The Incredible Nineteenth Century: Science Fiction, Fantasy, and Fairy Tale

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About *I19*

The Incredible Nineteenth Century: Science Fiction, Fantasy, and Fairy Tale (*I19*) seeks to publish the finest scholarship on the century that was, in many ways, the time period in which the modern genres of science fiction and fantasy began, and in which the academic study of fairy tale and folklore has its roots. *I19* interprets "the nineteenth century" broadly, using the dates of "The Long Nineteenth Century"—roughly, from the beginning of the French Revolution to the end of World War I—but even these dates are just notable historical markers as they approximately coincide with Romanticism and Modernism, respectively. Scholarship on works from the eighteenth century that anticipated or influenced writers in the nineteenth century or ways in which nineteenth-century literature influenced later authors both fall within the interests of this journal. *I19* also publishes scholarship on Neo-Victorianism, Steam Punk, or any other contemporary genres that react to the time periods contained within The Long Nineteenth Century. Genres such as horror and mystery, though not strictly within the realms of the fantastic, are also welcome, due to their close affinity with science fiction and fantasy. Scholarship on early film is also welcome. Additionally, *I19* is dedicated to maintaining a scope that is both multicultural and global, and encourages submissions on works from marginalized communities and from around the world.

In addition to literary scholarship, *I19* also publishes works on pedagogy. These pieces may be personal reflections, strategies on course design, innovative assignment sheets with commentary, or anything else that educators teaching nineteenth-century literature may find useful.

Finally, *I19* maintains a robust Book and Media Reviews section. Reviews on recent scholarship, as well as period fiction and film, are featured in every issue.

Queries and submissions may be sent to i19@mtsu.edu. We accept submissions on a rolling basis, and there are no author fees.

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From the Editor

***Mickey's Christmas Carol* at Forty**

This year marks not only the 180th anniversary of Charles Dickens's *A Christmas Carol*, but also the 40th anniversary of *Mickey's Christmas Carol*. This film is significant because it was the first time Mickey Mouse had appeared as a major character in a longer animation for many years, and because it served as a bright spot for Disney animation, which had experienced a drop in quality since Walt Disney's death in 1966 that would last until the Disney Revival beginning with the release of *The Little Mermaid* in 1989. The voice acting, the animation (especially the sumptuous backgrounds), and the writing were all far superior to the animated feature-length films the Disney corporation had been producing for nearly two decades. For me, however, this production has a great deal of personal value. My parents recorded the network television premiere on VHS, and I watched it over and over. In it I found a different type of Christmas magic that had nothing to do with Santa and reindeer. It was a story of ghosts and other-worldly beings who shatter the stark realism of Scrooge's counting house and Bob Cratchit's poverty. It was a story that insisted upon the necessity to find good in the world, even in such a terrible miser. It was a story that taught me we are all interconnected and that we have obligations to one another. After a few years of watching *Mickey's Christmas Carol*, I graduated to the VHS cassette my had father labeled "Versions of a Christmas Carol" that contained the adaptations starring Reginald Owen (1938), Alastair Sim (1951), and George C. Scott (1984). These films told the same story in different ways, and I became intrigued with the time period, with Dickens, and with the way a work of fantasy could comment on the social realities of our world. In many ways, *Mickey's Christmas Carol* began me on my path to becoming a scholar of Victorian literature.

Perhaps one of the most captivating aspects of *Mickey's Christmas Carol* is its ability to balance light-hearted comedy with profound sadness—something Dickens himself was adept at. The sight of Mickey Mouse shedding a tear over the grave of his dead son, then leaving Tim's crutch behind on his tombstone and silently, reverently, reluctantly backing away, accepting the finality of death, is surely the darkest moment in Mickey Mouse's on-screen history. As a child, I could barely stand to watch this moment. I wanted to look away, to pretend that it was not a part of the story, but on some level I knew this *had* to be part of the story. At some point I realized death has to be a part of everyone's story. But, as Scrooge himself realizes, death does not have to be in Tim's story yet, and that he is culpable for the death of this child. At this point Scrooge confronts his own mortality. After Scrooge asks the spirit whose grave he is standing over, the spirit reveals himself to be the villainous Pete, casually lights a huge cigar, and then delivers the line, "Why yours, Ebenezer—the richest man in the cemetery!" I was three years old when I first heard these words, and I have never forgotten them. Nothing I have ever heard since has impressed on me the vanity of wealth and worldly pursuits. In all versions of *A Christmas Carol*, including the original novella, the Ghost of Christmas Yet to Come is always represented in the image of the Grim Reaper. In this rendition, however, Disney takes the character one step further as he morphs into a satanic figure, roaring with malevolent laughter as Scrooge McDuck frantically clutches at roots to keep from falling into hellfire, inevitably plummeting into the flames as he calls out, hoping against hope for forgiveness, "I'll change!" I don't know when I first heard of the concepts of hell or damnation, but I understood that Scrooge was not just facing bodily death, but eternal punishment. Again, I wanted to look away.

Fortunately, the transition to happiness is very sudden, and the emotional cleansing for the audience immediate. Critics of *A Christmas Carol* often complain that Scrooge's transformation

is too sudden to be believable. Additionally, many of the actors who have portrayed Scrooge have struggled to pull off the abrupt transition. This version, however, perhaps because it is animated, achieves the sudden change in Scrooge very well. Perhaps more than any other adaptation, this iteration shows that Scrooge is not really *changing* into a good man, but rather, that a good man was there all along. As much as I had barely been able to watch moments before, I now visually drank in every moment of Scrooge's redemption, especially the part when Scrooge hauls in the toys and Tiny Tim finds a special teddy bear. The film ends in happiness with the haunting joyful/sad melody: "Oh what a joyous Christmas Day!" Scrooge has been saved, Tiny Tim will live, and the other-worldly forces of Christmas had triumphed, leaving "men of the worldly mind" looking foolish and insignificant.

Probably everyone has a work of sf or fantasy they remember from their early childhood that helped shape their view of the world. This was mine. It impressed on me the importance of social reform, and the power of fiction to effect it. For me and for many others, this also served as an introduction to the story Dickens first published in 1843 that has moved generations of readers. It was written the "Hungry 40s" as a way of Dickens asking his audience to consider what sort of a society they wanted to be. The 1980s—a decade that came to be known for its greed—saw three major interpretations of *A Christmas Carol*: *Mickey's Christmas Carol* (1983), the George C. Scott adaptation (1984), and *Scrooged*, starring Bill Murray (1988). *The Muppet Christmas Carol* (1992) followed soon after. Both *The Muppet Christmas Carol* and *Mickey's Christmas Carol* are notable for their combination of whimsy and sadness, and the George C. Scott version is excellent for its pathos, the menacing nature of the spirits, and the angst that Scott brings to the role of Scrooge. *Scrooged* is an insightful update of the story for a 1980s (not to mention a contemporary) audience. The ability of Dickens's story to be retold again and again in different time periods is a testament

to the power of his writing. These four major interpretations within a decade all began with *Mickey's Christmas Carol*; and, in many ways, even though it was made for a children's audience, it remains one of the most powerful adaptations. Multiple generations now have watched this holiday show as children, grown up, and then shown it to their children. It still resonates with audiences forty years later not just because of the beloved Disney characters, or the sense of wonder it captures, but also because it shows us that change is still possible in a world that so desperately needs an escape from cruelty and greed. It makes us once again believe in the goodness that is possible.

Articles

“Fairy-Born and Human-Bred”: From Fantastical to Farcical in Charlotte Brontë’s Fiction

Tyler Clark

Charlotte Brontë’s writing has always been conscious of negotiating the truth and the idealistic. Brontë composed her mature novels in sharp distinction to the infernal worlds of the Glass Town saga, the fictional kingdoms she and her siblings created throughout their childhoods. Her juvenilia essentially function as high fantasy genre fiction, though over time, Brontë became more intent on exposing “the extreme of reality, closely depicting characters as they had shown themselves … in actual life” as opposed to these “exaggerated idealisms of her early girlhood” (304), or so writes Elizabeth Gaskell in the author’s posthumous biography. This definition of reality, however, was subject to change over the course of Brontë’s writing career. In the span of eight years, her novels became increasingly psychologically complex, leaving behind the fairytale pilgrimages of her juvenilia and *Jane Eyre* to make room for the eccentric and pessimistic narration found in *Villette*. Indeed, when we compare the motifs and genre style found in Brontë’s texts, an overarching lack of the fantastical emerges throughout her narrative arcs.

Bronte’s use of fantasy throughout *Villette* is enigmatic, to say the least. Whereas *The Professor* tells a rather straightforward marriage plot, and Glass Town exists in the genre of exaggerated fantasy, *Villette* and its narrator Lucy Snowe serve as a cynical satire of fantasy and idealism overall, edging further away from high fantasy tropes that Bronte used even in *Jane Eyre*. Its plot progression and first-person narrator are, at first glance, nearly identical to those of *Jane Eyre*: a plain and penniless orphan adopts the mantle of educator and later falls in love with a man who is unavailable to her. *Villette* meanwhile has done away with these popular fairytale motifs, such as an idealistic ending, an Edenic space separate from societal norms, and what is very

possibly a magical link between soulmates. Despite relying heavily on Gothic imagery, with the ghost of the buried nun haunting Lucy Snowe in moments of heightened emotional distress, the text's treatment of the fantastical is scathing rather than earnest—ironic rather than sincere. There is a marked contrast between Jane's expectant optimism—she who "think[s] too much of the love of human beings" and exclaims she would die without the affection of others (85), and the characterization of Lucy, the jaded and cynical expatriate—a bruised and traumatized misanthrope, "Timon of Athens," "Diogenes," "the Dragon" (485).

Furthermore, Lucy's narrative highlights episodes of her severe depression, wavering between clarity and destructive sequences brought on by isolation and stress. She begrudgingly tells her story, hiding behind a reticent exterior. *Villette*'s strange narration has maintained a prominent feature throughout its literary criticism, as scholars often engage with Lucy as an unreliable narrator, marking the unusual grammatical patterns of Brontë's writing as well as the novel's proto-feminist undercurrents. It is also typical to make direct comparisons to Brontë's own unhappy life, citing the death of her siblings and failure to maintain correspondence with her Belgian professor Monsieur Heger with whom she was infatuated as an explanation of the unrelenting gloom of *Villette*. However, when analyzing *Villette* in comparison to Brontë's previous novels as well as general trends throughout the mid-nineteenth century, we notice the intentionality of its misanthropy as a marked rejection of romanticized fantasy and traditional marriage plots.

Throughout this essay, I argue that the intimations of satirizing fantasy and idealism found in *Villette* are indicative of Charlotte Bronte's growing interest in the portrayal of literary realism. Victorian realist novels towards the midpoint and latter half of the nineteenth century became increasingly aware of social and psychological inequalities, with the Realism movement

concerning itself more with the plight of various underprivileged groups. I begin by discussing the mid-Victorian expectations of realism in novels, and how *Jane Eyre* alludes to Romantic optimism and fairytales in order to imagine a just world through the novel's utopian ending at Ferndean. Then, I examine *Villette*'s intensifying cynicism, drawing comparisons between the language of both texts, and looking specifically at moments where Jane and Lucy interact with other characters and how their relationships are depicted. *Jane Eyre* portrays love in many forms, and Jane is often surrounded by friends beyond her love interest. Lucy, meanwhile, exists near characters who hardly notice her: Graham Bretton, for instance, who describes her as "inoffensive as a shadow" (356). Lastly, I analyze both heroines' narrative styles, marking the difference between Jane's trusting and almost naïve relationship with the audience and Lucy's paranoid distrust of her reader, culminating in *Villette*'s highly subversive ending in which the heroine does not marry. These close readings all emphasize Brontë's shift in her treatment of cynicism, marking a shift from the popular fantasy found in the early-nineteenth century towards general realism found in the more traditional Victorian novel.

