

PART TWO

THE WILD MAN

THE NATURAL MAN

THE CHILD OF NATURE

EVOLUTION AND DEGENERATION

CHAPTER FOUR

THE WILD MAN, THE NOBLE SAVAGE, AND THE CHILD OF NATURE

THE WILD MAN

The discussion of the Yahoos in the previous chapter could well have mentioned an important tradition to which they belong: the tradition of the Wild Man; but this rich and long-lasting tradition is so large and complicated that it requires a chapter of its own. The present chapter therefore serves as both an elaboration on the previous chapter, and an introduction to the following chapter on the evolutionary theories of Lord Monboddoo and their employment in Thomas Love Peacock's *Melincourt*. And of course it introduces another important element for an understanding of both Edward Hyde, who is, among other things, a Wild Man, and Olalla, who is a Child of Nature.

Just as the present chapter provides an elaboration on the previous one, likewise the previous chapter anticipates this. Maximillian Novak writes:

Probably the most important work connected with the various transmutations of the Wild Man is *Gulliver's Travels*. Even before we come upon the Yahoos, we find, in the materials associated with the Wild Man, numerous works from which Swift might have taken hints, from the men so small that they could be carried about in cages to the tales of wild men and their encounters with giants. But it is particularly when we meet the Yahoos in the fourth part that we encounter a version of the Wild Man myth.¹

Swift does not refer to the Yahoos as Wild Men, but they obviously fit within the Wild Man tradition. Take, for example, the following quotation from Richard Bernheimer about the Wild Man, and judge whether it does not apply equally to the Yahoo:

The wild man holds thus a curiously ambiguous and ill-defined position in God's creation, being neither quite man enough to command universal agreement as to his human identity, nor animal enough to be universally classified as such.²

While Bernheimer makes no mention of Yahoos, Novak outlines the

¹ 'The Wild Man Comes to Tea', in *The Wild Man Within: An Image in Western Thought from the Renaissance to Romanticism*, ed. by Edward Dudley and Maximillian E. Novak ([Pittsburgh]: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1972), pp.183-221 (pp.211-12).

² *Wild Men in the Middle Ages: A Study in Art, Sentiment, and Demonology* (New York: Octagon, 1970), p.6. I am indebted to this work for the following information on Wild Men. Further references are given after quotations in the text.

correspondences between the Yahoos and Wild Men; and he draws on some very familiar material with which to do so:

In so many ways they represent what was reported of orangutans and sometimes of the Hottentot. Like Tyson's orangutan, they are capable of going on their hind legs, though they generally travel on all fours; like the traditional Wild Man, they are hairy. The female Yahoo who attacks Gulliver resembles those lascivious male anthropoids who were so fond of women, and the long dugs of the females that hang down to the ground recall the Hottentot women who would throw their breasts over their shoulders to feed their children. As was sometimes reported of the Hottentots, the Yahoos are incapable of language and merely howl, grin, or chatter (212).

This passage contains the same bewildering confusion of comparisons which were examined in the previous chapter: the Yahoos are likened with equal justification to both apes and Hottentots—and now, again with equal justification, to Wild Men as well. To add to the confusion, Bernheimer notes that pendulous breasts are also typical of Wild Women (33); and although Novak says that Hottentots grin and chatter (212), grinning and chattering – as was pointed out in the previous chapter – are traditional descriptions of monkey and ape behaviour; so in employing these terms travellers are likening Hottentots to apes and monkeys, in the same way that Swift likens the Yahoos to apes and monkeys.

The gradual devolution of the Yahoos into their present brutish appearance was not without precedents, even, apparently, in real life. The sixteenth-century Peruvian writer Garcilaso de la Vega told of one Pedro Serrano who, shipwrecked on an island for seven years, grew hair all over his body, which he exhibited upon his return to civilization.³

As Bernheimer writes, the Yahoos conform to the mediaeval attitude that:

God had not created the wild man in his present lowly estate. Instead, the creature had been brought to its condition by loss of mind, by upbringing among beasts, or by outrageous hardships, all conditions which tended to depress man to something less than human. The status of the wild man was thus reached not by a gradual ascent from the brute, but by a descent (8).

The Yahoos resemble the Wild Man physically, and have arrived at their condition through a descent from a former state; but there the similarity ends. Bernheimer continues:

We find therefore that instead of explaining the existence of the wild man on theological grounds, medieval writers preferred to think of him psychologically and sociologically.

[...] Wildness in human beings was thus due to degeneration caused by extraneous circumstances and therefore was morally irrelevant and without theological implications (8).

This is not the case with the Yahoos. By their own actions they brought corruption upon themselves over the course of generations. Swift therefore presents his readers with the paradox that the Yahoos sink to the level of beasts as a result not of a developing tendency towards beastliness, but of the continuing and constant expression of their human qualities. Their physical condition reflects their moral condition, not only in their brutishness, but also in the illnesses which plague them chronically, and which are unknown to the robust Wild Man.

What is a Wild Man? They come in all shapes and sizes, from solitary mossy half-wooden giants rampaging through forests, to communities of dwarfs bathing, cleaning, and throwing banquets in caverns under mountains. But through the entire range between these extremes we find a consistency of attributes. Bernheimer gives us a few pointers on what to look for in the breed:

[I]t is a hairy man curiously compounded of human and animal traits, without, however, sinking to the level of an ape. It exhibits upon its naked human anatomy a growth of fur, leaving bare only its face, feet, and hands, at times its knees and elbows, or the breasts of the female of the species. Frequently the creature is shown wielding a heavy club or mace, or the trunk of a tree; and, since its body is usually naked except for a shaggy covering, it may hide its nudity under a strand of twisted foliage worn around the loins. Where any characteristics other than these appear, there is a possibility that instead of a wild man we may be beholding another imaginary figure such as a devil, faun, or satyr. The creature itself may appear without its fur, its club, or its loin ornament. Any one of its characteristics may be said to designate the species (1-2).

In many instances he also lacks the power of speech.⁴

Arthur Dickson offers more detail:

[H]is prototype in the main is the wood-spirit of popular belief. This creature, as modern folklore knows him, lives in the forest depths; has a hairy body, or green clothing; is frequently of great physical strength; sometimes carries an uprooted

³ This story is mentioned in Bernheimer, p.93; and given in greater detail by Stanley L. Robe, 'Wild Men and Spain's Brave New World', in Dudley and Novak, *The Wild Man Within*, pp.39-53, (pp.51-52).

⁴ Bernheimer, pp.9; 11.

tree as a club; is sometimes reputed to attack the unwary passer, particularly the women and children; but sometimes, too, is captured, tamed, and taught to render useful service.

[...]

To sum up: the Wild Man of medieval romance is a composite of many elements, chief of which are the wood-spirit of popular belief and custom, of art and pageantry; the eccentric recluse of actual life; and the *märchen* hero who owes his extraordinary strength to his animal birth or upbringing. In medieval story, he makes travel dangerous in the forest, or (rarely) shows himself helpful; is frequently sought and captured; and occasionally becomes a member of human society.⁵

The Wild Man tradition is extremely ancient—dating back to at least the third millennium B.C. In the Sumerian epic of Gilgamesh we find the Wild Man Enkidu, formed from clay by the goddess of creation Aruru:

His body was rough, he had long hair like a woman's; it waved like the hair of Nisaba, the goddess of corn. His body was covered with matted hair like Samuqan's, the god of cattle. He was innocent of mankind; he knew nothing of the cultivated land.

Enkidu ate grass in the hills with the gazelle and lurked with wild beasts at the water-holes; he had joy of the water with the herds of wild game. [A trapper tells his father,] 'He fills in the pits which I dig and tears up my traps set for the game; he helps the beasts to escape and now they slip through my fingers.'⁶

Enkidu is a natural Wild Man, that is, he has lived all his life in the wild, and away from civilization.

During the Classical Greek period travellers brought back stories of encounters with barbarous tribes who had long hair, dressed in the skins of animals, and whose speech seemed to be no more than a series of howls and grunts. Herodotus reports such peoples in Libya;⁷ but an even more fruitful territory was India. Alexander the Great's adventure into that land brought back tales of giants, cannibals, and men with ears big enough to curl up and sleep in—of whom more later. Equally bizarre, but probably accurate, were descriptions of extremely hairy wild men, who, although they were hairy and wild, were definitely not men. Bernheimer writes:

According to Pliny there existed in India a race of so-called Choromandi named *silvestres*, that is wild, creatures possessed of hairy bodies, yellow eyes, and canine teeth, who were incapable of speech and could let out only horrible shrieks. These creatures may not have been altogether fabulous, since their

⁵ *Valentine and Orson: A Study in Late Medieval Romance* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1929; repr. AMS Press, 1975), pp.114; 124. (Hereafter, Dickson.)

⁶ *The Epic of Gilgamesh*, English version and intro. by N.K. Sandars (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1972; repr. 1975), p.63.

⁷ Bernheimer, p.86.

description fits a large monkey such as the eastern gibbon. It seems to be generally true that whatever little was known in antiquity about the large anthropoid apes did not suffice to identify them as animals, so that they were usually described as hairy, speechless humans and thus, by implication, as wild men (87).

This centuries-old confusion and uncertainty doubtless led to the tradition – which continued well into the later nineteenth century – of the ape carrying the Wild Man’s club. Thus, by association, one of the defining characteristics of the Wild Man became incorporated into the stock image of the ape. This traditional weapon appears as the stick, bat or club wielded by the Ape in *Mother Hubbard*, the “orang-outang” of Tyson and the seventeenth-century travelers, and the natural man or “orang-outang” of Lord Monboddo and Thomas Love Peacock’s *Melincourt*, as well as other nineteenth-century representations of apes.

Moving along several centuries we come to the fifteenth-century romance *Valentine and Orson*. This work has a rich ancestry, and has left almost an equally rich posterity. Arthur Dickson writes that this French romance (in which King Arthur of Britain is beheaded),

was composed between 1475 and 1489, and based upon a lost fourteenth-century French poem, of which there are several versions in other languages [...]; and that the stories of both the older poem and the later prose, based originally (I believe) on a folk tale, are amplified by additions from the most widely various sources—*chansons de geste*, romances, saints’ lives, chronicles, popular traditions, and contemporary events—so that the whole forms a sort of compendium of many of the most popular elements of chivalric fiction, and the study of its sources throws light on the history of many common romance and folk-lore motifs.⁸

Valentine and Orson are the twin sons of the Emperor Alexander of Greece, born in a forest to the Emperor’s falsely accused and wrongfully exiled wife, Bellisant. Orson is immediately taken by a bear and carried away in its jaws. Bellisant, leaving Valentine, crawls after the bear, but falls in a swoon. Meanwhile her brother, King Peppin of France, on his way to Constantinople to see her, comes across Valentine lying alone and, assuming him to be abandoned, instructs one of his squires to raise him in Paris, where he grows up to be a handsome and valiant knight. Orson in his own way fares just as well. The bear’s cubs, instead of eating him, play with him,

⁸ *Valentine and Orson*, trans. by Henry Watson [1503-05?], ed. and intro. by Arthur Dickson (London: Oxford University Press, 1937; repr., New York: Kraus, 1971), pp.ix-x. (Hereafter, *V and O*.) Further references to this edition are given after quotations in the text.

whereupon the bear's maternal instincts take over, and she suckles him for a year. Orson grows up exhibiting the characteristics of a fierce Wild Man:

The chylde was all roughe because of the neutrifaction of the beer, as a wilde beest. So he began to go in the woode, and became great *within* a while and began for to smyte the other beastes of the forest, in suche wyse that they all douted hym, and fledde before him. For he fered nothyng in the worlde. In suche estate was the chylde ledyng a beastes lyfe *the* space of .xv. yeaere. He became so great and strong, that none durste passe through the forest for hym, for bothe men and beastes he put vnto death, and eate their flesh al raw as the other beastes did, and liued a bestual life and not humayne. He was called Orson because of the beere that had nouryshed hym, and he was also rough as a beere. He dyd so muche harme in the forest, and was so sore redoubted, that there was none, were he neuer so valiaunt and hardy, but that he had great fere to encountre the wylde man. The renowne sprange so of hym, that all they of the countrey aboute chaced and hunted him with force of strength, but nothyng auaylled all their deade, for he fered neyther gynnes nor weapons, but brake al in peces. Now he is in the forest ledang [*sic*] the life of a wilde beast, without wering of any cloth, or any worde speaking (*V and O*, p.38).⁹

Apart from all this, he is able to outrun a horse (86), and he also indulges in the traditional Wild Man behaviour of abduction and rape (64);¹⁰ although – as both history and *Melincourt* demonstrate – this behaviour could equally well derive from his noble blood.

Valentine comes into the wood to fight with and capture Orson. During the encounter Orson displays typical Wild Man behaviour, and employs his traditional weapon:

[Valentine] went towarde Orson with his sworde for to haue smyten him, but Orson lepte a back and went to a lyttel tree, the which tree he bowed and bracke it, and made thereof an horryble staffe, and after came vnto Valentyne and gaue him suche a strooke *that* he made hym for to fall vpon one knee (69).

Bernheimer writes:

The tree torn out by its roots [...] appears in artistic representations such as [...] some of the tapestries of the fifteenth century from the area of the upper Rhine. In carnival disguises such as those of Nuremberg and Basel the mummers were often required to carry a little tree; and even where the artist made the wild man carry a club or mace, instead of the tree out of which it was fashioned, the weapon was given a buckled and twisted shape to make sure that its origin from wood uprooted and coarsely hewn be well understood (26).

Later, when Orson has been partly tamed by Valentine but not yet civilized, he is

⁹ The italics are Dickson's.

¹⁰ See Bernheimer, chap.5.

called upon to joust with the Green Knight (by virtue of his green armour, another Wild Man) for the honour of the Lady Fezonne, daughter of the Duke of Aquitaine. His choice of weapon is a “grete clubbe of wodde” (112). Valentine persuades him to arm himself and fight like a knight; but these weapons are of no use against the Green Knight, and Orson finally overcomes him with brute strength.

Fezonne’s reaction to the sight of Orson reveals that, although by his upbringing he has become a Wild Man, his blood is noble and his soul is pure. When Valentine presents him to Fezonne, she asks:

But tell me I praye you wherefore you clothe not this valyaunt man no better than you haue brought to me. For he is marueylusly well made of his membres, and well formed, streight and hardy of countenance, & I beleue that & he were bayned in a hoothe house, his flesshe woulde be whyte and softe (101).

And immediately she is “stryken at the harte more ardauntly then euer she was before of any other” (101).

Orson quickly adapts to the knightly life, becomes – following a minor operation to his tongue – able to speak, and in time succeeds to the throne of his father the Emperor of Greece; but following the death of his wife he retreats to a forest again, living the life of a hermit and, in an almost ironic blending of lifestyles, exists on a diet which belongs to both hermit and Wild Man:

Orson made great sorow[.] And after the death of her he ete but brede and rotes, and small froytes that he founde in the wodde where as he dyd remayne (326).

Orson remained a popular figure in literature, theatre and pageantry until the early part of the twentieth century. This work influenced Spenser, Shakespeare, Cervantes and Bunyan; and was an influence – both directly, and indirectly via Spenser – on Thomas Love Peacock. Dickson writes:

Sir Philip Sidney referred to it [the story of Valentine and Orson] as to something well known; it was the subject of at least one lost Elizabethan play; “Orson,” to the seventeenth century, was almost synonymous with “wild man”; Uncle Toby, no less than Old Scrooge, delighted in the story as a schoolboy; the pantomimic art of Grimaldi made it familiar to the generation of Byron and Hazlitt; Godwin, Southey, De Quincey, Dickens, Browning and Meredith, are among the writers who make allusion to it. For four centuries, edition has followed edition, to a total of at least seventy-four, the latest in 1919.¹¹

As has been mentioned, *Valentine and Orson* was an influence on Spenser. But

Orson was not the only Wild Man available for inspiration; and when Spenser wrote *The Faerie Queene* he provided his readers with a host of Wild Men, only one of whom bore a resemblance to Orson. Spenser obviously knew his Wild Man lore, because he describes representatives of the several and distinct Wild types.

The first is old Sylvanus, the god of the fauns and satyrs, who is discovered leaning “on Cypresse stadle stout,/ And with an yuie twyne his wast [...] girt about” (I.6.14). Sylvanus displays both the traditional tree trunk used as a staff or club, and the traditional girdle. He lives in a wood, surrounded by a host of dancing and piping creatures including fauns (who are benign and protective), satyrs (who are lustful), hamadryads (wood nymphs), and naiads (river nymphs).

