

# *The Victorian Newsletter*

*The Victorian Newsletter* publishes scholarly articles by many of the most prominent Victorian academics of the last half century. As such, the *VN* reflects the genesis and development of contemporary Victorian studies. *The Victorian Newsletter* is a refereed publication featuring analyses of Victorian literature and culture.

The editor welcomes book announcements, review copies, and book reviews, along with announcements of interest to the Victorian academic community.

Tables of Contents for *The Victorian Newsletter* from 1952 through 2008 are available at <[www.wku.edu/victorian](http://www.wku.edu/victorian)>.

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Manuscript Submissions: MLA formatting and documentation; one hard-copy and electronic e-mail attachment (MS Word doc or RTF).

Subscription Rates: United States, \$15.00 per year; foreign rates, including Canada, \$17.00 USD per year. Please address checks to *The Victorian Newsletter*.

*The Victorian Newsletter* is sponsored for the Victorian Group of the Modern Language Association by Western Kentucky University and is published twice yearly.

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# *The Victorian Newsletter*

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*Number 114*

*Fall 2008*

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*Cover image: the Empress Dowager, Cixi*

### *Greetings from the Editor*

*The Victorian Newsletter* #114 introduces a number of innovative features, from the articles' unusual topics to the addition of book reviews. *Fin de siècle* Peking (Beijing) provides the setting for Jacqueline Young's "Rewriting the Boxer Rebellion: The Imaginative Creations of Putnam Weale, Edmund Backhouse, and Charles Welsh Mason." Young investigates three notoriously unreliable "eyewitness" accounts of the 1899 siege of the foreign legations in Peking, arguing that these "factual" accounts—still, bizarrely, to be found in the History sections of some academic libraries—are best termed "factional," being fiction based on historical events so imaginatively embellished as to border on the fantastic. The "imaginative creations" of these "siege narratives" employ such devices as private diaries, anonymous manuscripts, questionable translations, rare books, forged letters—most of which, conveniently, turn up missing when sought for material evidence. Weale is a "moral mercenary" whose self-image as a swashbuckling adventurer clashes with the reality of his dull life as a customs officer; Backhouse, an eccentric hermit prowling the streets of Peking, apparently relishes the rumor that he had an affair with the formidable Empress Dowager, Cixi; and Mason produces a "book within a book," a hastily compiled text that begins as speculative anti-Russian polemic and abruptly shifts to the "gathering storm" of the more palpable and news-worthy Boxer Rebellion, without troubling either to adjust the typeface or to note he was not even in the country at the time.

To mark the bicentenary of the abolition of slave trade—by Britain in 1807 and by the United States in 1808—*The Victorian Newsletter* offers a special section on literature and iconography related to slavery. Sara Hackenberg initiates the discussion by investigating the considerable transatlantic impact of American sculptor Hiram Powers's compelling statue, *The Greek Slave*. "Alien Image, Ideal Beauty: The Orientalist Vision of American Slavery in Hiram Powers's *The Greek Slave*" traces the reception history of the statue, from its prominent display at the Great Exhibition to its ubiquitous appearance as a mass-produced replica in respectable drawing-rooms. Hackenberg's study reveals that

although the white image, with "its ostensible Greek Christian identity and presentation of idealized Classical beauty," seems dissociated from the problem of African slavery, *The Greek Slave* occupied a central position in transatlantic abolitionist discourse that helped "expose the illogic of visual-racial justifications of American slavery." Along with such abolitionist exhibitions as panoramas depicting slavery and the appearances of former slaves on the abolitionist circuit—Ellen Craft, for example—Powers's compelling icon shaped and was shaped by Greek independence and American plantation slavery, orientalism and sexual slavery, and the extension of Victorian sexual ideology to all women, regardless of color or circumstance.

Segueing from the visual iconography of slavery to the aural is Debbie Bark's discussion of the slave body as a color-coded text inscribed by brands, whips, and chains. "Sight, Sound, and Silence: Representations of the Slave Body in Barrett Browning, Hawkhaw, and Douglass" investigates visual cues through Elizabeth Barrett Browning's "The Runaway Slave at Pilgrim's Point," in which the slave mother's blackness contrasts intolerably with the "too white" skin of her child. Lynching, rape, and infanticide are further complicated by the narrator's tripled powerlessness as a slave, a black, and a woman; while she is herself the master's property, she asserts a perverse control over her situation by murdering her infant—thus settling the question of his potential role as slave or heir, as master or overseer. Bark's analysis shifts to two lesser-known texts—"Why am I a Slave?" by the poet Ann Hawkhaw, and *My Bondage and My Freedom* by Frederick Douglass—to investigate representations of the slave body through both sound and silence. This sensory approach to reading literary depictions of slave bodies provides intriguing insights into the subtler means of control and oppression implicit in the institution of slavery.

Finally, Jacqueline Banerjee's "Charlotte Brontë's 'Pain Pressed' Pilgrimage and its Critical Reception" examines the checkered reception history of Brontë's novels from the perspective of fidelity to one's innermost truth. Arguing that the author's personal struggles resonate with those of her protagonists, Banerjee notes that changing attitudes toward self-revelation, autonomy, and spiritual development are traceable through nineteenth- and twentieth-century critical responses to Brontë's work. It is this public grappling with a private journey to which Victorian critics objected, since women were

expected to suffer in silence; later critics, in contrast, found fault with splendid heroines who seemed always-already defined by conventional love or its lack. But for Banerjee, it is Brontë's self-exploration that provides "the key to the power of her work"; this "pain pressed pilgrimage" is neither morbid nor depressive but an ongoing process of self-discovery. It is the constant effort, and the determination and resilience the pilgrim brings to that effort, which shapes the measure of one's self-worth. By employing Gothicism as a vehicle through which to channel pain, Brontë's novels anticipate a synthesis of "the ordinary and the extraordinary that we find in the postmodernist novel." Far from self-indulgent, employing pain "in the service of art" requires courage, persistence, endurance, and a commitment to truth.

As editor, I'm pleased to introduce a new section featuring book reviews, an endeavor impressively launched by Bill Harmon and Joseph Good. Special thanks are due to *The Victorian Newsletter's* graduate assistant, Kimberly Reynolds, and to its intern, Savannah Tankersley, for their valuable assistance with this issue.

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November 2008

*Rewriting the Boxer Rebellion:  
The Imaginative Creations of Putnam Weale,  
Edmund Backhouse, and Charles Welsh Mason*

*Jacqueline Young*

It may be that he provides some new historical insights, while [...] demonstrating the lengths to which perfidy, impudence, immorality, and poltroonery may be stretched in the enforced pursuit of fame, riches, and above all, survival.  
—George MacDonald Fraser, *Flashman and the Dragon*

George Fraser, in the introduction to his 1985 novel of an earlier uprising, the Taiping Rebellion of the 1850s, might well have been describing Putnam Weale and his "factual" account of the siege of the Peking (Beijing) legations in 1900. The comparison is doubly apt, because the conceit of Fraser's humorous series of *Flashman* novels is that they are based on authentic papers supposedly discovered in a Leicester auction room decades after they had been written, "edited" by Fraser, and published as historical memoirs. Using the same device in 1907, Weale presents his readers with an "anonymous" manuscript of mysterious origin, which he "edits" and publishes in the form of *Indiscreet Letters*. Still employed by historians as a valid documentary source (albeit with caveats usually attached) and still shelved in the history section of academic libraries, the *Letters* are clearly a construct, obviously "not a judicious history"; although the text bears "the hall-mark of truth" ("Eye-Witness" 236; 235), it is impossible to regard it as anything other

than a work of fiction—like Weale's 1920 novel of the siege, *Wang the Ninth*.<sup>1</sup>

Weale is the archetypal unreliable narrator; we see only his point of view and only his partial interpretation of events. Further, although his apparent self-criticism lends a gloss of objectivity to his narrative, there are always edgy qualifications. For his post-siege looting, he is not to blame: rather, he has been led astray by his Chinese servants, from whom it "was impossible to escape—my men had such decision left when every person in authority was already drifting" (231). On another occasion, he is influenced by a Russian friend, who "rescued me at a moment when I was prepared only to moralize on this infernal situation" (262). Then there are the times when, alone and afraid in an isolated place, he is approached by soldiers selling looted artifacts that he does not want but which "experience has taught [me] that it is best to buy [...] otherwise your pockets may be turned out and everything taken without an excuse" (289). When he runs out of people to blame, he excuses himself by making it known that "some of the Ministers have made little fortunes from so-called official seizures" (258); he even blackmails his employer, Sir Robert Hart, into silence when taken to task for "being a species of latter-day robber-chief" (276). Worse, having consistently presented himself as a man of honor who feels only contempt for those who indulge in rape in the aftermath of the siege, we find him opportunistically taking over a household of Manchu women, whom he hints may be prostitutes or abandoned concubines, ostensibly as their protector (244-46); but when the men of the household return, a "tragedy" looms as one of the women threatens to take her life. "My responsibility had been great," he admits (309), implying an affair or worse, but

<sup>1</sup> *Wang the Ninth* retells the events of 1900 from the perspective of a young Chinese man who decides to remain with his foreign employer inside the besieged foreign quarter. Less self-serving than *Indiscreet Letters*, the novel criticizes Europeans for their arrogance in China and for failing to put aside national self-interest during the siege.

by now it is impossible to rely on either his personal or narrative integrity.

Other literary techniques that he employs to establish the "veracity" of his account serve simply to add to its fictional quality. Each "letter" that comprises the text is dated, but often vaguely, with just a month, and not one is addressed or signed. Some of the early "letters" carefully include relevant details of Chinese history, and his descriptive passages are colorful, even lurid, lacking the matter-of-factness of the sober, contemporaneous factual narratives produced by other eyewitnesses. His use of initials rather than names implies discretion in terms of protecting protagonists' identities; but, rather than lending verisimilitude, the device instead generates excitement, drama, and tension, as well as half-revealing what perhaps should remain hidden. The following account of the German minister's encounter with a young Boxer offers a case in point:

Walking out in the morning, the German Minister saw one of the ordinary hooded Peking carts trotting carelessly along, with the mule all ears, because the carter was urging him along with many digs near the tail. But it was not the cart, nor the carter, nor yet the mule, which attracted His Excellency's immediate attention, but the passenger seated on the customary place of the off-shaft. For a moment Baron von K— could not believe his eyes. It was nothing less than a full-fledged Boxer with his hair tied up in red cloth, red ribbons round his wrists and ankles, and a flaming red girdle tightening his loose white tunic; and, to cap it all, the man was audaciously and calmly sharpening a big carver knife on his boots. (31)

Here is a character established earlier as "the hero of the affair," a "charming" German

enjoying “ordinary” sights on his daily stroll. The introduction of an out-of-place element combined with “not,” “nor yet,” “but” carefully builds tension that culminates not, as it might in the hands of a less adroit writer, with the mere presence of a “full-fledged Boxer.” Indeed, since the Boxer’s existence alone is insufficient to induce the thrill of horror in the reader, we are rewarded with the revelatory final flourish of a knife, the cleverly contrasted “audaciously” and “calmly” communicating the true menace of the Boxer’s intent.

What happens next typifies the central theme of the text, which is an extended discourse on the nature and dynamics of leadership. For the Baron, in Weale’s version of the incident (contemporary accounts of which vary), does not “go home and invite someone to write a despatch for him” but soundly beats the man with his walking-stick (32). That the Baron’s actions were considered by many to have aggravated an already tense political situation does not suit either Weale’s theme—his admiration for extrovert virility and his loathing of craven weakness—or the narrative arc. Like any skilled novelist, Weale allows the reader to make crucial discoveries along with the narrator, all the time resisting the temptation to endow the narrative with either retrospective knowledge or searching analysis, as a true memoirist would. Instead, he cannily lets events unfold, thus building a sense of anticipation and suspense and dividing the narrative into three parts, each with its own distinctive tone and timbre. Part I is amusing, sarcastic, and tense, introducing us to the young, idealistic narrator who, frustrated by his tedious existence, rails against “timid Ministers” who do not “understand that you must prick an ulcer with a lancet instead of pegging away at it with despatch-pens” (44). Part II, in vivid contrast, takes the “hero” into the febrile intensity, danger, and camaraderie of war that he has longed for, although he soon descends into exhaustion, shell-shock, and despair as the

muddled campaign drags on. Finally, Part III focuses on the harrowing bleakness of the aftermath as the narrator is brought low by the sordid sacking of the city and his complicity in it. Achieving a measure of self-knowledge but no redemptive grace, his conclusions about himself and human nature in general are stark, depressing, and surprisingly complex, given his earlier flippancy and facile condemnations of others’ incompetence and failure to act decisively. Ultimately unable, as many soldiers before and since, to find a place in a world that does not understand war, he realizes that “nobody but ourselves, who went through this incredible eight weeks of horror, were ever going to know really what the siege in Peking has been” (Hooker 183). He resigns his post and leaves Peking in a scene that would not be out of place in the pulp fiction of the American West, riding away “for the last time with all my men behind me,” picking up more horsemen—Indian cavalymen—as his party reaches the outer limits of the sacked and ruined city. There the men spur their horses to a gallop, moving against the tide of troops marching towards the despoiled city until, with the city walls almost out of sight and “the sun sinking behind the western hills,” the outriders peel away, leaving this performer to ride on alone into the night, a sadder, but not much wiser, man (309-10).

The true end of Weale’s five-year career with the Chinese Imperial Maritime Customs service was considerably more prosaic, involving no riding off on his moral high-horse barely two months after the lifting of the siege. Instead, he simply resigned the following spring from the post in distant Ichang to which he had been sent (“British Staff” 2007)—or, more likely, exiled, as was sometimes the fate of disgraced Customs officers. “I was kept for unusually long spells in the two worst posts,” ex-Customs man Alan Blake explains in another fictionalized treatment of the siege, *The “S.G.”*: “[m]ost men are

generally expected to resign when they receive this treatment" (Croskey 41). This is surely one of many such indications that *Indiscreet Letters* is not a rigorously researched chronicle, nor is it meant to be. Susanna Hoe, in *Women at the Siege*, asserts her belief that *Indiscreet Letters* is an insightful eyewitness account, viewing the unreliable, fictional nature of the narrative and Weale's use of a pseudonym (his real name was Bertram Lenox Simpson) as deliberate moves "to enable him to go against the grain of the more straightforward male accounts that preceded his" (41). While I agree that Weale may have crafted *Indiscreet Letters* to seem outrageous in parts so that it would appear as a fiction—indeed, could be dismissed as such—thus allowing him the freedom to range widely across myriad topics, his use of a pseudonym is far more complex. By the time *Indiscreet Letters* was published (1907), he no longer had any need to consider issues of professional prestige and advancement, and although he may have wished to protect his identity for social reasons, the pretence that he was the book's "editor" would have sufficed to distance him from his scandalously alternative, transgressive view of events. There are also the inescapable facts that *Indiscreet Letters* was not his first book, that he adopted the same pseudonym for all of his works, and that his real identity appears to have been an open secret in expatriate society in China.

Of greater interest is what the pseudonym tells us about his preferred view of himself as a man both of action and of letters, his life a celebration of literary and military ancestry. Such a view is in direct opposition to the drab public-servant role implied by the Simpson name; it also confirms that, during his career with the Customs, he was a man living the wrong life.<sup>2</sup> Claiming falsely to be the "editor" of the *Letters* and using diverse

<sup>2</sup> The pseudonym that Simpson chose honors both his purported literary and military ancestry (he claimed John Weale, publisher and author, as his grandfather, and General Israel Putnam of Massachusetts as his

fictional techniques situates his account squarely in the genre of "faction." That he packages his account of the siege in this form tells us something much deeper than the need to avoid censure. Indeed, the narrative was never intended to be a day-by-day eyewitness account of events but, rather, a representation of his personal views. It is obvious that he aimed to expose deeper, more resonant and universal truths about the behavior of men (and it is primarily men) when firm leadership is lacking; further, in a crisis situation in which the so-called authority figures are concerned only about their reputations and their careers, an attitude of *saue qui peut*<sup>3</sup>—a phrase he repeats often—inevitably results, with its attendant moral vacuum. Weale craves strong leadership, such that he will admire or accept it wherever it is offered, regardless of race, sex, or creed. Thus he finds himself drawn to the Japanese colonel who is such a "genius" at organizing his troops and volunteers that he is willing to throw himself at his feet, declaring "soon I feel I shall be his slave" (89; 79). He admires American missionaries whose "Protestantism is not my religion, but for masculine energy there is nothing like it" (99). Even the women, generally depicted as burdensome, emotional non-combatants or as potential victims of rape in need of care, are credited with having "too much sense" to bother getting out of bed during one of the many night-time "general alarms" (130); and the empress dowager, whom he dislikes and blames for the hostilities, is offered his grudging admiration when he declares her "as masterful as any man who ever lived" (28). But his stance means that whenever the alternative leadership offered is of doubtful morality but sufficiently robust, this moral mercenary will take it, and accordingly his fall is swift. After the siege is lifted,

great-great-grandfather), rather than the heritage of his father's Customs service, and reflects his self-image as a "heroic" and literary figure, rather than as a civil servant. Sources: "Mr. Lenox Simpson"; biographical information on C. L. Simpson, extracted from *Documents illustrative of the Origin, Development, and Activities of the Chinese Maritime Customs Service* (Shanghai, 1937–1940), available on the Chinese Maritime Customs project web pages: <<http://www.bris.ac.uk/history/customs/resources/careersp3.html#Simpson>>.

<sup>3</sup> *Sauve qui peut*: "save who can"; or more colloquially, "every man for himself."

he first observes the weakness of the imperial family—"Nowadays [...] ruling dynasties are so human that they merely run away" (288)—but reasons, "Who would not rob a fleeing Emperor of his possessions?" (290). He becomes open to persuasion when "The spokesman [of a looting party], a dark man with a quick tongue [...] explained to me how it was done" (291). Overcome by the force of these events, he succumbs to what he earlier characterized as "*la bête humaine*" (121): "We were all tarred with the same brush; we were returning to primitive methods. Yet what could be done? It was rather a hopeless tangle, and once more I gave it up" (292). Thus did he persuade himself that he was degraded through no fault of his own.

This account of the siege, whose truth or otherwise is still under discussion a century later by historians who read and cite it, reminds us that even apparently indisputable historical facts and events can be subject to a range of divergent interpretations. As its author certainly intended, this leads us to question both the authenticity and the authority of the many eyewitness accounts published after the siege. "An official diary is now being written up," he tells us once it becomes clear that the besieged will probably survive; "our only correspondent, M—[Morrison of the *Times*] has been taken under the wing of our commander-in-chief, and his lips will be sealed by the time we get out" (173). With the veracity of even the "official" *Times* report of October 1900 now cast into doubt, we are left asking: what is the truth, and whom can we trust?

Robert Bickers attributes Weale's constant railing against the feckless British leadership to his "settler sympathies" (35)<sup>5</sup> and his imperialist agenda, but if we cease to

<sup>4</sup> *La Bête Humaine*, translated variously as "the human beast," "the human animal," or "the beast in man," is the title of Émile Zola's 1890 novel exploring the barbarity lurking beneath humans' civilized exterior.

