

Tradition and Transformation:
Fairy Tales in the Victorian Novel

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Abstract

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The popularity of fairy tales in Victorian England frequently seeped into novels of all kinds. But scholarship on fairy tales in Victorian novels is doubly inadequate: first, today's fairy-tale scholars tend to pigeonhole all Victorian texts as passé, reflections of a misguidedly conservative time that can only interest us now as a foil to later, more "progressive" adaptations; second, too many scholars of the Victorian novel handle fairy tales with offhand or knee-jerk responses. This dissertation argues that we ought to investigate the rich intertextual relationship between fairy tales and Victorian novels in a thoroughgoing way. I focus primarily on the incorporation into novels of two related fairy tales popular in the nineteenth century: "Beauty and the Beast" and "Bluebeard." "Beauty and the Beast" is a story about doubles and opposites, about the relationship between the self and the feared other. From the perspective of the heroine, the story ends in the realization that the frightening, animalistic other is not actually very different from the self and can be incorporated into the self through marriage. The tale's dark cousin, "Bluebeard," is about discovering the beastly other inside the new husband and expelling

him.

Chapter 1 demonstrates the affinity between *Great Expectations* (1860-1) and “Beauty and the Beast,” especially the original literary version by Madame de Villeneuve (1740). Villeneuve’s version features several particularly Dickensian elements: confused identities, intricate and surprising family relationships, dream visions, and doubles. Both tale and novel are centrally about learning to shed surface assumptions in favor of a method of perception flexible enough to reveal underlying connections. Chapter 2 first establishes that “Bluebeard” underlies Anne Brontë’s *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall* (1848). Even though Brontë, unlike Dickens, does not explicitly allude to fairy tales in this novel, the heroine’s marriage to a suspicious man, discovery of his villainy, and attempt to distance herself from him is exactly the process Bluebeard’s wife undergoes. Second, “Bluebeard” links *Wildfell Hall* to novels from which it otherwise seems quite different: Robert Louis Stevenson’s *Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* (1886) and Oscar Wilde’s *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1890). As Doppelgänger tales, these novels house the monstrous villain and the human self in the same person, thus making literal the violation of the borders of self. Chapter 3 explores how “Beauty and the Beast” and “Bluebeard” patterns vie for dominance in *Jane Eyre* and *Wuthering Heights* (both 1847). In *Jane Eyre*, they drive both the plot structure and the characterization of Rochester as a combined “Beast figure” and “Bluebeard figure.” But whereas Jane follows the trajectory of a fairy-tale protagonist, ultimately forging a new place in a new situation, no character enjoys such stability in *Wuthering Heights*. The novel portrays not typical “selfhood” but something like the “subjecthood” articulated in the psychoanalytic theory of Jacques Lacan. Whereas *Jane Eyre* and most fairy tales enact the fantasy of a person’s reaching a satisfactory place or role in the world, *Wuthering Heights* depicts an essentially Lacanian subjecthood marked by instability and alienation. Finally,

Chapter 4 reveals the intersection of fey and fateful in Thomas Hardy's *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* (1891). Even though Hardy detested "happily ever after" endings, he frequently borrowed discrete elements from fairy and folk tales. His deployment of fate takes on a new dimension when we note that "fate" and "fairy" come from the same Latin word, *fatum*. Hardy sets Tess up like a fairy-tale heroine, but whereas every dark fairy-tale plot is confirmed, every happy one is truncated or cruelly distorted.

The novels I discuss are high-profile and various, demonstrating that incorporation of fairy-tale material was no fringe strategy. The frequency and variety with which authors deployed fairy tales requires us to keep them firmly in mind when we study Victorian fiction, lest we miss a crucial dimension of the novels' production and reception.

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Introduction

Victorian England was steeped in fairy tales and other stories of supernatural beings. Such tales appeared regularly and in many forms—art, poetry, children’s literature, theatre, ballet, non-fiction writing. Quite naturally, they seeped into Victorian novels as well. But scholarship on fairy tales in Victorian novels is doubly inadequate: first, today’s fairy-tale scholars tend to pigeonhole all Victorian texts as passé, reflections of a misguidedly conservative time that can only interest us now as a foil to later, more “progressive” adaptations; second, too many scholars of the Victorian novel handle fairy tales with offhand or knee-jerk responses instead of serious engagement. This dissertation argues that we ought to investigate the rich intertextual relationship between fairy tales and Victorian novels in a thoroughgoing way. Such an investigation applies not only to writers like Charles Dickens who avowed an interest in fairy tales. There is no doubt that other novelists wrote with them in mind as well, because fairies and fairy tales were demonstrably ubiquitous throughout the nineteenth century.

Victorian writers produced a plethora of short stories that were overt fairy-tale revisions. This Victorian use of fairy tales, fortunately, has received thorough attention in recent decades from several scholars, including Jack Zipes, Nina Auerbach, U.C. Knoepfelmacher, Jason Harris, Roderick McGillis, Jennifer Schacker, Nicola Bown, Molly Clark Hillard, Caroline Sumpter, and Laurence Talairach-Vielmas. This previous scholarship has accomplished several things. It has shown that supposedly idle tales of fairies and pixies provided a space for Victorians to work through real concerns. It has brought to light many formerly obscure Victorian fairy tale writers. It has demonstrated the sheer pervasiveness of fairies and fairy tales in the Victorian period. It has made great progress in tracing the transmission of continental fairy tales and *The Thousand and One Nights* to Britain. But many scholars have been unwilling to move beyond the concrete

and historically demonstrable. A glaring casualty of scholarly hesitation to leave empirical territory is the relationship between fairy tales and fairy lore and the Victorian novel. Even though the majority of Victorian novels (highbrow and popular alike) contain at least one allusion to fairy tales or supernatural beings, comparatively few scholars have thoroughly probed the resulting intertextual possibilities.

The traditional association of the Victorian novel with realism has not helped; too long, it discouraged discussions of the incorporation of fairies and fairy-tales as anything other than a sign of frivolity or immaturity. Increasingly, though, scholars have demolished the perception of a conflict between fanciful elements and the aims of realist fiction by showing that incorporating fairy tales into novels can actually contribute to their realism. Fairy tales appear most often in Victorian novels as passing allusions assumed to be meaningful to the reader. Sometimes fairy-tale comparisons offer more extensive illustrations. Pip's avowed intention in *Great Expectations* of emulating the knight in the tale who tears down the curtains and marries the princess amounts to a romanticized declaration of his desire to gain control in Satis House and possess Estella. The fairy-tale reference provides a paradigm for the course he hopes to take. Bruno Bettelheim insists in *The Uses of Enchantment* (1976) that we read fairy tales to see dilemmas worked through by others and then draw comparisons to our own lives. Some fairy-tale scholars, such as sociocultural historian Jack Zipes, condemn this approach for effacing cultural differences; however, a fairy tale need not to be precisely identical to another situation in order to be applicable to it. Meanwhile, when an allusion to a fairy tale occurs within a novel, characters are aligned with readers as people who are aware of fairy tales. This affinity between the fictional characters and readers enhances the sense of realism.

Moreover, there is no single definition of "realism." Many novels strongly evocative of

fairy tales prioritize internal over external realism—that is, authenticity of subjective experience rather than perfectly mimetic surface details. The “mysterious summons” in *Jane Eyre*, which I will discuss in Chapter 3, is a good example of an event that seems at odds with conventional realism but conveys the strength and nature of Jane’s feelings. Franco Moretti suggests that many nineteenth-century novels, especially *Bildungsromane*, “deep down...are fairy tales” (185). In my estimation, “deep down” applies in two ways: to characters’ interior experiences and to the fundamental structure of the novels. Many, whether they include overt references to fairy tales or not, rely on aspects of plot and/or characterization ultimately derived from fairy tales. In particular, Moretti cites mistreatment of children, exaggeratedly good and bad characters, and an overall structure of “violated and restored order” as fairy-tale elements in novels including *Waverly*, *Jane Eyre*, *David Copperfield*, *Great Expectations* (186-201). Once one begins to read Victorian novels with fairy tales in mind, the subtle echoes are inescapable—as they would have been for contemporary readers.

Though both were prevalent in the Victorian period and have been underappreciated by scholars of the novel, fairy tales and “fairy lore” are distinct categories. “Fairy tale” is the unfortunate English translation of the French “conte de fées,” which would be better understood as “tale of [told by] fairies” than “tale about fairies.” The vast majority of stories we would call fairy tales do not include fairies. “Fairy lore,” however, refers to stories about fairies, pixies, brownies, and related supernatural beings. Whereas fairy tales were frequently imported from other regions, fairy lore tended to be local, shared on the occasion of passing a valley, perhaps, where the fairies were believed to appear. A number of Victorians, notably Anna Eliza Bray and Thomas Keightley, published collections of stories from various regions’ fairy lore traditions; Keightley attempted to draw connections among the tales of different countries. Carole Silver, in

her excellent book *Strange and Secret Peoples: Fairies and Victorian Consciousness*, has discussed the relationship between fairy lore and a number of Victorian preoccupations, including religion, evolution, and industrialization. Belief in fairies could either be in competition or of a piece with belief in God, depending on the reader's perspective. The lore surrounding supernatural but humanoid beings took on new and disturbing significance in light of increasing evidence for human evolution from "animal" species; anthropological work (such as the "discovery" of the African Pygmies in the 1870s) lent interest to euhemerist interpretations of folklore about dwarves and other beings considered somewhat less than human. Meanwhile, fairy lore was linked in the minds of many Victorians with nostalgia for a fading pre-Industrial past and a lost childhood. Despite fairy lore's distinction from fairy tale, however, the foregoing issues surrounded many fairy tales as well. The two took different forms but were mutually influential.¹

The chief sources of the fairy tale in Victorian England are *The Thousand and One Nights* (usually known in Victorian texts as *The Arabian Nights*) and tales from continental Europe. *The Thousand and One Nights* gained popularity in Europe when Antoine Galland began translating them into French, in multiple volumes, between 1701 and 1717. Galland's translation both capitalized on and fueled the vogue for literary fairy tales in France, begun in the late seventeenth century by Charles Perrault's *Histoires ou contes du temps passé* (1697) and a myriad of tales by Madame d'Aulnoy, Mademoiselle de la Force, Mademoiselle Lh eritier,

¹ My distinction between fairy tale and fairy lore is related to that between literary and oral fairy tale. Scholars are far from agreement on how best to characterize the link between literary and oral tales. To my mind, it is ultimately a fruitless debate, since so much of the history of oral tales is inevitably lost. It is responsible to distinguish where we can, but in general the best we can do is to acknowledge that oral and literary tales were mutually influential and to remain open to new historical discoveries. See Ruth Bottigheimer's *Fairy Tales: A New History* (2009), which generated much controversy by arguing for an exclusively literary history of fairy tale, and subsequent skeptical book reviews by Cristina Bacchilega and Jack Zipes.

Mademoiselle Bernard, la Comtesse de Murat, Madame d'Auneuil, and other aristocrats, predominantly women. English translations of Galland appeared by 1706; throughout the eighteenth century, translations of d'Aulnoy, Perrault, and their compatriots became available in chapbook and volume form. Literary fairy tales also seized public interest in other European countries—most notably Germany, where a number of leading Romantic writers produced fairy tales based on traditional stories. The famous *Kinder und Hausmärchen* of Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm were published in 1812 and 1818, then translated into English as *German Popular Stories* by Edgar Taylor between 1823 and 1826. Late eighteenth-century protests by reformers including Sarah Trimmer and Hannah More, who opposed fanciful tales for children, only spurred publishers to bring out more fairy stories.

By the Victorian period, it would have been extremely difficult for a child of any social class to avoid substantial exposure to fairy tales—Middle Eastern, continental, or British. During the first decade of the nineteenth century, vast quantities of fairy tales, folk stories, and ballads were put out by “respectable booksellers” as well as producers of chapbooks (Jackson, *Engines* 197). Over the course of the century, British writers increasingly produced fairy tales of their own, for children and adults—morality tales, fanciful tales, utopian tales, social-justice tales, and even temperance tales, spanning just about all possible positions on the spectrum of “realistic” to “fantastical.” Many stories bore the titles of old continental fairy tales but were entirely devoid of the supernatural. Anne Thackeray Ritchie and Harriet Louisa Childe-Pemberton, for example, produced whole collections of tales for children that bore titles such as “Cinderella” and “All my Doing; or Red Riding-Hood Over Again” but had entirely realistic settings and characters. In this heyday of the realist novel, the attitudes and techniques of realism encroached on the fairy tale. Many Victorian writers used fairy tales to comment on the issues of the day, believing that the

fairy tale had a particular power to adapt to and promote contemporary values. Meanwhile, fairies and fairy tales appeared in theatrical productions and visual art. Of the Victorian pantomime and burlesque, Hillard writes that “nearly every such theatrical featured a fairy transformation scene” (183). Paintings by artists including Richard Dadd, John Anster Fitzgerald, and Joseph Noel Paton also frequently depicted fairies. Offhand references to fairies and fairy tales even abounded in factual texts, including news items and popular science works.²

My project is not to conduct a treasure hunt for mentions of fairy tales and fairy lore but to explore less obvious ways in which they operate throughout Victorian novels. While I consider fairy lore in Chapters 3 and 4, throughout the dissertation I focus primarily on two related fairy tales: “Beauty and the Beast” and “Bluebeard.” These stories came to Victorians along with other seventeenth- and eighteenth-century French fairy tales; allusions to them appear frequently in Victorian texts. They address issues that were significant for Victorians, particularly marriage, social class, the revelation of secrets, and the relationship between humans and animals. “Beauty and the Beast” is a story about doubles and opposites, about the relationship between the self and the feared other. (This is truer than most people would suspect; in the original literary version of the tale, the Beast appears to Beauty in dreams in his original human form—a beautiful man whom Beauty mistakes for the Beast’s adversary.) From the perspective of the heroine, “Beauty and the Beast” ends in the realization that the frightening, animalistic other is not actually very different from the self and can in fact be incorporated into the self through marriage. The tale’s dark cousin, “Bluebeard,” is about discovering the beastly other inside the new husband and ultimately expelling him. Bluebeard’s darkest secret is not the

² See Laurence Talairach-Vielmas’s recent *Fairy Tales, Natural History and Victorian Culture* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2015) for a rich discussion of the mutual influencing of fairy tales and popular science texts.

chamber full of murdered wives; rather, it is the fact that he harbors a monster inside his human body. Because these stories constitute two sides of the same coin, looking at them together illuminates the intricacies of the tales themselves and their implications for Victorians. Although I am not arguing that these two tales are uniquely applicable to Victorian novels—on the contrary, I hope to conduct similar investigations using different tales in future projects—I do maintain that their subject matter and their complementary relationship to one another make them a richly rewarding foundation for analysis.

Chapter 1 introduces my method by demonstrating and analyzing the affinity between *Great Expectations* (1860-1) and “Beauty and the Beast,” especially the lengthy original literary version by Madame Gabrielle-Suzanne Barbot Gallon de Villeneuve (1740). While critics have observed that fairy tales in general are integral to *Great Expectations* because of Pip’s difficulties in reconciling his fairy-tale dreams with reality, they have not sufficiently probed the importance of “Beauty and the Beast.” Villeneuve’s version features several particularly Dickensian elements: confused identities, intricate and surprising family relationships, dream visions, and doubles. It thus highlights the tale’s resonance with many crucial aspects of *Great Expectations*, including faulty vision, discoveries of Darwin-inspired links among seemingly distant individuals, and class assumptions. Pip follows Beauty’s trajectory in coming to understand his fundamental kinship with supposed “others” like the beastly, low-class Magwitch. But “Beauty and the Beast” informs *Great Expectations* far beyond plot similarities: both are centrally about learning to shed surface assumptions in favor of a gradually evolving method of perception flexible enough to reveal underlying connections.

Whereas “Beauty and the Beast” stories require the protagonist to transcend external differences with a seemingly menacing figure in order to discover deep-seated kinship with the

other, “Bluebeard” stories require the protagonist to delineate the boundaries between the self and the other, identify the other as a genuine threat, and escape. Chapter 2 first establishes that “Bluebeard” underlies Anne Brontë’s *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall* (1848). Even though Brontë, unlike Dickens, does not explicitly refer to fairy tales at all in this novel, heroine Helen Huntingdon’s marriage to a suspicious man, discovery of his villainy, and attempt to distance herself from him is exactly the process Bluebeard’s wife undergoes. The novel’s essential similarity to the fairy tale in no way conflicts with its realism. Second, the chapter contends that “Bluebeard” highlights *Wildfell Hall*’s affinities with two novels from which it otherwise seems quite different: Robert Louis Stevenson’s *Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* (1886) and Oscar Wilde’s *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1890). These popular late-Victorian novels, too, feature attempts to put distance between a human self and a monstrous villain. But they escalate the conflict because, as Doppelgänger tales, they house the monstrous villain and the human self in the same person. I clarify the terms of this process with recourse to René Girard, whose work on the substitution process (scapegoating) of ritual sacrifice uses the definition of “violence” as a violation or breach of the integrity of the self. His theory of mimetic desire, better known in literary circles, depends on the same assumption that the borders of the self are fragile and constantly shifting. Girard insists that seeming antagonists have a way of turning out to be fundamentally doubles of each other—so much so that the death of one usually involves the death of the other as well. His contention that supposed opposites are often crucially linked (and that people often misunderstand their relationships to others) both illuminates Helen’s problem of situating herself with respect to the errant man with whom she is “one flesh” and helps articulate how the late-Victorian Doppelgänger novels make literal the violation of the borders of self.

Chapter 3 uses the influences of fairy tales and supernatural lore to conceptualize the complex relationships between self and other in Charlotte and Emily Brontë's *Jane Eyre* and *Wuthering Heights* (both 1847). In both novels, "Beauty and the Beast" and "Bluebeard" patterns vie for dominance. In *Jane Eyre*, they drive both the plot structure and the characterization of Rochester as some combination of "Beast figure" and "Bluebeard figure"; whereas the former is a character who initially appears beastly but is ultimately desirable to the heroine, the latter is less obviously menacing at the outset but ultimately beastly on the inside. "Bluebeard," with its closetful of indistinguishable past wives, also illuminates Jane's construction of herself as an individual with varying degrees of permeability to other characters around her, especially Bertha. But whereas Jane follows the trajectory of a fairy-tale protagonist—beginning life in a stable interpersonal situation, confronting a series of disrupting adventures, and ultimately forging a new place in a new situation—no character enjoys such stability in *Wuthering Heights*. Characters share identical or similar names, uncannily resemble each other, and insist they *are* each other. Heathcliff, too, seems alternately a Beast figure and a Bluebeard figure. The novel portrays not "selfhood" as we (and Charlotte Brontë) typically understand it but something much more like the "subjecthood" articulated in the psychoanalytic theory of Jacques Lacan. Lacan's account of human behavior, speech, and naming as a fruitless but inevitable striving for a locus of plenitude within a larger structure of language and kinship seems to me harmonious with the grasping confusion of *Wuthering Heights*. Whereas *Jane Eyre* and most fairy tales enact the fantasy of a person's reaching a satisfactory place or role in the world, *Wuthering Heights* depicts an essentially Lacanian subjecthood marked by instability and alienation.

Finally, Chapter 4 reveals the intersection of the fey and the fateful in Thomas Hardy's *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* (1891). Even though Hardy detested "happily ever after" endings, he

frequently borrowed discrete elements from fairy and folk tales. His deployment of fate takes on a new dimension when we note that “fate” and “fairy” come from the same Latin word, *fatum*. The fates and the fairies address the same problem of events that defy human control and explanation. *Tess* both features numerous fairy and fairy-tale components and invokes various forms of fatalism and determinism (that is, assigns responsibility to the inevitable predestination of an external directing force or assigns it to the interplay of immanent causes). A crucial form is psychological determinism, which Hardy constructs in large part through a patchwork of fragmented fairy-tale plots. In addition to her D’Urberville and pagan family histories, Tess confronts pre-existing narratives in the form of ballads, fairy tales, and folk tales. Hardy sets her up like a fairy-tale heroine—poor, wandering, smarter than her hapless parents, well-meaning—but whereas every dark fairy-tale plot is confirmed, every happy one is truncated or distorted. *Tess* ultimately works as a sort of anti-*Bildungsroman*: Tess’s maturation, like Jane Eyre’s or Pip’s, anchors the novel, but Tess seems not to have a fair shot at independent development because she feels forced to walk paths already laid out for her by others. As in earlier chapters, I again consider the individual’s process of coming into a position in a larger (social, geographical, narrative) structure. In addition to a history of lore, Tess belongs to a natural history as tangible as the trees and birds themselves: the evolutionary web of species Hardy learned about from reading Charles Darwin. But the echoes of Darwin in *Tess* do not sufficiently account for the substantial role of psychological determinism. I again engage Lacan’s articulation of a subject’s entrapment in language and kinship structures—bound up, as in *Wuthering Heights*, with the significance and even fatefulness of the family name. Like a Lacanian subject, Tess has a disjointed, alienated experience of her relationship to the determining structure that is “D’Urberville”: it seems both to propel her and to impede her every step. The continual

evocation and withdrawal of fairy-tale plots in Tess's story belongs to this cycle; though always forced to pursue them, she is disappointed every time.

The novels I discuss are high-profile and various, demonstrating that incorporation of fairy-tale material was no fringe strategy. Fairy tales encourage looking at common things in a new way; that is exactly what I am advocating we do with Victorian novels. In many cases, I show that fairy tales play into issues long identified as central to the works at hand, offering a fresh angle from which to approach those issues. Dickens called fairy tales a “precious old escape” from a difficult world, but in fact they were imaginatively involved in nearly every part of that world. More than any other form, fairy tales are protean—enacting the very transformation they so often feature in their content. The resulting frequency and variety with which authors deployed fairy tales requires us to keep them firmly in mind when we study Victorian fiction, lest we miss a crucial dimension of the novels' production and reception.

Chapter One

“Yet It Looked So Like It”:

Great Expectations and “Beauty and the Beast”

Despite how frequently critics have mentioned Charles Dickens’s uses of fairy tales, hardly any have considered the connection between “Beauty and the Beast” and *Great Expectations* (1860-1). As part of his career-long defense of the imagination, Dickens habitually employed fairy-tale motifs and allusions in his novels. Pip refers explicitly to fairy tales several times, casting himself as a blend of Cinderella and the handsome prince in Sleeping Beauty. Yet the relationship between *Great Expectations* and “Beauty and the Beast” transcends simple allusion; both chronicle a process of learning to see beyond appearances. “Beauty and the Beast” was familiar to Dickens and his contemporaries through translations of the most popular French version of the tale, which Dickens may also have read in the original language. This is the version Stone has in mind when tracing the tale’s influence on *Great Expectations*. But Stone does not mention the first, novel-length rendition (1740) by Madame Gabrielle-Suzanne Barbot Gallon de Villeneuve, with which Dickens’s novel has far more in common. This original *La Belle et la bête* features confused identities, intricate and surprising family relationships, dream visions, and doubles, in addition to the overall theme of the transformative properties of love and generosity. Whether or not Dickens encountered this version of the story, it informs many crucial elements of *Great Expectations*—including faulty vision, discoveries of Darwin-esque links among seemingly distant individuals, class assumptions, and the possibility of change. Ultimately, both stories encourage their protagonists to shed surface assumptions in favor of a method of perception flexible enough to reveal underlying connections. Pip resembles Beauty in revising his opinion of Magwitch; because he fails to see his affinity with Orlick, however, he

succeeds less fully than his fairy-tale predecessor.

Like other fairy tales, “Beauty and the Beast” has circulated in various oral and written forms for generations. It is obviously inspired by the animal bridegroom tradition of oral stories more generally, as well as the myth of Cupid and Psyche in the 2nd-century collection *The Golden Ass* by Apuleius. In 1756, Madame Jeanne-Marie Leprince de Beaumont revised Villeneuve’s story, retaining the title but drastically reducing the length. Most subsequent versions, including English translations, have been based on this more pointedly didactic rendition. In Leprince de Beaumont’s version, a girl named Beauty whose father has lost his wealth asks him to return from a journey with a rose. He stumbles onto a mysterious mansion, sees and plucks a rose, and finds himself face to face with a furious Beast who vows to kill him unless he brings one of his daughters to live in the castle. To save her father’s life, Beauty goes to live with the Beast; soon, she adjusts to the leisurely life and even to the Beast. However, he asks every night, “Will you marry me?” She always answers no, but she feels increasingly uncomfortable with her response. Eventually homesickness prompts her to ask for a temporary visit to her family, and the Beast grants her request but warns her that he will die if she does not return by the appointed day. Beauty stays away too long, though, and rushes back to the castle to find the Beast near death. Here she discovers and declares her love for him, which prompts his transformation into a handsome prince. After a brief explanation of the curse that had turned the prince into a beast, Beauty and the prince are married.³

³ Certainly, on the surface, “Beauty and the Beast” is about marriage, which is why many feminist critics have taken aim at various versions of the tale. See, as representative examples, Jack Zipes, *Fairy Tale as Myth / Myth as Fairy Tale*; Cristina Bacchilega, *Postmodern Fairy Tales: Gender and Narrative Strategies*; and Karen Rowe, “Feminism and Fairy Tales,” *Women’s Studies: An Interdisciplinary Journal* 6.3 (1979): 237-57. But simply to “read the beasts as men in furry clothing” (Makinen 31) forecloses other readings of the story as one of maturation, overcoming prejudice, confronting fear, dealing with economic and class problems,

Leprince de Beaumont's most striking omission from Villeneuve's original version is the character of the "bel Inconnu" ("beautiful Unknown One") who visits Beauty in her dreams throughout her stay at the castle. This young man tells Beauty that he loves her and enjoins her to release him "des apparences qui me déguisent" ("from the appearances that disguise me"; Villeneuve 46; this and all subsequent translations mine). Beauty assumes him to be a prisoner of the Beast's but cannot understand what he means about appearances. She also dreams of an imposing but kind Lady who warns her again not to be deceived by her eyes. Over the course of the bel Inconnu's nightly visits, she feels increasingly attracted to him—and increasingly worried about the conflict between this emotion and her growing affection for the Beast. Despite the bel Inconnu's frequent presence and the proliferation of his image in artwork throughout the castle, Beauty does not realize until the final revelation scene that he is the human form of the Beast.

Villeneuve's version was not completely absent from nineteenth-century England: it appeared in an 1858 collection of 24 literary French fairy tales, and it was the model for Andrew Lang's rendition in *The Blue Fairy Book* (1891). For popular dissemination, though, especially given the explosion in children's publishing at the outset of the nineteenth century, Leprince de Beaumont's shorter version was the prevailing source. Up to and including the Victorian period, "Beauty and the Beast" underwent a myriad of retellings—Hearne identifies sixteen major editions of "Beauty and the Beast" published in England during or just before Dickens's lifetime (207-11)—but very little substantial change. In 1811, Charles Lamb published a "Beauty and the Beast" poem in rhymed iambic tetrameter that faithfully follows Leprince de Beaumont's version. During the mid-nineteenth century, the tale was frequently included in chapbooks and in

and negotiating the relationship between humans and animals. Due to lack of space and to my primary interest in the "Beauty and the Beast" nature of the Pip-Magwitch relationship, I do not substantially engage the feminism debate here.

illustrated collections for children such as the 1845 *Home Treasury* by “Felix Summerly,” or Sir Henry Cole.⁴ Adult Dickens was surely aware of James Robinson Planché’s dramatic version, produced in 1841. I have found no explicit mention of Planché’s “Beauty and the Beast” in Dickens’s materials, but he was in England in 1841, and, of course, loved theater. In 1854, Dickens mounted a production of Planché’s “Fairy Extravaganza,” *Fortunio and His Seven Gifted Servants*, starring members of his own family along with Mark Lemon’s and Wilkie Collins’s, for an audience including the playwright (Slater 383). Planché’s version of “Beauty and the Beast,” a musical comedy in heroic couplets, retains the key plot points of the traditional version and incisively sums up the story in one iambic pentameter line: “’Tis love hath so improved him in your eyes” (111). This line, like the Villeneuve version of the tale and the use Dickens makes of it in *Great Expectations*, emphasizes that Beauty’s new way of seeing brings about the story’s happy ending.