Sir Satyrane, as his name suggests, is satyr-like, but not, like most satyrs, lustful. His father – a satyr – abducts a woman and keeps her for his sexual pleasure (I.6.22). She becomes pregnant. He lets her go eventually, but keeps the child, whom he raises in the woods, teaching him to be fearless. Satyrane’s status as a Wild Man thus rests on both his lineage and his upbringing. As Bernheimer notes, from the time of the ancient Greeks and Romans, Wild Men were associated with “the demons of lower mythology, the centaurs, satyrs, and Pan, the fauns and sylvans and Silenus” (93).¹² On the other hand, an upbringing in the woods tends to promote physical, psychological and moral health far beyond that achieved by the city dweller exposed to the corrupting and debilitating effects of civilization. This leads to the Wild Man type known as the “Unsophisticated Youth”,¹³ represented in *The Faerie Queene* by the young Tristram:

A goodly youth of amiable grace,
 Yet but a tender slip, that scarce did see
 Yet seuentene yeares, but tall and faire of face
 That sure he [Calidore] deem’d him borne of noble race.
 All in a woodmans iacket he was clad
 Of Lincolne greene. (VI.2.5)

Tristram – heir to his dead father’s crown – has grown up in the woods, away from the perils threatened by his usurping uncle; and his noble blood, no less than his innate goodness, has seen him grow into a naturally chivalrous person.

¹¹ Dickson, p.1. Dickson provides a list of English versions and allusions. See Dickson, pp.284-298.

¹² For a gist of this association, from the Greeks to Satyrane, see Bernheimer, pp.93-100.

¹³ Dickson, p.124. See also *ibid.*, pp.128-29.

Sir Artegall also grows up away from mankind, but comes to maturity not as an Unsophisticated Youth, but as the feared champion of justice. Spenser likens him to Hercules,

Who all the West with equall conquest wonne,
And monstrous tyrants with his club subdued;
The club of Iustice dread, with kingly powre endowed. (V.1.2)

Hercules is also a Wild Man. Bernheimer points out that “in Greek and Roman art Hercules is shown carrying a club and clad in the skin of the slain lion of Nemea” (101). Artegall is therefore a Wild Man both by upbringing and by association. Fittingly he makes his first appearance at a tourney in the guise of a Salvage Knight:

In quyent disguise, full hard to be descride.
For all his armour was like saluage weed,
With woody mosse bedight, and all his steed
With oaken leaues attrapt, that seemed fit
For saluage wight, and thereto well agreed
His word, which on his ragged shield was writ,
Saluagesse sans finesse, shewing secret wit. (IV.4.39)¹⁴

He puts to flight all his opponents, until he is unhorsed by the virgin warrior Britomart.

Artegall has a companion, an iron man:

His name was *Talus*, made of yron mould,
Immoueable, resistlesse, without end.
Who in his hand an yron flale did hould,
With which he thresht out falshood, and did truth vnfold. (V.1.12)

Talus, apart from one brief moment (V.6.9), lacks any feeling except righteous indignation, and in the execution of his wrath is ruthless to the extent that Artegall has to restrain him. Talus will return later.

Thus far Spenser’s Wild Men have been virtuous. His villains, however, are truly hideous. One such is the giant Orgoglio:

his stature did exceed

¹⁴ Note the traditional association of the Wild Man with the oak tree, for which I am indebted to Roger Bartra, *The Artificial Savage: Modern Myths of the Wild Man*, trans. by Christopher Follett (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1997), p.214. For two Salvage Knights jousting, see Bernheimer, plate 11.

The hight of three the tallest sonnes of mortall seed.

The greatest Earth his vncouth mother was,
 And blustering *Aeolus* his boasted sire,
 Who with his breath, which through the world doth pas,
 Her hollow womb did secretly inspire,
 And filld her hidden caues with stormie yre,
 That she conceiu'd; and trebling the dew time,
 In which the wombes of women do expire,
 Brought forth this monstrous masse of earthly slime,
 Puft vp with emptie wind, and filld with sinfull crime.
 [...]

 his stalking steps are stayde
 Vpon a snaggy Oke, which he had torne
 Out of his mothers bowelles, and it made
 His mortall mace, wherewith his foemen he dismayde. (I.7.8-10)

This giant harks back to the archaic forerunners of humanity, emerging like Lucretian man from the earth itself. His club is the traditional uprooted oak. Nor is he alone. Orgoglio (Pride) has an equally hideous and baneful brother—Disdain:

His lookes were dreadfull, and his fiery eies
 Like two great Beacons, glared bright and wyde,
 Glauncing askew, as if his enemies
 He scorned in his ouerweening pryde;
 And stalking stately like a Crane, did stryde
 At euery step vppon the tiptoes hie,
 And all the way he went, on euery syde
 He gaz'd about, and stared horriblie,
 As if he with his lookes would all men terrifie.

He wore no armour, ne for none did care,
 As no whit dreading any liuing wight. (VI.7.42-43)

Whereas Orgoglio carries the oaken club, Disdain has apparently upgraded, and uses one of iron (VI.7.43).

By far the most horrible example of the Wild type is the savage personification of Lust in Book IV:

It was to weet a wilde and saluage man,
 Yet was no man, but onely like in shape,
 And eke in stature higher by a span,
 All ouergrowne with haire, that could awhape
 An hardy hart, and his wide mouth did gape
 With huge great teeth, like to a tusked Bore:
 For he liu'd all on rauin and on rape
 Of men and beasts; and fed on fleshly gore,

The signe whereof yet stain'd his bloody lips afore.

His neather lip was not like man nor beast,
 But like a wide deepe poke, downe hanging low,
 In which he wont the relickes of his feast,
 And cruell spoyle, which he had spard, to stow:
 And ouer it his huge great nose did grow,
 Full dreadfully empurpled all with blood;
 And downe both sides two wide long eares did glow,
 And raught downe to his waste, when vp he stood,
 More great then th' eares of Elephants by *Indus* flood.

His wast was with a wreath of yuie greene
 Engirt about, ne other garment wore:
 For all his haire was like a garment seene;
 And in his hand a tall young oake he bore,
 Whose knottie snags were sharpned all afore,
 And beath'd in fire for steele to be in sted.
 But whence he was, or of what wombe ybore,
 Of beasts, or of the earth, I have not red:
 But certes was with milke of Wolues and Tygres fed. (IV.7.5-7)

Spenser has left nothing out in the description of this Wild Man. He is naked, hairy, wears a green ivy wreath about his waist, carries an oak tree as a club, does not speak, preys on men and beasts, and abducts women whom he uses to satisfy both his lust and his stomach (IV.7.12). He may have been born of some unspecified beast, or have sprung straight from the earth; he was nourished with the milk of wolves and tigers—both noted for their fierceness; and he lives in a cave in a forest.

As Spenser says, this is no man, but simply a deformed parody of one. He is in fact another Platonic embodiment of evil low passions, which Spenser suggests by associating his sinful soul with his misshapen body. The huntress Belphoebe kills him with an arrow through the throat:

Whom when on ground she groueling saw to rowle,
 She ran in hast his life to haue bereft:
 But ere she could him reach, the sinfull sowle
 Hauing his carrion corse quite sencelesse left,
 Was fled to hell, surcharg'd with spoile and theft.
 Yet ouer him she there long gazing stood,
 And oft admir'd his monstrous shape. (IV.7.32)

Spenser's final Wild Man – the Salvage Man of Book VI¹⁵ – is a mixture of the noble and the savage, and returns us firmly to the tale of Valentine and Orson. In his first appearance he comes to the rescue of Sir Calepine and his Lady Serena, who are

being set upon by the vile Sir Turpine. Drawn by Serena's cries, the Salvage comes running from the woods, and finds Turpine on horseback pursuing the wounded Calepine.

The saluage man, that neuer till this houre
 Did taste of pittie, neither gentlesse knew,
 Seeing his sharpe assault and cruell stoure
 Was much enmoued at his perils vew,
 That euen his ruder hart began to rew,
 And feele compassion of his euill plight,
 Against his foe that did him so pursew:
 From whom he meant to free him, if he might,
 And him auenge of that so villenous despight. (VI.4.3)

He runs at Turpine, who thrusts his spear at his breast. The Salvage, protected by magic, is unharmed, but the predominating aspect of his character is aroused:

With that the wyld man more enraged grew,
 Like to a Tygre that hath mist his pray,
 And with mad mood againe vpon him flew,
 Regarding neither speare, that mote him slay,
 Nor his fierce steed, that mote him much dismay,
 The saluage nation doth all dread despize. (VI.4.6)

Turpine, confounded by the Salvage's strength, gallops away. The Salvage chases him, and almost succeeds in catching him, so great are his strength and speed. At last he returns back to Calepine, and Serena who, having witnessed his ferocity, fears for her life as he approaches. But now his noble blood begins to find gentle and courteous expression.

But the wyld man, contrarie to her feare,
 Came to her creeping like a fawning hound,
 And by rude tokens made to her appeare
 His deepe compassion of her dolefull stound,
 Kissing his hands, and crouching to the ground;
 For other language had he none nor speach,
 But a soft murmure, and confused sound
 Of senselesse words, which nature did him teach,
 T'expresse his passions, which his reason did empeach. (VI.4.11)

Nature has also taught him herb-lore. He applies the juice of a herb to Calepine's wound, then leads his charges to his den in the forest. Bernheimer writes of the Greco-Roman tradition of the idealized natural man – of whom Spenser's Salvage is

¹⁵ His story is given in some detail, as he will be compared in the next chapter with Peacock's hero Sir Oran Haut-ton.

a type:

Negatively speaking, primitive man abstains from the luxuries of sophisticated life and thus finds it easy to do without the arts that make it possible: the arts of war, of mining and metallurgy, and of navigation. In a positive way this abstention from all that enriches life materially shields primitive man from the vices of avarice and trickery and bellicosity. Since even agriculture and cattle breeding are unknown to him, he finds himself leading a life without possessions but also without toil and burden. As a means of livelihood Virgil and Juvenal allow him the hunt, while most other writers make him a vegetarian, following Empedocles' assertion that in the Golden Age man was on affectionate terms with the animals and birds and thus could not commit the disloyalty of slaughtering them. Acorns and fruits are thus all he can afford, and it is assumed that they suffice for his needs. Indeed, this diet favours his health and he may expect to live to a ripe old age (103).

The Salvage's den exhibits the traditional requirements of the Wild Man's lair; and, through a combination of innate sensibility and a lack of agricultural skill, he, like the idealized natural man, is a vegetarian:

Farre in the forrest by a hollow glade,
Couered with mossie shrubs, which spredding brode
Did vnderneath them make a gloomy shade;
Where foot of liuing creature neuer trode,
Ne scarce wyld beasts durst come, there was this wights abode.

Thether he brought these vnacquainted guests;
To whom faire semblance, as he could, he shewed
By signes, by lookes, and all his other gests.
But the bare ground, with hoarie mosse bestrowed,
Must be their bed, their pillow was vnsowed,
And the frutes of the forrest was their feast:
For their bad Stuard neither plough'd nor sowed,
Ne fed on flesh, ne euer of wyld beast
Did taste the bloud, obaying natures first beheast. (VI.4.13-14)

The Salvage's way of life is not that of a brute; on the contrary, it belongs to that of the natural man from the Golden Age, as can be seen from Milton's description in *Paradise Lost* of Adam and Eve's bower in Eden:

it was a place
Chos'n by the sovran Planter, when he fram'd
All things to Mans delightful use; the rooffe
Of thickest covert was inwoven shade
Laurel and Mirtle, and what higher grew
Of firm and fragrant leaf; on either side
Acanthus, and each odorous bushie shrub
Fenc'd up the verdant wall; each beauteous flour,

Iris all hues, Roses, and Gessamin
 Reard high thir flourisht heads between, and wrought
 Mosaic; underfoot the Violet,
 Crocus, and Hyacinth with rich inlay
 Broiderd the ground, more colourd then with stone
 Of costliest Emblem: other Creature here
 Beast, Bird, Insect, or Worm durst enter none;
 Such was thir awe of Man. In shadier Bower
 More sacred and sequesterd, though but feignd,
Pan or *Silvanus* never slept, nor Nymph,
 Nor *Faunus* haunted. Here in close recess
 With Flowers, Garlands, and sweet-smelling Herbs
 Espousd *Eve* deckd first her Nuptial Bed. (IV.690-710)

And their vegetarian diet:

to thir Supper Fruits they fell,
 Nectarin Fruits which the compliant boughes
 Yeilded them, side-long as they sat recline [*sic*]
 On the soft downie Bank damaskt with flours:
 The savourie pulp they chew, and in the rinde
 Still as they thirsted scoop the brimming stream;
 [...]

[...] About them frisking playd
 All Beasts of th' Earth. (IV.331-41)

Milton, following Genesis, willy nilly finds himself associating Adam and Eve with the idealized Wild Man and Woman.

The Salvage tends his guests' wounds with herbs from the forest, and nurses Calepine back to health; but Serena's wounds are beyond his skill. After Calepine becomes separated from them, he continues to comfort and protect Serena; and when she determines to venture abroad on Calepine's horse he clumsily dons some of Calepine's gear and accompanies her on foot, showing her all due courtesy as if he were a true knight.

So forth they traueld an vneuen payre,
 That mote to all men seeme an vncouth sight;
 A saluage man matcht with a Ladie fayre,
 That rather seem'd the conquest of his might,
 Gotten by spoyle, then purchaced aright.
 But he did her attend most carefully,
 And faithfully did serue both day and night,
 Withouten thought of shame or villeny,
 Ne euer shewed signe of foule disloyalty. (VI.5.9)

This stanza grows out of a fundamental shift in the Wild Man tradition; a shift evolving from a deepening disenchantment with the realities of the chivalric way of

life. Traditionally the Wild Man had been a threat to the Lady – as in the episode with Lust (*FQ*, IV.7) – and would be defeated by her knight; but, in what Bernheimer calls “a major turning point in the history of European civilization” (122), during the fourteenth century the Wild Man began to win. Spenser’s Salvage man has developed into not only a protector of the Lady, but a protector of the Lady against decadent knighthood.

Serena and the Salvage happen upon Prince Arthur and his squire Timias, who is also carrying a wound. Timias, thinking the worst, attempts to apprehend the Salvage, who unceremoniously knocks him to the ground. Serena intercedes, and tells her sad story and the part played by the vile Turpine. Arthur leaves Serena and Timias in the care of a hermit, and sets out to take revenge on Turpine. The Salvage meanwhile, seeing Arthur’s “royall vsage and array,/ [Has] greatly growne in loue of that braue pere” (VI.5.41), and, despite Arthur’s attempts to bid him stay, goes with him.

By the time they arrive at Turpine’s castle, the Salvage has become a *de facto* squire to Arthur, stabling his horse after Arthur alights. Yet, in contrast with his mild demeanour towards his friends, he still behaves like a wild beast towards their enemies. As he returns from the stable he sees Turpine’s groom laying hands on Arthur to throw him out. His response is by now predictable: he becomes enraged and tears the groom to pieces (VI.6.22).

A mighty battle ensues, in which the Salvage slays many of Turpine’s men, and has to be prevented by Arthur from killing even more. Arthur overcomes Turpine, but chivalrously spares his life at the pleading of Turpine’s lady (VI.6.31). However, when the Salvage comes upon Turpine, it is a different matter. The ferocity of the Salvage is awakened not by present danger to himself or others, but by an almost conditioned response of hostility to a foe regardless of the foe’s demeanour. The Prince, having originally felt the same way but having yoked his impulse beneath the laws of chivalry, is now obliged to restrain the Salvage again (VI.6.40).

In a later scene the Salvage is described holding “his weapon [...]/ That was an oaken plant, which lately hee/ Rent by the root” (VI.7.24). A.C. Hamilton tells us in a gloss that “plant” means “young tree”.¹⁶ In his final appearance the Salvage is again inflamed by the sight of violence directed towards the innocent and helpless. During Arthur’s fight with the villains Scorn and Disdain, the Salvage, again

enraged, falls upon Scorn and, having rent him with his nails and teeth, proceeds to deal with him in his customary manner until the customary conclusion:

And from him taking his owne whip, therewith
So sore him scourgeth, that the bloud downe followeth.

