzy [scelesti]" (Epodes VII.1). The city forces every man to fight his way through the streets, and, unfortunately, survival demands that he ignore anyone but himself: "I must battle in the crowd and do damage to the slow of pace" (Satire II.vi.27-28).

Yet perhaps Horace's most famous depiction of the mobbed city streets lies in his tale of the city mouse and the country mouse. Although his presentation is usually considered amusing, the message remains clear; the terror of the mice is simply a metaphor for the fear every inhabitant experiences because of the dangers inherent in the city:

when all of a sudden a terrible banging of the doors tumbled them both from their couches. In panic [pavidi] they run the length of the hall, and still more terror-stricken were they [magisque exanimes trepidare], as the lofty palace rang with the barking of Molossian hounds. Then says the rustic: "No use have I for such a life, and so farewell: my wood and hole, secure from alarms [tutus ab insidiis] will solace me with homely vetch.

(Satire II.6.111-117)

Seneca philosophizes on the desirability of avoiding the city masses in the Epistulae Morales. "On the Reasons for Withdrawing from the World" (XIV) warns that "We should therefore look about us, and see how we may protect ourselves from the mob [vulgo]." If one

allows himself to become a part of the crowd, adversity is inevitable:

To consort with the crowd is harmful; there is no person who does not make some vice [vitium] attractive to us, or stamp it upon us, or taint us unconsciously therewith. Certainly, the greater the mob with which we mingle, the greater the danger.

("On Crowds" VII)

But the greatest potential threat from the masses awaits the youth who is easily persuaded by majority opinion: "The young character, which cannot hold fast to righteousness, must be rescued from the mob; it is too easy to side with the majority." Such a philosophic stance may present a somewhat idealistic withdrawal from society, but as a member of Nero's inner circle, Seneca is acutely aware of the threats posed by the urban throng.

Historians record that "one of the features of London most noted by nineteenth-century visitors and newcomers was the swarm of people" (Trudgill 132), and as a result, Victorian poets voice a distaste similar to that of the Romans towards "The roar 'o streets" (Buchanan, "Liz," 1121). In several of his works, Tennyson expresses his concern regarding "steaming London's central roar" ("Ode on the Death of the Duke of Wellington" 9), "our dark Queen-city, [with] all her realm/Of sound and smoke" ("To Mary Boyle; with the Following Poem [The Progress of Spring]" 65-66), and in some cases the crowded urban streets "help to convey the poet-speaker's nightmare or grotesque states of mind" (Thesing, "Tennyson" 17). In Memoriam clearly reveals that "the noisy town" (LXIX.5) only aggravates the speaker's distress over the death of his friend Hallam, and he seems overwhelmed by the "crowds that stream from yawning doors" (LXX.9) and "The dust and din

and steam of town" (LXXXIX.8). Yet the influence of the metropolis becomes more exaggerated through the "madman's vision" (Thesing, "Tennyson" 17) in Maud, for here, that "society in which the action takes place is an integral part of the dramatic situation" (Drew 120). The narrator gasps for air as "the yellow vapors choke/The great city sounding wide" (IV.ix.203-204) and forcefully exhibits his abhorrence of the crowd:

And I loathe the squares and streets,
And the faces that one meets,
Hearts with no love for me.
(IV.xiii.232-234)¹¹

Certainly, such emotion reflects Horace's feelings toward the urban throng (cf. p. 57), and the young man's reaction to the unceasing clamor echoes Juvenal's description of the mob (cf. p. 75):

With never an end to the stream of passing feet,
Driving, hurrying, marrying, burying
Clamour and rumble, ringing and clatter.
(V.i.249-251)

Indeed, the reader cannot ignore the fact that the speaker's delirium is "a condition directly attributable to environmental pressures" (E. D. H. Johnson 60).

Arnold's intense disgust for the metropolis is unquestionable in such poems as "Thyrsis," "Horatian Echo," "Resignation," and "A Southern Night." He wishes to escape from "the great town's harsh, heart-wearying roar" ("Thyrsis" 234) and the "shouldering herd"

¹¹ This quote and the one preceding from Maud are repeated verbatim in "Oh! That 'Twere Possible" 37-38, 58-60.

("Horatian Echo" 9), a phrase which accurately parallels Horace's *profanum vulgus* in Ode III.i (cf. p. 57). Moreover, the first stanza of "Horatian Echo" which warns one not to become involved in civic turmoil:

Omit, omit, my simple friend,
Still to enquire how parties tend,
Or what we fix with foreign powers.
If France and we are really friends
And what the Russian Czar intends,
Is no concern of ours
(1-6)

clearly mirrors the Roman's admonition to Maecenas:

Thy thoughts are set on what conditions fit the state; anxious
art thou for the City, fearing what the Seres may be plotting,
or the Bactra once ruled by Cyrus, and the discordant tribes
on Tanais' banks.

(25-28)

Thus, Arnold merely replaces Horace's classical allusions with France and Russia to present the attitude he shares with his predecessor. Also, "Horatian Echo" recalls Horace's distaste for "the smoke . . . riches . . . din of wealthy Rome" in Ode III.xxix (cf. Ch. 1, p. 22) as do lines from "Resignation": "Capp'd with faint smoke, the noisy town" (93). Finally, "A Southern Night" expresses Arnold's regret that because of the "unslackening stride" (65) of business in the metropolis, we "never once possess our soul/Before we die" (71-72). Obviously, such "scorn of 'the shouldering herd' and the bustling commercial world" (Anderson, Classical 136) vividly reveals Arnold's repugnance towards the capital.

Arnold also investigates his feelings towards the mobbed conditions in the city in other poems, and his images convey the

prison-like atmosphere resulting from the crowds. In "The Buried Life" he seeks the knowledge and tranquility impossible to attain "in the world's most crowded streets,/ . . . in the din of strife" (45-46). "The Future" pictures the once pure "river of Time" (59) which is now polluted by the cities which "crowd to its edge/In a blacker, incessanter line" (60-61). As a result, "repose has fled" (58), and the people's "minds/Are confused as the cries which [they] hear" (55-56). Yet "A Summer Night" epitomizes the imagery of incarceration to which the city's inhabitants are confined:

most men in a brazen prison live,
Where, in the sun's hot eye,
With heads bent o'er their toil, they languidly
Their lives to some unmeaning taskwork give,
Dreaming of nought beyond their prison-wall.

Death in their prison reaches them,
Unfreed, having seen nothing, still unblest.
(37-41, 49-50)

Therefore, through his "archetypal images of prisons, seas, and rivers," Arnold makes clear that he considers "the mass [as] clerks and drones existing as slaves in the soul's hot prison" (Honan 225-226).

In Amours de Voyage Clough describes another metropolis whose crowded, congested atmosphere evokes much the same feeling. Claude, the poem's persona, witnesses the same ugly conditions and verbalizes his disenchantment in a letter to his friend Eustace: "Rome disappoints me much; I hardly as yet understand, but/Rubbishy seems the word that most exactly would suit it" (I.i.19-20). Claude wishes that he could be "far away from the crowd and the streets of the city"

(III.15) but feels that he must adjust and remain:

Rome disappoints me still; but I shrink and adapt
 myself to it.
 Somehow a tyrannous sense of a superincumbent
 oppression
 Still, wherever I go, accompanies ever, and makes
 me
 Feel like a tree (shall I say?) buried under a
 ruin of brickwork.

(I.ii.35-38)

In The Civil War, Lucan shows the panic of the mob. When the city learns of the imminent danger, "Nothing could keep back the wild rush of the people (ruit irrevocabile volgus)" (I.509). Rome goes into a state of terror, and the madness of the individual symbolizes the frenzy of the multitude:

Then, knowing not where to seek refuge or where to flee danger, each treads on the heels of the hastening population, wherever impetuous flight carries him. Forth they rush [prorumpit] in long unbroken columns; one might think that impious [nefandas] firebrands had seized the hold of the houses, or that buildings were swaying and tottering in an earthquake shock. For the frenzied crowd rushed headlong through the city with no fixed purpose [praecipiti lymphata gradu].

(I.490-496]

Such a description provides clear evidence that nothing can control the violence of the mob whose insanity has obliterated its thought.

Yet along with the mob's delirium comes its ability not only to create horrifying situations and in a frenzy to envelop anyone in its path but also to fabricate stories and by word of mouth to spread the tales, often vastly changing the facts each time they are repeated. And once begun, the hearsay cannot be halted as "Rumour [fama] flies swift in terror with beating wings, and seeks out the lofty top of the tall Palatine" (Petronius sec. 123).

Lucan's deranged multitude well exemplifies the power of rumor to destroy men's reason with empty lies. Granted, Caesar has departed from Rome, and the camps have been joined for the apparently unavoidable civil war. Yet much-needed rationality is defenseless against the invasion of rumor, and the unlimited imagination of terrified madness encouraged by falsehood takes over the city:

False report [vana . . . fama], swift harbinger of imminent war, was added to reasonable fears, invading [inrupitque] men's minds with presentiments of disaster [clademque futuram], and loosing countless tongues to spread lying tales [falsa in praeconia].

(I.469-472)

Lucan makes clear that the people's terror is the result of their own invention; the stories are groundless, and spreading the reports only intensifies the danger: "Thus each by his fears adds strength to rumour [famae], and all dread the unconfirmed dangers invented [finxere] by themselves" (I.484-486).

Vergil portrays rumor in a similar vein in the Aeneid. Throughout the epic, this means of relaying news always resides in the city and never fails to invite disaster. In IV, Dido and Aeneas' union is hopeless, partly owing to the scandal which rumor creates. The people fear that Dido's falling for the hero will weaken her and, as a result, endanger Carthage, and rumor encourages their alarm: "Forthwith Rumour runs through Libya's great cities - Rumour of all evils the most swift [Fama, malum qua non aliud velocius ullum]" (173-174). And rumor again terrifies the city with unreasonable dread upon the death of the queen: "Rumour riots [bacchatur Fama] through the startled city" (666).

Upon Aeneas' arrival in Italy, rumor once more nourishes adversity. In her determination to destroy the Trojan hero, Juno bursts open the Gates of Janus to end the peace and to initiate war. But the actual panic is created by the exaggerated lies which "Rumour [Fama], flitting far and wide, had already borne . . . through the Ausonian cities" (VII.104-105). As the war progresses, "winged Fame, flitting through the trembling town" (IX.473-474), continues to fan the fires of terror and as the "harbinger of that heavy grief [luctus], fills Evander's ears, Evander's house and city" (XI.139-140) with the report of his son Pallas' death.

A similar picture of the mob's madness and its aggravation as the result of unfounded rumor appears in Victorian poetry. Just as the Romans personify fama as an individual tearing through the capital, spreading scandal and lies, so the Victorians continue the poetic depiction of this vengeful creature who thrives only among the masses. Certainly, the portrayal of this human failing as a harpy-like monster is not presented as often in the poetry of nineteenth-century Britain as in classical Latin, but its mere presence serves to enhance the atmosphere of terror in the metropolis.

In his ironically entitled "Beautiful City," Tennyson denigrates the "civic insanity" (4) of revolutionary Paris, "the centre and crater of European confusion" (1). Then the poet shows that his own London is Paris' counterpart in "Locksley Hall Sixty Years After," in which he compares "Roaring London" with "raving Paris" (190). But the scene becomes yet more bloodthirsty through the classical image of fame as a

greedy bearer of lies or unauthenticated reports in "The Dawn," wherein the horror of revolution is intensified by the presence of "scandal . . . mouthing a bloodless name at her cannibal feast" (III.12), and the gluttony of this monster recalls Vergil's denunciation of this evil (cf. p. 63).

Clough uses the personification of rumor in a similar manner to describe the lack of religious faith in his own time, and the emphasis lies in the fact that those who deny the resurrection have no grounds for their belief. The people who claim, "Christ is not risen" ("Easter Day; Naples 1849" e.g., 5), are merely perpetrators of unreliable fame:

As circulates in some great city crowd
A rumour changeful, vague, importunate, and loud,
Of no determined centre, or of fact
Or authorship exact,
Which no man can deny
Nor verify;
So spread the wondrous fame.
(48-54)

Thus, these two Victorian poets in particular realize that rumor, which brings only despair through its love of spreading scandal, exaggeration, and death, cannot be depended upon but remains an ever-present resident of the metropolis. Whether its purpose be to broadcast "a tale of evil . . . through all the city" (Propertius II.xxxii.24) at the expense of a person's reputation or to instigate the conflagration of destruction, this seducer of man's reason encourages impending disaster and promotes its outcome. Yet only in the city may rumor grow, for there it finds its most willing victim in the masses. From its origin among the crowds, "thence the woeful

[infelix] rumour [fama] spreads throughout the town" (Aeneid XII.608). Granted, the picture of rumor as a wicked denizen of the city may be somewhat infrequent in Victorian poetry, but the examples from Tennyson and Clough substantiate the fact that this classical personification by Lucan, Vergil, and other Romans remains a tradition in the literature of the city.

Yet regardless of whether or not scandalous rumor is present, the mob itself is often presented as a kind of horrifying beast. For example, when portraying the masses in the city, Patmore speaks of "the adder-deadness of the crowd" ("Prophets Who Cannot Sing" 437) and the "vehement drift of man's herd to hell" ("Crest and Gulf" 384). Yet this poet's most vicious condemnation of the mob, those men to whom "'Tis but a toss-up whether they cry/Hosanna, or Crucify!" (fragment 483) is presented in "A London Fete," where the "Satanic throng" (Thesing, Muse 105) revels in "the wicked treat" (56) of a public execution. In this poem the horror takes on such dimensions that the onlookers are no longer like primitive carnivores; here, the "people are beasts" (Thesing, Muse 107). They watch

with horrid thirst;
Thousands of breasts beat horrid hope;
Thousands of eyeballs, lit with hell,
Burnt one way all, to see the rope
Unslacken as the platform fell.

And once the gallows stand empty, the final picture arouses only loathesome disgust:

The common din, the chaos of noises,
 That clatter and clangour of hateful voices
 Sicken'd and stunned the air, until
 The dangling corpse hung straight and still.
 The show complete, the pleasure past.
 (57)

Other writers, however, express compassion for the impoverished crowds. In the Georgics, Vergil acknowledges his "pang of pity for the poor [in the city]" (II.498) and conveys a picture of the dangers the individual faces in the violence of the urban rabble. The poor man is completely powerless amid the rush in the city streets, and Vergil's simile of the chariot out of control aptly describes "the helpless condition of a society in the throes of disorder" (Johnston 178). The defenseless driver's fate becomes that of the individual dragged by the crowd: "even as when from the barriers the chariots stream forth, round and round they speed and the driver, tugging vainly [frustra] at the reins, is borne along, and the car heeds not the curb!" (I.512-514).

Tennyson also expresses sympathy for the poor in the metropolis. In "Locksley Hall Sixty Years After," he despairs at the ugliness of the slums, knowing full well that the poor have no alternative but to continue their almost sub-human existence:

City children soak and blacken soul and sense in
 city slime?
 There among the glooming alleys Progress halts on
 palsied feet,
 Crime and hunger cast our maidens by the thousand
 on the street.

There the Master scrimps his haggard sempstress of
 her daily bread,
 There a single sordid attic holds the living and
 the dead.

There the smouldering fire of fever creeps across
 the rotted floor,
 And the crowded couch of incest in the warrens of
 the poor.

(218-224)

Even though Tennyson's portrayal of the impoverished groveling in the garrets has been described as given in a "frenzied tone of hysteria" (Thesing, Muse 31), the poet leaves no doubt concerning his pity for their suffering.

Arnold knew well the pitiful circumstances of the squalor in East and West London, and his words in Culture and Anarchy convey the depth of his compassion, especially for the children:

I remember, only the other day, a good man looking with me
 upon a multitude of children who were gathered before us in
 one of the most miserable regions of London, - children
 eaten up with disease, half-sized, half-fed, half-clothed,
 neglected by their parents, without health, without home,
 without hope.

