

Allusive Tactics: R.H. Horne, Induction, and “Desultory Criticism”

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It must be taken with exceptions; as all criticisms must, that aim at nothing more than to exhibit salient characteristics. (Richard Henry Horne, *A New Spirit of the Age*, 244)

A periodical editor, dramatist, historian, civil servant, and poet, Richard Henry Horne remains best known for the epic *Orion* (1843), which he notoriously priced at one farthing to promote sales and thereby improve the poetic taste of the reading public. And reaching and reforming that public, and perhaps even promoting that poem, too, as Herbert Tucker surmises, motivated the title of his patchwork collection of criticism, *A New Spirit of the Age*: “the title owed less to Hazlitt’s 1825 *Spirit of the Age*,” Tucker writes, “than it did to the business-minded reforming public to whose trade wind Horne trimmed his sail (with some unacknowledged help from a dissenter’s brilliant daughter named Elizabeth Barrett)” (Tucker 353). A good friend and, from 1839 to 1845, avid correspondent of Horne’s, Barrett contributed an unknown number of the book’s twenty-five remarkably uneven chapters (Paroissien) – some of which are long, colorful, occasionally witty analytical essays, others of which, hastily and tediously cobbled, resemble reference entries more than character sketches. Predictably, as Paul Schlicke notices, contemporary reviewers snubbed the book for its affectation and its eccentric selections and

omissions (*Westminster Review*); for its apparent lack of aesthetic, methodological, and moral principles (Henry Chorley); and for its dullness (Thackeray) (Schlicke 846). Schlicke essays to defend *A New Spirit of the Age* as “a work of genuine insight” (846), but his apologetics are unconvincing: the book lacks any substantial genealogical bearing on present critical methodology that might have redeemed it for twentieth-century critics and most of its alleged insights – the early acclaim for Tennyson and Dickens, the recognition of the age of the novel and of domesticity, even the respectful acknowledgment of female work (Schlicke 846) – are actually derivative. All Horne says of Tennyson was said by A.H. Hallam; his position on Dickens synthesizes antithetical but familiar opinions and manages to do so only through extensive quotations from and analogies to Charles Lamb’s well-known essay on Hogarth. Originality was not necessarily what most mattered to Victorian critics and their readers, however, for most knowledge counts as such because it fits decided parameters for truth in its field.

Recent criticism has accentuated how the hermeneutics of suspicion – “knowledge in the form of exposure,” as Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick influentially put it (138) – has dominated academic literary criticism and, in turn, obscured alternative epistemologies and aesthetic relations. Some such alternatives lurked in Victorian literary criticism, including Horne’s, before the hermeneutics of suspicion and its accessory, allegorical interpretation, were institutionalized as the reigning methodology of university literary scholarship. To be sure, some of the most familiar nineteenth-century critics – Coleridge, Hazlitt, Arnold, Ruskin, Pater – variously subscribed to the emergent depth epistemology and its tropes of organic wholeness and synecdoche, which fueled Practical and New Criticism (Law); and others – David Masson, for instance – regularly portrayed literature as a vehicle for disclosing immanent ideologies, prefiguring New Historicism (Farina 2015). But the notability of these particular critics accrues to the similarities between their methods and values and our own. Academic histories of criticism typically constitute implicit or explicit genealogies of present practices that focus the choice

figures and texts that anticipate formalist methodologies by deciphering implicit contiguities between form and content.