And sure I weene, had not the Ladies cry
Procur'd the Prince his cruell hand to stay,
He would with whipping, him haue done to dye:
But being chekt, he did abstaine streight way,
And let him rise. (VI.8.28-29)

For all his strength and ferocity, there is nothing ape-like about this Wild Man. Like Orson, he is fully human, in fact, again like Orson, he is of noble blood, apparently abandoned in the woods as a baby, and, apart from the charm protecting him, left to fend for himself without the society of other human beings. One would assume that, like Orson and other Wild Men, he was suckled by some kind of beast; although, unlike Orson and other Wild Men, he has not grown a coat of hair. He is a man of action, driven by his passions, be they rage, pity, or devotion. He lacks both the restraint which society develops, and the capacity to articulate emotions and concepts, which language provides. But, physically and morally unspoiled, he is a truer example of ideal man than many of those around him. He is, in fact, the natural man.

THE NOBLE SAVAGE

Spenser's noble Wild Man serves as a convenient introduction to a figure who was to become a potent image for writers and philosophers in the following two centuries: the Noble Savage. Hoxie Fairchild notes that this figure grew, much like his Wild cousin, from

the fusion of three elements: the observation of explorers; various classical and medieval conventions; the deductions of philosophers and men of letters.¹⁷

Whereas, as was noted in the chapter on *Gulliver*, the natives of Africa were regarded as little better than beasts, the natives of the New World came to embody

¹⁶ Edmund Spenser, *The Faerie Queene*, ed. by A.C. Hamilton (London and New York: Longman, 1977), p.669.

¹⁷ Hoxie Neale Fairchild, *The Noble Savage: A Study in Romantic Naturalism* (New York: Russell & Russell, 1928 ; repr. 1961), p.2. Further references are given after quotations in the text.

all the virtues of the Golden Age. The Noble Savage thus stood in stark contrast to the morally and physically degenerate Europeans who discovered them. Fairchild finds a remarkable instance of this contrast in

A unique treatment of the Noble Savage idea. [...] The Land of the Houyhnhnms is an ideal realm, set up for our admiration and shame, in contrast to the sordid and vicious life of man. This part of *Gulliver* is a Utopian Voyage, a form which applies to old visions of an ideal state the technic of the explorers' narratives. [...] Frequently, though by no means invariably, the Utopias discovered in these explorations of the fancy are peopled by Noble Savages.

Such, beneath their equine disguise, are the Houyhnhnms. The source of their virtues is the lack of everything prized in civilized society. They have no war, no weapons, no laws or lawyers, no diseases or doctors, no politicians, no ministers of state, no nobility (45-46).¹⁸

Thus Gulliver inhabits a society temporarily peopled by Wild Men (Yahoos), Noble Savages (Houyhnhnms), and one degenerate European (himself) who gradually assumes the characteristics of both Wild Man and Noble Savage: he dresses in the skins of animals; and he comes to enjoy perfect health, and to despise the civilization which bred him and to which he must return. This provides a philosophical explanation for why he would rather stay with the savages who wound him, than with the Europeans who eventually rescue him.

Despite their moral elevation, Noble Savages were still associated in many ways with Wild Man lore: being either naked or clothed in the skins of animals; lacking agriculture; and living in a wild natural environment. Is it any wonder, then, that literary descriptions of the Noble Savage sometimes employed Wild Man imagery? Indeed, some *are* Wild Men. According to Roger Bartra:

In a famous narrative contained in the *Dial of Princes* [by Fray Antonio de Guevara] appears a character, the villein of the Danube, who is one of the oldest incarnations of the noble savage. The text [was] written around 1520 and published in 1529 [...]. This character, whose name is Mileno, is represented as a wild man, with his traditional attributes: hairy and bearded and holding a tree in one hand and more resembling a beast than a human being.¹⁹

The condition of Noble Savagery is not racially dependent—one may be European, and have grown up in a natural environment. In Voltaire's *L'Ingénu* (1767)²⁰ a

¹⁸ Fairchild appears to have fallen into Swift's trap and based her judgment of the Houyhnhnms on Gulliver's report. This does not, however, invalidate her point about them being Noble Savages.

¹⁹ *Artificial Savage*, p.50.

²⁰ The title in English is *Master Simple*.

Canadian Huron Indian arrives on the coast of Brittany, unaware that he is actually the nephew of the people who encounter him on the shore. He is a creature of physical perfection and naturalness:

His figure and his dress attracted the notice of the brother and sister. His head was uncovered, and his legs bare; his feet were shod in small sandals; from his head his long hair flowed in tresses; a small close doublet displayed the beauty of his shape. He had a sweet and martial air [... and] an air of [...] natural simplicity.²¹

He is also tall (213).

Then begins his association with Wild Man imagery. A suggestive but not conclusive parallel is the fact that he was suckled by a Huron (218), in the same way that a Wild Man like Orson was suckled by a bear. He runs fifty leagues to strike a malefactor with his club (215). After his beloved has been devoured by a bear he kills it and wears its skin (215). Apart from his long tresses, his chin is “somewhat hairy” (218). And when his uncle and aunt have him baptized, he is given the name of Hercules (226).

The Huron may conform to the Wild Man type on the outside, but intellectually he performs the role of the Noble Savage, which is to display the superior wisdom which comes from the contemplation of nature. He is thrown into prison and shares his cell with an old scholar named Gordon. They pass their time philosophizing. After one exchange Gordon remarks:

I [have] consumed fifty years in instruction, and I fear I have not attained to the natural good sense of this child, who is almost a savage! I tremble to think I have so arduously strengthened prejudices, and he listens to simple Nature alone (247).

Robert Bage’s *Hermsprong* (1796) features another European raised in the American wilderness.²² Whereas Voltaire’s Huron never knew his parents, young Hermsprong lives with his parents within a native American community. He grows up to be tall (156), and muscular (196). His eventual wife, Miss Campinet, thinks him “possessed of the finest face she ever beheld” (73). His generosity and benevolence go hand in hand with an inflexible moral code. He prefers to go

²¹ Jean François Marie Arouet De Voltaire, *Candide: And Other Tales*, intro. by H.N. Brailsford, Everyman’s Library, no.936 (London: Dent [1937]; repr. 1967), p.212. Further references are given after quotations in the text.

everywhere on foot, with his manservant following on horseback with the luggage. Although he has grown up among savages and the wilderness, his father has given him a sound education, which, he admits, may have hampered his development:

[T]he active part of my life was spent like that of other young Indians, whose very sports are athletic, and calculated to render man robust, and inure him to labour and fatigue. Here I always found my superiors. I could not acquire the speed of many of my companions; my sense of smelling was less acute—my sagacity inferior. I owe this probably to the sedentary portion of my life spent with my father in learning languages, in mathematics, in I know not what. [...]

Such was the life I led amongst the aborigines of America; I am fond of the remembrance of it.—I never there knew sickness, I never there felt ennui (169-70).

Despite these periods of imposed inactivity, he is still capable of prodigious feats worthy of a Wild Man:

I could almost run up a tree like a squirrel; almost catch an antelope; almost, like another Leander, have swum over a sea to a mistress, had I had one (170).

Hermesprong is thus an individual who combines the natural virtues of a Noble Savage with the acquired benefits of a classical education.

Hermesprong comes in conflict with many examples of civilized man, most of whom are stupid, or craven, or corrupt, or morally bankrupt. But in Sir Philip Chestrum – who conspires with Miss Campinet’s father to marry her – Bage plumbs the depths to which civilized man can sink. Whereas the splendid world of nature has not only developed Hermesprong’s body to a state of beautiful perfection; the unsullied environment has also enlarged his mind and soul. The inner and the outer man, both nourished alike, dwell in harmony, the one appropriately reflecting the other. Sir Philip – an embodiment of all the ills that civilized flesh is heir to – appears to have had the sins of many degenerate fathers visited upon him:

[T]he child was feeble, small, and half animated. He grew, indeed, to the height of five English feet, but not equally. His legs bore too large a proportion to his body. In short, he might resemble that important personage, who, Sir John Falstaff said, looked like a man made after supper of a cheese paring (125).

But Sir Philip has not simply suffered from being at the bottom of a stagnant gene pool; his closeted upbringing teaches him nothing, and his deformed body is a fitting

²² Robert Bage, *Hermesprong: or, Man as he is not*, ed. and intro. by Vaughan Wilkins (London: Turnstile Press, 1951). Further references are given after quotations in the text. Bage was at one time the business partner of Charles Darwin’s grandfather Erasmus. The business – an ironworks – failed.

vehicle for an equally deformed soul which, both from its own inclination and from a lack of moral nourishment, is contemptible:

In this young gentleman's case, there was no occasion to consider the arguments for public and private education; his constitution and his mother both determined for the latter; but the office of preceptor was almost a sinecure, for dear Sir Philip was too weak for study, and never stood in the least need of correction. When, therefore, he arrived at the age of freedom, he found himself possessed of great wealth, without the least inclination to spend it; of unbounded pride, without necessary judgment to correct it; of literature, not quite none; and of the smallest possible quantity of human kindness (125-26).

THE CHILD OF NATURE

As the Noble Savage tradition declined under the weight of increasing familiarity with native peoples who were themselves declining under the European onslaught, writers switched their focus from the Savage, to the environment which produced him. The result was the Child of Nature. This creature need not have been bred in some exotic region among naked copper savages; it was enough simply to have avoided the polluting influence of civilization. Fairchild writes:

Every reader of romantic literature is familiar with the child of nature—generally, though not always, a girl—who is born and grows to maturity in the heart of some wild region untouched by civilization, and who imbibes beauty, innocence and an unerring moral sense from the scenery which surrounds her (366).

These children usually derive from nature great physical beauty; love of the scenes amid which they live; a sense of kinship with all living creatures; exquisite sensibilities; and a moral instinct independent of, and often hostile to, analytical reason (374).

In William Godwin's *Fleetwood* (1805) the eponymous hero provides a perfect illustration of the transition from Noble Savage to Child of Nature. Fairchild deals with him in two separate chapters, describing him initially as "something of a Noble Savage" (156); and later as "the best example of the male child of nature" (375). Fleetwood's father, a widower, goes to live in northern Wales, and takes his young son with him. Fleetwood says:

I had few companions. The very situation which gave us a full enjoyment of the beauties of nature, inevitably narrowed both the extent and variety of our intercourse with our own species. My earliest years were spent among mountains and precipices, amidst the roaring of the ocean and the dashing of waterfalls. A constant familiarity with these objects gave a wildness to my ideas, and an

uncommon seriousness to my temper.²³

While the father admires nature from his window, or from the end of his garden, or during a leisurely ramble on horseback, the son becomes a vital and vigorous part of the majestic landscape. Fleetwood recalls:

My limbs [...] were full of the springiness which characterises the morning of life. I bounded along the plains, and climbed the highest eminences; I descended the most frightful declivities, and often penetrated into recesses which had perhaps never before felt the presence of a human creature. I rivalled the goat, the native of the mountains, in agility and daring (18).

He goes about accompanied by a faithful dog. He does not hunt or fish, declaring, “I could not with patience regard torture, anguish, and death, as sources of amusement” (26). When, later, he goes to Paris, the ladies refer to him as “*the handsome Englishman*” (53).

While he is growing up his separation from mankind is not merely physical. He climbs to mountain tops,

anxious to see what mountains, valleys, rivers, and cities were placed beyond. I gazed upon the populous haunts of men as objects that pleasingly diversified my landscape; but without the desire to behold them in nearer view. I had a presentiment that the crowded streets and the noisy mart contained larger materials for constituting my pain than pleasure. The jarring passions of men, their loud contentions, their gross pursuits, their crafty delusions, their boisterous mirth, were objects which, even in idea, my mind shrunk from with horror (18).

Just as Hermsprong says that he “was born a savage” (73), so Fleetwood says that growing up he “had been a solitary savage” (29). Fairchild notes that when Fleetwood goes to Oxford, “for the first few weeks of his university life he behaves precisely like the typical Noble Savage in contact with civilization” (152). He is superior and aloof, disdaining the shallow, malicious wit of his fellows. But there is a flaw in his clay. At Oxford he lacks the strength to resist becoming morally compromised; and in Paris he debauches himself with decadent married women.

Fleetwood’s upbringing too, although in one sense ideal, has not fitted him for any kind of society. Having grown up with an indulgent father and a benevolent but ineffectual tutor, he cannot bear any kind of contradiction or defiance. He relies on the opinions and examples of others; and he cannot reason things clearly for himself.

²³ *Fleetwood: or, The New Man of Feeling. Collected Novels and Memoirs of William Godwin*, ed. by Mark Philp and others, 8 vols (London: Pickering and Chatto, 1992), V, 17. Further references are

Each mistake leads him to retreat further.

In the middle of this increasingly fevered tale of misanthropy, misogyny, intrigue, jealousy, betrayal and madness, Godwin finds time to insert a very fine passage on child labour. In *Hermesprung* the physical and mental shortcomings of Sir Philip Chestrum spring from decadent blood, and are, one might say, inflicted from within a degenerate social class, upon itself. Sir Philip has, like a mould, sprung organically from his environment. In *Fleetwood* Godwin describes the debilitating effect of social forces upon the poor, and what happens to potentially happy and healthy children who do not grow up as Noble Savages. After his disastrous affairs in Paris, Fleetwood flees to the Swiss alps, where he is taken up by his father's lifelong friend M. Ruffigny, who tells him the story of his life. Born into a wealthy Swiss family; orphaned at a young age; he is betrayed by his guardian uncle and left, at the age of eight, with a mill owner in Lyons who puts him to work in his silk mill. Ruffigny says:

I was most attentive to the employment of the children, who were a pretty equal number of both sexes. There were about twenty on each floor, sixty in all. [...]

Not one of the persons before me exhibited any signs of vigour and robust health. They were all sallow; their muscles flaccid, and their form emaciated. Several of the children appeared to me, judging from their size, to be under four years of age – I never saw such children (88-89).

Ruffigny – who in old age has retired to the Swiss mountains, grows his own food, appears to be vegetarian (68), and reads every day but finds more enjoyment in exercise²⁴ – understands that humans are creatures of nature and must be allowed to develop naturally. Deprived of a healthy natural environment, they wither like a plant deprived of light; and this deprivation acts on both body and mind:

Liberty is the parent of strength. Nature teaches the child, by the play of the muscles, and pushing out his limbs in every direction, to give them scope to develop themselves. Hence it is that he is so fond of sports and tricks in the open air, and that these sports and tricks are so beneficial to him. He runs, he vaults, he climbs, he practises exactness of eye and sureness of aim. His limbs grow straight and taper, and his joints well knit and flexible. The mind of a child is no less vagrant than his steps; it pursues the gossamer, and flies from object to object, lawless and unconfined: and it is equally necessary to the development of his frame, that his thoughts and his body should be free from fetters. But then

given after quotations in the text.

²⁴ Fairchild calls him “the old Houyhnhnm” (154). According to Bartra: “In the eighteenth century the idea began to spread that the Alps were a dwelling place of rustic felicity representing a privileged/ideal space for the adoration of nature, in which context the mountains and the purity of the air acquired a sort of symbolic value” (205).

he cannot earn twelve sous a week. These children were uncouth and ill-grown in every limb, and were stiff and decrepit in their carriage, so as to seem like old men. At four years of age they could earn salt to their bread; but at forty, if it were possible that they should live so long, they could not earn bread to their salt. They were made sacrifices, while yet tender; and, like the kid, spoken of by Moses, were seethed and prepared for the destroyer in their mother's milk. This is the case in no state of society, but in manufacturing towns. The children of gipsies and savages have ruddy cheeks and a sturdy form, can run like lapwings, and climb trees with the squirrel (90).²⁵

Ruffigny escapes and finds his way to Paris, where he is saved by Fleetwood's grandfather, who takes him to live in England, and brings him up as a brother to his own son, who is happy to share his inheritance with the foundling.

By the time that Fleetwood has reached the age of forty-five his retiring habits and his self-absorbed isolation have done him no good. The noble examples of his father, his grandfather and Ruffigny cast a shadow over the rest of mankind, and he falls into what he refers to as "the most incorrigible species of misanthropy, which, as Swift expresses it, loves John, and Matthew, and Alexander, but hates mankind" (138).²⁶

While travelling in Westmoreland he hears of an interesting family who live apart from society. The father, Macneil, has been a friend of Jean-Jacques Rousseau. The mother has disgraced herself in her youth by eloping with her music teacher to Italy, where her seducer, disappointed in his financial expectations, locks her up in an old castle. Macneil, who has met her before her elopement, rescues her and returns her to her father. Eventually they marry and have three daughters; but polite society will have nothing to do with Mrs Macneil or her daughters. They retire from the world, and educate the girls themselves. The eldest, Amelia, is an artist. The second, Barbara, is a musician. The youngest, Mary, is a true Child of Nature.