Dickens’s friend and official biographer, John Forster, called “Beauty and the Beast” “the divinest of all those fables” (Forster, *Vol. 1*, 347). Dickens refers to the fairy tale explicitly, albeit briefly, in *Our Mutual Friend*, and it resonates thematically in *The Old Curiosity Shop*, *Dombey and Son*, and *Martin Chuzzlewit*. Although critics most frequently note Quilp’s status as something of a Beast to Little Nell’s Beauty, this comparison is actually the weakest because Quilp does not change and Nell does not (and is not encouraged to) warm toward any “inner goodness” in him. Quilp, as Eigner and others have suggested, more closely resembles the eponymous antagonist of “The Yellow Dwarf,” a fairy tale by Madame d’Aulnoy and a popular

⁴ See F. Harvey Darton’s *Children’s Books in England: Five Centuries of Social Life* (1958).

English pantomime in 1821 (Eigner 19).⁵ In *Dombey and Son*, Florence is the Beast to her father, who gradually learns to love her by the end of the novel. *Martin Chuzzlewit* features a miniature “Beauty and the Beast” story with a twist: that of Mary Graham and Mr. Pecksniff. Mary responds to his proposal like a girl in an animal bridegroom story: she “would have preferred the caresses of a toad, an adder, or a serpent: nay, the hug of a bear: to the endearments of Mr. Pecksniff” (462). But although her rejection of him—“I hold you in the deepest abhorrence”—seems contrary to the spirit of “Beauty and the Beast,” she accounts for it by saying, “I know your real nature and despise it” (461). Like Beauty, Mary looks beneath the surface at the suitor’s true nature and is accordingly rewarded with marriage to the man she loves. Pecksniff is a reverse Beast, smooth on the outside but rotten on the inside. *Martin Chuzzlewit*, then, follows the fairy tale’s interest in distinguishing between internal and external qualities, but does not share its focus on the transformative properties of love.

Gradual change does occur, however, when young Martin is forced to examine his life during his illness in America and learns from Mark Tapley’s industrious and selfless example. Although this development does not follow “Beauty and the Beast” in particular, it reflects Dickens’s lifelong interest in the possibility of transformation offered by fairy tales in general; “in fairy tales all objects were transformed or transformable. That transforming power, which soon became a part of his own habit and vision...he first found in fairy stories” (Stone 56). True, Dickens’s early writings tend to draw on fairy tales for their dazzling settings and isolation of qualities into separate, exaggerated characters. But these are the surface-level attributes; fairy tales can also “be perfectly adapted to represent the tempos of modernity: its sudden transformations and accelerations” (Malik 491). By the time of *Great Expectations*, Dickens’s

⁵ See Toby Olshin, ““The Yellow Dwarf” and *The Old Curiosity Shop*.” *Nineteenth-Century Fiction* 25 (1970): 96-99.

uses of fairy tales emphasize elements more smoothly transferable to novels: the bewildering experience of childhood and maturation, confrontations with the unfamiliar, and, above all, the constant possibility of transformation. Later in Dickens's career, "the supernatural resonates with the realistic and conveys a more profound and complete realism"; fairy material functions "not as a counterpoint to his realism, but as an inextricable part of it" (Stone 197, Hillard 49). *Great Expectations* is precisely about the danger of seeing people as exaggerated, fairy-tale characters; Pip is finally forced to change his childhood notions about those around him.

This combination of gradual transformation and faulty vision links *Great Expectations* to Madame de Villeneuve's "Beauty and the Beast": their most crucial transformations are not of character essence, but of characters' perceptions of each other. The chief perceiving characters—Beauty, Pip, and Miss Havisham—eventually penetrate external appearances to realize the deeper identities that have been right in front of them. The Beast is a handsome prince. The merchant's daughter is a princess. The father is a foster father. The "bel Inconnu" is the Beast. The Lady in the dream is a fairy—and Beauty's aunt. For Pip, Magwitch seems a worthless criminal but turns out to be the benefactor. Miss Havisham seems insane, and then seems to be Pip's benefactor, but finally turns out to be a self-centered, if heartbroken, manipulator. Estella looks like a perfect fairy-tale heroine but turns out to be a creature bred to feel nothing. Joe looks like a low laborer but turns out to be one of the few genuine gentlemen in Pip's life. Herbert first appears as an adversary but turns out to be Pip's truest friend. Orlick, in a particularly complex case, looks like Pip's strongest enemy and opposite but actually represents the manifestation of Pip's innermost self, although Pip never recognizes this relation. For Miss Havisham, Estella seems a faithful pawn but turns out to despise her. Pip looks like a representative of men and

thus a deserving object for her revenge but turns out to be a fellow suffering human.⁶ Both the fairy tale and the novel end when all deceptive appearances seem to have been cleared away. More importantly, though, Beauty, Pip, and Miss Havisham ultimately learn to admit the possibility that their perceptions can be wrong.

The strongest echo of “Beauty and the Beast” in *Great Expectations*—and in all of Dickens’s novels—is the evolving relationship of Pip and Magwitch. Magwitch, the most obvious Beast figure in the novel, initially seems menacing but turns out to be the generous benefactor. He is revealed not to be blameless but at least to have suffered some injustice. Pip as Beauty “comes to love his Beast when he must try to save the Beast’s life, though in this case it is ‘Beauty’ who is under a spell from which he is released, to be transformed to himself” (Kotzin 66). This “spell” includes Pip’s expectation of enjoying a love story with a perfect Estella, which shatters like all his expectations; in fact he “learns about love...not through Estella, but through the slow change in his relation to Magwitch” (Miller 274). The “slow change” is crucial to this story’s debt to “Beauty and the Beast” in general and Madame de Villeneuve’s version in particular. Although the Beast’s ultimate physical transformation takes little time, most of the fairy tale consists of Beauty’s gradual change in attitude toward the Beast—from fear to acceptance, gratitude, friendship, and finally love. Pip’s feelings toward Magwitch, though not romantic, follow essentially this trajectory.

Like Beauty’s father meeting the Beast, Pip hears Magwitch’s “terrible voice” before he sees him; “terror” pervades his first interaction with the “fearful man” (10). But some of Pip’s fear gives way to sympathy as he watches Magwitch eat: “Pitying his desolation...I made bold to

⁶ The significant exception to this list is Jaggers, who does not change in Miss Havisham’s eyes as far as we know and only changes slightly in Pip’s, from a stolid and frightening lawyer to a stolid but helpful lawyer. Like Chancery in *Bleak House*, Jaggers seems to represent the fixed bureaucratic apparatus of society.

say, ‘I am glad you enjoy it’” (21). Before the end of this opening sequence, Magwitch calls Pip “my boy” and Pip considers Magwitch “my convict” (21, 33). Their opening encounter becomes a true exchange when Magwitch matches Pip’s generosity in giving the extra food by going out of his way to say that he had stolen it himself, thus deflecting suspicion from Pip. These first few chapters sketch “Beauty and the Beast” in miniature. But when the two meet again years later, Pip feels not fear but a much stronger repulsion. While at the initial recognition of the man he still calls “my convict” Pip only “recoiled a little” from him, the revelation that Magwitch is his benefactor shocks all sympathy away: “The abhorrence in which I held the man, the dread I had of him, the repugnance with which I shrank from him, could not have been exceeded if he had been some terrible beast” (241). This scene ends the second “stage” of the novel; Pip spends most of the third learning the histories of Magwitch and Miss Havisham, confronting Miss Havisham, surviving Satis House’s conflagration, and facing Orlick’s attack. The common denominator of these ordeals is a humbling effect on Pip, magnifying the lesson that he is not superior to Magwitch. They also force him to see beyond surface appearances; in taking “my place” by Magwitch and feeling his “repugnance...melted away,” Pip at last “only saw a man who had meant to be my benefactor....I only saw in him a much better man than I had been to Joe” (332). Like Beauty, Pip ultimately ceases to perceive any beastliness. In this “Beauty and the Beast,” romance is displaced onto the Beast’s daughter. Pip’s revelation to Magwitch that his daughter is alive and “I love her” immediately precedes the transformation that is Magwitch’s death—a death apparently more peaceful for the knowledge. In this topical “Beauty and the Beast,” a young person’s fear and repulsion toward an unrefined criminal evolve into sympathy and love for his generosity.

The numerous secret connections surrounding the Pip-Magwitch relationship makes

Villeneuve's uniquely complex "Beauty and the Beast" by far the best version for comparison. In a concluding section of almost the same length as the main narrative, the Beast/Prince and the kind Lady of Beauty's dreams (now revealed as the good fairy who had engineered the events) provide two overlapping backstories rife with secret family relationships and confused identities. First, it turns out that Beauty and the prince are cousins—the social implications of which I will discuss shortly. The Lady also reveals that Beauty is her niece; Beauty's mother was a fairy who had secretly married a mortal. One of the eldest and most vindictive fairies had punished the family by cursing the daughter, Beauty, to marry a monster. The prince, meanwhile, after rejecting the romantic advances of another old and ugly fairy, had found himself changed into a beast and cursed to remain so until a girl fell in love with him despite his appearance. Through an intricate plan, the Lady had seized the opportunity to use these two curses against each other (Villeneuve).

Notoriously, Dickens's characters tend to appear at the perfect time to disclose their integral but thus far hidden role in the story; often, a family relationship had been kept secret and thus remained unknown to subsequent generations. Both Villeneuve's "Beauty and the Beast" and *Great Expectations* have exactly one major coincidence. In the fairy tale, it is chance that two curses have been issued that could be broken with a single event; everything else is the work of the Lady. She refers to the whole story after its resolution as "cette heureuse aventure" (98), which means both "this happy/joyful adventure" and "this fortunate adventure." Similarly, only one true coincidence plays a significant role in *Great Expectations*: the fact of Pip's separate childhood encounters with the intimately connected Magwitch and Miss Havisham. All other apparent coincidences follow from these meetings, through a combination of natural progression and human intervention.

Pip longs to believe that Miss Havisham, like the Lady in “Beauty and the Beast,” has made him the hero of a “plan parfaitement agencé” (“perfectly arranged plan”; Biancardi 1437). Instead, both Miss Havisham and Magwitch clumsily set courses for Pip and Estella based on the desires of their own limited perspectives. No character sees everything. The only mastermind is Dickens, who is routinely associated with elaborate plotting. Indeed, everything about a novel is technically fabricated; “design is intrinsic to the language of storytelling, with its use of a narrative past tense. ‘Once upon a time’ already implies design” (Levine 138). But for Dickens, such plotting merely emphasizes that the world “was so much smaller than we thought it; we were all so connected by fate without knowing it; people supposed to be far apart were so constantly elbowing each other” (Forster, *Vol. 2* 69). Although a Dickens novel has more moving parts than Villeneuve’s fairy tale, he shares this fundamental attitude: “Dans l’univers finaliste de la version villeneuvienne, tout, même le mal, trouve sa place...tout s’éclaire en réalité dans une logique supérieure à l’homme” (“In the teleological universe of Villeneuve, everything, even evil, finds its place...everything is realized in a plan above human logic”; Biancardi 1441). *Great Expectations* chronicles several human beings’ coming to terms with the impossibility of directing their own plans in the face of larger deterministic forces.

Dickens’s teleology was also influenced, as has been thoroughly discussed, by the ideas of Charles Darwin. *Great Expectations* appeared in *All the Year Round* only one year after the publication of *Origin of Species* in 1859, and as early as *Martin Chuzzlewit* (1843) Dickens referred to the possibility of a relationship between human beings and “monkeys” (6). Levine distills the relationship between Dickensian and Darwinian cause-and-effect this way: “while both Dickens and Darwin describe worlds in which chance encounters among the myriad beings who populate them are characteristic, for Dickens chance is a dramatic expression of the value

and ultimate order in nature,” whereas for Darwin the universe is not designed (137). But in both, “what at first looks like agglomeration proves to be analysable connection” (Beer 42). In *Great Expectations* especially, Dickens traces the discovery and consequences of “unexpected” connections; such discoveries change *Oliver Twist*’s circumstances, but they change Pip’s entire worldview. Chance particularly serves Pip “as a hidden motivator of unexpected moral possibilities” (Plotz 41). The conclusion Pip cannot avoid is a contemporary version of the moral of “Beauty and the Beast”: the seemingly stratified Victorian society depends on the interconnection of all its members.

Indeed, Dickens’s humans learn to appreciate their kinship with other animal species; accordingly, *Great Expectations* teems with animal imagery. Not only Magwitch is likened to a “beast” in the novel (33); Pip compares himself to a “dog” (53) and a “wolf, or other wild beast” (75), and Orlick calls Pip “wolf” repeatedly (316-18). More broadly, the novel conspicuously anthropomorphizes animals and likens people to them. Drummle is called “Spider” throughout. Soldiers run after escaped Magwitch “like deer” (33). Molly is a “wild beast tamed” (157).⁷ As the Victorians saw mounting evidence of their kinship with animals, so Pip must accept the beastliness inherent not only in Magwitch but also in Estella and in Pip himself. In both cases, the change in perception is fundamentally the same mental movement that is central to “Beauty and the Beast,” in which Beauty realizes that the Beast’s beastliness does not make him entirely foreign to her. In *Great Expectations*, “as in *Beauty and the Beast*, Pip must accept Magwitch the beast *as* beast. It is the act of loving acceptance...that turns Magwitch’s and thus Pip’s own beastliness into beauty” (Stone 310). Pip’s beastliness (not animality per se, but what we might also call “boorishness”) is his ungracious treatment of Magwitch, and by extension his

⁷ Dickens even anthropomorphizes objects. Herbert battles a stuck door “as if it were a wild beast” (138), and Wemmick’s mouth always looks to Pip like a post-office (136, etc.).

dissociation from Joe. By the time of Magwitch's final capture, Pip's "repugnance to him had all melted away...I only saw a man who had meant to be my benefactor" (332). By abandoning his beastly behavior, Pip dissipates Magwitch's beastly appearance.

As Gillian Beer has pointed out, due to Dickens's Darwinian (or, pre-1859, proto-Darwinian) sensibility, many of his characters "turn out to be related by way either of concealed descent...or of economic dependency" (42). Pip struggles most to accept economic interdependence, so acutely does it conflict with his practice learned at Satis House of evaluating people by the external trappings of their social class. Certainly he is shocked to discover that his life as a gentleman was purchased by money a convict sent from Australia, not bestowed by the English castle-dwelling fairy godmother, Miss Havisham. But his most jarring realization is that the lowly criminal Magwitch literally engendered the elegant Estella. Pip shares with Victorian society at large a "subconscious recognition of a truth which he deeply resents...: that criminality and civilization, violence and refinement, Magwitch and Estella, are not warring opposites but intimately and inextricably bound together" (Gilmour 138). If Estella, the apex of Pip's social dreaming, is the offspring of a convict and a murderer, to what end his aspiration to be a gentleman?

Great Expectations appeared in the midst of a shift in the way "gentleman" was defined. It had long implied both a particular social rank and a habit of polite, chivalrous behavior; Fitzjames Stephens observed in 1862 "a constantly increasing disposition to insist more upon the moral and less upon the social element of the word, and it is not impossible that in the course of time its use may come to be altogether dissociated from any merely conventional distinction" (qtd. in Gilmour 5). Samuel Smiles's *Self-Help*, published the same year as *Great Expectations*, defined the "true gentleman" as any man who is "honest, truthful, upright, polite, temperate,

courageous, self-respecting, and self-helping” (374). Pip fails miserably the ultimate test of the true gentleman: “How does he *exercise power* over those subordinate to him?” (379). For Smiles, gentlemanly qualities have “no necessary connexion” with wealth and status; “the poor man with a rich spirit is in all ways superior to the rich man with a poor spirit” (374). Pip clings to an out-of-date notion of the gentleman as one whose birth and wealth render him superior to and apart from others, rather than one who fosters stronger social connections by courteous behavior.

Villeneuve’s “Beauty and the Beast” tells a surprisingly complex story of negotiation between inner qualities and external possessions and status. First, any triumph of internal over external is fundamentally in sympathy with the story. But even as Beast the hero is wealthy. His luxurious castle and provisions attract Beauty’s father in the first place and then afford Beauty (long before she cares for the Beast himself) the security, leisure, and entertainment she lost in her family’s impoverishment. Clearly the Beast even exceeds the status of gentleman in birth and wealth, but he falls short in behavior. He treats Beauty kindly but is “bête” in the second sense of the term forgotten in many later versions of the tale: “stupid.” When Madame de Villeneuve’s Beast loses his human form, he also loses his ability to speak with any sophistication; Beauty repeatedly cites this lack of wit and eloquence as an impediment to their companionship. The Beast feels the sentiments appropriate to a gentleman but cannot express them. His deeper gentlemanly qualities are revealed with Beauty’s social class also becomes an issue. The prince’s mother, who arrives at the castle along with the Lady after the transformation, protests her royal son’s proposed marriage to a girl of “sang obscure” (“obscure blood”; 92). After the prince interrupts her diatribe to declare that he would rather live as a Beast married to Beauty than as a man married to anyone else, the Lady, herself “dédaigneux et piqué” (“disdainful and annoyed”) in response to the Queen’s snobbery, reveals that Beauty’s pedigree matches the prince’s (94-7).

Somewhat like Perrault's Cinderella, originally the daughter of a "Gentilhomme" (gentleman), Villeneuve's Beauty lives in a story not of rags to riches but of riches to rags and back to riches—a restoration tale, not a rise tale (Perrault 153). Like *Great Expectations*, this version of "Beauty and the Beast" values accepting others for qualities deeper than their social rank, but ultimately the character most directly called upon to do so is the Beast.

The wealth of the Beast and Miss Havisham has bought the most important spaces in both stories: the Beast's castle and Satis House. Both are magical places—the Beast's literally and lavishly, especially in the Villeneuve version, and Miss Havisham's practically, given its overwhelming effect on Pip. In Satis House, Miss Havisham, who has not changed clothes or touched a place setting for twenty-five years, has also stopped the clocks. Pip frequently identifies it as a place impervious to alteration; "so unchanging was the dull old house...that I felt as if the stopping of the clocks had stopped Time in the mysterious place, and while I and everything else outside it grew older, it stood still" (100). By the end of the second Stage, "it is needless to add that there was no change in Satis House" (228). Eventually, though, Pip does come to perceive a change at Satis House: when he enters the grounds after Estella marries Bentley Drummle, "the rooks...seemed to call to me that the place was changed, and that Estella was gone out of it for ever" (295). Yet both of those supposed messages from the rooks are undercut. Estella does return in the published ending. As to the change in the place, Pip goes on to specify only "a new desolation in the desolate house" (297); the house appears the same as ever, only more so. Pip gives no evidence of additional physical decay, and the change in Miss Havisham's manner in this scene comes from the "unwonted tone of sympathy" she begins to use with Pip (296), not from the absence of Estella. Satis House does not really change; it represents stasis or even regression. Although Pip fancies himself "the young Knight of

romance” destined to “restore the desolate house, admit the sunshine into the dark rooms, set the clocks a going and the cold hearths a blazing, tear down the cobwebs...and marry the Princess” (179), he never takes any action to rouse the stagnant house and turn the Princess into his bride; he simply expects to win her. Within the crumbling but stubborn walls of Satis House, just as Miss Havisham buries herself away from the passage of time and Estella learns to relate to people in an inflexible way, Pip also allows himself to be trapped into an idea and a routine from which he does not emerge for a very long time.

Even as Satis House lulls its occupants into a rut, however, it also presides over a vast change in Pip’s life. When he falls in love with a girl who despises everything he currently is, he suddenly feels dissatisfied with himself and aspires to be someone entirely different: a gentleman. Although Miss Havisham turns out not to be Pip’s financial benefactor, it is under her influence that he conceives any desire for the sort of expectations Magwitch offers; but for his time at Satis House he might have refused to leave the forge. At Satis House, he undergoes the mental change that sets the course of his life. There, too, Miss Havisham and Estella change turn into a bitter recluse and a person without emotions. For all three characters, Satis House allows one change that leads to an intransigent pattern. Miss Havisham, though, alters one more time under its roof: she learns to pity Pip and sees that her set course was harmful. Pip and Estella, to the extent that they escape the bonds of Satis House at all, can only do so elsewhere. Pip modifies his system for valuing people when Magwitch returns to him in London, and Estella finally experiences pain after she leaves Satis House and marries the abusive Bentley Drummle.

Satis House, then, as the center both of character transformation and of barely credible stasis, is a key site for the possibility of change. Everything is larger than life at Satis House, including both the resistance to change and the alterations that do occur. The same is true of the

Beast's castle in "Beauty and the Beast"; like Miss Havisham, the Beast lives alone in his Gothic edifice for years, expecting no alteration in his circumstances. Ironically, in teaching Miss Havisham sympathy, Pip does effect a revolution in Satis House, though not the chivalric rescue of Estella he had planned. This change in Miss Havisham is every bit as dramatic as the physical transformation of the Beast. The process seems easier in "Beauty and the Beast," partly because the Beast, unlike Miss Havisham, actually desires change, and partly because even the unchanging state of the Beast's castle is more variable than that of Satis House. For example, the castle is stuck in a single season, but the season is spring. During Beauty's stay at the castle, she finds "en ses fenêtres des sources intarissables de nouveaux amusements" ("in her windows inexhaustible sources of new amusements"; Villeneuve 62) including opera, theater, even a proto-newsreel. Miss Havisham, by contrast, surely would not permit magical zephyrs like the Beast's to clear the cobwebs from her house, even if they appeared.

In particular, the Beast's castle facilitates flexible perception far more than Satis House does. Beauty encounters alternative means of vision there, particularly through the dreams that frequently visit her in Villeneuve's version. Dreams demonstrate the possibility of change, showing Beauty many things before she encounters them in waking life—including both the Lady and the original physical form of the prince (the *bel Inconnu*). Since these dreams take place in parts of the castle and grounds that she has not yet seen but recognizes later when she finds herself there, dreams turn out not merely to reflect reality, but to precede it. Later, a dream shows Beauty the Beast's suffering in her absence, making her understand that she loves him and wishes to return. Dreams function as a kind of sight not possible (or not yet possible) in real life. In realizing the connection between this dream-sight and the waking world around her—between the "*bel Inconnu*" and the Beast, between what she perceives in dreams and what she does in

reality—Beauty discovers a happy ending.

Great Expectations does have a counterpart to Beauty's dreams: Pip's two visions of Miss Havisham hanging from a beam in the brewery (54-5, 299). These visions, too, show Pip a deeper truth before he understands it in waking life; this "truth" might be a presentiment that Miss Havisham will be hurt and die or the impending symbolic destruction of her image in Pip's mind. The fantasy "both projects and disguises the boy's desire to punish his employer and to destroy her baleful power over him" (Moynahan 141); the value of imaginative vision is precisely that it can simultaneously "project and disguise" a fact he cannot yet accept in a starker form. Like Beauty, Pip takes most of the story to discover the relationship between such visions and his real life, if he discovers it at all; as Stone says, "Pip's errors of vision...are at the core of the fable" (311). A much graver "error of vision" than the illusion of hanging is the mental image Pip forms in Satis House of Miss Havisham as "fairy godmother" (122, 123) and Estella as princess-bride destined to be his. This fantasy actually distorts Pip's vision, instead of leading him below the surface to a deeper truth. Whereas Beauty's perception is most flexible inside the Beast's castle, Pip in Satis House falls under an enchantment that blinds him to everything else. Pip and Beauty demonstrate, respectively, the dangers and benefits of imaginative vision.

Which is not to say that Dickens used *Great Expectations* as a forum for warning against imagination. His oft-quoted essay "Frauds on the Fairies" had appeared only a few years before in *Household Words*, asserting that "it is a matter of grave importance that Fairy tales should be respected" (Dickens, "Frauds"). This essay is only one indication out of many that Dickens fervently believed in the powers of fantasy throughout his life. To name a few: he wrote from the beginning that fairy tales had saved him from despair as a child (see *David Copperfield* and "A Christmas Tree"), the entirety of *Hard Times* (1854) hinges on the value of fantasy, and his

personal and professional letters abound in allusions to *The Arabian Nights* through the last decade of his life. Every novel he published alludes at least once to fairy tales. The challenge for Dickens as a novelist—and for Pip as a character—is to make productive use of fairy tales. As Stone has documented, Dickens worked throughout his career to integrate fantasy and reality in artistic and plausible ways; by *Great Expectations*, his habitual fairy-tale elements “have been transmuted into a subtle, endlessly ramifying fable that concentrates reality and deepens our apprehension of life” (Stone 337). While we could identify other specific fairy-tale cognates to *Great Expectations*, as others have productively done, the novel is more fundamentally about the very practice of understanding life in terms of stories.⁸

The predominant lesson *Great Expectations* teaches its hero about this practice seems to have been lost on many critics: fairy tales do not exist independently of the rest of the world. Critics habitually characterize Pip’s maturation as a movement from belief in fairy tales (the realm of Miss Havisham) to realization that the “real world” is not a fairy tale (the realm of Magwitch). Brooks terms this process Pip’s “eventual ‘cure’ from plot”; Leavis warns us not to repeat Pip’s error and “reduce” the novel to a fairy-tale plot; and Moynahan claims that “upon the return of Magwitch, Pip is forced to wake up and recognise that life is not, after all, a fairy tale” (Brooks 114; Leavis, “How” 278; Moynahan 134). But this model sets up a false demarcation between fairy tales and the real world. Pip reacts to Satis House not by barricading himself there to dream of fairy tales but by pursuing a worldly goal: becoming a gentleman. As Gilmour observes, critics tend to “ignor[e] the fact that Pip’s desire to become a gentleman is ‘real’ too” (119). From Miss Havisham and Estella he learns material aspiration as well as

⁸ Kotzin likens *Great Expectations* to two little-known fairy tales called “The Little Red Hairy Man” and “The Donkey Cabbages” (65), and Meckier draws out the novel’s similarity to the “Eastern story” Dickens mentions (*Great* 235), called “The Enchanters; or, Misnar the Sultan of India” (Meckier).

plotting. From Magwitch, meanwhile, he both learns harsh facts about the world's workings and witnesses the seemingly magical transformative properties of love. Furthermore, Magwitch's first appearance in his life is no less surreal than Miss Havisham's: Magwitch's "terrible voice" comes out of nowhere, then he suddenly rises "from among the graves," and for much of their subsequent conversation Pip is upside down, seeing things such as "the church jump[ing] over its own weather-cock" (10-11). Magwitch's parting threat—that Pip's "heart and...liver shall be tore out, roasted, and ate" by the invisible "young man" who has "a secret way pecooliar to himself of getting at a boy, and at his heart, and at his liver"—features the grotesque villainy and linguistic repetition common to fairy tales (11). Finally, Magwitch spins plots as eagerly as Pip or Miss Havisham. As Magwitch's and Miss Havisham's histories intertwine, so do their influences on Pip.