I will start by examining mid-Victorian practices regarding literary realism. The nineteenth-century literary market changed dramatically over a short period of time, with the highly popular triple-volume novel dominating the publishing industry at a rapid pace by the time of Brontë's publications. In her article "'Grotesque but Not Impossible': Dickens's Novels and Mid-Victorian Realism," Nathalie Vanfasse asserts that "realism was one of the dominant aesthetics of the Victorian period" and that "this new artistic convention, considered more in keeping with the spirit of the age than the conventions of romance, increasingly applied to Victorian three-deckers" (1). The mid-century Victorians, writing during the general time frame of 1840-1870, were becoming increasingly anxious about composing realism and foregoing the

fabulist conventions of Romantic verse from just a few decades before. This urgency to create a new prose style was due in part to the lucrative market that novels were quickly becoming, but also because of a sustained prejudice against the merits of the genre, though this is by no means just a recent critical opinion. As far back as the mid-twentieth-century, in his book *The Theory of the Novel in England*, Richard Stang notes that, "The use of prose, a form of discourse inferior to poetry, helped even more to lower the new genre in the early-nineteenth century" (20). The Victorian novel had to quickly justify itself, marking its own unique artistic style, in order to live up to its widely marketable appeal.

This urgency of course led to a period of trial and error, with general scholarly consensus believing that mid-Victorian realism was awkward, stunted, and ephemeral. Again, this is a relatively dated description of early entries in the genre, with Walter Kendrick's 1979 article "Balzac and British Realism: Mid-Victorian Theories of the Novel" noting that, in regard to Victorian art and society, "So long as the novel restricted itself to subjects which were socially unobjectionable …the potential contradiction did not become troublesome" (14). The contradiction here refers to the novelist's attempts to portray realistic plots without propagating unwholesome rhetoric at odds with Victorian social mores. Realist writers, according to mid-twentieth-century scholarship at least, were limited in their accurate portrayals of society due to various social conventions. However, recent criticism generally still agrees with this viewpoint. Elaine Freedgood's book *Worlds Enough: The Invention of Realism in the Victorian Novel* further cites that critics generally believe "Victorian fiction is too narrative (diegetic) and not dramatic (mimetic) enough" (1), which leads to the novel's "timid" morality and that it "does not take itself seriously enough" (7). Realism required a sharper-edged tone, and dominant authors such as

Charles Dickens were tasked with the difficult duty of circumventing burgeoning social mores while writing their novels.

Charlotte Brontë, meanwhile, remained skeptical of realism. In a letter sent to the critic G. H. Lewes (quoted in Gaskell's *The Life of Charlotte Brontë*), Brontë notably condemns Jane Austen's style of realism as "more *real* than *true*" (319). Reality and truth then are different schools of thought according to Brontë's literary consciousness, following the format of typical fantasy, and are subject to different traditions and means of execution. Brontë's initial ambition to portray "truth" is deeply tied to the Romantic tradition: "Can there be a great artist without poetry?" she asks of Lewes in the same letter (319). This belief coincides with Brontë's literary upbringing, such as through the Glass Town sagas, and how she and her sisters were well-versed in the poetical works of Cowper and Byron, amongst others. Poetry likewise dominated Brontë's early writings, especially her first attempts at publishable literature beyond the tales of Glass Town. It is plausible to suggest that this belief affected Brontë's early novel writing as well, as her failed attempt at publishing *The Professor*, a highly autobiographical (though gender-bent) account of Brontë's life in Brussels that lacks any substantial amount of "truth" or fantastical imagery, forced Brontë to reconsider her ambitions as an artist as she began working on new projects.

In the introduction to *The Professor*, Brontëwrites that she, in the process of its writing in the 1840s, had "got over any such taste as [she] might once have had for ornamented and redundant composition, and come to prefer what was plain and homely" (2). Ornamented and redundant here refers to the Glass Town saga of her juvenile works.These stories, written alongside Brontë's siblings, are true fantasy. They are comprised of a fictionalized setting with its own dynamic characters, such as the Duke of Zamorna, and are inspired primarily by early British imperialist efforts in the African continent. In the introduction to *The Early Writings of Charlotte Brontë*,

Christine Alexander is quick to point out that the "aristocratic intrigue" which so enthralled Brontës early stories highlights her juvenilia's "interconnection [and] significance in relation to Charlotte's later novels" (4). The most poignant of these connections is possibly the depiction of Brontë's male characters. In the poems and plays that comprise the Glass Town saga, the eager beginnings of the Byronic suitors in her later novels emerge clearly through the Duke of Zamorna or Lord Charles Wellesley.

"Plain and homely," however, was not a successful literary pursuit for Brontë's works so far. Publishers repeatedly rejected *The Professor*, citing its curtailed and awkward narration, and it was this criticism that eventually led to the formation of *Jane Eyre*, a novel that deeply complicates Brontë's own relationship to what is fantasy and what is reality. Brontë establishes *Jane Eyre* solidly in the genre of fantasy. The intertextuality of the novel relies heavily on fairy tales, with Jane often compared to the imp—the forest elf—the plain "beauty" to Rochester's "beast," and whose story ends in a happy, consummated marriage. It borrows extensively from the Glass Town sagas as well, with especially Rochester's likeness to the Byronic Duke of Zamorna and the subsequent plot points of bigamy and locked-away brides providing the driving force for the plot. What is interesting here, then, is Brontë's own fascination and desire to cultivate the plain and the homely. *The Professor*, though published posthumously, was never deemed fit for publication throughout her life specifically because of its lack of narrative inspiration. Despite this, Brontë repeatedly wished to see it in print, at last conceding to locking it away after its ninth total rejection from her publisher Goerge Smith in 1851: "Its merits – I plainly perceive – will never be owned by anybody but Mr. Williams and me" (*The Bront*ës*: A Life in Letters* 329). Brontë's pursuit of realism, and her gradual distancing from fantasy, nevertheless comes full circle with the

publication of her final novel *Villette*, which is essentially a retelling of *The Professor*, albeit with a female narrator and a more cynical relationship, once again, with the fantastical.

Jane Eyre, meanwhile, depicts fantasy and realism from a more symbiotic perspective than her later attempts and those of her contemporaries, showcasing her synthesis of the true with the real. The novel is highly allusive to fairytales, and its fabulist ending, climaxing with Jane becoming an heiress and marrying Rochester after inexplicitly hearing him call for her across the moors, diverges from the increasingly high-brow expectations of three-volume Victorian realist novels. Indeed, Jessica Campbell's "Bluebeard and the Beast: The Mysterious Realism of *Jane Eyre*" notes that Brontë's deployment of fairytales "is central to her brand of realism" and is "oriented around the truth of an individual's experience" rather than remaining faithful to the laws of reality (235). Again, the distinction between truth and reality is apparent. The novel is also multi-genre in its blending of Gothic and realist traditions, serving, as Nicole Diederich describes in "Gothic Doppelgangers and Discourse: Examining the Doubling Practice of (Re)Marriage in *Jane Eyre*," as "a reflection of nineteenth-century social practices or cultural codes" (2). *Jane Eyre*'s position, then, in the nineteenth century is crucial in understanding its relationship to realism; the novel was published at the advent of a developing understanding regarding Victorian realism. Sidestepping the negotiation of Victorian social conventions and blending the novel's depiction of the truth with the more fantastical Gothic genre allowed Brontë to avoid the pitfalls common to mid-Victorian realists. *Jane Eyre*'s eponymous narrator subverted the "intrusive omniscient narrator" (Freedgood 21) who "is objective about reporting on an intact world that it did not make" (Freedgood 17). Brontë's narrative abilities, especially in *Jane Eyre*, are some of the most widely acclaimed features of her novels, as the intimate relationship Jane develops with

her reader exemplifies her quest for "truth" if not material reality, bypassing the washed-out, disingenuous, traditional Victorian narrator.

The fantasy elements found throughout *Jane Eyre* are quintessential not only to its enjoyability as a novel, but also to making its plot logically plausible. Jane's narrative evokes fables and myths. As she encounters Rochester for the first time in Hay Lane, she "remembered certain of Bessie's tales, wherein figured a North-of-England spirit called a 'Gytrash'" (142). Rochester, himself an oblique reference to Bluebeard and the beast in "Beauty and the Beast," calls Jane an "imp," an "elf," and capable of "bewitching [his] horse" (156). The novel's ending furthers its fairytale intertextuality, with Jane's optimistic assertion mirroring a happily-ever-after: I know what it is to live entirely for and with what I love best on earth. I hold myself supremely blest" (592). These motifs all essentially point to the novel's climax, which serves as one of the only "true" elements of magical realism (and evidence of high fantasy) found in *Jane Eyre.* The revealing of Bertha Mason's existence quells Jane's fears about the supernatural plaguing Thornfield, but she still cannot shake the conviction that hearing Rochester's voice from Moor House was somehow a fantastical occurrence. After the reunion with Rochester, Jane herself admits, "You will think me superstitious – some superstition I have in my blood, and always had: nevertheless, this is true – true at least it is that I heard what I now relate" (472). Though enigmatic in its inclusion, to both contemporary and modern readers, this scene is pivotal in its implications of Brontë's relationship to her works as fantastical; without it, Jane would have had no reason to go in search of Rochester again. This "magical realism," as it were, allows the novel's conclusion to end with Jane and Rochester's consummation.

In *The Madwoman in the Attic*, Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar discuss this scene to mark the similarities between Jane's narrative and John Bunyan's *The Pilgrim's Progress*, and that

"Charlotte Brontë appears here to have imagined a world in which the prince and Cinderella are democratically equal" (354). Ferndean, the retreat of Jane and Rochester after the destruction of Thornfield Hall, posits itself as an Eden-like withdrawal from the inequitable Victorian society at large. The fantastical "calling" Rochester casts to lure Jane here is idealistic in the same way that Ferndean itself is. Only here are Jane and Rochester able to "circumvent the strictures of a hierarchal society" (369). Brontë had an essentially impossible task to write—how could a man and a woman in such a society live in egalitarian equality? This again speaks of *Jane Eyre*'s portrayal of truth rather than reality, because Ferndean exists far beyond the possible conventions of Victorian reality, and is the "far, far away" to conclude Brontë's fairy tale. I posit, then, that Ferndean metonymically exists as a fictionalized space, not only in the fact that it is in a novel, but also because of what it represents diegetically. The union of Jane and Rochester mirrors a fairy tale in its optimism, and therefore allows *Jane Eyre* to be read as one of the more fantastical works in Brontë's overall oeuvre.

Furthermore, scenes from *Jane Eyre* also mirror quite a few throughout Brontë's juvenilia, showcasing the basis of the novel in her own fantasy worlds, whereas *Villette* exists as a restructuring of her first serious attempt at a realist novel. Take, for instance, the ending to Brontë's juvenile novella *Elizabeth*, written in 1838. Here, the "proud god incarnate" Sir William (*The Juvenilia of Charlotte Bront*ë 362), offers the heroine Miss Hastings to be his mistress after his conquests throughout her kingdom. He tells her, "Elizabeth, your eyes betray you. They speak the language of a very ardent, very imaginative temperament. They confess not only that you love me, but that you cannot live without me. Yield to your nature, and let me claim you this moment as my own" (364). Readers, of course, will recognize how Rochester's frantic pleading with Jane before she escapes Thornfield is essentially a revised version of this scene, nearly line-by-line: "I see you

can say nothing … you are thinking how *to act – talking* you consider is of no use … I should have asked you to accept my pledge of fidelity and to give me yours. Jane – give it to me now" (327). Through this comparison, the similarities of Brontë's early style are notable; in *Jane Eyre* here, she still writes of "bedroom dramas" (4), as Christine Alexander suggests of Brontë's juvenilia. Brontë's writing in the world of Glass Town and *Jane Eyre* signifies similar tropes, all pointing towards melodrama and Romantic motifs. The fictionalized settings of the Edenic Ferndean and the fantastical Angria mirror the larger-than-life Byronic heroes of Sir William and Mr. Rochester, who defy social customs in favor of a more Romantic, emotional satisfaction.

