

The Victorian Newsletter

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Cover: Undated pencil sketch of Dickens by John Leech

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Mr. Sludge and Mrs. Oliphant: Victorian Negotiations with the Dead

June Sturrock

"We cannot hear each other speak."

(In *Memoriam* 82.16).

Victorian mourners were concerned not only with the material tokens of grief—jet ear-rings, black edged stationery, the Albert Memorial and all—but more seriously with the more nebulous question of their on-going relationship with the beloved dead, or, as in my epigraph, the lack of relationship. For many, and notably Queen Victoria herself,¹ the supreme expression of this concern was found in *In Memoriam*, where Tennyson represents not only the pain of irrevocable separation, but also the intensity of a momentary union with the dead. As he reads over Arthur Hallam's letters to him:

So word by word and line by line
The dead man touched me from the past
And all at once it seem'd at last
The living soul was flash'd on mine. (95.32-35)

The consoling interaction with the beloved dead that Alfred Tennyson found both in his "waking trance" and in his own poetry was sought by the less gifted in other ways. Tennyson's brother Frederick and his sisters, Emily and Mary, like many of their contemporaries, looked for insight and consolation to their spiritualist beliefs and activities (Byatt 103-04). For the attraction that spiritualism held for many Victorians—an attraction that has fascinated in its turn such twentieth-century novelists as A. S. Byatt, Margaret Atwood, and Rebecca West—was usually initiated by grief. As Alex Owen says

Death was regarded as simply a state through which each of us must pass on the journey from this world to the next, and some spiritualists considered removing the dread of death was spiritualism's greatest gift. A belief in the naturalness of death and a certainty of the soul's survival was a source of inestimable comfort to all adherents, but especially to the bereaved. (95)

"The dark door of sorrow" was the usual entrance to spiritualist belief, according to an early believer, Morrell Theobald, who had himself experienced a "wave of psychic power" after "burying three little ones."² Theobald's contemporary, the Reverend Charles M. Davis, whose beliefs also changed after his son's death, defends spiritualism as

leaving "room for hope—hope at a time when we are most hopeless" (qtd. by Oppenheim 75.) Notoriously, this aspect of spiritualism, this hope for the hopeless, encouraged deception in mediums who feared disappointing their bereaved clients or who perhaps took a less elevated approach to their own activities:

Sludge begins
At your entreaty with your dearest dead
The little voice set lipping once again
The tiny hand made feel for yours once more
The poor lost image brought back, plain as dreams.
(471-75)

The relish and the fury with which Robert Browning imagines "Mr Sludge-'the Medium'" surely arise in part from outrage at the spiritualists' practicing on the longing of the bereaved, as well as from the lies, the sycophancy and the mutual exploitation between client and medium that Browning associated with the spiritualist movement.

The anxiety about the relationship between the dead and the living that fostered the spiritualist movement also produced countless ghost stories, especially in the second half of the nineteenth century. The extraordinary series of stories of the supernatural that Margaret Oliphant published in the 1880s and 1890s are remarkable among these as they are among her own voluminous writings. For Oliphant is unique in representing the dead as loving and benevolent and as yearning after the living as the living yearn for them. In this she resembles contemporary spiritualists, who sought communion with and comfort from the dead, rather than her fellow-novelists, who were more likely to exploit the fear of the dead. Elizabeth Gaskell, for instance, another writer of powerful ghost stories, focuses like Oliphant on family love and the care for children. The dead themselves, however, appear in Gaskell's fiction as malevolent and threatening: in "The Old Nurse's Story," for example, the dead child threatens the life of the little Rosamund. Other great writers in this genre, such as M. R. James, consistently represent their ghosts as acting out of vengeance (as in "Casting the Runes," "The Ash-Tree," and "The Uncommon Prayer-Book"), or even out of an Iago-like "motiveless malignancy" (as in "Room Thirteen," or "O Whistle and I'll Come to You, My Lad"). Oliphant's dead, however, love the living and act purely out of their desire for the welfare of the living.³

For years Oliphant—the unhappy survivor of all six of the children born to her as well as of her husband—brooded over the relationship between dead and living, the dreadful

¹She twice told Tennyson "how much comfort" she found in *In Memoriam*. See Queen Victoria, *Letters* 1:30; 3:438. For another poet's rather different concern with death, see Marshall on Rossetti, *passim*.

²The first quotation is used by Owen, 95. The second and third are from Theobald (18, 19).

³*The Wizard's Son* and "The Library Window" would seem to be excep-

tions. Yet in "The Library Window," the narrator is comforted by the sight of the apparition on her return to England, while in *The Wizard's Son*, the warlock-lord is seen merely as being too concerned for the material welfare and the prestige of his descendants. Oliphant represents these figures as harmful but also pitiful.

realization that "We cannot hear each other speak." An agonized passage of her journal follows the death of her ten-year-old daughter, Maggie: "Oh, my darling, my Maggie. I feel as if I could go down on my knees and pray for her not to forget her poor mother" (4). She goes on:

The more I think of it, the less I am able to feel that those who have left us can start up at once into a heartless beatitude without caring for our sorrow. God who is Love cannot give immortality and annihilate affection; that surely, at least we can take for granted—as sure as they live they live to love us. Human nature in the flesh cannot be more faithful, more tender, than the purified human soul in heaven. Where, then, are they, those who have gone before us? Some people say around us, still seeing, still knowing all that occupies us; but that is an idea I cannot entertain either. It would not be happiness but pain to be beside those we love yet unable to communicate with them, unable to make ourselves known. Where are you, oh my child, my child. I have tried to follow her in imagination, to think of her delight when from the fever, wandering and languour of her bed she came suddenly into the company of angels and the presence of the Lord. But then the child was but a child and death is but a natural event; it changed her surroundings, her capabilities, but it could not change the little living soul. Did she not stop short there and say "where is Mamma?" did not the separation overwhelm her? This thought of very desolation. Did she not think of the sad horror, the heart that was breaking for her? God knows.

(Autobiography 6-7).

Oliphant initially felt herself to be incapable of expressing adequately the bitterness of her experience. As a domestic novelist she felt silenced by the discourse of *In Memoriam*, privileged both as a formal elegy and as part of the ancient tradition of male poet mourning male poet. "I may put the long musings of my agony into words, but Tennyson has done it already far better than I can" (11), she writes, commenting that he carries "the human yearning and longing farther than it was ever carried before" (6). The questions she asks herself in the anger and misery of her loss were to haunt her for the rest of her life.⁴ These questions are twofold, concerning both God's mercy and the nature of immortality. While she never doubts God's existence, she does doubt his mercy, "always upbraiding and reproaching God" (9). Similarly, while she never doubts the immortality of the soul, she does question the nature of this immortality: "do they sleep until the great day? Or does time so ease for them that it seems but a matter of hours and minutes till we meet again?" (6). The question of God's mercy rapidly finds expression in her domestic fiction. *Agnes*, published the year after Maggie's death, records with an almost blasphemous

intensity—"Ah my God, was it as hard to be crucified?" (392)—the pain of losing a child. The bereaved mother sees her child's death as "nobody's fault, except God's" (392). In her anger she feels that "it was God only who was against her," and the narrative voice assumes much the same position: "Thus it all ended, God knows why. . . . If anybody on earth could tell why or what it meant, it might be a little consolation" (412). Until the last years of her life Oliphant continued to ponder the question of why God permits "the anguish that is in the world to go on" ("Fancies," 237). Yet her first shock and anger rapidly found an adequate outlet in her domestic fiction.

Those other questions, questions about the afterlife and about the dead in relation to the living, were more difficult for her imagination. Only after fourteen years did they finally work their way into her fiction—into fiction of a kind that was new to her and that she differentiated sharply from her usual competent professional writing. If the rest of her career was, as Deirdre D'Albertis claims, "anti-romantic" and "resolutely mercenary" (808)—and certainly Oliphant herself describes it in very similar terms—her ventures into the Gothic are apart from the main stream of her work. "Stories of this description," Oliphant wrote of her *Tales of the Seen and the Unseen*, "are not like any others. I can produce them only when they come to me. . . ." (Jay 158)—a strong contrast with the highly-organized and market-driven productivity of her usual professional writing.⁵ As the Colbys say, these supernatural stories "engrossed her creative mind more deeply and thoroughly than did her other fiction" (86). These *Tales*, which she produced from 1878 on, all focus in one way or another on the interaction between the living and the dead, and the care of the dead for the living. The ghost story with its generic necessity for fantasy enabled her finally to express her anxieties.

The strangest and most powerful of these narratives is the short novel, *A Beleaguered City*, which is probably the best work of fiction she ever produced (and even for a Victorian she was remarkably productive).⁶ The city—Semur, in France—is beleaguered by its own dead, who expel the living inhabitants not out of malice but so that they may learn while they are still alive "the true signification of life." But the living, preoccupied with their own affairs, incurious because of their fixed assumptions, and terrified by their experiences, cannot learn from the dead. Only the marginal welcome them. The mayor of the city, the main narrator of the story, notes that those who were most sensitive to the presence of the dead were "the weakest among us; most of them were women, the men old or feeble, and some children" (35). None of the narrators seem to understand "the true signification of life" or to grasp completely the message of the dead. All that is clear is that the dead return out of love. Paul Lecamus, the visionary and one younger male who has ears to hear, says

One time I was by the river porte in a boat; and this song [the song of the dead] came to me from the walls, as sweet as heaven. Never have I heard such a song. The music was beseeching, it moved the very heart. "We have come out of the unseen," they sang, "for love of you; believe us, believe us! Love brings us back to earth; believe us, believe us!" How was it that you did not hear? (144-45)

In this narrative, Oliphant imagines positive answers to the questions that she had asked herself years earlier after Maggie's death. The dead do continue to care for the living. Lecamus, bereft of his wife, had asked, as Oliphant asked "Why should it be a matter of wonder that the dead should come back? The wonder is that they do not. Ah, that is the wonder. How can one go away who loves you and never return nor speak nor send any message—that is the miracle" (57-58). And Oliphant imagines an answer that is in part consoling: the dead do love the living, do return to them, though their contact with the living can be only partial and is largely ineffectual. Commenting on the relation of Oliphant's short novel to the anxieties of her culture, Alison Milbank writes:

Accounts of Victorian funerary customs and the encoding of a mourner's dress, behaviour, stationery and so on reveal a society based on mourning, with from 1861 onwards a hidden Queen, mourning her own loss, at its heart. Most families would have lost at least one child, and accounts of the passage to death of family members formed an important part of family tradition among the literate classes. Oliphant's *A Beleaguered City* reveals something further. . . that the real, lost to this world, is located in the realm of the beloved dead. (184)

Yet as I have said, the living and the dead cannot mix. The city is eventually returned to its living inhabitants, but few of them are changed or regenerated by the experience: Oliphant refuses any conventional reassurance in her ending.

The loving dead operate more effectively and on a more domestic scale in "The Portrait," a narrative that exploits what Kerry Powell calls the "magic picture" mania of the period, which would culminate four years later in Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray*. But whereas in Wilde's narrative the supernatural is destructive, Oliphant's "magic picture" acts benevolently. The portrait in question here is that of the narrator's mother, who died at his birth, leaving his father to grow more callous and more worldly with the passing years. At the first sight of the portrait the father acknowledges and grieves over the distance between dead wife and living husband—the distance, that is, between innocence and corruption. After his own death, he says, he and his wife will meet "as what? As strangers, as people who have lost sight of each other" (117). But then the dead mother acts through the uncomprehending son, compelling him to break down his father's bitterness and avarice. "It is for this," the

son will say to his father, when he finally collapses "that heaven opened and one whom I never saw, one whom I knew not, has taken possession of me" (160). Yet though the son recognizes that what has possessed him is "a blessed creature," he fears any renewal of this possession: "Flesh and blood is not made for such encounters," he says. As usual in these stories, the living are weaker in their love than the dead—and the males notably less responsive to the world of the spirits than the females.

For in "The Portrait" the love of the dead for the living is associated with the female. Jay describes this story as investigating "the spiritual sterility of the male ethos by alternately removing and replacing, feminine influence in a young man's life" (*Fiction* 168). The dead mother's influence brings her son a living wife. Women are associated with the benevolent interaction between living and dead in virtually all these narratives. In the enormously popular (and rather saccharine) "Little Pilgrim" series, the pilgrim in question is a middle-aged woman.⁷ Jay comments that "the heavenly Book of Life begins to look suspiciously like twentieth-century feminist history. . . . Most women find themselves at home in heaven because their experience has already taught them something of divine altruism" (*Fiction* 171, 172). In *The Beleaguered City* it is the mayor's dead daughter who reaches out to him, and Lecamus' dead wife who comes back to him. And the living women, too, are far more responsive to their dead children and parents than the men are: as Merryn Williams comments, "most of those who manage to make contact with the unseen are women, the 'half of God's creatures' who are treated with contempt" (xi). In another tale, "Old Lady Mary," the old woman who has been charmingly selfish all her life feels compelled to come back after death out of concern for her ward, another Mary, who in turn will hear nothing against the woman who left her penniless. In *The Lady's Walk*, the dead "lady" stays on earth as a "good guardian, a kind soul" (88) to succeeding generations of her family. True, in the much-anthologized story, "The Open Door," the pitiful dead voice that calls out, night after night, "Oh mother, let me in! Oh mother, let me in, let me in" (169) belongs to a man. But it is the dead mother whose love will bring her son peace at last. The old Scottish minister speaks to the dead man, laying his ghost to rest:

"Your mother's gone with your name on her lips. Do you think she would ever close the door on her own lad? Do ye think the Lord will close the door, ye faint-hearted creature? No! . . . Cry out no more to man. Go home, ye wandering spirit! Go home. . . . Lord, take him into Thy ever-lasting habitations. The mother he cries to is with Thee. . . . Lord let that woman there draw him inower! Let her draw him inower" (180)

And she does. The haunting stops with their reconciliation.

For Oliphant, it is those characteristics culturally associated with the feminine that allow for such negotiations

⁴See "The Fancies of a Believer," published in 1895, two years before her death.

⁵"From the time she was twenty to her death in her seventieth year she wrote on an average at least six volumes a year" (Stephen Gwyn, writing in the *Edinburgh Review* in 1899, quoted by D'Albertis 821).

⁶Oliphant was proud of this short novel. For instance, she wrote to George Lillie Craik of Macmillan's "it is a story I like—a thing that does not always happen with my own productions" (qtd. by the Colbys "The Beleaguered City" 301).

⁷Esther Schor says that 20,000 copies had been sold by 1882 (91).

between the dead and the living. Qualities such as unquestioning love and openness to the irrational permit such liminal activity. In this again Oliphant resembles the Victorian spiritualists, for whom women, traditionally associated with the irrational, the emotional, and the passive, played important roles as mediums. Alex Owen, who discusses in fascinating detail the role of women in the spiritualist movement, argues that "the 'separate spheres' ideology enabled women to accede to positions of spiritual authority precisely because it offered a familial definition of female religious influence." She writes that "spiritualist mediumship . . . promoted a species of feminine power whilst at the same time interacting with contemporary concepts of acceptable womanhood" (9). And like the spiritualists, in her domestic fiction as in her quasi-Gothic writings, Oliphant represents women as powerful—within accepted limitations.

Despite her similar concern with the close relationship between the living and the dead, despite her similar sense of women as the proper medium between the two worlds, Oliphant showed small interest in seances and spiritualist discussion. Distinguished literary contemporaries—Elizabeth Barrett Browning, the Tennysons, Bulwer Lytton, D. G. Rossetti, William Morris—became involved with the spiritualist movement to various extents and for various reasons, but not Oliphant. In her 1880 story "Earthbound," she writes of a family gathering in which "they talked of what is called spiritualism—the older people indeed rejected unhesitatingly all mediums and supernatural operators as every kind of impostors" (120). Oliphant despite a little mild "table-rapping" in her own drawing room, seems to have been sympathetic with these "older people."⁸ Jay comments that her "awareness of the psychological appeal of spiritualism prevented her from either censorious disapproval or taking it too seriously. As her own need for consolation grew greater she became ever more conscious of the emotional continuum which led other seemingly sophisticated friends to confuse the levities of table-rapping occasionally practised in her own drawing room with naive belief in the spirit world" (149). So Oliphant remained aloof—not quite a conventional Christian, for she consistently represented heaven and hell as permeable rather than as fixed states, but not prepared to commit herself to a movement so open to charges of fraud and deception. For she was an ironist and dealt with more subtle forms of deceit than that usually associated with spiritualist practitioners.

Both as domestic novelist and critic Oliphant admired a certain emotional austerity. She was perhaps Jane Austen's most intelligent nineteenth-century critic, and highly responsive to Austen's "fine vein of feminine cynicism" (216). She was much more reserved about the novels of the Brontës, which she described as "vivid, original, and striking in the highest degree," but "not great books."⁹ She seems to have been almost repelled by their insistence on individual experience, individual passion. Her own most successful

domestic fiction has an almost Austen-like note of detachment, an air of sardonic amusement; as Jay observes, "only the death of children escapes her wry humour" (*Fiction* 187). In *Miss Marjoribanks* (1866), which was written soon after the death of her little Maggie, she casts a cold eye on parent-child relationships, writing with a sharp awareness of the rich possibilities for self-deception and role-playing in family life. Lucilla Marjoribanks, coming home after the death of her mother, sees that death in part as an opportunity to abandon her role as schoolgirl and become a true heroine:

She would wind herself up to the duty of presiding at her papa's dinner-parties, and charming everyone by her good-humour and brightness and devotion to his comfort; and how when it was all over she would withdraw and cry her eyes out in her own room, and be found in the morning languid and worn-out, but always heroic, ready to go downstairs and assist at dear papa's breakfast, and keep up her smiles till he had gone out to his patients. Altogether the picture was a very pretty one. (26)

The same note of detachment continues throughout the novel and is characteristic of her best work in this genre. It is only when Oliphant leaves the comfortable realms of domestic fiction and ventures in to the Gothic, working in a mode in which death is more commonly associated with terror, in which pain and separation are the basis of the plot, that she allows herself to dwell unironically on family unity, on domestic warmth and happiness. Perhaps partly because of what Jay calls a "temperamental aversion to self-revelation" ("Editing" 216), she could only engage fully with the agonies of subjective experience through fantasy. Brilliant though some of her realist fiction is—I think of *Miss Marjoribanks*, *Phoebe Junior*, or *Hester*, for instance—the realist mode evidently restricted her imagination. Writing in a mode in which fantasy was required, she was liberated to deal with issues that concerned her deeply and personally. "Nothing comes out of that darkness [of death]," she wrote at the end of her life, "not a word, not a wave of the hand. There is nothing more to come in this world, nothing to look for" ("Fancies," 250). But through her supernatural narratives Oliphant created a "something" coming out of that "nothing."

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⁹Their philosophy of life is that of a schoolgirl, their knowledge of the world almost nil, their conclusions confused by the haste and passion of a mind self-centered and working in the narrowest orbit" ("The Sisters Brontë," 51).

⁸She writes in her *Autobiography* of "very curious incidents" after the death of one Captain Gun, which "took place with the table-rapping to which we had given ourselves with much levity for the moment—the only serious experience we ever had" (128).

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Image and Text in *Jane Eyre's* Avian Vignettes and Bewick's *History of British Birds*

Susan B. Taylor

Several scholars have noted Charlotte Brontë's fascinating use of Thomas Bewick's *History of British Birds* in her 1847 novel, *Jane Eyre*.¹ Among other roles in *Jane Eyre*, Bewick's *History of British Birds* serves as an abusive missile (thrown by John Reed at ten-year-old Jane), as Jane's fantasy retreat from the difficult Reed home, and as a model for Jane's later artwork. Similarly, Jane and Rochester perceive each other in avian terms, Jane as "linnet," "dove," and "skylark" and Rochester as "eagle" and "falcon." While links have been observed between the innovative wood engravings of *History of British Birds* (1797 and 1804)² and

¹For example, a number of critics comment on the watery, cold, arctic imagery in Bewick and outside the window at Gateshead. John Maynard writes, "Jane begins life at the unnatural Gateshead looking on a lifeless, cold, rainy world and finding the same in her reading in Bewick" (115). Similarly, Cynthia Linder suggests, "It is significant that the pictures which she singles out for her attention are those which are analogous to her own state: pictures which show the bleak regions of the Arctic, shipwrecks, a graveyard, and a fiend, all of which are emblems of what she feels, but is too young to be able to express in words" (35-36). Jane Stedman states an

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Jane's elaborate paintings of stormy seas, drowned women, and icy realms, two important thematic and structural connections with Bewick's text have been overlooked. First, the novel's ornithological imagery contributes more than just completing the realism of the natural scenery. Rather, pervasive and integrated references to birds add a deeper, personal symbolic dimension to the novel's portrait of Jane Eyre and illuminate complex facets of Jane's identity, especially when read in terms of Bewick's species accounts of the cormorant and the rook. Second, for Brontë's work, *History of British Birds* offers a model for integrating seemingly

important relationship between Brontë's novel and Bewick's books succinctly: "'Early impressions are ineffaceable.' Charlotte wrote to W. S. Williams. Jane Eyre literally drew upon hers!" (40).

²The Brontë family owned the 1816 edition of the *History of British Birds*, and the Brontë children copied various engravings from this edition, possibly as lessons in drawing given by their art teacher John Bradley. See Christine Alexander and Jane Sellars comprehensive study (22). See also Christine Alexander, "Art and Artists in Charlotte Brontë's Juvenilia."

marginal material into the body of a work through the device of the "vignette." Vignettes are the ornaments or small pictures running through books that Bewick helped to popularize as a form of illustration earlier in the nineteenth century. In *Jane Eyre*, the verbal vignette serves as a narrative strategy for incorporating Jane's potentially explosive passions, passions noted by many scholars as symptoms of Victorian restrictions on women's ambitions and desires (Jane's love for Rochester, and her ambitions beyond her station as governess the most prominent). In this piece, after tracing several significant components of Bewick's discourse of natural history in *British Birds*, I will examine *Jane Eyre's* explicit and implicit echoes of Bewick's content and form.

Bewick's *History of British Birds* is divided into two volumes; the first (published 1797) presents the land birds and the second (published 1804) features water birds. Both volumes present detailed species accounts, authoritative in tone and replete with references to prominent natural histories, including the seventeenth-century ornithology of Willughby and Ray, the taxonomies of Linnaeus and Buffon, and the first-hand observations by Bewick and other amateur natural historians. Bewick combines these textual accounts of various birds' physical characteristics and behaviors with larger engraved illustrations of each species and smaller engravings featuring a variety of human and natural scenes. Plate 1 presents two pages of the cormorant account of Volume II, *The Water Birds*, from the 1821 edition of the book. These two facing pages demonstrate the *History's* interplay of illustration and text—for each species in the *History*, Bewick engraves an illustration of that species, taken from life if possible, or else from a specimen. Bewick follows these larger engravings with a detailed physical description of the bird's appearance, habitat, behavior, and diet. Bewick's approach to ornithology, as evinced in *History of British Birds*, illustrates the melange of elements comprising natural history in this period: his writings and engraved illustrations fuse what we might call scientific objectivity (e.g., facts about body mass or bill length and type) with more subjective observations, such as personifications of different bird species.

The lower left page of Plate 1 shows an example of what Bewick calls his "tail pieces or Vignettes," the small illustration at the end of the preceding bird's section, here depicting a man with fishing pole (*Memoir* 122). Bewick sometimes refers to these vignettes punningly as "tail-pieces," because they often create a narrative within themselves. Typical subjects of Bewick's vignettes include scenes of hunting and fishing or other activities of rural village life, of socially marginal persons such as beggars and itinerant peddlers, and of shipwrecks, graveyards, and ruined castles. Often these little illustrations seem to have no obvious connection to the textual material presented about a given bird. They serve to fill in space between bird entries in the history, and to intrigue the reader, for sometimes the tailpieces present a moral of sorts. In one example in a section describing the Gull in Volume II, Bewick inserts into the typescript a vignette of very small gallows with corpses hanging from them.