Like Beauty at the beginning of "Beauty and the Beast," Pip believes for years in the existence of opposites. He is eventually forced to reconcile the fantastical realm of Miss Havisham with the grim reality of Magwitch, for as Ginsburg points out,

[Pip] cannot interpret [Miss Havisham] according to the laws which govern his own world....the world of Satis House is a world where the impossible can happen....Pip's misinterpretation can be seen as a representation of the heart's desire to escape from the world of reality...into the world of pure imagination and fantasy..., a desire which is crushed by the inevitable discovery that such an escape is impossible...the world of Satis House is controlled by the same laws and powers as the world outside it. ("Dickens" 116)

In other words, Pip must learn that there is no realm of fantasy entirely separate from reality. The realm of Miss Havisham does not offer an escape from that of Magwitch; complex preexisting

forces have long bound the two together. In fact, Miss Havisham and Magwitch “are clear mirror-images”; they share “a mutual enemy, Compeyson,” “Magwitch [is] the father of Miss Havisham’s adopted daughter,” and both, like Pip, “have ‘great expectations’” (Daleski 238). These three people could hardly appear more different from one another, but they turn out, in “Beauty and the Beast” fashion, to represent closely linked variations on a single theme.

Moreover, Pip initially believes he can change his life by casting himself and his acquaintances in fixed roles in the story of his choosing. But the problem is not that he sees his life in terms of fantasy. The problem is that he misses the point of fantasy by using it so rigidly. Beauty’s perceptions in dreams and imagination lead her to increasingly flexible and sympathetic ways of relating to the world. “Beauty and the Beast” hinges on the realization that dichotomies between good and evil, refined and uncouth, real and imagined are unproductive because they close off the possibility for growth. Learning to see more clearly does not simply mean replacing the old view with a new one; it means learning that because vision is always susceptible to error, the method of perception itself needs to be tractable. Pip, however, does not fully grasp this lesson. His various references to the mists and fogs of deceptive appearances—not to mention his despairing “yet it looked so like it” upon discovering that Miss Havisham destined no union for Pip and Estella—make it difficult to accept his final “I saw no shadow of another parting from her” or “I saw the shadow of no parting from her” as a simple happy ending (251, 358). Pip has little skill in interpreting the evidence of his eyes. Hence the crucial distinction between Pip and Beauty: whereas Beauty both appreciates her own affinity with the Beast and reconciles the Beast and the *bel Inconnu*, Pip fails to apply his newly-learned way of seeing to his own relationship to the seemingly evil Orlick.

As I will discuss further in the next chapter, *Doppelgänger*s may be physical lookalikes,

two characters with internal similarities, or separate aspects of one character. Villeneuve's doubles manifest the initial division between the Beast's tangible form and his captive spirit, only allowed to express itself in the world of dreams. Throughout most of the story, the "bel Inconnu" exists solely in Beauty's mind's eye, as the concept of a lovable Beast is one that she must imagine for herself. Although Beauty has no trouble feeling increasingly "familière" (63) with the Beast over time, Villeneuve does not present the shift to romantic love as natural or easy. Beauty does feel romantic love for the bel Inconnu, which she of course sees as an obstacle to love for the Beast before learning they are the same. During her visit home toward the end of the story, she discusses the dilemma with her father, who (surprisingly wisely for a fairy-tale parent) takes seriously her repeated references to the Beast's kindness and reminds her that an ugly but amiable husband is far preferable to one who offers nothing but good looks. My translation of the following two paragraphs follows:

Belle accepted all these reasons. But resolving to take for her husband a monster horrible of face, and whose wit was as low as his body—the thing did not seem possible to her. "How," she responded to her father, "could I decide to choose a husband I cannot converse with, and whose face will not be improved by an amusing conversation? Nothing to distract me and divert me from this horrible exchange. Never to have the relief of occasional distance from it. All my pleasure limited to five or six questions about my appetite and my health; to finish this bizarre interview with a "goodnight, Belle" a refrain my parrots know by heart and repeat a hundred times a day. It is not in my power to set up such an establishment, and I would rather die this instant than die every day of fear, and sadness, and disgust, and boredom. Nothing speaks in his favor, except the

attention that this Beast has to make me a courtly visit, and not to present himself before me more than every twenty-four hours. Is that enough to inspire love?

The father allowed that his daughter was right. But seeing in the Beast so much geniality, he did not think him so very stupid. The order, abundance, and good taste that held sway in his castle were not, to him, the work of an imbecile. In the end, he found him worthy of the attention of his daughter; and Belle was aware of some liking for this monster, but her nocturnal lover was an obstacle. The comparison she made between the two lovers could not be advantageous to the Beast. The old man was not unaware himself of the great difference that could be seen between the one and the other. Still, he tried all sorts of methods to conquer her repugnance. He reminded her of the advice of the Lady, who had warned her not to let herself be put off by sight, and who seemed to want to make her understand that this young man could not make her happy. (73-4)

First, the few words Beauty spends on the Beast's ugliness relative to those on his lack of eloquence demonstrate that she is already closer to accepting the Beast than many young women would be. But Villeneuve's Beauty has a harder task than most of her successors in other versions because the Beast appears to have a viable rival.⁹ Beauty's father, though, apparently values the Beast's amiable nature over his wealth and over the bel Inconnu's attractiveness. Soon after this conversation, the Beast and the bel Inconnu seem roughly equal in Beauty's mind, each by turns "le sujet de ses rêveries" ("the subject of her dreams"; 81). Her feelings toward the bel

⁹ To my knowledge, Jean Cocteau's 1946 film version of *La Belle et la bête* was the first to introduce an actual rival; several others have done so since then. None of these versions encourages any sympathy for the rival, usually opposite of the Beast in being handsome and unkind. Cocteau's version follows the spirit of Villeneuve's most closely because, in a finale that has made generations of viewers uncomfortable, the transformed Beast/Prince looks exactly like the unkind rival. This is never explained but visibly surprises Beauty.

Inconnu do not weaken, but her awareness of those toward the Beast increases: “ce qui lui paraissait extraordinaire, c’était de se trouver tant de sensibilité pour ce monstre” (“what seemed to her extraordinary was to find in herself so much tenderness toward this monster”; 83). Taking notice of feelings already present but unarticulated also motivates the statement she makes just before agreeing to marry him: “j’ignorais à quel point je vous aimais: la peur de vous perdre m’a fait connaître que j’étais attachée à vous par des liens plus forts que ceux de la reconnaissance” (“I did not realize how much I loved you; the fear of losing you has made me understand that I am attached to you by stronger ties than those of gratitude”; 84). Beauty does not figure out on her own that the bel Inconnu is the Beast; she is “agréablement surprise” when the physical transformation explains why the Lady had said she could love them both: “les deux n’étaient qu’un” (“the two were but one”; 89). Nevertheless, Beauty earns a happy ending because in agreeing to marry the Beast before the transformation, she chooses not to take into account the defects that the revelation of his unity with the bel Inconnu will remove. Villeneuve uses doubles to offer Beauty a choice between internal and external attributes. In the moral economy of this fairy tale, making interpersonal decisions based on qualities that cannot be seen yields rewards.

Dickens envisions the same moral economy for *Great Expectations*, with the caveat that learning the lesson too late diminishes the rewards. While Pip gradually perceives the beauty in Joe, Magwitch, and Biddy, he warms to Magwitch too late to enjoy much time with him and notices Biddy too late to marry her. His gravest error, though, is failing to perceive himself accurately. Many critics have explored the novel’s various doublings of Pip, pointing frequently to Herbert Pocket as a good double and to Orlick and Bentley Drummle as evil twins. It is a critical commonplace, deservedly, that Dickens explores traits in pairs of people rather than multifaceted single people; he “habitually examined alternatives” (Leavis, “How” 281). But the

process of comparing people to study human characteristics matters exceptionally to *Great Expectations*, a novel of (self-)fashioning. As the protagonist of a *Bildungsroman*, Pip consciously models himself on those around him. He lives with Herbert expressly in order to learn gentlemanly behavior by his example. As Wentersdorf points out, Pip “stands midway between” kindhearted Herbert and the brutal, vindictive Orlick (210). But although Pip diligently emulates Herbert, he never sees his affinity with Orlick.

Moynahan observes that Orlick seems to “present a parody of Pip’s upward progress”: both invent their first names, work at the forge, play some role in the attack on Mrs. Joe, and work for Miss Havisham, and Orlick joins forces with Compeyson after Pip allies himself with Magwitch (131). Although only Orlick inflicts physical violence on others, he attacks those Pip secretly deems worthy of punishment: Mrs. Joe, Pumblechook, and Pip himself. Drummle fulfills the same function once, by mistreating Estella. Since all the assaults of Orlick and Drummle hurt those who have hurt Pip, the conclusion that they are enacting his secret or unacknowledged desires through narrative displacement is unavoidable. For the reader, that is—not for Pip, who despite his frequent meditations on his errors never suggests that Orlick’s onslaught of accusations at the limepit has any validity. Yet Orlick is clearly “a monstrous caricature of the tender-minded hero, insisting that they are two of a kind with the same ends, pursued through similarly predatory and criminal means” (Moynahan 133). Although Orlick’s accusations are not technically justified—there is a difference between fantasizing about violence and committing it—he persuasively insists that he and Pip are not nearly as different below the surface as they appear. This contention is entirely in keeping with “Beauty and the Beast”: if Pip were a true Beauty figure, he would eventually recognize his kinship with both Magwitch and Orlick. Instead, he persists in viewing Orlick as a foreign creature. Here Pip and Beauty differ crucially:

both are given help to see an underlying affinity that they could not discover on their own, but only Beauty adjusts her perception accordingly. Pip, of course, has a more difficult task because the hint comes from Orlick, a less trustworthy character than the Lady, and because the revelation is unflattering to him. Nonetheless, Pip has not seen all; he sees “no shadow of another parting” from Estella, but he also does not see a likeness to Orlick the reader knows is there.

The comparison to “Beauty and the Beast,” then, informs Dickens’s ambiguous ending as well as the overall story of Pip’s mid-Victorian confrontation with an increasingly interconnected world. This fairy tale’s emphasis on the need to cultivate the skill of perception makes it an important intertext for Dickens’s novel about a man who never learns to see through the mist. Juxtaposing *Great Expectations* with “Beauty and the Beast” is useful because while they are similar to a great extent and in several important ways, as I have delineated, ultimately Pip fails to match Beauty’s mastery of the lesson about perceiving underlying connections. Pip develops a fairy-tale dream without cultivating a fairy-tale way of thinking—in other words, a single plot bereft of the wonder and flexibility that fairy tales of transformation like “Beauty and the Beast” promote.

Chapter Two

One Flesh: Violence and Victorian Bluebeards

We move now to the dark cousin of “Beauty and the Beast”: “Bluebeard.” Whereas “Beauty and the Beast” stories require their protagonists to transcend external differences with a seemingly menacing figure in order to find a fundamental kinship, “Bluebeard” stories require theirs to delineate the boundaries between the self and the other, identify the other as a genuine threat, and escape. Even though somber realist Anne Brontë did not share Charles Dickens’s interest in using fairy tales, there is just as much affinity between *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall* and “Bluebeard” as between *Great Expectations* and “Beauty and the Beast.” Brontë does not refer in *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall* (1848) to any fairy tale, even in passing (something that can be said of few Victorian novels). But Brontë’s Helen Huntingdon, like Bluebeard’s wife, struggles more than one might expect to identify her husband as a villain and differentiate herself both from him and from his previous amours. *Wildfell Hall* matters to a discussion of the role of fairy tales in Victorian novels precisely because it can easily be read as a revised and extended version of “Bluebeard” despite Brontë’s lack of explicit interest in fairy tales. Fairy tales tend to permeate these novels whether the authors intend them to or not.

“Bluebeard” also underpins two novels that literalize Helen’s problem of defining and protecting herself as an individual: Robert Louis Stevenson’s *Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* (1886) and Oscar Wilde’s *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1890). Despite sharing “Bluebeard”’s thematic concerns of secrecy and violence, these Doppelgänger novels are virtually never read in conjunction with the tale, likely because they are not about marriage. Instead, they escalate the conflict by placing the monstrous other inside the human self. My reading of the Doppelgänger narrative is informed by the anthropological and literary theories of

René Girard, who argues that demarcating self and other via the substitution process of ritual sacrifice (scapegoating) is integral to the very foundation of human society. For Girard, not only the actual killing but the sacrificial substitution itself is “violence” in the sense of violation or infringement of the boundaries of selfhood. Girard’s contention that seeming opposites are often fundamentally interchangeable—and that people are often willfully blind to their true relationships to others—both clarifies the mechanics of Doppelgänger tales and illuminates Helen and Bluebeard’s wife’s problem of situating themselves with respect to the errant men with whom they are “one flesh.” Although this issue of distinction underlies many works of literature, I have chosen *Wildfell Hall*, *Strange Case*, and *Dorian Gray* partly because their substantial debts to “Bluebeard” have not been discussed. Juxtaposing Brontë’s work with that of Stevenson and Wilde, which has almost never been done, demonstrates the influence of “Bluebeard” across genres—indeed, across novels about as different as Victorian novels can be.

“Bluebeard”

“Bluebeard” began with Charles Perrault’s “La Barbe-Bleue,” published in 1697 in *Histoires ou contes du temps passé*. This Perrault tale, unusually, has no clear predecessors. Although real-life maréchal Gilles de Rais is now commonly associated with Bluebeard thanks to the atrocities he committed in his castle in the fifteenth century, he serially murdered children, not wives. The English folktale “Mr. Fox” (referenced in both *The Faerie Queene* and *Much Ado About Nothing*) centers on a murderous suitor, but the plot differs considerably from that of “Bluebeard.” Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm’s “Fitcher’s Bird” and “The Robber Bridegroom” are often mentioned in discussions of the “Bluebeard” family, but only the former bears any substantial similarity to Perrault. Even “Fitcher’s Bird,” though, probably post-dates “Bluebeard.”

Perrault's tale was extremely popular in England; after the first English translation by Robert Samber in 1729, it "almost immediately broke out and headlined chapbooks on its own, or sometimes with one other tale" (Hermansson 37). Throughout the 18th and 19th centuries, "Bluebeard" inspired pantomimes and other theatrical performances, including the successful *Blue Beard, or Female Curiosity!* (1798) by George Colman and Michael Kelly. Dickens discusses in *The Uncommercial Traveler* the version of the story he encountered as a child, "Captain Murderer." Thanks to the ubiquity of "Bluebeard" in Victorian Britain, it is explicitly mentioned in many novels from the period. Bluebeard-like (i.e., dangerous and grotesque) villains abound in Victorian fiction—Quilp in *The Old Curiosity Shop*, Svengali in *Trilby*, briefly Eustace Macallan in *The Law and the Lady* (until he is exonerated), and of course Dracula, to name a few.

"Bluebeard" also seeped into nineteenth-century storytelling in subtler ways. For Tatar, the tale's harmony with Gothic literature facilitated this incursion: "'Bluebeard' entered literary culture in the aftermath of the Gothic vogue, shaping marriage plots in novels ranging from Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* through Daphne du Maurier's *Rebecca* to the latest Harlequin Romance" (8). Indeed, "Bluebeard" can be seen as an extreme example of the common Gothic story of a heroine's entrapment with a dangerous, powerful man. Tatar then treats "Bluebeard" even more broadly as a story about secrets. This fairy tale hinges on the truism that hidden or forbidden knowledge is the most alluring. No one knew better than the Victorians how useful and disastrous secrets could be. Victorian novels are obsessed with their characters' secrets: *Lady Audley's Secret*; *Bleak House* (which might as well be entitled *Lady Dedlock's Secret*); *Middlemarch*, given what comes to light about Mr. Bulstrode; *Jane Eyre* and *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*, as I will discuss later in this dissertation; most novels by Dickens and Wilkie

Collins, both of whom frequently structured plots around the revelation of secret relationships among characters. Among these, fairy-tale secrets naturally find a place.

In Perrault's tale, a young girl marries an older man who possesses great riches but sports an alarmingly blue beard. Soon after their marriage, Bluebeard tells her that he must leave for a time, handing her his ring of keys and declaring the entire house at her disposal, save one chamber. If she enters that chamber, he says while pointing out the key that unlocks it, she will suffer dire consequences. Naturally, she enters the chamber as soon as he leaves, and there she discovers the mutilated bodies of several previous wives. In her shock, she drops the key in a pool of blood and finds to her dismay that she cannot wipe it clean—for it is a magic key. The husband returns, sees the bloody key, and prepares to kill her. Fortunately, her brothers appear just in time to rescue her and kill Bluebeard. Liberated and wealthy, the heroine provides for her brothers and sister and marries herself to a rather nicer man than her first husband.

“Bluebeard” is a strange fairy tale. The usual fairy-tale *dramatis personae* is askew, for one thing: the title character begins as the husband of the heroine but turns out to be the villain. The story commences with a marriage instead of leading toward one (although there is a modest recuperation of marriage when the heroine weds a second time). Almost all the action takes place within the confines of Bluebeard's house; the only journey is the one he takes as a pretext. Pinpointing the moral is difficult; Perrault's tongue-in-cheek “*moralités*” are not intended as moral lessons at all, and the heroine ultimately marries a man who “*lui fit oublier le mauvais temps qu'elle avait passé avec la Barbe-bleue*” (“made her forget the terrible time she spent with Bluebeard”; Perrault 135). If she forgets, she cannot gain any wisdom from the experience. “Bluebeard” offers no equivalent to the Grimm Little Red Riding Hood's concluding reflection that she has learned to listen to her elders and stay on the path, or Beauty's being rewarded for

prioritizing inner over outer beauty in “Beauty and the Beast.” Instead, perhaps the best clue to a moral of “Bluebeard” is the correspondence between Bluebeard’s behavior and inner qualities and his threatening appearance. Supposedly, his blue beard “le rendait si laid & si terrible, qu’il n’était ni femme ni fille qui ne s’enfuit de devant luy” (“made him so ugly and so terrifying that there was not a single woman or girl who did not flee from him”; Perrault 125). Not a single woman or girl, that is, except the many who have already married him, like the wife in the story, for his riches. She reflects after enjoying his lavish festivities that perhaps he “n’avait plus la barbe si bleue” (“did not have such a very blue beard after all”; Perrault 126). Like the debonair manners of the wolf in Perrault’s “Little Red Riding Hood,” Bluebeard’s civilized accoutrements deflect attention from both his menacing-looking body and his beastly impulses long enough to entrap women.

Yet Bluebeard’s secret is just shy of open. Everyone in the neighborhood knows that Bluebeard has married several times and that those wives are unaccounted for. Moreover, the elaborate ritual of giving the new wife the key, pointing out the chamber, and going on a journey indicates that the serial marriages are designed as much to exhibit the corpses as to add a new one. Perrault offers no indication that Bluebeard is surprised or even particularly angry to come home to a bloody key; he is described as having a hard heart, and he firmly tells his wife that she must die, but he does not raise his voice until she exceeds the fifteen minutes allotted to her to say her prayers. He shakes the house with his yells only out of impatience for the ritual to be complete. Revealing the secret of his past murders to his present wife under the aspect of forbidden knowledge is an integral part of his operation.

The complement to secrecy (erecting barriers) is violence (penetrating barriers). “Bluebeard”’s violence stands out even among traditional fairy tales, which were frequently

brutal and gory. For such a short story (less than 2,000 words), Perrault provides a substantial amount of graphic detail. The wife, upon opening the door, at first sees nothing in the dark, then realizes that the floor is covered in blood, and finally sees mirrored in that blood the corpses of women hung all over the walls. Violence is so unremarkable in this story that the subsequent explanation, “C’était toutes les femmes que la Barbe-bleuë avait épousées et qu’il avait égorgées l’une après l’autre” (“It was all the women whom Bluebeard had married and whose throats he had slit one by one”) is relegated to parentheses (Perrault 129). The castle itself seems unstable; when Bluebeard shouts, “toute la maison en trembla” (“the whole house shook with it”; Perrault 133).

As far as she knows, Bluebeard’s last wife commits an act of violence against her husband’s privacy in opening the forbidden door. Tatar ventures that she “risks becoming twin monster to her husband” (56). One might dispute the equivalence implied in “twin,” but there remains a noteworthy parallelism; violence begets more violence. Girard has argued in *Violence and the Sacred* (1972) that violence is “eminently communicable,” so much so that eventually in any society “the community members are transformed into ‘twins,’ matching images of violence. I would be tempted to say that they are each *doubles* of the other” (30, 79). For Girard, no violent act exists independently: violence always occurs in cycles. Furthermore, violence in general is always more powerful than individual perpetrators and victims: “violence...tends to fasten upon surrogate objects if the object to which it was originally attracted remains inaccessible; it willingly accepts substitutes” (35). By the end of “Bluebeard,” the crisis comes to such a head that someone is surely going to die—as it turns out, Bluebeard, instead of his wife. Substitution is crucial for Girard: he maintains that ritual sacrifice permits society to commit violence without the threat of revenge by offering a scapegoat to stand in for whomever community members

would like to kill. This process necessarily de-emphasizes the individuality of that scapegoat, who must be a representative for many. Such a diminishing of the sovereignty of the self *is* violence, violence of the borders of self, every bit as much as the stroke of a sword is. This is the kind of violation Bluebeard's wife risks, in addition to the threat of a physically violent death: she risks losing her individuality and becoming simply one of Bluebeard's long line of murdered wives.¹⁰

While "Bluebeard" is extreme, marriage to wealthy men can be dangerous outside the confines of magical stories. In Perrault's day, arranged marriages to strangers and death in childbirth were so common that any young woman's marriage could seem as frightening as marriage to Bluebeard.¹¹ Much previous criticism of "Bluebeard" has focused on the Perrault version in this immediate historical context. But even though the fairy tale comments on a historically specific problem, it also provides "a metaphorical enactment of the issues that arise in marriages between men with a past and young women without much life experience...[For the current wife] the wives in the closet are the women who played a powerful role in her husband's past and who, additionally, have a real physical presence in the day-to-day routines of her own life" (Tatar 66). Critics should be more willing than most have been to consider the metaphorical possibilities of "Bluebeard"; most simply take Perrault at his word (a dangerous thing to do) that the story is about female sexual curiosity, deem it sexist, and move on to another fairy tale. But if we can loosen our sociohistorical grip, we can see more general concerns at work in "Bluebeard" and thus consider the possibility of its influence on any story of marriage, not only ones with closets full of corpses.

¹⁰ See Chapter Three for a discussion of this concept in *Jane Eyre*.

¹¹ See Jack Zipes, *Fairy Tale as Myth / Myth as Fairy Tale* and *Fairy Tales and the Art of Subversion* for the relevance of arranged marriage to the early, seventeenth-century versions of "La Belle et la bête" and "Riquet à la Houppe," respectively.

Realist “Bluebeard”: *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall*

Primarily because of the troubled marriage plot at its center, *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall* is a fairly straightforward development of the central idea of “Bluebeard.” Helen Huntingdon shares the predicament of Bluebeard’s wife: she, too, naïvely marries a man whose past becomes her primary problem in the present. No one has written about fairy-tale influences in *Wildfell Hall*—not even the critics who discuss those in *Jane Eyre*.¹² Much criticism on the novel perpetuates Anne Brontë’s subordination to the rest of her family; many articles enter the debate over whether she modeled Arthur Huntingdon after brother Branwell, and many others claim *Wildfell Hall* as a deliberate response to *Jane Eyre* and/or *Wuthering Heights*. Solid evidence supports these arguments. But because the vast majority of Anne Brontë’s personal writings have vanished, we can only speculate about much of this. Beyond doubt, she wanted to portray realistically the evils of substance abuse and the inordinate power men held in marriage regardless of their behavior.

Critics arguing that *Wildfell Hall* responds to *Jane Eyre* or *Wuthering Heights* consistently point out several things. Parallels with *Wuthering Heights* are the most obvious: like Emily’s novel, Anne’s is named after one of its central locations (initials W.H.), features an abusive central male figure, and teems with male characters whose names begin with H. Although the first two elements apply to many novels, the profusion of H-names is unlikely to be a coincidence. As for *Jane Eyre*, critics compare the checkered pasts of Huntingdon and Rochester, as well as the heroines’ flights from and returns to these men. Chitham notes that Helen’s false friend Hargrave “produces arguments suggesting that Helen should go live with him that seem to satirize Rochester’s pleas to Jane Eyre” (149). Although the lack of direct

¹² See Chapter Three for a discussion of the *Jane Eyre* fairy-tale criticism.

evidence prevents me from concurring with Langland and others that much of Anne's writing was chiefly a critique of her sisters' perspectives, it seems reasonable that "in Anne's eyes, the very attractiveness of Rochester and Heathcliff adds a pernicious element to the novels.... Her own anti-heroes would be made to seem unattractive, and thus leave the reader unmoved by vice" (Chitham 149). Certainly the Brontë sisters worked closely enough with each other that they pondered each other's portrayal of complicated men,¹³ and certainly Anne Brontë wanted her readers to deplore "vice." In addition to her sorrow over Branwell's fatally dissipated lifestyle, she may have found incentive working as a governess for the unscrupulous and in her eyes immoral Robinson family (who are considered the inspiration for *Agnes Grey*).

Ultimately it is difficult to say, given how little of Brontë's writing remains. Biographer Chitham gives this account: "We have five of her letters, though we know she wrote hundreds. She may have kept a journal or diary, but if so, it has not survived. Two of her 'journal papers'... have been printed, but the manuscripts have been lost.... None of her juvenilia has survived: her earliest known poem dates from 1836, when Anne was sixteen, though all the Brontës wrote from a very young age" (5). Still, the dearth of primary sources helpfully discourages excessive biographical speculation. Brontë did leave a straightforward authorial preface to the second edition of *Wildfell Hall*. "My object in writing the following pages," she writes, is "to tell the truth, for truth always conveys its own moral to those who are able to receive it" (3). Using the familiar language of nineteenth-century realism, she continues, "when we have to do with vice and vicious characters, I maintain it is better to depict them as they really are than as they would wish to appear," and "when I feel it my duty to speak an unpalatable truth, with the help of God I *will* speak it" (4, 5). Charlotte Brontë used much of the

¹³ See, in Chapter Three, Charlotte's discussion in a letter comparing Rochester, Huntingdon, and Heathcliff.

same language about speaking truth, despite some critics' attempt to portray her as the fantasist of the two. But Anne goes further: she insists that she does not consider herself "competent to reform the errors and abuses of society, but only that I would fain contribute my humble quota towards so good an aim" (3). If we take her at her word, there we have the purpose of *Wildfell Hall*. And it seems more likely that someone as devout as Anne would be primarily interested in helping to reform society, rather than merely in firing back at her sisters.

The novel's potential to spur societal reform did not strike most contemporary reviewers, who, unsurprisingly, focused on the story's shock value instead. The word "coarse" appears in at least four reviews from 1848 and 1849, twice paired with "brutal." Many who believed Currer, Ellis, and Acton Bell were the same person saw *Wildfell Hall* as an additional offense by the uncouth mind that had produced *Jane Eyre* and *Wuthering Heights*. But a few saw value in it despite their objections. Charles Kingsley, writing in *Fraser's*, also uses the word "coarse" but defends the author against previous attacks and praises her "courage" in recording such "awful facts" (Kingsley 454). For Kingsley, "taking this book as a satire, and an exposure of evils, still all unnecessary coarseness is a defect,--a defect which injures the real usefulness and real worth of the book" (455). He advises the author to do differently next time but appreciates the exposé of "what the house of a profligate...is like" (454). The review in *Literary World* similarly finds the book shocking but useful: "the *reality* of these writings makes them seize upon the public mind" (Anonymous, "Review" 257).

