

The Way of the Classical Age as Seen in *The Vicar of Wakefield* :

Reasonableness in Religion

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I. A Glimpse of the Social Life of the English Classical Age

Major literary works are, as is generally admitted, a mirror in which multiple currents of any particular age are faithfully reflected. Upon reading Goldsmith's *The Vicar of Wakefield* (hereafter referred to as *The Vicar*, 1766), one cannot resist an impression that this is especially true of the work. What strikes us is a pervasive atmosphere of harmony between man and nature and a keen sense of poetry to be enjoyed heartily in the characters' daily life. These are reflected in the narration by Primrose the protagonist and Anglican clergyman. True we see in the work signs of an uneasy relationship between the haves and the have-nots due in part to the abuse of power by the former at the sacrifice of the latter; and due in part to the age's legacy of surviving brutality, the miserable condition of life, and the resulting social ills in the lower order of society. Also, we discern in it signs of the incipient decay of the traditional village community. Still, the village life retains its wholeness and integrity in the fabric of a close-knit human network based on its agricultural way of life.

A gentle atmosphere of natural beauty and harmony is seen in *The Vicar* to work upon the nature of the inhabitants' outlook of the world. For Goldsmith's

implicit belief in benevolent influences of nature upon human life and sensibility is to be discerned in every part of *The Vicar* with its picture of primary joys and sorrows. This is part of the reasons why it is indebted in its simple conception of the story to the tradition of the ballad:

'Alas! The joys that fortune brings, / Are trifling and decay; / And those who prize the paltry things, / More trifling still than they. 'And what is friendship but a name, / A charm that lulls to sleep; / A shade that follows wealth or fame, / But leaves the wretch to weep?'¹ (41)

As is suggested by the lines from the ballad² which occur in chapter eight, the thematic import of *The Vicar* is not unlike that of "Job" or "Ecclesiastes" of *the Old Testament*: Everything is in flux; all human endeavour is futile; as the Ecclesiast puts it:

sometime the just person gets what is due to the unjust, and the unjust what is due to the just. . . . this too is futility. So I recommend enjoyment, since there is nothing good for anyone to do here under the sun but to eat and drink and enjoy himself; (8: 14-5)

On the surface the quotations above seem to be different from each other in their emotional tones. But they do in fact point to the paradox that all the more because we realize the passing nature of human life and its inevitable sorrows, a robust enjoyment of things is meaningful as survival wisdom. This is a prevailing note to be heard throughout *The Vicar*. For a spirit akin to the Ecclesiast's is subtly recognizable in reasonableness and good sense in religion that came to fruition in the Classical age of Johnson, Gibbon, and Burke.

Deeply religious in their basic attitude to life, still "the philosophers of the street" have an intuitive dislike of fanatical idealism, religious or political. The kind of lessons they learned from the English Civil War and the Protectorate were still alive in their memories. Realism and good sense, as Cecil comments on Jane Austen's attitude to life, "taught the harsh lesson that life is incurably imperfect and that it was a sign of weakness to hope too much from it. Or to fear too much either; people believed profoundly in moderation and balance." (15) A deep suspicion of dogmas and notions is part of the spiritual inheritance the Classical age left along with its practical, good sense of "seeing things as they really are."³ This is the fundamental assumption that permeated through the ethos of the latter half of the eighteenth century, and was shared by the representative voices of Johnson, Burke, Goldsmith, and Jane Austen in her eternalized fictions.