<sup>5</sup> Bickers divides expatriate Britons and associated nationals such as Canadians and Australians into four categories: 1) *Settlers*: lower working-class, employed in treaty port service trades, the police or similar

think of *Indiscreet Letters* as a historical source, however vivid, and instead regard it as a hybrid generic experiment, a less partisan point of view is revealed. There is no clear division in Weale's account between "us" and "them": he makes sure to point out that those under siege consisted not only of Westerners and Japanese but also many Chinese converts, house servants, language teachers, shopkeepers, and "coolies" who were unable to escape the legation quarter in time. When, during a period of semi-truce, an informal market springs up, eggs are smuggled in by Chinese traders; an imperial soldier comes across to consult a legation doctor; legions of Chinese messengers come and go over the walls by night; and more than one amicable conversation is conducted across the barricades. He avoids using "the Chinese" to denote the opposing forces, his preferred terminology being "the Boxers," "Imperial soldiers," or "the Chinese Government"; and, although he does occasionally employ the phrase "heathen Chinese," it is only when he needs to distinguish non-Christian Chinese from the converts sheltering in the legations. It is apparent from the text that he favors "the Anglo-Saxon" race above all others, but this fact notwithstanding, he saves the worst of his bile not for the opposing Chinese, nor yet for the Japanese, whom he candidly admires, but for his fellow Europeans (and, by extension, Americans). He depicts the diplomats as "squabbling and cantankerous, rather absurd and petty" (4) and the legation guards as "all loafing and no duties" (14); on one notable occasion of dissent and confusion over the issuing of safe-conduct passes for

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authorities; land speculators/property owners; or small businessmen/women. They tended to found "dynasties," staying in China for two or three generations. 2) *Expatriates*: traders, bankers, and manufacturers involved in shipping, railways, and mining and working for China-based companies such as Swire, or for multinationals, e.g., British-American Tobacco. They were geographically dispersed, and likely to be moved between the treaty ports and into the interior. 3) *Missionaries*: British Protestant missionaries involved in educational, social, medical and evangelical work, usually in the outports and the interior. 4) *Officials*: diplomats and their staff; consuls; servicemen. Bickers contends that settlers should be distinguished entirely from the others, and that "the settler problem lay at the heart of Britain in China" (67); for a full discussion of Western expatriates in China, see chapter 3, "Britons in China: A Settler Society."



“servants and dependents” in a multitude of languages, including Chinese, he heartily wishes that “all the world spoke Volapük” (54).<sup>6</sup> Viewed from the perspective of fiction rather than historical witness, the narrator emerges less as an imperialist than as someone desperately seeking common ground with others, notably in a *lingua franca* that favored no one nation over another.

Criticism of various nationalities for retreating to look after their own, mostly petty, interests is a common theme of many eyewitness accounts, as is confusion over the identity of the “enemy.” Even when eyewitnesses employ the term “the Chinese,” it is clearly intended to refer to the combined Boxers / Imperial troops and not indiscriminately to an entire race; almost all accounts record the friendly exchanges with Chinese soldiers (though not Boxers), who often profess themselves sick of the hostilities. This subtlety is surprising in some cases but particularly so in the consciously even-handed siege diary published by Nigel Oliphant (1901), an employee of the Imperial Postal Service, whose brother David was killed by sniper fire. The death of David Oliphant, who was a popular junior diplomat, figures as one of the key incidents of the siege in all eyewitness accounts. The murders of Mr. Sugiyama and Baron von Ketteler of the Japanese and German legations are also invariably recalled, as are the cowardly behavior of the French minister and the presumed death of Professor Hubert James. The burning of the Hanlin College is noted by all, as is the unexpected cease-fire in mid-July, the arrival of a young Chinese messenger bearing an inappropriately vague message from the British minister in Tianjin, and the insane Norwegian missionary who visits the Chinese troops and lives to tell the tale. All survivors record the arrival on 14 August of the 7th Rajputs, heralding the lifting

<sup>6</sup> Volapük, like Esperanto, is an artificially-constructed language designed by nineteenth-century linguists to facilitate trans-national communication.

of the siege, and the post-siege looting and “sightseeing” around the abandoned Imperial Palace. The repeated telling of these common elements brings with it the concept of the conscious participation in a shared experience: if, as Weale claims, the diplomats concocted an official version of the siege out of self-interest, the “ordinary” besieged had a communal narrative of its own. These accounts were not necessarily written with a view to publication—the participants could not know, after all, if they would survive, and many did not publish their thoughts on the siege until years after the event, so common threads could not emerge as a result of the writers “copycatting” the first narratives to appear in print. Rather, the letters and diaries were probably intended to bear posthumous witness; but the very act of noting and recording the same events, whether witnessed personally or repeated secondhand, attests to the act of regular news-gathering, reporting, discussion, and even gossip among the participants, supplementing the “official” bulletins posted on the ad hoc notice-board at the British legation. Such news-sharing activities would allow participants to form a consensus about what the key events were and, consequently, to construct a legitimate “siege narrative.”

Within this narrative, two events in particular stand out as “mysteries” of the siege. First, was Baron von Ketteler’s body really lying in state, as the foreign affairs ministry Tsungli (Zongli) Yamen claimed, between his murder on 20 June and the discovery of his body on 16 August, “thrown into an old wooden box and left” (Hooker 194)? And what happened to Professor James, whose death was presumed but not actually witnessed, when he was attacked by Imperial soldiers? These questions—and a third, the circumstances surrounding the death of the emperor’s “Pearl Concubine,” which is still a matter of lively speculation—were apparently answered ten years later, in *China under the Empress*

*Dowager*, a literary collaboration between J. O. P. Bland and Edmund Backhouse. Present in body, if not in spirit, at the siege, Backhouse makes one known appearance in an eyewitness diary (Giles 163), but he also possibly plays a cameo role in Putnam Weale's *Indiscreet Letters*. One of the men purportedly leading the author astray during his looting spree is introduced, tantalizingly, only as "a young Englishman, who has been living in Peking rather mysteriously for a number of years" (277). With no further details as to his identity, we can only speculate that this may have been Backhouse, who, for the forty years or so that he resided in the city, became known for his puzzling, hermit-like existence. That the men's only meeting revolves around a plan to dig up an illusory cache of precious metals is consistent with what is now known of Backhouse's propensity to become involved with imaginary hoards of hidden treasure<sup>7</sup>—the most apposite of which is another "literary artifice" ("Eye-Witness" 236) that has been bequeathed to history: in this case, the entirely fabricated Chinese diary that was used for the Boxer Rebellion section of *China under the Empress Dowager*.

Like Weale, Backhouse adopts an epistolary approach to his subject. The Boxers segment of the text opens with a letter from Grand Secretary Jung Lu (Ronglu) of the Imperial household to a southern Chinese correspondent, followed by extracts from the diary of the late Ching-shan (Jingshan), a minor palace official in whose home Backhouse claimed to have discovered the diary after the siege, dramatically wresting it from the clutches of a party of Sikh soldiers (Trevor-Roper 73). Fittingly, it is Weale who opens the door to the possibility of such a discovery when he describes, with evident dismay, the

<sup>7</sup> Hugh Trevor-Roper describes a recurring pattern throughout Backhouse's life of claiming to possess certain valuables—jewels, pearls, rare books, manuscripts, and Chinese "curios," among other items—which he tries to use to raise funds or as collateral but which are for some reason difficult to access. Eventually, once the fantasy can no longer be sustained, the valuables disappear, or are stolen, and are heard of no more.

destruction by fire of the Hanlin College and the attempts of distraught sinologists to salvage some of the books, saying "it is possible that missing copies of China's literature may some day be resurrected in strange lands" (*Indiscreet* 96). Amidst the mayhem of war, such discoveries were not only possible but probable.

Backhouse was a particular "social type," according to his biographer Hugh Trevor-Roper: an aesthete and scholar, a secretive hermit and fantasist who lived in an imaginative world of his own making. He was also a sinologist and reputedly alert to the cliquishness and bitter infighting that characterized palace politics, lending credibility to his "translation" of the diary. His purpose in making this manuscript public was to reveal the "official" thinking and political maneuverings inside the Imperial Palace before and during the siege. Specifically, Backhouse wished to endow Jung Lu, whom he admired but who almost certainly played to both pro- and anti-foreign sides during the crisis with a stance sympathetic to the West. The diary also allowed him to provide explanations for the various unanswered questions of the siege: thus we discover that the assassinated Baron von Ketteler was properly "coffined," as the Tsungli Yamen had claimed, but only after heated internal dissent over whether or not he should be decapitated and his head publicly displayed (273). Professor James was captured alive, tortured, then decapitated three days later; his head was hung on the Tung An gate (272; 280-81), the diary's writer taking care to reveal that it was displayed in a cage, as there was no "queue" with which to hang it. This provides a neat explanation—before the question even has time to form in the mind of the reader—as to why no one in the legation quarter happened to catch sight of the grisly trophy and learn of the professor's "real" fate, the same fate assigned to an Italian priest killed by rogue troops after the lifting of the siege. As for the Pearl Concubine—who

indisputably died as the Imperial household fled, although whether by suicide or murder has never been ascertained—she was, according to Backhouse, killed at the empress's bidding for daring to suggest that the emperor should remain in Peking rather than going into exile. "Throw this wretched minion down the well!" Tzü Hsi (Cixi) ordered, simultaneously affirming her authority, sealing the woman's fate, and resolving the ambiguity of another mysterious death (300).

Like Putnam Weale, though to a much lesser degree, Backhouse employs literary artifice and embellishment; but he weaves them so dexterously into the narrative fabric that the text appears to be not simply colorful and of questionable veracity but rather the opposite—a sedulously researched and deeply pondered academic tome. The narrative offers strategic footnotes exhorting readers not to confuse one character with another, while an array of Chinese personal names is punctiliously recorded, complete with origins and etymologies. Yet these authenticated protagonists in Backhouse's drama of Chinese political court life are as fictional as Putnam Weale's version of his resignation from the Customs service. The Jung Lu letter, an apparently fragmentary document, immediately precedes the "diary," providing background information on the genesis of the Boxer movement and preparing the reader for what is to follow. In just a few pages, the letter achieves much more, as it includes a disquisition on differences in character between the southern and northern Chinese, which Jung Lu's supposed correspondent, a Cantonese-speaking man, would not in actuality need to be told. Placed in the midst of a potentially bewildering barrage of "facts," such devices are easily overlooked—perhaps deemed a creative translation of potentially arid material.

There were always doubts about the Ching-shan diary, with Morrison, the *Times*

correspondent, questioning its authenticity even before the book was published (Trevor-Roper 95-6). The debate rumbled on for decades, with a noted Dutch sinologist first authenticating it in the 1920s (229-30) then later changing his mind, finally declaring: "As an independent source for the history of the Boxer troubles the 'Diary' must in future be disregarded. It retains value merely as a literary fiction which, in masterly fashion, expresses the atmosphere of those days."<sup>8</sup> Even so, it was not conclusively proven to be a forgery until Trevor-Roper's biography of Backhouse appeared in the mid-1970s. Like Weale's *Indiscreet Letters, China under the Empress Dowager* is still to be found shelved among the history texts in libraries, thus retaining the potential for being read as historical fact, not fiction; it was actually used as an authentic source by Fraser, author of the 1985 *Flashman* novel quoted earlier. The greater part of *China under the Empress Dowager* was not, of course, a conscious forgery; but as it is impossible to differentiate which of Bland's material came from Backhouse and which from independent sources, the entire text must be considered highly suspect—as, indeed, must anything on Chinese affairs written by any of Backhouse's contacts during this period, including George Morrison of the *Times*.

Another text that includes a siege "interlude" as part of a wider narrative is *The "S.G."* (1900), written by Charles Welsh Mason—who, like Weale, was a former Customs officer ("British Staff" 2007)—under one of his pseudonyms, Julian Croskey. But where Backhouse's invention was perhaps an appropriate digression in a factual, politico-historical work, Mason's "book within a book" shows every sign of being parachuted in at the last moment to a work of fiction that had an entirely different theme. Essentially a double-edged *homage* to Sir Robert Hart—the eponymous "S.G." or Superintendent

<sup>8</sup> Professor J. J. L. Duyvendak, "Ching-shan's Diary: A Mystification," *T'oung Pao*, XXXIII, 1937, cited in Purcell (275).

General of Imperial Revenues (that is, the Inspector General of the Chinese Imperial Maritime Customs)—the first twelve chapters of the novel concern a complex anti-Russian spy tale of betrayals, disguise, and mistaken identities. The convoluted plot centers on Valda Beriskoff, the half-Russian, half-Chinese daughter of a Russian diplomat, who is forced to gather intelligence that will allow the Russian minister to annex Manchuria before taking over the capital, whereupon “Peking [will be] called Alexanderburg” (24). The Boxers do not figure in the narrative until chapter ten and then only briefly; two chapters later there is a marked physical alteration to the book—a noticeably different typeface—as if the latter portion of the novel had been hastily reset. In chapter thirteen, the Boxers resurface in a sudden plot shift away from Russia’s military ambitions toward the “gathering storm,” and at this point the author also ceases to disguise his character’s names, allowing real people to appear as themselves for the first time. Sir Robert Hart must remain “Pericord,” his assistant “Cinderpan,” the Russian minister “M. de Samovar,” and the young male love-interest—almost certainly the British author himself—has been recast as American Alan Blake; but now the British, American, French, Spanish, and German ministers appear as themselves, named in full, as do the Imperial princes, the leaders of the allied troops, and some of the guests at the American legation.

This adoption of an essentially non-fiction strategy for the “siege” section of the novel may have been the inevitable result of last-minute rewriting, with insufficient time to fictionalize, in order to accommodate the opportunistic interjection of timely references into a pre-existing story. But it is more interesting to wonder whether, like Backhouse and Weale, Mason was subscribing to some kind of communal account of the siege that required the truth—or the appearance of truth—to be told. Emblazoned across the front

cover of the novel is the legend “A Story of Legation Street during the Boxer Rebellion by One Who Was There”; but the author certainly was not there, as he had been deported from China in 1892 in the wake of his arrest and trial for bribery while still serving in the Customs. Like Backhouse and Weale, he needed for reasons of authenticity to give the impression that he had witnessed the siege. Unable to participate in the “legitimate” narrative, he seems unconsciously to have adopted some of the same strategies as the siege survivors. Again, Mason employs real names and refers to real events—albeit the “wrong” real events, as he had no way of knowing what the “right” ones were. He camouflages well, though, choosing to concentrate on the fraught atmosphere of the city’s annual horse races and on the ceremonial visit to the legations by the Tsungli Yamen officials. This latter event reveals the deep isolation and cultural irrelevance of the foreign diplomats, who are sidelined in “one small street of the vast city” (109) and regarded by the Chinese officials “with a sort of shivering curiosity, as if behind them they saw ghostly apparitions” (110). As well as foreshadowing the wholesale slaughter that Mason must have presumed would come about, he further exposes his “insider” knowledge by including a long exposition on the political situation in the north since the 1890s. He reviews the anti-missionary riots and the unrest in the country since the Sino-Japanese war. Other real occurrences are included, such as Bishop Favier’s letter to the French minister pleading for an armed guard for his converts and the attempted escape from the city of a party of American women who were turned back by Boxer activity. Mason likely gleaned such information from newspaper reports or correspondence with friends. Of the siege itself, though, he is clearly ignorant: the novel ends with the brief cease-fire in mid-July 1900, suggesting that the book must have gone to press well before the full newspaper accounts

appeared in October 1900. Instead, the siege is dealt with in an enigmatic postscript to the final chapter, where it is described as a period “when the blood-soaked city was as mysteriously and completely veiled from the ken of civilization as if some vast-winged dragon had rapt it away in a cloud back to the filmy chasms of antiquity” (179), the author skillfully concealing his lack of information with a (dragon) flight of poetic fancy.

Mason, who had earned his living by writing extensively about China in articles and genre fiction since his enforced exile from the country, had a stake in appearing to be an informed “China watcher”—a possible reason for his preferring to employ a non-fiction strategy for his Boxers digression, rather than weaving it into the existing novel. But both Weale and Backhouse were siege participants, and both were clearly, in their different ways, skilled narrators with opinions that they wished to broadcast. Why did neither produce a straightforward personal account as other eyewitnesses had done or even write a fictional treatment as Weale does in *Wang the Ninth*? Why did they choose to present accounts that were in one case so highly colored as to appear elaborately fictional and in the other to masquerade as scholarly fact? Do their factional accounts shed any light on the rarefied atmosphere of Peking diplomacy and political intrigue? As both books were popular with the reading public—or, at least, achieved notoriety—does this tell us anything about overseas attitudes towards China? Indeed, did the books help to *form* overseas opinion? Or is an answer to be found in their individual personalities and circumstances?

The three authors have as many similarities as they do differences: Weale and Mason had both been Customs officers, and Backhouse had at one time been considered for the service. All were close in age (Putnam Weale was 23 at the time of the siege, Backhouse 27, and Mason 33); all appear to have been reasonably gifted linguists; and all

were, to differing degrees, inhabiting fantasy lives. Each, at the time he produced his factional account, was also in some way *persona non grata*: Putnam Weale had aroused the displeasure of his former employers for his behavior after the siege, and Backhouse was a “remittance man,” banished by his family from Britain where he had disgraced himself and them through debt. Mason was in the most difficult situation of all, having been briefly imprisoned for his involvement in a supposed Ko Lao Hui (Gelaohui: Elder Brothers Society) insurrection before being sacked from the Customs service and deported. There the similarities end: Putnam Weale, for all his faults, was mentioned in dispatches for his actions during the siege (“Weale, Putnam”); Backhouse was one of the “useless” non-combatants whom Weale would happily have seen starve; and Mason, of course, was not even in the country.

Even their “fantasy lives” were different: Weale clearly craved adventure and risk but had ended up as a disgruntled pen-pusher in public service. Backhouse desired the company of fellow aesthetes, homosexuals, poets and writers; he longed for an academic post at Oxford, yet he had been exiled to China, where he made the best of things by selling imaginary battleships and building a non-existent library. Mason, a self-confessed “born romancer,” clearly uncertain of either his sexuality or racial identity and claiming in his autobiography to have torpedoed his career out of boredom, was cast out from the Customs service, in which he could have found a lifelong home, and exiled from China to roam the world in search of his inner Napoleon.<sup>9</sup> Nevertheless, it is in their disparate

<sup>9</sup> Mason was so insecure about his identity that he welcomed the possibility that he was of mixed-race ancestry (part-Malay), thinking it might explain his tendency to “run amok.” The Shanghai judge who tried him for corruption found no evidence that he was a secret society member, deciding that he had simply been bribed; correspondence and editorials appeared in the English-language press to the effect that he was a “monomaniac” and “insane,” citing Mason’s assertion that he had become involved in a gun-smuggling plot simply to relieve the tedium of four years in an outport (*Anti-foreign Riots* 62; 64). Mason admitted to having a Napoleon complex, and reported a moment in prison when he realized: “I knew that I was mad, and I knew

fantasy existences that we may locate the clues as to why they produced works of faction: that is, they all wished to be viewed as men who possessed detailed inside knowledge—to be seen as the one person who alone knew the truth of what the situation in China was really like. So we are presented with the “truth” by Weale, the soldier *manqué* who desired, as well as exculpating himself and taking revenge on his former employers, to reveal the bungling of the European establishment in China. This, according to his account, had been suppressed until *Indiscreet Letters* came along. There is another “truth” told by Backhouse, the Walter Mitty-ish sinologist and would-be professor, who had spent his youth trying to gain access to various fashionable cliques and who now desired to be taken seriously as a “palace insider,” to the extent of allowing gossip to circulate that he was the one-time lover of the empress dowager; this, had it been true, might have given him a unique inside knowledge of the workings of the court. Finally, there is one more “truth” from Mason, who saw Sir Robert Hart as a godlike figure, the real power behind the throne of China, which was under threat not from Western colonizing ambitions or—according to the expatriate view of the time—its own decadent, decaying government, but from the evil of the Russian empire. In their differences and in their similarities, all had very personal reasons for not producing, like writers up to the present day, readable, speculative novels of the rebellion but instead crafting apparently factual chronicles that were firmly rooted in the fictional worlds of their own imaginations.