Representing prosaic, unpolished reality was crucial to Brontë, who all but borrowed Dickens's defiant "IT IS TRUE" from the preface to *Oliver Twist*. *Wildfell Hall* begins with familiar markers of a realist novel: a specific time ("autumn of 1827") and the noncommittal setting of "--shire." Already we are not in the world of "once upon a time," as the rest of the

novel confirms. While many fairy tales (and *Bildungsromane*) follow a rags-to-riches pattern, Helen possesses riches from beginning to end, suffers at the hands of wealthy men, and finally marries a man who contributes nothing financially. Although the novel does end with marriage, the heroine's first marriage happens quietly and offstage. Langland contrasts *Wildfell Hall* with *Jane Eyre* and "fairy tale romance" by pointing out that Helen's development continues after she marries (52).

Correspondingly, Brontë makes remarkably few references to the supernatural for a nineteenth-century novelist. The religious supernatural appears occasionally—the word "demon" appears once, "fiend" and "witch" twice each (419, 106, 109, 14, 183). Like characters in many Victorian novels, two of Brontë's are "spellbound" and "disenchanted" (251, 322). Gilbert Markham uses the novel's only extensive supernatural imagery describing his first approach to Wildfell Hall:

the gigantic warrior that stood on one side of the gateway, and the lion that guarded the other, were sprouted into such fantastic shapes as resembled nothing either in heaven or earth...but to my young imagination, they presented all of them a goblinish appearance, that harmonized well with the ghostly legends and dark traditions our old nurse had told us respecting the haunted hall and its departed occupants. (23)

Wildfell Hall looks like a Gothic mansion, as its name suggests. But in fact it is Helen's safe haven from the true place of danger, the ordinary and innocuously named Grassdale. Brontë's sole portrayal of an otherworldly atmosphere is deliberately misleading.

Whether she liked them or not, Brontë was as aware of fairy tales as her brother and sisters. The only reference to fairies in Anne's surviving poems occurs in "The Bluebell," dated

1840, which compares bluebells to fairy gifts (Brontë, *Poems* 74). But the Brontës' childhood bookshelves included *Aesop's Fables* and *The Arabian Nights* (Gérin, *Anne Brontë* 71). Anne, too, heard beloved family servant Tabitha Aykroyd's stories from local fairy lore and participated in the group construction of the fantasy worlds of Angria and Gondal. In February 1833, one of the literary magazines the Brontës read, *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine*, included an 18-page review of Ludwig Tieck's theatrical version of "Bluebeard," complete with several pages of excerpts from the play. The reviewer provides the tale's background, interprets it, and compares Tieck's version to others ("Tieck's Bluebeard" 207). Anne may not have shared her sisters' love of fairy tales, but it is hard to imagine her, at nearly thirteen, skipping this scholarly review. Even though Anne's adult writing carries few explicit traces of them, the fantastical stories she encountered and composed as a child would not have simply vanished from her mind.

A summary that characterizes both "Bluebeard" and *Wildfell Hall* is easy to write. The heroine marries a rich man she does not know very well, suspecting that he has a checkered past but not knowing the extent of his faults until after the wedding. These faults include inappropriate behavior with women from his past. Feeling increasingly threatened the more she understands the man she has married, the heroine turns to her family for refuge. Ultimately she survives, her husband dies, and she marries a nicer man. Thus the basic structure of "Bluebeard" clearly underpins *Wildfell Hall*. Throughout, they share a concern with secrecy and violence in marriage.

Although Helen Lawrence, like Bluebeard's last wife, has money of her own, her uncle

comments in Arthur Huntingdon's favor that "he's a pretty tidy fortune" (136).¹⁴ The two women's feelings toward their prospective husbands are quite different; Helen marries Huntingdon primarily because she is attracted to him. But they possess similar amounts of knowledge about these men. Bluebeard's wife knows only that he has had several wives and that they have disappeared. Helen knows a little more. Her aunt, attempting to dissuade Helen from engaging herself to Huntingdon, constantly reminds her of his reputation as a "profligate" (149). Unlike Perrault's heroine, Helen discovers some of Huntingdon's callousness for herself during their engagement. "My cup of sweets is not unmingled," she writes in her journal. "It is dashed with a bitterness that I cannot hide from myself, disguise it as I will...I cannot shut my eyes to Arthur's faults...His very heart...is, I fear, less warm and generous than I thought" (186). Helen cringes at Huntingdon's laughing accounts of dissipation but insists on assuming the role of his moral guide.

Helen admits in the second paragraph of her first diary entry as Mrs. Huntingdon that "Arthur is not what I thought him at first...if I had loved him first, and then made the discovery [of his true character], I fear I should have thought it my duty not to have married him. To be sure, I might have known him, for everyone was willing enough to tell me about him, and he himself was no accomplished hypocrite, but I was wilfully blind" (202). Huntingdon is less secretive than Bluebeard; Helen could have learned much more before marrying him. But she holds herself back from knowledge, as Perrault's heroine ludicrously decides that perhaps the wealthy man's beard is not *so* blue after all and asks nothing about the fate of her predecessors. Knowing just enough to fear that the full story would scare them away from what they want,

¹⁴ Perrault's heroine is the daughter of a "dame de qualité" ("woman of quality"; 125), though subsequent versions of the story have often decreased her social standing, surely in order to better explain her choice to marry Bluebeard.

both brides-to-be decline to pursue suspicious information about their prospective husbands before marriage.

After the weddings, the wives finally learn the husbands' most damning secrets—in both cases, because the husbands choose to reveal them.¹⁵ Huntingdon's early transgressions against Helen are abandonment and betrayal—sins he has already committed against other women. Helen writes that he frequently “tell[s] me stories of his former amours, always turning upon the ruin of some confiding girl or the cozening of some unsuspecting husband; and when I express my horror and indignation, he lays it all to the charge of jealousy, and laughs” (208). She goes so far as to call these women the “victims of his former love” (208-9). Although Huntingdon has not literally killed these women like Bluebeard, he still marries Helen with a past full of women he has hurt and discarded. Soon, he treats Helen as he treated them, both by continuing to have extramarital sex with Annabella (and likely others) and by habitually lying to Helen about when he plans to return from sojourns in London. Helen makes the “bitter, bitter confession” to her journal that “*I can never trust his word*” (245, italics in original).

So, like Bluebeard's wife, Helen discovers quite soon after marriage that she made a terrible choice.¹⁶ “Bluebeard” comes to an end soon after this discovery, but the marriage in

¹⁵ Contrast Eustace Macallan in Wilkie Collins's *The Law and the Lady* (1875), who desperately guards from the heroine, his second wife, the secret of his past marriage and trial for murder of his first wife. Although Eustace turns out to resemble Bluebeard very little (since he has been married only once before and did not commit the murder), Collins's heroine, Valeria, is every bit as curious as Bluebeard's wife. Unlike Helen and the fairy-tale heroine, Valeria suspects nothing before the wedding. She learns of some mystery in her husband's past soon after, and the novel consists of her attempt to penetrate that mystery. *The Law and the Lady* ultimately differs crucially from “Bluebeard” and *Wildfell Hall*, however, in that the husband is innocent: the secret has to do with an event in his past, not a characteristic of him that threatens the present wife. Eustace's most serious fault is secretiveness itself.

¹⁶ Compare also Mary Wollstonecraft's *Maria: Or, The Wrongs of Woman* (1797), a possible inspiration for Brontë (see discussion in Langland). Although Wollstonecraft focuses less on alcoholism than Brontë does, her preface offers a similar purpose of shedding light on

Brontë's realist novel dies a longer and less dramatic death. Instead of threatening to kill Helen, Huntingdon threatens to corrupt their child. Helen's "greatest source of uneasiness" and the reason she flees Grassdale are the danger Huntingdon poses to little Arthur (350). The threat is not murder, but something worse from a Victorian perspective: Huntingdon, by pointing his son toward alcoholism, irreverence, and general misbehavior, threatens the boy's immortal soul. The mid-Victorian debates surrounding child-rearing are crucial to the novel, though outside the scope of my discussion. Adding a child exacerbates the immediacy of the problem in "Bluebeard" stories: the danger is not that the husband has dreadful secrets in his past, but that the character traits that led to those secrets remain a problem for the current wife now. The revelation of the continuing relevance of those secrets causes the crisis. Bluebeard cannot keep his secret from his current wife because it involves her. The condition of the past wives—murdered, replaced, turned into trophies—is always about to become the condition of the present wife. Thus the boundaries between past and present, and between individual women, are extremely vulnerable. Helen, though, tolerates her husband's affair with Annabella but walks out when Huntingdon brings subsequent mistress Miss Myers into their home as governess to their child. *Wildfell Hall* amplifies the encroachment of the husband's past sins into the present by focusing the anxiety on the child, a representative of the future. The "Bluebeard" problem of the current wife's excessive proximity to her predecessors thus folds into Brontë's concern about poor child-rearing.

Although Huntingdon does not exert physical violence on Helen, he does violate her property, her morals, and her very identity. Technically, the first of those is no violation at all,

problems with marriage. Maria, like Helen, falls in love with a man whom she marries despite his frivolity, learns after marriage the extent of his faults, is abused by him, leaves him, and gets into trouble for having left him, since the law is on his side. Wollstonecraft, too, emphasizes her story's realism, distinguishing it in the very first sentence from the Gothic tales in vogue at the time.

because Huntingdon legally owns his wife's property. But the scene is striking for the scholar of "Bluebeard." Having seized Helen's diary and discovered her scheme for escape with little Arthur, Huntingdon demands her keys. "What keys?" Helen replies. "'The keys of your cabinet, desk, drawers, and whatever else you possess,' said he, rising and holding out his hand" (365). He wrests the keys from her despite her refusal and proceeds to confiscate the money, jewels, and painting materials on which she had planned to live after escaping. While the "transgression" Huntingdon angrily discovers in Helen is quite unlike that of Bluebeard's wife, both wives come to mirror their husbands' secretive behaviors. The violation of Helen's secret plan and goods leads not to a literal death sentence but to another nine months of life at Grassdale. Helen is well-nigh trapped with her husband despite possessing resources that many women at the time did not—upper-class status, profitable artistic skills, and even access to another place to live, Wildfell Hall.

Worse is the moral violence done to Helen throughout the book, primarily at the hands of Huntingdon. Both Gilbert and Huntingdon's friend Hargrave bear some guilt for trying to persuade her into adultery before her husband's death—Helen refers to Hargrave in her diary as "the enemy" when she realizes his intentions, long before the moment he seizes her physically (331). Huntingdon never physically abuses Helen. Instead, in addition to causing her anxiety on behalf of their son, he hurts her primarily by giving her such a poor return for all the love and moral support she tries to give him. Realizing this imbalance leads Helen to confess to her diary "I HATE him!" (308). She writes several times that her environment is corrupting her, "turning my nature into gall" (313). After Huntingdon, suspecting intrigue between Helen and Hargrave, subjects her to "a volley of the vilest and the grossest abuse it was possible for the imagination to conceive or the tongue to utter" (359), she reflects,

Could I ever have imagined that I should be doomed to hear...such things spoken in my presence...by those who arrogated to themselves the name of gentlemen? And could I have imagined that I should have been able to endure it as calmly... as I had done? A hardness such as this is taught by rough experience and despair alone. (361)

Even graver than the problem of bad behavior by so-called gentlemen is Helen's diminishing sensitivity to it. Although she worries more about the moral danger Huntingdon poses to the still-developing little Arthur, her own moral fortitude also flags in the face of the depraved environment at Grassdale.

The problem is partly one of "rough experience," but Helen's particular status of wife to Huntingdon is crucial. Helen takes seriously the Victorian sense of moral association with her husband. "I so identify myself with him...feel for him as for myself; but I cannot act for him; and hence, I must be and am debased, contaminated by the union" (262). Despite knowing she "cannot act for him," she feels responsible for his actions anyway—necessarily "contaminated," a word Girard uses in discussing the communicability of violence (*Violence* 30). Helen's sense of a permeable self is perhaps more worrisome than the excessive proximity of a Bluebeard's wife figure with the former wives, since Victorian social mores underpin it. A woman in the middle of the nineteenth century had no legal identity separate from that of her husband. Moral equivalence is more complicated, as the nearly contradictory statements on the subject in Sarah Stickney Ellis's 1843 *The Wives of England* indicate. Early on in this book of advice for women considering marriage, Ellis asserts, "Human sympathy may do much to comfort, human advice to guide, and human example to encourage; but whether married or single...we must all bear our own burdens, perform our own duties, answer to our own consciences, reap our own rewards,

and receive our own sentence at the bar of eternal judgment” (14). This view is more forgiving than Helen’s, emphasizing the predominance of individual conscience. But Ellis also writes,

And now, having thus loved your husband, and cast in your lot with his... it is meet that you should love him to the last. It is true, there are cases where a gradual deterioration of character... renders affection the last offering a stranger would think it possible to make at such a shrine; but if others turn away repelled, there is the more need for such a man, that his wife should love him still. (49)

The phrase “cast in your lot” echoes Helen’s attitude; although Ellis does not say that the husband’s faults are equally the wife’s, she does insist on wife’s responsibility to meet them with unconditional love. Overall, Helen subscribes to a slightly more severe version of Ellis’s approach, which is fairly representative of the wider cultural belief. The problem of Bluebeard’s final bride is transformed into a Victorian wife’s complex dilemma.

Strange and Wilde Cases: Secrecy

Unlike *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall*, *Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* and *The Picture of Dorian Gray* are not about marriage. Instead, as Doppelgänger tales, they house Bluebeard and his wife in the same person; in both stories, the boundaries between the two sides of each pair are difficult to define. Plenty, of course, has been written about these two novels as Doppelgänger stories, and several critics have commented on Wilde’s debt to the Narcissus myth. Yet even though many scholars note their Gothic qualities, no one has discussed their similarities with “Bluebeard,” probably because they are not structured around marriage. But both novels contain several key characteristics of the fairy tale—the man who is mostly (though decreasingly) respectable but possesses unsavory secrets, the numerous acts of violence, the secret chamber,

the death or near-death of the person in the story who discovers the secret, and the ultimate death of the man keeping the secret. Like “Bluebeard,” *Strange Case* and *Dorian Gray* are driven by secrecy and curiosity.

Both Stevenson and Wilde were quite versed in and receptive to fairies and fairy tales. And both were skeptical of realism; Stevenson disputes Henry James by asserting that a novel “exists...by its immeasurable difference from life,” and Wilde writes in a commonplace book in his Oxford days, “Realism is the assertion of the claims of the ~~univer~~ particular, the detail, the parts: Idealism is the grasp of the whole and the universal” (“A Humble Remonstrance” 217, Smith and Helfand 127). Wilde grew up in Ireland with two folklorist parents. Sir William Wilde was a doctor but also traveled the Irish countryside collecting stories and antiquities; he published *Irish Popular Superstitions* in 1852. Lady Jane Francesca Wilde published *Ancient Legends, Mystic Charms, and Superstitions of Ireland* in 1887. Unlike many prominent recorders of Irish folklore (such as Thomas Crofton Croker and Samuel Lover), Wilde’s parents “regarded Irish folk traditions and beliefs as worthy of respect, and shared a Romantic rather than analytic or scientific approach to their subject” (Markey 197). Wilde’s exposure to traditional tales continued after he left home: during his first year at Oxford, he studied with philologist and folklorist Max Müller (Smith and Helfand 9). Influenced by this exposure and by continental literary fairy tales, Wilde wrote ten fairy tales himself; the two collections, *The Happy Prince and Other Tales* (1888) and *A House of Pomegranates* (1891), bookend the 1890 publication of *Dorian Gray*.

Stevenson, meanwhile, raves about *The Arabian Nights in Memories and Portraits*: it “captivates in childhood, and still delights in age” (227). In “A Chapter on Dreams,” Stevenson refers to homegrown folklore: he gives a fanciful account (reminiscent of “The Shoemaker and

the Elves”) of receiving assistance in writing stories from a handful of Brownies. These “Brownies, God bless them!...do one-half my work for me while I am fast asleep” (Stevenson, *Across* 225). He likens the experience to leading “a double life—one of the day, one of the night—one that he had every reason to believe was the true one, another that he had no means of proving to be false”; then he explains that a desire to convey “that strong sense of man’s double being which must at times come in upon and overwhelm the mind of every thinking creature” led him to write *Strange Case* (211, 227). Talking about Brownies and accounting for one of his most famous novels thus go together for Stevenson. Intentionally or not, he invokes “Bluebeard” and *Dorian Gray* in referring to one of his Brownies as a “Familiar...whom I keep locked in a back garret” (226). Throughout his fiction, too, Stevenson includes supernatural elements; his story “Olalla” particularly evokes “Bluebeard” by its emphasis on penetration of secrets in an ominous mansion.

Like that of “Bluebeard,” the plots of *Strange Case* and *Dorian Gray* hinge on the formation, keeping, enjoyment, and revelation of secrets. The atmospheres are secretive, too—reading Stevenson’s novel requires penetrating several levels of narration, and *Dorian Gray*’s friend Basil Hallward sets the stage for obfuscation by remarking on the third page of the novel that he has “grown to love secrecy” and acting accordingly (7). *Dorian*, Henry Jekyll, and Bluebeard use their secrets in order to have it both ways: to maintain a good upper-class reputation while enjoying illicit pleasures. Bluebeard, as we saw, gets to be a perennially eligible bachelor and to murder with impunity. Jekyll creates Hyde expressly to satisfy his “gaiety of disposition” while still “carry[ing] his head high” in the light of day (47, 48). Nearly the first characteristic we learn of Jekyll from his “Full Statement of the Case” is his exceptional secretiveness. He admits to feeling uncommonly strong “shame” for the level of dissipation of

which “many a man” of his status would have boasted (48). Not “many an unrespectable man” or “many a careless man,” simply “many a man.” The whole reason for creating Hyde, then, was to permit respectable Dr. Jekyll to better keep the secret of his improper but not extraordinary nighttime antics. Twice, the face of Hyde is called a “mask” (36, 37). Dorian Gray does not realize he is creating a secret double, but he undeniably does so by uttering the wish that the portrait would age and he would remain forever young. The arrangement allows him to defy Basil’s assertion that there can be no secret vices since sins are always written on the face; the locked room that houses the picture “hide[s] his soul from the eyes of men” (104). But Dorian himself also gains access to more information through the portrait: “he would be able to follow his mind into its secret places. The portrait would be to him the most magical of mirrors...it would reveal to him his own soul” (91). Presumably like Bluebeard, Dorian keeps a secret chamber not only to hide something from others but also to enjoy it more himself. All three men, to varying degrees, keep a secret in order to live a double life.

All three also rely on secret chambers that hide the incriminating things or bodies while they enjoy their freedom. Evoking an association between a physical space and a character is common in fairy tales and in Gothic fiction; Bluebeard’s castle has been understood traditionally as a symbol of his own body or psyche.¹⁷ Under this interpretation, the contents of the secret chambers—Bluebeard’s murdered wives, Dorian’s portrait, Hyde and the experiments that created him—are the parts of the selves that are “defined by [their] need to be confined, enveloped, hidden,” as Halberstam says of the portrait and Hyde in particular (70). The chambers thus “represent the relation between self and other as the relation between house and inhabitant—Hyde lives in Jekyll, the portrait lives in Dorian’s home. The small closeted spaces

¹⁷ Béla Bartók’s early 20th-century opera *Bluebeard’s Castle* particularly emphasizes the psychological interpretation.

also seem to represent on some level the unconscious, a dark space into which forbidden desires are repressed” (Halberstam 70). Bluebeard’s locked “cabinet” of dead bodies is not far removed from the locked room containing Dorian’s portrait. The contents of both spaces are approximations of the human form, not alive but not as far from life as they should be—the corpses should be buried and the painted face should be fixed. Jekyll has two secret spaces: Hyde’s lodgings (a secret space of Jekyll’s because other people do not associate it with him) and the laboratory and adjoining cabinet to which Jekyll increasingly confines himself as his troubles escalate (31). Jekyll’s secret association with Hyde also has to do with a kind of life that seems unnatural. Hyde represents, among other things, humankind’s pre-civilized nature. Like Dracula, Hyde should not hold sway in late-nineteenth-century London but does anyway.¹⁸ In contrast, Brontë does not equip Huntingdon with a melodramatic lair; his vices, particularly alcohol abuse, appear on his own body (like Dorian’s on his portrait). The secret containers in *Wildfell Hall* are actually Helen’s: the refuge she makes of the library at Grassdale and the diary she eventually opens to Gilbert. Regardless of their contents, all these guarded repositories have the same effect: to arouse in others a desire to look inside.

The receptacle can never keep the secret forever, or there would be no story. But although Bluebeard, Dorian, and Jekyll are extremely secretive up to a point, all of them ultimately reveal their dangerous secrets freely. While neither Jekyll nor Dorian begins with a Bluebeard-like plan for revelation, both grow lax with their secrets as despair mounts. Not long

¹⁸ Dracula too has a secret chamber in the form of his dirt box. Although I ultimately lacked space for it, I could have discussed *Dracula* in detail in this chapter. The beginning of the novel—the innocent’s sojourn in a monster’s castle—evokes “Bluebeard.” Jonathan Harker comments early on, “this diary seems horribly like the beginning of the ‘Arabian Nights,’ for everything has to break off at cock-crow” (35); the beginning of the Arabian Nights essentially is Bluebeard. Mighall in *A Geography of Victorian Gothic Fiction* discusses *Dracula* in relation to many of the same issues I address in this chapter.

before his death, Hyde transforms into Jekyll in front of Dr. Lanyon. The exchange in which Lanyon decides to watch entirely lacks violence, raised voices, or even much movement beyond the stirring and drinking of the potion and the dramatic transformation itself. By this point, Hyde has already trampled a child and murdered a prominent aristocrat; as desperate as he was to take the potion, he certainly could have forced Lanyon to leave or even killed him. Instead he lets him see, and immediately afterward, Jekyll explains what has happened. Dorian Gray, also not long before he kills himself, willfully reveals his secret to an old friend. He decides abruptly to show Basil the painting: "Come: it is your own handiwork. Why shouldn't you look at it? You can tell the world all about it afterwards, if you choose. Nobody would believe you" (129). Even more easily than Hyde, Dorian could simply have turned Basil away without revealing anything; Basil does not even express curiosity here. But at this point Dorian seems to want to share his secret, or at least the burden of it. Dorian kills Basil after he has seen the picture, as Bluebeard kills each wife forced to show him the bloodstained key, and rather as Hyde indirectly kills Lanyon from shock. Secrets will out, but not without fatal consequences.

Beforehand, though, Jekyll/Hyde and Dorian, like Bluebeard, arouse plenty of curiosity. Dorian is the subject of much London gossip, though it is not dramatized because Wilde tells most of the story from Dorian's perspective. Jekyll's acquaintances realize early on that something is amiss, but until soon before his death, he consistently refuses to confide in them. Mr. Utterson pursues answers most doggedly. Declaring, "If he be Mr. Hyde...I shall be Mr. Seek," Utterson stands in for the curious reader and eventually penetrates the mystery (15). He continually lurks outside Jekyll's house; after the Carew murder, he goes there every night for two months without being allowed inside (16-17, 29). Later, Utterson witnesses the opening of Hyde's house, in which "clothes lay about the floor, with their pockets inside out; lockfast

drawers stood open,” and instigates the breaking down of Jekyll’s door at the culmination of the action; servant Poole wields the axe, but Utterson eagerly gives the order (24, 38). Along with Jekyll himself, Utterson recalls Bluebeard’s last wife more than any other character in the novel; he pursues the mystery and survives when others do not. He even takes pure curiosity a step further than Bluebeard’s wife: unlike her, he does not depend on the man whose secrets he is searching so lacks her practical personal stake in the truth.

Dr. Lanyon resembles Bluebeard’s pre-tale wives: he learns the monstrous secret but does not survive it. Hyde knows that curiosity is Lanyon’s primary motivation: he advises Lanyon to leave instead of staying to watch the effects of the transformative draught, asking, “has the greed of curiosity too much command of you?” (46). Indeed it does “command” him, just as Bluebeard’s wife at the threshold of the chamber remembers her husband’s prohibition, “mais la tentation était si forte qu’elle ne put la surmonter” (“but the temptation was so strong that she could not overcome it”; Perrault 129). Lanyon stands in for the medical profession in general, scoffing at Jekyll’s past decade’s worth of unorthodox experiments. Although “Bluebeard” has frequently been interpreted in terms of female curiosity, in *Strange Case* the incredible scene of transformation is dramatized because of the curiosity of a skeptical medical man. Lanyon insists on knowing the truth precisely because of his scientific turn of mind: “I have gone too far in the way of inexplicable services to pause before I see the end” (46). Dr. Lanyon wants an explanation to a specific mystery, as Dr. Jekyll wanted one for the nature of humankind in general.

Indeed, in addition to arousing the curiosity of his acquaintances by behaving enigmatically, Jekyll acts on his own curiosity. In fact, both Jekyll and Dorian Gray are fatally curious; as a result, they both stand in the role of Bluebeard’s wife as well as that of Bluebeard

himself. Jekyll creates the transforming potion due to his dual curiosity as a scientist and as a Victorian man with conflicting desires. To begin with, his brand of science consists of “the mystic and the transcendental”; the easily observable immanent does not satisfy him. Soon enough the idea of splitting the two sides of a person’s nature takes such root in his mind that he says, “I had learned to dwell with pleasure, as a beloved daydream, on the thought of the separation of these elements” (49). Dwelling with pleasure as on a daydream is hardly a typical description of the drive to research.¹⁹ Obviously Jekyll has a personal incentive to satisfy the “lower elements in my soul” (50). The combination of professional and personal curiosity is required to bring about the creation of Hyde.

Dorian Gray is curious about life, about art, about his own soul, about how his affinity with the portrait came to be and how it will unfold. After realizing that the portrait is changing, he finally decides not to pray for release from the Faustian pact partly to preserve his beauty but also because “there would be real pleasure in watching it. He would be able to follow his mind into its secret places. The portrait would be to him the most magical of mirrors. As it had revealed to him his own body, so it would reveal to him his own soul” (91). Dorian chooses to treat himself as Lord Henry treats him: as an interesting experiment. Even though Dorian’s unspoken transgressions seem, like Hyde’s, probably bodily (such as the opium use Wilde does reveal), Budziak argues that “Dorian’s ultimate pleasure is in his mind. His highest indulgence is curiosity” (266). In Budziak’s estimation, he pursues Sybil in order to know “the secret of her theatrical changeability” and leaves Hetty not primarily to protect her but “to try out a new pose in himself” (267). Although Budziak does not provide compelling evidence that mental curiosity is Dorian’s “ultimate” indulgence—we know too little about his bodily pleasures to compare—it

¹⁹ Recall the title scientist of *Frankenstein*, whose work takes “an irresistible hold on my imagination” (Shelley 55). With good reason are Frankenstein and Jekyll frequently likened.

clearly drives his decision-making. Like Bluebeard's wife and Jekyll, Dorian cannot restrain his curiosity, and the whole story exists because of it.