Bewick's engravings are of small dimensions; even his larger engravings depicting each bird species are approximately 100 mm x 80 mm, while the tailpieces can be as small as 10 mm x 46 mm. Perhaps this small size and great detail is part of what appealed to the Brontë children, creators of their own miniature illustrated books. Brontë's knowledge of Bewick's *History of British Birds* is well documented. In fact, one of her earliest extant drawings is a copy of Bewick's engraving of the cormorant drawn in 1829 (see Plates 2 and 3). The Brontë children were avid readers and copiers of Bewick's work, and, as a young adult, Charlotte recommends to her friend Ellen Nussey in a letter dated July 4th, 1834 from Haworth that "For Natural History, read Bewick, and Audubon, and Goldsmith and White-of Selborne" (Wise and Symington I. 122).

Bewick's works were tremendously popular in the nineteenth-century. By the time of Bewick's death in 1828, his *History of Land Birds* was in its eighth edition and his *History of Water Birds* was in its sixth edition. In his introduction to Bewick's *Memoir*, Iain Bain quotes William Howitt, who notes in his *Rural Life of England* (1838), "I have seen how his [Bewick's] volumes are loved, and treasured, and reverted to time after time, in many a country house; the more familiar, the more prized; the oftener seen, the oftener desired" (ix).³ As one such rural family, the Brontës often perused Bewick as well.

Like many of the natural history texts of his day, Bewick personifies a number of the birds he depicts. Bewick's use of personification is fairly complex, for while he often criticizes the personifications created by others he nonetheless ascribes his own personifications to various birds.⁴ Indeed, it is several of Bewick's avian personifications combined with his tailpieces and engravings, that render his text such a vital element of *Jane Eyre*.

Importantly, *Jane Eyre* echoes Bewick's *History of British Birds* in more than merely passing references to birds. The formal structure of Bewick's text, the relationship of vignette and verbal text, is also found in Brontë's novel. In fact, Brontë's ornithology itself serves as a vignette for her novel, a running illustration of her text, in much the same way that Bewick's vignettes serve his ornithological text. It is as though Brontë inverts the textual strategies of Bewick: Bewick writes an ornithological treatise illustrated with engravings of birds and smaller tailpiece illustrations of ordinary life, whereas Brontë writes a treatise of ordinary life, featuring a portrait of an ordinary governess, complemented with smaller "tailpiece" references to birds. We are drawn to ask the significance of Brontë's references to birds in her novel, in the same way that we might be drawn, like Jane, to question why Bewick includes a small wood engraving of a shipwreck as a tailpiece to a section on seabirds, for example. Using Bewick's avian histories as guide reveals how Brontë's ornithological vignettes are intertwined with the novel's storyline, despite their seemingly peripheral, marginal roles. In this context, it becomes clear that the novel mirrors Bewick's model of natural history as a combination of observation, personification, and intertextuality.

Charles Rosen and Henri Zerner note that as a child reading Bewick in the window seat at Gateshead, Jane is fascinated by the tailpieces and their mysterious relationship to the ornithological text. As might other readers, Jane puzzles over how to relate the images of shipwrecks or churchyards

to the text and illustrations of birds, their descriptions, and perceived personalities. Rosen and Zerner observe that, "Although there is no explicit connection between the end-pieces and the text, we feel a hidden one. An intimate feeling for nature unites Bewick's familiar scenes, his glimpses of life, his visions, and the accompanying descriptions" (91). If nature unites Bewick's fascinating but seemingly unrelated vignettes of human life with a given bird species, then what connects Brontë's vignettes of bird life to Jane's life?

One answer to this question, is that Jane's nature, as personified in Brontë's ornithological references, unifies the narrative of her life. The specific birds mentioned in *Jane Eyre* suggest important metaphoric elaborations of Jane's character. In much the same way that Bewick's sense of nature pervades his illustrations of human life, Brontë's depictions of Jane's nature permeate the novel. One example is the fact that Thornfield has a rookery, a breeding locale for a colony of rooks (see Plate 4; note that in Bewick's plate, a rookery is shown in the background, near a large country house). Jane notes Thornfield's rookery the morning after she arrives; she observes of Thornfield that, "Its gray front stood out well from the background of a rookery, whose cawing tenants were now on the wing. They flew over the lawn and grounds to alight in a great meadow, from which these were separated by a sunk fence, and where an array of mighty old thorn trees, strong, knotty, and broad as oaks, at once explained the etymology of the mansion's designation" (130-131). Jane further mentions how she is "listening with delight to the cawing of the rooks" (131). The novel refers to crows and rooks interchangeably, for Rochester mentions he likes Thornfield's "old crow-trees and thorn-trees" when he is telling Jane about his love affair with Céline Varens (173).⁵ Similarly, when Jane returns to discover Thornfield a fire-gutted shell after her absence, she imagines the crows' response:

The crows sailing overhead perhaps watched me while I took this survey. I wonder what they thought. They must have considered I was very careful and timid at first, and that gradually I grew very bold and reckless. A peep, and then a long stare; and then a departure from my niche and a straying into the meadow; a sudden stop full in front of the great mansion, and a protracted, hardy gaze towards it. "What affectation of diffidence was this at first?" they might have demanded "what stupid regardlessness now?" (449)

is by some compared to the noise made by a person straining to vomit" (2: 55).

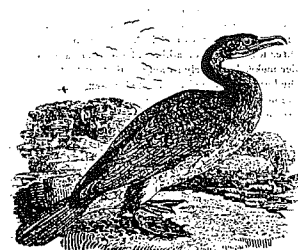
Rooks (*Corvus frugilegus*) and Carrion Crows (*Corvus corone corone*) are both widespread in the British Isles, as is the subspecies of the Hooded Crow (*Corvus corone cornix*). It is likely that the birds at Thornfield are in fact rooks, since rooks prefer habitats of "cultivated fields with groups of trees or small woods" (Bruun 218). Additionally, the carrion crow splits into nesting pairs and only flocks while roosting; also, unlike rooks, carrion crows are not organized socially. Charlotte Brontë would have seen a rookery when she visited Ellen Nussey at Rydings in September 1832, if not before.

³Bewick's popularity also reflects the broader interest in natural history in this period. As Barbara T. Gates notes, "In the 1830s and 1840s, women joined men in the widespread enthusiasm for natural history" (*Kindred Nature* 3).

⁴A few examples from the Heron family will illustrate. Bewick critiques Buffon's personification of the Heron as a bird which "exhibit[s] the picture of wretchedness, anxiety, and indigence [...] [while] sickened by the restless cravings of a famished appetite [...]" (*History of British Birds* 2: 51). Bewick comments in rebuttal that "It is probable that [...] [the Heron] suffers no more than other birds, many species of which employ equal attention in looking for their prey [...]" (2: 51). And yet, he then contradicts himself by stating: "This bird, however, is of a melancholy deportment, a silent and patient creature [...]" (2: 51-52). He also comments of the Night

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It is not yet clearly ascertained whether this is a variety of the last, or a distinct species, or whether it is the Cormorant in the garb of its highest adult state. Latham inclines to the latter opinion, and supposes the streaked head and different markings of its plumage to be acquired only by age. Buffon, in his *Planches Enluminées*, has given its figure as the Cormorant; and Pennant, differing from them, makes it a species of the Shag. Mr. Tanstall was in doubt on this subject, but discovered by dissection, that the whiteness under the chin and on the thighs, is not confined to the males, for one with these marks, which was sent to him out of Huddersfield, in Yorkshire, in 1775, was full of eggs. The above figure was taken from the specimen in his museum.



THE SHAG.
SKARY, SCARFE, OR GREEN CORMORANT.
(*Pelicanus grœculus*, Linn.—*Le petit Cormoran, ou le Nigaud*, Buff.)

The form, the aspect altogether, the outward conformation of all the parts, the character, manners and habits, and the places of abode, of this species, are nearly like those of the Cormorant; but they do not associate, and these make their nests on the rugged shelvy sides and crevices of the rocky precipices or projecting cliffs which overhang the sea, while the others make theirs on the summits above them; and these are at once distinguished from the others by the greenness of the upper, and brownness of the under



Plate 1
Thomas Bewick, *History of British Birds*, Volume II



Plate 2
Thomas Bewick, Tailpiece of Cormorant on Rocky Coastline, *History of British Birds*, Volume II



Plate 3
Charlotte Brontë, copy of Bewick's tailpiece, *Brontë Parsonage Museum* C3.5

The soaring crows' perspective, as described by Jane, gives a bird's-eye view of her arrival at Thornfield. Jane adopts their vantage point, which is also analogous to the perspective the confined Bertha Mason may have had from her prison on the third floor. In fact, it is through the rooks that we find important correspondences between Jane and Bertha.

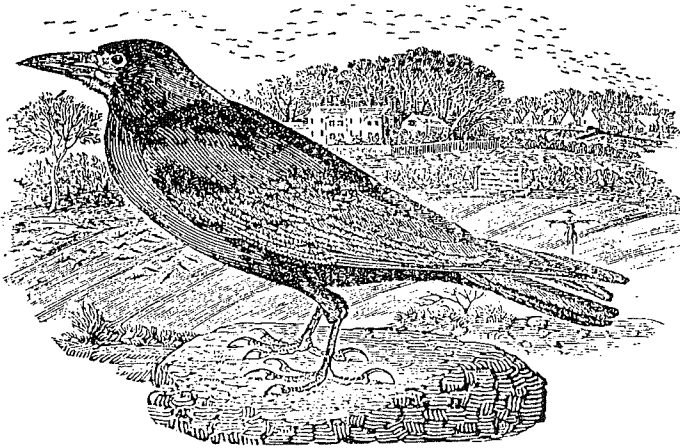


Plate 4
Thomas Bewick, *The Rook*, *History of British Birds*, Volume 1

Bewick delineates several features of rooks that aid us in understanding Jane and Bertha's related identities. In appearance, Bertha's dark hair and complexion are closer to that of a rook than Jane's. Bertha also shares some behavioral traits of rooks. Bewick notes that rooks generally live and travel in large flocks (something Bertha is denied by her confinement), but that despite their gregarious natures, rooks do not welcome all:

These rookeries, however, are often the scenes of bitter contests; the new-comers are frequently driven away by the old inhabitants, their half-built nests torn in pieces, and the unfortunate couple forced to begin their work anew in some more undisturbed situation. (*British Birds* 1: 106)

Though we do not hear from her directly, it is clear that Bertha sees Jane accurately as a rival for Rochester. Bertha attempts to destroy the "half-built nest" Jane and Rochester are constructing, first by lighting Rochester's bed on fire, then by tearing apart Jane's bridal veil, and most climactically, by destroying Thornfield Hall itself after Rochester's failed attempt at bigamy. Bertha symbolically rends Jane and Rochester's nest, a process her brother furthers when he arrives to interrupt Jane and Rochester's wedding ceremony. Indeed, Jane notes before they enter "the gray old house of God" that there is a "rook wheeling round the steeple," Bertha's symbolic representation (316). As the "unfortunate couple," Jane and Rochester are finally able to build their

nest "undisturbed" at Ferndean, after Bertha's plunge from Thornfield's battlements.

However, Jane's adoption of the crows' perspective upon her return to Thornfield (after Bertha's death, of which she is still ignorant at that point) suggests that Jane identifies at some level with the "old inhabitants" of Rochester's life, including his first wife.⁶ Knowing about Thornfield and its inhabitants, she views herself as the interloper and object of the crows' bemusement.

Bewick mentions several other behavioral characteristics of "Birds of the Pie-Kind" (i.e., the Corvid family, which includes rooks, ravens, and crows), that apply to Bertha as well. He comments they are "generally disliked for their disgusting and indiscriminating voracity" (*British Birds* 1: 99). Similarly, Rochester alludes to Bertha's sexual voracity when he tells Jane, "What a pigmy intellect she had, and what giant propensities! . . . Bertha Mason, the true daughter of an infamous mother, dragged me through all the hideous and degrading agonies which must attend a man bound to a wife at once intemperate and unchaste" (334). Bertha's supposedly ravenous, indiscriminate sexual appetite is meant to contrast with Jane's calm control; it clearly disgusts Rochester, who voices nineteenth-century society's strictures on a woman's sexual nature.

Insofar as Bertha and Jane can be seen as alter egos (as many readers have argued), Jane also appears to harbor the same elements of voracity and destructiveness symbolized by Thornfield's rooks. For Jane, these qualities emerge through another bird that assumes a central position in the novel: the cormorant (Plate 5). With its etymology from Old French, *corp-marin*, or "crow of the sea"/"sea-raven," the cormorant serves as a maritime double to Bertha's land-locked crows. The cormorant is one of the most important birds noted in *Jane Eyre*, as illustrated in one of Jane's paintings pulled aside by Rochester. Jane tells us of these works in Chapter 13:

These pictures were in water-colours. The first represented clouds low and livid, rolling over a swollen sea: all the distance was in eclipse; so, too, was the foreground; or rather, the nearest billows, for there was no land. One gleam of light lifted into relief a half-submerged mast, on which sat a cormorant, dark and large, with wings flecked with foam; its beak held a gold bracelet, set with gems, that I had touched with as brilliant tints as my palette could yield, and as glittering distinctness as my pencil could impart. Sinking below the bird and mast, a drowned corpse glanced through the green water; a fair arm was the only limb clearly visible, whence the bracelet had been washed or torn. (157)

I would argue that this painting is Jane's self-portrait as a cormorant.⁷ In fact, the description of the cormorant's

appearance itself contrasts with Jane—the cormorant is "dark and large," more Bertha-like, and Jane describes herself as small and with "white face and arms" (46)—as though Jane has painted her alter ego. The cormorant's nature is even more significant for understanding Jane's self-portrait, in that from Chaucer to the present, the cormorant has been seen as a symbol of gluttony and voracious greed. Even the current *Oxford English Dictionary* defines cormorant as "A large and voracious sea-bird (*Phalacrocorax carbo*), about 3 feet in length, and of a lustrous black colour, widely diffused over the northern hemisphere and both sides of the Atlantic" (3: 936).⁸ The repeated personification of the cormorant as voracious is odd, since cormorants eat proportionally no more than any other seabird. However, Brontë would certainly have been aware of the ravenous appetites ascribed to cormorants and the practice of training them to fish with a ring around their necks to prevent them from swallowing their catch. Bewick's text describes this practice as does Milton in *Paradise Lost*.⁹ Bewick's textual description of the cormorant seems both to question and to reinscribe the personification of this species as greedy and rapacious:

This tribe seems possessed of energies not of an ordinary kind; they are of a stern sullen character, with a remarkably keen penetrating eye, and a vigorous body; and their whole deportment carries along with it the appearance of the wary circumspect plunderer, the unrelenting tyrant, and the greedy insatiate glutton, rendered lazy only when the appetite is palled, and then they sit puffing forth the fetid fumes of a gorged stomach, vented occasionally in the disagreeable croakings of their hoarse hollow voice. Such is their portrait, such the character, generally given by the ornithologists; and Milton seems to have put the finishing hand to it, by making Satan personate the Cormorant, while he surveys, undelighted, the beauties of Paradise. It ought, however, to be observed, that this bird, like other animals, led only by the cravings of appetite, and directed by instinct, fills the place and pursues the course assigned to it by nature.

(2: 348)

It is remarkable the qualities attributed to the cormorant's disposition in this description: tyrannical, greedy, wary, and finally, Satanic. Bewick's qualification that the cormorant is only filling the place assigned to it by nature does not deny its essential personality; it merely notes that the bird does not in fact behave these ways out of choice. How, then, might this portrait (and the one painted by Jane) depict certain aspects of Jane's nature? Are these aspects hidden, or are these what she fears she will become should she act according to her true nature?

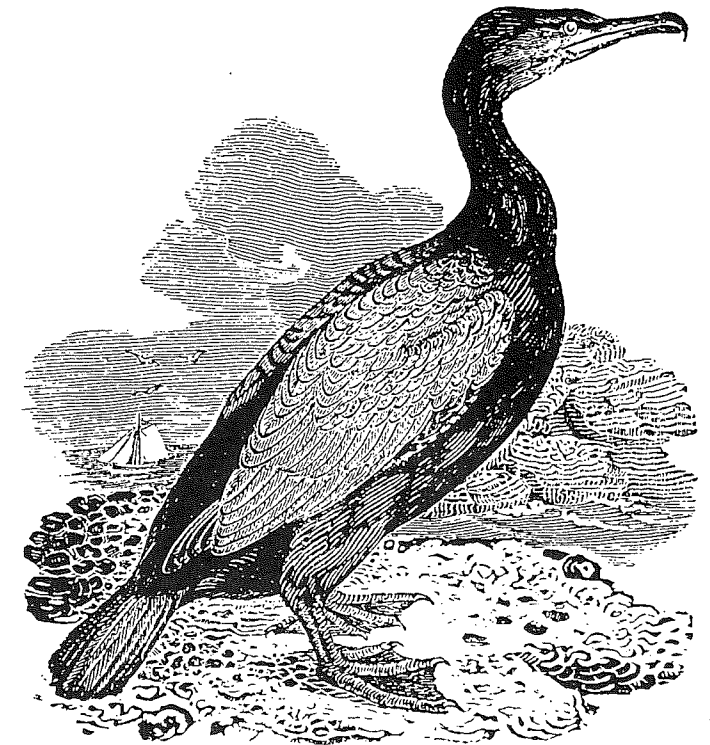


Plate 5
Thomas Bewick, *The Cormorant*, *History of British Birds*, Volume II

Indeed, Jane's self-portrait as cormorant connects her character with Bewick's textual characterizations of the species, through two areas of voraciousness and hunger in Jane's life: her passion for Rochester and her desire to surpass the limits assigned to her gender and social class. As a representation of Jane's passion for Rochester, the cormorant figure merges Jane's love for Rochester with Bertha's supposed appetites in an image of insatiability. The cormorant in her self-portrait sits as a sort of "circumspect plunderer" with the jeweled bracelet in its mouth; this image of the bird as plunderer is reinforced by the curious phrase at the end of Jane's description of her painting: that the bracelet "had been washed or torn" from the "fair arm" of the sinking corpse (itself a sort of *corp-marin* or body of the sea).¹⁰ Portrayed as a "greedy, insatiate glutton," in Bewick's terms, the cormorant within Jane's painting delineates the struggle within herself that emerges when she discovers Rochester's first wife and contemplates, briefly, becoming Rochester's concubine on the Mediterranean. Her painting presages this conflict by depicting Jane's passionate, cormorous nature (the cormorant) as victorious over her "fair" side (the corpse). The jeweled bracelet the cormorant holds would then represent Rochester's "buying" her sexual favors with his offers of money and jewelry—the exchange rate for satisfying her passion.

⁶The possible pun of Jane's surname Eyre and "eyrie" or "aerie," a bird's nest on a cliff or mountaintop is noted by Maurianne Adams.

⁷Maggie Berg also notes the theme of self-portraits running throughout *Jane Eyre*; however, she does not include the cormorant itself as an element of Jane's self-rendition (27). Several other critics speculate upon the cormorant's symbolic identity. John Hagan identifies the cormorant with

Bertha (360). Barbara Gates sees the cormorant as Rochester, also citing the importance of the jewelry imagery (39). Laurence E. Moser identifies Jane as the cormorant, but makes no further comment (279). Thomas Langford argues the cormorant represents an "evil force" generally in the novel (47-48).

⁸The *OED* cites Chaucer's *Parliament of Fowles* (1381) as mentioning "The hote cormeraunt of glotonye." By the eighteenth century, the word was firmly established as a figurative term for greedy persons or things as well as its literal meaning.

⁹For a detailed reading of the connections among the cormorants of Bewick, Brontë, and Milton, see my article, "Brontë's *Jane Eyre*."

¹⁰Had the bracelet been torn off by the bird, one might begin to personify

the cormorant as greedy or rapacious for stealing jewels from the dead. If the bracelet had simply washed off, did the cormorant pick it up the way ravens are said to be drawn to shiny objects? Bewick notes that the raven is called "crafty" because it "will frequently pick up things of value, such as rings, money, &c. and carry them to its hiding place" (*British Birds* 1: 102). Perhaps as a sea-raven, the cormorant craftily hoards the jewels.

Another quotation from Bewick illuminates the struggle within Jane initiated by her passion for Rochester and figured by the cormorant. Bewick comments about cormorants, "At other times and places, while they sit in a dozing and stupefied state, from the effects of one of their customary surfeits, they may easily be taken by throwing nets over them, or by putting a noose around their necks" (*British Birds* 2: 346). In the novel's moral structure, were Jane to succumb to her strong passion for the married Rochester, she would risk being caught by the "net" of the false bridal veil, or with Rochester's "noose" of pearls which Jane deliberately leaves behind when she flees Thornfield after the failed wedding ceremony. (She states of the pearl necklace, "I left that; it was not mine: it was the visionary bride's who had melted in air" [346].) Similarly, the jeweled bracelet in her painting symbolizes an appropriation of riches that would kill a part of herself; were she to give in to her voracious, cormorant side without being completely true to herself, the fair side would drown.¹¹

Jane's cormorous nature is evident in more than just her passion for Rochester. Her self-portrait as cormorant connects as well with the instances in the novel in which she articulates a hunger for intellectual, creative, and social outlets denied her because of her class and gender. In one example, while pacing the third story corridor, Jane tells herself "a tale my imagination created, and narrated continuously; quickened with all of incident, fire, feeling, that I desired and had not in my actual existence" (141). Similarly, in her well-known remarks on Thornfield's battlements, Jane describes how she "longed for a power of vision that might overpass that limit" of the horizon (140). These two quotations emphasize Jane's creative hunger and her desire to use imagination and vision to surpass the circumscribed and limited existence of a nineteenth-century English governess.¹² Brontë remarks upon comparable gender, class, and intellectual restrictions in a journal entry written while teaching at Roe Head, noting a similar creative voraciousness:

O it [the wind] has wakened a feeling that I cannot satisfy—a thousand wishes rose at its call which must die with me for they will never be fulfilled. now I should be agonised if I had not the dream to repose on—its existences, its forms its scenes to fill a little of the craving vacancy (qtd. in Christ 61)

Much like Jane, Brontë articulates the distinction here between boundaries that stifle the imagination and freedom

symbolized by the wind and the "craving vacancy" it arouses. Nature, as embodied in the wind (or for Jane, the horizon), figures this hunger for greater experience and fulfillment. Similarly, when Jane looks at distant vistas from her window at Lowood before obtaining the position at Thornfield she comments, "I tired of the routine of eight years in one afternoon. I desired liberty; for liberty I gasped; for liberty I uttered a prayer; it seemed scattered on the wind then faintly blowing" (117). Tellingly, Jane cannot fully imagine attaining such liberty; instead she "abandoned it and framed a humbler supplication" for a "'new servitude'" if nothing else (117). Unlike the unbounded paintings she creates at Lowood, the practicalities of being a poor, unmarried woman in nineteenth-century Britain require her to "frame" the self-portrait of what she would like her life to resemble.¹³

Despite the seemingly inevitable frames that circumscribe Jane's life, I would argue that the novel structurally supplies moments of liberation from confinement through its avian vignettes. A quotation from Rosen and Zerner about the genre of the Romantic vignette (as exemplified in Bewick's tailpieces) will help draw out the import of Brontë's formal arrangement of the novel:

Apparently unassuming as an artistic form, the vignette launched a powerful attack on the classical definition of representation, a window on the world. The vignette is not a window because it has no limit, no frame. The image, defined from its center rather than its edges, emerges from the paper as an apparition or a fantasy. The uncertainty of contour often makes it impossible to distinguish the edge of the vignette from the paper: the whiteness of the paper, which represents the play of light within the image, changes imperceptibly into the paper of the book, and realizes, in small, the Romantic blurring of art and reality. (84)

Like Bewick's tailpieces and other Romantic vignettes, Brontë's bird references transcend the frames of Jane's life physically presented in such architectural details as the window seat at Gateshead, the attic bedroom window at Lowood, and the battlements of Thornfield. It is as though Jane (and Brontë) wished to question the confining representations of Jane's world embodied in these frames of wood and stone. Through the rook and cormorant vignettes, Brontë provides a means to depict the uncontained dimensions of Jane's persona. Indeed, Brontë's model for an ideal world for Jane owes much to the formal arrangement of

Bewick's work, the interplay between vignette and text, and the scientific content of the species accounts.