Fairchild writes: "Romantic literature is full of [Children of Nature], and many of them are compared to flowers" (368). The association of purity, beauty, and flowers did not of course begin with Romantic literature. Milton, for example, having

²⁵ Pamela Clemit in her introductory note to *Fleetwood* writes: "In preparation for writing the scenes of child factory labour in the first volume, Godwin visited a silk mill at Spitalfields in July 1804 and wrote to the British Museum to get exact information about the 'Silk Throwing Machine' used in the south of France; he may also have drawn on his earlier visit to the Wedgwoods' potteries at Etruria in 1797" (p.vi). The Mosaic reference is to Exodus 23.19: "Thou shalt not seethe a kid in his mother's milk." The brutalizing effects of child labour will play a prominent role in *The Water-Babies*.

²⁶ Fleetwood is referring to Swift's letter to Pope of 29 September 1725, after he had completed *Gulliver's Travels*: "I have ever hated all nations, professions, and communities, and all my love is

previously associated Adam and Eve with the idealized Wild Man and Woman (*PL*, IV.690), specifically associates Eve with flowers, and her fall with their decay:

Here in close recess
With Flowers, Garlands, and sweet-smelling Herbs
Espoused *Eve* deckd first her Nuptial Bed. (IV.708-10)

While she is eating the forbidden fruit,

Adam the while
Waiting desirous her return, had wove
Of choicest Flours a Garland to adorne
Her Tresses, and her rural labours crown,
As Reapers oft are wont thir Harvest Queen. (IX.838-42)

Eve approaches, and tells him how she has eaten the fruit:

Adam, soon as he heard
The fatal Trespass don by *Eve*, amaz'd,
Astonied stood and Blank, while horror chill
Ran through his veins, and all his joints relaxd;
From his slack hand the Garland wreath'd for *Eve*
Down dropd, and all the faded Roses shed. (IX.888-93)

Just as the floral Child of Nature is not confined to Romantic literature; in like wise floral imagery is not confined to the Child of Nature: it applies as well to the Noble Savage. Voltaire's Master Simple the Huron "has a complexion of lilies and roses" (213). And thus it is with Godwin's Noble Savage/Child of Nature: Fleetwood says that he "felt like a tender flower of the garden, which the blast of the east wind nips, and impresses with the tokens of a sure decay" (18). Mary Macneil virtually is a flower. She lives among flowers:

The youngest was a gardener and botanist. She had laid out her father's grounds, and the style in which they were disposed did the highest credit to her imagination. One side of the family sitting-parlour was skirted with a greenhouse, of the same length as the room, and which seemed to make a part of it. This apartment was furnished with nearly every variety which Flora had ever produced in our island, or which curiosity has imparted, and were entirely cultivated by her hand (160).

She has taken on the qualities of a flower:

Her delight was in flowers; and she seemed like one of the beauties of her own parterre, soft, and smooth, and brilliant, and fragrant, and unsullied (171).

toward individuals: [...]. But principally I hate and detest that animal called man, although I hartily [*sic*] love John, Peter, Thomas, and so forth." *Correspondence*, III, 103.

And, as a true Child of Nature, she is the most beautiful of the three daughters, her beauteous soul having fashioned for itself a Platonically suitable body:

Mary had a complexion which, in point of fairness and transparency, could not be excelled: her blood absolutely spoke in her cheeks; the soft white of her hands and neck looked as if they would have melted away beneath your touch; her eyes were so animated, and her whole physiognomy so sensitive, that it was scarcely possible to believe that a thought could pass in her heart, which might not be read in her face (161).

After the loss of Mary's family at sea, Fleetwood marries her and takes her to his estate in Wales, where he is delighted to find that she has the strength, agility and endurance of a Noble Savage:

It was with pleasure that I perceived I could take her a walk of ten or twelve miles in extent, or invite her to climb the highest precipices, without her sustaining the smallest injury. When a woman is so unfortunately delicate, or has been so injudiciously brought up, as to be unable to walk more than a mile at a time, this effects a sort of divorce, deciding at once that, in many of the pleasures most gratifying to her husband's feelings and taste, she can be no partaker (198).

Mary is so much at home in the wilderness that Fleetwood comes to regard her not only as belonging to the landscape, but as a creature of vegetation herself. One afternoon she sets off to collect some rare wild flowers. Fleetwood remains at home in a bad mood, but reasons with himself and determines to follow after her. He teases himself with the pleasure which he will enjoy on seeing her again in her proper environment:

How beautiful will the carnation of her cheeks, and the lilies of her soft fingers, the fairest blossoms creation ever saw, appear amidst the parterre of wild flowers that skirts the ridge of Mount Idris! I think I see her now, as she stoops to cull them (201).

In this brief history the Wild Man has gradually emerged from the forest and the wilderness, wrenched from the bowels of the earth, or detached from the heart of a tree; savage, violent, hairy, indistinguishable from – and sometimes actually – a beast. This Wild Man, untamed, ferocious, lustful, is a foe of, and threat to, the orderly and civilized folk of the villages, towns and cities who have removed and isolated themselves from the mysterious, unpredictable and dangerous primitive natural world. In so doing they have cut themselves off from the physical, psychological, and moral nourishment which it also affords; and have begun to

degenerate accordingly. Meanwhile the natural world comes to be regarded as the cradle and nurse of the Wild Man's descendant, the Noble Savage, and the Noble Savage's more domestic offspring, the Child of Nature. Hand in hand with this progression the Wild Woman, a monstrous, moss-encrusted, leafy hag, has also evolved into a flower. Throughout the manifold incarnations of the Wild Man, the same images persist, until the tradition reaches its dazzling apotheosis in *Melincourt*. The aspect which one needs to bear in mind in all of this long, evolving tradition is the gradual movement away from ugliness, sin, lust, untamed beastliness, and violence in the Wild Man; and the corresponding movement towards beauty, goodness, and purity of body, mind and soul in the Child of Nature. In *Jekyll and Hyde* and 'Olalla' Stevenson embodies both of these extremes—Hyde is a Wild Man, and Olalla is a Child of Nature. But whereas other Children of Nature are essentially pure, Olalla is all too aware of the Hyde which lurks within and constantly threatens to overwhelm her; and it is she who will provide a crucial insight into the origins of Hyde.

This chapter has introduced the Child of Nature, with her beauty, her purity, and her goodness. *Melincourt* will show these virtues in action, and establish a standard of purity against which to set the beautiful and pious Olalla.

CHAPTER FIVE

OF APES AND PEACOCKS

Melincourt might seem an odd choice for inclusion in this dissertation: the ape is the hero, while the humans provide the degenerates. The book does, however, continue the examination of mankind's origins; the relationship between man and beast; evolution; degeneration; and the association between soul and body. Peacock presents the same light-hearted view of our early ancestors that Stevenson does in his essays concerning *Probably Arboreal*.²⁷ Moreover Peacock provides a particular frame of reference with which to approach 'Olalla', one of the keys to an understanding of *Jekyll and Hyde*. Most importantly, whereas our previous writers deal with the human condition by looking back to the Classical authors, in *Melincourt* Peacock blends the Ancients with modern scientific scholars of evolutionary theory, thereby moving one step closer to the amalgam of thought in *Jekyll and Hyde*.

LORD MONBODDO

In *Melincourt* Peacock utilizes the writings of one of the natural man's more notorious champions, the Scottish judge, laird, and philosopher James Burnett, Lord Monboddo (1714-99). Whereas Swift had presented a fiction of mankind degenerating into an ape-like creature, Monboddo firmly believed that mankind had risen from a more primitive condition, but that in so doing, had lost in size, physical strength, health, vitality, and moral fibre. In this he follows the progression outlined by Lucretius. William Knight writes:

Perhaps the most remarkable thing about Monboddo was his anticipative wisdom, his prevision of future theories as to the origin of man, and his descent or ascent from lower types. As an anatomist, he unconsciously followed Epicurus and Leucippus; while, as a virtual evolutionist, he holds an honoured place between Lucretius and Darwin.²⁸

Yet despite this honoured place, Knight finds fault with Monboddo's system,

²⁷ 'The Manse' and 'Pastoral', *Works*, XII. See above, p.26.

²⁸ William Knight, *Lord Monboddo and Some of His Contemporaries* (London: Murray, 1900), p.1. For a discussion of the validity of this claim, see Emily Cloyd, *James Burnet [sic]: Lord Monboddo* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972), pp.160-68.

which he laid out in two monumental works, *Of the Origin and Progress of Language* (6 volumes, 1773-92), and *Ancient Metaphysics* (6 volumes, 1779-99). Knight writes:

Monboddo's assertion that the race had degenerated—mentally, morally, and physically—was however curiously illogical, when taken in connection with his admission of the animal ancestry of man. The ascent, and not the descent, of man was the natural corollary of the conclusion he had reached in his anthropological studies. If our race has emerged from lower forms its continual progress, after the human stage was reached—and not its subsequent degeneracy—was the logical sequence to which his position led up (29).

Knight here is viewing Monboddo's system through the prism of his own logic, not Monboddo's. Monboddo's system consisted of two tightly interwoven strands of thought. The first is the Lucretian theme, in which mankind rises from a state of bestiality to arrive at language, civilization, and high culture. The second is the deteriorationist theme, in which mankind has degenerated physically and morally from a former Golden Age—in Monboddo's opinion, the Classical period. Thus Monboddo saw no contradiction in mankind's rise, perfection, and subsequent decline. In this he anticipated the views of Huxley,²⁹ Kingsley, and H.G. Wells in *The Time Machine*.

As a thinker, he was regarded with mixed feelings. Henry Cockburn writes:

Classical learning, good conversation, excellent suppers, and ingenious though unsound metaphysics were the peculiarities of Monboddo. He was reputed a considerable lawyer in his own time; and his reports show that the reputation was well founded. [...] He went very often to London, almost always on horseback, and was better qualified than most of his countrymen to shine in its literary society. But he was insufficiently appreciated; and he partly justified and indeed provoked this, by taking his love of paradox and metaphysics with him, and dealing them out in a style of academical formality; and this even after he ought to have seen, that all that people cared about his dogmas was to laugh at their author. It is more common to hear anecdotes about his maintaining that men once

²⁹ Huxley writes: “[I]t is an error to imagine that evolution signifies a constant tendency to increased perfection. That process undoubtedly involves a constant remodelling of the organism in adaptation to new conditions: but it depends on the nature of those conditions whether the direction of the modifications effected shall be upward or downward. Retrogressive is as practicable as progressive metamorphosis.” Huxley is of course not addressing the question of concomitant moral and physical decline; but Monboddo – along with Godwin, Peacock, and Kingsley – presents cities and industrial towns as physical environments calculated to warp and destroy bodies as well as souls. Huxley continues, using a simile which Monboddo would have applauded: “If our globe is proceeding from a condition in which it was too hot to support any but the lowest living thing to a condition in which it will be too cold to permit of the existence of any others, the course of life upon its surface must describe a trajectory like that of a ball fired from a mortar; and the sinking half of that course is as much a part of the general process of evolution as the rising” (‘The Struggle for Existence in Human Society’, *Evolution and Ethics, Collected Essays*, IX, 195-236 (p.199)).

had tails, and similar follies, than about his agreeable conversation and undoubted learning.³⁰

But Monboddo – albeit posthumously – found an ally in Charles Darwin:

The early progenitors of man must have been once covered with hair, both sexes having beards; their ears were probably pointed, and capable of movement; and their bodies were provided with a tail, having the proper muscles.³¹

History has proven Monboddo’s mockers wrong; but even at the time they were judging him too harshly. He was neither naive nor credulous, as he is at pains to demonstrate. He recounts a story told by a traveller:

His name is *Keoping*, a Swede by birth, who, in the year 1647, went to the East Indies, and there served aboard a Dutch ship of force, belonging to the Dutch East-India company, in quality of lieutenant. In sailing through those seas they had occasion to come upon the coast of an island in the gulf of Bengal called *Nicobar*, where they saw men with tails like those of cats, and which they moved in the same manner.³²

Some of the seamen go ashore, and the natives eat them.

Monboddo did not blindly accept this yarn because it suited his argument – even though he had come across it in a work by an acknowledged authority. He writes:

The story is told in the 6th volume of Linnæus’s *Amœnitates academicae*, in an academical oration of one *Hoppius*, a scholar, as I suppose, of Linnæus, who relates the story upon the credit of this Keoping, with several more circumstances than I have mentioned. As I knew nothing then of any other author who had spoken of men with tails, I thought the fact extraordinary, and was not disposed to believe it without knowing who this Keoping was, and what credit he deserved. I therefore wrote to Linnæus, inquiring about him, and desiring to know where his book was to be found.³³

Linnæus wrote back (Monboddo quotes part of the letter), giving publishing details, approving the author’s veracity, and citing other accounts of encounters with men who were nocturnal, without speech, and caudate. Finally Monboddo was

³⁰ Henry Cockburn, *Lord Cockburn’s Works: Vol. 2, Memorials of His Time* (Edinburgh: Black, 1872), pp.97-98. Cockburn was a Judge of the Court of Sessions in Scotland; and wrote his memoirs between 1821 and 1830. The Preface is dated 1856, three years before *The Origin of Species*.

³¹ *Descent of Man*, p.524. Emily Cloyd writes: “Erasmus Darwin, the grandfather of Charles Darwin, knew Monboddo’s works and mentioned him in *The Temple of Nature* (1801), but Charles Darwin does not mention him” (168). In the light of Darwin’s claim, it is interesting to note Gulliver’s observation of the Yahoos, that “Their Heads and Breasts were covered with a thick Hair, some frizzled and others lank; they had Beards like Goats” (193).

³² *Of the Origin and Progress of Language*, facsimile repr. of 1st edn (London: Cadell; Edinburgh: Balfour, 1773-92), 6 vols (Menston: Scholar Press, 1967), I, 234-35. (Hereafter *O & P*.)

persuaded to accept the story. He gives two reasons why. The first seems to be based primarily on his experience as a judge. He finds that the Swedish lieutenant

writes in a simple plain manner, not like a man who intended to impose a lie upon the world, merely for the silly pleasure of making people stare; and if it be a lie (for it cannot be a mistake), it is the only lie in his book; for everything else that he has related of animals and vegetables has been found to be true.³⁴

The second is based partly on an acceptance of the first, partly on the state of knowledge of the day, and partly on the testament of authority stretching back to the Ancients:

I am convinced, that we have not yet discovered all the variety of nature, not even in our own species [...]. I am therefore disposed to believe, upon credible evidence, that there are still greater varieties in our species than what is mentioned by this traveller: for that there are men with tails, such as the ancients gave to their satyrs, is a fact so well attested that I think it cannot be doubted. [Footnote: See *Linnæi Systema Naturae*, vol.1. p.33. and *Buffon's Natural History*.]³⁵

Like Swift, Monboddo was an admirer of the Ancients; but in his case it amounted to adulation.³⁶ He absorbed Classical thought, and lived a life that was both benignly patrician, and spartan. Knight writes:

His personal habits were frugal, if somewhat eccentric. Very fond of exercise in the open air, he rose early—six o'clock—and always took a cold bath, summer and winter (even during frost), in a house erected for the purpose at some distance from the mansion, near a running stream which supplied it with water. He took a light dinner early during the day, supper being his chief meal. Before going to rest he had an air-bath, and then anointed himself with oil, in imitation of the Ancients, his lotion being composed of “rose-water, olive oil, saline, aromatic-spirit, and Venetian soap” (12).³⁷

Following his morning bath, writes Knight,

He read his Plato usually at breakfast, and, therefore, required an edition which he could conveniently hold in his hand at that time (26).

Among the Moderns he approved of Henry More's fellow Cambridge Platonist,

³³ *O & P*, I, 236, footnote.

³⁴ *O & P*, I, 236-38.

³⁵ *O & P*, I, 238.

³⁶ According to Emily Cloyd this probably derived from his early education which “had the effect of narrowing James's mind so much that it could not ever again admit any learning without a Greek or Roman foundation” (5).

³⁷ No reference given for the quotation.

