

Transrealism as a Discourse of Social Change in Victorian Fiction

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Abstract

This thesis considers the use a range of writers in the early to mid-Victorian period have made of interplays between the fantastic and the mimetic modes in their texts. I respond to critical assessments of the role of fantasy writing within Victorian fiction, and develop new articulations both of this role and of the nature of fantastic-mimetic interplays. In doing so, I interrogate Stephen Prickett's categorization of Victorian fantasy writing as an unconscious creative force and Rosemary Jackson's detailing of 'Victorian fantasy realism' as an evocation of negative tensions within Victorian culture. I transpose Julia Kristeva's theories of transformative poetic intertextuality into the context of intertextualities between pairings of a fantasy and a realist text by four different Victorian authors.

Chapter One explores how uncanny textualities in Charlotte Brontë's juvenile novella, *The Spell* (1834), and her mature work *Jane Eyre* (1847) represent the fragmented nature of aesthetic identities in nineteenth-century artistic, religious and authorial contexts, and how this representation suggests ways of negotiating resolution. Chapter Two investigates the use of polyphonic textuality (combinations of fairy tale and ghost story motifs) in *Nicholas Nickleby* (1838-1839) and *A Christmas Carol* (1843) by Charles Dickens dramatizes the emotional complications of disability in terms of a wide spectrum of social exclusion. Chapter Three examines how astronomical imagery and cognitive dissonance represent educational reform in George Eliot's *The Lifted Veil* (1859) and *Daniel Deronda* (1876). Chapter Four traces the extended interrogation and transcendence of emotional deprivation in George Macdonald's *Adela Cathcart*, developed by a heteroglossic voice through the fairy tales 'The Light Princess', 'The Shadows' and 'The Giant's Heart' (all first published in 1864).

I propose that these critical interrogations can best be understood through an adaptation of Damien Broderick's theory of modern *transrealism*, adapted to the historical context of the Victorian period.

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Introduction

Realism, then, even as it struggles out from the traditions that helped found it, is paradoxically an attenuated form of non-realistic narrative practice. Realism [...] has one consistent commitment, the very hard work of trying to reach beyond words to things as they are. This hard work must always be in process because the way things are changes, as does the culture's understanding of the way things are, and because things look different from different perspectives [...] Realism, in this connection, is the commitment to register the external realism and then (or at the same time) the interiority that perceives and distorts or penetrates it. (George Levine, 'Literary Realism Reconsidered')¹

[T]he Fantastic functions as the cultural space for simulation of a "productive unrest" [...] Thus, as a kind of post-religious substitute mythology, the Fantastic exorcises the cultural demons of an epoch by allowing them into its narrative and permitting their work of corrosion – a paradoxical motion, to which it owes its emergence as a genre of late and post-enlightenment. Reassured, the reader can sit back: there are no ghosts in 'his'/'her' reality, no aliens – or are there? [...] Thus literature [...] is even itself a threshold, which demonstrates in further consequence that the boundaries between 'language' and the 'world' cannot be overcome. Representation as a construction of 'reality' (or: realities?) shows itself in the end to be just the potential convergence with a hypothetical world 'out there' at a threshold – a convergence that must always remain asymptotic. (Clemens Ruthner, 'Fantastic Liminality')²

General Definitions of the Fantastic and Realist Modes

George Levine's and Clemens Ruthner's separate discussions, read together, identify similarities between the two different literary modes of realism and of the fantastic. Both these modes interrogate ways of knowing (realism in its efforts to represent an external physical reality and the fantastic in its deployment of the supernatural and the esoteric). Yet they both also transgress these initial categories of knowledge: as Levine points out, realism contains a paradoxical non-realistic narrative practice in its efforts to draw out the 'real' from the 'non-real' in

¹ George Levine, 'Literary Realism Reconsidered: "The world in its length and breadth"' in *Adventures in Realism*, ed. by Matthew Beaumont (Malden: Blackwell, 2007), pp. 13-32 (p. 16).

² Clemens Ruthner, 'Fantastic Liminality. A Theory Sketch' in *Collision of Realities*, ed. by Lars Schmeink and Astrid Boger (Berlin/Boston: De Gruyter, 2012), pp. 49-63 (pp. 59-60).

continually shifting perceptions of what this 'real' might be. As Ruthner notes, the fantastic produces similar paradoxes in presenting a familiar to contrast with its focus on the un-homely, the un-canny, and the un-natural – again, continually shifting according to cultural perceptions of what is 'natural' and 'super' natural. Still further, these two sites of paradox contain the potential for social interrogation through their transgression of cultural, literary, and genre categories: what Ruthner terms a 'productive unrest' and Levine 'the commitment to register the external realism and [...] the interiority that perceives and distorts or penetrates it'. Having first discussed the theoretical and historical contexts of these two modes, I will argue that an intersection of the fantastic and the realist modes demonstrates not merely potential for social interrogation, but for exploring social transformation.

Other critics have, of course, explored the ambivalence in these two categories, though often remaining in the context of a single mode. As regards the fantastic mode in general, Tzvetan Todorov defines the fantastic as depicting an uncertain space between the uncanny and the marvellous, at a mid-point on a scale from the imaginary to the real. He defines fantasy as referring to specific genres within this mode (elements of the fantastic can be used in other modes).³ Like Todorov, Rosemary Jackson identifies the fantastic as a literary mode which transcends a range of genres, 'confounding elements of both the marvellous and the mimetic'⁴ and 'problematizing vision';⁵ she also locates it between the opposing modes of the marvellous (narratives of 'unrealistic, apparent impossibilities', such as fairy tales) and the mimetic (a mode which claims to match a represented fictional

³ Tzvetan Todorov, *The Fantastic* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1975), p. 25.

⁴ Rosemary Jackson, *Fantasy: The Literature of Subversion* (London: Methuen, 1981), p. 34

⁵ *Ibid.*, p.30

world with a world outside text, often termed the realistic mode).⁶ Lucie Armitt has examined the interrogative role of the fantastic and outlined its non-signatory possibilities. Like Jackson and Todorov, she differentiates between the fantasy and the fantastic, categorizing fantasy as a collection of genres which are constrained by the expectations carried by their chosen genre and the fantastic as an interrogative role which transcends limits.⁷ Most recently, Farah Mendlesohn explores the fantastic as a collection of ‘fuzzy sets’ expressing the various rhetorical dynamics across a range of fantastic texts ‘each of which yet looks to that common center that is so difficult to pinpoint, where mimesis ends and the fantastic begins’.⁸ She identifies these ambivalent categories as portal-quest fantasy, immersive fantasy, intrusion fantasy, and liminal fantasy, particularly noting the intersections of realism in liminal fantasy – but as ‘a dialectical space between author intention and reader expectation’ than as a meeting of realism and fantasy.⁹

Taking issue with Catherine Belsey’s definition of realism as ‘transparent’ and as ‘allow[ing] the introduction of ‘formal changes in the name of increased verisimilitude’,¹⁰ Matthew Beaumont traces the signatory complexities of realism in defining it as

[T]he assumption that it is possible, through the act of representation, in one semiotic code or another, to provide cognitive as well as imaginative access to a material, historical reality that, though irreducibly mediated by human consciousness, and of course by language, is nonetheless independent of it.¹¹

Fredric Jameson questions realism as a genre in itself, terming it ‘an epistemological category framed and staged in aesthetic terms [...] a contradiction which can,

⁶ Ibid., p. 35

⁷ Lucie Armitt, *Theorising the Fantastic* (London: Hodder Headline, 1996), p. 35

⁸ Farah Mendlesohn, *Rhetorics of Fantasy* (Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 2008), Kindle Edition.

⁹ Mendlesohn, *Rhetorics*, Kindle Edition.

¹⁰ Matthew Beaumont, ‘Introduction: Reclaiming Realism’ in *Adventures in Realism*, pp. 1-12 (p. 8).

¹¹ Beaumont, ‘Introduction: Reclaiming Realism’, p. 2.

however, be reformulated in a productive way, as a tension to be solved and resolved over and over again, in a series of fresh innovations'.¹² Jameson extends the paradoxical identity of realism which Levine explores, commenting that '[B]y definition realism does not want to become a paradigm of any kind: a form, a tale-type, or even a genre'.¹³ Michael Löwy, exploring what he terms 'critical irrealism', points out that the ambivalent nature of realism spills into formal non-realist literature. Asking 'Are there not many nonrealist works of art which are valuable and contain a powerful critique of the social order?'¹⁴ Löwy offers 'critical irrealism' as '*oeuvres* that do not follow the rules governing the "accurate representation of life as it really is"' but that are nevertheless critical of social reality.¹⁵ He observes: 'The critical viewpoint of these works of art is often related to the dream of another, imaginary world, either idealized or terrifying, one opposed to the gray, prosaic, disenchanted reality of modern, meaning capitalist, society.'¹⁶ I find Löwy's remarks particularly suggestive as I wish to explore the dynamics of the ambiguous nature of both realist and non-realist modes, though I think his exploration of realism's encounter with what he terms 'an absence of realism'¹⁷ does not sufficiently interrogate the social implications of the transformative resonances which Ruthner (and others) identify in the fantastic.

¹² Fredric Jameson, 'A Note on Literary Realism in Conclusion' in *Adventures in Realism*, pp. 261-271 (p. 261).

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ Michael Löwy, 'The Current of Critical Irrealism: "A moonlit enchanted night"' in *Adventures in Realism*, pp. 193-206 (p. 193).

¹⁵ Löwy, p. 196.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ Löwy, p. 195.

Points of Interplay in Victorian Texts

While all these critics usefully point out the complex paradoxes of both modes, hinting at the transgressive nature of borders of the fantastic and the realist modes, they frame their investigations as examining either the fantastic, with hints of the non-fantastic, or realist, with hints of the non-realist. I wish to examine the points of interplay between the fantastic and the realist modes, as form of partnership. Francis O’Gorman articulates the sense of interplay between a mixture of realism and romance in Victorian texts as being ‘held together in a simultaneity of opposites’.¹⁸ I would like to extend these examinations by exploring this mixture specifically as a space of ambiguity which dramatizes experiences of social transformation. My explorations will also focus on this mixture as drawing upon the shifting definitions of ‘fantasy’ and ‘the fantastic’ within the Victorian period (as I explain in detail below). To that end, I have chosen texts that question the boundaries of the realist and the fantastic modes. My investigation of the boundaries of realism interrogates texts in terms of their shifting physical and cultural representations as part of an examination of social debates in the texts.¹⁹ If realism links the ‘represented fictional world’ to the ‘world outside the text’, then examining shifting textual views will explore ambiguities in mutual depictions of fictional worlds and external worlds and consequently social implications of such ambiguities.

The nineteenth century offers a fruitful space for such explorations as it is a period when categorizations of both the fantastic and realist modes were in flux, yet

¹⁸ Francis O’Gorman, ‘Realism and Romance’ in *The Cambridge History of the English Novel*, ed. by Robert L. Caserio and Clement Hawes (Cambridge: CUP, 2012), pp. 485-499 (p.494).

¹⁹ Investigations of realism, of course, extend into many disciplines and epistemological systems: political theory, semantics, cognitive science, and mathematics are just a few. Of necessity, I am limiting my investigations to modes of literary realism. For a useful overview of realism in other systems, see Athanassios Raftopoulos and Peter Machamer, eds., *Perception, realism, and the Problem of Reference* (Cambridge: CUP, 2012).

an influential part of mainstream literary culture. Stephen Prickett introduces the development of Victorian fantasy as a continual shift in definition: though prior to the nineteenth century, it had contained overtones of madness, starting from Coleridge's categorization in 1816 of fantasy as a 'mystic wonderland' which, in the realm of symbol, 'plays into the small prose domain of Sense' and contains 'a sheen either of Inspiration or Madness, it acquired a context of imaginative inspiration as 'the image making power common to all who have the gift of dreams', as James Russell Lowell termed 'fantasy' in 1870.²⁰ The process of this shift of the fantastic mode in cultural identity to embrace an imaginative function can be seen in the development of Gothic tales of terror, of ghost stories, of science fiction, and of fairy tales throughout the nineteenth century.

Though locating the 'heyday' of the Gothic novel from the 1780s to the 1820s, and therefore outside chronological categorizations of Victorian fiction, Andrew Smith shows that the Gothic 'infiltrated ostensibly non-Gothic' forms of poetry and fiction, examining Christina Rossetti's 'Goblin Market' (1862) as influenced by Horace Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto* (1764), Samuel Taylor Coleridge's 'Christabel' (1816), and the poetry of Keats,²¹ and reading narratives of Gothic realism in *Jane Eyre* (1847) (descriptions of the Red Room, encounters with Bertha Antoinette Mason) as 'indicat[ing] that her imagination is constructed by the Gothic [...] [T]he novel becomes a Gothic reader's view of the world'.²² By contrast, the literary ghost story developed and formalized over the course of the nineteenth century. Shane McCorristine in *Spectres of the Self* describes attitudes to ghosts in the first half of the nineteenth century as 'a genre of rationalist, sceptical and

²⁰ Stephen Prickett, *Victorian Fantasy* (Waco: Baylor University Press, 2005), pp. 9-10.

²¹ Andrew Smith, *Gothic Literature*, 2nd edition (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2013), pp. 4, 57-60.

avowedly anti-supernatural tracts, pamphlets and books which maintained an intellectual continuity and ideological consistency in the British medical imagination until the spread of spiritualism in the 1850s'.²³ The 1850s saw the ghost story emerge with formalized patterns. Michael Cox and R.A. Gilbert in *The Oxford Book of Victorian Ghost Stories* observes that '[a]lthough there are earlier examples of the form [...] it is in the 1850s that the distinct, anti-Gothic character of the Victorian ghost story began to emerge.'²⁴ Cox and Gilbert articulate the nature of the post-1850s ghost story genre: 'Where the Gothic tale of terror had been indulgently heroic and ostentatiously fictitious, the Victorian ghost story was typically domestic in tone and inclined to blur the boundaries between fact and fiction.'²⁵ Texts including Dickens's *A Christmas Carol* (1843), therefore, anticipate these later developments, becoming an intriguing site to explore experiments with the resonances of ghosts.

Similarly, the science fiction genre formalized over the nineteenth century. In comparison to other forms of the fantastic mode, Istvan Csicsery-Ronay explains that, 'The specific difference between sf [science fiction] and other estranging genres, such as fantasy, is that sf's displacements must be logically consistent and methodical; in fact, they must be scientific to the extent that they imitate, reinforce and illuminate the process of scientific cognition.'²⁶ There is wide debate amongst critics as to when science fiction can be said to have begun (critics name texts anywhere from Lucian of Samosata's *True Story* or *True History* (2nd century AD) to H.G. Wells's *The Time Machine* (1895). However, the nineteenth century saw texts

²² Smith, p. 78.

²³ Shane McCorristine, *Spectres of the Self* (Cambridge; New York: CUP, 2010), p. 43.

²⁴ Michael Cox and R.A. Gilbert, 'Introduction' in *The Oxford Book of Victorian Ghost Stories* (Oxford: OUP, 2003), ix-xx (pp. ix-x).

²⁵ Cox and Gilbert, 'Introduction', p. x.

²⁶ Istvan Csicsery-Ronay, Jr, 'Marxist theory and science fiction' in *The Cambridge Companion to Science Fiction*, ed. by Edward James and Farah Mendlesohn, (Cambridge: CUP, 2006), pp. 113-124 (p. 118).

which ‘illuminate the process of scientific cognition’ emerge into a formal genre, as Martin Willis observes. Tracing this development from E.T.A. Hoffman’s ‘The Sandman’ (1816) to H.G. Wells’s *The Island of Dr. Moreau* (1896), Willis states that, ‘Science fiction emerged from the gothic romances of science made so influential by Hoffmann and Mary Shelley into a fully fledged genre of fiction under the directorship of, first, Jules Verne and, thereafter, H.G. Wells.’²⁷ Stableford observes that the first use of ‘science fiction’ as a specific term was by William Wilson in 1851, describing R.H. Horne’s *The Poor Artist* (1850). George Eliot’s *The Lifted Veil* (1859), sometimes identified as a ‘proto-science fiction’ for its blend of the supernatural and scientific experiments in phrenology and blood transfusion, appears at this point of early definition.²⁸ As Jack Zipes points out in his seminal *Victorian Fairy Tales: The Revolt of the Fairies and the Elves*, the nineteenth century saw a resurgence of interest in the fairy tale as a legitimate element of literary culture, influenced by translations of the Brothers Grimm’s tales (1823), the tales of Hans Christian Andersen (1846), and new translations of the *Arabian Nights*.²⁹ New literary fairy tales emerged, like John Ruskin’s ‘The King of the Golden River’ (1841). Caroline Sumpter continues Zipes’s work by tracing the popular influence and widespread presence of fairy tales in Victorian periodical culture, particularly noting the work of Anne Thackeray Ritchie.³⁰ As I shall discuss in more detail later on, George MacDonald’s *Adela Cathcart* (1864), a novel featuring a collection of stories, not only provides three new literary fairy tales, but depicts a storytelling club whose discussions intersect with and complicate the

²⁷ Martin Willis, *Mesmerists, Monsters, and Machines: Science Fiction and the Cultures of Science in the Nineteenth-Century* (Kent, Ohio: Kent State University Press, 2006), p. 2.

²⁸ Brian Stableford, ‘Science Fiction Before the Genre’ in *The Cambridge Companion to Science Fiction*, ed. by Edward James and Farah Mendlesohn (Cambridge: CUP, 2006), pp. 15-31 (p. 18).

contemporary context of the literary fairy tale. Yet, in spite of these developments, and the presence of elements of the fantastic in more realist texts, the sense of fantasy-as-madness could still hang over the publication of works of fantasy: for example, George MacDonald found it difficult to publish a fairy tale novel (as in *The Princess and the Goblin*) (1872) until the publication of Lewis Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (1865).

Prickett, in his study of Victorian fantasy, has expressed the potential of Victorian writers of fantasy to explore contemporary cultural conflicts, terming the Victorian fantastic as an 'underside or obverse' of the Victorian imagination, though he emphasises that it played an interrogative and reflective role rather than 'always being an escape or refuge from a repressive social code'.³¹ Jackson has traced the use of the fantastic in the Victorian period in two ways, noting that, in addition to writers of fantasy, 'mainstream' writers of realist texts 'relied upon non-realist' modes: investigating Victorian fantastic realism (for example, Charlotte and Emily Brontë, Charles Dickens, George Eliot and Elizabeth Gaskell) and Victorian fantasy (for example, Lewis Carroll, George MacDonald, and Charles Kingsley).³² She depicts Victorian fantastic realism as a self-conscious and uneasy assimilation of genres such as the gothic within Victorian realist novels, acting as a textual sub-conscious. She explores dialogue between the fantastic and realist modes within these novels in terms of realist elements attempting to repress the subversive nature of fantastic elements, with the dialogue between these various elements working to express fears of transformations in social mores (such as revolutions on the part of

²⁹ Jack Zipes's collection *Victorian Fairy Tales: The Revolt of the Fairies and the Elves* (New York: Methuen, 1987) provides both a useful summary and a comprehensive collection.

³⁰ Caroline Sumpter, *The Victorian Press and the Fairy Tale* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008).

the lower-classes, the expression of female desire, or radical scientific developments) and of cultural otherness (such as unmarried mothers, foreigners, or the poor). The use of ‘Victorian fantasy realism’ also throws open a space of social debate which suggests more positive possibilities of experimentation and discovery, though, in Jackson’s discussion, still disturbing.³³ Victorian fantasy, Jackson argues, also repudiates barbaric social elements,³⁴ but does so in a far more transcendental and marvellous setting, in which the influence of Christian Platonism can be traced in the desire for a consummation of cosmic harmony.³⁵ Jackson’s discourses on ‘Victorian fantasy realism’ are valuable and insightful, but she does not allow for the fantastic-realist mode opening more than a bleak and frightening ‘other’ of society, by signifying cultural disorder. Extending Prickett’s and Jackson’s arguments into a specific context of female gender, Laurence Talairach-Vielmas traces the use of fantasy as a method of dramatizing social tensions around the female medical body.³⁶ However, all these discussions trace the fantastic mode as a representation of social complexities in a context of problematized consciousness – either *unconscious*, or *self-conscious*.

Yet a number of Victorian writers deploy tropes of the fantastic, in conjunction with realist writing, in thoughtful ways, presenting the fantastic in the form of *conscious interplay*. For example, in his 1850 essay ‘A Christmas Tree’, Charles Dickens uses fairy tale figures to represent psychological moments in his childhood memories: he extends ‘A Christmas Tree’ into a fairy tale forest through

³¹ Prickett, p. 40. Prickett also takes issue with what he feels are ‘dangerously misleading’ views of Victorian society as always being repressive’, observing the strong role of campaigners and social reformers in the period, and terming it ‘probably the most profoundly self-critical age in English history’ (p. 39).

³² Jackson, *Fantasy: The Literature of Subversion*, p. 123.

³³ Jackson, pp. 124 and 140 in particular, but also see pp.125-139.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 141.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 146.

which ‘Little Red Riding Hood comes to me one Christmas Eve to give me information of the cruelty and treachery of that dissembling Wolf [...]She was my first love. I felt that if I could have married [her], I could have known perfect bliss.’³⁷ Though George Eliot is often considered as a realist writer rather than a writer of fantasy, her novella *The Lifted Veil* (1859) dramatizes the cognitive dissonance in confronting the fantastic as her protagonist, Latimer, negotiates his contemporary Victorian context with supernatural experiences in the development of his character. In Eliot’s *Daniel Deronda* (1876), the Meyrick sisters ponder the adventures of Daniel Deronda and Mirah Lapidoth by terming Daniel ‘Prince Camaralzaman’ and Mirah ‘Queen Budoor’ after characters in a tale from the *Arabian Nights*.³⁸ This is an interesting choice, because this fairy tale ends with Prince Camaralzaman – as permitted by Islamic law – marrying two wives in order to resolve dissatisfactions,³⁹ and like Eliot’s text, it explores tensions around the expectations of marriage. From the beginning of the novel, Daniel’s name is linked with that of another character, Gwendolen, teasing the reader with the question of whom he will marry, and highlighting the complications around resolution through marriage within the novel.⁴⁰ The discussion of Daniel’s prospects led one unsatisfied reader to write an unauthorized sequel, in which Daniel and Gwendolen did marry.⁴¹ My thesis will explore the implications of these conscious conjunctions in the context of nineteenth-century social changes.

³⁶ Laurence Talairach-Vielmas, *Moulding the Female Body in Victorian Fairy Tales and Sensation Novels* (Hampshire: Ashgate Publishing, 2007), p.8.

³⁷ Charles Dickens, ‘A Christmas Tree’ in *A Christmas Carol and Other Christmas Writings*, ed. by Michael Slater (London: Penguin, 2003), pp. 231-247 (p. 235).

³⁸ George Eliot, *Daniel Deronda* (London: Penguin, 1995), pp. 184, 209.

³⁹ ‘The Story of the Amours of Camaralzaman,’ *The Arabian Nights’ Entertainments* (Philadelphia: L.Johnson, 1832), pp. 215-243.

⁴⁰ See *Daniel Deronda*, pp. 7, 728.

⁴¹ See Anna Clay Beecher, *Gwendolen, or Reclaimed. A Sequel to Daniel Deronda by George Eliot* (Boston: W.F. Gill, 1878).

Nineteenth-century realism could be similarly ambiguous. Katherine Kearns frames discussions of the nineteenth-century realist novel with observations about its interplay with factual complexities:

Realism recognizes both the need for factual detail and the delusion of completeness that facts can come to represent [. . .] Realism clearly senses that to speak without a degree of scepticism about “facts” is to be guilty of Gradgrindism, a strange mixture of the ingenuous and the hardheaded.⁴²

She later articulates this complexity in a conscious authorial identity: ‘Nineteenth-century authors witnessed the novel’s power over the public, over themselves [...] And in this sense realism becomes a code for an acceptance of the genre’s potential and imminent legitimacy’.⁴³ Richard Menke locates nineteenth-century literary realism in responses to shifts in media technologies. Arguing that Victorian fictional realism is a ‘powerful expression of these media shifts just behind the ink and paper of the era’s written record’, he suggests that Victorian fiction ‘could offer a forum for exploring a real world that had come to seem laden with information’.⁴⁴ Rae Greiner sees nineteenth-century literary realism as an emotional interrogation, in the tradition of Adam Smith’s *Theory of Moral Sentiments* (1759):

[Nineteenth-century] realism [...] comes to define itself, as a sympathetic bringing together of moral feeling and judgment with representations of individual people in particular circumstances, accurately given, and with a verisimilitude of detail on which their ethical force relies.⁴⁵

She later observes the multiple effects of this ‘sympathetic bringing together’: ‘Nineteenth-century realism relies on sympathy to cultivate its particular mindset, giving shape to a double impression: that these novels “feel real” is an effect of both

⁴² Katherine Kearns, *Nineteenth-Century Literary Realism: Through the Looking Glass* (Cambridge: CUP, 1996), p.11.

⁴³ Kearns, p. 59.

⁴⁴ Richard Menke, *Telegraphic Realism: Victorian Fiction and Other Information Systems* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2008), pp. 3-4.

⁴⁵ Rae Greiner, ‘The Art of Knowing Your Own Nothingness’, *ELH*, 77(2010), 893-914 (p. 894).

the sympathetic structures of consciousness they generate and the fellow-feeling to which those structures give rise.⁴⁶

David Skilton, in examining the culture surrounding the Early and Mid-Victorian novel in a way which articulates contemporary thinking around what has come to be termed realism, emphasises the links between realist literature and other discourses (socio-political, religious, philosophic); writers, Dickens in particular, felt free to enter into debates in any topical discourse and to pursue their opinions on such debates both through literary writing and through personal action.⁴⁷ Critics assessed texts in terms of whether they were ‘true to life’ and contained recognisable characters: G.H. Lewes summarizes this type of assessment in his 1858 call for art to be a ‘representation of reality’, being as accurate as possible.⁴⁸ G.H. Lewes’s discussion of tensions between idealism and realism in art presents some of the complexities a ‘representation of reality, *i.e.* of Truth’ might involve: ‘[W]hen the conversation of the parlour and drawing room is a succession of philosophical remarks, expressed with great clearness and logic, an attempt is made to idealize, but the result is simple falsification and bad art’.⁴⁹ He cites Raphael’s ‘Madonna di San Sisto’ as containing ‘the intensest realism of presentation, with the highest idealism of conception’ in the Madonna: ‘In the virgin mother, again, we have a real woman, such as the *campagna* of Rome will furnish every day, yet with eyes subdued to a consciousness of her divine mission.’⁵⁰ Lewes’s discussion presents realism as a truthful representation of human nature but this mode brings its own set of

⁴⁶ Greiner, p. 899-900.

⁴⁷ David Skilton, *The Early and Mid-Victorian Novel* (London: Routledge, 1993), p. 7.

⁴⁸ Skilton, p. 13.

⁴⁹ G. H. Lewes, ‘Realism in Art’, *Westminster Review*, 1858, in Skilton, pp.101-104 (p. 102).

⁵⁰ Lewes, pp. 102-103⁵¹ T.H. Lister, on Dickens, *Edinburgh Review*, 1838 in Skilton, pp. 39-42 (41).

complications and ambiguities: Are there limits on whom and what can be represented? Who decides what is recognisable?

T.H. Lister suggests further ambiguous aspects of realism in his 1838 review of various works by Dickens. He praises Dickens because the ‘reader is led through scenes of poverty and crime, and all the characters are made to discourse in the appropriate language of their respective classes – and yet we recollect no passage which ought to cause pain to the most sensitive delicacy, if read aloud in female society’.⁵¹ Lister’s review suggests a potential for Dickens to go too far in his representation of reality: perhaps too many scenes of poverty and crime would be considered inappropriate for ‘delicate’ public consumption, and would possibly never see the daylight of a printing press. The review also suggests that texts appropriate for ‘delicate’ (ie. upper-class female) public consumption might contain little cultural accuracy – in which case, surely female readers were often under misapprehensions as to what could be truth and what could be life in ‘truth to life’ writing. Anne Brontë’s *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall* (1848) contains a reflection on the dangers of a lack in accuracy for women. Helen Huntingdon, having found that her training as a ‘delicate’ female ill prepared her for marriage to her abusive and alcoholic husband, comments on the dangers to women who are ‘tenderly and delicately nurtured, like a hot-house plant - taught to cling to others for direction and support, and guarded, as much as possible, from the very knowledge of evil’.⁵² In response to criticism that her book contained ‘a morbid love of the coarse, if not of the brutal’, Anne Brontë questions the effect of misrepresenting the reality of social evils: ‘To represent a bad thing in its least offensive light, is doubtless, the most

⁵¹ T.H. Lister, on Dickens, *Edinburgh Review*, 1838 in Skilton, pp. 39-42 (41).

⁵² Anne Brontë, *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall* (Ware: Wordsworth, 1996), p.26

agreeable course for the writer of fiction to pursue; but is it the most honest, or the safest?’⁵³ However, Juliet Barker notes that contemporary reviewers failed to grasp Brontë’s point; one reviewer ‘declared his intention of noticing *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall* simply to warn his readers, especially his lady readers, against being tempted to peruse it’, militating against the potential for change in Helen’s advice.⁵⁴ In comparison, Gwendolen Harleth in George Eliot’s *Daniel Deronda* could serve to exemplify (though some decades later) the ill-prepared girl of Helen’s words: she has been educated to be a successful socialite, and finds her education ill-preparation for her emotionally abusive marriage. Yet the cognitive dissonance in her characterization – highlighted by astronomical references, as I shall explore in more detail further on – dramatizes the social consequences of this mis-education in a more abstract, and thus more acceptable, way to Helen’s straightforward polemic.

Much of Eliot’s work explores the possibilities for social interrogation through representations of human nature in the form of the novel. She is often presented as a classic example of using Victorian realism to interrogate contemporary social issues, as Katherine Kearns observes, citing *Adam Bede* (1859) as the ‘first major exercise in programmatic literary realism in English literature’ and *Silas Marner* (1861) as ‘filled with the realest of real people talking the way people talk’ (among others);⁵⁵ yet it is their ambiguous qualities that perhaps best interrogate the complexities of her contemporary context. Matthew Beaumont interprets *Adam Bede* as exploring ‘the transformations of industrial capitalism itself’ in Eliot’s experiments with the realist novel as ‘dialectical’ and ‘democratic’,

⁵³ Anne Brontë, ‘Preface to the Second Edition’, quoted in Maria Frawley, ‘Anne Brontë’, *The Brontës in Context*, ed. by Marianne Thormählen (Cambridge: CUP, 2012), Kindle Edition.

⁵⁴ Juliet Barker, *The Brontës* (London: Phoenix, 1994), p. 574. Barker also terms *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall* ‘a book which was to be so profoundly disturbing to contemporary ideas of decency that it was to sink without trace for almost 150 years after its conception’. See Barker, p. 530.

suggesting a ‘dynamic force field’.⁵⁶ He cites Eliot’s explorations of social vision in *Daniel Deronda* in defining her development of a socially transcendent use of realism: ‘Eliot’s experimental attitude to the demands of realist narrative requires a concept of realism that escapes its limited definition in terms of a passive, positivistic reflection of banal social reality.’⁵⁷ As in the case of Gwendolen, Eliot’s writing dramatizes the emotional experience of cognitive dissonance in everyday life, and through this dramatization, interrogates the social implications of what causes this dissonance.

George Levine locates the socially interrogative paradoxes of nineteenth-century realism in its evocation of emotional qualities: ‘Its commitment to close observation of the details of society and the context in which characters move helped to destabilize the conception of selfhood and character on which the Victorian novel built its greatest successes.’⁵⁸ Levine locates this destabilizing effect in the limits of realism: ‘So it regularly failed to find a satisfying way to represent an active and virtuous protagonist who achieves success without being corrupted along the way. It struggled to reconcile success and virtue, but was too honest as a literary mode to accomplish that easily.’⁵⁹ My thesis will extend the social implications of these ambiguous representations particularly in my discussions of Smike and social exclusion in *Nicholas Nickleby* (1838-1839): the gaps in representations of Smike’s disability, I will argue, highlight the ambiguities of contemporary perceptions of disability, and of disabled people, into a wider social and emotional spectrum. Simon Dentith, in his discussion of ‘The Realist Synthesis’, extends the social

⁵⁵ Kearns, *Nineteenth-Century Literary Realism*’ pp. 21-22 and p. 35. See also pp. 70-7.

⁵⁶ Beaumont, p. 6.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Levine, p. 31.

⁵⁹ Levine, pp. 30-31.

implications of representations of emotional experience into textual levels, contextualizing: ‘the capacity to provide a vivid impression of the presence and interaction of people in all their intensity and complexity, and thus the pressure of a personality across its whole range’ as ‘a matter of the texture of the writing’.⁶⁰ Extending Dentith’s observations into the interplay of the fantastic mode with the realist mode, my discussion of *Nicholas Nickleby* and *A Christmas Carol* examines how social implications of emotive experiences highlighted by fantasy operates on a textual and ideological level: both elements of fairy tale and ghost traditions in plot structures complicate expectations and interpretations of character and dialogues between text and illustration affect the reader’s reactions to socially excluded characters. My discussions of the interplay between the fantastic and the realist modes will not only identify and explore how this interplay dramatizes social complexities, but will extend this examination to trace how the aesthetic liminality in fantasy interrogates representations of nineteenth-century social ambiguities in order to raise the possibility of social integration.

Critical Methodologies

My method in examining some of these issues takes inspiration from the Kristevan idea of intertextuality as transformative. Julia Kristeva delineates a transformative dynamic within the novel through the interplay of textual structures, particularly drawing on Mikhail Bakhtin’s concept of the ‘literary word’, ambivalence, and the ‘carnavalesque’. Kristeva observes that Bakhtin conceptualises literary writing as ‘an

⁶⁰ Simon Dentith, ‘Realist Synthesis in the Victorian Novel: “That unity which lies in the selection of our keenest

intersection of textual surfaces', due to a dialogue among the writer, the character and the contemporary context of the writing,⁶¹ and also observes that, '*Dialogue* appears most clearly in the structure of carnivalesque language, where symbolic relationships and analogy take precedence over substance-causality connections.'⁶² She points out the potential in Bakhtin's theories for developing a model of social criticism through observing the interplay of genres/modes caused by the carnivalesque: 'Carnivalesque discourse breaks through the laws of a language censored by grammar and semantics and, at the same time, is a social and political protest.'⁶³ The introduction of a more abstract mode into the interplay of textual languages challenges the interpretation of social codes within a novel:

By adopting a dream logic, [the carnivalesque] transgresses rules of linguistic code and social morality as well. In fact, this 'transgression' of linguistic, logical and social codes within the carnivalesque only exists and succeeds, of course, because it accepts *another law*.⁶⁴

Bakhtin derived many of his observations from examinations of the nineteenth-century polyphonic novel, and the presences of literary dialogue in these texts. As these novels contained a particular focus on 'social value' and 'moral message', they provide a fertile ground for observing the outcome of the interplay of linguistic dialogue amongst texts, or 'intertextual relationships', to use Kristeva's term. Drawing on Bakhtin's suggestion that this ambivalent dialogue allows the writer to 'enter history', Kristeva extends his ideas to identify the transformative role of a particular type of language, poetic language, within texts: 'Dialogue and ambivalence lead me to conclude that, within the interior space of the text as well as

consciousness''' in *Adventures in Realism*, ed. by Matthew Beaumont (Malden: Blackwell, 2007), pp.33-49 (p. 36).

⁶¹ Julia Kristeva, 'Word, Dialogue, and Novel' in *The Kristeva Reader*, ed. by Toril Moi (Oxford: Blackwell, 1986), pp.34-61, p. 36.

⁶² Kristeva, 'Word, Dialogue, and Novel', p. 43.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, p. 36.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 41.

within the space of *texts*, poetic language is a “double”.⁶⁵ Kristeva analyses this transformative intertextuality primarily within the context of the insertion of poetic language into the novel. My inquiry extends her analysis by examining the interplay of different tropes, codes and languages in and across texts.

I argue that the insertion of the fantastic within the mimetic creates a sense of distance that pulls the text into the interrogation of social concerns. The nineteenth-century context suggests textual and aesthetic transformations as well as a transformation of social values. Though the word ‘transformation’ has long contained a psychological connotation, in suggesting a change of character,⁶⁶ the nineteenth century saw the idea of transformation develop an aesthetic context. As *OED* notes, ‘transformation’ became a type of theatrical mechanics, in which ‘the principal performers were transformed in view of the audience into the players of the ensuing harlequinade’.⁶⁷ Peter Haining has shown how Victorian illustrated books, experimenting with movable devices in print, image, and paper production, offered new contexts of experiencing transformation on the part of the reader, as can be seen by titles such as *Dame Wonder’s Transformations*.⁶⁸ Richard Maxwell analyses the aesthetic transformation in illustrated books as the creation of ‘a reality that purposely challenges the traditional categories of the book [...] creat[ing], for [...] readers and viewers, a vast internal space: engulfing, highly organized, interactive,

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 40.

⁶⁶ The *OED* records the first instance of ‘transformation’ as ‘the action of changing in form, shape, or appearance; metamorphosis’ in 1475, and the first instance of transformation as ‘a complete change in character, condition, etc.’ in 1581. “transformation, n.”. *OED Online*. June 2013. Oxford University Press. 22 July 2013 <<http://0-www.oed.com.wam.leeds.ac.uk/view/Entry/204743?redirectedFrom=transformation>>.

⁶⁷ Transformation ‘A mechanical disclosing scene in a pantomime; *spec.* the scene in which the principal performers were transformed in view of the audience into the players of the ensuing harlequinade’ first used in *Punch*, 1859. “transformation, n.”. *OED Online*. June 2013. Oxford University Press. <http://0-www.oed.com.wam.leeds.ac.uk/view/Entry/204743?redirectedFrom=transformation> (accessed July 22, 2013).

⁶⁸ Peter Haining, *Movable Books: An Illustrated History* (London: New English Library, 1979), pp. 20-21.

and *illustrated* in the old sense ('filled with light').⁶⁹ To clarify such questioning, I have selected a more 'fantastic' text and a more 'mimetic' text by each of Charlotte Brontë, Charles Dickens, George Eliot, and George MacDonald; each pairing of texts contains an intriguing interplay between them which draws on both aesthetic and social realities. I have selected texts that incline towards particular fantasy genres (gothic-uncanny, ghost story, science fiction, fairytale). The interplay of modes in these texts demonstrate a transformative discourse which spans a variety of textual languages: for example, in my chapter on Brontë's *The Spell* and *Jane Eyre*, I explore how her use of word painting contains an artistic language of the uncanny, enabling a social analysis which in turn becomes an exploration of psychological identity, and eventually permits a successful negotiation of contemporary gender norms. By comparing two different texts by each author, I identify and explore ways in which writers developed and refined a process of transformative debate *about change* through interplays of modes, examining in particular expressions of emotional experience, of what change and the debates about change *feel like*.

The critical resonances of this transformative debate emerge through the examination of pairings which, as well as sharing the same author, also share similar themes, despite differences in mode. These intersections highlight actions of transformative interrogation in a practice which I shall, borrowing from the work of Rudy Rucker and Damien Broderick, term *transrealism*. Rucker developed this term in 1983 to describe a writing practice of blending science fiction tropes with realism in 'writ[ing] about immediate perception in a fantastic way', using 'the tools of fantasy and SF [...] to thicken and intensify realistic fiction' and concluding that '[t]ransrealism tries to treat not only immediate reality, but also the higher reality in

⁶⁹ Richard Maxwell, 'The Destruction, Rebirth and Apotheosis of the Victorian Illustrated Book' in *The Victorian Illustrated*

which life is embedded'.⁷⁰ In 2000, Broderick extended this concept in a critical context to argue that transrealism 'denotes *sf with heart*, portraying against its fantastic and disruptive invented settings naturalistic characters (some of them robots or aliens) with complex inner lives and personal histories somewhat resembling the density of recognizable or real people'.⁷¹ I find Broderick's delineation of the emotional resonances in interplays between fantasy and realism particularly helpful in my own examinations of how Victorian writers use interplays between fantasy and realism to dramatise emotional complexities around contemporary issues: together, these interplays produce, I will argue, a transrealist discourse. Broderick particularly develops the concept of transrealism in his readings of a number of Philip K. Dick's works, tracing 'chaotic unpredictability' across Dick's science-fictional and autobiographical works. While such readings help him to develop the concept of transrealism in a critical context, he acknowledges that they contain certain problems/limits:

Still, at the end of our investigation into this fresh narrative methodology, certain nagging questions remain. A major problem with the very postulate of transrealism, from both writer's and readers' viewpoints, is its flirtation with biographical fallacies and opacities. You might decide to *write* transrealistically, infusing your fantasies with the juices of your life, but how can I, the reader, know that exoterically – even if you assure me that it is so?⁷²

Broderick's acknowledgement opens the door to debate how much further transrealism could be applied. Broderick describes transrealist writing as containing 'the presence of many precise telling details of description in the environment and telling quirkness and singularity in the speech of the characters' and 'speaking truly

Book, ed. by Richard Maxwell (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2002), pp. 385-422 (p. 393).

⁷⁰ Rudy Rucker, quoted in Damien Broderick, *Transrealist Fictions: Writing in the Slipstream of Science* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2000), pp.37-38.

⁷¹ Damien Broderick, *Transrealist Fictions*, p.12

⁷² Broderick, 173.

of a life radically saturated with the machineries and insights of scientific discovery'.⁷³ Is it possible to apply 'transrealism' outside writing grounded in the tropes of 'machineries and scientific insights' often to be found in the twentieth century sf/SF? Though Broderick does not explore this possibility in detail, he reaches back to older texts and genres to place transrealist writing as an inheritance to some of Dante's visions, for example. A closer look at one of Dick's texts, *Now Wait for Last Year* (1966), which Broderick posits as an example of transrealist writing (noting 'the delightful novelty of his extrapolated future world'),⁷⁴ suggests connections with writing of the early to mid-nineteenth century.

In this novel, Dick interrogates psycho-emotional resonances around time travel, as protagonist Dr. Eric Sweetscent, making drug-induced time travel jumps, finds the borders of his marriage and surrounding society collapsing, merging, and surviving in strange ways. Dick's text, in Broderick's words, links 'itchy human experiences' with 'sundry striking deviations from normative fiction-making' to constitute 'a kind of whimsical signification vortex, which for the knowing reader gathers together connotations – all at once and unconsciously – from a number of incongruous directions'.⁷⁵ Broderick particularly focuses on Sweetscent's half-conscious reportage, which merges emotional reflection with futuristically dissonant adjectives such as 'apteryx-shaped'. However, Dick's text provides moments of dramatizing similarly dissonant experiences beyond the bounds of genre. Sweetscent, in responding to comments about the estranging effects of preserving humans as recorded robots, merges multiple time points in reflection on the illusion of recording life:

⁷³ Broderick, pp.174-175.

⁷⁴ Broderick, p. 105

When the first bard rattled off the first epic of a sometime battle, illusion entered our lives; the Iliad is as much a “fake” as those roband children trading postage stamps on the porch of the building. Humans have always striven to retain the past [. . .] Without it we have no continuity; we have only the moment. And, deprived of the past, the moment—the present—has little meaning, if any.⁷⁶

The act of exploring the illusions of time and memory leads him to reflect on his troubled relationship with his wife, Kathy: “[I]t’s become an involuntary arrangement, derived God knows how from the past [. . .] Neither of us can puzzle out its meaning or its motivating mechanism. With a better memory we could turn it back into something we could fathom.”⁷⁷ The plot of the novel expands on his thoughts, and he jumps in and out of time to find that the resolution of his marriage becomes a question of enduring illusion, producing an extended exploration of connections between cognitive dissonance, the production of illusion, and emotional experience, all of which are heightened by the time travel narrative, given extra poignancy by the realism of Sweetscent’s baffled conscientiousness regarding his marriage, and opened to wider social questions by the continuous dance of partnerships across spheres of gender, corporations, and even species.

Time travel and aliens are more familiar to the twentieth century than to the nineteenth century, but the combination of social realism, cognitive dissonance, illusion, and emotional experience forms a strong presence in nineteenth-century writing. Broderick explores some of this combination through a reflection on Arthur Rimbaud (1854-1891), quoting Rimbaud’s 1873 detailing the changes in his perception of his authorial identity: ‘I called myself a magician, an angel, free from all moral constraint . . . I am sent back to the soil to seek some obligation, to wrap

⁷⁵ Broderick, p. 105

⁷⁶ Philip K. Dick, *Now Wait For Last Year* (London: Gollancz, 2002), p. 26.

gnarled reality in my arms.’⁷⁸ Rimbaud sees the act of ‘wrap[ping] gnarled reality in my arms’ as an ‘end to a splendid career as an artist and storyteller!’.⁷⁹ However, the language with which he describes reality has a twisted tone to it: nineteenth-century translations of Catullus’s poems (1871) use gnarled to represent a whirlwind ‘his huge gnarled trunk in furious eddies a whirlwind Riving wresteth amain’; 1871 translations of Goethe’s works refer to ‘gnarls uncanny’.⁸⁰ Broderick then uses Rimbaud’s phrase to contextualise transrealist writing as ‘a gnarly attractor in narrative space (as a physicist might put it), a way of combining wild ideas, subversion and criticism of the supposedly airy fantastic, all bound together in a passionate, noncompliant act of self-examination.’⁸¹

There are, of course, other discourses which deal with twists between fantasy and realism. We might, perhaps, use ‘liminal’ and ‘liminality’ to describe such writing; Hank Viljoen, expanding Victor Turner’s discussion of the powers ambiguous ‘betwixt-and-between’ individuals have to create a space of shared equality’ due to their experiences of deprivation and loss, defines as poetics of liminality: ‘[Reading] is a ritual that carries readers way to a liminal space in which they can undergo transformations and even cause a new kind of *communitas* to develop’.⁸² Yet, ‘liminal’ writing suggests either a one-way process of transition, or the representation of one of those stages. Gothic realism, as Martin Willis has noted

⁷⁷ Dick, p. 26

⁷⁸ Arthur Rimbaud, quoted in Broderick, p. 3.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ See "gnarled, adj.". OED Online. June 2014. Oxford University Press. <http://0-www.oed.com.wam.leeds.ac.uk/view/Entry/79451> (accessed June 16, 2014), and "gnarl, n.1". OED Online. June 2014. Oxford University Press. <http://0-www.oed.com.wam.leeds.ac.uk/view/Entry/79446> (accessed June 16, 2014).

⁸¹ Broderick, p. 3

⁸² Hein Viljoen and Chris van der Merwe, eds., *Beyond the Threshold: Explorations in Liminality and Culture* (Potchefstroom: Peter Lang; 2007), p. 11.

in tracing Dickens's use of it, can 'marginalise [. . .] sites but also [. . .] relay the spectral quality of their connectedness and thereby bring them towards the centre of the narrative' thereby 'using the Gothic to uncover invisible relations that seem to stand outside the realm of realism'.⁸³ However, what of realism that shifts between the Gothic and other genres?

Hilary Schor links the Gothic and the fairy tale in discussing the realities of the marriage plot in *Jane Eyre*, commenting that 'the presence in *Jane Eyre*'s of gritty material world of the Gothic, the romance, the curious, is no accident [. . .] It is instead a heightening of the realist "and then"[. . .] remind[ing] us [. . .] of the ghosting of the married woman, as she disappears into coverture.'⁸⁴ Schor offers *Jane Eyre* as a complication of what Franco Moretti has termed 'quietist' 'fairy tale justice'; Schor instead develops the fairy tale plot as a quest for knowledge 'that goes beyond what every "mature individual" should know.'⁸⁵ Schor's discussions centre around the creation of knowledge in complications of the marriage plot; there are, I feel, wider complexities around transformation to be explored in the conjunction of the Gothic, the fairy tale and realism.

Reading Victorian texts through a transrealist lens brings together some of these interrogative discourses. Liminality indicates a one-way process of change; transrealism suggests multiple crossings, as when Eric Sweetscent wavers continually across time and conjugal contexts and Latimer circles the question of social estrangement through narrating his visions of the future past, propelled by Mrs. Archer's return from the dead. *Jane Eyre* merges gothic realism and the fairy

⁸³ Martin Willis, 'Victorian Realism and the Gothic: Objects of Terror Transformed' in *The Victorian Gothic: An Edinburgh Companion*, ed. By Andrew Smith and William Hughes (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2012), Kindle Edition.

⁸⁴ Hilary Schor, *Curious subjects: women and the trials of realism* (Oxford: OUP, 2013), p. 8

⁸⁵ Schor, p. 10.

tale plot through her spectral fairy, whose kindness assists Jane's search for social knowledge and whose spectrality suggests Jane's drive to negotiate her ambivalent contexts of orphan and outcast. Smike undergoes Bakhtinian degradation and renaissance as he moves from a figure of grotesque realism – whose physical features are visualized as abnormal – to be translated into a romanticised memory, emphasised by both textual and visual pathos; yet this memory requires the knowledge of his grotesque past to reinforce its effect. Through examining processes of change in these texts, we can see how the interplay of fantasy and realism becomes a point to uncover marginalization in a range of genres.

How might Broderick's exploration of writing from self-examination to the act of examining others' writing? Some sense of this can be found in Dickens's chapter 'An Italian Dream' in his travel memoir *Pictures from Italy*, through the descriptions of viewing: Dickens describes his travels in Italy through language which anticipates Broderick's expression of the 'chaotic unpredictability of lived reality'. 'A crowd of objects wandered in the greatest confusion through my mind' he comments, before explaining that 'some one among them would stop, as it were, in its restless flitting to and fro, and enable me to look at it, quite steadily, and behold it in full distinctness. After a few moments, it would dissolve, like a view in a magic lantern.'⁸⁶ He describes viewing the 'two towers of Bologna' and 'the monstrous moated castle of Ferrara' as 'that incoherent but delightful jumble in my brain'.⁸⁷ We can 'look steadily' at writing which evokes a confusion of genres, a jumble of tropes. Victorian transrealism' therefore, becomes a discourse of 'look[ing] steadily' at dissoving views: uncovering the whirlwinds of 'gnarled

⁸⁶ Dickens, *American Notes and Pictures from Italy*, ed. by Sacheverell Sitwell (London: OUP, 1966), p. 329.

⁸⁷ Ibid.

reality' produced by Broderick's 'signification vortex'. These effects are more easily articulated, perhaps, as conjunctions of genres, 'delightful jumbles', and combinations of disjunctive elements which cause discomfort and bafflement.

However, such writing is more than a combination of genres: it is also writing which offers emotional transformation through its passionate non-compliance. It is writing which answers George Eliot's question '[W]hat is really the difference to your imagination between Infinitude and billions, when you have to consider the value of human experience?'⁸⁸ in presenting emotional experience in ways which draws the literary imagination of the reader towards infinitude.

The construction of audiences within MacDonald's text offers an opportunity to explore the effects of audiences and emotional experience through MacDonald's spectrum of audiences reacting to stories and reflections: John Smith is moved by the unconventional sincerity of the pipe-smoking Rev. Armstrong in the first chapter; the collection of different social characters in the storytelling club (a young doctor, a vicar and his wife, a retired schoolmaster and his wife, a moralistic upper-class woman, and a young upper-middle class girl) offers some differentiation between age and class (though it is likely that a twenty-first century reader may not be particularly struck by such differentiation). More importantly, they offer a range of emotional reactions which reveal some sense of background: the snobbish upper-middle class Mrs Cathcart, for example, has a strict sense of social and moral propriety which extends to her interpretations of fairy tales; other characters challenge this, arguing for a more fluid categorization of such tales. While Mrs Cathcart is not a pleasant character, her disapproving comments propel the

⁸⁸ George Eliot, 'To the Hon. Mrs. Henry Ponsonby, 10 December 1874' in *Selections from George Eliot's Letters*, ed. by Gordon S. Haight (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985), pp. 452-454 (p. 454).

discussions, and offer a point from which Adela's transformation can occur, and provide a villain to dislike for anyone strongly in disfavour of moral hypocrisy. The last type of storytelling audience encountered is the circle of children gathered by Adela to listen to Smith's 'The Giant's Heart'. Some of these discuss the violent events in the text; one lone girl is sufficiently moved by it to view her life through its perspective. The representation of audiences in MacDonald's text suggests transrealist discourse through its prioritising of a mixture of views and tales whose content challenges the audience to discuss these views with passion: this content often involves fairy tale themes and tropes with which an audience can take issue.

Transrealist elements in Victorian writing has the potential to appeal to a range of audiences: the question is whether the audiences will engage with the texts on an emotional level, which might then inspire thoughts of wider social connections. While Broderick muses that the transrealist elements in Dick's fiction and biography do not allow an objective assessment of social change realism, moving an examination of transrealist writing to the nineteenth century demonstrates that spaces of fantasy can be infused with the 'juices' of many lives.

The texts which I examine, spanning the years from 1834 (Charlotte Brontë's *The Spell*) to 1876 (George Eliot's *Daniel Deronda*), reflect a period that takes in a number of different social changes, such as the Great Reform Act (1832), the Poor Law Amendment Act (1834), the coronation of Queen Victoria (1837), the Crimean War (1853-6) and the Elementary Education Act (1870) (among others), providing a fruitful context to explore the interrogation of social value. The Victorian period offers a space to examine the idea of exoteric reality and change in transrealism, as it is easier to identify the resonances of a wider social context. For example, both *A Christmas Carol* (1843) and *Nicholas Nickleby* (1836-1838) contain a context of

campaigning for social reform around the *Second Report of the Children's Employment Commission* (1843) and the abuse of children in the Yorkshire Schools, respectively. Brontë's *The Spell* suggests a writer using experimental textuality to negotiate a developing authorial identity which would mature in her later work, *Jane Eyre* (1847). Brontë uses uncanny language to explore and negotiate difficulties of social identity at a time when the social identity of the Victorian writer was ambivalent and fraught, as contemporary arguments by G.H. Lewes demonstrate. Brontë's success in developing a negotiative textuality to transcend uncanny elements in personal identity was recognised by succeeding authors, such as L.M. Montgomery, who uses her as an example of a successful writer negotiating complexities of community in her Canadian *künstlerroman* *Emily Climbs* (1925). Montgomery found herself identified with Brontë upon her successful navigation of the international literary scene as a writer emerging from a small provincial Canadian community. George Eliot explores complexities of psychological and professional development in her 1859 proto-science fiction novella *The Lifted Veil*; these complexities are explored in a more specifically educational context in her later work, *Daniel Deronda* (1876), published after the Education Act of 1870, which institutionalised national education. Written a time when definitions of depression, melancholia, and other aspects of mental health (such as epilepsy) were in flux, George MacDonald's *Adela Cathcart* (1864) collects fantasy tales of struggle and deprivation within a framing narrative of a young woman struggling with depression. I limit my explorations of Victorian transrealism to the early and mid Victorian period (1830s-1870s) as the late Victorian period, while certainly possessing fruitful ground for exploration, embodies shifts in both a realist and fantastic context which are beyond the space of this thesis to draw together. The

later Victorian period saw a reaction against forms of social realism in novel form typified in earlier years; as Skilton observes, ‘The low esteem in which critics of the 1890s and later held early and mid-Victorian criticism of prose fiction accompanies a turning away from social and political aspects of the novel’.⁸⁹ Prickett sees the writing of George MacDonald as a watershed point in the history of fantasy, in that subsequent fantasy writers wrote in reaction to him: ‘Before him we are always aware of the ambiguity as an *unconscious* creative force – the product of an unresolved tension in the writer. With MacDonald, and those who follow him, the tension is not removed, but sublimated into a framework of rich and complicated symbolism.’⁹⁰ For the sake of coherency, I shall leave tracing the use of transrealist discourse in these reactive contexts for exploration in further contexts.

Though the formal concept of transrealism is not contemporary to the writers I examine, I suggest that this concept, used in a wider social context to Broderick’s original setting of autobiography, encapsulates the critical complexity in these authors’ exploration of the possibility of transformed emotional autonomy through a conscious practice of interplay which emerges in the fluctuations across modes of fantasy and realism.

Chapter Summaries

In my first chapter, I trace the developmental connections between Brontë’s juvenile novella *The Spell* (1834)⁹¹ and her later work, *Jane Eyre*, which provide an opportunity to extend the auto-biographical realist mode which Broderick defines in

⁸⁹ Skilton, p.9.

⁹⁰ Prickett, p. 12.

transrealism into a wider biographical context in the transrealist interplay in the texts. A process of integration accompanies the dramatization of fragmentation in *The Spell*, particularly highlighted by transrealistic elements which pair demonic dandy sorcerers with the Duke of Wellington. Moving between the Gothic and the uncanny, the textual practice of negotiating fragmentation continues in *Jane Eyre*, similarly signalled by transrealistic elements. *Jane Eyre* herself is variously termed a 'rat', an elf, an incubus and a ministrant spirit, and these terms serve to emphasise the isolating identity within her liminal social status. Comparisons between the two texts highlight narrative techniques – multiple narrators and scenes of arbitrary resolution, for example – in both *The Spell* and *Jane Eyre* which insert a subversive ambiguity of social codes, implementing a transformative process of moral fragmentation, psychological exploration, and finally an integration of identity which suggests an authorial autonomy. In the first section of this chapter, I discuss how *The Spell* and *Jane Eyre* trouble the limits of artistic production and practice in their use of visual language and in their depiction of contemporary ideals and icons of beauty. In the second section of this chapter, I explore how religious allusions in uncanny moments decentre aspects of contemporary religious culture. In my final section, I discuss how the use of uncanny doubles in narrative voices explores the transformative process of negotiating public writerly identity in the nineteenth-century literary marketplace..

In my second chapter, my discussion of 'social ghosting' in two texts by Charles Dickens demonstrates how a transrealist discourse interrogates complexities of transforming identity – seen in a more personal, authorial trajectory in Charlotte Brontë's texts – in a wider context of social exclusion. Dickens's texts particularly

⁹¹ Charlotte Brontë, *The Spell*, ed. by Nicola Barker (London: Hesperus Press, 2005).

highlight the emotive aspect of transrealism which Broderick summarises as ‘sf with heart’: by emphasising the sentimental in his blend of fantasy and realism, Dickens provides potential for reflection on the social construction of excluded masculinity. Dickens was writing in a context far from more modern discussions of social and critical models of disability,⁹² but his emotive dramatization of disabled characters within a wider spectrum of exclusion interrogates the connections between emotional perception and the possibility of reform. The interplay of tropes of spectrality and haunting with contemporary discourse on trauma and memory helps to contextualize experiences of fear in the emotional exclusion experienced by Mrs Nickleby, Ralph, and Scrooge. I explore the effects on characters of these different aspects of trauma, using spectral metaphors to underline the complexities surrounding their emotive recollections and to interrogate the cultural practices of education and mourning which form their experiences of social exile. I further clarify the complexities of external and internal exclusion through examining the use of illustration in these texts to represent the characters of Smike in *Nicholas Nickleby* and Scrooge in *A Christmas Carol*, which propel a process of criticising emotional reactions to socially excluded individuals through the gaps in perception caused by tensions between visual and verbal texts. Finally, the endings of both texts make use of the structures of the Anti-tale⁹³ and of the ghost story respectively, as both dramatize the possibility of permanent exclusion from life and in doing so

⁹² Colin Barnes and Margrit Shildrick provide a useful summary of debates around the social model of disability. See Colin Barnes, ‘Understanding the social model of disability: past, present and future’ in *The Routledge Handbook of Disability Studies* ed. by Nick Watson, Alan Roulstone and Carol Thomas (London: Routledge, 2012), pp. 12-29, and Margrit Shildrick, ‘Critical disability studies: rethinking the conventions for the age of postmodernity’ in *The Routledge Handbook of Disability Studies* ed. by Nick Watson, Alan Roulstone and Carol Thomas (London: Routledge, 2012), pp. 30-41.

⁹³ The Anti-tale, a concept first presented by André Jolles, ‘takes a common element of the conventional tale and turns it upside down or opposes it or interprets it from a wholly new angle [. . .] [It] changes perspectives[. . .][putting] emphasis on the other [. . .] the unseen, the untold, the suppressed or the ignored within the tale’. Defne Çizakça, ‘A. S. Byatt and “The Djinn”: The Politic and Epistemology of the Anti-Tale’ in *Anti-Tales: The Uses of Disenchantment*, ed. by Catriona McAra and David Calvin, (Newcastle-upon-Tyne: Cambridge Scholars, 2011), pp. 264-274 (p. 264). Also see André Jolles, *Einfache Formen*, (Saale: M. Niemeyer, 1930).

explore the emotional complexities of Smike and Tiny Tim beyond a context of pity, and through this, interrogate the process of resolution.