The Romantic vignette, by blurring the boundary between text and picture, suggests that the two are integrally related. Perhaps it is this quality of Bewick's illustrations that appealed to Brontë, even when the links between text and image are not obvious. Even as children, the Brontës studied the relationships between text and image; Alexander and Sellars note that the Brontë children "were not indiscriminating" when they read the popular illustrated *Annuals* of their day (15). "Although they absorbed their [the *Annuals*'] Byronic mood and gothic overtones, they were often critical of the forced association between text and picture, occasioned by the poetry or prose being commissioned to accompany an already completed engraving" (15). Similarly, Alexander notes the importance of "the process of pictorial inspiration that we find at the beginning of *Jane Eyre*: the movement from visual perception to written form, as the older Jane articulates the young Jane's response to Bewick's illustrations" ("Art and Artists" 200). Alexander argues this is "precisely Charlotte's own method of composition" (200). This early questioning about the relationship between image and text resurfaces in *Jane Eyre* and emphasizes the central role of Bewick's work as a structural model for the novel.

Brontë herself celebrates Bewick's mixture of text and vignette in her 1832 poem in honor of Bewick, "Lines on Bewick." In this poem, Brontë describes exactly the effective integration of verbal and visual, what she calls Bewick's "pictured thoughts," that gives his work its great impact:

. . . again we turn
With fresh delight to the enchanted page
Where pictured thoughts that breathe and speak and burn
Still please alike our youth and riper age.
(11.41-44)

In Jane's paintings and in her verbal vignettes of avifauna, *Jane Eyre* expresses its debt to Bewick's art, to the images and text that "breathe and speak and burn." By naming the first house presented in her novel "Gateshead," also the name of the town neighboring Bewick's hometown of Newcastle on Tyne, Brontë might be suggesting that Bewick's work is a gateway to understanding Jane Eyre's nature—and perhaps her own.

Similarly, Virginia Woolf notes the essential relationship between the natural world and characters in the novels of both Charlotte and Emily Brontë. Woolf seems to comment implicitly on this relationship in terms of the vignette and text structure Bewick employs:

[Charlotte and Emily Brontë] seized those aspects of the earth which were most akin to what they themselves felt or imputed to their characters, and so their storms, their moors, their lovely spaces of summer weather are not

ornaments applied to decorate a dull page or display the writer's powers of observation—they carry on the emotion and light up the meaning of the book. (163)

Charlotte Brontë's cormorant vignettes serve as one such aspect of natural history most akin to Jane Eyre and perhaps herself. The cormorant in *Jane Eyre* may appear incidental, embedded within a painting described for us by Jane after it was singled out by Rochester for examination. Rather, I would suggest that the cormorant's seemingly marginal role in the novel functions structurally like Bewick's tailpieces or "pictured thoughts," as a brief revelatory tale which in fact bleeds into our perception of the rest of the work by its very lack of frame.

In using the cormorant and the rook as verbal vignettes in her novel, Brontë indeed does not merely ornament her page, as Woolf emphasizes. As Brontë asserts in a letter to her editors after they had inquired about clarifications of *Jane Eyre*, "I might explain away a few other points, but it would be too much like drawing a picture and then writing underneath the name of the object intended to be represented. We know what sort of a pencil that is which needs an ally in the pen." (L, 485-86; qtd. Berg 31). Brontë integrates ornithological vignettes into her novel, not as supplementary ornaments or labeled illustrations. Instead she etches fundamental relationships between the natural world, the visual world, and the written world, all fused by voracious and passionate creativity.¹⁴

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¹¹Significantly, Jane foreshadows this later struggle with Rochester in an earlier bird metaphor. When she and Rochester encounter each other in Thornfield's orchard at dusk before Rochester proposes to Jane, he says, "Jane, be still; don't struggle so, like a wild frantic bird that is rending its own plumage in its desperation" (282). Jane replies, "I am no bird; and no net ensnares me; I am a free human being with an independent will, which I now exert to leave you" (282). Of course, at this moment, Jane does not leave Rochester and instead becomes engaged to him. Later in the novel, Jane does leave Thornfield to seek the balance within her nature that she finally creates at the end of the novel, in fulfilling her cormorous side without subsuming all of her principles to passion, as she would have had she become Rochester's wife while he was still married.

¹²Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar comment upon several varieties of hunger in Brontë's *Shirley* and the implications for women's nineteenth-century fiction: "Describing the same hunger that troubles the dispossessed characters of Jane Austen, Mary Shelley, and Emily Brontë, Charlotte Brontë also implies that women are as famished for food as they are for sustaining fictions of their own devising" (374).

¹³Hilary Thompson argues that "Her [Brontë's] reaction to potential danger and unframed, untamed nature is that of the romantic, extolling freedom. And *Jane Eyre*'s paintings take this point of view to an extreme, their subjects and method almost slavishly imitating the vignettes described earlier" (12). In contrast, I would suggest that Jane's paintings bring out a more complex set of personal symbolism than a slavish imitation might.

¹⁴I wish to thank Ginny Kiefer and the staff of Special Collections at Colorado College for their help with Bewick's texts. I also would like to

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One Man Is an Island: Natural Landscape Imagery in Robert Louis Stevenson's *Treasure Island*

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Robert Louis Stevenson's *Treasure Island*, written from September to November 1881, was born of landscape—landscape remembered and imagined—and a map. After returning to his homeland with his newlywed American wife and her children, Stevenson was forced out of the Scottish moors by "native air"¹ that had long affected his health, and moved to Braemar, where he was kept indoors by squalls. For both his own entertainment and his stepson Lloyd Osbourne's, he explains that he

made the map of an island; it was elaborately and (I thought) beautifully coloured; the shape of it took my fancy beyond expression; it contained harbours that pleased me like sonnets; and with the unconsciousness of the predestined, I ticketed my performance *Treasure Island*. I am told there are people who do not care for maps, and find it hard to believe. The names, the shapes of the woodlands, the courses of the roads and rivers, the prehistoric footsteps of man still distinctly traceable up hill and down dale. . . . No child but must remember laying his head in the grass, staring into the infinitesimal forest, and seeing it grow populous with fairy armies. Somewhat in this way, as I pored upon my map of *Treasure Island*, the future characters of the book began to

appear there among imaginary woods; and their brown faces and bright weapons peeped out upon me from unexpected quarters, as they passed to and fro, fighting, and hunting treasure, on these few square inches of a flat projection ("My First Book" xxi-xxii)

Thus Stevenson created a blank slate on which he could design his own landscape (primarily influenced by Silverado country in California, where he took his honeymoon); from this landscape, the characters arise.

A careful analysis of the natural landscape imagery in *Treasure Island* shows how at first Stevenson simply uses the natural environment around Jim Hawkins to establish mood and foreshadow action in the novel, but then relates the topography of the island to Jim's maturity and independence forced by his struggle for survival in a morally relative environment. Stevenson is in many ways subverting and breaking away from the Romantic-Victorian tradition of landscape imagery that aimed merely to inspire contemplation, illuminate setting, and foreshadow action. He integrates natural setting and description with a sense of character more complex, ambiguous, and modernist than Romantic-Victorian.

The beginning of the novel, however, rather than

anticipating a "future feeling," as Alan Sandison puts it (3) clearly harkens back to Romanticism. Employing a basic feature of Gothic fiction, and perhaps recalling the sound of the sea on the California coast, Stevenson has Jim Hawkins suffer nightmares of the one-legged man about whom he has been warned by Billy. These nightmares, the usual expression of dread or terror in Gothic romance, are accompanied by the typical Gothic trope of "stormy nights, when the wind shook the four comers of the house, and the surf roared along the cove and up the cliffs" (5: 14). Hawkins is clearly a boy at this stage of the book, living at home with his mother and father, and imagining a peg-legged figure in different "monstrous" forms, a sort of bogeyman about whom he has many "abominable fancies" (14). To an extent, then, the use of a crude Gothic trope here by Stevenson suits the fanciful adventurous tone of an opening chapter, which introduces a juvenile protagonist. As Jim matures, however, Stevenson's use of landscape evolves, becoming more subtle and complex in its illumination of the complicated ideas of maturity and forced independence.

The first step towards Jim's maturity is a rather offhand plot device—his father dies. This demise is foreshadowed by another relic of Romanticist landscape writing—winter as harbinger of death: "It was a bitter cold winter, with long, hard frosts and heavy gales; and it was plain from the first that my poor father was little likely to see the spring" (20). What follows, however, is a subtle foreshadowing: "It was one January morning, very early—a pinching, frosty morning—the cove all grey with hoar-frost, the ripple lapping softly on the stones, the sun still low and only touching the hilltops and shining far to seaward" (20). Stevenson has now quickly and subtly moved from the minor sub-plot involving the death of Jim's father back to the main pirate story. The landscape, in stasis and indicating doom or death, with the tide ominously quiet and the sun low in the sky, suggests disruption in the form of the sea. For the sun is "only touching the hilltops and shining far to seaward" (20), indicating not only that the action will soon leave the shore and unfold on the sea, but that there is something of importance "far to seaward" (20). More immediately, it predicts the arrival of the pirate Black Dog from the sea, who appears a paragraph later to warn Billy of his approaching death.

Stevenson's use of a wintry coastal scene becomes more sophisticated in Chapters 3 and 4, where it is the first of successive landscape images which illuminate and emphasize the importance of sight and being seen. It is a "bitter, foggy, frosty afternoon" when Hawkins makes out Blind Pew—the most haunting, surreal figure in the book—tapping his way towards him (35). Later, running with his mother to the hamlet, which is "out of view, on the other side of the next cove," for help, Jim is hidden by "the gathering evening and the frosty fog" (40). The fog, associated with blindness and

concealment,² is then threatened by the "full moon [which] was beginning to rise and peered redly through the upper edges of the fog" (42). Thus the moon is associated with the watching eyes of inimical pirates, "for it was plain, before we came forth again, that all would be as bright as day, and our departure exposed to the eyes of any watchers" (42). This image-association recurs in Jim's and his mother's eventual escape from the besieged inn at the end of Chapter 4, when the

fog was rapidly dispersing; already the moon shone quite clear on the high ground on either side; and it was only in the exact bottom of the dell and round the tavern door that a thin veil still hung unbroken to conceal the first steps of our escape. Far less than half-way to the hamlet, very little beyond the bottom of the hill, we must come forth into the moonlight. Nor was this all; for the sound of several footsteps running came already to our ears, and as we looked back in their direction, a light tossing to and fro and still rapidly advancing, showed that one of the new-comers carried a lantern. (46-7)

Moonlight, previously associated with and anticipatory of the pirates' watching eyes and thus discovery, again predicts pursuit and possible capture, but is now also linked to a new light—that of a searching lantern.³ During the return to the cottage, however, earlier in the chapter, the "low wash of the ripple" had been emphasized (40; also 20—see above) in order to imbue the scene with a spooky, suspenseful mood, typical of Gothic romance, but Jim's detection of "the croaking of the inmates of the wood" likened him and his mother to prisoners of the weather and environment. The fogbound, gloomy landscape, then, usually so threatening and evil in Gothic romances or Victorian mysteries (e. g., the poisonous fog of *Bleak House* or the hound-concealing misty moor of *The Hound of the Baskervilles*), becomes both a prison, dangerous beyond certain boundaries, where the pirates wait, and a safe environment for Hawkins and his mother to travel in, within those boundaries, concealed from enemies. Stevenson also turns the light of the moon into a threatening sentinel, associating it with the spying buccaneers—thus making the darkness of the night the friend of the protagonist here, an uncommon reversal of the typical trope of Gothic romance, where night threatens and terrifies. Such ambiguity of the landscape imagery in relation to atmosphere and foreshadowing—both prison and haven, enemy and friend, watcher and protector—is soon to be exploited in representing the psychological development of Jim on *Treasure Island*.

Much as in the Sherlock Holmes "dog in the night-time" incident, it is important to note what is absent from the chapters concerning the voyage to the island (Chapters 10

²Stevenson dedicated an entire chapter of description to "sea fogs" in California in *The Silverado Squatters* (2: 455, 527-34). See also David Barnett, *A Stevenson Study: "Treasure Island"* (Edinburgh: David Macdonald, 1924), 11.

³From Diogenes of Greek lore to the policeman's bulls-eye lantern in Dickens's *Bleak House*, the lantern is commonly associated with the roving, searching eye. Stevenson uses such an image in "A Winter's Walk in Car-

rick and Galloway"—"As the moon flashed a bull's-eye glitter across the town between the racing clouds" (24: 382)—and again in *The Ebb-Tide*: "The moon shone, too, with bull's-eye sweeps" (18: 12). The presence of lunar imagery in *Treasure Island* may be derived from the substantial section on the moonlit sky in *The Silverado Squatters* (2: 544-7). The moon as both seeing-eye and guide or protector appears also in the poem "The Moon" in *A Child's Garden of Verses* (8: 37-8).

¹Stevenson, "My First Book," an introduction of sorts to *Treasure Island*, in *Works* 5: xxi. Unless otherwise noted, further references to Stevenson's

works are to this edition, with the volume noted where necessary.

and 11). There are no detailed seascapes during the voyage of the *Hispaniola*; indeed, Stevenson—narrating through Hawkins, of course—actually says that "I am not going to relate that voyage in detail" (91). Advocates of Stevenson as a romance-adventure writer cite this to show him making a quick transition from one "setting" for adventure—the coast where pirates chased Hawkins and his mother—to Treasure Island, the central setting of the novel. Thus Robert Kiely claims that Stevenson, "with shameless dispatch . . . [gets] rid first of geographical place and time present and all the demands that go with them"; he goes on to say that "chronology is presented through the highly omisive mind of a child and an island is a place where treasure is buried, not an actual piece of land a given number of miles off the coast of England" (69, 81). Even Diana Loxley, intent on relating *Treasure Island* to imperialism, sees the island merely as a "setting. . . significant only in so far as it functions as the harbour for that treasure" (65).

Stevenson, however, rapidly immerses the reader in the environment of the island because the landscape of Treasure Island is crucial in illuminating and shaping Jim's independence from significant conventional moral codes and his maturing experiences of isolation and violent death. Unlike *Kidnapped* or *The Master of Ballantrae*, where the landscape is associated with the ambivalent, ambiguous psychologies of a pair of characters (David Balfour and Alan Breck, Henry and James Durie), the landscape in *Treasure Island* is linked only to Jim, who focalizes the narrative. Alistair Fowler talks of Stevenson "as an ur-existentialist and early modern writer," citing *Treasure Island* as a book that deals with Jim's growth and the stages of authority, duty, and loyalty through which he passes, and shows him succeeding in a quest for identity (105, 111). The sea on the way to the island is of little significance to this quest—it is the island, and its seascape and landscape, where he confronts both natural dangers and moral dilemmas that will make a man of him. Sandison states: "As a psychological archetype the island is a lonely place, and those who venture upon it will either emerge from the trial triumphant against all the forces that would seek to deny selfhood and sustain the authority of the patriarchy; or . . . be marooned in their sense of existential worthlessness, abject and malleable before the forces of authority" (68-9). Jim chooses the former path when, after landing on the beach, he escapes from both the supposedly virtuous moral code of Captain Smollett *et al.* and the wily, selfish, cutthroat principles of Long John Silver and his pirate crew into the depths of the island. "The island [is] for Jim a challenge to his own nascent self-sufficiency and he must meet that challenge alone," concludes Sandison (69). The island as the setting for the process of Jim's maturation necessitates such a quick transition from mainland to island. The island landscape is a crucial dimension of the setting and an integral link to the development of character consciousness in the book.⁴

Jim's first clear view of the island suggests an inner

foreboding as Stevenson abandons the typical, plot-related conventions of romantic landscape imagery that he has used until now to connect the island inextricably with Jim's maturing consciousness. Jim's description of the island as he sees it is at first simply topographical: "Grey-coloured woods covered a large part of the surface. This even tint was indeed broken up by streaks of yellow sandbreak in the lower lands, and by many tall trees of the pine family, out-topping the others—some singly, some in clumps; but the general colouring was uniform and sad. The hills ran up clear above the vegetation in spires of naked rock" (117). Then, description changes to haunting perception:

perhaps it was the look of the island, with its grey, melancholy woods, and wild stone spires, and the surf that we could both see and hear foaming and thundering on the steep beach—at least, although the sun shone bright and hot, and the shore birds were fishing and crying all around us, and you would have thought anyone would have been glad to get to land after being so long at sea, my heart sank, as the saying is, into my boots; and from that first look onward, I hated the very thought of Treasure Island. (118)

Stevenson at first clearly suggests, with the woods and birds, Jim's growing sadness, but the increasing length of the sentence intensifies the gloomy introspection of the narrator, so that by the end, when Jim states his hatred for an island he has not yet visited, this feeling is both startlingly strong and plausible, given the stormy mood built up by the images and length of the sentence. Again, a critic who espouses the view of Stevenson as a writer of adventure-romances might argue that he is heightening the reader's anticipation of the heated battles and daring escapades which will take place on the island, but there is something more to this passage. Unlike in a typical romance, the island is not idyllic—Jim feels that it cannot be before he has even set foot on shore. His heart "sinking," and the mirroring of "melancholy woods" and birds crying with his inner despair—these hint at some overwhelming, subconscious dread of what is to transpire on the island, a deeply personal fear of something that will befall Jim, and only Jim. As Sandison writes, this is

not the reaction we expect from this adventurous youth and we won't find an explanation in the superficialities of a boy's adventure-story. Stevenson's islands are, by and large, traps for the self-tormented where the traveller's moral adequacy (usually that is reflected in his aspirations to manhood) is put under severe stress with results which are often less than flattering. . . . If the sight of such islands as Soledad, Earraid and Treasure Island sends the hearts of these youths into their boots (which is how Jim puts it), it is because they instinctively realise that they are a tightly-contained theatre of action which

they must enter if they are to prove their fitness for the adult world" (70, 72).⁵

Jim himself sees the island as a kind of theater. As he looks out at the atoll from the ship, he notes: "The place was entirely landlocked, buried in woods, the trees coming right down to high-water mark, the shores mostly flat, and the hilltops standing round at a distance in a sort of amphitheatre, one here, one there" (119). More than just dramatic foreshadowing, this is his subconscious realization of landscape as a dramatic forum for self-maturity. Interestingly, in a fable called "The Persons of the Tale," probably written after the novel, Stevenson has "two of the puppets" of *Treasure Island*, Captain Smollett and Long John Silver, engage in a conversation "in an open place not far from the story," between Chapters 32 and 33 (25: 183). They discuss their non-existence, the Godlikeness of the "Author," their possible fates, depending on which of them the Author prefers, and even their own relative and ambiguous moral merits as characters in the narrative (25: 183-7). While it may be a stretch to claim that Stevenson is anticipating an important element of postmodernism here—after all, metafictional narratives were not suddenly born with the advent of postmodernism—he is expanding upon his propensity for finding stories in landscapes. For we see him here using the page as a narrative landscape, removing two characters to "an open place not far from the story," just as, within the story, Hawkins is isolated in an amphitheater of natural landscape which will reveal his relative and often amoral virtues, in the process of his maturity. This Hamlet play-within-a-play structure—natural landscape as dramatic forum for Jim's maturity, within a narrative landscape where the author's control over all the characters is emphasized—is implied by Jim's subconscious recognition of the island as amphitheater. Throughout Stevenson's *oeuvre*, one can see his constant perception of landscape as dramatic forum, with the story emerging from the surroundings, much as the plot of *Treasure Island* formed itself for him from the map he had drawn for his stepson. In *The Silverado Squatters* (much of which came from a journal he kept in California), Stevenson writes: "in front the place was open like the proscenium of a theatre, and we looked forth into a great realm of air, and down upon tree-tops and hill-tops, and far and near on wild and varied country" (2: 488-9). The passage in *Treasure Island* continues, just like the passage in *The Silverado Squatters*, by suggesting that the place looks as if no one had ever been there before; it is a blank page on which the narrative—Jim's journey of self-discovery—is to be written by the "Author." The concept of landscape as a theater for action can also be

seen in one of Stevenson's stories, "Edifying Letters of the Rutherford Family" (1876-77), where a character stands "in the bottom of a vast amphitheatre of highlands" (1:64). Stevenson continued to employ such imagery while in the Pacific;⁶ his repeated use of the amphitheater image in his writing is combined with the clear realization of the relation between natural landscape and narrative landscape, as in *Treasure Island*. Stevenson is clearly advancing beyond a romancer's "clean canvas" that "[v]isions often require" (Eigner 18) to a modernist, self-reflective, metanarrative use of landscape.

Jim literally plunges into the natural landscape to begin his quest for mature selfhood, braving the foliage "of poisonous brightness" (120) to rush "into the nearest thicket"; although Silver and the others call out to him to come back, he runs headlong into the depths of the island—an adolescent rushing towards adulthood. Perhaps mirroring this impatient, uncertain embrace of growth, the landscape becomes less clear-cut, with sandy, undulating areas, contorted trees, twisted evergreen oaks, bramble-like thickets, and a steaming marsh (125-6). In the midst of this tangle, Long John Silver, one of the story's ambiguous authority figures, speaks in a voice that "runs in a stream" (127), and when Jim doubles back to eavesdrop on the pirate and his crew, he sees them sitting in a "little green dell" as the "sun beat full upon them" (127). So, after painting a forbidding portrait of a landscape which Jim may have to negotiate alone, Stevenson outlines one of Jim's alternatives to independent exploration: joining the ruthless pirate mutineers who are observed in an idyllic, radiant setting. Thus the narrative begins to show the ambiguity of the moral choices in Jim's mind.

To add to the ambiguity of moral codes, Jim has still not decided against following Silver even when he sees him savagely kill Tom, the rebellious mate. Much like Jim's description of his first view of the island, Tom's death is at first rendered in a most unromantic way, with no moralistic point about honor among thieves, and the elaboration on the callous and violent death is expressed in a neutral tone. Then, however, using landscape, Jim relates how this death shatters his sheltered, morally clear-cut, boys' world: "I do not know what it rightly is to faint, but I do know that for the next little while the whole world swam away from before me in a whirling mist; Silver and the birds, and the tall Spy-glass hilltop, going round and round and topsy-turvy before my eyes" (130). The association of Silver with the birds and central spire of the island is interesting, suggesting perhaps that Silver's ruthless, selfish amorality is as natural to the world

⁴Sandison also sees the island as a harbinger of the "active involvement of the sub-conscious," which is signalled here "by the draining away of colour from the landscape and by the association of the landscape with dreaming. Jim first sees the island 'almost in a dream' and then describes the 'grey, melancholy woods'" (71). Sandison goes on to say that Jim's first, seemingly objective topographical description of Treasure Island "runs strikingly true to psychoanalytical form and is heavily imbued with Freudian symbolism" (71), with the "almost painfully-truncated Spyglass [Hill]" suggesting Jim's anxiety about his "psychosexual development and . . . a troubled awareness of a highly vulnerable masculine identity" (72). Such a view of two of Stevenson's works (including *Treasure Island* and especially *Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*) as having an affinity

with Freudian theory serves to encourage the view of Stevenson as a precursor of the modernists who were rapidly breaking away from the Romantic-Victorian influence.