Negotiating a practice between the adjudication of taste and allegorical interpretation, however, most Victorian criticism instead aimed for something like what Horne describes above in *A New Spirit of the Age* (1844): an exhibition of salient, not latent, characteristics. If much of this exhibition was indeed puffery and opinionating, a substantial portion nevertheless surpassed mere summary and evaluation: it contains an occluded repertoire of critical tactics and a now outmoded but once conventional epistemology. Horne's criticism was exceptional, then, not for originality or innovation, but for extraordinary representativeness. *A New Spirit of the Age* does not construe innovative interpretations because interpretation was not yet an established critical protocol. It does condense the range of otherwise diffuse critical tactics and attitudes that did constitute the parameters for knowledge production in Victorian criticism. As representative as any of its subjects, that is to say, *A New Spirit of the Age* marshals the whole catalogue of tropes animating literary criticism in the 1840s. Here and there Horne invokes organic wholeness, aesthetic autonomy, and other figures of depth, but his principal tactics are paradox, especially the idiomatic articulation of "particulars" and "generals" that evoked the aura of induction, and a threefold notion of tact: attention to the physiological feel or impression of a text, investment in a writer's moral delicacy or decorum, and persistent tangential allusion, habitually "touching upon" without fully elaborating, various topics "suggested" by a text under consideration. Where modern critics produce arguments, Horne and his peers produced tactful, allusive, and "suggestive" descriptions.



Markedly more optimistic than its largely melancholic forbear, Hazlitt's *Spirit of the Age* (Schlicke 829-30), and progressive in its politics, *A New Spirit of the Age* forwards its favorite subjects as industrious heroes akin to, if to the left of, those praised by Carlyle's *On Heroes, Hero-Worship, and the Heroic in History* (1841). Horne addresses a diverse group of

politicians, reformers, and writers, as disparate as Dickens and P.J. Bailey, the author of "Festus." Like Hazlitt and Augustin Sainte-Beuve, the foremost critic of the time, Horne presumes writings to be "so inextricably and so interestingly mixed up with their [authors'] biographies" (108) that his criticism aspires to conjure authorial ethos rather than the "meanings" of individual works. In the Preface, Horne protests that his "criticisms are entirely on abstract grounds" and that he has "carefully excluded all disagreeable personalities, and all unwarrantable anecdotes" (v). Notwithstanding this perfunctory nod to disinterestedness, some less than flattering anecdotes happily follow: most notably a delicious yarn about Landor embarrassing a farmer, whose pond he was illegally fishing, by trapping him in his casting net. The preponderance of biographical material, crammed into opening paragraphs, is routine data about parentage, place of birth, education, and occupation, whereas the bulk of the essays consistently gesture indirectly at moral vibes like assiduity and strength and shortcomings, like laziness or impetuosity, which in turn determine the salutary or insalubrious influence of texts on the public.¹ Capitalizing on the vogue for the Hegelian spirit of history, the book joined prose like Southey's *Colloquies* (1829), Mill's "The Spirit of the Age" (1831), Bulwer Lytton's *England and the English* (1834), Pugin's *Architecture of the Fifteenth and Nineteenth Centuries* (1836), and Carlyle's *Past and Present* (1843), all of which interpret their subjects as symptomatic of a latent and moralistic zeitgeist or temper. The characterization of such a current, as it was often called, was a dominant objective of Victorian nonfiction.

Some of the representative features of *A New Spirit of the Age* are familiar enough that I need only mention them. Like the infamous Francis Jeffrey and his peers, Horne can be amusingly dismissive and charmingly frank in his condemnations. In an otherwise laudatory chapter on Wordsworth, for instance, he speculates that "subjects and characters seemed to be chosen, and entire poems written expressly with a view to provoke ridicule and contempt. He wrote many poems which were trivial, puerile, or mere trash" (191). As I have said, Horne sparingly invokes the

ideal of organic wholeness, regretting, for instance, that "The design of [Landor's] larger works, as wholes, are also deficient in compactness of form, precision of outline and condensation" (105). Horne also privileges the subconscious imagination that was later more influentially and elaborately described as the "hidden soul" in E.S. Dallas's *The Gay Science* (1866). He defends Dickens' "instinctive" genius and its "suddenly revealed" ideas as well as its "accidental," which is to say unintentional, effects and meanings (43). With the Romantic nostalgia of Carlyle and Arnold, Horne regrets that "this unconsciousness of the operation of their own genius, which was perhaps the case with nearly all the great writers of former times, hardly applies now with any force in our age of constant analysis and critical disquisition" (44).