Ralph Cudworth, “for he was thoroughly learned in the Ancient Philosophy.”³⁸ He thought Lord Shaftesbury’s ‘The Moralists’ “the best philosophical Drama that has been composed, since the days of Plato.”³⁹ His antipathy to Dr Johnson was inflamed by Johnson’s dismissal of Milton,⁴⁰ whom he regarded as not only “the greatest writer both in verse and prose that we have in our language;”⁴¹ but also “the only poet in English that can be compared with Homer.”⁴²

He divided writing into “three general characters of style: The simple, the highly ornamented, and the middle between these two.”⁴³ At the one extreme he finds that Shaftesbury “has the richest and most copious style of any writer in English; [...] in this he has imitated Plato”.⁴⁴ At the other extreme,

The author, in English, that has excelled the most in [the simple] style is Dr Swift, in his *Gulliver’s Travels* [...]. I think I do not go too far when I pronounce it the most perfect work of the kind, ancient or modern, that is to be found.⁴⁵

He advised one correspondent that, in metaphysical matters, the Church of England might benefit from a thorough study of “the pious Philosophy of the ancients, and particularly the Philosophy of Plato, which has ever been acknowledged to be more agreeable to the doctrines of Christianity than any other.”⁴⁶

Monboddo looked back fondly on a complicated history of advancement and decline—as in fact did Lucretius: on the one hand, mankind is evolving from a state of brutishness to a state of culture, civilization, and philosophy. On the other hand, mankind is degenerating both in stature and physical prowess. In Monboddo’s mind this dual process achieved an ideal mating in the golden age of Classical Greece. After that, the physical decline continued, but now went hand in hand with a mental and moral decline as well, brought on, ironically, by the very civilization which had been so hardly won. Monboddo did not simply dream this up: he was working within a long tradition, also operating in *Gulliver’s Travels*, a work which was first published in Monboddo’s twelfth year. During Gulliver’s voyage to Laputa he visits

³⁸ Knight, p.125. Letter to Richard Price, 15 September 1780.

³⁹ Knight, p.141. Letter to Samuel Horsley, 11 December 1780. Monboddo devotes an entire chapter to ‘The Moralists’ in *O & P*, IV, 341-94.

⁴⁰ Knight, p.264. Letter to John Young, 17 February 1784.

⁴¹ *O & P*, V, 253.

⁴² Knight, p.214. Letter to Sir George Baker, 2 October 1782.

⁴³ *O & P*, III, 181.

⁴⁴ *O & P*, III, 282.

⁴⁵ *O & P*, III, 195-96.

⁴⁶ Knight, p.118. Letter to Samuel Horsley, 24 July 1780.

Glubbudbrib, where the Governor is able to summon the ghosts of the dead. Gulliver requests him to summon the ghosts of such famous leaders as Alexander the Great and Julius Caesar, and philosophers such as Socrates and Aristotle. Gulliver then requests to see the ghosts of those who lived between two- and three-hundred years before, and finally those who lived only one-hundred years before. He reflects:

As every Person called up made exactly the same Appearance he had done in the World, it gave me melancholy Reflections to observe how much the Race of human Kind was degenerate among us, within these Hundred Years past (173).

Imagine, then, how much we must have diminished since the days of the Ancients. Monboddo reckoned up the dimensions of the Greek heroes from the Homeric texts:

Homer has said nothing positively, of the size of any of his heroes, but only comparatively [...]. But [...] he has given us a very accurate description of the persons of several of the Greek heroes; which I am persuaded he had from very good information. In this he tells us, that Ulysses was shorter than Agamemnon by the head, shorter than Menelaus by the head and shoulders, and that Ajax was taller than any of the Greeks by the head and shoulders; consequently, Ulysses was shorter than Ajax by two heads and shoulders, which we cannot reckon less than four feet. Now, if we suppose these heroes to have been no bigger than we, then Ajax must have been a man about six feet and a half, or at most seven feet; and if so, Ulysses must have been most contemptibly short, not more than three feet, which is certainly not the truth, but a most absurd and ridiculous fiction, such as we cannot suppose in Homer: whereas, if we allow Ajax to have been twelve or thirteen feet high, and, much more, if we suppose him to have been eleven cubits,⁴⁷ as Philostratus makes him, Ulysses, though four feet short of him, would have been of a good size, and, with the extraordinary breadth which Homer observes he had, may have been as strong a man as Ajax.⁴⁸

By Monboddo's most conservative estimate, Ulysses would have been eight feet tall. We certainly have declined. Monboddo, alas, had declined along with the rest: he was not quite five feet tall.⁴⁹

Hand in hand with this physical diminution went our degeneration in every other way. In Peacock's *Headlong Hall* (1816) Mr Escot the Monboddan deteriorationist gives a graphic description of this slow fall:

The first inhabitants of the world knew not the use either of wine or animal food;

⁴⁷ Between sixteen and a half feet, and twenty feet.

⁴⁸ *Antient Metaphysics: or, The Science of Universals. With an Appendix, containing an Examination of the Principles of Sir Isaac Newton's Philosophy*, 6 vols (London: Cadell; Edinburgh: Balfour, 1779-99), III, 146. Quoted in *Melincourt* (New York: AMS Press, 1967), p.207-08. Further references to *Melincourt* will be given after quotations in the text.

⁴⁹ Emily Cloyd, raising more questions than she answers, adds: "and, for much of his life, proportionately small" (57).

it is, therefore, by no means incredible that they lived to the age of several centuries, free from war, and commerce, and arbitrary government, and every other species of desolating wickedness. But man was then a very different animal to what he now is: he had not the faculty of speech; he was not encumbered with clothes; he lived in the open air; his first step out of which, as Hamlet truly observes, is *into his grave*. [Footnote: See Lord Monboddo's *Ancient Metaphysics*.]⁵⁰ His first dwellings, of course, were the hollows of trees and rocks. In process of time he began to build: thence grew villages; thence grew cities. Luxury, oppression, poverty, misery, and disease kept pace with the progress of his pretended improvements, till, from a free, strong, healthy, peaceful animal, he has become a weak, distempered, cruel, carnivorous slave.⁵¹

The wild – or natural – man of Lucretius existed alongside the other beasts, inferior to some, superior to a few. The natural man of Monboddo, however, existed in an almost pre-lapsarian state of gentle innocence, lacking speech and arts, but innately noble and capable of realizing the full human potential which his civilized modern brothers have forfeited.

From the safe distance of two centuries it is easy to smile on Monboddo's quirks and eccentricities. He was difficult; he was opinionated; and towards the end of his life he may have been drifting towards dementia. But his beliefs went beyond mere philosophical propositions: they determined the kind of life he led, and he maintained them heroically although they brought him little comfort, as this moving passage from Emily Cloyd demonstrates:

On 16 June 1774, Monboddo and Boswell walked together in the Meadows, near Parliament House. Monboddo's son Arthur had died on 27 April, at the age of eleven, and the loss was naturally still very much on the father's mind. It was a personal loss of great importance, but it meant other things to him, too—it meant the dwindling end of a family line which had been great, strong, and vigorous, and it symbolized as well the history of man, declining from the physical greatness and intellectual stature of the Greeks to the physical and intellectual meanness of modern man. One need only compare a Plato and a Hume to see what was happening. Family legend told Monboddo of giants in his line, and there were stories of great strength, of curling stones used as hay weights; but in him the family had dwindled to less than five feet in height and to a constitution which maintained its vigour only by strenuous exercise, air baths, and careful diet; in his son, there was not enough strength to maintain twelve years of life. Boswell remarked on Monboddo's manly composure in discussing his loss, and the talk soon turned to matters of language (59-60).

⁵⁰ See also *O & P*, I, 205.

⁵¹ Peacock, *Headlong Hall* (New York: AMS Press, 1967), p.39.

MELINCOURT

And so to *Melincourt* (1817), whose hero Sir Oran Haut-ton, Baronet, M.P., musician, gardener, boozier and orang-outang, became so popular that, when the novel was published again in 1856, it appeared under the title: *Melincourt, or, Sir Oran Haut-ton*.⁵²

The first thing to note about this work is that Peacock has included a Wild Man (Sir Oran), a Noble Savage (Sir Oran's patron Sylvan Forester), and a Child of Nature (the heroine Anthelia Melincourt)—although, as will become apparent, these categories tend to overlap each other.

Anthelia's name (Greek: *Antheilion* = *little flower*) is enough to suggest that she is a Child of Nature.⁵³ She grows up in Westmoreland (the district of Mary Macneil, the Child of Nature in *Fleetwood*), and the magical power of nature works its spell on both her mind and body. Peacock writes:

The majestic forms and wild energies of Nature that surrounded her from her infancy, impressed their character on her mind, communicating to it all their own wildness, and more than their own beauty. Far removed from the pageantry of courts and cities, her infant attention was awakened to spectacles more interesting and more impressive: [...]. The murmur of the woods, the rush of the winds, and the tumultuous dashing of the torrents, were the first music of her childhood. A fearless wanderer among these romantic solitudes, the spirit of mountain liberty diffused itself through the whole tenour of her feelings, modelled the symmetry of her form, and illumined the expressive but feminine brilliancy of her features (9).

Her studies are appropriate to her environment:

[A]nd when she had attained the age at which the mind expands itself to the fascinations of poetry, the muses of Italy became the chosen companions of her wanderings, and nourished a naturally susceptible imagination by conjuring up the splendid visions of chivalry and enchantment in scenes so congenial to their development (10).

Of course, by the time she is twenty-one and an orphan, and the inevitable suitors are beginning to swarm, she is completely uninterested; and Peacock is beginning his attack on the present degenerate age:

Her knowledge of love was altogether theoretical; and her theory, being formed by the study of Italian poetry in the bosom of mountain solitude, naturally and

⁵² Although Sir Oran was popular, the book itself was not a great success; hence the delay before the second edition.

⁵³ Her surname may in part derive from *meli* = *honey*.

necessarily pointed to a visionary model of excellence which it was very little likely the modern world could realize (12).

Sylvan Forester is a Noble Savage by temperament and philosophical persuasion, rather than upbringing. He has had a university education, and has retired to an ancient abbey in Westmoreland, Rednose Abbey, which he has partially restored and renamed Redrose Abbey, “as being more analogous to [his] notions of beauty” (34). It is also analogous to his notions of ideal love. This Noble Savage has not simply fled to the countryside, but has come “with a view of carrying on in peace and seclusion some peculiar experiments on the nature and progress of man” (34). His tautological name, however, also places him immediately among the Wild Men: *Sylvan=forest dweller; Forester=forest dweller*, and is also another name for a Wild Man.⁵⁴ Furthermore, as we shall see, Peacock is fond of combining words to create names; if we combine SYLVan and forESTER, we arrive at SYLVESTER, which identifies him strongly with Sir Oran, whose scientific name is *Homo Sylvestris*. His dwelling is covered in ivy, the Wild Man’s girdle; and he has left the woods around the abbey in “a fine state of wildness” (36; 37). His temperament of course shines on his countenance, making him a “very bright-eyed wild-looking young man” (170). He keeps no horses, regarding them as “a selfish and criminal species of luxury” (271). His estate has been laid out specifically to prevent the entry of carriages, to preserve the tenants “from the contagious exhibitions and examples of luxury” (275). To protest the slave trade he denies himself and his guests sugar (chapter 5). And he is “always fond of railing at civilized life, and holding forth in praise of savages and what [he calls] original men” (34). He is, in fact, an ideal mate for Anthelia.

Peacock’s introduction of Sir Oran is both subtle and extended. Sir Telegraph Paxarett has been summoned by his aunt Mrs Pinmoney to try his luck with Anthelia’s affections. Driving towards Melincourt in his barouche he happens on Forester and recognizes him as an old college chum. Forester invites him to stay the night and shows him around the abbey grounds. Sir Telegraph asks:

“But who is that gentleman, sitting under the great oak yonder, in the green coat

⁵⁴ Bernheimer, p.128. See also *The Faerie Queene*, III.1, where Florimell is pursued by a “foster.” We should not confuse Spenser’s use of *foster*, meaning Wild Man, with Peacock’s Mr Foster in *Headlong Hall*. Peacock gives his derivation: “Foster, quasi φωστηρ,—from φως and τηρεω, lucem servo, conservo, observo, custodio,—one who watches over and guards the light; a sense in which the word is often used amongst us, when we speak of *fostering* a flame” (8).

and nankins?⁵⁵ He seems very thoughtful.”

“He is of a contemplative disposition,” said Mr Forester: “you must not be surprised if he should not speak a word during the whole time you are here. The politeness of his manner makes amends for his habitual taciturnity” (37-38).

Forester introduces them. It then takes fourteen pages, dinner – at which Sir Oran shows “great proficiency in the dissection of game” (39) – and a discussion about sugar before Forester reveals that Sir Oran is an orang-outang. But Peacock has in another sense announced from the first that Sir Oran is a Wild Man. He is dressed in the traditional green garment, and seated beneath an oak—the tree under which is traditionally found not only the Wild Man, but the original man of Lucretius.⁵⁶ He shares his contemplative disposition with Godwin’s Noble Savage/Child of Nature Fleetwood, and with the noble Wild Man of the Golden Age.⁵⁷ His hairiness, hidden beneath his garments, is represented by “a pair of enormous whiskers” (38). Both he and the Wild Man lack the gift of speech.

Sir Oran is a multi-faceted creation. He spends his infancy in the woods of Angola, in the typical environment of a Wild Man. But then he is caught by a native couple who bring him home, where he grows up in the typical environment of a Noble Savage. Forester explains:

[T]hey brought him up in their cottage as the play-fellow of their little boys and girls, where, with the exception of speech, he acquired the practice of such of the simpler arts of life as the degree of civilization in that part of Africa admits (54-55).

Note here the inversion of the Wild Man tradition in which a human child is raised among beasts.

Forester’s old friend Captain Hawltaught buys Oran from his owners, and after a few years spent at sea, they retire to a little village in the west of England to take care of their garden. Captain Hawltaught plants cabbages, and Oran becomes “a very expert practical gardener” (57). He also becomes proficient on the flute and French horn; and in the evenings, both of them drunk, he accompanies the Captain as he sings his shanties. In his acquired taste for drink Oran is again conforming to the Wild Man type, who may be captured by being made drunk, or, like Orson, encounters alcohol when he comes in from the wild. His occupation in the garden

⁵⁵ Trousers made from yellow cotton.

⁵⁶ Lucretius, *On the Nature of Things*, V, lines 939-40 (Munro, p.179).

⁵⁷ In *Headlong Hall* Mr Escot the deteriorationist says: “The wild and original man is a calm and contemplative animal” (120).

identifies him with the type of Wild Man who protects and husbands his wild environment.

Following the death of the Captain, Forester, who has always regarded this natural man as a project, takes Oran to live with him in order to give him a philosophical education and, hopefully, teach him to speak. To protect Oran from impolite behaviour towards him, Forester purchases him a baronetcy and one half of the elective franchise of a rotten borough, and makes over to him an estate.

Upon hearing this tale Sir Telegraph remarks:

By the by, you put me very much in mind of Valentine and Orson. This wild man of yours will turn out some day to be the son of a king, lost in the woods, and suckled by a lioness (63).

Forester and Sir Oran share a fraternal relationship like that of Valentine and Orson, and one may easily discern parallels in the two stories;⁵⁸ but the exploits of Forester and Sir Oran, as the plot unfolds, seem to be modeled more on those of Prince Arthur and the Salvage Man in *The Faerie Queene*.

Hand in hand with this insistence on Sir Oran's pedigree as a Wild Man, Peacock adds another layer of observations and suppositions by modern natural philosophers—in particular, Lord Monboddo.⁵⁹ Having first introduced Sir Oran with Wild Man imagery – clad in green, sitting under an oak – Peacock shifts the focus to the orang-outang's relationship to man; and presents him in a more scientific light. He then proceeds to fashion a tale in which Sir Oran performs many Wild Man actions, which receive corroboration not from Wild Man lore, but from the assertions of natural philosophers, and the testimony of travellers who have witnessed the behaviour of orang-outangs. The result is a fascinating story in which we find ourselves drawn into a world which seems to have been constructed jointly by Spenser and Monboddo; a world which is greater and more bewilderingly joyous than the sum of its parts.

Every last detail about Sir Oran's appearance and behaviour (apart from his dress

⁵⁸ Marilyn Butler writes: "Peacock lightly finds equivalents in *Melincourt* for many essentials of [Valentine and Orson]." *Peacock Displayed: A Satirist in his Context* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1979), p.322, n18.

⁵⁹ Also quoted are Buffon's *Histoire Naturelle* (44 vols, 1749-1804), Linnæus's *Systema Naturæ* (1735), and Rousseau's *Discours sur l'origine et les fondements de l'inégalité parmi les Hommes* (1755).

sense and his horticultural pursuits) is corroborated by an extensive footnote from one or more of Peacock's sources, the most frequent being Monboddo. Forester, who on several occasions recites large slabs of Monboddo verbatim, says of his protégé:

He is a specimen of the natural and original man—the wild man of the woods; called, in the language of the more civilized and sophisticated natives of Angola, *Pongo*, and in that of the Indians of South America, *Oran Outang*.⁶⁰

[...]