⁶For example: the "scuppers of the mountain" formed "the sides of the amphitheatre" (*In The South Seas* 16:91); "the dark amphitheatre of the Atuona mountains and the cliffy bluff that closes it to seaward" (142); "[t]he seaward end of the isle the theatre of low hills inclines some third part of its surface; the amphitheatre has much the air of an old crater" ("Tutuila," 25: 395); "[t]he floor of the amphitheatre was piled with shattered rock, detritus of the mountain" ("The Lazaretto," 26: 456); "[o]n the landward side, cliffs made a quadrant of an amphitheater [sic], melting on either side into the general mountain of the isle" (*Travels in Hawaii* 25-6).

⁵Modernists such as Conrad, Lawrence, Greene, and even Borges would exploit this link between landscape and character more fully (Greene, a dis-

tant relation of Stevenson, and Borges in fact acknowledged Stevenson as a major influence).

which Jim is entering as the landscape of the island. After "Tom lay motionless upon the sward . . . the murderer minded him not a whit, cleansing his blood-stained knife the while upon a wisp of grass. Everything else was unchanged, the sun still shining mercilessly on the steaming marsh and the tall pinnacle of the mountain, and I could scarce persuade myself that murder had been actually done, and a human life cruelly cut short a moment since, before my eyes" (130-1). This is no romantic retelling of pirate exploits, but a vivid exposure of a boy's mindset—illuminated by the constancy of landscape—when he is confronted with the seemingly natural mundaneness and remorselessness of violence and death in the world of men. It is primarily this aspect of human society, as predicted and emphasized by the natural landscape, that opens Jim's eyes to human society, challenges him to choose between Silver's way and the path of Captain Smollett and his company, and is thereby the primary catalyst in Jim's maturation from naive boy to disillusioned man.

It is not surprising, then, that the one man who seems to arise fully-formed from the natural landscape of Treasure Island—Ben Gunn, the marooned pirate and true keeper of the treasure—is a "new apparition" to Jim, more terrifying (133) than the murderers he has left behind in a dell now forever transformed for him from a sunlit spot to a symbol of darkness. All signs of Ben Gunn's presence originate in the natural landscape: "The air, too, smelt more freshly than down beside the marsh. . . . And here a *fresh* alarm brought me to a standstill with a thumping heart" (131, my emphasis); "From the side of the hill. . . a spout of gravel was dislodged, and fell rattling and bounding through the trees. My eyes turned instinctively in that direction, and I saw a figure leap with great rapidity behind the trunk of a pine" (133). After the indifference of the sunlit dell during Silver's murder of Tom, Jim is terrified by the possibility of a man born of the landscape, as it were: "Silver himself appeared less terrible in contrast with this creature of the woods" (133). Yet Stevenson again plays with the reader's expectations and further complicates Jim's weighing of the relative moralities contesting the island by showing Ben Gunn to be Silver's antithesis, a man who has been resourceful in ensuring his own preservation on the island by using the landscape for food and shelter, but is also willing to help others, starting with Jim. Recalling that he must be "a man, however wild" (134), Jim approaches Ben Gunn for help and soon finds him to be a pious, cheese-obsessed, and yet rewarding man—kind of lunatic combination of Robinson Crusoe and Magwitch, but certainly not the clichéd or two-dimensional castaway figure one might expect in an island romance-adventure.

Jim is soon separated from Ben Gunn by a cannonade from the *Hispaniola*, now taken over by the pirates. Jim thus cannot seek refuge with Gunn and must continue to scramble for survival—which contributes to his maturing process—and to visit the third (after Silver and Gunn) moral alternative. When he enters the log-house where Captain Smollett, Squire Trelawney, Doctor Livesey, and the loyal crew members are holed up, it is clear that Jim is not necessarily better off with them than he would be with Silver. The landscape descriptions frame this quandary. The log-house, sunk in sand, is merely a dilapidated structure made from timber of the "slopes of the knoll and all the inside of the

stockade . . . we could see by the stumps what a fine and lofty grove had been destroyed" (170). Thus Jim's boyhood fancies of idyllic dells suffer another blow. While Silver's men are ill with fever in the marsh, the group of "good men and true" sits idle in a place that is being slowly swallowed up by the island environment:

the soil had been washed away or buried in drift after the removal of the trees. . . . The cold evening breeze. . . whistled through every chink of the rude building, and sprinkled the floor with a continual rain of fine sand. There was sand in our eyes, sand in our teeth, sand in our suppers, sand dancing in the spring at the bottom of the kettle. . . but a little part of the [chimney] smoke. . . found its way out, and the rest eddied about the house. . . (170-1)

Ironically, the clearing of the grove to make the log-house has led to soil erosion, causing the gradual submersion of the log-house in sand. Any remaining illusions about fortune favoring the righteous are shattered by the island's natural landscape, which is harsh, remorseless, and utterly separate from the world of men, as Jim realizes the next morning:

The sky was bright and cloudless overhead, and the tops of the trees shone rosily in the sun. But where Silver stood with his lieutenant all was still in shadow, and they waded knee deep in a low, white vapour that had crawled during the night out of the morass. The chill and the vapour taken together told a poor tale of the island. It was plainly a damp, feverish, unhealthy spot. . . . (175)

Jim must overcome this sinister landscape to advance towards maturity, gain the treasure, and return home.

Fittingly, the forbidding landscape also spurs Jim to strike off on his own. As he sits in the log-house "grilling" in the hot sun, the adult world of violence and bloodthirstiness sickens him: with "so much blood about me, and so many poor dead bodies lying all around. . . . I took a disgust of the place that was almost as strong as fear" (197). He wants to escape to the idyllic fancies associated with his childhood, which are again evoked through landscape: "What I began to do was to envy the doctor, walking in the cool shadow of the woods, with the birds about him, and the pleasant smell of the pines" (197). "The cool shadow of the woods" and "the pleasant smell of the pines" are like the sunlit dell earlier, and the "fine grove" cut down to build the log-house. Jim thus takes "the first step towards my escapade," after "this disgust and envy kept growing stronger and stronger" (197). He takes pistols and food; he has a plan in mind, but feels still "only a boy" (198). Yet, ironically, his two impetuous, youthful follies—of first joining the expedition and now leaving the log-house to the protection of only two men—lead him not only to "help towards saving all of us" but also to his own manhood (198).

The presentation of the natural landscape now both echoes and diverges from the early passages describing the setting of the "Admiral Benbow." The sea lies "blue and sunny to the horizon," the afternoon is "still warm and sunny," and Jim "walked along beside the surf with great

enjoyment" (199), but Stevenson keeps calling attention to the noise of the sea. Even as Jim "continued to thread the tall woods" (199), the sound of the sea weaves its way throughout the passage, lending a sobering and eerie feel to what might otherwise be a cathartic release for Jim, now ostensibly free in his imagined boy's idyll:

I could hear from far before me not only the continuous thunder of the surf, but a certain tossing of foliage and grinding of boughs which showed me the sea breeze had set in higher than usual. . . . I came forth into the open borders of the grove, and saw the . . . surf tumbling and tossing its foam along the beach. I have never seen the sea quiet around Treasure Island. The sun might blaze overhead, the air be without a breath, the surface smooth and blue, but still these great rollers would be running along the external coast, thundering and thundering by day and night; and I scarce believe there is one spot on the island where a man would be out of earshot of their noise. (199)

This passage recalls Jim's early nightmares about the man with one leg (this was before he met Silver) as the waves crashed into the cove near the inn (14), and is in turn recalled in the final sentence of the book, where we read that in his "worst dreams" of "that accursed island," Jim hears "the surf booming about its coasts" (317). It was upon first seeing and hearing the surf "foaming and thundering on the steep beach" that his heart sank and he "hated the very thought of Treasure Island" (118). This image of the seascape culled from Stevenson's time in California⁷ is so frightening to Jim because, as he narrates the events of the book in retrospect, the sea represents his utter isolation: it is where he went from childhood to adulthood, especially when he acts boldly and independently to steal the ship, sailing it around the island, harboring it safely, and rescuing the others, who had given up on him. To do this, Jim braves the treacherous sea, his great trial and his baptism. Only a boy could be reckless enough to sail out to the *Hispaniola* singlehanded in Ben Gunn's coracle and cut it adrift to prevent the pirates from leaving on it. But the challenges that follow can be met only by a reckless adolescent; in meeting them the adolescent becomes a man. Refusing to remain with either Silver or the Squire, determined to act alone, Jim takes advantage of the darkness—"a night out of ten thousand for my purpose" (202)—to float out on the coracle to the ship at anchor. At the beginning of the story, when he and his mother had hidden from the pirates, fog and darkness had helped Jim run for help; now he is boldly acting alone to prevent the pirates from escaping and is rescuing some of those men to whom he had once run for help.

The reason why the sea around the island haunts Jim long after is made abundantly clear now. Upon cutting the hawser, Jim is swept by the wind and waves against the ship,

has to fight the current, and then must hoist himself up onto the ship by a trailing rope. But while still in the coracle, which is tied to the ship, he fears the *Hispaniola* will drag him into "some bar of raging breakers, where all my troubles would be ended speedily" (210). He lies

in the bottom of that wretched skiff . . . for hours, continually beaten to and fro upon the billows, now and again wetted with flying sprays, and never ceasing to expect death at the next plunge. Gradually weariness grew upon me; a numbness, an occasional stupor, fell upon my mind even in the midst of my terrors; until sleep at last supervened, and in my sea-tossed coracle I lay and dreamed of home and the old' Admiral Benbow'. . . . (210)

The parallelism here is noteworthy: as an adult years later Jim has nightmares about his ordeal at sea as the *Hispaniola* circled Treasure Island, but during the adventure itself, the boy-come-man Jim dreams of his childhood, and leaves himself to the mercy of the elements. Sheer endurance is required in dealing with the dangerous sea, just as with adolescence and life itself; but as Jim finds when he wakes, initiative, intelligence, and courage are also needed. He cannot swim to shore because "[a]mong the fallen rocks the breakers spouted and bellowed; loud reverberations, heavy sprays flying and falling, succeeded one another from second to second; and I saw myself, if I ventured nearer, dashed to death upon the rough shore, or spending my strength in vain to scale the beetling crags" (211). Overcoming his terror, Jim analyzes the seascape and notices "how it was [the coracle] managed to slip so quietly through the rollers" (214). Metaphorizing the sea as land, he sees that the daunting seascape is in fact negotiable and surpassable: "I found each wave, instead of the big, smooth glossy mountain it looks from shore, or from a vessel's deck, was for all the world like any range of hills on the dry land, full of peaks and smooth places and valleys" (214). As the coracle, twisting and turning, threads its way through the waves, avoiding "the steep slopes and higher, toppling summits of the wave" (214), Jim astutely judges the rapidly changing conditions and manages to come quite near the land. But when he discovers the *Hispaniola* tossing in the sea with only two men on board, he paddles the coracle to the ship and, helped by the wind, which turns the ship towards him, he grabs the jibboom and hauls himself up just as the *Hispaniola* strikes the coracle and sinks it.

The central section of Part V, "My Sea Adventure," is the three chapters (22-24) that focus on Jim's haunting, hours-long odyssey at sea, which proves to be the turning point in his maturity. Not only does he face death and survive, which is a maturing experience in itself, but he overcomes a terror of solitude in a forbidding environment, learning to rely on himself and his wits, reading the landscape and overcoming its challenges. Now the landscape is not a place

⁷The similarity of the sea images quoted above to a passage from "The Old and New Pacific Capitals" (written in the summer or fall of 1880) is striking: "The one common note of all this country is the haunting presence of the ocean. A great sound of breakers follows you high up into the inland

canons; the roar of water dwells in the clean, empty rooms of Monterey as in a shell upon chimney; go where you will, you have but to pause and listen to hear the voice of the Pacific" (2: 403).

of idyllic dells or sunlit groves or the remembered coves of home, but an unforgiving, relentless, everpresent force, like life. After this ordeal, Jim is distinctly more confident, assertive, and adult in his reactions. His maturation from boy to man, forged in quickly-changing and life-threatening circumstances, causes his dreams long after he has left the island to be haunted by its seascape. While Stevenson was not given to detailed descriptions of the sea, even in his travel writings, the sea as a metaphor for life and fate is a motif in his other works.⁸ What makes *Treasure Island* so different from these works in its representation of the seascape is the vivid, dramatically integrated way that the sea, as a site of both life and death, and constant reminder of the underlying potential of harsh fate, shows us Jim being forced to "read" and interpret its waves and tides to save his life, proving his mettle as a seaman, coping with isolation, hardship, and danger. The real treasure he finds on the island is his selfhood. When Jim shoots the murderous Israel Hands as the *Hispaniola* comes to rest in the estuary on the north shore of the island, the pirate falls into the bay, and Stevenson again employs the seascape to chilling effect, stressing its implacable indifference to human needs and desires and rendering it, in these respects, like life itself:

He rose once to the surface in a lather of foam and blood, and then sank again for good. As the water settled, I could see him lying huddled together on the clean, bright sand in the shadow of the vessel's sides. A fish or two whipped past his body. Sometimes, by the quivering of the water, he appeared to move a little, as if he were trying to rise. But he was dead enough, for all that, being both shot and drowned, and was food for fish in the very place where he had designed my slaughter.

I was no sooner certain of this than I began to feel sick, faint, and terrified. The hot blood was running over my back and chest. The dirk, where it had pinned my shoulder to the mast, seemed to burn like a hot iron yet it was not so much these real sufferings that distressed me, for these, it seemed to me, I could bear without a murmur; it was the horror I had upon my mind of falling from the cross-trees into that still green water beside the body of the coxswain. (239-40)

Here, as when Silver wiped the blood off his knife on the grass, the sea is connected with blood and death, but Jim, matured by his near-death experience of the sea and sights of death on land, retains his poise because he knows the wretched fate of Hands might easily have been his own, and because he is now accustomed to the brutal, senseless violence that seems to be a natural part of the adult world. Far from being boyishly emotional, such a reaction is detached and logical, arising from Jim's instinct for self-preservation. Ignored by the fish, Hands grotesquely seems

to rise from the shallow bottom, but Jim is not only certain of his death, but does not fall prey to any childish fancies or terrors about death; he only feels faint and scared not because he is afraid of falling next to Israel Hands, but because he fears falling in "that still green water beside the body" (240). Hands' name is not even mentioned, for he is depersonalized as merely "the coxswain" (240). It is the stagnant water, symbolic of death, that Stevenson emphasizes in order to convey Jim's fear of the sea around the island as a place of death and utter solitude. Adult enough now to handle corpses without fear—"as the habit of tragical adventures had worn off almost all my terror for the dead" (241)—Jim takes Hands' victim and former crewmate, O'Brien, and dumps his body overboard.

He went in with a soundless plunge; the red cap came off, and remained floating on the surface; and as soon as the splash subsided, I could see him and Israel lying side by side, both wavering with the tremulous movements of the water. O'Brien, though still quite a young man, was very bald. There he lay, with that bald head across the knees of the man who had killed him, and the quick fishes steering to and fro over both. . . . (241)

Jim refers to O'Brien merely as a "sack of bran" (241), calmly speaks of the dead man's youth and baldness, and remarks on the irony of O'Brien lying across the knees of the man who had killed him. The two bodies "both wavering with the tremulous movement of the water" reflect this equality, yet the motion of the water with "the quick fishes swimming to and fro over both" also mirrors the fleetingness of human life, reminding Jim that landscape and nature remain even as individuals perish.

Throughout *Treasure Island*, Stevenson reminds us that landscape can inspire both death and life. As Jim realizes he is alone on the ship, the shadows of pines fall "in patterns on the deck" (241), and after cutting the halyards, he fondly recalls the sunset, with "the last rays. . . falling through a glade of the wood, and shining bright as jewels, on the flowery mantle of the wreck" (242). This romantic mental picture of the sunset, occurring just after his violent encounter with death, illuminates for Jim the precious nature of life and his own fortuitous survival.

As he leaves the ship and makes his way across the island to find the Squire and the others, the moon, previously experienced as a seeing-eye for spying pirates and his foe, now rises to become his guide: with the "pale glimmer of moonbeams to help me, I passed rapidly over what remained to me of my journey; and, sometimes walking, sometimes running, impatiently drew near to the stockade" (245).⁹ But inside, instead of his friends, he is startled to find himself among the pirates again, for they have seized the fort in his absence. In the next section of the narrative— "Part VI: Cap-

enters the log-house. Silver then has one of his men fetch a torch, recalling the bulls-eye lantern that is linked with the moon early in the book. Silver, like the moon earlier (in threatening to expose Jim and his mother, but later guiding him), can both help and harm Jim.

tain Silver" (Chapters 28-33, essentially)—Jim is forced to stay close to Silver, as Captain Smollett and the others are incensed by Jim's apparent desertion. Jim now regards Silver with a mixture of repulsion for the man's amorality and awe of his wiles, resourcefulness, and overwhelming confidence, while Silver still treats Hawkins as a sort of son, varying between calling him "lad" and "Mr. Hawkins" (254) but allowing him the choice of staying with him and his treacherous fellow pirates, or setting off alone. In a show of bravery which demonstrates how much Jim has matured and learnt to cope with death, he offers the pirates a choice in return—kill him or spare him; if the latter, he will do his best to keep them from the gallows. Such courage impresses upon Silver that Hawkins is not only a man now, but "more a man than any pair of rats of you in this here house" (258). When Silver's daunting defense of Jim is complete, the others congregate in one corner and discuss whether or not to kill Jim. To Jim, "the low hiss of their whispering sounded in my ear continuously, like a stream" (259); again, he sees death in terms of water, an image that can remind us that the manly bravado he shows under pressure is associated with his escapade at sea, from his nearly fatal isolation in the coracle, to his violent confrontation with Israel Hands, whose body, together with his victim's, still lies in the shallow green water of the north estuary.

In his shrewd bargaining with the pirates, Jim deals with the even slyer Silver on equal terms, man-to-man, but the whole transaction fills him with misgivings. He cannot help admiring the consummate villain, who in turn treats him with respect and almost affection—indeed he comes across as somewhat fatherly in his attitude to the young man, as Jim can now be called. Stevenson seems to be saying that no moral positions are clear-cut in life; crucial decisions often involve hedging one's bets and bargaining with devils. As Jim himself puts it:

It was long ere I could close an eye, and Heaven knows I had matter enough for thought in the man whom I had slain that afternoon, in my own most perilous position, and, above all, in the remarkable game that I saw Silver now engaged upon—keeping the mutineers together with one hand, and grasping, with the other, after every means, possible and impossible, to make his peace and save his miserable life. . . . my heart was sore for him, wicked as he was. . . . (271)

None of the men on the island is more moral than another in their pathetic, desperate attempts to survive and return home. The next day, the landscape makes the Doctor appear to Jim as Silver once did: "when I ran to a loophole and looked out, I saw him standing, like Silver once before, up to the mid-leg in creeping vapour" (272).

When the hunt begins in earnest, it first takes Jim, Silver and the others through "heavy, miry ground," but the scenery soon becomes more idyllic, with thickets, fresh air, and stirring sunbeams belying the eventual outcome of the expedition (287). The discovery of a skeleton is jarring, but it points to the treasure (288). Then, just before the surprise of the empty treasure chest, Stevenson gives Jim and the reader one last, long look at the island:

The plateau being somewhat tilted towards the west, this spot on which we had paused commanded a wide prospect on either hand. Before us, over the tree-tops, we beheld the Cape of the Woods fringed with surf; behind, we not only looked down upon the anchorage and Skeleton Island, but saw—clear across the spit and the eastern lowlands—a great field of open sea upon the east. Sheer above us rose the Spy-glass, here dotted with single pines, there black with precipices. There was no sound but that of the distant breakers, mounting from all round, and the chirp of countless insects in the brush. Not a man, not a sail upon the sea; the very largeness of the view increased the sense of solitude. (292)

While the pirates look at the landscape simply for clues that will lead them to the treasure, Jim feels a profound sense of isolation as he observes the Cape "fringed with surf" and then "a great field of open sea." The prospect of the sea is, as usual, accompanied by the haunting sound of the "distant breakers." Thus this passage not only looks ahead to the eventual journey home but, more importantly, continues Stevenson's modernist exploration of Jim's progress towards maturity and the worldly knowledge it brings—through narrative events framed by the natural landscape—of life as harsh, precarious, and amoral. When the treasure-seekers reach the grove where the chest is buried, Jim thinks of the grove as a haunted place where the buccaneer Flint had killed six of his companions: "This grove, that was now so peaceful, must then have rung with cries, I thought; and even with the thought I could believe I heard it ringing still" (299). Much earlier, of course, Jim had thought of the groves and dells as idyllic.

After the treasure chest has been found empty, the Doctor, Gray, and Ben Gunn ambush Silver and his accomplices, and it is revealed that Gunn had the treasure all along, Jim sails back to the north inlet on a "smooth sea" (306). He does not feel isolated or distressed now and knows he will soon be returning home. But to the end, Stevenson stresses the landscape's shaping of Jim into a man. As they sail away from the atoll, the crew, along with Silver, see the three men they have marooned on the island, a fate which Jim had often been terrifyingly close to suffering. Heightening the horror, Stevenson has Jim focus on the lone "spit of sand" on which they are last seen: "when I next looked out they had disappeared from the spit, and the spit itself had almost melted out of sight in the growing distance. That was, at least, the end of that; and before noon, to my inexpressible joy, the highest rock of Treasure Island had sunk into the blue round of sea" (314). The sea that had almost swallowed him up finally rids him of his most hated sight—the landscape that metamorphosed him into an adult weary of violence and death. Jim's emphasis on the vanishing island extends to his narration, as he says with rueful understatement that the receding view is "at least, the end of that" (314). He waits for the tallest point of the island—the site of his violent maturation—to disappear, but that hated spot and the three abandoned men who reminded him of what might easily have been his own plight haunt his memories and dreams and decisively affect his tone as narrator.

Although the ship, on what ought to be a triumphal

⁸See "Keepsake Mill" from *A Child's Garden of Verses, An Inland Voyage, "The Merry Men," Catriona, and The Ebb-Tide*.

⁹It may not be a stretch to connect the moon and moonlight with Long John Silver. Not only was the moon linked with the pirates earlier, but here the lunar crescent is twice described as "silvery" (244, 245), as Jim unwittingly

return voyage, stops at a "beautiful land-locked gulf," anchors for a time at such an idyllic place in the best tradition of an adventure-romance, and Silver escapes with a bag of gold, the lasting image of the novel concerns Jim's psychological obsession with the island and his "dark and bloody sojourn" on it (315): "Oxen and wain-ropes would not bring me back again to that accursed island; and the worst dreams that ever I have are when I hear the surf booming about its coasts" (317).