Like most Victorian literary criticism, *A New Spirit of the Age* also marvels repeatedly at profusion, prodigality, and productivity of all sorts: at Dickens' "apparently inexhaustible variety and truth of character" (11), "surplus vitality" that "can fill page after page" (31); at Gore's "marvelous capacity of production" and "teeming eloquence" (137, 138); at Martineau's "great industry" (229); at Barrett's singly "extensive and diffuse acquaintance with literature" (267); and at G.P.R. James' "voluminousness," "the enormous quantity of books he has written" (130). "If all these works were gathered together," Horne quips of G.P.R. James, "and a scrivener employed to copy them, it would probably occupy him a longer period of fair average daily labour in the simple task of transcription than the author expended upon their composition" (131). Victorians tended to correlate modernity with the multiplication or expansion of everything, including print, personages, data, and details, as well as people and commodities, but upholding the scale of publication underscored its physical and moral influence and thereby aggrandized the role of literary criticism (Farina 2010).

As many have noted, an epistemological investment in paradox underwrote Hazlitt's *Spirit of the Age*. Schlicke observes that "spirit" characterizes the zeitgeist as "a clash between opposing forces [...] oppositions between intellect and imagination, abstract thought and

dramatic experience, speculation and circumstance, past and present, reaction and progress, tyranny and freedom" (833-34). And "in the very act of positing the notion of a unified spirit," James Chandler adds,

Hazlitt has constructed a very scheme of contradictions. Not only are the contradictions discernible; they are emphasized by Hazlitt's arrangement of things. Writers are contrasted with other writers both within essays (Mr. Campbell and Mr. Crabbe), and between essays (Lord Byron and Sir Walter Scott), and, where two paired figures are both accorded representative status, they nonetheless may be said to agree on virtually nothing. (181)

The accumulation of contradictions between and within representative individuals and their characteristics endows Hazlitt's subjects with a complexity that seems to require explanation, and so the identification of paradoxes helped establish literary criticism as a discipline.

Horne follows Hazlitt, regularly calling attention to striking admixtures and peculiar combinations. "Mr. Macready's character," he says, "is made up of stronger opposites than is usual, however common those antagonisms are in forcible characters" (257-58); and he lists Macready's clashing characteristics: "great energies of action" but "morbid will"; "a limited imagination" but "large ambition," and so on (258). Horne likewise organizes many chapters around the tension of contrasting modalities of influence, writers who achieve equally representative effects through divergent means, as with Wordsworth's "sense of moral dignity" and Hunt's "loving spirit" and "smiles" (192), for example, or Bentham's "systematizing" and Carlyle's "reviving and reiterating" (336), for another. The tacit motive of Horne's work is to identify these types of contrast, tension, or paradox, not to resolve or explain them.

Thus Horne begins the opening essay on Dickens with an apologia for paradoxes and "strange admixtures." He describes how "extensive knowledge and experience of the world" render men "very credulous and of open-armed faith to embrace strange novelties," capable of seeing "truth

through the refractions of paradox and contradictory extremes" (9). He lauds Dickens' "fit and harmonious admixture of the opposite elements of tragedy and comedy" – what Dickens described in *Oliver Twist* as the "regular alternation" of "the layers of red and white in a side of streaky, well-cured bacon" (Dickens 117) – in "intermediate shades and gradations" without "abrupt and offensive contrast and revulsion" (47). Mrs. Gamp offers "an unexampled mixture of the humorous, the grotesque, the characteristic, and detestable" (32). Horne nevertheless insists that no character can adequately represent Dickensian characterization, "nobody can speak satisfactorily for an assemblage composed of such heterogeneous elements" (22), a claim that undermines the generic principle of *A New Spirit of the Age* unless the spirit Horne describes is heterogeneity.