This is not to suggest of course that *Jane Eyre* is a bright and sparkling novel, or that Brontë's implementation of cynicism was entirely devoid in the text. Indeed, Christopher Lane's analysis "Charlotte Brontë on the Pleasure of Hating" argues how "few critics have addressed her novels' preoccupations with hatred" (199). Gilbert and Gubar are also aware of *Jane Eyre*'s "Satanic rebellion" and the extent to which Brontë's rage against social norms pervades her prose (314). Rather, Brontë's indictment of Victorian social mores is present though contrasted in each of her novels. Lane notes that *Jane Eyre* "accepts the Romantic strain of individualism that flourishes as hatred in her novels" (200). Brontë's engagement with misanthropy by this time is dependent on rebellion and a wish to imagine a better, more just social dynamic, as evinced by *Jane Eyre*'s ending. Whereas Jane's rage is fantastical and idealistic in its rejection of societal evils, Lucy Snowe's, as will soon be discussed, is deeply misanthropic—vindictive and cynical because she accepts her fate as remaining solitary and unhappy. Gilbert and Gubar are quick to surmise in the end of their analysis that, "Brontë was never again to indulge in quite such an optimistic imagining" (371). Thus begins Brontë's marked shift into avoiding fantastic elements, such as Edenic scenes or magical realism, in *Villette*.

If *Jane Eyre*'s ending exemplifies the indulgence of Romantic optimism, then *Villette* certainly is its dark twin. Scholars are quick to discern the narrative similarities between Brontë's novels, with both heroines "suggest[ing] a similar point about women's disenfranchisement from culture" (Gilbert and Gubar 406) or, as Robyn Warhol's "Double Gender, Double Genre in *Jane Eyre* and *Villette*" argues, "lend[ing] themselves especially well to feminist tropes of doubleness, as critics of *Jane Eyre* and *Villette* repeatedly invoke dualities, oppositions, and doublings in their interpretations of the texts" (858); however, the scenic and plot minutiae of the novels are also highly allusive to one another, with both Jane and Lucy reliving near identical moments in their lives, though from a sharp contrast in degrees of internal optimism. Emily Heady's article "'Must I Render an Account?': Genre and Self-Narration in Charlotte Brontë's *Villette*" argues that, like *Jane Eyre*, *Villette* is "often described as an uneasy fusion of two dominant novelistic modes of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the Gothic and realism" (341), though with *Villette*'s Gothic conventions reflecting more of Lucy's trauma as internal conflict, as opposed to the more literal impediment to Jane's marriage in the form of Bertha Mason. These similarities, however, allow the heroines to be read as doubles of one another, with Lucy serving as the jaded and traumatized double of the ever-hopeful Jane Eyre, expanding on Brontë's discourse regarding realism.

When considering Jane and Lucy as doubles, it is easy to notice their similarities at first glance, as both novels are told from the perspective of an indignant heroine who ventures beyond the familiar, albeit traumatic, sanctity of their childhoods. The interference or existence of a separate female character (Bertha Mason/Blanche Ingram or Madame Beck/Walravens) interrupts Jane's/Lucy's ability to love and find reciprocation for it, only for their love interest to return to the plot before the novel's end in order to secure the happiness of the narrator. Only the final page

of the novels, all considered, differ dramatically in plot and end the doubling metaphor, with Jane's story concluding in a happy marriage and Lucy's ending in mourning and spinsterhood. What could have caused such a pronounced change in the novels' conclusions? These final pages have long been analyzed in Brontë's response to her "deepening pessimism about woman's place in man's society" (Gilbert and Gubar 399), but they also speak of Brontë's cynicism being indicative of the Victorian novelist's desire to better portray realism. Lucy Snowe's infamously laconic and paranoid distrust of the reader, *Villette*'s decidedly less fabulist intertextuality, and the divergence from the marriage plot (by Lucy's remaining unmarried by the conclusion) are all indicative of a greater Victorian attempt to represent "the novel as an art form with intrinsic values apart from its effectiveness as a moral instructor" (Kendrick 19). There is no egalitarian paradise of Ferndean in *Villette*, but rather an unremarkable yet plausible *externat de demoiselles* in which Lucy must live and work alone.

The doubling of the novels, as well as the cynical realism of *Villette*, becomes most apparent when reading their passages closely and comparing them side-by-side. Take for instance, early on, the similarities as both Jane and Lucy undergo journeys from their childhood residence to their unknown teaching positions. In *Jane Eyre*, the narrator invites her reader to fantasize the expedition as though it were a Romantic play:

> A new chapter in a novel is something like a new scene in a play; and when I draw up the curtain this time, reader, you must fancy you see a room in the George Inn at Millcote … I sit in my cloak and bonnet; I am warming away the numbness and chill contracted by sixteen hours' exposure to the rawness of an October day … Reader, though I look comfortably accommodated, I am not very tranquil in my mind. (117)

Jane's anxiety contrasts with her desire to romanticize this moment to the reader, and she recognizes the duality of her situation: "The charm of adventure sweetens that sensation, the glow of pride warms it; but then the throb of fear disturbs it" (118). Jane relates her story in an almost ironically self-aware statement as though she were in an epic or acting on a stage, whereas in reality she is simply waiting alone in an unfamiliar inn. The self-allusion to the theatre is indicative of Brontë's careful treatment of realism in *Jane Eyre*, where the material reality of the narrator is set in conjunction with a high imagination—an optimistic impulse to recognize the romance of travel and the excitement of a new situation, as though Jane Eyre were the actor of an idealized play.

In *Villette*, Lucy undergoes a nearly identical experience, though her narration differs noticeably in tone. Lucy's employment ends after Miss Marchmont's death, and she sets off for London, aware that she must find a new situation as quickly as possible. Here, Lucy describes her arrival:

> About nine o'clock of a wet February night I reached London. My reader, I know, is one who would not thank me for an elaborate reproduction of poetic first impressions; and it is well, inasmuch as I had neither time nor mood to cherish such; arriving as I did late, on a dark, raw, and rainy evening, in a Babylon … How difficult, how oppressive, how puzzling seemed my flight! (42)

Villette offers no romanticized travelogues regarding the thrill of an uncertain future. Lucy here refrains from offering any imaginative solace to her reader; rather, she addresses them obliquely, baldly stating that she was in no mood at the time to imagine London as anything but a dangerous wilderness. Her cynicism is both self-deprecating and offensive, imagining that she could neither attract an audience with poetical tastes nor believe that the reader could be inspired by such

imaginings. However, Lucy's contempt is not needlessly bleak, and she awakens the next morning endeavoring to make the most of her circumstances: "I did well to come," she soliloquizes, "I like the spirit of this great London which I feel around me. Who but a coward would pass his whole life in hamlets?" (45). She is, to use a fairly modern description of the word, a *realist*. She accounts for her losses as the cost of experience, recognizing a similar thrill to being in unfamiliar territory though without the sentimentalized allusions that Jane utilizes. Lucy's narrative journey, therefore, hinges on her balance of presenting reality without excessively divulging in her romantic imaginations.

When comparing the doubled circumstances of Jane and Lucy early in their respective plots, we become aware of the reader's position and how it changes throughout Brontë's novels. In fact, Lucy's dialogue with the reader functions satirically towards the narrative choices found in *Jane Eyre*. While Jane urges the reader to "fancy" her in the new scene of a play, Lucy undercuts any attempts to picture her beyond what she wishes to be perceived as. During her voyage from London, Lucy cuts short her "reverie," the "wide dream-land, far away" to scold us: "Cancel the whole of that, if you please, reader … *Day-dreams are the delusions of the demon*" (63). Lucy is overwrought by her relationship with imagination, and this interaction with her reader harkens back to Kendrick's previously cited remark regarding the Victorian novel's goal to portray art as more than mere moral instruction for the sake of realism. Brontë's writing here satirizes novelistic pedantism. Lucy's reprimands and harsh attempts to remind herself of the pitfalls of imagination only serve to increase her own unhappiness; furthermore, she does not trust her reader enough to attempt further moral instruction, often carelessly writing the reader off: "Well! The amiable conjecture does no harm, and may therefore be safely uncontradicted. Far from saying nay, indeed, I will permit the reader" (39). This exchange treats moralizing ironically as Lucy does not care

what we imagine or believe. She tells us it "does no harm" to imagine, only to contradict herself later that dayreams are demonic delusions. Lucy's narrative distrust of the reader, therefore, highlights Brontë's changing relationship with realism, and how her novels function as forms of art that showcase reality beyond pedantism.

As an example, in reference specifically to the Gothic, we see the distinction between Jane and Lucy, and how this represents a change in Brontë's literary relationship to fantasy from accepting to satirical. As previously mentioned, Jane's true encounter with the supernatural, namely Rochester's voice calling her from across the moors, is accepted at face value. Jane notes that "the coincidence struck [her] as too awful and inexplicable to be communicated or discussed" (472), yet no resolution is offered; we as readers, therefore, take this claim true. Rochester's connection to Jane allows him to communicate with her from afar, positioning the novel in the realm more of the fantastical (or in Bronte's words, the "true"), rather than the real. This is not the case in *Villette*, where the Gothic apparition of the nun turns out to be nothing more than a sham, with Lucy criticizing herself and the reader for believing otherwise. Upon seeing its appearance for the last time, she states, "Be the spectacle what it might, I could afford neither consternation, scream, nor swoon. Besides, I was not overcome … I defied spectra (483). Later on, Lucy receives a letter from Ginevra Fanshawe admitting that her lover was using the costume of the nun to visit her on the school grounds. The illusion in *Villette* is dismantled scornfully, whereas in *Jane Eyre*, it is left open to interpretation and acceptance. Brontë's use of the nun, and the illusion of the supernatural it provides, further provides satirical commentary on the fantastic and magical realism found even within her own earlier novels.

Though the circumstances of Jane and Lucy are quite similar, their outlook on life and the treatment of their imaginative psychologies remain curiously distinct. In "A Great Break in The

Common Course of Confession: Narrating Loss in Charlotte Brontë's *Villette*," Gretchen Braun analyzes in detail the effects that trauma has on Lucy's personality, arguing that "the intensity of her grief render[s] her inarticulate" (189). Braun notices that "Jane, like Lucy, has lost her family and fortune" though "unlike Lucy, Jane never conceals the details of her misfortunes, relating her youthful trials in an open, self-asserting manner" (196). Lucy's condition, and her relationship with her own trauma of being orphaned and homeless, correlates more directly with realistic interpretations of trauma. Her misanthropic sarcasm and near-paranoid distrust of her reader indicate an internal fear of repeating her cycle of loss and undergoing grief. When Polly, the optimistic and beautiful counterpart to Lucy, questions her life philosophy and states that to always be alone is the equivalent to sadness, Lucy responds, "Yes; it is sadness. Life, however; has worse than that. Deeper than melancholy, lies heart-break" (437). Lucy's defensiveness, her guarded attempt to endure isolation to avoid heart-break, is realistically portrayed in line with the fallout of her trauma; Brontë herself was acutely aware of this and painstakingly applied this level of realism to *Villette*. In response to criticism regarding Lucy's characterization, Brontë wrote, "I consider that she *is* morbid and weak at times … anybody living her life would necessarily become morbid" (Gaskell 485). "Morbid" of course refers to Lucy's depression and the various causes of her misanthropic nature. Jane Eyre would never be referred to as morbid, though her trauma is hardly less severe than Lucy Snowe's, as it is Brontë's portrayal of the latter's realistic cynicism that invites this critique.

When considering the criticism that early Victorian novels depicted flawed realism in order to not contradict socially objectionable standards does not hold up in regard to *Villette*, as Lucy's trauma does begin to accurately affect her marriageability and her relationships with other people, both of which (especially the former) were imperative in the social expectations of single women.

Jane Eyre, meanwhile, is at fault for this presentation of inconsistent reality, as its narrative structure is much more conventional in its design as a marriage plot. Jane's love is reciprocal both romantically and platonically, and it is external phenomena that originally prevent her marriage to Rochester as opposed to unrequited affection. Overall, Jane is actually rarely alone in the novel. Upon her return to Thornfield after visiting the sick Mrs. Reed, the household staff greets Jane: "This was very pleasant" she writes, "there is no happiness like that of being loved by your fellow-creatures" (320). Even after fleeing Thornfield, Jane miraculously lands on the doorsteps of her cousins, with Diana and Mary specifically bonding with her at once: "I know all your sisters have done for me since … and I owe to their spontaneous, genuine, genial compassion as large a debt as to your evangelical charity" (456). "Sisters" is spoken reverently, and Jane fits in with them effortlessly, finding friends almost immediately after she is forced to abandon Thornfield. The novel's format as a marriage plot comes full circle, as I previously discussed, as she hears the voice of Rochester calling to her, ascends to the paradise of Ferndean, and happily marries her true love. *Jane Eyre*, in this aspect at least, does not undermine the Victorian model of marrying off the heroine by the novel's conclusion in its representation of realism.