(Prose, V 217)

His poetry also depicts the surroundings smothering such people who have no alternative for a home. They are forced to be "Crouch'd on the pavement, close by Belgrave Square" ("West London" 1) or on "the squalid streets of Bethnal Green" ("East London" 2), and Arnold vividly exposes the similarities between modern London and ancient Rome in his satiric "New Rome." Regardless of the fact that The Times declares that in London "paupers/Are not pushed out by the swells" (13-14), the truth that the poor must suffer alike in both societies is unmistakably symbolized by the rejection of the god of love:

The armless Vatican Cupid
 Hangs down his head as before.
 Through centuries past it has hung so,
 And will through centuries more.
 (17-20)

Another poem by Arnold deserves recognition for its presentation of the fate of the poor in the city. In "The Sick King in Bokhara," the atmosphere where

fierce
 In these days the sun hath burn'd;
 That the green water in the tanks
 Is to a putrid puddle turn'd
 (58-61)

has been described as industrialized London "orientalized as dusty Bokhara" (Honan 176). And the distance between the affluence of the king and the poverty of the condemned man reflects the class distinctions in the Victorian capital. As the king walks through the streets, he orders his armed protectors to remove from the road the indigent one whom the vizier later describes as "being nothing" (141): "My guards, what, prick him with your spears!/Prick me the fellow from the path" (42-43). Yet Arnold's strongest condemnation of the treatment of the poor comes through the mouth of the vizier. Rebuking the king for his remorse over the stoning of the sinner, the vizier clearly represents the attitude of the wealthy towards the masses:

But who, through all this length of time,
 Could bear the burden of his years,
 If he for strangers pain'd his heart
 Not less than those who merit tears?
 (145-148)

Arnold obviously believes that the illnesses of both the king and the

criminal, psychological and physical, are the "consequences of life forced upon them by their civilization and environment" (Roper 111).

London Visions gives Binyon's portrait of the polluted atmosphere of the slums. Fortunately, some of the more bleak details are obscured by a "phantom dimness" (30) in "Deptford" since the true picture would be even more distressing:

Well it is, shrouded Sun, thou spars't no ray
To illumine this sad street! A light more bare
Would but discover more this bald array
Of roofs dejected, window patched that stare [sic]
From sordid walls.

And the individuals living there have no hope, for Binyon foresees "no remedy for these passive, beaten down figures" (Thesing, Muse 167). They are ghost-like images wandering helpless in the shadows:

these shapes
That pass, by toil disfeatured, with slow feet
And sad mistrustful eyes; while in the mire
Children a mockery of play repeat,
Drearly to satisfy their starved desire.

Binyon more fully develops some of these despairing persons in such poems as "The Convict" and "To a Derelict." The released felon in the former poem is overwhelmed by the mobbed city: "His ear the jostling roar of the street/Amazed: he felt the crowd like a load" (44). On the other hand, the vagabond in the latter has endured his miserable life for so long that he is oblivious of his surroundings: "'Mid busy voices haunting motionless/Thou standest" (60). Indeed, the tramp's condition is symbolized by the tenement in which he and all his counterparts are fated to live:

An aged house, broken and doomed at last,
Ere yet it vanish quite,

But now the fires are ashes, all is bare,
The torn, gay paper flutters old,
And a phantasmal stair
Climbs into floorless chambers, and hearths cold.
(61)

Although no one could avoid seeing the poverty in the streets of Victorian London, many chose to remain merely bystanders. In contrast, Clough directly involved himself in the urban masses and thus knew their plight first hand. In 1844, he worked in a soup kitchen in the slums of St. Ebbe's for the Oxford Mendicity Society, "sitting by nights in the office as the ragged and weary filed past to sleep on bare boards and start again at daybreak" (Greenberger 66-67), and his experience might well be summarized by the words of the fictional Mark Rutherford:

I did not know, till I came in actual contact with them, how far away the classes which lie at the bottom of great cities are from those above them; how completely they are inaccessible to motives which act upon ordinary human beings, and how deeply they are sunk beyond ray of sun or stars, immersed in the selfishness naturally begotten of their incessant struggle for existence and the incessant warfare with society.

(White 82)

Included among his "Shorter Poems" is Clough's own poetic depiction of this scene and its effect on him:

These vulgar ways that round me be,
These faces shabby, sordid, mean,
Shall they be daily, hourly seen
And not affect the eyes that see?
(1-4)

Such a position was obviously depressing, but Clough clearly felt the need to stand independently from his peers and to participate in the

more unpleasant aspects of life. Interestingly enough, Clough "was the only one of his circle to become what was known as a 'visitor' of the Society [yet] its subscription list included most of Oxford's best-known names" (Greenberger 66).

Davidson's Vale of Hinnon in "Epilogue to Fleet Street Eclogues" gives another illustration of the indigent workers in the ghettos of the city. The Artist, struck down by fate from his "once-so-certain destiny" (85) and cast off by society, has been forced to join the ranks of the urban poor and now he is "Alive in Hinnon where human offal rots" (47). In describing his destitution to the Volary, he points out the "Millions of people huddled out of sight,/The offal of the world" (76-77). These are the men existing in the urban tenements without any hope for the future:

Seared by the sun and carved by cold or blanched
In darkness; gnarled and twisted all awry
By rotting fogs; lamed, limb-lopped, cankered,
burst,
The outworn workers!

(146-149)

Clearly, Hinnon is "Davidson's image for the mass of cast-off, diseased, poverty-stricken, failed human refuse" (Davidson, ed. Turnbull xxvi).

Davidson reiterates the workers' plight in "A Northern Suburb." Here again he shows his repulsion towards the living conditions of the urban poor and despairs that no relief is possible:

With shelves for rooms the houses crowd,
Like draughty cupboards in a row -
Ice-chests when wintry winds are loud,
Ovens when summer breezes blow.

. . .

For here dwell those who must fulfill
 Dull tasks in uncongenial spheres,
 Who toil through dread of coming ill,
 And not with hope of happier years.
 (13-16, 21-24)

Obviously, Davidson shares Vergil's "pang of pity" (cf. p. 67), realizing like Martial that the city grants the poor man no peace (cf. p. 55).

"Railway Stations" offers glimpses into another locale where the masses congregate, and Davidson emphasizes again that the poor remain the victims of this congestion:

Such a premonstrant shadow of disgrace,
 Such gray alarm, such sickening for despair
 Is only seen in urban crowds.
 ("London Bridge" 94-96)

But "Liverpool Street Station" more precisely details this "breed of folk forlorn . . ./[who] sink to helpless indigence at last" (23, 27). These penniless workers are the slaves of the rich "Who keep the power to be or not to be" (324). And the curse of poverty is further pronounced when viewed through the eyes of a newcomer upon first arriving at the station. Amid the masses, no sound of joy is heard - only the senseless movement of the crowd:

Barbaric shouts and shrieks he heard,
 Like cries of wrath or cries of ruth;
 But no one laughed or spoke a word;
 Master and man and age and youth
 In purposeless, intense, uncouth
 Commotion seemed for ever lost.
 (244-249)

The traveler describes these men who experience a daily bondage to

drudgery and abhor the conditions from which no refuge can be found, regardless of their desires:

On every lip, on every brow
I see their dreadful secret lurk:
All work to them is thralldom now;
They hate to work, they cannot work
This last expedient still they shirk,
And every day resolve to fly
From hell.

(298-304)

But the abyss of their misfortunes is too deep for escape.

A graphic portrayal of the contrast between the condition of the poor and that of the rich appears in "Waiting." The "human vermin" (18), endeavoring to improve their lot, appear almost "fawningly polite" (Thesing, Muse 194) to the wealthy, yet their fate remains unchanged. The indigent already know the negative answer to the poet's question:

From the mansion and the palace
Is there any help or hail
For the tenants of the alleys,
Of the workhouse and the jail?
(7-10)

The affluent feel no compassion for those "In the gutters and the ditches" (17) who "scarce have room to breathe" (36).

Thus, Davidson's poetry succinctly depicts the dangers inherent for the urban multitude and the horrific conditions of this suffocating, noxious atmosphere. As the clerk in "Thirty Bob a Week" says, "So p'r'aps we are in Hell for all that I can tell,/And lost and damn'd and serv'd up hot to God" (29-30). Also, Davidson seems to mirror not only the compassion of Vergil but the animal imagery of Juvenal as well (cf. gregibus, p. 75):

this is Mob, unhappy locust swarm,
Instinctive, apathetic, ravenous.

 captives in a labyrinth, or herds
Imprisoned in a vast arena;

 Crowd; Mob; a blur of faces featureless,
Of forms inane; a stranded shoal of folk.

 ("The Crystal Palace" 132-133, 138-139, 144-145)

These are the beasts of burden of the metropolis, and their brutish-
ness vibrates through the city:

 With heavy noise of voices numberless,
 Shouting in unison - the muffled roar
 As of a thousand bulls of Phalaris,
 The bellowing of men in agony.

 ("Eclogue of the Downs" 267-270)

In these latter poems by Davidson, the reader clearly hears the
echoes of Juvenal, who in his opening lines insists on immediately
"plunging us into a mob" (Hight, Juvenal 50). The Roman's imagery
reduces the masses to herds of animals: "my heart burns dry with rage
when I see the people hustled by a mob [gregibus]" (I.45-46), and any
type of tranquility is impossible amid the rush of the city crowds:

 The crossing of wagons in the narrow winding streets, the
 slanging of drovers when brought to a stand, would make
 sleep impossible [eripient somnum] for a Drusus - or a sea-
 calf.

 (III.236-238)

Naturally, the weak and indigent are the major victims of the clamor
of the masses: "Most sick people here in Rome perish for want of
sleep" (III.232). But everyone alike is victimized by the confusion
for "What sleep is possible in a lodging?" (III.234-235), and no one
is free from the physical punishment of life in the city streets:

hurry as we may, we are blocked by a surging crowd in front,
 and by a dense mass of people pressing in on us from behind:
 one man digs an elbow into me, another a hard sedan-pole;
 one bangs a beam, another a wine-cask, against my head. My
 legs are beplastered with mud; soon huge feet trample on me
 from every side, and a soldier plants his hobnails firmly
 on my toe.

(III.243-248)

Such concrete images certainly relay a picture of the oppression of existence in the city.

London Poems, which exposes Buchanan's "reaction to the widespread squalor and misery he saw in his first years in the metropolis" (Cassidy 88), contains several poems which present the city as "the oppressor of downtrodden humanity" (Forsyth, "Dilemma" 65) in the tradition of Juvenal. In "Nell" an impoverished woman tells the story of her wanderings through the streets of London the entire night preceding her husband's execution. Her desperate state is clearly reflected by the sights and sounds she witnesses; for example, in response to her mood, "Seven Dials made a moaning sound" (I 150). Similarly, the setting for "The Wake of Tim O'Hara" is the Seven Dials, an appropriate atmosphere for the death of a downtrodden pauper. And the speaker in "The Swallows," standing in an urban churchyard's cemetery, tells of hearing "in the distant streets the ragged urchins cry" (I 173). Certainly, Buchanan is "moved to pity and anger at the suffering of mankind, particularly of the urban poor" (Forsyth, "Nature" 412), and the reader hears the echo of Juvenal's indignatio (cf. Ch. II, p. 46) in Buchanan's "moral outrage at the hellish city" (Forsyth, Pattern 80).

William Morris has much the same attitude about the oppression of the urban poor. Morris directly arraigns the metropolis as the source of all the workers' distress, "the symptom and symbol of the ugliness and loneliness behind the facade of optimism" (Foakes 168); to him, the city is the laborers' "deadly enemy" (Thesing, Muse 122). In "The Day is Coming," he expresses hope for their relief, these "Poor ghosts of the wicked city, the gold-crushed hungry hell" (38), and wonders why such human torment has continued so long unabated: "O why and for what are we waiting? While our brothers droop and die,/And on every wind of the heavens a wasted life goes by" (35-36). Likewise, The Pilgrims of Hope presents the squalid, prison-like conditions of the city workers' existence. The bestial imagery reduces the people to "prey . . . trapped" ("The Bridge and the Street" 34) in an inescapable snare, "In this grim net of London, this prison" (38). The speaker in "The New Proletarian" refers to his room as a "prison-cell/In the jail of weary London" (69-70), and his narrative reveals a stark contrast to the unsympathetic, thoughtless voice of affluence who scoffs: "You are young, you belong to the class you love . . ./Work on with your class and be thankful" (33-34).

While other Victorian poets may find some redemptive value amid the crowded metropolis, the Juvenalian tone of Noel's poetry does not allow any positive aspects to emerge. Indeed, Noel's entire conception of the city is "only as the locale of suffering and chaos" (Stange 478). He is overwhelmed by "the loud confusion" ("In London" 348) and excoriates London's obliviousness to the living conditions of

its paupers. The multitude of images in "A Lay of Civilization, or London" clearly pronounces Noel's "awareness of the horrifying town" (Thesing, Muse 118):

Illimitable leagues of piles confused,
Dome, tower, and steeple, stately palaces,
Islanded in a welter of dim street;
Mean habitations, warrens of dun life,
Tortuous, swarming; sullied, pale, cramped life
With, in the midst, a large imperial River,
Turbid and troubled, the town's artery,
Spanned by tumultuous bridges.
(241)

But even more despairing than the picture of the filthy slums and confusion are the people victimized by urban life. The bliss of innocence is unimaginable to those growing up in the alleys because they never experience youth. Living "in the reek/Of the monster town" ("The Children's Grass" II.143) destroys any semblance of childhood:

the child's old face!
Starved and very pale she seems,
With a hollow place
Dark beneath her eyes, how wearied,
Lashless looking on the bleared
Mimic grass.

And from Noel's vantage point, no one cares about such children - or for any of the poor. The wealthy minority controls the destiny of the masses and openly expresses its attitude toward the impoverished: "Ring in the rich man's child with jubilation,/And ring the poor man's out, O happy nation!" ("The Red Flag" 150). What happens to the indigent matters only insofar as it affects the rich man's purse: "You must not stab, nor strangle, a poor neighbor;/For, if you did, why you would lose his labour" (151).

"Poor People's Christmas" also stresses the very well-defined line between the opulence of the few and the destitution of the majority. The poor exist in cramped, deplorable garrets

Where bleared faces of mean houses
Lean as if to touch each other,
Where idle, ugly vice carouses,
And the brown fogs choke and smother.
(127)

Then the refrain underscores the severe contrast since while the poor are starving, the rich are celebrating the holidays:

Hark! the Christmas bells ring round!
Many light hearts with joy abound!
They come and go upon the wind,
"Peace and goodwill to all mankind!"
(e.g. 127)

Clearly, the repetition of this stanza indicates that the affluent have a rather limited idea of whom "mankind" includes. They care only that the poor seamstress finishes their gowns, not that she lives and works under conditions where

Hunger grim
Slow feeds on lives she fights for yet -
Three tattered little ones who play
Faint-hearted on the mouldy floor.
(128)

This woman is well-acquainted with the atmosphere depicted in "A Lay of Civilization" (cf. p. 78) since her world is much the same:

Vile fumes, with subtle poison-breath
That foulds the throat, killed one young child:
Walls totter and tumble, damp-defiled;
While on the too scant space intrude
Rats hustling the young human brood.

Bitter winter wind shrilled through
Rotten door and window when it blew.

And to augment the woman's desperate position, she has no one on whom to rely since her husband has chosen to sink beneath the waters of the Thames rather than continue to watch himself and his family fall deeper into poverty. Yet his words prior to his suicide again accent the careless attitude of the rich towards the hopeless paupers:

The man that wrings the murderous rent,
Yet shelters not the naked bones
Cooped in his plague-fraught tenement.
(132)

The slum landlords are virtually "vampires" sucking the life blood from these "chained starvelings." And the poor, condemned only because of their indigence, know that their lot is immutable: "we in our vile vaults immure/These whose crime is to be poor" (133). Certainly, poverty for the city multitude is "This gangrene of the Commonweal,/ This prime injustice of the world."

In any society where excessive desire for wealth and lack of morality abound, the poor are crushed beneath the weight of the mob, and Romans and Victorians share disgust and abhorrence towards the city's crowded slums and the resulting degrading existence inflicted upon the impoverished. To both groups of authors, any metropolis is the people's enemy, and this viewpoint is accurately summarized by the words of Mark Rutherford:

Great towns are answerable for the creation and maintenance of the masses of dark, impenetrable, subterranean black-guardism The filthy gloom of the sky, the dirt of the street, the absence of fresh air, the herding of the poor into huge districts which cannot be opened up by those who would do good, are tremendous agencies of corruption which are active

at such a rate that it is appalling to reflect what our future
will be if the accumulation of the population be not checked.
(White 82-83)

Such abject conditions are the distinct antithesis of the life of the
wealthy class which both ignores and sneers at the beggarly mobs.