Horne extends contradictory admixture to other elements of style, like Tennyson's "harmonious blending of the poetical and familiar" (204). This at-once epistemic and aesthetic virtue marks a rupture from the dominant moral objectives of sincerity and propriety, which dictated that appearance, expression, tone, and form ought to correspond with actuality, interiority, circumstance, or content. For example, Horne castigates Thomas Ingoldsby for his "exquisitely blended [...] horror and levity" (82): "the only possible attempt at justification of such writings," he says of the *Ingoldsby Legends*, "must be on the score of some assumed merit in the unexampled mixture of the ludicrous and revolting – the 'exquisite turns' – 'the playfulness' of these bloody fingers" (85). Even as Horne laments in Ingoldsby's work "the incongruity of the actual emotions compared with those which the subject was naturally intended to convey" (90), he identifies and reproduces incongruity as the fit object of critical attention and analysis, positive or negative. The chapter on Thomas Carlyle gives explicit evidence that internal contradictions were becoming attractive objects of critical attention and that resolving such contradictions was becoming the signature task of the critic: "[Carlyle] applauds inactivity and silence; but he also applauds work: he says man must work, and exhorts every one to do his utmost. These contradictions,

however, have a central meaning, which we shall attempt to explain” (346).

Horne briefly assigns these contradictions to the strife inherent in the “Competitive system,” but I am less interested here in his explanation of Carlyle’s critique of capitalism than in underscoring the way he legitimates his criticism as intellectual work by representing the writing of his subjects as enigmatical, contradictory, or otherwise problematic and therefore in need of some form of reconciliatory tact.

Perhaps most prevalent of all critical paradoxes in the 1840s was the concomitant valorization of lucidity and indirectness or implicitness, whose lexical signature is the compound modifier “graphic and suggestive.” “Graphic and suggestive” conjures mimetic exactitude, on the one hand, and vague, provocative associations or intimations on the other. In one chapter Horne praises the “graphic powers” (37), “graphic truth and originality” (39), “Happy Words and Graphic Phrases” (39), and “graphic absurdity” (43) of Dickens, who “can write so suggestively by accident” (43). Elsewhere, Ingoldsby offers “Nell Cook” “clearly and graphically told in rhyme” (81); Carlyle’s prose is “graphical and picturesque [...] by force of being philosophical and poetical” (340, emphasis in original); and *Sartor Resartus* is noted “for graphic vigour and quantity of suggestive thought” (343).

“Graphic” and “suggestive” were established analytical categories, value terms that performed heuristic work. Graphic denotes accuracy, vividness, and simplicity or clarity, which were routinely praised as hallmarks of good style. Clarity indicated moral transparency and sincerity. In critical practice, the value of clarity comes through in simple adjectival praise, as when Horne writes of Lord Ashley’s “simply stated and lucidly arranged” facts (66) and of Martineau’s “free, clear, and unaffected style, which in her later productions is admirable from its lucid distinctness and simple force” (229). But clarity likewise operates at the methodological level, for Horne routinely assumes the self-evidence of his claims and cites long passages without analysis, as if they were certain to provoke the same reactions in any reader. With the passive voice, he

assumes, for instance, that Milnes "will be found to attain [his "standard of inherent beauty"] most completely" and "a short extract [...] will suffice to illustrate this" beauty, marked by "chaste repose" (155). Horne adduces an eighteen-line block quotation and then begins a new paragraph on a new topic. As Nicholas Dames has observed, the prolonged quotations in Victorian criticism seem to be "*autoanalytic*" (20; Dames' emphasis) inasmuch as their "very presence obviates commentary" and warrants little "critical redescription" (Dames 20). For Dames, this critical protocol assumes that certain excerpts can "[induce] in the reader" "the sheer feeling of reading" the whole text under review from the perspective of the reviewer (18).

The mechanics of Associationist psychology, the dominant psychological paradigm for most of the nineteenth century, explained how feeling worked and thus how clarity, like that Arnold imputed to the Homeric "grand style," intensified reader affect. As G.H. Lewes and Herbert Spencer explained, the simplest words were the ones people experienced first because those words therefore were associated with more subsequent sensations, ideas, and memories. Horne assumes an efficient associative mind in his method: he relies on acknowledgement or identification, rather than analysis or interpretation. "This is not a fanciful criticism," he writes, for example, of Charles Lamb's description of Hogarth's Rake: "all that Lamb describes of that face, is *there*, and anybody may see, who has an educated eye, and clear perceptions of humanity behind it" (17; emphasis in original). Instead of courting prestige by drawing attention to the sophistication of his insights, Horne routinely disavows them as telling it like it is, as what we might now refer to as "just" or "surface" reading.² Posterity may have too comfortably dismissed such work as simple description merely because it does not match the methodological practices of formalist interpretation, when instead they evidence a genuinely Victorian epistemology and heuristic. Good writing was deemed self-evident.