In order to look at the close interrelationship between the age's social atmosphere and its literary creation, it would help us to turn to social historians for their insights. Trevelyan, for instance, gives his illuminating picture of the Classical age: "it was an age of aristocracy and liberty; of the rule of law and the absence of reform; of individual initiative and institutional decay; of Latitudinarianism above and Wesleyanism below; of the growth of humanitarian and philanthropic feeling and endeavour;" (297). What he means by 'liberty' and 'the rule of law' seems to be that they were monopolized and practiced, more or less, for the benefit of the privileged few. We see ample evidences of this negative side of the social life in *The Vicar*. Squire Thornhill, for example, is presented to make a comprehensive exercise of his power and authority as justice of the peace, leaving the whole parish at the mercy of his

arbitrary will. But what interests us is that upon the squire's unpalatable moral conduct hinges the whole plot of Parson Primrose and his family's trials of life; and that this systematic injustice is counterbalanced by the benevolence of Sir William, Thornhill's uncle and "reputed" hereditary peer. Goldsmith's world view, one suspects, rests upon this juxtaposition and contrast of virtue and vice, and the subsequent redressing of the evil by the good. This is reminiscent of Job's whole-hearted trust in God by faith through his strokes of misfortune.⁴

The religious dualism of Latitudinarianism above with its easy, forgiving conscience and Wesleyanism below with its ascetic principle of proselytizing zeal is not in focus in *The Vicar*. But it would mislead us if we disregarded the conflicting, yet mutually complementing forces of religion in eighteenth century England. The fact was that far-reaching implications of the Industrial Revolution had been felt by a broader stratum of people. Not far beneath the surface popular discontent and industrial unrest were brewing among the working class long before the turn of the nineteenth century.⁵ After some decades from then on the early Victorians found themselves plagued with serious social issues on account of people's full-scale divorcement from land. "The forces set in motion," as Allen puts it, "by the industrial revolution they [the Victorians] did not know how to control, and the working of what seemed the iron laws of economics outraged the consciences of the best and most intelligent of the time." (135) It was an ominous development in store for the whole nation, of which the men of taste in the eighteenth century were in blissful ignorance.

During the 1760s when *The Vicar* was written a quiet tenor of life was little disturbed by the incipient signs of the industrial strife. As a matter of fact, however, the years did mark the start of a widening division in the social fabric which came later to be called "the two nations." Already sinister signs of the miseries and afflictions were felt by the victims of the tyrannous oligarchy: Dr Primrose, as inmate of the infamous debtor's prison, stands face to face with their miserable reality. Then he finds himself fired with a sense of mission to perform his devotional duty of calling the fellow prisoners to repentance:

Then what signifies calling every moment upon the devil, and courting his friendship, since you find how scurvily he uses you. He has given you nothing here, you find, but a mouthful of oaths and an empty belly. . . . Were it not worth your while then, just to try how you may like the usage of another master [Jesus], who gives you fair promises at least to come to him. (144)

Interestingly enough, his exalted style of biblical language reminds us of the impassioned Wesleyan plea for repentance and submission, and the coming rectification of injustice in eternal life. We can even discern in his harangue a note as of evangelical fervour not unlike that of St John Rivers's fiery appeal to the protagonist in *Jane Eyre*⁶ and of Dinah Morris's preaching to the farm laborers in *Adam Bede*.⁷ As a matter of fact, the magma of popular discontent was gathering momentum in the lower order beneath the imposing façade of the age of elegance and taste. After all, the conflicting currents of the two schools of religion were in close interplay with each other in spite of the seeming disparity. In *The Vicar* the tip of the iceberg of the abrasive mood becomes visible from time to time as is implied in Primrose's episode of imprisonment.

In respect of the dual structure in religion, Trevelyan gives his insight into the functions of the rival forces:

The Latitudinarian stood for the spirit of tolerance, for lack of which Christianity had for centuries past wrought cruel havoc in the world it set out to save; the Latitudinarian stood also for reasonableness in the interpretation of religious doctrines, without which they were unlikely to be received by the more scientific modern mind. Methodism, on the other hand, renewed the self-discipline and the active zeal without which religion loses its power and forgets its purpose; . . . the principles which they respectively rescued and embodied have flourished in new forms and combinations, which preserved religion as a powerful force in English life through many changing generations. (310)

Here we recognize the historian's dynamic approach to grasp the functions of religion in form-

ing a living body of the community that was organically unfolding itself with the times. Religious faith, by its nature, is a living dynamism with its pendulum swinging between the voice of the originators' inspiration and emotional exaltation and the voice of a quiet comfort in a settled order with its hereditary attachment and memory.