While elements of transrealism in Charles Dickens's texts interrogate the possibility of transforming perceptions in a spectrum of social exclusion, a transrealist discourse in George Eliot's *The Lifted Veil* (1859) and *Daniel Deronda* (1876) highlights the complexities of transforming identity in a more specific social process, that of educational development, exploring this development in contexts of forming women as objects of fashion, the role of self-help in professional training, and finally, the creation of cultural dialogue in helping women to engage with their communities. The emotionally educational effects of a transrealist discourse can be seen in moments of cognitive dissonance contained in both texts which intersect with socially educational effects of sympathy (or lack of sympathy). In her 1859 novella *The Lifted Veil*, social perception is problematized in an overtly esoteric way, through the medium of Latimer's uncanny and isolating sight, whereas in *Daniel Deronda*, astronomical imagery signals complexities of social development. Comparing the two texts highlights both Eliot's use of transrealism to explore social effects of cognitive dissonance in a fantastic context and her transposition of this discourse to explore the social effects of cognitive dissonance in a more realist context, particularly surrounding the dramatization of educational challenges following the Elementary Education Act of 1870. A comparison to Bertha Grant in *The Lifted Veil* – another heroine with a troubled marriage who ends her narrative without a husband – demonstrates the possibilities in the results of Gwendolen's education. My discussion of transrealist representations of educational complexities in Eliot's texts continues by exploring esoteric associations in moments of cognitive dissonance throughout Charles Meunier's (*The Lifted Veil*) and Mirah Lapidoth's

(*Daniel Deronda*) development of professional vocations as a doctor and as a vocalist, respectively. While my discussions of Gwendolen and Bertha, Mirah and Meunier explore the process of preparing to engage with external communities, my examination of the characters of Latimer and the Meyrick family evaluates the educational process of engaging with their external communities through a dialogue which enables them to overcome initial fear.

My final discussion brings elements of Brontë's, Dickens's, and Eliot's interrogations together as it explores the role of transrealism in representing (as a framing narrative) the transformation in identity of a young woman suffering from depression; these representations take the form of tales told in a therapeutic storytelling club which contain the transposition of fantasy elements into realist contexts, commenting on perceptions in social identity; the element of didacticism in George MacDonald's overarching narrative interrogates the idea of educational development. While my discussion in this chapter may not draw upon the aspects of the previous chapters in any great detail, the accumulation and interplay of these previously-discussed elements in MacDonald's *Adela Cathcart* (1864) contextualizes the more conscious and specifically focussed role which transrealism forms in his representations.

The framing narrative context of the club serves as a useful partnership to the tales, exploring a therapeutic social resonance to the literary fairytale⁹⁴ focussed around healing a sick young woman, the eponymous Adela and helping her towards independence. The first fairy tale, 'The Light Princess', establishes a heteroglossic

⁹⁴ Elizabeth Wanning Harries, summarizing research by Jack Zipes, Maria Tatar and others, notes that, '[t]he English term "literary fairy tale" is a translation of the German compound *kunstmarchen* (artistic tales) that distinguishes original tales written by a single, educated writer from "folktales," or *Volksmarchen*, tales thought to have been transmitted orally by

voice of intertextual ambivalence, which foregrounds a cathartic process, moving from evocations of deprivation through the cursed Light Princess, to fairy tale resonances in representations of Elsie's isolation and mental disability in 'The Bell', and finally to a transformed signifying process in representations of culturally forbidden mourning around child mortality in 'Birth, Dreaming and Death'. A second sequence of tales interrogates images of identity as part of a process of transformation. The sequence begins with a 'fairy tale' ('The Shadows'), followed by two tales which transpose abstract themes presented in the first tale into more specific nineteenth-century social contexts of the Crimean War ('The Broken Swords')⁹⁵ and of child reform ('My Uncle Peter'). Representations of gender in the final sequence around the third fairy tale, 'The Giant's Heart' complicate these contemporary symbols of femininity by blending them with symbols of masculine violence and of victorious feminine struggle. The cumulative and communal process in the tales and the responses to the tales in *Adela Cathcart* promotes the social potential of exploring the transformation of deprivation to integration through telling, retelling and discussing of tales in a context which actively encourages discussions of grief, moving from catharsis, to interrogation, and then to active resolution.

Concluding Remarks

As I shall demonstrate in more detail in the chapters which follow, examining interplays of the fantastic and realist modes in early to mid Victorian fiction

the uneducated, often illiterate "folk." 'Literary Fairy Tales' in *The Greenwood Encyclopedia of Folktales and Fairytales*, ed. by Donald Haase (Westport, CT: Greenwood, 2007), 578-583 (p. 578).

interrogates the conscious expression of emotional transformation alongside a context of social autonomy. These intersections, in what I term a transrealist discourse, align what Broderick terms 'disruptive invented settings' with dissonant emotions including fragmentation (Charles and Jane), isolation (Smike and Scrooge), fear (Latimer and the Meyrick sisters), and despair (Adela and Elsie), to suggest a few examples. The use of a transrealist discourse does not simply articulate these emotions, but also draws them together in dissonant aesthetics, exploring change on multiple levels. Connections between Brontë's *The Spell* and *Jane Eyre* explore new identities of the moral, visual, and creative observer in articulating psychological insights of the fragmented self and of the surrounding community. These articulations result in the development of a creative identity expressed in the person of the negotiative (female) writer. Connections between Dickens's *Nicholas Nickleby* and *A Christmas Carol* examine experiences of loneliness in an socio-economic community; by drawing together a spectrum of exclusion which encompasses both those identified as disabled [that is, in language contemporary to the Victorian era] and those who are not identified in this way, these examinations articulate a shared identity of isolation which criticises the isolating society. Connections between Eliot's *The Lifted Veil* and *Daniel Deronda* explore experiences of estrangement in individual, professional, and communal educational contexts. These explorations interrogate the process of developing an independence which integrates psychological maturity with social insight. Finally, heteroglossic connections amongst the collected narratives in MacDonald's *Adela Cathcart* trace numerous experiences of loss and deprivation; the shared expression of these

⁹⁵ For a discussion of the links between 'The Broken Swords' and the Crimean War, see Jenny Neophytou, 'Military Bodies and Masculinity in "The Broken Swords"' in *Rethinking George MacDonald: Contexts and Contemporaries*, ed. by Christopher MacLachlan, John Patrick Pazdziora, and Ginger Stelle (Glasgow:ASLS, 2013), pp. 84-104.

experiences enacts a healing process of first catharsis, then inquiry, and finally sublimation, resulting in new interpretations of gender identity. The socio-critical alignments of Victorian transrealism dramatize the formation of new emotional identities which enable increased autonomy, and consequently, social transformation.

Chapter One: Charlotte Brontë and the Aesthetics of Alienation

The developmental connections between Charlotte Brontë's juvenile Gothic novella *The Spell* (1834) and her adult novel, *Jane Eyre* (1847), form a useful space to explore wider applications of Broderick's biographical approach to transrealism. There has been much critical speculation and investigation into *Jane Eyre* by examining tensions and interplay between the formation of Jane's social identity and what is known of Brontë's development as a writer. Examinations of *The Spell* extend these tensions due to its complexities of narration, particularly highlighted by Brontë's use of her alter-ego, Charles Wellesley, as both a framing narrator and character.¹ My investigations will explore how both texts use uncanny transrealism to dramatize tensions of creating a social identity, and how these tensions might be transformed.

Jane Eyre is a novel which has often been identified as mixing the fantastic and the realist modes.² Though it is not always considered part of the Victorian fantasy tradition (for example, Prickett includes no discussion of the Brontë sisters or of *Jane Eyre* in his detailed examination of Victorian fantasy), critics have observed connections to the fairy tale and Gothic traditions. Much attention has been paid to the resonances of the *Arabian Nights* in the novel³ and to Gothic elements including

¹ In addition to the narrative and thematic resemblances to *Jane Eyre*, I have chosen to focus on this particular text in the Brontë juvenilia because, as Christine Alexander observes, *The Spell* represents a departure from, and thus something of a self-contained text within, the main body of the juvenilia: 'Many of the characters do not appear again in the juvenilia and the events must be seen as separate from the main conception from the Glass Town Saga. *The Spell* is an imaginary excursion from the central plot.' See Christine Alexander, *The Early Writings of Charlotte Brontë* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1983), p. 120.

² Michael Clarke observes that, 'Readers attempting to place Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* in the nineteenth-century novel tradition have been puzzled by Brontë's bold mixing of genres and by the immense and powerful ideological dialectic that seems to "close down" at the novel's conclusion to an apparently thin monological stream.' Clarke also explores the influence of the Grimms upon Brontë. See Michael M. Clarke, 'Jane Eyre and the Grimms' Cinderella', *SEL (Studies in English Literature 1500-1900)*, 40 (2000), 695-710 (p. 695).

³ Melissa Dickson sees the *Arabian Nights* 'as a kind of material and psychological souvenir [which] [...] becomes a metonymic device for the objectification and summation of all [Jane's] miseries at Gateshead'. See Dickson, 'Jane Eyre's 'Arabian Tales': Reading and Remembering the Arabian Nights', *Journal of Victorian Culture*, 18 (2013), 198-212 (p.

the haunted atmosphere at Thornfield Hall, Rochester's troubled past, and his imprisoned mad wife Bertha Antoinette Mason. However, the novel has also been associated with a realist context: the evocation of governess hardships rang true for many people, as some reviewers pointed out, and links between Lowood and Roe Head School make Brontë's evocation of Mr Brocklehurst's strict regime only too real. An examination of her speculative Gothic novella increases the resonances of emotional fragmentation among several characters and provides links both to Charlotte Brontë, who identifies herself with her alter ego, Charles Wellesley, and to her adult novel, *Jane Eyre*, as there are similar themes and tropes.

Charlotte's musings about life at eighteen in *Shirley* (1849) hint that her mindset at the time of writing *The Spell* straddled the border between fantasy and reality. According to *Shirley*'s narrator, the age of eighteen, although possessing vast quantities of 'Hope' and 'Love', '[draws] near the confines of illusive, void dreams [as] Elf-land lies behind us [and] the shores of Reality rise in front'.⁴ *The Spell* sites itself within complexities that straddle the uncanny, in Hélène Cixous's definition of the term as 'a gap/border between fantasy and reality'.⁵ The original villain is a hellish demon yet possesses the airs and graces, and indeed the literal calling card, of a Regency dandy. The story takes place in a world where historical figures including the Duke of Wellington swear by characters of the Arabian mythos. Its denouement hangs on the revelation of a cradle curse.

198). Dickson's article is a particularly recent example. Other work covering the influence of the *Arabian Nights* on *Jane Eyre* includes Paula Sullivan, 'Fairy Tale Elements in "Jane Eyre"' *Journal of Popular Culture*, 12 (1978), 61-74, and Joyce Zenona, 'The Sultan and the Slave: Feminist Orientalism and the Structure of *Jane Eyre*', *Signs*, 18 (1993), 592-617.

⁴ Charlotte Brontë, *Shirley* (Oxford: OUP, 2007), p.83.

⁵ Hélène Cixous, 'Fiction and Its Phantoms: A Reading of Freud's *Das Unheimliche* (The "Uncanny")', *New Literary History*, 7 (1976), 525-645 (p. 536).

For readers of *Jane Eyre*, reading Charlotte Brontë's short novel *The Spell* is an uncanny experience. In his essay *Das Unheimliche* ['The "Uncanny"'] (1919), Sigmund Freud (before expanding this definition, as I will explore below) explores a definition of the uncanny as 'that class of the frightening which leads back to what is known of old and long familiar',⁶ and in this juvenile text, the familiar attributes and tropes of the plot and characters in *Jane Eyre* are separated and spliced together in an unfamiliar way. The supernatural intrudes, but in the form of a fiendish sorcerer instead of heavenly visitations. There are suggestions of madness, but in this text the hero is mad rather than his wife. Mary Henrietta, the Duke of Zamorna's baffled young bride, at various times recalls the jealousy of Bertha Mason, the snobbery of Blanche Ingram and the questioning nature of Jane Eyre. Mina Laury, the nurse figure, interrogates social boundaries, as does Jane Eyre, but her slavish devotion to Zamorna's lightest whim makes her contemptible in comparison to Jane's defiance. Zamorna himself, with his seraglio of beautiful ladies (Lady Helen Victorine, Florence Marian, Mary Henrietta, Mina Laury), is reminiscent of Rochester, whose past and present is similarly colourful (Bertha Mason, Céline Varens, Giacinta, Clara, Blanche Ingram, Jane Eyre). Yet a reader used to Rochester's 'goblin' ugliness and awkward temper can find Zamorna's Byronic perfection of face and manner somewhat nauseating.

Jane Eyre's plot is well-known, so I shall briefly summarize the plot of *The Spell*, which is less generally familiar. *The Spell* opens with a preface from one of its several narrators, Lord Charles Wellesley. Charles is full of righteous fury against his older brother, Arthur Augustus Adrian Wellesley, Marquis of Douro, Duke of Zamorna and King of Angria. The text which follows is his revenge, he

⁶ Sigmund Freud, "The 'Uncanny'" in *The Penguin Freud Library, Vol. 14: Art and Literature* ed. Albert Dickson, (London:

says, and he calls the Angrian populace to uncover the madness and crimes of their king, which they can discover through various hints and clues scattered in the text:⁷ *The Spell* is a puzzle that only the reader can solve. Charles then begins the novel by describing the death and funeral of Zamorna's first-born son, at which a mysterious and malevolent stranger appears and delivers a rhyming curse. Zamorna's wife, Mary Henrietta (née Percy), takes up her narration in the form of letters to her grandmother. Her husband's strange behaviour, secrets and (suspected) adultery bewilder and distress her, and her discovery of what seems to be a separate establishment, complete with hidden wife and children, alarms her even more. Charles and Mary Henrietta describe further investigations (augmented by the accounts of Dr Alford) as Zamorna grows more erratic and then deathly ill, blaming his wife for betraying him. His mistress, Mina Laury, then undertakes a desperate journey which restores him to life and health. The novella appears to close with a scene of explanation and revelation: Zamorna has a twin brother, Ernest, Duke of Valdacella; due to a cradle curse from a demonic magician, the twins must remain separate and Ernest hidden until the death of Zamorna's first child. Charles is forgiven, Mary and Zamorna are united and Ernest introduces his hidden wife, Emily Inez, and children to the cream of Angrian society. But a final address baffles this happy ending by suggesting that these related events are actually an elaborate artifice to disguise Zamorna's tragic madness and death. He leaves the reader to decide between the two possible endings.

The Spell perches on numerous borders. It is set in Branwell and Charlotte's personal fantasy world of Angria, but it incorporates a range of modes ranging from fairy-tale to ekphrasis. The elaborate descriptions of Angrian high society borrow in

style from the silver-fork genre, which critics have characterised by its ‘prioritising of social etiquette [and] shallow conventionalities of polite discourse’⁸ and its narrator, a younger son called Lord Charles, recalls a popular formula from silver-fork novels.⁹ However, Charlotte’s ignorance of contemporary high society introduces an element of fantasy into supposedly ordinary scenes that do not include demonic magicians, and as silver-fork novels also avoided ‘complexities of plot and characterisation’,¹⁰ the investigation into Zamorna’s character, the detailing of Mary Henrietta’s despair, and the enigmatic ending shifts the novel away from this categorisation.

Questions of fragmentation and resolution in *Jane Eyre* have received much discussion, but, since critics come down on either side, there seems to be little consensus as to whether Jane ends her narrative in a unified identity or a state of social fragmentation. I wish to transcend these two views by suggesting that Jane ends by negotiating her fragmented identity: while issues of fragmentation and alienation have not been resolved, she has learned to negotiate them in order to maintain her social and aesthetic identity. Something of this balance can, I suggest, be exemplified through examining transrealist elements in endings of *The Spell* and of *Jane Eyre*, which both negotiate the prospect of alienation in combination with an emotional ‘non-compliance’. Jane Eyre’s final focus on St John Rivers and the biblical book of Revelation, drawing attention from the preceding conclusion of Jane’s own story, has baffled many readers and has produced many interpretations. I suggest that an examination of the double ending alongside a similar ending in *The*

⁷ Charlotte Brontë, *The Spell*, ed. Nicola Barker (London: Hesperus Press, 2005), p. 6. References henceforth given in text.

⁸ Matthew Whiting Rosa, *The Silver-Fork School: Novels of Fashion Preceding Vanity Fair* (New York: Kennikat Press, 1964), p.8.

⁹ Cheryl Wilson identifies a similar character as a cliché of the genre. See Cheryl A. Wilson, ‘Almack’s and the Silver-Fork Novel’, *Women’s Writing*, 16: 2 (2009), 237-252.

Spell explains how this ending contextualises the rest of the novel and provides an insight into the nature of spirituality in *Jane Eyre*.

The Spell ends with the image of Zamorna in a madhouse, and this image concludes a warning to all double-natured individuals: ‘If the young King of Angria has no alter ego he ought to have such a convenient representative, for no single man, having one corporeal and one spiritual nature, if these were rightly compounded [...] should speak and act in that double-dealing, unfathomable [...] sphinx-like manner which he constantly assumes’ (129). However, this final warning and image form part of an aside, a concluding *note bene* to a postscript detailing the marriage of a couple of minor characters. The curtain officially drops on the scene of the Angrian court in harmony, all questions having been answered with the story of the mysterious ‘Henry Nicolai, Flesher and Spirit Merchant’, who apparently left his home ‘close by the Gates of Hades’ one ‘18th of July, Cycle of Eternity’ in order to place a spell on the infant royal twins, Arthur (Zamorna) and Ernest (Valdacella) (125). This combination of endings encourages the reader to review the preceding narratives in light of their contradictions and to decide whether the tale of supernatural, demonic intervention, which relieves Zamorna from the madhouse and so ends happily, is to be believed over the tale of a torturous, psychotic ruler who unhappily goes mad at the age of 22. The reader must balance the miraculous alongside court gossip and social dilemmas.

This multi-faceted ending, and the re-reading and re-interpretation it produces, recalls the multi-faceted conclusion to *Jane Eyre*. Jane concludes with a couple of paragraphs predicting the death of St John Rivers. Any regret Jane might feel on the loss of her cousin will be tempered with ‘Divine joy’, for St John

¹⁰ Rosa, p.8.

interprets his coming death in the context of Revelation and chooses to end with the words of the biblical seer, ‘Even so, come, Lord Jesus’ (385).¹¹ But, given the effect of the narrative technique in the conclusion(s) of *The Spell* (which spill back over the preceding text), I suggest that St John’s final words instigate a re-reading of the supernatural elements in the novel. St John predicts his death by invoking the end of Revelation. This, obviously, emphasises the religious side of his nature. However, his choice emphasises a particular strand of religiosity: that of the supernatural and the miraculous. Revelation, as Jean-Pierre Ruiz notes in his introduction to the book in *The New Oxford Annotated Bible*, is ‘a work of extremes and notoriously complex [...] [as] the symbolic visions of the book are by no means self-explanatory [...] [and] there are transcendent levels of meaning that must be discerned’.¹² Ruiz warns that any meaning discerned is the subject of a wide-ranging scholarly debate, with no single interpretation available; he quotes the Church Father St Jerome in underlining the book’s atmosphere of mystery. St John Rivers’s final words suggest a spirituality that is endlessly mysterious and that provokes constant re-reading and re-interpretation.. Revelation certainly contains warnings of punishment, but the atmosphere of symbolism, prophecy and vision which surrounds such warnings emphasises the difficulty in attaching specific – and personal – interpretations of these punishments. Furthermore, the conclusion, from which St John’s words are taken, contains a warning about the dangers of strict interpretation which ‘add or take away’ from the prophecies contained in the book. Like the conclusion in *The Spell*, St John’s words provoke re-reading and re-interpretation.

¹¹ Charlotte Brontë, *Jane Eyre: The Norton Critical Edition*, ed. by Richard Dunn (New York: Norton, 2001), pp. 456-457. References henceforth given in text.

¹² Jean-Pierre Ruiz, ‘Introduction to Revelation’ in *The New Oxford Annotated Bible*, ed. by Michael D. Coogan (Oxford: OUP, 2001), pp. 420.421 (p. 421) [New Testament].

Comparing *The Spell* to *Jane Eyre* also raises overt questions of resolving, or negotiating, fragmentation and alienation. The narrator of *The Spell* challenges the reader to balance the narrated events and decide how to resolve the ending by considering how to interpret the doubled nature of Zamorna – through a fantastic mode (cursed by a demonic spell) or a mode of psychological realism (mad). The practice of negotiation/balance is poised between unification and fragmentation: it opens the way to understand Zamorna's character while acknowledging the unresolved complexities which remain. This practice provides a way to interpret the refinement of Jane's identity; linking this practice of negotiation to Charlotte Brontë's experience reveals new understandings of re-shaping authorship to overcome alienating reactions from critics, social contacts and the wider public. This chapter will extend investigations of the liminal narrativity of the respective endings into wider examinations of a transrealist discourse of uncanny creativity with the texts, and how these resonances provide insight into the practice of negotiating creative production. This use also raises questions of resolving fragmentation by transcending identities of alienation to create what I shall term an authorship of negotiation.

Given the biographical interplay among *The Spell* and *Jane Eyre*, and Brontë's own experience of authorship, I shall define this negotiative authorship within a feminine context, particularly exploring the resonances of the 'female uncanny'. I examine how experiences of uncanny strangeness transcend alienation through processes of creative production. Julia Kristeva observes that 'Under certain conditions, however, the repressed "that ought to have remained secret" shows up

again and produces a feeling of uncanny strangeness.’¹³ I draw on Kristeva's arguments that ‘uncanny strangeness allows for many variations: they all repeat the difficulty I have in situating myself with respect to the other and keep going over the course of identification-projection that lies at the foundation of my reaching autonomy.’¹⁴ However, while Kristeva argues that fantastic elements such as the fairy tale abolish uncanniness, I argue that the fragmented fantastic (or, to use another Kristevan/Bakhtinian term, the carnivalesque) limits this abolition to some degree. I combine this with Helen Cixous's definitions of the transformative resonances of female writing in confronting ‘the other’: ‘The other is safe if I write. Writing is good: it's what never ends. The simplest, most secure other circulates inside me.’¹⁵ Brontë provides her own definition of writing which suggests an approach of transcending realism. She depicts authorship as interpreting both ‘Truth and Nature’ and ‘Art’: ‘The first duty of an Author is – I conceive – a faithful allegiance to Truth and Nature; his second, such a conscientious study of Art as shall enable him to interpret eloquently and effectively the oracles delivered by those two great deities.’¹⁶ Brontë locates her pseudonymic authorial identity as negotiating tensions between Art and Nature: ‘The “Bells” [...] rather apprehend that whatever pains they take to modify and soften, an abrupt word or vehement tone will now and then occur to startle ears polite, whenever the subject shall chance to be such as moves their spirits within them.’¹⁷ Brontë represents the right to ‘startle ears polite’ on the movement of ‘their spirits within them’, evoking resonances of the

¹³ Julia Kristeva, *Strangers to Ourselves* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991), p. 184.

¹⁴ Kristeva, pp. 184,187

¹⁵ Cixous, ‘Coming to Writing’ in *“Coming to Writing” and Other Essays*, ed. by Deborah Jensen (Cambridge, Mass.,1999), pp. 1-58 (p. 4). I do not argue that Brontë’s work represents Cixous’s *écriture féminine*, but I think that Cixous’s observation of ability of the creative process to transcend female experiences of alienation is helpful in articulating the transformative resonances of Brontë’s own creative processes and accompanying experiences of alienation.

¹⁶ ‘To W.S. Williams, 14 August 1848’ in *The Letters of Charlotte Brontë*, Vol II, 1848-1851, ed. by Margaret Smith (Oxford: OUP, 2000), pp. 98-101 (p.98)

psychological uncanny. In a subsequent letter, Brontë conceives her authorial identity as stemming both from imaginative and divine forces:

No matter – whether known or unknown – misjudged or the contrary - -I am resolved not to write otherwise. I shall bend as my powers tend [...]I must have my own way in the matter of writing. [...]The faculty of imagination lifted me when I was sinking three months ago, its active exercise has kept my head above water since – its results cheer me now – for I feel they have enabled me to give pleasure to others – I am thankful to God who gave me the faculty – and it is for me a part of my religion to defend this gift and to profit by its possession.¹⁸

Her imaginative and divine authorship suggests positive transformation, in allowing her to defy social perceptions ('whether known or unknown – misjudged or the contrary') and to choose multiple directions if necessary ('I shall bend as my powers tend'). Representations of an uncanny imagination within Brontë's texts highlight repressions of the 'other' in a space of transrealist circulation: that is, producing multiple identities which circulate and intersect in a critical manner. The skill of circulating multiple identities allows female writers to confront experiences of alienation and to create potential autonomy.

In order to articulate how Brontë represents the ability of uncanny creative identity to transform experiences of alienation, I shall explore the use of uncanny strangeness in visual art, tracing how verbal portraiture in *The Spell* dramatizes psychological complexity, particularly referring to portraits of Mary, Queen of Scots. I shall extend these explorations into *Jane Eyre* by considering how Jane's evocation of the artistic process (through dramatizing the creation of verbal portraiture) opens a route for psychological expression. I continue my examinations of the resonances of uncanny creativity into narrative spheres. The narrators in both *The Spell* and *Jane Eyre* confront uncanny strangeness by rewriting religious texts (*The Pilgrim's*

¹⁷ Ibid.

Progress in *The Spell*, the Bible in *Jane Eyre*), and thus articulating psychological resonances in supernatural experiences. Finally, I will examine intersections between uncanny narrative creativity and resonances of public authorship, showing how the uncanny allows ‘the other’ to circulate, not to overcome, producing autonomy by giving the author a choice of which identity to deploy in order to transcend social barriers.

Painting the Verbal Uncanny

The publication of *Jane Eyre* called the aesthetic identity of Charlotte Brontë (then known as Currer Bell, of course) into question. Elizabeth Rigby’s condemnatory examination in the *Quarterly Review* (1848) spends a few sentences dismissing Jane Eyre’s role as an artist. These sentences offer a perspective from someone who had published an essay on art collections, had studied art and literature in prestigious contexts, and whose impressive cultural knowledge led to an invitation to write regular reviews in a respected periodical.¹⁹ Rigby was to become a prominent influence in artistic circles: her husband, Sir Charles Eastlake, became President of the Royal Academy (due in part to his wife’s connections).²⁰ She felt sufficiently qualified to criticize Charlotte Brontë (in her capacity as the author of *Jane Eyre*) for lacking artistic knowledge and capability; this author, she asserts, cannot possibly be an artist, due to Jane’s: ‘evident total ignorance of [art’s] first principles [...] [T]he moment [the author] talks of the art itself, it is obvious that he is a complete

¹⁸ ‘To W.S. Williams, 21 September 1849’, in *The Letters of Charlotte Brontë*, pp. 260-262 (pp. 260-261).

¹⁹ Rosemary Mitchell, ‘Eastlake, Elizabeth, Lady Eastlake (1809–1893)’, in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* <<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/8415>> [accessed 16 April 2010].

²⁰ See Bernard Denvir, *The Early Nineteenth Century: Art, Design, and Society* (Harlow, Essex: Longman Group, 1984), p.16.

ignoramus’; although Rigby does allow that ‘Curren Bell’ shows artistic talent in ‘his’ descriptions of scenery.²¹ Rigby’s disapproval suggests that Brontë disturbed notions of artistic practice. But however unsettling she may have found *Jane Eyre*, Rigby’s dismissal of *Jane Eyre* and her author as artists is hardly valid. Brontë, as we know, was not at all ignorant of pictorial disciplines. She took pains to study prints of both old masters and contemporary artists. Elizabeth Gaskell’s biography notes that Charlotte was particularly interested in ‘Guido Reni, Giulio Romano, Titian, Raphael, Michelangelo, Corregio, Annibale Carracci, Leonardo da Vinci, Fra Bartolommeo, Carlo Cignani, van Dyck, Rubens, Bartolommeo Ramenghi’;²² the Brontë household contained prints by the popular landscape artist, John Martin.²³ Her lifelong friend Mary Taylor also recalled how much Brontë’s school peers admired her artistic knowledge, commenting that, ‘She [...] knew much about celebrated pictures and painters’. Taylor noted that Brontë was skilled at developing her own aesthetic observations: ‘[S]he went over [pictures] piecemeal, with her eyes close to the paper, looking so long that we used to ask her “what she saw in it”. She could always see plenty, and explained it very well’.²⁴ Charlotte practised drawing rigorously and saw her work included in a regional exhibition. Juliet Barker suggests that Charlotte may have been present at some of her brother Branwell’s more formal art classes. Even if she did not actually audit these classes, her relationship with Branwell would have exposed her to some of the techniques surrounding professional artistic training (as opposed to feminine amateur training),

²¹ Elizabeth Rigby, ‘Vanity Fair—and Jane Eyre’ in *Quarterly Review* 84 (1848), pp.153–185 (p. 176).

²² Elizabeth Gaskell, *Life of Charlotte Brontë* (London: Penguin, 1997), p.68.

²³ Christine Alexander and Jane Sellars, *The Art of the Brontës* (Cambridge: CUP, 1995), p.12.

²⁴ Joan Stevens, *Mary Taylor: Friend of Charlotte Brontë: letters from New Zealand & Elsewhere* (Oxford: OUP, 1972), pp. 158-159.

as she modelled for him twice.²⁵ Christine Alexander suggests that this training taught her ‘a way of seeing’ which informs the richness of description in her texts and that textual space offered her an unfettered space to explore aesthetic practice beyond the rigid code of early nineteenth century aesthetic training, which restricted females from professional training involving anatomical knowledge and painting in oils, confining them to amateur work in watercolour, pencil and crayon.²⁶ She links Brontë’s decision to pursue a career in writing to a moment of disappointment at the age of nineteen, when Brontë realized that ‘without the finances and necessary training she remained an amateur’.²⁷ However, an examination of verbal portraiture in *The Spell* shows that even before the age of nineteen, Brontë was experimenting with language and artistic practice in ways that exceed theories of the picturesque. This experimentation with verbal aesthetics would flower further in *Jane Eyre*, which provides an analysis of Blanche Ingram’s emotional qualities as well as her visual ones. *The Spell* and *Jane Eyre* trouble the limits of artistic identity in their use of visual language and in their depiction of contemporary ideals and icons of beauty. Brontë’s transrealist portrayal of visual reproduction and illusion uses associations of the uncanny in verbal portraits to hint at potentially disturbing aspects to manufacturing identity. Brontë begins to explore complexities of identity in *The Spell*, using the freedom of personal fantasy to reconstruct an idealised historical icon outside the limits of a specific social setting. She develops her explorations further in *Jane Eyre*, through uncanny productions of experimental artwork which dramatize multiple layers of cultural beauty.

²⁵ Juliet Barker, *The Brontës* (London: Orion Books, 1995), pp.215-216.

²⁶ Christine Alexander, ‘Educating the Artist’s Eye: Charlotte Brontë and the Pictorial Image’, in *The Brontës in the World of the Arts*, ed. by Sandra Hagan and Juliette Wells (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008), pp.1-30 (pp.18-20).

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p.11.

Brontë's multi-faceted verbal portraiture in *The Spell* both offers a reconstruction of Mary, Queen of Scots and suggests extensions to feminine artistic practices of her time. The reader first encounters a depiction of Mary Stuart in Mary Henrietta's letter to her grandmother. Mary's verbal description of Emily Inez pastes together elements from multiple portraits of Mary, Queen of Scots. Noting that Emily Inez resembles portraits of the famous queen, Mary divides her into characterising elements:

[T]he same fascinating turn of countenance, the same animated eyes, white neck and winning mouth. Her hair was *dark glossy brown*; it fell in *ringlets over her neck and temples* but did not rest on her shoulders. Her *polished taper-fingers were sparkling with rings*, and round her neck there was a *rosary of foam-white pearls, having a gold cross at the end* (43). [*emphasis mine*]

However, this description does not copy any one particular portrait of Mary, Queen of Scots, but draws different elements from different pictures. A portrait entitled 'Mary, Queen of Scots' by 'Unknown artist' (oil on panel, circa 1560-1592) gives her glossy brown curls and somewhat frothy pearls but does not show her taper fingers or a gold cross hanging around her neck.



Figure 4 Unknown Artist, Mary *Queen of Scots*, 1560-1592.



Figure 5 *Mary Queen of Scots after Nicholas Hilliard; 1610 (1578?)*

Nicholas Hilliard's portrait gives her two gold crosses, one dangling from tapered fingers, but both rosaries lack pearls. Another portrait (a drawing after François Clouet) depicts her in black and white, but makes her mouth particularly clear.



Figure 6 *Mary Queen of Scots after François Clouet*

Her collection of varying attributes explores the complexities of Mary Stuart's reputation. As Jayne Lewis points out in her investigation into this reputation, none of the varying portraits of Mary Stuart resembles the other.²⁸ Mary Henrietta's composite description acknowledges these differences while at the same time

²⁸ Jayne Lewis, 'The Reputations of Mary Queen of Scots', *Études écossaises*, 10 (2005), 41-55 (p.42).

challenging them by uniting them in a single portrait. Charles's narration enlarges on the portrait of Emily Inez, continuing the composite effect. His manner differs from that of Mary Henrietta. Instead of prefacing his description by noting her resemblance to Mary Stuart, he launches into a description of an unnamed woman:

[S]he seemed the very flower of patrician beauty, with her slight but stately figure, her fair features rounded off in curves so exquisitely delicate, her marble neck so queenly and swan-like, which a small ruff turned back showed to full advantage, her full, dark, liquid blue eye, her wreathed, braided, curled and clustered tresses whose bright abundance would scarcely be confined by the slender gold chains wound amongst them, and above all her winning, fascinating, enchanting smile (102).

He itemises remarkable elements which Mary Henrietta omits: her 'slight but stately figure', 'a small ruff', 'a liquid blue eye' 'wreathed, braided, curled tresses' wound with gold chains'. Mary Henrietta's style is succinct, but Charles piles extravagance on extravagance. The combination of the two descriptions means that the reader receives a portrait of Emily Inez which depends on multiple perspectives and gradual refinement for completion. Charles's description also suggests a discomfort with reproduction. His words creates an increasing sense of mystery about this unknown lady, which culminates in a startled exclamation of 'Mary Stuart . . . A noble likeness, a dazzling eidolon'. Since an eidolon is 'an image, a phantom, a spectre',²⁹ Emily Inez does not merely *resemble* Mary Stuart, but *is* Mary Stuart come to life. Charles's description creates her as an uncanny figure. It creates a transrealist challenge in the familiar compliment of a comparison to an ideal by emphasising unfamiliar aspects of reproduction: an exact copy is unsettling, a spectre, a warp of identity.

The fantasy setting of *The Spell* allows Brontë to explore the character of Mary, Queen of Scots outside her historical context. Charles's and Mary's

descriptions of Emily Inez allude to the visual Mary, Queen of Scots, but the text incorporates emotional and sentimental connotations to the famous queen in another character. Mary Stuart was an emotive figure in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century landscape.³⁰ In the eighteenth-century, she was an 'attractive icon for the Jacobite cause' but also a popular sentimental icon for non-Jacobites as well.³¹ Lynne Vallone's examination of late eighteenth-early nineteenth century juvenilia describes how Mary, Queen of Scots inspired the juvenile writings of Jane Austen and Queen Victoria, becoming a personal heroine as they recreated her life in a way that allowed them to explore complexities of power.³² Mary Stuart's story of betrayal, despair and loneliness invites comparison with Mary Henrietta herself (as Christine Alexander and Margaret Smith suggest).³³ A Queen Mary like the Scottish Queen, Mary Henrietta is accused of betraying her husband; she experiences loneliness and despair in her bewildering separation from Zamorna. However, the Angrian Queen Mary enjoys a happier version of betrayal, loneliness and despair than does the Scottish Queen Mary. Mary Henrietta's betrayal is an understandable mistake, not adultery or political plotting; her loneliness and despair end in reconciliation with her husband rather than execution. Charlotte is not the only author to express a fascination with Mary, Queen of Scots in her juvenilia, but, whereas Austen's version of Mary's tale exonerates her, Brontë's text moves beyond exoneration by dividing her qualities amongst separate characters and promoting multiple views of the queen. This multiplicity and division both questions and celebrates a writer's

²⁹ Oxford English Dictionary, 1989.

³⁰ Denvir, p.7.

³¹ Jayne Lewis, 'Hamilton's "Abdication," Boswell's Jacobitism and the Myth of Mary Queen of Scots', *ELH*, 64 (1997), 1069-1090 (pp.1075-1076).

³² Lynne Vallone, 'History Girls: Eighteenth- and Nineteenth-Century Historiography and the Case of Mary, Queen of Scots', *Children's Literature: Annual of The Children's Literature Association and The Modern Language Association Division on Children's Literature*, 36 (2008), 1-23 (pp. 2-3).

³³ Christine Alexander and Margaret Smith, *The Oxford Companion to the Brontës* (Oxford: OUP, 2003), p. 322.

ability to reproduce Mary's history; it explores aspects of her personage in depth, but splits this icon asunder by separating idealizations of her physical form from idealizations of her emotional state.

The use of fragmented narrativity to promote complications of visual portraiture from multiple perspectives in *The Spell* becomes an exploration of individual autonomy in *Jane Eyre*. Mary Henrietta and Charles Wellesley interrogate perceptions of a cultural icon, Mary Queen of Scots, in *The Spell*; Jane uses descriptions of her experimental artistic work to interrogate contemporary icons of class and femininity in *Jane Eyre*, uncovering a transrealist visual discourse around uncanny self-imagery. The multiple descriptions of Blanche Ingram develop a complex portrait that investigates emotional as well as physical attributes of this individual. The reader first encounters Blanche through the words of Mrs Fairfax, who delivers a quick verbal sketch which presents her as an ideal of femininity. Mrs Fairfax first describes a background scene of a richly decorated Christmas ball, with an assembly of handsome and splendidly dressed ladies. Against this backdrop, Blanche shines as 'the belle of the evening' and 'the queen'. She expands on this categorisation of Blanche by analysing the excellence of her physical appearance, with reference to her features, hairstyle and clothing. Blanche possesses a '[t]all fine bust, sloping shoulders, long, graceful neck; olive complexion, dark and clear; noble features; eyes [...]large and black, and as brilliant as her jewels' (135). Like Mary Stuart/ Emily Inez, Blanche has glossy curls (although black rather than brown): 'And then she had such a fine head of hair, raven-black, and so becomingly arranged; a crown of thick plaits behind, and in front the longest, the glossiest curls I ever saw.' Blanche's beauty extends to her dress: 'She was dressed in pure white, [with] an amber-coloured scarf [...]over her shoulder [...] across her breast, tied at

the side, and descending in long fringed ends below her knee,[...] an amber-coloured flower, too in her hair [...] contrast[ing] well with the jetty mass of her curls' (135). This paragon apparently possesses a dazzling array of accomplishments, as well as outstanding beauty. Jane produces a visual copy of Mrs Fairfax's admiring description, just as Mary Henrietta reproduces portraits of Mary, Queen of Scots. Jane brings this portrait into an emotional context, as she uses it as a way to control her own feelings for Mr Rochester; her note that 'Mr Rochester might probably win that noble lady's love' suggests that the beautiful Blanche is both an emotional and a visual prize (137). Mrs Fairfax's verbal sketch and Jane's subsequent visual reproduction unite to create a portrait of an ideal, recalling the composite and gradual techniques of verbal portraiture in *The Spell*.

However, a transrealist experience of the uncanny emerges as Jane describes both Blanche's portrait and her own self-portrait, from the process of creation to a comparison with the actual woman. While Jane creates an extended study of Blanche, a combination of contrasting complications in the creative process highlights reactions to social isolation and emerging skills of social intervention with her emotional identity. Juliette Wells, exploring this process as part of a larger investigation into Jane's artistry, observes that 'Jane's contrasting portraits of Blanche Ingram and herself [...] incorporate a mixture of motives', arguing that these motives ultimately require the 'repress[ion] [of] all acknowledgement of her artistic gifts' despite the fact that 'considerable skill is certainly required to prepare the contrasting images she envisions'.³⁴ I believe that Jane's lengthy instructions to herself regarding these portraits, and the subsequent description of their creation, reveal a conscious confidence in her artistic identity. Her ability to create a delicate

ivory miniature of Blanche requires a knowledge of artistic methods involved in creating miniatures: '[T]ake a piece of smooth ivory—you have one prepared in your drawing-box: take your palette, mix your freshest, finest, clearest tints; choose your most delicate camel-hair pencils; delineate carefully the loveliest face you can imagine; paint it in your softest shades and sweetest lines' (137). Jane's ability to paint on ivory demonstrates artistic abilities which had considerable social currency and offered opportunities for early nineteenth-century women to gain financial and public recognition. Ellen Clayton's examination of early nineteenth-century miniaturists (ranging from 1800-1840) includes miniature painting on ivory as part of a wider culture of female artistic autonomy. She mentions Mary Anne Knight's ivory painting skills in particular, noting that her ivory miniatures were commissioned by the nobility and exhibited in the Royal Academy before women were admitted to formal membership of the Academy,³⁵ despite the fact that miniatures were not considered academic art.³⁶ Some female miniaturists used their skills to offer social challenge, as Alexandra K. Wettlaufer observes in her study of the politics of the miniature. Wettlaufer notes that miniatures contained a longstanding significance of high social and artistic status:

As developed in the sixteenth century, miniatures were closely linked to British royalty and rapidly became markers of status for members of the moneyed classes [...] Although most miniatures were small enough to fit in a hand or be worn as adornment, by the late eighteenth century the size had increased to a more substantial scale to incorporate more ambitious compositions.³⁷

³⁴ Juliette Wells, "Some of Your Accomplishments Are Not Ordinary": The Limits of Artistry in *Jane Eyre* in *The Brontës in the World of the Arts*, ed. by Sandra Hagan and Juliette Wells (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008) pp. 67-80 (p. 74).

³⁵ 'Mary Anne Knight [1776-1831] [...] exhibited at the Royal Academy first in 1807, and from that time continued to send her miniatures on ivory. She was a good miniaturist. The Earl of Abingdon contributed to the Loan Exhibition a miniature on ivory by her, painted about 1813' Ellen C. Clayton, *English Female Artists* (London: Tinsley Brothers, 1876), p. 392.

³⁶ Alexandra K. Wettlaufer, *Portraits of the Artist as a Young Woman* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 2011), p.199.

³⁷ *Ibid.*

Wettlaufer also details how one female miniaturist, Margeret Gillies, used this skill of 'intervention in the politics of identity, representation, and art in nineteenth-century Britain' through portraits of progressive individuals which gained popularity through her work:

Translating the intimate form into the social sphere of public engagement, Gillies used the miniature for the broad dissemination of images of Fox, Dickens, William Wordsworth, Leigh Hunt, Jeremy Bentham, Ebenezer Elliot, William Macready, Southwood Smith, Horne, and other Unitarian, liberal, and/or Romantic thinkers both at the RA exhibition and in the pages of the radical press. Even more importantly, Gillies devoted a large number of her miniature portraits to images of influential women of the period, including Mary Howitt, Charlotte Cushman, Helena Faucit, Mary Leman Grimstone, and Harriet Martineau.³⁸

Jane's creation of miniature suggests Gillies's actions on a smaller, personal level: she consciously uses her skill to intervene in emotional problems, seeking autonomy from her affection for Rochester.

Her self-portrait represents another type of artistic skill, through her ability to create an honest and accurate sketch which details a realistic context. Jane's instruction to herself reveals a certainty that she can create a productive contrast with the image of Blanche so that,

[w]henever, in future, you should chance to fancy Mr. Rochester thinks well of you, take out these two pictures and compare them: say, "Mr. Rochester might probably win that noble lady's love, if he chose to strive for it; is it likely he would waste a serious thought on this indigent and insignificant plebeian?" (137).

To effect the necessary contrast, Jane 'place[s] the glass before [her]' and creates a 'faithful' self-portrait in '[a]n hour or two' (137). But the description of the two processes offers another level to the contrast. Jane creates her self-image by 'draw[ing] in chalk [her] own picture, faithfully, without softening one defect; omit[ting] no harsh line, smooth[ing] away no displeasing irregularity;

[and]writ[ing] under it, 'Portrait of a Governess, disconnected, poor, and plain' (137). What would her self-portrait look like if she had spent the two weeks on it which she spends on Blanche's portrait, and had used the soft and subtly flattering shades which she uses to paint Blanche? Richard Redgrave's *The Governess* (1844) depicts just such 'an insignificant plebeian' as a sympathetic beauty, suggesting the soft hues used to represent Blanche.³⁹



Figure 7 Richard Redgrave, *The Governess*, 1844

Similarly, what would the portrait of Blanche look like if it had just been a quick chalk sketch? The contrast in creative process suggests that images of wealthy beauty might be dependent on the skill of the artist, or on cultural customs of perception, rather than the natural features of the person in question.

Jane extends and deepens this critical complexity by adding a detailed emotional portrait (which also serves to deconstruct the contemporary ideal of

³⁸ Wettlaufer, p. 201.

³⁹ See Figure 9.8 (Richard Redgrave, *The Governess*, 1844), in Michelle Facos, *An Introduction to Nineteenth-Century Art* (New York and London: Routledge, 2011), p. 231. Referring to this painting, Facos observes that Redgrave 'painted contemporary subjects intended to evoke a sympathetic viewer response [. . .] The anecdotal detail, precisely described

physical and moral beauty mentioned above). Her ability to separate the physical and moral aspects of an icon recalls the separation of Mary Stuart's characteristics in *The Spell*. Jane's initial impression when she encounters Blanche in person suggests the uncanny as 'she answered point for point [...] my picture and Mrs. Fairfax's description', turning Blanche into a painting rather than a person (146-147). These resonances of uncanny artificiality become a critical investigation into Blanche's moral nature. After prolonged study, Jane provides an detailed anatomy of Blanche's character, which is certainly not ideal: '[S]he was not genuine [...] her mind was poor, her heart barren by nature [...] she did not know the sensations of sympathy and pity; tenderness and truth were not in her' (158). The portrait enlarges upon the unsettling connotations of reproduction suggested by Charles's term 'eidolon' in *The Spell*. Jane suggests a source for Blanche's imperfections of character; she suffers from reproduction without the capacity for interpretation: '[S]he was not original: she used to repeat sounding phrases from books: she never offered, nor had, an opinion of her own' (158). Through the use of uncanny verbal portraiture in *The Spell* and *Jane Eyre*, Brontë produces a transrealist creativity which explores the psycho-emotional effects of social alienation, and also suggests the potential of an aesthetic process to produce autonomy out of alienation.

Re-writing the Biblical Supernatural

While Brontë's transrealist representation of visual aesthetic cultures in her texts interrogates the *production* of identity, transrealist collections of imagery evoked through religious themes in *The Spell* and *Jane Eyre* explore the social complexities of *re-writing* personal identities, in which a process of transcending fragmentation through personal creativity emerges. Brontë's biographical context regarding religion illuminates the critical role of the uncanny in the re-writing of religious narratives in her texts, in that the critiques offered by uncanny and supernatural elements emphasise the complications of religious social identity. David Jasper summarizes Brontë's expression of religion in *Jane Eyre* (particularly) as 'complicated, articulate, devout, rebellious'.⁴⁰ Emily Griesinger explores this complicated expression through autobiographical connections of religious identity between Brontë and *Jane Eyre* in her detailed discussion of *Jane Eyre* as a 'Christian feminist *bildungsroman*': she challenges 'dismissive if not hostile to women's religious experience' interpretations by critics of religion in Brontë's texts as misleading, because they miss how the religious resonances in Brontë's work evoke a process of autonomy in the development of identity.⁴¹ Griesinger characterises these resonances in Brontë's life and work as balancing multiple elements of identities, commenting that 'Brontë's own spirituality, her desire to live a godly life without denying her feminist impulses or her unique gifts as a woman writer, [is] reflected in the development of her most popular heroine Jane Eyre'.⁴²

⁴⁰ David Jasper, 'Religion' in *The Brontës in Context*, ed. by Marianne Thormählen (Cambridge: CUP, 2012), Kindle Edition.

⁴¹ Emily Griesinger, 'Charlotte Brontë's Religion: Faith, Feminism, and Jane Eyre', *Christianity And Literature* 58 (2008), 29-59 (pp. 30-31, 56).

⁴² Griesinger, p. 30.

Griesinger traces Brontë's Jane's 'interrogation of evangelical Christianity'⁴³ in her response to St. John, which she argues is 'radically feminist, Protestant, and biblical' as Jane 'is willing to submit to God's will, but [...] must determine that will for herself'.⁴⁴ To support this characterisation, Griesinger presents Brontë's own nuanced connections to religion. She quotes from a letter to Ellen Nussey in which Brontë draws on her faith to help her manage uncertainties and grief: 'Faith carries her through the death of Anne as well: "I do not know how life will pass, but I certainly do feel confidence in Him who has upheld me hitherto"'.⁴⁵ However, Griesinger summarizes Brontë's nuanced and unconventional approach to Christian culture through a quotation from a letter to her publisher W. S. Williams, in which 'Charlotte states unequivocally: "I love the Church of England. Her Ministers indeed, I do not regard as infallible personages, I have seen too much of them for that—but to the Establishment, with all her faults—the profane Athanasian Creed excluded—I am sincerely attached"'.⁴⁶ Alison Jasper adds to Griesinger's contextualisation by suggesting that *Jane Eyre* acts as an interrogation of the Evangelical movement: 'In *Jane Eyre* [...] we could perhaps say that Brontë tries out and tests a number of Christian Evangelical tenets relating to [...] 'lusts of the flesh', seeking the limits of their compatibility with what is acceptable to a still devoutly Christian author or her readers'.⁴⁷ However, Griesinger and Jasper focus merely on the general construction of religion in *Jane Eyre*. I will extend these investigations by examining a transrealist process of rewriting religious narratives in Brontë's texts, identifying patterns of recasting the Christian supernatural in

⁴³ Ibid., p. 47.

⁴⁴ Ibid., pp. 51-52.

⁴⁵ Ibid., p. 46.

⁴⁶ Ibid., p. 34.

unpredicable ways in her juvenile text *The Spell* and continuing by tracing their development in *Jane Eyre*.

These elements in Brontë's texts link to traditions of Biblical re-writing and re-interpretation by nineteenth-century women. Arleen M. Ingham argues that 'Biblical interpretation' was central to the nineteenth-century Evangelical movement, which she describes as 'involv[ing] probing the heart and searching the soul as a means of individual reform and salvation'.⁴⁸ Ingham offers the later work of Hannah More (particularly her 1811 *Practical Piety*) as an Evangelical writer who desired readers to use a 'genuine unadulterated Christianity' to 'correct mistakes in religion'.⁴⁹ More's ethos extends to the work of later nineteenth-century women in re-writing moral and religious narratives. While women were generally proscribed from entering theological debates – John Wesley, for instance, who allowed women to preach, forbade women to conduct scriptural exegesis⁵⁰ – they could write on moral and religious subjects in the arena of education and religious entertainment. Julie Melnyk has shown how *The Christian Lady's Magazine*, begun in 1834, overcame institutional bans on females conducting theological exegesis by incorporating biblical exegesis in the context of religious fiction: '*The Christian Lady's Magazine* published long-running series of articles on female characters from the bible [...] [The series cited] the examples of Deborah, Hannah, and Mary, as justifications of women's poetry and prophecy, quoting and analyzing their scriptural songs at

⁴⁷ Alison Jasper, 'Body and Word' in *The Oxford Handbook of English Literature and Theology*, ed. by Andrew Hass, David Jasper, and Elisabeth Jay (Oxford: OUP, 2011), pp. 776-792 (p. 786).

⁴⁸ Arleen M. Ingham, *Women and Spirituality in the Writing of More, Wollstonecraft, Stanton and Eddy* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), p. 141.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

⁵⁰ John Wesley, 'Letter to Sarah Crosby', quoted in 'Women's Theology and the British Periodical Press' by Julie Melnyk in *Reinventing Christianity*, ed. by Linda Woodhead (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2001), pp. 191-198 (p. 194).

some length'.⁵¹ These periodicals – the *Christian Lady* ran for twelve years but had successors, including the *Christian World* magazine (1857-1961) – allowed women to decentre religious narratives of female social spheres by reinterpreting and rewriting biblical texts, just as Jane's multi-faceted ending encourages the re-reading and re-interpretation of biblical allusion and spiritual experiences within the text.

Brontë extends this process of re-writing religious narratives through employing the uncanny in her use of biblical allusion and allegorical language, particularly referencing apocalyptic and prophetic texts. Her blend of social realism and religious writing creates uncertainty about how to define religious genres by highlighting gaps in the transfer of religious symbolism. This technique is evident in *The Spell*, where the figure of the demonic magician, Henri Nicolai, carries the symbolism of a devil beyond the sphere of the Christian supernatural and suggests a satirical interpretation of the Christian supernatural. A scene in which Zamorna confronts the demonic Nicolai invites comparison with a scene in John Bunyan's *The Pilgrim's Progress* in which the protagonist (called 'Christian') battles the devil, Apollyon. *The Pilgrim's Progress* was a favourite of the Brontë children,⁵² and, as Michael Wheeler has shown, Brontë makes great use of it within *Jane Eyre*, in which, he argues, 'Jane seems to be rewriting the *Progress* for her own generation'.⁵³ Like *The Spell*, *The Pilgrim's Progress* places a great emphasis on retrospective reading and interpretation. The story of Christian's progress ends with a challenge to the reader to puzzle out the meaning of his adventures: 'Now, Reader, I have told my dream to thee/See if thou canst interpret to me', just as *The Spell* challenges its readers to interpret Zamorna's fate. However, unlike *The Spell*, *The*

⁵¹Julie Melnyk, 'Women's Theology and the British Periodical Press' in *Reinventing Christianity*, ed. by Linda Woodhead (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2001), pp. 191-198 (p.195).

⁵²David Jasper, *The Brontës in Context*, ed. by Marianne Thormählen (Cambridge: CUP, 2012), Kindle Edition.

Pilgrim's Progress warns against misinterpretation, 'for that, instead /Of doing good, will but thyself abuse/ By misinterpreting evil ensues'.⁵⁴ Any interpretation of *The Pilgrim's Progress* must lie within the bounds of Christian doctrine.

The Spell takes a scene from *The Pilgrim's Progress* and rewrites it with no restrictions about interpreting it within the bounds of Christian doctrine. In *The Pilgrim's Progress*, the narrator introduces Christian's nemesis and impending battle: '[P]oor Christian was hard put to it, for he had gone but a little way before he espied a foul fiend coming over the field to meet him; his name is Apollyon'.⁵⁵ This fiend is 'clothed with scales like a fish [...] [has] wings like a dragon [and] feet like a bear, and out of his belly came fire and smoke, and his mouth was as the mouth of a lion'.⁵⁶ However, for all this fire and smoke, Apollyon attacks by using words: 'When he was come up to Christian, he [...] began to question with him'.⁵⁷ Although he does throw a few flaming darts at the end of their conversation, the object of his attack is to prove that Christian is one of his subjects. He attempts to do this by pointing out moments in Christian's past when he has been unfaithful to Apollyon's rival prince, in the hopes of provoking crippling remorse and despair. Christian baffles his attempts by acknowledging these past infidelities and refusing to give into remorse and despair: 'All this is true [...] but [...] I sucked [these infirmities] in, and I have groaned over them, been sorry for them, and have obtained pardon of my Prince'.⁵⁸ Frustrated, Apollyon attacks with flaming darts, determined to 'spill thy soul', but Christian defeats these darts with quotations from scripture.

⁵³ Michael Wheeler, *The Art of Allusion in Victorian Fiction* (London: Macmillan, 1979), p. 38.

⁵⁴ John Bunyan, *The Pilgrim's Progress and Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners* (New York: Random House, 2004), p. 140.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 52.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 54

The Spell also features a battle of words, in which Zamorna engages in biting repartee with a mysterious figure. Unlike *Progress*, the identity of this figure depends on reading backwards from the book's double ending: either Zamorna is not mad, in which case this figure is the demonic 'Henry Nicolai, Flesher and Spirit Merchant', or Zamorna is mad, and this figure is merely a manifestation of his madness. There are no scales, wings, fire and smoke in this battle and when the reader finally finds a description of the demonic magician (at the end of the novel), the fiend is more social eccentric than traditional denizen of hell: '[He is] a tall gaunt man in black, a Quaker's broad-brimmed beaver in one hand' (123). Instead of flaming darts and scaly wings, Nicolai attacks with social niceties: 'He pulled a black card-case from his pocket, opened it, took out a card, threw it on the table, and with a low bow left the room. The card was like any ordinary note of address' (125). His opening volleys resemble the *bon mots* of Regency dandies more than the flaming breath of a dragon. Nicolai attempts to pierce Zamorna's emotional armour by twisting his words. When Zamorna comments that 'Spade, mattock and builder's axe have rung so loud a warning to the old settlers on the plain', Nicolai repeats the phrase and turns it into a taunt over the death of Zamorna's baby son: 'Spade and mattock are ringing a warning elsewhere [...] There's a grave dug in Verdopolis tonight' (14). This ability to twist the words and events of the moment into verbal weapons recalls the Regency wits of the silver fork culture, as identified by Alison Adburgham in her exploration of silver fork novels and their surrounding society.

Adburgham particularly discusses the wit of Samuel Rogers, who featured in *Fraser's Magazine* and was noted for his caustic, double-handed innuendos, which

are verbal techniques that Nicolai uses.⁵⁹ However, Nicolai's verbal attack recalls Apollyon as well as Regency wits. Like Apollyon, he is determined to provoke his opponent to despair by flinging his past in his face. Nicolai taunts Zamorna with sarcastic reminders of his treatment of his dead wife: "[H]er kindly husband [...] is far too faithful to love her the less for any slight failure in that beauty which he once thought matchless"(15) and "[S]he'll look sadly at her Arthur and moan to herself when he is gone, as she did that night on leaving the Gladiator's Hall. You heard her then, but would not take pity"(15). Zamorna is not unmoved, but he remains defiant, and ultimately frustrates Nicolai, who claims to 'know you too well': "Yet not well enough," replied the Duke, "or you would know the change in my voice is owing to hatred of yourself rather than regret for either my wife or my son"(17). Like Christian, Zamorna will not give into despair and like Christian, he will not allow the attacking demon access to his innermost being, but his battle combines spiritual salvation with questions of how to behave in polite society.

By recasting a battle for spiritual salvation in the language of social repartée, Brontë expands the definition and causes of despair beyond the sphere of Christian doctrine to highlight the impact of social intrusion. The psychological weight of Christian's dark night of the soul is not forgotten, as the double ending suggests the possibility of Zamorna's madness, but the text uses allusion to Christian apocalyptic writing lightly, using it to add poignancy to a *jeu d'esprits*. The dandyish nature of the demonic magician defamiliarizes the Christian devil and suggests multiple interpretations of this being: society bully, a madman's ravings, a fashion icon.

⁵⁹ She quotes Byron's rhymes on Rogers: 'All which women, or which men do/ Glides forth in an innuendo/ Clothed in odds and ends of humour/ . . . / All which life presents of evil/ Makes for him a constant revel'. See Alison Adburgham, *Silver Fork Society: Fashionable Life and Literature from 1814-1840* (London: Constable, 1983), pp.39-40.