While the affluent carelessly celebrate the holiday

In lusted lordly palace hall

On [their] cold doorstep women fall
Starved, numbed, and naked, life gone grey.
(Noel, "Poor People's Christmas" 133)

Just as Juvenal denounces the crowds and the subsequent poverty of the
masses (cf. p. 75), Victorian poets lament the consequences of "The
thousand-streeted and smoke-smothered town" (Smith, A Life-Drama,
Bogue, scene II 9) where the fate of the majority is "Shame, grim
Nakedness, and Want!" (Noel, "Poor People's Christmas" 135). Such
individuals are often denied respite even through death, for they are
compelled to continue their death-in-life existence as described by
Binyon:

Death possesses thee;
But too secure
To occupy his easy kingdom, spares
To enforce his title, cruelly forbears,
And suffers thee to languish in thy lot,
In this most woeful, that thou weepest not.
("To a Derelict" 61)

One must acknowledge, however, that Roman authors tend to stand
more aloof than the Victorians and not to become involved personally in
the plight of the mob. In fact, one might say that the Roman stance
is the more literary of the two depictions of the dangers of the crowd.
For example, the personification of rumor is a portrait which definitely

occurs more frequently in Latin literature than in Victorian poetry. Also, whereas Seneca supports a sober withdrawal from the mobbed city streets, his words fail to convey the sincere human compassion which the Victorians express for the destitute forbidden to escape the confines of the Seven Dials. Perhaps the pictures drawn by such poets as Davidson and Noel reflect the attitude of a society which dignified individual worth and forbade the ownership of human beings in contrast to Rome, where slavery was an accepted part of the culture. Nevertheless, the gregibus of Juvenal (cf. p. 75) are merely pointed out by a concerned, but uninvolved observer of the conditions, but the Victorians repeatedly emphasize the reduction of humanity into a "swarm" of "bellowing" animals (cf. p. 75) condemned to the prison of the city, and the precise details of the vermin and slime in the gutters of the metropolis serve to pronounce the depth of humanitarianism felt by those faced with the onslaught of industrialism. On the other hand exists the literature of Rome, a civilization which regrets but still condones dehumanization as an inherent part of life.

Yet regardless of the intensity of an author's emotional involvement, the populace herded into the streets poses a daily threat to urban life. One may choose to espouse the philosophic perspective of Seneca or to expose the outright horror of Lucan's city in panic, but undeniable is the fact that "For a man to rise when poverty stands in the way of his merits" (Juvenal III.164) is impossible, and the dangers lurking in the crowded streets are both mental and physical.

Of course, to avoid the masses completely, as some authors propose, is desirable, but the poor man does not have the option. Instead, he must remain trodden underfoot by the mob.

CHAPTER IV

HOPELESSNESS AND DESPAIR

In the wake of the mob, those "marred sons of misery" (Noel, "Poor People's Christmas" 134), follow only hopelessness and despair. The black clouds hanging over the walls prevent the light of the sun from appearing, and beneath lie murmuring grief, darkness, and silence. Man is "an exile lost and wandering in an empty wasteland, an arid desert of futility and despair; and besides being an exile he [is] a solitary exile, denied the comfort of relationship with even his fellow-wanderers" (Trudgill 135). Certainly, these unhappy conditions place a heavy burden on the inhabitants, and severe depression is the outcome. Yet the victims can find no escape from the "blind [caecam] night" (Aeneid II.397) since "The very sky is hidden by billowing smoke [undante fumo]; the face of day, obscured as by an impenetrable cloud, is black and foul [squalet]" (Seneca, Troades 19-21). Like the Romans, Victorian poets portray these feelings of desertion experienced in the city and the subsequent alienation the individual faces upon the realization that no one cares for him. In this urban wasteland where "Mist clogs the sunshine" (Arnold, "Consolation" 1), man senses an inexplicable sorrow: "A vague dejection/Weighs down my soul" (4-5). One may easily see that such literary descriptions of the metropolis are "attributable to more than the extent of destitution and squalor. Its sheer size [seems] to

dwarf the individual, destroying his sense of community" (Idea 12), and he becomes merely a solitary pawn "doomed to the eternal darkness" (White 28). Ultimately, the loneliness of the shadows is so intense that even the lark can no longer sing tunes of happiness:

The lark sings sad and low, -
 "The city is dull and mean -
 There is woe! there is woe!
 Never a soul is clean;
 The city is dark, the wrong is deep
 Too late to moan, too late to weep!
 Tired, tired! sleep, sleep!"
 (Buchanan, "A Lark's Flight," I 163)

Clearly, the oppressive atmosphere allows only sorrow to those living in the city.

Upon recounting the last night of Troy, Aeneas expresses his keen mental suffering evoked by the memory: "tears for misfortune and mortal sorrows touch the heart" (Aeneid I.462). He vividly recalls "the sights most piteous [miserrima] that I myself saw" (II.5) and laments that no asylum is given to those agonized by their hopeless situation, for no corner offers relief: "On every side, meanwhile, the city is in a turmoil of anguish [luctu]" (II.298). Ultimately, the people are completely overcome by their weariness and give in to their despair: "All, outworn [defessi] have deserted me and flung their bodies to the ground or dropped helpless [aegra] into the flames" (II.565-566). Even as the few exiles band together for comfort, not "any hope of help [is] offered" (II.803); the iron-hearted city feels no compassion for this "piteous throng [miserabile volgus]" (II.798). And the ensuing silence brings even greater fear since no

one knows what may lie concealed in the speechless shadows:

"Everywhere dread [horror] fills my heart; the very silence, too dis-
mays [ipsa silentia terrent]" (II.755).

In the poem "Eurydice," Coventry Patmore conveys a similar personal experience of a man wandering through the darkened, silent city streets, tortured by the emotions of loneliness and fear. The individual expresses his "mortal sorrow" (364) which is made the worse by the atmosphere of "sordid streets and lanes" and "infamous doors, opening on hapless rooms." Although Patmore's persona is not a witness of a city in chaotic conflagration, certainly the poet's images "very accurately suggest the misery of a man loaded with grief walking through the city at night" (Oliver 99).

Tennyson also refers often to the city as a source of desolation. In "the dust and drouth of London life" ("Edwin Morris" 143), man is totally alone, and the darkening shadows accentuate his unhappy seclusion: "night enough is there/In yon dark city" ("The Ancient Sage" 252-253). As a result, the alienation experienced in the urban setting becomes symbolic of the individual's mental state: "The wasteland image seems to be invariably linked with the emotional desolation or spiritual emptiness of Tennyson's characters" (Quereshi 20).

The "madman's vision" (Thesing, Muse 28) in Maud is unquestionably an exaggeration of man's actual experience, yet the "wasted frame" (IV.x.209) upon whom "anguish hangs like shame"

(IV.x.214)¹² graphically emphasizes the isolation of the individual in the metropolis. His loneliness in the midst of the urban confusion is so intense that "The madman imagines himself to be buried in a suicide's grave beneath the street" (Thesing, "Tennyson" 18):

Dead, long dead,
Long dead!
And my heart is a handful of dust,
And the wheels go over my head,
And my bones are shaken with pain,
For into a shallow grave they are thrust,
Only a yard beneath the street,
And the hoofs of the horses beat, beat,
The hoofs of the horses beat,
Beat into my scalp and my brain.
(239-248)

In Memoriam also presents the urban atmosphere as blankness, "a symbol of desolation" (Thesing, Muse 28). As the poet stands in the vacant street before Hallam's house in the early hours of the morning, his "spiritual nadir" (Sharpe 83) is apparent:

Dark house, by which once more I stand
Here in the long unlovely street,
Doors, where my heart was used to beat
So quickly, waiting for a hand.
(VII.1-4)

And the section's closing lines recognize the relationship between the bleakness of the dawn and the "spiritual failure" (Sharpe 83) of the individual: "And ghastly through the drizzling rain/On the bald streets breaks the blank day" (11-12). As one critic has noted, "this last line drags and halts, and the baldness and blankness seem to invade the entire prospect" (Jump 94).

¹²These same lines appear in "Oh! That 'Twere Possible" 43, 48.

The wasteland imagery associated with the metropolis appears again in LXIX of In Memoriam. Tennyson feels that man is exiled into the gloom of the dark city and clearly "conveys his sense of anguish at man's supposed relegation in this new dispensation" (Forsyth, "Self-Image" 73). In fact, the enormity of his despair confounds even the regenerative powers of natural forces:

I dream'd there would be Spring no more,
That Nature's ancient power was lost:
The streets were black with smoke and frost,
They chatter'd trifles at the door.
(1-4)

The "Easter Day" poems and Amours de Voyage exemplify Clough's reflection on the despair resulting from the urban environs. In "Easter Day; Naples 1849," an isolated, hopeless individual is stifled in the scorching heat of the city:

Through the great sinful streets of Naples as I past,
With fiercer heat than flamed above my head
My heart was hot within me.
(1-3)

Then, "Easter Day II" pictures a similar alienated figure, again with no one to give him solace: "in the sinful streets, abstracted and alone,/I with my secret self had communing of mine own" (1-2).

Finally, Claude in Amours de Voyage experiences the same loneliness of the crowd, except in his case he is enabled to vent his emotions through his correspondence with Eustace. Claude truly desires to act decisively but openly acknowledges his lack of resolution: "I am a coward, and know it/Courage in me could be only factitious, unnatural, useless" (V.v.84-85). Thus weighed down by his own depression which life in the Roman metropolis only intensifies, Claude realizes his

only alternative: "I must take without question/Comfort, however, it come, in the dreary streets of the city" (93-94).

Yet other writers create an even stronger picture of the empty sadness experienced by the solitary urban inhabitant, bereft of companionship and spirit alike, and among the Romans, Lucretius perhaps conveys the hopelessness in the city most vividly. He sees the "human spirit engaged in a vain and unassisted battle for peace and tranquility in the midst of endless agitation" (Sellar, "Lucretius" 16). The fear which lurks in the inhabitants' minds causes adults to relive the dread they have experienced in their youthful imaginations, and once again their empty dreams seem to be reality:

For even as children tremble and fear all the things in blind darkness [caecis/in tenebris], so we in the light fear, at times, things that are no whit more to be feared, than what children shiver at in the dark [in tenebris] and imagine to be at hand.

(II.55-58)

But the plague's victims present a more frightening image of despair since these people are confined both by the city's walls and the prison of their own bodies. They are "weary and weeping with grief [lacrimis lassi luctuque]" (VI.1248) as they hopelessly wander about the metropolis. Their entrails are consumed by the fire within from which they can find no relief: "a flame burnt [flagrabat] in the stomach as in a furnace" (VI.1169), and insomnia further debilitates their waning strength. The observer sadly notes their "staring [patential] eyes, fiery with the plague [ardentia morbis] and knowing no sleep" (VI.1180-1181). Yet no respite is offered; the city gives no comfort to those suffering from the relentless contagion.

Arnold is fully aware of the desolation and estrangement associated with living in the city, and the classical affiliations of the poet are often quite obvious. Yet of special significance is the fact that he notes the similarities between the Victorians and one major Roman poet in particular: "Depression and ennui; these are the characteristics stamped on how many of the representative works of modern times! they are also the characteristics stamped on the poem of Lucretius" ("Modern Element," Prose, I 32).

The opening lines of "A Summer Night" make clear that only this despair can attend a life denied any human company. The windows' blankness represents their lack of awareness of the speaker standing beneath them, and "their horror of inexpressiveness" (Honan 225) symbolizes the individual's estrangement from his fellowman:

In the deserted, moon-blached street,
How lonely rings the echo of my feet!
Those windows, which I gaze at, frown,
Silent and white, unopening down,
Repellent as the world.
(1-5)

The sounds of the speaker's unattended footsteps accentuate the "'repellent' world which drives him from it" (Roper 160), and he realizes that because of his alienation from humankind he is allowed only the silent "moon" (7) for companionship.

In "Alaric at Rome," the conqueror looks down upon his victim "that hast stood/In greatness once, in sackcloth now and tears" (IV.19-20), and London may easily replace imperial Rome where "Anger, and strife, and sickness are within,/Famine and sorrow are no strangers here" (XIV.81-82). Such surroundings, regardless of the

metropolitan locale in which they lie, are a source of sadness and isolation, "cold and sad beneath that breathless, voiceless night" (XVIII.108), because the emphasis lies "on the tragic vicissitudes of a great city" (Eells 74) which has fallen.

Yet "Dover Beach" more vehemently pronounces the condition of "bewildered man in an alien world" (W. S. Johnson 205). All of man's hopes are dashed since he is abandoned "as on a darkling plain" (35), and again Arnold displays his affiliation with Lucretius. In his despondency that in the modern world faith is "Retreating" (26) and "now I only hear/Its melancholy, long, withdrawing roar" (24-25), the speaker clearly reflects his predecessor's lack of "assurance of a deity governing the universe" (Schneider 191). Thus, this poem's expression of melancholy merits its description as one of the major literary portrayals of man's desolation: "With the possible exception of The Waste Land, no other poem of the nineteenth or even the twentieth century captures the isolation of modern man as does 'Dover Beach' with its use of the Thucydidean night battle" (Anderson, "Arnold" 285).

In Empedocles on Etna, however, man's struggle to continue amid the chaos of the city is proved impossible, and a type of Lucretian seclusion from society, even to the rim of the fiery volcano, is a preferable alternative: "one is far better here/Than in the broiling city in these heats" (103-104). Just as the ancients choose isolation over the tumults of the megalopolis, Arnold finds "no solution for the individual's feeling of barren isolation except withdrawal into the

self" (Anderson, Classical 40). Nothing in the modern world of the "factory-and-tenement Victorian city" (Honan 203) offers any hope for improvement, and therefore, nineteenth-century man shares the sentiments of his forebear:

Heaven is with earth at strife,
Signs make thy soul afraid,
The dead return to life,
Rivers are dried, winds stayed.
(122-125)

As a result, Empedocles escapes his unbearable existence by hurling himself into the crater.

Matthew Arnold's poetry presents a distinct line between man's subjective aspirations and his actual existence. The industrial Victorian city is the creation of modern man, and as a consequence of this production, man has destroyed his claim to happiness. In the words of Empedocles to Pausanias, "Thou hast no right to bliss" (160), and the theme of the individual's inevitable alienation frequently appears in Arnold's poetry:

In his picture of man's isolation from the world and from his fellows Arnold shows the contrast between human desires and mores and objective nature. The theme represents his reaction to being alone in an indifferent universe. It is stated not only as a personal feeling but as a universal condition of man.

(W. S. Johnson 195)

Although of lesser renown than some of the previously discussed authors, other Victorian poets have claim to recognition for their contributions to the urban image of despair. In his poem "In the City," Davidson describes the overwhelming gloom which is impervious and indomitable:

the day
 With its London doom of smoke
 No storm can quite revoke,
 No deluge wash away.
 (5-8)

Yet the magnitude of the city's capacity to bury nature itself in its realm of prostrate wretchedness becomes even more pronounced:

When their march and song grow mute
 In the city's labyrinth trapped,
 The storms themselves are wrapped
 In dragged shrouds of soot.

The mightiest of tempests quail
 In the midst of a million fires.
 (9-12, 19-20)

Certainly, such concrete description presages "further shadows of doom engulfing the city" (Thesing, Muse 196) and recalls Seneca's "impenetrable cloud" in the Troades (cf. p. 84).

A Life-Drama and, more important, "Glasgow," by Alexander Smith, depict life in the metropolis as the foundation of mankind's griefs. In A Life-Drama Walter's specific references to the city as a fiendish beast enforce the image of its tyranny. He describes the city as "A monster sleeping in its own thick breath" (Bogue, scene IV 53) and that which "seemed a demon's brain/The children of night its evil thoughts" (scene IX 151).

Yet the first person narrator in "Glasgow" appears more personally immersed in the "shapeless gloom" (Crowell 45) and admits his lamentable heritage: "City! I am true son of thine" (41). Not only does he realize that he is a "Wave . . . in that sea of woes,/ Which, night and morning, ebbs and flows" (42), but moreover, his

subjectivity accentuates the horror: "I have watched thee, Terror! Dream!" (43). Similar to the descriptions given by other poets, Smith's presentation of the city is that of a force overpowering nature: "Poor flowers! I watched them pine for weeks/With leaves as pale as human cheeks" (42). Finally, the speaker accepts that his fate is inescapable, that the irreversible sadness of the metropolis and he are one:

Of me thou hast become a part -
Some kindred with my human heart
Lives in thy streets of stone;
For we have been familiar more
Than galley-slave and weary oar.
(46)

Binyon portrays the anxiety and sorrow coexisting with the urban darkness in a poem entitled "Red Night," the initial lyric in London Visions. The imagery creates a setting where only a hellish fiend could thrive; beneath "Ensanguined skies" (1), morbidity reigns:

A lurid vapour, throbbing up the gloom,
Glazes like a furnace fume;
Exhausted pallors hover faint and strange.