Self-evident, because its import or affect was deemed contingent on the reader: the efficiency of clarity was offset by the unpredictable,

contingent, altogether individual content of readers' actual associations, which depended on experience, not universal humanity. The adjective "suggestive" marked the formal quality of works that evoked associations without ever aspiring to specify the contents of these suggestions, which necessarily varied for readers. The process of inducing associations was routinely called "suggestion" since 1820, when the influential commonsense philosopher Thomas Brown's *Lectures on the Philosophy of the Mind* and *Sketch of a System of the Philosophy of the Human Mind* explicitly replaced "association" with "suggestion" because the former unduly connotes "ideas" (Brown *Sketch* 185-89, 204-5). To the extent that a critic invested in this model of psychology, he would attend less to the interpretation of ideas than to the formal properties or "links" by which a text induces those ideas. Hence Horne lauds Lewes's *Zanoni* (1842), for instance, for "the truthfulness of its suggestions": "The fabled events represent, or are types of, the links of association, the sympathies and antipathies, the instincts smothered or left undeveloped in common life by the nature of our education, pursuits, and habits, but not the less elemental principles of nature" (306). In discussing Carlyle, Horne describes this suggestive process as a poetic form of thinking that "proceeds," as he says, "rather by analogy and subtle association than by uses of logic" (341).³

Central to this occluded, bygone mode of analysis are gestural suggestions that often go by the name of "allusions" – not in the sense of quotations or oblique references to other texts, but in the sense of intimated, implied, indicated but not elaborated thoughts. For example, Horne itemizes Lamb's observations – "Lamb also alludes to the kneeling female [...] to the 'sad endings of the Harlot and the Rake,' [...] to the 'heart-bleeding entreaties' [...] and to the sweetly soothing face of the wife" (17) and then adds his own observation about Hogarth's prints. The subsequent paragraph avers that recognizing the semantic import of this catalog of features and to Dickens' early fiction is self-evident: "How analogous, how closely applicable all this is to the finest parts of the works of Mr. Dickens, must be sufficiently apparent. It may be hardly necessary to mention any corresponding scenes in particular" (17). Noting or alluding to the similarity seems to be enough for Horne.

Allusion functions for Horne as a critical tactic, in both de Certeau's sense of a form of productive reception and in the social sense of decorum, of a delicate touch. "We allude," he says, "to the scenes where" Mr. Stiggins and Mr. Pecksniff get drunk (31), and "Allusion may also be made to [Sykes] not daring to turn his back towards the dead body [...] to the circumstances attending his flight, and to the conduct of his dog" (41). The first allusion generates a series of meandering sentences of description that culminate in observations about the superiority of the proverb "drunkenness exposes a man" to "liquor disguises a man" (17). The "two inimitable scenes," Horne explains, "not only display the secret capacities and the habitual bent of the mind, but may also be regarded as physiological studies" inasmuch as they demonstrate how "a charlatan, to succeed, *must* possess a strong physique [...] to maintain [...] their [sic] bland and ruffled exterior" (33). These observations are not so much integral parts of an overarching exploration of Dickens' physiological manifestations of character (though Horne remarks on that often enough) as they are by-the-way observations in an itemization of Dickens' memorable scenes. Horne's essay alludes to passages and other features without determining their meaning or effect, perhaps either because this vagueness allows the critic to avoid contradicting the reader or because the content of a suggestion or idea evoked by a passage is subordinate to the sheer suggestivity itself. Alluding to suggestive scenes recalls readers' associations. Horne's interpretation of Nancy's murder is limited to a subordinate clause, tacked on with an em dash, conjecturing about Sykes' extinguishing a candle before getting to work: " – the tone of expression suggesting a vague notion of some excuse to himself for his contemplated ferocity, as if it were a sort of duty" (41).