Villette, however, contradicts all such ideals. Whereas Jane encounters adoptive siblings in Diana and Mary, Lucy pessimistically casts away such thoughts towards Dr. John: "I could not help forming half a wish that the said doctor were my brother … I say half a wish; I broke it, and flung it away before it became a whole one, discovering in good time its exquisite folly" (103). Ironically, Dr. John *is* in fact Lucy's god-brother, and she enjoys perhaps one of the happiest periods of her life upon realizing that her god family, Graham (Dr. John) and Mrs. Bretton, are living in Villette as well. This happiness, however, is tempered by the novel's cynical authenticity: Graham drifts away from Lucy over time, especially as he begins to fall in love with Polly. As for

Mrs. Bretton, Lucy painfully admits to herself that, "The difference between her and me might be figured by that between the stately ship cruising safe on smooth seas … and the life-boat, which most days of the year lies dry and solitary in an old, dark boat-house" (184). Lucy's trauma, and her pessimistic refusal to expect anything from her relatives, deepens her own isolation. Her nature is not congenial enough to have her relationship with the Brettons be as idyllic and romanticized as Jane's sisterly affection with the Rivers.

Furthermore, and perhaps its strongest subversion of mid-Victorian social mores in an attempt to better portray realism, *Villette* does not end with Lucy's marriage, effectively breaking the expectation of Brontë's novel fulfilling itself as a marriage plot. After burying Graham's letters in her attempt to bury her emotional attachment to him, Lucy's relationship with M. Paul begins to develop rapidly. They recognize their shared interests, similar trials of burying their affection for a lover out of reach, and—symbolically—Lucy and M. Paul are the only characters who can see the nun haunting the school's corridors. *Villette* picks up pace toward its conclusion as Lucy and M. Paul must overcome multiple hurdles in order to merely speak to each other, not to mention propose marriage. However, M. Paul is at last able to reveal to Lucy the depth of his affection for her—he had rented and furnished an *externat* school in which Lucy could live and teach away from the oppressive oversight of Madame Beck. *Villette*'s ending, so far at least, begins to mimic the fairytale bliss of *Jane Eyre*.

Lucy's description of the new residence aligns quite similarly to Jane's opinion of Ferndean. Lucy's school is "in a good-sized apartment, scrupulously clean, though bare, compared with those I had hitherto seen. The well-scoured boards were carpetless; it contained two rows of green benches and desks, with an alley down the centre, terminating in an estrade" (497) whereas Ferndean "was a building of considerable antiquity, moderate size, and no architectural pretensions

… Ferndean then remained uninhabited and unfurnished, with the exception of some two or three rooms" (566). Indeed, the *externat* becomes dangerously close to Ferndean in its metaphorical dimensions as well. Here, away from intruding society, Lucy and M. Paul might live together in egalitarian harmony. Brontë's delineation of Lucy's character as a cynical individual, and the aim to convey a novel more truthful in its realism, begins to pave way in respect for the mid-Victorian expectation of single heroines naturally being paired off in marriage before a novel's conclusion.

However, as mentioned previously, the final page or so of *Villette* contains the majority of the novel's subversive realism. Lucy recounts that her *externat* quickly developed into a prosperous *pensionnat*; and, though not coming into the inheritance that supported Jane Eyre, Lucy's hard work pays off to finally give her a modicum of financial liberation. M. Paul, however, gone across the Atlantic at the behest of Walravens's designs, is nowhere to be seen. Lucy strongly hints that he perished at sea during a raging storm across the ocean, and advises her reader: "Here pause: pause at once. There is enough said. Trouble no quiet, kind heart; leave sunny imaginations hope" (507). Lucy almost disdainfully refuses to answer for his fate, revealing the same cynical impression of her reader as she did at the novel's start. Her wisdom to "leave sunny imaginations hope" is acerbic in its denunciation of any optimism left from the reader's perspective. This, of course, implies that Lucy remains single for the rest of her life, making Lucy's "story so different from those of literary peers like Elizabeth Gaskell's Margaret in *North and South*, Charles Dicken's *Oliver Twist* and *David Copperfield*, and Charlotte Brontë's own earlier *Jane Eyre*" (Braun 189). The final chapter of *Villette* is what separates Brontë's writing from the flawed realism of her other mid-Victorian contemporaries. Lucy, in an almost nonchalant fashion, condemns the reader for having any expectations of her marriage and effectively breaks the barrier of the independent values of life and literature that plagued the Victorian realist tradition.

Villette's misanthropic heroine and pessimistic view of fantasy and idealism is doubly significant in both Brontë's own journey as an author and the Victorian novel's triumph over its difficult relationship with realism. Brontë's Gothic conventions and allusions to fantasy are indeed artistically pertinent to her oeuvre, but the stark difference between *Jane Eyre* and *Villette* in how she utilizes these motifs is what secures Brontë's overall development as a writer in the realist tradition. Though the Victorian novel would undergo more significant developments in its narrative style, and in its interpretation of representing reality in the most truthful way possible, Brontë's novels stand as providing a remarkable insight in how nineteenth-century authors would forego the fantastic and dramatic traditions, such as Edenic paradises and magical realism, of the Romantics before them. By subverting fairytale tropes and constructing a cynical narrative style, Brontë's *Villette* emphasizes the mid-Victorian shift in its employment of literary realism, marking a general trend towards contradicting nineteenth-century social ideals in order to strengthen literary realism's legacy with the novel format.

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Coleridge and Milton: How *Paradise Regained* Inspired *Christabel*

Ernest W. S. Yuen

Coleridge's *Christabel* is widely studied for its multifold obscurity and mysteriousness. Its fragmentary state has puzzled and challenged scholars for two centuries, but what is as baffling and enigmatic as its ending is its emergence, or the inspiration for Coleridge's composition of *Christabel*. The excerpt below, vocalized by the poet in the poem, Bard Bracy, invites a specific reading:

> For in my sleep I saw that dove,
>
> That gentle bird, whom thou dost love,
>
> And call'st by thy own daughter's name
>
> […]
>
> When lo! I saw a bright green snake
>
> Coiled around its wings and neck.
>
> Green as the herbs on which it couched,
>
> Close by the dove's its head it crouched;
>
> And with the dove it heaves and stirs,
>
> Swelling its neck as she swelled hers! (Coleridge 533-5, 551-6)

The dove, named *Christ*-abel, and the snake in Bard Bracy's prophetic dream are unmissable Christian symbols for Christ and the Devil. This excerpt alone from *Christabel* impels us to peruse the poem with a religious lens. The brawl between these two animals recalls the psychological duel between Christ and the Devil in the Gospel. Another poem that famously presents and reimagines the battle between Jesus and Satan, whose composer garnered immense popularity and admiration among the Romantics, is John Milton's *Paradise Regained*.

Critics sometimes consider *Paradise Lost* as the sole Miltonic inspiration for the poem. Robert Siegel puts forth a brief comparison between Geraldine and Satan from *Paradise Lost* (176) to demonstrate Geraldine's evilness in his paper about the ambiguity of evil power in the poem. William A. Ulmer draws similarities between *Christabel* and *Paradise Lost*, for instance, in the stretching of hands, the introduction of Christabel, and the image of the serpent (380-1). Ulmer believes the poem explores the origins of evil and highlights the inevitable consequences of sin in the post-fall world (380).

While some critics read *Christabel* merely as an allegory of the Fall of humanity, there are enough dissimilarities and inconsistencies between the story in *Genesis* and Coleridge's poem to suggest that this interpretation is insufficient. Walter Jackson Bate, for one, considers that the Fall only exists "as a general backdrop" of the poem, for "the castle is far from being an Eden," "Christabel is no Eve," and "there is no Adam at all" (70). (I would suggest that this immediate association between women and sinfulness is rooted in misogyny, and constricts our interpretation of this poem so rich in ambiguities and possibilities.)

Regarding Coleridge's reading and interpretation of Milton, Elizabeth McLaughlin teases out Coleridge's reception of Milton from various perspectives, drawing from Coleridge's lectures and letters. The article primarily focuses on Milton's *Paradise Lost* and does not mention its sequel. Martin Bidney asserts that Milton's *Comus* provides the basis for the characterizations in *Christabel* by closely identifying parallels between the two works. Andrew M. Cooper regards both Milton's *Comus* and *Paradise Lost* as *Christabel*'s precursor, especially for the two female protagonists (88-90).

Complementing previous critical works, this paper aims to suggest yet another Miltonic source of inspiration for *Christabel*, arguing that Coleridge's poem is a subversive rewriting of

Milton's *Paradise Regained*. I will first draw some general similarities between the two texts in terms of their settings and forms and explore how Coleridge subverts them. Then I will zoom in to one character to examine the ways in which Geraldine is a literary heir of the Miltonic tempter. Next, I will compare the plot, and more specifically, the nature and sequence of the temptations, in both poems, which then leads to the subversion of sex and the notion of sexuality that are interwoven with the temptations. I will conclude by identifying how poetic works are perceived as evil by the narrator and by Coleridge the poet to propose yet another reason for *Christabel*'s incompletion and link the poem to Coleridge's time.

Invocation and Inspiration

Milton commences *Paradise Regained* with these lines:

> I, who erewhile the happy Garden sung
> By one man's disobedience lost, now sing
> Recovered Paradise to all mankind,
> By one man's firm obedience fully tried
> Through all temptation, and the Tempter foiled
> In all his wiles, defeated and repulsed,
> And Eden raised in the waste Wilderness.
>
> Thou Spirit, who led'st this glorious Eremite
> Into the desert, his victorious field
> Against the spiritual foe, and brought'st him thence
> By proof the undoubted Son of God, inspire,

As thou art wont, my prompted song, else mute,

And bear through highth or depth of Nature's bounds,

With prosperous wing full summed, to tell of deeds

Above heroic, though in secret done,

And unrecorded left through many an age:

Worthy to have not remained so long unsung. (1.1-17)

Milton starts by invoking God to aid his poetic creation, and by offering a brief account of the ensuing events. Though divine invocation is absent in *Christabel*, the poem acknowledges its inspirations from its literary ancestors: "Tis the middle of night by the castle clock, / And the owls have awakened the crossing cock" (1-2). Critics concur that the temporal and medieval setting foregrounds the Gothic genre that is so prevalent in the Romantic era. Coleridge starts his poem with representations of the past, as well as the evocation of time with the clock. Additionally, this concept of time and literary tradition are subverted as the midnight owls wake the cock, instead of the other way around. By altering the godly invocation to a supernatural, eerie, and presumably sinister one, the poem forecasts despair and despondence.

Coleridge subverts the narratological structure, such that the summary follows the main events instead of the other way around. Lines 274-78, the end of Part I, give a brief summary of the happenings that night. A striking feature of the poem is its "conclusions" that come after each of the two parts. Perhaps it is due to the lack of divine invocation that *Christabel* is left unfinished. This lack of (divine) certainty and guidance is evident and is directly linked with evil forces such as Geraldine, which will be discussed later.

Among many things, the two poems are similar in the protagonists' introductions that underscore descent. Christ in *Paradise Regained* is introduced as being the "undoubted Son of

God" (1.11), and "the son of Joseph" "from Nazareth" (1.23). Coleridge inherits this emphasis on lineage. He introduces the heroine of his poem with the following line: "The lovely lady, Christabel, / Whom her father loves so well" (23-4). Both protagonists are characterized by their status as descendants of their fathers. Such characterization is expressed through the name *Christ-Abel* as well. Christ is obviously the son of God, whereas Abel is the younger son of Adam and Eve. Milton's Satan once refers to Christ as "The Woman's Seed" (1.64). The focus on descent functions on the narratological level as well, since *Paradise Regained* is a sequel, and *Christabel*, bearing two parts, is a descendant of Milton's epic poem.