And the city itself denigrates this murky wasteland:

Where shadowy London mutters at the core
Of meeting streets interminably ploughed
Through blackness built and steepled and immense
With felt, unfeatured, waste magnificence,
The night shudders and glows.

Binyon then introduces individuals living in this setting and reveals its emotional effects on them. The speaker in "Deptford" is choking from the oppression of his "pain and languor" (31) and "cannot breathe." Ultimately, his mental agony becomes so inordinate that his willingness to find an escape from the noxious air fades as in a dream:

"the last and worst despair/Begins to invade me, numbing even desire/
That panted for sweet draughts of light and air." Yet "A Woman"
seemingly endures even greater depths of misery through her abandon-
ment in the metropolis which is oblivious of her presence. Although
she once was a "child . . . in some far, forgotten place" (20), all
memories of happiness and innocence have been obliterated by her
present condition, "this wild/Despair, when loneliness stabs thee!"
Of all the solitary, forgotten figures in the city, the speaker says
of her, "In all this city, methinks, so charged with pain,/None
suffers as thou."

William Sidney Walker's entire life was a series of depressing
obstacles both spiritual and physical, and his poetry traces his
progressive deterioration as a "starving poet in an urban jungle"
(Thesing, Muse 78). In "The Rain is Falling," the bleak setting
emphasizes a general aura of lassitude and inability to react:

The rain is falling sluggishly, the night is
sad and still,
My weary soul is waning with thoughts of woe
and ill;
The earth is cold beneath me, and the heavens
are black with fear.
(69)¹³

Obviously, the poet's sadness makes him the more apt to reflect upon
his feelings of estrangement, and his meditations deepen his despair:

¹³Citations for Walker are page numbers since The Poetical
Remains of Williams Sidney Walker does not give line numbers.

For I am vext
 With many thoughts: the kindly spirit of hope
 Is sick within me: fretting care, and strife
 With my own heart, have ta'en from solitude
 Its natural calm.

("Peace to the Far Away" 24)

Yet other of Walker's works present a more bitter attitude toward the city. Rather than quietly lamenting that his "eyes/Are dim with sorrow and sin" ("Peace to the Far Away" 25), "Tis Utter Night" and "They Go, and I Remain" denounce the metropolis as "a merciless consumer of hopes and a spoiler of all promises of peace" (Thesing, Muse 79). Throughout the night,

still the tramp
 Of busy feet, the roll of wheels, the hum
 Of passing tongues, - one endless din confused
 Of sounds, that have no meaning for the heart -
 Marring the beauty of the tranquil hour,
 Press on my sleepless ear.

("Tis Utter Night" 81)

In his confusion, Walker clearly echoes Lucretius' depiction of a child's fear of the darkness (cf. p. 89) since he feels "as a child/In a strange home, with unaccustomed sights/Perplex'd, and unknown voices." The poet's memories of happier times make him wish to escape "London's never-ebbing multitude/And everlasting cataract of sound" ("They Go, and I Remain" 38), but he knows that such desires must be left unfulfilled: "I sit, and strive/To cheat my hope-sick heart with memory."

Finally, Buchanan is incapable of discovering any redeeming virtues in the urban locale. Inevitably, all hopes are dashed where "the sky [is]/Black with the smoky breathing of the city" ("Edward Crowhurst," I 142). Man is doomed to an existence of degradation and

can neither improve his plight nor find any means of escape. In this "somber monochromatic view of the industrial city, . . . nowhere [is] suggested the vitality, variety and opportunity of urban life" (Forsyth, "Nature" 398).

Set in the confines of the capital, "London, 1864" suggests that the poet's "growth in poetic power is matched by a lessening of his elan for the profession of literature" (Cassidy 89) as a result of his urban residence. He feels enshrouded by "the awful sound of the city,/And the terrible faces around" (I 183), and the exhaustion of the other inhabitants parallels his own:

For the sound of the city is weary,
 As the people pass to and fro,
 And the friendless faces are dreary,
 As they come, and thrill through us, and go.

Clearly, one of the major forces overwhelming the poet is the "spatial endlessness of the urban environment" (Thesing, Muse 85).

The City of Dream, sometimes considered Buchanan's "religious autobiography" (Cassidy 23), describes man's hopeless quest for the ideal, a metropolis completely free from the despair and sadness of the "Cities of the Earth" (II 59). The journey, however, is futile, and man is proved the dupe of his own folly: "O fool! there is no City Beautiful/Beyond these Cities of the Earth thou seest!" All urban surroundings produce the same effect on the inhabitants; their only purpose is to increase men's sorrow:

And in each City thou dost look upon
 A different legend and a different God
 Lengthen man's misery and make him mad.

Certainly, Buchanan's own gloomy existence in London influenced his perception, and this poem reveals his opinion that the search for the City of God must end in failure. No City of Dream exists; "the 'unholiness' of contemporary London" (Forsyth, "Dilemma" 650) is the only urban reality.

The Wandering Jew is often discussed in conjunction with The City of Dream because of the two works' similar presentations of the megalopolis. In both, "the city [is] filled with nightmarish shapes and shadows" (Cassidy 34-35) which mirror the tortured mind of the poet. The vast silence in The Wandering Jew creates a terrifying feeling of suffering and alienation, and the serpent imagery of the river suggests the total corruption of the environment:

Shrouded in snow the silent City slept;
And through its heart the great black River crept
Snakewise, with sullen coils as they wound
Flash'd scales of filmy silver; all around
The ominous buildings huddled from the light
With cold grey roots and gables tipt with white.
(II 210)

In "Jane Lewsom," Buchanan unfolds the story of another victim of the city's "hypocritical religiosity, cruelty and loneliness" (Forsyth, Pattern 82). In her "dismal dwelling in the smoky square" (I 135), the abandoned heroine experiences only sadness: "she merely knew the world/Was drear" (I 126). In fact, bleak unhappiness envelops every aspect of her life just as the clothes that cover her body:

The dull life that she wore,
Like a gloomy garment, day by day,
Was a familiar life, the only life
She clearly understood.
(I 127)

The background of this narrative accentuates the gloom since nothing can thrive in the noxious air: in "The garden-plots . . . here and there a flower/Grew up, and sicken'd in the smoke, and died" (I 126). This portrait of abandonment and despair, besieged at every turn by "streets/And frightful sounds, and gloomy sunless faces" (I 127), is truly "a visual image of spiritual desolation" (Forsyth, "Nature" 395).

Thus, life in the city displays another of its many flaws. Far from the open and healthy atmosphere of the countryside, the inhabitants of the metropolis are weighed down by gloom and loneliness, and the Victorians' depiction of the sorrow and disappointment of urban dwellers closely mirrors that of their classical models. However, the Victorians do make some modifications on the Roman presentation of the metropolis. Certainly, the sadness and desperation of the citizens are vividly portrayed by the Romans, but authors such as Vergil and Lucretius seem to deal with severe depression only when the individuals affected are under extreme agony which ultimately leads to disaster; for Vergil, the horror is the collapse of both a city and a civilization while Lucretius describes the hideousness of a metropolis enshrouded in contagion. In Victorian poetry, however, melancholy appears to be a part of each individual's daily life, an unavoidable force dominating one's entire existence. Certainly, Tennyson is overcome by the premature death of Hallam, but much of his poetry other than In Memoriam and those poems dealing with this particular loss convey a deep sense of gloom. The pervasive melancholy

of Walker and Buchanan is obviously partly attributable to their own experiences in the city, but no single incident or horror seems to have provoked this mood. And, of course, Arnold's poetry throughout reveals his complete alienation since its "most consistent feature is the burning plain and the hot city upon it [which] nearly always expresses some variation upon the unpleasant life battle of the mid-nineteenth century" (Roper 2).

Yet "the giant-factoried city-gloom" (Tennyson, "Sea Dreams" 5) hangs over London like the clouds in Seneca's Troades (cf. p. 84). Also, in much the same manner that Aeneas becomes immured in the desolation as he listens to the "joyless [inlaetabile] murmur of the town in turmoil [confusae]" (XII.619), Smith's narrator feels a personal involvement in the city's despair when he says, "I know the tragic hearts of towns" ("Glasgow," Crowell 41); and thereby, the nineteenth-century poet reveals his emotional affiliation with Vergil, his predecessor (cf. p. 85). In contrast, Lucretius chooses to stand aloof and watch the despair of which he is not a part, yet "the very position, which he [tries] to gain above the storms of life, [serves] only to disclose a wider view of that misery, from which he [cannot] separate himself, while it [can] give him no glimpse of any hope or light beyond the gloom" (Sellar, "Lucretius" 16-17). Ultimately, the result of his experience is a skepticism towards any assurance in life, an attitude which is reflected throughout the poetry of the latter age by the general tone of dejection and hopelessness. Gloom pervades the urban environment, and as Carlyle noted upon his first

visit to London in the 1830's, every individual is entirely alone:

"There in their little cells, divided by partitions of brick or board, they sit strangers unknowing, unknown" (Froude, Carlyle, II 207). This somber atmosphere subsequently produces an undeniable burden on the human spirit:

Today the streets are dull and dreary,
Heavily, slowly the Rain is falling,
I hear around me and am weary,
The people murmuring and calling;
The gloomy room is full of faces,
Firelight shadows are on the floor,
And the deep Wind cometh from country places,
And the Rain hath a voice I would hear no more.
(Buchanan, "In London, March 1866,"
I 163)

CHAPTER V

DEATH AND DESTRUCTION

The misery and sickness in the city are naturally the omens of death and destruction, and although despair and feelings of desertion may lead men to search for a happier existence, eventually the urban dwellers must realize that mortality is their unalterable fate: "Count me as lost and dead/Tomb'd, in the City" (Buchanan, "Up in the Attic," I 160). Both Roman and Victorian writers appear to accept the inevitable and present a horrifying, fatalistic picture of the metropolis. Some authors refer specifically to the blight in the cities of their actual habitation while others choose to deal with pestilence and its disastrous effects in an urban locale removed in space and time from the capital. For example, in much the same way that Juvenal and Horace deal with Rome, Noel and Henley focus directly on London in their bloody indictments of urban life. Yet other Victorians, such as Tennyson, withdraw from London itself to the imaginary worlds of Timbuctoo or Camelot in the tradition of Vergil and Lucretius. Nevertheless, whether one searches through "the burnt city of Troy, now only a famous name" (Lucan IX.964), or witnesses the plague at Thebes, where "Prostrate the crowds lie at the altars and pray for death" (Seneca, Oedipus 197-198), the city's destructive power reigns; man is merely a pawn in the hands of the unfeeling metropolis, and the nihilistic city mutilates every inhabitant.

Juvenal's friend Umbricius clearly expresses the physical threats to a city inhabitant and says, "I must live where there are no fires, no nightly alarms" (III.197-198). In fact, the most deserted and primitive region which lacks any conveniences at all is a desirable alternative to the chaos in Rome:

I myself would prefer even Prochyta to the Subura!¹⁴ For where has one ever seen a place so dismal and so lonely [tam miserum, tam solum] that one would not deem it worse to live in perpetual dread [horrere] of fires and falling houses, and the thousand perils [mille pericula] of this terrible [saevae] city.

(III.5-8)

But the dangers are greatest at night, and these terrors are the most frightening since no one is safe in the darkness:

When your house is shut, when bar and chain have made fast your shop, and all is silent, you will be robbed by a burglar; or perhaps a cut-throat [grassator] will do for you quickly with cold steel.

(Juvenal III.302-305)

Similarly, Propertius knows the dangers of the city after dark: "What should I do? Trust myself to the dark that shrouded all [obductis . . . tenebris] and tremble lest my limbs should be gripped by ruffian bands?" (III.xvi.5-6). Thus, any scant protection afforded in the day disappears in the shadows of nightfall.

Yet physical injury is not the major source of concern. Unlike the man who merely feels threatened by petty criminals who want his money (cf. above), Juvenal is aware that if one is exposed to "the

¹⁴Prochyta - "a small island off Misenum"; Subura - "the noisiest street in Rome" - Ramsay (trans.) fn., 33.

different and diverse perils of the night" (III.268), he may never reach his destination: "There's death at every open window as you pass along at night" (III.274-275).

Petronius compares the malignity of the city to the ravages of a pestilence. The farm-bailiff tells Encolpius and company that as they enter Croton,

you will go into a town that is like a plague-ridden plain
[in pestilentia campos], where there is nothing but carcasses
to be devoured, and crows to devour them [cadavera, quae lace-
rantur, aut corvi qui lacerant].

(sec. 116)

This animal imagery vividly expresses the fate of the inhabitants, and the city walls prohibit any reprieve from the carnage. In addition, that such an atmosphere invites men to violate one another is emphasized by the fact that the voice of Discord encourages them to "set your torches to the heart of cities" (sec. 124) and destroy.

One play in particular by Seneca likewise depicts the city as a violent necropolis. In Octavia¹⁵ Nero's insane love of gore goads him to encourage a speedy extinction: "Quickly let Rome's roofs fall beneath my flames; let fires, let ruins crush the guilty populace, and wretched want, and grief and hunger dire [turpisque egestas, saeva cum luctu fames]" (831-833). And the Chorus proclaims that all Rome shares Nero's exultation in carnage: "Rome's delight is in her children's blood [civis gaudent Roma cruore]" (983).

¹⁵Although usually attributed to Seneca, "Octavia is on a contemporary subject and almost certainly not Seneca's." (Hadas 246).

The prose of Mark Rutherford may well serve as a mirror to show that the same destructive conditions exist in nineteenth-century London. In his Deliverance, Rutherford is pained "that men, women, and children [are] living in such brutish degradation, and that as they [die] others . . . take their place" (White 82). But such is the destiny for all urban dwellers, regardless of whether their home be Petronius' Croton, Seneca's Rome, or Rutherford's London.

A similar attitude appears in the poetry of Alexander Smith wherein he describes the cruel fate of the city's inhabitants. In "Horton" Smith denounces "The terrible city whose neglect is death . . ./the crowd who die/Unmentioned" (Crowell 21). Also, Glasgow, the setting for both A Life-Drama and a shorter poem entitled "Glasgow," is portrayed "in terms of hellish darkness, murk and death" (M. J. W. Scott 107). The suffering of the people is unbearable as "Black Labor draws his weary waves/Into their secret-moaning caves" ("Glasgow," Crowell 41). All alike are forced into an existence of "smoky sun-sets" and "rainy nights" (43) until they meet their unconquerable foe, "that black disdainful stream;/ . . . O, stream of dread!/O, long, dark river of the dead" (44).

"Poor People's Christmas" by Roden Noel deserves mention for its contribution to the overall Victorian picture of the fatal horror of the metropolis. The major theme of the poem is death, the indomitable conqueror of all, and the means whereby it accomplishes its goal do not matter. Whether like the child Willie, who has been "Thrown into a nameless grave" (131), or the husband who has chosen

suicide "under tide/Of deeply, darkly rolling Thames,/That quenches hottest human flames" (129), all the populace faces the same agonizing end; and until then, death-in-life is the only fate for these "Pale spectres of dread Babylon" (135).

Horace views civil strife as the source of a city's final downfall and warns that Rome "might perish [periret] by its own right hand" (Epode VII.10). The country has already experienced one civil war, and now "a second generation is being ground to pieces, and Rome through her own strength is tottering [ruit]" (Epode XVI.1-2). Yet the Romans cannot avoid their fate since the city is cursed and the slaughter is thus preordained: "this selfsame city we ourselves shall ruin [perdemus], we, an impious generation, of stock accurst [devoti sanguinis]; and the ground shall again be held by beasts of prey" (Epode XVI.9-10).