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that the only way to be mad successfully is to pretend to be sane” (Mason 339).

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### *Special Section: Abolition of Slave-trade 1808-2008*

#### *Hiram Powers's Greek Slave*

*They say Ideal beauty cannot enter  
The house of anguish. On the threshold stands  
An alien Image with enshackled hands,  
Called the Greek Slave! as if the artist meant her  
(That passionless perfection which he lent her,  
Shadowed not darkened where the sill expands)  
To so confront man's crimes in different lands  
With man's ideal sense. Pierce to the center,  
Art's fiery finger, and break up ere long  
The serfdom of this world. Appeal, fair stone,  
From God's pure heights of beauty against man's wrong!  
Catch up in thy divine face, not alone  
East griebs but west, and strike and shame the strong,  
By thunders of white silence, overthrown.*

—Elizabeth Barrett Browning (1850)

*Alien Image, Ideal Beauty:  
The Orientalist Vision of American Slavery  
in Hiram Powers's The Greek Slave*

*Sara Hackenberg*

In June 1845, a neoclassical marble statue depicting a nude woman with chained hands was publicly displayed, to great acclaim, in Graves' Pall Mall print-shop, London. Six years later, the sculpture, titled *The Greek Slave*, was given a place of honor in the American Rooms of the Great Exhibition, and sculptor Hiram Powers had arguably become the most internationally famous American artist of his time. Over the next several decades, Powers's *Greek Slave* was to become a nearly ubiquitous presence in English and American culture: not only did the sculptor eventually create a total of six full-sized "originals" as well as many 3/4- and bust-sized versions of his work, but the image was also repeatedly reproduced in engravings and made widely available as a relatively affordable figurine in inexpensive parianware. The fame of the *Greek Slave* was so great that Henry James found himself reflecting on the phenomenon in 1903, noting in his biography of William Wetmore Story the widespread abundance of reproductions of "the Greek Slave, so undressed, yet so refined, even so pensive, in sugar-white alabaster, exposed under little domed glass covers in such American homes as could bring themselves to think such things right" (I:114-15).

Certainly the *Greek Slave's* popularity in the nineteenth century was pervasive,

even if the "rightness" of such transatlantic enthusiasm might seem as questionable to us now as it did to James a century ago. We might well ask: why was a statue of a naked, white woman in chains an image that people wanted to "expose" in their own drawing rooms? Or, why was it this particular work, created by an American expatriate artist living in Florence, which was the first sculpture of a nude woman to be widely accepted by an American audience and the first piece of American art to garner extensive international acclaim? Given that many critics—both in the nineteenth century and today—have contended that Powers's *Greek Slave* was possibly seen by more people than any other work of American art in the nineteenth century, it is clear that the image significantly helped shape ideas of American art in an international milieu.<sup>1</sup> The statue also, however, contributed to other ideas about America in mid-century transatlantic culture, in particular serving on both sides of the Atlantic as a kind of lightning-rod for ideas and debates about American slavery. In this discussion, I consider *The Greek Slave's* impact in England and propose that the sculpture's ambivalent but powerful treatment of female slavery not only contributed to its popularity but also caused it to bolster specifically British versions of the American abolitionist trope of the "tragic mulatta."

In making this kind of argument, I follow such commentators as Jean Fagan Yellin, Mary Mitchell, and Jennifer DeVere Brody in seeing the statue's fetishistic treatment of gender and sexuality as inextricable from the image's evocation of slavery. While the statue's marbled whiteness—its ostensible Greek Christian identity and presentation of idealized Classical beauty—at first seems to remove the image from association with

<sup>1</sup> Linda Hyman notes how the *Greek Slave* was famous for being "viewed by more people than any other [work of art] in 19<sup>th</sup>-century America" (216), while Vivian Green observes that the statue "has been studied primarily for its singular position in the history of American art as the first female nude to be accepted by the public" (31).



African slavery, on second view we can see the piece centrally located in a growing abolitionist discourse—on both sides of the Atlantic—that sought to utilize white, Christian, and classically beautiful “tragic mulatta” or “octoroon” figures to help expose the illogic of visual-racial justifications of American slavery. *The Greek Slave* offered its viewers a powerful double vision. Its ability to register in viewers’ eyes as both a white Christian Greek girl *and* a tragic American octoroon allows us to locate this image among the many American-generated spectacles of slavery that were circulating in England in the mid-century. We can, for instance, see the sculpture influencing the production and dissemination of novels such as Harriet Beecher Stowe’s *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* and William Wells Brown’s *Clotel*. When we contextualize the statue alongside other mid-century depictions and discussions of slavery, including fugitive slave Ellen Craft’s many appearances on the abolitionist stage and the panoramic, multi-media exhibitions created by Wells Brown and Henry “Box” Brown, *The Greek Slave* emerges as an image that clearly both arises from and is deeply associated with American slavery.

### ***1. The Greek Slave as Image of American Slavery***

A mere glance at Powers’s image reveals its ability to send multiple and overlapping messages. *The Greek Slave* is a sculpture of a naked woman on a pedestal; her face is both cast down and yet clearly visible, and her midsection is literally chained off even as it is exposed. She leans in a *contrapposto* stance, her weight on her left foot while supported by her right hand resting on a post. This rather phallic post is, in ironic comparison with her own stark self, extremely well dressed: swathed in a fringed shawl-type fabric, it is further accessorized with a cap and two necklaces, one a locket and the

other a cross [figure 1].

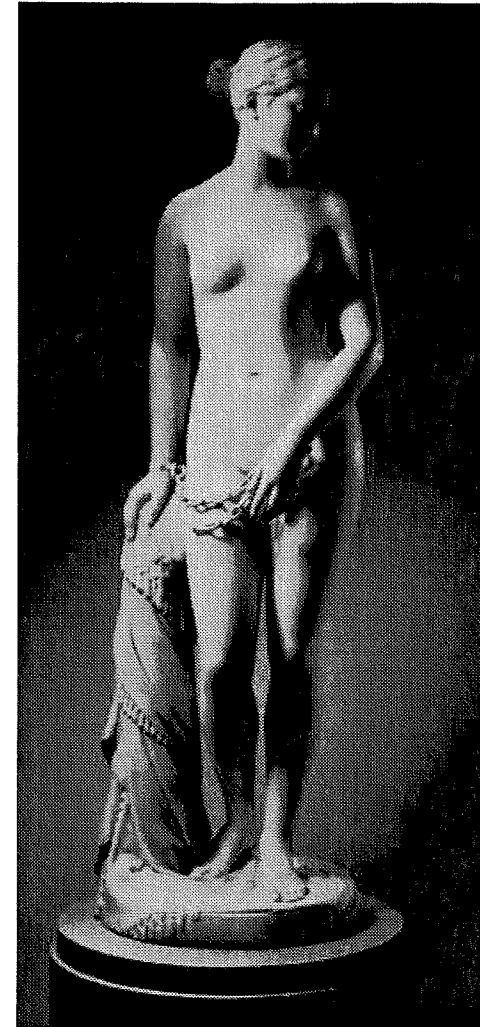


Figure 1.

While the image was first displayed in London’s Pall Mall, other versions of the sculpture toured extensively across the American North and South in the late 1840s. It was

viewed by thousands in shops, tents, exhibition galleries, merchants' exchanges, and rotundas before it again became a spectacle in England as the celebrated centerpiece of the American Rooms of London's 1851 Great Exhibition. And wherever it appeared, *The Greek Slave* generated a great deal of textual commentary, largely because of its signal ability to be received as simultaneously titillating *and* decorous. As a shocking image of a chained, naked woman about to be sold into sexual slavery, it was nevertheless repeatedly celebrated for its sedate depiction of innocence, purity, and chastity: many viewers, both male and female, argued that the exposed figure was magically "clothed" by its maidenly "nobility"; and, it presented an image of female beauty that was ambiguously located equally on a pedestal, a market stand, and an auction block.

The types of writing provoked by this compelling and confounding image included poems, reviews, satires, diary entries, caricatures, letters, and even a kind of "fan fiction" in the form of back stories about the Greek girl, her devout faith (illustrated by her cross), her friends and family, her despair at being severed from her betrothed lover (figured by the locket), the cowering of her would-be purchasers by her impassive scorn, and so on. Such narrativizing worked to enrich the statue's "official" narrative history, which was supplied by Powers himself. The longest version of Powers's story about his sculpture, which detailed her identity as a victim of the Greek War of Independence, was reproduced alongside other selected responses (poems and reviews) in a pamphlet of upwards of twenty pages that accompanied showings of the work. Shorter versions, reproduced on handbills advertising the statue's exhibition, significantly pared this down; one handbill simply reads, "The subject is a Grecian Maiden, made captive by the Turks, and exposed

for sale in the Bazaar of Constantinople."<sup>2</sup>

Despite this explicit explanatory back-story, *The Greek Slave* resonated with viewers on both sides of the Atlantic as clearly figuring not just "Turkish" or Ottoman but also American slavery; it managed to evoke at the same time both a "classical" white *and* a black or mixed-raced womanhood. As Yellin notes, "the connection between Powers's enchained female and American slavery was the subject of much comment" in America and England (109). An example of this commentary can be seen in an oft-cited *Punch* cartoon from 1851, which figures a dark-skinned, chained female figure whose stance clearly parodied that of *The Greek Slave* and which was explicitly captioned: "The Virginian Slave: intended as a companion to the Greek Slave" [figure 2]. Additionally, such critics as Yellin and Charmaine Nelson have persuasively argued that the sculpture's chained hands would have, from the first, inescapably signaled abolitionist iconography, especially the famous antislavery image and slogan, "Am I not a man/woman and a brother/sister?" (Yellin 102; Nelson 174). Such a resonance would be made all the stronger by viewers who recalled that the original Wedgwood medallion which sported the "man and brother" slogan also literally figured a slave "in white": Wedgwood's original deep blue medallion featured a bone-white image of an enchained, supplicating male.

*The Greek Slave* not only echoed such established anti-slavery images as the "man and brother" medallion, but it also significantly influenced many mid-century depictions of

<sup>2</sup> Jean Fagan Yellin quotes a full paragraph from the "official" pamphlet which asserts that while the "ostensible subject is merely a Grecian maiden, made captive by the Turks and exposed at Constantinople, for sale," the actual subject is "a being superior to suffering, and raised above degradation by inward purity and force of character," and that the statue serves as "an emblem of all trial to which humanity is subject" (107; emphasis added). The handbill statement, which Linda Hyman quotes, notably leaves out the "ostensible" and therefore highlights the specific, Grecian identity of the statue.



Figure 2.

American slavery, from literary depictions and illustrations to theatrical representations.

Jo-Ann Morgan has noted that *The Greek Slave* contributed to the “Uncle Tom-mania” that swept through England in the mid-1850s, specifically giving *literal* form to some of the most famous depictions of Stowe’s light-skinned slave character Emmeline; as Morgan observes, American illustrator Hammatt Billings’s version of Emmeline “exactly echoes the famous sculpture in reverse” (32). Billings further depicted Stowe’s other light-skinned

slave character Cassy with a Grecian flavor, and Powers’s image seems also to have influenced Cruikshank’s famous 1852 British depictions of Stowe’s book. In Cruikshank’s version, Emmeline not only again stands *like* Powers’s *Greek Slave*, with a demure bowed head and hands loosely folded across her mid-section, but she is also placed in an auction-hall of remarkably Grecian proportions, where she is surrounded by wall-ensconced neoclassical statuary that ironically depict, in idealized female forms, such abstract values as justice, democracy, and Christianity.

England’s enormous “Uncle Tom-mania” fervor encouraged the novelistic ambitions of William Wells Brown, a fugitive slave and activist who lived in England between 1849 and 1854. In 1853, Brown published *Clotel; or, The President’s Daughter: A Narrative of Slave Life in the United States*, a text widely acknowledged to be the first novel by an African-American. The novel, which Brown continued to rework after his return to the United States—in addition to the 1853 London edition, he was to publish three other distinct editions in America between 1860 and 1867—begins in all of its versions with a sensationalized vision of “white” female slaves being sold into explicit concubinage. The 1853 edition’s first chapter, titled “The Negro Sale,” begins with a dire warning against sexual “immorality and vice” followed by a multi-page paean to marriage as the “most important institution of human existence—the foundation of all civilization and culture—the root of church and state” and “the first and last sanctuary of human culture” (83-4). The novel’s actual events then begin with the selling of the beautiful, light-skinned Clotel, who, “reserved for the last, because she was the most valuable,” is touted by the auctioneer as “real Albino, fit for a fancy girl for any one” (87). Vivian Green has suggested that the widespread visibility of *The Greek Slave* influenced many literary

descriptions of the “tragic octoroon,” including Brown’s “alabaster-cheeked” Clotel (37). While Brown was himself personally ambivalent about Powers’s statue—at one point during the Great Exhibition he reportedly placed a copy of the “The Virginian Slave” cartoon next to the sculpture as a kind of corrective gesture (Green 37; Yellin 122),—he also clearly saw the usefulness of the “tragic octoroon” character in developing antislavery sentiment. Thus, he repeatedly employed the “white slave” trope not only to disrupt both the “color” and “character” justifications for American slavery but also to demonstrate that, under a system of institutionalized slavery, no one—regardless of his or her ability “to pass”—was ever secure from being categorized as black.

Brown in fact maximized the usefulness of the “tragic octoroon” character in at least three ways during his time in England. One way was to deliberately cast his fictional heroine Clotel as the daughter of Thomas Jefferson—a connection that was excised from subsequent American versions of the novel but which made an especially pointed representation of how slavery was literally produced and fostered by the father of American liberty and democracy. A second way was to “exhibit” a “real” white slave in the form of Ellen Craft, a fellow fugitive slave who had sensationally escaped from slavery with her husband William through a remarkable, tripled “passing” act of race, gender, and class. The very light-skinned Ellen had posed as the white, male “master” of her darker-skinned husband, and in so doing, the two had quietly traveled to the north where Brown “discovered” them and helped publicize their story on the abolitionist lecture circuit. By the time Brown had invited the Crafts to join him in England, Ellen was well-versed in appearing as the “white slave” on stage, where she always stood, silent, demure, with downcast eyes, in what Teresa Zackodnik deems a “deliberate embodiment” of the “tragic

mulatta” (“Enslaved” 83), and in what I think we also might recognize as a version of *The Greek Slave*’s pose. Strengthening this connection between Craft’s stage presence and Powers’s sculpture were reviews that made much of Craft’s “delicate,” “graceful,” and “modest demeanor,” as well as her noteworthy “display” of herself in the Great Exhibition. Zackodnik notes how English abolitionists had resolved that the Crafts should themselves “be exhibited under the world’s huge glass case” of the exhibition, and William and Ellen did indeed spend many days promenading with Brown in the Crystal Palace (82). Finally, Brown maximized the “tragic mulatto” trope by creating a moving panoramic exhibition titled “Scenes in the Life of an American Slave”—which, while it utilized the ubiquitous “slave and brother” image on the cover of the panorama guide, also prominently featured completely “white” slaves in over a sixth of its twenty-four images.

## *II. The Greek Slave as Orientalized Protest Image*

Viewed in the context of Uncle Tom-mania and Craft’s and Brown’s performances and exhibitions, Powers’s statue provided a particularly compelling version of the American “white slave” under the guise of a “Greek Slave.” The trope of the white slave was a powerful, if not unproblematic, abolitionist tool. In many ways the idea of the white slave functioned like Henry “Box” Brown’s “Mirror of Slavery,” another panoramic exhibition shown in England in the early 1850s, which arguably outstripped Wells Brown’s spectacle in its ambitious fifty-image abundance. Box Brown’s title is telling: when viewing a “mirror” of slavery, white viewers are told to identify, to see themselves reflected *in* slavery as well as to see how slavery could be reflected back *onto* themselves. This “mirroring” frame is central to the trope of the “white slave” and especially central to

the ways in which the “tragic mulatta” was a particularly galvanizing figure for white female abolitionists. The “tragic mulatta” virtually defined the place where abolitionism and feminism met: she was a figure who forced white women to identify with slavery, to see slavery *as* a mirror. As early as 1826, white women began taking the antislavery “woman and sister” slogan to heart: analogies between free white women and slaves became increasingly frequent, and the “woman as sister slave” trope continued to intensify in the 1830s, 40s, and 50s. Indeed, as early as 1837, American activist Angelina Grimké famously declared that women who did not actively object to slavery might as well be deemed the “white slaves of the North.” In Grimké’s oft-quoted assertion, which was widely reported in both America and England, the image of the silent, passive woman *is* the image of the enslaved woman. This feminist appropriation of the slave woman—identifying with her, erasing differences between women’s experiences, and then rendering her mute to intensify the “duty” of free white women to speak up and enter the public sphere of political debate—certainly betrays problematic power dynamics that did not go unchallenged in the interactions of white and black female abolitionists such as Lydia Maria Child, Sojourner Truth, and Harriet Jacobs. What I would like to consider here is how the orientalist subject matter of Powers’s sculpture both displaces and intensifies the kind of move Grimké makes: how perhaps, especially in an England imagined as a “free” middle-ground between Western and Eastern versions of slavery, Powers’s statue, with all its evocation of both the harem and the auction block, could extend and even strengthen the mandate for women in general to speak up and act. Furthermore, Powers’s image not only helped stimulate white female abolitionist energy but also, arguably, contributed to new, British versions of the “tragic” octoroon character, versions that were both more outspoken

and significantly less tragic than American counterparts.