As a collection of suggestive allusions, Horne's essays do not marshal evidence and integrate interpretations into a cohesive argument so much as they gesture at or touch upon the spirit of a text. As he says in his chapter on popular prose fiction, "If we had prescribed for ourselves in this desultory criticism anything like a distinct plan, we should be terribly puzzled to assign a satisfactory reason for turning from Mr. James to Mrs. Gore. [...]"

But we have no plan at all – beyond that of illustrating two or three popular phases of our prose fiction through two or three of its master-spirits” (137). In the very essay in which he critiques G.P.R. James for lacking a cohesive plan to his novels (132-34), Horne disavows methodology in a way that respects the stereotypical British aversion to method and instead embraces the genteel freedom of pursuing whatever “occurs to us” (137), as if out strolling the country house park.

Allusive gestures at fuller potential arguments fill *A New Spirit of the Age*, which begins with an apology for omitting various individuals because they exceeded classification or because of the “inability to find sufficient space” for them (iii). The feigned lack of space was an explicit, commonplace tactic for nineteenth-century critics, who would of course explain themselves in greater detail if they had more space to do so: by synecdoche, such allusive gestures suggest richer, fuller analyses than they commit to paper. In an 1855 essay, “The First Edinburgh Reviewers,” Walter Bagehot claims “review writing but exemplifies the casual character of modern writing” (52) and appeals, formally, to the distracted modern reader, with his “head full of sums,” “reverting perpetually [... to] mundane topics” (53). Bagehot dismisses the suggesting, implicative style of what Horne embraces as “desultory criticism.” The style of reviews, Bagehot says, is “fragmentary yet imparting what he says, allusive yet explaining what he intends, disconnected yet impressing what he maintains. This is the very model of our modern writing” (55). Bagehot derides this “necessary incompleteness,” and in a later essay on Tennyson’s *Idylls*, he sardonically denominates the related practice of feigning not to have enough space to explain and prove an argument as “allusive criticism.” Bagehot sometimes indulges in the practices he mocks: “We may not pause to prove this,” he says of a remark on Shelley, “it is the nature of allusive criticism to be dogmatic; we must appeal to the memory of our readers” (392). As a learned professional and a competitive editor, Bagehot clearly dislikes and distrusts this form of writing (Brake 94-95), but he nonetheless registers it as the dominant heuristic alternative to systematic argument and interpretation in 1840s criticism.

"Touch" often enough describes the means by which mid-nineteenth-century writers present the moral kernels they purport to induce from their subject texts. If clarity was paramount, simplicity and explicitness provoked severe mockery. The subordination of didacticism to implicit morality, tactfully and naturally – which is to say indirectly – represented, is most adroitly articulated by the earliest reviews of Jane Austen. Walter Scott, for instance, appreciates the kind of moral Austen evokes from the "current of ordinary life": using the concurrently decorous and physical idiom of touch and assuming, too, the self-evidence of his subject, he marvels at "the peculiar tact with which she presents characters that the reader cannot fail to recognize" (193). Richard Whately likewise appraised how "the moral lessons also of this lady's novels, though clearly and impressively conveyed, are not offensively put forward, but spring incidentally from the circumstances of the story; they are not forced upon the reader, but he is left to collect them (though without any difficulty) for himself" (360). Later criticism firmly established the assumption that the morality of a text was most properly embedded tacitly in its style and not ostentatiously articulated as its subject. Edward Bulwer-Lytton, for example, discerns "two kinds of moral fictions" in his essay "On Moral Fictions," a review of Harriet Martineau's *Illustrations of Political Economy*: lesser fiction that inculcates "some decided end" and superior fiction "in which no *one* distinct end is arrived at, and no solitary maxim worked out from the rich variety of the whole; – but which, nevertheless, abounds in moral lessons and scientific inquiries, in which the heart is touched, the passions elevated, or the mind enlightened" (146; emphasis in original).