Strange and Wilde Cases: Violence and the Self

The "fortress of identity" (Stevenson 50) shaken by Jekyll's potion and Dorian Gray's portrait is one of the most significant distinctions humans make; its shattering is the subject of the Doppelgänger tale. William Greenslade observes that Stevenson's novel "gives direct access, unlike the realist fiction of the period, to a radical uncertainty about the notion of a unitary identity, and to a perplexing coexistence of competing psychic and bodily states" (83). The same could be said of *Dorian Gray*. But, as Greenslade's almost-buried phrase "unlike the realistic fiction of the period" implies, it cannot be said of *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall*. Although Helen feels compromised by the immorality of her husband's circle, she never truly loses her identity and manages to escape the marriage intact. Even Perrault's "Bluebeard" never questions the literal distinction between Bluebeard and his wife. The Doppelgänger novels, by disrupting the central figures' actual identities, "give direct access," as Greenslade says, to what *Wildfell Hall* and "Bluebeard" gesture toward in their marriage narratives (as well as Bluebeard's indistinguishable corpses). Bluebeard (the monster) and Bluebeard's wife (the central consciousness of the narrative) are not merely joined together in the eyes of God and man: they are literally the same person. The combination of such fluidity of selfhood with the echoes of "Bluebeard" makes these novels disturbing: the "villains" in many ways resemble Bluebeard, but they are also fragments of the "heroes" of the story.

Although both Jekyll/Hyde and Dorian perpetrate notable acts of violence against other people, the Doppelgänger relationship best reflects the sense of the word "violence" as violation

of the boundaries of selfhood. It is difficult to imagine a more profound violation than the Doppelgänger's on the self's very body and identity. This understanding of violence underlies Girard's interpretation of human sacrifice as a process of violating the boundaries of individuality in order to treat people as interchangeable—hence a sacrificial victim standing in for other members of the community. Girard's approach informs Stevenson's and Wilde's Doppelgängers novels particularly because he defines this sacrificial scapegoat as a “monstrous double” for other people, simultaneously reviled and identical.²⁰

Both *Strange Case* and *Dorian Gray* have lingered in 20th- and 21st-century cultural awareness as classic tales of monstrous Doppelgängers. Most book-length studies of the literary Doppelgänger discuss or at least mention them.²¹ Coates sums up the various categories of doubles this way: “The Double can be said to crystallise under the concurrence of two conditions: when other people begin to be viewed as akin to ourselves; and when the self is projected into a space hitherto defined as other” (32). In other words, the boundaries of the self become open to two directions of movement: from the other into the self, and from the self out to the other. Thus, “in all its variations, the double arises out of and gives form to the tension between division and unity. It stands for contradiction within unity, and for unity in spite of division” (Herdman 2).

The nineteenth century was the heyday of the Doppelgänger tale; classic examples come from writers such as E.T.A. Hoffmann, James Hogg, Fyodor Dostoyevsky, Guy de Maupassant,

²⁰ The only critic to link Girard to either novel is Paul Coates, who in *The Double and the Other* applies Girard's observation that “there is no monster who does not tend to duplicate himself” to *Strange Case* (Coates 102; Girard, *Violence* 160). But Coates merely mentions this connection.

²¹ See Otto Rank, *The Double*; Masao Miyoshi, *The Divided Self*; Paul Coates, *The Double and the Other*; Carl Keppler, *The Literature of the Second Self*; Ralph Tymms, *Doubles in Literary Psychology*; Robert Rogers, *A Psychoanalytic Study of the Double in Literature*.

Edgar Allan Poe, Théophile Gautier, Nikolai Gogol, and Joseph Conrad. The Doppelgänger story was clearly shaped by rising in the wake of the Gothic vogue. Using Alexander Pope's line from *Essay on Man*, that man is "In doubt to deem himself a God, or beast," Miyoshi notes that by the late Victorian period, "this same 'God' and 'Beast' are joint tenants of the dark cave of the Gothic villain-hero" (xiv). Using similar language, Carl Keppler argues that Doppelgänger stories illustrate the realization that "the *I* one ordinarily supposes oneself to be in the everyday world is not the only tenant in the house of self, and that this house is far larger than one has imagined, full of shadowy recesses and corridors, but full of wonder as well" (206). Keppler's words recall "Bluebeard" as well as the Gothic. But Dryden differentiates stories of the double from Gothic stories: "If the traditional tale of Gothic horror tends to explore and expose our fear of agents outside ourselves and their capacity to harm us, then the fiction of duality usually reverses that anxiety, turning it in upon ourselves to explore our horror at what we may be capable of" (38). The Doppelgänger story tends to focus on a specific manifestation of Gothic horror, as it intensifies a particularly horrifying implication of "Bluebeard."

The possibility of being horrified by oneself is central to Girard, who posits that hierarchies and distinctions among individuals are needed to uphold order in society, and that frequently these categories break down. Girard's challenging writing on sacrifice theory—an abstract and complex account of rituals that no reader is likely to have witnessed—gains in clarity when applied to literature. Girard himself offers Greek and Shakespearean tragedies as cases in which "it is not the differences but the loss of them that gives rise to violence and chaos... This loss forces men into perpetual confrontation, one that strips them of all their distinctive characteristics—in short, of their 'identities'" (51). For example, Oedipus discovers in *Oedipus Rex* that the man he seeks to find and punish to save the community is himself. Girard

also cites Euripides' *The Bacchae*, in which chaos descends when antagonists Dionysus and Pentheus take on similar characteristics and reverse roles; this play also foregrounds “that loss of distinction between man and beast that is always linked to violence” (128)—an articulation particularly thought-provoking in the context of evolutionary theory's rising currency in Victorian England. On the one hand, these moments constitute discoveries that the individual is plural: Oedipus is both detective and perpetrator, Pentheus is both civilized and debauched, the human being is both unique and fundamentally similar to animals. The problem is that in each case, the human subject previously thought of this relationship as himself vis-à-vis an other—the culprit, the Dionysian reveler, the beast. When such distinctions are revealed to be even partly false, identity dissolves into chaos.

The doubt that self is self and other is other constitutes the problem of evolutionary theory for Victorians taking their fundamental superiority to other kinds of beings for granted. The Victorians essentially experienced a Girardian crisis in the wake of Darwin's evidence that no such essential distinction existed. Many critics interpret the connection between urbane Dr. Jekyll and brutish Mr. Hyde as a staging of the anxiety produced by the inescapable post-Darwin conclusion that “beasts” and “savages” were of the same family as respectable English people. Greenslade argues that the Doppelgänger plot of *Strange Case* personalizes the Victorians' “intensified awareness of the contiguity of barbaric or lower-order species with the civilisation which had assumed an unquestioning ‘natural’ hegemony over them” (72). Stevenson depicts the relationship between self and other as “indeterminate...by showing how fatally that relationship might be inverted” (Greenslade 74). How does one deal with the inferior or threatening being suddenly revealed as a relative?

The reading of *Strange Case* as an enactment of such “inverting” of the order of things—

the atavism reading—has justifiably predominated for decades. Stevenson himself was aware of Darwin’s theories and the subsequent debates. His letters show that he had certainly read Darwin by 1885; in one, he uses the phrase “inherent or inherited brute principles and laws” in a general comment about human beings (*Letters* 143). In *Strange Case*, the words “ape,” “monkey,” and “animal” describe Hyde; Jekyll calls him “the animal within me” (22, 37, 38, 58). People who encounter Hyde report a sense evil or deformity without being able to specify it. As many critics have noted, such moments would have reminded late-Victorian readers of post-Darwin scientific (or pseudoscientific) debates about atavism and degeneracy. Could evolution work backwards? Do external appearances indicate internal tendencies? (Ever the question of fairy tales as well.) Critics have wanted to link Stevenson’s portrayal of Hyde to Cesare Lombroso’s *L’uomo delinquente*, which argues for a connection between criminal tendencies and certain physical characteristics, usually ones associated with apes and “savages.” *L’uomo delinquente* was not translated into English until after the Victorian period, though it was available in French (which Stevenson, like many other Victorians, could read) and was frequently cited in Havelock Ellis’s 1891 *The Criminal*.²² Whether or not Lombroso’s work directly influenced Stevenson, it contributed to the (pseudo)scientific atmosphere in which *Strange Case* was produced and read.

All four menacing male figures in this chapter—Bluebeard, Huntingdon, Jekyll, and Dorian—are upper class. The issue of social class underlies many discussions of Hyde as atavistic; although one would think that a “devolved” person would seem less urbane than the average person, in fact “Hyde’s horror is less that he is devolved than that he is the embodiment

²² Lombroso’s theories also influenced the fiction of Émile Zola, who was widely read by his Victorian contemporaries. Stevenson read and admired Zola’s *L’oeuvre* in 1886, though he wrote disparagingly seven years later of *La Bête humaine*, which resembles *Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* in exploring the warring forces in a man and dramatizing the dangers of repression. See Stevenson’s April 1886 letter to Will H. Low and June 10, 1893, letter Edmund Gosse.

of the upper-class gentleman. If he is savage, he is so because the drug reveals what is hidden behind the mask of class” (Hyman 199). What the mask hides is the increasingly inescapable fact that all humans, whatever their class, are biologically descended from apes. The scattered hints of devolution combined with Jekyll/Hyde’s upper-class status actually evoke the implications of evolutionary theory more strikingly than a simply ape-like character would. Any respectable-looking man on the street could have beast-like tendencies, because even the most respectable are descended from beasts.²³ Ironically, the one who understands this least is Jekyll. He is extremely upset by his animal desires; his problems “stem not from his savage instincts *per se*, but from his culturally informed anxiety to deny this biological heritage” (Reid 98).²⁴ As we have seen, Jekyll takes the “culturally informed anxiety” further than other men, who take some pride in their transgressions. The plot is driven by his inability to reconcile his desired social persona with his antisocial instincts.

Although Jekyll wants to erect a boundary between the sides of himself, physical boundaries of all kinds are unstable and difficult to distinguish throughout *Strange Case* and *Dorian Gray*. In Hyde’s neighborhood, “the buildings are so packed together...that it’s hard to say where one ends and another begins” (11). And so it is with the human body: Jekyll has a breakthrough in the creation of Hyde when he realizes “the trembling immateriality, the mist-like transience, of this seemingly so solid body in which we walk attired” (49). Jekyll does not modify the human body to create this transience: he exploits a transience that is already there. Even after he has created Hyde, Jekyll calls him “pure evil” (51) but never calls himself pure

²³ Compare Charles Perrault’s “moralité” to “Little Red Riding Hood”: “ces loups doucereux, / De tous les loups sont les plus dangereux” (“these gentle wolves are the most dangerous of all the wolves”; Perrault 123).

²⁴ Jekyll’s mindset contrasts with that of the protagonists of “Beauty and the Beast” and *Jane Eyre*, who prioritize their deep-seated, organic tendencies over cultural expectations.

good; rather, he remains “commingled,” an “incongruous compound” (51, 52). Hyde also infects other people around him with discomfort and even violence, as in the case of the women who turn “wild as harpies” after he tramples a child (10). Although Hyde is most indistinguishable from Jekyll, everyone struggles to keep him out. Contagion also surrounds Sibyl Vane in *Dorian Gray*. When Dorian takes Basil and Lord Henry to see her perform, he muses that even though the audience consists of “common rough people,” Sibyl “spiritualizes them, and one feels that they are of the same flesh and blood as one’s self” (70). When Sibyl dissolves the boundaries of selves in her audience, she transmits to them the quality that underlies her technique as an actress, making herself purely “a reed through which Shakespeare’s music sounded” (88). For better or for worse, both Sibyl and Hyde catalyze the dissolution of boundaries.

The relationship among Lord Henry, Basil Hallward, and Dorian Gray is unstable from the beginning of Wilde’s novel. For artist Basil, well aware of the permeability of his identity, Dorian’s “mere personality [i]s so fascinating that, if I allowed it to do so, it would absorb my whole nature, my whole soul, my very art itself” (9). At the same time, Basil also refuses to exhibit his painting of Dorian on the grounds that “I have put too much of myself into it” (6). Basil feels both that he is being taken over by Dorian and that his own self has bled onto the picture of Dorian. Rogers deems Basil a latent double of Dorian because they both project narcissistic ideals onto the painting (23). Meanwhile, as Dorian sits for the picture’s final touches and listens to Lord Henry speak of his philosophy of life, Dorian feels that “entirely fresh influences were at work within him. Yet they seemed to him to have come really from himself. The few words...had touched some secret cord that had never been touched before” (19). Strictly speaking, Lord Henry’s words are entering his brain from the outside, but Dorian immediately perceives that these sensations already lay dormant within him. In later years, he has the same

experience with Lord Henry's yellow-covered book.

Most importantly, Dorian experiences his painted image as both intrinsic and external to him, but with a distinct shift toward the latter; Jekyll perceives Hyde the same way. At first, Dorian gazes on the portrait "as if he had recognized himself for the first time," curious and excited about the possibilities opened up by the fact that the effects of his actions will appear only on the portrait (24). Then, he experiences a "sense of infinite pity, not for himself, but for the painted image of himself" because he has divided the two in his mind (79). Later still, when he triggers Sibyl's death and notices a cruel touch creeping over the painted face, he increasingly focuses on the division between portrait and flesh, soul and body. At this time, he calls his association with the portrait a "horrible sympathy" (90). Jekyll's attitude toward Hyde follows a similar trajectory. He initially insists on two authentic but divided aspects of himself: "man is not truly one, but truly two"; "I was no more myself when I laid aside restraint and plunged in shame, than when I laboured, in the eye of day" (48). Once he has created Hyde, he emphasizes the shared root of the two beings, calling Hyde "my second self" and "this familiar that I called out of my own soul" (54, 53). Like Dorian's first sight of the portrait, Jekyll's first look at Hyde in the mirror stirs "no repugnance, rather of a leap of welcome. This, too, was myself. It seemed natural and human" (51). Paradoxically, seeing the Hyde aspect isolated makes Jekyll begin to understand that aspect's importance to his whole self. But Jekyll conveniently forgets the "twin" element later in the novel, when he can no longer control the transformations and Hyde gains in strength. Beginning to distance himself linguistically from Hyde, he calls him my *other* self instead of my *second* self and shifts toward third-person pronouns: "he, I say—I cannot say, I. That child of Hell had nothing human" (59). But Jekyll was right the first time: Hyde is human. Jekyll cannot exorcise him because he did not come in from outside.

The ever-changing perception of the relationship between self and other leads for Girard to the figure of the monstrous double: “the double and the monster are one and the same being....The nature of the relationship between monster and double, stubbornly denied by the antagonists, is ultimately imposed on them in the course of the shifting of differences—but it is imposed *in the form of a hallucination*” (*Violence* 160). “Hallucination” is a bit strong for our purposes: neither Stevenson nor Wilde ever suggests that his characters are literally mistaken in their perceptions, that Hyde does not really exist or that Dorian simply imagines his affinity with the portrait. But both Jekyll/Hyde and Dorian are crucially wrong about the exact nature of the relationship between themselves and their doubles. By exaggerating their distinctions from Hyde and the portrait, Jekyll and Dorian show the “degree of misunderstanding” crucial to the substitution process (7). The payoff for Girard is an explanation of scapegoating in human sacrifice; the victim must be similar enough to others in the community to represent them, but distinctive enough that no one will wonder whether someone else ought to have been chosen. Hence the sacrificial victim as “monstrous double”: both other and twin.

Even more dramatically than Jekyll willfully forgets the extent of his connection to Hyde, Dorian aims a knife at his portrait expecting no consequences to himself. Over time, Dorian begins to doubt his relationship with the portrait, as its assumption of the physical trace of his vices ceases to relieve him of their weight. He says to Lord Henry late in the novel, “My own personality has become a burden to me. I want to escape, to go away, to forget” (174). Correctly, he realizes at last that the portrait does not preserve him from all consequences; it cannot “absorb” all the effects his behavior has on others (Ginsburg, *Portrait* 105). But his solution demonstrates a fundamental misunderstanding of the arrangement. He asks himself, “Was he always to be burdened by his past?...There was only one bit of evidence left against him. The

picture itself—that was evidence. He would destroy it” (189). The knife “would kill the past, and when that was dead, he would be free. It would kill this monstrous soul-life, and without its hideous warnings, he would be at peace” (189). Dorian fallaciously believes to the end that he can simply jettison the part of himself represented by the portrait. But the opposite happens: he stabs himself and takes on the visage he deserves, while the portrait returns to its original beauty. This ending exemplifies Girard’s final confrontation between the monstrous double and the self: “the monstrous double looms up everywhere at once. The decisive act of violence... then gives way to calm; hallucinations vanish... In an instant all extremes have met, all differences fused” (161). Once the relationship of doubles has shifted from helpful fiction to horrifying chaos, it culminates in a hysterical act of violence that instantly dispels all confusion and all differences between the doubles. In this way, no one of the doubles can simply kill the other and save himself; instead, because self and other are fundamentally one, killing the perceived double almost always amounts to killing oneself (Rank 92, Keppler 28). As Girard puts it in a later work, “To turn back against oneself the curse first hurled at the Other, to discover that this wicked Other and the Self are one, means discovering the Same in what once passed for absolute Difference, it means unifying reality. But first of all it means *dying*” (*Oedipus Unbound* 9). Sacrificing the other and sacrificing the self turn out to be the same thing.²⁵

Even more than in *Strange Case*, it is difficult to say whether Dorian or his portrait is the

²⁵ Compare Wilde’s fairy tale “The Fisherman and His Soul” (1891). The eponymous fisherman separates his body from his soul in order to live with a mermaid he loves. After a few years he takes his soul back, but then finds he can never cut it away again. The soul tells him, “Once in this life may a man send his Soul away, but he who receiveth back his Soul must keep it with him for ever, and this is his punishment and his reward.” The narrator continues, “And when the young Fisherman knew that he could no longer get rid of his Soul, and that it was an evil Soul and would abide with him always, he fell upon the ground weeping bitterly” (Wilde, *Complete* 230). Unlike Dorian Gray, the fisherman theoretically could have parted ways with his soul. But ultimately he, too, is left with the miserable realization that all parts of him are forever fused together.

monster. Obviously the portrait, like Hyde, has a monstrous appearance. And like Hyde, it is clearly the “second self” rather than the “first self” (using Keppler’s terminology) because Dorian’s perspective, not the portrait’s, is both chronologically and narratively primary. But the portrait seems to exert an elemental power over Dorian. To begin with, the mechanism behind the Faustian pact is never explained. All three men contribute—Basil by idolizing and painting Dorian, Lord Henry by whispering to him a paean to youth, and Dorian by uttering the wishful words—but there is no deliberate Faustian decision to trade away the soul. Wilde’s language often hints that the characters do not direct the action at key moments. For instance, when Lord Henry wants to meet Dorian, Basil acquiesces but begs him not to spoil their relationship; according to the narrator, “the words seemed wrung out of him almost against his will” (15). When Dorian returns home from rejecting Sibyl Vane, the narrator says, “his eye fell upon the portrait” (77) and “suddenly there flashed across his mind” the memory of the Faustian words (78). These statements, less direct than such alternatives as “he looked at the portrait” or “Suddenly he remembered,” diminish Dorian’s agency. Climactically, the part of Dorian that lives in the portrait prompts him to murder Basil: “suddenly an uncontrollable feeling of hatred for Basil Hallward came over him, as though it had been suggested to him by the image on the canvas, whispered into his ear by those grinning lips” (134).

The influence the portrait exercises over all who come near it evokes the second half of Girard’s title: the sacred. The picture of Dorian Gray is the controlling force in the story, as its sole occupancy of the title page reveals—Dorian does not even share top billing with his Doppelgänger as Dr. Jekyll does. For Girard, the sacred comprises “all those forces whose dominance over man increases or seems to increase in proportion to man’s effort to master them” (*Violence* 31). This dominance over human beings *is* violence; violence is “impersonal,” that

which “effaces the differences” between individuals (47). The sacred is the realm in which the sovereignty of the self disappears entirely. For this reason, Dorian’s attempt to save himself (and stop himself from hurting others in the future) by destroying the portrait is futile. According to Girard, “the real victor is always violence itself. . . . The more men strive to curb their violent impulses, the more these impulses seem to prosper”; humans even see their own violence as “something exterior to man and henceforth as a part of all the other outside forces that threaten mankind. Violence is the heart and secret soul of the sacred” (31). Again, Girard is trying to explain why people perform ritual sacrifice. But the broader concept of the sacred applies to any force that overpowers individuality. In Wilde’s novel, this might be art itself, or it might be some kind of fate or story paradigm more broadly—even the patterns of fairy tales. Recall Bluebeard’s wife on the threshold of his chamber, compelled by a temptation “so strong that she could not overcome it.”

One way or the other, the sacred is that which always gets *in* despite all efforts to keep it out. The language of inside and outside is crucial to discussing the Doppelgänger. Girard uses it lavishly in this description of the experience of the monstrous double:

The subject watches the monstrosity that takes shape within him and outside him simultaneously. In his efforts to explain what is happening to him, he attributes the origin of the apparition to some exterior cause. Surely, he thinks, this vision is too bizarre to emanate from the familiar country within, too foreign in fact to derive from the world of men. The whole interpretation of the experience is dominated by the sense that the monster is alien to himself. The subject feels that the most intimate regions of his being have been invaded by a supernatural creature who also besieges him without. Horrified, he finds himself the victim of

a double assault to which he cannot respond. Indeed, how can one defend oneself against an enemy who blithely ignores all barriers between inside and outside?

(165)

Every sentence in this excerpt features spatial confusion or invasion. Many of them point to nonhuman (bestial or supernatural) sources for this “outside” force that nevertheless seems to come from within.²⁶ The boundary-crossing involved in simultaneous outwardness and inwardness is of course not limited to Doppelgänger tales: MacAndrew, for instance, holds that in Gothic fiction in general, “inner evil is projected outward, but in such a manner that it will ultimately be apprehended as lurking in the shadows within us” (157). Freud’s account of the uncanny anticipates Girard in emphasizing confusion: “the subject identifies himself with someone else, so that he is in doubt as to which his self is, or substitutes the extraneous self for his own. In other words, there is a doubling, dividing and interchanging of the self” (940). Recall Helen Huntingdon’s dilemma over identifying herself with her husband despite knowing that she cannot influence his actions. This perplexity is integral to stories of doubling; Keppler holds that the literary double has “an always contradictory being, a paradox of simultaneous outwardness and inwardness, of difference from and identity with the first self” (10).

Even though both Hyde and the portrait later act as powerful outside forces, their greatest source of strength is their essential indistinguishability from Jekyll and Dorian. But both Jekyll and Dorian are additionally responsible for having made at least somewhat deliberate attempts to manipulate the boundaries of selfhood—Dorian to divide body and soul, Jekyll to create different bodies for social and antisocial behavior. Keppler insists that in general the menacing second self does not simply intrude on the first self: “he has been, however unconsciously and for whatever

²⁶ Compare the discussion in Chapter Three of *Jane Eyre*’s “mysterious summons,” which seems both to come from within her soul and to be an inspiration from the outside world.

reason, *invited* to intrude” (191). Dorian never knows why the portrait is taking on his sins, but he eagerly lets it happen. Jekyll does more than invite Edward Hyde: he labors for years to summon him out of himself. These first selves cannot truly condemn or dismiss the second selves not only because they are internal but also because the first selves essentially gave birth to them. Dorian and Jekyll set in motion the very violence they later attribute to their monstrous doubles.

Conclusion

Surprisingly, the most extreme of the four texts in this chapter are two of the novels, not the fairy tale. “Bluebeard” may be more shocking on the surface, but *Strange Case* and *Dorian Gray* intensify its implications. As representations of Victorian responses to evolutionary theory, too, these novels are extreme. The Victorians did not create animals or cavemen or non-white people. But *Dorian Gray* in particular raises the question of less-direct responsibility for engendering monstrous others. A major thrust of postcolonial criticism of Victorian literature depends on holding its characters and authors accountable for words and acts connected unbeknownst to them to the oppression of various others. As works of speculative fiction, *Strange Case* and *Dorian Gray* pose this possibility as questions: what if our science experiments created monsters? what if a wish idly uttered became a reality with the power to alter the lives of many? “Bluebeard” is actually less speculative; apart from the magic key (and perhaps the blue beard), it offers nothing that could not occur in the real world. Its events are far less likely than those of Brontë’s realist *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall*, but only marginally less possible. It does not ask, what if Bluebeard’s wife were literally “one flesh” with her husband and had herself unleashed him on the world? The wives of Bluebeard and Huntingdon are bound

to them only through the circumstance of marriage; at the end of each story, the threats are eliminated and both women move on, individuality intact, to better husbands. In all four texts, distinctions between individuals tend to vanish, but in the Doppelgänger stories order is far more difficult to restore. “Bluebeard” thus influenced the Victorian novel widely in both directions: it underpinned an unimpeachably realist novel and two fantastical novels that amplified its themes.

Chapter Three

Bluebeard or the Beast?

Patterns for Selfhood in *Jane Eyre* and *Wuthering Heights*

Jane Eyre and *Wuthering Heights* have been read together many times before, but not through a fairy-tale lens. The influences of fairy tales and supernatural lore help us conceptualize the odd relationships between self and other in both 1847 novels. I will first consider *Jane Eyre* as a negotiation between “Beauty and the Beast” and “Bluebeard” paradigms. These two tales drive both the plot structure and the characterization of Rochester as some combination of “Beast figure” and “Bluebeard figure”; whereas the former is a character who initially appears beastly but is ultimately desirable to the heroine, the latter is one less obviously menacing at the outset but ultimately beastly on the inside. “Bluebeard,” with its closetful of indistinguishable past wives, also illuminates Jane’s construction of herself as an individual with varying degrees of permeability to other characters around her, especially Bertha. But whereas Jane essentially follows the trajectory of a fairy-tale protagonist—beginning life in a stable interpersonal situation, confronting a series of destabilizing adventures, and ultimately forging a new place in a new situation—no character enjoys such stability in *Wuthering Heights*. Multiple characters share identical or similar names. Children resemble not only their parents but their aunts and foster fathers. Two characters insist that they are each other. Generations of critics have valiantly but unevenly attempted to make some sense of this novel; no critical piece fully accounts for its labyrinthine, thorny lushness. I do not expect mine to do so either, but I do attempt to fight fire with fire by bringing to bear on the novel Jacques Lacan’s psychoanalytic theory of language and kinship structure. Lacan’s account of human behavior, speech, and naming as constantly striving for a place of plenitude within a larger structure of words and people—a fruitless but inevitable

striving—seems to me harmonious with the grasping confusion of *Wuthering Heights*. Whereas *Jane Eyre* and most fairy tales enact the fantasy of a person's reaching a satisfactory place or role in the world, *Wuthering Heights* depicts an essentially Lacanian subjecthood marked by instability and alienation.