Jane Eyre continues and expands the technique of blending religious allusion with contemporary culture in a way that subverts religious narratives, heightening a sense of transrealist unpredictability and through this, highlighting a multi-faceted emotional density. The scene in the Red Room exemplifies the potential in mixing various cultural resonances with supernatural scripture, moral tracts and social commentary to explore and re-interpret ideas of justice and judgement. Following her resistance of John Reed's bullying, Jane is shut up in the Red Room (a remote spare room in which her uncle Reed died) as a punishment. This gives her an opportunity to reflect on her ostracised status as a charity child in the Reed household, which she terms 'unjust': 'Why was I always suffering, always browbeaten, always accused, forever condemned? [...] "Unjust — unjust!" said my reason'(12). Consequently, Jane begins to imagine that her uncle Reed (her mother's brother, who loved her and who required his wife to care for Jane after his death) might return to protest against such injustice. This avenging image is also an uncanny one and thoughts of the uncanny influence Jane's sense of perception. Caught in the grip of her imagination, Jane interprets what the elder Jane deems a passing lantern as a ghost bent on vengeance: 'I thought the swift-darting beam was a herald of some coming vision from another world. My heart beat thick, my head grew hot; a sound filled my ears, which I deemed the rushing of wings: something seemed near me; I was oppressed, suffocated: endurance broke down' (14). Jane's vision and the language she uses to depict it recalls a passage from the biblical book of Ezekiel. The book of Ezekiel explores questions such as the purpose of suffering and the enactment of judgment through prophetic and apocalyptic imagery.⁶⁰ Like Jane, the prophet Ezekiel experiences a vision:

⁶⁰ Stephen L. Cook, 'Introduction to Ezekiel' in *The New Oxford Annotated Bible*, pp. 1180-1182 (p.1180) [Hebrew Bible].

[T]he heavens were opened and I saw visions of God [...] [there was] a great cloud with brightness around it [...] [and in] the middle of it was something like four living creatures [...] When they moved, I heard the sound of their wings like the sound of mighty waters, like the thunder of the Almighty, a sound of tumult like the sound of an army.⁶¹

Jane's vision recalls Ezekiel's in that it features strange forms of light, the entrance of otherworldly creatures in human form and the sound of rushing wings.

Both visions cause tumult in the minds of their receivers. Ezekiel's vision causes him to fall down prostrate; Jane is 'oppressed, suffocated', and when the servants thrust her back into the room after she complains, she faints (14). Ezekiel's vision is a catalyst for his role as a prophet of God's judgment to Israel; Jane's vision is a catalyst for her subsequent defiance – and judgement – of her aunt. Following the vision, she faints and the attendant apothecary recommends that she be sent away to school. Upon this decision, she confronts her aunt: 'You treated me with miserable cruelty [...] I shall remember how you thrust me back – roughly and violently thrust me back – into the red room, and locked me up there [...] though I was in agony [...] People think you a good woman, but you are bad' (30). By recasting the biblical supernatural to support an emotive resistance to social hypocrisy, Jane subverts evangelical moral narratives and cements her own personal pattern of challenge which extends throughout the novel.

Due to her upbringing, Brontë was more than familiar with Evangelical tradition, as both Juliet Barker and Emily Griesinger observe,⁶² and part of this tradition was a theme of social challenge, something of which can be seen in the

⁶¹ Ezekiel 1.4-24, *The New Oxford Annotated Bible*, pp. 1182-1183.

⁶² Griesinger explores how Brontë's knowledge of Evangelicalism stems from the influence of her mother and aunt, from whom she had access to Methodist texts (p. 41): 'One of the first books left to Charlotte by her mother was John Wesley's abridged 1803 edition of *The Imitation of Christ* by Thomas a Kempis. Aunt Branwell, who subscribed for years to *The Methodist Magazine*, brought a large collection of these magazines published between 1804-1821 with her to the parsonage. Caroline Helstone, the heroine in Brontë's 1849 novel *Shirley*, reads "mad Methodist Magazines," which she claims are "full of miracles and apparitions, of preternatural warnings, ominous dreams, and frenzied fanaticism".' In representing the strength of Evangelical influence on Patrick Brontë, Barker cites (for example) Patrick's sponsorship by the famous Evangelical leader William Wilberforce.

work of Evangelical writer Hannah More (1745-1833). More's work of reinterpreting the bounds of moral precepts, begun in the late eighteenth-century, anticipates the subversive biblical exegesis by nineteenth-century female writers of religious periodicals discussed above, in that her *Cheap Repository Tracts* (1796) also evoke the biblical supernatural in combination with social oppression, though not social resistance. More's tract 'Turn the Carpet' features two weavers discussing unequal wealth. One of the weavers, Dick, questions the inequality of the social classes: 'How glorious is the rich man's state!.../ Heaven is unjust, you must agree/Why all to him and none to me?'⁶³ His friend, John, responds by soothing him with a vision of the next world: 'When we reach that world of light/And view these works of God aright/.../ What now seem random strokes, will there/ All order and design appear'.⁶⁴ Here the biblical supernatural pacifies feelings of resistance to injustice, rather than encouraging defiance. The Evangelical More, who championed female education in Sunday Schools, produced a number of *Cheap Repository Tracts*, a series of narratives which promoted the benefits of moral education. While these tales emphasised an evangelical context, they encouraged girls to read and write in order to better themselves and their families. Her tale *Hester Wilmot* (1796) represents St John's Gospel as an 'easy' primary reader; having trained herself through reading St John's Gospel, Hester converts her family and becomes a teacher.⁶⁵ Anne Stott comments that More's work, while ostensibly reinforcing the social order, subverted it by encouraging self-education.⁶⁶ Hannah More's tales,

⁶³ Hannah More. *Turn the carpet; or, the two weavers: a new song in a dialogue between Dick and John*. [London], [1796]. Eighteenth Century Collections Online. Gale. University of Leeds. <accessed 17 May 2010 >, pp.1-7 (p.4).

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 6.

⁶⁵ Anne Stott, "'A singular injustice towards women": Hannah More, Evangelicalism and Female Education', in *Women, Religion and Feminism in Britain, 1750-1900*, ed. by Sue Morgan (Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan, 2002), p. 23-38 (p.33).

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

produced in the context of Evangelical morality and good behaviour, reinterpreted established social narratives on the extent of female education and encouraged girls to rewrite their own narratives, as it were, by improving their own lives. Susan Pedersen, in an examination of More's tracts, notes that although More was sympathetic to the plight of the lower classes, she was determined to quell social unrest by pointing to the next world, as she said in a letter to her sister.⁶⁷ Whereas More's use of the biblical supernatural interprets it as a placebo for social unrest, Brontë's transrealist use of the biblical supernatural suggests that it can act as a provocation for social defiance.

However, Brontë's text does not locate her heroine or her vision in a concrete dynamic of justice and judgment, but rather locates her in social and spiritual uncertainties – which in turn leads to affirmation. Ezekiel may be confident that his vision was from God, but the elder, narrating Jane suggests that her childhood 'vision' was the product of overactive imagination and ruffled emotions on the part of her younger self. By emphasising the ambiguous nature of Jane's vision, the text reproduces the ambiguous status of orphans, allowing the reader to ponder such questions and formulate his or her own interpretation. Laura Peters, in exploring the status of orphan children in early nineteenth century England, notes that contemporary perceptions of orphans constructed them as both a hope and threat, allocating them an ambiguous, uncertain status.⁶⁸ The evocation of the biblical supernatural affirms Jane's feelings of righteous anger, while the uncertain status of her vision reflects the contemporary questions surrounding her status, and that of others, as an orphan. Jane's encounter in the Red Room contains multiple

⁶⁷ Susan Pedersen, 'Hannah More Meets Simple Simon: Tracts, Chapbooks, and Popular Culture in Late Eighteenth -Century England', *The Journal of British Studies*, 25 (1986), 84-113 (p.86).

⁶⁸ Laura Peters, *Orphan Texts: Victorian orphans, culture and empire* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000), p.9.

possibilities, which allows the biblical supernatural to jostle in a transrealist manner with social justice and with ghostly superstition, leaving biblical symbolism and moral judgment as a matter of interpretation. The uncertainty around these accounts suggests a religious identity which prioritises re-interpretation, offering a glimpse of the academic and spiritual life of women outside the limits of religious institutions and communities. *Jane Eyre*'s use of these religious re-writing techniques in itself suggests an alternative female identity, as Jane's rewriting of scripture takes place in a new, personal context: not in a religious periodical, not in a church, not in the writings of a theologian or a denominational leader.

Negotiating Authorial Fragmentation

These practices of re-writing religious narratives extend into contexts of re-writing female authorial identities; ambiguous jostlings in both Brontë's fictional texts and texts centred around her public image merge moments of transrealist narrativity with [auto]biographical representations of the writing process. Elements of the uncanny in Brontë's texts and in her public perception suggest experiences of alienation. Her ability to transcend these experiences by deploying multiple public identities presents the ability of female writers to transform alienation into autonomy. Sharon Marcus presents Brontë's ambiguous authorial identity as 'split' between Charlotte Brontë and Currer Bell, 'masquera[ding] in business letters as an intermediary who brokered the Bells' poems', effecting a successful public advertising process within a contemporary literary milieu in which '[p]rofessional writers depended on the commodification of their names and on the alienation of their books into a network of advertisements through which the names and the books mutually promoted each

other'.⁶⁹ Steven Earnshaw observes that the 'conjunction [of] 'Jane Eyre' and 'An autobiography' both 'create[s] an uncertainty around 'gender', since it refuses to close down this aspect of it with regard to the 'control' or supervision of the character 'Jane Eyre' and positions the text 'as a new kind of work, a new way of thinking about a young single female, including, as the reader finds out, thinking about heroines as 'plain''.⁷⁰ Speculations around the production of *Jane Eyre* (before the true identity of Currer Bell was known) included the theory that the novel's power stemmed from a partnership, or collaboration, between a man and a woman.⁷¹ Brontë herself observed that her authorial identity of 'Currer Bell' contained multiple and multi-gender resonances, which in turn gave her a writerly strength:

I wish all reviewers believed "Currer Bell" to be a man – they would be more just to him. You will – I know – keep measuring me by some standard of what you deem becoming to my sex – where I am not what you consider graceful – you will condemn me [...] Come what will, – I cannot when I write think always of myself – and of what is elegant and charming in femininity.⁷²

This ambiguous identity allowed Brontë to develop, not only her own gendered writing context, but her own public context of writing, pushing aside (as much as she could) intrusions from her personal life:

It is very kind and right in you to answer "Currer Bell" to all queries respecting the authorship of "Jane Eyre": that is the only name I wish to have mentioned in connection with my writings. "Currer Bell" only – I am and will be to the Public; if accident or design should deprive me of that name, I should deem it a misfortune – a very great one; mental tranquillity would then be gone; it would be a task to write – a task which I doubt whether I could continue. If I were known – I should ever be conscious in writing that

⁶⁹ Sharon Marcus, 'The Profession of the Author: Abstraction, Advertising, and Jane Eyre', *PMLA*, 110 (1995), 206-219 (p.215).

⁷⁰ Steven Earnshaw, "'Give me my name': Naming and Identity In and Around *Jane Eyre*", *Brontë Studies* 37 (2012), 174-189 (p.16).

⁷¹ For example: Douglas Jerrold's *Lloyd's Weekly Newspaper* argued that '[a] woman's experience or invention furnished the materials of the book; but, there has been a man's hand, we imagine, in the arrangement and conduct of the work'. 20 November 1847, pp. 1458-9.

⁷² 'To G.H. Lewes, 1 November 1849' in *The Letters of Charlotte Brontë*, pp. 275-276 (p. 275)

my book must be read by ordinary acquaintances – and that idea would fetter me intolerably.⁷³

Brontë's skills in producing and deploying speculative creativity around a doubled (or multiple) creative context can be seen in her fictional texts as well as in her letters,

In both *The Spell* and *Jane Eyre*, transrealist spaces created by the experimental possibilities in the figure of the double and in the use of multiple narrators allow characters to embark on new social identities which suggest complications in contemporary practices of authorship. Brontë's experiment with the phenomenon of the double in *The Spell* represents an attempt to construct an alternative social identity for Zamorna, who features prominently in other works *sans* the saving grace of a twin to explain away his faults and free him from entanglements. This technique of constructing an alternative social identity is continued and explored in *Jane Eyre*. Jane does not encounter a twin sister, but she depicts psychological complications in her character by using the imagery of a double and her ability to construct a psychological double helps her to gain freedom from social constrictions.

Jane's first encounter with a double comes in childhood, when her Aunt Reed locks her in the Red Room. Catching a glimpse of herself in an elaborate looking glass, Jane sees her familiar features uncannily transformed: '[M]y fascinated glance involuntarily explored the depth [the looking glass] revealed. All looked colder and darker in that visionary hollow than in reality: and the strange little figure there gazing at me [...] had the effect of a real spirit: I thought it like one of the tiny phantoms, half fairy, half imp' (11). Jane's encounter with her looking

⁷³ 'To W.S. Williams, 20 April 1848' in *The Letters of Charlotte Brontë*, pp. 51-52 (p. 51).

glass self anticipates Freud's discussions of connections between the infantile stage of primary narcissism and the development of uncanny resonances around the 'double': '[W]hen this stage has been surmounted, the "double" reverses its aspect. From having been an assurance of immortality, it becomes the uncanny harbinger of death'.⁷⁴ Jane represents the process of forming her own identity as a negotiation through a collection of ambivalent references: 'tiny phantoms, half fairy, half imp' Freud identifies positive elements within the figure of the 'double', commenting that '[a] special agency is slowly formed there [. . .] which has the function of observing and criticizing the self [. . .] and which we become aware of as our 'conscience'.⁷⁶ However, he notes that the '*manifest* motivation of the figure of the "double"' is not particularly linked to the uncanny; it is the dynamic of repression and return around the double which creates the uncanny figure: '[T]he quality of uncanniness can only come from the fact of the "double" being a creation dating back to a very early mental stage [. . .] at which it wore a more friendly aspect.'⁷⁷ Freud's theories recall Jane's adventures: when wrestling with difficult decisions in later life she represents her internal debates as two versions of herself in conversation. When considering her future at Lowood, she finds herself at a standstill and 'order[s] my brain to find a response, and quickly'. She then turns her thoughts elsewhere, which allows her to abstract herself from the source of the responses she receives. She describes this source as 'a kind fairy' who 'in my absence, had surely dropped the required suggestion on pillow' (73). Sharon Marcus suggests a professional context to Jane's self-splitting in exploring how Jane's of abstraction and self-alienation allow her achieve social freedom by, for example, advertising herself as a potential

⁷⁴ Freud, 'The "Uncanny"', p. 357.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

governess.⁷⁸ But Marcus fails to explore Jane's split identity as a narrative technique which requires conscious construction rather than abstraction.

Just as the construction of a double in *The Spell* releases Zamorna from social dilemmas, the construction of a psychological double strengthens Jane Eyre to confront new social situations while building on her past. By describing her internal self as a fairy, she recalls her childhood encounter with her looking-glass self, which she also describes as being fairy-like: 'half-fairy, half-imp'. Jane has made the necessary psychological step of encountering her alienated self in childhood and so can use it to advance herself in adulthood by manipulating her social identity through a *conscious* negotiation with the repressed figure of childhood, merging an experience of terror with the development of a 'kind fairy'. Although she hesitates, saying 'I know nothing about advertising', the 'kind fairy' negotiates the image of potential success by instructing Jane in the necessary adaptive process through an extended discussion: 'Replies rose swift and prompt now: "You must inclose the advertisement and the money to pay for it under a cover directed to the Editor of the *Herald*; answers must be addressed to J.E. at the post-office"'(73). Her step of advertisement brings her to the notice of Mrs Fairfax, who responds by offering her a position with a salary that is double what she receives at Lowood (75). The uncanny space depicted by the double allows the characters of Zamorna and Jane to negotiate a combination of social narratives and to create successful new roles.

The negotiative resonances in the figures of Brontë's doubles transcend the binary of character/narrator and dramatise the development of a professional identity in a biographical context. Brontë's skill at the narrative technique of the double,

⁷⁷ Freud, p. 358.

honed first in *The Spell* and developed in *Jane Eyre*, allowed her and her sisters to enter the public literary world as male authors. Not only did she use the name 'Currer Bell' as a pseudonym, she also developed and used his personality further in a potential response to the critic Elizabeth Rigby which justifies her portrayal of female characters in the text.⁷⁹ The imagery of the double is noticeable in her exploration of the complexities of writing. When debating the use of melodrama in an exchange with G. H. Lewes, she justifies her mixture of melodrama and realism by pointing out the uncanny aspects inherent in the act of writing. She depicts these uncanny aspects in the light of a hidden double:

When authors write best [...] an influence seems to waken in them which becomes their master, which will have their own way, putting out of view all behests but its own, dictating certain words, and insisting on their being used, whether vehement or measured in their nature; new moulding characters, giving unthought-of turns to incidents, rejecting carefully elaborated old ideas, and suddenly creating and adopting new ones.⁸⁰

The language of the double underlies a transrealist narrative of experimenting with and exploring non-compliant potential in public identities: it is this uncanny hidden influence which moulds new characters and insists on unthought-of turns, not Charlotte Brontë.

However, the authorial condition of creating and adopting public identities was not limited to one woman's, or even one family's, experience. As Sharon Marcus describes, the social position of authorship in the 1840s was one of complexity and social uncertainty. Marcus primarily (and with good reason) explores the ambiguous position of female authors, but the position of an author in

⁷⁸ Sharon Marcus, 'The Profession of the Author: Abstraction, Advertising, and *Jane Eyre*', p. 211. Marcus also links Jane's experience to Brontë's adventures in the publishing world. See *Ibid.*, p. 213-215.

⁷⁹ Brontë even excuses an (understandably) terse postscript as stemming from the elderly Currer Bell's battles with his gout. See Charlotte Brontë, 'A Word to the Quarterly', quoted in *Jane Eyre: The Norton Critical Edition*, pp. 456-457. Unfortunately, her publishers did not allow this preface to be published and urged her to write another one; Brontë refused to write another one.

general shifted between that of a respectable middle-class profession and that of a jobbing tradesmen. Linda H. Peterson, in her wider exploration of the development of the female author, explores the generic social ambiguities involved in authorship. She comments on the arguments that Brontë's correspondent, G.H. Lewes, himself a well-known writer, makes in his 'Condition of Authors' (1847). Having experienced official disdain over the socially uncertain rank of author, Lewes calls for public acknowledgement of authorship as a profession. He argues that this acknowledgement could only come from self-construction, as Peterson summarises: 'Authors should, in effect, publicly construct themselves – as well as conduct themselves – as professionals as a crucial step toward achieving middle-class, gentlemanly status.'⁸¹ The social dilemma and solution that Lewes describes is the same pattern as that of Jane's, only writ large. Authors must confront their current status of social alienation and, having done so, construct for themselves an alternative narrative of professional gentlemen and gentlewomen. Constructing a professional authorial identity requires skills in creating multiple identities in order to manage fluctuations in public perception. The complex use of multiple narration and the ambiguities of framing narrators in both *The Spell* and *Jane Eyre* dramatizes the uncertainties of fragmented social identity of writers. Transrealist elements in these varying strands of narration call plot outcomes and characters' identities into question; the actions of the framing narrator, who stands in for the author (*The Spell* is a polemic 'by' Charles; *Jane Eyre* writes her own biography), can manipulate the reader's opinion of the characters and consequently call his or her own identity into question. By first examining the transrealist tensions caused by negotiations with

⁸⁰ 'Charlotte Brontë to G.H. Lewes, 12 January, 1848', in *The Brontës: A Life in Letters*, by Juliet Barker (New York: Overlook Press:1998), p. 180.

⁸¹ Linda Peterson, *Becoming a Woman of Letters* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009), p. 40.

the uncanny in the varying narratives of Charles (regarding the cursed Zamorna) and of Jane (regarding her supernatural call), I will trace how Brontë's texts present successful negotiations of alienating complexities of social identity faced by contemporary female authors.

The depiction of the supernatural (upon which the resolution of the plot and the social rehabilitation of at least one character depends) in both *The Spell* and *Jane Eyre* is split between multiple narrators, who offer a complementary perspective which sometimes enlightens and sometimes confuses the reader. In *The Spell*, varying narrators describe different hints of a malevolent intruder, who is finally revealed to be Henry Nicolai, a demonic sorcerer. Unravelling the various clues towards the character of Henry Nicolai requires reading backwards at least, perhaps even a second reading, in order to pull together the clues given by the multiple, and sometimes complementary, narrators. Charles describes Nicolai as having a 'dark figure', as matching wits with Zamorna in 'deep harsh tones', and as disappearing, enveloped in a cloak (13-17). Mary's narration increases the atmosphere of mystery and uncertainty that Charles introduces as she also encounters a dark figure who on an initial reading appears to be Nicolai. Later, the reader can name Mary's stranger as Valdacella and can interpret his voice as being too familiar to Zamorna's accents, rather than to Nicolai's harsh tones. However, the reader also does not know that there is a demonic magician, so the multiple accounts of dark figures and shades cumulate in a transrealist effect of a brooding, malevolent, uncanny presence. It falls to one other narrator to give the reader the final clues which assign demonic Nicolai and the innocent Valdacella and Zamorna their respective characters and identities in previous events. Zamorna and Valdacella's father, Charlotte's fantasy version of the Duke of Wellington, relates the tale of the cradle curse. His narration recalls the

dark, harsh-toned figure of earlier scenes, but this time, names him as ‘Henri Nicolai, Flesher and Spirit Merchant’ (125). But the Duke’s narration is more fragmented than that of the others, as he is interrupted by numerous questions and comments from his audience, and his narrative identity is ambiguous as it stretches across Victorian society and Angrian fantasy and the reader can never be certain which aspect is being invoked at which point.

Caught up in the puzzling strands of *The Spell*, the reader can forget that these various narrators operate as characters within a wider narrative and that anything related by these narrators is mediated by C.A.F. Wellesley [Charles, using his full name], who as the ‘public’s obedient servant’, brings these private events to the notice of the world as a book published by John Tree, Book-Seller and Stationer, Biblio-Street, Verdopolis.⁸² This public servant is also the established alter-ego and persona of Charlotte Brontë⁸³ and her concluding footnote consigns Zamorna to the madhouse and the Duke’s authoritative explanation to the realm of fantasy, propelling the *Spell* to rest in uncertainty and indecision at the same time as the plot and characters achieve resolution.

The transrealist complexities of narration present in *The Spell* are also present in *Jane Eyre*, but are particularly noticeable in the construction of a baffling supernatural intervention with regards to plot resolution. When Jane hesitates over accepting St. John’s proposal to accompany him to India in a marriage of convenience, she entreats Heaven to show her how she should answer. In response, she hears ‘the voice [...] of Edward Fairfax Rochester[which] spoke in pain and woe wildly, eerily, urgently (357). Jane is unclear about the source of this voice,

⁸²Title-page from ‘The Spell’ in Charlotte Brontë, *Tales, written under the of Lord C. A. F. Wellesley 1834-1835*, British Library Manuscripts Add.34255.

⁸³Alexander and Smith, *Oxford Companion to the Brontës*, p. 533.

rejecting the suggestion of occult powers, ‘Down superstition!’ and deciding that, ‘[i]t is the work of nature’. This supernatural intervention strengthens her to reject St. John’s proposal and to seek out Rochester. When she reaches Rochester, Jane discovers that he is injured, widowed and spiritually repentant. Further questioning reveals that he also has had a supernatural encounter at the same time that she had hers. The reader of *Jane Eyre*, like the reader of *The Spell*, must piece together in retrospection the experiences of different narrators in order to discover a whole account of this telepathic event. Jerome Beaty explores both the complex narrative strategy of this event and the consequences of such retrospective strategy. He points out that Jane Eyre herself represents multiple narration as she is at once the ‘elder Jane who [...] is telling the story of her earlier life’ and [...] the younger Jane, Jane-at-the-moment-of-action’.⁸⁴ He suggests that Brontë is pacifying imagined readers who might prefer the strictly religious St. John⁸⁵ and sees in Jane’s and Rochester’s respective narrations an act of social rehabilitation through the complementary (and increasing) religious atmosphere; Rochester’s account, Beaty says, ‘is the final confirmation of the ontological world of *Jane Eyre*, a world governed by Providence[...] Those recognizing and accepting this providential reading, now trace the theme backward through Jane’s [various] plea[s] to God [...] For such readers, *Jane Eyre* has finally taken its full shape.⁸⁶ However, this shape is interrupted by the voice of the author – the elder Jane.

As Beaty observes, Jane Eyre is at once two voices: the younger plot participant and the older, socially established, writer. The intrusion of the writerly persona subverts the ‘full shape’ that Beaty notes. The supernatural event, with its

⁸⁴Jerome Beaty, ‘St. John’s Way and the Wayward Reader’ in *Jane Eyre: the Norton Critical Edition*, pp. 491-503 (p. 493).

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 496.

multiple narrations, cements the union of Jane and Rochester; the melodrama of this event helps both narrators to describe the passionate nature of their feelings in ways which jostle together in transrealist unpredictability while presenting a complementary process. Jane describes her ecstatic reaction to Rochester's voice by itemising her beating, throbbing heart, 'an inexpressible feeling that thrilled it through, and passed at once to my head and extremities' and her rising senses: 'eye and ear waited, while the flesh quivered on my bones' (357). Rochester does not itemise the movement of sense by sense, but summarises his feelings in a way that indicates an equivalent passion: 'I longed for thee, Janet! Oh, I longed for thee both with soul and flesh! [...] [T]he Alpha and Omega of my heart's wishes broke involuntarily from my lips in the words – 'Jane! Jane! Jane!' (381). These equivalent confidences unite them. But the writerly Jane intrudes after Rochester's narration by indicating that this union of confidences is not complete.

Jane, and the reader, know that Rochester's experience complements Jane's, but she does not inform Rochester of this fact, as she worries about how he will receive it: 'I [...] made no disclosure in return. The coincidence struck me as too awful and inexplicable to be communicated [...] I kept these things, then, and pondered them in my heart' (381). The writerly Jane explores the ambivalent effect of the supernatural events which confirm her union with Rochester, and frames this exploration in an image of women experiencing the divine through her words 'pondered them in my heart', which, as Richard Dunn observes, quotes from the Gospel of Luke 2:8-19, in which Mary, hearing the shepherds' tale of angelic revelations around the birth of Jesus, 'treasured up all these things and pondered

⁸⁶Ibid., p. 499.

them in her heart'.⁸⁷ However, Jane's use subverts the words from the Gospel narrative in that *she* tells of her own pondering. As F.Scott Spencer points out, though Luke is possibly the most 'gynocentric' of the Gospel accounts, in using a male voice to tell the supernatural experiences of Mary and of Elizabeth, it evokes 'the problems of co-optation, colonization, and patronization [...]that inevitably arise when dominant male authors and readers attempt to speak for and about women's experiences':

Mary and Elizabeth – while certainly inspired by the Spirit and attuned to each other and to God's purposes – begin the action in Luke's gospel by giving birth to notable sons, John and Jesus, who then dominate the story from that point on. After Luke 2, Mary and Elizabeth are never seen or heard from again.⁸⁸

Jane's adoption of Mary's pondering to explain her own story celebrates female experiences of balancing supernatural perceptions as a conscious narrative technique. By fragmenting the power of their supernatural – and narrative – union, Jane subverts the power of her social rehabilitation: it is the unpredictable spiritual quality of these events which justifies her potentially shocking decision to abandon hard-won social freedom and return to a married man. However, seen in the light of *The Spell's* indecisive ending, the transrealist contradictions of *Jane Eyre's* multiple narrators can be seen as pulling narrative strands into a space of questioning and uncertainty that places the social and emotional complexities of Jane and Rochester's experiences before the reader and empowers the reader to puzzle out an understanding.

Brontë had access to literary depictions of multiple narratives and fragmented writerly identities – both in terms of childhood fantasy and in terms of contemporary views of authorship. As Christine Alexander describes, the Brontë children

⁸⁷ Luke 2.8-19 in *The New Oxford Annotated Bible*, p. 99 [New Testament]

constructed themselves as the ‘Four Chief Genii’, with Branwell as the ‘chief Genius’. They were the ‘Guardians of [these] lands and of their particular characters, once the famous wooden soldiers.’⁸⁹ To do this, however, they drew from multiple depictions of Genii across the *Nights*, the *Tales* and the *Mythology*.⁹⁰ These three texts present Genii in different ways, as can be seen from the variations in spelling across the texts. The *Nights* refers to Genii as ‘Genie’ in the singular,⁹¹ whereas the *Tales* has them as ‘Genius’ in the singular.⁹² The *Mythology* refers to them as Jinn(s) and Jinnyah (pl).⁹³ As mentioned earlier, both male and female authors in the early nineteenth-century had problems with public perception. But female authors in particular faced condescension and prejudice from literary circles, who attempted to mediate their identities. Southey’s response to the young Brontë’s enquiring letter about literary pursuits attempts to proscribe her patronizingly: ‘Literature cannot be the business of a woman’s life: & it ought not to be’, he advises.⁹⁴ An example of the need for these skills can be seen in the experience of the Countess of Blessington, an early nineteenth-century author who initially managed her public literary identity through deploying images of her physical beauty as analogous to her moral beauty, which create problems when she published books considered immoral, as Ann Hawkins observes:

When Lawrence’s portrait launched Blessington as a celebrity beauty, Blessington realized that she could capitalize on her audience for her books. Blessington clearly benefitted from the marketing of her image outside and within her books, but her identification as a morally beautiful writer

⁸⁸ F. Scott Spencer, *Dancing Girls, Loose Ladies, and Women of the Cloth: The Women in Jesus’ Life* (New York: Continuum, 2004), p.11.

⁸⁹ Christine Alexander, *The Early Writings of the Brontës*, p. 30.

⁹⁰ Alexander and Smith, *The Oxford Companion to the Brontës*, p. 206.

⁹¹ Anonymous, *Arabian Nights Entertainment*, Vol. I (London: C. D. Pignit, 1798). *Eighteenth Century Collections Online*. Gale. University of Leeds. <accessed 19 May 2010 >

⁹² Sir Charles Morell, *The Tales of the Genii*, Vol 1. London, [1794]. *Eighteenth Century Collections Online*. Gale. University of Leeds. <accessed 19 May 2010>

⁹³ Thomas Keightley, *The Fairy Mythology* (London: George Bell, 1900), pp. 15-26.

⁹⁴ ‘Robert Southey to Charlotte Brontë, March, 1837’, in *The Brontës: a Life in Letters*, pp. 46-48 (p. 47).

circumscribed her books to those topics that a beautiful woman might write.⁹⁵

Some of this ambiguous imagery haunts the Angrian world, due to Brontë's use of the Countess to inspire one of her favourite characters, Zenobia Marchioness Ellington.⁹⁶ Charlotte Brontë also had an example of successful authorial self-construction before her in the shape of Harriet Martineau, who reinvented herself from the feminine writer of the *Monthly Repository* to public commentator (*Illustrations of Political Economy*, 1832-34), and then to author (*Deerbrook*, 1839).⁹⁷ Like the writerly Jane, Martineau mediated, fragmented and edited her authorial identity – although there were plenty of critics eager to offer opinions on her identity as well. Charlotte Brontë's own experience with literary celebrity reveals the difficulty female authors could experience in balancing the multiple narratives of private expectations and public success. As observed earlier, her use of a pseudonym stems from a desire for a mediative space for assessment of their work⁹⁸ – just as Jane Eyre and Charles quietly mediate their characters' narratives while allowing the reader to assess the puzzles of the respective plots. Her use of a pseudonym allowed her to transform her identity within the literary marketplace.

Placed in this context, Charles (and Mary etc) and Jane (and Jane etc) are part of a long process of exploring the identity of authorship which broke out of the

⁹⁵ Ann R. Hawkins, 'The Portrait, the Beauty, and the Book: Celebrity and the Countess of Blessington' in *Woman Writers and Celebrity in the Long Nineteenth Century*, ed. by Ann R. Hawkins and Maura Ives (Farnham: Ashgate, 2012), pp. 49-78 (pp.76-77).

⁹⁶ Alexander and Sellars examine this link in detail, particularly pointing out similarities between E.H. Parris's portrait of the Countess, and Brontë's drawing of Ellington. See *The Art of the Brontës*, p.217.

⁹⁷ Shelagh Hunter, *Harriet Martineau: The Poetics of Moralism* (Brookfield, VT: Scolar Press, 1996), pp.3-6: Hunter describes her book as an extended commentary on Martineau's *Autobiography* and she explores Martineau's self-presentation, self-interpretation and self-invention in a public setting throughout her book. Her introduction provides a helpfully concise summary of this process, and the cited pages are particularly relevant.

⁹⁸ Linda H. Petersen suggests that the Brontë's childhood reading of literary annuals, particularly *Fraser's Magazine*, would have taught them how differently male and female authors were perceived: 'They would have learned that literary women must be properly domestic – as in Mitford's appearance within her village home, surrounded by flowers and attended by a faithful dog, or in Caroline Norton's portrait as a dutiful wife pouring tea for her husband. They would have learned that love poetry and romantic fiction were appropriate genres for women – as in Fraser's praise of [Letitia] Landon for choosing 'the tender passion as the theme for woman' – whereas politics and 'economical philosophy' were deemed unacceptable' (Linda H. Petersen, 'The Brontës' Way into Print' in *The Brontës in Context*, Kindle Edition).

text and into Brontë's own life. Brontë presented multiple narratives of herself in order to gain social acceptance, just as the multiple narratives of Charles, Mary, and the Duke of Wellington rehabilitate Zamorna and Valdecilla, and Rochester and Jane each present complementary explanation. Harriet Martineau saw her as demure and self-effacing, receiving criticisms in sweet submission,⁹⁹ while G.H. Lewes received the full force of her anger when he commented that 'we have both written naughty books'.¹⁰⁰ Paradoxically, like Jane and Charles, Brontë's mediating self-narrator intruded into her self-narratives and her audience perceived elements of construction.

Brontë only achieved full social rehabilitation when another narrator rewrote her narrative. Elizabeth Gaskell fragmented Charlotte Brontë's authorial identity in order to restore her social reputation. Her initial thoughts on writing her friend's biography revolved around separating her personal life from her professional life in order to manipulate her friend's reputation: 'I would put down everything I remembered about this dear friend and noble woman [...]the more she was known the more people would honour her as a woman, separate from her character of authoress'.¹⁰¹ She mediates Brontë's experiences by expressing opinions about the position of female authors through Brontë's voice. Gaskell acknowledges women's domestic responsibilities: '[A] woman's principal work in life is hardly left to her own choice; nor can she drop the domestic charges devolving on her as an individual, for the exercise of the most splendid talents that were ever bestowed', but Gaskell also emphasises that female authors should not neglect their talents by using Brontë as an example: 'And yet she must not [...] hide her gift in a napkin; it was

⁹⁹ Harriet Martineau, *Autobiography*, ed. by Maria Weston Chapman (Boston, 1877), Vol II, pp. 21-25.

¹⁰⁰ Barker, p. 641.

meant for the use and service of others [...] I put into words what Charlotte Brontë put into actions'.¹⁰² Linda Peterson suggests that Gaskell's 'parallel currents' construction of a female author having a domestic and a literary identity helped Gaskell, and other female writers, to navigate her (their) own authorial identity.¹⁰³ Brontë's influence extends across beyond Victorian England: for example, the Canadian Lucy Maud Montgomery in *Emily Climbs* (1925) uses Brontë as an example of a successful negotiative writer, who inspires Emily (a budding writer) to carve her own literary identity by balancing the conflicting demands of her creative imagination and of her unsympathetic provincial community.¹⁰⁴ In *Jane Eyre* and *The Spell*, Brontë continually negotiates the varying narratives in a way which evokes the difficulties of establishing an authorial social centre.

The use of the uncanny in *The Spell* and *Jane Eyre* emphasises complexities of religion, art and literary culture by championing a transrealist process of multi-faceted interpretation and investigation. This arbitrary, uncertain textuality promotes the articulation of the spaces 'between' or 'around' social narratives. Julian Wolfreys suggests that texts located solely in the uncanny have the potential to act as a disruptive force: 'Haunting and spectral effects [...] operate disruptively from within the most habitual, accustomed structures of identity'. He also suggests that uncanny textuality, by its disruptive nature, acts as a textual protest as well: '[T]he tracing of

¹⁰¹ 'Elizabeth Gaskell to George Smith, Letter 242', in *The Letters of Elizabeth Gaskell*, ed. by John Chapple and Arthur Pollard (Manchester: MUP, 1966), pp.345-348 (p.347).

¹⁰² Elizabeth Gaskell, *The Life of Charlotte Brontë*, p. 272.

¹⁰³ Linda Peterson, *Becoming a Woman of Letters*, p. 132.

¹⁰⁴ Emily's former teacher, Mr. Carpenter, advises her to reject an opportunity offered by a successful female journalist to move to New York because 'I wanted you to be—pure Canadian through and through, doing something as far as in you lay for the literature of your own country, keeping your Canadian tang and flavour.' He responds to Emily's argument that 'there's no chance to do anything here' by commenting: "No—no more than there was in Haworth Parsonage." Although Emily initially says that "I'm not a Charlotte Brontë[...]She had genius—it can stand alone. I have only talent—it needs help—and—and—guidance", she stays in her Prince Edward Island community ('among my own people') and eventually achieves international literary success, bearing out the comparison to Brontë. See L.M.Montgomery, *Emily Climbs* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1989), pp. 310-313, and *Emily's Quest* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1989), p. 185.

the spectral and the effects of haunting refuse to be generalized into a system [...] because the very condition of spectrality is neither determinable as a single modality nor available as being governed by unchangeable laws.’¹⁰⁵ Brontë’s shrewd mix of uncanny and realist textuality doubles the disruptive force that Wolfreys describes and propels the reader into a space of multi-levelled questioning. Brontë defended *Jane Eyre* as attacking conventionality and self-righteousness, and it is these radical qualities which, propelled by her transrealist technique of uncanny creativity, ‘pluck the mask from the face of the Pharisee [...] penetrate the sepulchre and reveal charnel relics’ – allowing new identities to arise from these relics.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁵ Julian Wolfreys, *Victorian Hauntings: Spectrality, Gothic, the Uncanny and Literature* (New York: Palgrave, 2002), pp.19-22.

¹⁰⁶ Charlotte Brontë, ‘Author’s Preface to the Second Edition’ in *Jane Eyre: The Norton Critical Edition*, pp.1-2.

Chapter Two: Charles Dickens and Tales of Social Ghosting

While Charlotte Brontë experiments with uncanny narrativity, Charles Dickens interrogates the fairy tale and the ghost story in *Nicholas Nickleby* (first published in monthly parts, 1838-1839)¹ and *A Christmas Carol* (1843).² He subverts specific elements of these supernatural tropes in the realist setting (both thematic and descriptive) of early nineteenth-century London. This particular blend of fantasy and realism, which I argue is best identified according to its anti-fairy tale resonances, presents a transrealist process in its narrative challenges to contemporary concepts of heroes, villains and happy endings. Not only does it give insight into the struggles of suitably heroic characters, but it also grants access to the experiences of those separated from ideal social contexts, particularly disabled individuals. Dickens's texts blend multiple modes and social classes in a transrealist polyphony, out of which spill disconcerting questions to trouble nineteenth-century structures of exclusion.³

Rosemary Jackson, in her insightful exploration of the fantastic and the fantasy modes, locates Dickens as an example of 'Victorian fantasy realism' which she depicts as an uneasy assimilation of genres such as the gothic within Victorian realist novels (that is, novels which make particular use of the mimetic mode), acting as a textual sub-conscious. Jackson investigates the ability of Victorian fantasy realism to incorporate elements of social deviance, noting the expression of anxiety regarding cultural otherness (such as unmarried mothers, foreigners, or the poor). However, Jackson views such incorporations as repressive; she suggests that the use

¹ Charles Dickens, *Nicholas Nickleby* (London: Penguin, 2003). Henceforth *Nickleby*. References included in text.

² Charles Dickens, *A Christmas Carol and Other Christmas Writings* (London: Penguin, 2003). Henceforth *Carol*. References included in text.

that such writers as Dickens make of the fantasy-realist mode explores but rejects a painful sub-conscious of socio-cultural disorder.⁴ Yet the acknowledgement and exploration of social deviance in itself has much positive potential as it dramatises the complexity of excluded individuals, opening their experiences into a space of debate. Dickens creates a transrealist process of challenge by placing emotional experiences of social deviance and exclusion in a wider trajectory of moral rehabilitation and restoration, which are then complicated by his polyphonic use of the fantastic.

The use of the ghost story genre interrogates questions of exclusion. The ghost story genre places particular emphasis on the transformation of featured characters, as the appearance of ghosts, revenants or spirits is often inspired by an unfulfilled duty or wrong-doing on part of the haunted individuals, which requires action from these individuals in order to reverse injustice. As Juha Pentikäinen observes, revenant ghosts represent ‘the result of an unfulfilled duty on the part of either the deceased or the community of the living: Either the deceased behaved in an unacceptable way during his or her life or the community of the living neglected or improperly conducted the necessary rites for the dead person, either during life or after death.’⁶ Scrooge, himself an outcast in need of expiation, initially constructs the Christmas Spirits as ‘other’ and must identify with contemporary representations of otherness (ignorance, for example) before he decides to incorporate all three Spirits in himself. In addition, Scrooge is never certain whether the Spirits are dreams or the mimicry of his own mind – reflecting contemporary discourse on

³ For example, *Carol* was based on Dickens’s initial decision to publish ‘an appeal to the People of England, on behalf of the Poor Man’s Child’. See ‘Charles Dickens to Dr. Southwood Smith, 6 March 1843’ in *The Letters of Charles Dickens, Vol III, 1842-1843*, ed. by Madeleine House and Graham Storey (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1974), p. 459.

⁴ Rosemary Jackson, *Fantasy: the Literature of Subversion* (London: Methuen, 1981), p. 124.

ghosts as of psychological origin, before the advent of widespread interest in Spiritualism in the 1850s.⁷ However, Scrooge's time with the spirits necessitates a form of metaphorical reversal, and the transrealist use of ghosts and spirits in combination offers the possibility that even the unworthy, who call down ghostly judgement on themselves, can find a reversal of their circumstances. Similar questions linger around the figures of Mrs Nickleby and Ralph Nickleby in *Nickleby*, whose respective foolishness and greed propel them into unfortunate circumstances; consequently, they both find themselves haunted by memories of the past. However, unlike Scrooge, neither can find a complete rehabilitation, or reversal of circumstances, and the ghostly language associated with them and their memories highlights the issue of why they cannot find such reversal.

The fairy tale mode often dramatizes questions of exclusion: for example, in the Brother Grimms' 'Brier-Rose' which fairies are invited to the christening ball? These questions gain particular clarity in final scenes – typified as 'the happy ending', in which wicked stepmothers and false princesses are punished violently when they try to attend the wedding of the happily united couple, surplus beauties are cast into the sea when the prince chooses the 'right' beautiful girl, and traitors' heads fall down a mountain (see Grimms' 'Snow White' and 'The Goose-Girl', 'The Frog King', and 'King of the Golden Mountain').⁸

⁶ Juha Pentikäinen, 'Revenants' in *Folklore: an encyclopedia of beliefs, customs, tales, music, and art* (Vol II), ed. by Thomas A. Green (Santa Barbara, Calif. : Oxford : ABC-CLIO, c1997.), pp 718-720 (p. 718).

⁷ Shane McCorristine in *Spectres of the Self* describes attitudes to ghosts in the first half of the nineteenth century as 'a genre of rationalist, sceptical and avowedly anti-supernatural tracts, pamphlets and books which maintained an intellectual continuity and ideological consistency in the British medical imagination until the spread of spiritualism in the 1850s'. Shane McCorristine, *Spectres of the Self* (Cambridge ; New York : CUP, 2010), p. 43. Andrew Smith, locating the onset of interest in 'ghost-hunting' with Catherine Crowe's *The Night Side of Nature; or, Ghosts and Ghost Seers* (1848), notes that Dickens terms accounts of ghosts 'delusions superintended by a well-understood, and by no means uncommon disease' in his review of this text. Andrew Smith, *The Ghost Story, 1840-1920* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2010), p.2.

⁸ I have chosen to examine tales from the Brothers Grimm collection of *Household Tales* (first published in England as *German Popular Stories* in 1823), due to its extreme popularity and influence within the early Victorian period. Jakob and Wilhelm Grimm, 'Brier Rose' in *The Complete Fairy Tales of the Brothers Grimm*, ed. by Jack Zipes (New York:

Dickens's part in a fairy-tale tradition has been extensively investigated; Harry Stone and Elaine Ostry explore this in particular depth (which I shall discuss in detail further on), noting Dickens's use of fairy-tale elements like seemingly unobtainable princesses, questing heroes etc.⁹ Fairy god-father figures such as the Cheerybles comment on the inevitability of Smike's fate and the tragedy of his birthright, evoking debate as to why Smike's fate is inevitable. Both texts, however, interrogate the 'consolation of the happy ending' trope in fairy tales, which J.R.R.Tolkien terms as a 'good catastrophe [*eucatastrophe*]' or 'the sudden joyous "turn"'. He comments further that this *eucatastrophe* 'does not deny the existence of *dyscatastrophe*, of sorrow and failure [...] [but] it denies (in the face of much evidence, if you will) universal final defeat [...] giving a fleeting glimpse of Joy, Joy beyond the walls of the world, poignant as grief.'¹⁰ Dickens's texts recall Tolkien's definitions as each ending contains the consolatory ending of defeating malice, but also contains a sense of poignancy. However, re-reading patterns of fairy tale consolation in these texts alongside patterns of challenging otherness dramatized by ghost story tropes pulls elements of sorrow to the centre, creating a transrealist space to reveal social chaos. The physically and mentally impaired Smike dies before *Nickleby*'s denouement, conveniently resolving such dilemmas as his unrequited love for Kate Nickleby and his uncertain place in a world of employment. However, the fact that the otherwise triumphant conclusion ends with a depiction of the sorrowful Nickleby family around his grave raises the question of why the innocent Smike – who, like Nicholas, has suffered from a loss of birthright – has no

Bantam, 1992), pp.186- 189, 'The Frog King', pp. 2-4, 'The Golden Bird' pp.216-222, 'The Goose Girl', pp.322- 327, 'The King of the Golden Mountain', pp.338-342, and 'Snow White', pp. 196-204.

⁹ Elaine Margaret Ostry, *Social Dreaming: Dickens and the Fairy-Tale*, published thesis, University of Toronto, 1998, and Harry Stone, *Dickens and the Invisible World* (London: Macmillan, 1980).

¹⁰ J.R.R. Tolkien, 'On Fairy Stories' in *The Monsters and the Critics and Other Essays* (London: Harper Collins, 2006) pp.109-161 (p. 153).

permanent place in the restored family fortunes. Since much of Smike's condition arises from his destructive time in the abusive school run by Mr Squeers, his plight suggests that other individuals may undergo similar sufferings, as well as drawing attention to his disabled condition.

Dickens makes reference to this emotive potential in his *Preface* to the original collected *Nickleby* edition of 1839,¹¹ in which he refutes charges of exaggeration: 'Mr Squeers and his school are faint and feeble pictures of an existing reality, purposely subdued and kept down lest they should be deemed impossible [...] [T]here are upon record trials at law in which damages have been sought as a poor recompense for lasting agonies and disfigurements inflicted upon children by the treatment of the master in such places' (3-4). In *Carol*, the process of Scrooge's partial redemption is interrupted by such figures as the grotesque Want and Ignorance in his time with the Ghost of Christmas Present. These childish figures are in some aspects reminiscent of Tiny Tim, with a crippled and emaciated physical appearance; however, although the novel's conclusion emphasises that 'Tiny Tim did *not* die', the question of the outcome of Want and Ignorance can only remain unresolved. Examining the interplay of fairy tale and ghost story motifs in the texts illuminates some of the complexities around these questions.

Dickens's transrealist use of fairy-tale structure and spectral evocation in an art form which already naturally contains such elements doubles the significance of this use, as do the questions of social identity dramatized in a circular partnership between text and illustration which in itself interrogates narrative legitimacy. The doubly fantastic nature of his textual construction invites debate as to how unreal it is – and so on to the realism contained in contemporary constructions of society.

This subversive and critical mixture of tropes suggests the concept of the anti-tale. Andre Jolles first defined the 'anti-tale' or 'anti-fairy-tale' in 1930, as part of his treatise on literary forms. Jolles, in searching tale-forms from antiquity onwards, identified 'eine Form finden würden, in der die naiv unmoralische Welt, die Welt des Tragischen, sich verdichtet – kurz es muß ein Antimärchen geben' [a form in which the naively immoral world, the world of the tragic, is condensed- in short, there should be an anti-fairy tale].¹² Jolles gives the tale of Pyramus and Thisbe as an example of the 'anti-fairy-tale', which corresponds to 'der Welt des Tragischen; der tragische Lauf der Dinge wird hier in einer Sprachgebärde zusammengezogen [...] die Trennung und Tod in sich tragen' [the world of the tragic; in these cases the tragic course of events is condensed into a verbal gesture [. . .] things that carry separation and death in them].¹³

Subsequent critics have expanded Jolles' definitions into wider readings, and consequently, wider possibilities. For example, John Pizer notes that 'the genre of the anti-fairy tale offers the creative writer a chance to express his/her disillusion by subverting the illusions of the traditional fairy tale'.¹⁴ Dickens's *Carol* suggests Wolfgang Mieder's definition of the anti-fairy tale as focusing on 'the negative hero or antihero',¹⁵ since Scrooge's villainy haunts many households, including his own, and his redemption requires intense concentration on the very real possibility of separation and death. The ending of *Nickleby*, in which even Nicholas's and Kate's children mourn Smike's tragic life and death at his grave, recalls Mieder's

¹¹ The *Preface* is included in the Penguin edition.

¹² Andre Jolles, *Einfache Formen* (Saale: M. Niemeyer, 1930), p.242. I am grateful to Patrick Maiwald for this translation, and to Ellie Roberts and Edward Powell for their associated advice.

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ John Pizer, 'The Disenchantment of Snow White: Robert Walser, Donald Barthelme and the Modern/Postmodern Anti-Fairy Tale' *Canadian Review of Comparative Literature* 17 (1990), 330-347 (p.330).

¹⁵ Wolfgang Mieder, 'Anti-Fairy Tale' in *The Greenwood Encyclopedia of Folktales and Fairytales*, ed. by Donald Haase (Westport, CT: Greenwood, 2007), p. 50.

observation that ‘anti-fairy tale [...] has also been used to refer to modern literary reworkings of fairy tales that stress the more negative scenes or motifs, since they appear to be more realistic reflections of the problems of modern society’,¹⁶ especially as Dickens noted that his inspiration for Smike came from seeing the grave of a boy who had died at an abusive Yorkshire school.¹⁷ Defne Çizakça outlines the critical potential of anti-fairy tales: ‘The anti-tale *changes perspectives*, it puts the emphasis on the “other”. This other may be the unseen, the untold, the suppressed or the ignored within the tale.’¹⁸ Dickens is interested in a transformation of perspective, and tracing the transrealist use of the anti-fairy tale in his texts questions whether the ‘others’ can change: whether Smike can escape the abuses of Dotheboys Hall, and whether the disabled Tiny Tim experiences the social isolation that the child Ebenezer suffered.

There are a number of complications surrounding the exploration of disability in *Nickleby* and *Carol*, even without the uncertainty surrounding Smike's mental capacities. There is a discrepancy associated with differences of language and discourse about disability between the twenty-first century and the early to mid-nineteenth century; there are also discrepancies between literary constructions of disability (or madness, insanity, deviance, deformity) and social realities. But these complications can be linked through a theme of social inconvenience, and treatment based on such perceived inconvenience. In *Fictions of Affliction: Physical*

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Peter Ackroyd's description of Dickens's research into Yorkshire schools suggests a more positive inspiration, however. He describes Dickens's reaction to a particular grave among the graves of children who died under the rule of the infamous schoolmaster, William Shaw, and notes the origins of Smike in this reaction: ‘In particular Dickens was struck by one gravestone which read: “Here lie the remains of GEORGE ASHTON TAYLOR Son of John Taylor of Trowbridge, Wiltshire, who died suddenly at Mr William Shaw's Academy of this place, April 13th, 1822 aged 19 years.[. . .] “I think his ghost put Smike into my head, upon the spot,” he told a friend later in the year.’ Ackroyd suggests that Dickens's reaction came from a personal engagement with this dead boy: ‘Perhaps it ought to be remarked, in passing, that the year of the boy's death, 1822, was the year in which the young Dickens was taken to London.’ See Peter Ackroyd, *Dickens* (London: Sinclair-Stevenson Ltd, 1990), pp. 251-252.

Disability in Victorian Culture, Martha Stoddard Holmes notes Smike's and Tim's isolated state in a social context, although she sees them as a springboard for wider social questions about 'the dynamics of sympathy' rather than inspiring discussions about the experience of disability itself. For example, although she suggests that 'Tiny Tim, glad to be looked at in church on Christmas Day [...]invests pleasure both in the act of looking at disability', she ultimately sees him as merely 'catalyz[ing] Scrooge's change of heart and reconnection with society'.¹⁹ While these two characters undoubtedly challenge contemporary constructions of the values of sympathy, I feel that they also propel a discussion about the social experience of disability, and so an exploration of their social experience is essential to understanding their place in the text.

The existence of discrepancies is hardly surprising, considering the range of terms applied in the nineteenth century to those who were what modern readers might term disabled (a term which has both medical and socio-political connotations, as Simi Linton has shown),²⁰ whether intellectually or physically. Iain F.W.K. Davidson, Gary Woodill and Elizabeth Bredburg, in a survey of nineteenth-century images of disability in children's literature, explain that that there were generally four groups of terms:

People who are described as sick or ill occur frequently, but they are not always singled out as special. The word 'diseased' is very occasionally used, but typically to refer to either an extreme example of a sick person, for

¹⁸ Defne Çizakça, 'A. S. Byatt and "The Djinn": The Politic and Epistemology of the Anti-Tale' in *Anti-Tales: The Uses of Disenchantment*, ed. by Catriona McAra and David Galvin (Newcastle-upon-Tyne: Cambridge Scholars, 2011), pp. 264-274 (p. 264).

¹⁹ Martha Stoddard Holmes, *Fictions of Affliction: Physical Disability in Victorian Culture* (Michigan: University of Michigan Press, 2004), p. 97.

²⁰ Simi Linton assesses the multifaceted connotations contained in the term 'disability': '[D]isability is an arbitrary designation[D]efinitions of disability [...]include incapacity, a disadvantage, deficiency, especially a physical or mental impairment that restricts normal achievement [...] Stedman's Medical Dictionary (1976) identifies disability as a 'medicolegal term signifying loss of function and earning power' [. . .] The medicalization of disability casts human variation as deviance from the norm [. . .] When disability is redefined as a social/political category, people with a variety of conditions are identified as people with disabilities or disabled people, a group bound by common social and political experience. 'Simi Linton, 'Reassigning Meaning' in *The Disability Studies Reader, Second Edition*, ed by Lennard J. Davis (New York, London: Routledge, 2006), pp 161-172 (pp.162-163).

instance, a 'consumptive', or to someone in a foreign land, such as a 'leper'. A second, and at times related, group consists of people called "crippled", or (less commonly) "deformed". Their state is often associated with sickness, frequently exemplified in extreme tiredness or incapacity to get around. Blind or nearly blind people form a third group and are probably more precisely delineated than any other sector. The fourth group consists of people specified by any, or any combination, of the terms 'deaf', 'dumb' and 'mute'; muteness tends to be depicted as the most unfortunate aspect. Lastly, there is the least precisely depicted group, described under such terms as 'idiot', 'witless', 'insane', 'crazy' and 'mad', with 'cretin' appearing in material dealing with special hospitals in the Swiss mountains.²¹

Davidson, Woodill and Bredburg also emphasise that these types are generally presented in a context of moral didacticism: 'Disabled children's patience and sweetness in suffering or in accepting their disability make a powerful impact on others at times, bringing out the best in them'.²²

David Mitchell and Sharon Snyder point out in their examination of disability and narrative discourse, there is a long tradition of disabled characters in literary texts, ranging from Oedipus to Richard III to Clifford Chatterley. Tom Shakespeare notes that these characters often embody cultural anxieties: '[I]t is disability which is the most active and prominent metaphor of all, and disabled people become ciphers for those feelings, processes or characteristics with which non-disabled society cannot deal.'²³ Mitchell and Snyder note that there is a paradox in such use, as 'While disability's troubling presence provides literary works with the potency of an unsettling cultural commentary, disabled people have been historically refused a parallel power within their social institutions'.²⁴

²¹ Iain F. W. K. Davidson, Gary Woodill, and Elizabeth Bredberg, 'Images of Disability in 19th Century British Children's Literature', *Disability & Society*, 9 (1994), 33-46 (pp.38-39).

²² *Ibid.*, p.40.

²³ Tom Shakespeare, 'Cultural Representation of Disabled People: Dustbins for Disavowal?', *Disability & Society*, 9(1994), 283-299 (p. 287).

²⁴ David Mitchell and Sharon Snyder, *Narrative Prosthesis*, (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2000), p. 8.

Discussions of whether impairment is a social, rather than a medical, condition are still present in twenty-first century debates about disability. Colin Barnes, in particular, emphasises the importance of interrogating wider social barriers around constructions of disability: '[A] social model of disability [...] provide[s] insights into the disabling tendencies of modern society in order to generate policies and practices to facilitate their eradication.'²⁵ Margrit Shildrik differs from Barnes in arguing 'that an investigation into both the phenomenological experience of the disabled body and into the psychosocial dimensions of what mobilizes normative exclusions would yield a deeper understanding of the issues at stake.'²⁶ I feel that Bill Hughes's examination of the social barriers involved in emotive reactions to disabled bodies provides both a helpful bridge between these two arguments and a helpful framework to understand the complexities of emotion in Dickens's texts. Building on Rosemary Garland-Thomson's argument that 'the impact of discrimination and exclusion is augmented by a disablist interaction order in which people with impairments are patronized, ignored, abused and subjected to the subcutaneous violence of the intrusive, demeaning and disturbing non-disabled gaze', Hughes explores 'three emotions [which] are the major – though not the exclusive – building blocks of the emotional infrastructure of ableism'. Hughes argues that, 'It is these emotions, as they collect in the non-disabled imaginary, that contribute, therefore, to the social distance between disabled and non-disabled people. These three emotions are fear, pity and disgust.'²⁷ I suggest that the emotive nature of Smike's and Tiny Tim's characterization prompts an interrogation of

²⁵ Colin Barnes, 'Understanding the social model of disability: past, present and future' in *The Routledge Handbook of Disability Studies* ed. by Nick Watson, Alan Roulstone and Carol Thomas (London: Routledge, 2012), pp. 12-29 (18)

²⁶ Margrit Shildrik, 'Critical disability studies: rethinking the conventions for the age of postmodernity' in *The Routledge Handbook of Disability Studies* ed. by Nick Watson, Alan Roulstone and Carol Thomas (London: Routledge, 2012), pp. 30-41 (p.35).

disability as an experience of social exclusion: which other groups might these characters be bound to emotionally and what common social experiences might they share with other characters? Defining this emotive element as the ‘sentimental’ or ‘a concern with the self’s need to take social, ethical and moral care of others’, Heather Tilley argues that sentimental technique in Dickens’s works ‘encouraged readers to use their imaginations to see and empathise with figures of suffering, offering subtly complex realignments of self in the process’.²⁸ While Tilley clearly identifies Dickens’s adaptation of the sentimental mode in a context of Victorian social reform, she does not comment on Dickens’s exploration of trauma in confronting social deviance within this mode.

The transrealist interplay of fantastic tropes emphasises troubling emotional experiences of exclusion in a nineteenth-century social context. The emphasis of these troubling experiences consequently interrogates the barriers this exclusion creates across a social spectrum. Paul Marchbanks considers that, taking his whole body of work into consideration, Dickens’s disabled characters show depth and nuance (particularly intellectually disabled ones), but he considers that characters like Smike ‘slip easily into the snug garments laid out by convention, playing synthetic, perfunctory roles that disqualify them from full participation in their respective communities’.²⁹ I argue that the characters in *Nickleby* and *Carol* both embody and subvert these complications in a transrealist combination, by using pathos to highlight a troubled emotional context shared by both ‘normal’ and ‘disabled’ individuals. Nicholas’s family difficulties and temper lead him into

²⁷ Bill Hughes, ‘Fear, Pity and Disgust: Emotions and the Non-disabled Imaginary’ in *The Routledge Handbook of Disability Studies*, ed. by Nick Watson, Alan Roulstone and Carol Thomas (London: Routledge, 2012), pp. 67-77 (p. 68).