There has been much speculation as to both the literary origins of *Treasure Island* and the romanticism of islands in general as a setting. Yet it is Stevenson's treatment of the natural landscape that truly sets *Treasure Island* apart, not only from other island adventure-romances of the time, but from the spirit of romanticism itself and how it views the sea. One critic of Romantic poetry writes: "Like the mountains, the sea is antisocial. . . it is a type of sublime wilderness that provides a particularly good testing ground for the romantic hero"; "Such landscapes of refuge and retreat are isolated but are not themselves hostile to man, and even their solitude may be modified" (Fletcher 25, 4). It is striking, however, that Stevenson does not treat the sea as such a sublime wilderness that inspires contemplation; rather, the seascape most often fills Jim with fear, forcing him to act to survive, to experience hardship, and thereby achieve maturity. The sea is indeed a testing ground for him, but he is no romantic hero—any notion of a hero is absent from the book, which emphasizes instead how the desperation of men in life-and-death circumstances can blur seemingly clear-cut moral positions—Jim becomes a man who knows how to survive in a morally relative world. John Sandford talks of the pre-Romantic view of islands as illustrative of "isolation as a manly virtue rather than a curse," while in nineteenth-century literature, the island setting is seen as a prison (82). But in Stevenson's novel, the island and the sea are neither wholly liberating nor wholly imprisoning: Jim loses his boyhood innocence and is hardened in his dealings with the adult world he enters, thus helping his own survival. The sea and island make a man of him and haunt him ever after, effects far removed from the contemplative aims of sublime Romantic landscapes. Jim Hawkins' incomprehensible dread of *Treasure Island* bespeaks Stevenson's interest in the "something both more essential, more transient, more elusive" that Baruch Hochman attributes to the modern masters of fiction (12). Especially in the way that he employed landscape we can see that, like the modernists, he "stressed a range of unconscious motives that shape and inform the conscious self. . . . The modernist conception of character. . . often directs our consciousness away from the immediate context of social, moral, economic striving, and tends to subvert our sense of monolithic coherence in characters" (Hochman 12). Yet *Treasure Island* is also not as modernist as some recent critics have suggested. Tom Hubbard talks of "sheer menace" as "characteristic of Stevenson's islands" (77). Yet the island itself is not particularly menacing to Jim: he cannot forget the hardships, fear, and close calls indelibly associated with its seascape and its landscape, but he also registers images of sunbeams falling around him and the panoramic prospects that occasionally open up before him. Sandison argues that "antagonism towards the father,"

(15) is central to Stevenson as well as modernism, and talks also of the Freudian symbolism of the island landscape. Silver, while a threat to Jim for much of the book, at first wins the boy's admiration but repels him after he discovers the one-legged pirate's bloodthirsty and treacherous nature. By the end of the book, however, after having joined with Silver for mutual protection (Silver saves Jim from the pirates, and Jim vows to keep Silver from the gallows), his feelings are ambivalent, and he is satisfied with the eventual escape of "that formidable seafaring man," and hopes that he lives in comfort in this world, for he will not in the next, Jim is certain (317). In this I find little of the "antagonism towards the father" that Sandison focusses on, nor do I agree with his Freudian observations about Jim's reactions to the landscape of the island. Stevenson does not employ the hills and spires of rock to dwarf Jim's manhood, and uses his adventures on the island in order to show him learning how to endure hardship and read the landscape, as the means of his acquisition of adult experience—harsh, violent, unheroic and mean but also gritty and determined.

In discussing the island motif in Stevenson's fiction, too, I think that critics have missed the point. Nicholas Rankin and Jenni Calder, for example, in writing about *Treasure Island*, talk of the many islands in Stevenson's childhood, and Rankin goes on to write of how, to a child, an island is "a place where it can be safely isolated, as it once was, in the womb. . . . An island encloses, but it also excludes, like a charmed circle" (43-44). In a similar vein, the less psychologically-inclined Calder writes:

An island suggests a perfect territory of the imagination, especially a distant, barely charted island. Isolated, hard to find, cut off, a world unto itself, it is the perfect territory to exclude, not necessarily reality, unless one chooses to, but any aspect of life that one does not want to intrude. An island was a place where child or adult could forget any part of the adult world that challenged or distorted fantasy. . . . (169-70)

Such notions are fine in the abstract, but my analysis of the landscape imagery in the novel shows that Jim is not safely ensconced in an amniotic Caribbean atoll. Isolation, violent death, and amoral acts contribute decisively to his achievement of selfhood. The island setting is neither idyllic nor contained. In *Treasure Island*, Stevenson makes a deft transition from using landscape—primarily in the early chapters set in England—for the foreshadowing and atmosphere typical of the adventure-romance, to using landscape imagery in the service of a *Bildungsroman* in which life is seen as demanding, harsh, and morally relative. The landscape in the book is of vital importance to the development of the consciousness of Jim Hawkins, which is the true story of *Treasure Island*. Stevenson himself perhaps realized the nuances and subtle meanings of his landscape imagery when he talked of how the map "was the most of the plot" ("My First Book" xxix) and that the "author must know his countryside, whether real or imaginary, like his hand" (xxx). Indeed, in the topography of *Treasure Island*, the "tale has a root there; it grows in that soil; it has a spine of its own behind the words," and it is more true than Stevenson

imagined that, as the author studies a map which he will turn into a narrative landscape, "relations will appear that he had not thought upon. . . even when a map is not all the plot, as it was in *Treasure Island*, it will be found to be a mine of suggestion" (xxx).

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A Hundred Daily Comedies: Anne Thackeray Ritchie's Comic Identity in *Old Kensington*

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Anne Thackeray Ritchie's virtually forgotten novel *Old Kensington* (1873) deserves recognition as one of Victorian fiction's most powerful and dramatic narratives of self-construction. A *Bildungsroman* concerned with female subjectivity and self-expression within the stifling constraints of mid-Victorian English culture, *Old Kensington*, like its more famous relation *Jane Eyre*, is also fundamentally comic, not only in its conventional plot resolution (inheritance and marriage), but in its adherence to the eighteenth-century Addisonian ideal of disinterested comic sympathy as a standard for true self-consciousness.¹ Ritchie's narrative demonstrates that a comic resolution to the self's larger epistemological crisis—how to transcend the individual's radical isolation from others—involves a painful process of self-division and projection, a recognition that the achievement of self-consciousness means rejecting the very idea of a

coherent, concretized individuality.² This process of displacing the self in order to save it is familiar to readers of Victorian fiction, and Ritchie's heroine, Dolly Vanborough, is reminiscent not only of *Jane Eyre*, but of Margaret Hale, Maggie Tulliver, Dorothea Brooke, and others. But quite distinctly from these novels, Ritchie's impressionistic narrative enacts the very diffusion of the self that comic self-consciousness requires, revealing an identity between the act of novel-writing and the formation of self-consciousness itself. Telling a story is nothing more than narrating the self into being—Ritchie's *Bildungsroman* reveals that aesthetics and comic epistemology are one and the same.

If *Jane Eyre* is a novel about the development of a comic sensibility in a self that is persistently and negatively constructed by others, *Old Kensington* traces a similar development in a self that is explicitly conscious of its own fleet-

¹As Stuart Tave and Ronald Paulson have persuasively argued, Whig aestheticians such as Joseph Addison and Richard Steele reimagined Cervantes' *Don Quixote* as a model for British civility and social virtue, in contrast to savage Tory satire and the Hobbesian laughter of superiority. See especially Paulson, Chapters 1 and 3. I would argue that this "amiable humorist" concept of Whig comic theory was adopted by nineteenth-century British novelists as a fictional construct—the comic consciousness—in an attempt to combat radical individual isolation implied by eighteenth-century philosophical skepticism, secularism, and economic industrialization. The

realist novel, the dominant literary mode of the British nineteenth century, both modeled and disseminated comic consciousness to a nation of alienated readers, promoting an essentially aesthetic vision of social reform and reconnection of the individual to the collective.

²See J. Jeffrey Franklin's lengthy discussion of Smith's concept of self-division in *Serious Play*, Chapter 3. On Smith's theory of sympathy, see also David Marshall. Roy Cain earlier identified Hume and Smith as sources for Hazlitt's use of the concept of disinterested sympathy.

ing coherence.³ Brontë's use of the first person "autobiographical" narrative creates a powerful yet misleading impression of Jane's "self-image." While purporting to tell her own tale, Jane unconsciously repeats the tales others tell of her. Only in moments "out of herself" (in the Red Room, or in her dreams and visions, for example) does Jane's subjectivity emerge, empowering Jane to acts of self-definition. True intersubjectivity, the essence of disinterested comic sympathy, is possible only if the self identifies its own individuality—its ability to speak in its own voice. Despite Jane's apparently concrete grasp of her own narrative, she is rarely speaking for herself, but for others in the novel who construct her for their own self-protective purposes. Moreover, Jane is not only a threat to them individually, but to the social structure they both represent and exploit. Jane thus becomes a composite of "detestable" and "ridiculous" identities—an animal, an incubus, a demon, a liar. However, Jane's shadow self, which is obscured by externally imposed identities, asserts itself during moments of vision, when Jane is driven to the brink of complete self-effacement by Mrs. Reed's cruelty, Rochester's siren song, and St. John's over-mastering control. These moments of self-leaving allow Jane the subjective space for the evolution of her comic relationship with Rochester, one marked by its Carlylean sensibility of sport, its mutually corrective and deeply sympathetic dynamic.⁴ Jane's true self-identity—her self-speaking voice—is ultimately illuminated by an open, unconstrained natural laugh, a laugh that identifies her as one of Addison's own.

With Dolly Vanborough, Ritchie starts from different ground. Here we have an Eliot-like third person narrative voice, with a distinct perspective on the events and characters narrated in the text. Unlike *Jane Eyre*, where Jane's misleading self-assuredness contributes to a narrative instability that tends, consciously or unconsciously, to raise epistemological barriers between the teller, the tale, and the reader, there seems to be less conflict between the authority of the self-interested teller and the authenticity of the tale. Instead, Ritchie deliberately distances us from the text, mediating it through a sympathetic, yet strangely fragmented, Wordsworthian memory of recaptured time. "A quarter of a century ago the shabby tide of progress had not spread to the quiet old suburb where Lady Sarah Francis's house was standing," the narrator begins, "with its many windows dazzling as the sun travelled across the old-fashioned housetops to set into a distant sea of tenements and echoing life" (Chapter 1, 1). We are deliberately separated not only in terms of

time and space, but in terms of movement and stasis—the differential *rates* of change of time and space. In other words, in this first sentence of the novel, the narrator establishes the relativity of seemingly fixed narrative concepts. Time is at once a constant (a quarter of a century ago) and a variable, marked by the differential rates at which the "shabby tide of progress" spreads and the sun travels across "the old-fashioned housetops." Likewise, space is conceived as both static and dynamic. The "quiet old suburb" is excluded from the "echoing life" of the city just beyond the park walls, the permanence of its ancient houses contrasted to the modernity of the urban tenements. There is also a moral relativism associated with these rate differentials. Progress, temporality, change are somehow already tainted, "shabby," whereas the "dazzling" windows of the old suburb promise a certain moral beauty, at least on the surface.

This type of narrative distance immediately poses an epistemological dilemma for the reader. How can we begin to consider the question of self-identity in a world of radically variable perspectives on the conventional narrative framework? If the narrative cannot place us in the same frame of reference with its subjects—the same historical field of apprehension—how can our perspective ever be fixed long enough to apprehend, much less to understand, our own subjectivity, to say nothing of another's? If comic self-consciousness depends on an ability to fix another's subjectivity in our gaze so that we may sympathize with it in a mutually corrective manner—through marriage, friendship, or disinterested social action—what can be the basis for such self-consciousness if subjectivity is always already distorted by the essential formlessness of its composite materials?

Simply put, Ritchie's narrative never allows us a fixed perspective from which to view Dolly Vanborough's evolving consciousness. Events and sense impressions intrude upon and subtly influence the development of the characters, conversations are interrupted and diverted in other directions, motives are hopelessly mixed and misunderstood. "Rather than keep dinner waiting people break off their talk, their loves, their prayers," the narrator interjects when Dolly's mother calls her away from the dying Lady Sarah's bedside. Again, in contrast to *Jane Eyre*, whose narrative follows a more or less diachronic, chronological sequence, Dolly exists in a synchronic narrative world in which each object seems independent of every other object; each exists in its own time and space, its particular zone of isolation. Like Teufelsdröckh's vision of individual beings emerging out of the Cimmerian darkness, crossing the world stage, and dis-

appearing back into oblivion, these objects move among and past one another on different planes, unconsciously casting their shadows on one another but not mutually entwined in an Eliot-like web of life.

Frank Raban, for example, exemplifies this essential psychic isolation:

There are some years of one's life when one is less alive than at others, as there are different degrees of strength and power to live in the course of the same existence. Frank was not in the despairing state in which we first knew him, but he was not yet as other people are, and in hours of depression such as this, he was used to feel lonely and apart. He was used to see other people happy, anxious, busy, hurrying after one another, and he would look on as now, with his hands in his pockets, not indifferent, but feeling as if Fate had put him down solitary and silent, into the world—a dumb note (so he used to think) in the great music. And yet he knew that the music was there—that mighty human vibration which exists independent of all the dumb notes, cracked instruments, rifted lutes, and broken lyres of which we hear so much, and he had but to open his ears to it. (Chapter 30, 271)

Here "life" is imagined not as a "history" in the biographical sense, but as a kind of energy, more or less intense at any given moment. While Frank's "depression" may have many explanations for those in search of causal relationships—his as yet unrequited love for Dolly, his guilt over his first wife's death, his estrangement from his family, his jealousy of Henley—his self-image as a "dumb note . . . in the great music" bespeaks a much bleaker view of personal identity as a nullity. Whatever Frank's feelings may be, they cannot resolve the fundamental epistemological impasse at which he finds himself. At the same time, however, Frank "knew the music was there" and "had but to open his ears to it"; he is squarely on the horns of the Humean dilemma between extreme skepticism and implicit faith in some reality beyond the senses. He also appears conscious of the comic implications of that dilemma, of the paradox of individual ineffectiveness ("all the dumb notes, cracked instruments, rifted lutes, and broken lyres") and collective power ("that mighty human vibration"). Frank is poised on the edge of comic consciousness, the self-knowledge that cannot rationally accept the self's connection to the collective but that can nevertheless create a provisional, fictional relationship between the self and the collective for the purpose of promoting an aesthetic ideal of individual and social happiness. Just as Hume himself, Ritchie has no illusions about the evolution of that consciousness. To open one's ears means to understand that although we are each broken instruments in our own essential isolation, we must continue to play as if there is an orchestra and we are members of it.

By the same token, Dolly is repeatedly characterized as unconscious, absent: "There was no knowing exactly what she was, her mother used to say," the narrator tells us. "One day straight as an arrow—bright, determined; another day, grey and stiff, and almost ugly and high-shouldered":

Did she do it on purpose? In early life she didn't care a bit what people thought of her. In this she was a little unwomanly perhaps, but unwomanly in the best and noblest sense. When with time those mysterious other selves came upon her that we meet as we travel along the road, bewildering her and pointing with all their different experiences, she ceased to judge either herself or others as severely; she loved faith and truth, and hated meanness and dissimulation as much as ever. Only, being a woman too honest to deceive herself, she found she could no longer apply the precepts that she had used once to her satisfaction. To hate the devil and all his works is one thing, but to say who is the devil and which are his works is another. (Chapter 13, 111-12)

Like Raban, Dolly is characterized as disconnected from the collective. But whereas Raban imagines his isolation as a silence or nullity in the music of humanity, Dolly imagines hers as fidelity to "faith and truth." Her "self-imagination" thus reverses the moral position occupied by Raban, who contrasts the powerlessness of the individual with the mightiness of the whole. For Dolly, the self is the touchstone, the container of good; the collective, in contrast, is corrupted by "meanness and dissimulation."

This difference in moral perspective is related to and implicitly critiques Raban's and Dolly's relative gender positions. Ironically, it is much easier for Raban to project an existential powerlessness for the simple reason that he holds all the power. Despite the fact that he incurs substantial gambling debts and his first marriage, which ends in his wife's premature death, is clouded by suspicions of neglect and mistreatment, Raban nevertheless secures a teaching appointment at Cambridge and inherits his uncle's estates. While Raban's repentance is undoubtedly sincere, the consequences of the actions of his own "mysterious other selves"—which incidentally destroy the lives of Emma Penfold and her family—do not include his actual impeachment from political and economic power. Dolly, on the other hand, does not have that luxury. She is truly powerless, culturally constructed to perform, through her proposed marriage to Henley, the transfer and consolidation of Lady Sarah's wealth. Dolly's only defense to this externally imposed self-identity is to be "unwomanly"; to ignore her cultural construction as a wife and adhere to a self-generated moral standard. Her achievement of comic consciousness, which involves her growth into sympathy and the realization that the devil and his works are as much projections of self as anything external, is a much greater leap of faith than that taken by Raban. Dolly's leap requires her to give up that part of her subjectivity that empowers her to imagine herself as individual and against cultural norms. For Raban, individuality, however fictional, is culturally granted; to be sure, his self-consciousness is bought at a price, but the price is much easier to pay for those who have always had the wherewithal to pay it.

In this context, it is not surprising that *Old Kensington* has been read as novel about Dolly's resistance to masculine power and the importance of relationships between women, as demonstrated by Dolly's loyalty to Lady Sarah—a loyalty that ostensibly costs her her engagement to Henley (see

fire that pervades and vivifies his whole being. He is a humorist from his inmost soul; he thinks as a humorist, he feels, imagines, acts as a humorist: Sport is the element in which his nature lives and works" ("Richter" 14). "Sport" is an important, if ambiguous, idea. Carlyle, borrowing the term from Schiller, opposes it to "sentimentality." According to Carlyle, sentimentality converts "true humour" into "falsehood" and is the product of overwrought sensibility. "The essence of humour is sensibility," Carlyle announces, "warm, tender fellow-feeling with all forms of existence. . . . but it is this *sport* of sensibility; wholesome and perfect therefore; as it were, the playful teasing fondness of a mother to her child" ("Richter" 16). Carlyle points to Rousseau as an example of sentimentality "run wild"; true humor is more disinterested, a "playful easing fondness" which seems to spring from a deep philanthropic impulse.

³On *Old Kensington* as an "autobiographical" novel, see Gérin, 171-174. However, she also criticizes the novel for its "want of structure, want of an independent existence. . . . The personal experience on which it was based was all-pervading, leaving little or no license for invention to lend it a life of its own. The story is built up of a succession of vividly realized, or rather remembered, episodes, feebly linked together. Lacking a unifying structure, *Old Kensington* still has charming and original qualities of its own, which can well account for its great success" (172-173). I hope my own reading contributes to changing this perception.

⁴Carlyle's conception of comedy is closely akin to that of Addison. His most explicit writing about comedy is found in his essays on Jean Paul Friedrich Richter, a German writer and aesthete of the Napoleonic period. Carlyle's highest praise of Richter is that "Humour" is "the central

Schwartz-Mackenzie xxx). I'm not sure that this is entirely the case. Dolly's unstinting love and sympathy for her brother George seems equally as formative as her bond with her aunt. At the same time, her relationships with other key women in the novel, particularly with her mother, Rhoda, and Lady Henley, are marked by jealousy, misunderstanding, and injured feelings. Dolly does form a close friendship with Mrs. Fane, by whom she is nursed through the illness brought on by her grief at the virtually simultaneous deaths of George and Lady Sarah, but even this relationship is initiated and mediated by Colonel Fane. It is thus somewhat questionable to me whether Ritchie intends to foreground bonds between women as a hedge against male authority, or whether she finds that both women and men, although starting from far different positions of individual and social relationships. Could it be that those "mysterious other selves," so reminiscent of Pater's friendly companions, exist synchronically for each one of us, layer upon layer accruing with each moment of experience, each a self onto itself? And could it be that each of those other selves exists in its own dimension of time and space, always simultaneously part of and separate from "the course of the same existence"? If this is the case, Ritchie provides another possible key to the Carlylean hierogram, a key Brontë finds in Jane's visionary moments of self-leaving. For Ritchie, that key is not the sanctity of one type of relationship over another, but the willing suspension of that overpowering sense of isolation and the inexpressible sadness that accompanies it.

This suspension of the silent self might also be thought of as the resistance of tragedy. Preoccupied with the dying Lady Sarah, Dolly attends a dinner party with Henley, who is annoyed by her "constant depressions":

It is fortunate, perhaps, that other people are not silent always because we are sad. With all its objections—I have read this in some other book—there is a bracing atmosphere in society, a Spartan-like determination to leave cares at home, and to try to forget all the ills and woes and rubs to which we are subject, and to think only of the present and the neighbour's fate has assigned for the time. Little by little, Dolly felt happier and more reassured. Where everything was so commonplace and unquestioning it seemed as if tragedy could not exist. Comedy seems much more real at times than tragedy. Three or four tragedies befall us in the course of our existence, and a hundred daily comedies pass before our eyes. (Chapter 34, 303-304)

Here, perhaps, is what Ritchie means by the "mighty human vibration"—the notion that "other people are not silent always because we are sad." As we have seen, Raban's depression is associated with feelings of isolation, of being in but not part of the world. He senses its existence without being able to project himself into it, to forge sustainable human relationships. For Dolly, on the other hand, depression is a function of misprision, both in her external relationships and in her confusion over the authenticity of her mysterious other selves. In other words, Dolly's sadness springs partly from a nascent awareness that the self is

incoherent and fluid, an awareness awakened by the very changes in her relationships that sadden her.

Moreover, Dolly's sense of the "mighty human vibration" is much more concretized than Raban's. Rather than viewing intersubjective human relations in the abstract, as Raban does, Dolly is deeply affected by minute changes in register of specific relationships. "Dolly was haunted by the sense of coming evil; she was pained by Robert's manner," the narrator tells us during the dinner party scene. "He was still displeased, and he took care to show that it was so. She was troubled about George; she was wondering what he was about. . . . Again she told herself that it was absurd to be anxious, and wicked to be cross, and she tried to shake off her depression, and to speak to the courteous though rather alarming neighbour on her right hand" (Chapter 34, 303). Note the disjunction between the foreboding opening clause "Dolly was haunted" and the relatively transitory feeling implied by the conjoined clause that begins "she was pained." What is the coming evil that haunts Dolly? The circumstances of her immediate impressions—pain at Robert's annoyance, worry about George (this scene occurs just after George breaks with Rhoda and leaves Cambridge)—do not seem to justify her "sense of coming evil," yet events soon bear out her worst fears. Dolly's mysterious other self has already forecast George's death in the Crimea and Henley's duplicitous relationship with Rhoda, yet she suppresses that self as "absurd" and "wicked." Again, her suppression of these voices, her confusion over their authenticity, is partly attributable to the gender role she is expected to play. Robert is irritated when he overhears someone say, "That girl does not look happy"; it is "unwomanly" to appear unhappy in society. Her unhappiness, in fact, is a direct challenge to Robert's authority. "I wonder when you will learn to trust me, Dora," Robert asks her. "How shall we ever get on unless you do?" (Chapter 32, 286). To listen to her mysterious other self, which seems to discern her past, present, and future in a single comprehending insight, is to trust her own voice instead of that of her male protector. Her resistance to that voice is at the root of her depression, which, when viewed in light of her subsequent exhaustion and debilitating illness, is clinical and eventually life-threatening.

Yet at the same time Dolly begins to manifest the physical and emotional signs of her self-instability, she finds in the society of Colonel Fane a degree of happiness and reassurance. Ritchie's characterization of this moment as a "forgetting" and a containment of the experience of the present moment is consistent with her imagination of the self as synchronic, existing on many planes at one time. Dolly experiences a similar moment during a visit to Cambridge:

There are blissful moments when one's heart seems to beat in harmony with the great harmony: when one is oneself light and warmth, and the delight of light, and a voice in the comfortable chorus of contentment and praise all around about. Such a minute had come to Dolly in her white muslin dress, with the Cam flowing at her feet and the lights dazzling in her grey eyes.