While *The Greek Slave* can clearly be identified as a vision of American slavery, critic Charmaine Nelson has persuasively suggested that Powers’s deliberate indirection—positioning his beautiful captive squarely within a “Christians vs. Turks” narrative rather than a “Europeans vs. Africans” narrative—considerably diminishes his image’s radical impact (173). However, I propose that the statue’s ability to transmit ideas about American slavery might have been strengthened rather than compromised by the blatantly orientalist subject matter of its ostensible main subject. Indeed, the statue’s evocation of the Eastern “bazaar” and “seraglio” could be seen to transform the image into an even more immediate anti-slavery symbol for its British audience. In particular, such orientalist connotations might have signally helped to contribute to the many British revisions and recuperations of the American tragic octoroon, whose fate is elevated from an untimely “fallen” demise into a happy, noble British wifehood. The sculpture’s image of passive suffering and its direct reference to the Turkish harem could be used to underscore the need for women’s social activism. Elizabeth Barrett Browning, in her sonnet “Hiram Powers’s Greek Slave,” advocates breaking the “white silence” in order to “overthrow” the “serfdom of this world” (l.10, 14). In Barrett Browning’s vision, Powers’s statue is equally white *and* “shadowed,” since it emerges as an “alien Image” even as it represents “Ideal Beauty” (l.1, 3, 6). As Barrett Browning works to catalogue and reconcile the sculpture’s oppositional energies, she finally celebrates how the passive, silent image provides a truly global occasion—as it shows “not alone / East grieves but west”—for encouraging women to overthrow their own silence and “appeal [...] against man’s wrong” (l.10-13).

The orientalist bogey of the Turkish harem and its iconic “wrongness” was

pervasive in mid-nineteenth century English literature. For example, Thomas Hood's 1843 "The Song of the Shirt," published in the same year Powers completed the first version of *The Greek Slave*, depicts a beleaguered "white slave" seamstress as "a slave / along with the barbarous Turk" (l.13-15). Similarly, Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* (1847), despite its ultimate celebration of marriage, is rife with references to the harem and seraglio. When Rochester and Jane are first affianced, for instance, Rochester exults: "'Is she piquant? I would not exchange this one little English girl for the grand Turk's whole seraglio; gazelle-eyes, houri forms, and all!'" to this Jane responds: "'I'll not stand you an inch in the stead of a seraglio [...] so don't consider me an equivalent for one; if you have a fancy for anything in that line, away with you, sir, to the bazaars of Stamboul'" (229). When Rochester then asks what she will be doing while he is "'bargaining for so many tons of flesh and such an assortment of black eyes,'" she asserts: "'I'll be preparing myself [...] to preach liberty to them that are enslaved—your harem inmates amongst the rest'" (229-30).

Jane's outspoken rejection of the seraglio is fashioned by Brontë as a necessary and virtuous resistance to male "despotism" that underlines both her chaste nobility *and* her equality with Rochester. We can see Powers's image as able to trigger the same kind of outspoken response. On the one hand, *The Greek Slave* represented idealized female beauty as passive, angelic, saintly, pure, and enduringly "true" womanhood; but, on the other hand, she is, as Barrett Browning's sonnet observes, an "alien image": a shadowy, subjected "other" from the East or West who was both an excuse and a mandate for white women to react *against* and to speak out *for* (l.3). In this way, the same image that seemed to celebrate noble, silent, passive-white-female selflessness simultaneously provided women with an excuse to vocally decry such idealized passivity, to be both "public" and

yet still "noble."

That the anti-slavery—or, for that matter, orientalist—imagination in England worked differently from that in America can be seen most immediately in English recuperations of the American "tragic octoroon" character. This recuperation happened even before *The Greek Slave* became a touchstone image; such British plays as "The Quadroon Slave" resolved the title character's tragic problems through the comedy of the marriage plot as early as 1841. By the 1850s, melodramas like Captain Williams's *The Woman of Colour, or Slavery in Freedom* (1853) challenged expectations by rewarding its octoroon character with a marriage into the heart of the British aristocracy.<sup>3</sup> Enthusiasm for such re-writings of American tragedy famously caused Dion Boucicault to change the tragic ending of his own "Octoroon" play when it moved from New York to London. While the play continued to climax with a drawn-out white slave sale (a scene featured prominently in promotional materials on both sides of the Atlantic), London audiences strenuously objected to the resulting suicide of the "octoroon," Zoe. After three increasingly unsuccessful weeks, Boucicault finally acquiesced to London tastes and revised his ending; Zoe soon found herself moving from tragic octoroon to happily married expatriate, transformed from a shadowy, "stained" almost-American into a pure and virtuous English wife.<sup>4</sup> Through all these changes, the image of *The Greek Slave* continued to influence the visual culture surrounding the stage octoroons of Boucicault and others—depictions that invariably recast the distinctive stance of Powers's statue.

<sup>3</sup> Hazel Waters discusses this play in *Racism on the Victorian Stage* (139-41); see also Jennifer DeVere Brody's commentary in *Impossible Purities* (18-19).

<sup>4</sup> Certainly the tendency of British narratives to reward "tragic" white female slave characters with mixed-race marriages—a move that radically revises the inevitable tragic fate of such characters in American narratives—can initially be parsed by attending to the long history of British Colonial and American anti-miscegenation laws. However, I am suggesting that we can gain additional insight into such differences by reading the complexities of international responses to cultural icons such as *The Greek Slave*.

*The Greek Slave* is also clearly present in Mary Elizabeth Braddon's 1861-62 novel *The Octoroon; or, The Lily of Louisiana*, which was written to coincide with the London debut of Boucicault's play. Braddon's novel concerns a beautiful young heiress, Cora Leslie, who discovers that her mother was a slave; as a result, she experiences the tragic octoroon's radical change in social status, transforming her from a wealthy, privileged, and chaste white maiden into a "black" slave who is quickly and sensationally sold into potential concubinage. From the first, Braddon's descriptions of Cora are explicitly Grecian: she has "features, delicately molded and exquisitely proportioned: a tiny rosebud mouth; a Grecian nose" and "a complexion fairer than the ungathered lily" (6). Later, after her "true" identity is revealed, Cora is abstracted into a beautiful and idealized figure, the "lovely representative of an oppressed people" (42); by the time she mounts the inevitable auction block, she has morphed into an almost uncanny replica of the *Greek Slave*: "Her face was whiter than marble, her large dark eyes were shrouded beneath their dropping lids, fringed with long and silken lashes [...] her slender yet rounded figure was set off by the soft folds of her simple cambric dress, which displayed her shoulders and arms in all their statuesque beauty" (163). Like *The Greek Slave*, Cora averts her face in a pose that "protects" her from having to acknowledge the sordid marketplace scene: "when for one brief instant she lifted her eyes, the crowd of faces swam before her, as if hidden from her by a veil of mist." However, like Boucicault's Zoe in the revised "Octoroon," Cora's fate does not end tragically with the slave sale. Despite being purchased by a lascivious and brutish villain, Cora is soon rescued by a clever, noble, and heroic British inventor, who takes her to England and transforms her into a "happy English wife," blissfully "secure in the devotion of her proud English husband" (175, 215).

The impact of Powers's statue on these depictions and transformations of the "tragic octoroon" can illustrate how one kind of "alien image" could potentially work to help "recast" another "alien." *The Greek Slave* could, perhaps, have contributed to the British transformation of the tragic octoroon into the idealized white wife in ways that both fulfilled and challenged dominant ideologies. Clearly, the octoroon-wife necessarily alters the mold: by virtue of her varied experiences, she remains simultaneously idealized *and* public. I am likening the British recuperated octoroons to figures like Ellen Craft, whose daring cross-dressing resulted in a public persona of idealized, silent, demure womanhood that was *always* accompanied by the idea of her past successful and literal assumption of masculine privilege. *The Greek Slave* displayed a palimpsestic proliferation of oppositions that ultimately resulted in a challenge to the "purely domestic" and selfless female. Powers's image, literally taken into the bosom of English and American domestic spaces, figured a woman simultaneously chaste and exposed, naked and clothed, pure and sullied, fallen and raised, ancient and modern, beautiful and awful, white and black, Eastern and Western, abstract and particular, idealized and problematic, unique and relentlessly reproduced, alien and deeply familiar. Its uncanny impact makes it central to an imaginary Eastern "Turkish bazaar" that traded in flesh as well as to the project of the antislavery "charity bazaars" that, run by female abolitionists, bought and sold objects for the amelioration of trading in flesh on the South's auction block. We can perhaps see Jane's assertion to Rochester—"I had rather be a "thing" than an angel"—facilitated by images like Powers's sculpture: both commodity *and* angel, it could help justify British women's increasingly public denunciations against bondage, as well as British authors' repeated



Figure 3.

attempts to recuperate and integrate the tragic octoroon (223).<sup>5</sup>

In the end, Powers seems to have come to see—or at least to have tacitly admitted—that his statue *was* overtly about American slavery after all when, after the Civil War, he cast his final full-sized *Greek Slave* as the only version of his iconic image to wear

<sup>5</sup> My argument here runs somewhat along the lines of Jennifer DeVere Brody's claim that the "mulattaroon" works to establish and secure white English masculinity as virile, powerful, and noble. I'm arguing that *The Greek Slave* worked to help position white female abolitionists as necessarily and virtuously active and outspoken in ways that both extended and also altered the tragic mulatta trope.

actual manacles [figure 3]. Long before this final vision, though, the ambivalent, alien beauty of *The Greek Slave* helped viewers on both sides of the Atlantic grapple with strategies for understanding and challenging the complexities of American slavery.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> The author gratefully acknowledges the following permissions: Figure 1, *The Greek Slave* 1847, Newark Museum; and Figure 3, *The Greek Slave* 1869, Brooklyn Museum.



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**Ellen Craft**

*Craft “passed” as a prosperous white man travelling with a black servant, played by her husband William Craft. Thus the couple escaped slavery and became abolition activists in the Northern States and United Kingdom.*

*Sight, Sound, and Silence:  
Representations of the Slave Body  
in Barrett Browning, Hawkshaw, and Douglass*

*Debbie Bark*

Enslavement is literally—and literarily—written on the slave body. Late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century anti-slavery propaganda and abolitionist tracts made their case for abolition through descriptions of the brutal physicality and inhumane conditions of the Middle Passage. Autobiographical narratives gave voice to those whose enslavement was carved into their bleeding backs by the lash of the slavers’ whips. Slave masters inscribed their ownership on the foreheads of their slaves with branding irons, rendering the slave body a text—encoded with symbols of oppression that the slave could neither read nor escape. Slaveholders’ mastery had long been predicated on a notion of racial otherness, naturalized through observations of bodily difference. Dating from Aristotle’s theory of the “natural slave,” the physical differences between slave and master have been cited in both justifications for and denunciations of slaveholding practices. In the campaign to defend slavery in the American south during the 1850s, for instance, subservience was read through the very structure of the black slave body. In his essay “Diseases and Peculiarities of the Negro Race,” Dr. Samuel A. Cartwright observes that “in the anatomical conformation of his knees, we see ‘*genu flexit*’ written in his physical structure, being more flexed or bent, than any other kind of man” (332). In finding evidence for this reading of the slave body in the Pentateuch, Cartwright configures the slave as “submissive knee-bender”—just as “the Almighty declared he should be.” In

codifying the enslaved body as “other,” colonial supremacy could be rationalized through the assertion of “natural” bodily difference.

The most obvious and easily observed marker of difference was in the color of the slave’s skin. As such, the blackness of the slave body became currency for the binary oppositions of white and black, good and bad, cultured and savage underpinning colonial discourse. These governing oppositions, which Moira Ferguson has termed “Anglo-Africanist rhetoric,” are usefully summarized by Alan Richardson as

an ideological system or discursive code in which white and black, English and African, civilized and savage, Christian and pagan, self and Other constitute the ruling polarities and define white English Christians as the norm against which the colonial “Other” is measured and found lacking. (461-62)

While Richardson argues that this reductive and distorting rhetoric is not adopted uncritically in all anti-slavery poetry of the Romantic era, citing Blake’s “The Little Black Boy” and Cowper’s “The Negro’s Complaint” as texts which collapse racial hierarchies, Abdul JanMohamed’s discussion of racial difference in colonialist literature suggests otherwise. JanMohamed argues that the power relations underpinning “narrative organization based on racial/metaphysical oppositions” (61)—which he refers to as “Manichean Allegory”—“set in motion such strong currents that even a writer who is reluctant to acknowledge it and who may indeed be highly critical of imperialist exploitation is drawn into its vortex” (63).

In order to explore the complexities of the slave body as text and to problematize the opposition of white “norm” and black “other” inherent in nineteenth-century colonial

discourse, I will investigate literary representations of the slave body through the devices of sight, sound, and silence. Analysis of three texts—Elizabeth Barrett Browning’s “The Runaway Slave at Pilgrim’s Point,” “Why am I a Slave?” by the poet Ann Hawkshaw, and *My Bondage and My Freedom* by Frederick Douglass—reveals that the distinct representations of the slave body through sight, sound, and silence extend the “diverse yet interchangeable oppositions” (JanMohamed 63) on which theories of Anglo-Africanist rhetoric are predicated.

### *I. Sight: visual signifiers in “The Runaway Slave at Pilgrim’s Point”*

“The Runaway Slave at Pilgrim’s Point” (1848) is representative of literary constructions of the enslaved body through color, in which the slave body is signified through visual difference. The refrain “I am black, I am black!” punctuating the slave’s narrative not only stresses the visual opposition of black slave and white slave-owner, but also implicates the physicality of the slave body in its enslavement: it is the slaves’ “blackness” that “shuts like prison-bars” (6.4). The slave’s confessional begins at Pilgrim’s Point, where, having fled the plantation, she pauses to tell her story. She describes falling in love with another slave: “one of my color stood in the track, / Where the drivers drove, and looked at me, / And tender and full was the look he gave” (9.3-5). But her “girlish glee” (9.2) for the man who said “I love you” (11.2) in “the sunny ground between the canes” (11.1) is eradicated by the slavers who “wrung [her] cold hands out of his” and “dragged him” away (14.4-5). Signifying their ownership of her body, the masters rape the grieving slave. Her struggle to bond with the “too white” (17.4) child born of the rape is played out in the poem’s middle stanzas, as the child is killed by the black mother who

"could not bear / To look" at her baby's face, "it was so white" (18.1-2).

The narrator's self-referenced blackness is insistent—it is repeated either directly or indirectly over fifteen times throughout the poem's thirty-six stanzas. As E. Warwick Slinn has observed, this blackness "is not only a matter of literal coloring, it emerges from an ideologically differentiated world" (56). As such, bearing a child that is not black is problematic for the Runaway Slave. Genetically, the baby is part white and part black; but socio-economically, like the hierarchy of power on the slave plantation, it is its whiteness that prevails. The child's whiteness is referred to as frequently as its mother's blackness—"it was so white" (18.2), "the white child" (18.6), "the white-faced child" (19.6); in constructing her baby through the visual signifier of color, his part-whiteness reinforces the mother's subjugation. The slave aligns this child that is "far too white [...] too white for me" (17.4) with the white "ladies who scorned to pray / Beside me at church but yesterday / Though my tears had washed a place for my knee"; the child is further associated with the white "master-right" not only of "liberty" but of committing rape and murder with impunity (17.5-7; 18.7, 6). In reading the dominant white ideology through her baby's body, the Runaway Slave finds that its whiteness enslaves her as completely as her own blackness.

Most profoundly, the whiteness of the baby disables the mother's ability to nurture. For even in its natal dependency, the "too white" child represents a master of the next generation, born to enslave, not to be enslaved. As such, nurturing this child perpetuates and condones the suffering of the black race. In the stanzas describing the gradual suffocation of her child, the slave mother oscillates between Medean rage and poignant tenderness. The longing to accept her "own, own child!" is barred by the whiteness that

repels her: "My own, own child! I could not bear / To look in his face, it was so white" (18.1-2). In a first attempt to obliterate the child's whiteness, she covers "him up with a kerchief there," covering "his face in close and tight" (18.3-4). The baby struggles for air, striking out with his "little feet that never grew" (19.2). Seemingly moved by the baby's distress, she reflects that she "might have sung and made him mild" (19.5); but again, the instinctive desire to comfort her child is arrested by his skin color, as she "dared not sing to the white-faced child / The only song I knew" (19.6-7). Unlike the white mother who "may keep live babies on her knee, / And sing the song she likes the best" (31.6-7), this black mother cannot comfort the too-white baby with her own indigenous song. Earlier in the poem, she had expressed love for her sweetheart through song:

I sang his name instead of song,  
Over and over I sang his name—  
Upward and downward I drew it along  
My various notes,—the same, the same!  
I sang it low, that the slave-girls near  
Might never guess from aught they could hear,  
It was only a name—a name. (12.1-7)

But even here, among her kind ("the slave-girls near"), song as an expression of love must be covertly sung so that it merges with the expected rhythms of the plantation slaves' mantra. Confronted with her "white-faced child" (19.6), the Runaway Slave finds a song of such intimacy inappropriate as a lullaby; it is a transgression of racial boundaries that she "dared not" breach. Reflecting the disjunction between black mother and white child that contaminates maternal ideology, the Runaway Slave, instead of singing to the infant, first smothers it then buries the body in the blackness of the earth:

Yet when it was all done aright...  
 Earth, 'twixt me and my baby, strewed...  
 All, changed to black earth,.. nothing white...  
 A dark child in the dark!—ensued  
 Some comfort, and my heart grew young;  
 I sate down smiling there and sung  
 The song I learnt in my maidenhood. (27.1-7)

Only after the slave has obliterated the whiteness of her dead baby's body with the blackness of the earth can the "dark child in the dark" bring comfort and fulfil her youthful expectations of motherhood. In its blackness, the child can now receive her song, and "white child and black mother" are reconciled through the "soft and wild" slave song that echoes from the grave: "The same song, more melodious, / Rose from the grave whereon I sate: / It was the dead child singing that, / To join the souls of both of us" (28.2-7). In killing her baby, the slave mother denies its "master-right," instead drawing the child into her own narrative of subjugation. And as the blackness of the earth eradicates the whiteness of the baby's body, so the reciprocal sound of the indigenous song restores the slave's body to its "maidenhood," to a time before it had been sullied by the whiteness that invaded her.

## II. Sound: Frederick Douglass's *My Bondage and My Freedom* and Ann Hawkshaw's "Why am I a Slave?"

The polarization of black slave and white slave-owner would seem to be destabilized in the mulatto infant, as the literal and ideological shades of the mixed-race child distort binary oppositions of naturalized blackness and whiteness predicated by Anglo-Africanist rhetoric. Rejected by its mother as too white, and yet not white enough to

be free, the murdered infant in "The Runaway Slave at Pilgrim's Point" draws attention to color as a site of ambiguity. The conflation of black slave and white master in the "far too white" baby of Barrett Browning's poem prefigures Frederick Douglass's observation in the second of his autobiographical slave narratives, *My Bondage and My Freedom* (1855), that color "was a very unsatisfactory basis for slavery" (69). This statement distances the narrative of the former slave from the rhetoric of his oppressors, permitting alternative and potentially less reductive constructions of the slave body. As John David Smith points out in his introduction to *My Bondage and My Freedom*, this is Douglass's least known, yet arguably most important, autobiography—being more "analytical, complex, and critical" (xxiii) than the canonical *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, An American Slave, Written by Himself* (1845). "Douglass's outrage with slavery," notes Smith, "punctuates every page" (xxvii). What is particularly significant about this text in terms of literary constructions of slavery is Douglass's delineation of the enslaved body through sound rather than color.