²⁸ Heather Anne Tilley, ‘Sentiment and Vision in Charles Dickens’s *A Christmas Carol* and *The Cricket on the Hearth*’, 19: *Interdisciplinary Studies in the Long Nineteenth Century*, 4 (2007), 1-22 (pp. 1, 19).

wandering on the road (soon joined by the run-away Smike); in this instance, our hero demonstrates vagrancy, one of the symptoms of insanity.³⁰ Tiny Tim's lonely, crippled state reminds the reader of the lonely, pathetic schoolboy-Scrooge. Mrs Nickleby's inconvenient characteristic of foolish, chaotic speech reaches beyond the text to characterize social isolation: it becomes shorthand for madness in an 1840 article about a lunatic asylum, which describes an inmate of a Pauper's Lunatic Asylum as 'a placid middle-aged woman, of the Mrs. Nickleby genus, with a weak flow of [...]of namby-pamby'³¹ Investigating patterns of transrealist interplay highlights how Dickens's texts provide an imaginative space to explore tensions surrounding contemporary contexts of social exclusion, using emotive responses to underline the depth of real isolation experienced by Mrs Nickleby – and by others.

By linking tropes of ghost story and of fairy tale in his representation of disabled characters, Dickens provides potential for reflection on the social construction of reality, recalling the emotional dissonance which Hughes observes. Tracing the transrealist interplay of these tropes opens an exploration of processes of separation and of death, which in turn emphasises wider social disability around the physical disability experienced by Tiny Tim and Smike, as other, non-disabled characters suffer from social separation and ambiguity. Exploring how ghost story motifs highlight problems of exclusion in nineteenth-century culture society clarifies how the anti-fairy tale resonances in fairy tale motifs illuminate complications of physically disabled characters.

²⁹ Paul Marchbanks, 'From Caricature to Character: The Intellectually Disabled in Dickens's Novels (Part One)', *Dickens Quarterly*, 23 (2006): 3-13 (p. 5).

³⁰ As listed by Peter Bartlett, in Peter Bartlett, 'The Asylum and the Poor Law: the Productive Alliance' in *Insanity, Institutions and Society, 1800-1914*, ed. by Joseph Melling and Bill Forsythe (London: Routledge, 1999), pp. 48-67 (p.57).

³¹ The article notes several traits which Mrs Nickleby shares: '[H]er earnestness and minute descriptions of particulars showed how completely she was living in a world of her own, where she saw the seraphs she described. She was fully impressed with the notion that she was sane, and that the rest of the people were mad'. See H. B. 'New Year's Eve in a

I will first explore links between fluid constructions of identity and experiences of exclusion by examining how Dickens's texts explore the existence and effects of anxiety surrounding deviance from and/or disconnection to social communities. As discussed above, some outcasts in the texts are more physically disconnected: Smike in *Nickleby* suffers from a limp, as does Tiny Tim in *Carol*; Smike also displays some intellectual or cognitive disability (which is difficult to classify in precise medical terms). These disabilities mean that they are excluded from roles in employment or in general social interaction, and so this isolation naturally extends to a deeper emotional level. However, others, such as Ralph Nickleby, Mrs. Nickleby and Scrooge, have no physical or mental disability, but do have an emotional disconnection, which then involves anxieties about social displacement. By first examining the emotional reality of exclusion through non-disabled characters, I will demonstrate how Dickens's texts explore the formation of social identity, and consequently, question the permanency of the social structures which produce exclusion.

The relationship between Dickens's texts and the accompanying illustrations unsettles a smooth interpretation of both *Nickleby* and *Carol* by propelling the reader to sympathise with excluded individuals. Of course, Dickens is only one among many writers who explore social complexities of interpretation around visual productions of the fantastic. Charlotte Brontë's use – and transcending – of ekphrasis in *The Spell* and *Jane Eyre* experiments with verbal reactions to artistic images, disturbing contemporary social contexts. M.R. James's short story, 'The Mezzotint' (1904) is an example of the unsettling potential of visual reproduction.

The tale describes a picture, initially dismissed, but re-evaluated after the figures in it move, telling the tale of a murder and raising questions of justice.³³ However, the partnership of author and illustrator in *Nickleby* and *Carol* offers a different angle on exchanges between text and image. An official element in the original presentation of the texts, the illustrations reproduce scenes in the written narrative; in doing so they give a transrealist narrative that can extend beyond the written text, as the images contrast and contradict with discrepancies created by words. This contradiction raises issues of textual interpretation, which then opens questions of social interpretation, and of how this links to social exclusion.

Finally, having identified a wider model of social exclusion within the novels, I shall explore representations of physically disabled characters as partaking in these experiences of isolation. Transrealist moments within the text dramatize the characters of Smike and Tiny Tim as anti-tale heroes. These figures convey a sense of emotional reality: Smike's loneliness and exclusion are vividly drawn, including the expression of his unattainable love for Kate; Tiny Tim's psyche is not explored in the same depth as is Smike's, but *Carol* does depict him as transcending contemporary clichés attached to 'cripples': although he is 'deformed', he is a beloved member of a family, and he manages to escape the morally didactic death that Davidson et al identify as a cliché of 'cripples'. Contemporary cultural anxieties collect around both characters, since Dickens uses them to show the effects of social problems, whether it be Yorkshire schools³⁴ or the trials of the working-class family;³⁵ however, these disabled characters are more than ciphers for contemporary problems, as the transrealist twisting of fairy tale tropes (anti-heroes, deathly

³³ M.R. James, 'The Mezzotint' in *Collected Ghost Stories* (London: Wordsworth, 2007), pp. 20-29 (p. 27).

³⁴ See Dickens, 'Preface'

consolation) complicates the texts in a way that engages the reader in the characters' emotional conflicts.

Social Ghosting: Exclusion and Trauma

While Smike and Tiny Tim experience extreme conditions of social exclusion due to their impairments, examining experiences of exclusion suffered by other characters dramatizes a wider spectrum of social deviance propelled by trauma and consequent isolation. This spectrum is highlighted by haunting imagery which collects around them in transrealist contradiction, emphasising a social 'death'. In the texts, Smike's and Tiny Tim's surrounding social circle identify them as dealing with traumatic experiences (without using that precise term). Yet the texts also contain characters whose traumatic experiences are not so extreme, but are still debilitating. They are, as it were, on the edge of trauma, which can mean that other characters dismiss their experiences. In *Nicholas Nickleby*, Mrs. Nickleby has lost her husband and consequently her social position; this context frames her character throughout the book: she refers constantly to her departed husband and her lost social status. This mourning may seem excessive; after all, Kate and Nicholas have also lost their father but they are able to make their way in the world, trying to support themselves. Ralph Nickleby certainly finds her grief excessive: 'It was no *uncommon* loss, ma'am [...]Husbands die every day, ma'am, and wives too', he comments acerbically on first meeting his relations (36). Succeeding chapters suggest that there may be more to Ralph's comment than mere misanthropy.

³⁵ Sally Ledger, *Dickens and the Popular Radical Imagination* (Cambridge: CUP, 2010), p.119.

Ralph has himself lost a wife and a son and the narrative suggests (albeit briefly), that these experiences have formed his character. Reeling in despair from the discovery that the persecuted Smike was his own lost son, Ralph muses over the events that have brought him to this point: 'He began to think now, that his supposed death and his wife's flight had had some share in making him the morose, hard man he was. He seemed to remember a time when he was not quite so rough and obdurate' (751). These bereavements encourage a tendency to isolation within him, building on childhood experiences. While Mrs Nickleby experiences a loss of social context, Ralph experiences a loss of emotional context; both losses imply a state of isolation. These isolations and losses are explored through each character's memories. Similarly, in *Carol*, Scrooge's encounter with the Ghost of Christmas Past brings him face to face – in a dramatized recollection – with his childhood isolation, and consequently a recognition of his current isolation. An enacted memory of his lonely schooldays strikes him deeply: 'A lonely boy was reading near a feeble fire; and Scrooge [...] wept to see himself as he had used to be' (58). As Scrooge is the main focus of *Carol*, his character is explored in more depth than those of Mrs Nickleby and Ralph, who are part of a more crowded cast.

These recollective explorations also contain fantastic or fanciful aspects, which create a transrealistic effect. A spectral context marks their recollections: Mrs Nickleby constantly refers to dead acquaintances, centring these references with fantastic elements such as the Cock Lane Ghost (see below for more detail); Ralph re-discovers his dead brother in his encounters with Kate and Nicholas Nickleby, producing reactions of horror and shock which are compared to ghostly encounters; and Scrooge, of course, is particularly surrounded by fancy and spectrality, being guided by ghosts and glimpsing fairy tale characters. A link between memories and

ghosts is easy to make, as in the phrase ‘haunted by the past’. Dickens himself connects spectral processes to mental processes in his preface to the *Carol*; he hopes to ‘raise the Ghost of an Idea’ in his readers’ minds.

Such analogies were not uncommon in this period; as Shane McCorristine describes, investigations into accounts of ghosts like Samuel Hibbert’s *Sketches of the Philosophy of Apparitions; or, an Attempt to Trace Such Illusions to Their Physical Causes* (1824) study spectral phenomena as part of an examination of a patient’s mental state.³⁶ Louise Henson notes that ‘Dickens was well read in such material. Throughout his life he collected ghost stories as an important source of enquiry into the mysteries of the mind, and it was as contributions to human psychology that he viewed many of the sensational tales that came under his notice’.³⁷ The genre of the ‘ghost story’, as explored earlier, contains the idea of a return due to an unfulfilled duty, or some wrong action performed, on the part of the person being haunted; the experience of haunting can then sometimes lead to rehabilitation of both the ghost and the wrong-doer. Andrew Smith widens interpretations of Dickens’s interaction with ghost stories out from discussions of psychological disorder, arguing that such spectres represent economical disorder in society: ‘Dickens’s ghost tales frequently function as allegories about how individuals negotiate their way around the financial system even whilst that system appears to psychologically ‘possess’ them.’³⁸ Smith’s focus on financial metaphor, while important in emphasising a wider social implication of psychological resonances, does not extend to discussing how individuals negotiate disorder other than economic. By examining Scrooge’s experience of disorder beside that of other

³⁶ McCorristine, p. 44.

³⁷ Louise Henson, ‘Investigations and fictions: Charles Dickens and ghosts’ in *The Victorian Supernatural*, ed. by Nicola Bown, Carolyn Burdett and Pamela Thurschwell (Cambridge: CUP, 2004), pp. 44-63 (p.45).

characters, a transrealist combination of varying isolation creates a space to explore the emotional reality of those who are not morally attractive. Mrs Nickleby, Ralph and Scrooge have all helped to cause their isolated states: Mrs Nickleby's foolishness prompted the financial loss which caused her husband's death; Ralph's greed drove his wife away and set a chain of events in motion which robbed him of his son; and Scrooge's greed drives his fiancée away. Their memories help them to explore the complexities which make up their current social anxieties, underlining the seriousness beneath seemingly commonplace events.

The interpretation of the characters' experiences as being in part traumatic both emphasises the seriousness contained within 'common' losses and points towards a wider social context; it also develops a tendency within the text to connect such experiences with more general social debates. For example, the text of *Nickleby* muses on Mrs. Nickleby's emotional distress as being compounded by sudden poverty (126). Mrs Nickleby is presented as being more foolish or peevish than suffering or tragic. When summarizing an instance of her recollections, the text suggests, by describing her as 'peevish' and being able to 'persuade herself', that she is at the very least lacking an accurate awareness of her situation:

At every small deprivation or discomfort which presented itself in the course of the four-and-twenty hours to remind her of her straitened and altered circumstances, peevish visions of her dower of one thousand pounds had arisen before Mrs Nickleby's mind, until, at last, she had come to persuade herself that of all her late husband's creditors she was the worst used and the most to be pitied (126).

The text continues to mock her subtly by stating that her grief, although stemming from a valid emotional bereavement ('she had loved [her husband] dearly for many years, and had no greater share of selfishness than is the usual lot of mortals'), has a

³⁸ Andrew Smith, *The Ghost Story*, p.34.

definite financial aspect as well: 'Such is the irritability of sudden poverty. A decent annuity would have restored her thoughts to their old train, at once' (126). In comparison with Nicholas, who deals with Dotheboys Hall and tours with the Crummles, and Kate, who works long days in the Mantalini establishment and in the Witterly household, Mrs Nickleby's recollective approach to emotional and financial loss can appear self-indulgent.

Considered in the light of contemporary experiences of widowhood, however, Mrs Nickleby's anecdotes reflect a particular experience of grief which her children do not share. Alastair Owens explores how the financial expectations surrounding early nineteenth-century widows might place them in an impossible dilemma. In a survey of wills in early nineteenth-century Stockport, he finds that widows had a sense of responsibility for maintaining family inheritance with little economic freedom:

While 84 per cent of married male testators' wives were appointed as an executor or trustee of their husband's will, the conditions attached to most trusts meant that widows were rarely able to derive much financial benefit from family property. Within prevailing systems of inheritance, widows largely looked after property for others and could only use it prudently for the maintenance of themselves and minority children. They were, therefore, often simultaneously the linch-pin of intergenerational provision systems while being its least rewarded beneficiary.³⁹

Although Mrs. Nickleby is not the executor of her husband's will, she represents an ambiguous guidance to her family's finances: her advice has precipitated her husband's sudden death, which prevents him from making detailed plans for inheritance, and she emphasises dependence on Ralph Nickleby, who has no interest in executing his brother's will adequately. Pat Jalland's exploration of widowhood in the Victorian period suggests that this troubled financial position expands to

³⁹ Alastair Owens, 'Property, gender and the life course: Inheritance and family welfare provision in early nineteenth-century England', *Social History*, 26 (2001), 299 - 317 (p. 310).

propel a wider loss of social position, and not simply a financial loss: ‘Widowhood, as the end of marriage, was a devastating experience, entailing the loss of central role of wife, which defined the identity and sense of worth of so many women. [. . .] Widowhood was [...] a form of social exile’.⁴⁰ Behind this social loss lies a – less easily acknowledged—sexual death as well: for Mrs Nickleby, a wife’s implied sexual companionship is now in her past.⁴¹ Both of her children have a far more definite social identity than their mother does, unpleasant though it may be at times. At the beginning of the novel, Kate still has the possibility of becoming a wife (which eventually occurs), in addition to her paid occupation, and Nicholas sets off, a fairytale hero, to seek his fortune. Seen in this light, Mrs Nickleby’s vacuous recollections represent her social death as a result of her husband’s physical death, and her anecdotes become a space to explore this social ghosting.

Mrs Nickleby’s disjointed anecdotes suggest a hidden reaction to what she feels is an unsympathetic context. On discovering the absence of Smike, she muses disapprovingly on this behaviour: “‘I hope [...] that this unaccountable conduct may not be the beginning of his taking to his bed and living there all his life, like the Thirsty Woman of Tutbury, or the Cock Lane Ghost, or some of those extraordinary creatures’” (605). She follows this initial disapproval with a recollection centred around what turns out to be a family ‘ghost’ story: “‘One of them had some connection with our family. I forget, without looking back to some old letters I have upstairs, whether it was my great-grandfather who went to school with the Cock-Lane Ghost, or the Thirsty Woman of Tutbury who went to school with my grandmother’” (605). Mrs Nickleby is a naturally attention-seeking person anyway,

⁴⁰ Pat Jalland, *Death in the Victorian Family* (Oxford: OUP, 1996), pp. 230-231.

but her strange anecdote is a particularly extreme attempt to attract attention; as both the Cock Lane Ghost and the Thirsty Woman of Tutbury were famous hoaxes,⁴² the import of Mrs Nickleby's allusion is unclear: does she seek to emphasise a connection to celebrity or to unreliability? However, an examination of the emotions beneath her 'ghostly' anecdote collects this ambiguity into an transrealist experience of social isolation. Since Smike is Mrs Nickleby's most attentive and sympathetic listener (as Marchbanks notes in a discussion of Smike),⁴³ her comments on his absence indicate an appreciation for his companionship and her anecdote becomes an attempt to compensate for this lack by attracting notice and sympathy from others. Her dependence on a consistently patient listener recalls the lack of social role occasioned by the death of her husband, and consequently identifies her with similar experiences of exclusion.

While Mrs Nickleby introduces ambiguous ghosts into her anecdotes, Ralph reacts with shock on encountering a living ghost, and his shock emphasises an emotional poverty. He sees his dead brother returned in Kate: '[Her face] fired some dormant train of recollection in the old man's breast; and the face of his dead brother seemed present before him, with the very look it bore on some occasion of boyish grief [...] with the distinctness of a scene of yesterday'. This recollection produces an extreme reaction: 'Ralph Nickleby, who was proof against all appeals of blood and kindred—who was steeled against every tale of sorrow and distress—staggered

⁴¹ Cornel J. Reinhart, Margaret Tacardon and Philip Hardy, 'The Sexual Politics of Widowhood: the Virgin Rebirth in the Social Construction of Nineteenth- and Early-Twentieth-Century Feminine Reality', *Journal of Family History*, 23 (1998), 28-46 (p. 31).

⁴² The 'Thirsty Woman of Tutbury' was Ann Moore, a woman who became famous between 1808 and 1813 for surviving long periods lying in bed without food and drink; these periods of abstinence were later revealed to be fraudulent. See Rosemary Mitchell, 'Moore, Ann (b. 1761)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004; online edn, Jan 2010 <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/19095> [accessed 17 June 2014]. The 'Cock Lane Ghost' arose from mysterious sounds of knocking in a house in Cock Lane, London, during 1762; the house was said to be haunted by a tenant's deceased wife, Fanny (termed 'Scratching Fanny'). Investigation revealed that the sounds were made by the landlord's daughter, Elizabeth Parsons. See Douglas Grant, *The Cock Lane Ghost* (London: Macmillan, 1965), pp. 79-80.

⁴³ Marchbanks, p. 11

while he looked, and went back into his house, as a man who had seen a spirit from some world beyond the grave' (240). For the first time, the text gives evidence of Ralph having some family feeling, and his extreme reaction therefore emphasises both his connection to them and the depths of his isolation.

Ralph's initial recollection of his dead brother in association with Kate contains negative connotations, as he remembers him a context of 'boyish grief'. In a later chapter, he reflects further on his relationship with Nicholas Sr, depicting a long separation from his brother: "[T]he first comparisons were drawn between us—always in my disfavour. HE was open, liberal, gallant, gay; I a crafty hunks of cold and stagnant blood, with no passion but love of saving, and no spirit beyond a thirst for gain" (421). Ralph depicts these recollections bitterly as a sort of gruesome mental carrion: "[They] flock upon me – when I resign myself to them – in crowds, and from countless quarters" (421). His use of the passive voice suggests that others made what initially may have been misjudgements of him, beginning a process of isolation which meant that such judgements became reality. Ralph's few recollections on his childhood and youth evoke a strong loneliness and his horrified reaction to these memories implies a deeply troubling experience, creating a transrealistic effect.

Troubling experiences of childhood are common in Dickens's works (David Copperfield, Pip, Little Nell, Florence and Paul Dombey etc) and the spectre of Dickens's own difficult childhood experience of the Warren's Blacking warehouse lingers near.⁴⁴ Ralph's musings suggest that troubling childhood experiences could

⁴⁴ Claire Tomalin, in discussing the influence of this episode on Dickens, observes his 'horror and indignation on such a proposal being made for a young, sensitive and promising child, and on his parents' indifference to what it meant for him'. Claire Tomalin, *Charles Dickens: A Life* (London: Viking, 2011), p.24.

extend beyond factories into genteel (if at times financially troubled) homes.⁴⁵ General Victorian portrayals of children contain an ontological ambiguity: Sally Shuttleworth summarizes a Victorian perspective on childhood as a ‘clash between Romantic ideas of childhood innocence, and Evangelical-fuelled notions of the child as an expression of original sin’.⁴⁶ This summary grounds childhood liminality in a context of judgement and potential misjudgement, a state which Shuttleworth, borrowing a phrase from Caroline Arscott, terms ‘blameless malefaction’.⁴⁷ Such liminality contextualizes the spectre of neglect and misjudgement haunting Ralph’s words, extending the limits of his troubling childhood to a universal experience. The potentially dangerous effects in adulthood of childhood difficulties were certainly recognised in the early Victorian era.

Recollections of childhood form an essential part of self-development: in an exploration of Victorian life-writing, Valerie Sanders traces a link between childhood trauma and troubled adult identity: ‘the emphasis on childhood as a “safe” site for narrative [...] anxiety about the adult sexual self [is] displaced on to stories of appalling or extraordinary childhoods’. She cements this link by noting various examples of nineteenth-century childhood isolation: ‘John Stuart Mill’s being made to learn Greek at three, Ruskin’s toyless infancy, Harriet Martineau’s hunger for demonstrative love, and Edmund Gosse’s memory of his father throwing out the Christmas pudding as an example of “idolatrous confectionery”.’⁴⁸ The brief description of his troubled marriage and his separation from his wife suggests some developmental links between Ralph’s complaints about his childhood and Ralph, the

⁴⁵ The opening chapter of *Nicholas Nickleby* briefly details the troubled financial speculations of Ralph and Nicholas Sr’s father, Godfrey Nickleby. There is no recourse to blacking factories, but the text suggests that until the family is relieved by an uncle’s bequest, their financial situation is precarious (17-18).

⁴⁶ Sally Shuttleworth, ‘Victorian Childhood’, *Journal of Victorian Culture*, 9(2001), 107 -113 (p.110).

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

socially troubling adult. But Ralph's complaint of injuries caused by misjudgement is as much a complaint to the reader as a complaint of his youthful experiences: these words attempt to mollify his otherwise villainous character. For Ralph, misjudgement is present as well as past.

Scrooge's hauntings extend the experiences of both Mrs Nickleby and Ralph. With the guidance of The Ghost of Christmas Past, Scrooge has already travelled into memories of his lonely school life – itself a potentially traumatic process⁴⁹ – and his haunting experiences accumulate in a transrealist manner, in which sentimentality gnarls together with discomfort. Following this initial encounter, the Ghost's supernatural powers allow Scrooge to fast-forward a few years into his childhood memories of loneliness: '[T]here he was, alone again, when all the other boys had gone home for the jolly holidays [...] He was [...] walking up and down despairingly' (59). This new memory contains an interruption of his loneliness, as his beloved sister appears to rescue him, both emotionally ('a little girl [...] came darting in, and putting her arms about his neck, and often kissing him, addressed him as her "Dear, dear brother"') and physically ("I have come to bring you home, dear brother") (60). The Ghost uses this memory to remind Scrooge of his present isolation from his family: "'She [...] had, as I think, children [...] Your nephew!'" and at this connection, Scrooge recalls with unease his self-imposed isolation from his sister's son (61). Like Mrs Nickleby and Ralph, Scrooge is presented as lacking in companionship, but the Ghost's selective time-travelling powers allow for the further development of this context into an overt emphasis on the impact of family

⁴⁸ Valerie Sanders 'Victorian Life Writing', *Literature Compass* 1 (2004), 1–17 (p. 9).

⁴⁹ Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall note that 'boys would often suffer greatly when sent away to school or, at a later age, to apprenticeships. Severing close home ties was part of the hardening process of becoming a man'. See Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall, *Family Fortunes: Men and Women of the English Middle Class, 1780-1850* (London: Routledge, 2002), p. 345.

memories on his current situation. In Scrooge, the spectre of misjudgement haunting Ralph is dramatized further. Scrooge's childhood memories challenge initial judgements of him as a bitter misanthrope, while the three Spirits lead him in transrealist process of re-assessing extended misjudgements – a process which eludes Ralph.

For all three characters, their recollections collect in spaces of escape from social exile, and their need for escape emphasises that such exile can exist in the midst of a family (Mrs Nickleby) as much as in the form of self-imposed exile (Ralph and Scrooge). Combined tropes of spectrality and haunting in reference to memory help to explore the emotional anxieties experienced by Mrs Nickleby, Ralph, and Scrooge. The spectral elements in transrealist moments of initial recall help to underline the social complications of both emotional and financial poverty. The spectral qualities associated with the memories of Mrs Nickleby, Ralph and Scrooge suggest an experience of emotional dis-order (that is, a lack of order, as opposed to an illness [disorder]) representative of a wider social dis-order.

Graphic Haunting: Progressions of Challenge

Both the ghost-story *Carol* and the non-ghost story *Nickleby* use visual contradictions to interrogate social separation: the interrogative nature of these contradictions is highlighted by examining them as part of a trajectory of emotional identification around ideals of heroism. This extended process of contradictions between visual and verbal representations forms a discourse of challenge which comments on contemporary aesthetics of masculinity evoked by graphic codes of

sartoriality and caricature. The development of Smike's character through the *Nickleby* illustrations moves him from an outcast status to a place of pathos, in which the audience can sympathise with him, while the development of Scrooge's character in the *Carol* illustrations moves him to a place in which Scrooge empathises with outcast members of his contemporary society.

The text follows Smike's progress from disabled victim to an unsettling hero, revealing an alternative social reality, and the illustrations form an aesthetic response to this trajectory. Many critics have noted an influence of Hogarth in Dickens's texts and Browne's illustrations⁵⁰ and Dickens himself acknowledged this influence.⁵¹ Jane Cohen explores this influence further in examining the use of caricature in the *Nickleby* illustrations. She notes a development of moral encoding through distortion:

Dickens [...] was following a tradition of popular graphic as well as literary satire. However repulsive the author later found Gillray and Rowlandson's use of ugliness, at this time, he, too, employed the powers of physical distortion for purposes of moral satire [...] Browne relied heavily on distorted facial expressions to convey their villainy, but effectively used physical height and girth as well.⁵²

Cohen also notes that 'the virtuous male characters, except for Noggs, are physically as well as morally attractive',⁵³ and questions the consistency of this coding in the character of Noggs, who is morally attractive but is depicted as being physically awkward and distorted. Interestingly, she does not pose the same question of the depiction of Smike.

⁵⁰ See Jane Cohen, *Dickens and His Original Illustrators* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1980), p. 4, and Michael Steig, *Dickens and Phiz* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1978), p. 8

⁵¹ Interestingly, Dickens mentions Hogarth as influencing him in his idea of 'a book in serious earnest – a true, strong, sledge-hammer book – about the children of the people' in an 1841 letter. 'Charles Dickens to Mrs Gore, 31 January 1841', *The Letters of Charles Dickens, Volume II*, ed. by Madeleine House and Graham Storey (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1969), pp. 200-201 (p.201).

⁵² Cohen, p. 70.

⁵³ Cohen, p. 72.

The graphic character of Smike fluctuates throughout the series in terms of hair colour, dress, and symmetry of face, placing him in between conventions of moral or social coding. The one consistent element in depictions of Smike is the bent or waving line of his figure, which invites comparison to Hogarth's theories on a serpentine line as being 'the line of beauty', a comparison which seems to have been missed in discussions of Hogarth's influence upon Browne and Dickens. Hogarth praised this particular form because of its potential for 'infinite variety', but noted that 'winding lines are as often the cause of deformity as of grace'.⁵⁴ A social context to Smike's character develops as his fluctuating figure wavers between deformity and grace.

The audience first hears of Smike in terms of being a strange mixture of child and man: 'He could not have been less than eighteen or nineteen years old, and was tall for that age, he wore a skeleton suit, such as is usually put upon very little boys,⁵⁵ and which, though most absurdly short in the arms and legs, was quite wide enough for his attenuated frame' (89). The illustrations exemplify this strange mixture (figure 5). Although Smike's downcast face is not unattractive (especially in comparison to that of the kicking Master Squeers), the contrast between his older face and his thin body, so pitifully thin that he can still wear garments normally put on little boys, makes him grotesque in a transrealist way: Hogarth comments that a combination of disjunctive elements in visual representations suggests deformity,⁵⁶ and the combination of disjunctive elements in Smike's visual representation immediately emphasises his outcast status, as well as challenging the text (surely a

⁵⁴ William Hogarth, *The Analysis of Beauty* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997), p. 4.

⁵⁵ As Elizabeth Ewing describes, skeleton suits were popular for little boys (ages 3-6) in the late eighteenth-century and early nineteenth-century (circa 1780s-1820s). They consisted of extremely high-waisted trousers buttoned into a shirt (creating a long smooth line, hence the term 'skeleton'), and allowed a comfortable freedom of movement for boys while providing a transition from infant clothes to more adult suits. See Elizabeth Ewing, *History of Children's Costume* (London: Bibliophile, 1982), particularly pages 46-50 and illustrations 28, 30-34.

six-year-old's garment would be too short to fit the height of the doubled figure in the illustration). His doubled figure evokes the question of his social place: it makes him the same



Figure 5 Hablot K. Browne, Detail from *The internal economy of Dotheboys Hall*

height as the children surrounding him, but it is clear that were he to straighten, he would be much taller than these children. Smike is in between a student and a worker: a visual fantasy of a drudge, in fact.



Figure 6 Hablot K. Browne, Detail from *Nicholas Instructs Smike in the Art of Acting*

Smike's emaciated figure is attractive to Vincent Crummles, at least, if not to anyone else, and the sight of him in part prompts Crummles to offer Nicholas and Smike employment in his theatre company (275). He offers both roles in the company's performance of *Romeo and Juliet*. While Nicholas receives the role of Romeo, Smike is cast as the apothecary. The role of the Apothecary – at least in Dickens's text – suggests that he is quite starved, and Smike's experiences make him

⁵⁶ Hogarth, p. 26.

a natural choice. Crummles notes this: ““Why, as he is now [...] without a pad upon his body, and hardly a touch of paint upon his face, he’d make such an actor for the starved business as was never seen in this country. Only let him be tolerably well up in the Apothecary in Romeo and Juliet [...] and he’d be certain of three rounds”” (275). The difficulty comes with training him in the part. Smike’s experiences have left him with a memory loss and Nicholas is afraid that ‘ “you can’t learn it, my poor fellow””(318). The illustration accompanying their training session suggests Smike’s disability, as Marchbanks notes: ‘That Dickens intends the benighted Smike to function at least in part as an imbecile or simpleton is underscored by [Hablot K. Browne]’s accompanying illustrations; one illustration in chapter twenty-five (figure 6) depicts an ungainly, stringy-haired Smike with goggle-eyes and open mouth’.⁵⁷ Of the two, Nicholas’s gently waving, symmetrical figure recalls Hogarth’s definition of beauty, and Smike’s bent form is disproportionate in comparison; his distressed face suggests the difficulty of memorising his part. Yet in this instance, Smike’s deformed appearance serves to confirm his social utility. He may not be as symmetrical as Nicholas, but of the two, the audience’s eye is more naturally drawn to Smike, as he takes up more space in the illustration. The unusual and compelling quality of his appearance has earned him employment and this needs to be exaggerated for maximum effect in the stage performance. However, this utility does not mean complete acceptance: he is still a ‘poor fellow’.

Smike’s appearance in his final illustration is almost unrecognisable from his stage training illustration. His face is symmetrical (although distressed); his figure bends in

⁵⁷ Marchbanks, p. 8.



Figure 7 Hablot K. Browne, Detail from *The recognition*

a graceful line up from his sickbed (figure 7). The graceful line of his position contrasts with the text. Smike has half-risen from fear, not from grace: '[Nicholas's] charge had struggled into a sitting posture, and with eyes almost starting from their sockets, cold dew standing on his forehead, and in a fit of trembling which quite convulsed his frame, was calling to him for help'(713). Smike's distress comes because he says he has glimpsed his childhood kidnapper, but Nicholas, not seeing this figure, dismisses this glimpse as being Smike's fancy: 'Nicholas endeavoured, by every persuasion and argument he could think of, to convince the terrified creature that his imagination had deceived him' (715). However, the illustration validates Smike's perspective rather than Nicholas's, as the audience can see Brooker's figure hidden in the trees.

Nicholas is turned away from Brooker, so cannot see it, but Smike is facing Brooker: the audience joins with the horror in Smike's viewpoint. The illustration of Smike's figure also advocates for him over Nicholas, in Hogarthian terms. In comparison to Smike, Nicholas's figure is straight and uniform in shade, whereas Smike rises in graceful progression, has variety in dress, and has gently waving curls. Hogarth praised waving lines as being more attractive than straight ones, and praised curls as particularly exemplifying the beauty of the serpentine line: '[T]he

hair of the head is another very obvious instance [of the serpentine line] which, being design'd chiefly as an ornament, proves more or less so, according to the form it naturally takes, or is put into by art. The most amiable in itself is the flowing curl.⁵⁸ Smike's final illustration champions him aesthetically, inviting the audience to identify with him and not to dismiss him as the 'creature' suggested by the text. This aesthetic advocacy suggests some of the court cases regarding the injurious practices in the Yorkshire schools to which Dickens refers in his *Preface*.⁵⁹ In one such case, witnesses urge the jury to condemn one infamous school master based on emotive stories of bad victuals, dirty sheets, and 'vermin and sores in the head'. However, despite these tragic tales, the jury finds for the schoolmaster.⁶⁰ The visual transformation in the progression of illustrations both creates empathy with elements of trauma and horror in social exclusion and provides an emotional inclusion which might well be lacking for inmates of the Yorkshire schools (and other similar institutions), a transrealist combination of disjunctions which suggests a prospect of social change.

If Smike's pictorial progression moves him to a state in which the audience identifies with him, Scrooge's pictorial progression moves the wealthy miser to a state in which he can identify with a poorer society. The use of colour underlines this progression: as noted earlier, colour illustrations were more expensive than black and white ones. They suggest wealth and luxury. The colouring process itself required extra time and labour, as Cohen describes: 'Leech had indicated on a master print the shades he desired. Then a copyist, working from prepared tints, had colored each object separately and uniformly [...] The hand-painting by others [...]

⁵⁸ Hogarth, p. 34.

⁵⁹ Dickens, *Preface*, p.8.

accounted for a disproportionately high proportion of the total expense”.⁶¹ Percy Muir gives the details of such cost more specifically, noting the fantastical nature of Dickens’s budget: ‘[H]is [...] experiments with various colourings for the end-papers and title-page and the hand-colouring of the plates (£120 for the first and £140 for the second [...]) ran away with the money’.⁶² Considering that Bob Cratchit’s weekly wage (fifteen shillings) does not even rise to a pound, it is not surprising that he never appears in colour. Black-and-white illustrations were far cheaper and far more accessible; they also had the advantage of being made from wood-blocks which could then be sold again and recycled by the penny press ⁶³—perhaps the publishing equivalent of the pawnbroker’s shop with which the Cratchits are all too familiar. Graphically, Scrooge moves from inaccessible expense to common cheapness: he begins in colour and ends in black-and-white, sharing a drink with Bob Cratchit.



Figure 8 John Leech, Detail from *Marley's Ghost*

⁶⁰ Anonymous, ‘Court of King’s Bench, January 14’, *The Morning Chronicle*, 15 January, 1824.

⁶¹ Cohen, p. 143.

⁶² Percy Muir, *Victorian Illustrated Books* (New York: Praeger, 1971), p. 93.

⁶³ Muir, p. 19.

The audience first sees Scrooge in appropriately luxurious colour. In Stave One, the illustration shows him receiving Marley's ghost in a bright pink chair (figure 8). He sits by a fireplace which is a rosy brown; its small golden flames glow against the darkened room. Scrooge's blue stockings contrast with his yellowy-brown slippers, and even his narrow, scowling face contains nuances of colour, varying between pale and rosy pink (the tip of his nose suggests a slight cold). However, all this bright colour contrasts with the stark whiteness of his nightgown,



Figure 9 John Leech, Detail
from *Scrooge*
extinguishes the First of
the Three Spirits

which links him to Marley's ghostly paleness. This paleness stands up markedly against the shadowed corner in which he stands, emphasising his location in death. The graphic connection with Marley underlines the warning that Marley gives. Marley's ghostly status, he says, comes because his greedy actions have loaded him with a punitive chain that weighs him down in death, and Scrooge has been similarly greedy: "I wear the chain I forged in life [...] [W]ould you know," pursued the Ghost, "the weight and length of the strong coil you bear yourself? It was full as heavy and as long as this, seven Christmas Eves ago. You have laboured on it, since. It is a ponderous chain!" (48) The effect of Scrooge's white body against the colourful surroundings suggests an inner poverty amidst all his wealth. Such poverty is emphasised by the next illustration, which shows Scrooge extinguishing the Ghost of Christmas Past (figure 9). The light from the Ghost shows both



Figure 10 John Leech, Detail from *The Second of The Three Spirits*

the whiteness of Scrooge's nightgown – his connection with Marley – and the grip of the surrounding shadows on Scrooge, predicting his possible death. The next picture brings Scrooge face to face with an alternative version of wealth: prosperity based in a wealth of spirit. The Spirit of Christmas Present has taken over Scrooge's hearth and his bright green robe spills over onto the vivid piles of enticing food which surround him (figure 10). His body, cheeks and smile glow as generously as the torch he carries. In comparison to all this, the grim and white-robed Scrooge appears a ghostly imitation of wealth; this appearance is emphasised by the fact that he stands in Marley's position (on the edge of the room, near the door).



Figure 11 John Leech, Detail from *Ignorance and Want*

This transrealist combination of contrasts dramatises the harshness of Scrooge's reaction to the Spirit's generosity in the text. Scrooge initially excludes himself from the Spirit's celebratory atmosphere on learning that the Spirit has 'eighteen hundred brothers' (74). Despite the evidence of liberality before him, he momentarily dismisses the Spirit in Malthusian terms as having 'a tremendous family to provide for' (74). He then relents and allows the Spirit to introduce him to contemporary Christmas celebrations. The next picture suggests that the Spirit is an ideal of wealth, not a reality. The Spirit's body fades into the night air beside the figures of Ignorance and Want (figure 11). Against his shadowy figure, Scrooge, Ignorance and Want share a similar clarity. The text emphasises links between Scrooge and the two suffering children through the fading Spirit's conversation with Scrooge. "'They are Man's' explains the Spirit, and when the shocked Scrooge asks whether they have any 'refuge or resource', the Spirit reminds him of his earlier dismissal of two philanthropists: "'Are there no prisons,' said the Spirit, turning on him for the last time with his own words. 'Are there no workhouses'" (94). Scrooge's marginal position in relation to Christmas Present and his proximity to the emaciated children dramatises the Spirit's point that the existence of Ignorance and Want is the fault of Scrooge (and others with similar views). However, it is not enough for Scrooge to become aware of the existence of Ignorance and Want. His conversion occurs when he recognises Ignorance and Want in himself.

The following picture shows Scrooge at his gravestone, escorted by the Ghost of Christmas Yet To Come. It illustrates a scene in the text in which Scrooge, horrified by the news of his imminent death, collapses in repentance: "'I am not the man I was. I will not be the man I must have been but for this intercourse'"(108). The details of the illustration recall the neglected emaciation of Ignorance and Want

and point the audience past the graveyard scene to an earlier scene when Scrooge discovers a dead man in desperate want of affection. An opportunistic group gathers to pick over his corpse and possessions; one of the group comments, ‘He frightened every one away from him when he was alive, to profit us when he was dead! Ha, ha, ha!’ The dead man lies ‘beneath a ragged sheet’; it is ‘plundered and bereft, unwatched, unwept, uncared for’ (102). The kneeling Scrooge is similarly neglected and ragged: one blue stocking has gone, leaving a bare knee sticking out from a torn nightgown (figure 12). His white figure blends with the headstone that both reveals and destroys his ignorance of his emotional poverty.



Figure 12 John Leech,
Detail from *The Last
of the Spirits*

Scrooge’s ragged, transrealist moment of simultaneous conversion and identification links him with some of the more scandalous aspects in the contemporary reports of children’s employment conditions.

Dickens had read the Children’s Employment Commission of 1842, which detailed horrific working conditions of children and inspired him to attack such issues with a ‘Sledgehammer’.⁶⁴ Peter Kirby argues that one emotive aspect of such working conditions was that of ragged or no dress; despite a questionable basis in reality, such items stirred a public outcry and helped the campaign progress: ‘In

moving the bill for the prohibition of women and children from coal mines, Lord Ashley could state confidently that children and young female coal miners commonly worked naked in coalmines.⁶⁵ While Scrooge's own ragged state is less scandalous, it forms an emotive context to emphasise the progress of his own conversion. For both Scrooge and Smike, social acceptance comes when they achieve a pathetic context, sympathetic or empathetic, but this context depends upon an audience educated in both text and illustration. The emotional progression of their respective illustrations mirrors contemporary methods of social challenge; the transrealist fluctuation in the quality of accumulated manipulations of colour and of line suggest both the potential and the questionable nature of emotive campaigns.

Anti-Fairy Tale Structures: Disability as a Point of Debate

Having explored how haunted images of social death and social separation in Dickens's texts present a critical combination of disjunctions around social exclusion, I shall now discuss how interpreting disabled characters within this critical context emphasises resonances of challenge and debate through a transrealist combination of plot disjunctions. The emotive qualities of Smike and Tiny Tim provide a critical example of the consequences of a society in need of reform. These two characters possess limps (and Smike has a vaguely defined cognitive impairment as well) which are evoked in pathetic detail and because of this, various critics cast them as clichés of disability. Although he acknowledges their place in an overall stratagem of using disability to symbolise social problems Stanley Wainapel

⁶⁴ 'Charles Dickens to Dr Southwood Smith, 10 March 1843' in *The Letters of Charles Dickens, Volume III 1842-1843*, 461.

⁶⁵ Peter Kirby, 'Child labour, public decency and the iconography of the Children's Employment Commission of 1842' *Manchester Papers in Economic and Social History*, 62 (2007), p. 2.

terms them ‘angelic cripples’ and ‘one-dimensional, faceless figures’.⁶⁶ Rosemarie Garland Thomson, in her valuable examination of disability in American culture and literature, poses Tiny Tim as an example of the problems involved in literary representations of disability. She comments that literary representations falsify real social dynamics, because the disabled figure must remain excluded: ‘The plot or the work’s rhetorical potential usually benefits from the disabled figure remaining other to the reader – identifiably human but resolutely different’. She cites Tiny Tim as an example, asking, ‘What would happen to the pure pity generated for Tiny Tim if he were portrayed as sometimes naughty, like a “normal” child? Thus the rhetorical function of the highly charged trait fixes relations between disabled figures and their readers’.⁶⁷ As explored earlier, Smike first enters the narrative as an uncanny drudge, a stumbling man-child: ‘He was lame; and as he feigned to be busy in arranging the table, glanced at the letters with a look so keen, and yet so dispirited and hopeless, that Nicholas could hardly bear to watch him’ (89).

Tiny Tim’s movements are more confined, as the text of *Carol* comments, sadly: ‘Alas for Tiny Tim, he bore a little crutch, and had his limbs supported by an iron frame!’ (79).

Both texts collect the transformational qualities of fairy tales with the ‘otherness’ of ghost story tropes to explore the emotional complexities of Smike and Tiny Tim outside a dynamic of social utilitarianism, a nuance which has been missed by several critics who have commented on his use of fairy tales. Richard Hannaford notes the picaresque quality of *Nickleby*, emphasising its possession of a quest

⁶⁶ Stanley F. Wainapel, ‘Dickens and Disability’ *Disability and Rehabilitation*, 18 (1996), 629-632 (p. 630).

motif.⁶⁸ However, his discussion of these qualities mainly focuses on Nicholas in the context of quests, presenting him as a ‘passive fairy-tale hero’, with a search for fame and fortune, and with a reward of a princess. He does not examine Smike in the context of Nicholas’s quest. Ostry identifies Smike as being an ‘outcast child’, which represents an ancient romantic motif. Ostry comments that this motif can be used to comment on society: ‘[This motif] fits the romantic agenda of the child whose natural purity contrasts with the corrupt society. The child stands for nature whereas the wilderness it is thrown into is an urban jungle with all of the negative attributes of an industrial society’.⁶⁹ She sees Smike as pursuing an ultimately doomed quest for a home: ‘Smike [is an example of] children who have been so damaged by their cruel environments that they will never be able to function, and so die [...]The “outcast child” searches for a home in which the vulnerability of the child can be protected’.⁷⁰ Yet Ostry, casting Smike merely as a damaged, doomed child, does not reflect on the relationship between Smike and Nicholas, whereas Robert Patten sees them as a ‘rewriting of the traditional “buddy” relationship between two travellers’.⁷¹ Harry Stone discusses *Nickleby* together with *A Christmas Carol*, assessing the two texts in terms of their ability to combine fairytale tradition with contemporary social reality. In terms of *Nickleby*, Stone particularly focuses on the Cheeryble brothers as fairy godfathers (noting that Dickens decided to ‘authenticate’ the Cheerybles as being drawn from real people and was then flooded with requests for help to be passed on to the ‘Cheerybles’; he also views the fairy-

⁶⁷ Rosemarie Garland Thomson, *Extraordinary bodies: figuring physical disability in American culture and literature* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997), pp. 11-12.

⁶⁸ Richard Hannaford, ‘Fairy Tale-Fantasy in *Nicholas Nickleby*’, *Criticism* 16 (1974), 247-259 (p. 251).

⁶⁹ Ostry, p. 148.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

⁷¹ Robert L. Patten, “Sketches to *Nickleby*” in *A Cambridge Companion to Charles Dickens*, ed. by John O. Jordan (Cambridge: CUP, 2001), pp. 16-33 (p. 27).

tale structure of *Nickleby* as contrasting with ‘the page-by-page texture of the novel’. Stone states this structure ‘rarely deepens vision or meaning’.⁷² He feels that *Carol* is much more successful; while inspired by contemporary debates, it suggests rather than authenticates any connection to these issues.⁷³ Both critics, however, ignore Smike’s role in *Nickleby*’s fairy tale structure, and consequently ignore the possibilities that this structure offers to ‘deepen’ the ‘vision’ and ‘meaning’ of Smike’s character. I feel that examining ambivalent resonances behind fairy tale motifs within the texts deepens the interrogative context of Smike and Tiny Tim, creating the beginnings of a transrealist ‘passionate non-compliance’.

Fairy tales foreground typification: the very term conjures questing heroes, unattainable princesses, and happy endings, as Derek Brewer notes.⁷⁴ Consequently, allusions to these motifs within narratives call attention to processes of categorization. Fairy tales contain traditions of transformed bodies which are marginalized within their societies, some of which are evident in the fairy tale collections enjoyed by the young Dickens (the Grimms’ *Household Tales* (English translations 1823-1826), upon which I shall focus; these transformed bodies are often a source of wise, even slightly angelic, counsel, but also suffer painful experiences of disability, as Beth Franks discusses in her examination of Grimms’ tales and disability in the context of the classroom. Interpretations of these characters can be difficult to determine in a wider focus; while Franks herself determined that the representations of disabled characters were positive, her students

⁷² Stone, *Dickens and the Invisible World*, pp. 83-84

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ Derek Brewer, ‘The Interpretation of Fairy Tales’ in *A Companion to the Fairy Tale*, ed. by Hilda Ellis Davidson and Anna Chaudhri (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2003), pp. 15-37 (p. 15).

remembered them as being negative.⁷⁵ Vivian S. Yenika-Agbaw brings together critical disability theory with theories of narrativity to examine experiences of disability within Hans Christian Andersen's fairy tales ('The Little Mermaid', with her lost voice, for example), arguing that levels of action in these tales specifically reflect on the social difficulties and potential empowerment of marginalized characters with disabilities:

The characters in these tales are not passive victims; rather, in different ways, they make conscious decisions about their lives and must live with the consequences of their actions, like the little mermaid. Alternatively, they use whatever resources they find in their environment, or their talents/skills, to liberate themselves.⁷⁶

I would add to this by noting the arbitrary nature of the marginalized experience in fairy tales. In the Grimms' 'The Golden Bird', a dependably wise wolf guides the hero (who, unlike his suspicious brothers, trusts the wolf); at the end, the wolf is mutilated, allowing him to transform into the heroine's brother.⁷⁷ These tales involve a context where physical transformation and marginalized bodies are both relational and an ever-present possibility: anyone can give birth to a changeling; a mutilated wolf can suddenly turn out to be a family member. Combining elements of this tradition with the ghost story tropes explored above within the *Nickleby* and *Carol* texts, I argue, propels a deeper exploration of the transrealist collections of disjunctions in representations of 'angelic cripples' like Smike and Tiny Tim by evoking a social context of anxious physical transformation in which all levels partake.

⁷⁵ Beth Franks, "Gutting The Golden Goose: Disability In Grimms' Fairy Tales" in *Embodied Rhetorics: Disability in Language and Culture*, ed. by James C. Wilson and Cynthia Lewiecki-Wilson (Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois UP, 2002), pp. 244-258.

⁷⁶ Vivian S. Yenika-Agbaw, "Reading Disability In Children's Literature: Hans Christian Andersen's Tales" *Journal Of Literary And Cultural Disability Studies* 5.1 (2011), 91-107 (p.98)

⁷⁷ Jolles, *Einfache Formen*, p.242.

The anti-fairy tale, as defined by André Jolles, emphasises resonances of ‘separation and death’ (see above). Çizakça further clarifies the critical potential of the anti-fairy tale dynamic, observing that in anti-fairy tales ‘what is in the dark and in the periphery is highlighted, the foreign grows into the centre.’⁷⁸ Reading Smike and Tiny Tim by joining fairy tale dynamics of transformation and arbitrary marginalization alongside socially challenging otherness evoked by the ghost story tropes highlights, in a transrealist manner, the social peripheral experience of these characters, and pulls it into the centre. For example, Holmes views Tiny Tim’s emotional context as a mere springboard to encourage sympathy for Scrooge: ‘The emotional landscape of Tim’s disability [...] tends to obscure other questions we might have about it [...] We know – and only need to know – that Scrooge’s Malthusian, emotionally closed stance toward poverty is the cause’.⁷⁹ However, she ignores the potential of the fantastic to draw out Tiny Tim’s experience of exclusion from the wider context of Scrooge’s developing sympathy. Links between Tiny Tim and Scrooge shed light on Tim as well as on Scrooge: Scrooge’s haunting by a troubling context of childhood isolation (as detailed above) which challenges readings of Tim’s experience. What might be the outcome of Tiny Tim’s own experience of isolation? Similarly, although Holmes observes that, ‘[t]he character Smike in *Nicholas Nickleby* presents a somewhat more complicated example and suggests the demographics of sympathy’s breakdown,’”⁸⁰ examining Smike’s (failed) pursuit of a ‘happy ending’ following observations of the widowed Mrs Nickleby’s social ghosting due to the loss of marital (and implicit) sexual status,

⁷⁸ Çizakça, p.255

⁷⁹ Holmes, p. 97.

⁸⁰ Ibid., p. 97.

emphasises that 'sympathy's breakdown' affects both 'disabled' and non-disabled people.

Investigating patterns of anti-fairy tale in Smike's trajectory emphasises both the expectations of heroism indicated by his embodiment of fairy tale heroism and his failure at an ultimate fulfilment of this heroism due to his social otherness, providing a critical exploration of the barriers which surround him. As Ostry notes, Smike's quest for fortune involves a home and kindness, rather than financial success, as rainbow gold. Smike knows that Nicholas's appearance and subsequent departure is his only way out of the drudgery that is Dotheboys Hall, and is his only chance at something approaching kindness. However, Smike's character is more complex than merely that of a wronged child – as Patten notes, he offers Nicholas much needed friendship and support, as well as receiving Nicholas's kindness and protection. Smike is always hovering on – or beyond – the edge of exclusion, and his doomed quest explores the painful nature of this experience. His journey and relationship with Nicholas means that he becomes more than just a drudge. To Nicholas, Smike is 'his only comfort and stay' since they are 'poor together' (251); however, although he presents Smike to Kate as 'faithful friend and affectionate fellow-traveller', he still thinks of him as 'poor fellow' and 'poor boy' and he is aware that both Smike and any new acquaintances may need special preparation for each other (422-4). Smike can never truly be Nicholas's equal. However, like Nicholas, he also embodies elements of a fairy-tale hero: he embodies both the 'hero-fool' type and the bewitched/enspelled hero type that Vladimir Propp discusses.⁸¹ This embodiment, when combined with the manner of his death, offers a new, alternative interpretation of heroism. In fact, rather than being a fairy-tale hero,

Smike can be seen as an anti-fairy tale hero. As such a hero, he champions a wider discourse of social criticism through his excluded role. In the narrative, Smike's death is his happy ending: it is acknowledged as the natural outcome to his status as an outcast, which he can never completely transcend. This trajectory shadows Nicholas's journey to fortune and security, presenting a context to criticize the naturalness of Nicholas's conventional happy ending. However, Smike's resonances of critique do not merely shadow Nicholas; they also reflect on his own experience.

The structure of Smike's journey from drudge to death evokes questions about the causes and consequences of his exclusion. He can never escape the effects of Dotheboys Hall; his experiences there have damaged him irreversibly, as he explains in a discussion with Nicholas: "I could remember, when I was a child [...] but that is very, very long ago, or at least it seems so. I was always confused and giddy at that place you took me from; and could never remember, and sometimes couldn't even understand, what they said to me" (267). The lasting nature of his condition serves to underline the social evil of the Hall, in a deeper, transrealist density than the scenes featuring masses of deprived, unhappy children, because the reader sees that the horror of Squeers's regime continues, despite any escape.

However, Dotheboys Hall is not the only cause of Smike's death. The ill effects of the Hall are compounded by Smike's impossible love for Kate. Smike knows he is a social outcast: "[H]ere there are none like me. I am a poor creature, but I know that" (423), and because of this, he knows that he can never win the hand of Kate, his unattainable princess. His love for her consumes him: 'Nicholas learnt, for the first time, that the dying boy, with all the ardour of a nature concentrated on one absorbing, hopeless, secret passion, loved his sister Kate' (716-7). After long

⁸¹ Vladimir Propp, *The Morphology of the Folk-Tale* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1968), p.8

years of exclusion and drudgery, any experience of love can only be blown out of proportion. Since Smike never knew his mother, Kate is sister, mother, and beloved, all in one, so it is hardly surprising that he concentrates all his nature on an absorbing passion for her. Considering this, it is natural that he plunges into fatal melancholy when Kate and Frank Cheeryble fall in love and his hopelessness is confirmed: 'I could not help it, but though I would have died to make her happy, it broke my heart to see—I know he loves her dearly—Oh! who could find that out so soon as I?' (716-7). Smike's passion and consequent death trouble the otherwise idealistic portrait of a morally upright family, as not even the happy little country home, which provides solace for everyone else, can save Smike. His love also troubles the category of holy innocent and outcast child, partly because it suggests that those with disabilities or deformities have romantic urges, but also because it makes him somewhat transgressive. His affection for Kate and the death following from it unsettle the reader. Smike dies in part because he falls into a decline because of his unattainable and impossible love, and also because this makes him realise how much he is excluded from society. His death is pathetic and the reader can mourn him.

But there is also a sense of relief that Kate will not marry him, because he is not an appropriate person for her to marry – just as improper, though for different reasons, as is the would-be rapist Mulberry Hawke. Marchbanks observes that 'Smike just does not count as a card-carrying member of this romantically inclined community which [...] plump[s] itself with [...] happy marriages [...] [T]he reader [is] made to feel that [his] [...] removal is not only appropriately touching, but

necessary'.⁸² However, Smike's death does not eliminate him from the narrative: his memory lingers to haunt the final showdown with Ralph (as the subject of accusations) and the novel ends with Kate's and Nicholas's children around Smike's grave (777). Holmes discusses Smike's absence from ultimate social integration (specifically, employment and marriage to Kate) as a marker for wider problems, seeing this lack as 'the homosocial bond's failure between Nicholas and Smike'.⁸³ She notes that 'Smike inhabits the closing lines of the book, when a group of happy, healthy, and loved children come to weep at his grave' yet sees this as immaterial because 'there is no "bildung" for boys like Smike'.⁸⁴ However, the extra knowledge of Smike's parentage and childhood does provide something of this missing 'bildung' or development narrative for him, giving Smike a social place as Nicholas's cousin and Ralph's missing son, and casting Smike as the heroic survivor of imprisonment and kidnapping. By restoring Smike to his birthright as a member of the Nickleby family, the narrative draws the uncomfortable question of just *why* Smike should not marry Kate from beneath the sense that her marriage with Frank is more appropriate. Smike's death draws the narrative from complete resolution, and therefore, from the successful ending that Propp sees typified in fairy issue-tales as the completion of a difficult task, leading to recognition, exposure, transfiguration, punishment of a villain, and a wedding.⁸⁵ Though Smike does not achieve ultimate resolution, transrealist combinations of both inclusion *and* exclusion in his death subverts Tolkien's 'consolation of the fairy tale', acknowledging that resolution is not possible for everyone, and certainly not for the socially excluded.

⁸² Marchbanks, p. 10.

⁸³ Holmes, p. 98.

⁸⁴ Holmes, pp. 98-99.

⁸⁵ Propp, p.126

In comparison with Smike, Tiny Tim has a much more certain place in his immediate family. He only has one disability to contend with and his family look upon him as something of a holy and wise innocent. Ostry sees Tiny Tim as an example of the Christ Child type, which she defines as ‘utter poverty’ [...] united with “highest kingship”.⁸⁶ This comparison also highlights Tiny Tim’s links to contemporary clichés of disability as outlined by Davidson et al. Ostry suggests that these connotations further an element of contemporary social criticism as this comparison gives ‘dignity to the contemporary poor child [...] [and] show[s], with images of monstrous degradation, the fragility of this state. Tiny Tim is the poor child whose life depends on the generosity of his father’s employer’.⁸⁷ This dependency highlights the uncertain status of a poor child with a disability. Tiny Tim’s thoughtful meditations on his condition and on the religious qualities of the season certainly move his family to respect and to pious reflection, as can be seen in the anecdote that his father recounts, in tremulous tones: ‘He told me [...] that he hoped the people saw him in the church, because he was a cripple, and it might be pleasant to them to remember upon Christmas Day, who made lame beggars walk, and blind men see’ (80). However, a throwaway remark about the source of Tiny Tim’s remarks shows this thoughtfulness to be a by-product of a lonely condition: ‘Somehow he gets thoughtful, *sitting by himself so much*, and thinks the strangest things you ever heard’ (80) [emphasis mine]. By underlining the isolation of Tim’s experience, the text suggests that Ostry’s ‘holy and wise innocent’ may be using religious reflection to comfort his own difficulties; this then prompts the question of what these difficulties might be, creating a transrealist combination of

⁸⁶ Ostry, p. 168.

⁸⁷ Ibid.

disjunctions: socially critical isolation beneath the angelic cripple. A comparison with Smike shows the necessity of inquiring beneath Tim's words. Like Tiny Tim, Smike has moments of loneliness and reflection. Although the reader can see that these moments coincide with the beginning of Kate's romance with Frank Cheeryble and thus the end of Smike's hopes of marrying Kate, the rest of the Nickleby family is bewildered by his behaviour: Mrs Nickleby comments that '[H]e must have sat moping in the dark all the time [...] [T]hat's very extraordinary' (605). When Nicholas and Kate ask him about this isolation, using Nicholas' 'kindest manner', Smike refuses to tell them. But the narrative suggests a deeper source of Smike's melancholy than disappointed love: Smike 'glanc[es] for a moment at the brother and sister as they stood together, as if there were something in their strong affection which touched him very deeply' (615). While Smike is a loved member of his family circle, his condition means he will never have the type of equal and affectionate partnership that Nicholas and Kate share, let alone romance; interaction with Smike requires a special – and isolating – kindness. Read beside Smike's lonely grief, the description of Tiny Tim reveals a similar type of isolating kindness in those who surround him: Bob speaks about him in 'tremulous tones' and comments that he thinks 'the strangest things you ever heard' (80). These isolating words interrogate Tiny Tim's experience: what, precisely, would it be like to live with people who thought you said 'the strangest things'?

The text's fantastic structure, featuring an uncertain timeframe, prompts more questions about Tiny Tim: this time, about his future. Stephen Prickett notes that the story hinges on the problem of whether Scrooge's 'conversion is possible'; the psychological credibility, the strength of the tale, 'is only made possible by the technique of fantasy [...] the disjunction of time between ghostly appearance and

realistic events'.⁸⁸ Stone similarly commends the power of the fairy tale structure. He terms this an 'arbitrary fairy-tale wrenching [that allows Dickens to] show misery and horror and yet do so in a context of joyful affirmation'.⁸⁹ Prickett and Stone explore the structure's effect on Scrooge, but do not explore the consequences of this structure on Tiny Tim's character. As Ostry indicates, Tiny Tim's continued existence depends on Scrooge's generosity, and therefore on his conversion. The uncertain timeframe allows the reader to dramatize Tiny Tim's death, and to see the death of a poor child (with a 'deformity') in the context of a loving family who will miss him, rather than taking place in a workhouse. The fantastic structure is also an indication of just how unlikely Scrooge's conversion and Tiny Tim's recovery actually is, as it underlines that such events often belong in the realm of fantasy, no matter how opportune they would be in everyday life.