Charlotte Brontë, from her juvenilia through her last novel, frequently refers to fairy tales and supernatural beings. The juvenilia and various biographical sources demonstrate her early familiarity with the *Arabian Nights*, local folk and fairy lore, and continental fairy tales. One general source for Brontë's knowledge of fantasy is the work of the Romantics, which we know influenced her heavily. Moreover, just as Jane Eyre heard fairy stories from servant Bessie (117, 239), Brontë heard them from beloved family servant Tabitha Aykroyd. Affectionately known as "Tabby," she joined the Brontës in 1824 and remained until she died shortly before Charlotte in 1854. According to Elizabeth Gaskell, Tabby

had known the "bottom," or the valley, in those primitive days when the fairies frequented the margin of the "beck" on moonlight nights, and had known folk who had seen them. But that was when there were no mills in the valleys; and when all the wool-spinning was done by hand in the farmhouses round. "It wur the factories as had driven 'em away," she said. No doubt she had many a tale to tell of by-gone days of the country-side...dark superstitious dooms. (Gaskell 110-1)

This account reflects the usual elements of the Victorian version of the perennial "farewell to the fairies": fairies belong to the English countryside but are associated with the pre-industrial past

(Silver 10).²⁷ The Brontës' rural dwelling increased their access to fairy lore and its immediacy. Such stories are fundamentally local, as indicated by the title of a popular work of nineteenth-century folklore: Anna Eliza Bray's 1836 *Traditions, legends, superstitions, and sketches of Devonshire: on the borders of the Tamar and the Tavy, illustrative of its manners, customs, history, antiquities, scenery, and natural history, in a series of letters to Robert Southey, esq.* In oral form, these folk stories would often be prompted by the setting. One of Bray's letters in the above volume reports traveling with a friend in Tavy, being accompanied by a shepherd, and stumbling on a bog, which spurs the shepherd to tell stories of spirits and witches in the area (261). It is in this tradition that, in *Jane Eyre*, Rochester tells Adèle how he met Jane: "Adèle, look at that field...In that field, Adèle, I was walking late one evening about a fortnight since...when something came up the path....It was a fairy, and come from Elf-land, it said" (280). Even before Tabby's arrival, Charlotte knew something of fairy lore; a former nurse to the Brontës recalled a very young Charlotte insisting one day that she had seen a fairy by baby sister Anne's cradle. The fairy was nowhere to be seen when Charlotte returned to show an adult; "But she *was* here, just now!' she insisted. 'I really and truly did see her!'—and no argument or coaxing could shake her from the belief" (Sarah Garrs, qtd. in Harland 31).

Charlotte's juvenilia and mature novels are full of explicit allusions to *The Arabian Nights*, "Cinderella," "Bluebeard," and *Tales of the Genii*, as well as to fairies, brownies, and similar supernatural creatures. The Brontë children's fantasy worlds of Angria and Gondal are integrally based on Eastern stories of genii, whether the authentic (from *The Arabian Nights*) or

²⁷ Compare the title character's remark in *Shirley*, "When I was a very little girl, Mr. Moore, my nurse used to tell me of fairies being seen in that Hollow. That was before my father built the mill" (237). *Shirley* mentions an array of supernatural figures, including elves, goblins, Peris, Gorgons, mermaids, and witches, as well as a "contraband volume of Fairy-tales" (97, 179, 246, 470, 567).

imitative (from the British-penned *Tales of the Genii*) variety. The four children created “Chief Genius” avatars for themselves, named Brannii, Annii, and Emii, and Talii. As writers, they shaped these worlds like genii. Charlotte’s early writings, in particular, are peppered with references to fairies and their ilk. The Byronic hero of her Angria, the Duke of Zamorna, prefigures Rochester by likening women who interest him to fairies; he calls his mistress Caroline Vernon “my fairy” and a passing woman a “nymph” (Brontë, *Tales* 307, 183). Charlotte as narrator refers in the same stories to “fairy sandals” and “the fairy-like voice of a musical clock” (211, 212). She also alludes to specific tales, both of the eastern and western traditions. “I wish,” muses Caroline Vernon, “a fairy would bring me a ring or a magician would appear & give me a talisman like Aladdin’s lamp that I could get everything I want”; later, Caroline “is sitting moping by the hearth like Cinderella” (256, 303). On the whole, the Brontës’ juvenile writings are not fairy tales at all: they are primarily interested in the political and interpersonal entanglements of their main characters, who are unequivocally human and adult. As in Charlotte’s mature writings, allusions to fairies and fairy tales serve as illustrations and counterpoints. They are traditions of which the narrator and the characters are aware as they go through their daily lives. These allusions appear in some of the earliest and latest of Charlotte’s Angria writings, produced throughout the 1830s; all of her novels except *The Professor* contain at least one allusion to “Bluebeard.”

As an adult, Brontë habitually referred to fantastical beings metaphorically in her personal and published writings. A striking example is the group of letters Brontë wrote to various acquaintances while visiting London in 1851. She had several overwhelming sensory experiences, including a visit to the lavish Great Exhibition and two trips to the theatre to see the melodramatic actress Rachel (the inspiration for Vashti in *Villette*). Brontë’s letters about these

experiences allude profusely to the supernatural. For example, she calls the Great Exhibition “such a Bazaar or Fair as eastern Genii might have created. It seems as if magic only could have gathered this mass of wealth from all the ends of the Earth—as if none but supernatural hands could have arranged it thus—with such a blaze and contrast of colours and marvellous power of effect” (Barker 324.) Brontë describes the exhibition with the word “magic” again in a letter to Mrs. Joe Taylor written the same day (325). Of seeing the actress Rachel, she writes to Mrs. Joe Taylor that Rachel “and Thackeray are the two living things that have a spell for me in this great London”; to Ellen Nussey, “She is not a woman—she is a snake—she is the ---”; presumably the dashes stand in for “devil” (325, 328). To Dobell, she writes that Rachel is “I know not what, I think a demon....Fiends can hate, scorn, rave, wreath, and agonize as she does, not mere men and women” (328). Habitually, Brontë resorts to the supernatural to describe the marvelous, spectacular, and unsettling.

She employs such language for similar reasons in her published writings. Phyllis Ralph implicitly links the fairy tale to the *Bildungsroman* by pointing out that understanding the key to “Beauty and the Beast”—namely, the fact that the transformation of the Beast is less significant than the change in the young woman’s perception of him—“is important in understanding the growth of Jane Eyre and her evolving relationship with Edward Rochester. As Jane moves toward emotional and psychological maturity, she sees beyond Rochester’s bestial appearance and behavior to the human strengths and weaknesses beneath” (57). Ralph goes on to argue that “there are many surface references to fairies and other supernatural beings in *Jane Eyre*, but more significant is the underlying psychological meaning conveyed by the themes and patterns from the tales, especially that of the animal groom” (59). For Ralph, then, there is a common denominator between this novel and this fairy tale—one that is crucial to the novel but more

vivid in the fairy tale. Fairy-tale allusions and paradigms within novels like *Jane Eyre* thus bring complicated psychological and interpersonal issues into sharper relief. Asking “Is he a Beast figure or a Bluebeard figure?” is a concrete, vivid way of asking “Should I trust him? Should I stay with him?” These questions highlight a crucial difference between *Jane Eyre* and Anne Brontë’s *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall*: whereas *Tenant* clearly follows “Bluebeard” in that Helen Huntingdon absolutely cannot trust her husband, *Jane Eyre* encompasses a combination of “Bluebeard” and “Beauty and the Beast” in that Jane legitimately struggles to answer these questions about Rochester, and readers and critics are likely to answer them in conflicting ways (as, indeed, they do; the warring influences of these two fairy tales go some way to explaining scholarly disagreement).

Which fairy tale critics compare *Jane Eyre* to seems to depend on the level of specificity used. One calls it simply “a tale”; another, “a feminist fairytale”; still another, both “a Cinderella fable [and] a Bluebeard mystery” (Rich 227, Carlton-Ford 350, Tillotson 258). Offhand comparisons to “Cinderella” are ubiquitous in *Jane Eyre* criticism (see, for instance, Leavis, Introduction 143; Gilbert and Gubar 342; Benvenuto 212; and Miele 501, which also suggests the related “Donkeyskin”). This comparison simply recognizes the novel as a “rise tale,” to use fairy-tale scholar Ruth Bottigheimer’s term. Jane begins as a penniless orphan in a house with a hostile “stepmother” and equally hostile surrogate siblings, only to end as an heiress and the wife of a wealthy man. Robert Martin treats the fairy-tale world in general as crucial to the novel, deeming Jane “first a childhood Cinderella, then a Sleeping Beauty, a wife in Bluebeard’s castle, and finally Beauty wed to Beast, Rapunzel healing the prince” (94); unfortunately he does not develop any of these comparisons in much depth, pointing only to the most obvious evocations

of “Bluebeard” and “Beauty and the Beast” in particular (90, 92).²⁸ The few critics who have discussed the role of “Bluebeard” or “Beauty and the Beast” in the novel inexplicably treat it as an either-or proposition; only Maria Tatar has been willing to consider the possibility that both “Beauty and the Beast” and “Bluebeard” figure prominently in the mythical landscape of Brontë’s novel. I suspect that this is because of the weight critics tend to give to stories’ endings; because these two fairy tales have such different ones, it seems strange that both could have a profound structural affinity with the same *Bildungsroman*. This, though, is precisely what I am arguing.

Critics suspicious of Brontë’s happy ending eagerly point to the novel’s direct allusion to “Bluebeard.” Just before Jane first meets Rochester, Mrs. Fairfax takes her to the third story of Thornfield Hall as part of a tour of the house. Jane peers down the corridor and reflects that it “look[ed], with its two rows of small black doors all shut, like a corridor in some Bluebeard’s castle” (112). Then, for the first time, she hears the eerie laugh and is told that it must belong to Grace Poole. Not only do we learn here that Jane herself now looks at the house with “Bluebeard” in mind; the placement of the allusion right before Jane’s initial encounters with mystery, Bertha, and Rochester is crucial. But it is also odd. The logic of the sentence indicates that the rows of closed doors prompt the comparison; would it really have seemed strange for the doors of a (supposedly) little-used corridor to be closed in a large house with the master away? Furthermore, “Bluebeard” is not really about a series of closed doors; it is about one closed door. It is also fundamentally about the heroine’s being forbidden to enter that door. No one in *Jane Eyre*, master or servant, forbids Jane from entering Bertha’s space. Some critics contend that

²⁸ For additional mentions of *Jane Eyre*’s affinity with “Beauty and the Beast,” see Paula Sullivan, “Fairy Tale Elements in *Jane Eyre*,” *Journal of Popular Culture* 12.1 (Summer 1978): 61-74 and Elizabeth Imlay, *Charlotte Brontë and the Mysteries of Love*. New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1989.

Rochester follows Bluebeard in discouraging Jane's curiosity about the area even as he brings her right into it to tend Richard Mason. But more to the point, at the time Jane makes the novel's sole overt allusion to "Bluebeard," no stifling or rousing of curiosity has occurred. The comparison actually makes very little sense at the time of the action; it makes a great deal of sense, however, as part of the story that narrator-Jane is telling us. She assumes, reasonably, readerly familiarity with the fairy tale of mystery, danger, and former wives who have not yet gone away. The final element, of course, makes "Bluebeard" particularly applicable to Jane's story, but she makes the allusion before she realizes this. Narrator-Jane seems to be taking poetic license to create the proper atmosphere for her retrospective story.

The arrival of a young woman in an imposing house with an intimidating, suspicious master is equally evocative of "Bluebeard" and "Beauty and the Beast" (and of the Gothic novel, for that matter). It is long unclear whether Rochester will be a Bluebeard figure or a Beast figure. Jane herself, relatively early in their acquaintance, weighs his merits and faults, concluding, "I believed he was naturally a man of better tendencies, higher principles, and purer tastes than such as circumstances had developed, education instilled, or destiny encouraged. I thought there were excellent materials in him; though for the present they hung together somewhat spoiled and tangled" (154). The final phrase indicates that Jane recognizes in Rochester a combination of what I am calling Beast and Bluebeard qualities, even as she clearly wants to favor good intentions.

When Rochester asks Jane whether she finds him handsome and she frankly replies in the negative, many nineteenth-century readers would have been reminded of the very similar scene in "Beauty and the Beast"; Tatar maintains that Brontë intended a "conscious reprise" of the fairy tale (71). Over time, Jane and Rochester develop companionship through conversation and

Jane ceases to find him intimidating; this, too, echoes “Beauty and the Beast.” Jane has clearly learned Beauty’s lesson when Rochester asks her to use her fairy magic to make him handsome and she responds inwardly, “A loving eye is all the charm needed: to such you are handsome enough; or rather, your sternness has a power beyond beauty” (257). By this time, Jane has admitted to herself that she loves him for something beneath the gruff surface.

When, on their wedding day, Rochester is forced to reveal that he has a previous wife hidden in a chamber of the house, “Bluebeard” seems to have won decisively. But instead of following in Bluebeard’s footsteps by threatening the new object of his desire and earning his own death at the hands of her brothers, Rochester lives. Jane quits Thornfield with mixed feelings, as Beauty leaves the Beast in his castle. From this point on, “Beauty and the Beast” prevails. Like Beauty, Jane bides her time with her family and is nearly tempted away from Rochester forever. This happens to Jane twice, in fact; climactically, with the Rivers family, but also earlier, at the behest of the dying Mrs. Reed. The earlier episode is, at least on the surface, even more evocative of “Beauty and the Beast,” hinging as it does on the illness of an older relative, an unexpectedly extended sojourn, and a conversation between Jane and Rochester before her departure as to how long she will stay away. The supernatural call of distress that summons Jane back to Rochester after her second departure has an antecedent in some versions of “Beauty and the Beast” as well; in the Leprince de Beaumont version, for instance, Beauty sees in a dream that the Beast is near death because of her extended absence.

Although *Jane Eyre* contains no magical transformation from inhuman to human, it does feature a highly fortuitous event—the fire—that “transforms” Rochester from a married man and potential bigamist into an available widower. Even though his blindness and debility render him less physically attractive than before, this transformation still has the “Beauty and the Beast”

effect of fitting Rochester for marriage to the heroine. Jane notes, “in his countenance, I saw a change: that looked desperate and brooding,” in contrast to the strength he had always projected in the past (454). Rochester himself feels a shift: “of late...I began to experience remorse, repentance; the wish for reconciliation to my maker” (470-1). That the inner improvement comes at the price of a battered exterior poses no problem for Jane. Rochester expects rejection: “‘I thought you would be revolted, Jane, when you saw my arm and my cicatrized visage.’ ‘Did you? Don’t tell me so—lest I should say something disparaging to your judgment’” (460). Like Beauty, Jane loves Rochester despite his physical defects.

What are we to do, then, with these abundant similarities? Rowe, who finds the novel more evocative of “Beauty and the Beast” than of any other fairy tale, maintains that Brontë “tests the paradigm of fairy tale for her *Bildungsroman* and finds it lacking, precisely because it can give shape only to the child bride of Rochester, not to the substantial human being who is Jane Eyre” (71). To Rowe, the experiences of Jane and Rochester “are not awakenings in the fairy-tale sense, where instantaneous love allows one to live happily ever after; rather they are enlightened perceptions, hard-won within a real world where fallible humans must perforce exist” (87). But to equate all fairy tales with the instantaneous is to miss the integral point of “Beauty and the Beast,” which champions the opposite of “instantaneous love.” Beauty, the Beast, and the members of Beauty’s family are all “fallible humans,” and Beauty’s ordeal of leaving her home and beloved father to live with an unfamiliar creature of whom she is initially terrified absolutely earns her ultimate happiness the description of “hard-won.” In fact, the “paradigm of fairy tale” is not “lacking” at all if the fairy tale in question is “Beauty and the Beast”: because this fairy tale is precisely about the realization that one’s previously held perspective on the world should always be susceptible to change, Jane continues to operate

within it as she grows into a more mature and multifaceted understanding. Tatar cites Rowe but attributes to Jane not so much a graduation from fairy tales as a purposeful revision of them: “making productive use of fairy tales by reacting to them, resisting them, and rewriting them rather than passively consuming them and internalizing their values, Brontë’s *Jane Eyre* offers a map for reading our cultural stories and using them” (*Secrets* 73).

“Using” these cultural stories often involves combining them—as, indeed, many twentieth- and twenty-first-century stories do with “Bluebeard” and “Beauty and the Beast.”²⁹ *Jane Eyre* gestures toward this development by offering a central male figure who embodies elements of both Beast and Bluebeard. Critics who insist on viewing Rochester as entirely good or entirely bad are behind the times when it comes to the evolution of these stories. Although “straight” versions of both tales certainly still circulated in Brontë’s time, the incorporation of their themes into novels is multifaceted and complex. Part of the mystery of *Jane Eyre* is precisely whether Rochester will lean more toward Bluebeard or Beast, flitting as he does between the two throughout the novel. To say that Jane is “blind” to Rochester’s faults (as Anderson and even Tatar do, 119 and 74) and therefore participates in a reactionary “Beauty and the Beast” narrative or in a “Bluebeard” narrative with the wrong ending is incorrect because it only acknowledges part of the story. The point is not that Rochester “is” the Beast or “is” Bluebeard, but rather that he presents a combination of two story paradigms that suggest to Jane two very different responses; her dilemma, then, is to figure out how to translate what she has learned from fairy tales into her real-life, adult relationship with a mixed human being. Winifred Gérin sees this as fundamental: “above all, what distinguished Charlotte’s conception of the hero, both in her juvenilia and adult writing, was her acceptance of his moral imperfections”

²⁹ See, for example, *The Phantom of the Opera*, *King Kong*, and the Disney film *Beauty and the Beast*.

(89). Gérin attributes this acceptance to Brontë's early encounters with Byron's heroes and Milton's Satan, and, more acutely, to her deep love for her very morally imperfect brother, Branwell. The lesson of "Beauty and the Beast" is to love despite imperfection; the influence of "Bluebeard" in *Jane Eyre* ups the ante by adding moral to physical imperfection, but the resulting difference is of quantity, not quality.³⁰

Rochester's sliding between Beast and Bluebeard qualities contributes to a profusion in *Jane Eyre* of uncertain boundaries of self and other. Frequently, the characters and narrator-Jane deal with this uncertainty by resorting to language of supernatural beings. While this language is applied to many characters, it is most noticeably and frequently applied to Jane and Bertha. Critics typically focus on the differences between the varieties of figurative language used for Jane and for Bertha, reducing them to as Jane-as-fairy versus Bertha-as-demon. Indeed, Rochester frequently compares Jane to fairies, elves, and sprites, whereas Bertha is associated with vampires, called a "demon" and a "fearful hag," and accused of having a "goblin

³⁰ The exact kind of imperfection mattered a great deal to Brontë, as this 1848 letter to William Smith Williams shows: "the foundation of each character [Rochester and Huntingdon of *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall*] is entirely different. Huntingdon is a specimen of the naturally selfish sensual, superficial man whose one merit of a joyous temperament only avails him while he is young and healthy, whose best days are his earliest, who never profits by experience, who is sure to grow worse, the older he grows. Mr Rochester has a thoughtful nature and a very feeling heart; he is neither selfish nor self-indulgent; he is ill-educated, misguided, errs, when he does err, through rashness and inexperience: he lives for a time as too many other men live – but being radically better than most men he does not like that degraded life, and is never happy in it. He is taught the severe lessons of Experience and has sense to learn wisdom from them – years improve him—the effervescence of youth foamed away, what is really good in him remains – his nature is like wine of a good vintage, time cannot sour—but only mellows him. Such at least was the character I meant to portray.

"Heathcliff, again, of 'Wuthering Heights' is quite another creation. He exemplifies the effects which a life of continued injustice and hard usage may produce on a naturally perverse, vindictive and inexorable disposition. Carefully trained and kindly treated, the black gipsy-cub might possibly have been reared into a human being, but tyranny and ignorance made of him a mere demon. The worst of it is, some of his spirit seems breathed through the whole narrative in which he figures: it haunts every moor and glen, and beckons in every fir-tree of the 'Heights'" (Barker 203).

appearance” and a “familiar” (223, 297, 317, 299, 317).³¹ But supernatural beings were not so easily pigeonholed in the 1840s; it took much of the nineteenth century to solidify the opposition between words like “fairy” as good and like “goblin” as bad.³² When Rochester calls Jane a fairy, he does not only mean to praise her for being adorably petite. He is testifying to her strangeness, her ability to bewitch him, her alternation between granting and withholding physical affection, her seeming to stand for something that he desperately wants but doubts he can ever truly possess. It may sound pleasant when Rochester tells Adèle the story of his meeting Jane as a tale of fairy summons, but in most contemporary tales of being “pixy-led,” the human protagonist either dies or goes insane; the moral of these stories is that human beings cannot abide in Elfland. Five times, Rochester calls Jane the predominantly negative “thing,” which in the mid-nineteenth century could be used not only “in contempt or reproach, usu. suggesting unworthiness to be called a person,” but also, thanks to Brontë’s beloved Byron, “a particular supernatural or other dreadful monster” (*OED*, “Thing,” senses II.8e and II.10a). Jane refers to herself as a thing in relation to the Reeds: “they were not bound to regard with affection a thing that could not sympathize with one amongst them; a heterogeneous thing...a useless thing...a noxious thing” (*JE* 16). She therefore welcomes Rochester’s use of “thing” when she is trying to hold him off during their engagement: “I had rather be a *thing* than an angel” (275).

Furthermore, many identical or similar terms are used for both Jane and Bertha, and sometimes for Rochester as well. Rochester applies the word “creature” to Jane and Bertha two

³¹ Rochester’s conception of Jane as a fairy also resonates with the revelation in Madame de Villeneuve’s original “Beauty and the Beast” that Beauty had a fairy mother. Although Brontë may not have encountered this version, the connection between Jane-as-fairy and Jane-as-Beauty-figure nonetheless adds helpful complexity to our conception of Jane’s particular fairy status.

³² For a thorough discussion of this shift, see Molly Clark Hillard, “Dangerous Exchange: Fairy Footsteps, Goblin Economies, and *The Old Curiosity Shop*,” *Dickens Studies Annual* 35 (2005): 63-86.

times each (224, 298, 329, 335). He uses the term “monster” for Bertha and never for Jane, but Jane uses it on herself: “am I a monster?...is it impossible that Mr. Rochester should have a sincere affection for me?” (326, 278). Similarly, Rochester frequently characterizes himself as hideous and fears that Jane will be bothered by it; he also speculates that she refuses to dine with him because she “suppose[s] I eat like an ogre, or a ghoul” (283). He may call Jane a “shadow,” but he also characterizes his past wandering self as a “Will-o’-the-wisp” and his present self as a “devil” (257, 327, 305). When Rochester wakes to see Jane throwing water at him after Bertha has set his bed on fire, he asks, “In the name of all the elves in Christendom, is that Jane Eyre?...What have you done with me, witch, sorceress?” (156). Late in the novel, both Jane and Bertha are compared to witches by an outsider: Jane’s informant on the subject of the fire at Thornfield remarks that the servants claimed never to have seen anyone as much in love as Rochester had been with her, as if he had been “bewitched”; only a paragraph later, the same man deems Bertha “cunning as a witch” (450). Obviously the speaker intends opposing connotations, but his use of the same figure for both women nearly in the same breath is telling. Imagery of the supernatural other does not simply contrast Jane with Bertha; rather, it pervades the novel and actually muddles the distinctions among the central characters.

Plenty of critics have noted something odd in the relation between Jane’s actions and Bertha’s, although the characterizations of and explanations for this relation vary. Gilbert and Gubar, seminally, point out that Bertha acts as Jane’s “ferocious secret self,” always appearing in “associat[ion] with an experience (or repression) of anger on Jane’s part” (“Dialogue” 360). They make a compelling case for Bertha as an agent of Jane’s darker desires (consider the similar relationship between Orlick and Pip discussed in Chapter 1). But the subsequent profusion of postcolonial criticism on *Jane Eyre* has reminded critics to consider Bertha as more

than Jane's proxy. My response is not so much to raise Bertha's agency as to lower Jane's. The affinities between Bertha and Jane are legion, but one explanation for this lies with "Bluebeard." Critics have debated the "real" reason Jane leaves Rochester when she discovers the existence of Bertha. Early reviewers tended to applaud Jane's moral fortitude; on the other end of the spectrum, Pyrhönen claims that she fears Rochester and is delighted at the excuse to "escape" (5). Yeazell more reasonably maintains that "Victorian sexual morality and Christian dogma certainly influence the terms in which Jane defines her conflict, but not its essential nature. At the deepest level, Jane struggles to preserve the integrity and independence of the self....The identity she thought to have found as Rochester's wife has proved illusory" (248). I agree with Yeazell but mean something very specific by "preserv[ing] the integrity and independence of the self": Jane worries above all that Rochester will eventually abandon her if she accepts him on the same terms as the likes of Céline Varens. Toward the end of Rochester's self-justification speech, Jane arrives at "the certain inference, that if I were so far to forget myself and all the teaching that had ever been instilled into me, as...to become the successor of these poor girls, he would one day regard me with the same feeling which now in his mind desecrated their memory" (*JE* 329). To be the "successor" to a long line of cast-off women is precisely to find oneself in the midst of "Bluebeard," who killed his wives "l'une après l'autre" ("one after the other"; 129). Tatar holds that seeing the corpses as "Bluebeard's discarded lovers" is the most "likely" symbolic reading (64). Jane refuses to participate, just as she had refused during the proposal scene to "stay and become nothing" to a Rochester married to Blanche Ingram (265). Staying and becoming nothing is exactly what befell Bertha. Jane prefers to be at least something to herself ("respect myself," as she says [334]) than nothing to Rochester. Bertha is the strongest manifestation of Jane's liability to become a mere successor: Jane is "like" all the other women

who have been romantically involved with Rochester, but she is especially like Bertha. The frequently insisted-upon affinity with Bertha thus emphasizes that Jane is not unique at all.

This assertion of course departs from many critical assessments of *Jane Eyre*; Adrienne Rich, representatively, calls Jane “a woman who is *incapable* of saying *I am Heathcliff* (as the heroine of Emily’s novel does) because she feels so unalterably herself” (227). While the borders of selfhood are indisputably less porous in *Jane Eyre* than in *Wuthering Heights*, they are porous nonetheless. Jane certainly declares a desire to be a coherent, independent individual, but, as Marcus, Williams, and Chase have discussed, Jane frequently reports division within her own faculties. Early on, while being dragged to the Red Room after revolting against John Reed, she “was a trifle beside myself; or rather *out* of myself, as the French would say” (12). While Jane is not unusual in conceptualizing her inner struggles in terms of a conflict between, say, Reason and Feeling (the narrators of *The Professor* and *Villette* do the same), Chase points to a particularly drastic instance of this phenomenon. “When Jane first learns of Rochester’s previous marriage, she wonders how to respond: ‘But the answer my mind gave—“Leave Thornfield at once”—was so prompt, so dread, that I stopped my ears’ (ch. 27). What a telling formulation! she stops her ears so as not to hear her mind, as though her mind and she were different beings in different places” (Chase 74). Jane has an especially difficult time seeing herself as a bride. On the wedding morning, servant Sophie makes Jane look at herself in the mirror. “I saw a robed and veiled figure, so unlike my usual self that it seemed almost the image of a stranger” (300). Only a little later, preparing to quit Thornfield, Jane leaves behind the pearl necklace because “it was not mine: it was the visionary bride’s who had melted in air” (337).

This flexible and fragmented selfhood disposes Jane to take on the attributes of others. Jane is always in danger of becoming Bluebeard’s next wife—not only because she nearly stays

with Rochester, but also because she is the heroine of a *Bildungsroman*, which by definition makes her still in development. She models herself on the people around her; because of her desire for control and independence, though, she adopts aspects of these people only to discard many of them over time. Chase, nodding toward the extensive critical work on this topic, advises considering characters like serene Helen Burns, violent Bertha, and self-sacrificing St. John Rivers “not as parts of, or doubles for, Jane, but as *phases*, temporary and extreme manifestations” (73). Jane’s robust flight reflex and avowed trepidation about becoming a “successor” indicate a constant fear of absorbing too much from the people around her.