Interestingly enough, a glimpse of Dr Primrose's pastoral care and family life is found to be well endorsed by the historical account of Trevelyan's. "There was," as the historian puts it, "perfect liberty for the individual parson to act according to his own lights, however eccentric. He might have as many twists in his mind as Laurence Sterne." (312) "Perfect liberty" sounds too preposterous, we might think, for a country parson with a sober belief in common sense religion. Still a close reading would leave us no doubt about the truthfulness of Trevelyan's observation. We realize how little of the Episcopal control must have been exercised for the subordination and submission of the individual clergyman to the dogmatic and organizational claims of the Church. This might be accounted for by a relative steadfastness of the organic structure of the community. For, it was basically run by the established rules and conventions that were deeply embedded in people's mind. This might have been especially true of the relationship between the Established Church and her clergymen. Thus they were allowed, more or less, to follow the dictates of their conscience, however lax they may be. As hinted by Primrose's donation of thirty five pound's worth of living for the relief of "the orphans and widows of the clergy of our diocese," (12) a predominant motive of his conduct is a heart-felt, neighbourly compassion. This is an eloquent episode to illustrate the ethos of a tolerant, genial paternalism of the age.

II. Reasonableness in Religion

Everywhere in *The Vicar* we find an unchallenged assumption of a hierarchical order. The individual is, according to the assumption, allotted to his place in that order where God pleases to call him. This might be the secret of a dominant atmosphere of peace and contentment in spite of the age's growing disharmony. Still the aristocratic influence coloured various aspects of social life. The social aristocracy

of the great nobles, squires, wealthier clergy, and the cultivated middleclass, as Trevelyan surveys, “broadly based on adequate numbers and undisputed in its social privilege, . . . set the tone to the bourgeoisie and professional class, and they in turn supplied the nobles with brains and ideas.” (351)

In this scheme of things the Church of England, challenged though it was by a newly aroused conscience, still held a position as the hub of social life. This is hinted in *The Vicar* by Dr Primrose’s light-hearted remark:

there is not a place in the world where advice can be given with so much propriety as there [the Church]; for, as it persuades us to marry, it also furnishes us with a wife; and surely that must be an excellent market, my boy, where we are told what we want, and supplied with it when wanting. (86-7)

Here the protagonist is seen to be making fun of the matrimonial hunting of mothers and daughters in his hilarious tone. We can detect in his satirical comment a slight tinge of his self-derision as a clergyman serving as trader in the very market he is mocking. But what is revealed in these words was the actuality of the community’s attitude to life in those days.

Marriage was then a key institution uniting its members to the close-knit organism of the social fabric; it played such a vital role in any respectable family in perpetuating the prosperity and prestige of time-honored family tradition that every avenue would have been explored to ensure success in this respect. No wonder the serious nature of matrimony provided the public with an inexhaustible supply of humorous tragicomedy as is artistically presented in Jane Austen’s novels.

It is worthy of remark that Goldsmith contemplates the vanity of human endeavour; and that his awareness of this truth seems to elevate itself into his peculiar lightness of touch with which he looks at the absurdity of human dramas. “Futility, utter futility, says the Speaker, everything is futile.” (Eccles. 1: 2) These words of the Ecclesiast must have represented Goldsmith’s own painfully earned vision of life.⁸ In his view, love of the vanities of this world is to be forgiven, if pursued within reasonable

bounds; just because nothing abides, we are capable of being renewed by a zestful appreciation of the good things of life.