However, by suggesting the possibility of change, *Carol's* fantastic structure means that Tiny Tim transcends the contemporary cliché of a disabled child who dies, suffering angelically, in order to teach the virtues of patience and resignation. This transrealist combination of isolation and fluctuation time in *Carol* dramatizes the possibility of remediation and spurs its readers to view Tiny Tim as a 'disabled' child whose patience and resignation, rather than being underlined by his death, become a way to manage his impairment. Although it is didactic in its way, it retains an element of uncertainty, allowing the readers to consider all the possible ramifications of the events and resolution. Tiny Tim, like Smike, dramatizes the emotional reality of people with disabilities, depicting them as navigating their surrounding circle, rather than merely deformed. If the reader is already wondering

⁸⁸ Stephen Prickett, *Victorian Fantasy* (Waco: Baylor University Press, 2005), pp. 60-61.

⁸⁹ Stone, p. 120.

who will be invited to the happy ending, then Dickens's inclusive instruction that 'Tiny Tim did *not* die' becomes particularly noticeable – and so recalls earlier scenes of Tim's isolation.

The inclusion of the questions of disability at the end of the narratives differs from contemporary depictions of disability. Dinah Mulock Craik's *Olive* (1850) finds her deformed back means she suffers much distaste and condescension from others and cannot take her place in the 'marriage market' but by the end of the novel, she is a happy wife and mother and has received not one, but two, proposals of marriage. Eliot's *Silas Marner* (1861) involves an eponymous hero who appears to suffer from cataleptic fits. At the beginning of the novel, Silas Marner's fiancée tries at first to fight her fear of his condition, but then abandons him after a supposed friend exploits the condition to frame him for theft. Silas's ensuing bitterness proves to be more disabling than his catalepsy and he eventually finds contentment through his relationship with his adopted daughter. However, neither Silas's catalepsy nor Olive's back receives much mention at the conclusion of these novels, suggesting that an everyday life of disability is not part of a happy ending. As they retain Smike's and Tiny Tim's disabilities at their endings, happy or otherwise, Dickens's texts extend discussions on disability throughout the novel.

By deviating from contemporary literary norms, *Nicholas Nickleby* and *A Christmas Carol* open an imaginative space for exploring social impairment beyond specific literary and medical discourses, suggesting glimpses of the economic and psychological barriers surrounding individuals with impairments without being confined to difficulties of terminology. Through the subversion of the fairy tale, the texts highlight gaps in social constructions of inclusion, allowing readers the opportunity to re-imagine the complexities of 'disabled' characters. In this reading,

'angelic cripples' such as Smike and Tiny Tim become more than tools for cultural commentary: they offer a commentary on experiences of disability, transcending moral didacticism to demonstrate strategies of managing social exclusion. The transrealist interplay of fantastic tropes emphasises troubling emotional experiences of exclusion in a nineteenth-century social context. The emphasis of these troubling experiences consequently interrogates the barriers this exclusion creates across a social spectrum.

Chapter Three: George Eliot and Intersections of Other Worlds

Sometimes termed a proto-science fiction story, *The Lifted Veil* (1859) is in many ways a transrealist text – the protagonist’s emotional entrapment by his visions of the future parallels his emotional experience of social entrapment by class and marriage. Yet its bleak narrative holds little hope of transformation: even the (artificially induced) renewal of life produces reinforced hatred as Mrs Archer arises from her deathbed to accuse Bertha of plotting to murder her husband, Latimer. However, the transformative potential in its dramatization of social dissonance through the use of cognitive estrangement can be understood by examining transrealist connections of thematic dissonance and tropes of ‘other’ worlds between the *Lifted Veil* and Eliot’s later novel, *Daniel Deronda* (1876). Tracing the intertextual fantastic underlined by moments of cognitive estrangement in *Daniel Deronda* demonstrates how the exploration of gender, professional and communal dissonance can refine problematic education. Comparisons to *The Lifted Veil*,¹ which problematizes formational experiences through its conjunction of past and future, highlight the transformative process of education in *Daniel Deronda* [henceforth *Deronda*].²

Deronda has inspired much valuable critical investigation into its use of scientific imagery to explore social estrangement. Gillian Beer describes it as ‘a novel haunted by the future’ in her examination of the novel’s concerns about the shifting identity of the human race, particularly in the context of Charles Darwin’s *The Origins of the Species* (1859) and *The Descent of Man* (1871). Beer comments

¹ George Eliot, *The Lifted Veil and Brother Jacob*, ed. by Helen Small (Oxford: OUP, 1999).

² George Eliot, *Daniel Deronda*, ed. by Terence Cave (London: Penguin, 1995).

that ‘descent and extension are [...] ordering principles’ and identifies ‘descent, development, and race’ and ‘sexual selection and the socio-economic elements in genetics’ as being ‘part of the book’s polemic’.³ While Beer notes how Eliot’s narrativity extends such scientific explorations, she does not examine in detail the speculations caused by the conjunction of science and fiction: I suggest that Eliot couches her inquiries in literary traditions of speculation which problematize social change through spaces of estrangement in the narrative. Martin Willis, in an examination of the interaction of science fiction and science, praises Beer’s valuable exploration of literature as a point of exchange between Darwin and Victorian writers such as Eliot, but reflects that such points of exchange could be seen as sites of change as well.⁴ I will argue that the possibility of change is reflected in processes of using astronomical language to explore the marvellous, suggesting an experience of wonder, which then becomes both a point of curiosity and doubt. This trope appears in the beginning epigraph: ‘Even science, the strict measurer, is obliged to start with a make-believe unit, and must fix on a point in the stars’ unceasing journey when his sidereal clock shall pretend that time is at Nought’(7). ‘The stars’ unceasing journey’ becomes a metaphor for constructions of time, underlining Eliot’s subsequent observation that the faculty of the imagination links poetry and science: there are elements of uncertainty – as the scientist must ‘make-believe’ and ‘pretend that time is at nought’ – in both disciplines. Immediately afterwards, Eliot then dramatizes an ambiguous social power through Daniel’s questions regarding Gwendolen Harleth. Unable to decide whether she is beautiful or not, she causes him inner uncertainty as her effect is ‘that of unrest rather than charm’ and she

³ Gillian Beer, *Darwin’s Plots* (Cambridge: CUP, 2009), p. 169 and p. 170.

⁴ Martin Willis, *Mesmerists, Monsters, and Machines: Science Fiction and the Cultures of Science in the Nineteenth-Century* (Kent, Ohio: Kent State University Press, 2006), p. 22.

propels a 'wish to look again' which he feels as 'coercion'. In this moment, he, like Gwendolen in her astronomy lessons, is estranged from himself as he is forced to look at Gwendolen despite inner counsel: however, this inner chaos produces a transrealist effect through the transformative process of inquiry and reflection it inspires.

Sally Shuttleworth notes the resonances of exploring the unknown evoked by the use of astronomical imagery: 'For men, as for planets, neither origins nor history can be fully known; the comfort of certainty must be exchanged for an openness to the unknown'.⁵ Shuttleworth's idea of an openness to the unknown in discussing constructions of society as an organism and any consequent contradictions, exemplified by the psychological complexity of Gwendolen and by Mordecai's politically rousing prophecies. However, she does not explore the resonances of contemporary cultural use of astronomical imagery to textual patterns of scientific investigation. Neither does she explore how references to more esoteric investigations might widen the social horizons of the text. The combination of estrangement and imaginative interplay in both texts suggests Darko Suvin's ideas on cognitive estrangement and genre. Estrangement, Suvin says, is 'one of confronting a set normative system [...] with a point of view [...] implying a new set of norms'.⁶ He suggests that the use of 'cognitiveness' or 'cognition' implies 'not only a reflecting *of* but also *on* reality. It implies a creative approach tending toward a dynamic transformation rather than toward a static mirroring of the author's environment'.⁷ The two together operate as a social critique, he argues, and within

⁵ Sally Shuttleworth, *George Eliot and Nineteenth-Century Science* (Cambridge: CUP, 1984), p. 176.

⁶ Darko Suvin, *Metamorphoses of Science Fiction* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1979), p. 6.

⁷ Suvin, p. 10.

‘an imaginative framework alternative to the author’s empirical environment,’ they form the literary genre of science fiction (or SF).⁸

The resonances of exploring moments of estrangement within the text can be clarified usefully by a comparison with *Veil*, which foregrounds an investigation into esoteric estrangement using observation, measurement and analysis – this text also recollects Dante’s explorations in its preoccupation with death and progress into the afterlife. *Veil* tells the story of Latimer’s attempts to understand and negotiate his clairvoyancy or ‘double consciousness’: an ability to see into the future and into the thoughts of other people. Latimer’s hope of death as a means of escape immediately suggests an experience of estrangement.⁹ His mysterious condition of double consciousness, which has been ascribed to contemporary practices of mesmerism,¹⁰ builds to a shared experience of cognitive dissonance when an attempt at blood transfusion in a dead woman reanimates the corpse in time to accuse Latimer’s wife of plotting murder. While most of the narrative focuses on Latimer’s interpretations, this scene reverberates across interpretations of other characters as well. By combining a medical experiment in blood transfusion¹¹ with suggestions of otherworldly justice, this scene foregrounds a transrealist experience of using the fantastic to meditate upon emotional reactions to life experiences. My analysis will explore the effects of this scene on the interpretations of three different characters, using the cognitive estrangement which this scene bestows upon Bertha, Charles Meunier, and Latimer to explore how their educational experiences both effect and affect their social estrangement.

⁸ Suvin, p. 8.

⁹ George Eliot, *The Lifted Veil* and *Brother Jacob*, p. 3. References henceforth given in text.

¹⁰ See Kate Flint, ‘Blood, Bodies and *The Lifted Veil*’, *Nineteenth-Century Literature*, 51.4 (1997), 455-473.

¹¹ A reprinting in 1879 included an illustration of this transfusion scene, foregrounding a medical context of social estrangement and physiological speculation. See H.É. Blanchon, *La Transfusion du sang* (1870).

I suggest that some of the dynamics noted by Suvin of estrangement and cognition forming a social critique provide a useful context for how dissonant characters – or those who experience estrangement – function in a wider social network to speculate upon the possibility of new social norms. In Eliot’s texts, the accompaniment of esoteric references (astronomical-metaphysical in *Deronda*; unnatural sight and life in *Veil*) to experiences of estrangement, raises explores difficulties around educational development through this transrealist combination of esoteric references and cognitive estrangement. For example, Gwendolen Harleth’s troubling schoolroom experience of astronomy evokes contemporary discourse on the higher education of women which argue the importance of astronomy because it ‘kindle[s] in man the spirit of inquiry’.¹² References to Dante’s *Divine Comedy* – itself an extended investigation, although into the afterlife – pull at the social borders of nineteenth-century England: complications of social dissonance in the novel can be understood through the imagery of investigating other worlds.

Eliot’s deployment of intertextuality in *Deronda* presents experiences of imaginative inquiry across genre (contemporary fiction, history, epic) and narrative level (narrator, character, reader), developing a transrealist process of deepening intellectual and emotional understanding through disjunctive (at first) meetings of worlds. Terming this intertextual process ‘a multi-layered system of reference which allows her –and her characters and readers – to move to and from between empirical everyday experience and what is in effect an allegorical plot’, Terence Cave argues that ‘Virtually every cultural reference in the novel contributes to the network of reverberations that move outwards from the literal plane of the action and integrate it

¹² Emily Shirreff, *Intellectual education, and its influence on the character and happiness of women* (London: John Parker, 1858), p. 59.

into that wider “world-historical” continuum of which it is a fragment’.¹³ Cave interprets this allegorical system of reference as detailing Daniel’s journey to becoming a Jewish leader.¹⁴ I feel he fails to notice the non-allegorical moments in these intertextual patterns – the moments of cognitive estrangement. Tracing these patterns of cognitive estrangement highlighted by the intertextual references to Dante and the *Arabian Nights* reveals an educational process of transforming narrow knowledge to multifaceted understanding. The intertextual fantastic in *Deronda* dramatizes connections to an educational navigation through linking astronomical imagery to imaginative inquiry. What Kristeva terms ‘a transgressive intersection of textual surfaces’¹⁵ becomes an illumination of character intersections: dissonant moments of the fantastic, signposted by references to stargazing, highlight a transrealist process in characters of transforming estrangement.

In both the *Comedy* and the *Arabian Nights*, the known and the other overlap. This dissonant fantastic draws on resonances of other worlds – both otherworlds, and worlds of the ‘other’. John Clute defines otherworlds as ‘any sort of autonomous impossible world, including faerie and wonderlands, while the secondary world is not normally thought of as being governed by the arbitrary rules’.¹⁶ Clute adds that otherworlds ‘certainly have some sort of connection with mundane reality’. Of course, Dante’s epic is also an exploration of the underworld – which Clute terms ‘the land of the dead [...]it may [...] work as a mirror [...] or serve as a venue for afterlife existences’ – but, as Rachel Falconer notes, Dante’s katabatic journey ‘conceives of selfhood as the narrative construct of an infernal

¹³ Terence Cave, ‘Introduction’ to *Daniel Deronda*, xxiv – xxxiii (pp. xxix-xxx).

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. xxxi.

¹⁵ Julia Kristeva, ‘Word, Dialogue, and Novel’ in *The Kristeva Reader*, ed. by Toril Moi (Oxford: Blackwell, 1986), pp.34-61, p. 36.

¹⁶ John Clute and John Grant, ‘Otherworld’ in *The Encyclopedia of Fantasy* (London: Orbit, 1997), p. 738.

journey and return'.¹⁷ Erich Auerbach terms the *Comedy's* connection with reality as paradoxical: 'It is [...] a literary work which imitates reality and in which all imaginable spheres of reality appear: past and present'.¹⁸ References to Dante's otherworldly quest, therefore, contain resonances of psychological exploration or what William Franke terms 'revelation of the meaning of life'. Franke notes that this 'ultimate reality' is 'more vivid than the world of ordinary sense-perception by virtue of a strikingly realistic, indeed surrealistic imagery'.¹⁹ Indeed, Dante's vivid scenes have captured the imagination of readers from Chaucer onwards,²⁰ and as Clute and Grant observe, his epic has become a 'taproot' text for fantasy.²¹ Despite a decrease in popularity in the eighteenth century, H.F. Cary's 1814 translation wakened the interest of the Romantic poets, who praised the psychological reality in Dante's compelling images of the afterlife context.²² Dante's otherworld of tormented monsters and twisted hybrids heightens perceptions of ourselves. Eliot herself suggests a psychological interpretation to Dante's work in *Felix Holt*.²³ The imagery of his work entranced Eliot, as she wrote to her friends Sara Hennell, on seeing a painting by Ary Schaeffer of Paulo and Francesca.²⁴ This sense of affective perception highlights the development of Gwendolen's and Mirah's inner nature.

¹⁷ Rachel Falconer, *Hell in Contemporary Literature* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007), p. 2.

¹⁸ Erich Auerbach, *Mimesis* (Princeton, N.J.:Princeton University Press, 2003), p.189.

¹⁹ William Franke, 'Dante's *Inferno* as Revelation of Prophetic Truth' *Philosophy and Literature* 33 (2009), 252-266 (pp. 252-253).

²⁰ For a concise summary of Dante's influence over English writers, see David Wallace, 'Dante In English' *The Cambridge Companion to Dante* (Cambridge: CUP, 2007), pp. 281-304.

²¹ See John Clute and John Grant, 'Dante Alighieri', p. 248. Also see Melody Green on links between Dante and Neil Gaiman's *Sandman* (Melody Green 'Ravens, Librarians and Beautiful Ladies', in Anthony S. Burge, Jessica Burke, and Kristine M. Larsen, *The Mythological Dimensions of Neil Gaiman* (Crawfordville, FL: Kitsune Press, 2012), pp. 49-63 (p. 54), and Brian Stableford, ed., 'Dante Alighieri' in the *Historical Dictionary of Fantasy Literature* (Oxford: Scarecrow Press, 2005). Nick Havely notes Dante's influence on various science fiction movies (Nick Havely, 'Introduction' in *Dante's Modern Afterlife*, ed. by Nick Havely (Basingstoke: MacMillan, 1998), 1-14 (pp. 12-13).

²² Alison Milbank, *Dante and the Victorians* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1998), pp. 1-2.

²³ George Eliot, *Felix Holt* (Oxford: OUP, 1980), p.11.

²⁴ George Eliot to Sara Sophia Hennell, 17 May 1854 (*The George Eliot Letters*, ed. Haight, London, 1954, II, p.155).

The *Arabian Nights* in *Deronda* highlights the exploration of the cultural other, in its role as a 'global nomad'.²⁵ This exploration has negative possibilities, as noted by Said, in spurring a false perception of real countries as childhood tales. Robert Irwin has detailed how this aspect was evident in the influence the *Nights* had on the Victorians.²⁶ But as Warner observes, the *Nights* have positive potential: 'The *Arabian Nights* holds out for scrutiny an extraordinarily productive case of cross-fertilisation, retellings, grafts and borrowings, overwriting, imitation, and dissemination back and forth between Persia, India, Iraq, Turkey, Egypt and Europe, and then back again into its homelands, over an extremely *longue durée*'.²⁷ Warner identifies a paradox of the other and the same in renderings of the *Nights* which recalls the paradoxical reality of self-revelation in the *Comedy*: '[T]he attraction arises from encountering much that is revealing about ourselves [...] There is a recognition of sameness at work, not only curiosity about difference'.²⁸ The Meyrick sisters demonstrate something of this self-revelatory process in transrealist disjunctions between emotional experience and perceptions of difference within their allusions to the *Nights*; they begin by using them to categorize an exotic other and ending by using them to cement a shared cultural narrative.

In *Deronda*, as well as in earlier texts, Eliot uncovers dissonance behind cultural practices of education, dramatizing a need for renewed perception and perspective. Although *Deronda* was published in 1876, by setting it in the 1860s, George Eliot locates it before a number of key educational advances, particularly the Education Act of 1870. As Dinah Birch notes, Forster's Education Act of 1870

²⁵ See Marina Warner, *Stranger Magic: Charmed States and the Arabian Nights* (London: Vintage, 2011), p. 25.

²⁶ See Robert Irwin, *The Arabian Nights: A Companion* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2008), pp.268-270.

²⁷ Warner, p. 25.

²⁸ Ibid.

formed a social and cultural landmark, since it meant that ‘For the first time, significant numbers of British women had access to education at a serious and ambitious level’.²⁹ Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall observe that in the first half of the century, female education served the interest of their family’s status, whether it was gaining ornamental accomplishments through a boarding school or a governess,³⁰ learning morals,³¹ or domestic duties.³² Laura Green comments that, ‘By the end of the 1840s, however, a different critique of girls’ education had [...] emerg[ed], as [...] strictly domestic and moral training began to appear inadequate [...] [b]ecause the aim of such training was the reproduction and recirculation of domestic virtues.’³³ This critique made questions of educating women a site of cultural enquiry, investigating issues ranging from educating genteel women beyond social accomplishments and the domestic sphere,³⁴ whether women should pursue education against the potential need to earn a living,³⁵ and to the role a working-class teacher might play in her surrounding community.³⁶ Running throughout this discourse was the deeper question of what the aims of education might be.³⁷

Responses to these questions emphasised the importance of intellectual and vocational development in recognising the effect of bad education, some of which Josephine Butler summarizes in her essay ‘The Education and Employment of

²⁹ Dinah Birch, *Our Victorian Education* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2008), p. 3.

³⁰ Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall, *Family Fortunes: Men and Women of the English Middle Class, 1780-1850* (London: Routledge, 2002), pp.289-90.

³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 290.

³² *Ibid.*, p. 291.

³³ Laura Morgan Green, *Educating Women: Cultural Conflict and Victorian Literature* (Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 2001), pp. 10-11.

³⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁵ See Birch’s comments on educational discourse in the 1840s and 1850s, in which elementary training colleges began to appear (pp.81-85).

³⁶ See Marianne Larsen, *The Making and Shaping of the Victorian Teacher: A Comparative New Cultural History* (London: Palgrave MacMillan, 2011), p.109.

³⁷ Davidoff and Hall observe that while professional families sometimes gave their daughters a ‘general liberal education’, ‘the aims of that education, however, were specifically non-vocational’, p. 290.

Women' (1868): '[Women] cannot teach, because they are so ill educated, and again they are so ill educated that they can do nothing *but* teach'.³⁸ As Davidoff and Hall indicate, an education which provided only a 'closed-off knowledge of the world outside family, friends and co-religionists, [...] [b]owdlerized reading matter and lack of experience' disempowered women by 'creat[ing] a real need for male protection, not least in financial affairs'.³⁹

In her non-fictional writing, Eliot herself recognized the importance of a multi-faceted education, both in describing the negative aspects of a lack of such an education, and in describing the positive effects which such an education might bring. In an 1876 letter to Harriet Beecher Stowe, she criticises: 'intellectual narrowness' in general education:

To my feeling, [...] this inability to find interest in any form of life that is not clad in the same coat-tails and flounces as our own lies close to the worst kind of irreligion. The best that can be said of it is, that it is a sign of the intellectual narrowness – in plain English, the stupidity, which is still the average mark of our culture.⁴⁰

Otherworldly references in both *Veil* and *Deronda* highlight an awareness of 'this inability to find interest in any form of life that is not clad in the same coat-tails and flounces as our own' and its consequent 'intellectual narrowness': an accumulated effect of what I shall summarise as 'educational alienation'. A comparison between these two texts emphasises that developing such an awareness carries a possible transformation; although this potential is not fully extended in *Veil*, the transrealist interplay in *Deronda* suggests that Gwendolen, Mirah, and the Meyrick family may 'bring [...]into activity the feelings and sympathies that must issue in noble action'

³⁸ Quoted in Green, p.11.

³⁹ Davidoff and Hall, p.292.

⁴⁰ George Eliot, 'To Mrs. Harriet Beecher Stowe, 29 October 1876' in *Selections from George Eliot's Letters*, ed. by Gordon S. Haight (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985), p. 476.

which Eliot depicts as an educational ideal in her 1855 essay on Thomas Carlyle.⁴¹ She represents the developing minds and spirits of Gwendolen, Mirah, and the Meyrick sisters as dissonant scenes of astronomical imagery dramatize the complexities that both *affect* and *effect* their engaged understanding. Astronomical references in descriptions of Gwendolen, Mirah and the Meyrick family demonstrate a context of educational alienation. By dramatizing how and why Gwendolen, Mirah Lapidoth, and the Meyrick sisters experience an estranged understanding, Eliot explores the cognitive inclinations which ‘produce [...] that mental condition which renders acquirements easy’,⁴² and, consequently, affect women’s intellectual and emotional development.

These references evoke a shared space of potential intellectual and emotional development; it was one of the few sciences which women could learn and was thus a common subject in mid-nineteenth-century schoolrooms.⁴³ Famous female amateur astronomers were held up as examples of female inspiration:⁴⁴ for example, in an 1858 pamphlet on ‘Intellectual Education’, Emily Shirreff describes astronomy in multi-disciplinary terms: ‘We see in [astronomy] the example of the perfect success of the scientific method [...] [It is] the field opened to the loftiest flights of imagination’.⁴⁵ A comparison with *Veil* highlights a discourse in an education of identity in both, linked through common experiences of a shock of recognition.

⁴¹ George Eliot, ‘Thomas Carlyle’, *Leader* (vi (27 Oct. 1855) in *Selected Writings of George Eliot*, ed. by Rosemary Ashton (Oxford: OUP, 1992), pp. 1034-5.

⁴² *Ibid.*

⁴³ In her 1866 book *The Higher Education of Women* (London: Strahan, 1866), Emily Davies mentions that ‘astronomy and botany are considered the ladies’ department’ (p. 133); Frances Power Cobbe in an 1866 collection entitled *Essays reprinted from Fraser’s and Macmillan’s Magazines* notes that she was taught the ‘use of the globes’ (p. 217); and Emily Shirreff includes it in a list of subjects that cannot ‘be omitted from a rational education’ in her 1858 publication *Intellectual education and its influence upon the character and happiness of women* (London: John Parker, 1858) (p. 61).

⁴⁴ Frances Power Cobbe, *Essays on the pursuits of women reprinted from Fraser’s and Macmillan’s magazines*, (London: Emily Faithfull, 1863), p.222.

⁴⁵ Emily Shirreff, *Intellectual education*, p. 61.

Whereas in *Deronda*, astronomical imagery signals complexities of social engagement, in *Veil*, social perception is problematized in an overtly esoteric way, through the medium of Latimer's uncanny and isolating sight. Similar shocks of dissonance mark changes in development throughout Eliot's texts. Latimer in *Veil* experiences a shock of estrangement in seeing a dead person reanimate and communicate secrets which result in the reordering of his life. In *Deronda*, as with Gwendolen, images of stars and of star-gazing mark a renewed vocation for Mirah and a process of continued widening of perspectives for the Meyrick family.

I will argue that the combination of identity progression and the question of vocation implement a transrealist discourse of educational dissonance. Experiences of dissonance within a context of creating and deploying social power invite speculation upon educational progress; it is not just necessary to propose reforms, but to understand the paradoxes that mitigate against the development of a cultivated mind, to observe the characteristics of a sense of vocation, and finally, to suggest a context that will successfully produce a rational identity, able to analyse a range of issues by employing a balanced dialogue around a meeting of social perspectives. .

Fashionable Society and Educating the Self

Eliot dramatizes the effects of Gwendolen's problematic early education through descriptions of her confrontations with a wider world. An examination of the stars

propels an imaginative experience which is strange to her, and so makes her feel uncomfortable: 'The little astronomy taught her at school used sometimes to set her imagination at work in a way that made her tremble'.⁴⁶ Discussions of Gwendolen's educational development have pointed out the shallowness in her initial training, from the fact that she has not retained many intellectual ideas to the moral reform in which Daniel leads her. Dinah Birch traces the transformation from the sort of training given in Mrs Lemon's school in *Middlemarch* (1871-1872; 1874), in which the pupils learn fashionable accomplishments. This training, of course, fails her when Gwendolen's marriage proves to be a sham.

Birch also describes Gwendolen's educational trajectory as an inner development, terming it 'a matter of spiritual and emotional discipline, privately borne, resulting in the education of feeling alongside intellect'.⁴⁷ However, while she explores the resonances of Daniel's influence on Gwendolen extensively, linking it to contemporary debates on education, she does not place this in the context of Gwendolen's initial and equally influential training in social mobility. Sarah Gates takes a much bleaker view of Gwendolen's change in perspective, describing the endpoint of Gwendolen's education as an 'endless bettering'. She predicts for Gwendolen a 'tragic sentence of death or exile to one of liminal life. Not married, not dead, not exiled, and quite sane, she will live out a plausible tragedy, figured as a role-less and repetitious living'.⁴⁸ A thorough understanding of Gwendolen's development must take in past, present and future identities in order to gain a sense of her educational transformation. Such an understanding is helped by considering her outside of the model of the 'romance heroine' through which Gates analyses her

⁴⁶ George Eliot, *Daniel Deronda*, p. 64. References henceforth given in text.

⁴⁷ Birch, p.118.

future as bleak and hopeless. Instead, a comparison to Bertha Grant in *Veil* – who leaves her troubled marriage at the end of her narrative – demonstrates the possibilities in the results of Gwendolen’s education. The problematic effect of the training as society leaders which both Gwendolen and Bertha have undergone can be seen through a similarity of description: in both texts, mythological references via serpentine imagery encode the manipulative effect of their fashionable social power, creating a transrealist conjunction of troubling power which serves as a background context for deeper reflections. Latimer associates serpentine imagery with Bertha, alluding to her ‘deep coils of hair’, and he cements his encoding of Bertha as monstrous with the words ‘her cruel contemptuous eyes fixed on me, and the glittering serpent, like a familiar demon, on her breast’ (34). Gwendolen’s self-costuming as a nereid serves as a point of interrogation, as others see her as a tempting serpent. Surrounding members of society observe “‘She has got herself up as a sort of serpent now—all green and silver, and winds her neck about a little more than usual’” (12). Her serpentine costume inspires reflection on the constructed nature of her social identity: the words ‘she has got herself up’ suggest a self-conscious artificiality and this impression is enhanced by the observation “‘She must always be doing something extraordinary. She is that kind of girl, I fancy’”. Not everyone agrees, and Gwendolen’s social identity remains pointedly ambiguous (12). The developmental trajectory which both women follow suggests that their fashionable training induces an inner artificiality. I will demonstrate how both characters move from this to a point of wider awareness, however brief this might be (in the case of Bertha).

⁴⁸ Sarah Gates, ‘Gender, Genre and Realism in *Daniel Deronda*’ *ELH*, 68 (2001), 699-724 (p. 700).

In *Deronda*, problems in Gwendolen's early training are emphasised through comparison to Miss Arrowpoint (accomplished, moral yet not a beauty) and Anna Gascoigne (demure and moral). These characters exemplify some of the attributes of contemporary discourse on the development and conduct of women. Miss Arrowpoint's mental superiority and her compassion (52) evoke W.H. Hodgson's list of attributes which should result from a 'liberal culture': 'faculties and aspirations, moral and intellectual, [together] with social duties requiring enlightenment and guidance'. In his lectures '*The Education of Girls and the Employment of Women*' (1869), W.B. Hodgson argues that both men and women should receive a thorough education because 'it is on the inward community of human nature, not on the outward similarity of employment, that the right to an equal culture is really founded'.⁴⁹ In *The Women of England*, Sarah Stickney Ellis marks the object of education – that is, what will make a woman 'most valued, admired, and beloved' – as 'disinterested kindness',⁵⁰ recalling Anna's unselfish kindness to her relatives. However, neither character fits Gwendolen's ambitions. Anna shows plenty of disinterested kindness, but her father doesn't value her enough to buy her the horse that he buys her cousin and Gwendolen's mother begs her to be polite to Anna because she inspires pity. Gwendolen has a grudging, envious respect for rich and accomplished Miss Arrowpoint, but she knows herself to be more beautiful and that her livelier conversation will win her complete attention at the shooting competition. She does not wish to merge into Hodgson's 'equal culture' or 'community of human nature'. Unlike Anna or Miss Arrowpoint, Bertha Grant in *Veil* does enact the type of social trajectory commensurate with Gwendolen's

⁴⁹ W.B. Hodgson, *The education of girls and the employment of women of the upper classes educationally considered: two lectures* (London: Trübner & Co., 1869), pp. 4-5.

⁵⁰ Sarah Stickney Ellis, *The Women of England* (London: Fisher, Son & Co., 1839), p. 63.

ambitions. As Miss Merry notes, Gwendolen ‘will not rest until she has the world at her feet’ and Bertha is extremely accomplished at ensuring that the world around her *is* at her feet. Her confidence in her social success lies in her ability to manipulate those around her. Davidoff uses theatrical, rather than mythological imagery, to describe the power dynamics of fashionable society in the mid-nineteenth century, but she clarifies the need to stand out that the mythological descriptions give, as well as the influence that this perceived need could exert: ‘A girl’s whole life from babyhood was oriented to the part she had to play in this “status theatre”. Although marriage was her greatest chance for expanding her role it was not the end of the play by any means.’⁵¹ Gwendolen’s and Bertha’s desire to command social attention is not just the need for protection through marriage; it is a desire to establish power over fashionable society. Comments from Sarah Stickney Ellis’s *The Women of England* (1839) reveal a class-related encoding to the discourse on ‘disinterested kindness.’ She instructs the middle-classes to exercise restraint: ‘There is, on the other, a gross violation of good taste, in assuming for the middle classes of society [...] the same description of personal ornament, as belongs with more propriety to those who enjoy the luxury of giving orders, without any necessity for farther occupation of time or thought.’⁵² One should be moral, because that is a way to remain tastefully in one’s place. Neither Gwendolen nor Bertha will admire the endpoint of Ellis’s arguments in their quest for fashionable society.

While discourses on reforming women’s education in the early 1860s encouraged more mobility than Ellis’s advice, they argued for an increased education for women stemming from their need to establish themselves beyond marriage

⁵¹ Leonore Davidoff, *The Best Circles* (London: Cresset Library, 1986), p. 51.

⁵² Ellis, *The Women of England*, p.99.

through the sphere of work.⁵³ But Bertha and Gwendolen wish to establish themselves beyond marriage without working, so they adhere to a different type of training: one in manipulating fashionable society. For Bertha, this is easier, as she has been adopted into a wealthy position (although the narrative notes an expectation that she will marry a wealthy husband); Gwendolen needs to work harder to make an impression so that she can climb into fashionable circles by marriage.

Bertha and Gwendolen embody fashionable advice in furthering their training; Eliot's transrealist use of dissonant imagery underlines the dysfunctional aspects inherent even in the successes of this training. In *The Habits of Good Society* (1860), the anonymous writers discuss the necessities for taking part in society. They acknowledge the importance of education, calling it the 'first indispensable requisite for good society', although the writers feel that a university or boarding school is not necessarily the place to find an education. They go on to explain that they require the development of mind, yet not for the sake of cultivation itself: 'A man should be able, in order to enter into conversation, to catch rapidly the meaning of anything that is advanced.'⁵⁴ Education, in their view, is a means to acquire social polish.

In her memoirs (1907), Lady Dorothy Nevill, a fashionable society hostess of the mid-nineteenth-century, holds up conversation as an important skill which possesses experts and masters: 'The difference between a clever talker and one who delights in saying things which embarrass and annoy is much the same as that which exists between a first-class fencer and a bungling assassin'⁵⁵ Of course, should one master the art of witty banter, it can have great social currency. Despite the fact that

⁵³ Laura Green notes that the influential *English Women's Journal*, which ran from 1858-1864 and focussed on women as having a public rather than simply a domestic role, treated education 'largely as a means to the end of providing middle-class women with respectable work, and making work respectable'. (pp. 11-12).

⁵⁴ Anonymous, *The Habits of Good Society* (New York: Rudd and Carleton, 1860), p. 64.

'Lady Waldegrave' had 'no pretensions to good birth', Lady Nevill views her with a sort of grudging, albeit, surprised respect as Lady Waldegrave led a 'somewhat aristocratic and exclusive' society due to her bold conversation and her ability to make jokes against herself.⁵⁶ These are the sorts of social skills with which Bertha and Gwendolen can manipulate society.

Bertha's interactions with Latimer train her in manipulating those around her, as she 'makes use of banter' with Latimer, to terrible effect on him. Like Lady Dorothy Nevill's description, she is bold and ruthless of speech: 'She was keen, sarcastic [...] remaining critical and unmoved in the most impressive scenes, [and] inclined to dissect all my favourite poems' (15). She is also a deft and clever talker, adept in creating any particular impression she desires: '[She] made me believe, by the subtlest looks and phrases – feminine nothings which could never be quoted against her – that [Latimer's brother] was really the object of her secret ridicule' (16). In addition to (unintentionally) making her cousin Rex and the curate fall in love with her (unintentionally) with her lively repartée, Gwendolen can use her conversation to make a more considered attempt at social manipulation. She starts a discussion with Mrs Arrowpoint intending to charm this lady 'by giving her an interest and attention beyond what others were probably inclined to show'. Gwendolen begins well by praising her daughter's musicianship and alluding to Mrs Arrowpoint's success as a biographer of the Italian poet Tasso (45). However, Gwendolen endangers this effect with a note of artificiality ('Homemade books must be so nice'), causing Mrs Arrowpoint's glance to be 'a little sharper'. But Gwendolen is able to restore herself by suggesting 'girlish simplicity' with her

⁵⁵ Lady Dorothy Nevill, *Leaves from the Note-Books of Lady Dorothy Nevill* ed. by Ralph Nevill (London:Macmillan, 1907), p. 24.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 39-40.

comment, 'I would give anything to write a book' and she strengthens this by saying 'I dote on Tasso'(46). The ability to carry off social manipulation requires intense restraint to allow polished conversation.

Both Gwendolen and Bertha demonstrate this restraint to varying levels of ability. The authors of *The Habits of Good Society* emphasise that any education acquired should not interfere with a polished manner:

[T]he best society will not endure dilettantism, and whatever the knowledge a man may possess of any art, he must not display it so as to make the ignorance of others painful to them [...] To have only one or two subjects to converse on, and to discourse rather than talk on them, is always ill-bred, whether the theme be literature or horse-flesh.⁵⁷

While this perspective contains a practical point, it demonstrates a perspective which makes the ultimate goal of education the ability to make charming conversation. It suggests a continual restraint: one cannot become passionate about a particular subject. Similarly, a *Ladies' Treasury* article in an 1850s series on 'Conduct and Carriage' gently mocks two historians who talk of 'dates, facts, references, quotations, and opinions [...] rapidly, fluently, and earnestly' and instead advises the reader (pictured in the character of a young woman) to make a 'daily perusal of the morning papers [and] a few hours weekly devoted to the best journals [...] [as] to be *au courant*, you must read the newspapers and magazines'.⁵⁸ The reader is advised to make her conversation, 'graphic, naive, and easy'. Although the article does exhort the reader to form her own opinions on her reading, the ultimate goal is fashionable, rather than mental, cultivation, and, as in *The Habits of Good Society*, she should not become overly passionate about the results of her cultivation.

⁵⁷ *The Habits of Good Society*, p. 67.

⁵⁸ Anonymous, 'Conduct and Carriage, or rules to guide a young lady on points of etiquette and good breeding in her intercourse with the world' *The Ladies' Treasury* [circa June 1858], pp.186-187 (p. 187).

In *Veil*, Bertha recognises the social importance of fashionable self-command. She desires a context where she can be mistress of the household without any emotional pressure or vulnerability: 'I must love the man I'm going to marry? [...] [M]ost unpleasant [...] I should quarrel with him [...] [and] be jealous of him [...] A little quiet contempt contributes greatly to the elegance of life' (26). For Bertha, self-command means not letting herself develop affection for people; which means that this is not reciprocated. It also runs contrary to contemporary writings on educational reform. Unfortunately, Gwendolen's use of self-command suggests artificiality. In a subsequent conversation with another guest, Mrs Arrowpoint hears her mocking poetry with witty quips (51). To Mrs Arrowpoint, this obviously confirms any doubts about Gwendolen's affection for Tasso and decides that 'I shall be on my guard against her'. Gwendolen's attempts at restraining her views and managing her conversation in the hopes of pleasing result in provoking dislike.

Eliot's use of imagery suggests that this lack of depth is internally harmful, and significant of deeper anxieties. Her description of Gwendolen's childhood context indicates an inner unsettlement; the astronomical imagery associated with this encapsulates the effect of this unsettlement as an inability to navigate: 'The best introduction to astronomy is to think of the nightly heavens as a little lot of stars belonging to one's own homestead. But this blessed persistence in which affection can take root had been wanting in Gwendolen's life'. The conjunction of the image of watching 'a little lot of stars' with a sense of home dramatizes the fact that Gwendolen lacks a secure point of emotional navigation (22). Her school experiences compound her childhood uncertainty: her 'showy school' teaches her little of intellectual depth and ensures that she is always on display (23). Yet Gwendolen feels confident in her ability to manipulate her surrounding society,

predicting that at the archery competition “‘[[M]y arrow will pierce [Grandcourt] before he has time for thought. He will declare himself my slave’” (95). Bertha’s role of manipulating Latimer turns into establishing herself as a glittering leader of fashion. Latimer recounts that Bertha prejudices the world against him due to her social success: ‘She was really pitiable to have such a husband, and so all the world thought. A graceful, brilliant woman, like Bertha, who smiled on morning callers, made a figure in ballrooms, and was capable of that light repartee [...] was secure of carrying off all sympathy’ (33).

Both Bertha and Gwendolen have internalized this discourse, so when a sense of failure comes, it shakes their identities. A moment in which Latimer sees a different image than the one she presents shocks her briefly out of her confidence. “‘Tasso!’ she said, seizing my wrist, and peeping round into my face, “are you really beginning to discern what a heartless girl I am [...] [Y]ou are actually capable of believing the truth about me’” (26). Latimer’s narrative focuses more on his own discomfort than on Bertha’s, but the phrase ‘she had recovered herself sooner than I had’ indicates that the prospect of Latimer seeing beyond her ‘beautiful sylph’ identity does break her equilibrium. Years later, this momentary shock is magnified when her dead maid reveals her ‘heartless’ character as a result of a blood transfusion experiment conducted by Latimer’s childhood friend, Charles Meunier: the transrealist conjunctions of dissonance around Bertha’s emotional reactions to this episode highlight the consequences of her educational alienation. At this point, she no longer cares what Latimer thinks of her, but she ‘was much struck by the unexpected fascinations’ of Meunier and so ‘put forth all her coquetries and accomplishments’. Bertha wants Meunier’s homage and ‘she succeeded in attracting his admiration, for his manner towards her was attentive and flattering’ (41).

However, the dead maid's revelation presents her in an extremely unattractive light. The maid not only reveals she meant to poison her husband, but also the petty cruelty of her character: "[Y]ou laughed at me, and told lies about me behind my back, to make me disgusting." Bertha reacts to this revelation with paralysis: 'Bertha stood pale at the foot of the bed, quivering and helpless, despairing of devices, like a cunning animal whose hiding-places are surrounded by swift-advancing flame' (42). It is not just being found out in plotting murder that causes her shock; her manipulations have been uncovered and her ability to dissemble her emotions and thoughts has been broken. The maid's haunting words, coming from beyond death, presents an image of herself that Bertha cannot manipulate as it is outside the limits of her experience.

The transformational aspects of Gwendolen's experience of cognitive dissonance arise when, after her marriage, we see her looking in the mirror with a sense of disillusionment:

'This beautiful, healthy young creature, with her two-and-twenty years and her gratified ambition, no longer felt inclined to kiss her fortunate image in the glass. She looked at it with wonder that she could be so miserable. One belief which had accompanied her through her unmarried life as a self-cajoling superstition, encouraged by the subordination of every one about her—the belief in her own power of dominating—was utterly gone' (423).

The text emphasises the paradox in her failure by linking the phrase 'gratified ambition' with her brilliant marriage: Gwendolen would be, in many people's eyes, a social success: for example, the Meyrick sisters see her as a glamorous figure. Yet this success has brought a loss of identity, and an awareness of her vocational lack. Gwendolen cannot be the social leader that she felt herself destined to be, due to the abusive control of her husband – ironically, the source of her new glamour. She had expected to be able to manipulate her husband, but instead finds that he has 'gained a mastery which she could no more resist than she could have resisted the

benumbing effect from the touch of a torpedo'. While Bertha continues to follow the educational route mapped out for her (living apart from her husband, but 'the mistress of half our wealth' and 'pitied and admired') (42), Gwendolen's shock of dissonance propels her in a new direction, guided by Daniel.

Another reference to astronomical perception encodes this development, through a transrealist combination of the esoteric and metaphysical with questions of gaining a 'real knowledge' of the world around her through developing an occupation. The quotation from *Purgatorio* at the beginning of chapter 64 (755), telling that the ascent may be difficult at first, but that the climb will grow easier towards the top,⁵⁹ places Gwendolen's efforts to 'rally her strength and courage' (755) in the context of mental cultivation. The context of astronomical navigation surrounding these lines in *Purgatorio* recalls an earlier comment about the lack of stars, and consequently, a lack of a secure point by which to navigate. In *Purgatorio*, Virgil's comment responds to Dante's astronomical questioning. Dante's sight of strange celestial geography fills him with amazed dissonance:

First on the nether shores I turn'd my eyes,
Then rais'd them to the sun, and wond'ring mark'd
That from the left it smote us.⁶⁰

Yet Virgil, using 'that broad mirror' as a guiding point, calms Dante's fears through mental cultivation: 'How that may be if thou would'st think; within | Pond'ring, imagine Sion with this mount'.⁶¹ Virgil helps Dante to plot an unearthly geography by encouraging him to use his mind and imagination to put together the clues given to him by the position of the stars. He promises that Dante will understand 'If with

⁵⁹ Dante Alighieri, *Purgatorio*, Canto IV: 88-90, ed. by Robert M. Durling and Ronald L. Martinez (Oxford: OUP, 2003), p.69.

⁶⁰ See *Purgatory*, Canto IV: 53-55 in H.F. Cary, *The Vision, or Hell, Purgatory, and Paradise, of Dante Alighieri* (New York: T.Y., 1814), p. 132-133.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, p. 133.

[...] intellect attend' and Dante finds this to be true: 'I now discern | Where seem'd my ken to fail [...] the mid orb| Of the supernal motion'.⁶² Astronomical imagery first links Dante with Gwendolen's educational dissonance, and then indicates the possibility of overcoming this dissonance successfully.

For Gwendolen, Daniel's influence begins to counteract this earlier lack of navigation. As Andrew Thompson notes, the references to Dante's journeys place Daniel in the role of Virgil,⁶³ initially making Daniel Gwendolen's source of navigation. Yet Daniel begins to encourage an ability in Gwendolen to self-navigate as well. By pointing out her lack of a passionate occupation, he suggests that she might develop a vocation which would give her a reference point: "Life *would* be worth more to you: some real knowledge would give you an interest in the world beyond the small drama of personal desires. It is the curse of your life—forgive me—of so many lives, that all passion is spent in that narrow round, for want of ideas and sympathies" (451). His words contradict her previous fashionable training against expressing passionate – if potentially embarrassing – vocation. They also point her in the direction of contemporary discourse on developing mental cultivation; W.B. Hodgson argued that education should give women 'an insight into the real working of the social world, the conditions of economic and general well-being, and awaken in them an intelligent sympathy with the spirit of their age and country, an intelligent interest in the great movements which are characteristic of both'⁶⁴ Kate Flint suggests that the ending leaves Gwendolen bereft and alone: '[Gwendolen], still very far from standing on her own feet, looks to a departing Daniel for guidance rather than looking into herself [...] the plot does not begin to suggest where she might

⁶² Ibid., Canto IV: 73-76, p.133

⁶³ Andrew Thompson, *George Eliot and Italy* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1998), p. 150.

begin'.⁶⁵ However, Daniel's question "Is there any single occupation of mind that you care about with passionate delight or even independent interest?" (451) does create a point of beginning: discovering a subject in which she can develop a passionate interest.

This new reference point, when combined with her new financial circumstances, creates a sense of possibility in Gwendolen's unknown future. Even with her decision to give her mother £800 a year, Gwendolen will have above £1,000 as result of Grandcourt's will, which Sally Mitchell, in a discussion of mid-nineteenth-century social economics points out is 'a significant dividing line', giving Gwendolen financial independence: 'At that figure, a family could afford four women (cook, two housemaids, nurserymaid) plus a coachman and stableboy; thus they could keep one or two horses and a carriage[...] It was judged to be the smallest income that would permit life as a country squire'.⁶⁶ Constance Frederica Gordon-Cumming (1837-1924), a contemporary of Lady Dorothy Nevill's, was noted in her own day for her wide travels and paintings.⁶⁷ Miss Gordon-Cumming died with an annual income of £1,703 in 1924⁶⁸; her example indicates that although Gwendolen does not end with a vast inheritance, she has enough money to allow her an independent lifestyle with the possibility of travel. Consequently, we leave Gwendolen with financial and emotional autonomy, combined with a new wisdom by which to navigate her future.

⁶⁴ W.B.Hodgson, p. 29.

⁶⁵ Kate Flint, 'George Eliot and Gender' in *The Cambridge Companion to George Eliot*, ed. by George Devine (Cambridge: CUP, 2001), pp.159-180 (p.177).

⁶⁶ Sally Mitchell, *Daily Life in Victorian England* (London: Greenwood Press, 1996), p. 33 and p. 35.

⁶⁷ Jane Robinson, *Wayward Women: A Guide to Women Travellers* (Oxford: OUP,1990) pp.94-95.

⁶⁸ Elizabeth Baigent, 'Cumming, Constance Frederica Gordon- (1837-1924)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004; online edn, Jan 2010 [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/42347>, accessed 5 May 2012]

Whatever her future might be, Gwendolen has obtained the fulfilments for Hodgson's educational ideals; her marriage to Grandcourt and her conversations with Daniel Deronda have given her 'an insight into the real working of the social world' (she knows about the experiences of mistresses, abandoned women, and abusive husbands; she has also encountered a different religious culture) and she has learned 'the conditions of economic and general well-being', as she has come to value an income that is much reduced from her initial social ambitions, but is still enough for independence. She has also developed a new attachment to her family which will give her renewed security and for which she felt a longing when Grandcourt prohibited contact with them. Eliot conveys this new affection with astronomical imagery: 'There is a way of looking at our life daily as an escape, and taking the quiet return of morn and evening – still more the starlike out-glowing of some pure fellow-feeling [...] as a salvation that reconciles us to hardship'. (795)

Our last sight of Gwendolen is of her exercising this starlike fellow feeling in her affectionate acknowledgement of her mother's efforts to help her: '[W]hen she waked in the morning light, she looked up fixedly at her mother and said tenderly, "Ah poor mamma! You have been staying up with me. Don't be unhappy. I shall live. I shall be better"' (806). She has developed a 'starlike fellow feeling' and the ability to reflect on this feeling: she sympathizes with her mother's grief, then realizes that this grief comes from a concern for her daughter's unhappiness, causing her in turn to allay her mother's troubles. This realization suggests new powers to navigate her own emotions and to imagine the pain of other people. It is not yet, perhaps, the 'loftiest flights of the imagination' that Emily Shirreff praises, but Gwendolen has learned the skills of observation and reflection that will prepare her to face whatever her unknown future brings.

Professional Education and the Negotiation of Estrangement

In the characters of Charles Meunier (*Veil*) and Mirah Lapidoth (*Deronda*), Eliot brings together elements from these debates around self-education and professionalization, since her narratives explore the role of other people in strengthening independence. Both Meunier and Mirah have natural abilities, which the actions of others develop and enhance. The nature of their scientific and musical skills, respectively, places them in a contemporary context of achieving independence in professional spheres. States of educational failure which both encounter explore ambiguities in professional narratives: the transrealist conjunction of professional narratives and esoteric references in scenes of cognitive dissonance indicate a sense of problematic narrowness in the intense focus which both individuals have had to develop.

Veil provides brief glimpses of Charles Meunier's development from a child enthusiast of science to a famous and respected scientist: both Kate Flint and Helen Small, exploring *The Lifted Veil* in relation to nineteenth-century medical science,⁶⁹ have traced a resemblance between Meunier and Charles-Edouard Brown-Séguard (1817-1894), a nineteenth-century scientist who won fame in 1856 for his investigations into blood transfusion.⁷⁰ However, these explorations do not investigate Meunier in a context of contemporary scientific education, and I believe that a comparison of Meunier's experiences to the experiences of nineteenth-century scientists gives insight into the challenges inherent in a process of vocational self-

⁶⁹ See Kate Flint, 'Blood, Bodies, and *The Lifted Veil*' *Nineteenth-Century Literature* 51.4 (1997): 455-473 (p. 457), and Helen Small, 'Introduction' in George Eliot, *The Lifted Veil and Brother Jacob* (Oxford: OUP, 2009), ix-xxxviii (p.xxiv).

⁷⁰ Flint, 'Blood, Bodies, and *The Lifted Veil*', p. 464.

improvement. Various stages of Mirah Lapidoth's musical training suggest both a problematic narrowness in her disciplined focus and the potential of transcending this narrowness to achieve transformative action. Delia Da Sousa Correa observes, in her exploration of George Eliot and music in Victorian culture, that this training allows Mirah a valuable independence.⁷¹ But I feel that Da Sousa Correa's emphasis on Mirah as 'an uncomfortable attempt to harmonise aesthetic and feminine ideals' and her argument that 'her musical proficiency and professional attitude to her work are of a part with a voice and personality which conform to conventional ideals of femininity' misses some of Mirah's achievement in developing talent and independence despite difficulties. I suggest that an examination of her development as a trajectory of self-help reveals a nuanced use of sympathy in attaining a vocation which suits her abilities. A comparison between Meunier and Mirah dramatizes the resonances of their differing uses of sympathy in their vocational development; Meunier's use of sympathy is more of the deployment of social connections, whereas Mirah's sympathy, involving more self-introspection, exemplifies the importance of self-knowledge in achieving a more lasting social role. This may not seem obvious, since Meunier becomes a famous scientist and Mirah, although gaining a certain amount of success as a salon singer and music teacher, appears to abandon this role to follow Daniel to the East at the end of the novel. But, although both characters reach a vocational impasse, Meunier's impasse is psychological, involving the destruction of his beliefs; the externality of Mirah's impasse (a change of culture), as it does not involve an internal destruction, suggests that she may overcome the

⁷¹ Delia Da Sousa Correa, *George Eliot, Music and Victorian Culture* (Houndmills:Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), p. 147 and p. 151.

challenges of cultural change – if she deploys the skills of introspective sympathy which she has been honing.

Both texts use elements of dissonance to explore the nuances of developing a professional role: they contain scenes of ‘vocational’ dissonance around which shocks of revelation occur in transrealist conjunction. One of the *OED*’s definitions of ‘revelation’ articulates some of the nuances of revelation which Eliot’s texts explore in more depth: ‘revelation’ can mean ‘[t]he disclosure or exposure by a person of something previously unknown or kept secret’ as well as the ‘communication of knowledge, instructions, etc., by divine or supernatural means’.⁷² Eliot’s texts rework this definition, as these moments of revelation are not (specifically) inspired by the divine, but they do contain an authority which affects the characters’ attitude towards their vocations. These scenes also evoke an interpretative process. For Meunier, a scientific experiment becomes an experience of cognitive dissonance. Mrs Archer’s otherworldly accusation propels a vocational reinterpretation: ‘life for that moment ceased to be a scientific problem’ for the successful scientist Meunier (42). The source of this revelation is ‘the spirit of life’ occurring in an esoteric context: that of a revenant from death.

Mirah’s shock of revelation dramatizes a rekindling of social connection which offers renewed opportunity for vocational engagement. In this scene, Daniel rows along the Thames singing Rossini’s musical setting of Francesca’s words in his 1816 version of the Shakespeare play *Othello* (*Otello*); Mirah, about to commit suicide, hears these familiar words and a shock of instinctive connection occurs which allows Daniel to rescue her. References to stars, which frame the passage of

⁷² See entry 1 for relevant examples ranging from 1384-2000 ‘revelation, n.’. *OED Online*. June 2012. Oxford University Press. 5 August 2012 <<http://www.oed.com.wam.leeds.ac.uk/view/Entry/164694?redirectedFrom=revelation>>.

action, evoke divine prophecy. The scene begins with Daniel starting his journey up the Thames ‘to row till past sunset and come in again with the stars’ (185). Later, when the sun is setting, he decides to ‘watch out the light of sunset and the opening of that bead-roll which some oriental poet describes as God's call to the little stars, who each answer, “Here am I”’ (185). His decision to do this, and the reflective mood which it inspires, allows him to reconsider the glimpsed figure of Mirah and decide to rescue her. After Mirah is safely in the boat, the narrative completes the rescue with the words ‘The twilight was deepening; [. . .] the little stars were giving their answer one after another’, responding to imagery of calling in the previous quotation. This imagery evokes experiences of divine revelation in an educational context. Contemporary educational text *Mangnall's Questions* (first published in 1823 and reprinted many times throughout the century) contains a poem on Astronomy in which the contemplation of the stars stirs in the speaker a desire to know the will of God: ‘Fair Star of Eve, thy lucid ray/ Directs my thoughts to realms on high/ . . . / [M]y heart whispers, *God is nigh*/ . . ./[F]ixed stars I see/ With native lustre ever shine / . . . / O may I better know his will’.⁷³ Later, she will interpret her encounter with Daniel, a scene which contains both the failure of and a renewal of her vocation, as a divine revelation. The scene, in which the esoteric from Dante jostles with contemporary educational references, also dramatises a renewed engagement across cultures. It is emphatically intertextual, containing two references to rewordings⁷⁴ of Francesca da Rimini’s famous words from Canto V of

⁷³ Richmal Mangnall, *Mangnall's Questions* (London: Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme and Brown, 1823), p. 367.

⁷⁴That is, Alfred, Lord Tennyson’s poetic translation of ‘Nessun maggior dolore’ and Rossini’s setting of this quotation in his opera *Otello*.

the *Inferno*: “Nessun maggior dolore/ Che ricordasi del tempo felice/Nella miseria”
[There is no greater sorrow than to recall, in wretchedness, the happy time].⁷⁵

Both these scenes result in transformation: Mrs Archer’s revelation changes Bertha’s and Latimer’s future and casts Meunier’s into uncertainty. Although a reader familiar with *Deronda* will know that this scene will lead to a new direction for Daniel, in this scene Mirah’s future is transformed directly and dramatically, moving from death to life. The transrealist combination of transformation, professionalization, and interpretation in these instances of vocational dissonance invite a process of re-reading in a wider narrative context to understand how interpretations of their surrounding community affect the characters’ trajectories of self-help, moving from isolation, to social recognition, and finally to achieving an established social independence. The question of resolving emotional conflicts illuminates the ambiguities of sympathy; Meunier and Mirah dramatize two aspects of the ambiguities of interpretative sympathy in their trajectories of self-help: Meunier an external ambiguity and Mirah an internal one.

Both characters formulate educational narratives in response to social conflicts. Meunier develops a bond with Latimer. Latimer explains that he and Meunier are drawn together because both of them are isolated and are mocked by their contemporaries: ‘He was an orphan, who lived on a miserable pittance while he pursued the medical studies for which he had a special genius [...] [His] strongest passion was science [...] Charles was poor and ugly, derided by Genevese *gamins*, and not acceptable in drawing rooms’ (8). Latimer’s description of their friendship emphasises a sense of sympathetic union: ‘I saw that he was isolated, as I was, though from a different cause, and, *stimulated by a sympathetic resentment*, I made

⁷⁵ See Alighieri, Canto V: 133-136, in *Inferno*, ed. by Robert M. Durling and Ronald L. Martinez (Oxford: OUP, 1996), p.

timid advances towards him. It is enough to say that there sprang up as much comradeship between us as our different habits would allow' (8). Both Latimer and Meunier remember their childhood bond with affection; for Meunier, this has formed an important role in his professional development, evoking the development experiences of other nineteenth century scientists. Meadows's account of the developing years of nineteenth-century scientists (1850s-1870s) suggests that surviving an unsympathetic scientific context was a common experience for these scientific children. Often because they, like Tom Tulliver in Eliot's *The Mill on the Floss* (1860), found their talents unwelcome in a context of classical education,⁷⁶ they had to learn to endure mockery and bullying, and they highlighted this in autobiographical narratives. For example, Charles Darwin (1809-1882), because of his chemistry experiments, was nicknamed 'Gas' by his classmates and was rebuked by his teacher for these 'useless' activities. Similarly, James Maxwell (1831-1879) was called 'Dafty' by his teacher and classmates for his difficulty with the classical curriculum. If not actively bullied, many Victorian scientists found their schooldays distinctly unsympathetic because of a focus on classics to which they were unsuited or which they thought insufficient.⁷⁷

Mirah has had no one with whom to develop a sympathetic bond; however, a comparison of her situation in the light of the importance of such a bond in Meunier's development suggests that she uses the image of her mother as a replacement for a sympathetic companion like Latimer. Like Meunier, Mirah has been isolated as a child, but she has had no Latimer in which to confide. Up until her encounter with Daniel, Mirah has survived through internal discipline, with her

92, and Canto V:129-133 of *Hell* in Cary, p. 19.

⁷⁶ See George Eliot, *The Mill on the Floss* (New York: Bantam, 1987), pp. 207-208.

⁷⁷ Jack Meadows, *The Victorian Scientist: the Growth of a Profession* (London: British Library, 2004), p. 15.

mother as a focus. She links her developing religious self-education with her mother's influence: "[O]ur landlady was a Jewess and observed her religion [. . .] I read in her prayer-books and Bible, and when I had money enough I asked her to buy me books of my own. [T]hese books seemed a closer companionship with my mother: I knew she must have looked at the very words and said them" (214). She continues by emphasising that this maternal education has allowed her to develop interpretative skills in a wider cultural context: "In that way I have come to know a little of her religion, and the history of our people, besides piecing together what I read in plays and other books about Jews and Jewesses; because I was sure that my mother obeyed her religion" (214). Her vocation is to be a good Jewish daughter, worthy of her mother's memory. In this she embodies Sarah Stickney Ellis's ideal of female self-education, in which women achieve 'moral greatness' by 'trampling under-foot every impediment', intent on the accomplishment of some 'great object' which in turn is inspired by a 'beloved object'. Mirah's narrative enacts this trajectory through her psychological identification with her mother, who becomes her 'beloved object' upon whose sorrow she constantly muses; this constant reflection allows her to fix her hopes on the 'great object' of connecting herself with her mother across the miles and years which have separated them, turning herself into an image of 'moral greatness'.⁷⁸ But her story questions Ellis's ideal: what happens when these objects of inspiration are removed? Mirah's despair suggests the possibility of a negative transformation emerging from Ellis's self-education narrative.