The instability of reading enslaved bodies through color, implied by Barrett Browning in "The Runaway Slave at Pilgrim's Point," is borne out by the life experience of Douglass. The author's childhood reflections on slavery begin with the questions "Why am I a slave? Why are some people slaves, and others masters? Was there ever a time when this was not so? How did the relation commence?" (68; original emphases). Like the narrator in Barrett Browning's poem, Douglass is told that "'God, up in the sky,' made every body" and that "he made *white* people to be masters and mistresses, and *black* people to be slaves." But Douglass finds that "there were puzzling exceptions to this theory of slavery on both sides, and in the middle [...]. I knew of blacks who were *not* slaves; I

knew of whites who were *not* slaveholders; and I knew of persons who were *nearly* white, who were slaves. *Color*, therefore, was a very unsatisfactory basis for slavery" (69). Douglass proposes an alternative theory of slavery based on aural rather than visual signifiers. Even though he recognizes the potential ambiguity of sound—"I write from sound, and the sounds on Lloyd's plantation are not very certain" (92)—he finds it to be a far more robust indicator of the enslaved body than skin color. Douglass makes striking use of sound to describe many different aspects of enslavement, particularly in the anti-slavery speeches transcribed in *My Bondage and My Freedom*. In representing the slave body through sound in these speeches, written to be spoken and heard rather than read, the auralty of the slave body is embedded within the very composition of the text—intensifying Douglass's theory of the slave body as intimately related to sound.

Douglass's rhetoric of sound distinguishes his testimony from the myriad of anti-slavery polemics formulated through descriptions of violated black bodies. This is not to suggest that Douglass pulls back from presenting the slave body in all its horrific physical subjugation, nor from using contemporary anti-slavery polemics to support his cause. In an 1846 speech at London's Finsbury Chapel, Douglass quotes these uncomfortably descriptive lines from the poem "Our Countrymen in Chains," written by John Greenleaf Whittier, a founding member of the American Anti-Slavery Society:

...Our countrymen in chains,  
The whip on woman's shrinking flesh,  
Our soil yet reddening with the stains  
Caught from her scourgings warm and fresh. (304)

Later in the same speech, Douglass focuses on the sound of the auctioneer's hammer in the "slave-breeding state" of Maryland, where "men, women, and children are reared for the

market, just as horses, sheep, and swine are raised for the market" (306). He tells the story of a married slave couple who, despite living together and raising a family by permission of their master, are "brought to the auctioneer's block under the sound of the hammer" to be sold and parted forever. The sound of the auctioneer's hammer both codifies the powerlessness of the slave and becomes a paradigm for the power of the slave master. "It goes on in all its bloody horrors," continues Douglass, "sustained by the auctioneer's block."

Douglass's own recollections of plantation-life take up the descriptions of physical brutality described by Whittier, but with the terrifying audibility of the violated body delineating its enslavement. In his speech addressing the internal slave trade, given at Rochester, New York in July 1852, Douglass recalls the sounds of the "doleful wail of fettered humanity, on the way to the slave markets" (347), and the "savage yells" and "blood-chilling oaths" (346) of the slave trader, driving his human stock with his whip. "Suddenly you hear a quick snap, like the discharge of a rifle; the fetters clank, and the chain rattles simultaneously; your ears are saluted with a scream that seems to have torn its way to the center of your soul." The "snap," the "clank," the "rattles," and the "scream" construct the slave body through an unmistakable cacophony of enslavement. The crack of the whip and the scream of the woman merge, resonating with Charles Darwin's famous polemic on slavery in the *Beagle* diary:

On the 19<sup>th</sup> of August we finally left the shores of Brazil. I thank God, I shall never again visit a slave-country. To this day, if I hear a distant scream, it recalls with painful vividness my feelings, when passing a house near Pernambuco, I heard the most pitiable moans, and could

not but suspect that some poor slave was being tortured, yet knew that

I was as powerless as a child even to remonstrate. (530)

For Douglass, the sounds of the plantation, particularly slaves' songs, are a far more profound indicator of the enslaved body than the more usual descriptions of physical brutality. He recalls the "plaintive," "melancholy," "wailing" sounds of the "rude, and apparently incoherent songs" (75) that he had previously described in *Narrative of the Life*. Such sounds were "loud, long and deep, breathing the prayer and complaint of souls boiling over with the bitterest anguish. Every tone," continues Douglass, "was a testimony against slavery, and a prayer to God for deliverance from chains [...]. To these songs I trace my first glimmering conceptions of the dehumanizing character of slavery." In recollecting these lines in *My Bondage and My Freedom* a decade later, Douglass goes further still, pitching his theory of sound against the traditions of anti-slavery rhetoric: "I have sometimes thought, that the mere hearing of those songs would do more to impress truly spiritual-minded men and women with the soul-crushing and death-dealing character of slavery, than the reading of whole volumes of its mere physical cruelties." In Douglass's writing, the slave body constructed through sound resonates more than any other with the essence of servitude and subjugation.

Similarly, in her poem "Why am I a Slave?" (1842), Ann Hawkshaw favors aural rather than visual signifiers of the slave body. The first person narration of the poem's slave subject calls to mind Barrett Browning's "The Runaway Slave at Pilgrim's Point." But unlike the emphatic blackness of Barrett Browning's narrator, the slave's blackness in "Why am I a Slave?" is merely implied through the briefly mentioned oppositional allusion to whiteness in stanzas two and five. Instead, like Douglass, Hawkshaw constructs the

slave body through the sounds of the plantation, rather than through direct expressions of color or race:

### *Why am I a Slave?*

"One poor wretch died here (Isle of France) broken hearted, constantly exclaiming,  
'Why am I a Slave?'" — *Bennet and Tyerman's Voyage Round the World*

I. Why do I bear that cursed name?

Why, why am I a slave?

Why doomed to drag a wretched life

In sorrow to the grave?

Born 'mid the mountain solitudes,

And as the lion free,

Who had a right to bind these limbs

And make a slave of me?

II.

I looked—there stood the white man's home,

'Mid pleasant founts and flowers,

'Mid waving woods and waters clear,

Green vines and rosy bowers;

It had an air of loveliness

That suited not despair—

I turned away, for well I knew

That happy hearts were there.

III.

I knew that happy hearts were there,

For voices full of glee

Came on the air, and from their tone

I knew that they were free;

Unlike the low faint murmuring sound,

That marks the wretched slave,

Words wrung from misery's quivering lips,

That sound as from the grave.

IV.

I turned—there stood my lonely hut,

I call it not my home,

For no beloved face is there,

And no familiar form,

No voice to break its solitude,

And none to soothe the woe

Of him who was but born to sigh,

Whose tears must ever flow.

V.

Why does the rose bestrew his path,

And mine the pricking thorn?

Why was the white man born to smile,

And I to sigh and mourn?

I know not, only this I know,

Till in the silent grave

There is no hope, no joy for me,

I am a slave—a slave!

The slave narrator's insistent and indignant questioning in the opening stanza rejects racial associations between blackness and servitude, whiteness and power, by invoking the rights of humanity per se, rather than the dominant rights of white colonizers: "Born 'mid the mountain solitudes, / And as the lion free / Who had a right to bind these limbs / And make a slave of me?" (1.5-8). This idealization of a pre-slavery existence provides a striking contrast to Douglass's childhood musings. Whereas Douglass had asked "*Why am I a slave? [...] Was there ever a time when this was not so?*" (68), Hawkshaw's narrator asks the same question but invokes Romantic discourses of freedom to affirm that there had been a time when this indeed was not so.

The humanist sentiment of the opening stanza seems to reject the rhetoric of colonial discourse. "A slave" is a "cursed name" received unwillingly, rather than a naturalized position of servitude. But while the opening line disconnects the speaker's slave status from his sense of self, it also embeds his enslavement. The double meaning of "bear" in "Why do I bear that cursed name?" calls to mind the branding of the enslaved body—a mark of servitude forever borne—while emphasizing the powerlessness of the slave, questioning his subjugation but unable to do anything other than "bear" it. The indignation of the narrator, and his apparent rejection of colonial discourses of slavery, is undermined by this doubling—foreshadowing a shift in the slave's perspective as he moves through the sounds of the plantation in the middle stanzas, towards the poem's poignant denouement.

Like Douglass, the narrator in Hawkshaw's poem hears his subjugation. In defining the slave body through what can be heard, Hawkshaw invokes the aurality of slave narratives that have been absorbed and embodied through the sensory experience of

generations of slave bodies such as Douglass's. But unlike the sounds of cruelty and pain that often distinguish the slave in Douglass's text, there are no overt signifiers of physical brutality in Hawkshaw's poem. The poem begins by using the more benign sounds of the plantation to construct oppression as a self-enforcing psychological state. Hawkshaw's narrator compares the plantation house—"the white man's home, / 'Mid pleasant founts and flowers" (2.1-2)—with his own "lonely hut" (4.1), his comparison predicated on the sound of "happy hearts" (2.8, 3.1) in the one and silence in the other, with "No voice to break its solitude, / And none to soothe the woe" (4.5-6). The slave hears happiness and freedom in the "tone" (3.3) of "voices full of glee" (3.2), and compares this to the "low faint murmuring sound, / That marks the wretched slave" (3.5-6). Here, in the "sound" of the slave, the emphasis shifts from psychological enslavement to physical enslavement. The "words" that are "wrung from misery's quivering lips" (3.7) merge into a single sound that seems to come "as from the grave" (3.8). For the enslaved body, the sounds of these individual words lose all meaning other than signifying the one "low faint murmuring" sound of enslavement, as the slave ideologically and literally loses his voice.

The insistent questioning of stanza one re-emerges in the first half of stanza five, with more explicit oppositions of oppressor and oppressed. Although still asking "why," the slave's questions remain unanswered—"I know not" (5.5), resonating with the Runaway Slave's appeals to the sea and the sky that are met with mocking silence. Moreover, in asking "Why was the white man born to smile, / And I to sigh and mourn?" (5.3-4), the narrator in Hawkshaw's poem has moved away from the position of inherent freedom in stanza one and towards a position of naturalized and predestined servitude in the final stanza—the slave was *born* to "sigh and mourn" (5.4). Most strikingly, having



recognized the aural signifiers of enslavement and freedom in stanzas two, three, and four, the narrative voice moves from indignation to awful realization and horrified acquiescence in stanza five. The knowledge of servitude and freedom as conveyed through the sounds of the plantation is divisive—so much so that the slave narrator ends the poem not by questioning *why* he is a slave, but by affirming “I am a slave—a slave!” (5.8). This recalls Douglass’s observation that the “increase of knowledge was attended with bitter, as well as sweet results” (118). He explains:

Once awakened by the silver trump of knowledge, my spirit was roused to eternal wakefulness. Liberty! the inestimable birthright of every man, had, for me, converted every object into an asserter of this great right. It was heard in every sound, and beheld in every object. It was ever present, to torment me with a sense of my wretched condition. (118-9)

Distinct from Douglass, who ultimately moves towards the sound of liberty and escapes his “wretched condition,” Hawkshaw’s narrator experiences sound *as* slavery, his only escape through the silence of death: “only this I know, / Till in the silent grave / There is no hope, no joy for me, / I am a slave—a slave!” (5.5-8).

Literary constructions of the slave body through sound certainly offer an alternative perspective to such conventional binary oppositions of Anglo-Africanist rhetoric as blackness and whiteness. And yet, as these last lines of Hawkshaw’s suggest, the slave body constructed through sound relies upon the oppositional position of silence to realize its hope of emancipation. The relationship between sound and silence in Hawkshaw’s “Why am I a Slave?” and Douglass’s *My Bondage and My Freedom* is complex,

intersecting as it does with the power politics inherent in the more conventional oppositional positions of colonial discourse.

### *III. Silence: ambiguity in “Why am I a Slave?” and My Bondage and My Freedom*

As my earlier discussion of *My Bondage and My Freedom* shows, Douglass draws attention to the slave body constructed through sound to epitomize the dehumanizing effect of slavery—particularly when this sound is slave song. Yet when coupled with silence, the sounds of these songs emerge as increasingly politicized sites of power. “A silent slave is not liked by masters or overseers” (74), states Douglass. “‘*Make a noise,*’ ‘*make a noise,*’ and ‘*bear a hand,*’ are the words usually addressed to the slaves when there is silence amongst them” (original emphases). “This,” observes Douglass, “may account for the almost constant singing heard in the southern states.” Slaves are “generally expected to sing as well as to work,” with the sound of slave song signaling the productive slave body. Accordingly, the silent slave indicates the potential for insurrection and mutiny. The implicit threat of the plantation slave’s silence is therefore overturned by the order to “*make a noise,*” “*make a noise.*” In denying the slave his silence, the slave master takes ownership of the slave body through sound. With sound ordered from his body under the threat of slavers’ whips, slave song becomes an embodiment of the slave’s subjugation. Like the “words wrung from misery’s quivering lips” (3.7) in Hawkshaw’s poem, slave sound is neither spontaneous nor freely expressed. As such, representing the slave body through sound is inherently problematic, as sound in itself conveys the power of the slave master over the slave.

Equally problematic is the ambiguous position of the silent slave. As Douglass

illustrates in his Reception Speech of 1846, the silent slave body is a complex site of competing power. The plantation slave's silence may threaten the authority of masters and overseers, but the slaveholder's power relies upon the complicity of the silent slave. "Expose slavery, and it dies" (313), claims Douglass. "All the slaveholder asks of me is silence. He does not ask me to go abroad and preach *in favor* of slavery; he does not ask any one to do that [...]. The slaveholders want total darkness on the subject." Having masked silence with sound on the plantation, the slave master now demands silence, thus implicating the silent slave body in its own subjugation. Of course, the irony here is that although Douglass's first person narration expresses the complexity of the silent slave body, his words are spoken—and delivered from a position of power as America's foremost black orator in the abolitionist cause.

Like Douglass, Hawkshaw's narrator grapples with the complexity of the slave body constructed through sound and silence. Having heard his enslavement in the "low faint murmuring sound / That marks the wretched slave" (3.5-6) earlier in the poem, the narrator now hears his enslavement in the absence of sound: "No voice to break its solitude, / And none to soothe the woe" (4.6-7). As the oppositional positions of sound and silence conspire to reinforce his subjugation, the slave is left with no worldly hope. The poem ends with the slave narrator looking to death for salvation: "Only this I know / Till in the silent grave / There is no hope, no joy for me, / I am a slave—a slave!" (5.5-8).

However, the moment of hope in the poem's final lines is subverted by this notion of a "silent grave." For earlier in the poem, the very sound of slavery is traced back to the grave: "words wrung from misery's quivering lips / That sound as from the grave" (3.7-8). With the unearthly sound of slavery emanating from the grave, the slave's hope for a

"silent grave" seems out of reach. The comfort of actual death may have the potential to replace the living death of slavery, but the ambiguous status of silence in Hawkshaw's poem prevents closure, denying the slave—and the reader—the comfort of Christian salvation. Moreover, as Hawkshaw undermines the tenets of Christian faith by denying the slave narrator the hope of eternal life, the conclusion to "Why am I a Slave?" can be seen as a wider challenge to Christian perspectives that justified slaveholding practices through religious dogma.

Neither Douglass nor Hawkshaw resolves the tension between sound and silence. The slave body as sound and the slave body as silence remain opposing and inexorable sites of meaning. Although seeming to collapse racial hierarchies by eschewing the visual signifier of blackness in literary constructions of the slave body, as in Barrett Browning's "The Runaway Slave," neither Douglass nor Hawkshaw overcomes the power dynamics inherent in an oppositional narrative organization. Nevertheless, the representation of the slave body through aural rather than visual signifiers, combined with the tension between sound and silence, yields innovative insights through which to read the complexity of the slave body.

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*Charlotte Brontë's "Pain Pressed" Pilgrimage  
and its Critical Reception*

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Recent biographers have overturned the way we regard the Brontës, noting that Haworth was a busy, lively town, well-supplied with social and material amenities. Despite the early loss of their mother and two eldest siblings, the children led a more cheerful and stimulating life than Elizabeth Gaskell suggests. Even their childhood reading has been re-assessed: Juliet Barker explains that, far from being a substitute for more appropriate reading matter, the newspapers at the parsonage were "a fascinating source of information and had plenty to interest bright young children" (112). Vigorously debunking the old "parable of victimhood" (Miller 161), these biographers stress the resulting resilience and feistiness of the eldest sister in particular.

Yet while the young Charlotte Brontë's forays into the outside world were clearly more successful than those of her siblings, they came with a price. It was one thing, for example, for her to make and sustain close friendships outside the family circle with Ellen Nussey and the Taylor family, whom she had known from her days at school in Roe Head; but it was only with great difficulty that she could be persuaded to visit newer, more distinguished friends like the educationist Sir James Kay-Shuttleworth and his wife. Brontë not only managed schoolrooms at home and abroad but also made several extended visits to London; she went to the Great Exhibition at the Crystal Palace not once but five times; she attended a legendary dinner in her honor hosted by Thackeray; and she traveled to

Scotland to visit her publisher and admirer, George Smith, and his sister. But none of these events was undertaken lightly. At Thackeray's dinner, for example, the guests were nonplussed by a conversation stilted by Charlotte's nervousness, which was so severe as to prompt "sick" headaches. A remark to her friend Mary Taylor poignantly reveals her battle against this affliction: on setting out with her sister Anne for an evening at the opera with the Smiths, Charlotte reports, "I put my headache in my pocket [...] and went with them to their carriage" (*Letters* 2:113).

On other occasions, Brontë put her suffering into her work instead of her pocket. Along with hauntings, storms, disappearances, reappearances, desperate flights and other manifestations of Gothicism, her novels are studded with graphic descriptions of pain. One of the most harrowing of these descriptions occurs in *Shirley*, written during the desperate period of 1848-49, when all three of her surviving siblings died; the episode concerns the eponymous heroine cauterizing a mad dog's bite on her arm by boring the glowing tip of a hot iron "well in" to the wound (478). But neither the pain nor its biographical association is as significant as the way that pain is deployed in the novel. *Shirley* was modeled on Emily Brontë (see Barker 198); but whereas Emily herself might have used such an incident in her work to point up the extremes of passion, Charlotte uses it to show her heroine's extraordinary strength of will and capacity for endurance. Only after a period of solitary anxiety does *Shirley* report her agony, with dramatic effect, to Louis Moore, a favored and suitably quiet listener. In this way, intense physical pain segues into psychological torment, nicely illustrating the shift in the Gothic from the exterior world to the interior.<sup>1</sup> *Shirley*'s inner torment eventually erupts into the narrative, illustrating Charlotte Brontë's own way of releasing her pent-up feelings upon generations of readers.

<sup>1</sup> See also Ingham 176.

Self-expression of this kind may well have been therapeutic, but it was also part of Brontë's mission as an artist. In *Shirley*'s "devoir" about Humanity and Genius,<sup>2</sup> the figure representing Humanity is a typically Brontëan one: Eva is a lonely orphan, surrounded by the infinite, "boundlessly mighty" universe. Yet she is still convinced of her own significance: "herself seemed to herself the centre." The very awkwardness of the words here, coupled with the repetition of "herself," increases their force. Occupied "rather in feeling than in thinking," Eva knows instinctively that the brightly burning flame of her sensitive soul has a "God-given strength" which demands "exercise"; her life that beats "so true, and real, and potent" must have its outlet (457-58). The text's urgency and religious fervor are echoed later in the image of Lucy Snowe pursuing her intellectual growth like a "pain pressed pilgrim" in *Villette*. "Prove yourself true ere I cherish you," orders M. Paul, compelling Lucy to struggle onwards while metaphorically strewing her way with thorns, briars, and flints—and making her lay bare "the furthest recess of [her] existence" in the process (438).