Closely following that half serious, half funny comment as given above, Dr Primrose reflects on the blessings of his family life:

What thanks do we not owe to heaven for thus bestowing tranquility, health, and competence.⁹ I think myself happier than the greatest monarch upon earth. He has no such fire-side, nor such pleasant faces about it. Yes, Deborah, we are now growing old; but the evening of our life is likely to be happy. We are descended from ancestors that knew no stain, and we shall leave a good and virtuous race of children behind us. While we live they will be our support and our pleasure here [this world], and when we die they will transmit our honour untainted to posterity. (87)

Here we see the protagonist’s keen sensibility to enjoy what he has at the moment. This represents, in a sense, an ability to survive the inevitable trials of life. What the future holds in store for him and his family is a train of ordeals far beyond his imagination, as we are to see from this point on. It is this trust in the continuity of “the tree of life”¹⁰ that enables him to transcend himself sufficiently to stand up to his difficulties in a sturdy spirit of quiet acceptance.

We recognize in Dr Primrose’s attitude to religion an implicit belief in the soundness and stability of family inheritance. This is part of the reason why, it seems to him, property transmission by family lineage holds not an insignificant part of cultural continuity. This is best represented in Burke’s conviction¹¹ shaped from watching the development of the French Revolution. What was at stake by the radical politics, in his view, was a steady, down-to-earth transmission of civil liberty that could stand the test of time:

All the pleasing illusions, which made power gentle, and obedience liberal, which harmonized the different shades of life, and which, by a bland assimilation, incorporated into politics the sentiments which beautify and soften private society, are to be dissolved by this new conquering empire

of light and reason. (45)

Here we discern a spirit of harmony reconciling diversity of forces into communal unity. Toward this end the individual is exhorted to subordinate his personal opinion, more or less, to create an atmosphere of tolerance among the discordant notes. Implicit in Burke's philosophy is a version of realism at once political and moral, where human nature is held to be incurably imperfect. This sense of resignation might have done a great deal toward nurturing an attitude of taking things as they are, and of enjoying their positive side; closely in line with this is the wisdom of meeting emotional needs of man as irrational being. Suppose we hear the voice of enlightenment requiring us to adapt ourselves outwardly; then our psychological needs would be disregarded, and our mental equanimity be lost. Here lies the necessity of honouring the voice of memory at once individual and communal. What Burke means by the phrase "the pleasing illusions" might be our love of myths to be shared among us through our communal memory; bare, prosaic facts of life would not suffice. Herein rests the significance of satisfying our aesthetic needs through connecting the present with the past. This is why our respect for history is requisite for our emotional and spiritual health. We are made aware, then, that our sense of continuity of the past and present would serve as lamplight for us to be guided. Tinged with a touch of aestheticism, Burke's conservative world view offers a telling example of an enduring trait of Englishmen's habit of mind. This is also an assumption shared, more or less, by Burke's and Goldsmith's contemporaries.

III. Love of the Countryside, Mild Humour and Irony

A deep sense of the poetry of life is seen at the author's best in *the Deserted Village* (1770). It was a happy stroke of fortune for Goldsmith that he reached his artistic maturity just in time for eternalizing the beauty of the English countryside. "The poem's simple nostalgia and the praise of rural life" (Mack xxix) is anticipated here and there in *The Vicar*. It is set in an age when "man's work still added more than it took away from the beauty of nature. Farm buildings and cottages of local style and material sank into the soft landscape, and har-

moniously diversified and adorned it." (Trevelyan 355) It is to be suspected that Goldsmith's mildly genial attitude to life might have been coloured by the mildness of the landscape which finds expression in *The Vicar* as well. It was the sort of life which retained its wholeness owing to regular pulsations of natural rhythm. The rough and the smooth had little touch upon an even repetition of the protagonist's life even after his family's misfortunes. We may be justified in discerning in this instance the author's poetic vision. The small neighbourhood, where Primrose and his family just moved, was made up of "farmers, who tilled their grounds, and were equal strangers to opulence and poverty. . . . they still retained the primaeval simplicity of manners with which "they wrought with cheefulness on days of labour; but observed the festivals as intervals of idleness and pleasure." (23) Christmas, All Fools' Day, Easter, Pentecost, and Michaelmas, all these are faithfully kept according to the Christian calendar.