This fear, in addition to explaining why Jane leaves Rochester rather than become his mistress, also helps answer the difficult question as to why she returns to him when she does. “Because he is no longer married to Bertha” is not the answer, since Jane does not know of Bertha’s death when she returns to Thornfield. But two events have occurred by that time that distinguish Jane from Rochester’s wife and mistresses. One is the supernatural summons, which I will discuss in greater detail later. This uncanny communication is clearly a once-in-a-lifetime experience; Jane can safely assume that Rochester never had such an experience with any of his continental paramours. Second, Jane now differs from the other lovers because of having left Rochester rather than given in. She has distinguished herself by establishing a life apart from him, achieving professional, financial, and domestic stability along the way. Narrator-Jane never discusses what she would have done if Rochester had still been married when she returned; we can only speculate. But in terms of the “Bluebeard” plot, Jane’s task of saving herself is complete: whatever had happened after her return, she would not have been a mere “successor” indistinguishable from others in a long line of unfortunate predecessors.

Jane thus leaves “Bluebeard” for “Beauty and the Beast.” Whereas the former tale hinges

on the heroine's discovery that the master of the castle intends to place her in a lineage of victims, the latter progresses from her initial perception of immutable difference between her and that male figure to her realization of deeper affinity between them. Although Jane and Rochester get along better from the beginning than Beauty and the Beast do in most versions of the story, Jane still has reasons to feel categorically separate from Rochester. Both of them, in fact, fear that they are not physically attractive enough to tempt the other; this problem from the fairy tale of external "beastliness" thus plagues them both (even though Jane occupies the role of the character named "Beauty"). Jane, however, worries more about her relatively low social class, of which she is keenly aware due to both her upbringing with ungenerous Mrs. Reed and her awkward position as a governess at Thornfield. She commands herself to expect no love from Rochester: "keep to your caste" (171). Prior to his declaration of love, she assumes that despite their good rapport, her physical and financial shortcomings prevent his considering her a romantic possibility: "if God had gifted me with some beauty, and much wealth, I should have made it as hard for you to leave me, as it is now for me to leave you" (265-6).

But Jane clearly resents these external impediments as standing in the way of something deeper that ought to be regarded more highly: "wealth, caste, custom intervened between me and what I *naturally* and *inevitably* loved" (264; italics mine). Jane is keenly aware of whether or not she feels such sympathy with people; she feels none with her blood relatives the Reeds, for instance, nor does she believe Rochester feels any with his high-class guests: "he is not of their kind. I believe he is of mine....I feel akin to him,—I understand the language of his countenance and movements: though rank and wealth sever us widely, I have something in my brain and heart, in my blood and nerves, that assimilates me mentally to him" (184). Jane explicitly opposes the dicta of "rank and wealth" to the physical and mental compatibility she feels with

Rochester.

Rochester, too, feels “akin” to Jane; “I sometimes have a queer feeling with regard to you...as if I had a string somewhere under my left ribs, tightly and inextricably knotted to a similar string situated in the corresponding quarter of your little frame” (264). He calls her “my equal” and “my likeness”; “I love [you] as my own flesh” (267). This is strong language—and language which acts out what it declares, mirroring as it does Jane’s insistence earlier in the conversation that “I have as much soul as you, and full as much heart!...I am not talking to you now through the medium of custom, conventionalities, nor even of mortal flesh:--it is my spirit that addresses your spirit; just as if both had passed through the grave, and we stood at God’s feet, equal,--as we are!” (265, 266). Jane goes one better than Rochester in focusing on a spiritual communion, but they both grope for language to express their unconventional feelings.

Expression grows even more difficult in the episode of the “mysterious summons” (472). When Jane inexplicably hears Rochester calling her name across a great distance, she quickly acknowledges and dispels the possibility that “superstition” is the cause; “This is not thy deception, nor thy witchcraft: it is the work of nature. She was roused, and did—no miracle—but her best” (442). The following morning, Jane reflects that the voice “seemed in *me*—not in the external world”; it felt “like an inspiration” (444). These two remarks seem contradictory: how can the summons come from inside and yet be an inspiration, which has an external source? It helps to conceive of Jane as a fragmented subject, as her next comment encourages: “The wondrous shock of feeling had come like the earthquake which shook the foundations of Paul and Silas’s prison: it had opened the doors of the soul’s cell, and loosed its bands”; this feeling “vibrated thrice a cry on my startled ear, and in my quaking heart, and through my spirit; which neither feared nor shook, but exulted as if in joy over the success of one effort it had been

privileged to make, independent of the cumbrous body” (444). So, in the manner of Chase, I would rephrase thus: a shock of feeling liberates the soul from its bodily prison, and then cries to the ear, and the heart, and the soul, which is full of joy...because *it* had made the effort in the first place. It seems that the soul/spirit here frees itself, but Jane can only conceptualize the experience by considering her faculties as separate. The soul does not exit the doors of the bodily cell, nor are the bands broken; rather, the doors are opened and the bands are loosened, just enough for the soul to communicate with the rest of the being. It does not need release, only full communion among all parts of the self.

Like Jane, Rochester opens his account of the mysterious summons by warning, “You will think me superstitious,” only to add, “nevertheless, this is true—true at least it is that I heard what I now relate” (471). While Jane uses “work of nature” to insist on the deep reality of the experience, Rochester uses “true,” with the clarification that while he cannot account for anything outside himself, he can insist on the authenticity of his subjective experience. Again like Jane, Rochester “cannot tell whence the voice came” (471). But he hears her voice echoing and “could have deemed that in some wild, lone scene, I and Jane were meeting. In spirit, I believe, we must have met. You no doubt were, at that hour, in unconscious sleep, Jane: perhaps your soul wandered from its cell to comfort mine; for those were your accents—as certain as I live—they were yours!” (472). Rochester, too, conceives of Jane as divisible: it makes sense to him that even if she were asleep, her soul might have been alert and communing with him. He takes Jane’s figure of the “cell” one step further, believing that the soul actually exited those open doors. Rochester’s formulation also echoes his despair earlier in the novel upon seeing he would lose Jane after revealing Bertha: “Whatever I do with its cage, I cannot get at it—the savage, beautiful creature!...And it is you, spirit,...that I want: not alone your brittle frame”

(335). In this earlier episode, Rochester knew that he could overpower Jane's body but was in no position to hold sway over her spirit; now, the situation is reversed, since Jane is physically far away but her spirit seems to approach him.

"Beauty and the Beast" resolutely gives precedence to that which unexpectedly underlies the surface; this applies both to Jane and Rochester's sense of kinship and to the subordination of superficial realism to psychological "nature" and "truth" in Brontë's artistic vision. Yeazell astutely attempts to work out the relationship between "realism" and the episode of the "mysterious summons." She allows that the novel "is part fantasy," since "even the most conventionally romantic of readers could scarcely deny, of course, that midnight conversations between lovers many miles apart...are scarcely the stuff of which a realistic novel is made" (Yeazell 251, 240). But she takes seriously Jane's and Rochester's insistence on something "natural" or "true" about the inexplicable experience. Quoting from a letter Brontë wrote to George Henry Lewes after heeding his suggestion to read Jane Austen, Yeazell writes, "If an Austen novel, in Charlotte Brontë's terms, is 'more *real* than *true*,' *Jane Eyre* can be said to be 'more true than real.' For while the miraculous events which conclude this novel are scarcely realistic, they *are* 'true'—true to the internally consistent laws by which [Brontë's] world is governed...[this] truth is the truth of the psyche" (241). The word "real" here seems contingent on the external, the objectively verifiable—the prosaic drawing-room experiences that populate Jane Austen novels, for example (by which Brontë was far from impressed, unsurprisingly). Brontë seems to have a surface-depth model in mind when she faults Austen for losing sight of the "true" in her detailed treatment of the "real." In Yeazell's assessment, *Jane Eyre* is "part fantasy" because the mysterious summons amounts to an external event cooperating with the demands of the psyche: "The ultimate dream which *Jane Eyre* enacts is thus the dream of the

harmony between the individual psyche and the world which it confronts....this coincidence of inner and outer reality” (252). This is the happy ending: as signaled by Jane’s convoluted language, the inexplicable call comes from inside and outside at once, both an “inspiration” and the unshackling of the soul itself.

“Nature” thus connects two spheres: the internal as opposed to the conventional, and the literary quality that is related to but distinct from simple realism. Brontë designates “a faithful allegiance to Truth and Nature” as the primary task of an author; she aims to “study Nature herself” and “use the language of Truth in preference to the jargon of Conventionality” (Barker 202, 206). Lewes, despite his injunction to read Austen, understood this commitment to underlying truth, as his *Fraser’s* review of *Jane Eyre* demonstrates: “The book closed, the enchantment continues....Reality—deep, significant reality—is the great characteristic of the book. It *is* an autobiography, - not, perhaps, in the naked facts and circumstances, but in the actual suffering and experience” (691). Lewes subordinates the “facts and circumstances”—the trappings of a realist novel—to something more “actual” and “deep.” In almost the same breath, he attributes to *Jane Eyre* “enchantment” and “deep, significant reality,” only two sentences apart. Like the characters in the novel, he resorts to the language of the supernatural in attempting to access an inner reality not easily articulated in everyday language.

This brings us back, finally, to “Beauty and the Beast,” the “deep reality” of which is the acceptance of an improbable truth underlying a seemingly irreconcilable surface difference. After all Jane’s insistence on independence, “how is it possible for Brontë to picture the self as engaged with, but separate from, an other?” (Chase 85). The problem with “Bluebeard,” in addition to the obvious one, was that Jane would have lost any distinction from her predecessors. Yet by slipping into a “Beauty and the Beast” story, Jane fits herself into a fairy-tale model and

thus joins a long line of predecessors anyway. But it seems to be a kind of succession that does not bother her, rather like the sort of merged selfhood she comes to with Rochester that apparently leaves her just enough independence. Her sense of inherent kinship with him helps; instead of stepping out of herself and into a new role, she is returning to something deep-seated. He suits her “to the finest fibre of my nature,” she tells him at the end (470). Their marriage may not fit social norms, and the “mysterious summons” that reunited them may not fit conventional realist narration, but Jane insists to the end on a deeper justification. Chase has argued that the “governing presupposition” of Brontë’s juvenile tales is that “reality is tractable” (11). Clearly this presupposition extends to *Jane Eyre*. “Beauty and the Beast” not only outweighs “Bluebeard” in the content of the story; it also offers a way to consider the kind of realism operating in the novel itself. This fairy tale’s insistence on the value of the improbable but profoundly true makes it a productive intertext for *Jane Eyre* far beyond a list of plot similarities. Because the complex characters in this novel have markedly odd relationships to each other, looking beyond surface-level realism is necessary.

This necessity grows more urgent in addressing the even odder relationships that make up *Wuthering Heights*. We know less about Emily Brontë than we do about Charlotte; since she died younger and had less contact with the world outside Haworth Parsonage, she left far fewer personal writings. We can assume, however, given the tight-knit community of the Brontë children, that she had the same exposure to fairy tales and fairy lore as Charlotte. Like Charlotte’s early stories, Emily’s poetry contains scattered references to the supernatural—one calls to “my Fairy love,” another mentions “witching notes,” still another reads, “I know my mountain breezes / Enchant and soothe thee still....I know my magic power / To drive thy greifs away” (Gérin 305, *Tales* 411, 409-410). *Wuthering Heights* has no explicit fairy-tale references,

but lore surrounding fairies and other supernatural creatures pervades the novel. It essentially opens with a ghost story, after all, when Lockwood sees or dreams he sees the ghost of Catherine (I will follow the practice of the majority of critics in calling the mother Catherine and the daughter Cathy) and Heathcliff howls after her. Brontë demonstrates her familiarity with spirit lore with the sentence, “The spectre showed a spectre’s ordinary caprice; it gave no sign of being” (70). Fairies and related beings pop up metaphorically throughout the novel. Lockwood reacts to his encounter or dreamed encounter with Catherine’s ghost by declaring, “she must have been a changeling—wicked little soul” (69). Later, characteristically gauche, Lockwood says to Hareton when he mistakes Cathy for Hareton’s wife, “you are the favoured possessor of the beneficent fairy” (55). The devout servant, Joseph, leaves food out all night “for the fairies” (96). Cathy, on learning about the “fairy cave” at Penistone Crag, forms a vehement desire to “see where the goblin hunter rises in the marsh, and to hear about the *fairishes*,” Hareton’s country word for them (230).³³ Lockwood muses ruefully at the novel’s end, “What a realization of something more romantic than a fairy tale it would have been for Mrs Linton Heathcliff [namely Cathy], had she and I struck up an attachment!” (335). Rather like Pip in *Great Expectations*, ineffective and unwanted Lockwood figures himself as the hero of a fairy tale.

Fairies and fairy tales are native, then, to the world of *Wuthering Heights*. And quite early in prospective protagonist Catherine Earnshaw’s life, she is essentially cast as Beauty of “Beauty and the Beast.” Just as in the fairy tale, as several critics have noticed, her father goes on a journey after asking his children to name gifts for him to bring back. And like Beauty’s father,

³³ Seemingly related to this catalogue of fairies and their ilk is the fact that Nelly sings a song called “Fairy Annie’s Wedding” (339). But Colin Wilcockson’s research turned up no song of that name; he found instead a song called “Fair Annie” that is thematically appropriate to the later part of the book. Wilcockson thus suggests that “‘Fairy Annie’ was a misprint in the first edition” of *Wuthering Heights*. See Wilcockson, “‘Fair(y) Annie’s Wedding’: A Note on *Wuthering Heights*” in *Essays in Criticism* 33.3 (July 1983): 259-61.

Mr. Earnshaw goes on to encounter unexpectedly a figure who will turn out to be something of a beast. But the fairy-tale pattern is altered early on: instead of bringing this beast back to the home only figuratively, Mr. Earnshaw does so literally. Heathcliff, the *enfant sauvage*, meets with the suspicion and dislike to be expected for a Beast figure. But this potential “Beauty and the Beast” story lacks the central tension of the fairy tale: the need for the heroine to progress from initial repulsion to sympathy to love. Catherine takes to Heathcliff almost instantly and insists far more vehemently than Beauty on her kinship with him (and in much more extreme terms, as I will discuss later). After years of unquestioned companionship, Catherine learns to find this Beast inadequate as a (human, marriageable) man when she has her first real encounter with the glitter of more refined civilization.³⁴ Then comes a marriage proposal, but not from the Beast: from the ostensibly more human male rival, who inadvertently prompts Catherine to consider and reject the alternative of marriage to Heathcliff before he has even asked.³⁵ The rest is history: Catherine marries Edgar Linton, and Catherine and Heathcliff spend the rest of their lives in states of comparative unhappiness.

But the story continues: unusually for a stand-alone Victorian novel, *Wuthering Heights* spans the childhood and adulthood of two separate generations. In the second generation, one story actually feels like “Beauty and the Beast”: that of Cathy and Hareton. Hareton is a combination of Frankenstein’s monster (deliberately raised as he is into brutishness by a

³⁴ I say this acknowledging what several critics have pointed out: the fact that Thrushcross Grange is hardly Buckingham Palace, but at least a notch above *Wuthering Heights* on the scale of refinement.

³⁵ Gose suggests that Catherine has trouble choosing “which kind of fairy tale she is participating in.” After a childhood of “Beauty and the Beast,” she discovers Thrushcross Grange as a palace which she could enter as queen and decides she wants to change tales. In Gose’s estimation, she could do this if she had not committed herself to being Beauty; “but she has committed herself, has so already bound up her identity with Heathcliff’s that she can choose a destiny demanding another identity only at the cost of splitting her nature” (65).

Heathcliff seeking revenge on Hareton's father, Hindley) and Beast. A servant deems him "not bad-natured, though he's rough" (246). Lockwood patronizingly praises, "the fellow is as handsome a rustic as need be seen" (330). Like the Beast, he has come into a harsh exterior through someone else's agency, but evidence of gentler qualities occasionally emerges. Cathy does not meet Hareton until she is thirteen; when she does, ever-present servant and narrator Ellen Dean (Nelly) finds her "perfectly at home, laughing and chattering" to him (228). This, however, is before she knows his identity; when Nelly identifies him as her cousin, she weeps, looking at Hareton "with a glance of awe and horror" and turning her attention in the following days to the impending arrival of the presumably more refined Linton Heathcliff, whom she deems "her 'real' cousin" (231, 234). Like Pip with Magwitch, Cathy becomes repulsed by Hareton after learning her intimate connection with him. On Cathy's next visit to Wuthering Heights, Heathcliff stages a reprise of the "Beauty and the Beast" "do you find me handsome?" exchange (as we saw in *Jane Eyre*). "Is he not a handsome lad?" Heathcliff asks Cathy, at which point "The uncivil little thing stood on tiptoe, and whispered a sentence in Heathcliff's ear"; Heathcliff laughs and reports "'She says you're a—what was it? Well, something very flattering'" (252).

Once Cathy comes to live at Wuthering Heights after having married and been widowed by Linton, the Beauty-and-the-Beast-style relationship between the two cousins takes off. At first, Cathy screams at Hareton when he tries to touch her and mocks his attempts to learn to read, calling him a "brute" and comparing his behavior to that of a "dog" or a "cart-horse" (333, 341). But after Nelly reproaches Cathy for her rudeness, she apologizes to Hareton and makes friends with him by way of a kiss and an amicable reading lesson. Nelly helps the friendship along by commenting, "it would make you another man, to have her for a companion" (344).

This statement, reminiscent of “Beauty and the Beast,” turns out to be prophetic; “the enemies were, thenceforth, sworn allies” (345). As in the fairy tale, the *rapprochement* takes time; Nelly narrates to Lockwood, “The intimacy thus commenced, grew rapidly; though it encountered temporary interruptions. Earnshaw was not to be civilized with a wish, and my young lady was...no paragon of patience”; ultimately, though, Hareton’s “honest, warm, and intelligent nature shook off rapidly the clouds of ignorance and degradation in which it had been bred; and Catherine’s sincere commendations acted as a spur to his industry. His brightening mind brightened his features, and added spirit and nobility to their aspect—I could hardly fancy it the same individual” as before (346, 351-2). And so the second-generation Beast is transformed into a civilized man, living with the beauty happily ever after.

It would be pleasant to argue that, ergo, *Wuthering Heights*, like *Jane Eyre*, may be read as a triumphant “Beauty and the Beast” story. But anyone who has read *Wuthering Heights* knows that this is wrong, no matter what the last chapter of the novel relates. Of course, responsible critics should not neglect the second half of the novel. But Catherine and Heathcliff linger in readers’ minds longer than Cathy and Hareton do; their bizarre, problematic, unhappy relationship is undeniably more striking.³⁶ *Wuthering Heights* has no *Jane Eyre*—no single organizing consciousness. True, Nelly and Lockwood are present throughout the novel insofar as they are narrating it, but obviously the story is not primarily about either of them. It cannot be primarily about Catherine Earnshaw, either, given that she exits the novel so early (even though she remains a haunting presence). The best candidate for primary focus is Heathcliff. Of the major players in the Earnshaw-Linton drama, only he is present in both stages of the novel. Brontë invites the reader to pay attention to him by obscuring his origins, giving no clues

³⁶ This is as true of critics as of other readers; the overwhelming majority of writing on *Wuthering Heights* prioritizes the first generation.

whatsoever as to his three-year absence of social advancement, and rousing a maddening combination of sympathy and horror for his actions.

So if Heathcliff is the focus of the story, what story is it? Is he the hero, the villain? Isabella goes so far as to ask, “Is Mr Heathcliff a man?....I beseech you to explain, if you can, what I have married” (173). The abundance of comparisons of Heathcliff to malevolent supernatural creatures suggests an unfavorable answer. Mr. Earnshaw introduces child Heathcliff to the family by saying, “you must e’en take it is a gift of God; though it’s as dark almost as if it came from the devil” (77). The comparisons only get worse. Nelly and Isabella, at different points, compare his eyes to “fiends”; Hindley calls Heathcliff both a “fiend” and a “hellish villain” (97, 217, 175). Nelly insists some of the time that Heathcliff is “a human being” (209), but in the end he looks to her like a “goblin”; “Is he a ghoul, or a vampire?...I had read of such hideous, incarnate demons” (359). Even Catherine compares him to Satan in anticipation of how he would treat Isabella once married to her (151). After that marriage, Isabella has the greatest interest in identifying his nature; she runs through a number of possibilities. “Is Mr Heathcliff a man? If so, is he mad? And if not, is he a devil?” she asks (173). Soon she is far more certain; she calls him “incarnate goblin,” “monster” “a tyrant,” possessing a “diabolical” forehead and “basilisk” eyes (208, 209, 214, 215). Even though she sees in his face one day “an expression of unspeakable sadness,” she still concludes, “He’s not a human being” (215, 209). Talking to Nelly about Heathcliff’s desperation at the death of Catherine, Isabella insists, “I was not going to sympathise with him—the brute beast!” (207). One could not ask for a statement in starker contradiction to “Beauty and the Beast”: Isabella sees that there is feeling beneath Heathcliff’s rough exterior, but she keeps her distance from him. His behavior toward her has been too Bluebeard-like for her to be able to forgive him and align herself with him. Interestingly, years

later it will be young Cathy—the only possible Beauty figure—who says, “Mr Heathcliff, you’re a cruel man, but you’re not a fiend” (307). Cathy has her problems with Heathcliff, but she is one of the very few people in the novel who do not connect him with evil supernatural figures.

Charlotte Brontë, in her 1850 Preface to *Wuthering Heights*, declares Heathcliff “unredeemed,” underscoring her feeling as usual with reference to the supernatural: he is “a man’s shape animated by demon life—a Ghoul—an Afreet” (40; an “Afreet” is a supernatural creature common in *The Arabian Nights*). Critics initially followed Brontë’s lead; the 1848 *Atlas* review calls Heathcliff an “evil genius” and a “tyrant,” while the 1851 *Eclectic Review* similarly lands on “a perfect monster, more demon than human” (both reviews in Norton critical edition of *Wuthering Heights* 283, 354). E.P. Whipple, writing for the *North American Review* in 1848, calls Heathcliff a “brute-demon” and “deformed monster” more reprehensible than Goethe’s Mephistopheles, Milton’s Satan, and Dickens’s Quilp and Squeers (Whipple 300-1). As early as 1887, though, a commentator in *Temple Bar* allows that Heathcliff may be seen as “a psychological mystery, as lover, as villain, or as all three characters combined in his proper person” (J.F. 37).

Twentieth- and twenty-first-century criticism predominantly follows this track, identifying Heathcliff as a composite of “hero” and “villain” qualities. Representatively, Arnold Kettle’s seminal 1951 essay asserts that “Heathcliff becomes a monster: what he does...is cruel and inhuman beyond normal thought,” but “despite everything he does and is, we continue to sympathize with Heathcliff—not, obviously, to admire him or defend him, but to give him our inmost sympathy, to continue in an obscure way to identify ourselves with him *against* the other characters,” because “Brontë convinces us that what Heathcliff stands for is morally superior to what the Lintons stand for” (Kettle 195, 195-6, 194). Certainly, Brontë does not present a world

perfect but for the intrusion of Heathcliff; the Lintons are childish and rude, Hindley is a brute, Nelly is often insensitive, and Catherine treats Heathcliff abominably. It may be going too far to maintain that Heathcliff is more sinned against than sinning, but he was at any rate sinned against before sinning. He explicitly states that his intention has been retribution against his “old enemies...to revenge myself on their representatives” (Brontë 353). These enemies, of course, are all those who tried to separate him from Catherine (including, to some extent, Catherine herself). And Brontë certainly presents such a separation as wrong; whatever one says about the nature and advisability of the bond between Catherine and Heathcliff, it is unquestionably deep-seated, and the motives of those who try to sever it are petty and superficial. To some extent, Catherine and Heathcliff’s feeling of underlying connection despite external social barriers resembles the relationship between Jane and Rochester.

But ultimately, is Heathcliff a Beast figure or a Bluebeard figure? At the beginning of the novel, he certainly seems like a Beast figure—a good-hearted but rough boy sneered at by almost all others except for one girl who aligns herself with him. But when that story falls through, he begins to take after Bluebeard. He tortures his wife, nearly kills her dog, behaves with indifference toward his child, and imprisons Cathy and Nelly for days, to name a few of his most egregious interpersonal actions. He also sounds like Bluebeard when he comments on those actions: “The more the worms writhe, the more I yearn to crush out their entrails! It is a moral teething, and I grind with greater energy, in proportion to the increase of pain” (189). Thus, the Beast *manqué* turns into Bluebeard after Beauty rejects him. Charlotte Brontë says as much in an 1848 letter to William Smith Williams: “Carefully trained and kindly treated, the black gipsy-cub might possibly have been reared into a human being, but tyranny and ignorance made of him a mere demon” (Barker 203). And so a Beast figure might look at a Bluebeard figure and say,

“there but for the grace of God go I”; Heathcliff’s misfortune is that Catherine refuses the Beauty role. In the traditional fairy tale, Bluebeard’s diabolical actions are given no rationalizing backstory; Heathcliff gains sympathy by being shown to have preferred a different path.

Meanwhile, as in *Jane Eyre*, Heathcliff is not the only character to be discussed in unfavorable supernatural terms. Hindley notes that Hareton screams when he sees him “as if I were a goblin” (114). Heathcliff, tortured by how much Cathy’s eyes resemble her mother’s, asks Cathy, “What fiend possesses you to stare back at me, continually, with those infernal eyes?” (348). Even the supposedly gentle Linton lashes out when Hareton shuts him in the kitchen: “‘If you don’t let me in I’ll kill you!’ he rather shrieked than said. ‘Devil! devil! I’ll kill you, I’ll kill you!’,” prompting Joseph to laugh and comment, “‘That’s father! We’ve allus summut uh orther side in us” (283). Linton thus simultaneously calls Hareton a devil and reveals the violent tendencies of his father. Heathcliff receives more such name-calling than anyone else, but still, he represents an extreme manifestation of something more general.

Despite the characters’ and narrators’ repeated attempts to distance themselves from Heathcliff by calling him a demon or a ghoul, it is in fact nearly impossible to identify an entirely unique characteristic or action of Heathcliff’s. Our first clue to Heathcliff’s non-uniqueness is the fact that even the name “Heathcliff” originally belonged to someone else: an Earnshaw son who had died (78). Surprisingly, it is not Heathcliff but Hareton, the novel’s eventual gentle “hero,” who one day casually hangs a litter of puppies (217). Heathcliff tortures other people; so does Hindley (who pushes a knife between Nelly’s teeth and terrorizes Hareton [114]). He comes to the house as an outsider and is given a family name; so does Hindley’s wife, Frances (as she comes to Wuthering Heights and takes the name “Earnshaw”). He prefers roaming on the moors to civilized life; so does Catherine, and to some extent Hareton and Cathy

as well. He plots revenge; so does Hindley. He marries someone he does not love and causes that person unhappiness; so does Catherine. True, his versions of these actions exceed those of other characters in quantity, but they really do not in quality.