Echoing Horace's indictment of Roman impiety, Noel is most stringent in "The Red Flag" with its concluding "nightmare vision of the destruction of London" (Thesing, Muse 114). And the Victorian, like his predecessor, blatantly warns the people of their impending doom:

Your grand colossal edifice today
Rests on yawning darkness and decay;
Beware! for it is ready to vanish away!
(145)

Again, the source of destruction comes from within the city itself where the people are choking and suffocating in the pernicious atmosphere, "gasping for some air." And the haunting refrain serves

as a constant reminder that in such bestial conditions "Peace: in London" (146) is impossible; the banner of civil war is inevitable:

What! shall Wealth kneel upon the fainting forms
Of millions whom scarce a raiment warms,
Draining their very heart's blood leisurely,
And shall we wonder when with frenzied cry,
Beyond endurance urged, at last they leap
To murder gorged wealth where it lies asleep?
The legal armed oppressor of his neighbor,
He who hath goaded overdriven labour,
A peaceful tyrant, the Red Flag unfurled:
He stands accurst of God, and of the world!
. . . . There is War in London.
(152)

Tennyson too shares the opinion of Horace (cf. p. 106) in asserting that man's aspirations towards invention and industrialization are the forerunners of his downfall. Thus, man is responsible for erecting his own tomb. Indeed, this Victorian seems obsessed with "some apocalyptic upheaval - of a city, a civilization, of the earth itself" (Rosenberg 14), and this predisposition is apparent in "Timbuctoo," one of his earliest poems. Man's placing so much value on "Discovery" (240) clearly "dissolves the ideal" (Thesing, Muse 26), and the Spirit presages the imminent disintegration of the splendid creation into a wasteland:

Oh City! oh latest Throne! where I was raised
To be a mystery of loveliness
Unto all eyes, the time is well-nigh come
When I must render up this glorious home
To keen Discovery: soon yon brilliant towers
Shall darken with the waving of her wan;
Darken and shrink and shiver into huts,
Black specks amid a waste of dreary sand,
Low-built, mud-walled, Barbarian settlements.
How changed from this fair City!
(236-245)

Certainly, these foreboding words spoken to the Poet are an undeniable warning "that this city of spires and crystal piles would be reduced, under the influence of the modern scientific and rationalistic spirit, to a depressing and unimaginative habitation in a waste land" (Quereshi 24).

The wreckage of the beautiful city in "Timbuctoo" omens a similar fate for the imaginary Eden of Camelot. In both works, "the 'brilliant towers' ("Timbuctoo" 240) of the mind's own building give way to a desolate, post-civilized landscape of forgotten peoples and waste sands" (Rosenberg 19). In fact, Tennyson's earliest prose draft of the Idylls (1833) reveals the ominous threat of destruction as one of the poem's major symbols, for beneath Arthur's utopian world,

all underneath . . . was hollow, and the mountain trembled,
when the seas rushed bellowing through the porphyry caves;
and there ran a prophecy that the mountain and the city on
some wild morning would topple into the abyss and be no more.
(H. Tennyson, II 122-123)

Indeed, "Camelot partakes of the dual reality of the holy city of Revelation, of which it is a replica, and the Infernal City, the Great Whore of Babylon, which it has become" (Rosenberg 92).

The inevitable doom of Camelot is intimated in "The Coming of Arthur" by the presence of the "Great lords from Rome" (476) outside the chapel where Arthur and Guinevere's marriage takes place. On this glorious day the "city [is] all on fire/With sun and cloth of gold" (478-479); yet this fire portends another conflagration, the eventual holocaust. Here Rome may be ignored by the celebrants since she is now "The slowly-fading mistress of the world" (504), but "just

as Rome has grown feeble and Arthur can spurn her demand for tribute, so too the new kingdom will pass" (Rosenberg 41). And this implied possibility of ruin becomes fact in "The Holy Grail" in the wasteland metropolis Percivale encounters on his quest:

O, when we reached
The city, our horses stumbling as they trode
On heaps of ruin, hornless unicorns,
Cracked basilisks, and splintered cockatrices,
And shattered talbots, which had left the stones
Raw, that they fell from, brought us to the hall.
(712-717)

Certainly, this picture is not an insinuation but an implicit statement of the unavoidable annihilation of Camelot itself.

Suggesting that dreams may become reality, the nightmares of two individuals in the Idylls clearly forebode the end of this paradise. Pelleas' vision in "Pelleas and Ettarre" focuses on the destruction of Arthur's court, and the source of the fall comes from within the inner circle. Pelleas dreams "that Gawain fired/The Hall of Merlin, and the morningstar/Reeled in the smoke, brake into flame and fell" (507-509). Yet the depiction of upheaval is more terrifying in the mind of Guinevere since her nightmare prophesizes havoc beyond the confines of a single kingdom; the firebrand appears "broadening from her feet,/And blackening, swallowed all the land, and in it/Far cities burnt, and with a cry she woke" ("Guinevere" 80-82).

Finally, such fantasies become harsh fact in "The Passing of Arthur" as "Arthur's city built to music falls to the discordant shrieks of men" (Rosenberg 98), and the wounded king who knows his own death is near hears the "dim cries/ . . . As of some lonely city

sacked by night" (41, 43). Ultimately, the fall of Camelot may serve as the symbol of that of all cities whose inevitable collapse may be attributed to their creators. Man's destiny is hopeless in the metropolis, and therefore, one may question the purpose of human existence "when the greatest hero and leader can see, after all his efforts, that 'all [his] realm/Reels back into the beast, and is no more' (25-26)" (Talbot 229).

The destruction of another city erected through the music of the supernatural appears in "Oenone," and again the cause of the ruin is the imbalance created by one of its inhabitants. Having been abandoned by her husband Paris, Oenone entreats her mother, "O mother Ida, harken ere I die" (e.g., 52), and relates the tale of Paris' enticement by Aphrodite's pledge to give him the mortal Helen in return for his choosing the goddess as the most beautiful: "I promise thee/The fairest and most loving wife in Greece" (182-183). As a result of his decision, Paris has destroyed the golden mean between power, wisdom, and love, and his pursuit of Helen has provided the instigation of the war and the ultimate conflagration of Troy. Oenone's madness prevents her being fully aware of the situation, but she instinctively knows that

I will not die alone, for fiery thoughts
Do shape themselves within me, more and more,
Whereof I catch the issue, as I hear
Dead sounds at night come from the inmost hills,
Like footsteps upon wool.

(242-246)

Thus, "yonder walls/[which] Rose slowly to a music slowly breathed"

(39-40) fall in the disaster as "All earth and air seem only burning fire" (264).

Another poem by Tennyson concerning human mortality warrants mention, yet in the case of "Lucretius," the destruction is wreaked not upon the city at large but upon a single inhabitant. This frightening portrayal of "spiritual disintegration" (Bush, Mythology 216) emphasizes that the manic state of a depressed individual may be his own assassin. The rational, ordered materialism of Lucretius' philosophy dissolves as do his mental powers under the philtre's influence, and again Tennyson stresses the danger of destroying the balance by extremes. The classical allusions spoken by Tennyson's persona pronounce the extreme mental anguish of the Roman. His dream of seeing "The breasts of Helen" (61) terrifies him into a deranged awakening: "and as I stared, a fire,/The fire that left a roofless Ilion/Shot out of them, and scorched me that I woke" (64-66). Then he prays that Venus' love may "keep [Mars] from the lust of blood/That makes a steaming slaughter house of Rome" (83-84). Certainly, these sexual innuendoes give an explicit statement of the fate of those inhabiting the metropolis and also reveal Tennyson's close ties with antiquity, but, in addition, specific lines in the Victorian's poem emphasize his close reading of his predecessor. For example, the description of "the tranquil life of the gods" (Mustard 70) as "eternal calm" ("Lucretius" 79) obviously echoes Lucretius' "deepest peace" (De II.647) as does the picture of Mars lying in Venus' lap (82-83) parallel Lucretius' portrayal of the lovers:

Mars . . . often casts himself upon thy lap wholly vanquished
by the everliving wound of love, and thus looking upward with
shapely neck thrown back feeds his eager eyes with love.
(De I.32-36)

Yet Tennyson's choice of Lucretius to portray the destruction of a human being "is perhaps not surprising for the melancholy of the ancient had much in common with the dark moods of his latter-day admirer" (Pollard 58).

Vergil similarly presents desperation in the face of disaster in Aeneid II, but here the collapse is that of another civilization rather than of a sole tortured individual, and the emphasis is placed on the "violence in the glare of the burning city" (Knox 137). As Aeneas recalls to Dido the fall of Troy, he says, "Beyond all words [Infandum], O queen, is the grief thou bidst me revive" (3). Remembering the crashing buildings and uncontrolled flames leaves him in a state of shock:

The word Aeneas keeps using, as he tells of the night Troy fell, is obstipui: I was dumbfounded, shocked into silence. Again and again he tries to assert himself, to act as a hero, and again and again he fails.
(Parry 114)

Clearly, the massive destruction poses too great a threat for even pius Aeneas to confront.

Amid the "war's dread din [horror]" (301), Aeneas again shows his consternation, and the word obstipui reappears. Whether in his imagination or in actuality, spectres come into his view. Upon seeing Creusa's ghost, he admits, "I was appalled [obstipui], my hair stood up, and the voice clave to my throat" (774). And the cataclysm is

endless: "Everywhere is cruel grief [luctus], everywhere panic [pavor], and full many a shape of death [mortis imago]" (368-369).

To be sure, the only certainty in the falling city is death:

we pass to certain death [haud dubiam in mortem] Who
could unfold in speech that night's havoc [cladem]? Who its
carnage [funera]? or who could match our toils with tears?
(358, 360-361)

The ravages of death are inescapable "amid flames and weapons" (337) where "in heaps lifeless corpses lie scattered [sternuntur] amid the streets [passim]" (364-365). Finally, the destruction of the city is complete as Aeneas sees "Troy topple [sternit] from her pinnacle" (603). But the cataclysm is unavoidable since destruction is an inherent part of a city, and Panthus expresses this inevitability to Aeneas: "It is come - the last and inevitable [ineluctabile] hour for Troy" (324).

Upon the death of Dido in Aeneid IV, Vergil depicts another city threatened by destruction since the chaos in Carthage is similar to the upheaval of a once majestic metropolis. The event is portrayed "as though all Carthage or ancient Tyre were falling [ruat] before the intrushing foe, and fierce flames [flammaeque furentes] were rolling on [volvuntur] over the roofs of men" (669-671). Thus, the reader is quickly reminded of how "all Ilium sank in flames and Neptune's Troy was upturned from the base" (II.624-625).

Selecting another locale removed from the capital, Seneca portrays a city of destruction in Oedipus. The plague does not differentiate among the classes, and everyone is the involuntary victim of its voracious onslaught:

No class is free from death; but every age and sex is smitten alike. Young men with old, fathers with sons, are joined by the deadly plague [funesta pestis]; husband and wife by a single fire are burned, and funerals lack bitter tears and lamentations. Nay, the persistent bane [pervicax clades] of our so great a woe hath of itself dried our eyes and, as oft in utmost misery, our tears have perished [periere lacrimae].

(52-59)

And the ravenous contagion gives death a more horrific image than the one by which it is usually known: "O dire appearance and new form of death [O dira novi facies leti], far heavier than death!" (180-181).

This personified abstraction knows no limits in the city of Thebes and has created an endless procession to the grave:

Each hour a new train moves on to Death; the long array of a mournful band [agminis maesti] hastes to the shades; the gloomy [tristis] procession jams, and for the throng that seeks burial the seven gates spread not wide enough. The grievous wrack of carnage [gravis strages] halts and funeral crowds funeral in unbroken line.

(124-132)

Ovid gives a similar picture of the plague's devastation in Metamorphoses VII. Aeacus describes the "dire pestilence" (523) as the creation of the immortals and thus beyond the power of man to control:

So long as the scourge seemed of mortal origin and the cause of the terrible plague was still unknown, we fought against it with the physician's art. But the power of destruction exceeded our resources, which were completely baffled.

(525-527)

Just as Seneca's "Healers fall victims" (Oedipus 69), in Athens "No one can control the pest, but it fiercely breaks out upon the very physicians, and their arts do but injure those who use them" (560-562).

Men's homes become prisons as death hangs in the air, grasping entire families in its claws. As a result, men "flee from their homes: for each man's home seems a place of death to him" (574-575). Yet the ineluctable monster pursues them in flight, and suicide becomes a preferable alternative for the suffering populace who join the masses left unburied with no one left to mourn:

Some hung themselves, driving away the fear of death by death and going out to meet their approaching fate. The dead bodies were not borne out to burial in the accustomed way; for the gates would not accommodate so many funerals. They either lie on the ground unburied, or else they are piled high on funeral pyres without honours. And by this time there is no reverence for the dead; men fight for pyres, and with stolen flames they burn. There are [sic] none left to mourn the dead. Unwept they go wandering out, the souls of matrons and brides, of men both young and old. There was no more space for graves, nor wood for fires.
(604-613)

But Lucretius' depiction of the "insatiable disease" (VI.1236) is perhaps the most vivid. Whereas Seneca's concern is Thebes and Ovid focuses on Athens, Lucretius' subject is the plague itself. He "is not primarily concerned to give an accurate account of a specific epidemic What he is concerned with is Plague, as an emotional, moral and psychological, disaster" (Wormell 60). The reader can feel the heat of the stricken citizens packed like animals in the suffocating atmosphere and can clearly visualize the foul pollution from the innumerable cadavers:

by the stifling heat [astu] death all the more piled them in heaps, being thus packed. Many bodies dragged out by thirst and rolling over the road lay stretched by the water-spouts, cut off from the breath of life by the too great sweetness of water; many in public places and roads you might see all about, bodies half dead [semanimo] with fainting limbs caked

with squalor [horrida paedore] and covered with rags, perishing in filth [inluvie] of body, nothing but skin on their bones, and that almost buried in foul ulcers [taetris] and dirt [sordidque]. Moreover, death had filled all the sanctuaries of the gods with lifeless [semanimis] bodies, all the temples of the celestials everywhere were burdened with corpses [cadaveribus], all which places the sacristans had crowded with guests. And now neither the worship of the gods nor their power was much regarded: the present grief was too great [praesens dolor exsuperabat].
(1263-1277)

Yet the strongest impression of the horrors of the plague comes not from the people gagging and smothered by the broiling and filthy air but from the delirium of the citizens who in their efforts to bury their dead intensify the havoc by victimizing one another:

Sudden need also and dire poverty [paupertas horrida] persuaded to many expedients: for they would lay their own kindred amidst loud lamentation upon piles of wood not their own, and would set light to the fire, often brawling with much shedding of blood rather than abandon the bodies.
(1282-1286)

Clearly, the pestilence is not the sole butcher; one's fellowman is also his assassin, and "Man's inhumanity to man makes the catastrophe yet more horrible" (Wormell 60).

These classical descriptions of the horrifying conditions associated with plagues are clearly reflected in William Ernest Henley's graphic account of the Wind-Fiend in London Voluntaries, in which he leaves no question of the terror of a "nightmarish London under the grip of disease and death" (Thesing, Muse 184). In all of these presentations, the reader is overcome by the filth and the desperation of people endlessly wandering in search of reprieve. But the gluttony of death is infinite and devours everything in its urban lair:

A cave of cut-throat thoughts and villainous
 dreams,
 Hag-rid and crying with cold and dirt and wet,
 The afflicted City, prone from mark to mark
 In shameful occultation, seems
 A nightmare labyrinthine, dim and drifting,
 With wavering gulfs and antic heights, and
 shifting,
 Rent in the stuff of a material dark,
 Wherein the lamplight, scattered and sick and pale,
 Shows like the leper's living blotch of bale:
 Uncoiling monstrous into street on street
 Paven with perils, teeming with mischance,
 Where man and beast go blindfold and in dread,
 Working with oaths and threats and faltering feet
 Some wither in the hideousness ahead.
 (IV. "Largo e mesto" 197)

Thus, Death is the unconquerable foe of the city and the ultimate doom of every inhabitant. The shadowy, plague-ridden cities of antiquity reappear amid "The broken tombs, dark walls, roofed by a sunless sky" (Buchanan, "The Swallows," I 173) in London, and nineteenth-century English poets seem literally "Hag-ridden by the thoughts of death" (Evans 5). Indeed, such a preoccupation cannot be avoided in a sordid world overwhelmed by "such a blast of corruption, made up of gases bred by filth, air breathed and rebreathed a hundred times, charged with odours of unnameable personal uncleanness and disease" (White 31). Yet a major difference seems to exist between the Roman and Victorian presentations of destruction and death. On the one hand, Roman literature reveals a strong inclination to portray every extreme of "devouring" (cf. Petronius p. 104) carnage and revels in the bloody violence of Seneca and the gore and "foul ulcers"

(cf. Lucretius p. 114) of the inescapable plague. In contrast, with the exception of Henley's *Wind-Fiend*, the Victorians tend to avoid giving excessive details of the more gruesome aspects of mortality. Granted, Tennyson's poems may predict imminent destruction, but the poet does not offer bloodthirsty scenes of the actual fall. Rather than depicting the violent collapse of a burning metropolis or the endless funeral trains in cities filled with contagion, the victims of death in Victorian poetry are more often the result of poverty and neglect. Thus, again arises the concern which the Victorians display for the destitute in the slums, the lonely alienated individual whose endless nightly wanderings provide the focus of James Thomson's *The City of Dreadful Night*, the terrifying depiction not only of the complete "disintegration of the self, the darkest hour of an individual soul, but also [of] the human condition in the modern world - a city, a country, a civilization in decline where 'all things good . . . /have been . . . strangled by that City's curse' (IX.20-21)" (Sharpe 66).