The title of the poem already hints at its poetic inspiration from literary predecessors. A year before the publication of *Christabel*, a poem titled "Christobell. A Gothic Tale" was published by an anonymous author. Having a similar name as well as characters and plot resembling that of *Christabel*, some conclude that Coleridge was the author (McElderry 450). Assuming that is the case, Coleridge's alteration and deliberate use of the name *Christabel* in this poem indicates his intention to underscore the theological aspect and its status as a descendant. Evoking Christ, the naming itself is a literary inheritance from previous (theological) works.

Christabel's preface might be read as an invocation of Milton. In the 1816 preface of *Christabel*, Coleridge states:

> The dates [of publications] are mentioned for the exclusive purpose of precluding charges of plagiarism or servile imitation from myself. For there is amongst us a set of critics, who seem to hold, that every possible thought and image is traditional; who have no notion that there are such things as fountains in the world, small as well as great; and who would therefore charitably derive every rill they behold flowing, from a perforation made in some other man's tank. I am confident, however, that as far as the present poem is concerned, the

> celebrated poets whose writings I might be suspected of having imitated, either in particular passages, or in the tone and the spirit of the whole, would be among the first to vindicate me from the charge and who, on any striking coincidence, would permit me to address them in this doggerel version of two monkish Latin hexameters. "'Tis mine and it is likewise yours; / But an if this will not do; / Let it be mine, good friend! for I / Am the poorer of the two." (214-5)

Though he is mainly referring to his contemporaries in his preface, with the Latin hexameters the "celebrated poets" can be read as poets from the past as well. Coleridge is aware, and by pointing out is also gesturing readers to be aware, of his poem's resemblance to his literary forebearers. He rejects potential plagiarism allegations, but at the same time acknowledges that different poets might share similar ideas, in this case, the Biblical incidents that gave life to these poems. By distancing himself from the possibilities of plagiarism, Coleridge foreshadows the poem's divergence from the epic poem. From his translation of the Latin hexameters, Coleridge is also keenly conscious of his own poetic limitations and inferiority to Milton.

Coleridge's Subversion of Milton's Settings

Moving into the poem, *Christabel* appropriates and subverts the spatial setting of the firmament from Milton when Satan's councils meet. Milton's Satan summons his Peers "Within *thick clouds* and *dark* tenfold involved, / A *gloomy* consistory" (1.41-42, emphases added) as they devise a plan to tempt Christ. Coleridge depicts the setting of *Christabel* with twofold irony:

> Is the night chilly and dark?
>
> The night is chilly, but not *dark*.
>
> The *thin grey cloud* is spread on high,

It covers but *not hides the sky*. (14-17, emphases added)

Coleridge explicitly and comically subverts the initial setting from "thick clouds" and "dark tenfold" to a singular "thin grey cloud" and the night that is "not dark". His peculiar use of questions and answers not only categorizes the text as a parody of the Gothic genre, but also engenders ambiguity, and anticipates the protagonist's succumbing to evil forces. For Benjamin Woodford, the brief moments between the answers and questions hold "reader[s] in a state of momentary *suspense* and *wonder*" (107, emphases added), which are fundamental Satanic elements. The oddly distinct state of cloud that "hides not the sky" responds to a few lines prior in *Paradise Regained* where "*Heaven opened*, and in likeness of a Dove / The Spirit descended, while the Father's voice / From Heaven pronounced him his beloved Son (1.30-2, emphasis added). These four lines are deliberately rewritten and reimagined to instigate ambiguity and suspense.

The "thin grey cloud" that "covers but not hides the sky" situates the text in the liminal space between Jesus's salvation and Satan's domination. In Milton, the sky occupied by Satan is darkened by thick clouds, whereas the Heavenly sky is open and bright. The liminality of Coleridge's description thus depicts a world that is in between God and Satan. In Miltonic language, *Christabel* is set in between *Paradise Lost* and *Paradise Regained*. The deferment of regaining paradise is due to the evil forces of Geraldine who lures the Christly figure.

In terms of the secular spatial setting, Coleridge retains the essence of wilderness in *Paradise Regained*. Jesus is sent to "the Wilderness" (156) by Providence "to conquer Sin and Death" (159) by "humiliation and strong sufferance" (160). He then enters "the bordering Desert wild" (193) and does "his holy meditations" (195). The Desert is, according to Christ, a "woody maze" (246). The entrance to a place of wilderness to pray occurs in *Christabel*. She "pray[s]" "in the midnight wood" (29) which is "a furlong from the castle gate" (26). Karen Swann points out

that the midnight wood is "where innocence is traditionally put to the test, or when spirits walk abroad" (539). Forests have long been a symbolic space of enchantment and wilderness. Its distance from the civilized, orderly castle amplifies its wilderness as well. Interestingly, the forest is "bare" (43), and "naught was green upon the oak" (33), even more barren than the desert in Milton.

Trees, being protective shelters, ironically anticipate evil in both works. Throughout his forty-day stay in the wilderness, Jesus takes cover under "some ancient oak" (305) for protection. Milton's tree appears in *Christabel* as "the huge, broad-breasted, old oak tree" (42), beneath which Christabel has been kneeling and praying. However, far from protecting, the other side of Coleridge's oak tree hides the dangerous villain of the poem. In Milton, the oak tree is also mentioned right before Satan and Jesus's encounter.

The animals that wander in *Paradise Regained* are domesticated and confined in *Christabel*. Book One of *Paradise Regained* ends with "fowls" that are "couched" (1.501), and "wild beasts [coming] forth the woods to roam" (1.502) as the night falls. Incidentally, *Christabel* begins with exactly the same animals, albeit in a contrasting state to the ones in Milton. Readers are introduced to the Gothic poem by the "owl" (2) (the phonetic similarity of "owl" and "fowl" is striking as well) that awakens the "crowing cock" (2). The birds in Coleridge are agitated and restless in "the middle of night" (1), not "couched." Milton's "wild beasts" are diminished to one "toothless mastiff bitch" (7). Far from roaming in the woods, this "mastiff bitch" is kept captive in a "kennel beneath the rock" (8) within the castle. It "maketh answer to the clock" (9), a symbol of regularity and (imposed) civilization. Such confinement and subversion, as well as the evocation of the supernatural Gothic, may suggest the state of loss and deviation from holiness, which is the pivot of the poem, as it gradually reveals itself.

Geraldine as a Literary Heir of Milton's Satan

Shifting the focus from the plot to the characters, Geraldine epitomizes the women suitable for sexual allurement according to Milton. Incubus's description of a desirable woman lays the groundwork for Coleridge's portrayal of Geraldine. After Satan's first temptation, one of Satan's council members, Incubus, proposes provoking carnal desires.

Set *women* in his eye and in his walk,

Among *daughters of men* the *fairest found*.

Many are in each region passing fair

As the noon sky, more like to *goddesses*

Than mortal creatures, *graceful and discreet*,

Expert in amorous arts, *enchanting tongues*

Persuasive, *virgin majesty* with *mild*

And sweet allayed, yet terrible to approach,

Skilled to retire, and in retiring draw

Hearts after them tangled in amorous nets. (2.153-62, emphases added)

First, Geraldine appears in the form of a woman, though one cannot be sure of her real sex or identity, and she characterizes herself as a "daughter" at the outset of her exchange with Christabel by saying, "my sire is of a noble line" (79) (similar to that of Christabel and Christ). She is "beautiful exceedingly" (68), so that her beauty exceeds human perception, and is said to be a "bright dame" (106), a "lofty lady" (223, 226, 384), and "like a lady of a far countrèe" (225). These ethereal qualities of Geraldine suggest that she is indeed more "like to goddesses than mortal creatures," as Incubus describes. Elizabeth M. Liggins provides a comprehensive list of

supernatural or folkloric beings that inspired the depiction of Geraldine. Interestingly, syncretism is found in both poems. But in any case, all agree that Geraldine is a being beyond ordinary mortal humans.

Geraldine is also "discreet" as she is concealed behind a tree as Christabel prays. Her lengthy and "persuasive" speeches pervade the poem, and most significantly she lures Christabel into bringing her back to the castle with her "enchanting tongue," comparable to Satan's seductive words. The narrator repeats and underlines her "faint and sweet" (72, 77) voice, which corresponds to "mild and sweet" in Incubus's description. Geraldine identifies herself as a "*maiden* most forlorn" (195, emphasis added), and later on the narrator says she "cast[s] down her large bright eyes divine" (576) "in *maiden wise*" (575, emphasis added). "Maiden wise" here means both a maiden-like manner and maiden wisdom (again, Coleridge plays with the double meanings of words). Geraldine is well aware of her own "virgin majesty" and weaponizes it against Christabel and her father to seduce them, just as Incubus and Satan would have wanted for the fall of Christ and humanity. Coleridge illustrates and amplifies Incubus's (rather misogynistic) description of a desirable female figure, such that Christabel falls prey to Geraldine's malice.

More generally, Geraldine embodies Satan's deceptive appearance. Edward Darwin argues that there are "shared traits" between Geraldine and Milton's Satan in *Paradise Lost* that "range from crimes against innocence to forcing together 'thoughts so all unlike each other'" (224). Satan at first takes his form as an "aged man" (1.314) to speak to Jesus. Apart from the apparent parallel image of the serpent, Geraldine is frequently read as a malicious shapeshifter. Milton's Jesus sees through Satan's deception instantly and rebukes him as "composed of lies" "from the beginning, and in lies wilt end" (1.407-8). He continues:

For lying is thy sustenance, thy food.

Yet thou pretend'st to truth! all oracles

By thee are given, and what confessed more true

Among the nations? That hath been thy craft,

By mixing somewhat true to vent more lies.

But what have been thy answers? what but *dark*,

Ambiguous, and with *double sense deluding*,

Which they who asked have seldom understood,

And, not well understood, as good not known? (1.429-37, emphases added)

Pretense and deception are the nuclei of Jesus's reprimand. Coleridge's molding of the antagonist is exactly what Jesus chastises Satan for: "dark," "ambiguous," and "with double sense deluding" (1.434-5). Geraldine's intention is kept "dark" and "ambiguous" to readers, and so are her speeches and subsequent actions. Walter Jackson Bate associates Geraldine with "elusiveness and ambiguities of evil" (68). Robert Siegel claims "the spirit who takes the form of Geraldine is essentially ambiguous" (167). Geraldine's first speech is already steeped in incongruity and portent. She explains that she can scarcely speak "for weariness" (74), but nevertheless launches into a lengthy speech to introduce her lineage and recount her story. Claire B. May points out the puzzling temporal aspect of Geraldine's story, where the ambiguity contributes to the perplexity of narrative time (704).

Geraldine's appearance and speeches are "double sense deluding." Her appearance, as mentioned, is deceptive, and serves to drive Christabel astray. Her speeches are suffused with double entendre from the start. She mentions that she is "choked with force" (83), "tied up" (84) to a horse, a symbol of masculine virility, and there are men "[riding] furiously behind" (86) all

night. All of these statements may be understood in a lecherous sense. Geraldine has even "lain entranced" (92), which again can be read in two ways. Despite Christabel's innocence, she is affected (and aroused, as discussed later) by Geraldine's words. This signifies that Geraldine "deludes" Christabel with success using her double-sensed words and veneer.

Coleridge's Subversion of the Temptations in *Paradise Regained*

The council in Milton abandons the idea of a honeytrap as Satan finds it inadequate. In Coleridge, Geraldine successfully seduces Christabel on multiple levels, which corresponds to, but simultaneously subverts, the temptations in Milton. In light of Bard Bracy's dream, the battle between the snake and the dove symbolizes the psychological fight between Christ and Satan, and is translated and altered in Coleridge's poem. Hence, Christabel and Geraldine can be read as Christ and Satan in *Paradise Regained* respectively.

Firstly, Christ identifies and unveils Satan's deception, but Christabel is never able to do so. Upon Geraldine's first cry for help, Christabel literally and symbolically "stretch[es] forth her hand" (104) to take Geraldine back to the castle, falling into Geraldine's deception. She cannot discern Geraldine's disguise. In *Paradise Regained*, Christ rebukes Satan who is "composed of lies / From the beginning, and in lies wilt end" (1.408-9), and rejects Satan. Different from Christabel, he sees through Satan's lies because of his divine knowledge.