Some presumptuous naturalists have refused his species the honours of humanity; but the most enlightened and illustrious philosophers agree in considering him in his true light as the natural and original man. One French philosopher, indeed, has been guilty of an inaccuracy, in considering him as a degenerated man: degenerated he cannot be; as his prodigious physical strength, his uninterrupted health, and his amiable simplicity of manners demonstrate. He is, as I have said, a specimen of the natural and original man—a genuine fac simile of the philosophical Adam (52-54).

Peacock appends to this speech the following footnote from Monboddo, which encapsulates the latter's entire argument:

His body, which is of the same shape as ours, is bigger and stronger than ours [...] according to that general law of nature above observed (*that all animals thrive best in their natural state*). His mind is such as that of a man must be, uncultivated by arts and sciences, and living wild in the woods. [...] If ever men were in that state which I call natural, it must have been in such a country and climate as Africa, where they could live without art upon the natural fruits of the earth. [...] If this be so, then, the short history of man is, that the race having begun in those fine climates, and having, as is natural, multiplied there so that the spontaneous productions of the earth could not support them, they migrated into other countries, where they were obliged to invent arts for their subsistence; and with such arts, language, in process of time, would necessarily come (*Melincourt*, 53).

Having stated his case with a philosophical detachment, Monboddo cannot resist a splenetic outburst against his opponents:

That my facts and arguments are so convincing as to leave no doubt of the

⁶⁰ Since he comes from Angola, Sir Oran is obviously not what we know as an orang-outang, which is a native of Borneo and Sumatra, from where it derives its name. In Chapter I of *Man's Place in Nature* Huxley devotes several pages to a history of researches into chimpanzees and gorillas, both of whom were known indifferently as "pongo", an apparent corruption of an African place name. The confusion between "pongo" and "orang-outang" may be seen in a passage in Buffon's *Histoire Naturelle*, vol. XIV (1766). He entitles a chapter "Les Orang-outangs ou le Pongo et le Jocko." Huxley quotes from a note appended to Buffon's title: "Orang-outang, nom de cet animal aux Indes orientales: Pongo, nom de cet animal à Lowando, Province de Congo" (*Man's Place in Nature*, intro by Ashley Montagu (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1971), p.24). It is possible that some further confusion resulted in Buffon's "Indes orientales" eventually becoming Forester's "Indians of South America". One should therefore regard Sir Oran as the ideal, hairy, natural "orang-outang" or "Wild Man of the woods".

humanity of the oran outang, I will not take upon me to say; but this much I will venture to affirm, that I have said enough to make the philosopher consider it as problematical, and a subject deserving to be inquired into. *For, as to the vulgar, I can never expect that they should acknowledge any relation to those inhabitants of the woods of Angola; but that they should continue, through a false pride, to think highly derogatory from human nature what the philosopher, on the contrary, will think the greatest praise of man, that from the savage state in which the oran outang is, he should, by his own sagacity and industry, have arrived at the state in which we now see him.*” *Origin and Progress of Language*, bk ii. chap.5 (*Melincourt*, 53-54).

Peacock draws the reader’s attention to the principle underpinning his book, by putting part of a passage from Rousseau into Forester’s mouth:

It is still more curious to think that modern travellers should have made beasts, under the names of Pongos, Mandrills, and Oran Outangs, of the very same beings whom the ancients worshipped as divinities under the names of Fauns and Satyrs, Silenus and Pan (63-64).

Peacock then goes on to show the seamless blending of myth, lore, and poetic imagination which provided the language for the expression of contemporary philosophical and scientific thought. Forester refers to “a learned mythologist” – based on Peacock’s friend Thomas Taylor “the Platonist” (1758-1835), who always addressed the classicist Peacock as “Greeky-Peaky”.⁶¹ Forester says:

I introduced him to Sir Oran, for whom he immediately conceived a high veneration, and would never call him by any name but Pan. His usual salutation to him was in the following words:

[...]

King of the world! enthusiast free,
Who dwell’st in caves of liberty!
And on thy wild pipe’s notes of glee
Respondest Nature’s harmony!
Leading beneath the spreading tree
The Bacchanalian revelry!

“This,” said he, “is part of the Orphic invocation of Pan. It alludes to the happy existence of the dancing Pans, Fauns, Orans, *et id genus omne*, whose dwellings are the caves of rocks and the hollows of trees, such as undoubtedly was, or would have been, the natural mode of life of our friend Pan among the woods of Angola. It alludes, too, to their musical powers, which in our friend Pan it gives me indescribable pleasure to find so happily exemplified. The epithet *Bacchic*, our friend Pan’s attachment to the bottle demonstrates to be very appropriate; and the epithet *Κοσμοκρτωρ*, king of the world, points out a striking similarity between the Orphic Pan and the Troglodyte of Linnæus, *who believes that the*

⁶¹ *Headlong Hall*, Introduction, p.xcviii.

earth was made for him, and that he will again be its sovereign (65-67).⁶²

In this passage we can see an unbroken line of thought, from ancient Greece to Peacock's day, in which Pans, Wild Men, and Orans have become virtually indistinguishable: the mythological wood gods, the Wild Man, and the natural man of Monboddo all dwell in the hollows of trees or in caves in the rocks; Sir Oran's ability on the flute, "a fact attested, not by a common traveller, but by a man of science, Mr Peiresc, and who relates it, not as a hearsay, but as a fact consisting with his own knowledge" (57),⁶³ is attributed to Pan's inherent skills; his taste for alcohol, which is a failing of Wild Men, is also noted by Buffon as a sign of orang sophistication when dining at table (*Melincourt*, p.58, footnote), and by the learned mythologer as the appropriate behaviour of a Bacchant faun.⁶⁴

Although the focus so far has been on Sir Oran's relationship to the Wild Man, it is worth noting also his qualities as a Noble Savage. He is taller than everyone else;⁶⁵ he is enormously strong; he enjoys excellent health. Put simply, his temperament and innate benevolence are those of a Noble Savage; while his actions when roused are those of a Wild Man. His contemplative disposition has been noted above. Morally he is superior to the bulk of his human fellows. Captain Hawltaught "used to observe, he could always say he had an honest man in his house, which was more than could be said of many honourable houses where there was much vapouring about honour" (57). Forester reiterates this sentiment by quoting directly from Monboddo: "*With regard to his moral character, he is undoubtedly a man, and a much better man than many that are to be found in civilized countries*" (*Melincourt*, p.71). It is therefore Sir Oran who embodies the ideal man, while those around him are degenerated from this state, and only a few are striving to recapture it. Peacock

⁶² Forester states earlier: "Linnæus has given him the curious denominations of *Troglodytes*, *Homo nocturnus*, and *Homo silvestris*: but he evidently thought him a man: he describes him as having a hissing speech, thinking, reasoning, believing that the earth was made for him, and that he will one day be its sovereign" (62-63). Linnæus is quoted in the Latin in a footnote.

⁶³ This is a footnote quoting Monboddo, *O & P*, book ii, chap.5.

⁶⁴ Charles Darwin in *The Descent of Man* also notes the vices of our simian cousins: "Many kinds of monkeys have a strong taste for tea, coffee, and spiritous liquors: they will also, as I have myself seen, smoke tobacco with pleasure." He goes on to describe the effect of strong beer on African baboons, and their consequent hangovers. He concludes with an appropriate moral observation: "An American monkey, an Ateles, after getting drunk on brandy, would never touch it again, and thus was wiser than many men" (396-97). The habit of associating primates with mythological figures persisted even after Darwin's revelations. In 1894 an Abyssinian baboon was named *Cynocephalus Hamadryas* = *dog-headed tree-dwelling wood-nymph*. See *OED*, *cynocephalus* and *hamadryad*.

⁶⁵ In a footnote Peacock quotes Monboddo describing a "young [orang-outang] but six and a half feet tall" (56).

employs this heretical conceit for some Swiftian attacks on his own species. Forester relates how he took Sir Oran to London, a place in Forester's philosophy equivalent to Babylon with pollution, within whose confines are found "the sordid and sickly victims of commerce, and the effeminate and enervated slaves of luxury" (289):

The theatres delighted him, particularly the opera, which not only accorded admirably with his taste for music; but where, as he looked round on the ornaments of the fashionable world, he seemed to be particularly comfortable, and to feel himself completely at home (60).

The joke of course is not that Sir Oran has risen to the noble condition where he is at ease with the fashionable world, but that the denizens of the fashionable world of London resemble those lesser simiae of his home in Angola.

The one point to keep in mind about Sir Oran Haut-ton and Sylvan Forester, is the same point that G.K. Chesterton made about Henry Jekyll and Edward Hyde:

The real stab of the story is not in the discovery that the one man is two men; but in the discovery that the two men are one man (72).

Sir Oran and Forester are obviously not one physical person, as Jekyll and Hyde are, but they do form a complementary pair, as Jekyll and Hyde do not. Sir Oran lacks the gift of speech; Forester lacks the gift of silence. He talks, at length, with and to anyone who comes near him. Sir Oran is the natural man being exposed to civilization; Forester is the philosopher satiated and disgusted with the modern world, in retreat to a nobler, more simplified life. Forester is the thinker; Sir Oran is the man of action. Forester possesses "so much intellectual superiority to the generality of mankind" (205); Sir Oran "is prodigiously strong" (106, n.). Both halves of the pair fall in love with Anthelia, and both halves end up with her; but significantly it is Sir Oran who strikes up the first acquaintance, in the natural setting of the wood beyond Melincourt Castle, when Anthelia (who spends most of her time in her library reading Italian poetry) is out communing with nature, whilst avoiding her suitors, most of whom are degenerate specimens of humanity, and none of whom measure up to her ideals:

She was roused from her reverie by sounds of music, issuing from the grove of pines, through which she had just passed, and which skirted the hollow. The notes were wild and irregular, but their effect was singular and pleasing. They ceased. Anthelia looked to the spot from which they had proceeded, and saw, or thought she saw, a face peeping at her through the trees; but the glimpse was

momentary. There was in the expression of the countenance, something so extraordinary, that she almost felt convinced her imagination had created it; yet her imagination was not in the habit of creating such physiognomies. She could not, however, apprehend that this remarkable vision portended any evil to her; for, if so, alone and defenceless as she was, why should it be deferred? (102).

There are several things at work here. The Child of Nature Anthelia shares with the natural man the habit of contemplation. Sir Oran is first introduced to her as a Pan figure playing wild music on his flute, unseen in the woods. She is the only person who encounters him first in a wild environment. When she sees him she is not afraid.

She walks on, is caught in a downpour, and marooned on a rock in the middle of a rising torrent.

She looked towards the pine grove, through which she had descended in the morning; she thought of the wild music she had heard, and of the strange face that had appeared among the trees. Suddenly it appeared again: and shortly after, a stranger issuing from the wood, ran with surprising speed to the edge of the chasm.

Anthelia had never seen so singular a physiognomy; but there was nothing in it to cause alarm. The stranger seemed interested for her situation, and made gestures expressive of a design to assist her. He paused a moment, as if measuring with his eyes the breadth of the chasm, and then returning to the grove, proceeded very deliberately to pull up a pine. [Footnote: "I have heard the natives say, he can throw down a palm-tree, by his amazing strength, to come at the wine."—*Letter of a Bristol Merchant, in a note to the Origin and Progress of Language*, book ii. c.4.] (106).

Sir Oran runs with the speed of a Wild Man, and emerges from the woods in the same way that the Salvage Man emerges to aid Serena. Sir Oran makes friendly gestures in the same manner as the Salvage. He then performs the defining Wild Man act of pulling up a tree; but by Peacock's time this act has entered the scientific literature as an accomplishment of the orang-outang, thus coming, as it were, full circle, and enabling Peacock to paint a seemingly straightforward scene of great richness and complexity.

After the spectacular rescue, Peacock tells us that:

Sir Oran Haut-ton, as we conjecture, had taken a very long ramble [...] and had sat down in the pine-grove to solace himself with his flute, when Anthelia, bursting upon him like a beautiful vision, rivetted him in silent admiration to the spot whence she departed, about which he lingered in hopes of her reappearance, till the accident which occurred on her return enabled him to exert his extraordinary physical strength, in a manner so remarkably advantageous to her (110).

Why should an orang-outang be smitten with a human? One could invoke Beauty and the Beast, and leave it at that; but that still leaves the question unanswered. It is important to remember what Sir Oran and Anthelia represent; and that these representations are essentially fluid. Anthelia is a Child of Nature, and as such is loved by wild creatures. The reason for this is simple; Fairchild writes: “It is evident that humanitarian feeling toward animals, based not so much on reflective pity as on a genuine kinship with all instinctive and irreflective beings, is often associated with the [Child of Nature]” (371). This “genuine kinship” exists between Forester, Anthelia, and Sir Oran; and it is that which eventually unites the Wild Man, the Noble Savage, and the Child of Nature.

Forester has already found his Wild aspect in the person of Sir Oran, and is in search of the perfect woman. He describes her to his friend Mr Fax, in a way that leaves little doubt that what he is looking for is a flowery Child of Nature:

She should have no taste for what are called public pleasures. Her pleasures should be bounded in the circle of her family, and a few, a very few congenial friends, her books, her music, her flowers—she should delight in flowers—the uninterrupted cheerfulness of domestic concord, the delightful effusions of unlimited confidence. The rocks, and woods, and mountains, boundaries of the valley of her dwelling, she should be content to look on as the boundaries of the world (117).

“You say nothing of beauty,” replies Fax, giving Forester the opportunity to reveal that he is a true Platonist:

As to what is usually called beauty, mere symmetry of form and features, it would be an object with me in purchasing a statue, but none whatever in choosing a wife. Let her countenance be a mirror of such qualities as I have described, and she cannot be otherwise than beautiful. I think with the Athenians, that beauty and goodness are inseparable (118-19).⁶⁶

Anthelia, meanwhile, is looking for a Noble Savage in the guise of a knight-errant. In a conversation with Mrs Pinmoney she lists the qualities of her ideal man, in which the reader may see that some apply as well to Sir Oran as to Forester:

I would require him to be free in all his thoughts, true in all his words, generous in all his actions—ardent in friendship, enthusiastic in love, disinterested in both—prompt in the conception, and constant in the execution, of benevolent enterprise—the friend of the friendless, the champion of the feeble, the firm opponent of the powerful oppressor—not to be enervated by luxury, nor

⁶⁶ What, then, of Sir Oran, who, like Socrates, and, indeed, Gabriel Utterson, is good but far from beautiful? I shall address this paradox later in this chapter, and in Chapter Ten.

corrupted by avarice, nor intimidated by tyranny, nor enthralled by superstition—more desirous to distribute wealth than to possess it, to disseminate liberty than to appropriate power, to cheer the heart of sorrow than to dazzle the eyes of folly.

THE HONOURABLE MRS PINMONEY

And do you really expect to find such a knight-errant? The age of chivalry is gone.

ANTHELIA

It is, but its spirit survives. Disinterested benevolence, the mainspring of all that is really admirable in the days of chivalry, will never perish for want of some minds calculated to feel its influence, still less for want of a proper field of exertion. [...] And I believe it possible to find as true a knight-errant in a brown coat in the nineteenth century, as in a suit of golden armour in the days of Charlemagne (23-24).⁶⁷

The reference to the brown coat is ambiguous enough to include both Forester and Sir Oran. By the end of the story, Forester and Sir Oran have jointly either performed all of the actions, or come to embody all of the qualities recited above by Anthelia. Nor should one forget that she embodies all of the qualities as well: she refuses sugar and all other products of slavery, and she has saved a family from destitution and placed them in a cottage and farm on her estate. Desmond, the recipient of Anthelia's largesse, asks Forester,

“[W]hat can repay her benevolence?”

“I will answer for her,” said Mr Forester, “though she is as yet personally unknown to me, that she loves benevolence for its own sake, and is satisfied with its consummation” (159).