As we rose with the sun, so we never pursued our labours after it was gone down, but returned home to the expecting family; where smiling looks, a neat hearth, and pleasant fire, were prepared for our reception. (24)

As is seen here, life on the earth was full of the poetry of the humble. Upon the firm foundation of nature's gifts was the bond of interpersonal relationship built. The sort of life described here has little in common with a carefully controlled modern life based on exclusive requirements of human expediency.

Dr Primrose, upon performing his professional duty of honouring "that Being that gave us another day," (24) goes on to describe the family routine:

. . . my son and I went to pursue our usual industry¹² abroad, while my wife and daughters employed themselves in providing breakfast, . . . I allowed half an hour for this meal, and an hour for dinner; which time was taken up in innocent mirth between my wife and daughters, and in philosophical arguments between my son and me. (24)

Even if we discount the authenticity of this senti-

mental picture, we can at least infer from the delineation of these trivialities that they had an essentially different attitude to life and sense of time from ours. Their love of blackbirds “that answered each other from opposite hedges, the familiar redbreast that “came and peck the crumbs from our hands,” (38) and their keen appreciation of every sound “that seemed but the echo of tranquility” (38) are simply an inherited sensibility from time immemorial. This is poetry that is lived out in their daily scenes. This is an aspect of the national tradition that has been threatened by the incessant encroachment of the industrial way of life.

About a hundred years hence George Eliot, in her attempt to revive the time-honored tradition, offers us in *Adam Bede* a retrospective presentation of the typical ethos of pre-industrial England:

Old Leisure was . . . a contemplative, rather stout gentleman, of excellent digestion, . . . He lived chiefly in the country, among pleasant seats and homesteads, and was fond of sauntering by the fruit-tree wall, and scenting the apricots when they were warmed by the morning sunshine, or of sheltering himself under the orchard boughs at noon, when the summer pears were falling. . . for he had an easy, jolly conscience, broad-backed like himself, and able to carry a great deal of beer or port-wine, . . . not being made squeamish by doubts and qualms and lofty aspirations. Life was not a task to him, but a sinecure: (477)

A quietly contemplative mood in which this passage occurs invites us to take a close look at the time-hallowed way of life now by-gone on a merciless wave of industrialism. We are made to realize how an awful multiplicity of implications is hidden behind the humorous touch of the allegory. What moves us is Eliot's keen sense of history that is at work in her evocative use of language. Sensuousness of touch is stirred up in the reader's mind by an accumulation of specific words that go to raise a comforting atmosphere of natural beauty. Under an irresistible influence of the peaceful landscape the old gentleman is seen to be in love with life. What comes to our mind by the metaphoric import of “an easy, jolly conscience, broad-backed like himself” is an aristocratic nonchalance at peace with his hereditary priv-

ileges. Words and phrases, seemingly neutral on the surface, do in fact connote class and cultural overtones as we see in the wording of ‘squeamish,’ ‘qualm,’ and ‘lofty aspirations.’ These inevitably remind us of Johnsonian satire on puritanical zeal and idealism.

To go back to the right track, it is remarkable how man and nature in the pre-industrial England worked together to create a unique harmony between them. Genuine love of poetry that had been nurtured and practiced in every aspect of people's life was an enduring legacy Latitudinarian England passed on to her descendants. It was a voice ever reasserting itself, no matter what change of fortune she went through. What was once held as her living reality that nourished people's imagination has been handed down as part of a living tradition. As Trevelyan recalls, “the beauty of field and wood and hedge, the immemorial customs of rural life . . . had supplied a humane background and an age-long tradition to temper poverty.” (418) Now the griping care and miseries have long been a thing of the past; still what the age of taste and gracefulness stands for in people's mind has become a centerpiece of the English tradition. It is in this inheritance of the national tradition in Goldsmith that Cazamian perceives “the broad deep currents that are leading to Romanticism.” (852) He goes on to observe that “he [Goldsmith] has even the retrospective trend of sensibility and imagination. Not only does he extol the moral purity of simple folks, but he finds pleasure in describing the archaic traits of peasant customs, exalts the touching beauty of the old popular ballads.” (852) Thus, Cazamian's viewpoint illuminates us to the fact that Goldsmith opened up the path leading to the Romantic Revival by hearkening back to the old echoes of the folk tradition.