Mrs. Morgan gave a loud sneeze under the tree, and the beautiful minute broke and dispersed away. "I

wonder what it can be like to grow old," Dolly wonders, looking up; "to remember back for years and years, and to wear stiff curls and satinette?" Dolly began to picture herself a long procession of future selves, each older and more curiously bedizened than the other. Somehow they seemed to make a straight line between herself and Mrs. Morgan under the tree. It was an uncomfortable fancy. Dolly tried to forget it, and leant over the wall, and looked down into the cool depths of the stream again. Was that fish rising? What was this? Her own face again looking up from the depth. (Chapter 22, 200)

Dolly's moments of forgetting are often characterized as fleeting instances of harmony, contrasting with Raban's sense of discord. But the narrative never allows these moments to be sustained; they are always "dispersed away" by the incongruity of the "real" with Dolly's transcendent vision. Yet curiously, Dolly's "beautiful minute" segues into a reflection on her own self-identity as, in Hardy's terms, "a series of seemings." In another vision she sees herself as a future reiteration, each more bizarrely clothed than its predecessor, leading to old age and, ultimately, to the ghastly clothing of the tomb. When she tries to forget this darker vision, she is confronted with her own image in the stream. While this reflection suggests Dolly's sometimes narcissistic self-absorption, it likewise deepens her sense of her own self-division, her growing consciousness that her feelings of well-being and integration occur only in moments of forgetting. While harshly incongruous with the external markers that work to classify her (primarily her great expectations), these moments of fully realized self-consciousness are capable of suspending Dolly's "life-time": they reveal her entire history in a glance, allow her to remember forward as well as "back for years and years." This forward memory closely mirrors the narrative movement of the text, as if the narrator's, or perhaps Ritchie's, consciousness somehow fuses with Dolly's, always looking in all directions at one time within these epiphanic moments of vision.⁵

But at the same time she recognizes the paradox of her visions of harmony and fragmentation, Dolly also seems to achieve, at least provisionally, a practical realization of the "mighty human vibration," which she is capable of identifying in individual human bonds. Raban and Dolly might even be said to represent tragedy and comedy, respectively. His absorption in the operation of fate and essential detachment from the world is clearly a tragic attitude; her ability to continue to engage in the world, even in the face of her growing awareness of its arbitrary and capricious nature, is certainly a comic one, at least within conventional terminology. Tragedy, Dolly perceives, cannot exist if we resist despair at the existential insight of our loneliness. At certain times in our lives, particularly the death or estrangement of a loved one, that loneliness is brought home to us with crushing force.

With respect to Dolly, however, tragedy is also a matter of denying the authority of her own voice, of submitting to the false voices that urge compliance with cultural norms—for example, the expectations of Henley and her mother. Comedy, on the other hand, is found in the "commonplace and unquestioning." At first glance, this could be read to mean that comedy is associated with precisely the social conformity Dolly resists. To engage in society, to submit to its superficialities and controlling hypocrisy, is to float with the stream, just as Dolly allows Henley to row her down the Thames in the last untroubled twilight of their engagement.

Yet that submission to authority is not what is represented in the text. Colonel Fane, a good-natured, noble English soldier in the mold of Colonel Newcome, befriends Dolly, who is "surprised to find herself talking to Colonel Fane, as if she had known him all her life. A few minutes before he had been but a name" (Chapter 34, 305). He tells her of her father's courage, urges her to meet his sister-in-law, a nurse in a fever-ward, and offers to assist George in military advancement:

There is something in life which is not love, but which plays as great a part almost—sympathy, quick response—I scarcely know what name to give it; at any moment, in the hour of need perhaps, a door opens, and some one comes into the room. It may be a commonplace man in a shabby coat, a placid lady in a smart bonnet; does nothing tell us that this is one of the friends to be, whose hands are to help us over the stony places, whose kindly voices will sound to us hereafter voices out of the infinite? Life has, indeed, many phases, love has many a metempsychosis. Is it a lost love we are mourning—a lost hope? Only dim, distant stars, we say, where all was light. Lo, friendship comes dawning in generous and peaceful streams! (Chapter 34, 306)

This translation of a "name" to a "known" is the comic process at work. Dolly's tragedy, borne of her conformity to Henley's "trust" and the suppression of the "voices out of the infinite," is transformed by the "commonplace" comedy of "sympathy" or "quick response." Again, this "quick response" is not only a reaction to the proffered friendship or kindness of another, but to the voice of the mysterious other self that travels with us and emerges out of loss and the despair of isolation. As we have seen, comic self-projection assumes the division and identification of the paradoxical individuality and collectivity of the self. Ritchie takes the comic idea of the divided self even further, imagining the self as always in the process of division and multiplication even as it envisions the potential for transcendent harmony. "Life has, indeed, many phases, love has many a metempsychosis": those phases are life's individual present moments, each contained within itself yet linked by memory

⁵On memory and the effacement of the boundaries between past and present as central to Ritchie's writing, see Abigail Bloom. In a reading of one of Ritchie's recollections of youth, Bloom observes: "The past in some ways is more real than the present and it is a part of the present. Thus, Ritchie's experiences in Rome are given a rebirth by the transformation of memory

into art" (80). I would argue further that part of Ritchie's narrative strategy in the novel is to enact this forward and backward movement of consciousness, as it constructs the present "real" out of both these aestheticized memories of the past and projections of the future.

and the "infinite" voice which mysteriously tells our whole story in a fleeting instant of coherence. Dolly senses the approaching evil in one of these flashes of "kindly" insight, yet that very self-knowledge allows her to resist the impulse to tragedy and to embrace the transcendence of comic self-consciousness, the "generous and peaceful streams" of friendship.⁶

Of course, it is important to remember that the narrator glosses Dolly's response to Colonel Fane's kindness, once again raising the issue of the narrator's mediation of the text and leaving us to evaluate her authority to tell the "truth" of the tale. At the end of the novel, the narrative shifts to the narrator's own voice, which describes the loving home in which she writes and the regenerative power of the domestic ideal "of the phoenix of home and of love springing from the dead ashes":

Take courage, say the happy—the message of the sorrowful is harder to understand. The echoes come from afar, and reach beyond our ken. As the cry passes beyond us into the awful unknown, we feel that this is, perhaps, the voice in life that reaches beyond life itself. Not of harvests to come, not of peaceful home hearts do they speak in their sorrow. Their fires are out, their hearths are in ashes, but see, it was the sunlight that extinguished the flame. (Chapter 56, 531)

Just prior to this passage, Dolly finds a packet of letters written by Henley to Emma Penfold, Raban's first wife. They reveal that at the time Henley was courting Dolly, he and Emma were having an affair, which Henley broke off with the assertion that "I am not a marrying man" (Chapter 56, 530). With this revelation, Dolly finally realizes that Henley's marriage proposal was premised solely on the expectation of her inheritance. Frank sees the letters burning in the fire and "understood all and stooping he took his wife's hand in his and kissed it" (Chapter 56, 531). This conclusion is far different, for example, from the "Reader, I married him" resolution of the marriage plot in *Jane Eyre*. In this tale of betrayed and broken relationships, it seems clear that Dolly's is the message of the sorrowful, whose cup nevertheless runneth over.

Overwhelmed with grief over the deaths of George and

Lady Sarah, Robert's duplicity, and—the final blow—the demolition of Church House at Rhoda's behest, Dolly seems to give up:

She was looking for something that was not any more, listening for silent voices, and the girl's whole heart answered as she stood stretching out her arms towards the ulterior shores. At that minute she would have been very glad to lie down on the old stone terrace and never rise again. Time was so long, it weighed and weighed, and seemed to be crushing her. She had tried to be brave, but her cup was full, and she felt as if she could bear no more, not one heavy hour more. This great weight on her heart seemed to have been gathering from a long way off, to have been lasting for years and years; no tears came to ease this pain. Marker had sat down on the stone ledge and was wiping her grief in her handkerchief. Dolly was at her old haunt by the pond, and bending over and looking into the depth with strange circling eyes.

(Chapter 55, 514)

This vision of her dead self, drowned in the pond, completes Dolly's prior vision, when she looked at her image in the Cam and saw a succession of selves leading to old age and the grave. Those silent voices Dolly seeks are all the dead selves associated with the ruined Church House and its inmates, the house characterized at the beginning of the novel as standing outside of time and warping space around it. It is the intrusion of time into this stasis that crushes Dolly's spirit, the consciousness that prior selves do not remain fixed, even in memory, but must alter along with the context in which they were constructed. That incongruity is almost too bitter to bear, yet it is in essence a comic incongruity, borne of the self-consciousness that both greets and mourns each iteration of the dividing self as a friend and fellow-traveler.⁷

Raban's sympathetic intervention forestalls Dolly's suicide and restores her to this self-consciousness, this comic peace:

If there are certain states of mind in which facts seem exaggerated, and every feeling is over-wrought, it is at these very times that people are most ready to accept

the blessings of consolation. "Peace, be still," said the Divine Voice, speaking to the tossing waves. And voices come, speaking in human tones to many a poor tempest-tossed soul. It may be only a friend who speaks, only, a lover perhaps, or a brother or sister's voice. Love, friendship, brotherhood give a meaning to the words. Only that day Dolly had thought that all was over, and already the miracle was working, the storm was passing from her heart. (Chapter 55, 516-17)

The "message of the sorrowful" is a consolatory one, difficult to hear for those who are "happy." But Ritchie speaks of two distinct species of happiness: one associated with "harvests to come" and "peaceful home hearths," and the other with those fortunate few who hear the call of their own voices, their mysterious other selves. The former describes, in the end, a specious conception of the relationship between individual and social identity, structured by oppressive rules that are hopelessly at odds with the true nature of the self and its social relations. The latter is a truer vision of the "happiness" of self-consciousness. Dolly's refusal to rebuild Church House and erection of a "row of model lodgings" instead represents not only a comic movement from self to community interest, but the doubly comic acceptance of the self as a provisional idea, whose coherence is only a fiction of convenience.

Indeed, Dolly's Church House self can never be reconstructed, only remembered in fleeting moments of transcendence when all iterations of the self in time and space are simultaneously present to interior apprehension. In these moments, each self views the other, speaking of its pain in a silent voice. The vestige of that self-experience is sympathy, the comic self-projection identified by Addison, Hume, Smith, and their nineteenth-century counterparts as the only possible path to reconciliation of self and society. But as Ritchie shows, the development of comic self-consciousness is an intensely personal and often painful experience, one that is even likely to end in sorrow. Yet it is "the sunlight that extinguished the flame," the enlargement of life at the expense of life's incidental externalities. Ritchie's narrative enacts this enlargement, illuminating not only the material

and social inequities that stifle and distort true social bonds, but the comic peace necessary to restore them.

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⁶Carol MacKay's distinction between women's empathetic humor and men's aggressive humor is instructive here. As MacKay observes, "In point of fact, women writers create images which embody both hate and humor, thus enabling the reader to experience the two emotions at once, in an altogether new way. In the writings of Anne Thackeray Ritchie we can recognize this creative consolidation in her unique brand of whimsy. What first appears as mere caprice of odd fancy enables Ritchie to critique stereotypes and conventions—especially those that have limited societal roles for women—with disarming success" ("Hate and Humor" 118). Although MacKay does not specifically refer to *Old Kensington*, I believe that Dolly's moments of "kindly insight" represent the kind of empathetic response MacKay identifies.

⁷Again Carol MacKay's work on Ritchie's *Chapters from Some Memoirs* (1894) provides some insight regarding Ritchie's narrative voice and this relation of time stasis. MacKay argues that "Ritchie does not write in the ego-centered tradition of autobiography that has been especially associated with male authors; instead, by evoking herself through her subject, she creates 'reflected biography.'" The result for Anne Thackeray Ritchie, in terms of both biography and autobiography, is a rich literary form created

in response to a characteristically Victorian dilemma. Apart from the specific proscription against writing his biography uttered by Thackeray, Ritchie had her own reserve to contend with, but she also held in common with other women writers what George Eliot called that 'precious speciality'—which leads them to quiet self-discovery" ("Biography as Reflected Autobiography" 65-66). Consequently, Ritchie's voice is ambivalent, decentered, "weaving fact and imagination to establish a meeting-ground in which images of fertility conjoin her as a creative writer with her father. Gardens and flowering often inform these images but Ritchie also uses any focal point of creativity, such as memorable locations and works of art, as the catalyst for an epiphany. This form of autobiography is thus much more than factual information arranged in chronological order" (67). Indeed, in *Old Kensington* Dolly's visions—her epiphanies—of her divided self occur when she is looking at her own reflection in a pond or imagining past and future forms of herself under a flowering tree. For Ritchie, the self is its own creator, as well as the creator of others, as her biography of her father may be said to create him. This is also the way comic consciousness works to construct self and other, and why I think MacKay attributes an "optimistic tone" to Ritchie's work (66).

"Escaping the Body's Gaol": the Poetry of Anne Brontë

Alexandra Leach

"She thought not of the grave, for that is but the body's gaol, but of all that is beyond it."
Ellen Nussey (Gaskell 297)

A well-known and still ubiquitous twentieth-century reference source dismisses Anne Brontë as "the youngest and least gifted of the celebrated Brontë sisters," and "writer of a few negligible poems" (de Ford 73). Often side-stepped by critics and underrated by Charlotte Brontë herself, Anne Brontë's work sheds light on the intriguing Brontë family,

but more importantly it reveals the inner thoughts of an early Victorian woman struggling to find an authentic voice. I believe that Brontë's poems chart her progress from derivative copyist at the side of Emily Brontë, her sister and early literary twin, through an increasing self-awareness arising from her experiences as a governess, to a fully-realized expression of her mature views and beliefs. Anne Brontë uses images of confinement and loneliness and metaphors of prisons and tombs throughout this journey. Instead of outgrowing this conventional Romantic vocabulary that has been

bequeathed and taught her, she learns to reuse it as a language that describes her own understanding of life's boundaries.

Anne Brontë does not fit the mold created by Charlotte, Emily, and Branwell Brontë and their later mythmakers. As a poet she works much more in the tradition of earlier hymn writers and poets such as Cowper and Moore, and is much closer to Wordsworth, among Romantic writers, than the Byron and Shelley favored by her siblings. Anne Brontë's poetry emphasizes the faculty of reason, specifically reason aided by conscience. Emotions are not inconsequential in her work, but they hold a subservient position to the discipline of the intellect. Her most mature works lead her to positions that at first may be seen as conventional or overly pious. In fact Anne Brontë's views on a generous and forgiving deity and on universal salvation are not common, but represent a philosophy reached on her own through both logical analysis and much soul-searching.

Brontë's preferred methodology is a self-reflexive examination of her own personal experiences. Apart from the Gondal poems, which are based on the imaginary land and characters of Gondal that she invented and shared with Emily, all of Brontë's poetry arises from personal experience. She tries to make sense of her life by subjecting these experiences to intellectual scrutiny and challenge by other views. She does not shy away from examining difficult issues; and Anne Brontë's life experiences were difficult. Apart from the relatively stable years between her two older sisters' deaths when she was five until she went away to school at age fifteen, she was either away from home and homesick, or back in her father's parsonage becoming increasingly alienated from other family members. Still she worked successfully as a governess for five years, published two novels, two poems in magazines, and a joint volume of poetry with Charlotte and Emily, all before her death at age twenty-nine. She was sent to school at all only because Emily was unable to adjust to life away from Haworth and could not finish out her term; Charlotte, who taught at the school, barely mentions her youngest sister in her abundant correspondence from this period. When Charlotte and Emily traveled to Brussels to prepare themselves to open a girls' school, Anne Brontë was not invited to go. The major joys of her life were the yearly visits to the sea at Scarborough while she was employed by the Robinson family. After her resignation, probably as a result of Branwell's indiscretions with Mrs. Robinson, those trips came to an end. It is not believed that she was ever offered an opportunity to marry.

Many of Brontë's poems use words that express confinement: cages, tombs, prisons, dungeons, chains. This device is not unexpected since the poetry and novels by women of this era are permeated by what Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar have called an "oppressive imagery of confinement that reveals that the female artist feels trapped and sickened by suffocating alternatives, and by the culture that created them" (64). What is strikingly unique is that Anne

Brontë finds alternative meanings for metaphors that typically express disappointment, bereavement, loneliness, and homesickness. Her early poems become scaffolds for the later poems, with the topography of the early years showing little resemblance to that of the final ones.¹ An examination of the early Gondal poems, the middle poems written mainly while she was a governess, and the late poems written back home in the Haworth parsonage demonstrates this progression.

Most of the Gondal poems were written between 1836 and 1840, in Haworth. Ada Harrison and Derek Stanford have called these the "imaginary" poems because they are by a woman who has not yet been bruised by hard experience (172). They are also the imaginary poems because they are infected by Emily's "torrid" Byronic heroes (Harrison and Stanford 175). It is especially illuminating to think of them, however, as the inauthentic poems since they are so heavily influenced by Emily. But even in these imitative, fledgling poems, Brontë asserts her own views of life that do not share Emily's themes of revenge, rebellion, and scorn.

In "A Voice from the Dungeon," the prisoner, Marina Sabia, speaks in a resigned voice:

I'm buried now; I've done with life;
I've done with hate, revenge and strife;
I've done with joy, and hope and love
And all the bustling world above.

Long have I dwelt forgotten here
In pining woe and dull despair;
This place of solitude and gloom
Must be my dungeon and my tomb. (3: 1-9)

The dungeon and the tomb are virtually the same since to be imprisoned and forgotten is a living death. Near the poem's end, Marina Sabia utters "one long piercing shriek," which rouses her from her one consoling dream of child and lover:

I looked around in wild despair,
I called them, but they were not there;
The father and the child are gone,
And I must live and die alone. (3: 51-54)

After this melodramatic episode the poem returns to its resigned misery. "A Voice from the Dungeon" is a highly derivative poem and has even been mistaken for Emily's work (Brontë 167). Brontë's heroines are not usually given to making piercing shrieks, but the joy that the dreaming Marina Sabia feels in being reunited with her darling child is purely Anne Brontë. Neither Charlotte nor Emily seems particularly interested in children and neither expresses the yearning for a child that their sister voices.

"The Captive's Dream" is similar to "A Voice from the Dungeon" in that an imprisoned woman, Alexandrina Zenobia, who lies wasting in a dungeon, dreams of her

lover. The Byronic influence is clear in his description: "his hollow wandering eyes," "his marble brow." And as Alexandrina Zenobia tries to reach him:

I struggled wildly but it was in vain,
I could not rise from my dark dungeon floor,
And the dear name I vainly strove to speak,
Died in a voiceless whisper on my tongue,²
(4: 18-21)

Brontë transfers the emphasis from Alexandrina's suffering to her concern for the man who "bleeds and breaks" for her. She could stoically bear her imprisonment if only it did not bring suffering upon her beloved. Brontë's personality emerges in these lines, in her disquiet over another's grief, even when she speaks in the voices of stock characters and locates them in the Gothic settings of earlier Romantic poetry.³

Both of these poems were written before Anne Brontë assumed her first position as governess in April 1840. Then the imaginary world of Gondal became largely silent and Brontë's experiences as a paid employee in a busy household began to supply the material for her verses. It was also at this time that an attentive man, her father's curate, William Weightman, entered her life. His death, at the age of twenty-eight, in 1842 almost certainly inspired Anne's lines on a dead lover. Her work as a governess ended in 1845 and her brief career as a published writer began.

The poem, "The Captive Dove," clearly represents a woman yearning for freedom. A bird in a cage is a common image of a trapped individual, a yearning soul, or a woman with limited opportunities. The caged bird is also a particularly appropriate metaphor for the Victorian governess, since a governess is an educated lady who is required to work, trapped essentially, within the homes of other people. The employment of a governess acts as a testimony to the economic power of the Victorian middle-class father and an indication of his wife's leisure and ornamental status (Peterson 5); it is also living proof that the woman's own family and home have failed her. A governess lives in exile from her own family, yet resides outside the circle of her employer's family and apart from the lower world of the household servants.

In "The Captive Dove" Anne Brontë evokes the image of the gentle bird with its haunting call. The scene is so heartbreaking that it has the power to turn the speaker from her own loneliness:

Poor restless Dove, I pity thee,
And when I hear thy plaintive moan
I'll mourn for thy captivity
And in thy woes forget mine own. (24: 1-4)

In vain! In vain! Thou canst not rise—

Thy prison roof confines thee there;
Its slender wires delude thine eyes,
And quench thy longing with despair.

(24: 9-12)

A prison no longer has to have heavy stone walls or to be a cold, damp dungeon since invisible wires serve to confine the prisoner. Although the image is more subtle, the airy cage still represents incarceration. But Brontë does not have escape in mind:

Yet hadst thou one gentle mate
Thy little drooping heart to cheer
And share with thee thy captive state,
Thou couldst be happy even there.
(24: 17-20)

It is not the captivity that is so hard to bear; it is the loneliness and neglect. Brontë recognizes that relationship is crucial to her emotional health; to be condemned to live without a soul mate is almost unbearable (Gilligan 8). William Weightman's early death prevents him from ever rescuing her from her captive state, but his very real spiritual presence in her mind inspires new metaphors of separation and loneliness.

In the first two stanzas of "Yes Thou Art Gone," Anne Brontë describes the physicality of her lover's tomb:

Yes, thou art gone and never more
Thy sunny smile shall gladden me;
But I may pass the old church door
And pace the floor that covers thee;

May stand upon the cold damp stone
And think that frozen lies below
The lightest heart that I have known,
The kindest I shall ever know. (31: 1-8)

Placing the burial under the church floor strongly identifies with Weightman's tomb in Haworth's village church. He is doubly entombed: frozen below the floor and shut up within the building itself, and he is doubly dead: lifeless as well as frozen. The speaker's pacing movements further emphasize the narrow, captive space. The poem's mood however is not bleak; it concludes by reflecting on the sweetness of the lover's transient existence and its lasting impression upon the poet.

"Mirth and Mourning," and its companion poem, originally published as "Weep Not Too Much, My Darling," are some of the last of the Gondal poetry. Written a year after Brontë's return to Haworth, and at a time that it appears Emily had stopped writing poetry, this pair of verses demonstrates that the themes of Gondal are merging with the themes of Brontë's experiential verses, and that Gondal's

¹Teddi Lynn Chicester draws the opposite conclusion for Emily Brontë's poems.

²Both Elizabeth Hollis Berry and Maria Frawley provide in-depth discussions of silence and voicelessness in Brontë's poems and novels.

³The name Alexandrina Zenobia is notable. Emily has nothing to say about this Gondal character in her poems, although Charlotte includes a Zenobia

in her juvenile writings. The historical Zenobia was the third century C.E. Queen of Palmyra who was captured and paraded through Rome in golden chains. It would have been typical of Brontë to derive her character from a real person rather than create her entirely as a fiction.

dungeons no longer serve to contain her thoughts. In the first poem Zerona argues with another speaker who implores her to cast away her sorrow. But Zerona cannot be joyful when her lover is still imprisoned:

For, in the brightest noontide glow,
The dungeon's light is dim;
Though freshest winds around us blow,
No breath can visit *him*. (50: 17-20)

This poem may be an internal dialogue that takes place in the mind of Zerona. A mental duel such as this is consistent with Brontë's increasing use of dialogue and rational argument as a way to refine ideas and present satisfactory conclusions. The technique reaches its maturity in her last poems.

Striking similarities exist in the description of Zerona's prisoner-lover to the dead lover of Brontë's bereavement poems. The lines, "What waste of youth, what hopes destroyed," and "If he must sit in twilight gloom" could easily refer to Weightman. In the answering poem, the imprisoned lover responds, begging Zerona to enjoy nature for his sake:

When through the prison grating
The holy moonbeams shine,
And I am wildly longing
To see the orb divine
Not crossed, deformed, and sullied
By those relentless bars
That will not show the crescent moon,
And scarce the twinkling stars.

It is my only comfort
To think, that unto thee
The sight is not forbidden—
The face of heaven is free. . . .
(51 : 17-28)

The anguished lament raised by the first poem is not left unchallenged. Brontë does not realize her purpose until she provides a convincing counter-argument that offers comfort in a seemingly hopeless situation.

In "Severed and Gone," Brontë is still reconciling herself to a lost love. Again, she unflinchingly surveys death's abode:

I know that in the narrow tomb
The form I loved was buried deep,
And left, in silence and in gloom,
To slumber out its dreamless sleep.

I know the corner, where it lies,
Is but a dreary place of rest:
The charnel moisture never dries
From the dark flagstones o'er its breast.

(55:5-12)

Brontë does not dwell upon the corrupting body. Instead, within her silent bedchamber she prays that Heaven will grant her a vision of her loved one, glorious in the afterlife. Brontë craves a visit from such a spiritual visitor, for as long as she can remember him she can keep his memory fresh. She firmly believes the earthly tomb can be transcended and replaced by "the more distant residence of the spirit" (Harrison and Stanford 186). Brontë is increasingly understanding herself to be the one in exile, far from her eternal home of Heaven.