Horne too invokes the manners and physiology of touch, remarking on different writers' "fine tact," "the dramatic *tact* of the *raconteur*," "much tact and adroitness" (16, 129, 140). Like his predecessors and like the more famous Henry James whose "Art of Fiction" ardently ascribed morality to style, he harbored a concomitant distaste for explicit didacticism and an insistence that tacit moral import nevertheless could and ought to be, despite its implicitness, unmistakably clear. Morality was

not altogether divorced from content, for Horne worries about the “equivocal morality” of parts of *Martin Chuzzlewit* (27) and *Oliver Twist*, which temporarily aligns “our sympathies” with the “hunted-down” Sykes (30). But Horne contends that Thomas Ingoldsby cannot redeem his immoral style with his moral concluding distiches and stanzas: “they are all written upon the same principle of arrant twaddling advice, the self-evident pointlessness of which is intended to look like humour, and are humiliating to common sense” (87). Milnes, however, eschews “the vulgar utilitarianism of moral drawing” but consistently perceives “the spiritual significance” of beauty (159). With “spiritual” Horne connotes here not just an unspecified theological energy but also an abstract value, a suggestive touch of significance rather than a concrete fact or pragmatic lesson. The spirit of the age, it seems, is a mannerism and modality, a form of tact and suggestion without content.

We are accustomed to translate suggestions into ideas, to interpret the implicit, but Victorians had more purchase in “induction,” the work of abstracting general knowledge from observed particulars. Victorian critics habitually observe the ways texts or other artifacts oscillate between the scales of particularity and generality, and by doing so they purport to identify induction in action and thus to ascribe a philosophical or scientific quality to their subjects and writing. Induction had tremendous clout in the nineteenth century: as Mary Poovey puts it, “the problem of induction [...] constitutes the heart of the epistemology of the long modern period” (327). Nineteenth-century writers nearly always aligned induction with Francis Bacon; and, as David Simpson has said, Bacon evoked a common-sense Britishness that “British intellectuals” routinely marshalled “in their campaign against system and theory” (Simpson 43). Simpson observes how Baconian method was described as inherent in the national character and constitution, part of Britons’ innate modesty, liberality, sincerity – part, that is to say, of their innate capacity for empirical experimental practice (Simpson 45). I doubt many writers actually ever proceeded deliberately from objectively observed particulars to ever more inclusive generalizations according to Bacon’s experimental method, but they did

not have to: employing the idiom of induction – the words “particular” and “general” and their synonyms, including “individuals” and “classes” or “types” – mustered the epistemological éclat and British ethos of induction for any subject.

In the work of Dr. Johnson, Coleridge, Lamb, Hazlitt, and many other critics, the idiom of induction supplied the stock compliment to pay Shakespeare: his individuals, nearly all late eighteenth- and nineteenth-century critics say, are both individuals and representative of types, eccentric and familiar. Horne follows suit and repeatedly endows Dickens’ work with the same inductive and innately British vibe: “Mr. Dickens’ characters, numerous as they are, have each the roundness of individual reality combined with generalization – most of them representing a class” (21). Horne iterates this compliment throughout, each time working to uphold mutual investments in a reality defined by concrete, material particularity and abstract, ideal universality. To wit: Dickens’ character are, Horne equivocates, “*fac-simile creations*, built up with materials from the life, as retained by a most tenacious memory. They are *not* mere realities, but the type and essence of real classes; while the personal and graphic touches render them at the same time individualized” (24; emphasis in original). This trope dominates Horne’s writing. It recurs in the balancing of abstraction and evidence, as when it says Dickens’ “universality does not extend beyond the verge of the actual and concrete” (35). And it blends seamlessly with the German Idealist motif of organic wholeness: “How very like [Hogarth’s prints] are to many scenes in the works of Dickens, not substantially nor in particular details, but in moral purpose and finished execution of parts, and of the whole, must surely have been often observed. The resemblance,” Horne adds, “is apparent with regard to single figures and to separate groups [...] and equally apparent with relation to one distinct and never to-be-mistaken whole into which the various figures and groups are fused, and over which one general and harmonizing atmosphere expands” (11). In such passages Horne assumes an inductive relation coheres the ostensibly disparate features of complex, sprawling prose. He writes similarly of John Banim,

“However elaborately he may finish his individual figures, they are always skillfully grouped, and all the groups together make a harmonious whole” (274).