On the contrary, Christabel succumbs to Geraldine's first sexual temptation. Geraldine twice asks Christabel to "stretch forth [her] hand" (75, 102), and Christabel complies (104). The use of the same words and the lack of hesitation between the two actions convey Christabel's thoughtless and reckless succumbing to an almost instinctive lust. Jonas Spatz views Geraldine as a projection of Christabel's sexuality and desire (111). The stretching of limbs can be interpreted

in an erotic light (as a phallic symbol), as Christabel is aroused by Geraldine's beauty. Christabel further carries Geraldine back to her bedroom and satiates her desires. They then proceed to sleep together, and although the story does not provide explicit descriptions, Christabel says, "Sure I have sinn'd!" (381) the morning after.

Similarly, Satan's temptation of Jesus also centers on bodily desires. Cognizant of Jesus's fasting, Satan tempts Jesus to "command / that out of these *hard* stones be made thee bread" (1.342-3, emphasis added). Of course, Jesus desists gratification for he needs to endure suffering. In a subversive sense, Jesus resists temptation by hardening of his heart and keeping the stone hard, but Christabel submits to temptation exactly by *hardening*. Coleridge preserves the core of Satanic temptation and reimagines it in a sexual manner. Satan's council then devises the aforementioned *femme fatale* plan but soon deems it ineffectual. The initial encounter of Christabel and Geraldine corresponds to this temptation in *Paradise Regained*, but instead of rejecting it, Christabel succumbs to sexual temptation.

The episode where Geraldine regains power after drinking the cordial wine germinates from Satan's last temptation. Geraldine yells out, "Off, wandering mother! Peak and pine! / I have power to bid thee flee" (205-6) and seemingly expels the mother by saying "'tis over now!" (219). She drinks the wine and "stand[s] upright," (223) and becomes "most beautiful to see" (224). This brief episode is probably inspired by these two lines from *Paradise Regained*: "With that (such power was given him then), he took / The Son of God up to a mountain high" (3.251-2). Satan physically takes Jesus to the "peak" of the mountain, with the "power to bid [him] flee." After some more transportations, for "his power [has] not yet expired" (4.394), the Son of God ultimately rebukes Satan with the famous "Tempt not the Lord thy God" (4.561). Satan "fall[s]" (4.562). However, Geraldine gains power soon after this exchange.

Christabel exemplifies and subverts this last temptation. She indulges in the Devil (Geraldine) and offers the precious wine and gives Geraldine power. Therefore, instead of falling, Geraldine "stand[s] upright" and regains her beauty (Satan is said to be beautiful as well). Having given the "cordial wine" (191) of "virtuous powers" (192) to Geraldine, the Devil can thus expel the maternal figure. Coleridge bestows more power to the Devil, like how Providence enables the Devil to tempt Jesus. The wine is also an allusion to Christ's blood. In communion, Jesus's body and blood are commemorated with bread and wine. Christabel's mother gives her literal "wine," which she then gives to Geraldine. The power of the wine and bread, supposed to save humanity, is offered to the Devil figure. Such misdistribution and "misgiving" are Coleridge's parodic subversion of Christ's sacrifice on the cross. The salvation trajectory in *Christabel* does not succeed, or has not succeeded, because the flesh and blood are mis-distributed. Coleridge extends this power so that Geraldine's power does not "expire" just yet. This struggle to sustain the Devil's power reflects his composition process of the poem, discussed below.

The suspended ending and uncertainty are conveyed through the battle between the snake and the dove in Bard Bracy's dream. From the excerpt quoted at the beginning of this paper, the green snake coils around the dove's "wings and neck" (552). At this point, the serpent, representing Geraldine, has the upper hand as she is physically constricting Christabel's movements and vocal cords. This represents the initial and temporary triumph of the Devil over Christ, and thus humanity. However, the prophetic dream ends with the following lines: "it heaves and stirs / Swelling its neck as she swelled hers" (555-6). The ambiguity of pronouns and syntax perplexes the reader and blurs the boundary between the two animals. In Milton, it is clear that Jesus wins against Satan. Coleridge deliberately withholds this information to further engender uncertainty

and ambivalence, such that the text is neither a *Paradise Lost* nor a *Paradise Regained*. Coleridge has constructed a space in between.

The consecutive submission to devilish temptation situates the text in a liminal state between Heaven and Hell. Whereas Christ defeats Satan and regains paradise, Geraldine's consecutive attempts to seduce Christabel are all successful. Christabel's inability to see through Geraldine's temptations and falling into them suggests that paradise is still "lost." The text, so abundant in ambiguities and liminality, sets itself within the uncertain and fluctuating times between *Paradise Lost* and *Paradise Regained*, where humanity is temporarily taken hostage by the Devil.

Subversion of Sex and Sexuality

Coleridge reproduces the multiple veils of temptation in Milton but changes the sexes of the corresponding characters. While Christ refrains from all temptations, Christabel succumbs to each of Geraldine's. Before one censures Christabel and blames the entire female sex for falling victim to evil forces, one must not forget the myriad of Biblical men (and men in real life) who fell because of their lust as Milton has listed. Additionally, the evil force takes its form as a beautiful woman, instead of a man, to lure Christabel, a mortal woman. If anything, this champions female power and proves patriarchy impotent. At the same time, Sir Leoline, the apex of the patriarchal jurisdiction is "weak" (118), and he himself falls into Geraldine's seduction as well.

Following the characters' correlation, Sir Leoline is a parodic subversion of Mother Mary. Mary in *Paradise Regained* knows of her son's disappearance but "meekly" "await[s]" "the fulfilling" (2.108). She believes in Christ's power and leaves him to fight his battles. Sir Leoline's self-absorption, on the other hand, only aggravates the predicament. He misinterprets Bard Bracy's

dream, does not listen to Christabel, and heedlessly "[leads] forth the lady Geraldine" (657). Sir Leoline's (male) ego exacerbates the plight and aggrandizes Geraldine's power within this castle.

Coleridge inherits Milton's bodily description of the parental figure. As Mary finds her son missing, "Within her breast though calm, her breast though pure, / Motherly cares and fears got head, and raised / Some troubled thoughts" (2.63-5). The description of the breast is in Coleridge as well. As Geraldine is embracing Sir Leoline, "Again she saw that bosom old, / Again she felt that bosom cold (457-8)." The peculiar yet deliberate repetition of the syntax and the breast is a clear evocation of the two lines in *Paradise Regained*. Though most critics regard "the bosom" as Geraldine's, Dennis M. Welch asserts that this "'old' and 'cold' bosom in Christabel's vision is as much as her father's as Geraldine's" (172). This reading makes even more sense if Sir Leoline is a subversive rewriting of Mary. The feminine innocence and tranquility, as well as maternal trust, are juxtaposed greatly with the "old" and "cold" paternal quality, so much that even the rhyming words seem comical.

Another point concerning the maternal instinct lies in Coleridge's animals. The mastiff bitch in *Christabel* "sees my lady's shroud" (13). "My lady" refers to the spectral mother. Right at the beginning, femininity and feminine power to see the supernatural are highlighted. She made an "angry moan" (148) while asleep to warn Christabel (and others) of Geraldine's danger. The fact that the bitch can detect the wicked antagonist even in her sleep demonstrates the powerful female consciousness that instinctively perceives danger and protects others. The narrator surmises that her groan is a response to the "owlet's scritch" (152) – a protective interaction between an old female and a young female – which evokes maternal protection. Regardless of whom the dog wants to protect, the poet underlines the formidable and protective maternal instinct and feminine power. Meanwhile, Sir Leoline is fast asleep while peril invades his castle.

Tension between homosexuality and heterosexuality adds another layer of bodily desire onto the temptations. Interestingly, Milton addresses Satan as a "swain" (1.337), which according to the Oxford English Dictionary, means "a man," or "a wooer, especially in pastoral poetry." Lucifer's disuse of a honeytrap is commingled with potential homosexual tendencies. Claude J. Summers argues that Satan's "erotic lure" "includes beautiful males" (53) and is a homosexual temptation. He sees the banquet as an excess of appetite and sexual desires. Indeed, the word "seduction" itself has an immense (homo)sexual connotation. In a sense, the back-and-forth question-and-answer pattern by Satan and Jesus throughout *Paradise Regained* is also a metaphorical kind of penetration and resistance on a narratological level.

Coleridge might have derived this trace of homosexuality in the poem and translated it into the intimate relationship between Geraldine and Christabel. Satan deceptively begs Jesus to "disdain not such access" (1.492), comparing himself to priests who nevertheless tread God's altar (1.487-8). Christ unambiguously refuses and Satan vanishes. This episode is subverted entirely in *Christabel*. Geraldine asks Christabel to "help a wretched maid to flee" (103) with her presumably fabricated tale. Christabel does not recognize her disguise and brings her back to the castle. Christabel has allowed "access" of evil to enter her space. In fact, Camille Paglia considers the poem a "blatant lesbian pornography" (331). Moreover, both poets play with the "double sense" of the words – "access" in *Paradise Regained* and "[entrance]" (92) in *Christabel* – to suggest homosexuality. Of course, in Coleridge's poem, the relationship is a lesbian one, unlike that in *Paradise Regained* – yet another subversion. To Benjamin Scott Grossberg, the relationship between Sir Roland and Sir Leoline is a kind of "patriarchal homosociality" (158). Being excited about Geraldine's relationship with his old friend, it is not unreasonable to think Sir Leoline harbors romantic feelings for Sir Roland. Coleridge's incorporation of two

homosexual/homosocial relationships in his poem further indicates his recognition and subversion of the subtle homosexual undertones in *Paradise Regained*.

Since the two female protagonists can be read as Christ and Satan in Milton, it would make sense to read the mother specter as Providence. In the epic poem, Providence's sole direct interaction lies in the very moment of Christ's baptism, a *rebirth* in a Christian sense, where He declares "This is my Son beloved, – in him am pleased" (1.85). Afterwards, they do not exist in the same plane together. *Christabel*'s mother, likewise, never appears in the same dimension as the daughter. She dies after giving birth to Christabel. She makes a spectral appearance only visible to Geraldine. This distance from parents is found in both texts, and both protagonists are heavily influenced by their parents. Obviously, Christ quotes the Scripture (or God's words) from his mind to reply to Satan. Christabel is constantly reminded of her late mother by the *bell* (which one can say is instilled in her name as well), that "knells us back to the world of death" (333). By portraying the godly figure as female, Coleridge once again empowers women through his creative output and reasserts female power in the literary circle.

At the end of *Paradise Regained*, Jesus returns "home to his mother private" (4.639) after defeating Satan. Ironically, *Christabel* ends with Christabel's father escorting the devil within their home. The patriarchy, much like Satan, fails.

Coleridge's Stray and Struggle

The last section of this paper concerns the unfinished state of the poem and the reasons accounting for it. The narrator's change of tone after Part I is a result of his admiration of and affinity with Milton's Satan. Providence cautions the others that Satan "might have learnt / *Less overweening*, since he failed in Job" (1.146-147, emphasis added), but lets him tempt Christ,

nevertheless. Ironically, the narrator in *Christabel* gains confidence and becomes "more overweening" along the two parts of the poem. The uncertain questions he asks in Part I—for instance, the question of whether the night is chilly and dark—become confident, albeit unreliable, conjectures in Part II, expressed by "I ween" (348, 425, 474). Despite Geraldine's ambiguity and the puzzling unravelling of events, the narrator conversely grows erroneously certain.