Forester, who has never met a woman who lives up to his ideals, visits Anthelia with Sir Oran on business arising from the rescue. She receives them in her library. Forester begins:

You have an admirable library, Miss Melincourt: and I judge from the great number of Italian books, you are justly partial to the poets of that exquisite language. The apartment itself seems singularly adapted to the genius of their poetry, which combines the magnificent simplicity of ancient Greece with the mysterious grandeur of the feudal ages. Those windows of stained glass would recall to an enthusiastic mind the attendant spirit of Tasso; and the waving of the cedars beyond, when the wind makes music in their boughs, with the birds singing in their shades and the softened dash of the torrent from the dingle below, might, with little aid from fancy, be modulated into that exquisite combination of melody which flowed from the enchanted wood at the entrance of Renaldo, and

⁶⁷ Marilyn Butler, in her chapter on *Melincourt* (58-101), discusses Peacock's use of chivalry “as a positive ideal about which he is serious, and as a satiric tool which undercuts his enemies” (82).

which Tasso has painted with a degree of harmony not less magical than the music he describes(164).⁶⁸

Note here that Forester is standing in the library, gazing through the window, and painting an Arcadian picture of the natural scene which, only a few days before, had been so wild and threatening, and in which Sir Oran had been so much at home and so necessary. In his present environment Sir Oran is at a disadvantage, being able neither to speak nor read. However, his manners remain impeccable.

After a rarefied Classical discussion, Forester and Anthelia each find that the other fulfils all of the requirements for the ideal mate; and when dinner is announced, Forester offers his hand to Anthelia. Sir Oran is left to escort the match-making matron Mrs Pinmoney. This is a significant moment. After Sir Oran saved Anthelia from the torrent, she “requested the favour of his company to dinner at Melincourt” (109). Sir Oran had been obliged politely to refuse, as he was due home. In the end, it is the civilized Forester who accepts Anthelia’s invitation, and walks into the dining room with her on his arm, in which all three sit down to dinner. Their first communal moment cannot happen without all three of them.

The fly in this wild ointment is one of the suitors for Anthelia’s hand, “Lord Anophel Achthar [Footnote: ΑΝΩΦΕΛΟΝ ΑΞΦΟΣ ΑΡΟΥΡΑΣ. Terræ pondus inutile.],⁶⁹ son and heir of the Marquis of Agaric [Footnote: AGARICUS, in Botany, a genus of plants of the class Cryptogamia, comprehending the mushroom, and a copious variety of toadstools.]” (80), who, following the self-serving advice of his parasite the Reverend Mr Grovelgrub lays plans to abduct Anthelia and keep her prisoner until she agrees to marry him. Grovelgrub meanwhile has his own plans to undermine Lord Anophel and ingratiate himself with Anthelia.

In *Hermesprong* the moral difference between Hermesprong and Sir Philip Chestrum is accentuated by their physical differences; in *Melincourt* there is no description of

⁶⁸ Butler points out that Anthelia resembles a heroine from Tasso; and that “Forester, Sir Oran and Anthelia are not characters in a novel, but figures from romance. There is no attempt to give them the surface detail of novel characters; instead, they have the elusive depth of allegory. Equally, the adventure in which all three are involved, of quest and rescue, has the dream-like inconsequence of romance” (68). Butler considers *Melincourt* in relation to Tasso, Spenser, and other works of romance (66-69). Peacock abandoned ‘Ahrimanes,’ a poem based on *The Faerie Queene*, shortly before beginning *Melincourt*.

⁶⁹ ANOPHELON ACHTHOS AROURAS. David Garnett politely translates it as “A useless cumber of the ground.” *The Novels of Thomas Love Peacock*, ed, intro. and notes by David Garnett (London: Hart-Davis, 1948), p.144, n1. Peacock probably had in mind something closer to his description of the property owned by another of Anthelia’s suitors, Mr Harum O’Scarum: “a vast tract of undrained bog” (83).

Lord Anophel, but we draw our own conclusions. Sir Oran the Wild Man has come from the fruitful forests of Africa, and has learned the art of horticulture; he toils happily in his garden, and nurtures the yeoman cabbage. Forester the Noble Savage lives in an establishment which he has named after a potent image of courtly love—Redrose. Living on his estate he has a maiden aunt called Miss Evergreen, which implies that his mother was an Evergreen, and therefore a Child of Nature. His estate – modelled on Monboddo’s – is described thus:

The valley expanded into a spacious amphitheatre, with a beautiful stream winding among pastoral meadows, which, as well as the surrounding hills, were studded with cottages, each with its own trees, its little garden, and its farm. Sir Telegraph was astonished to find so many human dwellings in a space that, on the modern tactics of rural œconomy, appeared only sufficient for three or four *moderate* farms [...]. Anthelia, as their path wound among the cottages, was more and more delighted with the neatness and comfort of the dwellings, the exquisite order of the gardens, the ingenuous air of happiness and liberty that characterized the simple inhabitants, and the health and beauty of the little rosy children that were sporting in the fields (284-85).

Anthelia the Child of Nature is a wild flower blooming in a land that is both wildly beautiful and agriculturally productive. Lord Anophel is a useless piece of dirt engendered by a toxic fungus.

The first abduction attempt moves our heroes into Spenser territory. Like the Salvage Man, Sir Oran is characteristically unrestrained in defence of his beloved, while Forester’s efforts are divided between comforting the distressed heroine and preventing Sir Oran from going too far. Anthelia goes for one of her rambles in the woods. Suddenly,

a mantle was thrown over her. She was wrapped in darkness, and felt that she was forcibly seized by several persons, who carried her rapidly along. She screamed, but the mantle was immediately pressed on her mouth, and she was hurried onward. After a time the party stopped: a tumult ensued: she found herself at liberty, and threw the mantle from her head. [...] Two men were running away in the distance: two others, muffled and masked, were rolling on the ground, and roaring for mercy, while Sir Oran Haut-ton was standing over them with a stick [Footnote: “They use an artificial weapon for attack and defence, viz. a stick, which no animal merely brute is known to do.”—*Origin and Progress of Language*, book ii. chap.4.], and treating them as if he were a thresher, and they were sheaves of corn. By her side was Mr Forester, who, taking her hand, assured her that she was in safety, while at the same time he endeavoured to assuage Sir Oran’s wrath, that he might raise and unmask the fallen foes (202-03).

Here begins the merging of our two heroes into one.⁷⁰ Sir Oran's apparently Monboddon application of a stick in fact derives (as a later scene will confirm) from Talus, Artegall's Iron Man in *The Faerie Queene*. Peacock describes Sir Oran beating the villains "as if he were a thresher, and they were sheaves of corn." Spenser writes of Talus, "Who in his hand an yron flale did hould,/ With which he thresht out falshood, and did truth vnfold" (V.1.12). Hamilton writes that this iron flail is

a military weapon in the Renaissance, adapted from the wooden flail or thresher. [...] It is an instrument of punishment [...] but its end is to unfold truth. [...] Apparently Talus is not to be regarded as separate from the exercise of Artegall's virtue (532).

Artegall is the embodiment of justice, and Talus is his instrument. They are not independent of each other. The comparison between these two and Forester and Sir Oran does not withstand close scrutiny beyond a certain point. Forester is not the embodiment of justice: he is the embodiment of noble virtues. Sir Oran is not the instrument of Forester's justice: when he acts, it is upon his own wild impulse. Nevertheless, Hamilton's felicitous statement that "Talus is not to be regarded as separate from the exercise of Artegall's virtue" (532) applies equally to Forester and Sir Oran; Forester simply could not achieve his ends without his irascible companion. However, despite Peacock's verbal allusion to Talus (and an explicit allusion later), Sir Oran's behaviour here is not unlike that of Spenser's Salvage in the fight with Scorn and Disdain. The Salvage overcomes Scorn and then begins to scourge him with his own whip; and were it not for Arthur's restraining hand,

He would with whipping, him haue done to dye:
But being chekt, he did abstaine streight way,
And let him rise. (VI.8.29)

This conflation of Talus and the Salvage recurs later, during Sir Oran's election to Parliament in the Borough of Onevote. The electors, having been plied with ale and divers foodstuffs, offer to chair Sir Oran through the crowd. He politely declines the offer. They politely insist. He politely declines again. They attempt "with gentle force to overcome his scruples" (249). He grabs a stick from a farmer and begins to

⁷⁰ Clare Simmons writes: "Peacock's choice of name for his (human) hero, which itself suggests a 'man of the woods' (Sylvan or Sylvanus, a traditional name for a wild man found in such works as the *Faerie Queene*, is also the name for the orang-outang in *Count Robert of Paris*) may hint that there is little difference between man and orang-outang. Sir Oran is, in many respects, Sylvan Forester's alter-

lay about him “like Artegall’s Iron Man, or like Ajax among the Trojans, or like Rhodomont in Paris, or like Orlando among the soldiers of Agramant” (249). He fights his way through the mob and leaps onto the box of Sir Telegraph’s barouche “from whence he shook his sapling at the foe, with looks of mortal defiance” (250). Peacock probably had in mind the sequence in *The Faerie Queene* of the giant with the scales, and Talus’s attack on the mob who followed him (V.2.51-54.) But the mention of Sir Oran shaking his sapling at the foe is a reminder that he is above all a Wild Man—like the Salvage, as the following scene from *The Faerie Queene* illustrates.

After Arthur and the Salvage leave the villain Turpine’s castle, Turpine follows them at a distance, intent on more mischief. Arthur lies down to sleep while the Salvage forages for fruit in the wood. He returns to find Turpine about to attack the sleeping Arthur, whereupon:

Himselfe vnto his weapon he betooke,
That was an oaken plant, which lately hee
Rent by the root; which he so sternely shooke,
That like an hazell wand, it quiuered and quooke. (VI.7.24)

After the abduction of Anthelia has been foiled, Forester reveals that he has felt a need to involve himself emotionally with the connection between Anthelia and Sir Oran:

Anthelia, as she walked homeward, leaning on Mr Forester’s arm, inquired to what happy accident she was indebted for the timely intervention of himself and Sir Oran Haut-ton. Mr Forester informed her, that having a great wish to visit the scene which had been the means of introducing him to her acquaintance, he had made Sir Oran understand his desire, and they had accordingly set out together (204).

In fact, all three become psychically connected with that scene in the moments before the attack. Anthelia also has “wandered alone to the ruined bridge, to contemplate the scene of her former misadventure” (201). She hears the sounds of the villains in the woods, and becomes scared, but, “She paused again to listen: the soft tones of a flute sounded from a distance: these gave her confidence, and she again proceeded” (202). The first rescue – by Sir Oran from the forces of nature – is about to be repeated, this time by Sir Oran and Forester together, from the designs of

ego.” ‘A Man of few Words: The Romantic Orang-Outang and Scott’s *Count Robert of Paris*’, *Scottish Literary Journal*, 17.1 (May 1990), 21-34, (p.24).

degenerate men.

Although, as Marilyn Butler points out, Sir Oran, Forester and Anthelia are figures from romance (68), it appears that Peacock is not content to leave it at that. As with his blending of Spenserian and Monboddan themes, he cleverly arranges things so that Forester and Sir Oran are both in love with Anthelia, but within separate genres, as it were. Forester is a normal, if somewhat eccentric, gentleman, who begins as a reclusive philosopher-landlord, falls in love, marries, settles down and raises a family. He begins and ends unremarkably, as if he were a stock character in a conventional novel. Peacock writes:

The course of mutual love between Anthelia and Mr Forester was as smooth as the gliding of a skiff down a stream, through the flowery meadows of June: and [...] there was a very apparent probability that their intercourse would terminate in that grand climax and finale of all romantic adventure—marriage (311-12).

Again Peacock employs the image of the flower, this time associated with true love and its natural union; which is the theme of a song sung previously by Anthelia—an expression of her yearning for true love and her as yet unacknowledged anticipation of union with the owner of Redrose Abbey:

THE FLOWER OF LOVE

'Tis said the rose is Love's own flower,
Its blush so bright, its thorns so many;
And winter on its bloom has power,
But has not on its sweetness any.
For though young Love's ethereal rose
Will droop on Age's wintry bosom,
Yet still its faded leaves disclose
The fragrance of their earliest blossom.
[...]
Why did not Love the amaranth choose,
That bears no thorns, and cannot perish?
Alas! no sweets its flowers diffuse,
And only sweets Love's life can cherish.
But be the rose and amaranth twined,
And Love, their mingled powers assuming,
Shall round his brows a chaplet bind,
For ever sweet, for ever blooming (191-92).⁷¹

⁷¹ Amaranth is a real flower, but in this context is a fabled flower that never fades. Cf. Milton's description of

Immortal Amaranth, a Flower which once
In Paradise, fast by the Tree of Life
Began to bloom, but soon for Mans offence
To Heav'n remov'd where first it grew, there grows,

Sir Oran's fortunes are less certain. Anthelia, who has been constantly in the company of Forester and Sir Oran for some time, returns to Melincourt Castle, leaving Forester content and happy in the conventional anticipation of matrimony. However:

Mr Forester observed with concern, that his friend Sir Oran's natural melancholy was visibly increased, and Mr Fax was of opinion that he was smitten with the tender passion: [...]. But Sir Oran grew more and more fond of solitude, and passed the greater part of the day in the woods, though it was now the reign of the gloomy November, which, however, accorded with the moody temper of his spirit; and he often went without his breakfast, though he always came home to dinner. His perpetual companion was his flute, with which he made sad response to the wintry wind (312).

Note here that Peacock is again emphasizing Sir Oran's mythical associations by reprising, now in a minor key, his lines from the learned mythologer's Orphic invocation to Pan: "And on thy wild pipe's notes of glee/ Respondest Nature's Harmony" (66).

Having earlier given examples from Monboddo on the orang-outang's capacity for forming deep attachments (56n.), Peacock presents the familiar image of a devoted pet pining for its owner, but then refocuses the image with the introduction of the flute, and the heightened language of the "sad response to the wintry wind" (312), to present the equally familiar image of the courtly lover pining for his Lady. Thus in one single passage Sir Oran represents an orang-outang, a mythological wood god, and a courtly lover.

But our courtly lover, lacking speech, is hopelessly disadvantaged. Forester and Anthelia, being less instinctive, have to talk their way into each other's heart; and in a charming scene on the sea shore Anthelia not only displays a sympathy of feeling with Forester, but displays her floral origins in a speech absolutely teeming with blossoms and other images of nature:

The morning is the infancy of the day, and, like the infancy of life, has health and bloom, and cheerfulness and purity, in a degree unknown to the busy noon, which is the season of care, or the languid evening, which is the harbinger of repose. Perhaps the song of the nightingale is not in itself less cheerful than that of the lark: it is the season of her song that invests it with the character of melancholy. It is the same with the associations of infancy: it is all cheerfulness, all hope: its path is on the flowers of an untried world. The daisy has more beauty

in the eye of childhood than the rose in that of maturer life. The spring is the infancy of the year: its flowers are the flowers of promise and the darlings of poetry. The autumn too has its flowers; but they are little loved, and little praised: for the associations of autumn are not with ideas of cheerfulness, but with yellow leaves and hollow winds, heralds of winter, and emblems of dissolution (218-19).

Forester delivers a speech beginning, “Fresh air and liberty are all that is necessary to the happiness of children” (220), which could have come directly from Ruffigny in *Fleetwood*. It ends as a soliloquy on the enduring power of first love. This exchange is a recognition not only of sensibilities, but of natures—the Noble Savage and the Child of Nature.

Poor Sir Oran finds himself socially included but emotionally excluded, as he attempts to maintain contact with Anthelia through his only medium of communication, his music. On the excursion to Forester’s estate:

They followed a narrow winding path, through rocky and sylvan hills. They walked in straggling parties of ones, twos, and threes. Mr Forester and Anthelia went first. Sir Oran Haut-ton followed alone, playing a pensive tune on his flute (278).

The second abduction attempt is successful; Lord Anophel locks Anthelia away in the wonderfully named Alga castle, situated on the sea shore. Here Peacock extends his botanical joke at Lord Anophel’s expense. As has been mentioned, Lord Anophel is the son of the Marquis of Agaric, and Agaricus is a species of mushroom, which is of the class Cryptogamia. Alga is also of the class Cryptogamia. The *OED* defines *cryptogamia* thus: “A large division of the vegetable kingdom, being the last class in the Linnæan system, comprising those plants which have no stamens and pistils, and therefore no proper flowers; including Ferns, Mosses, Algæ, Lichens, and Fungi.” Anthelia is a flower; Lord Anophel is not. His attempt to breed with her is botanically doomed. One may also infer from the name of his castle and its position on the sea shore that the Marquis’s line is deteriorating from generation to generation. The Marquis is a mushroom or toadstool, but he would seem to be located safely on land. Lord Anophel, his son and heir, is identified with seaweed, and dwelling in the littoral zone between land and sea. The line, representing the most primitive specimens in the plant kingdom, seems to be heading back into the foamy scum from which mankind emerged.