CHAPTER VI

DISINTEGRATION AND NIHILISM IN THE NECROPOLIS:

THOMSON'S THE CITY OF DREADFUL NIGHT

The poetry of James Thomson, "the laureate of pessimism" (Dobell), forbids comparison. Even though other Victorian poets may present the city as desolation and hopelessness, he alone depicts a necropolis, the true Lucretian wasteland. Critics may argue the origins of Thomson's "nightmare vision" (Thesing, Muse 100) - his unfortunate childhood and subsequent years in an orphanage, his literal obsession with the ghost of Mathilda Weller, his addiction to alcohol, or his "observation of the natural order of things, with its lack of apparent purpose" (Forsyth, "Evolution" 156). Nevertheless, no other poet of the period so clearly describes the metropolis as an "under-world of a bewildered and brutalized humanity" (Hyde 347), and quite similar to the philosophy expressed by Lucretius, Thomson's

pessimism is connected with the notion of man as an integral part of nature, subject wholly to natural law, and with the terror which arises when a heightened self-consciousness, without the stay of healthy animal instincts, finds itself confronted by the vision of all-involving motion and permutation.

(More 194)

Undoubtedly, the Roman author whose beliefs seem to be most openly represented in Thomson's works is Lucretius. That Thomson knew the De Rerum Natura well is obvious from his comparison of his own writing with that of the ancient. In a letter to Bertrand Dobell dated June 24, 1874, the year in which The City of Dreadful Night was

published, Thomson notes the opaqueness of his masterpiece which he says is "less remote than, say, Lucretius" (Salt, "B.V." 117). Yet the underlying despairing tone of the two authors is much the same. They see man as the pawn of natural law, a helpless creature in a merciless universe. Certainly, Thomson's "bitter denial of a God who could spin for his pleasure all these follies of creation, or . . . [his] horror of a living eternity, rings like an echo of the Tantum religio.¹⁶ And there is the same poetic fury in his vision of infinite motion" (More 191).

Therefore, before one turns to a discussion of Thomson's poetry, he should first consider certain aspects of Lucretius' thought which find parallels in the work of Thomson. Of course, from beginning to end, the purpose of the De Rerum Natura is "the overthrow of superstition" (Sellar, Poets 321), and the Roman openly admits the indebtedness of his philosophy to his Greek mentor Epicurus:

When man's life lay for all to see foully grovelling [foede]
upon the ground, crushed beneath the weight of Religion, which
displayed her head in the regions of heaven, threatening
mortals from on high with horrible aspect, a man of Greece was
the first that dared to uplift mortal eyes against her, the
first to make stand against her. . . . Wherefore Religion is
now in her turn cast down and trampled underfoot, whilst we by
the victory are exalted high as heaven.

(I.62-67, 78-79)

Like Thomson, Lucretius' reasoning which demands the denial of blind spiritual faith is based on his keen observation of the world in which

¹⁶Tantum religio potuit suadere malorum (De Rerum Natura I.101) - "So potent was Religion in persuading to evil deeds" Trans. Rouse, p. 9).

he lives. Instead of religion's providing humanity with hope and guidance, man is afflicted with unhappiness and pain throughout his life. Likewise, the deities affirmed by theology do nothing to avert man's misery. And finally, the fear of death which religious worship encourages in its followers only increases their despair, and this anguish is unnecessary since, according to Lucretius, nothing exists beyond the grave. Therefore, the Roman proclaims that spiritual faith does nothing to enrich man's life and to promote his happiness; instead, "So potent [is] Religion in persuading to evil deeds" (I.101).

For Lucretius, life is merely a series of tribulations, and man's efforts to alter this course and to achieve wealth and power serve no purpose. The poet feels compassion for the newborn child since "so much trouble [tantum malorum] awaits him in life to pass through" (V.227) and warns each individual of the life's miseries which cannot be avoided: "O pitiable minds of men, O blind [caeca] intelligences! In what gloom [tenebris] of life, in how great perils is passed all your poor span of time!" (II.14-16). Wherever upon the earth that man looks, instead of pleasures he finds "so great are the faults wherewith it stands endowed" (V.199).

Although Lucretius does not completely disavow the existence of divinity as does Thomson, the Roman gives a higher being no place in human affairs. For him,

the very nature of divinity must necessarily enjoy immortal
life in deepest peace, far removed and separated from our
troubles.

(II.646-648)

Rather than sympathizing with man and protecting him from danger, the deity "needing us not at all, . . . is neither propitiated with services nor touched by wrath" (II.650-651). In Lucretius' description, the gods seem much like humans in appearance and personality, differing only in their immortal state. Therefore, perhaps Lucretius' "inability to form the definite conception of a God without human limitations, as well as his strong sense of the imperfection of the world, [forces] upon him the absolute denial of any Divine providence over human affairs" (Sellar, Poets 380).

Certainly, Lucretius' repudiation of religion also includes the negation of the soul's immortality and life after death; he refuses to accept "the doctrine of a Divine Providence recompensing men, here or hereafter, according to their actions" (Sellar, Poets 368). Yet man should not be concerned about an afterlife since

when we shall no longer be, when the parting shall have come
about between body and spirit from which we are compacted into
one whole, then sure enough nothing at all will be able to
happen to us who will then no longer be, or to make us feel,
not if earth be commingled with sea and sea with sky.
(III.838-842)

Therefore, man should not lament the brevity of his small enjoyments in life, for once he is dead, he will not miss these pleasures.

Lucretius "exhibits the lassitude, the incurable tedium which pursue men in their amusements" (Arnold, "Modern Element," Prose, I 32) and scorns those who act

as if after death their chief trouble will be to be miserably
parched with thirst and burning drought, or a craving possess
them for some other thing! . . . But they do not go on to add
"No longer withal does any craving possess you for these
things."

(III.916-918, 900-901)

Yet the worst aspect of religion is its promoting apprehension in man's mind concerning death. Indeed, this fear must be destroyed for it stands in the way of any small happiness man is allowed:

that fear of Acheron [must] be sent packing which troubles the life of man from its deepest depths, suffuses all with the blackness of death [Omnia suffundens mortis nigrore], and leaves no delight clean and pure.

(III.37-40)

In fact, because of his fears and anxieties, man is half dead when alive, so why should he worry about the finality: "And will you hesitate, will you be indignant to die? You whose life is now all but dead though you live and see" (III.1045-1046).

Clearly, in the philosophy of Lucretius, "death is nothing [Nil] to us, it matters not one jot" (III.830) and must be accepted as the inevitable boundary: "There is an end fixed for the life of mortals, and death cannot be avoided, but die we must" (III.1078-1079). And through the words of the Roman, "the horror and pain of the thought of death are lost in a feeling of august resignation of the universal law" (Sellar, Poets 372) to which every man must submit: "you may live to complete as many generations as you will, nevertheless that everlasting death will still be waiting" (III.1090-1091).

Finally, if man believes that he can no longer withstand the sorrows of his present existence, Lucretius suggests the action taken by his "revered Democritus - death by suicide" (Kinsey 121):

Democritus again, when ripe old age reminded him that the recording motions of his mind were beginning to fail, of his own free will offered his head to death.

(III.1039-1041)

Such a recommendation is indeed morbid but certainly reveals a strong similarity to the pessimism of Thomson. In a world where man is denied any form of happiness or hope for a later reward since he "cannot escape the complete annihilation which is death" (Kinsey 120), the future for mankind is portrayed as clearly painful to witness. Certainly, "Lucretius's vision of human life is tragic only atoms and void and the remote gods exist for ever" (Wormell 61), and his picture of a hopelessly wandering humanity shares much with that of Thomson's city where "To arrive is not to cease from wandering, but rather to be doomed to roam without ceasing, and with no prospect of a further goal except death and oblivion" (Foakes 173).

In addition to his own individual pessimism echoing his Roman forebear "plunged in gloom and in stern sorrow" (Arnold, "Modern Element," Prose, I 36), Thomson was also witnessing the growth of scientific knowledge and the increased mechanization brought about by the Industrial Revolution which caused a general state of "mental confusion" (Byron 13) among Victorian writers. With the foundations of their religion under attack, they discovered themselves "forced to question the importance of man in the universe" (I. B. Walker 96), and their conclusions did not substantiate their former beliefs. As a result, beneath the veil of fashionable decorum and "solid and bewhiskered optimism" (Poems, ed. Ridler xxx) lay a deep-seated fear of the changing times, and the vast metropolis with its smoky factories and endless slums became the symbol of this trend toward despondency. Therefore, Thomson's literary significance clearly relies on "the fact

that his writings reflect in miniature the many aspects of that period's strong undercurrent of pessimism" (Byron 157).

The happiness of childhood was short-lived for Thomson. After the premature deaths of his parents, he became an orphan at eight years old and spent the next few years at the Royal Caledonian Asylum and the "Model School" of the Royal Military College, Chelsea. Although he did well in school and friends considered him an affable companion, his bouts with melancholy and alcohol began early. Ultimately, his entire life was a downward progression toward abject poverty and complete prostration from mental agony: "Thomson spent most of his lonely life in that city [London], boarding first at school, then with friends, and finally lodging, from 1866 until his death in 1882, in a succession of ever more shabby rooming houses" (Sharpe 65). Even his closest friends did not know of his whereabouts during the final weeks of his life until "The merciless City . . . at last claimed its victim" (Meeker 132). But the inconclusiveness of Thomson's total existence is emphatically pronounced by his gravesite. Not only are the words on the headstone almost illegible, but also both dates engraved thereon are incorrect. His birth is given as 1831 instead of 1834, and he died on June 3, 1882, not June 8 as the stone reads. "Thus the man who suffered all his life from neglect and misunderstanding has a grave that is uncared for and a headstone that is inaccurate. But Thomson would not have been surprised at this, for after all, 'every struggle brings defeat/Because Fate holds no prize to crown success'" (Lutz 36).

Obviously, the years of wandering amid the crowded city would have a devastating effect on an already unstable personality. One can vividly imagine a homeless shadow, an heimathlos¹⁷ (Maccall 19) victimized by alcoholism, depression, and insomnia, seeking the companionship he knew was impossible, and thus his torment was made the worse. In fact, his living in London "intensified his depression till [the city] took on the qualities of a narcotic" (I. B. Walker 89). Eventually, his drugged state became habitual: "At such times he incessantly walked the nighttime streets of London, trying to exhaust himself, but all the while unable to escape sights and thoughts that only deepened his melancholy" (Sharpe 65).

Yet Thomson believed that the city was more than a microcosm of a clockwork universe bereft of emotion and concern for its inhabitants. For him, the city felt actual malevolence toward the people and was actively striving to accomplish their destruction. He saw

the ruthless quality of its tremendous size and its relentlessly steady march Every man seemed like himself, dull and despairing and alone, and he recognized the insignificance and helplessness of the little human cogs in London's unceasing, unconscious machinery. The city became for him the City of Dreadful Night, as its net of despair and loneliness enveloped him and atrophied his hope. He came to think of London as the home of the lonely and hopeless, who made up the fraternity of which he was becoming a member. It was not that the city was simply unaware of him - it was as though it were a malignant force asserting its emotional domination over him, a curse which half paralyzed him and left him with no vitality to fight.

(I. B. Walker 79)

¹⁷Heimathlos is German for "a homeless one."

Although the culmination of Thomson's expression is The City of Dreadful Night, "the most famous poem of pessimism written in our language" (McGann 493), his earlier works present an appropriate exposition to his masterpiece. As early as 1855, years before he became a victim of the "ceaseless uproar" (Poems, ed. Ridler 5, 11),¹⁸ Thomson writes of "this sordid, restless life of ours" (14) in the sonnet "The Approach to St. Paul's." The masses of people are "heedless" (13) of their fellowman in their rush for "Mammon-gain" (3), and the reader can clearly visualize the solitary young man who later becomes the hopeless wanderer in The City of Dreadful Night: "Eastwards through busy streets I lingered on;/Jostled by anxious crowds" (1-2).

Yet "The Doom of the City" (1857) more explicitly enunciates Thomson's portrait of the merciless city, for here the roaring mob becomes emotionless stone. In an effort to escape his former tempestuous environment which has brought only sorrow, the voyager arrives at a more despairing one. In Part I, he explains the reason for his journey:

From out of the house I crept,
The house which long had caged my homeless life:
The mighty City in vast silence slept,
Dreaming away its tumult, toil, and strife.
(I.I.1-4)

¹⁸"The Approach to St. Paul's" is not included in Dobell's The Poetical Works of James Thomson (2 Vols.). Therefore, in order to include the poem here, Poems and Some Letters of James Thomson, edited by Anne Ridler, must be consulted.

The language seems to indicate that the speaker feels he must leave in secrecy while the prison-like city is asleep and thus unaware of his departure. He realizes that the metropolis offers him neither "home nor hope" but is only a "stifling tomb from which [he] now is free" (I.III.54-55).

But the voyage takes the man to an even more hopeless destination. Here "the breathless air" (II.I.21) denies any consolation or companionship, and the sky above symbolizes the reign of death below: "like a fiery pall,/Blazoned with death, that sky hung over all" (II.I.28-29). And the death imagery in the description of the city continues to predominate throughout Part II of the poem. "The City [is] dead in ever-voiceless dream" (II.V.125), and the continuous silence is more terrifying than the pandemonium of his former home: "Only a dark dead dearth/Of soulless silence yawned in dreadful mystery" (II.V.138-139).

The traveler, however, refuses to give up his quest for refuge and "[plunges] into the City of the Dead,/And [pierces] its Mausolean loneliness" (II.VI.143-144). Nevertheless, the funereal silence prevails where death is the sole guardian of its realm, and the man has to admit that his search is fruitless:

What found I? Dead stone sentries stony-eyed
Erect, steel-sworded, brass-defended all,
Guarding the sombrous gateway deep and wide
Hewn like a cavern through the mighty wall.
(II.VIII.193-196)

Indeed, everything within the metropolis appears "Frozen into a nightmare's ghastly death" (II.VIII.213).

The "crushing gloom" (II.IX.232) of the city is like a massive coffin and again provides a stark contrast to the environment the man has previously fled. Thomson's choice of the word peace (II.IX.255) is clearly ironic in that the contentment and restfulness associated with peace are absent in the tomb-like solemnity of this metropolis; the citizens here, in reality, know no peace. Granted,

their peace is vext no more by a curse - and -
shriek-swell'd roar,
By ferocities, obscenities, inebriate brawls and jars:

the strife of our sordid restless life
Is now locked in adamant bonds.
(II.IX.255-256, 259-260)

Line 259 obviously echoes "The Approach to St. Paul's" (cf. p. 127), but the effect of the silence is far more frightening than the jostling tumult. Here no one dares to disturb the austerity of the despot:

Silence broods ghastly on the dead realm's throne:
Whatever life in prayer or sign or moan
Would shake the Nightmare of his tyranny,
Shudders with anguish, horror, lunacy,
To feel its scorned and strangled pleadings creep
Like homeless spectres through the vacant deep,
And wither into nothingness at last -
Devoid of refuge, unrelieved, aghast.
(II.XI.293-300)

Thence the weary voyager departs the "deadly blank" (II.XIII. 317) of the city of stone and returns to "the darkness of the great abyss" (IV.II.47) of his former home. The contrast between the two environs emphasizes that man can never find refuge in any metropolis, for once again the voyager witnesses

an holocaust of woes, sins, lusts and blasphemies;
 When thy thousands of harlots abroad with the other
 thousands are met
 Of those who made them first and who kept them harlots yet:
 So dreadful, that thou thyself must sometimes look for
 the fire
 That rained from heaven on Sodom to make thee one funeral
 pyre.