Four poems survive from the late summer of 1847 until shortly before Brontë's death in May 1849. These are her most authentic poems and although they contain some conventional didactic elements, to dismiss them as such is to miss their individuality; for Anne Brontë's didacticism is not commonplace, but is "of a passionate kind" (Ewbank 52), and the pupil she is most concerned with examining is herself. She is rarely adamant; her religion is "a quest, a patient sifting and internal discussion" (Chitham "Religion" 133). An examination of the extensive revisions and word listings on Brontë's manuscripts reveals that she sifts not only religious ideas but words in her efforts to achieve a clearer and simpler vocabulary. Her choice of hymn and ballad forms also allows the most musical of the Brontë clan comfortable boundaries within which to create. These are contours that many writers before her have used, providing comfortable familiarity in their economical rhymes and traditional rhythms (Scott 61).

"Self-Communion" is her longest poem—a dialogue between the poet and an immortal speaker, perhaps Wisdom or Reason. It is a poem so autobiographical in nature that Edward Chitham has placed it among primary sources for understanding Anne Brontë's personality (Brontë 3). The questioner asks the poet to look back on her life and search her memory, a step that will provide her with the guidance she seeks. Brontë insists that even as a child she strove "to find the narrow way" but her childish prayers and artless cries were scorned by those around her. In time, the child (it) grew wiser than her teachers in seeking the path to Heaven:

It asked for light, and it is heard;
God grants that struggling soul repose;
And, guided by his holy word,
It wiser than its teachers grows.
It gains the upward path at length,
And passes on from strength to strength. . . .
(57: 115-120)

One of Brontë's chief fears is that her experiences and reflections are chilling and hardening her heart. She laments the loss of an early friendship, someone who was her "sun by day and moon by night." Critics widely believe that Brontë is referring to an increasing estrangement from Emily, whose early literary partnership had brought her so much delight.⁴ Emily's scorn of her sister's crystallizing religious faith

becomes a source of deep anguish for Anne Brontë: the poet chooses to hide her concerns and discoveries from those closest to her, further constricting the shell of silence that she inhabits. In "Self-Communion," the first speaker (echoing Brontë's own conscience) assures her:

Could I but hear my Saviour say,—
"I know thy patience and thy love;
How thou has held the narrow way,
For my sake laboured night and day,
And watched, and striven with them that strove;
And still hast borne, and didst not faint,"—
Oh, this would be reward indeed! (57: 326-332)

The second of the two poems that Brontë saw published during her lifetime is entitled, significantly, "The Narrow Way."⁵ Using archetypal images of the Christian pilgrim (Duthie 85), it is a rousing foursquare evangelical hymn filled with admonishments, encouragement, and assurances of God's rewards:

Believe not those who say
The upward path is smooth,
Lest thou shouldst stumble in the way
And faint before the truth.

It is the only road
Unto the realms of joy;
But he who seeks that blest abode
Must all his powers employ. (58: 1-8)

The 'narrow way' has now evolved into a major theme in Anne Brontë's last poems, and she is no longer interested in exhuming its Romantic ancestors, damp dungeons or silent tombs, to express it. These metaphors have merged with a well-known phrase in Christian theology, the "straight and narrow" path.⁶ Anne Brontë's belief in the end is that life indeed is filled with sorrow and loneliness. And when even her dearly loved home is no longer a place of refuge, with Emily alienated, Charlotte pursuing her own ambitious goals, and Branwell wallowing in self-abuse and defeat, she can still envision a path that will lead her to her final destination of Heavenly reward and reunion with loved ones. She affirms a constricted life of disappointments and absent opportunities by transforming it into a pathway that if followed carefully and faithfully will lead to a reconciling God. That which was a language of failed expectations and estrangement now

expresses a firm conviction that a life lived within narrow borders can ultimately lead Home.

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⁴See Mary Summer's article for an exploration of this issue.

⁵Desmond Pacey reported in the *Times Literary Supplement* his discovery that this poem had appeared in the December 1848 issue of *Fraser's Magazine*; many works on Anne Brontë do not include this information.

⁶"Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it" (Matt. 7: 13-14).

The Fall of the House of Usher and Little Dorrit

Rodney Stenning Edgcombe

Since Dickens met Poe during his first trip to America, and tried, as a result, to get his work published in England, there can be no doubting his familiarity with the latter's tales. Indeed when both Vizetelly and Routledge republished them in 1852 (though with different couplings), he took note of their appearance on English soil, and, ten years on, recalled his unsuccessful effort on behalf of their author in the 1840s: "At least ten years passed . . . before Mr Poe's tales were republished in England" (10:40). We can infer from this scrupulous tabulation of dates that Dickens was (at the very least) reminded of the tales during the time that *Little Dorrit* was gestating and that he probably re-read them, increasing the likelihood of *The Fall of the House of Usher's* having exerted some influence on that novel—a not-inconceivable line of influence, even though it reverses the usual arrows of the flow chart. (As the Pilgrim editors remark, Poe owed much more to Dickens than vice versa, being "the first American critic to see CD's true importance," using "him in his articles, from 1841, as a model by which to judge other writers," and almost certainly gaining "ideas from him . . . for his own tales and poems" [3:106n].)

So far as I can tell, the motif of the collapsing house in *Little Dorrit* has not been traced to Poe's *Fall of the House of Usher*, though it seems an obvious enough comparison to draw. Here are some points of contact between the tale and the novel that, taken together, suggest that aspects of that tale lodged in Dickens's mind during composition. For a start, there is the spiritual oppression associated with the physical house of Usher, anticipating Arthur Clennam's state of mind when he returns to home to London. In both cases, a building catalyses that sense of oppression and becomes the objective correlative of what Poe calls "insufferable gloom" (244):

I looked upon the scene before me—upon the mere house, and the simple landscape features of the domain—upon the bleak walls—upon the vacant eye-like windows—upon a few rank sedges—and upon a few white trunks of decayed trees—with an utter depression of soul which I can compare to no earthly sensation more properly than to the after-dream of the reveller upon opium—the bitter lapse into everyday life—the hideous dropping off of the veil. There was an iciness, a sinking, a sickening of the heart—an unredeemed dreariness of thought which no goading of the imagination could torture into aught of the sublime. (245)

Dickens projects Sabbatarian London as likewise involving "an utter depression of soul"—"Melancholy streets, in penitential garb of soot, steeped the souls of the people who were condemned to look at them out of windows in dire despondency" (67)—before moving to the Puvian "dreariness of thought" (245) that also characterized the Sabbaths of Arthur's childhood:

There was the dreary Sunday of his childhood,

when he sat with his hands before him, scared out of his senses by a horrible tract . . . There was the resentful Sunday of a little later, when he sat down glowering and glooming through the tardy length of day, with a sullen sense of injury in his heart. . . . (69)

He swiftly canalizes this sense of mental oppression into the actual "House of Clennam," the barrenness of which, like Poe, he images through vegetation that should contrast with, but actually confirms, the surrounding sterility:

. . . passing silent warehouses and wharves, and here and there a narrow alley leading to the river, where a wretched little bill, FOUND DROWNED, was weeping on the wet wall; he came at last to the house he sought. An old brick house, so dingy as to be all but black, standing by itself within a gateway. Before it, a square courtyard where a shrub or two and a patch of grass were as rank (which is saying much) as the iron railings enclosing them were rusty; behind it, a jumble of roots. It was a double house, with long, narrow, heavily framed windows. Many years ago, it had had it in its mind to slide down sideways; it had been propped up, however, and was leaning on some half-dozen gigantic crutches: which gymnasium for the neighbouring cats, weather-stained, smoke blackened, and overgrown with weeds, appeared in these latter days to be no very sure reliance.

"Nothing changed," said the traveller, stopping to look round. "Dark and miserable as ever. A light in my mother's window, which seems never to have been extinguished since I came home twice a year from school, and dragged my box over this pavement. Well, well, well!" (70-71)

Like Poe before him, Dickens prepares us for the imminent collapse, but, since at all turns he Radcliffizes Poe's supernatural Gothic, he also hints that the closeness of the river and the weakness of the timbers will be the immediate (and rational) cause of the house's fall. Only once it happens does he adapt it to the symbolistic pattern of his narrative. In Poe, on the other hand, the instability of the fabric is from the very first symbolic, and only secondarily (and in a perfunctory way) related to issues of physics: "Yet all this was apart from any extraordinary dilapidation. No portion of the masonry had fallen; and there appeared to be a wild inconsistency between its still perfect adaptation of parts, and the crumbling condition of the old stones" (248). Indeed the narrator even goes so far as to couch the proximate cause of collapse in the subjunctive mood: "Perhaps the eye of a scrutinising observer might have discovered a barely perceptible fissure, which, extending from the roof of the building in front, made its way down the wall in a zigzag direction, until it became lost in the sullen waters of the tarn" (248).

By the same token, while both structures seem to subsist in capsules of bad weather, the miasma of the House of

Usher is the vehicle of Gothic atmosphere (in both senses of that term), generated at first from the narrator's subjectivity, but quickly hypostatized into something "faintly discernible":

I had so worked upon my imagination as really to believe that about the whole mansion and domain there hung an atmosphere peculiar to themselves and their immediate vicinity—an atmosphere which had no affinity with the air of heaven, but which had reeked up from the decayed trees, and the gray wall, and the silent tarn—a pestilent and mystic vapour, dull, sluggish, faintly discernible, leaden hued. (247)

Dickens, on the other hand, connects attributes of the "bad weather" of his house (which in any case, he presents as a conceit) to its architectural shortcomings and physical situation:

The debilitated old house in the city, wrapped in its mantle of soot, and leaning heavily on the crutches that had partaken of its decay and worn out with it, never knew a healthy or a cheerful interval, let what would betide. If the sun ever touched it, it was but with a ray, and that was gone in half an hour; if the moonlight ever fell upon it, it was only to put a few patches on its doleful cloak, and make it look more wretched. The stars, to be sure, coldly watched it when the nights and the smoke were clear enough: and all bad weather stood by it with a rare fidelity. You should alike find rain, hail, frost and thaw lingering in that dismal enclosure when they had vanished from other places; and as to snow, you should see it there for weeks, long after it had changed from yellow to black, slowly weeping away its grimy life. (220)

One can see from this how Dickens has tempered and adapted Poe's conflation of inner and outer weathers. He monitors the passage of the seasons instead of offering a single, symbolistic take upon his object—and yet, for all that, the parallels remain quite striking.

One is struck throughout by the similarity of subject-matter, and, at the same time, by the differences of tone and presentation. For example, Poe traces an intangible continuity between house and inhabitant that begins in superstition but converts to something real but ineffable. The "terms too shadowy to be here restated" resemble the miasma that had begun in the narrator's mind but quickly turned into an apprehensible datum:

He was enchained by certain superstitious impressions in regard to the dwelling which he tenanted, and whence, for many years, he had never ventured forth—in regard to an influence whose superstitious force was conveyed in terms too shadowy to be here restated—an influence which some peculiarities in the mere form and substance of his family mansion, had, by dint of long sufferance, he said, obtained over his spirit—an effect which the *physique* of the gray walls and turrets, and of the dim tarn into which they all looked down, had, at length, brought about upon the *morale* of his existence. (252)

This sort of self-cloistering and its corollary, viz. the elision of the personality into its closed environment, almost certainly inspired Dickens's treatment of Mrs. Clennam, whose identity likewise becomes co-extensive with her room, and ultimately with her house: "The world has narrowed to these dimensions, Arthur . . . It is well for me that I never set my heart upon its hollow vanities'" (73). And just as Roderick Usher's "morale" absorbs the grayness of his setting, so to does Mrs. Clennam's:

"All seasons are alike to me," she returned, with a grim kind of luxuriousness. "I know nothing of summer and winter, shut up here. The Lord has been pleased to put me beyond all that." With her cold grey eyes and her cold grey hair, and her immovable face, as stiff as the folds of her stony head-dress,—her being beyond the reach of the seasons seemed but a fit sequence to her being beyond the reach of all changing emotions. (74)

Dickens's richer grasp of psychology, as before, becomes the more vivid when we place the passage alongside its probable source. What Poe renders as a vague Gothic neurasthenia has here been adapted into a study of Calvinist self-immolation, the semi-supernatural origin of the first recast as the "history of a self-tormenter" (to use the phrase applied to the comparable character of Miss Wade).

When it comes to the actual fall, Poe connects the sounds of his collapsing structure with details of the pastiche romance that the narrator is reading at the time, and, true to the tradition of Otranto Gothic, attempts to milk it for all its supernatural horror:

I did actually hear (although from what direction it proceeded I found it impossible to say) a low and apparently distant, but harsh, protracted, and most unusual screaming or grating sound—the exact counterpart of what my fancy had already conjured up for the dragon's unnatural shriek as described by the romancer. (265)

Dickens's Udolpho Gothic also connects the sounds of the imminent fall with romance formulae, but mutes them for the sake of plausibility, and runs them through the consciousness of a superstitious old woman, who comically relays that consciousness to herself at one remove ("She thought that she had been similarly frightened"). This is Dickens's way of adapting the nightmare world of Poe to a realistic context. Reality itself becomes so odd that the participant thinks she is dreaming:

On a wintry afternoon at twilight, Mrs Flintwinch, having been heavy all day, dreamed this dream:

She thought she was in the kitchen getting the kettle ready for tea . . . she was frightened by a sudden noise behind her. She thought that she had been similarly frightened once last week, and that the noise was of a mysterious kind—a sound of rustling and of three or four quick beats like a rapid step; while the shock or tremble was communicated to her heart, as if the step had shaken the floor, or even as if she had been touched by some awful hand. (222)

Both tale and novel handle the actual collapse of their buildings with startling despatch, though Poe's, having been given away by the title to which it finally recurs, and contextualized by a Gothic storm, is more obvious in its effect: "my brain reeled as I saw the mighty walls rushing asunder—there was a long tumultuous shouting sound like the voice of a thousand waters—and the deep and dank tarn at my feet closed sullenly and silently over the fragments of the "HOUSE OF USHER" (268), Dickens has learned from Poe—he also deploys an effect of centrifugal force—but improved upon him. Instead of a storm "still abroad in all its wrath" (267), he gives us a pious idyll in which "great shoots of light streamed among the early stars, like signs of the blessed later covenant of peace and hope that changed the crown of thorns into a glory" (862). Then, changing registers in a way that seems almost to mock St. Paul's account of instantaneous resurrection, he flings his structure down before its spectators: "In one swift instant the old house was before them, with the man lying smoking in the window; another thundering sound, and it heaved, surged outward, opened asunder in fifty places, collapsed and fell" (863). This shows an extraordinary imaginative capacity in Dickens, for it anticipates the sort of rapid slow motion we see in the footage of imploded buildings, just as Leonardo's sketches of turbulent water show his awareness of date that only slow motion photography can bring to the consciousness

of lesser mortals. Also, unlike Poe, he allows Mrs. Clennam to survive the fall of her house for some years. But she does so only as so much building rubble, her inhumane values finally externalized in stroke-induced stoniness: "There Mrs. Clennam dropped upon the stones; and she never from that hour moved so much as a finger again, or had the power to speak one word" (862). This Grand Guignol is wholly functional in terms of the novel's over-arching themes. Poe's falling figure, on the other hand, is itself its own Gothic justification: "For a moment she remained trembling and reeling to and fro upon the threshold, then, with a low moaning cry, fell heavily inward upon the person of her brother, and in her violent and now final death-agonies, bore him to the floor a corpse, and a victim to the terrors he had anticipated" (267).

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A Note on "Jack, Joke" in Hopkins's "That Nature is a Heraclitean Fire and of the Comfort of the Resurrection"

Nathan Cervo

The word "Jack" (l. 23) is generally interpreted by critics of "That Nature is a Heraclitean Fire and the Comfort of the Resurrection" as signifying "Everyman" (Trilling 687). However, this does not take into account the appositive character of "joke" (l. 23). To Hopkins, this "Jack" is not merely a "joke," a *ludus naturae*, but a joking Jack, an actor who fulfills the thematic idea of "-ster" stated in the phrase "heaven-roysterers" (l. 2). The suffix "-ster" indicates an agent, one who does something with skill or as an occupation. What Hopkins's joking Jack does is serve as an agent of the "king" (French *roi*) in "heaven." Hopkins emphasizes the royal aspect of such "gay-gangs" (l. 2) by using the obsolete spelling of "roisterers": "roysterers."

Basically, Hopkins's Catholic vision in "That Nature is a Heraclitean Fire" is comic; but the means by which he achieves the poem's final comedy is not only dialectical but also polemical. Under cover of Heraclitus, Hopkins really attacks the Aestheticism of his sometime Oxford tutor,

Walter Pater. He begins in a Hamletian vein speculating on clouds and the shapes they take (l. 1), but moves on to affirm that the natural elements (such as rain and "wind"; l. 5), when viewed from the aesthetic perspective, are merely "Squandering ooze"¹ (l. 7) and producing "Squadroned masks" (l. 8; that is, aesthetic moments doctrinairely masking the Paterian's sensibility). At this point, the putative subject of the poem—Heraclitus's notion of the *logos* qua fire—tilts very decisively in the direction of the "hard gem-like flame" (prismatic impressionism) of which Pater speaks in his "Conclusion" to *Studies in the History of the Renaissance*. To Hopkins, this sort of practiced openness to the sensual allurements of really extraordinary perceptiveness culminates only in just that: perceptiveness, whose object and content is perception. Thus, the Aesthete strains perceptiveness to a point of frustrated titillation and must let the moment pass on its way into the area of rueful romanticism tinged with philosophy. The Aesthetic stage proliferates

with "Squadroned masks" (l. 8), all ready to make forays into the no-man's-land of exquisite sensation.

Ironically considered, such is the wisdom of the world, couched in the nervous system and armed with the stone—if not the slingshot—of aporia. Not to be so open is to be humbug's devotee,² a zany.

With a good deal of optimistic humor, Hopkins blithely pits the "Resurrection" (l. 16) of the "king" ("roy"; l. 2) against the "squeezed dough, crust, dust" (l. 7) of the Renaissance (in the poem clinging to Heraclitus's underbelly); that is, against the leaven of the Pharisee (Pater).

Laughing from his zany place among "heaven-roysterers" (l. 2), Hopkins embraces the role deridingly assigned him as a Christian believer: he is a zany, a "Jack, joke" (l. 23), a domestic clown or jester ("patch"; l. 23). And why not? The process as he sees it—and it is a process—is from humility to glory, with all the stages participating in the various phases of the Incarnation, including Christ's being laughed at: thanks to his faith, Hopkins is able to say of himself, "I am all at once what Christ is" (l. 22).

In the eyes of many, as Hopkins understood only too well, Christ continues to be the butt of amusement, a zany. In effect, perceptions hampered in and by the experiential constructive limits of a given sensibility are unable to mature to Apocalypse. To Hopkins, the stunted zany (the word "zany" derives from "Zanni," that is, "Jack," a dialectical nickname for Italian *Giovanni*, "John," and designates a masked subordinate clown in the Old Comedy) is the un insightful unbeliever, who, constricted in the vagaries of material constructs, remains at the level of terminal "joke" (l. 23) qua *ludus naturae*. Rather wryly, Hopkins envisions himself and other Christian believers as being fools only in

the estimation of fools but really richly participating actively and conceptually in the graces afforded by the Incarnation and Heaven's King. Such participation reveals "Christ" (l. 22) to the believer as being infinitely superior as a human agent to either Heraclitus's smoky dance of the fire/*logos* or Pater's sensate "flame" darting wispily toward imploded pseudo-Platonic yearnings from an ideologically exclusively perceptual zircon temperament.

To Pater, in his "Conclusion," each "personality" (the Latin word *persona* means "mask") is "ringed round" by uniquely defining and therefore impenetrable (opaque) "impressions" that ineluctably reify "human" isolation. To Hopkins, the moral necessity of mutual strengthening in faith is intrinsic to human nature (the "comfort" of the poem's title) and accorded fulfillment not by the Renaissance but by the "Resurrection" (l. 16).

Substantively, the poem is about the real face of folly behind the mask of "personality": "We were deceived by the wisdom of the serpent, but we are freed by the foolishness of God" (St Augustine 1: 14, 13). The wisdom of the world is folly with God; and what the world laughs at, "the foolishness of God," is, to the believer, the true wisdom.

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Franklin Pierce College

Coming in

The Victorian Newsletter

Lawrence Starzyk, "'Ut Pictura Poesis': The Nineteenth-Century Perspective"

Marilyn Hume, "Who Is Heathcliff? The Shadow Knows"

Ernest Fontana, "Rossetti's Belated and Disturbed Walk Poems"

substance, essence."

¹Familiar with the philosophy of Parmenides and a Professor of Greek, Hopkins is using "ooze" here as a pun on the Greek word *Qusia*: "being,

²Cf. Blougram's rhetorical projection of Gigadibs's evaluation of him and his Catholic faith in Browning's "Bishop Blougram's Apology," l. 41:

"'He's quite above their humbug in his heart' [. . .]"

Books Received

- Adams, Kimberly VanEsveld. *Our Lady of Victorian Feminism: The Madonna in the Work of Anna Jameson, Margaret Fuller, and George Eliot*. Athens: Ohio UP, 2001. Pp. 299. \$59.95 (cloth), \$24.95 (paper). "This book focuses on three nineteenth-century women: Anna Jameson (1794-1860), the Anglo-Irish art historian; Margaret Fuller (1810-1850), the American Transcendentalist essayist; and Marian Evans (1819-1880), the English novelist and lapsed Evangelical, who wrote under the name George Eliot. All three, Protestants by background and feminists by conviction, are curiously and crucially linked by their use of the Madonna in arguments designed to empower women. They are not the only Victorians to focus on this figure, but in their work the Madonna is not, as is customary in this period, abstracted from church tradition and used with literary license, usually to support a constrictive domestic ideology; rather, she has a central role in a feminist biblical hermeneutics. Anna Jameson saw the Madonna historically as the feminine face of the divine, a figure whose glory and power are shared by women. Jameson also made the Madonna a human and inclusive figure; she noted ethnic and class variations in Marian portraiture and insisted on a Madonna who ages. Margaret Fuller and George Eliot focused instead on the Madonna as Virgin and Mother, seeing her as a figure at once intellectually self-reliant and fulfilled by her family relationships. As such, the Madonna represented the self-perfection and completion that ordinary women would achieve when freed from social restraints. Fuller also considered her a powerful symbol of the female artist, miraculously producing books, or 'virgin births,' with no man's aid. All three women explored the Virgin Mother's likeness to the creative and destructive goddess-figures of the religions pre-dating Christianity. The three writers form a significant group because they were quite unusual among their English-speaking and Protestant contemporaries in seeing feminist possibilities in the Madonna, and because they knew or knew of each other and frequently were influenced by each other's work. More generally, they enable us to consider issues of representation, the relations of nineteenth-century feminism and religious thought, and cross-cultural and trans-Atlantic influences in our theorizing about nineteenth-century culture" (1-2).
- Bown, Nicola. *Fairies in Nineteenth-Century Art and Literature*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2001. Pp. xiii + 235. \$59.95. "The fascination with fairies which is the subject of this book emerged in the late eighteenth century, and the fairy was a pervasive cultural figure for more than a hundred years. Indeed, so many and various were the forms that the captivation with fairies took that in this book I look at only a few of them.

Hundreds of fairy operas and operettas, plays, songs and ballets were produced in the nineteenth century, too many for me to deal with here. The same goes for the enormous numbers of fairy tales, traditional and literary, which were published during the period. In this book I concentrate on fairies in paintings, poetry and non-fictional prose. These genres interest me because they allowed the Victorians, most of all grown-up ones, an outlet for their regressive and escapist fantasies. When I first became interested in nineteenth-century fairies I was startled by the mixture of strangeness and sentimentality I encountered. This book is about that combination of strangeness and sentimentality, and in it I argue that understanding the Victorians' enchantment with fairyland is central to understanding their emotional responses to their own world" (1-2). Illustrated.