Lucy Snowe's struggle to be true to her innermost self, to express it and develop it against all odds, is one in which Charlotte Brontë herself engaged; this is the key to the power of her work. Accepted as an ongoing process rather than a *fait accompli*, this struggle underpins all her narratives and progressively strengthens her heroines—though that is not always how her critics have viewed her writing.

Some of her earliest critics were women, to whom Brontë's honest expression of the self and its sufferings seemed self-indulgent, even subversive. That a woman should expose her personal problems went completely against the grain of what Lucasta Miller

<sup>2</sup> Entitled "La Première Femme Savante" (chapter 27, "The First Blue-Stocking") and spun from the first two verses of Genesis Ch. 6, this is generally taken more specifically as "Charlotte's myth of female creativity" (Miller 176), as well perhaps as a defence and idealization of her sister Emily's gift.

calls the “normative [passive and retiring] femininity” (18) of the time. In her biography of Charlotte Brontë, Elizabeth Gaskell did her best to repackage Charlotte herself, but she could not hide the defiance of her heroines. Whereas Emily Brontë’s Catherine Earnshaw finds happiness in *Wuthering Heights* through a companionable haunting in the afterlife, Charlotte’s heroines confront their problems and wring out whatever rewards they can from *this* life. Their pain has to be lived through, and then, as far as possible, lived with; some *modus vivendi* has to be established. Such an insistence was astonishingly brave for those times, when a woman was expected to suffer passively and remain silent. Even the early feminist Harriet Martineau recommended, in her essay “Temper,” that “in times of mental distress” the sufferer should adhere to “the principles of endurance and self-mastery” (*Life* 125); and while Martineau later wrote frankly in the *Autobiography* about her own early torments, she stored the work for posthumous publication. The response to Charlotte Brontë’s explicit descriptions of women’s frustrations and struggles was predictable. In December 1848, *Jane Eyre* was criticized in the *Quarterly Review* by Elizabeth Rigby, who was convinced that no woman, or at least no lady, could possibly have written such a document:

there is that pervading tone of ungodly discontent which is at once the most prominent and the most subtle evil which the law and the pulpit, which all civilized society in fact has at the present day to contend with [...] the tone of the mind and thought which has overthrown authority and violated every code human and divine abroad, and fostered Chartism and rebellion at home, is the same which has also written *Jane Eyre*. (Allott 109-10)

But it was not the perceived vulgarity of the enterprise that irritated Rigby so much as its expression of “ungodly discontent.” No sympathy was offered for the suffering involved; such a reader had simply shut herself off from fellow-feeling. But less insensitive readers could not help being drawn in, and they resented that all the more. This resentment formed the basis of Martineau’s objection to Lucy Snowe’s anguish in *Villette*: “the book is almost intolerably painful,” she complained in her review of the novel in the *Daily News*; “the author has no right to make readers so miserable [...] we ourselves have felt inclined to rebel against the pain” (Allott 172).

When Martineau’s autobiography was published in 1877, her account of a childhood endured without “cheerful tenderness” (1:11) and her candid disclosure of her later trials no longer seemed shocking. In fact, the *Spectator* review of “Harriet Martineau’s Autobiography” regrets that the book does not “tell us very much of the inner nature” of the author (318). By this time, then, the revelation of women’s sufferings no longer seemed shameless, inconsiderate, or a form of sadism practiced on the hapless reader. Nor did it seem an act of defiance. Critics were even beginning to realize that Charlotte Brontë’s own revelations provided only half the picture. Thus Sir Leslie Stephen complained about the “inharmonious representation of life” in her work, finding that the hurt she evinced was oddly and incongruously “combined with a most unflinching adherence to the proper conventions of society” (Allott 420). The word “proper” gives away Sir Leslie’s sympathies; but the pendulum continued to swing. Later in the twentieth century, Charlotte Brontë’s feminist readers adopted precisely the opposite view to Rigby’s and Martineau’s, deploring the fact that the novelist’s “rebellion” against society and its rules had not gone further, that the painful struggle was not shown to produce

enough results, and that in the end this novelist seemed to settle for compromises. For example, Susan Gubar decried the "social role" in which the spirited eponymous heroine of *Shirley* "becomes enmeshed" (118)—the more so, perhaps, because this critic so clearly perceives the author's own deep reservations about it. In general, of course, Gubar's complaint reflects major changes in attitude towards the role and rights of women, particularly their right to determine their own course in life and their own sphere of action, to develop their gifts and to reap the rewards of their achievements. This was also the time when New Historicism flourished in academia: critics were quick to seize on even the subtlest accommodations to the prevailing ideology, and on what seemed like cowardice in authors who failed to follow through on their own beliefs and aspirations. Such critics felt entitled to ask much more from women writers, even women writers of previous eras.

Subsequent Brontë critics look at her writing from a wider perspective and ask more radical questions about it. They probe both the identities of this author's heroines and the reality to which they try to accommodate themselves. Again, the debate on these issues has its origins in past critiques. G. H. Lewes, for instance, had posited in his review on the novel's first publication that the "reality" offered in *Jane Eyre* is not the ordinary novelistic one, but a "deep, significant reality [...] it is soul speaking to soul; it is an utterance from the depths of a struggling, suffering, much-enduring spirit: *suspria de profundis!*" (Allott 84). Charlotte Brontë, who had been steeling herself for Lewes's judgment, remarked to her editor on his "strange sagacity" (*Letters* 1:571) and thanked Lewes for his "generous review" (*Letters* 2:9). But in the twentieth century, the scrutiny was more intense and even disturbing. The most probing and thought-provoking was Sally Shuttleworth's study of Brontë's works in the context of Victorian psychology. Shuttleworth agreed with

Martineau that the novels are not simply tormented but "tormenting" (247). But this is not because they make us feel how women suffered in an age when their voices were stifled by propriety. Rather, Shuttleworth argued, Charlotte Brontë's narrators are so conflicted and unreliable that we are left to interpret the narrative ourselves; yet we are unable to do so because it is so deeply riven by the "drama of internal pain and division" (241). Physical and spiritual needs jostle with each other in these heroines, as do private interests and social obligations, and the desire for power and submission in the male-female relationship. As a result, she concluded, we are baffled, and forced to challenge our own "cherished assumptions of subjective integrity and literary unity" (247).

Yet this exactly corresponds with our most recent expectations of the novel. Indeed, it helps to explain why Charlotte Brontë's work still resonates so powerfully with us today. The stream of consciousness technique, which can also involve the juxtaposition of disparate consciousnesses, has challenged E. M. Forster's ideal of rounded but entirely predictable characters, replacing them with the kind of characters described by D. H. Lawrence in "Why the Novel Matters" as those who "do nothing but *live*" (107). In our own times, James Wood describes such characters equally simply as "sites of human energy" (96). For his own reasons, Lawrence himself failed to respond to the kind of nervous, edgy life which flows through Charlotte Brontë's characters, but readers have always done so and been convinced by these characters, seeing them as valid agents of thought and feeling. As for textual disjunctions and provisionality, we now have a critical vocabulary and even a predilection for these; we may be baffled, but we are not alienated. Another factor, inherent in the text, also helps us through the "torment" that Shuttleworth expected us to feel. This is the constant effort towards equilibrium in the narrative, which

makes us aware of the controlling intelligence behind it. This reassurance is felt even—or especially—when the “windings-up” of the narratives alert us to alternative readings or subtexts, leaving questions unanswered or suffering unassuaged.

More importantly, perhaps, in the *oeuvre* as a whole, there is the sense of a theme being worked out slowly and painfully but surely. “The Critics will accuse you of repetition,” Arthur Nicholls warned Charlotte Brontë, when his new wife read him the opening of the novel she had started before their marriage (Barker 768). The fragment, *Emma*, sets up a familiar scenario: a girl is abandoned at school under mysterious circumstances, a victim, it seems, first of her guardian’s and then of her schoolmistress’s callousness. She is described as “insolently distant” (236), less open and more stubborn than her literary predecessors. Neither her status as an heiress nor her name bear scrutiny, and she seems poised to raise even more probing questions about her identity than Lucy Snowe. The drive towards what Kate Flint neatly sums up as “active self-assertion” (190) would surely have been more problematic, more challenging, and more urgent in this unfinished work than in the previous novels.

To express such a drive in her work, Brontë first had to cut herself loose from her early sibling collaborations. This in itself was a wrench: the imaginary African kingdoms of Glasstown and Angria had clearly been a great source of “emotional security” in childhood (Alexander 12). Later, too, Angria had offered her an escape from the real and very demanding world outside the parsonage. So keen had she been to forget her “wretched bondage” as a teacher and withdraw into her intense imaginative life that she was once almost physically sick when “a Dolt came up with a lesson” at an inconvenient moment: “I thought I should have vomited” (Gérin 104). Still, she accepted Robert

Southey’s advice to move on from her vivid Angrian “daydreams” (*Letters* 1:166), famously nerving herself to “turn now to a cooler region” (*Letters* 1:560n3). The process began with her first completed work, *The Professor*, in which the male protagonist William Crimsworth makes it his priority to secure a “competency” (207); his wife Frances is far more resilient than the conventional romantic heroine, “neither hysterical nor liable to fainting fits” (195). Reality, however inimical or painful, must be tackled. Frances expresses just such a sentiment herself; when asked what she would have done if she had married a dissolute tyrant, she replies stoutly that she would have resisted such enslavement at any cost: “though torture be the price of resistance,” she declares, “torture must be dared [...] for freedom is indispensable” (279).

Nevertheless, Frances’s declaration is strongly worded, indicating that the Gothic element would not be completely abjured. On the contrary, it would become a valuable card in the novelist’s hand to be played when necessary—part of her determined push towards freely expressing the innermost self. When Lewes also advised Charlotte Brontë to tone down her writing—specifically, to eschew the melodramatic—she responded presciently, even assertively, that she could not promise *always* to do so. She even doubted whether it was advisable: “When authors write best, or at least, when they write most fluently,” she explained, “an influence seems to waken in them which becomes their master [...] Is it not so? And should we try to counteract this influence? Can we indeed counteract it?” (*Letters* 2:10). All through her work, then, she continued to depart from the quotidian at the moments of highest drama. A notorious example is the telepathic communication which urgently summoned Jane Eyre back to Edward Rochester for her happy ending. Such incidents have been seen as lapses in literary judgment: they led Lord

David Cecil to criticize her plots for being “badly constructed” (114). Alternatively, critic Robert Heilman commends her deployment of the Gothic: “it released her from the patterns of the novel of society and therefore permitted the flowering of her real talent.” Whereas Lewes had noted another level of reality in *Jane Eyre*, Heilman linked it with this flouting of the mundane: Brontë has a talent “for finding and giving dramatic form to impulses and feelings which, because of their depth or mysteriousness or intensity or ambiguity, or of their *ignoring everyday norms of propriety or reason*, increase wonderfully the sense of reality in the novel” (108-09; emphasis added).

A later critic, Pauline Nestor, provides an alternative view by co-opting Heilman’s argument for a feminist reading, suggesting that when Jane Eyre “hears” Mr. Rochester calling her, she demonstrates the power of the more sensitive, emotional, “intuitive” female (65). The point bears elaboration. Charlotte Brontë was very much abreast of the scientific thinking of her age and is known to have been deeply interested in the psyche.<sup>3</sup> By implying that women, then considered to be more mentally as well as physically vulnerable than men, have superior access to the psyche, she suggests that their supposed weaknesses might actually be strengths: “It was *my* time to assume ascendancy. *My* powers were in play and in force” (415), Jane says at this juncture, banishing the importunate St. John Rivers from her side so authoritatively that he obeys her. Her strength will soon be confirmed when she becomes not Mr. Rochester’s dependent, but, to use her own well-known words, his “prop and guide” (443). No wonder this author has been taken as a spokeswoman for the women’s cause, despite her own reservations about it.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>3</sup> Again, see Ingham 155ff. There would have been a personal reason for this interest: Charlotte Brontë is now thought to have suffered from “serious depressions” herself (Ingham 60).

<sup>4</sup> Brontë claims that women “need exercise for their faculties, and a field for their efforts as much as their brothers do” (*Jane Eyre* 111); but her best-known pronouncement on “Woman’s Mission” is ambivalent:

In her reply to Lewes, Brontë calls these improbable episodes “unthought-of turns” (*Letters* 2:10), and they mark crises in the narrative, the moments when the heroines feel most intensely of all; however poignant, they really are turning-points in the most positive sense. This is clearly so in *Shirley*: Caroline Helstone, her “beacon [...] quenched” by the thought of Robert Moore’s involvement with Shirley (398), is at her very lowest ebb when she learns that Mrs. Pryor is her long-lost mother. This astonishing disclosure recalls the “haloed face” that Jane Eyre half-expected to materialize above her in the red-room at Gateshead (18), and the supernatural voice that bids her to “flee temptation” later in that novel (316). The author’s more complete conjuring trick in *Shirley* may say something about her own needs at the time of writing, when Branwell, Emily, and Anne Brontë had died in quick succession, suggesting the scene offers her vicarious relief in a warm maternal embrace. As Mrs. Pryor clasps her daughter, the narrative resonates with images of regression, withdrawal, and even constraint:

“Daughter! we have long been parted: I return now to cherish you again.” She held her to her bosom: she cradled her in her arms: she rocked her softly, as if lulling a young child to sleep.

“My mother! My own mother!”

The offspring nestled to the parent: that parent, feeling the endearment and hearing the appeal, gathered her closer still. She covered her with noiseless kisses: she murmured love over her, like a cushat fostering its young. (410)

Here, the young woman who had once claimed to “wish fifty times a-day” to have some

“Certainly there are evils which our own efforts will best reach—but as certainly there are other evils—deep rooted in the foundations of the Social system—which no efforts of ours can touch—of which we cannot complain—of which it is advisable not too often to think” (*Letters* 2:457).



kind of employment (235), who had been quite unfazed by the advance of the Dissenters on the way to the Whitsuntide feast at Briarmains, and who needed to be held back from helping Robert Moore when he was faced with rioting mill-workers, is reduced to being like a small child again, ready to be "lulled to sleep." Mrs. Yorke had previously taunted Caroline for seldom putting her nose "over her uncle, the parson's, garden-wall" (389); now it seemed she might never do so again.

Lewes's heart seemed to leap at this. Typically Victorian in his view of motherhood as the "grand function of woman" (Allott 161), and unable to see how Mrs. Pryor could have abandoned her child in the first place, he was perfectly delighted by the cozy sight. In his otherwise scathing comments on *Shirley* in the *Edinburgh Review*, he enthused over the "simple, humble, *thrilling naturalness*" of the episode, describing it as "one of the most touching and feminine scenes in our literature" (Allott 169; emphasis added). His near-oxymoron "thrilling naturalness" not only hints at the powerful tension between belief and disbelief in the scene but also embodies the power of the prevailing iconography of maternity.<sup>5</sup> But partly, too, it betrays the male critic's satisfaction that Caroline, whose discourse on the "condition of women" had so irked him (168), is here reduced to utter dependence.

Yet Lewes was doomed to disappointment after all, since the unexpected revelation proves to be strengthening in the long term. While Caroline in her illness hovered near "The Valley of the Shadow of Death," she posited that an "abundant gush of happiness" might revive her (409), and it does: the emotional fillip raises her spirits and promotes her long-term recovery. Better still, Mrs. Pryor, who admits to her lack of "moral courage" in

<sup>5</sup> That Shirley had guessed the relationship but declined to comment is puzzling. True also of the narrator's withholding Dr. John's identity in *Villette*, this seems deliberately deceptive.

the past, soon turns out to be empowering. When Caroline murmurs happily, "It seems so natural, mamma, to ask you for this and that. I shall want nobody but you to be near me, or to do anything for me," the ex-governess responds very sensibly, "You must not depend on me to check you: you must keep guard over yourself" (413). Thus melodrama and sentimentality alike subside, the "sweat of agony" dries off the watching mother's forehead (418), and both Caroline and the narrative take a turn for the better. Caroline, who "was usually pained to require or receive much attendance" (401), soon begins to regain her physical and mental strength—too soon, in fact, for the original *Times* reviewer of the novel, who exclaimed irritably: "Mark how Caroline Helstone gets suddenly well after she had been as suddenly carried to the very edge of the grave!" (Allott 150). But a mother's love would be a particular and potent blessing for a young woman raised by an unsympathetic uncle. She recovers, therefore, without any of the psychoneurotic fallout that sends Catherine Earnshaw-Linton to her death after her breakdown in *Wuthering Heights*;<sup>6</sup> within weeks of her first "touching endeavour to *appear better*" (419), Caroline is seen struggling through "blinding snow and bitter cold" (537) to visit the wounded Robert Moore at Mrs. Yorke's house. This is a risky business: young Martin Yorke has to keep three dragons at bay for her—his outspoken mother; Robert's sister, Hortense; and the hefty pipe-smoking nurse Zillah Horsfall. In no way, then, does this novelist allow herself to be thoughtlessly carried away without "pausing to attend to so paltry a consideration as artistic unity" (Cecil 116); nor does she use the Gothic to avoid struggling with painful realities. She has her purpose, an important part of which is to ensure that her

<sup>6</sup> See my earlier article in this journal, "Sources and Outcomes of Adolescent Crises in *Wuthering Heights*." Note that Caroline's recovery, like Jane Eyre's at Moor House, is not attributable to any improvement in her romantic prospects. It is simply the result of her new experience, of having "something I can love well, and not be afraid of loving" (423). Only later does she discover the truth about Robert's feelings for her.

heroines have a purpose as well.

In *Villette*, Lucy Snowe's pursuit through dark streets by two sinister-looking men (chapter seven) signals more extraordinary and troubling incidents, and this heroine's journey forward in life promises to be particularly fraught. And so it is; this time, the conflict between different levels of reality is fully worked out on a conscious, even abstract level. Lucy, in this last of Charlotte Brontë's completed works, portrays her own personality as split:

I seemed to hold two lives—the life of thought, and that of reality, and provided the former was nourished with a sufficiency of the strange necromantic joys of fancy, the privileges of the latter might remain limited to daily bread, hourly work, and a roof of shelter. (140)

"Thought" for Lucy means imagination, fed by "the strange necromantic joys of fancy" which she feels she must reject in order to subsist calmly in the everyday world. Later, her resolve strengthens; and, much like her author when wrenching herself away from Angria, the young student-teacher decides to abjure "the world of delight" which acting in the school play had opened up for her. Her evident gift for acting and "the strength and longing" involved "must be put by; and I put them by," she adds, "and fastened them in with the lock of a resolution which neither Time nor Temptation has since picked" (211). But the tension soon mounts. When Lucy's beloved Dr. John confesses his feelings for her pupil Ginevra Fanshawe, and Lucy herself is left to endure spiritual turmoil during her solitary summer vacation, this heroine too has a kind of break-down, during which the phantasmagoric takes over: the very beds in the dormitory appear to be specters. Not a phantom, but another improbable reunion, comes to her rescue: this time, in the

shape of her godmother, Mrs. Bretton, who nurses her back to health. Again, the counterclaim of reason is quickly felt: Lucy refuses a second extension of her stay with the Brettons; she returns to the Pensionnat de Demoiselles where she had suffered so much, and where a tyrannical personified Reason whispers to her that she absolutely must not reply if Dr. John (now revealed as Graham Bretton) writes to her. Then, gradually, "a composite feeling of *blended strength and pain* wound itself wirily around [her] heart"; she is made "fit for the day's work" and can lift her head up again (310; emphases added). Once again, the pain expressed through Gothic elements proves to be empowering.