(IV.IV.148-152)

Clearly, his quest has reaped no consolation and thus substantiates Thomson's theory of the futility of hope. Some critics believe that the closing of the poem offers a possible redemption (Thesing, Muse 139) since the teeming city, the "Queen of the Sea" (IV.IV.120), is admonished to humble herself and to make atonement for her pride, greed, and injustice. However, the fact that the final option given after "Repent" and "reform" is "perish" (IV.IV.119) denies such an interpretation. Instead, the poem negates any boon in life regardless of whether one lives in a mob-torn metropolis or a city of stone. On the one hand, the "awful mass of life" (IV.II.53), whose misdirected energies are "curbless and dreadful" (IV.II.62), is presented; its alternative is "an allegory of the stony insensibility of the human heart when numbed by destiny and despair" (Salt, "B.V." 217).

Whereas "The Doom of the City" is a condemnation of urban immorality, "the colossal image of 'A Lady of Sorrow' verges on the Satanic" (Noel-Bentley 197). Although this piece (1862-1864) is written in prose, it must be included in this survey of Thomson's poetic depiction of the city not only for its transitional value but, moreover, for its portrayal of the more thoroughly pessimistic trend of both Thomson's works and his actual existence. The metropolis

which in "The Doom of the City" has been either a tumultuous abode of greed and prostitution or a heartless mausoleum here becomes a demonic force which feeds on the despair of its inhabitants. The narrator is overwhelmed by its malignancy, and his presence in the necropolis is the desolate wanderer Thomson himself:

And I wandered about the City, the vast Metropolis which was become a vast Necropolis, desolate as a Pariah; burdened in all places and at all times with the vision of wrath and hatred that might dye the green earth blood-red, lust that might pollute all the seas, ignorance and guilt and despair that might shroud the noonday sun with eclipse.

(Thomson, ed. Schaefer 314)

Yet the greater horror lies in the fact that this man is no longer a mere spectator but a member of "the great Freemasonry of Sorrow" (315). And Sorrow herself provides guidance for the masses of the brotherhood

through the interminable streets of this great and terrible City. The ever-streaming multitudes of men and women, mysterious fellow-creatures of whom I know only that they are my fellow-creatures . . . confound and overwhelm my spirit until . . . I cannot believe myself walking awake in a substantial city amongst real persons.

(315-316)

Perhaps the idyllic "Sunday at Hampstead" (1863-1865) offers a degree of relief from the urban gloom when the clerks and shop girls, who have been "Tied to a desk and a counter" (I.15), escape the "monstrous grimy London" (IX.8) for a pleasant Sunday afternoon picnic in the countryside. Indeed, the tyrannical city may seem only a dream to one who determines to make the most of his bucolic adventure and thus addresses his love:

Was it hundreds of years ago, my Love,
 Was it thousands of miles away,
 That two poor creatures we know, my Love,
 Were toiling day by day;
 Were toiling weary, weary,
 With many myriads more,
 In a City dark and dreary
 On a sullen river's shore?

Was it truly a fact or a dream, my Love?
 I think my brain still reels,
 And my ears still throbbing seem, my Love,
 With the rush and the clang of wheels;
 Of a vast machinery roaring
 For ever in skyless gloom;
 Where the poor slaves peace imploring,
 Found peace alone in the tomb.
 (III.1-16)

But although these people may briefly enjoy the ease of the rural setting, they cannot deny the subconscious which continuously reminds them of the foreboding "mighty city of London" (I.5) to which they must soon return. Regardless of the leisure to be relished presently, the fantasy vanishes as the result of the city's omnipresent "psychological oppression" (Thesing, Muse 139). Thus, the narrator appears serene as he views the troubles of mankind from a distance and may serve as a mirror of Lucretius' philosophical withdrawal from the world:

Pleasant it is, when over a great sea the winds trouble the
 waters, to gaze from shore upon another's great tribulation;
 not because any man's troubles are a delectable joy, but to
 perceive what ills you are free from yourself is pleasant.
 (De II.1-5)

Yet like Lucretius, who demands the realization that one cannot escape the miseries of life (cf. p. 121), Thomson's speaker is fully aware that his refusal to involve himself "in the murk down there" (I.14) is impossible, and the words of Matthew Arnold regarding

Lucretius may easily be applied to Thomson's persona: "there is no peace, no cheerfulness for him either in the world from which he comes, or in the solitude to which he goes" ("Modern Element," Prose, I 33).

With Thomson's deteriorating friendships and more pronounced isolation about 1866 begins his "solitary existence in anonymous London rooms which pervades his nightmare poems" (Poems, ed. Ridler xix). Clearly, his portrayal of William Blake (1866), one of his most respected mentors, is indicative of Thomson's own loneliness and desolation:

He came to the desert of London town
 Grey miles long;
 .
 .
 .
 He came to the desert of London town
 Mirk miles broad:
 .
 .
 .
 There were thousands and thousands of human kind
 In this desert of brick and stone:
 But some were deaf and some were blind,
 And he was there alone.
 (1-2, 5-6, 9-12)

Then suddenly the bleakness of Thomson's depiction of the giant and overwhelming metropolis shrinks into a solitary hole when in 1867-1868 he "concentrates all the loneliness of a great city within a single dingy room" (Meeker 73) in "In the Room." The "twilight grey" (I.1) of the early evening appears "a dusky gloom" (I.4) in the sordid room "which [seems], at first, as still as death" (I.5). But the sole human inhabitant, the symbol of the complete "mental alienation from the surrounding world" (Thesing, Muse 141), is no longer capable of accepting his fate since "the he [has] become now

And the atmosphere becomes the more bleak as the spectator sees some early risers setting out to work. Their positive urgency toward their destination is obviously futile since the observer knows that in the relentless city their only fate is death:

When some stray workmen half asleep but lusty
 Passed urgent through the rainpour wild and gusty,
 I felt a ghost already, planted watching there.
 (268-270)

Nevertheless, The City of Dreadful Night remains the epitome of Thomson's expression. The poet "takes us to the nadir of darkness, hid in the earth's cone of shadow" (Hoffman 321), and never once throughout the entire poem does one ever imagine a ray of sunshine or a moment of rest, for the wanderer is allowed nothing. The monstrous "city is the emblem of everything" (Thesing, Muse 146), and the tone is one of "unrelieved and hopeless pessimism" (Dahl 346). No more can a person be merely reminded of the distant city's horrors as in "Sunday at Hampstead," nor can he be the observer of another man's sorrow as in "William Blake." Here as the narrator roams helpless and hopeless through the metropolis, Thomson vehemently pronounces that this Lucretian wasteland is "the condition of human life" (Williams 236).

Although by the time of the poem's composition Thomson had long since uttered his complete denial of God's existence and rejected any form of religion, interestingly enough his original draft of The City of Dreadful Night is headed by a quotation from the Book of Job 10:22: "A land of darkness, as darkness itself, and of the shadow of death; without any order, and where the light is as darkness"

(Sharpe 81). Others too have recognized the similarity between the poem and the same biblical text. For example, in a letter to Henry S. Salt, Herman Melville refers to the poem as "the modern book of Job, under an original form, duskily looming with the same aboriginal verities" (Salt, Company 108). And one may understand Thomson's choosing this verse as a subtitle since he considered "himself as a Job, an Ishmael, and outcast" (Sharpe 81).

The structure of Thomson's "great pessimist's manifesto" (Schaefer 77) is clearly defined. The Proem and odd-numbered sections are divided into seven-line stanzas of iambic pentameter, describe the setting, and state Thomson's philosophy. These stanzas' conformity helps to sustain the unrelenting tone of the entire poem and pronounces the "stern uniformity of Fate" (Salt, "B.V." 230). In contrast, the even-numbered sections open with a six-line stanza and then display a number of meters and forms to accompany the various moods of the speakers in these narrative accounts. Yet throughout, the first person narrator, whose "funereal intonation [gives] a voicing of utter despair" (Hoffman 318), details his one night's experience as "a series of symbolic adventures that illustrate the demonic isolation of human existence in the city" (Noel-Bentley 198).

In the Proem Thomson addresses his "sad Fraternity" (36), who with him rove the streets of "that same city of tremendous night" (30). All others are excluded from his message since "None uninitiate by many a presage/Will comprehend the language" (40-41). Also, the theme is clearly explained: the city is no imaginary vision but the

reality of life. In exposing "the bitter old and wrinkled truth/
Stripped naked of all vesture that beguiles" (9-10), Thomson emphasizes that "the city of dreadful night is real because it is a recurrent nightmare that has overcome the reality of the daydreams of the sunlight" (McGann 502).

The narrator then reiterates the pervasive theme of the poem that the seeming dream of endless, terrifying night is actuality in the sunless metropolis; the constant repetition of the nightmare has made impossible that "any/Discern that dream from real life" (55-56) since "life [itself] is but a dream" (57). Then the geographical boundaries of the city are given with a description of the "savage woods, enormous mountains,/Bleak uplands, black ravines with torrent fountains" (74-75). Within this "necropolis" (92), the inhabitants "wander, wander" (96), individuals who are "living men and women, actuated by every sensation of pity, horror, and despair" (Salt, "B.V." 227) and thus experience every type of misery which Lucretius describes (cf. p. 121). In this "termless hell" (116), the people realize Dante's dictum and "leave all hope behind who enter here" (120). And like the Inferno created by Dante, Thomson's nightmare city can be perceived "as a city of the mind as well as a city of the external world" (Crawford 35). Nevertheless, the presentation is one of "a surreal, nocturnal urban wasteland, set amidst barren and trackless wildernesses, an empty, dark and homeless city in which shadowy figures endlessly circle like miserable insomniacs, unable to find any meaning in their lives and yet unable to rest without it" (Trudgill 136).

Actual contact with a member of the city's populace is initiated in the first of the narrative sections. Focusing upon one particularly "intent" (127) traveler, the narrator follows him. But the purposeless of life is symbolized by the futility of their journey since their destinations in this city are where "Faith [has been] poisoned by the charnel air" (138), "Love . . . stabbed by its own worshipped pair" (144), and "Hope . . . starved out in its utmost lair" (150). Then the climatic watch image, the mechanical counterpart of the wanderer's endless circuit, re-emphasizes the absurdity of hope in a cosmos where objects continue to run and life goes on without any reason:

Take a watch, erase
The signs and figures of the circling hours,
Detach the hands, remove the dial face;
The works proceed until run down; although
Bereft of purpose, void of use, still go.
(158-162)

And like the useless watch, the wanderer continues to circle "thus for ever tracing out/The series of the fraction left of Life" (171-172) and thus symbolizes Thomson's many "spectral wanderers longing for their travesty of a life to be brought to an end by death" (Trudgill 137).

In this "phantasmagoria" (Byron 24) of despair, man's senses take on new abilities. In the blackness of night, "the eye a strange new vision learns" (182), and "The ear, too, with the silence vast and deep/Becomes familiar" (189-190). But no one questions what he sees or hears; he is too tired to care. He simply ceases to wonder

at the "mysteries of woe and terror" (201) in the lair "Where Death-in-Life is the eternal king" (199).

Then the reader becomes almost hypnotized by the incantatory monotony of the "the isometric interlude" (Stedman 456): "As I came through the desert thus it was,/As I came through the desert" (e.g., 209-210). In this "desert where a landscape of horror heaves and burns with continual threat" (Foakes 171), the total isolation experienced by the city's inhabitants is embodied in the vision of a woman, "O, desolation moving with such grace!" (268), whose guide through the oblivion is not a lantern or a lamppost but "Her own burning heart" (286). But this woman is just one of "Thomson's many wanderers [who] are all totally isolated, moving in dreadful night, with only their own small futile lights to guide them. These lights are only effective for intensifying the darkness about them" (Talbot 232). In this endless midnight, the sun's power to shed light is completely negated for it becomes but "a rim/A bleeding eyeless socket" (257-258). Finally, the repetition of the half-line which closes six of the stanzas, "No hope could have no fear" (e.g., 217), rounds out the mystical echoing effect of the section which Salt considers "the most mysterious and impressive episode in the whole poem" ("B.V." 232).

Exactly how one becomes a member of the homeless throng in the city cannot be explained since "none can clearly know" (309). But one fact is unalterable: any desire to depart from the city's fraternity is senseless. If one imagines that he has escaped, he is merely

deceived by his own fantasy. Any "who once hath paced that dolent city/Shall pace it often, doomed beyond all pity" (327-328), and must endure the curse of his habitation. Fate has ordained that "no one once entered, once realizing . . . the true horror of life, [is] ever able to escape again" (Schaefer 75).

The narrator's desolation is further intensified as he sits by the river and overhears "strange voices join in stranger talk" (345) from "bodiless voices" (347). The speakers have opted for the punishment of eternal hell instead of remaining in "this insufferable inane" (360). However, entrance into the pit has been denied by the warden who demands "the payment of the settled toll" (369). In order to gain admittance, each spirit must obey the words above the gate: "Leave hope behind, all ye who enter here" (357). But these beings are "Shut out alike from Heaven and Earth and Hell" (393) since their disconsolate existence in the city has destroyed any hope they may once have had. Thus, "even death is no refuge for hell itself denies entrance to the hopeless" (Dahl 346).

Continuing his "ghastly night-vision of a living, moving metropolis" (Meeker 32), the narrator admits that the distinction between shadows and actual men is completely blurred. Since "No man there [is] wholly sane in mind" (406), the differentiation is impossible. The mind becomes more confused as "phantoms there that were as men/And men that were as phantoms flit and roam" (414-415) in the "weird and awful" (418) city.

Again the narrator strays down to the river bank and listens to another conversation. In this instance, a passionate and embittered person, who thinks himself the "most wretched in this dolorous place" (441), argues with a logical and iron-hearted one, clearly representative of the unfeeling metropolis. The latter is fully insensitive to any emotion and coldly explains the cyclic futility of any hope: "The world rolls round for ever like a mill;/ It grinds out death and life and good and ill;/ It has no purpose, heart or mind or will" (456-458). His own apathy toward the other's despair clearly symbolizes the blind mechanical world akin to that of Lucretius (cf. p. 122) which "is quite indifferent" (464) to any individual or his fate.

Upon hearing the hoofs of horses and the "ponderous wheels" (470) of a wagon, the narrator wonders what the driver may have to sell in the blackness of the funereal city. That "The harness jingles" (477) is a strange phenomenon in a place of endless, horrendous night. But the narrator knows that the wares must in some way be associated with death, "Perchance . . . a Fate-appointed hearse" (483), since "all things good which should have been our portions,/ . . . have been strangled by that City's curse" (487-488).

The narrator next observes a "festival" (556) honoring the beauty of a young girl who has died, but no congregation is present. The only celebrant at her bier is a man who too appears almost death-like. The mansion wherein lies her corpse and kneels the young man praying at her side may from "every window of its front shed light"

(493), but all within remains "deadly still" (495). The entire house is "hung with its funereal pall" (509) as the young man expresses his "grief eternal" (533). Such a place is clearly the only possible "palace in the City of the Night" (557), and even though the house is flooded with light, death remains the conqueror and supreme monarch and demands the complete isolation of every individual.

The fraternity of the city's inhabitants includes every rank of person. And like the lack of distinction between phantoms and reality in the midnight air (cf. p. 140), the reasonable and the mad, the wealthy and the poor, become one in the gloom. Since "paradise" is reserved for "fools" (567) and "wicked" men's "hell" (568) denies entrance to the hopeless (cf. p. 140), all others are doomed to endure their fate as "brothers,/The saddest and the weariest men on earth" (584-585).

Thomson again makes use of a repetitive incantation to provide an hypnotic effect as each member of the crowd is questioned as he enters the cathedral. One may initially wonder why a cathedral would exist in the dreadful city where only hopelessness and desolation thrive, and his curiosity is further aroused because all of the entrants have previously enjoyed some measure of satisfaction in their lives. Yet each, whether his lot has been king, teacher, or clown, has realized that the horrific city is the only reality and that any good he has experienced is mere fantasy. Thus, he tells the questioner at the door, "I wake from daydreams to this real night"

(e.g., 601). As each answer echoes the preceding one, the brotherhood of the throng is more thoroughly emphasized.