Meunier's second appearance suggests a positive transformation emerging from his own self-help strategy. Although he was isolated as a schoolboy, he has

⁷⁸ Ellis, p. 62.

transformed himself into a famous scientist, and also a social celebrity, due in some degree to the ‘charming social powers’ which Latimer describes. The fact that Meunier is a ‘brilliant figure in society, to whom elegant women pretended to listen, and whose acquaintance [is] boasted of by noblemen ambitious of brains’ is an achievement involving no little delicacy (37). The passages in *Veil* assign him attributes which allowed contemporary scientists to reach social success: his ability to gain the sympathy of non-scientists and his pattern of travel. Similar achievements were made by contemporary scientists through strategic publication – but for a lay readership, rather than for an expert audience. Alison Fyfe, in discussing the professional identities of scientists in the mid-nineteenth century, points out that a popular work ‘promising rational amusement to a general readership’ could bring a social entree through winning ‘attention and approbation’ to those ‘who did not have direct access to the circles of polite society, because of geography or social class’. Publication was therefore a matter of social mobility rather than just of advancement in a chosen field, offering ‘literate men of all classes a way to pursue their interests, earn money, build a reputation, and cross geographical and class divides’.⁷⁹ Meunier’s interaction with Latimer exemplifies similar skills in engaging people outside of his immediate field, a skill which could well have been necessary for his financial survival. Although Meunier is coming to England seeking rehabilitation, he does not write of disease or medical difficulties, but instead of their common experience: ‘[H]is letter to me expressed that keen remembrance of an early regard, an early debt of sympathy, which is inseparable from nobility of character’ (37). These sentiments move Latimer: ‘I too felt as if his presence would be to me like a transient resurrection into a happier pre-existence’

⁷⁹ Alison Fyfe, ‘Conscientious Workmen or Booksellers’ Hacks? The Professional Identities of Science Writers in the Mid-

(37), although Latimer's 'too' assumes that Meunier is feeling an unhappiness with his current state which matches Latimer's perspective, an assumption which is not clear from the description of Meunier's letter.

However, contemporary scientists translated this sense of sympathy in isolation as a major emotional support beyond childhood: Jim Endersby, in his discussion of Darwin and Hooker's strongly sympathetic relationship, argues that this was strengthened by 'shared experiences of fatherhood, of both loving and losing children'.⁸⁰ The two friends confided feelings of deep grief; Endersby quotes passages such as "Dear dear friend, My darling little 2d. girl died here an hour ago, & I think of you more in my grief, than of any other friend"⁸¹ and sums their relationship up by concluding 'Neither Hooker nor Darwin separated science from friendship or family, and neither was embarrassed to express his feelings to his friend'.⁸² Meunier, who, if he needs relaxation from too strenuous labour must have experienced some emotional difficulties, does not seem inclined to confide in Latimer. Their conversations seem to be of professional topics and even when Latimer considers confiding in Meunier, it is in a doctor-patient context rather than as a friend; Meunier has been speaking on 'the psychological relations of disease' when Latimer wonders 'Might there not lie some remedy for *me*, too, in his science?'(38). Although Meunier can debate psychological relations and manipulate (either consciously or unconsciously) social dynamics, he does not seem able to reveal the painful secrets of his soul, as Darwin and Hooker did to their mutual empowerment. This raises the question of whether, despite the fact that Meunier can

Nineteenth Century', *Isis*, 96 (2005), 192-223 (p. 193).

⁸⁰ Jim Endersby 'Sympathetic Science: Charles Darwin, Joseph Hooker, and the Passions of Victorian Naturalists', *Victorian Studies*, 51 (2009), 299-320 (p. 308).

⁸¹ Endersby, p. 306.

⁸² Endersby, p. 307.

further his career through superficial social connections, he can overcome experiences of emotional difficulty (37).

The ambiguous quality of Meunier's ability to evoke sympathetic connection is revealed when he perceives a chance to conduct a ground-breaking experiment of blood transfusion on a human subject, rather than on animals. His connection with Latimer offers an attractive opportunity, which is clear from the differences between Meunier's experiment and a similar one conducted by Brown-Séquard. In Flint's description of Brown-Séquard's experiment, she notes that he 'had managed to access the decapitated corpse of a healthy young murderer of twenty, freshly guillotined at eight in the morning' and performed an experiment which allowed the muscles to become 'irritable'.⁸³ However, Meunier wishes to use the body of an innocent woman who has never been in trouble with the law, while Brown-Séquard used the body of a criminal who had been condemned by society. Meunier has the opportunity to use a body with a head and therefore some brain function, whereas Brown-Séquard was experimenting with a headless body. Perhaps because of a lack of institutional context, he fears the disapproval of 'provincial doctors'. Consequently, he makes use of his connection to Latimer in order to secure this valuable chance. In seeking Latimer's help, he again evokes their childhood bond of shared unity in isolation by a mocking world: "I want you to promise me your assistance in making the experiment. I can't do without another hand, but it would perhaps not be well to call in a medical assistant from among your provincial doctors" (39). His words give the self-doubting Latimer a necessary role, and in a professional scientific context which Latimer has always felt that he cannot enter.

⁸³ Flint, 'Blood', p. 464.

Meunier continues his persuasion by offering Latimer the chance to enter into a sympathetic bond with someone against Bertha, his detested wife, who has been able to gain the approval of every other person in their circle. When Latimer asks whether Meunier has consulted Bertha, Meunier explains that he wishes to keep the experiment a secret from her: “I don’t want her to know about it. There are always insuperable difficulties with women in these matters [...] When certain symptoms appear I shall take you in, and at the right moment we must manage to get everyone else out of the room” (39). His words flatter Latimer by implying that his understanding is superior to Bertha’s, as she is an inferior female, and suggest an exciting resonance of co-conspiracy. Although he has achieved a social rehabilitation from his isolated childhood, his connection with Latimer suggests that this is based on exploitative interpretation rather than sympathetic identification.

Mirah’s suicide experience offers a bleak process of exploring rehabilitation. Her first account of herself to the Meyricks makes her suicide attempt an extreme form of filial love encountering a shock of despair (“I came to find my mother and brother in London. I had been taken from my mother when I was little [. . .] I had trouble [...] I could not find her again”) (201). This inspiration of her act offers a challenge to contemporary representations of suicides, which interpreted female suicide as the logical outcome of female unchastity. As Olive Anderson observes, Martha in *David Copperfield* (1849) and Thomas Hood’s poem ‘The Bridge of Sighs’ (1844) offer textual identifications of female suicides with water. Visual illustrations (G.F. Watt’s 1848-50 ‘Found Drowned’ and Gerald Fitzgerald’s etching ‘The Bridge of Sighs’ (1858), in particular) and the final image of an adulterous wife contemplating a watery end under a moonlit bridge in Augustus Egg’s series *Past and Present* (1858) all helped strengthen the power of the link between fallen

women and female suicide.⁸⁴ Consequently, ‘any young woman depicted as lingering near deep water was immediately understood to be deserted or “fallen”, and contemplating suicide’.⁸⁵ Nicoletti points out the element of isolation and abandonment in this image: ‘Regardless of the frequent presence of witnesses to these fictional suicides, none shows a resuscitation attempt, although it would have been standard practice in the Victorian era’.⁸⁶ Eliot’s narrative offers a different image of suicide: one which rewards engagement.

Eliot’s narrative transforms this stereotype in a transrealist ways by recalling a disjunctive suicide image, that of Piero della Vigna and the wood of suicides in Canto XIII of the *Inferno*. In contrast to the popular images of suicide on or near a moonlit bridge, the suicidal Mirah is associated with trees and woods. After his first glimpse of Mirah on the riverbank, Daniel sees her on a bench under a tree, leading him to reflect on:

the girl-tragedies that are going on in the world, hidden, unheeded, as if they were but *tragedies of the copse or hedgerow*, where the *helpless drag wounded wings forsakenly*, and *streak the shadowed moss with the red moment-hand of their own death*’ [emphasis mine] (187-188).

The final glimpse of her which confirms her intent of suicide and decides him on rescue is of ‘something moving on the bank [...] bordered by a line of willow-bushes [...] He had a darting presentiment about the moving figure; and [...] the small face with the strange dying sunlight on it’ (189). Combinations of suicide, wood and blood imagery resemble descriptions of the wood of suicides in *Inferno*, in which the trunks are red with blood.

⁸⁴ Olive Anderson, *Suicide in Victorian and Edwardian England* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987), p. 197.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

⁸⁶ L. J. Nicoletti, ‘Downward Mobility: Victorian Women, Suicide, and London’s “Bridge of Sighs”’ *Literary London: Interdisciplinary studies in the representation of London*, 2 (2004) [accessed 24 July 2012] <<http://www.literarylondon.org/london-journal/march2004/nicoletti.html>> (p. 17).

Dante finds himself, with Virgil, in a wood filled with cries of woe, but with no one around (apparently) to make such cries. He investigates:

Allor / . . ./ colsi un ramicel da un gran pruno/ e tronco suo grido / . . ./ Da che fatto fu poi di sangue bruno/ ricomincio a dire / . . ./ “[N]on hai tu spirito di pietade alcuno? / Uomini fummo, e or siam fatti sterpi”/ [S]i de la scheggia rotta usciva insieme / parole e sangue.⁸⁷

[‘Thereat/ . . ./ From a great wilding gather’d I a brand/ And straight the trunk exclaim’d / . . ./ Then as the dark blood trickled down its side, / These words it added/ . . ./ “Is there not touch of mercy in thy breast?/ Men once were we, that now are rooted here”/ . . ./ [S]o burst at once/ Forth from the splinter words and blood’].⁸⁸

Dante’s discovery, prompted by cutting a tree and making it bleed, that the suicides have become trees propels him to pity. Eliot’s description of girl-tragedies also merges humans with trees: ‘girl-tragedies’ become ‘tragedies of the copse’, at which point they lose any individuality and can only be identified by the fact that they are helpless, and that they are red with suicidal blood. What is also similar is the result of the action of pity in these two suicide scenes in that both Dante and Daniel stop to engage with the suicide figure in their respective scenes, allowing transformation through explanation.

Dante’s conversation with the broken thornbush reveals that this plant is actually Piero della Vigna,⁸⁹ an advisor of the Holy Roman Emperor Frederick II, who was accused of corruption and committed suicide.⁹⁰ Piero maintains that he has been the victim of a conspiracy and that this is the explanation for his suicide: “L’animo mio, per disdegnoso gusto/ credendo col morir fuggir disdegno”⁹¹ [“My soul, disdainful and disgusted, sought/ Refuge in death from scorn”].⁹² He also

⁸⁷ Dante Alighieri, Canto XIII: 33-44 in *Inferno*, ed. by Durling and Martinez, p. 200.

⁸⁸ *Hell*, Canto XIII: 32-44 in Cary, p. 42.

⁸⁹ Dante’s narrative does not actually mention Piero della Vigna by name, but gives enough details to identify him as this character. See *Inferno*, ‘Notes to Canto XIII’, Durling and Martinez, p. 211-212.

⁹⁰ 73-75, ‘Notes to Canto XIII’ in Durling and Martinez, pp. 213-214.

⁹¹ *Inferno*, Canto XIII: 70-71, Durling and Martinez, p. 202.

⁹² *Hell*, Canto XIII: 72-73, in Cary, p. 44.

emphasises his loyalty: “[V]i giuro che gia mai non ruppi fede/ al mio signor”⁹³ [“I swear/ That never broke I faith to my liege lord”].⁹⁴ Piero begs that Dante and Virgil will rehabilitate his memory. As a result of Daniel’s stopping to rescue her and taking her to refuge at the Meyrick household, the reader discovers that Mirah embodies some of Piero’s qualities (or those which he maintains he has) in a purified context: she has been a victim of a conspiracy between her father and the lecherous Count, her suicide is an attempt to seek refuge from persecution in death, and all throughout her life she has remained faithful to the memory of her mother. Read in the light of Piero’s request for the restoration of his memory, Mirah’s suicide image propels the reader to engage in interpretative sympathy. The comparison to Piero illuminates elements of cognitive dissonance in suicide; both for the reader, seeing suicide as a result of loyalty, rather than sexual shame, and for Mirah, dramatising the process by which her internal discipline might bring death.

By contrast, Meunier’s reaction to death sees Mrs Archer as a subject for experimentation rather than as an individual. Although he observes that “there seems a strange prompting in her to say something which pain and failing strength forbid her to utter; and there is a look of hideous meaning in her eyes, which she turns continually towards her mistress”, he frames this in clinical detail: he has observed this “for the last five or six hours—since, I fancy, she has lost all hope of recovery” and notes that “[i]n this disease the mind often remains singularly clear to the last” (40). Latimer describes Meunier as being so absorbed in his experiment ‘that I think his senses would have been closed against all sounds or sights which had no relation to it’. At first, his subject complies with his scientific skill. There is

⁹³ *Inferno*, Canto XIII: 73-74, Durling and Martinez, p. 202.

⁹⁴ *Hell*, Canto XIII: 75-76, in Cary, p. 44.

a ‘wondrous slow return of life; the breast began to heave, the inspirations became stronger, the eyelids quivered, and the soul seemed to have returned beneath them. The artificial respiration was withdrawn: still the breathing continued, and there was a movement of the lips’ (41). But the reappearance of Bertha causes the experiment to take a less clinical turn, as Mrs Archer sits up and gasps out her accusation (42). The narrative indicates her accusation’s intense effect by noting that ‘Even Meunier looked paralysed; life for that moment ceased to be a scientific problem for him’ (42). Flint’s discussion of this scene notes the oracular nature of Mrs. Archer, but ascribes this oracular power to Meunier: ‘The intake of *male* blood, through the combined power of Meunier’s body and profession (for class as well as gender boundaries are traversed in this transfusion), gives Mrs. Archer new power to speak’⁹⁵ However, this assessment misses some of the peculiar social dynamics of this scene, some of which explain in part why this has such a devastating effect on Meunier’s conception of the world. Meunier’s blood allows Mrs Archer to resume breathing, but it is the sight of Bertha that causes her to speak. She does not speak merely of Bertha’s plot to kill Latimer, but of Bertha’s own injustice towards her: “[Y]ou laughed at me, and told lies about me behind my back, to make me disgusting” (42). This emphasis on injustices done to her places her in the tradition of revenants, which Juha Pentikäinen defines as stemming from ‘the result of an unfulfilled duty on the part of either the deceased or the community of the living’.⁹⁶ It is Mrs Archer’s experience of a lack of sympathy, of isolation and derision, which propels her accusation. Esoteric melodrama would be enough to startle anyone; however, the experience of baffled communication evoked by Mrs Archer’s

⁹⁵ Flint, ‘Blood’, p. 470.

⁹⁶ Juha Pentikäinen, ‘Revenants’ in *Folklore: an encyclopedia of beliefs, customs, tales, music, and art* ((Vol II), ed. by Thomas A. Green (Santa Barbara, Calif. ; Oxford : ABC-CLIO, c1997.), pp 718-720 (p. 718).

statement may contribute to Meunier's paralysis. Before her accusation, as noted, he has seen her as a subject for experiment, not as a person with whom he might communicate. But Mrs Archer's experience of isolation places her in community with Latimer and Meunier. This provides an explanation for Meunier's paralysis: Mrs Archer is no longer a subject of experimentation, but someone who, like him, has undergone an experience of derision and mistrust. In this case, his strategy of gaining independence by exploiting connections of shared experience confounds him.

Like Meunier, Mirah must revise her former vocational narrative to involve a wider sympathetic community. However, the internal nature of Mirah's self-help narrative offers a positive way in which she can do this, following a disturbance to her former conception of a community of feeling. But the very fact that Mirah is able to connect with Daniel at all indicates that she is revising, if not reinterpreting, her individual code of behaviour in relation to her personal Jewish identity, tracing a psychological trajectory to self-help. Francesca's words themselves suggest an interpretative process of 'looking back' and both Allison Milbank⁹⁷ and Andrew Thompson⁹⁸ have read this scene as suggesting a reinterpretation of Jewish national identity through references to Italian culture. On seeing Daniel and meeting his gaze, Mirah is able to trust a non-Jew whom she has never seen before, revising her previous experience of a negative community of feeling. Considering her previous

⁹⁷ In a discussion of this scene in *Dante and the Victorians*, Milbank comments: 'For the first time Italian culture has enabled the representation – indeed the life – of Judaism in the person of Mirah, who responded to the words of Dante'. (Alison Milbank, *Dante and the Victorians*, p. 92).

⁹⁸ Andrew Thompson comments, in discussing this scene in *George Eliot and Italy*, that: Eliot translates a Jewish yearning for a national identity into the language and terms of the Italian *Risorgimento*. She was however faced with the greater problem of portraying the Jewish people and a culture essentially alien to British readers. Mirah and Daniel's singing of settings of Italian texts is part of a more sustained association of Jewish characters with Italy and its culture, in what amounts to a deliberate and carefully calculated hermeneutic strategy whereby the Jewish part of the novel is often mediated through Italian cultural references to provide 'a definite outline for our ignorance' (*George Eliot and Italy*, p. 171).

encounters with male non-Jews, this is astonishing. Such encounters have involved anti-Semitic prejudice, dramatized through the mocking comments of a passing gentleman (““There’s no race like [the Jews] for cunning in the men and beauty in the women””) and the appropriating gaze of male spectators at the theatre (““The plays I acted in were detestable to me. Men came about us and wanted to talk to me””) (215, 217), and finally, a lecherous Count: ““He worried me with his attentions, his eyes were always on me [...] I knew he meant to make love to me, and I had it firmly in my mind that [...] one who was not a Jew could have no love for me that was not half contempt”” (218). Eliot offers one explanation for this through allusions to an iconic image of instinctive emotional connection: that of Paolo and Francesca. References to Paolo and Francesca contextualize the power of emotions in a gaze, and through this an explanation for her ability to trust him. In Canto V, Francesca speaks of love as a compelling emotion and the power of this compelling love is dramatized by moments when their eyes meet: ““Per piu fiata li occhi ci sospinse quella lettura, e scolorocci il viso; ma solo un punto fu quell che ci vinse.””⁹⁹ [““One day/For our delight we read of Lancelot/ How him love thralled/Alone we were/.../Ofttimes by that reading/Our eyes were drawn together””].¹⁰⁰ In Eliot’s text, the passage describing Daniel’s and Mirah’s meeting is full of the imagery of compelling gaze:

Deronda [...] saw a figure who might have been an impersonation of the misery he was unconsciously giving voice to [...] Her eyes were fixed on the river with a look of immovable, statue-like despair. This strong arrest of his attention made him cease singing: apparently his voice had entered her inner world without her having taken any note of whence it came [...] [S]he changed her attitude slightly, and, looking round with a frightened glance, met Deronda’s face. It was but a couple of moments, but that seems a long while for two people to look straight at each other (187).

⁹⁹ Durling and Martinez, *Inferno*, Canto V: 130-132, p. 92.

¹⁰⁰ *Hell* Canto V:126-129, in Cary, p. 19.

However, Daniel and Mirah's gaze shares Francesca and Paolo's compulsion without their quality of tragic error. The astronomical imagery underlines this difference: while Dante meets the lovers in a space of 'muted light', Daniel and Mirah meet under starlight. But, more importantly, what compels their gazes is not a shared love of romance literature, but a shared sense of music and suffering. Their gaze is of instinctively kindled sympathy. Daniel first sees Mirah as 'an impersonation of the misery he was unconsciously giving voice to' and when Mirah sees him again, she remembers him as voicing this misery: 'But she did not speak for a few moments which were a renewal of their former gaze at each other. At last she said in a low sweet voice [...] "I saw you before," and then added dreamily, after a like pause, "nella miseria" ["in misery"] (190). In contrast, Francesca and Paolo are drawn together through shared reading of a powerful love which will ultimately bring them death.¹⁰¹ This misery will ultimately bring them a shared love (reversing Paolo and Francesca's trajectory of love-to-misery); but, for Mirah, it also recalls a process she has used to protect herself against malevolent surroundings. In contrast to the non-Jewish men she has met previously, who appropriate her through a contemptuous and external gaze, Daniel's singing connects with 'her inner world'. This is a world she has constructed through self-education to protect herself from her distressing surroundings:

I gathered thoughts very fast, because I read many things – plays and poetry, Shakespeare and Schiller, and learned evil and good [...] I made a life in my own thoughts quite different from everything about me: I chose what seemed to me beautiful out of the plays and everything, and made my world out of it (213).

¹⁰¹ See Durling and Martinez, *Inferno*, Canto V: 133-136, p. 92, and Cary, *Inferno*, Canto V: 129-133, p. 19.

The narrative emphasises a restoration of engagement for Mirah through the starlight imagery of the stars answering ‘Here am I’ to God’s call evokes the vocation of the Old Testament Isaiah. Mirah reflects this new, sanctified engagement with her comment that ‘God has commanded me to live’.

Mirah’s successful engagement with Daniel, created through a transrealist conjunction of astronomy, musical professionalization, and katabatic literature, signals the possibility of social engagement on her own terms: engagement which matches her internal world. Nadia Valman sees Mirah’s tale as a ‘progress towards martyrdom [...] a calvary that renders her a type of Christ’, actively presenting her Jewishness through imagery that a Christian could recognise.¹⁰² Valman also mentions the moral power of Mirah’s femininity: ‘Mirah has an appropriately submissive attitude [...] Narrated to the benevolent Mrs Meyrick following Mirah’s rescue from suicide by Deronda, her account is endowed with moral authority by her ingenuous vocal register.’¹⁰³ However, it is not just her ingenuous vocal register that brings her both moral authority and the chance of a sympathetic connection. Her years of study allow her to construct an instant image of professional refinement. Due to her recognition of the lines from *Otello*, Daniel is able to tell the Meyricks that Mirah knows Italian music. This in turn helps her to win shelter from the Meyricks. Mrs Meyrick introduces Mirah to her daughters as not just a suicide (and therefore potentially unchaste), but as a refined singer: “‘Here is a poor girl who was going to drown herself in despair [...] It seems she is a Jewess, but quite refined, he says – knowing Italian and music’”(200). The conjunction of ‘Italian’ and ‘music’ is proof of sufficient refinement to overcome the barriers of religion and

¹⁰² Nadia Valman, *The Jewess in Nineteenth-Century British Culture* (Cambridge: CUP, 2007), p.153.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, p. 152.

(possible) immorality. The combination of the phrases ‘Jewess, but quite refined’, ‘poor girl’ and ‘drown herself’ evokes some of the barriers that Mirah must overcome; these barriers are later confirmed through Mrs Meyrick’s own internal musings over the consequences of hosting Mirah: “‘One can hardly imagine this creature having an evil thought in her head, but wise people would tell me to be cautious’” (209). David Golby’s history of nineteenth-century female vocalists provides an explanation of the power this conjunction; he notes that ‘Italian singers in particular were revered and rewarded accordingly’.¹⁰⁴ Mirah’s self-education has brought her an instant connection of social respect. This connection with the Meyricks anticipates Mirah’s social success as a professional female vocalist, in which what Daniel describes as “‘such first-rate teaching – or rather first-rate instinct with her teaching’ gives the impression ‘that you might imagine her singing all came by nature’” (435). Daniel’s description highlights the public perception of her internal navigation, emphasising how this navigation can bring her engagement with her surrounding community. Mirah’s associations of unspoiled innocence exemplify the attributes that David Golby assigns to successful professional singers of the nineteenth century. There was, he comments, a ‘popular perception of the singer themselves being the “instrument”, the voice “formed and tuned by God himself”, without the type of impure, human, mechanical “enhancement” required by any instrumentalist’. Consequently, ‘[p]ractitioners such as the upper-class female amateur vocalist [...] were seen to possess a ‘wholly beneficent influence’.¹⁰⁵ Mirah’s self-disciplined innocence helps her to win the social approval that allows her to support herself.

¹⁰⁴ David J. Golby, *Instrumental Teaching in Nineteenth-Century Britain* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004), pp. 56-57.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

In contrast to Mirah, Meunier's ending does not explore a revised strategy of self-help; little information is given, although the image of sympathetic union is again evoked with Latimer's comment: 'There had been no witness of the scene in the dying room except Meunier, and while Meunier lived his lips were sealed by a promise to me'. However, this suggests that Meunier's work to perform his experiment is useless: if his lips are sealed, then he cannot publish the results. He has also lost control over the possibility of publication: his lips are not sealed for the duration of Latimer's or Bertha's lives, but for his own. Unlike Mirah, who gains a context of both internal and social independence, Charles's vocational independence becomes limited by his inability to re-imagine his emotional connections. There is no suggestion that this bond of shared mistrust will be expanded to include others. Other scientists emphasised the role of emotional and philosophical knowledge in a trajectory of improvement: George Stephenson placed his successful perseverance in a context of trust: 'I was trusted in some small matters, and succeeded in giving satisfaction. Greater trusts were reposed in me, in which I also succeeded [...] [T]he results of my perseverance you have this day witnessed'¹⁰⁶, but this is a trajectory of gradually expanding trust. John Tyndall argues that scientific investigation itself must be more than a scientific problem; in fact, it is an imaginative problem: 'Scientific men fight shy of the word [imagination] because of its ultra-scientific connotations; but the fact is, that, without the exercise of this power, our knowledge of nature would be a mere tabulation of co-existences and sequences'.¹⁰⁷ Eliot's texts emphasise not only the role of others in creating conditions of self-help, but also the necessity of emotional knowledge of both self and others in achieving

¹⁰⁶ George Stephenson, 'Speech to Mechanics' Institute at Belper, July 6th, 1841,' quoted in the *Life of George Stephenson* by Samuel Smiles (London: John Murray, 1857), p. 37.

'tenacity in the face of life's trials' and persevering through conflict to a successful transformation.

Exotic Cultures and Educating Spaces of Dialogue

While my discussions of Gwendolen and Bertha, Mirah and Meunier have explored the process of preparing to engage with external communities, my discussion of Latimer and the Meyrick family will evaluate the educational process of engaging with external communities, moving from a narrowness of cultural perception to actions of shared autonomy. This engagement process evokes nineteenth-century debates about educational contexts: prospective nineteenth-century teachers were encouraged to develop wider cultural abilities, whether of foreign language skills, as the Brontë sisters sought to do in order to increase their employment value,¹⁰⁸ or sewing and knitting skills, as Ragged School teachers were encouraged to hone in order to foster shared relationships with the parents of their pupils.¹⁰⁹ In *Deronda*, as I shall demonstrate, group dialogue dramatizes the complexities of cultural education through a meeting of disparate social traditions, as the astronomical imagery associated with the Meyrick family underlines.

Though stargazing encodes Gwendolen's estrangement with education, it indicates a different sort of problem with the Meyrick family: uncritical narrowness. The Meyricks, like Gwendolen, are unsettled from their initial position, and the imagery uses the metaphor of a telescope to indicate their critical movement. Dialogue contextualizes this transformation of perspective. Contemporary

¹⁰⁷ John Tyndall, *Fragments of Science: On the Scientific Use of the Imagination* (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1871), p. 111.

¹⁰⁸ See Juliet Barker, *The Brontës* (London: Phoenix, 1995), p. 362.

representations of dialogue used images of communal discussion as a lively form of education: the mid-nineteenth-century *English Woman's Journal* contained an 'Open Council' section in which respondents teased out educational topics in written discussion; the etiquette series 'Conduct and Carriage' in the *Ladies' Treasury* depicted a mother pursuing her daughter's social education through conversation. Dialogue also traces the development of an educational identity in *Veil*: Latimer's social difficulties place him in the context of narrators who use a consciously liminal persona to cement skills of observational dialogue which allow them to educate others.

One of these is a 1840s creation by Eliot. This persona, a man called Macarthy, is the subject of Eliot's series 'Poetry and Prose, from the Notebook of an Eccentric' (1846-1847). Though, unlike Latimer, Macarthy is not 'a misanthropist, all compact of bitter sarcasm' his separation from society also stems from uncanny insight: Macarthy has 'a preternaturally sharpened vision, which saw knots and blemishes, where all was smoothness to others'. This vision naturally separates him from those around him.¹¹⁰ Another observational persona is Jean-Jacques Rousseau, particularly as presented in his *Confessions* (1782). His *Confessions* have a didactic and useful purpose, emphasised by his appeal to his reader 'by my misfortunes [...] not to destroy a unique and useful work [...] for the study of men, a study which certainly has not yet begun'.¹¹¹ Contemporary etiquette manual *The Habits of Good Society* also constructs a liminal persona, 'The Man in the Club Window', who opens his dialogue with his readers by justifying his right to instruct through the fact

¹⁰⁹ See Larsen, p.141.

¹¹⁰ George Eliot, 'Poetry and Prose, From the Notebooks of an Eccentric' in *Essays of George Eliot*, ed. by Thomas Pinney (London: Routledge, 1963), pp. 13-26 (p. 15).

that he has remained aloof from society due to an illness.¹¹² This aloofness, he explains, has given him a heightened wisdom, as he is at once in society and yet not of it and so has been able to reflect on a range of behaviour: ‘What I see, indeed, is what any one may see in the streets of London, but I see it all calmly; and having nothing else to do, I observe in these ordinary outlines details which would escape many others’.¹¹³

In *Veil* and *Deronda*, dialogue, whether between the narrator and the reader or between characters, produces an educational narrative by dramatizing the observation and evaluation of associations in transrealist conjunction. The association theory of development (the assumption that ‘mental life is derived from sensory and perceptual stimulation’) was a matter of psychological controversy in the Victorian period, as Rick Rylance explores in detail.¹¹⁴ However, as Rylance observes, Eliot uses association as a form of narrative articulation.¹¹⁵

Eliot’s instructions about story-telling configure association with others as development through a narrative process. In her essay ‘Story-Telling’,¹¹⁶ she explores the technique of storytelling by comparing it to the ‘instruments of thought’. She argues that we learn storytelling through associative links in our own lives:

The modes of telling a story founded on these processes of outward and inward life derive their effectiveness from the superior mastery of images [...]our earliest, strongest impressions, our most intimate convictions, are simply images added to more or less of sensation.¹¹⁷

¹¹¹ Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Confessions in The Confessions; and Correspondence, including the letters to Malesherbes*, Vol. V in *The Collected Writings of Jean-Jacques Rousseau*, ed. by Christopher Kelly, Roger D. Masters, and Peter G. Stillman; translated by Christopher Kelly (Hanover: University Press of New England, 1998), p. 3.

¹¹² *The Habits of Good Society*, p. 13-p.14.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, p.16.

¹¹⁴ Rick Rylance, *Victorian Psychology and British Culture, 1850-1880* (Oxford: OUP, 2000), p. 57 (also see pp.55-69).

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 220.

¹¹⁶ No precise date for this essay exists, but Charles Lee Lewes judges it to be between 1872 and 1879. George Eliot, ‘Story-Telling’ in *Leaves from a Notebook in Essays of George Eliot*, ed. Thomas Pinney, pp. 444-446 (p. 445).

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*

In both *Deronda* and *Veil*, Eliot uses storytelling dialogue around Latimer and the Meyrick family, respectively, to create associative links which interrogate cultural otherness, whether it is spaces of distance between the 'othered' Latimer or associations of the exotic with the Jewish Mirah.

Modern critics have pointed out the links between narrativity, dialogue and the development of identity. In an exploration of the links between psychological development and narrative constructions, Valerie Hardcastle discusses representations of self-narration as a form of assessing the self in relation to society, tracing various resonances of control. She comments that narratives can reveal the process of social evaluation: '[S]tories can only be told if they fit into the social milieu. If they don't already fit exactly, they are altered such that they do fit. Narrators of self adjust, correct, edit, and modify their descriptions of the self so that it will remain in the appropriate relation to others'.¹¹⁸ Similarly, Latimer's narrative breaks and inconsistencies evaluate the process of psychological construction through his observation of society, providing an education in the formation of social identity.

Eliot indicates the need for evaluation (and re-evaluation) through cognitive estrangement depicted through the transrealist interplay of associations. The use of the fantastic in story telling becomes an educational process, encoding concerns about perception (of self, of others) and of emotional/ethical reactions and engagement. Latimer uses the language of death and the liminal quality of uncanny foresight to criticise both himself and those around him, leading the reader to a point of self-assessment before aligning themselves with him: he educates the reader. His

¹¹⁸ Ibid, p. 444.

dialogue is one-sided, so he can only represent true engagement through distance. Latimer's narrative encodes the potential of transformative engagement through education. He breaks his narration of events to address the reader with questions and observations. He initially courts the reader's sympathy and attention, but by the end, he assumes that the reader has given these to him. His uncanny insight foregrounds a process of revaluation through social observation, highlighting the potential and challenges in perceiving deeper issues in surrounding interactions. Mrs Archer's mesmeric death bed scene dramatizes the consequences of extended knowledge of others. Comparing associations of the fantastic in dialogic sequences in both texts demonstrates how the educational potential of dialogue lies in the realignment of associative patterns. My discussion will trace this transrealist process of dissonant realignment, starting with the recasting of the unknown as exotic (recognizing a need for reinterpretation), proceeding to a re-evaluation of social contexts, and finally, the realization of shifts in perceptions, which, if developed fully, leads to the transformation of cultural definitions.

Both Latimer and the Meyricks begin their critical engagement with external cultures by offering a process of interpreting exotic associations. While Ellen Argyros sees Latimer's asides to the reader as 'a rather violent rhetorical strategy [. . .] [of] self-pitying rantings' which, although potentially sympathetic in that they 'make us want to identify ourselves with a more humane response to human suffering', are 'off-puttingly manipulative' in their 'neurotic agency',¹¹⁹ I suggest that Latimer's questioning offers a educational space through interpreting exoticised entities. His glimpse of Prague is both his happiest vision and his first proof of his prevision, and so has a positive place in the narrative as a whole. He signals these

positive associations in his first description of Prague as a ‘new and wondrous scene’, and this sense of wonder is bound up with a sense of distance: ‘a city under the broad sunshine, that seemed to me as if it were the summer sunshine of a long-past century arrested in its course’. Having constructed this attractive image, he assigns this city and its inhabitants qualities which he possesses: Prague’s inhabitants are ‘doomed to live on in the stale repetition of memories’ – and yet still possess a ‘time-eaten grandeur’ and ‘regal gold-inwoven tatters’ despite being ‘weary’, ‘deposed and superannuated’ (9). Through this, he constructs elements of himself as exotic and then invites the reader to speculate on this process in two ways: he questions the source of this vision – is it a dream? Or ‘the poet’s nature in [Latimer], hitherto only a troubled yearning sensibility, now manifesting itself suddenly as spontaneous creation’ (10)?

He then invites speculation on the vision itself, by associating it with famous literary geographies (‘Surely it was in this way that Homer saw the plain of Troy, that Dante saw the abodes of the departed, that Milton saw the earthward flight of the Tempter’), and finally inquires as to appropriate categorizations of genre: fiction, biography, philosophical reflection. Although his questions offer no resolution, they train the reader in art of critical observation by linking sources of curiosity, recalling the educational advice in *Emile*: ‘Make your pupil attentive to the phenomena of nature. Soon you will make him curious. But to feed his curiosity, never hurry to satisfy it. Put the questions within his reach and leave them to him to resolve.’¹²⁰

While Latimer’s narrative invites the reader to speculate upon the exotic, the Meyrick family extends this speculation into dialogue. Their technique of managing

¹¹⁹ Ellen Argyros, ‘Without any check or proud reserve’: *Sympathy And Its Limits In George Eliot's Novels* (New York, NY: Peter Lang, 1999), p. 104.

¹²⁰ Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Émile or, On Education*, ed. by Allan Bloom (New York: Basic Books, 1979), p. 168.

the unknown is to associate it with a literary or textual occurrence: the mysterious ‘Mr Deronda’ becomes ‘Prince Camaralzaman’, a character from a tale in the *Arabian Nights*.¹²¹ However, while Daniel remains unknown and distant as Prince Camaralzaman, other exoticised individuals who interrupt their immediate sphere develop an extended relationship. Latimer uses exotic associations to inspire speculation through distancing, but the Meyricks use exotic associations to extend communication.

The narrative encodes their introduction to Mirah with associations that emphasise their secluded perspective, but also suggest possibilities of engagement. Their first encounter with her constructs her as a wounded soldier. The sisters have been reading Erckmann-Chatrion’s *Histoire d’un Conscrit* (1864) and have found it extremely moving; Mab, in particular, has been filled with passionate sympathy for the characters, exclaiming that “‘I wish I had three wounded conscripts to take care of’”(198). When Mirah enters their home, as a refugee, Mab sees her as an extension of this text: ‘Mab looked rather awe-stricken, as if this answer to her wish were something preternatural [...] The poor wanderer [...] was looking at each of them in turn [...] “We will take care of you – we will comfort you – we will love you,” cried Mab, no longer able to restrain herself, and taking the small right hand caressingly between both her own’ (200). Of course, her sympathy is a touching response to Mirah’s difficulty. But the source of and the enactment of Mab’s sympathy problematize the process, indicating a need for sympathetic engagement to stem from depth of insight and sincere communication. *Histoire d’un Conscrit* is a combined work by nineteenth-century French writing duo Erckmann and Chatrion.

¹²¹ Alicia Carroll notes that Prince Camaralzaman is a highly desexualized figure in the *Arabian Nights* tale, and the Meyrick sisters feel that Daniel is so heroic that no woman could be good enough for him. Alicia Carroll, ‘Arabian Nights’:

In *Mes Haines* (1866), Émile Zola criticized the pair for the lack of emotional reality in their narratives, characterizing Erckmann-Chatrion's works by 'un mensonge éternel dans les peintures de l'âme' ['a constant falsity in emotional portraits'] [*Translation mine*].¹²² However, though the link with the works of Erckmann-Chatrion as a whole signals emotional naïveté on the Meyrick sisters' part, their interest in *Histoire d'un Conscrit* suggests the possibility of change: Zola approved of this work, saying that in it 'L'écrivain a trouvé des couleurs admirables de vérité et de vigueur pour peindre cette lutte dernière d'un homme' ['The writer has found admirable hues of truth and vigour with which to paint this last struggle of a man'] [*Translation mine*].¹²³ The Meyricks assign the external entity an association with a book – but then extend beyond this association to dramatize struggles of emotional communication, through links between Mirah and Queen Budoor of the *Arabian Nights*.

Alicia Carroll usefully points out that the text's evocation of the *Arabian Nights* tale 'Prince Camaralzaman and Queen Budoor' delineates some of the tensions between Deronda and Mirah.¹²⁴ Yet Carroll misses the fact that the *Arabian Nights* contains another tale featuring a heroine named Budoor. Imagery from the two tales merges around the figure of Budoor. In the tale of Ibn Mansoor and the Lady Budoor and Jubeyr the Son of Esh-Shey Baree, the Lady Budoor has 'thin lips, like two pieces of carnelian';¹²⁵ in the story of Kamar ez-Zaman, Queen Budoor's 'lips

'Make-Believe, Exoticism, and Desire in Daniel Deronda', *Journal Of English And Germanic Philology*, 98 (1999), 219-238 (p. 220).

¹²² Émile Zola, *Mes Haines* (Paris: Charpentier, 1893), p. 181.

¹²³ Zola, p.197.

¹²⁴ Alicia Carroll, p. 232. NB. This Prince's name appears with a variety of spellings, according to the translation: for example, Qamar Al Zaman, Kamar ez-Zaman, as well as Camaralzaman.

¹²⁵ 'The tale of Ibn Mansoor and the Lady Budoor and Jubeyr the Son of Esh-Shey Baree' in *The Arabian Nights' Entertainments*, trans. by Edward Lane, vol. 2 (London : Charles Knight and Co., Ludgate Street, 1839-1841), p 477-493 (p.480).

resemble coral and carnelian'.¹²⁶ Since, according to Edward Lane in his popular annotated translation of 1841, the name 'Budoor' means 'Full Moon', both Budoor-heroines are associated with moon imagery. The Queen Budoor is synonymous with moonlight, as one observer explains: 'She turned up her face towards the moon of heaven and shewed me two moons in the same instant'. The Lady Budoor also evokes the moon; the narrator recalls that, 'I beheld a fair damsel, like the moon when it appears in its fourteenth night'.¹²⁷ By terming Mirah 'Budoor', the Meyrick sisters link her not just with one tale, but with a wider tradition.

In the second Budoor tale, the Lady Budoor shares qualities with Mirah which Queen Budoor does not. In this tale, the heroine uses music to communicate. Her 'voice of lamentation, proceeding from a sorrowful heart, warbling melodious sounds' engages the narrator's sympathy; her melodic taunting of her estranged suitor propels their rapprochement. By associating Mirah with Budoor the musical heroine, the narrative suggests a more nuanced emotional portrait of Mirah as having autonomy through communication, responding to the association with Zola's criticism on narration; it also prefigures Mirah's deepening engagement with the Meyrick family and with her surrounding community as her musical skills gain her respect and the Meyrick sisters find their prior perceptions of Jewish culture challenged through depictions of Jewish musical space.

In both texts, spaces of shared uncertainty appear as an important part of dialogue. The interplay of associations suggests a re-thinking of social observations in *Veil*, foregrounding the arbitrary nature of constructions of marriage; in *Daniel Deronda*, this shared uncertainty extends to enact a new intersectional space.

¹²⁶ 'The Tale of Kamar ez-Zaman and the Lady Budoor' in *The Arabian Nights' Entertainments*, trans. by Edward Lane vol. 2, pp. 79-148 (p.89).

¹²⁷ 'Ibn Mansoor and the Lady Budoor', p. 480.

Latimer first reflects on the role of uncertainty in maintaining an experience of survival, inviting the reader to join him in his speculations. He covers a range of situations in order to prove his assertion of the ‘absolute need’ of humanity for the maintenance of ‘doubt and hope and effort’. While his earlier assertions had focused on a poetic identity, here he widens his examples to include a wider society. He dramatizes various differing members of society enacting uncertainty: a financier would ‘rush fiercely to the Exchange for our last possibility of speculation, of success, of disappointment’; ‘political prophets’ would ‘foretell [...] a crisis or a no-crisis within the only twenty-four hours left open to prophecy’. He sums this up with the pronouncement that: ‘Art and philosophy, literature and science, would fasten like bees on that one proposition which had the honey of probability in it’ (29).

Latimer’s observations evoke a wider cultural context of speculations on marriage by encoding debate through the use of serpent imagery. While associations of serpents cast doubt on Bertha’s character (see above), they also cast doubt on Latimer’s strength of assessment. Latimer pulls his reader into taking part in a consciously inconsistent assessment of a marriage; the serpentine imagery recalls other questionable assessments. Serpentine imagery suggests ambiguity in the construction of feminine identity even more markedly in the situation of a husband conflating his wife with snakes in a troubled marriage in Eliot’s novella, ‘Janet’s Repentance’ (from *Scenes of Clerical Life*, 1857). In this text, featuring the abusive Paul Dempster and his long-suffering wife, Janet, the depths of Paul’s deterioration into delusion is marked by his verbalized conflation of his wife’s body with serpents. His delirium is such that this conflation is transformative, and also cumulative; he begins from a peripheral point by observing that ‘her hair is all serpents [...] they’re black serpents [...] they hiss [...] they hiss’, then cries that “‘her arms are serpents

[...] they are great white serpents” and finally turns inward towards her heart: “her bosom is cold [...] it is black [...] it is all serpents”.¹²⁸ Latimer’s serpentine conflation takes place within a troubled marriage as well, though it is not violent. The ambiguity of the serpentine conflation points towards a troubled context of assessment: the difficulty of judging Latimer and Bertha’s marriage from the perspective of a male speaker. The fact that Latimer can see Bertha’s thoughts at times permits a questioning of his omniscient role: would Bertha agree with Latimer in this evocation of her thoughts? Can the reader rely on Latimer’s reporting of her emotions?

By raising these questions, Eliot’s narrative dramatizes tensions of power in the every-day misery of a broken marriage. A.J. Hammerton argues that though high-profile cases of marital violence commanded attention in the press (circa 1858), cases of what he terms ‘mundane cruelty’ actually propelled changes in divorce laws. He explains that these changes arose because of difficulties in assessment:

The more sensational cases [...] presented few legal difficulties for judges once the charges were proved[...] On the other hand more common and mundane cruelty charges [...] which required more detailed judicial scrutiny [...] are revealing of problems arising from the exercise of authority in marriage, which changing attitudes in society were causing to be judged differently in the courts. ¹²⁹

The impact of this ambiguity of assessment could be at the root of the failed marriage itself, as well as in the divorce court. The transrealist interplay of associations in the narrative encourages the reader to sift the rights and wrongs of Latimer and Bertha’s marriage; through this process, the narrative emphasizes the

¹²⁸ George Eliot, ‘Janet’s Repentance’ in *Scenes of Clerical Life*, ed. by Jennifer Gribble (London: Penguin, 1998), pp. 196-350 (p. 321).

¹²⁹ A.J. Hammerton, *Cruelty and Companionship: Conflict in Nineteenth-Century Married Life* (London: Routledge, 1992), p.123.

complexities of interpretation in a context of increasing alienation, placing the reader in the position of a contemporary divorce judge.

While Latimer imagines the possibility of differing cultural elements uniting around a shared experience of uncertainty, this union is enacted in *Daniel Deronda*, becoming a process which explores the initial difficulties as well as ensuing potential. The narrative dramatizes out elements of mutual incomprehension between religious cultures, particularly when the Meyrick sisters accompany Mirah to her synagogue. This incomprehension stems from pre-determined narratives. Amy and Mab's ideas of Mirah have been influenced by Scott's *Rebecca* and this clouds their view of her as an autonomous individual, since the sisters 'found the Jewish faith less reconcilable with their wishes in her case than in that of Scott's *Rebecca*' (361-362).¹³⁰ The phrase 'reconcilable with their wishes' underlines the element of control in their dialogue with her. In contrast to this pre-determined narrative, Mirah's cradle song provides a way in which they can understand Jewish culture.

Though the Meyricks may not feel the precise resonances of Jewish tradition which Daniel feels in "the lisped syllables [...] very full of meaning", this song provides a bridge from Jewish liturgical experience to wider experiences of family affection. Eliot was familiar with the importance of Jewish ritual and liturgy as a way of maintaining traditional culture, as Jane Irwin explores in her edition of the *Daniel Deronda Notebooks*. Eliot linked the sounds of the Hebrew language with the maintenance of Hebrew national identity, copying quotations from Levi VI, 56:

¹³⁰ Daniel sees the Meyrick family as a positive shelter for Mirah, because they are kind, generous and innocent: they have a romantic readiness to believe in innocent need and to help it: 'They hardly knew of any evil closer to them than what lay in history-books, and dramas, and would at once associate a lovely Jewess with Rebecca in "Ivanhoe"' (194). Their identification of Mirah with Scott's Rebecca is both positive and negative: Rebecca was a hugely popular representation of a Jewess as a figure of principle in the nineteenth century, but her story also contains elements of conversion narratives, as Nadia Valman points out. See Nadia Valman, *The Jewess in Nineteenth-Century British Literary Fiction*, p. 20-34 for

‘In the Assyrian character, the Hebrew language & the Egyptian dialect, didst thou cause the Hebrew daughter (the nation) to inherit thy law. Thou didst cause the Beth to precede the Aleph in the beginning of the creation’.¹³¹ Cradle songs in Jewish folksong tradition emphasize the importance of hearing the sound of the Hebrew syllables in a context of domestic affection as part of the transfer of tradition from one generation to another.¹³²

While there is no evidence that Eliot was aware of these songs, Mirah enacts elements of these experiences, allowing the scenes in the Meyrick household to interrogate interactions between English and Jewish culture as educational processes. The Meyricks are impressed by the maternal affection contextualizing Mirah’s song. Mrs Meyrick introduces it as part of Mirah’s childhood development, as well as part of Jewish tradition: “‘It is the Hebrew hymn she remembers her mother singing over her when she lay in her cot,’” said Mrs. Meyrick’ (373). The hymn provides localized access to Jewish culture: as it is associated with mother’s love, they can understand the depth of tradition in Jewish culture in this form. It leads Mrs Meyrick to comment that, ‘Friendships begin with liking or gratitude—roots that can be pulled up. Mother’s love begins deeper down’ (373).

The discussion of Mirah’s cradle song develops into a general discussion about religious identity. Mrs Meyrick values family identity above religious identity: “‘I am neither quite Scotch, nor quite French, nor two Calvinists rolled into one, yet I honour my parents’ memory.’”(375) Mirah’s response emphasizes to her, family

further detail, particularly p. 32 for an exploration of a Christianization of Jewish musical culture through the character of Rebecca.

¹³¹ George Eliot, *George Eliot’s Daniel Deronda Notebooks*, ed. by Jane Irwin (Cambridge: CUP, 1996), p. 201.

¹³² Ronald H. Isaacs, *Jewish Music: Its History, People, and Song* (Northvale: Jason Aronson, 1997), p. 153. ‘Some Yiddish folk songs were cradle songs, in which a mother is portrayed praying for her child’s health and happiness. Other Yiddish folk songs dealt with the importance of early initiation of a child into Jewish learning, including teaching young children the Hebrew alphabet’. Also see M.D. Gol’din *Evreiskaia narodnaia pesnia : antologiiia* [Jewish Folk Songs: anthology] (Moskva : Kompozitor, 1994), pp. 386-393 for variants.

and religious identity are one: ‘ “But I could not make myself not a Jewess,” said Mirah, insistently, “even if I changed my belief ””(375). While Mrs Meyrick acknowledges Mirah’s response, her cheerful statement that ‘there would come a time when there would be no Jews to be seen’ as a result of gradual syncretism between the two religions demonstrates that she has failed to understand the multi-faceted nature of Mirah’s faith. Mirah’s continued loyalty to her faith in the face of this misunderstanding demonstrates the educational strength of the cradle song: ““Oh, please not to say that,” said Mirah, the tears gathering. “It is the first unkind thing you ever said. I will not begin that. I will never separate myself from my mother's people”” (375). Her emphasis on the importance of maintaining her tradition reflects the effects of her cradle education.

Suggestions that Mirah might abandon her religion recall pressure upon Anglo-Jews throughout the nineteenth century to convert. Geoffrey Alderman observes that such pressure was extensive: ‘In 1826 the Philo-Judaeon Society had been established. Its purpose – to kill Judaism by kindness – was far more sinister, for it proposed to bring about the conversion of British Jewry by aiding and abetting their civil emancipation and their social integration’.¹³³ Jewish novelists criticized these activities extensively in works like Charlotte Montefiore’s *Caleb Asher* (1845), which accuses the hypocrisy of Christian missionaries towards Jews, and Matthias Levy’s *The Hasty Marriage* (1857), linked changes in Jewish practice to fears of conversion.¹³⁴ An awareness of this context underlines the fact that the act of apparently innocent discussion could have hypocritical associations, suggesting a non-abstract persuasion of Mirah. As in *Veil*, the interplay of associations evokes

¹³³ Geoffrey Alderman, *Modern British Jewry* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1992), p. 70.

¹³⁴ For more extensive discussion on this matter, see Geoffrey Alderman, *Modern British Jewry*, p. 70

critical debate. However, the communal nature of this debate emphasizes the intersectional resonances in the transrealist clash of cultures. Mirah's hurt response contrasts with the Meyricks' cheerful theorizing; to her, the experience of representing religion affects her identity, while to the Meyricks, this is an abstract discussion. Their exchange provides instruction in cross-cultural dialogue, suggesting that it must balance a multi-directional web of associative experiences in order to succeed.

Finally, scenes of dissonance explore the process of an empathetic shift in perspective. Eliot's use of imagery in these scenes emphasizes both the difficulty and the potential in linking oneself with others. Both Latimer and the Meyricks encounter characters who are strange to them and undergo a shift in perception due to their encounters with these characters. A re-reading of Latimer's reaction to Mrs Archer in the light of Eliot's essay on story-telling and association suggests that this marks a point of new (if late) development for him, one which then extends outwards to others through the creation of a new narrative identity. In scenes with the Meyricks, this process is more defined, as her use of telescopic imagery evokes a transrealist shift in perspective as a physical transformation.

Latimer's narrative demonstrates the difficulties in identifying with others; in the scene of the experiment with Mrs Archer, these difficulties become acutely traumatic. Jill Matus emphasises some of the trauma involved in Latimer perceiving others; first he 'uncover[s] the horror of others', then he is 'taken over by the thoughts and feelings of others'.¹³⁵ But a re-reading of transrealist conjunctions in the Mrs Archer scene suggests that Latimer is not merely perceiving others, but seeing himself in others – a type of self-separation through emotional association.

Tracing the development of Latimer's descriptions of Mrs Archer suggests an awakening of empathy in Latimer. His earlier descriptions indicate previous constructions of her as actively malevolent: On page 35, he describes her as possessing a 'coarse hard nature' and an 'odious finish of bold, self-confident coquetry' – the word 'finish' suggests a veneer which may not be accurate. He is also separated from her socially, since she is a female servant. After the psychological revelation, he comments that 'this scene seemed of one texture with the rest of my existence: horror was my familiar, and this new revelation was only like an old pain recurring with new circumstances' (42). This comment indicates Latimer's continued unhappiness; the revelation that his wife has plotted to murder him is an outward manifestation of their mutual hatred. However, an earlier exclamation suggests a movement of emotion in him. The use of exclamation marks and of blasphemy in his exclamation 'Great God! Is this what it is to live again!' indicates that his emotions have been stirred beyond what he is willing to admit by some element in this scene. In the light of the fact that his speculations on the revelation are more focussed on Mrs Archer than on Bertha, his comment that 'this scene seemed of one texture with the rest of my existence' may be a reflection on experiences shared with Mrs Archer as well as on his own unfortunate life. Mrs Archer returns from the dead to reveal not only that Bertha has been plotting murder, but that Bertha has mistreated her, made her unhappy and prejudiced others against her.¹³⁶ This is an experience that Latimer shares, and having heard her tell her mistreatment, his ensuing description constructs her as a passive victim rather than

¹³⁵ Jill Matus, *Shock, Memory and the Unconscious in Victorian Fiction* (Cambridge: CUP, 2009), p. 141.

¹³⁶ Jill Galvan also links Mrs Archer to Latimer, due to his own 'sickly body' (see Jill Galvan, 'The Narrator As Medium' In George Eliot's "The Lifted Veil", *Victorian Studies: An Interdisciplinary Journal Of Social, Political, And Cultural Studies* ' 48 (2006), 240-248 (p. 242)), yet I feel that the fact that they are both rejected by society due to the influence of Bertha reflects a stronger emotional connection.

an agent of malevolence: 'The wretched woman's heart-strings had been set to hatred and vengeance'. Latimer's awakening of sympathy towards Mrs Archer is slight, but enough to awaken powers of authorship, in that the narrative indicates that it is the event which inspires Latimer's decision to write his memoir, due to the fact that it has been building towards this climactic scene. Jill Galvan argues that it 'becomes an allegory for Latimer's own status as a conduit of information'. However, she subsumes Latimer's narrative autonomy beneath that of Eliot's, representing him as a medium and that 'the story he hastens to tell us is the product of Eliot's imagination'.¹³⁷ But Latimer not only relays experiences; he analyses and comments upon them as well, suggesting a man of letters. While he is, of course, Eliot's artistic creation, she creates in him a conscious observer.

Latimer's gift of uncanny foresight works in his favour here; as he knows the precise moment of his death, he can 'use my last hours of ease and strength in telling the strange story of my experience' – as opposed to Mrs Archer, who has only a few brief moments to tell her story. His construction of death, while containing fear and uncertainty, also contains a element of hopefulness to it in the words 'moving onwards': 'Darkness – darkness – no pain – nothing but darkness: but I am passing on and on through the darkness: my thought stays in the darkness, but always with a sense of moving onwards' (3). While for the reader, this is simply the beginning of Latimer's development, for Latimer, this represents a new narrative of autobiography and social observation. This narrative, as well as representing the prospect of readerly sympathy, also places him within a writerly community of social observation. His self-construction of his narrative within this community gives him a new autonomy, made evident by contrasting his narrative with Macarthy, another

¹³⁷ Galvan, p. 242.

observatorial persona of Eliot's. While Latimer frames his own narrative, Macarthy relies on another to disseminate his words: Macarthy, before his death, bequeathes to his only friend a collection of manuscripts 'as the only memorial I have to give [...] use them as you will'. The friend examines these essays and musings and delivers selections to the reader.

Latimer's conditions of writing – of becoming an artist – are arbitrary, as they depend on his having enough independent income to support himself, and to live in a separate household from his hostile wife; when contrasted to the experience of Mrs Archer, these conditions become a question. Would Latimer have had the time to produce his narrative if he had been a servant? These experiences examine his methods of portraying his ideals, underlining his inconsistencies but in doing so, turning them into a question for his reader. His double-consciousness becomes a double-narrative as he reflects on his own experiences; this transrealist conjunction suggests that purpose can be discovered in sifting life, rather than an uninterrogated striving after ideals.

While a sifting of Latimer's narrative suggests a spark of transformative empathy, the Meyricks' discussions make such a shift literal. Their encounters with Mr Klesmer, a professional musician, cause them to unbalance their previous conceptions of themselves and of their connection to society. Eliot encodes the strength of this process through telescopic imagery. In her introduction to the Meyricks, Eliot describes their little home as being 'as necessary and uncriticised a part of their world as the stars of the Great Bear seen from the back windows'; the Meyricks may watch the stars, but only see one constellation (196). However, when Julius Klesmer visits, they find their safe home shifting in size as they imagine it from a critical viewpoint of the cosmopolitan landscape which Mr Klesmer evokes.

The imagery of shifting in size responds to the earlier description of their uncriticised world, signalling a change in critical perspective. A visit from Mr Klesmer, challenges their perceptions of their family community and forces them to perceive Mirah as an object of respect rather than of pity. To the Meyrick sisters, part of Mr Klesmer's fascination stems from his social connections: he is able to grant Mirah the entrée to polite society. The Meyrick sisters find him something beyond their previous experience which pierces their domestic self-satisfaction: 'when he entered, the rooms shrank into closets, the cottage piano, Mab thought, seemed a ridiculous toy, and the entire family existence as petty and private as an establishment of mice in the Tuileries' (482). The narrator mediates their perception, attributing this shift in perception to a reaction to Klesmer's multi-faceted character: 'Klesmer's personality, especially his way of glancing round him, immediately suggested vast areas and a multitudinous audience, and probably they made the usual scenery of his consciousness' (482). By explaining the change in size as a reaction to new landscapes evoked by Klesmer, the experience of transrealist disjunctions within the narrative emphasizes the constraints of the Meyricks' home. Throughout the course of his visit, the Meyricks see representatives of Jewish culture as strong: the narrative emphasises that though the Meyricks may be awed by Klesmer, Mirah is not. After Klesmer departs, Mrs Meyrick comments with admiration on Mirah's cultural knowledge: "But what was the German quotation you were so ready with, Mirah – you learned puss?" Mirah's amused reply indicates that she is confident in a world which shakes the foundations of the Meyricks' existence.