Additionally, the question-and-answer form permeates *Paradise Regained*, where Christ rejects Satan categorically and salvages humanity. The question-and-answer pattern is parodically repeated in a plain and comical fashion in *Christabel*, for instance, in asking whether the night is chilly and dark. In Part I, these questions are immediately answered, but in Part II, as Woodford observes, the "elapsed time between the questions and answers increases as Christabel approaches Geraldine" (107), which he relates to Geraldine's "growing sense of mystery" (107). As the overall duration of uncertainty lengthens, the narrator and the poem become progressively ambiguous and uncertain. This gradual swelling of over-confidence ("I ween") but simultaneously dwindling in resolution (in answering the question) are remnants of Satan's "smooth" words of seduction. Such qualities indicate that the narrator is going astray from Providence's will in Milton. Jesus chastises Satan for "mixing somewhat true to vent more lies" (1.430), providing ambiguous answers, and leading people astray. The narrator precisely begins to integrate these Satanic qualities in his narration as the poem unfolds.

Integrating elements of *Paradise Regained*, *Christabel* starts with an abundant amount of ambiguous, discordant sounds and imagery. Even the poet within the poem, Bard Bracy, tells an ambiguous dream, and his confusing use of pronouns of "it" and "her" in the passage quoted at the beginning of this paper demonstrates Bracy's limitation as a poet. Such ambiguity and feeble communication through poetic language reveal the ineffectual nature of poetry. Christian La

Cassagnère categorizes the odd and unpoetic "Tu – whit! – Tu – whoo!" sounds as "the Real", distinct from the other poetic language belonging to the symbolic order, in Lacanian terms (85). Such distinction between the real and the symbolic/poetic from the beginning shows the poem's self-reflexivity and cognizance of poetry's deceptive nature and unreliability. The poem and its descriptions are inherently ambivalent, fabricated, and uncertain, just like Satan's words in *Paradise Regained*. Satan's lines are copious, flowery, and misleading, whereas Jesus's responses are succinct, resolute, and unequivocal.

Bearing the Satanic quality of ambiguity, the poet within the poem must also be an ineffective communicator. Bard Bracy's prophetic dream leaves readers puzzled by its ambiguity and ominous ambience. He is supposed to foretell perils to protect the inhabitants of the castle, but he fails to deliver his message with clarity. This is exactly the frame narrative style throughout the poem. The narrator exemplifies the ambivalent nature of poetry that provides an array of possibilities for various interpretations, but at the same time, he is aware of the confusion and the inability of poetry to bring forth truth and knowledge as Jesus does. In the course of his narration, he grows conscious of his own inclination to the Devil; but more so, he grows conscious of the deceptive and deluding property of poetry per se.

More than an ineffective communication, the narrator's inability to finish narrating the poem manifests in Christabel's muteness. Geraldine mutes Christabel after she falls into temptation with her, and she forbids Christabel to utter words about the previous night. While Christabel cannot vocalize what has happened before, the narrator cannot do so either. Similarly, Claire B. May concludes that Coleridge's own disturbance and overwhelming feeling led him to abandon the poem and made him unable to bring closure to it (700). Such a disruption is reflected on the narrator's level as well. Additionally, the muteness per se is derived from *Paradise*

Regained, where Satan stands "mute" (3.2) following Jesus's last response. He "had not to answer, but stood struck / With guilt of his own sin – for he himself, / Insatiable of glory, had lost all" (3.156-8). Coleridge swaps the mute and the *muter* in his poem, where the villain is the one who induces muteness, and the supposed savior is forced into silence after her amazement at the temptress's beauty after their consummation. The wordlessness of Christabel mirrors that of the narrator. He is fascinated and overwhelmed, but terrified by the sublime beauty of the poetic language he surrenders to, which explains why he can start his narration but cannot bring himself to resume it.

Going astray and growing mute, the narrator calls for help by intruding into the poem. The narrator time and again interrupts to say, "Shield her well" (54, 254, 278, 584) in hopes that Christabel is protected from vicious infiltration (the word "shield" evokes the opposite of sword/spear, which is masculine and devilish penetration, again recalling the homosexual undertones of Satanic temptations). Not only is he wishing for someone to protect Christabel from Geraldine, but he is also crying for help because he fears falling into the grasp of the Devil, since he demonstrates devilish qualities of ambiguities and poetic language. This interjection that puts itself discordant with the lines around it reflects the narrator's genuine anxiety about going astray and his gradual assimilation with the Devil. Anya Taylor observes that Geraldine's voices "multiply while Christabel's go mute" (713) as Geraldine slowly takes over Christabel. Stemming from this reading, the replacement extends to the narrator. The narrator grows mute (because the poem ends there), as if the Satanic forces take command of the entire poem.

At a meta-poetic level, Coleridge inevitably renders poetry itself Satanic. He on one hand admires Satan's eloquence and poetic language, as many of the Romantics do. But on the other hand, he fears this evil force. He stops his composition of the poem, for continuing means to

indulge in evil, to fall into Satan's temptation, and to go astray from righteous divinity. The irreconcilable struggle between admiration and fear ultimately leads Coleridge to never finish *Christabel*. Kathleen M. Wheeler argues that Geraldine is a pure force of disruption (88). Although she does not see Geraldine as necessarily evil, she agrees that Geraldine inhibits Coleridge's writing (88). The disruption that Wheeler posits is the contradictory intensity that hampers Coleridge's decision of whether to indulge in such Satanic attributes or not.

The poetic structure sheds light on Coleridge's intention for the composition of *Christabel*. *Paradise Regained* has four books. *Christabel*, with "Part I," "Conclusion to Part I," "Part II," and "Conclusion to Part II," also has four sections. Perhaps one of the reasons why Coleridge was unable to finish the poem is the lack of poetic inspiration. In some issues' preface, Coleridge confesses, "I shall be able to embody in verse the three parts yet to come, in the course of the present year" (213). He envisioned five parts in total for *Christabel*, one more than *Paradise Regained*. In the preface, he expresses that his meters and accents are "founded on a new principle" (213). His deviation from the traditional meters may be a sign of his aim to outdo Milton and to rewrite and recontextualize the tale. However, in the process of his composition, he recognized his susceptibility to diabolical attributes. This may be a consequence of his lack of divine invocation (as pointed out previously). He could not finish the poem, for completing it would mean outwitting and outperforming the literary predecessor who manifests great literary power as well as mental resoluteness to not fall into Satanic temptation himself. While Milton can resist Satan's poetic seduction and stay resolute, Coleridge as a poet cannot reconcile the two forces that mold the poem and himself. This is why both his inability to complete *Christabel* and *Christabel* itself rendered Coleridge in tremendous doubt of his own poetic ability.

Previously, I have argued that Christabel's succumbing to Geraldine's temptation is Coleridge's way of depicting the world in the liminal state between *Paradise Lost* and Christ's salvation, where evil dominates the world. This world of vicissitudes and uncertainty may be reflective of Coleridge's feelings about his own time. Having written the poem around 1800, Coleridge felt greatly the impact of the French Revolution and various tumultuous social events. The ambiguous, foggy, unforeseeable future is both evident in *Christabel* and in Britain's socio-political predicament in the late-eighteenth to early-nineteenth centuries.

Bells in the story act as agents of connection. The story starts with the ringing of the bell – it connects readers to the fictional fantasy. The "bell" in the second part of the poem "knells us back to a world of death." It reminds Sir Leoline and Christabel of Christabel's mother and connects them to her, and it symbolizes the link between the world of the living and that of the dead. The bell and the clock are measurements of time that represent regularity and certainty and connect people's concept of time. Even the name of the heroine Christabel contains the word "bell," and the evocation of Christ that comes with it suggests humanity's connection to God. The transitions between the fiction and the real can be observed through the back and forth between the actual plot of the poem and the "conclusion" that follows each part, showing the self-reflexivity of the text as a fictional fantasy, but also having awareness of its relationship with the real world. Coleridge, by ringing this "bell," or Christa"bell," connects his poetic world to the real world he inhabits. On a metafictional level, *Christabel* signals the connection between the literary world and the unstable times in which Coleridge lived.

The traumatizing uncertainty the poem presents may well be Coleridge's feelings toward the vicissitudes of society that even adhering to the seemingly unmoving literary classics cannot bring solace to him. Instead, it only engendered even more uncertainty and a pessimistic outlook.

Peter Kitson traced Coleridge's attitude towards the French Revolution in the 1790s, pointing out that Coleridge "appears to have become a supporter of the Revolution" (198) when he was at Cambridge. It was only until 1798 when Coleridge "was disillusioned with the French Revolution" and later retreated from politics (205). He might have anticipated a Miltonic redemption at the beginning of the French Revolution and a restoration. However, as the revolution progressed and turned sour, Coleridge lost hope in this regaining. This loss perhaps explains why the composition of *Christabel* ceased. Part 1 of the poem was allegedly composed in 1797 while the second part was written in 1800, after Coleridge felt the great disillusionment. Dissociating himself from politics, he leaves the poem permanently suspended in uncertainty and ambiguity, in turn forever imprisoning the narrator and the poetic world in that liminal space dominated by diabolical forces.

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Book Reviews

Smith, Andrew and Mark Bennet, editors. *Locating Ann Radcliffe*. Routledge, 2021.

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Review by Laurence Roussillon-Constanty

Locating Ann Radcliffe, edited by Andrew Smith and Mark Bennett, is a collective volume comprising seven articles written by various international scholars. All the articles in the volume were previously published as an issue of Women's Writing, volume 22, issue 3 (August 2015), also entitled "Locating Ann Radcliffe" and edited by the same publisher. In the introduction to the volume, the editors (Andrew Smith, Professor of Nineteenth Century Literature at the University of Sheffield, UK, and Mark Bennett, author of a Ph. D. thesis on Ann Radcliffe, and scholar of travel writing and Victorian popular fiction) state that the volume "broadens the critical understanding of Ann Radcliffe's work and includes explorations of the publication history of her work, her engagement with contemporary accounts of aesthetics, her travel writing, and her poetry" (1).

The selection of articles tackles several aspects of Ann Radcliffe's writing and offers a stimulating discussion of Radcliffe's multifaceted writing. The contributions are evenly distributed between Ann Radcliffe scholars and/or Gothic fiction experts. The introduction to the volume underlines the well-known aspects of Ann Radcliffe's importance as a key figure and a pioneer – foregrounding her as a forward-thinking and subversive writer. Beyond these well-documented aspects of Radcliffe's writing, this volume aims to "relocate her work within a much broader literary, cultural and historical context" (1): eighteenth century print culture and publishing networks, poetry, travel writing, and aesthetic theories are drawn upon and rearticulated in such texts. As a whole, the volume nicely moves from articles devoted to the publishing history of some

of Radcliffe's novels to the body of some of her lesser-known works, including topics such as the commonplace book or the influence of her Gothic novels on the sonnet.

The opening article, by JoEllen DeLucia, focuses on the impact the famous radical bookseller George Robinson had on the circulation/reception and understanding of Radcliffe's literature when he published both *The Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794) and *A Journey Made in the Summer of 1794* (1795). The first part of her article recognizes the role played by Radcliffe's first publisher, the circulating library proprietor Thomas Hookham. The main argument in her article is that "Robinson's network positions Radcliffe and her work outside of the insular worlds of the British novel and the fashionable milieu of the circulating library and makes her a significant part of early conversations about human rights and even what we might today call global citizenship" (7). The first part of the article reminds us of how the contractual terms with Radcliffe's first publisher, Hookham, resulted in very little profit for even best-selling authors such as Mary Robinson (Radcliffe's contemporary) and sums up previous scholarship on the connection between circulating libraries and anonymous female writers. While DeLucia praises previous critical readings that have "developed compelling and necessary frameworks for understanding Radcliffe's influence on and position in eighteenth-century print culture" (10), she offers to expand what she sees as a narrowing view of the author's political commitment and outreach by placing Radcliffe within a broader "media empire" led by George Robinson. In particular, DeLucia reconsiders Radcliffe's fiction alongside her other literary productions, which she considers in the light of Robinson's firm and the publisher's effort "to support and encourage a group of authors interested in exploring and theorizing universal rights" (13). Conversely, DeLucia convincingly demonstrates how Radcliffe's *Mysteries of Udolfo* may have informed Godwin's own Gothic novels (*Caleb Williams* (1794), for instance) as well as other political essays. Such a line of inquiry

that "connects Radcliffe and Godwin through Robinson" (14) highlights the value of previous research about the influence of radical Dissenting culture on her work and paves the way for further research into other texts that were published alongside Radcliffe's novels and presents us with a finer assessment of the role played by publishers and circulating libraries in shaping the reception of Radcliffe's works.