Existence in the "sunless City's range" (647) seems endless, and the men ceaselessly wander in a "labyrinth from which death is the only escape" (Noel-Bentley 199). Therefore, the narrator cannot understand why anyone would lament that "life is fleeting" (649) and anticipate "some longed-for date of pleasure" (655) which will never come. In actuality, the passage of time is

like a monstrous snake,
Wounded and slow and very venomous;
Which creeps blindwormlike round the earth and
ocean,
Distilling poison at each painful motion,
And seems condemned to circle ever thus.
(660-664)

As a result, man should welcome "a speedy death" (684) to release him from "the intolerable hours/ . . . aeons of slow pain" (672-673), and the truly wise are acutely aware that their lifespan is only "an everlasting conscious inanition" (683).

As the scene returns to the cathedral, the ritual is a negation of all organized religions:

no swelling organ strain,
No chant, no voice or murmuring of prayer;
No priests came forth, no tinkling censers fumed,
And the high altar space was unillumed.
(688-691)

Then out of the darkness enshrouding the pulpit come the menacing words of "a voice of solemn stress" (701): "O melancholy Brothers, dark, dark, dark!" (710); and the bleakness of the atmosphere is re-emphasized by the echo, "dark, dark, dark" (715). In phrasing which

leaves no doubt in the minds of the congregation, the speaker utters his apocalyptic message in a painful allusion to the birth of Christ:

And now at last authentic word I bring,
 Witnessed by every dead and living thing;
 Good tidings of great joy for you for all:
 There is no God."

(722-725)

In this "gospel of atheism" (Byron 144), every individual is made aware that no spirit exists to care for insignificant man and that the universe has never felt "for man a special clause/Of cruelty or kindness, love or hate" (747-748). Clearly, no being even notices man's presence, and thus a person has no reason to dread punishment in an afterlife, to have "fear of waking after death" (769) since death itself is the only finality (cf. Lucretius p. 122). The voice espouses "the quiet, sincere unchanging conviction that the laws of the universe are unconscious of man, immutable by him, and supreme over him, and that he is powerless, therefore, to do more than await the oblivion of merciful death" (I. B. Walker 113). Man's only recourse to avoid the "sleepless nightmare" (Meeker 87) in the city is to "End it when [he] will" (768) a phrase ominously echoing Lucretius' words on the suicide of Democritus (cf. p. 123). Finally, in this section, "The religious vision is thus also inverted, and instead of comfort being found in the prospect of heaven, the only consolation for the city's people rests in the certainty that life ends absolutely with death" (Foakes 177).

In fact, taking one's own life is the preferable option to continued existence where "That City's atmosphere is dark and dense"

(790). Instead of finding comfort in the society of other men, the individual is adversely affected by the breath of those around him, "Each adding poison to the poisoned air" (793). Although the band of exiles in the metropolis may be small, each person's woes and lack of mental stability are compounded by those of his brotherhood:

Infections of unutterable sadness,
Infections of incalculable madness,
Infections of incurable despair.
(794-796)

But even if man does choose to end his own life, the grave offers no comfort. Once again, the narrator relates the picture of the city's inhabitants in the cathedral where a voice "from the northern aisle" (839) supports the preacher's words by recounting his own experience. This individual once had the opportunity to know "The rapture of mere being" (815). This chance, however, has been denied, and all his dreams for happiness are only "A mockery, a delusion" (828). Yet why should one wish for death because the grave, like life, is "senseless" (830) and gives no rest? The latter is merely repetitious futility of the former: "Our life's a cheat, our death a black abyss" (837). And again the reader hears the echo of Lucretius' denial of the afterlife (cf. p. 122).

Some men submerged in the city's blackness may turn their eyes from the gloom around them to the moon and stars and "think the heavens respond to what they feel" (857). Yet like Lucretius' careless deities who are completely unresponsive to man's prayers, actions, and needs (cf. p. 122), Thomson's celestial rim denies compassion, and thus such an attempt to find "pity, tremulous, divine" (867), or even

"cold majestic scorn" (868) is fruitless; the heavens are but another part of the unfeeling clockwork universe. They have "no heart or mind in all their splendour" (870) and like man experience the same "fusion and confusion" (876). Thus, similar to the pitiless walls of the city, the heavens above reject man's hope and assure his desolation.

As the traveler continues his lonely trek through the blank, he explains that his fatigue is becoming more acute since this journey is merely a continuation of countless nights before:

my feet [are] shod
 With heavy langour, and my frame downbent,
 With infinite sleepless weariness outworn,
 So many nights I thus [have] paced forlorn.
 (887-890)

But the creature whom he soon meets more sharply defines the interminable length of the hopeless circuit. What once "had been a man" (498) is now so deranged by his destitution that he has lost his human features and reverted to "something crawling" (892) upon the ground. Like the rest of the brotherhood, he is doomed to wander endlessly within the walls, forever to experience "this accursed night without a morn" (935). Just as hell allows no entry to those without hope to abandon (cf. p. 140), the city permits no one to exit. The man's insanity makes him unaware that he cannot "find the long-lost broken golden thread/Which reunites [his] present with [his] past" (928-929), but his return to innocence is impossible since fate has decreed that "The thing which has been, never is again" (956). Clearly, this horrific vision of humanity's retrogression into a

bestial state as the result of his mad hope for the unattainable is a picture of "a wasted life searching for an impossible ideal" (Campbell 128).

At last, the city offers an end to the journey, but not everyone is willing to abandon his existence, albeit meaningless, to the River of Suicides. Some may leap in a "blind and sudden frenzy" (965) while others aim for their goal slowly "with purpose set" (966), but many of the city's weary travelers decide not to take advantage of the opportunity to terminate the "ever-vain endurance" (975). Similar to the manner in which Lucretius wonders why man strives so hard to avoid the inevitability of death (cf. p. 123), the narrator asks, "Why actors and spectators do we stay?" (979). And the reader may well ask the question of Thomson himself. Why did Thomson, a man obsessed by the inferno of London, not end his own life? Perhaps, like the characters in his poem with whom he so closely identified, he wanted to see what fate would do to him next: "What shifts are yet in the full play/For our illusion" (981-982). Or, as one critic has suggested, Thomson chose not to commit suicide because such action would have been "to place too high a value on life" (Byron 111).

The intensity of man's helplessness as the victim of the iron-hearted metropolis is depicted in the following scene involving the angel and the sphinx. Before the unchanging, unresponsive "monster's large quiescent paws" (1032), the sword-bearing angel of religion is reduced to a mere man, a soldier who subsequently becomes disarmed and then decapitated: "the statues of the angel and the warrior,

representing the noblest aspirations of man, . . . fall shattered before the feet of the sphinx, the symbol of necessity" (Foakes 178). And amid the clamor of this violent metamorphosis, the sphinx remains immutable and "has nothing to say of the genesis of evil, nor yet its possible cure" (Byron 109). Likewise, the moon, symbolic of the entire universe, which "[bathes] the whole enclosure with its light" (1036), is unconscious of the man's annihilation.

This scene also emphasizes the imperviousness of the unfeeling city in another way. The narrator who witnesses the encounter repeatedly appears to sink into a "dull swoon/Which drugs and with a leaden mantle drapes/The outworn to worse weariness" (1011-1013). Yet each time he falls into "that repose unsweet" (1022), the result of complete physical and mental fatigue from his futile wanderings, he is harshly awakened by a "clashing noise" (e.g., 1014). Juxtaposed to this denial of rest reclines the comatose sphinx, which remains fixed with "Such mien as if with open eyes" (1027) it slumbers through the massacre. Clearly, this contrast pronounces man's impotence in the face of inexorable doom.

Finally, the poem reaches its climax with the description of the "City's sombre Patroness and Queen" (1111) Melancholia, the ghastly image of total nihilism. As she blankly gazes out over the metropolis, her "sombre thought beholds no outward sight" (1053). Her tools are "a pair of compasses" (1051), "Scales, hour-glass, bell, and magic-square" (1061), and "The household bunch of keys" (1071), and with these symbols of man's isolation she calculates "the time and

"Despair" is indeed a most appropriate conclusion for Thomson's great poem. Any glimmer of sky, any dream of escape, is damned in the blind, fatalistic galaxy of worlds symbolized by the unrelenting blackness within the city's walls. And this expression is clearly the result of the poet's own experience. Like the wanderer in the poem, Thomson watched any assurance he might have found trampled beneath the feet of a heartless fate, and the result of a life which he himself characterized as "a long defeat" (Meeker 1) became The City of Dreadful Night, "a mystical allegory, the outgrowth of broodings on hopelessness and spiritual desolation" (Stedman 456).

From his unhappy childhood to his premature lurid death at Philip Bourke Marston's apartment in 1882, Thomson knew every desolate alley of the Lucretian wasteland of Victorian London; and from the early "The Approach to St. Paul's" to "Insomnia," his poetry expresses the desperation of one who has participated in every horror that fear, poverty, and desolation can create. Yet worst of all, although the inhabitants of the city are joined by their membership in the brotherhood, Thomson and all the others are fully aware that they are completely alone:

Thomson does not wander calmly through his wasteland. He feels its terrors to the full, sees fiends in every somber shadow, and pours out through his imagery a passionate and personal anguish. Though he searches for light, though he intensely questions all he meets, he finds only dreadful night. His sole comfort is that he need not even keep up the pretense of courage, for though he is one of the inhabitants of a great city, no one cares about him.
(Dahl 347)

Thus ends a life perhaps best described as "the continual and inevitable defeat of the dream of hope by the dream of despair" (McGann 502), and Thomson's masterpiece serves as the climax of nineteenth-century British poetry regarding the brutal, terrifying city, the "New Rome" of the western world. Yet only one who has actually experienced the horror of the metropolis could verbalize the portrait so clearly, for

the true and lawful haunts of the poetic powers . . . [are] if anywhere, in the blank and desolate streets, and upon the solitary bridges of the midnight city, where Guilt is, and wild Temptation, and the dire Compulsion of what has once been done - there with these tragic sisters around him, and with Pity also, and pure Compassion and pale Hope that looks like Despair and Faith in the garb of Doubt, there walks the discrowned Apollo, with unstrung lyre.

(Clough, "Review of Some Poems by Alexander Smith and Matthew Arnold," Prose, I 362-363)

CHAPTER VII

THE SHROUD OF EXISTENCE

Clearly, the crowded and violent metropolis is the home of many undesirable aspects of human existence, and regardless of the pageantry of the court, writers in Augustan Rome and Victorian England alike reveal their keen awareness of the reality of life for the common man. Similar to their classical forebearers who portray the dehumanizing circumstances in Rome, in nineteenth-century London,

few could rest unconscious of the dire "condition of England," of widespread illiteracy, alcoholism, prostitution, hunger, and disease, of corrupt government and mob riots, of savage brawling in ill-lit streets and slave labor in squalid factories.

(Buckley 27)

And the strong classical background enforced by the Victorian educational system constantly reminded its listeners: "Forward then, but still remember how the course of Time will swerve,/Crook and turn upon itself in many a backward streaming curve" ("Tennyson, "Locksley Hall Sixty Years After" 235-236). Indeed, the Victorians realized that their own civilization, described as "a paradise for the well-to-do, a purgatory for the able, and a hell for the poor" (Morley 75), was a blatant reflection of the most horrid conditions of the ancient capital.

The writers in both eras acknowledge that tastelessness such as that of Trimalchio or Tennyson's "Northern Farmer" certainly forebodes a propensity for the excessive luxury displayed by the desires of

Propertius' Cynthia, the representation of those women who often fall prey to prostitution to get what they want, or of Clough's "Dipsychus." And although the sin-breathing city quite naturally welcomes the commerce of unrestrained extravagance, dissipation, and harlotry, not everyone enjoys basking in the wantonness of the rich. Some individuals endeavor to divorce themselves from this lifestyle, and Romans such as Horace and Juvenal express their desire to escape from the corruption and vice of the crowded city, a feeling shared by their successors who long to go

Forth from the dust and din,
The crush, the heat, the many-spotted glare,
The odour and sense of life and lust aflare,
The wrangle and jangle of unrests.

(Henley, II. "Andante con moto" 187)

Yet the masses in the slums are not granted this option, and forced to exist "'outside' Nature, and in seeming opposition to the traditional sanction of that hallowed rural life" (Forsyth, "Self-Image" 72), they become trampled beneath the mob in its rush to spread rumor and thereby to increase the terror in the city with groundless lies. Thus, both periods of literary development vividly describe the "sin-breathed exhalations of the city" (Noel, "London" 245), and the mobbed streets create an image of terror: "the physical congestion of the masses, even more than their great numbers, . . . [is] regarded as a threat to social stability" (Forsyth, "Nature" 402).

In addition to the threat of the mob are the "moral side-effects of urbanization" (P. G. Scott 41). Not only is the individual

endangered by the chaos of the mob but he must also learn to cope with his solitary existence devoid of companionship or guidance:

He has a life small happiness that gives,
 Who friendless in a London lodging lives,
 Dines in a dingy chop-house, and returns
 To a lone room while all within him yearns
 For sympathy, and his whole nature burns
 With a fierce thirst for some one, - is there none? -
 To expend his human tenderness upon.
 So blank, and hard, and stony is the way
 To walk, I wonder not men go astray.

(Clough, *Mari Magno*, "The Clergyman's
 Second Tale" 220-238)

Ultimately, since "the transition from a rural to an industrial society is seen as a kind of fall, the true cause and origin of our social suffering and disorder" (Williams 96), even hell itself is represented within the city's walls by "Hecate, whose name is shrieked at night at the crossroads of cities" (*Aeneid* IV.609). Man is thus overwhelmed by the evil in the metropolis, and his only escape is death, the ultimate conclusion for all material existence. In this Lucretian wasteland "that is neither itself divine nor created by divine power, . . . as it has come into existence, so it must one day perish" (Sellar, *Poets* 319).

The environment of the actual metropolis, however, is not always presented in the same light by the two ages. Rome appears more the backdrop of a stage on which horrific scenes of corruption and demoralization are performed whereas the Victorians give the setting of London an actual role in the production. For them, the city is a malevolent beast of prey who actively and consciously stalks every member of society with the single goal of destroying him. As a

result, the satirical comments of the Romans regarding urban crudity and even the sexual promiscuity of the harlots become in the nineteenth century harsh indictments of the metropolis as the cradle of sin. Again, perhaps part of the reason for the divergence in attitude was the presence of the institution of slavery in Roman culture, but human compassion is clearly more distinctly heard in the poetry of the Victorians.

Another plausible source of the difference in viewpoint may be the Romans' apparent fascination with gruesome events as portrayed in the thunderous, bloody tragedies of Seneca. Yet the plagues retold by Ovid and Lucretius substantiate this possibility as well. In contrast, the alienated wanderer in Victorian poetry more often experiences an ever-present, unavoidable sadness resulting only from the fact that he is alive. Rather than being struck down by a single terrifying cataclysm, he is the forgotten victim of Thomson's creation who has drunk "The cup of pessimism, with all its conjuring bitterness" (Stedman 456) every day of his life. He exists in a world where he

never [sees] a wild flower blowing, or [looks] on an unpolluted river; where children [cannot] learn to play save in alley or asphalte court; where the whole of the life of the immense majority of its inhabitants from infancy to the grave [is] a dreary routine of soulless, mechanical labour.

(Froude, Oceana 386)

Yet whether in Rome, London, or any metropolis, amid the "distracted swaying hither and thither of the multitudes" (White 28), even the sun does not willingly send its rays where only chaos, sadness, and horror prevail:

The hesitant sun returns, and rises, sadly veiling his beams in murky cloud [nube maestus squalida]; with woeful flame he brings a light of sadness [lumenque flamma triste luctifica gerens] and will look forth upon our homes stricken with ravenous plague [avida peste], and the day will reveal the havoc [stragem] which night has wrought.

(Seneca, Oedipus 1-5)

Finally, the compendium of this "grave/Within thy central din" (Smith, "Glasgow" 46) is Thomson's The City of Dreadful Night, which "represents London, and is a type of all cities [in which] frustration, rootlessness and insecurity are common to many of the lonely crowd" (Foakes 169). And "Because there is no light behind the curtain" (The City of Dreadful Night 1108), Thomson's necropolis, like every avaricious, lascivious, heartless urban locale, is "the city from which the only escape is death, the city which is limbo, a wilderness at the heart of the wilderness" (Foakes 171).

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