If Gothic episodes help express suffering through the plot, graphically physical vocabulary and imagery express it in the narrative. Jane Eyre's struggle with herself after the aborted marriage ceremony in the chill and shadowy church is a case in point. Jane is resolute about leaving Thornfield: Mr. Rochester has gripped her hard, ground his teeth, shaken her; but at last his rage at her intransigence gives way to sorrow. Jane tells herself firmly, "only an idiot [...] would have succumbed now" (315). She leaves at dawn, later falling to the ground in her distress but picking herself up again, "as eager and as determined as ever to reach the road" (318). So the head wins, as it must; but the hurt continues. Jane says that her heart, with its natural impulse to stay with the man she loves, has been left with "gaping wounds" and "inward bleeding"; she vividly evokes her painful and futile yearning by describing her damaged heart as "impotent as a bird with both wings broken," still quivering "its shattered pinions in vain attempts to seek him" (320). Just as her heart has been starved of love, her body is "gnawed with nature's cravings" (324), and she is reduced to begging a farmer for bread one day and a child for left-over porridge the

next.<sup>7</sup> By the time she is taken in by charitable strangers (not knowing then that the Rivers are related to her) she is as “white as clay or death [...] bloodless” (332), so far gone, in fact, that these people talk freely over her sickbed, commenting on such personal matters as her appearance and class, not supposing that she can hear them. It is three days or so before Jane can even begin to speak to them and put them right about her. In this way, the pain continues to vibrate through the narrative, even as it resumes an even tenor.

In *Villette*, where the struggle in Lucy Snowe’s soul is couched in the most metaphysical terms, their correlative in the physical world is aptly provided by the atmospheric conditions. The “equinoctial storms” rage around the heroine, and she is feverish “for nine dark and wet days”; when she begs for the respite of sleep, the almost invariable response is a “rattle of the window, a cry of the blast” (231). She too ends up being brought to her eventual succor “perfectly unconscious, perfectly bloodless, and nearly cold” (258). Her subsequent return to reason and sense is graphically evoked by personifying spirit and substance, and by describing their reunion almost apocalyptically:

[T]hey greeted each other, not in an embrace, but a racking sort of struggle. The returning sense of sight came upon me, red, as if it swam in blood; suspended hearing rushed back loud, like thunder; consciousness revived in fear: I sat up appalled, wondering into what region, amongst what strange beings I was waking [...] But the faculties soon settled each in its place; the life-machine presently resumed its wonted and regular working. (237)

<sup>7</sup> The significance of food or its lack is pronounced. Jane’s hunger is distinct from the anorexic self-denial of the later novels (see Silver 85-100), being aligned with that of the downtrodden mill-workers in *Shirley*: “Ye see we’re ill off,—varray ill off: wer families is poor and pined,” says William Farren there, in his rough, blunt way. “I know it isn’t right for poor folks to starve” (156-57). Suffering and violence are an important source of pain in the later novel, paralleling and contributing to the heroines’ problems.

As usual, though, Lucy has been actively involved in this agonizing struggle back to normality. In the hour of her direst need, when driven into the streets by her inner turmoil, this dyed-in-the-wool Protestant made confession to a Catholic priest; she learns later that her instinct to do so was entirely right—for it was this same kind elderly man who first rescued her and brought her to Dr. John—Graham Bretton—and the haven of her godmother’s present home in Villette.

For all these protagonists, pain, intense pain, is dramatically expressed through the jostling of different elements in their stories, in a way that looks forward to the collage of the ordinary and the extraordinary that we find in the postmodernist novel. It is also expressed in the very language and imagery of the narrative. And it is shown to be an inextricable part of the heroines’ efforts to move forward with their lives.

Two cases of breakdown in the novels are rather different, however. The first is the unexpected return of William Crimsworth’s old demon “hypochondria” towards the end of *The Professor*, just when, as he himself says, his “affections had found a rest” (253), and Frances Henri has agreed to become his wife. The other is when Shirley becomes “exquisitely provoking” and even “queer and crazed” (592-93), not because of the mad dog’s bite which she had dealt with so staunchly (though she had worried about that, of course), but as she bows beneath the yoke of marriage with Louis Moore. Both these episodes mark the moments when the protagonists commit themselves to their future life partners, and so raise important questions about their relationships, their inner lives, and the whole way their—and indeed the other—novels end.

Crimsworth’s case is the more straightforward of the two. He was miserable and lonely in early life; when the darkness descends again, he explains that he is subject to

such “spells”—in both the temporal and the nightmarish sense of the word. However, he also talks of trying to stave off his present affliction “as one would a dreaded and ghastly concubine coming to embitter a husband’s heart towards his young bride” (254), terms that suggest some underlying resentment of Frances. It would be natural, of course, for such a self-obsessed young man to enter an intimate relationship with some degree of trepidation. And this episode is followed by signs of tension in the marriage itself. He seems barely able to crush his negative feelings, giving off “ominous sparks” much as the couple’s son Victor does (289) and continually requiring his wife’s submission and deference. But all this is shown indirectly, through turns of phrase and imagery.<sup>8</sup> Crimsworth himself talks smugly of his domestic bliss, and our last glimpse of Frances is when she comes to his library to call him for tea and then waits patiently for him to finish some work. Having hinted at Crimsworth’s breakdown, the author then only implies the strains in the couple’s marriage. As the first novel that Charlotte Brontë completed during her professional writing career, *The Professor* anticipates the fuller psychological delving to be found in the subsequent novels.

By the time she wrote *Shirley*, the author seems not only more aware of potential problems but also more loath to gloss over them. Like Crimsworth, the young woman who once felt she might be styled “Shirley Keeldar, Esquire” (213), and who has her own quite considerable means, decided opinions, and strong character, is ambivalent about her marriage. Indeed, once it is all arranged, she is portrayed as being “fettered to a fixed day [...] conquered by love, and bound by a vow” (592; emphases added). Yet she loves Louis Moore and later explains that her strange behavior at this point was partly assumed: “Louis

<sup>8</sup> For example, when Crimsworth’s friend, Yorke Hunsden, refers to Frances’s “little lamp of a spirit,” he implies that Crimsworth will soon tire of it. Frances asks her husband anxiously, “Will you, monsieur?” His reply is ambiguous: “My sight was always too weak to endure a blaze” (285).

would never have learned to rule, if she had not ceased to govern: the incapacity of the sovereign had developed the powers of the premier” (592). In other words, mingled with Shirley’s natural hesitation on the eve of marriage is a completely contradictory desire to be dominated by her future husband. Mrs. Pryor’s warning, given earlier in the novel, comes to mind here: “My dear, romances are pernicious,” she had told Caroline, adding that marriage can never be “wholly happy. Two people can never literally be one” (366). Nothing could be more ominous or more explicit. So when the narrator talks of having to “settle accounts now” in the last chapter of *Shirley* (587), the sense of a reluctant yielding to readers’ expectations, of the unfeasibility of a “happy-ever-after” ending, is tangible.

No wonder the critics were puzzled. Lewes complained at the time that the action fails to flow naturally here. It lacks the “artistic fusion, or intergrowth, by which one part evolves itself from another,” so that the work leaves behind it “no distinct or satisfactory impression” (Allott 164, 165). In 1877, Sir Leslie Stephen wrote more scathingly that someone with a better mind would “even under her conditions have worked out some more comprehensible and harmonious solution whatsoever” (Allott 422). More recent critics have been troubled too, because Shirley’s wish to be mastered reflects a consistent trend among Charlotte Brontë’s heroines.<sup>9</sup> Their “highest joys arise from some sacrifice of self” (128), writes Cecil; to Shuttleworth and other feminist critics, a marriage like Shirley’s is little short of the “vanquishment” of a dream of powerful womanhood (218).

In *Shirley*, then, Charlotte Brontë could not quite bring herself to offer “the

<sup>9</sup> Frances Henri in *The Professor* and Lucy Snowe in *Villette* both submit masochistically to dreadful psychological batterings in their pupil/master relationships with the men they love. In his essay on “Pornography and Obscenity,” D. H. Lawrence caught the odor of disintegration in the maiming of Mr. Rochester at the end of *Jane Eyre*, and blamed it on the collapse or even death of the “deep instincts” (39). There is no doubt that disturbed sexuality is a contributory factor to the pain in the novels. I have discussed this point elsewhere: in the school context in “Girls’ Education and the Crisis of the Heroine in Victorian Fiction” (39-40); and more fully, in the wider context of misogyny, sadism, and masochism, in *Through the Northern Gate* (132-40).

unvarnished truth”—or, as she put it in the last chapter of the novel, “the squeak of the real pig” (587). The result was an ending which satisfied neither her contemporaries nor our own. But in *Villette*, finally, she took her courage in both hands. Those who wished to could simply ignore the false notes in Shirley and Caroline’s double wedding to the Moore brothers; but not even those with “sunny imaginations” could seriously think that M. Paul survives the terrible storm at sea. It seems clear that there can be no “wondrous reprieve from dread” for Lucy (596). The *Examiner*’s anonymous reviewer was bitterly disappointed, claiming “it was in the power of the disposing author of the book to close her story with a charming satisfying picture [...] she daubs her brush across it, and upon the last page spoils it all for no artistic purpose” (Allott 177). By now, the other important single women in the novel have found their respective partners: Mrs. Bretton’s younger charge, Paulina, has won Graham Bretton, and Ginevra too has got her appropriate “portion” (576). But Lucy’s great need for love is left unanswered. There is no final help, therefore, for what Martineau describes as the novel’s “pervading pain” (Allott 172). Sally Minogue praises the novel for arousing sympathy “both for those who float easily on life’s surface and for those who struggle bravely with life’s pain” (xx-xxi); but we are much less involved with the lucky Paulina and the bold Ginevra than we are with the beleaguered and battling Lucy. “I know some signs of the sky; I have noted them *ever since childhood*,” Lucy cries (595; emphasis added). We empathize with her as she reels under this latest blow of fate, and as Charlotte Brontë makes her fullest, most courageous and final acknowledgment of life’s sufferings.

Not that pain triumphs here. On the contrary, just as Charlotte Brontë struggled on with her life, Lucy is set to carry on with life after M. Paul. “I had been left a legacy [...] —

I *could* not flag” (594). As with “herself seemed to herself the centre” in *Shirley* (457), the repetition of the personal pronoun seems important at this juncture. Lucy’s sense of identity has indeed been weak in the past: when Ginevra asked her once, “Who *are* you, Miss Snowe?” she could only reply half-mockingly and half-bemusedly, “Perhaps a personage in disguise” (392-93). But M. Paul’s support has given her a new stability and sense of purpose as well as the economic means for independence. That is worth a great deal, even if the love for which she had yearned fails to materialize. Not “too consolatory to console” as Frank Kermode puts it (164), in this respect the ending represents a conscious, mature accommodation to life, similar to that found in such later novels as Trollope’s *The Small House at Allington* (1864) and George Eliot’s *Daniel Deronda* (1876)—works still ahead of their time in checking their heroines’ progress towards the altar and the family hearth. Moreover, unlike the largely escapist juvenilia, this part of the narrative perfectly fits R. D. Laing’s definition of the creative faculty as sending out “bridgeheads into alien territory” and performing “acts of insurrection” there (37). By allowing Lucy’s feelings to be vented so completely, Charlotte Brontë has affirmed her heroine’s individuality more fully than she had ever done before.

In her own life, although “past thirty and plain,” Charlotte Brontë still managed to make an impact on people, if only through what Matthew Arnold described as her “expressive gray eyes” (qtd. in Murray 112). She is now known to have turned down at least three marriage proposals, including one from Ellen Nussey’s brother Henry; and her comparatively late marriage to Arthur Nicholls is now thought to have been much more satisfactory than her earlier biographers suggested, producing “a new, contented Charlotte” (Fraser 473). Whatever the medical cause (and, like so much else in her life, this too is

disputed), she died in the early stages of pregnancy, that ultimate validation of life. In her own work and experience, she had the strength of mind to face the deepest anguish and to accept that there are no easy solutions. Granted, she revealed fissures in the innermost self and in how that self experiences the outside world—but it does her no disservice to grant this. She had set herself to probe deeply and honestly, and to express what she found; and she had done so. Her work therefore stands at the brink of a new age for literature, in which novels of introspection, guilt, and angst would appear, and in which the exploration of painful and untidy reality would be much valued. Few would any longer expect a novelist to have what Shuttleworth finds missing in her work—“an overall moral vision” (247); but on that score it is worth challenging Shuttleworth. Lucy Snowe is left at the end of *Villette* not only with the “legacy” from M. Paul but also with her own “pure faith” (594). This recalls Christopher Ricks’s finding that some favorite lines from Psalm 16, about how God appoints our destinies,<sup>10</sup> often came to Charlotte Brontë’s own “support and even her rescue” (137).

Whatever the source upon which she drew, this novelist did fight off debilitating despair, in both her life and through her protagonists. Writing about this difficult struggle was far from self-indulgent: it required self-knowledge, candor, and courage. Above all, as anyone who has tried it knows, using pain in the service of art requires self-discipline. Charlotte Brontë’s great and continuing popularity suggests that the reading public has always appreciated this, and listens as little now to critical carping as it has done in the past.

<sup>10</sup> Psalm 16 opens, “Preserve me, O God, for in thee do I put my trust.”

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### *Review Essay*

Norman H. MacKenzie, *Excursions in Hopkins* (Philadelphia: Saint Joseph's UP, 2008), pp. x + 393, \$37 cb; Cary H. Plotkin, *Soundings: Essays in Memory of Norman Hugh MacKenzie, 1915-2004* (Philadelphia: Saint Joseph's UP, 2007), pp. xxi + 194, \$37 cb; James I. Wimsatt, *Hopkins's Poetics of Speech Sound: Sprung Rhythm, Lettering, Inscape* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2006), pp. ix + 162, \$47 cb.

Gerard Manley Hopkins's reputation has come a long way since 1912, when *The Oxford Book of Victorian Verse* contained fewer poems by him than by Ezra Pound. The *Collected Poems* did not appear until the end of 1918, and recognition was still slow until the Hopkins centennial in 1944, by which time the *Kenyon Review* published a special issue, some parts of which soon appeared as a book, with contributions by Austin Warren, Marshall McLuhan, Josephine Miles, Robert Lowell, and F. R. Leavis. For me, the most influential by far has been Warren's "Instress of Inscape," still a useful guide to Victorian philological trends.

Since then, we can speak of a Hopkins Industry or Business or Factory, with busy branches devoted to religion, philosophy, versification, diction, aesthetics, politics, sexuality, music and graphic art, and almost any other fashionable topic. The three volumes at hand are a diverse group: one sustained study of language and prosody, one set of lectures with additional material, and a collection of studies presented in honor of the author of that same set of lectures.

Hopkins did not live very long or write very much. On the one hand, he was a radically original and independent thinker on philosophy, social concerns, aesthetics, diction, and prosody; on the other hand, as Bridges lamented, he submitted almost abjectly

to the discipline of a rigid and demanding religious order that rejected him from its higher levels because his thought was “too Scotist.” He set himself off from family and friends by converting to Roman Catholicism, then set himself off further by entering the Society of Jesus, but then differentiated himself from the mainstream of Thomist-Dominican-Realist thought by adhering to an eccentric Scotist-Franciscan-Nominalist brand of individualism. (I cannot here elaborate on how Hopkins’s devotion to Parmenides and Scotus looks like a forerunner of Martin Heidegger’s early thought, but the connection seems to be there for a specialist to investigate.)

A small morose man seldom in robust health, almost fanatically devoted to poverty, obedience, and chastity, Hopkins seems to have developed a compensatory immodesty in giving moral advice to others and an even more pronounced gigantism of manner in rhetoric, diction, and prosody. His rhetorical stance is that of overstatement, almost never relieved by understatement, direct statement, or irony (although religion leads to reversals and paradoxes). All recognize Hopkins’s singularity in diction and prosody, but few have gotten to the bottom of his practice. He customarily favors the Germanic over the Italic, using for example “ghost” and “fall” instead of “spirit” and “autumn,” a bias that yields many powerful phrases of percussive monosyllables, such as “now burn new born” and “I wake and feel the fell of dark not day.” His typical syntax, when not straightforward, involves agglutination, apposition, and displaced adverbial matter (the latter most vividly in “I caught this morning morning’s minion,” where “this morning” would usually be found at the beginning or the end of the clause). These lexical proclivities also drive Hopkins’s reliance on alliteration in many patterns, some related to the Welsh *cynghanedd* (a word that Hopkins, according to the *OED*, was the second to use).

Just as he strains limits of diction, he challenges conventional forms of rhythm and rhyme, often outrageously. No one else has ever rhymed “electric” with “wrecked her? he / C[ame...” or “Providence” with “of it and / S[turtle...” Such “fused” rhyme has baffled students, and so has sprung rhythm, the meaning of which brought derision early from A. E. Housman: “Sprung rhythm...is just as easy to write as other forms of verse; and many a humble scribbler of words for music hall songs has written it well. But [Hopkins] does not: he does not make it audible; he puts light syllables in the stress and heavy syllables in the slack, and has to be helped out with typographical signs explaining that things are to be understood as being what in fact they are not.” (Housman had helped Bridges by composing the Latin dedication of the *Collected Poems* to Hopkins’s mother, who was almost a hundred years old in 1918. Bridges had told Housman that the book, although “one of the queerest in the world,” was “full of genius and poetic beauty.”) Housman was not being willfully dense or deaf, and many of us can echo his sentiment ninety years later.

James I. Wimsatt, a distinguished Chaucerian, enters the vexatious discussion with *Hopkins’s Poetics of Speech Sound*, concentrating more on theory than on practice. Wimsatt begins by following suggestions in Hopkins’s writing about what he thought he was up to. With the premise that “the chief advantage of sprung rhythm lies in its bringing verse rhythm closer to natural speech rhythms than traditional verse systems usually allow,” Wimsatt takes an interesting case about as far as it will go. I doubt two elements in the argument: that anything about speech is natural and that written verse has very much to do with spoken language. Speech is totally a function of culture, and verse as we know it is largely a function of writing. Since writing is relatively inert, in comparison with almost anybody’s living speech, we try to give it a sort of virtual life by arranging pulsations of



accent, alliteration, and rhyme, but none of those things feature in anybody's ordinary speech. In fact, we strive to avoid them. Even so, Wimsatt does a creditable job of following Hopkins's lead in arguing those two doubtful positions. Again like Hopkins, Wimsatt does not distinguish the rhythms of classical Indo-European verse (quantitative, always unrhymed) and its modern Western counterpart (qualitative, often rhymed), a distinction arguably founded on the distinction between synthetic-suffixal language (early) and analytic-prefixal language (late). Without observing these radical distinctions, I think, one's arguments about prosody can run into trouble. Very few of the students I have encountered in a forty-year teaching career can parse the simplest sentence or scan the simplest line; that means to me that very few readers will have any sense of what is going on in any scheme of rhythmic or stanzaic patterning, however elaborate or sophisticated. They may respond viscerally, but they will be limited.