To see things in a light-hearted manner is another characteristic attitude of the classical age. This is also a natural outcome of the ethos of good sense with mature awareness of human absurdity. This is one of the features of Goldsmith's authorial vision behind the unfolding human scenes. A firmly fixed notion of the fitness of things in people's mind is confirmed by the hierarchy of the aristocratic order. Small wonder their deep-seated instinct of climbing the social ladder provides ample materials for satirical treatment. In illustration of this, a revealing

scene is narrated in a humorous touch: the protagonist and his family's lovable foibles are brought into relief by an accidental visit of a fortune-telling gypsy:

The tawny sybil no sooner appeared, than my girls came running to me for a shilling a piece to cross her hand with silver. To say the truth, I was tired of being always wise, and could not help gratifying their request, because I love to see them happy. (49)

Here a genial note of satire is double-edged. On the one hand the daughters' snobbish weakness for fortune-telling suggests a tenacious survival of magic and witchcraft beneath the Christian pretensions to whole-hearted obedience to Law; on the other hand is hinted the Churchman's painful sense of self-contradiction between the claims of the sacred profession and his fondness for his daughters. His awareness of the incongruity gives a peculiar flavour to the poignancy of his self-deprecating tone.¹³ It is not that his conscience has grown numb to the Pauline wisdom of self-renunciation, but that it runs too deep in his sensibility to allow his tenet to make emotional waves in his daughters' minds on such trivial matters.

Immediately after this sketch comes a depiction of likable vanity in their family affection. While handing a shilling to each of his daughters to pay for the fortune-telling, Primrose narrates:

... though, for the honour of the family, it must be observed, that they never went without money themselves, as my wife always generously let them have a guinea each, to keep in their pockets; but with strict injunctions never to change it. (49)

Genial forgiveness of his loved ones' innocent joy is in tune with his Latitudinarian approach to life. For, he knows too well that foolishness is an ineradicable trait of youthful inexperience; and that it is wise for his young daughters to play the fool when fancy takes them. Thus, he takes the fact philosophically that they are proof against his "long and painful lectures upon temperance, simplicity, and contentment." (49) Nor does he frown upon his wife's imagining of her daughters' "pockets filled with far-

things" as "a sign of their being shortly stuffed with gold;" (50) nor does he allow himself a moral censure in watching his daughters' flight of fancy when they "felt strange kisses on their lips" or "saw rings in the candle, purses bounced from the fire,¹⁴ and love-knots¹⁵ lurked in the bottom of every tea-cup." (50) He knows too well that intoxication with superstitious notions has a sensuous side to cultivate and meet his daughters' aesthetic imagination;¹⁶ and that fantasy must take its own course in their emotional life before it passes of its own accord.

It would be hard for us not to recognize in these episodes a negative aspect of moral and spiritual laxity of eighteenth century England. True it was undeniably an aspect of the age of taste and fashion. We are not, however, allowed to rush to judge the lukewarm attitude of compromise. After all, the climate of the age fostered an unmatched prosperity of civil liberty, limited though it was to the upper circle. It was in this atmosphere of easy, relaxed conscience that fostered a version of Christianity freed at last from the dogmatic rigor of the Puritan schools. As shown in Dr Primrose's inexhaustible power of fortitude in his adversities, it is an honest, unpretentious reflection upon his own foolishness and inconsistency that enables him to draw on hidden reserve stored up in his inner chamber. Thus alone, has he found himself capable of walking the path of easy moderation and forgiveness. This represents the Latitudinarian attitude at its best.