As the news of Anthelia’s disappearance spreads, search parties fan out across the country, but without success. Forester, who has initially gone about in a carriage,

elects to do a more thorough search on foot. He, Fax, and Sir Oran – who at this stage is unaware of Anthelia’s disappearance – set out on their quest.⁷²

As the quest continues, Sir Oran’s role is to perform the feats which Forester undertakes, but lacks the physical strength, and the savage nature, to carry through. He becomes the Salvage to Forester’s Arthur.

When they are staying at Cimmerian Lodge, the home of Moley Mystic (a satirical attack on Coleridge), a fire breaks out in Mystic’s room.

Mr Forester and Sir Oran Haut-ton ran for water: Mr Fax rang the nearest bell: Mr Mystic vociferated “Fire!” with singular energy: the servants ran about half-dressed: pails, buckets, and pitchers, were in active requisition; till Sir Oran Haut-ton ascending the stairs with the great rain-water tub, containing one hundred and eight gallons of water [Footnote: “Some travellers speak of his strength as wonderful; greater, they say, than that of ten men such as we.”—*Ancient Metaphysics*, vol.iii. p.105.], threw the whole contents on the flames with one sweep of his powerful arm (341).

One evening they stop in an inn, and are sitting down to dinner in “an apartment separated from another only by a moveable partition, which allowed the two rooms to be occasionally laid into one” (389). An argument begins in the adjoining apartment between a pair of runaway lovers and the girl’s heavy father, “Sir Gregory Greenmould, and the old valetudinarian he had chosen for his daughter, Sir Bonus Mac Scrip” (392). Sir Gregory calls for his varlets and rascals.

A violent trampling of feet and various sounds of tumult ensued, as if the old gentleman and his party were tearing the lovers asunder by main force; and at length an agonizing scream from the young lady seemed to announce that their purpose was accomplished. Mr Forester started up with a view to doing all in his power to assist the injured damsel; and Sir Oran Haut-ton, who, as the reader has seen, had very strong feelings of natural justice, and a most chivalrous sympathy with females in distress, rushed with a desperate impulse against the partition, and hurled a great portion of it, with a violent crash, into the adjoining apartment (391-92).

Again Sir Oran hurls himself, like the Salvage, into the fray, while Forester merely leaps up “with a view” to doing something (probably delivering a speech on the evils of arranged marriages). Peacock contrasts the civilized, socially responsible – therefore constrained – gentleman, with the unrestrained natural man of action; but shows that, working in concert, they achieve their chivalrous purpose:

⁷² Marilyn Butler writes: “Sir Oran goes on his travels to investigate the current state of England, as did other fictional Noble Savages – Voltaire’s Huron, [...] and Bage’s Hermsprong” (78). She analyses Forester’s quest in relation to Renaissance allegory (86-87).

As Sir Oran was not habituated to allow any very long process of syllogistic reasoning to interfere between his conception and execution of the dictates of natural justice, he commenced operations by throwing the assailants one by one down stairs [...]. Sir Bonus Mac Scrip retreated through the breach, and concealed himself under the dining-table in Mr Forester's apartment. Mr Forester succeeded in preventing Sir Gregory from being thrown after his myrmidons: but Sir Oran kept the fat Baronet a close prisoner in the corner of the room, while the lovers slipped away into the inn-yard, where the chaise they had ordered was in readiness (392-93).

Peacock is at pains to emphasize the symbolically consanguineous relationship between Forester and Sir Oran, who experience a profound mutuality of sentiment during their quest when they return to Melincourt Castle in the hope of hearing news of Anthelia. The servant old Peter Gray receives them, and leads them into the library.

The moment the door was thrown open, Mr Forester started, and threw himself forward into the apartment towards Anthelia's chair; but before he reached it, he stopped, placed his hand before his eyes, and turning round, leaned for support on the arm of Mr Fax. He recovered himself in a few minutes, and sate down by the table. [...]

Mr Forester observed, from the appearance of the drawing materials, that they had been hastily left, and he saw that the last subject on which Anthelia had been employed was a sketch of Redrose Abbey. He sate with his head leaning on his hand, and his eyes fixed on the drawing in perfect silence. [...]

Sir Oran Haut-ton kept his eyes fixed on the door with looks of anxious impatience, and showed manifest and increasing disappointment at every re-entrance of old Peter, who at length summoned them to dinner (352-53).

The philosopher is distraught because he knows that his beloved is missing, but the natural man is fretful simply because his beloved is absent.

Mr Fax was not surprised that Mr Forester had no appetite, but that Sir Oran had lost his, appeared to him extremely curious. The latter grew more and more uneasy, rose from table, took a candle in his hand, and wandered from room to room, searching every closet and corner in the Castle [...]. Sir Oran at length having left no corner of the habitable part of the Castle unexamined, returned to the dining-room, and throwing himself into a chair began to shed tears in great abundance.

Footnote: "He is capable of the greatest affection, not only to his brother oran outangs, but to such among us as use him kindly. And it is a fact well attested to me by a gentleman who was an eye-witness of it, that an oran outang aboard his ship conceived such an affection for the cook, that when upon some occasion he left the ship to go ashore, the gentleman saw the oran outang shed tears in great

abundance.”—*Origin and Progress of Language*, book ii. chap.4 (353-54).⁷³

At this point there is nothing to distinguish between the philosopher and the natural man.

By the end of the quest, the other characters have begun to feel this merging of identities of our heroes. Lord Anophel visits Anthelia in her room in Alga Castle where she sits playing her harp and gazing out at the sea. He tells her that all her friends “have now gone home in despair”.

ANTHELIA

That, my Lord, I cannot believe; for there is one, at least, who I am confident will never be weary of seeking me, and who, I am equally confident, will not always seek in vain.

LORD ANOPHEL ACHTHAR

If you mean the young lunatic of Redrose Abbey, or his friend the dumb Baronet,

Lord Anophel’s confusion is appropriate: Anthelia’s assertion applies equally to either. But it also applies equally to both. Lord Anophel continues with another lie, but one which reveals an unconscious acknowledgment of their Wild and Noble status:

they are both gone to London to attend the opening of the Honourable House; and if you doubt my word, I will show you their names in the Morning Post, among the Fashionable Arrivals at Wildman’s Hotel (446-47).

At last the searchers come to the shore near Alga Castle, where the keen sighted Sir Oran spies in the distance Grovelgrub taking a constitutional. He recognizes the cleric at once as one of the foiled abductors from the original attempt, and overtaking him, threatens him, in true Wild Man style, with his stick. Forester restrains “the rage of Sir Oran” (451) while Grovelgrub confesses, then they storm the castle. Again, as Arthur has to restrain the Salvage at the sight of Turpine in his castle, it is the civilized Forester who acts as a socializing influence on the behaviour of Sir Oran, as it threatens to go beyond acceptable bounds. But, on this final occasion, Forester is beginning to neglect the social niceties, and focus only on Anthelia.

⁷³ This footnote is originally given by Peacock on p.56. On p.354 the reader is simply referred to the note on p.56.

[T]he door was burst open, and Sir Oran Haut-ton appeared in the aperture, with the Reverend Mr Grovelgrub in custody, whom he dragged into the apartment, followed by Mr Forester and Mr Fax.⁷⁴ Mr Forester flew to Anthelia, who threw herself into his arms, hid her face in his bosom, and burst into tears: which when Sir Oran saw, his wrath grew boundless, and quitting his hold of the Reverend Mr Grovelgrub (who immediately ran down stairs, and out of the castle, as fast as a pair of short thick legs would carry him), seized on Lord Anophel Achthar, and was preparing to administer natural justice by throwing him out at the window; but Mr Fax interposed, and calling Mr Forester's attention, which was totally engaged with Anthelia, they succeeded in rescuing the terrified sprig of nobility (449-50).⁷⁵

Anthelia thanks her deliverer with a speech that is touchingly appropriate to her character, yet laughingly inappropriate to an age in which chivalry (despite the activities of the heroes) is dead:

“O Forester!” said Anthelia, “you have realized all my wishes. I have found you the friend of the poor, the enthusiast of truth, the disinterested cultivator of the rural virtues, the active promoter of the cause of human liberty. It only remained that you should emancipate a captive damsel, who, however, will but change the mode of her durance, and become your captive for life” (452).

Anthelia progresses from being rescued by Sir Oran alone in a wild natural setting; to being rescued by Sir Oran and Forester in a natural setting, but where nature is neutral; to being rescued by Sir Oran and Forester in a civilized but degenerate setting. The next move is into an ideal, rural, permanently secure setting. She and Forester marry; or, as Carl Dawson puts it: “Sir Oran having finally rescued the beleaguered heroine, Forester wins his lady.”⁷⁶

Peacock then does something very interesting. Apart from the mention of “little Foresters” (455) sitting on Anthelia's uncle's knee, he makes no further reference to the relationship between Forester and Anthelia. As a well-off gentleman and his wife, they simply settle down conventionally, and get on with raising a family. However,

Sir Oran Haut-ton continued to reside with Mr Forester and Anthelia. They discovered in the progress of time, that he had formed for the latter the same kind of reverential attachment, as the Satyr in Fletcher forms for the Holy Shepherdess [there follows a long footnote containing extracts from Fletcher's *The Faithful Shepherdess* (1609)]; and Anthelia might have said to him in the words of Clorin:

⁷⁴ Note how the natural wild impulse of this symbiotic pairing always runs ahead of the civilized restraining intellect.

⁷⁵ Sir Oran represents the warlike, vengeful aspect of chivalry, while Forester represents the protective. At this point the two halves of the centaur dissociate, and have to be reunited by Fax.

⁷⁶ *His Fine Wit: A Study of Thomas Love Peacock* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1970), p.206.

“—They wrong thee that do call thee rude:
 Though thou be'st outward rough and tawny-hued,
 Thy manners are as gentle and as fair,
 As his who boasts himself born only heir
 To all humanity.”⁷⁷

His greatest happiness was in listening to the music of her harp and voice: in the absence of which he solaced himself, as usual, with his flute and French horn. He became likewise a proficient in drawing; but what progress he made in the art of speech, we have not been able to ascertain (453-54).

Anthelia has “married” both halves of this composite creature: the Forester half provides her with children and domestic tranquility – the commonplaces of marriage – and in him she finds a true meeting of minds. Sir Oran remains forever the devoted Wild courtly lover, and it is in this devotion that Peacock presents a true meeting of souls. Sir Oran and Anthelia may not be able to converse in words, but they commune at a deeper level with their music. Peacock’s final image is of a family of forest creatures playing happily together under the watchful gaze and benign protection of the Wild Man.⁷⁸

In this marriage of bodies, minds and souls between the Wild Man, the Noble Savage and the Child of Nature, they become, as it were, one single organism. None can exist without the other two; indeed, as a married couple, Forester and Anthelia have become one flesh. Anthelia makes the home; Forester provides for his extended family; Sir Oran protects them all.

Of particular interest to the student of *Jekyll and Hyde* is the outward appearance of Sir Oran, and the response of people upon first meeting him. Both Hyde and Sir Oran are described as ugly. Hyde’s appearance is grotesque, deformed, threatening, baffling, and disgusting. This is because his body is the outer expression of his foul and evil soul. Sir Oran’s body, however, is upright, tall, strong, and athletic, as befits the natural man. Moreover his soul is pure, his mind is gentle, and he is of a loving disposition. His face is ugly, but his benign and noble character shines through and overcomes the initial misgivings of those with whom he comes in contact. The

⁷⁷ Butler points out that Fletcher adapted his Satyr from Spenser. She goes on: “Spenser’s Sir Satyrane, in Book I of the *Faerie Queene*, and Fletcher’s Satyr, in the pastoral play *The Faithful Shepherdess*, are two rough but loyal creatures, who prove their native nobility by championing a woman and saving her from rape by a so-called civilised man. It is, of course, highly ironic that they should do this, since the satyr’s partly bestial nature traditionally connoted lust” (69).

⁷⁸ This is in keeping with the Renaissance pictorial tradition of the satyr marrying a woman or nymph and raising a family in the forest. Cf. also Dürer’s 1498 engraving *Hercules*, in which a Wild Man protects a satyr and his family from attack. See Bartra, fig.16, opp. p.54.

running joke in the story revolves around the fact that none of the human characters realize that they are meeting an orang-outang:

Sir Telegraph looked earnestly at the stranger, but was too polite to laugh, though he could not help thinking there was something very ludicrous in Sir Oran's physiognomy, notwithstanding the air of high fashion which characterized his whole deportment, and which was heightened by a pair of enormous whiskers, and the folds of a vast cravat. He therefore bowed to Sir Oran with becoming gravity, and Sir Oran returned the bow with very striking politeness.

"Possibly," thought Sir Telegraph, "possibly I may have seen an uglier fellow" (38).

Sir Oran saves Anthelia from the torrent, giving Peacock the opportunity to ridicule the effete upper class:

The remarkable physiognomy and unparalleled strength of the stranger caused much of surprise, and something of apprehension, to mingle with Anthelia's gratitude: but the air of high fashion, which characterized his whole deportment, diminished her apprehension, while it increased her surprise at the exploit he had performed (107).

After the rescue, a search party arrives, among whom is Anthelia's ancient hypochondriac uncle, Mr Hippy.⁷⁹

Anthelia communicated to him the particulars of the signal service she had received from the stranger, whom Mr Hippy stared at heartily, and shook hands with cordially.

[...]

"I wonder who he is," said Mr Hippy, as they walked rapidly homewards: "manifestly dumb, poor fellow! a man of consequence, no doubt: no great beauty, by the by" (107-09).

Forester is not unaware of Sir Oran's social predicament; and has taken pains to remedy it. He tells Sir Telegraph:

There is to a stranger something ludicrous in a first view of his countenance, which led me to introduce him only to the best society, where politeness would act as a preventive to the propensity to laugh; for he has so nice a sense of honour (which I shall observe, by the way, is peculiar to man), that if he were to be treated with any kind of contumely, he would infallibly die of a broken heart, as has been seen in some of his species [Footnote: *Origin and Progress of Language*, book ii. chap.4.]. With a view of ensuring him the respect of society, which always attends on rank and fortune, I have purchased him a baronetcy, and made over to him an estate (61).

And it works. During Sir Oran and Forester's first visit to Melincourt Castle, Mrs Pinmoney, seeing Forester and Sir Oran standing together, takes Sir Telegraph aside:

THE HONOURABLE MRS PINMONEY

Who is that very bright-eyed wild-looking young man?

SIR TELEGRAPH PAXARETT

That is my old acquaintance [...] Sylvan Forester [...].

[...]

THE HONOURABLE MRS PINMONEY

And who is that *very* tall and remarkably ugly gentleman?

SIR TELEGRAPH PAXARETT

That is Sir Oran Haut-ton, Baronet; to which designation you may shortly add M.P. for the ancient and honourable borough of Onevote.

THE HONOURABLE MRS PINMONEY

A Baronet! and M.P.! Well, now I look at him again, I certainly do not think him so very plain: he has a very fashionable air. Haut-ton! French extraction, no doubt. And now I think of it, there is something very French in his physiognomy (170-71).

In *Melincourt*, with its orang-outangs, Lucretian men, Pans, fauns, satyrs, sylvans, troglodytes, Wild Men, Noble Savages, Children of Nature, flowers, trees, cabbages, creepers, toadstools, algae, Homer, Spenser, Virgil, Shakespeare, Milton, Tasso, Wordsworth, Coleridge, Buffon, Linnæus, Rousseau, Monboddo, and a galaxy of others too numerous to mention, Peacock has given us a brief history of man, from his wild beginnings to his present degenerate condition. But he has not done it from within a religious framework; he has done it from within an eccentric evolutionary framework; and he has done this through the enduring, constantly evolving figure of the Wild Man: a figure which will emerge from the shadows some decades later in the form of Edward Hyde.

Melincourt provides a striking example of an ape who, although ugly, is neither deformed nor evil. He is violent when roused, and has fallen victim to the human scourge of alcohol; but he is tall, polite, honourable, considerate, gentle, protective and loving; and all of these qualities are not simply derived from Peacock's imagination, but attested to by eye-witnesses and natural philosophers. It would be incautious, therefore, to conclude that Hyde's apishness is a defining sign of his evil

⁷⁹ He is in fact "an old relation, a medium, as it were, between cousin and great uncle" (26).

nature. His apishness no doubt reveals his archaic origins, but the primitive is not necessarily the evil. Hyde's evil is expressed not in his apishness, but in his deformity, and that requires a Platonic or Christian explanation.

In the next chapter we shall examine a text which overtly deals with the three great themes underpinning *Jekyll and Hyde*: Platonism, Darwinism, and the Bible.