The next couple of essays both examine Radcliffe's engagement with aesthetics. Robert Miles aims to demonstrate Radcliffe's talent at crafting complex art by retracing the various encounters of Emily in *The Mysteries of Udolfo* and the various "red herrings" (22) in the novel's plot. He then goes on to discuss the significance of the name "La Voisin," which he concludes can be identified both as "a noble peasant conditioned by a naturally graceful sensibility and an echo of the most infamous poisoner in French history" (24).

The next article, by Andrew Milnes, deals with Radcliffe's aesthetics and the representation of holy mothers, exploring how "a Gothic aesthetic was negotiated at the end of the eighteenth century" (36). The main argument in Milnes's analysis of Radcliffe's fiction rests on an exploration of Edmund Burke's notion of the Sublime as expressed in his closing account of writing in *A Philosophical Enquiry* (1757) where, Milnes argues, "he transforms his theory of obscurity into an account of aesthetics that has implications for the theory of Terror" (37). Thus, the article aims to demonstrate that Radcliffe's "On the Supernatural in Poetry" is a response to Burke's treatise. While the discussion of Burke's Sublime terror is convincing, the second part of the argument, which includes the gendered reading of the Madonna figure by Elisabeth Bronfen (in her remarkable book, *Over Her Dead Body: Femininity and the Aesthetic* (1992)) does not help clarify the overall argument as it tends to focus a lot more on Burke than on Radcliffe herself (as the author himself recognizes toward the end of his article). However, the explicit attention to

aesthetics and representation in fiction is stimulating and offers insights into how to enlarge the discussion of Radcliffe's writing into a larger cultural framework.

In the same way, the next article, by Jacob Lipski, intends to unveil another aspect of Radcliffe's work, which he names "quasi-masquerades" and includes the element of masking and play "similar narrative functions to masquerade scenes proper in well-known eighteenth-century novels" (50). In his article, Lispski draws an interesting parallel between the way Radcliffe represents landscapes and artistic performances to "amplify the effects of sensual enthrallment" (52). He then aptly shows how the quasi-masquerade scenes operate as plot catalysts, but he also debunks the traditional understanding of the masquerade as a "destabilizing force" (57). His conclusion that Radcliffe's work belongs to the modern regime of selfhood as it portrays "almost frantic workings of the imagination" (59) is both convincing and accurate.

By comparison to the first group of essays, the next three articles in the volume stress the way in which Radcliffe's novels draw on various sources, highlighting the intertextual nature of her works. In her article, Marianna D'Elzio thus aptly demonstrates how Radcliffe borrowed from her friend Hester Lynch Thrale Piozzi to signal her support and understanding of her difficult position as a social and literary outcast from London society and to celebrate her innovative contribution to the literature of the grand tour. As far as influence is concerned, the article is well argued and indeed reveals yet another interesting aspect of Radcliffe's literary connections. To the present reader, though, the most striking article in the section, and indeed in the whole book, is undoubtedly Cheryl L. Nixon's essay, "Anne Radcliffe's Commonplace Book: assembling the Female Body and the Material text," which examines a little-explored primary source and offers insight into Anne and William Radcliffe's everyday life as well as a stimulating discussion of the connection between bodily pain and fiction. The article includes very moving reproductions in

both Anne's and William's handwriting and brilliantly demonstrates how Anne Radcliffe's first-hand experience of bodily pain informed her fiction and helped her shape her construction of the Gothic female body. In this respect, the connection between the commonplace book and the Gothic novel is convincingly supported by recent criticism on the body and affect theory. The most notable aspect of the article, however, lies in the way it draws attention to the material body of Radcliffe's text. In the same way, the last article in the volume, which traces the way Radcliffe's novels helped generate a whole new genre, "the Gothic sonnet," draws a relevant parallel between the confined space in the novel and the spatial dimension of the sonnet with examples by Keats and Elizabeth Barrett Browning, showing the subtle transition (from the Romantic and the Victorian sonnet) the Gothic trope allowed.

As a collection of essays, the volume covers many aspects of Radcliffe's literary achievement, and indeed reframes her in the broad context of literature and culture where she appears as an important writer. The book is well-informed and carefully edited and will be a very useful resource for literary scholars and students of the period and beyond.

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Schwabe, Claudia. *Craving Supernatural Creatures: German Fairy-Tale Figures in American Pop Culture. Wayne State UP, 2019.*

https://www.wsupress.wayne.edu/books/detail/craving-supernatural-creatures

Review by Ethan Taylor Stephenson

The fantastic, the mythical, the monstrous are everywhere in North American popular culture today, appearing in films, television, social media, video games, toys, and clothing. Consumers are more fascinated than ever with the supernatural, and companies are as eager to monetize and profit from it. Claudia Schwabe's study accounts for this phenomenon in late-twentieth and early-twenty-first century film and television, tracing how the "evil" and "monstrous" characters of Romantic German fairy tales are reimagined for postmodern audiences in ways that reflect our evolving views on alterity and diversity. She maintains that through the adaptation of characters like the automaton, the golem, the doppelganger, the evil queen, the Big Bad Wolf, and the dwarf, we are "mov[ing] toward a celebration and exaltation of fantastic Otherness, the anthropomorphization of and identification with supernatural beings, and the rehabilitation of classic fairy-tale villains and monsters" (4). What were once sources of the uncanny, the dangerous and untamed, the villainous, and the grotesque are "rehabilitated" in postmodern, North American media.

Schwabe limits her study to German fairy and folk tales of the early nineteenth century, most notably in the works of E. T. A. Hoffmann and the Brothers Grimm, in part, because their characters and plots are most familiar to American audiences steeped in Disney culture. Schwabe's analysis extends beyond Disney, however, to recent adaptations, both animated and live action, featuring characters like the automaton (á la Hoffmann's Olimpia), the Evil Witch, and the Big Bad Wolf of Grimmian lore. She draws historical connections between these once negatively

connoted figures and their postmodern counterparts. Each chapter is similarly framed, beginning with the historicization of a classic fairy-tale archetype followed by an analysis of its recent popular portrayals.

Chapter 1, "Reimagining Uncanny Fairy-Tale Creatures: Automatons, Golems, and Doppelgangers," draws parallels between three related creatures that reflect the Dark Romantic fascination with, what Schwabe describes as, "the hidden, the dark, the subconscious, the unknown, and everything that was not open to rational comprehension" (15). She looks to E. T. A. Hoffmann's seminal 1816 story "The Sandman," as well as the tales of Achim von Arnim, Wilhelm Hauff, and Adelbert von Chamisso, in which the automaton, the golem, and the doppelganger precipitate violence and death because of their uncanniness. They are anathema to human psychological and social stability because they are human-like in appearance, yet remain inhuman in substance. Schwabe demonstrates how these creatures—automatons in films including *The Stepford Wives* (both 1975 and 2004 versions), Steven Spielberg's *A. I.* (2001), and *Edward Scissorhands* (1990), golems in television shows as diverse as *The X-Files* (1993-2002, 2016-18) and *The Simpsons* (1989-present), and the doppelganger in television series like *Grimm* (2011-17) and *Once Upon a Time* (2011-18) and in the *Harry Potter* films (2001-2011)—are "transformed, dramatized, humanized, and infantilized characters, oftentimes with positive connotations and equipped with profound emotional depth that invites a spectator's empathic response in return" (16). These creatures are made *heimlich* in the twenty-first century, as television and films posit the Other as something (or someone) that the audience can understand, accept, and even identify with.

Chapter 2, "Evil Queens and Witches: Mischievous Villains or Misunderstood Victims?," examines the history of the evil queen/stepmother and wicked witch tropes in the Grimms'

"Schneewittchen" and related stories. The villainous women of these classic tales express little character depth, and are, as Schwabe states, "evil to the core," serving only as the "antithesis of the heroine" (90–94). They are flattened to represent the duality—the black and white, the dark and light, the evil and good—of the Grimmian moral universe. Through her careful analysis of films such as Walt Disney's *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* (1937), *Snow White: A Tale of Terror* (1997), *Mirror, Mirror* (2012), *Snow White and the Huntsman* (2012), *The Huntsman: Winter's War* (2016), and the television series *Once Upon a Time*, Schwabe shows how these women are now commonly provided "backstories," offering viewers a broader palette of character traits and a more sympathetic characterization. Recent adaptations play to our desire for characters with complicated, human motivations. We sympathize with their intricate and often painful backstories, as is the case with *Snow White: A Tale of Terror*, whose "evil" stepmother, Claudia, played by Sigourney Weaver, becomes evil only after a miscarriage. Schwabe's point is that we want to know what has led these women to their wickedness, to understand, even if we do not always endorse, what drives their actions. Modern film and television fulfill this desire.

Chapter 3, "Taming the Monstrous Other: Representations of the Rehabilitated Big Bad Beast in American Media," argues that the Big Bad Wolf of the Grimms' fairy tales is either anthropomorphized and infantilized or, conversely, made sexy in modern American media. Schwabe looks to the character of Monroe, a reformed werewolf, in NBC's *Grimm*, who, as the sidekick to the main character, "enjoys a quiet life in his suburban bachelor pad and abstains from killing humans" (174). Schwabe also discusses the episode "Child of the Moon" from ABC's *Once Upon a Time*, which tells the backstory of Ruby Lucas, also known as "Little Red Riding Hood" or "Red," who is cursed to turn into a wolf on each full moon. One night, Red loses control and unintentionally kills her boyfriend. She flees to the forest, where an outcast pack of werewolves

helps her control and eventually accept her lupine identity. Through these, and other examples, Schwabe maintains that this "rehabilitated" werewolf/big bad wolf has "shaken off its biologically inscribed and culturally reinforced shackles of monstrosity" for a complex, sympathetic, and ultimately self-determined identity (222). Furthermore, she claims that this transformation reflects our growing acceptance of otherness and our increasingly emphatic condemnation of discrimination based on biological differences.

The last chapter is perhaps the most pointed in its social and political implications. "Dwarfs, Diversity, and Deformation: From Fairy-Tale Imps to Rumpelstiltskin Reloaded" argues that the link between dwarfism and the grotesque in German folk tales, the conflation, in Schwabe's words, of "deformity and disability with punishments and bad, sinful, or improper behavior," is rejected in modern fantasy genres for a kinder and more inclusive politics (50). Schwabe looks to the heterogeneity of dwarfs in recent popular cinema, films such as Peter Jackson's *Hobbit* trilogy (2012-2014) and Tarsem Singh's comedy *Mirror Mirror* (2012), among others. She also looks to ABC's *Once Upon a Time* and the character of Rumpelstiltskin/Mr. Gold, who is provided a sympathetic backstory and emotional depth. She argues that diversity in casting and in characters' personalities, body types, races, ethnicities, ages, sexual orientations, and abilities in films and series like these puts the individual before the stereotype and suggests a "societal shift against disability bias and ableism" (227). Netflix's *The Witcher* series (2019-present) and HBO's *Game of Thrones* (2011-19) are just a few recent examples of shows that criticize persistent social stigmas around disability, offering instead complex, problematic, and often heroic characters that challenge ableist prejudice.

The book is especially useful for its careful historical exegesis of Romantic German fairy-tale archetypes and its explanation of how and why they are subverted for modern audiences.

Schwabe provides abundant examples of contemporary film and television that both support her thesis and invite audiences to extend her reading to the seemingly endless stream of new fantasy-based media being released today. Fairy tales, overtly or not, reflect the mores of the times in which they were written. Schwabe contributes significantly to the scholarly evaluation and criticism of how modern media, especially that which proports to be fantastical, in fact, reflects and responds to contemporary social and political struggles. Indeed, the most provocative, but least explored assertion in the book, is that the study of films and television based on fairy tales, especially films and television that humanize others and challenge racism, sexism, homophobia, ableism, and other prejudices is more important now as bigotry in its many forms is being codified in state legislatures across the nation. This book argues for continued scholarly engagement with these issues and the further elucidation of how fairy tales, and popular culture broadly, continue to serve as vehicles for social and political action that may produce a more just and accepting America.

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