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Notes

- 1 Oliver Goldsmith, *The Vicar of Wakefield*. Oxford University Press. Ed. Friedman, 1976. References hereafter to the novel are to this edition, and page numbers are to be shown in parentheses.
- 2 Friedman infers that this ballad is Goldsmith's own creation from the fact that a few copies of it appear in his *Collection of Poems*, p. 202. See Chap. 8. pp.39-44.
- 3 Arnold points out this attitude as one of the fundamental characteristics of Hellenism which, in his view, the English genius as a nation of Indo-European stock "seem to belong naturally to." See *Culture and Anarchy*, p. 127, 135-36.

- 4 Dixon supports the major critics' shared association of *The Vicar's* central motif with "the archetypal narrative of reversed fortunes, the Book of Job." *Oliver Goldsmith Revisited*, p. 85.
- 5 Briggs, referring to Arnold Toynbee's viewpoint that "more had been destroyed than created through the smoke of the industrial revolution," goes on to interpret Toynbee's insight: "the essence of the revolution was neither the spectacular transformation of the coal, iron and textile industries nor the development of steam power, but 'the substitution of competition for the medieval regulations which had previously controlled the production and distribution of wealth.'" *A Social History of England*, p. 217.
- 6 See *Jane Eyre*, chapter 34-5. The dialogue between St John's evangelical sense of mission with his suspicion of personal emotions and Jane's romantic exaltation of the truth of feeling records an aspect of the religious controversy of Victorian England.
- 7 Methodists' plea for repentance and renewal of life, addressed to the working population, is convincingly presented owing to George Eliot's personal memory of her aunt-in-law the Methodist. Her unerring grasp of biblical phraseology is an aspect of her spiritual biography. See *Adam Bede*, chapter 2.
- 8 In this regard Mack attributes Goldsmith's philosophy to his personal background: "The more one learns about Goldsmith's life, the more one is impressed by the poet's continued ability somehow to transmute the experience of suffering and tribulation into understanding and enlightening, to transform and ultimately to reconcile the stuff of individual and even national tragedy within the over-arching structure of an at times divine — and at best a genially divine — comedy." See *Everyman's Poetry: Oliver Goldsmith*, ed. Mack, M.J. London: Dent, 1997. "Introduction," p. xxv.
- 9 "sufficiency of means for living comfortably." See *Oxford English Dictionary*. (hereafter referred to as *OED*)
- 10 "On either side of the river stood a tree of life, which yields twelve crops of fruit, one for each month of the year. The leaves of the trees are for the healing of the nations." See "Revelations," 22: 2.
- 11 Edmond Burke, "Reflections on the Revolution in France" in *Burke, Paine, Godwin, and the Revolution Controversy*, ed. Marilyn Butler. p. 45.
- 12 "diligence or assiduity in the performance of any task, or in any effort." In the present context the cultivation of land is meant by the word. See *OED*.
- 13 Mack recognizes that Goldsmith is indebted for his self-deprecating sensibility to his Celtic inheritance: "Goldsmith was an Irishman and possessed an Irishman's knack for introducing a peculiarly Celtic brand of vibrant and often cryptic and self-deprecating verbal play into the conversation of his overwhelmingly serious-minded — not to say — English companions." "Introduction," p. xxv.
- 14 Friedman recognizes in the *Universal Spectator* (3rd edn., 1756) examples of similar superstitions. He implies that they were part of the inherited folklore. See *op.cit.*, p. 202.
- 15 "a bow of ribbon" as a sign of romantic love. See *OED*.
- 16 Upon the authority of Keith Thomas's historical analysis of the function of magic in religious life, Butler touches upon the echoing survival of superstitions in people's emotional life after the age of enlightenment: "Even in the 'rational' eighteenth century, a population which was not offered scientific explanation for its ills, and had no scientific protection . . . had the same need of reassurance which earlier generations sought from a more naïve Christianity or from witchcraft." See Butler, *Romantics, Rebels and Reactionaries*, p. 28. For Keith Thomas's viewpoint in this regard, see *Religion and the Decline of Magic*, "the Impact of the Reformation," pp. 58-89.

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