Having learned to challenge their own perspective, the Meyricks must reconstruct previous cultural narratives. When word of Mirah's long-lost brother reaches them, they must abandon their hopes of converting her. Their discussion of

this reveals a change in power and a new narrative in this acceptance. In a conversion narrative, she is an object on which their ideals could be enacted; in a sibling narrative, she shares their emotions, allowing a true relationship of empathy to arise between them. Previously, the Meyricks have imagined Mirah as fulfilling hopes of prevailing conversion narratives. The family constructs a new romance around Mirah, which allows them to see her in a more autonomous social identity. This romance coalesces around initial objection. When Mrs Meyrick announces that Mirah's brother has been found, Hans and Kate react with anger (““Oh, confound it!””) and disappointment (““I *cannot* help being rather sorry””) (579), reflecting their respective hopes for Mirah (Hans dreams of marrying her and Kate wishes her to convert). Not only does this opposition strengthen Mrs Meyrick's determination to relate the news in full, but it also contributes an antagonist for a new sibling narrative. Mab responds to Hans's comment by imagining her feelings if her brother had been lost: ““Hans, that is wicked [...] suppose we had lost you”” (579)? This comment then inspires further speculations, building a tale around the idea of a lost brother. Mrs Meyrick rebukes Hans with a more specific elaboration on Mab's comment: ““If you had lost me for *twenty* years, I should have thought”” (579). Mab reflects on the ramifications of discovering a long-lost brother: ““ [I]t's nice finding people – there is something to tell [...] Did Prince Camaralzaman find him”” (579)? Hans's imaginings are far more negative and prejudiced: ““We shall never be all together [...] but we must have this prophet Elijah to tea with us, and Mirah [...] will be spoiled as an artist [...] [S]he will get as narrow as a nun”” (579). The intensity of this reaction is so extreme that the sisters unite against it, even Kate, who had previously objected: ““I do think men are the most contemptible animals in all creation. Every one of them must have everything to his own mind”” (580). Her

comment acknowledges the pressure of trying to make Mirah adapt to his wishes (which she herself has been doing) and in doing so, recognises that Mirah has a right to her own wishes.

Mab's comments extend Mirah's reunion in a wider narrative tradition. By linking the discovery with Prince Camaralzaman, she again evokes the folktale context of the Arabian Nights. Her comment "'I *should* like to see Mirah when Mr Deronda tells her [...] I know she will look so beautiful'" (580) recalls her earlier admiration for Mirah as Queen Budoor, but with a change of emphasis. This time, it is Mirah's love for her brother which makes her beautiful, rather than her tiny feet. By focussing on this shared quality, Mab places Mirah in a positive transcultural context. While comparisons to Queen Budoor depict Mirah as an exoticised oriental figure, Mirah as a loving sister suggests a different folktale trope of supportive opposite-sexed siblings.¹³⁸ One element of such tales is the reunion of separated siblings. In one Grimm tale, a long-lost brother (enchanted by a witch) helps the hero discover the heroine, his sister. Another folk-tale, retold by Hans Christian Andersen as 'The Wild Swans' (first published in 1838; English translation 1871), features a sister who works to rescue her enchanted brothers, languishing in disguise as swans. Another feature of these tales is the establishment of a home shared by the brother and sister.¹³⁹ The *Arabian Nights* includes the tale of Hammad the Bedouin, which ends sadly, but in which the brother and the sister share a household and fight to

¹³⁸ *The Greenwood Encyclopaedia of Folklore* notes several tale types which celebrate a positive relationship between siblings: 'Sisters often cooperate with and support their brothers, as exemplified in the well-known tales of type Hansel and Gretel (ATU 327A.); Little Brother and Little Sister (ATU 450); and, The Maiden Who Seeks Her Brothers (ATU 451). Conversely, the famous tale "Blue Beard" (ATU 312, Maiden-Killer), best known in Perrault's version "La barbe bleue," depicts a young woman captured by a serial killer. Her brothers rescue her at the last minute.' See *Greenwood Encyclopedia of Folktales and Fairytales*, ed. by Donald Haase (Westport, CT: Greenwood, 2007), p. 142.

¹³⁹ *The Greenwood Encyclopaedia of Folklore* also notes the tale 'Das Lämmchen und Fischchen' ('The Little Lamb and the Little Fish'; (ATU 450: Little Brother and Little Sister) as an example (p. 329): See also Hasan El-Shamy, 'The Brother-Sister Syndrome in Arab Family Life: Socio-Cultural Factors in Arab Psychiatry: A Critical Review', *International Journal of Sociology of the Family* 11 (1981), 313–23 for another exploration of shared households between brothers and sisters in folklore tradition.

protect each other.¹⁴⁰ By evoking these tale types through the Meyricks' discussion, the narrative indicates the establishment of a new social autonomy for Mirah: she need not rely on the Meyricks or on Christian society for shelter, but can find support in her own culture. Fulfilled empathy allows the acknowledgement of equality. The Meyricks use fairy tales to explore reactions to events, as a form of assessment, but the context of shared discussion retains an important element of transrealist speculation, allowing the possibility of disagreement.

While with Gwendolen and Mirah, narrative links to Dante's *Purgatorio* and *Inferno* encoded a metaphysical transformation, the Meyrick sisters consciously adapt figures from romances, particularly the *Arabian Nights*, to frame their observations of Daniel and Mirah. With Gwendolen, these encoded her increased engagement with emotional education and with Mirah, these encoded the flowering of her self-educational process. For the Meyricks, combined transrealist elements in imagery encodes ambiguities in process – and the results – of observation itself, which they overcome through learning self-criticism. This critical education becomes a telescopic process, in which progress is marked by an ability to shift perspective. Eliot's texts use transrealist elements of dissonance to challenge a smooth acceptance of social realities, and these challenges criticise problems in nineteenth-century education in multiple levels and contexts. The presence of new formative actions which transcend experiences of estrangement indicate potential solutions. Although the clearest sign of this transformation in *Veil* (Latimer's actions towards narration), does not indicate a sense of wider social permanence, *Deronda's* extension of Eliot's earlier exploration of social estrangement suggests that

¹⁴⁰ See Hasan M., El-Shamy, 'Siblings in Alf laylah wa-laylah', *Marvels and Tales* 18:2(2004), 170-186.

increased inquiry into emotional dissonance underlying educational alienation can lead to more permanent actions.

Chapter Four: George MacDonald and the Fairy Tale as a Voice of Renewal

While previous chapters have focussed on transrealist interplay across two texts by a particular author, George MacDonald's *Adela Cathcart* (1864) offers an opportunity for extended examination of transrealist interplay across a range of texts and genres. The narrative context of the club serves as a useful partnership to the tales, exploring a therapeutic social resonance to the literary fairytale¹ focussed around healing a sick young woman, the eponymous Adela, and helping her towards independence. Adela's sickness is one of 'mental distress', suggesting a condition of melancholia which nineteenth-century medicine defined as part of the experience of depression, and which today we might classify as depression itself. The novel investigates the process of creating signification as a method of developing agency which allows Adela to combat melancholia successfully. Tracing the heteroglossic context emphasises a transrealist process of combating a loss of meaning induced by depression/ melancholia through dramatizing interpretative acts crossing multiple genres and narrative levels.

Though she feels Adela's transformation forms a 'thin plot', Tabitha Sparks, exploring the novel as part of a study on the doctor in Victorian literature, argues that 'The self-consciousness of the reading experience that these overlapping genres demand of the reader of *Adela Cathcart*, as on the titular listener herself, are meant to provide a kind of mental and moral richness'.² Sparks concentrates more on the

¹ Elizabeth Wanning Harries, summarizing research by Jack Zipes, Maria Tatar and others, defines the literary fairy tale as: '[T]ales written by an individual, usually identifiable author. Though these writers usually draw on pre-existing published material for some or all of their characters and plot, they put them together in a new way'. She notes that, '[t]he English term 'literary fairy tale' is a translation of the German compound *künstmärchen* (artistic tales) that distinguishes original tales written by a single, educated writer from 'folktales' or *Volksmärchen*, tales thought to have been transmitted orally by the uneducated, often illiterate 'folk' 'Literary Fairy Tales' in *The Greenwood Encyclopedia of Folktales and Fairytales*, ed. by Donald Haase (Westport, CT: Greenwood, 2007), pp. 578-583 (p. 578).

² Tabitha Sparks, *The Doctor in the Victorian Novel: Family Practices* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2009), pp. 47 and 59.

healing properties of reading in the novel than on the transformative resonances of the signifying process in both Adela's narrative and in others. Consequently I feel Sparks misses the socio-critical complexities of the interplay which builds throughout MacDonald's text. Adela's symptoms interrogate connections between an inner (mental and spiritual) agency and an external agency, demonstrated in a loss of ability to interact with others. These connections fit within contemporary medical writing on melancholia which linked troubles of the mind and the soul (or what we might term the psyche) as part of a wider experience of depression. Johann Christian Heinroth's 1823 description of *melancholia simplex* denotes a lack of external agency in the sufferer: '[It is a] loss of freedom of the disposition accompanied by depression, withdrawal into oneself, and brooding over some loss, death, pain, or despair'.³ Adela experiences a similar loss of social agency due to her brooding on death: "I believe I am dying; but of what I have not the smallest idea [...] I believe I would rather die than not".⁴ Though William Griesinger does not incorporate Heinroth's discourse of the soul in his 1867 description of melancholia as 'a state of profound emotional perversion, of a depressing and sorrowful character',⁵ preferring to focus on the mental process, he described the baffling nature and experience of the disease in similar terms of a loss of self: '[S]o far as the patient himself is concerned, the mental pain consists in a profound feeling of *ill-being*, of inability to do anything, of suppression of the physical powers'.⁶ Adela's mental vitality is similarly sapped by her disease: "I am crowded with wretched, if not wicked thoughts, all

³ Johann Christian Heinroth (1773-1843) in presenting melancholia as a subsection of the Order of Depressions, suggests MacDonald's extension of Adela's condition is beyond that of 'mental distress': 'In thus approaching mental disorders as *disturbances of the soul*, Heinroth's notion of the soul included the *disposition*, the spirit, and the will as faculties'. See Johann Christian Heinroth, *Lehrbuch der Störungen des Seelenlebens [Textbook on the disorders of the soul]* quoted in *Melancholia and Depression* by Stanley Jackson (Yale: Yale University Press, 1986), p. 155.

⁴ George MacDonald, *Adela Cathcart*, Volume I (Hazleton: Pennsylvania State University Electronic Press, 2006), pp.24-25. References henceforth in text.

day. Nothing seems worth anything. I don't care for anything" (25). The novel explores the transcendence of this condition, representing Adela's ultimate healing as the revival of her intellectual, physical, emotional and spiritual nature. In *Adela Cathcart*, Adela's healing stems from a restoration of her inner spirit, leading to an integration of mind, body and soul.⁷ In some ways, she recalls Eliot's Gwendolen Harleth, as the two share a trajectory of developing an increased emotional understanding. However, Adela's transformed understanding is consciously linked to an extended process of increasing emotional understanding through a transrealist sifting of multiple facets of meaning in tales: literary interpretation becomes a safe space in which to develop self-interpretation.

The fairy tale plays a significant role in the structure of Adela's transformation. A fairy tale –written, then read out – begins the club, and two others follow, one for each volume. The novel explores the social purpose of fairy tales on multiple levels, as a few critics have observed. F.Hal Broome particularly notes references to homeopathy in the text, arguing that the process of telling fairy tales serves as a type of homeopathy.⁸ William Gray has emphasised the 'crossover' nature of the work, exploring Adela's liminal condition in the context of the fluid boundary between 'child' and 'adult' in MacDonald's presentation of the fairy tale.⁹

⁵ William Griesinger, 'State of Mental Depression – Melancholia' in *Mental Pathology and Therapeutics* (1867), in *The Nature of Melancholy: From Aristotle to Kristeva*, ed. by Jennifer Radden (Oxford: OUP, 2000), pp. 225- 229 (p. 226).

⁶ *Ibid.*.

⁷ MacDonald depicts a spiritual aspect to Adela's distress; however, though he represents spiritual healing as finding a home with a Christian God, he presents spiritual healing as something more than conformity to doctrine: '[W]ithout good spiritual food to keep the spiritual senses healthy and true, they cannot see the things about them as they really are' (49).

⁸ F.Hal. Broome, 'Dreams, Fairy Tales, and the Curing of Adela Cathcart', *North Wind: A Journal of George MacDonald Studies* 13 (1994), 6-18 (pp.14-15). Broome was the first to point out both *Adela Cathcart's* critical significance and the therapeutic resonance of the novel. Nancy Mellon builds on Broome's work by observing the significance of the sequence of stories. See Nancy Mellon, 'The Stages in Adela Cathcart's Cure', *North Wind: A Journal of George MacDonald Studies*, 15 (1996), 26-43 (p. 27).

⁹ William Gray, "'Crossover fiction" and narrative as therapy: George MacDonald's *Adela Cathcart*', *Barnboken – tidskrift för barnlitteraturforskning* 2(2009), 45-57 (pp. 46, 51). Gray has also emphasised MacDonald's debt to German Romantic writers of tales, Novalis and Hoffmann in particular. See *Ibid.*, p. 56, and also William Gray, *Fantasy, Myth and the Measure of Truth: Tales of Pullman, Lewis, Tolkien, MacDonald and Hoffmann* (Houndmills, Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan, 2010), pp. 25-27.

Most recently, Stefania Tondo views the process of integrated development in the novel as exploring the narrative renewal of the literary fairy tale as well as of the depressed young woman.¹⁰ However, as I will demonstrate, MacDonald's exploration of social purpose extends beyond a fairy tale context, across genres and narrative contexts, bringing explorations of Adela's transformative process alongside interrogations of nineteenth-century social issues: child mortality, disability, charitable reform and gender identity, for example.

Due to its use of multiple genres in the twelve tales, which range from fairy tale to panoramic writing to autobiography, *Adela Cathcart* unites a variety of contemporary discourses around developing female agency through a multifaceted understanding. Written at a similar point to the setting of *Daniel Deronda*, Adela demonstrates the need to have 'something to live for' which Daniel observes in the ill-trained Gwendolen; the novel intersects to some degree with the educational context discussed in my previous chapter. MacDonald himself challenges restrictions to female education in his realist novel *Alec Forbes of Howglen* (1865), as Ginger Stelle observes. Kate Fraser, the hero's former sweetheart (neither intellectually nor emotionally self-sufficient), comes to a bad end: [I]t is 'the result of her "having never been taught to provide for her own mental sustenance, and so nourish a necessary independence."¹¹ By contrast, in *Adela Cathcart*, MacDonald dramatizes a transrealist process of nourishing independence through a mental subsistence drawn from conjunctions of tales infused with the fantastic. Contemporary writers also used a fairy tale context to explore self-development. For example, John Ruskin (1819-1900) and William Thackeray (1811-1863) dramatize

¹⁰ Stefania Tondo, *Come il bambino* (Napoli: Grauseditore, 2012). Tondo also stresses that MacDonald's stories foreground the intertextual quality of the fairy tale in its ability to trouble different genres.

moral transformation in their fairy tales. John Ruskin's 'The King of the Golden River' (1841) depicts the hero, Gluck, growing in wisdom and confidence as he moves away from the prescriptions of his villainous older brothers and eventually succeeds in winning a magical prize from the King of the Golden River due to his acts of sympathy. William Thackeray's novel *The Rose and the Ring* (1855), suggesting a group story telling context with its frontispiece labelled 'A Fireside Pantomime', contrasts moral and physical beauty while arrogance and enchanted beautifiers play havoc in the lives of four royal cousins. Discussions of female agency in contemporary society framed the publication context of several fairy tale texts in the 1860s that foreground female lack of agency, including Anne Thackeray Ritchie (1837-1919)'s 'The Sleeping Beauty' (1868) and Christina Rossetti (1830-1894)'s 'The Prince Who Arrived Too Late' (and *Goblin Market* (1862): Sumpter notes as an example that Caroline Norton reviewed *Goblin Market* and Coventry Patmore (1823-1896)'s 'The Angel in the House' (1863) in the same article.¹² Adela Cathcart joins Rossetti's Lizzie and Laura as Victorian maidens poised on the socially critical borders of fairy tale. However, in *Adela Cathcart*, MacDonald specifically foregrounds both the difficulties of young women without a social purpose *and* the ability of fairy tales to have a beneficial effect on character development through a transrealist multiplicity in layers of meaning.

The discussions around the stories provide reactions to the tales and analyses of the themes within them, while the narration and some of the exchanged comments trace Adela's gradual reawakening of mind, character and spirit. The structure of fairy tales opening each section explores the link between this inner awakening and

¹¹ Ginger Stelle, 'When Bad Girls Go Good: Stereotype Reversals in George MacDonald's *Alec Forbes of Howglen*', *North Wind: Journal of George MacDonald Studies*, 25(2006), 27-38 (p. 36).

¹² Caroline Sumpter, *The Victorian Press and the Fairy Tale* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), p. 83.

the telling of fairy tales. MacDonald's use of dialogue at times provides a meta-narrative challenge to the link between a fairy tale, a fictional and a realistic context. In MacDonald's novel, tales, and fairy tales in particular, possess an ambivalent quality that interrogates the boundaries between narrative and social criticism, dialogue and perception.

The theories of Mikhail Bakhtin on the social potential of different types of interrogation (discussion and the interrogation of genre/mode), and Julia Kristeva's exploration of signification systems in the context of depression assist in defining the dialogic resonance in MacDonald's text. Bakhtin foregrounds the link between the representation of dialogue in texts and social expression:

Authorial speech, the speeches of narrators, inserted genres, the speech of characters are [...]compositional unities with whose help heteroglossia [*raznorecie*] can enter the novel, each of them permits a multiplicity of social voices and a wide variety of their links and interrelationships.¹³

Bakhtin's heteroglossic social voice provides a useful term to clarify the intertextual resonance of the fairy tale in MacDonald's novel, as it shifts in and out of other genres. Kristeva's observation of the emotional resonance in the shifts of literary creation suggests a way of exploring a specific link between the heteroglossic social voice of the fairy tale and Adela's personal development. Kristeva argues that agency derives both from the discovery of shifting nature of reality, and the ability to master a new system of signification:

Literary creation is that adventure of the body and signs that bears witness to the affect – to sadness as imprint of separation and beginning of the symbol's sway [...] The "semiotic" and the "symbolic" become the communicable imprints of an affective reality.¹⁴

¹³ Mikhail Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981), p. 262.

¹⁴ Julia Kristeva, *Black Sun* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1989), p. 22.

MacDonald extends the articulation of an 'affective reality' into a specific context of restorative transformation.

In his essay 'The Imagination: Its Functions and Culture' (1867), he suggests that the possibility of internal restoration comes from the faculty of the imagination 'which beholds or invents *a* harmonious relation of parts and operations, and sends the intellect to find out whether that be not *the* harmonious relation of them'.¹⁵ In a later essay, 'The Fantastic Imagination' (1893), MacDonald, looking back at his previous essay, develops the imagination's capacity for developing harmony in the specific context of the fairy tale which 'cannot help having some meaning; if it has proportion and harmony it has vitality, and vitality is truth.'¹⁶ MacDonald observes the shifting interpretation of the fairy tale according to its audience: 'Everyone, however, who feels the story, will read its meaning after his own nature and development: one man will read one meaning in it, another will read another.'¹⁷ In this shifting interpretation, MacDonald links the fairy tale with other aesthetic genres: 'A genuine work of art must mean many things; the truer its art, the more things it will mean [...] [The fairy tale] is there not so much to convey a meaning as to wake a meaning.'¹⁸ MacDonald brings his discussion of shifting meaning in the fairytale into a context of moral development: 'The best thing you can do for your fellow, next to rousing his conscience, is—not to give him things to think about, but to wake things up that are in him; or say, to make him think things for himself [...] Nature is mood-engendering, thought-provoking: [...] such ought the fairytale to

¹⁵ MacDonald, 'The Imagination: Its Functions and Culture', in *A Dish of Orts* (Hazleton: Pennsylvania State University Electronic Press, 2012), p. 14.

¹⁶ MacDonald, 'The Fantastic Imagination' in *A Dish of Orts*, p. 234.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 235.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 234.

be.’¹⁹ Though *Adela Cathcart* was written before both essays, the novel’s strong emphasis on the restorative potential in widening systems of interpretation through the transrealist interpellation of the fairy tale with other genres demonstrates the social agency in shifting images and in ‘waking meaning’.

In *Adela Cathcart*, characters construct, debate, and re-construct a variety of texts; the inclusion of fairy tales, particularly ‘The Light Princess’, introduces carnivalesque qualities; Adela’s reading, others’ readings of Adela, and reading of the novel itself all flow into each other. Throughout this space, the fairy tale forms a transformative narrative voice which nurtures social expression. Each tale introduces a new ambivalence, which subsequent tales transpose and redevelop in different forms. The healing effect on Adela can be seen in the development of her expression: in the opinions raised, in her increased practice of performing songs, and in the writing of letters. The construction of ‘deprivation’ undergoes continual shifts in significance, enacting a critical process of transposition. Transposition is defined by the *OED* as ‘an alteration of order, or an interchange of position’²⁰ and by Kristeva as ‘the subject’s acceptance of a set of signs’ in the process of negotiating socio-psychological meaning amidst depression, an absence of meaning:²¹ Adela’s development functions on both levels. Examining the transposition of internal and external textuality among the tales foregrounds how Adela explores connections between herself and others in the novel, and then in the outside community through the narrative process: as the tales unfold, she perceives the shifts in meaning of character, event and theme in increasing depth. The cumulative and communal process in the tales and the responses to the tales promotes the social potential of

¹⁹ Ibid., p. 236.

²⁰ "transposition, n.". OED Online. December 2012. Oxford University Press. <http://0-www.oed.com.wam.leeds.ac.uk/view/Entry/205037?redirectedFrom=transposition> (accessed February 25, 2013).

exploring the transformation from deprivation to integration through telling, retelling and discussing of tales. This process creates a transrealist context which actively encourages discussions of grief, moving from catharsis, to interpretative exploration, and then finally to active voice, as the tales become subsumed in the Adela-centred narrative.

Interplays of Cathartic Expression

The transrealist interplay of discussions and tales in the first section dramatizes a transformative process of cathartic expression. Adela's transformation begins with the visit of John Smith (Adela's uncle) to the home of the Colonel and Adela Cathcart for Christmas. Their house, The Swanspond, contains other visitors, Mrs Cathcart and her son Percy (Adela's aunt and cousin), and the Cathcarts entertain neighbours, like the Bloomfields (a retired schoolmaster and his wife) and the Armstrongs (the local curate and his wife, plus Mr. Armstrong's physician brother, Harry), all of whom add to the circle. Smith, shocked by Adela's chronic listlessness, notices that she responds to a tragic anecdote told by Mrs Bloomfield, the schoolmaster's wife, with unusual interest: 'I like sad stories' (30). In consultation with Dr. Harry Armstrong, Smith forms a club for telling stories, with the motive of healing Adela's spirit.

The first fairy tale, 'The Light Princess', establishes a heteroglossic voice of intertextual ambivalence, which foregrounds a cathartic process. The fairy tale dramatizes an abstract experience of deprivation; elements of this experience are transposed into more realistic contexts in the subsequent tales, forming an exploration of both deprivation and the process of catharsis involved in responding

²¹ Julia Kristeva, *Black Sun* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1989), p. 41.

to it. The opening discussion creates the fairy tale as a new voice, one drawing from German folktales, the English epistolary novel, poetic romance, and French salons, to transcend limits of age and of shallow social surfaces. The tale contains fairy tale tropes of deprivation which are then transposed within the surrounding discussion. The opening sentence recalls that of Charles Perrault's 'The Sleeping Beauty in the Wood' (1696) in that it discusses a King and Queen who have no children, and so feel deprivation due to their infertility. Perrault's tale is part of a wider Sleeping Beauty tale (ATU 410) tradition, including Giambattista Basile (1566-1632)'s 'Sole, Lune e Talia' (1634-1636), and the Grimms' 'Brier Rose'. The Sleeping Beauty references also suggest a contemporary context of exploring female development: Sumpter points out that Harriet Martineau uses allusions to the fairy tale of 'Sleeping Beauty' to celebrate developments in female education in her article 'Middle Class Education in England: Girls' (1863), using the imagery of the woman herself breaking past briars and brambles.²²

The Grimms' collection presents the Sleeping Beauty tale of 'Brier Rose' along with other tales containing themes of infertility, but also containing other themes, providing a microcosm of interwoven tales and tropes. The Grimms' version of the Sleeping Beauty tale, 'Briar Rose', also picks up on the theme of a desire for a child in its initial sentence: 'In times of old there lived a king and queen, and every day they said, "Oh, if only we had a child!"'²³ Motifs of infertility and subsequent abnormality are present in other tales in the Grimms' collection, including 'Hans my Hedgehog', 'Snow White', and 'Thumbling' (all containing experiences of infertility

²² Harriet Martineau, 'Not all the ignorance, the jealousy, the meanness, the prudery, or the profligate selfishness which is found from end to end of the middle class, can now [...]retard the ennobling of the sex which is the natural consequence of it becoming wiser and more independent, while more accomplished, gracious and companionable. The briars and brambles are cleared away from the women's avenue to the temple of knowledge. Now they have only to knock, and it will be opened to them', quoted in Sumpter, p. 85.

and abnormal children). In addition to infertility, 'Hans My Hedgehog' exemplifies abnormality and transformation in a romantic setting. It begins with an ordinary couple who have no children; they accidentally curse themselves with giving birth to a hedgehog-boy, named Hans My Hedgehog. His abnormality is further underlined when at his christening, the priest observes that his prickles will prevent him from sleeping in a normal bed. When Hans grows up, he wishes to find a wife. After various difficulties, he does so. However, his marriage is not completed until his hedgehog skin has been taken off and burned, the attendants work over him with salves, and he is revealed as a 'handsome young gentleman'.²⁴ This tale is part of a wider tradition of transformed men in fairy tales; the tale represents a particular subsection called 'Hog Bridegrooms' (ATU 441).²⁵ The prince in 'The Light Princess' both evokes and subverts this tradition. When reflecting on how he might carry out a marriage with the princess, he realises that marriage will entail a transformation: "If I marry her, I see no help for it; we must turn merman and mermaid, and go out to sea at once" (80). The pattern of transformation is reversed in his reflection, as he contemplates moving from human to merman. The ending also recalls the transformation scene in 'Hans My Hedgehog' in representing the complications in a shift from isolation. The prince, rescued by the princess at the point of drowning in the lake, hovers near death while the attendants work to resuscitate him. This, and its successful achievement, recalls the attendants' work to salve Hans with cream to restore his charred skin to normal human flesh. In neither tale is a happy ending easy or instantaneous.

²³ Jakob and Wilhelm Grimm, 'Brier Rose' in *The Complete Fairy Tales of the Brothers Grimm*, ed. by Jack Zipes (New York: Bantam, 1992), pp. 186-189 (p.186).

²⁴ 'Hans My Hedgehog' in *The Complete Fairy Tales of the Brothers Grimm*, pp. 393-397 (p. 396).

²⁵ U. C. Knoepflmacher, 'Pig', in *The Greenwood Encyclopedia of Folktales and Fairytales*, pp. 743-745.

The princess's actions to save the prince recall the type, 'The girl as helper in the hero's flight' (ATU 313c). As Tondo notes, the actions of the princess to administer the saving kiss to the prince reverse the gender roles in 'Sleeping Beauty'.²⁶ The princess not only kisses but acts, as she drags the prince's body up to the castle. 'Sweetheart Roland' is an example of this type from the Grimms' collection, in which the heroine rescues her sweetheart from a murderous stepmother-ogress. This tale also encapsulates some of the princess's earlier isolation. In order to disguise the two of them from the ogress, the heroine of this tale transforms herself into a flower and her sweetheart into a fiddler; she then transforms herself into a stone so that she can wait in safety while her sweetheart leaves to arrange their marriage. In due course, her sweetheart abandons her; in her sadness and loneliness, she transforms herself back into a flower, seeking the prospect that someone may trample her.²⁷ the Light Princess's isolation is also underlined by the prospect of death; the narrator notes that '[S]he could not walk out without a cortege [...] for fear [...]the wind might take [...] her' (70).

The discussion following the tale's conclusion dramatizes the possibility of transformation on multiple levels, through the transrealist dissonance beneath the surfaces of the conversation. Adela further defies criticism in her championship of the tale: "I won't have my uncle found fault with. It is a very funny, and a very pretty story" (94). A question from Mrs Cathcart about the tale's moral explores the issue of the effect of the fairy tale and Harry draws this question close to Adela's experience by claiming that the moral is "[N]o girl is worth anything till she has cried a little" (95). His suggestion affects Adela: 'Adela gave him a quick glance,

²⁶ Tondo, p. 59.

²⁷ 'Sweetheart Roland' in *The Complete Fairy Tales of the Brothers Grimm*, pp. 212-215.

and then cast her eyes down'. Tondo traces the beginning of Adela's recovery in the discussion of the moral, extending the suggestion of a similarity between Adela and the Light Princess in the narrative: 'É un duro colpo per la malvagia zia strega ed è un segno di vitalità mentale e morale nella giovane, la quale comincia a leggere la propria storia attraverso i racconti che le vengono presentati'. [It is a hard blow for the wicked witch aunt and it is a sign of mental and moral vitality in the young girl, who begins to read her own story through the tales which are presented to her.] [Translation mine]²⁸ In addition to this suggestion of catharsis, Adela's moral represents a narrative empowerment. Her question evokes the moral following Perrault's 'Sleeping Beauty', and through this, a shared experience of isolation. In this moral, Perrault describes listless maidens waiting a long time for a husband: 'I'm sure I never met/ Any sort of woman yet/ Who could wait/ . . . /Free from fretting, free from fears/ . . . /Maids will be a-sighing still'.²⁹ Adela's response to her aunt's question transforms this moral. She hints at experiences of deprivation and fear, but places direct emphasis on the ability to conquer these experiences: "That you need not be afraid of ill-natured aunts, though they are witches", said Adela (94). Adela's response indicates the possibility of recovery through her growing ability to form and articulate her own perspective.

The following tale, 'The Bell', transposes the themes of deprivation identified in 'The Light Princess' and its surrounding discussion into the specific context of disability. The prior discussion locates the tale in the context of depression, and of Adela's particular depression. The tale's narrator, Mr. Armstrong, excuses the tale on account of its being 'a sad story': "I fear you will find it a sad story". His

²⁸ Tondo, p. 58. This critical text is not yet available in English.

²⁹ Charles Perrault, 'The Sleeping Beauty in the Wood' in *Perrault's Fairy Tales*, trans. by A.E. Johnson, (New York: Dover, 1969), pp. 3-21 (p. 21).

comment and subsequent gesture towards Adela connects the tale and the telling of it to Adela's depression. The novel's narrator (Mr. Smith), suggests that the tale is intended to be cathartic: 'I believe that he had chosen the story on the homoeopathic principle'. Adela's response of "I like sad stories" strengthens his guess, both by signalling her engagement with the present context and also by recalling her earlier comment of liking sad stories at the initial session of anecdotes, when the first signs of her engagement with her surroundings prompts the idea of the therapeutic club (101). The narrator of 'The Bell' (Mr Armstrong) represents abnormality, isolation and transformation in the tale of two social outcasts, both with disabilities (one has epilepsy and another has a cognitive disability) and who suffer financial deprivation. The tale relates how they find empathetic connections despite experiences of desertion and isolation (one romantic, one not), dramatizing alternative and transformative perspectives of social value. It is told from the perspective of a young girl, Elsie Scott, who finds herself isolated from her family and her neighbours because of her sensitive nature and because of the epileptic attacks she suffers. She finds sympathy in her friendship with an old man, 'Feel Jock', who suffers a cognitive impairment. After suffering rejection from her childhood sweetheart, Elsie's condition worsens and one day, when defending her friend Jock from a dog, she has a particularly strong fit and inadvertently confesses her affection to her former sweetheart, who has become a physician. After this, her constitution falls into a fatal decline, as does that of Jock. They find comfort in their shared hope of a heavenly home, and the narrative closes with the image of both finding 'intellect and love' in heaven. But by focussing on their lack of sympathy within the wider community as a cause of their decline, rather than their impairments, the narrative criticises perceptions of disability. This criticism is strengthened through an

identification of the fairy tale tropes continued from ‘The Light Princess’, which establishes a connection between Elsie and Jock and other characters. Exploring links between these characters and the fairy tale ones in their quest to triumph over deprivation raises the question of why others are unable to achieve resolution.

Both Elsie’s epilepsy and Jock’s cognitive impairment (the tale uses the word ‘fool’; the contemporary medical term was ‘idiot’) are conditions which shared an ambiguity of diagnosis in a nineteenth-century medical context. In their exploration of the influence of William Gowers (1845-1915), a leading nineteenth-century neurologist who pioneered new directions in epilepsy research in the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century,³⁰ Ann Scott, Mervyn Eadie, and Andrew Lees observe the difficulties in specifying causes of epilepsy: ‘In the mid 1850s Russell Reynolds and Delesiauve also asserted, independently, that epilepsy was a distinct disorder and had no detectable cause, and this idea became generally accepted’.³¹ A similar ambiguity attended mid-nineteenth-century diagnoses of idiocy. In his cultural history of idiocy, Patrick McDonough traces the shifting definitions of the term ‘idiot’ throughout the nineteenth century from ‘pure idiots, fools, and simpletons’ to psychological deficiency commencing in early life’.³² The anonymous author of ‘Idiot Asylums’ (1865) suggests a contemporary definition which stresses the social disempowerment inherent in the experience: ‘An idiot is one wanting in power, greater or less, to develop and manifest the normal human faculties by reason of organic defects . . . the nerves of motion and sensation are without due action’.³³ Representations of both conditions constructed them as signifiers of social isolation,

³⁰ See William R Gowers, *Manual of the Diseases of the Nervous System* (1886-1888), and *The Borderland of Epilepsy* (1907).

³¹ Ann Scott, Mervyn Eadie and Andrew Leeds, *William Richard Gowers, 1845-1915: Exploring the Victorian Brain* (Oxford: OUP, 2012), p. 115.

³² Patrick McDonough, *Idiocy: A Cultural History* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2008), p. 2.

and MacDonald's tale troubles these constructions by dramatizing disabled individuals as being multifaceted, rather than simply markers of social ambiguity.

In doing so, he challenges normative social structures. Jeanette Stirling locates the mid-nineteenth century as a point when epilepsy began to become a more specific signifier of isolation:

By the 1860s the body prone to seizure was becoming a liminal figure, consigned to the "borderlands" of normative society [...] As the century moved to a close, the "borderlands" evolved into an enduring trope in medical and cultural systems of representation.³⁴

In his exploration of epilepsy in Mary Elizabeth Braddon's *Thou Art the Man* (1894), Allen Bauman observes the connections between epilepsy and criminality in the nineteenth century:

Epilepsy was, however, associated with criminality and crime, especially crimes with no clear motive. As such, it evoked degeneration or recidivism: the disease was seen to cause primitive qualities to regain their hold over an otherwise normal individual. In other words, epilepsy transformed a normal, healthy individual into a criminal, lunatic, and primitive one.³⁵

Stirling, reviewing characters by Dickens (Monks in *Oliver Twist* (1838) and Guster in *Bleak House* (1852-1853)), Fyodor Dostoevsky (1821-1881) (Smerdyakov in *The Brothers Karamazov* (1880)) and Thomas Hardy (1840-1928) (Lucetta in *The Mayor of Casterbridge* (1886)) offers a more detailed context into gendered representations of epilepsy in the nineteenth century: 'Male characters are often imbued with violent and dangerous impulses [...] Female characters with the condition tend to be marginalised, infantilised or eroticised'.³⁶ MacDonald's tale complicates these liminal representations. In 'The Bell', Elsie is marginalized by her epilepsy but her feelings of depression link her to others inside and outside the tale. Her failed

³³ Anonymous, 'Idiot Asylums' *Edinburgh Review*, 122:37-74(1865) (p. 46), quoted in McDonagh, p. 244.

³⁴ Jeanette Stirling, *Representations of Epilepsy: Myth and Matter* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2010), p. 37.

³⁵ Allen Bauman, 'Epilepsy, Crime, and Masculinity in Mary Elizabeth Braddon's *Thou Art the Man*', *Nineteenth-Century Gender Studies* 4.2 (2008) <http://www.ncgsjournal.com/issue42/bauman.htm> [accessed 20 February 2013], p. 2.

romance explores her social context in as an emotional individual, rather than an eroticized one.

By contrast, representations of the ‘fool’ or the ‘idiot’ often involve an isolation suggesting a hidden innocence: an individual for which society is not good enough, rather than an individual who is not good enough for society. Patrick McDonagh traces nineteenth-century representations of idiocy in the works of Sir Walter Scott (1771-1832) (Davie Gellatley in the 1814 *Waverley*), Charles Dickens (Smike in his 1839 *Nicholas Nickleby*, Barnaby in his 1841-1842 *Barnaby Rudge*, and Maggy in the 1857 *Little Dorrit*) and George Eliot (Jacob in the 1860 *Brother Jacob*) to older traditions of the holy innocent and the trickster fool:

[T]he holy innocent and the trickster fool were potent images for nineteenth-century writers [...] Scott, Dickens and Eliot renovated the concept of the holy innocent or trickster fool as a more contemporary version of idiocy in order to develop social and moral critiques of the worlds they portray in their novels.³⁷

The concept of the holy innocent or trickster fool stems from the folklore trope of the simpleton, as Daithí Ó hÓgáin notes. Drawing on representations of foolishness in folktales (‘Stories about a Fool’ (ATU 1200–1349)), and in religious and mystical tradition, Ó hÓgáin observes that,

[T]he foolish person can be thought of as having some special hidden abilities [...] because of their unusual social positions, [they] are often considered to have arcane or magical powers. Being outside of the norm for members of the community, they are in some way exotic and thus can be thought of as exceeding the normal human potential.³⁸

McDonagh notes that Scott, Eliot and Dickens extend the resonances of this uncannily wise isolation to create critiques of politics, capitalism, and social status. Jock has a hidden wisdom in his foolishness, but Macdonald focusses on the

³⁶Stirling, p. xvi.

³⁷McDonagh, p. 153.

³⁸Daithí Ó hÓgáin, ‘Simpleton’ in *The Greenwood Encyclopedia of Folktale and Fairytales*, pp. 865-867 (pp. 865-866).

difficulties of his isolated experience in itself, rather than simply using them as a vehicle to create wider social critiques.

By raising the issue of healing and sickness prior to the telling of the tale, the text emphasises connections with abnormality in 'The Light Princess'. Both Elsie and Jock share elements of abnormality with the princess: their condition has been with them since childhood. Yet the tale casts Elsie's emotional sensitivity as an isolating condition: '[She] was excessively and painfully sensitive, as if her nature constantly protended an invisible multitude of half-spiritual, half-nervous antennae, which shrunk and trembled in every current of air at all below their own temperature' (104). Though the Light Princess does not perceive her lack of sensitivity, she feels herself to be unlike others, and so does Elsie (104). The tale foregrounds Elsie's connection with Jock from the opening scene of Elsie gazing out of the window at Jock, when the text notes that she feels a sympathy with him: 'The cause of Elsie's annoyance was that the fool was annoyed [...] [because of] a real similarity in their history and present condition' (102-103). The tale interrogates constructions of normality through a transrealist process of identifying connections between those who feel themselves to be abnormal, first within the tale, and then widening out to intertextual levels through links with the Light Princess and then Adela: if so many people share feelings of abnormality, then what is normal?

The tale transposes fairy tale tropes evoked in 'The Light Princess' in order to explore the nuances of isolation surrounding impairment, dramatizing the transformative role of this ambivalent heteroglossic voice in non-fairy tale settings. 'The Light Princess' evokes tales of transformed abnormal masculinity such as 'Hans My Hedgehog'. In this tale, the transformation of the cursed male depends on meeting a king and his daughter who treat him with respect. The hedgehog-youth

punishes a disrespectful king and princess with violence. The king has promised Hans his daughter, but the king attempts to kill Hans instead. In response, Hans attacks the murderous king's daughter: 'Hans-My-Hedgehog took off her beautiful clothes and stuck her with his quills until she was covered with blood. "This is what you get for being so deceitful!" Then he sent her away, and she lived in disgrace for the rest of her life.'³⁹ In this tale, the hero with an abnormal condition does not suffer threats from others with saintly endurance, but employs a violent defence. In 'The Bell', Jock similarly eschews a saintly endurance: 'Although the most harmless of creatures when let alone, he was dangerous when roused [...] Now he stooped repeatedly to pick up stones and hurl them at his tormentors, who took care, while abusing him, to keep at a considerable distance' (102-103). Jock's violent anger is necessary for his (and, later in the tale, Elsie's) protection, though not sufficient to prevent all torment. The transformative aspects of Elsie's isolation recalls another tale evoked by 'The Light Princess': 'Sweetheart Roland'. In this tale, the young girl is abandoned when her lover meets someone else: '[W]hen Roland returned home, he was ensnared by another woman, who made him forget the maiden [...] [S]he grew sad, turned herself into a flower, and thought, Someone will surely come along and trample me.'⁴⁰ Elsie's impairment grows when her lover dismisses her: 'She saw her lover walking with two ladies, who would have thought it some degree of condescension to speak to her [...] Yet she [...] bore all in silence, though it was evident that her health was giving way' (108). But the comparison to 'Sweetheart Roland' emphasises a difference between them: Elsie cannot enjoy the resolution that the heroine finds. The tale emphasises the connection between Elsie's

³⁹ 'Hans My Hedgehog' in *The Complete Fairy Tales of the Brothers Grimm*, p. 396.

⁴⁰ 'Sweetheart Roland' in *The Complete Fairy Tales of the Brothers Grimm*, p. 214.

emotional and mental health through the decline that occurs when she realises that her lover has witnessed both her fit and her confession of hopeless love:

[I]n the dreamy condition in which the fit had left her [...] she uttered wild words of love [...] But as her senses recovered themselves, the face gradually changed to her, [...] the slow alteration of two years [...] phantasmagorically compressed [...] and her soul found itself at the narrow window of the present, from which she could behold but a dreary country. (108)

Like the heroine of ‘Sweetheart Roland’, Elsie’s health is affected by her lover’s desertion. However, the tale depicts the transformation of the lover as well: his shift in facial features matches his emotional shift and it is the perception of his changed face that causes her decline. The representations of isolation in ‘The Bell’ interrogate the characters of those around Elsie and Jock: abnormality acquires an emotional resonance, including those with perceived impairment and those without in its definition. Because Elsie feels a sympathetic connection with Jock, she can connect with the symbol of a heavenly home which he constructs as a welcoming bell. Elsie adopts Jock’s signifying system, contained in his repeated phrase ‘gaeing home to the Wow’: on her own deathbed, a few months after she had attended Jock’s, Elsie narrates her upcoming death through Jock’s words: ‘[T]he nurse [...] heard her murmur through her sleep, “I hear it: *come hame—come hame* [...] I’m gaein’ hame to the wow, nae to come back”. She [...] begged [...] that she might be buried by the side of the fool, within the old church of Ruthven’ (114). Elsie and Jock develop a shared interpretation of a Christian death as going to the ‘wow’, rather than naming it as going home to God. They may endure social isolation due to their impairments but they are able to transcend these limitations through their ability to reshape significations of words.

The discussion following the tale emphasises their abilities rather than their disabilities. The sympathetic connection created by the word ‘wow’ extends to the

audience, as this is the element from the tale that attracts them, just as Elsie is attracted by it. They join Elsie and Jock in exploring new interpretations of the ‘wow’, prompted by Smith’s question, “Is *wow* a word at all?” The discussion begins by exploring the multiplicity of official definitions of the word ‘wow’: “‘If you look into Jamieson’s Dictionary,” said Armstrong [...] you will find that the word is used differently [...]—chiefly, however, as a verb. It means *to bark, to howl; likewise to wave or beckon; also to woo, or make love to*. Any of these might be given as an explanation of his word” (116). The focus on nuances of interpretation and signification interrogates the therapeutic effect of the tale on Adela. Smith, observing Adela, notes her interest and interprets this as a sign of continuing recovery. Though ‘Adela offered no remark upon the story’, Smith constructs her features as symbols of engagement: ‘Her eyes had that fixed, forward look, which, combined with haziness, indicates deep emotion, while the curves of her mouth were nearly straightened out by the compression of her lips.’ He interprets these signs of engagement as due to a cathartic engagement with the tale: ‘I had thought [...] that she could hardly fail to find in the story of Elsie, some correspondence to her own condition and necessities: I now believe that she had found that correspondence’ (116). As Elsie experienced misunderstanding from others, the suggestion of a correspondence between Adela and Elsie raises the possibility of Smith misinterpreting Adela. But the transrealist link between Elsie and Adela emphasises the importance of Adela forming her own system of interpretation, as it is this which gives Elsie empowerment.

The final tale in the volume is ‘Birth, Dreaming and Death’, telling of a young couple experiencing neo-natal mortality, and who, consequently, dramatize the reshaping of signifying systems as part of a successful cathartic process. While

there is no suggestion that the earlier tales (in the formal discussion club context) were personal experiences of any members, there is a suggestion that this tale is a personal experience of a woman who attends the group, though this is never confirmed. The tale opens with dreams of transformation that a father and mother experience following the birth of a newborn baby (one featuring a frozen child, the other a bouquet of flowers). Their newborn child dies soon after this, and they find that the dreams have prepared them for dealing with this loss. This personal experience of neo-natal mortality suggests a location of around 1820-1840 in the wider context of nineteenth-century child mortality, if it is linked with the retired schoolmaster and his wife; certainly, there is a suggestion that the loss is not recent. In an exploration of death and the Victorian family, Pat Jalland observes that high infant mortality rates endured throughout the nineteenth century:

The death-rate in England and Wales per 1,000 live births for infants under 1 year varied remarkably little up to 1900, standing at 154 in 1840, 148 in 1860, 153 in 1880, and 154 in 1900 [...] This [...] totalled over 100,000 infants a year dying before their first birthday – one-quarter of all deaths.⁴¹

Robert Woods notes that early neo-natal mortality rates (death within the first 6 days), contributing to the general child mortality rates of 154 a year, lay at 23 per 1,000 live births.⁴² Jalland, exploring Victorian consolation literature as a response to these losses, explains: ‘Grieving parents were informed that this trial should teach them the lesson of submission to God’s will, but were warned that this would not be easy [...] The consolation literature offered a further rationalization [...] that a benevolent God had removed their children’.⁴³ Jalland notes that this literature avoided some unpleasant questions: ‘Authors of consolation literature refrained from

⁴¹ Pat Jalland, *Death and the Victorian Family* (Oxford: OUP, 1996), p. 120.

⁴² Robert Woods, ‘Lying-in and Laying-out: Fetal Health and the Contribution of Midwifery’, *Bulletin of the History of Medicine*, 81. 4 (2007), 730-759 (pp. 743-744).

⁴³ Jalland, p. 122.

addressing the problem that such a terrible trial could be interpreted as God's punishment, though that was how many sorrowing parents perceived it'.⁴⁴ The tale, while in some ways adapting to contemporary consolation literature in its offering of religious doctrine as a source of comfort, subverts it by dramatizing the intense impact of the death. Transrealist links to fairy tale tropes foreground the mother's rebellious reaction to her grief, allowing an investigation of the socially inadmissible complexities of loss.

The recounting of her pre-birth dream transposes the fairy tale's ambivalent heteroglossic voice to interrogate definitions of recognition and value. The dream responds to worry on the part of the mother and uses fairy tale references to encode a wider background of deprivation in the images. She dreams of a transformation of herself linked with fairy tale romance rather than with Christian concepts of the divine. Falling asleep after the successful labour, she dreams of herself changed into flowers: '[W]ithout losing the sense of existence she lost the consciousness of its form, and thought she lay, not a young mother in her bed, but a nosegay of wild flowers in a basket, crushed, flattened and half-withered' (128). Within this context she doubts her own value, feeling lost in comparison to 'a cluster of delicately curved, faintly tinged, tea-scented roses'. Her dream narrative repeats her husband's validation of her, despite her transformed identity. She is concerned that he will not recognise or choose her: "'How dreadful if [...] I should be left lying here, while he takes another [...] But how should he choose me? They are all so beautiful [...] And he cannot know that it is I lying here!'" (128). Her concerns suggest the tale of 'Sweetheart Roland', in which Roland, due to a witch's spell, does not recognise his sweetheart in flower form, and, preparing to marry another, only recognises her

⁴⁴ Ibid.

when he hears her singing as a woman.⁴⁵ The tale foregrounds its roots in fairy tale tradition in the language of her relief at her restored identity: ‘He had chosen her. He had known her [...] as if he had [...] like one of the old knights, delivered her from the transformation of some evil magic, by the counter-enchantment of a kiss, and restored her from a half-withered nose-gay to be a woman, a wife, a mother’ (128). Her dream depicts a transformation of identity as a validation of what others do not see.

This dream propels the therapeutic process of interpreting the death of the couple’s newborn son, dramatizing the transformative application of an ambivalent heteroglossic voice in a cathartic context. The effect of her dreams strengthens the mother in her choice of mourning. The narrative emphasises the transformation in the baby’s identity in the description of her grief. As a new mother, before realising the death, she asks for the baby as ‘it’: “‘I want to nurse it’ [...] [S]he had not learned to say ‘him’; for it was her first baby’ (129). As a result of the death, the baby is now ‘a waxen image of a son’ (130). The description of the death evokes tropes of 1860s consolation literature, in which dead children were depicted as angels or stars:⁴⁶ the dead baby is ‘a frolicsome, child-angel, that but tapped on the window and fled’ (129). But the mother insists on her dead baby’s humanity, exploring the trauma in the shift of identity between her newborn son and her dead child. She asks that the baby be left at her side: ‘[S]he fancied she heard it breathe [...] [B]ut [...] when she drew it close to her, she shivered to feel it so cold [...] [A]

⁴⁵ ‘Sweetheart Roland’, p. 215.

⁴⁶ Pat Jalland observes several examples of this image: ‘The 1861 SPCK tract *Early Death* encouraged grieving parents to think of a lost daughter as a ‘bright angel permitted to watch over your path’ [...] John Keble’s popular poem ‘Bereavement’ [asks] ‘What if / . . . / She / . . . / prove guide to thee / In ways to Angels known? [...]’ In 1864 Lord Skelmersdale found spiritual solace on the death of his young child: ‘It is a very comforting thought that our little bright one is now most certainly one among the many that surround the throne of our Saviour’ Jalland, p. 123-124. Charles Dickens in ‘A Child’s Dream of a Star’ refers to a child’s dead relatives as angels; the image of a star accompanies his visions of his relatives’ ‘angels’: ‘[T]he child looked upon the star as the Home he was to go to [...] [H]e thought that he

look of her husband's dawned unexpectedly on its face [...]he cried out' (130-131). The narrative dramatizes the effect of her desire to transform her dead baby into a living form, as in her dream, she had been transformed from a withered bunch of flowers into a living woman.

However, the validation of her identity in her dream gives her the strength to insist on her own way of mourning. She demands to keep the corpse beside her: 'But the unsatisfied heart of the mother longed to look again on the form of the child [...]though with remonstrance from the nurse, it was laid beside her' (131). While the mother eventually accepts the death as God's embrace of her child returning to a heavenly home, the description of the child and the mother's desire to keep holding it dramatizes experiences of grief which did not fit into consolatory conventions.

The physical visibility of some of the descriptions of the child as a 'waxen image of a son' or as 'alabaster' suggests the practice of post-mortem photographs. Nicola Bown explores how post-mortem photographs, emerging in the 1850s-1860s and remaining popular throughout the rest of the century, gave the bereaved parents a healing access to a dead child's physicality: 'Images recalled the physical presence of a dead child and brought mourning parents to feel some consolation for their loss'.⁴⁷ Bown argues that the prevalent theme of touching the dead recalls touches made in funerary preparation: 'Preparations for the funeral [...] meant that the baby was held and cared for, and these loving touches are recorded in the image. The photographs [...] invite touch and became miniature substitutes for the dead child, whose image they recorded'.⁴⁸ However, this bereaved mother extends her need for

did not belong to the earth alone, but to the star too, because of his sister's angel gone before'. 'A Child's Dream of a Star' *Household Words*, 6 April 1850, pp.185-189 (p. 187).

⁴⁷ Nicola Bown, 'Empty Hands And Precious Pictures: Post-Mortem Portrait Photographs Of Children', *Australasian Journal Of Victorian Studies* 14.2 (2009), 8-24 (p. 9).

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

physical touch beyond accepted convention, as the nurse's remonstrance suggests. Though the child has already been dressed for burial, she insists on holding it, not for a brief touch, but for two days. Her decision extends a parent's need for physical consolation beyond what representations in literature or photography could offer. The virtue of her insistence can be seen in its effect: it produces a cathartic burst of tears.

Despite her defiance of convention, her husband validates her perspective, as in her dream: 'At length, the nurse appealed to the father, and the mother feared he would think it necessary to remove it; but to her joy and gratitude he said, "No, no, let her keep it as long as she likes". And she loved her husband the more for that; for he understood her' (131). While the previous two tales explore the importance of emotional expression, with the second tale intensifying such expression as connection as well as expression, the schoolmaster's tale, in locating shared connection as compassion, dramatizes its role in transforming a signifying process in a context of grief.

The exploration of grief in 'Birth, Dreaming and Death' is strongest of the three, and the surrounding conversation indicates that previous telling of 'sad stories' has enabled a sharing of trauma. Adela not only digests the tale, but offers a response that indicates a shared emotional connection which in turn leads her to make an interpretative expression. This expression takes the form of a song performance, which Smith terms 'one of [Heinrich] Heine's [1797-1856] strange, ghost-dreams, so unreal in everything but feeling, and therefore, as dreams, so true' (4). The song recalls elements from each of the previous tales. The lines "'I dreamt of the daughter of a king/With a cheek white, wet, and chill/ Under the limes we sat murmuring/ And holding each other so still!'" suggest the Light Princess's watery moments of

romantic connection with her prince (5). The lines ““Oh! not thy father’s sceptre of gold/ . . ./’Tis thyself I want, my own! ”” explore a desired connection beyond structures of financial connection, recalling the hopeless love of Elsie in ‘The Bell’ for the richer doctor who considers her a peasant girl beneath a romantic connection. The final lines, ““I lie in the grave all day/And only at night I come to thee/ For I cannot keep away””, recall the dreams of the mother who cannot keep away from her child (5). However, though all these lines recall aspects of the previous tales, they create a new story from them: a lover of a dead princess, who only sees his beloved as a ghost in his dreams. This transrealist combination of images is heightened by Adela’s self-expression: her performance represents a new creative autonomy. Her use of music represents her own narrative identity as it is an aesthetic form which the main narrator cannot use. Smith acknowledges his lack of narrative control over the song: ‘[I]t is a misfortune that, in writing a book, one cannot give the music of a song’ and also acknowledges the potential for independent expression in this medium: ‘At the same time, a true-word song has music of its own, and is quite independent, for its music, both of that which it may beget, and of that with which it may be associated’ (5). Adela has been able to ‘wake her own meaning’ from the stories of shared sadness, and through this, develops the promise of emotional autonomy.

Wonder Tales: Interrogating Signification

While the transformative process in the first volume situates itself in traditions of the nineteenth-century *künstmärchen*, the second volume evokes a *wondermärchen* in its dramatization of interpretative exploration as a transformative process. Marina

Warner, observing that this term was used by the German Romantics and Russian folklorists to characterise folktale or fairy tale, defines it as a tale conveying a particular facet of the marvellous, ‘fascination and inquiry’, or ‘active motion towards experience and the passive state of enrapturement’.⁴⁹ All of the tales in this second sequence explore the balance between fascination and inquiry, in moments of wonder. The sequence begins with a ‘fairy tale’ (‘The Shadows’), followed by two tales which transpose abstract themes presented in the first tale in more specific nineteenth century social contexts (‘The Broken Swords’ and ‘My Uncle Peter’). These tales all explore the critical process of evaluating social perception. MacDonald’s grouping of tales explores a transrealist discourse of mediating images, from interpreting literal shapes, to deliberating mental enlightenment, and finally to narrating social identity. The tales each contain moments of wonder (fascination and inquiry) which prompt this mediation of images, and through these moments, each tale explores different ambiguities of perception. MacDonald’s representation of the transformative aspect of dialogue suggests the transformative power Julia Kristeva locates in human speech. Kristeva investigates whether the ability to speak can transform mourning, defining speech processes as ‘a transposition of series or sentences testifying to our ability to work out a fundamental mourning and successive mourning’.⁵⁰ Kristeva represents dialogic space as containing a promoting a process of re-interpreting signs in which ambiguous states become a way of challenging signification:

Our gift of speech, of situating ourselves in time for another, could exist nowhere except beyond an abyss. Speaking beings, from their ability to endure in time up to their enthusiastic, learned, or simply amusing

⁴⁹ Marina Warner, *Wonder Tales* (Oxford: OUP, 2004), p. 3.

⁵⁰ Kristeva, *Black Sun*, p. 42

constructions, demand a break, a renunciation, an unease at their foundations.⁵¹

However, Kristeva acknowledges that such transformation is not always possible: 'The negation of that fundamental loss opens up the realm of signs for us, but the mourning is often incomplete. It drives out negation and revives the memory of signs by drawing them out of their signifying neutrality'.⁵² But she suggests that the widening of signification in aesthetic processes can effect a transformation of the original form of depression (what she terms the 'Thing'):

Art seems to point to a few devices that bypass complacency and, without simply turning mourning into mania, secure for the artist and the connoisseur a sublimatory hold over the lost Thing [...] by means of the polyvalence of sign and symbol, which unsettles naming and, by building up a plurality of connotations around the sign, affords the subject a chance to imagine the nonmeaning, or the true meaning, of the Thing.⁵³

MacDonald's heteroglossic sequence extends the process of loss and non-meaning discussed by Kristeva as his last tale builds on the soldier's experience of 'imagining a nonmeaning' in learning to mediate his perceptions of himself and those around him. This last tale not only explores the experience of imagining 'nonmeaning' as a way of transcending 'the abyss' but also explores the social reactions to this imaginative transcendence. In all three tales, MacDonald dramatizes a transrealist experience of a plurality of image interpretations, from the mysterious shadow images, to the mental images deliberated over by the depressed soldier, and to the images of social identity lying behind the names associated with Little Christmas. The element of fascination and inquiry in each instance complicates the interpretative process, opening the possibility of transformation through the multiplicity of signs associated with each image which promote new emotional

⁵¹ Kristeva, *Black Sun*, p. 42.

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Kristeva, p. 95.

connections due to the ability of multiple persons to find a shared social signification.

‘The Shadows’ indicates a link to ‘The Light Princess’ in the storytelling club tradition as it is yet another ‘fairy tale without any fairies’, though, like the first tale, it is a tale full of the marvellous. However, while ‘The Light Princess’ evokes and then subverts fairy tale tropes such as cursed princesses, heroic princes and happy endings, ‘The Shadows’ dispenses with the traditional fairy tale structure of a quest for resolution altogether.⁵⁴ The story begins with the tale of a man, Ralph Rinkelmann, taken from his sickbed to be king of the fairies, and gives a brief account of his adventures as king, including a battle with villainous goblins. Yet these difficult tasks are accomplished within a couple of sentences, and the narrative focuses on exploring a series of shadow play scenes, suggesting a written diorama, a form which Charles Dickens uses in his travelogue *Pictures From Italy* (1846).⁵⁵ While most of his travel narrative traces his act of journeying through Italy, Dickens finishes this narrative with a section he terms ‘A Rapid Diorama’, in which the act of viewing a collection of scenes replaces his act of journeying.⁵⁶ It also recalls his preface which terms his pictures ‘a series of faint reflections- mere shadows in the water...written in the shade of a sunny day’, as a way of excusing imprecisions in a text he himself acknowledges as subjective.⁵⁷ Similarly, Macdonald’s collection of scenes calls attention to the act of viewing, though more specifically to the act of

⁵⁴ That is, the typical fairy tale structure defined by Vladimir Propp as the completion of a difficult task, leading to recognition, exposure, transfiguration, punishment of villain. See Vladimir Propp, *The Morphology of the Folk-Tale* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1968), p. 126.

⁵⁵ In *The Victorians and the Visual Imagination*, Kate Flint discusses Dickens’s ‘Rapid Diorama’ chapter, observing that ‘he presents his mind as an open screen which receives impressions’ and categorizing it under Walter Benjamin’s definition of ‘Panorama Literature’: ‘individual sketches which, as it were, reproduce the plastic foreground of those panoramas with their individual form and the extensive background of the panoramas with their store of information’. See Flint, *The Victorians and the Visual Imagination* (Cambridge: CUP, 2000), p.144-146.

viewing ambiguous images. This narrative focus consciously interrogates the instructive process of mediating illusions through evoking multiple aspects of Victorian optical culture which contained confused perceptions.