Wimsatt follows Hopkins also in terminology, adopting "sprung rhythm," "inscape," "instress," "outrides," and other such distinctive language. With "lettering," however, by which Hopkins seems to have meant any sort of repetition, I hit an obstacle. Wimsatt cites an entry from one of Hopkins's Journals that defines "lettering" as "sameness or likeness of some of all of the elementary sounds—the letters—of which syllables are made." For one thing, "of some of all" may be a misprint (whether in Wimsatt's text or the Journals I cannot tell) for "of some or all." For another, unless you are indentured to Phonics, the connection between letters and sounds is so tenuous and capricious as to be worthless in acoustic analysis. "Whole world" looks as though it involves alliteration of the "w" sound, but it does not; "world be once bereft" does not look as though it involves alliteration of the "w" sound, but it does. These shoals call for

scrupulous navigation. We can trust Hopkins to follow his ear and not his eye, but the persistence of "letter" (implicit in "alliteration" and so forth) could mislead someone who trusts the eye more than the ear. In addition to "cynghanedd," Wimsatt introduces the Norse "skothending" for rhyme of final consonants after a different vowel—in Hopkins's usual practice, I believe, also involving alliteration (as in "soft sift" and "now burn new born"), since Hopkins disdained the typical consonance rhyme of, say, "word / lord" or "come / home." (He did rhyme "wool" and "pool," but that may be jocular.) Wimsatt mentions that "Earnest" and "equal" in "Spelt from Sybil's Leaves" "are presumed to alliterate, though the *e* sounds are not the same"—but in Old Germanic systems all vowels alliterate with one another.

Hopkins also uses a kind of vowel-lettering that Wimsatt does not mention: the repetition of groups of three or four accented vowels in lines near each other, as in "left and who'll" and "Penmaen Pool" but more conspicuously in "Wiry heathpacks, fitches of fern, / And the beadbonny ash that sits over the burn." Using eye more than ear, Wimsatt applies "eightfold rhymes" to the octave of "The Windhover" because all the lines [end] in "-ing," but in four of them that material is unaccented, so that the masculine *a*-rhyme is between four stressed syllables ending "-ing" ("king-, wing, swing, thing") but the feminine *b*-rhyme involves "-ing" only as the unstressed element in "riding, striding, gliding, hiding." Let me add here that experience has taught me that any detailed discussion of verse skates on the thinnest ice, almost as though the secrets of harmony did not want to be discovered or disclosed. One does need to exercise care, and Wimsatt does so most of the time and, if nothing else, sets a fine example of how to pay attention to what a poet says in his theoretical as well as his creative writing. (One might wish, even so, that

he did not slightly misquote Pope's "The sound must seem an echo to the sense.")

The remaining two books I am reviewing both have to do with Norman Hugh MacKenzie, one of the great Hopkins scholars. One is MacKenzie's last work, a set of lectures with some additional materials, not quite completed when he died. I would recommend this book among the top fifty or so of texts for the student of Hopkins, but not among the top ten. For the real adherent, the book offers a great mine of glittering details. Some are fascinating, but all seem to lead away from the poems in other directions. A good deal of space goes to Hopkins as dramatist, not one of his major roles and scarcely even a minor one. Space also goes to laudable environmental concerns, but, again, not of much value as commentary of poems. We learn what seems like every conceivable detail of the wreck of the *Deutschland*, including much speculation about what the nun meant by "O Christ, Christ, come quickly," which some witnesses interpreted as suicidal rather than redemptive. According to some, the nuns were more hysterical than heroic, and their behavior bred despondency and contempt in others. But none of that has any more to do with Hopkins's poem than the real history of the charitable King Macbeth, who ruled for seventeen years and distributed alms liberally, has on *Macbeth*. (Likewise the real history of Central American exploration versus "On First Looking into Chapman's Homer" or the hydrography of the tideless Aegean on "Dover Beach.") Even so, it is good to exhaust every lead before the evidence grows any dimmer. For example, many people living now could easily have known Hopkins's youngest sister, Grace (1857-1945).

For me the most distressing material in *Excursions in Hopkins* has to do with Hopkins's uncommon anxiety about morality. He seems to have been a very passionate man with much stronger feelings than most people: when he felt good, he felt great; when

he felt bad, he felt awful. And he took his vows so seriously that he refused to let Bridges give him a peach. The incident resurfaced in *The Testament of Beauty*:

when the young poet my companion in study  
and friend of my heart refused a peach at my hands  
he being then a housecarl in Loyola's menie,  
'twas that he fear'd the savour of it, and when he waived  
his scruple to my banter, 'twas to avoid offence. (IV.434-38)

If a little peach could have such ramifications, we can scarcely imagine the perturbations set off by normal erotic impulses, thoughts, and dreams, especially if they result in wet dreams, as Hopkins's evidently often did. I am almost a hundred years younger than Hopkins, and boys of my generation were warned about the hazards of masturbation, the terminology for which admits of no neutrality. "Self-abuse" is 300 years old, "self-pollution" 400, and "nocturna pollutio" 1300.

Influential books, such as John Harvey Kellogg's *Plain Facts for Old and Young* (1877) made masturbation the root of many illnesses and problems, and one reads with some alarm of parents severely overreacting, as when Eleanor Roosevelt, no less, for many a saintly model of benevolence, ordered that her daughter Anna be made to sleep with her hands tied in such a way that she could not touch herself. Hopkins lived a blameless and spotless life of the utmost rectitude, preserving most of the time an agreeable sense of humor, and yet his journals suggest that he tormented himself with feelings of guilt and remorse for quite ordinary shortcomings. Jesuits of Hopkins's time seem to have undergone a certain amount of physical self-mortification of a sort most recently seen in *The Da Vinci Code*, but most of the humiliation seems to have been mental.

Norman Hugh MacKenzie's memory is honored by the volume of essays called

*Soundings: Hopkins Studies in Transition*, with contributions by thirteen scholars labeled “The Hopkins Quarterly Critics.” Some of the pieces are densely earnest applications of this or that theory to Hopkins’s life and work, and I find these the hardest from which to profit. Maybe I scruple too much, but, when somebody writes, “Precisely this difference and distance can be seen as providing the language of Part the First of *The Wreck of the Deutschland*,” I start talking back: “‘Precisely? Precisely?’ What’s precise about all that, blurred by the passive voice and dimmed by generalities?” Of the end of *The Wreck of the Deutschland*, the same writer asserts, none too modestly, “These lines are grammatically improper and impossible to construe semantically. No critic has ever successfully unpacked them, but, also, no critic has pondered why Hopkins should utter so maddening a series at the end of the ode.” One can dispute each of those points, beginning with the supposed impropriety of the grammar or the opacity of the meaning. In any event, I generalize, no one has read every critic to comment on the poem, so who knows who has unpacked or pondered what?

Through the book, theoretical soundings alternate helter-skelter with less stratospheric considerations, which, after sporting awhile with Ametaphoricity in the shade, I find more congenial. Toward the end of the book (which, by the way, could use an index), there are an enjoyable appreciation of Hopkins as a letter writer and a detailed examination of Saint Beuno’s as it was before it became (ahem) an Ignatian Spirituality Centre. It is fun to be reminded that the architect of the main buildings constructed in the 1840s was Joseph Hansom, whose nominal immortality rests on a rather homelier but more practical design from 1834: a cab.

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### *Book Review*

Antonio Melechi, *Servants of the Supernatural: The Night Side of Victorian Nature*. London: William Heinemann, 2008, pp. xii + 290, £20.00.

*Servants of the Supernatural* is the latest book by British historian Antonio Melechi, whose first book, *The Fugitive Mind*, was published in 2004. Like Melechi’s earlier work, *Servants of the Supernatural* straddles the divide between academic and popular writing. *Servants of the Supernatural* contains too much historical analysis to qualify as a popular work; however, the level of scholarship does not rise to conventional academic standards. The book falls somewhere in the middle; what it lacks in detail, it makes up for in clarity and insight. Rather than offering a new interpretation of Victorian spiritualism, Melechi assumes the role of a congenial museum guide, walking us from one exhibit to another in the twilight gallery of the Victorian supernatural.

The title of Melechi’s book refers to Victorian writer Catherine Crowe’s 1848 miscellany on spiritualism, *The Night Side of Nature*. Like Crowe, Melechi casts his net wide; rather than focusing on details, Melechi instead provides a wide-angle view of how the Victorian craze for mesmerism paved the way for the spiritualist movement. This broad perspective is one of the book’s principal assets. Several monographs on Victorian spiritualism, such as Janet Oppenheim’s excellent but exhaustive *The Other World*, contain a stultifying amount of detail. Additionally, many of the latest academic publications on spiritualism, including Bridget Bennett’s *Transatlantic Spiritualism and Nineteenth Century Letters*, rely heavily on the turbid jargon of critical theory. Melechi’s insightful commentary is sustained by his supple prose and his desire to weave a coherent narrative.

In that sense, Melechi's work is a welcome departure from the parched academic style characterized by some recent publications on Victorian spiritualism.

The first half of *Servants of the Supernatural* focuses on the history of mesmerism and animal magnetism, beginning in the late eighteenth century. Melechi describes the early therapeutic uses of magnetism in clinics for well-heeled French aristocrats. Mesmerism and magnetism eventually made their way to England, where they found a champion in Dr. John Elliotson. Elliotson is a major figure in *Servants of the Supernatural*; Melechi devotes a significant portion of the book to describing the various medical and pseudo-medical experiments Elliotson devised to demonstrate the efficacy of magnetism and mesmerism as treatments for a wide variety of illnesses. From the wards of University Hospital to darkened rooms in private London houses, Elliotson and his acolytes endured incredulity and humiliation in the course of their increasingly bizarre experiments. By 1838, the medical establishment concluded that Elliotson was a fraud and mesmerism a sham; it is therefore ironic that, at precisely the same time, Elliotson was at the apex of his popularity with the elite of London society.

In the second half of *Servants of the Supernatural*, Melechi traces spiritualism from the "Rochester Rappings" in the Fox household to its establishment as a full blown social and religious movement that spanned both sides of the Atlantic. Melechi contends that spiritualism emerged just as popular interest in mesmerism began to wane; unsurprisingly, many former mesmerists embraced spiritualism with ease. It is here that more detail would be welcome. According to Melechi, Victorians already familiar with trances and mesmerism were primed for the supernatural practices of spiritualism. However, the underpinnings of Melechi's argument provide an inadequate basis for concluding that

mesmerism made Victorians more receptive to spiritualism. Additionally, Melechi does not adequately explain the various social and political trends that contributed to spiritualism's popularity. This is the book's most obvious weakness, particularly when it is compared with earlier works on the subject.

Melechi's depiction of Victorian spiritualism offers nothing new to academic readers already familiar with the subject. However, to the reader in search of a lively introduction to the Victorian spiritualist movement and its leading figures, *Servants of the Supernatural* is certainly adequate. Melechi has produced a compelling narrative that sustains reader interest while relating the events and personalities that comprised the Victorian shadow world of séances and spirits.

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*Books Received*

Baskerville, Peter. *A Silent Revolution? Gender and Wealth in English Canada 1860-1930*. Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's UP, 2008.

Baskerville's book "explores how urban women managed wealth in the period from 1860 to 1930—a time when they were thought to have little independence—and shows that women were in fact important players in the world of capital."

Himmelfarb, Gertrude, ed. *The Spirit of the Age: Victorian Essays*. New Haven: Yale UP, 2007.

Himmelfarb presents a "wide-ranging collection of Victorian writings by John Stuart Mill, Charles Dickens, Oscar Wilde, and other leading lights of the era. This volume offers a representative sampling of essays from the early, middle, and late Victorian periods, each accompanied by an introductory note."

Huguet, Christine, ed. *Spellbound, George Gissing*. Peperstraa, the Netherlands: Equilibris, 2008.

"George Gissing was one of the major English novelists of the late nineteenth century. It was [...] as a short-story writer that he entered into the world of literature and his instinct for suggestive compression soon secured his place as an accomplished fin-de-siècle practitioner in the field of short fiction. Chronologically planned from 1877 to the early 1900s, the present book focuses on eleven specimens [...] of the artist's 115 stories. It will recommend itself to all lovers of late Victorian culture and short-story practices."

Jenkins, Brian. *The Fenian Problem: Insurgency and Terrorism in a Liberal State 1858-1874*. Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's UP, 2008.

"Irish revolutionary nationalism, initially dedicated to insurgency, quickly descended into less conventional violence. How successive British governments responded to this challenge and the extent of their respect for essential freedoms are the subject of *The Fenian Problem*."

Paterson, Gary H. *At the Heart of the 1890s: Essays on Lionel Johnson*. New York: AMS Press, Inc., 2008.

"Widely recognized in his own time as a poet of the highest order, Lionel Johnson has since been largely overshadowed by critical interest in some of the brighter luminaries of the fin de siècle literary moment, such as Wilde and Yeats [...] Paterson compensates for some of that neglect while aiming to restore Johnson to his deserved position at the center of the 1890s literary world."

Plotz, John. *Portable Property: Victorian Culture on the Move*. Princeton: Princeton UP, 2008.

"*Portable Property* examines how culture-bearing objects came to stand for distant people and places, creating or preserving a sense of self and community despite geographic dislocation. Victorian novels—because they themselves came to be understood as the quintessential portable property—tell the story of this change most clearly. Plotz analyzes a wide range of works, paying particular attention to George Eliot's *Daniel Deronda*, Anthony Trollope's *Eustace Diamonds*, and R.D. Blackmore's *Lorna Doone*."

Potter, Russell A. *Arctic Spectacles: The Frozen North in Visual Culture, 1818-1875*. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2007.

"Drawing from the illustrated press, panoramas, and dioramas of the era, as well as oft-overlooked ephemera such as handbills and newspaper advertisements, Potter shows how representations of the Arctic in visual culture expressed the fascination, dread, and wonder that the region inspired and continues to inspire today."

Tromp, Marlene, ed. *Victorian Freaks: The Social Context of Freakery in Britain*. Columbus: Ohio State UP, 2008.

"While 'freaks' have captivated our imagination since well before the nineteenth century, the Victorians flocked to shows featuring dancing dwarves, bearded ladies, 'missing links,' and six-legged sheep [...]. *Victorian Freaks* turns to that rich nexus, examining the struggle over definitions of 'freakery' and the unstable and sometimes conflicting ways in which freakery was understood and deployed."

## *Announcements*

A note on recent George Gissing Scholarship:

The editor of *The Victorian Newsletter*, on behalf of Professor Andrew Radford, author of "Unmanned by Marriage and the Metropolis in Gidding's *The Whirlpool*," published in *The Victorian Newsletter* #110, Fall 2006, wishes to acknowledge work of similar theme and topic published by Professor S. J. James. Professor James's work includes: *Unsettled Accounts: Money and Narrative in the Novels of George Gissing* (London: Anthem, 2003) and "The Discontents of Everyday Life: Civilization and the Pathology of Masculinity in *The Whirlpool*." In *George Gissing: Voices of the Unclassed*. eds. Martin Ryle and Jenny Bourne Taylor (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005): 93-105.

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Call for Papers: Dickens and the Voice of Victorian Culture: an International Conference.  
Verona, Italy. 8-10 June 2009

The Dipartimento di Anglistica of the University of Verona, in cooperation with the Scuola di Dottorato in Studi Umanistici, University of Verona, will host a three-day conference devoted to the multiple aspects of Victorian culture as it is variously represented in Dickens's works. We welcome papers—each 20 minutes in length—for presentation in panels organized by members of the Scientific Committee. Please send one-page abstracts to both Yvonne Bezrucka <yvonne.bezrucka@univr.it> and David Paroissien [paroissien@english.umass.edu](mailto:paroissien@english.umass.edu) by 31 January 2009. For further details, please see the conference website: <http://profs.lingue.univr.it/dickens/index.htm>.

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Forthcoming in *The Victorian Newsletter* #115, Spring, 2009: special edition on "The Elusive William North." Contributors include: Patrick Scott, Rebecca Stern, Allan Life, Lanya Lamouria, Leon Jackson, and Edward Whitley.

## *Contributors*

*Jacqueline Banerjee* earned her B.A. and Ph.D. degrees from King's College London, was later a Research Fellow at Lucy Cavendish College, Cambridge, and has taught at universities in Canada, Ghana, England and Japan. She has published over a hundred articles and reviews and is the author of *Through the Northern Gate: Childhood and Growing Up in British Fiction, 1719-1901* (1996). Now a private scholar, she is working on George Meredith and serving as the UK's Contributing Editor for the Victorian Web.

*Debbie Bark* is writing a Ph.D. on Ann Hawkshaw's poetry at the University of Reading. Research interests include transitions between Romantic and Victorian poetry, Manchester poetry of the 1840s, and nineteenth-century poetic responses to history and historiography, particularly the Anglo-Saxon period.

*Joseph Good* is a doctoral student in English literature at the University of South Florida. His research interests include spiritualist fiction and the Victorian Gothic novel.

*Sara Hackenberg* received her Ph.D. from Stanford University and is now an Assistant Professor of English at San Francisco State University, where she teaches classes in nineteenth-century transatlantic literary, media, and popular culture. She has published articles on Dickens and Alcott and is currently working on a book-length project investigating the popularity and proliferation of nineteenth-century narrative mystery. She is also working on a scholarly electronic edition of G.W.M. Reynolds's sensational urban mystery novel, *The Mysteries of London*.

*William Harmon* is professor emeritus of UNC-Chapel Hill, where he was James Gordon Hanes Professor in the Humanities. He has published five books of original poetry, including winners of the Lamont Award from the Academy of American Poets (*Treasury Holiday*, 1970) and the William Carlos Williams Award from the Poetry Society of America (*Mutatis Mutandis*, 1985). He is the editor of *The Oxford Book of American Light Verse*, *The Classic Hundred Poems*, *The Top 500 Poems*, and *Classic Writings on Poetry*, as well as the *Holman, Hunt, Harmon Handbook to Literature*. In 1999 and 2008, he received the Robert B. Heilman Award given by *The Sewanee Review* for excellence in book-reviewing. His current research interests include a book about the relations between the English writer Charles Montagu Doughty and the American writers Laura Riding Jackson and Schuyler B. Jackson.

*Jacqueline Young* is a Ph.D. candidate in the Department of English Literature at the University of Glasgow, currently in her second year of research. Her thesis addresses fiction written by Western residents of China during the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries. Her primary research interest is in the works of Mrs. Archibald Little (1845-1926).