- Browning, Robert. *The Complete Works of Robert Browning with Variant Readings and Annotations*. Vol. XII. Ed. Rita S. Patterson and Paul D. L. Turner. Waco, TX: Baylor U; Athens: Ohio UP, 2001. Pp. xxv + 420. \$65.00. Contents: "Aristophanes' Apology; Including a Transcript from Euripides: Being the Last Adventure of Balaustion." Includes a preface, tables and notes.
- Correa, Delia Da Sousa, ed. *The Nineteenth-Century Novel: Realisms*. London: Open University / Routledge, 2000. Pp. 414. \$29.95, \$44.95 Canada (paper). Contents: Dennis Walder, "General Introduction"; Delia Da Sousa Correa, "Introduction to Part I"; Simon Eliot, "Books and Their Readers—Part I"; Nicola Watson, "Northanger Abbey: A Novel's Entry into the World"; Marilyn Brooks with Nicola Watson, "Northanger Abbey: Contexts"; Delia Da Sousa Correa, "Jane Eyre and Genre"; Delia Da Sousa Correa, "Jane Eyre: Inside and Out"; Sebastian Mitchell, "Dombey and Son: Families and Commerce"; Sebastian Mitchell, "Dombey and Son: Industrialization and Empire"; Stephen Regan, "Introduction to Part 2"; Simon Eliot, "Books and Their Readers—Part 2"; Nora Tomlinson, "Middlemarch: The Social and Historical Context"; Nora Tomlinson, "Middlemarch as a Novel of Vocation and Experiment"; Nora Tomlinson, "Networks and Narratives in Middlemarch"; Stephen Regan, "Far from the Madding Crowd: Vision and Design"; Stephen Regan, "Far from the Madding Crowd: The Novel in History"; Nicolette David, "Germinal: The Naturalist Novel"; Dennis Walder, "Zola and the Political Novel." Includes an index.
- David, Deirdre, ed. *The Cambridge Companion to the Victorian Novel*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2001. Pp. xx + 267. \$54.95 (cloth), \$19.95 (paper). Contents: "Chronology"; Deirdre David, "Introduction"; Kate Flint, "The Victorian Novel and Its Readers"; Simon

Eliot, "The Business of Victorian Publishing"; Linda M. Shires, "The Aesthetics of the Victorian Novel: Form, Subjectivity, Ideology"; Joseph W. Childers, "Industrial Culture and the Victorian Novel"; Nancy Armstrong, "Gender and the Victorian Novel"; Jeff Nunokawa, "Sexuality in the Victorian Novel"; Patrick Brantlinger, "Race and the Victorian Novel"; Ronald R. Thomas, "Detection in the Victorian Novel"; Lyn Pykett, "Sensation and the Fantastic in the Victorian Novel"; John Kucich, "Internal Debate in the Victorian Novel: Religion, Science, and the Professional"; Robert Weisbuch, "Dickens, Melville, and a Tale of Two Countries." Includes an index.

- Dickens, Charles. *The Cambridge Companion to Charles Dickens*. Ed. John O. Jordan. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2001. Pp. xxi + 235. \$54.95 (cloth), \$19.95 (paper). Contents: John O. Jordan, "Preface"; Grahame Smith, "The Life and Times of Dickens"; Robert L. Patten, "From Sketches to *Nickleby*"; Kate Flint, "The Middle Novels: *Chuzzlewit*, *Dombey*, and *Copperfield*"; J. Hillis Miller, "Moments of Decision in *Bleak House*"; Hilary Schor, "Novels of the 1850s: *Hard Times*, *Little Dorrit* and *A Tale of Two Cities*"; Brian Cheadle, "The Late Novels: *Great Expectations* and *Our Mutual Friend*"; Robert Newsom, "Fictions of Childhood"; Murray Baumgarten, "Fictions of the City"; Catherine Waters, "Gender, Family, and Domestic Ideology"; Garrett Stewart, "Dickens and Language"; Nicola Bradbury, "Dickens and the Form of the Novel"; Richard L. Stein, "Dickens and Illustration"; John Glavin, "Dickens and Theatre"; Joss Marsh, "Dickens and Film."

_____. *Dickens' Journalism: "The Uncommercial Traveller" and Other Papers 1859-1870*. The Dent Uniform Edition of Dickens' Journalism, Vol. 4. Ed. Michael Slater & John Drew. Columbus: Ohio State UP, 2000. Pp. xxxiii + 476. There are 27 essays from "The Uncommercial Traveller" series, 7 from "New Uncommercial Samples" and 11 others—most from *All the Year Round*. Included also are an introduction, a select bibliography, Dickens's life and times 1859-1870, 11 illustrations, an index and annotations.

- Draznin, Yaffa Claire. *Victorian London's Middle-Class Housewife: What She Did All Day*. Contributions in Women's Studies No. 179. Westport, CT & London: Greenwood P, 2001. Pp. xvi + 227. \$29.95. ". . . I realized that my real interest lay, not in the notables. . . but in a singular group of 'nonentities,' women who never joined in the battle at all, but spent unobtrusive lives as stay-at-home housewives in the London suburbs at the end of the nineteenth century" (vii-viii).
- Eliot, George. *The Cambridge Companion to George Eliot*. Ed. George Levine. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2001. Pp. xviii + 248. \$54.95 (cloth), \$19.95 (paper). Contents: George Levine, "Introduction: George Eliot and the Art of Realism"; Rosemarie Bodenheimer, "A Woman of Many Names"; Josephine McDonagh, "The

Early Novels"; Alexander Welsh, "The Later Novels"; Suzy Anger, "George Eliot and Philosophy"; Diana Postlethwaite, "George Eliot and Science"; Barry Qualls, "George Eliot and Religion"; Nancy Henry, "George Eliot and Politics"; Kate Flint, "George Eliot and Gender"; Donald Gray, "George Eliot and Her Publishers"; Kathleen Blake, "George Eliot: The Critical Heritage"; Tanya Agathocleous, "Works Cited and Further Readings."

- Field, Michael [Katharine Bradley and Edith Cooper]. *Music and Silence: The Gamut of Michael Field*. Chosen, annotated, but not edited by Ivor C. Treby. London: De Blackland P. Pp. 221. \$21.50 US, £13.50 UK, \$37.50 AU, \$47.50 NZ, R150.0 SA. De Blackland Press, Apartment 4, 63 Neveer Square, RB Kensington & Chelsea, London SW5 9PN, UK. "Not all the poems are perfect; they wrote too much. But in fairness, a lot of it was only for their eyes, and the unpublished work included in this anthology should be read with this in mind. And it is in this very unpublished work that one can discover new facets of a fascinating personality, the 'double-headed' nightingale The unpublished pieces have been printed exactly as they stand in manuscript draft, with incomplete punctuation, and some words such as *and*, *could*, *which*, *would* abbreviated to *&*, *cd*, *wh*, *wd*; these have deliberately been left unedited to remind the reader that the received text is not necessarily in its finalised state. Whereas *A Shorter Shirazad* covered 1884-1912, *Music and Silence* not only returns to this prolific period, but also extends the catchment back to ca. 1856 and forward to 1914. The present book, as its subtitle implies, affords for the first time a bird's eye view of the *entire* chronological range of the poetry of Katherine Harris Bradley and Edith Emma Cooper" (14-15).

- Gaskell, Elizabeth. *Ruth*. Everyman Gaskell. Ed. Nancy Henry. London: Everyman/J. M. Dent; Vermont: Charles E. Tuttle, 2001. Pp. xxxvii + 416. \$5.99 (paper). The copytext is that of the single-volume Cheap Edition (1855), corrected by Gaskell. Includes a chronology and introduction, notes, annotated critical summaries, a summary of text by chapters.
- Gates, Payson G. *William Hazlitt and Leigh Hunt: The Continuing Dialogue: With Unpublished Letters of Lamb and Dickens*. Ed. and annotated by Eleanor M. Gates. Essex, CT: Falls River Publications, 2000. Pp. xv + 376. \$22.50 (paper). "Although Hunt is inevitably touched upon in many of the works pertaining to Hazlitt . . . there is still no study specifically devoted to the Hunt-Hazlitt relationship. Gate's is in fact the first work to explore this in any systematic fashion, and as such fills a large gap. It should be welcomed for bringing together in one volume the lives of two men whose careers intersected at many crucial points, whose dialogues constituted one of the literary phenomena of the period, and whose mutual interests and influence, which made them a veritable team for a time, can now

be considered to make them a team for all time" (xiv). A companion volume to *Leigh Hunt: A Life in Letters, Together with Some Correspondence of William Hazlitt*. Intro. and ed. Eleanor M. Gates. Essex, CT: Falls River Pubs., 1999.

conditions that permitted the Lewes boys to end their lives in South Africa, and Eliot to amass a portfolio of colonial stocks, were the same social conditions in which she wrote her fiction—itsself a valuable export to the colonies. Although there was no imperialist agenda behind either her actions or her writing, the empire and the domestic culture that sustained it are crucial to the understanding of both" (2-3).

- Green, Laura Morgan. *Educating Women: Cultural Conflict and Victorian Literature*. Athens: Ohio UP, 2001. Pp. xiii + 153. \$42.95 (cloth), \$16.95 (paper). "The subject of this book is the relationship between two phenomena central to English culture in the second half of the nineteenth century—the movement to establish higher education for women, and the profusion of representations of women as students, teachers, or frustrated scholars within the domestic novel of the period. The women's education movement intersected with larger Victorian cultural conflicts over gender and identity, in particular a conflict between the values of domestic ideology and those of the emergent liberal individualism, provoking complex and often ambivalent responses even among its supporters. I analyze both fiction and nonfiction texts that revolve around themes of pedagogy and delineate a range of such responses, beginning with writings by educational reformers and including three novels—Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* (1847), George Eliot's *Middlemarch* (1872), and Thomas Hardy's *Jude the Obscure* (1896), and one memoir—Anna Leonowen's *The English Governess at the Siamese Court* (1870)" (ix).
- Hawlin, Stefan. *The Complete Critical Guide to Robert Browning*. The Complete Guide to English Literature Series. London and New York: Routledge, 2002. Pp. [xiii] + 222. \$75.00 (cloth), \$19.95 (paper). The text is divided into "Life and Contexts," "Work," and "Criticism"; includes a chronology, bibliography and index.
- Henry, Nancy. *George Eliot and the British Empire*. Cambridge Studies in Nineteenth-Century Literature and Culture. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2002. Pp. xi + 182. \$50.00. "There is no apparent warrant for associating Eliot's shares in Cape Town Rail with her stepsons' emigration or the sale of her novels to the colonies. Yet all are linked both to her domestic finances and to the consolidation of the South African colonies. The export of English literature, money, and sons to the colonies formed a pervasive and diverse culture of empire in mid-nineteenth-century England. But the systemic totality of that culture was not perceived or articulated by those who were implicated in it. *George Eliot and the British Empire* assumes the existence and coherence of nineteenth-century British imperialism, but only as a retrospective construction. In the years covered by this study (1850-1880), the Victorian experience of the empire was local and fragmented. The benign pursuit of caring for family by providing financial security through investments and finding colonial careers for young men helped to consolidate notions both of imperialism and of Englishness. The social

Hunt, Peter. *Children's Literature*. Blackwell Guides to Literature. Oxford & Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2001. Pp. xxii + 334. \$59.95 US, £50.00 UK (cloth); \$24.95 US, £14.99 UK (paper). The book is divided into an "Introduction," "Matters of History," "Writers" (some 38 from 1832 to date), "Key Texts" (some 60 works), "Topics" (12). Includes a general bibliography, guide to further reading and an index.

Hunt, Peter. *Children's Literature: An Anthology 1801-1902*. Blackwell Anthologies. Oxford & Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2001. Pp. xvi + 480. \$69.95 US, £65.00 UK (cloth); \$34.95 US, £16.95 UK (paper). There are selections from works or whole works from 95 English and American authors. Includes an introduction, select bibliography and index.

Johnson, Patricia E. *Hidden Hands: Working-Class Women and Victorian Social-Problem Fiction*. Athens: Ohio UP, 2001. Pp. ix-224. \$55.00 (cloth), \$24.95 (paper). "The absence of women factory workers ['in the industrial novels as well as in later Victorian social-problem novels']—placed alongside the emphasis on women—is the contradiction that this study focuses on, a contradiction that has its roots in the complex role of working-class women in Victorian ideology. I have chosen to use [Raymond] Williams's 'industrial novels' as my core group of fictions, first of all, because they have largely set the terms of debate about social-problem fiction and industrial questions, and, second, because it was the relative absence of factory women in these novels that roused my initial interest. I have, however, expanded on Williams's list by including works by key women writers—such as Charlotte Elizabeth Tonna, Charlotte Brontë, and Frances Hodgson Burnett—who address the issue of working women, as well as some examples of the treatment of working-class women in late-nineteenth-century social-problem fiction" (1-2).

Klee, Wanda G. *Leibhaftige Dekadenz: Studien zur Körperlichkeit in ausgewählten Werken von Joris-Karl Huysmans und Oscar Wilde*. Britannica et Americana: Folge 3-Band 20. Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag C. Winter, 2000. Pp. 337. Kt C, -/SFr 112. (paper). University of Marburg dissertation 2000.

Larson, Jill. *Ethics and Narrative in the English Novel, 1880-1914*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2001. Pp. ix + 176. \$49.95. "This book has two broad purposes: the first is to read ethics through narrative by reflecting on ethical concepts or problems as they take shape in the telling of a story; the second is to further an argument about late Victorian aesthetics and ethics. This

second purpose makes my project similar to William Scheick's *Fictional Structure and Ethics: The Turn-of-the-Century English Novel*. We share an interest in Hardy and Conrad . . . and in the ethics of their fiction, particularly their ideas about compassion. My work departs from Scheick's, however, in the philosophical lenses through which I read these texts, and, perhaps more importantly, in the literary historical direction of my overall argument. While his book focuses on Hardy, Conrad, Wells, and other writers of their generation in relation to twentieth-century fiction (both modernist and contemporary), my study considers late nineteenth-century English novelists in relation to Victorian culture and the work of those writing earlier in the century. One reason for this emphasis is my interest in the turn-of-the-century obsession with the new, which went hand-in-hand with sometimes defiant, but more often ambivalent efforts to break free of the trammels of the old, including both mid-Victorian moral culture and novelistic traditions" (3).

Mallinson, Allan. *Honorable Company: A Novel of India before the Raj*. New York etc.: Bantam Books, c2000, 2001. Pp. ix + 299. \$13.95 (paper). "*Honorable Company* is a work of fiction: the princely state of Chintal never existed. However, the story is firmly rooted in what was happening in India, just after Waterloo, in the build-up to the Third Maratha War. And Chintal (even with its singular rajah) is, I would maintain, not untypical of the many minor princely states whose precarious existence depended increasingly on the Honorable East India Company. They were states where young Englishmen like Hervey—as soldiers, administrators, or tutors to the royal household—often had disproportionate influence" ([vii]).

Murphy, Patricia. *Time Is of the Essence: Temporality, Gender, and the New Woman*. Albany, NY: State U of New York P, 2001. Pp. ix + 291. \$68.50 (cloth), \$22.95 (paper). "Feminist critics have turned unprecedented attention in recent years onto the plight of nineteenth-century women, and other scholars have frequently remarked upon the Victorian fascination with time, but the intricate connections between time and gender have remained virtually unexplored. It is my contention, however, that late-century novels responding to the cultural and literary figure of the New Woman import temporal discourses, in subtle but revelatory ways, to illuminate the heightened gender anxieties wrought by this rebellious anomaly. The *fin de siècle* novels [*She, Tess of the Durbervilles, The Beth Book, The Heavenly Twins, The Daughters of Danaus, The Story of an African Farm*] that I investigate in the following chapters foreground a latent, but marked, discursive intersection, revealing temporality as a vehicle for reifying a patriarchal order that depended upon rigid gender boundaries to ensure its stability and viability. In effect time became a covert but potent means of naturalizing repressive definitions of female subjectivity in

response to the threatening New Woman. Temporality thus offers not only an enlightening but a crucial approach for examining the formation, inscription, and problematization of gender boundaries in the century's waning decades" (1-2).

Norman, Paralee. *Marmion Wilme Savage 1804-1872—Dublin's Victorian Satirist*. Studies in Irish Literature Vol. 3. Lewiston, Queenston, Lampeter: Edwin Mellen P, 2000. Pp. xii + 133. "This book is a detailed historical evaluation and description of the author's life and unique literary contribution. . . . Research was undertaken in Dublin, Torquay, and London where he lived. With great admiration for this Irish subject, the book garners answers to questions about Marmion Savage's life, work, and place in the canon. The Savage books are now all out of print, but available in major British and American libraries."

O'Donnell, Edward T. *1001 Things Everyone Should Know about Irish American History*. New York: Broadway Books, 2001. Pp. 352. \$15.95 (paper). 1001 facts are arranged chronologically and divided into chapters: "Ireland before 1850," "Coming to America," "Politics and Law," "Nationalism," "Religion," "The Military Tradition," "Culture," "Medicine and Science," "Work, Business, and Innovation," "Sports."

Peterson, Linda H. *The Traditions of Victorian Women's Autobiography: The Poetics and Politics of Life Writing*. Victorian Literature and Culture Series. Charlottesville and London: UP of Virginia, 1999, 2001. Pp. xiii + 256. \$17.50 (paper). "In this study, I reconsider Victorian women's autobiography not by presupposing the existence of a women's tradition but instead by asking about possible self-representational modes available to, acknowledged, or created by women writers. And I begin not by proposing an alternate version of literary history but by looking closely at early attempts to identify 'women's autobiography' and by examining the assumptions that undergird them. For, as it turns out, modern literary critics are not the first to construct a tradition of women's autobiography. The effort to construct a literary past—that is, a tradition of English autobiographical writing that accounts for women's texts as well as men's—originates in the nineteenth century. The 'origins' of women's autobiography are distinctly Victorian" (3).

Sidlauskas, Susan. *Body, Place, and Self in Nineteenth-Century Painting*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2000. Pp. xvi + 230. \$75.00. "In all the paintings I analyze here, space is as palpable and as vivid a presence as any sentient being. These interiors are not neutral vessels designed to contain or protect; they are animate entities, highly responsive to, even shaped by, the psychological currents that flowed within them.

"These images exploit the interior's accessibility as a sign, even as they subvert its commonplace associations with comfort and safety. Contradictions are inherent in the interior On the one hand, the private interior

was a sanctuary from which the world could be safely observed—a 'box in the world theater,' as Benjamin put it; on the other, it was a stage for the acting out of one's most intimate feelings with great authenticity" (3).

Turner, Paul. *The Life of Thomas Hardy: A Critical Biography*. Blackwell Critical Biographies. Oxford, UK and Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2001. Pp. xiv + 326. \$25.95 (paper); (clothbound edition was published in 1998.) "To make tentative [questions about aspects of experience] easier, I have focused each chapter on a single work, and divided it into two sections, one biographical, the other critical; the first on what Hardy was doing and thinking in the run-up to publication, and the second on the work itself. Needless to say, this arrangement does not always work smoothly; for Hardy, like Wordsworth, often drew on thoughts and experiences 'from hiding-places ten years deep,' and sometimes much deeper. For instance, certain childhood memories tend to recur throughout his long writing career. In such cases the current instalment of biography has had to be extended backwards, or the system otherwise modified" ([1]-2).

Twain, Mark. *How Nancy Jackson Married Kate Wilson and Other Tales of Rebellious Girls and Daring Women*. Ed. John Cooley. Lincoln & London: U of Nebraska P, 2001. Pp. xvi + 255. \$16.95 (paper); UK £12.50 (paper). Contents: "Lucretia Smith's Soldier," "Aurelia's Unfortunate Young Man," "A Medieval Romance," "Hellfire Hotchkiss," "A Story without an End," "Wapping Alice," "How Nancy Jackson Married Kate Wilson," "A Horse's Tale," "Eve's Diary," "Saint Joan of Arc," "Little Bessie," "Mark Twain, Rebellious Girls, and Daring Young Women." "This edition brings together for the first time Mark Twain's stories that feature girls and independent, unmarried young women. Although Twain wrote adolescent female fiction principally between 1895 and 1905, his earliest piece of that genre was published in 1864 and his last was written in 1908. Not only do these stories reflect Twain's changing representation of young women over forty years (essentially his entire writing career), they reflect changing ideas in his culture about gender and the rapidly evolving roles of women in American society at the time" (ix).

Ulrich, John M. *Signs of the Times: History, Labor, and the Body in Cobbett, Carlyle, and Disraeli*. Athens: Ohio UP, 2002. Pp. x + 221. \$44.95. "As I intend to show in the following chapters, these three writers—[William Cobbett in *A History of the Protestant 'Reformation'* and *Rural Rides*, Carlyle in *Past and Present* and Disraeli in *Sybil*—are not merely wallowing in a wistful nostalgia for the past; instead, each writer's intense level of engagement with his *present times* is founded on two mutually important characteristics: a passionate belief in the power of writing to

shape the way people understand their position relative to the past, present, and future; and a relentlessly self-conscious approach to discerning the texture of those times—to the complex, 'perplexing' interrelation between the materiality and the textuality of history, labor, and the body" (7).

Vallone, Lynne. *Becoming Victoria*. New Haven and London: Yale UP, 2001. Pp. xviii + 256. \$26.95. "This study of Queen Victoria's girlhood is not meant to compete with the many excellent large-scale biographies of Queen Victoria . . . Nor is this book solely a work of literary and cultural criticism of Queen Victoria as a figurehead and cultural marker of an age. Rather, *Becoming Victoria* is a study of girlhood, and combines biographical with cultural criticism, focusing on the youth of Princess Victoria by way of her own words and works found in her letters, stories, drawings, educational materials, and journals. *Becoming Victoria* also tells the story of children's books: those that Princess Victoria read, those she attempted to copy, and those that helped create the cultural climate and social mores in which she was raised. The book locates the young Victoria within the complex and often conflicting contexts of Georgian children's literature, conventional child-rearing practices, domestic and familial intrigues, and the frequently turbulent political climate of the period" (xvi-xvii).

Woolson, Constance Fenimore. *Constance Fenimore Woolson's Nineteenth Century: Essays*. Ed. Victoria Brehm. Detroit: Wayne State UP, 2001. Pp. 255. \$39.95 (cloth). Contents: Victoria Brehm, "Introduction"; Nina Baym, "Revising the Legacy of 1970s Feminist Criticism"; Lisa Radinovsky, "Negotiating Models of Authorship: Elizabeth Stoddard's Conflicts and Her Story of Complaint"; John H. Pearson, "Constance Fenimore Woolson's Critique of Emersonian Aesthetics"; Richard Adams, "Heir Apparent: Inheriting the Epitome in Sarah Orne Jewett's *A Country Doctor*"; Caroline Gebhard, "Romantic Love and Wife-Battering in Constance Fenimore Woolson's *Jupiter Lights*"; Victoria Brehm, "Castle Somewhere: Constance Fenimore Woolson's Reconstructed Great Lakes"; Dennis Berthold, "Miss Martha and Ms. Woolson: Persona in the Travel Sketches"; Kathleen Diffley, "'Clean Forgotten': Woolson's Great Lakes Illustrated"; Sharon Kennedy-Nolle, "'We Are Most of Us Dead Down Here': Constance Fenimore Woolson's Travel Writing and the Reconstruction of Florida"; Katherine Swett, "Corinne Silenced: Improper Places in the Narrative Form of Constance Fenimore Woolson's *East Angels*"; Cheryl B. Torsney, "Fern Leaves from Connie's Portfolio"; Anne E. Boyd, "Anticipating James, Anticipating Grief: Constance Fenimore Woolson's 'Miss Grief'"; Kristin M. Comment, "The Lesbian 'Impossibilities' of Miss Grief's 'Armor'"; Sharon L. Dean, "Edith Wharton's Early Artist Stories and Constance Fenimore Woolson"; Includes a chronology of Woolson's life and an index.

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