These scenes begin with the protagonist marvelling at a view of his world through the eyes of otherworldly creatures which are shadows come to life, evoking a contradictory mediation: the experience of receiving renewed perception from creatures who signify ambiguous perception. The term ‘shadows’ evokes nineteenth-century practices of shadow play and phantasmagoria, whether it be the ‘Chinese galantee’ man interviewed by Henry Mayhew in his *London Labour and the London Poor* (collected in two editions, 1851 and 1861), who entertains the street crowds using simple stories told ‘with a piece of calico stretched in front, and a light behind to throw the shadows on the sheet’,⁵⁸ to more sophisticated technologies of manipulating light and shadow such as dissolving views in magic lantern shows, and finally to traditions of philosophical reflection linked to Plato’s metaphor of the cave, with individuals invited to determine the difference between shadows on the wall and the origins of these shadows, propelling dialogue and discussion.

The representations of the shadows dramatize transrealist applications of the experience of wonder, by evoking aspects of Victorian optical devices which provoke inquiry through transformation. Their use of a capacity for motion creates them as at once frolicsome, grotesque and eerie. Though initially considering them ‘good-natured creatures, and more frolicsome than positively ill-mannered’, Ralph is

⁵⁶ Charles Dickens, *American Notes and Pictures from Italy* (London: Chapman and Hall, 1894), p. 478.

⁵⁷ Dickens, p.302.

⁵⁸ Henry Mayhew, *London Labour and the London Poor*, Volume III, ed. by John Rosenberg (London: Dover Publications: Constable, 1968), p.74.

taken aback when two of them begin to move, approaching him and cavorting (41).⁵⁹

This capacity for motion becomes discomfoting as well as grotesque in combination with the eeriness of their appearance:

They were [...] rather awful [...] in their appearance [...] looking, in fact, just like the pictures of Puritans drawn by Cavaliers, with long arms, and very long, thin legs, from which hung large loose feet, while in their countenances length of chin and nose predominated [...] [T]hey were very *erie* indeed to look at(42).

The addition of new technologies of motion – through ‘dissolving views’ – to traditional shadow plays created them as figures of public curiosity. Mervyn Heard, in his comprehensive exploration of magic lanterns, defines the dissolving view as ‘a transformation effect produced through the alignment of two lanterns projecting overlapping images: what we would now recognize as a cross-fade or mix’.⁶⁰ Heard explains that these new effects, first emerging in the 1820s-1830s,⁶¹ created a great stir, and provided opportunities to refine magic lantern images: ‘[A] skeleton might doff its head [...] or a ghost be made to suddenly appear or disappear. Through repetition some could even be made to display continuous movement such as skipping or jumping’. MacDonald’s eerie beckoning, bowing, and ducking shadows recall the dissonant attraction of these dissolving views. Though first appearing in the 1820s, an 1856 advertisement for dissolving view slides underlines their enduring power to draw fascination: ‘[M]ovable sliders [...] produce very curious appearances[...] [T]he figure of the skeleton figure [...] may be made to lie on the floor and rise up to a sitting or standing posture. By combining the motion of the

⁵⁹ George MacDonald, *Adela Cathcart*, Vol II (Hazleton: Pennsylvania State University Electronic Press, 2006). References in text.

⁶⁰ Mervyn Heard, *Phantasmagoria: The Secret Life of the Magic Lantern* (London: Projection Box, 2006), p. 197.

⁶¹ Heard explains that ‘the origins of the dissolving view are somewhat hazy’. Early forms had begun to emerge in the first decade of the nineteenth century, but in 1823 Philip Carpenter ‘revolutionised magic-lantern slide production’ by adding a copper-plate process to the dissolving view which ‘[led] to its most marvellous evocation’. See Heard, pp.197-201.

lantern with movable sliders, a great variety of curious effects may be produced'.⁶² MacDonald's moving shadows similarly 'produce very curious appearances' but the description of them as 'like the pictures of Puritans drawn by Cavaliers' adds an element of meditative inquiry to the curious attractiveness in Victorian moving shadows, by emphasising a potential for subjectivity and bias: Cavaliers might well misrepresent, exaggerate, and satirize their political opponents. His shadows complicate the perception of fascination and inquiry in experiences of wonder by provoking the question of who creates perceptions, and why.

This initial discomfort behind perceptive wonder becomes more overt as the text depicts the shadows using their capacity for motion to instruct people. The shadows take turns relating their victories in influencing people to reform through creating moving images. One of these involves Ralph's own child: in order to take Ralph on a tour of the shadow world, the shadows distract his wife by making their baby cry with their movements. The idea of the shadows frightening his child angers Ralph, but the shadows pacify him by interpreting their tricks as moral instruction: "[I]t will do the child good; for that Shadow will, all her life, be to her a symbol of what is ugly and bad. When she feels in danger of hating or envying anyone, that Shadow will come back to her mind, and make her shudder"'(51). Ralph accepts this interpretation, but there is an element of discrepancy in the Shadows' hurried assertion which complicates their moralizing role: how can they be certain that a) she will interpret the shadowy movements as 'a symbol of what is ugly and bad' for all her life and b) that she will connect images of something 'ugly and bad' with the act of 'hating or envying anyone'? Within this discrepancy lies the question of how

⁶² Benjamin Pike, *Pike's illustrated descriptive catalogue of optical, mathematical, and philosophical instruments: manufactured, imported, and sold by the author: with the prices affixed at which they are offered in 1856*. (New York : Published and sold by the author, 1856), p.211.

much the Shadows are really concerned for the child's welfare. This initial representation of questionable instruction frames their subsequent descriptions of reform.

One of these, featuring the reform of an alcoholic, evokes the use of optical technology as reform, as dissolving views were a popular educational tool of the temperance movement.⁶³ Having 'caught a toper alone, over his magnum of port,' the Shadow 'made *delirium tremens* first; and then [...] settled into a funeral'; he reports that the alcoholic improves: "[T]he wretch [...] took refuge with his wife and children in the drawing-room, much to their surprise. I believe he actually drank a cup of tea; and although I have often looked in again, I have never seen him drinking alone" (53). Quoting an 1850 article stating that 'the phantasmagoria lantern [has become] not only an amusing and rational recreation, but a powerful aide in the work of education [...] extensively used by the Clergy in giving lectures', Heard notes that the mid-nineteenth-century dissolving view was 'a visual aid to education [...] conveying [...] the advantages of cleanliness, sobriety and the fear of God'.⁶⁴ The dramatization of death as a consequence of alcoholism was a popular theme in this education. Susan Horton gives an example of a temperance tool which depicted "'the Evils of Drink,": a dissolving slide showing a beautifully dressed woman being transformed into a horrible skeleton'.⁶⁵ Horton argues that these temperance shows made optical spectacles an 'acceptable' form of moral entertainment: 'You could watch those magic lantern shows with an easy conscience if what was "really" happening was that you were being educated in and edified by

⁶³ See Richard Altick, *The Shows of London* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1978), p.220, and Heard, p.8.

⁶⁴ Heard, p.213.

⁶⁵ Susan R Horton, 'Were They Having Fun Yet?: Victorian Optical Gadgetry, Modernist Selves' in *Victorian Literature and the Victorian Visual Imagination*, ed. by John O. Jordan (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), pp. 1-26 (p. 14).

the wonders of modern technology'.⁶⁶ Yet, as well as representing a scene of phantasmagoric instruction, the dialogue in MacDonald's text also disturbs the idea of this edifying entertainment, emphasising the shadow's enjoyment of his moralizing terror. Though the shadow undoubtedly assists the alcoholic, there is little indication that he feels any sympathy for him: the shadow excitedly exclaims 'didn't I give it him!' and dismisses the alcoholic as 'such a sinner'. The shadow's dialogue seems more concerned with self-gratification rather than with any real concern for the alcoholic he manipulates. By representing a common trope of temperance instruction as self-gratification, MacDonald's text complicates contemporary symbols of reform, questioning whether they are motivated by a real concern for the viewers or by the fulfilment of the instructors.

The shadows use dialogue consciously to extend signification, by commenting on types of shadows which differ from them, in order to establish their own identity. In discussing a man who is trapped in emotional turmoil, the shadows' dialogue annotates this tale by clarifying mental shadows as a contrast to their visual identity: "[H]e soon overshadowed the whole table with his morose looks and short answers. That kind of shadowing is very different from ours". Similarly, they differentiate themselves from visual shadows whose pale appearance contrasts with their own black appearance. When Ralph sees 'stranger Shadows, with human faces and eyes, moving about amongst the crowd', he asks one of his Shadow friends about them. The evocation of fear in the Shadow's response assigns them an identity of discomfiting otherness as they are unable to make any approach, connection or dialogue with these pale Shadows: 'I do not know,' said he, in a low tone, 'what they are [...] Some of us paid a visit to a man who [...] was said to think a great deal. We

⁶⁶ Horton, pp. 14-15.

saw two of those sitting in the room with him [...] We could not cross the threshold, but shivered and shook' (67). He finishes with a question 'Is not your majesty afraid of them too?' which establishes the depth of this identity of otherness as it indicates fear of these pale shadows as a natural assumption. This extended signification process strengthens Adela's critical faculties. Throughout the tale, she interrupts her uncle's narration several times to ask, "But what does it mean?" only for him to respond, "I don't know". When the tale finishes, she demands to know the meaning of the pale Shadows: "But what were those other shadows, mysteries in the midst of mystery?" Her uncle says that they are 'the shadows of the mind' (68). His answer is unsatisfying – if the pale shadows are the shadows of the mind, then what are the other shadows who 'overshadowed' the mental processes of the misanthrope? The multifaceted nature of the signification combined with her uncle's unsatisfactory response strengthens Adela to challenge her uncle's interpretative practice:

"I don't know. I can't trust you.—I *do* believe, uncle, you write whatever comes into your head; and then when any one asks you the meaning of this or that, you hunt round till you find a meaning just about the same size as the thing itself, and stick it on.—Don't you, now" (68)?

The gaps in signification provide Adela with the opportunity to develop an autonomy which allows her to evaluate perceptions of those surrounding her.

While 'The Shadows' explores links between symbol and perception by dramatizing interactions with anthropomorphic images, 'The Broken Swords' uses mental dialogue to determine an enlightened identity through mediating perception of images. Unlike 'The Shadows', with its transrealist collection of discomfiting unearthly scenes, there is a trajectory of moving from difficulty to resolution. However, this resolution is not a successful social integration, as in 'My Uncle Peter', but rather a mental integration: the soldier-hero dies without seeing his beloved family again, yet dies with his mental torment resolved. The text overtly

foregrounds the resonance of this mental dialogue by addressing the reader with questions about perceptions of images and symbols. MacDonald opens the tale by questioning experiences of perception in his description of the young man's moonlit farewell to his sisters, contrasting 'the land of shadows' with the 'land of realities': 'But which should be called the land of realities?—the region where appearance, and space, and time drive between, and stop the flowing currents of the soul's speech? or that region where heart meets heart, and appearance has become the slave to utterance, and space and time are forgotten?'(98). The allusion to the 'land of shadows' recalls the previous tale of 'The Shadows', in which the shadows provide revelations by dramatizing secrets of heart and conscience. It also links the tale to Plato's Cave discussion, especially in combination to the accompanying question of 'the land of realities'. In Plato's Cave metaphor, the philosopher argues with the prisoners of the cave, trying to help them perceive the difference between the shadowy copies of reality and the real forms to be perceived once released from the Cave. 'The Broken Swords' depicts similar wrestlings with reality, but in this case the philosopher and the prisoners are both contained in one young man's mind. MacDonald does not engage the philosopher's writings in direct debate (unlike J.S. Mill, for example); as Stephen Prickett observes, he is more concerned with exploring tensions of interior enlightenment.⁶⁷

The text contrasts tensions of mental reality ('appearance [becomes] the slave to utterance') and social reality ('appearance, and space, and time [...] stop the flowing currents of the soul's speech'), questioning how the one might affect the other and vice versa, creating mental dialogue as a transrealist mediation of

⁶⁷ Stephen Prickett, 'The Two Worlds of George MacDonald', *North Wind: Journal Of The George Macdonald Society* 2 (1983), 14-23 (p.20): 'MacDonald's [...] thought is at once Christian and Platonic [...] Whereas for Plato and Dante alike the perception of spiritual truth was a collective process, involving what was common to mankind, for MacDonald, living

imaginative perceptions. MacDonald proceeds to define failed mediation as a lack of self-knowledge: 'Yet so little, do we know ourselves, and so different are the symbols with which the imagination works its algebra, from the realities which those symbols represent' (100). He assigns this lack of self-knowledge a recognisable context of a young soldier contemplating imagining the army as a symbol of chivalry and glory: 'the youth felt no uneasiness, but contemplated his new calling with a glad enthusiasm and some vanity; for all his prospect lay in the glow of the scarlet and the gold'. He draws the reader into this process of mental dialogue by presenting contrasting military symbols of 'old knightly romances' and 'Sangreal knights' with 'the cannon bellowing against the walls' and women crying in the streets' (100-101). The text assumes that the reader will not share the soldier's romantic view of military life,⁶⁸ and uses this assumption to gloss what is lacking in the soldier's initial concepts of the army. The soldier has not learned to evaluate his mental perceptions and tumbles into torment when, on joining his regiment, he realizes that the army he has joined is not that of Arthurian legend. His shock of discovering that members of his regiment are capable of behaviour which symbolize an enemy army leads him to imagine his regiment as an enemy attacking his family: '[H]e woke at the cry of horror and rage that burst from his own lips, as he saw the rough, bloody hand of a soldier twisted in the loose hair of his elder sister, and the younger fainting in the arms of a scoundrel belonging to his own regiment' (102). The soldier's imaginative process leads him into an abyss of social signification, as he questions whether his army regiment or his family define his identity.

in and belonging to a world of nineteenth-century individualism, we climb our own secret stair to the wider vision. The articulation of truth is indispensable from a discovery of one's own individuality'.

⁶⁸ Jenny Neophytou argues that the tale, a form of which was first published in 1857, specifically evokes the Crimean War.

After being ejected from the army, the soldier works as a labourer before re-enlisting as a private. He begins to learn mediation of perception when he falls in love with a woman who is in love with someone else and contrasts his idea of their interactions with her perception, bringing him the ability to contextualize his perceptions of himself with his knowledge of other people. His newly acquired powers of mediation allow him to integrate various types of perception.

The resolution exemplifies a successful integration of self-knowledge with perceptions of social custom. The tale ends with an account of the soldier acting to save a woman on the battlefield: ‘A girl, bare-headed, was fleeing towards the rock, pursued by several soldiers. “Aha!” said he, divining her purpose—the soldiers behind and the rock before her—“I will help you to die!”’ (118). The resolution combines knowledge of battlefield custom – presumably, the girl is fleeing the soldiers because she fears various forms of violence – with perception of others (he is able to understand her intent). The soldier realizes that his romantic/chivalric instincts can assist her: he sacrifices himself to save the girl from the prospect of violence. This combination brings him peace:

‘The next instant he fell, pierced to the heart; and his spirit rose triumphant, free, strong, and calm, above the stormy world, which at length lay vanquished beneath him’ (119). The tale dramatizes the gaining of an enlightened identity by analyzing the fluid signification process that underpins it. The tragic ending foregrounds the importance of mediating perceptions of symbols by presenting a successful mediation as being of more importance than extended life.

The final tale in this sequence, ‘My Uncle Peter’, explores social transformation through interrogating symbols of social identity, particularly as indicated in names. The text produces two different processes of interpreting social

identity through names: through contemporary indicators of social reform and through emotional connections with individuals. Some of these complications of identity and naming can be seen in a later essay ‘A New Name’ (*Unspoken Sermons*) (1867): here, MacDonald interrogates the naming process, separating what he terms ‘a name of the ordinary kind’ with a ‘true name’. An ordinary name, he argues, does not express an individual's essential personality: ‘It is but a label by which one man and a scrap of his external history may be known from another man and a scrap of his history’.⁶⁹ A true name ‘expresses the character, the nature, the being, the meaning of the person who bears it. It is the man’s own symbol,—his soul’s picture, in a word,—the sign which belongs to him and to no one else’.⁷⁰ The chronological proximity of this essay to the *Adela Cathcart* tale makes it a useful indicator of MacDonald’s thoughts around fluctuations in naming, identity and Christian culture, which I shall develop further in my discussion.

The heroine in this story begins as a crossing sweeper girl, who is adopted by an eccentric bachelor. The tale explores her development at two points in her life: her first encounter, as a child, with her eccentric benefactor and her crisis of identity following her abduction and consequent new job as a maid. Throughout this, Little Christmas (or Chrissy) becomes a confident woman by determining her own ‘soul’s picture’ due to education in Christian culture.

MacDonald, though perceiving the learning of Christian spirituality as essential to freedom, offers complications to contemporary constructions of moral reform.⁷¹ John Pennington points out that MacDonald, though interested in moral

⁶⁹ MacDonald, ‘A New Name’ in *Unspoken Sermons* (Wilder Publications, 2008), pp. 38-46 (p. 42).

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

⁷¹ For example, see discussions of reform as expressed by MacDonald’s friend Charles Kingsley: In a discussion of Kingsley’s addresses to the Chartists, Donald Hall notes that ‘[i]n his third “Letter” to the Chartists, Kingsley asks them to remember their Psalms, to be content with “the patient abiding of the meek” (his emphasis), not to resort to “the frantic boasts of the

refinement, emphasizes active integration rather than merely self-mastery: '[H]e feminizes muscular Christianity by depicting processes of the integration and reconciliation rather than polarization and bifurcation of gender roles, thus making his a more powerful force than Hughes or Kingsley could ever imagine'.⁷² Pennington focuses on MacDonald's transformation of gender, but MacDonald also dramatizes complexities of social integration in 'My Uncle Peter'. The patterns of naming in MacDonald's text trace Chrissy's process of refining an ability to speak her true identity as she moves from crossing sweeper to Miss Belper, Peter's daughter; the social complexities which Chrissy encounters in this contain experiences of wonder which interrogate wider conceptions of social integration.

Uncle Peter's initial encounter with Little Christmas presents emotional identification as a transrealist experience of fascination and inquiry; his response to this complicates the role of autonomy in social integration. Uncle Peter, conversing with some crossing sweepers to whom he is handing out Christmas alms, is struck by a strange sense of connection with one crossing sweeper girl. This sense of connection increases when, stopping to talk to her, he discovers they share a common birthday as both were born on Christmas Day (137). Uncle Peter's dialogue suggests an approach to charity which attempts to engage with the identity of a working-class individual and find out points of emotional connection. Peter's adoption dramatizes the importance of dialogue and consent in trying to rescue someone from a difficult situation. In comparison with (slightly later) child rescue

bloodthirsty" See Donald Hall, 'On the making and unmaking of monsters: Christian Socialism, muscular Christianity, and the metaphORIZATION of class conflict' in *Muscular Christianity*, ed. by Donald Hall (Cambridge: CUP, 1994), pp. 45-65 (p. 53).

⁷² John Pennington, 'Muscular spirituality in George MacDonald's *Curdie* books' in *Muscular Christianity*, pp. 133-149 (p. 146).

initiatives by Dr. Barnardo,⁷³ in which children were sometimes rescued whether they wanted to be or not, Peter realizes that Little Christmas needs to decide to come with him herself. The transrealist combination of fascination and inquiry in his connection with Little Christmas inspires a pattern of charity which recognizes a need for autonomy and equal identity in street inhabitants, involving them in making decisions about their own welfare.

The effect of this element of self-definition can be seen in Little Christmas's own crisis of identity. Raised by Uncle Peter as his own daughter, Chrissy, she becomes secure in a middle-class identity (suggested by her attendance at a respectable day school and by the possession of soft white hands). But her new identity is shaken when she is snatched off the streets by a couple whom she recognizes from her childhood days as a crossing sweeper.⁷⁴ However, Chrissy's rebellious acts of transrealist storytelling in this episode signify her ability to explore new interpretations of self-worth, and from this, to achieve social integration for herself.

MacDonald's interest in spiritual instruction emerges in her decision to seek comfort in praying to God, but, significantly, prayers alone do not help. It is the act of storytelling which assists her: "I left my prayers alone [...] I told God the whole story [...] from the very beginning when Uncle Peter found me on the crossing, down to the minute when I was talking there to Him in the dark" (6). This act of self-representation, she finds, restores her spirits. Self-representation by working-

⁷³ Ginger Frost, discussing Dr. Barnardo's refuges for children (the first was built in 1870 and 'by 1900, eight thousand children lived in his homes and one thousand babies in his Waif's Association'), observes that 'Dr Barnardo [...] argued that time was of the essence in saving a child. Any investigation into the children's backgrounds, then, came after they were admitted. In fact, Barnardo did not wait for children to come to him; he and his assistants prowled the streets of London at night, urging street children to come into the home. Barnardo's tactics were controversial from the beginning [...] He [...] boasted about kidnapping children from harmful environments'. *Victorian Childhoods* (London: Praeger Publishers, 2009), p. 147.

⁷⁴ *Adela Cathcart*, Volume III (Hazleton: Pennsylvania State University Electronic Press, 2012), p. 5.

class individuals acquires a resonance of social as well as spiritual autonomy. In her exploration of nineteenth-century child narratives, Galia Benziman notes that memoirs by former child labourers possessed a strong political power, merging genres of autobiography and social-problem fiction to ‘provide [...]instances of the complex and inconsistent representation of the child's subjectivity, interiority, and agency in lower-class-authored texts aimed at causing social change’.⁷⁵ She observes that an 1832 narrative by Robert Blincoe was one of the most famous and most effective examples of these texts, arousing public sympathy for child employment reform. One strong theme in Blincoe's memoir is to find the identity of his parents, which Benziman interprets as ‘this boy's frustrated need to possess an identity of his own’.⁷⁶ Read in this light, Chrissy's storytelling becomes an act of defining her own social identity, an act which, in the context of MacDonald's spiritual framework, is enhanced by addressing her story to God. MacDonald, while stating that each individual should be respected as having a ‘true name’, also emphasises that this name comes from communication with God: ‘[T]he giving of the [...] new name is the communication of what God thinks about the man to the man’.⁷⁷ Uncle Peter's comment on Chrissy's fear that the kidnappers are her parents clarifies a link between MacDonald's theories and Chrissy's act. Peter observes that God knows the ambiguity behind her identity, and will not judge her by it. He states that Chrissy can find a true spiritual name: “‘ [Y]ou are God's child. And He can't be ashamed of you’” (7). Chrissy, by telling her story to God, represents herself in a context which transcends social categories. Her act of storytelling becomes an act of transrealist mediation, of finding interior enlightenment through self-representation:

⁷⁵ Galia Benziman, *Narratives of Child Neglect in Romantic and Victorian Culture* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), p.98.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

creating a new spiritual name as 'God's child' allows Chrissy to possess a social identity which stems from an interior essentiality.

This interior process of establishing an essential identity brings her social autonomy. Her kidnappers sell her to a middle-class lady, Mrs Sprinx, as a maid of all work. Mrs Sprinx plays into the hands of Chrissy's abusers as she sees her as an object of salvation rather than someone with whom she might interact: 'I tried to say that I had led an honest life. But [...] I was stopped by her saying—"Now don't tell lies" This shut me up quite. I could not speak when I knew she would not believe me' (8-9). Mrs Sprinx's perception of Chrissy as incapable of accurate self-representation evokes problems in nineteenth-century discourses of reform, in what Troy Boone, in a survey of child rescue discourse, condemns as perceptions of 'a working-class population that is [...] incapable of the vision that determines subjectivity – including political subjectivity as the citizen of a modern democratic nation'.⁷⁸ It also runs contrary to MacDonald's theories on names, as Mrs Sprinx manifestly fails to see Chrissy as possessing an essential nature. In MacDonald's spiritual framework, acknowledging that every individual has an essential 'name' leads to integration: 'It is as one that the man has claims amongst his fellows. Each will feel the sacredness and awe of his neighbour's dark and silent speech with his God. Each will regard the other as a prophet'.⁷⁹ However, Chrissy's skills of self-representation allow her to engage with someone who sees her as a source of wonder and consequently as capable of dialogue.

Mrs Sprinx's son, Eddie, notices the contrast between her white hands and her hard work and decides that she must be a fairy tale princess. Chrissy replaces a

⁷⁷ MacDonald, 'A New Name', p. 41.

⁷⁸ Troy Boone, *Youth of Darkest England: Working-Class Children at the Heart of Victorian Empire* (New York: Routledge, 2005), p.13.

fairy tale identity with her own story: ““No, my darling,” I replied; “but something like her; for they have stolen me away from home and brought me here. I wish I could get away”” (10). This self-representation brings her autonomy, as Eddie steals the key to the garden gate for her, without which she cannot get away, although Chrissy is very capable of breaking out of the house itself. By championing Chrissy’s process of liberation, from its foundations in interior refinement, to self-representation, to physical action and finally to social autonomy, ‘My Uncle Peter’ demonstrates Chrissy’s self-development of her own ‘fitness for freedom’ and in so doing dramatizes the question of transcending fixed perceptions of social categories and seeing possibilities of autonomy across class boundaries.

The end of the second section raises the question of Adela's development in a specifically gendered context, connecting her successful transformation with her ability to perceive ‘a woman’s realities’ and to reflect ‘a light within’, which the narrator links with Hood's 1861 ‘Ruth’ (a woman who ‘praises God with sweet looks’) (15). This representation of Adela is qualified by the ambiguous representation of the narrator himself: Smith notes that there is a gulf between himself and Adela, that he is a ‘foolish old bachelor’, and that Adela is ‘shy of her old uncle’ (15). This ambiguous perception of Adela's gender identity anticipates the themes explored in the final section. The narrator’s reflections following the tale ‘My Uncle Peter’ raise the issue of completing Adela's recovery in a context of ambiguous perception, as the narrator is not certain how much his insights into Adela’s character are true. Yet his discussion anticipates both Adela's eventual recovery and the framework for determining this recovery.

⁷⁹ MacDonald, ‘A New Name’, p. 45.

Interpreting Autonomous Identities

Transrealist elements in the third volume of tales present resolution as gendered contestation, providing Adela with a process of questioning resolution by negotiating overt constructions of gender. 'The Giant's Heart' genders struggle through varying masculine and feminine responses to methods of defeating Giant Thunderthump, both in the tale itself and in the surrounding conversation. Adela's own plot becomes part of the sequence of tales, as in the chapter entitled 'Interruption' she defies codes of polite behaviour to oppose her aunt. 'The Cruel Painter' dramatizes resolution as a process of self-construction: the heroine, Lilith, defies others' representations of her to construct her own performance which allows her to join in a mutual partnership with the hero, Karl. Adela balances all these characteristics in the final chapters to negotiate her own future with Harry. While MacDonald does not provide a radical redefinition of gender, through Adela's own navigation of gendered conflict, he presents gender as a process of ongoing and transformative interpretation, which leads to a successful emotional integration.

The resolution of 'The Giant's Heart' offers a gendered representation of conflict involving cunning and violence; these themes are transposed in a subsequent chapter 'An Interruption' in which these attributes form a reworking of gender identity. In this tale, a brother and sister, Buffy-Bob and Tricksey-Wee, battle the cannibalistic Giant Thunderthump. The resolution turns on the ability of the children to control the Giant's heart, an external organ which the children have captured. The brother and sister differ in their responses to the Giant's promise to reform if they will return his heart (37). Tricksey-Wee (the sister) is kind and forgiving, willing to give the Giant a chance to reform, but Buffy-Bob prepares 'for any emergency' by

taking 'out his knife with the pretence of cutting the string' (37). His preparation for violence is justified: 'No sooner was the heart out of the bag, than [...] the giant, with a yell of rage and vengeance, rushed on the two children [...] But Buffy-Bob was too quick for Thunderthump. He sprang to the heart, and buried his knife in it, up to the hilt' (37). Tricksey-Wee still pities him, however: 'A fountain of blood spouted from it; and with a dreadful groan, the giant fell dead at the feet of little Tricksey- Wee, who could not help being sorry for him after all' (37). The story itself does not precisely privilege Buffy-Bob's ruthlessness over Tricksey-Wee's pity. However, William Gray sees this difference as pre-figuring Smith's comments in the discussion which follows: 'By leaving the last word to a female response to male violence, a gesture is perhaps made towards the moral that Smith draws at the end of the chapter, when he reflects 'how much more one good woman can do to kill evil than all the swords of the world in the hands of righteous heroes'.⁸⁰ This discussion divides conflict types by gender: women win moral victories and men win physical victories.

The discussion is not strictly part of the storytelling club, although members of the club are present at the tale's reading. Smith has asked Adela to find some children to whom he can read his fairy tale, and she gathers a local group for him. This audience indicates connection/access to wider society. One little girl, in expressing her enjoyment to Smith, recalls contemporary gender discourse in her comment that "It was a very nice story. If I was a man, I would kill all the wicked people in the world. But I am only a little girl, you know; so I can only be good". Smith suggests that women do not need to resort to physical action as they have the non-physical, complementary power of influence. Yet, discussions in an 1858 issue

⁸⁰William Gray, "Crossover fiction" and narrative as therapy', p. 55.

of the *English Woman's Journal* demonstrate that moral influence was not always sufficient to 'kill' the problems which arose for women. An article in the fifth issue urged women to use their influence to purge evil from their homes. A response to this article complained that women did not always have sufficient power to enforce such influence.⁸¹ The Adela-centred episode 'An Interruption' that follows presents a transrealist complication of the gender signification set up by 'The Giant's Heart', by combining the male characteristics identified in the earlier tale with contemporary tropes of female identity in order to strengthen Adela's struggle against hypocrisy.

When Adela takes a chill, her aunt, Mrs. Cathcart, decides to ask Dr. Wade to treat her, even though Adela is now the patient of Dr. Armstrong. Mrs Cathcart realizes that Adela will not agree with this decision, and so resorts to cunning in order to introduce Dr. Wade into Adela's sickroom. As Mrs Cathcart is a visitor in Colonel Cathcart's household, she has no right to be directing matters in her brother's and niece's household. Her justification for taking over is that Adela is mentally incapable of directing her own affairs (Mrs Cathcart describes her as 'wandering' when Adela objects to Dr Wade's presence). When she realizes that the doctor she had consented to admit is Dr. Wade, Adela expresses her anger with her aunt by uttering a threat of violence: "Aunt, what do you mean? If that old wife comes into this room, I will make him glad to go out of it!" (66). The narrator feels that she is being inappropriate: 'You see she was feverish, poor child, else I am sure she could not have been so rude to her aunt' (66). He excuses her actions on the

⁸¹ A.H.D. comments: 'I read the following passage :—" If ladies were to determine that they would not admit within their houses men who had been notoriously guilty of breaking God's laws, and of having cruelly oppressed a woman, they would greatly raise the standard of morality, and confer an immense benefit upon their own sex." [...]The difficulty is this:—that at home as elsewhere it is generally a man who rules [...] [H]ow are they to act if their own husbands and fathers are no better than those whom they would willingly exclude ?' To the Editor' *English Woman's Journal* 1.6 (1858), p. 426.

grounds that she has been sick; as Marianne Bailin notes, the sickroom was a space in which normal social rules could be relaxed to some degree.⁸²

But Adela demonstrates herself to be a woman capable of victorious struggle in this episode, watching her aunt's actions as Buffy-Bob watches Giant Thunderthump, and preparing for opportunities to act. While her aunt busies herself with Doctor Wade, who joins her in diagnosing mental incapability, Adela writes a letter to Dr. Armstrong in order to access a different prescription and diagnosis. Though Mrs Cathcart tries to confiscate the letter, the maid who takes it recognizes Adela, and not Mrs Cathcart, as having authority in the household: “Show it me [. . .]I command you.” “Miss Cathcart pays me my wages, ma’am,” said Emma’ (67). Like Buffy-Bob, Adela uses cunning to gain victory over her aunt. She shows an interest in Dr. Wade's prescription: “What is the prescription?” said Adela, quite quietly, as Mrs. Cathcart approached the bed [...] “Let me see it” (67). But this is only a pretence: ‘Mrs. Cathcart, thrown off her guard, gave it to her. Adela tore it in fragments, and threw it in a little storm on the floor’ (67). Her final confrontation with her aunt follows, in which she is passionately and transgressively expressive: ‘Pay Dr. Wade his fee, and tell him I shall never be too ill to refuse his medicines. Now, aunt! You find I am determined.—I declare you make me behave so ill that I am ashamed of myself’ (67). Again, the narrator feels that her verbal outburst is inappropriate: ‘Here the poor impertinent child crept under the clothes, and fell a-weeping bitterly’ (67). Adela's passionate expressions of struggle extend her identity beyond that of the capable domestic manager who pays her servants’ wages and who embodies the domestic educational ideals against which the *English Woman’s Journal* rails.

⁸² Marianne Bailin, *The Sickroom in Victorian Fiction* (Cambridge: CUP, 1994)

Because of this expressed struggle, the narrator terms her an ‘impertinent child’ and Adela feels a sense of social guilt at her outburst – but she also feels that it is necessary. A contemporary reader would have recognized her as flouting conventions of etiquette. *The Habits of Good Society* (1860), praising modesty as one of the most important characteristics of womanhood, instructed women to be polite to elderly people: ‘She must consider modesty the prettiest ornament she can wear [...] To the old her manner must always be respectful and even affectionate’.⁸³ Yet the narrative inclines us to sympathize with Adela. Mrs. Cathcart bears a strong resemblance to the evil witch in ‘The Light Princess’, as Tondo notes,⁸⁴ and Adela’s actions make sense: Mrs Cathcart does not have the right to control her. Adela’s interventions attract the reader because they combine logic and fierceness.

The connection to ‘The Giant’s Heart’ gives a mythopoeic connotation to this female opposition, which evokes mythological images of femininity that encompass more fierceness than the femininity of conduct manuals. For example, John Ruskin’s explorations of a mythological femininity of battle in *The Queen of the Air* (1869), interpret Athena, the Greek goddess who guides warriors (among various other activities), as a symbol of vitality, justice and wisdom: ‘[S]he is the queen of the breath of man, first of the bodily breathing which is life to his blood, and strength to his arm in battle and then of the mental breathing, or inspiration, which is his moral health and habitual wisdom [...] of conduct and of the heart’.⁸⁵ Though Ruskin describes her as embodying the cardinal virtues of Prudence, Justice, Fortitude and Temperance, he also identifies her vital wisdom with a righteous fury: ‘[H]er wrath is of irresistible tempest: once roused, it is blind and deaf, – rabies –

⁸³ Anonymous, *The Habits of Good Society* (New York: Russ and Carleton, 1860), p. 101.

⁸⁴ Tondo, *Come il bambino*, p. 57.

madness of anger – darkness of the Dies Irae [...]Wisdom never forgives'.⁸⁶ He holds this female image of multi-faceted vitality up as an example to Victorian young ladies (though in the context of exercise rather than of 'madness of anger'):

[T]herefore the queen of the air becomes to them at once the queen of bodily strength in war [...] the strength of young lives passed in pure air and swift exercise [...]Fresh air and sound sleep at night, young ladies! You see you may have Athena for lady's maid whenever you choose.⁸⁷

Adela combines Athena's wise, mythic fury with a more socially acceptable vitality: championing a transrealist discourse of 'passionate non=complicance' as her passionate, socially inappropriate resistance to her aunt's efforts brings a marked improvement in her melancholic condition: a renewed vitality.

However, Adela does not express fierceness solely to guide heroes; she is the heroine and she uses her fierceness to assist herself in her own struggles. In this sequence of tales, MacDonald blends images of social contradiction and male behaviour with multiple images of female vitality in order to expand the possibilities of Adela's identity, and with this, the question of whether righteous fury and violent expression can be necessary in order to bring about renewed strength.

In 'The Cruel Painter', questions of expression and autonomy raised by the 'Giant's Heart' and the 'Interruption' chapter are transposed into a courtship context. While the 'Giant's Heart' featured a brother and sister, 'The Cruel Painter' presents a romance between a young artist, Karl, and Lilith, daughter and muse of Karl's artistic master, Teufelburst [Devil's Brush]. The tale, set in Renaissance Prague, details the efforts of Karl to win the 'hard heart' of Lilith. Lilith's heart has been hardened by being featured in her father's paintings as a soulless figure who cannot

⁸⁵ John Ruskin, *The Queen of the Air* (Orpington, Kent: George Allen, 1887), p.18.

⁸⁶ Ruskin, *The Queen of the Air*, p. 158.

⁸⁷ Ruskin, pp. 51-52.

display the emotional reality praised by Smith, and so is imprisoned by paintings which do not acknowledge her autonomy or personality: 'She did not hate, she did not love the sufferers: the painter would not have her hate, for that would be to the injury of her loveliness: would not have her love, for he hated' (79-80). Karl terrifies Teufelburst into thinking he is a vampire and so unsettles Teufelburst's rule over the household. Lilith in turn dresses up as a ghost and startles Karl, at which point they unite to counteract Teufelburst's rule. The surrounding text makes a personal connection between this tale and Adela: for several sessions, Harry has been expected to read a tale and has failed to do so, much to Adela's obvious disappointment. Consequently, when he finally reads the tale he has written, it is a conscious act to please Adela. The act of producing a written text for a potential sweetheart or fiancée has a personal resonance of courtship for MacDonald, since he produced a lengthy poetic sequence for his wife-to-be, Louisa Powell.⁸⁸ Nancy Mellon reads the text as anticipating the necessary act of overcoming Colonel Cathcart's objections to Adela marrying Dr. Harry Armstrong.⁸⁹

Karl opposes Teufelburst by pretending to be a vampire and by changing his portraits, painting out Lilith in all the paintings and putting himself into them. Teufelburst thinks that Karl is dead and that the paintings are being changed by supernatural means. However, Lilith, examining the paintings and finding signs of a wet wash, realizes that Karl must be playing tricks and determines to catch him out: "I will see," she said to herself, "whether I cannot match Karl Wolkenlicht at this game" (103). She dresses up as a ghost in order to startle him. However, what terrifies Karl is the idea that his manipulation of the paintings featuring Lilith has

⁸⁸ See Greville MacDonald, *George MacDonald and His Wife* (London: G. Allen & Unwin, 1924), pp.152-153.

⁸⁹ Nancy Mellon, *The Stages in Adela Cathcart's Cure*, p. 38.

had an effect: ‘He looked up, evidently rather startled, and saw the face of Lilith in the air. He gave a stifled cry threw himself on his knees with his arms stretched towards her, and moaned— “I have killed her! I have killed her!”’ (104). His cry evokes the process of representation, suggesting that artistic depiction can impact the emotional realities of the muses. Lilith complicates this process by creating her own performance – dressing herself as a ghost – and by interrogating Karl, placing herself on an equal level with him. Her actions subvert the dynamic between artist and model, suggesting a muse who steps out of her painting to confront the artist.

These complications of representation evoke contemporary shifts in the relationship between artists and models. Elizabeth Prettejohn identifies the Pre-Raphaelite Movement (emerging as a cultural influence in the late 1850s and continuing) as the first British artistic movement to acknowledge the identities of artists’ models in a significant way: ‘[T]he Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood marks a significant shift: letters, journals and diaries, from the earliest days of the Brotherhood onward, document the labour of models as a conspicuous element in the production of works of art’.⁹⁰ This shift, she notes, allowed the identities of female models to emerge from behind the artist’s image: ‘As a result, we know the names of a remarkably high proportion of the historical individuals who sat for Pre-Raphaelite pictures, including [...] friends, family and lovers, [...] professional artists’ models and working-class men and women in other occupations’.⁹¹ Lilith’s trajectory of developing her own identity outside of her father’s visual representations of her recalls this wider cultural shift in artists’ models acquiring their own identity, suggesting a cultural impetus of social action lying beneath the

⁹⁰ Elizabeth Prettejohn, ‘The Pre-Raphaelite Model’, in *Model and Supermodel: The Artist’s Model in British Art and Culture*, ed. by Jane Desmarais, Martin Postle, and William Vaughan (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2006), pp. 26-46 (p. 28).

transrealist complications of perception. The act of self-costumed expression suggests other contemporary images of active female expression, such as Victorian equestriennes who used costumed performance to craft a public brand. Alison Smith, investigating equestrienne performers, notes that ‘Victorian supermodels played an active role in fabricating their own image and public identity’.⁹² While these equestrienne models were certainly eroticized, they manipulated their projection by choosing their own fabrics and cuts.⁹³ Lilith evokes both of these gendered figures, in that the narrative increases the process which Karl begins of emphasising her own emotions and perceptions over the repetitive image of herself in her father’s paintings, and she raises her relationship with Karl to one of mutuality through her use of costumed self-expression as a ghost: her ghostly performance terrifies Karl, just as his vampiric performance had terrified Lilith (initially) and her father. Her words ‘if you are a vampire and I am a ghost’ create a shared space of supernatural theatricality, which becomes a partnership between the two (104). With this foundation, they are able to defeat Teufelburst’s hold over them and forge a successful marriage.

These themes of autonomous perception, mutuality and self-expression emerge in a subsequent interlude between Adela and Harry. When Colonel Cathcart catches them gazing at each other tenderly and moving towards a kiss, he is furious and bans Harry from Adela’s presence, halting the process of Harry’s courtship of Adela. However, the situation differs somewhat from that of Karl and Lilith. In the ‘The Cruel Painter’, Karl had no social obligation towards Lilith; as Adela’s doctor,

⁹¹ Ibid.

⁹² Alison Smith, ‘Modelling Godiva: the female model as performer in Victorian England’ in *Model and Supermodel: The Artist’s Model in British Art and Culture*, ed. by Jane Desmarais, Martin Postle, and William Vaughan (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2006), pp.61-74 (p. 61).

⁹³ Ibid.

Harry should not be seeking to embrace her. Colonel Cathcart has a double reason to reject him as a suitor, due to his lack of fortune and his unethical behaviour. The narrator frames this episode ambivalently: Smith is sympathetic towards the lovers, and notes that the Armstrongs and the Bloomfields are as well, but terms Adela and Harry ‘the sinners’ when Colonel Cathcart erupts in fury; whether Smith means ‘sinners’ unqualifiably or ‘sinners according to the Colonel’ is unclear (131). However, the gender dynamics in ‘The Cruel Painter’ act as a method to assess Harry and Adela’s courtship. Though the two move towards a shared embrace, evoking the embrace which consolidates the mutual partnership of Karl and Lilith, Harry finds that Adela’s gaze causes dissonance within him and he blames his unethical attempt at a kiss on this gaze: ““But somehow those great eyes of hers kept pulling and pulling my head, so that I don’t know what I was going to do. I remember nothing but her eyes. Suddenly a scared look in them startled me, and I saw it all”” (136). Adela’s gaze suggests both an emerging social autonomy – she is able to control Harry through her gaze – and entrapment within an image: Harry interprets her gaze as causing him to sin and he does not consider his own actions or what his own role might be in this embrace.

Contemporary etiquette cautioned against women showing too much affection before marriage. In an episode in the 1850s etiquette serial published in the *Ladies’ Treasury*, ‘Conduct and Carriage’, Mrs Vernon warns her daughter against: ‘those little familiar caresses and endearments which experience shows often extinguish the man’s love while they increase the woman’s’.⁹⁴ She explains that, ‘Long tête-à-têtes between lovers, which encourage so much familiarity, are certainly not likely to increase in man that reverence which forms part of all true

love'.⁹⁵ Adela's gaze both subverts this dynamic, in that it propels Harry's expression of affection for her, and embodies it, in that Harry blames Adela's eyes for his improper behaviour. The dynamic of shared partnership contained in Karl and Lilith's relationship is as yet missing from Harry and Adela's.

The last chapters develop this sense of mutuality in Adela, bringing together themes from the previous two tales. The process of resolution begins with Harry meeting Adela to clarify the complications around their abortive kiss; their discussion first explores the tensions of autonomy in this almost-embrace, then extends their relationship to a point of mutuality, suggesting the achievement of Karl and Lilith. This scene suggests that Adela has reached the ideal of a 'true woman', in that she is able to express the emotional 'realities that awake the swift play of feature'.

Smith's description presents Adela as having such dramatic plays of feature on her face that her exchange of glances with Harry is enough to signal her meaning: 'The moment Adela caught sight of Harry, she cast one frightened glance up to her father's windows, and stood waiting. He lifted his hat; and held out his hand. She took it. Neither spoke. They turned together and walked along the terrace'(138). This exchange of glances opens a conversation which cements an emotional union. Harry apologizes for getting her into 'a scrape', and confesses his love for her. Adela returns this by expressing both her affection and her vulnerability: "I wished you would. But I don't deserve it. A great clever man like you love a useless girl like me! I *am* so glad!"(138). However, this representation of Adela and Harry's *rapprochement* is uncertain, as Smith consciously frames their exchange as imagined

⁹⁴ Anonymous, 'Conduct and Carriage, or Rules to Guide a Young Lady on Points of Etiquette and Good Breeding in Her Intercourse with the World' *The Ladies' Treasury*, September, 1857, p. 210.

⁹⁵ Ibid.

by him: 'I do not know anything that passed upon that terrace. How should I know? Neither of them was likely to tell old Smith. And I wonder at the clumsiness of novelists in pretending to reveal all that *he* said, and all that *she* answered' (138). Smith presents the scene as an interpretative game between himself and the reader: 'But if I were such a clumsy novelist, I should like to invent it all, and see if I couldn't make you believe every word of it. This is what I would invent' (138). Adela's confession of love, involving a self-description as being 'a useless girl' who doesn't deserve Harry's love, invokes this interpretative game as it strongly resembles Smith's earlier comment that she has not grown up enough to be a good wife for Harry. However, the exchange between Adela and Harry provides a necessary link in the process of narrative resolution as well as in Adela's own resolution: suggesting that it does not occur questions the resolution of the novel itself. This shifting interpretative space emerges in a context of economic anxiety – Adela and Harry are unable to marry because Adela is too rich (in her father's eyes) for Harry; they marry when the Cathcarts lose their money in some sort of bank failure.

Adela's reaction to this bankruptcy represents an achievement of personal autonomy, as she creates her own identity within society in order to confront the change in economic circumstances. The overt uncertainty around Smith's representation of her highlights the impact of Adela's act of self-representation. She begins by discussing her depression: "[I]f you knew how awful things looked to me a little while ago—but it's all gone now!—the whole earth black and frozen to the heart, with no God in it, and nothing worth living for—you would not wonder" (144). Adela both constructs her own narrative of depression ('the whole earth black and frozen to the heart') and interprets it, attributing her condition to a lack of

vocation. The connection between female vocation and the experience of bankruptcy raises the issue of female independence through economic action. As Leeann Hunter points out, experiences of bankruptcy within Victorian novels, while causing family misfortune, provide daughters with a space of empowerment: ‘While Victorian novels rarely represent financial ruin as an outright benefit to daughters, they frequently suggest that daughters are positively transformed or liberated by such misfortunes [...] explor[ing] the daughter heroine as an independent, economically minded character’.⁹⁶ Adela’s reaction to her father’s bankruptcy recalls such patterns, as she expresses exhilaration at the prospect of a vocation: “‘I take the prospect of poverty with absolute indifference— yes, if you will believe me, with something of a strange excitement. There will be something to battle with and beat”” (144). However, the imagery of battle recalls the earlier symbolism of resistance in ‘The Giant’s Heart’ as well as Victorian bankrupt daughters: Adela represents herself as an economic warrior. The narrator strengthens a transrealist discourse around gendered resistance by merging imagery of both warrior and domestic angel, recalling his earlier reflection on how much a ‘good woman may do to defeat evil’: ‘And she stretched out a strong, beautiful white arm—from which the loose open sleeve fell back, as if with that weapon of might she would strike poverty to the earth; but it was only to adjust the pillow, which had slipped sideways from the loved head’ (144). The conflation of imagery around Adela’s self-representation of resistance indicates her recovery.

Yet the novel leaves these symbols of gender on a point of contestation. As Adela will marry Harry, who is able to support a wife on his doctor’s salary, it seems

⁹⁶ Leeann Hunter, ‘Communities Built from Ruins: Social Economics in Victorian Novels of Bankruptcy’, *WSQ: Women’s Studies Quarterly*, 39 (2011), 137-152 (p.142).

she will have no need for her determination to work. Her last action is of taking refuge with Harry, in response to his offer of marriage: ‘Adela drew near, knelt beside Harry, and hid her eyes on his knee’ (146). However, this is also an act of physical intimacy and the narrator’s gloss emphasises the breach of etiquette in Adela’s action: ‘Was this unmaidenly of her? I say “No, for she knew that he loved her”’ (146). ‘Hiding her eyes on his knee’ would certainly not be a ‘recognised mode of cordial salutation’ in conduct manuals (for example *The Habits of Good Society* recognized ‘the kiss and the shake of the hand’ as appropriate for young ladies).⁹⁷ Adela’s expression of emotional reality is now not only upon her face but has become an action of interpretation used to dramatize the union between herself and Harry. We leave Adela with representative and interpretative abilities, with the freedom to express her emotions without concern for social mores. She is able to negotiate her own identity among the varying symbols of gender around her and her achievement of the ability to balance and express emotional, social and financial realities marks her as a ‘true woman’.

Identifying the widening narrative voice of the fairy tale allows the exploration of Adela’s increase in social voice – the fairy tales expand the signifying system within the novel, just as Adela learns to expand her own interpretative process: she wakens her own meaning of the fairy tales, to borrow MacDonald’s phrase. Adela’s transformation can be seen as an extended process of this awakening, or rather, of allowing her to define herself emotionally and socially. Broome argues that the therapeutic effect of the tales is produced through emotional links between Adela and the tales: ‘[I]t is made plain that their subjects should be in

⁹⁷ *The Habits of Good Society*, p. 321.

sympathy with Adela's feelings as moved by them. This is produced by creating a correspondence between the essential character of the tale and Adela herself. The correspondence does not need to be direct'.⁹⁸ Tracing the intertextual nature of these transrealist connections reveals the specific nature of this correspondence and extends Broome's argument of correspondence: the tales' references to each other and to external texts provide a wider narrative community for Adela by emphasising shared experiences of deprivation in different settings. Adela's autonomy lies in a well-balanced mind which can reflect and enquire. As she proceeds from abstract context to achieving her own autonomous role among various contemporary gender identities, she achieves her own context of transformation.

⁹⁸ Broome, pp. 109-110.

Conclusion

Whether such fantasy can be any more politically radicalising than any other cultural forms (or indeed than literature and culture generally) is not only a question of the immediate situation, it is also one of consciousness-raising as well – or in other words an awareness of the possibilities and potentialities of the form itself. (Frederic Jameson, ‘Radical Fantasy’)¹

In challenging assessments that Victorian fantasy writing acts as a textual sub-conscious, I have demonstrated that interplays of the fantastic and the realist modes within Victorian fiction act as a social critique by representing shifting emotional perceptions of a variety of social debates. Interplays of the fantastic and the mimetic could, of course, be made thematically among texts by various writers as well as through the textual pairings I have chosen: for example, the juvenile Brontës’ playful ‘Four Chief Genii’ narrators combined with resonances of that resourceful narrator Scheherazade in the adult *Jane Eyre* suggests comparisons with Eliot’s Meyricks and their attempts to create wider cultural narratives using references to the *Nights*. However, my examination of interplays grouped by author allows me to explore how the fantastic mode dramatizes emotional transformation in the light of contemporary discourses and events pertinent to each writer’s context: Brontë’s involvement with the shifting role of female authorship in the early Victorian period; Dickens’s responses to injustices suffered by socio-political outcasts; Eliot’s concern with nuancing contemporary intellectual development through a multi-faceted understanding of sympathy; and MacDonald’s interests in renewing a cultural imagination through psycho-spiritual interrogations. My observations of a *conscious* interplay between the fantastic and the realist modes highlight how these writers respond to nineteenth-century debates by dramatizing the possibility of positive

social transformation. In doing so, I explore how the fantastic imagination joins with the realist mode as a transformative space of socio-cultural intersection. Rather than using concepts like *critical irrealism* or *Victorian fantasy realism* to articulate these intersections, my thesis demonstrates the value in articulating these intersections as examples of *transrealism*.

I have chosen this term because I feel the resonances of these modal crossings within Brontë's, Dickens's, Eliot's and MacDonald's texts suggest dynamics of multiplicity and mutuality: the fantastic speaks to the realist mode and the realist mode speaks to the fantastic mode continually. In doing so, this convergence becomes more than the asymptotic threshold which Ruthner discusses,² or the critical irrealism which Löwy presents as challenging social structures through its opposition to 'the gray, prosaic, disenchanted reality of modern, meaning capitalist, society'.³ The idea of a threshold or of an absence of realism denotes one-way or passive movements: each of the texts I have examined offers a thoughtful and multi-faceted aesthetic through an active crossing of various identities and perceptions. My investigations of this multi-faceted aesthetic in Brontë's technique of narrative portraiture and her representation of visual reproduction show how associations of the uncanny in both verbal landscapes and verbal portraits hint at potentially disturbing aspects of artistic conventions. By observing fantastic tropes and structures in representations of social exclusion in both disabled and non-disabled individuals, I demonstrate that Dickens's texts explore the formation and permanency of excluded states, question the cultural and economic structures which

¹ Frederic Jameson, 'Radical Fantasy' *Historical Materialism*, 10 (2002), 273–280 (p.280).

² Clemens Ruthner, 'Fantastic Liminality. A Theory Sketch' in *Collision of Realities*, ed. by Lars Schmeink and Astrid Boger (Berlin/Boston: De Gruyter, 2012), pp. 49-63 (pp. 59-60).

³ Michael Löwy, 'The Current of Critical Irrealism: "A moonlit enchanted night"' in *Adventures in Realism*, ed. by Matthew Beaumont (Malden: Blackwell, 2007), pp. 193-206 (pp. 193-196).

produce exclusion, and consequently, dramatize the social implications of transrealism in transforming perceptions of identity. Through examining the troubled context of education within Eliot's texts, I have explored how a comparison of esoteric connotations in the representations of Bertha (*The Lifted Veil*) and Gwendolen (*Daniel Deronda*) within nineteenth-century society dramatizes the necessity of a sympathetic maturity in building the promise of social autonomy. MacDonald's *Adela Cathcart* makes multiple connections between a lack of social purpose and a repression of emotional voice, as the first fairy tale initiates understandings of deprivation which extend into tales of disability and of child mortality; these contexts reflect back and forth on the first tale, drawing on multiple comparisons to nurture cathartic expression.

While both Stephen Prickett and Rosemary Jackson see contexts of Victorian fantasy and realism as often uneasy due to unresolved tensions within the writers (Prickett)⁴ or to a fear of transformation within realism (Jackson),⁵ my thesis demonstrates how Victorian intersections between fantasy and realism can explore the potential for social resolution. Both Brontë's *The Spell* and *Jane Eyre* invite the reader to re-interpret a range of religious narratives through suggesting a more arbitrary and complex spirituality that celebrates the contemporary practice of women performing exegesis (which subverted accepted norms) and creates uncertainty about religious genres by highlighting gaps in the transfer of supernatural symbolism. By combining tropes of integration and social challenge suggested by the ghost story with the process of evaluating contradictions presented by the

⁴ Stephen Prickett, *Victorian Fantasy* (Waco: Baylor University Press, 2005), p. 12.

⁵ Rosemary Jackson, *Fantasy: The Literature of Subversion* (London: Methuen, 1981), p. 124.

dialogue between word and image and with the quest trajectory offered by the *Nickleby* narrative, Dickens's illustrated texts dramatize the complications of transforming masculine exclusion, interrogating the presence of permanency and sincerity as the characters of Smike and Scrooge move through stages of initial exile to the confrontation of potential inclusion. My discussion of transrealism and education widens into a vocational context by examining how scenes of cognitive dissonance dramatize Charles Meunier's and Mirah Lapidoth's negotiation of social estrangement in their respective medical and musical professions, as they achieve an established social independence. MacDonald's *Adela Cathcart* provides a heteroglossic reflection on transformation in the context of Victorian discourses on reform. The second fairy tale within the book, 'The Shadows', presents transformation as rooted in considerations of identity; this representation gains deeper poignancy within the tale of military conflict following it; and acquires a thoughtful radicalism in the subsequent tale of a crossing sweeper challenging hypocrisies of moral reform in effecting her own social transformation.

Broderick's theories on the transformative resonances of transrealism define it within an autobiographical realism as 'writing about immediate reality [. . .] in a fantastic way [. . .] from the standpoint of your richly personalized reality,'⁶ which he acknowledges can present 'biographical fallacies and opacities' since it can be difficult for readers to ascertain an author's autobiographical reality.⁷ My thesis extends Broderick's theories by applying these transformative resonances to the historical context of nineteenth-century social debates, in exploring how Brontë, Dickens, Eliot and MacDonald create an opening for personal intersections within

⁶ Damien Broderick, *Transrealist Fictions: Writing in the Slipstream of Science* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2000), p. 3.

⁷ Broderick, p.173.

their modal interplays through exploring the possibility of emotional resolution from multiple perspectives – and so allowing readers to investigate the social contexts under consideration. By examining patterns of uncanny creativity moving in and around Charlotte Brontë's *The Spell* and *Jane Eyre*, I apply Broderick's theories of (auto) biographical realist dissonance illuminated by the fantastic to a nineteenth-century context of female authorship. My discussion of creative identity widens to explore how negotiating narrative identity confronts authorial alienations; the skills of transcending a fragmented identity which Brontë displays in her narratives won her autonomy in the literary marketplace. I have demonstrated the anti-tale resonances in Smike's trajectory as he shadows Nicholas's journey to fortune and security, presenting a context to criticize the naturalness of Nicholas's conventional happy ending. I have argued that the question of life or of death in *Carol's* ghost story structure means that Tiny Tim transcends the emotional context which Martha Stoddard Holmes views as merely 'catalyz[ing] Scrooge's change of heart and reconnection with society'.⁸ Through comparisons with Latimer's uncanny and fearful personal dialogues with the reader, both of foreknowledge and of Mrs Archer's return from the dead, I have demonstrated how, for the Meyricks, the use of astronomical imagery encodes a process of positive cultural critical dialogue. Studying patterns of cognitive dissonance in the Meyricks' group dialogue emphasises a gradual progress, culminating in the ability to create shared cultural narratives. Experiences of dissonance within a context of deploying social power dramatize the paradoxes that militate against the development of a cultivated mind, observe the characteristics of a sense of vocation, and finally, suggest a context that will successfully produce the ability to create cultural dialogue. While MacDonald

⁸ Martha Stoddard Holmes, *Fictions of Affliction: Physical Disability in Victorian Culture* (Michigan: University of

does not provide a radical redefinition of gender, through Adela's own navigation of gendered conflict, he presents gender as a process of ongoing and transformative interpretation, which leads to a successful emotional integration. My reading of this process highlights MacDonald's dramatization of Adela's choice of gender identity; the transformation occurs in her ability to select elements from the variety of tales she has heard and discussed – combining the physical courage of giant-slayer Buffy Bob from 'The Giant's Heart' with the emotional passion of Lilith from 'The Cruel Painter', for example – and to use these combinations to craft an autonomous social position on her own terms.

As I have discussed, Brontë, Dickens, Eliot and MacDonald all build upon a cultural background of fantastic texts – most obviously the Grimms' *Household Tales*, the *Nights* (both Galland's and Lane's translations), the biblical supernatural, and nineteenth-century translations of Dante's *Divine Comedy*. Their constructions emphasise a conscious creative voice which engages with the possibility, and the consequence, of belief: to borrow Jameson's phrase (above), with 'an awareness of the possibilities and potentialities of the form itself'. They create a transrealist discourse which manifests as multiple expressions of the fantastic, not just 'sf with heart', as Broderick terms it.⁹ The element of dissonance which Suvin notes in his definition of science fiction as being a structure of cognitive estrangement can be found in multiple types of intersections between the fantastic and mimetic modes. Brontë's use of the uncanny questions experiences of alienation in exploring concepts of autonomy and authorship, emphasising the creative potential in such intersections. Dickens draws on a shared cultural memory in combining ghost story and fairy tale motifs to challenge exclusion across a social spectrum. Eliot

dramatizes experiences of wonder as a developmental process in transforming estrangement into emotional and intellectual understanding. Finally, MacDonald interrogates a multi-faceted fantastic mode in his discussions of story-telling as a method of transforming deprivation into renewal. This transrealist use of the fantastic by these four authors suggests the fantastic as a point of transformative intersection in multiple aspects of Victorian life: a way to balance the social dissonance present in experiences of authorship, disability, education and melancholia, and to enable visions of different, even new, social realities.

⁹ Broderick, p. 12.

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