Spotting particulars and generals in Dickens’ novels allows Horne to imply that his fiction reproduces the full ontological spectrum between “minute truths and general effect” (37), scales of materiality and ideality. The idiom of induction also fosters the sense that Dickens is not just exaggerating “strange novelties” (9) or “monstrosities and absurdities” (11), but inducing “the character of mankind” (10) from “various classes of anomaly” (9). Horne employs the idiom throughout his writing to legitimate his otherwise “desultory criticism” as induction in both the natural philosophical sense of abstracting generals from observed particulars and the emotive sense of conjuring affects, of using allusions to induce associations or suggestions in readers. Good texts, Horne says, “induce” sympathy in readers (25); Tennyson’s “characters, with few exceptions, are generalizations, or refined abstractions, clearly developing certain thoughts, feelings, and forms, and bringing them home to all competent sympathies” (200).

A New Spirit of the Age attunes us to the idioms and tropes by which Victorian critics thought in markedly different forms than us but in forms that it routinely discerns in the literature it appreciates. Victorian critics regularly forward “abstraction” or “induction” as the process by which texts induce truth from particulars and thereby induce sympathy from readers. Whately had distinguished Austen’s novels accordingly, for providing “the general, instead of the particular, – the probable, instead of the true; and, by leaving out those accidental irregularities, and exceptions to general rules, which constitute the many improbabilities of real narrative, present us with a clear and abstracted view of the general rules themselves” (357). Horne has it both ways, yielding Dickens this inductive abstraction even as he also indulges in “touches of nature” (11). To be sure, the “touch of the real,” in Horne’s hands, accrues not to “mechanical matter-of-fact portraits,” that is to photographic mimesis, but precisely to the way Dickens’ characters deviate from such mimesis. For Horne, Dickensian realism accrues to his inductive mediation of reality: “the

only exception to their reality," he says of Dickens' characters, "is that they represent classes [...] It is this closeness to reality, so that what he describes has the same effect as *thinking of reality*, that renders Dickens so very like De Foe" (50; emphasis in original). Horne and Barrett together dismiss Ainsworth for being "a reviver of old clothes," for "mere raking and furbishing up of by-gone materials" (313) of the sort G.H. Lewes later dismissed as "detailism" in *Principles of Success in Literature*. Schlicke rightly identifies the injunction to maintain a "proper orientation to mundane reality" (844) as a principal theme of *A New Spirit of the Age*, but attending to the stylistic tics of Horne's prose reveals how abstract his "mundane reality" was, how allusive suggestion and evocations of induction had reality effects as substantial as concrete details allegedly did.

Horne adopts other notable critical habits – dismay at the subordination of public drama to private comfort (238-39); the use of "intensity" to mark the imbrication of form and content (136, 198-206); an amazing prosodic eye for "versification in the prose," such as his recasting of Nelly's funeral into verse (46-47) – and cataloging more of these critical tropes will help us not only recover the contours of specifically Victorian forms of thinking that have been effaced by our modern modes of criticism but also register the as yet unrecognized conventions of Victorian prose in different genres. Horne's allusive tactics, his idioms of suggestion and induction, seem most provocative now for a discipline somewhat weary of positivist historicism but not altogether sold on a return to formalism. Adopting his tactics alone will not expiate this weariness, but recovering and reimagining a broader hermeneutic vocabulary of terms strikingly different from ours will eventually make possible new forms of thinking and new modes of reading.

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Notes

¹ On the shift of critical attention from authorial ethos to the ethos of texts and its relation to formalism, see Anger 131-40.

² "Just reading" is Marcus's term, but for an account of the recent return to surface, just, reparative, and other forms of reading putatively

opposed to a hermeneutics of suspicion or symptomatic interpretation, see Love.

³ The prefatory “Note” to *Orion* professes to adopt Greek instead of Roman names so as to eliminate “commonizing associations,” because “It has been my object to create new associations, founded upon those of the antique age which are the most purely poetical and suggestive.”

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