Throughout the novel, then, Heathcliff's situation and behavior are extreme but not unique. Arguments that Heathcliff actually makes a pact with the devil during his three-year absence (Thormählen), that he "might *really* be a demon" (van Ghent 154), or that he literally turns into a werewolf (Piciucco 223), provocative as these suggestions are, unduly limit the problem to Heathcliff.³⁷ Heathcliff's non-uniqueness is a key tenet of the 1887 *Temple Bar* writer's argument for the realism of *Wuthering Heights*. Because Heathcliff "is in complete harmony with his surroundings," the reader must accept him as "not at all unreal—no chimera, but a very present and very astounding reality" (J.F. 37). Indeed, while Heathcliff certainly seems larger than life at times, there is nothing truly implausible or unique about his behavior. Despite the novel's strangeness, it is difficult to argue that it is fundamentally non-realist. A few early critics, such as those of the *Britannia* and *Eclectic Review*, insisted that nothing natural or true could be found in the novel, but even in Brontë's time, reviewers saw something realistic in spite of themselves. The anonymous reviewer for *The Leader* wrote, "The visions of madmen are not more savage, or more remote from ordinary life....And yet, although there is a want of air and light in the picture we cannot deny its truth; sombre, rude, brutal, yet true" (Anonymous, *Wuthering* 32). A similar attempt to have one's cake and eat it too came from the 1848 *Atlas* review:

A more natural unnatural story we do not remember to have read. Inconceivable as are the combinations of human degradation which are here found...the

³⁷ Henry Staten has recently pointed out that "as a child Heathcliff is the only one of the Earnshaw children (including Nelly) we never see commit a violent act" (141).

vraisemblance is so admirably preserved...[that] when we lay aside the book it is some time before we can persuade ourselves that we have held nothing more than imaginary intercourse with the ideal creations of the brain. The reality of unreality has never been so aptly illustrated. (Norton edition 283)

This reviewer locates Brontë's talent precisely in creating the illusion of reality while telling an implausible story. Later critics including Leo Bersani, J. Hillis Miller, and Barbara Hardy have also commented on the coexistence in *Wuthering Heights* of a sense of the supernatural with an unimpeachable realism. Bersani observes that "there is always a realistic 'out' for the extravagances of *Wuthering Heights*" (210); Miller, that "in spite of its many peculiarities...it is, in its extreme vividness of circumstantial detail, a masterwork of 'realistic' fiction" (42). Hardy, too, notes the realism in the "solid portrayal of environment," but she also points out that "the supernatural... does not have to be accepted as part of the action. Its reality is left tentatively in doubt, within the area of folk-superstition and dreams. As in real life, the ghosts appear in dreams or abnormal states of consciousness" (77, 59). Hardy contends that Emily Brontë's "use of fantastic material" is "more realistic" than Charlotte's because whereas the ending of *Jane Eyre* is facilitated by a supernatural event (the "mysterious summons" previously discussed), "in *Wuthering Heights* none of the supernatural 'activity' has this kind of influence on the action" (58). The supernatural is not a given according to an omniscient narrator (or near-omniscient narrator like Jane Rochester); rather, the narration of *Wuthering Heights* shows the characters experiencing the world through the lens of received superstitious beliefs and using the distancing language of the supernatural as a coping strategy for explaining horrible things like Heathcliff's behavior.

There is, admittedly, something uncanny about the fact that although Heathcliff seems to

occupy the place of the outsider, he also seems to have always already belonged at Wuthering Heights. It is paradoxically “the stranger Heathcliff who is most closely associated with the moors around Wuthering Heights. . . . Heathcliff is an intruder into the household at the Heights, but he belongs to the place” (Bersani 211). The change in his financial condition over time indisputably increases the control he can exercise over the property, but his simultaneously inevitable and intrusive presence there is more deep-seated than that. The novel’s title points directly to this issue, as Vine notes: according to the *OED*, the word “wuther” means both “an attack, onset; a smart blow, or stroke” and “to tremble, shake, quiver.” The disturbance could come from the outside or from the inside—like Jane Eyre’s “mysterious summons,” a wuthering can feel externally and internally motivated at the same time. “If Wuthering Heights wuthers, there can be no stable distinction between the inside and outside of Heathcliff’s dwelling; for, according to the logic of the wuther, the difference between interior and exterior, attack and convulsion, becomes indeterminate as the exterior enters in and as the within comes to share the properties of the without” (Vine 340). In this way, Heathcliff can feel like an intruder and a native—preternatural and akin everyone else—at the same time.

These impossible boundaries between inside and outside, self and other, are the backdrop for the bizarre declarations of affinity that Catherine and Heathcliff make. Heathcliff declares after her death, “I *cannot* live without my life! I *cannot* live without my soul!” (204); Catherine, for her part, comments, “he’s more myself than I am” and “I *am* Heathcliff” (121, 122). It’s worth adding to these oft-quoted lines a few more: Catherine maintains that “it would degrade me to marry Heathcliff now” but also, a sentence later, “whatever our souls are made of, his and mine are the same”; and finally, “my love for Heathcliff resembles the eternal rocks beneath—a source of little visible delight, but necessary. . . he’s always, always in my mind—not as a

pleasure...but as my own being” (121, 122). It is clear from these statements that the lack of “visible delight” and the threat of “degradation” in marrying Heathcliff coexist with but are subordinate to the deep-seated kinship between Catherine and Heathcliff. For Catherine, the external operates on such a completely different plane that she believes she can do anything—even marry Edgar—without compromising the underlying affinity. But Catherine is wrong. In a conversation after her marriage to Edgar, she accuses Heathcliff of being “too prone to covet your neighbour’s goods: remember, *this* neighbour’s goods are mine”; Heathcliff replies, “If they were *mine*, they would be none the less that” (145). At this point, Heathcliff still thinks of them as one person, but Catherine does not. Heathcliff later accuses Catherine on her deathbed of having killed herself because she “parted” them (197). Their subsequent discussion nearly baffles comprehension as to whether they broke each other’s hearts or their own, killed each other or themselves.

Many critics have discussed the haziness of the division between self and other in *Wuthering Heights*. Clayton, gesturing toward Lacan, suggests that Catherine and Heathcliff’s “union might...be compared to the narcissistic state in which the boundaries between self and other have not yet been established” (92). Napier identifies the problem of defining boundaries in general as “central” to the novel, and “not confined to Heathcliff” (95, 101). Bersani maintains that the novel “violently reject[s]...assumptions about the natural or inevitable shape of the self...[here] we no longer have coherent, individuated, intelligible structures of personality; in a sense, we no longer even have a locatable self” (189-90). It was difficult enough to demarcate boundaries of the self in *Jane Eyre*; compared to *Wuthering Heights*, though, Charlotte Brontë’s work seems quite straightforward. Strangely, though, with the arguable exception of Hareton, we do not see the characters undergo substantial transformation. Heathcliff’s change happens

offstage and is all external anyway; “we are told that during a three-year’s absence Heathcliff miraculously changed and then reappeared, still savage at heart, bearing all the outward and visible signs of a gentleman. Yet this change itself must take place outside the province of literature....what may not be brought into the open, in this case, is the very transformation that makes other novels so gratifying” (Armstrong 395). If we consider Heathcliff the most important character in the novel, then this is almost a grotesque of “Beauty and the Beast.” Similarly, whereas Jane Eyre constantly imitates others and incorporates parts of them into herself, Catherine seems impervious to real change except for her discovery of fashion at Thrushcross Grange. Torgerson points out that whereas Charlotte Brontë often uses illness to signify “moral growth or psychological transformation within a character,” Emily Brontë’s characters “remain psychologically unchanged....The psychological essence of each is static in this highly tumultuous novel” (90). Rather than learning from their experiences and ultimately landing in their proper places in the world, the characters in *Wuthering Heights* run endlessly in circles. This novel thus fundamentally differs from the traditional fairy tale and, for that matter, from the *Bildungsroman*.

Instead of the transformation and self-fashioning characteristic of *Jane Eyre* and “Beauty and the Beast,” *Wuthering Heights* features pervasive repetition and enclosure within an exaggeratedly confined linguistic and nominal structure; the whole novel might as well be taking place inside Bluebeard’s forbidden chamber, every character as indistinguishable from every other as the murdered wives. Supposedly individual selves and events seem obsessively to repeat in other people at other times. “Everyone is finally related to everyone else, and, in a sense, repeated in everyone else” (Bersani 202); this is one reason Heathcliff cannot be considered uniquely villainous with respect to other characters. Furthermore,

If these affiliations and resemblances disperse individual identities [201] in *Wuthering Heights* (each character is, genealogically and/or psychologically, present in other characters), they also tend to enclose experience within a circle of repetitions...the novel examines both a threat to the family from something outside it and the familial strategies for transforming life into an uninterrupted repetition of the same. (Bersani 200-1)

Repetitions and resemblances exist, as Bersani hints, on several levels in the novel. Most obvious is heredity; although Nelly identifies Cathy as gentler than her mother, she delineates several ways in which she takes after her maternal and paternal predecessors, both physically and behaviorally. Both Cathy and Hareton have precisely the same eyes as Catherine, according to both Nelly and Heathcliff. Nelly once takes Hareton for his father. But the novel's interpersonal repetitions transcend biological explanation. Hareton, for example, clearly functions as a descendant or repetition of Heathcliff, despite being biologically unrelated to him. Of course, this is not just a rehearsal of Goethe's *Elective Affinities*, in which a child takes after not his parents but the man and woman they each secretly love at the time of his conception. It is partly attributable to Heathcliff's stated intention of raising Hareton by treating him as cruelly as Hindley had treated the boy Heathcliff: "we'll see if one tree won't grow as crooked as another, with the same wind to twist it!" (222). Indeed, by the end of the novel, Heathcliff admits, "Hareton seemed a personification of my youth, not a human being" (353). His relationship to Hareton is not unlike that of Magwitch to Pip or, even more aptly, Miss Havisham to Estella in *Great Expectations*. The young charge affords an opportunity to exact a kind of revenge or reparation; members of the older generation see the younger generation as an opportunity to try again. One could argue that *Wuthering Heights* as a whole operates on this principle: the failed

relationship between Catherine and Heathcliff is given gentler and happier form in the *rapprochement* between Cathy and Hareton.

Repetitions or alternate test cases of sorts occur throughout the novel, not only between the major pairs. Hindley and Heathcliff both remain absent from Wuthering Heights for three years, for instance. Nelly says of Hindley's wife, Frances, "What she was, and where she was born, he never informed us" (86); the same uncertainty surrounds Heathcliff's introduction to Wuthering Heights in the arms of Mr. Earnshaw. Neither intruder fares very well at the Heights, although Heathcliff certainly survives longer. Catherine's death offers two juxtapositions. Nelly reflects that whereas Hindley responds to the loss of his wife by terrorizing his child and attempting to drink himself to death, Edgar responds to the loss of his by devoting himself to his daughter: "I used to draw a comparison between him, and Hindley Earnshaw, and perplex myself to explain satisfactorily, why their conduct was so opposite in similar circumstances" (219). Meanwhile, when Nelly states that Edgar "was too good to be thoroughly unhappy long. *He* didn't pray for Catherine's soul to haunt him: Time brought resignation" (219), her emphasis on "he" is clearly intended to recall Heathcliff's prayer to that effect. In Freudian terms, Edgar is able to mourn productively for Catherine and then move on because he can conceive of himself as existing apart from her, whereas Heathcliff is a Freudian melancholic: not surprisingly, he never ceases to feel the loss of Catherine as a loss of part of himself.

Finally, to some extent Thrushcross Grange and Wuthering Heights mirror each other. They stand geographically as an identically isolated pair. At the beginning of the novel, the families match structurally: mother, father, son, and daughter. Even within each family, each generation has two people, one of each gender. A comparison to Noah's ark after the flood would not be out of place. Undeniably, what disturbs this symmetry is Heathcliff. But he comes

not of his own accord or by chance but by the deliberate choice of Mr. Earnshaw. Heathcliff's arrival reveals that the family's united front was not so united after all, since one of the members felt compelled to bring in an outsider. Moreover, the original structure is itself repeated by the end of the novel. The two boy-girl pairs from the earlier generation have been slimmed down to one Linton and one Earnshaw, presumably setting out to live together at least in harmony, if not in unabated joy. Thus, even though Heathcliff's arrival disturbed the marital exchange that was very likely to take place between the Lintons and Earnshaws, his departure opens the field for what looks like a similar result. Lockwood himself is a sort of failed repetition of Heathcliff, dolefully musing that he might have come in and taken young Cathy. If anything, then, the Earnshaw-Linton family is more resistant to outsiders at the end of the novel than at the beginning.

With good reason has Armstrong called the world of the novel a "historical cul-de-sac" (392). The available options for names and actions seem unusually finite, circumscribed most prominently by those of the preceding generation. But perhaps the most striking instance of repetition in *Wuthering Heights* is Heathcliff's impression, intensified toward the end, that Catherine is repeated in everything and everyone he sees. It is natural enough that Cathy rouses "maddening sensations" and that Hareton "awakens, or embodies" a host of "past associations" for Heathcliff; Nelly observes in the same scene that Cathy and Hareton both have Catherine's eyes (352, 353). She was their mother and aunt, after all. But Heathcliff continues,

what does not recall her? I cannot look down to this floor, but her features are shaped on the flags! In every cloud, in every tree—filling the air at night, and caught by glimpses in every object, by day I am surrounded with her image! The most ordinary faces of men, and women—my own features mock me with a

resemblance. The entire world is a dreadful collection of memoranda that she did exist, and that I have lost her! (353)

To Heathcliff, everything stands for Catherine. To some extent he resembles Pip insisting to Estella in *Great Expectations*, “You have been in every line I have ever read...in every prospect I have ever seen since—on the river, on the sails of the ships, on the marshes, in the clouds, in the light, in the darkness, in the wind, in the woods, in the sea, in the streets” (272). But, as Miller points out, what Heathcliff sees in everything is a sign not exactly of Catherine, but of “the infinite distance between Heathcliff and Catherine” (66). He finally hesitates to exact his revenge because even though it is appealing to destroy the reminders of his separation from Catherine, he hates to destroy anything that reminds him of Catherine in any way. “To leave these signs in existence is to be tormented by the absence they all point to, but of which they also block the filling. To destroy them is to be left with nothing, not even with any signs of the fact that Cathy once existed and that he has lost her” (Miller 66). According to Miller, Heathcliff is in this bind because “the standard behind the system [Catherine] has vanished” (66). Whether Heathcliff preserves or destroys the remaining signs in the system makes no difference; it no longer makes any sense to talk about distance between him and Catherine because she does not exist at all.

A productive way to consider this impasse is to resort to Lacan. Following the method of Clayton, I will not attempt here a full rehearsal of Lacanian psychoanalysis; rather, I will consider a selection of Lacanian concepts as useful paradigms for considering some of the stranger aspects of *Wuthering Heights*.³⁸ To begin with, Lacan refers to people as “subjects”

³⁸ Mine is not the first Lacanian reading of *Wuthering Heights*. Some predecessors I do not quote because their attempts are untrue to the spirit of Lacan or of Brontë (simply designating Heathcliff as a stand-in for the Law of the Father, for instance, which is nonsensical).

because he characterizes a person as fundamentally subjected to a structure of kinship and language that precedes and overpowers the individual. He offers a system of three “orders”: the Real, the Imaginary, and the Symbolic. He envisions two distinct “cuts” of subjection, the first of which is subjection through the signifier to the law of language. Language cuts a subject off from the Real, forcing the subject to use “the world of words [to] create the world of things” (“Function” 229). This realm of language is the Symbolic order. Synonymous with the Symbolic is what Lacan calls the “Other”—the “big Other,” as opposed to the lowercase-o “others,” referred to as *objets petit a*. Whereas the Other is the overpowering, omnipresent structure impelling every act of language, *objets petit a* are the many people and things that a subject interacts with and desires over a lifetime.³⁹ But no act of speech or desire simply occurs between the subject and the *objet petit a*; instead, the Other is always the force that actually initiated the interaction, and the goal is always much larger than it seems to the subject. This is why Lacanian subjects are fundamentally frustrated; even if they obtain an *objet petit a*, the root cause of their desire remains unsatisfied. Lacan figures that root cause as a “treasure trove of signifiers” (“Subversion” 693). Crucially, this treasure trove is specifically about a satisfaction of *meaning*. The subject has an (illusory) impression of having possessed that treasure trove sometime in the past. Every act of speech or desire, then, is really an attempt to “recapture” that sense of plenitude. The subject thus moves through the world in pursuit of “signifiers of [one’s] desire”—the *objets petit a*.

One productive Lacanian angle I do not pursue here is an application of the “mirror stage” of a subject’s development; some critics have applied Lacanian identification to the relationship between Catherine and Heathcliff and to Catherine’s transformative experience at Thrushcross Grange. See Massé, Clayton, and Coste.

³⁹ Lacan’s second “cut” is subjection to kinship structures. This cut involves some of Lacan’s more complex concepts of the Law of the father, desire, demand, and drive; rehearsing this part of Lacanian theory is beyond the scope of this dissertation. See “The Subversion of the Subject and the Dialectic of Desire” in Lacan, *Écrits*.

Lacan's system does not allow for the possibility of satisfaction. The best the subject can do is to recognize his or her identity construction as situated in a broader temporal, social, linguistic structure; doing so constitutes moving (at least temporarily) from the Imaginary to the Symbolic order. Lacan's account of subjecthood is not unlike the middle part of a fairy tale, cut off from the stable beginning and ending. In the middle, the protagonist confronts terrible, inexplicable, dizzying events, wandering through an uncertain environment that is not of his or her own making. Neither does a Lacanian subject reinvent language; rather, a person develops into use of a language that precedes and exceeds the individual. "Language, with its structure, exists prior to each subject's entry into it...his place is already inscribed at his birth, if only in the form of his proper name" ("Instance" 413-14). Like the structure of kinship, the structure of language simply exists, and the subject must submit to it in order to have human relationships or articulate (even experience) desire at all. Fairy tales are crucially about succession. But unlike Lacanian subjects, fairy-tale protagonists (even Bluebeard's last wife) ultimately can exercise some control over their roles in the language and kinship structure; via magic, cleverness, kindness, or determination, they can assume roles and names other than those prescribed for them.

Hareton, on the other hand, is born into a world in which his name is literally "already inscribed at his birth": we learn on the second page of the novel that above Wuthering Heights's front door are carved "the date '1500'" and "the name 'Hareton Earnshaw'" (Lacan, "Instance" 413-14, Brontë, *Wuthering* 46). Heathcliff sees no such inscription, of course, but his is the first and last proper name mentioned in the novel. We learn early on of both excess and deficiency in proper names: whereas Heathcliff has only one name instead of the usual two, Catherine is given three before she even appears (the "Catherine Earnshaw," "Catherine Linton," and "Catherine

Heathcliff” Lockwood reads at the beginning). In the case of both main characters, Brontë immediately denies the reader the usual combination of Christian name and surname to identify the individuals in clear relation to their families.

This function of language to identify subjects’ comparative positions drives Lacan’s use of the word “signifier” for both words and people. The “signifying chain” is Lacan’s term for the whole structure of language (“Instance” 418). Building on Ferdinand de Saussure’s model of “signifier/signified,” Lacan insists both that “no signification can be sustained except by reference to another signification” and that “the signifier in fact enters the signified”; put differently, that words/signifiers do not simply point to “referents” in the real world but endlessly refer to other signifiers in the same system (415, 417). Lacan distinguishes between two kinds of signification: metonymy and metaphor. Metonymy “is based on the *word-to-word* nature of th[e] connection” between the signifiers for part and whole, such as “sail” and “ship” (421). In other words, we understand the phrase “thirty sails” by seeing the relationship between “sail” and another link on the signifying chain, “ship.” Metaphor, meanwhile, “flashes between two signifiers, one of which has replaced the other by taking the other’s place in the signifying chain” (422). In this case, one signifier, instead of being interpreted in light of its relationship to another signifier, is understood to have actually taken the spot in the structure where the other signifier might have stood. While neither metonymy nor metaphor is inherently preferable, they have different implications when used to conceptualize human relationships.

In Lacan’s system, no one—subject or *objet petit a*—is a stable, self-contained individual, but rather an occupant of a particular position in the structure at a particular time. Similarly, the characters in *Wuthering Heights* are forever sliding in and out of each other’s places. Sometimes only hypothetically: Lockwood, for instance, catches himself early on

imagining that he knows Heathcliff's motivations for reticence, when really "I bestow my own attributes over liberally on him" (47). At times, "place" refers to social class, as Catherine once uses it against Nelly: "'To hear you, people might think *you* were the mistress!' she cried. 'You want setting down in your right place!'" (150). But in fact Nelly does participate in the systemic shifts; she once tells Heathcliff what she would do "were I in your place" and finds herself literally standing in his place the same evening when the Lintons come over for a dance and Nelly is "appointed to supply the deficiency" left by Heathcliff's being forbidden to participate (98, 100). This episode, of course, belongs to Hindley's intention to "reduce him [Heathcliff] to his right place" after Mr. Earnshaw's death, since Hindley had seen Heathcliff as a "usurper of his parent's affections, and his privileges" when they were children (64, 79). Heathcliff himself later slides into Hindley's position of revenge-seeker. Although he states at one point "I'd not exchange, for a thousand lives, my condition here, for Edgar Linton's at Thrushcross Grange," once Catherine shows a preference for Edgar, he changes his tune: "I wish I had light hair and a fair skin, and was dressed, and behaved as well, and had a chance of being as rich as he will be!" (89, 97). Even at the end of Catherine's life (and thus at the practical end of the rivalry between the two men), Heathcliff tells Nelly what he would have done "had he been in my place, and I in his" (185). It is at this point that Heathcliff has begun to see other people as capable of representing each other; he treats Isabella as "Edgar's proxy in suffering" (182) and he begins to use Hareton to wreak revenge on Hindley (which also brings Heathcliff temporarily into Hindley's place). Meanwhile, the profuse repetition of names throughout the novel creates a situation in which individual people function as temporary occupants in the place indicated by the name (Heathcliff "replacing" the deceased son, Cathy marrying Hareton to become "Catherine Earnshaw" as her mother once was, and so on).

This lengthy list of examples demonstrates the ubiquity of interpersonal replacements in the novel. Like Lacanian subjects, the denizens of *Wuthering Heights* often exist for each other as placeholders, functions, stand-ins, rather than as unique individuals. Compare also Vladimir Propp's analysis of folk and fairy tales in terms not of specific stories or characters but of roles—the hero, the donor, the villain. It is no accident that Brontë's characters' identical or similar names cause the reader frequently to forget who is who. This may also be the reason the novel feels so restless. Catherine, on her deathbed, cries to an absent Heathcliff, "I won't rest till you are with me...I never will!"; Heathcliff himself, according to the country folk, "*walks*" the moors after his death (164, 366). Heathcliff and Catherine cause problems in the kinship structure of *Wuthering Heights* and Thrushcross Grange because they cannot stop moving; initially, they seem to think that they are one person—that they can occupy the same place in the structure simultaneously, coexist as metaphors for each other. When this attempt fails, and they cause nothing but trouble for other people as they wander around looking for comfortable places. A Lacanian might say that Catherine and Heathcliff see each other as *objets petit a* in a more extreme way than usual. A subject always believes that a certain *objet a* will lead to the "treasure trove of signifiers." But normally this belief is vague, unarticulated; Catherine and Heathcliff come right out and say "My ideal, full being is *there*, in that person."

Heathcliff, then, is miserable at the end of the novel because he can only see his relation to Catherine metaphorically, while all other people signify metonymically with relation to *her*, not to him. He feels so distanced from her when she cuts him off and dies that he cannot imagine a link with anyone else, since he sees everything and everyone in the world through her. When Heathcliff "speaks," he's always saying the same thing: Catherine, Catherine, Catherine—what Lacan would call "empty speech," insisting on the preeminence of the same signifier over and

over without properly appreciating that she is for him merely a signifier in a larger structure, as a user of “full speech” would understand (“Function” 207). The contrasting example? *Jane Eyre*, who famously ends her tale with “Reader, I married him” (Brontë, *JE* 473). *I married him*, with subject and direct object separated in the sentence and that nice word “married” in between to clarify their relative positions in the kinship structure. “Reader, I married him” is thus the full speech metonymic utterance that constitutes the happy ending of *Jane Eyre*.

Jane arrives happily at a metonymic understanding of her relationship to Rochester; fairy-tale protagonists usually get to more or less the same place, perhaps by returning home, by marrying the princess and winning half the kingdom, by vanquishing the supernatural foe. In fact, Jane’s problem of “Bluebeard” versus “Beauty and the Beast” can be imagined as metaphor versus metonymy. The line of Bluebeard’s wives / Rochester’s mistresses seems metonymic but may as well be metaphoric, because these women are entirely collapsed into indistinguishable placeholders. “Beauty and the Beast,” on the other hand, consists of Beauty’s increasing acceptance of the Beast as a person who is separate from her but not as distant as she thought—as a particular signifier of her desire rather than operating in a different system altogether. Jane constantly tries out new people as models and slides in and out of other people’s places, but her experimentation comes to an end when she marries. In *Wuthering Heights*, the wandering persists. True, Cathy and Hareton seem better off at the novel’s end; Heathcliff’s death relieves them from serving him as signifiers for Catherine. Although Hareton is like Heathcliff, he is not entirely like him; *we* do not read Hareton as a mere metaphor for Heathcliff. But Catherine and Heathcliff, despite Lockwood’s incredulity, seem indeed to be suffering “unquiet slumbers” (367) in the quiet and confining earth.

In fairy tales, and in the most positive Lacanian situation, you cannot *be* someone else;

you can and must be *like* other people, because they are your models, but you need to become yourself in relation to them. It is crucial that for Lacan, subjecthood *is* alienation. Clayton summarizes that Lacan “sees language as alienating, yet regards alienation as a crucial part of our humanity. For Lacan, the thing that makes us human is our acquiescence in the otherness of words, particularly...the symbolic dimension of names” (88). The Lacanian “cuts” of language and kinship do not impose anything new: they were always already there. Alienation is the natural state of things, not communion. But we learn from *Wuthering Heights* that that is just as well. Without our willing subjection to being alienated from others in kinship structures, any person could claim to be identical to any other. Jane Eyre aligns herself *next to* Rochester. Many a fairy-tale heroine effectively kills off the evil stepmother before taking her place and marrying. But Catherine and Heathcliff insist on trying to stand in the same place in the structure at the same time, inevitably failing. Marriage would have fitted their relationship into the kinship structure by defining it, and by placing a structurally “proper” distance between them. Instead, Catherine Earnshaw lets herself become Catherine Linton without understanding the difference that that name change makes in her place in the structure of *Wuthering Heights* and Thrushcross Grange.

Miller maintains that the reader of *Wuthering Heights* has a similar experience to Heathcliff’s, “wandering...from emblem to emblem, from story to story, from generation to generation, from Catherine to Catherine, from Hareton to Hareton, from narrator to narrator” in search of a “head referent” that would meaningfully unite all these elements (67). Miller’s reading is fundamentally Lacanian (as he acknowledges in general terms at the beginning of *Fiction and Repetition*, although he does not tease out specific connections):

The reader of *Wuthering Heights*, like the narrator, is led deeper and deeper into the text by the expectation that sooner or later the last veil will be removed. He will then find himself face to face not with the emblem of something missing but with the right real thing at last. This will be truly original, the bona fide starting place. It will therefore be possessed of full explanatory power over the whole network of signs which it has generated and which it controls, giving each sign its deferred meaning. Through this labyrinth of linkages the reader has to thread his way. (60)

Indeed, the reader of *Wuthering Heights* is likely to feel as trapped as a Lacanian subject, pursuing the “chain of signifiers” by reading to the end in hopes that all will become clear. But although good readers should be able to keep straight the similarly-named characters, we are still left with a sense of having missed something. Perhaps a tantalizing glimpse of an oblique but passionate world was precisely what Brontë wanted to give us. Charlotte Brontë bestows a multilayered but triumphant “Beauty and the Beast” tale for the somewhat-real world. Emily Brontë dangles hints of enchantment but takes them back, leaving us not, perhaps, in Bluebeard’s castle, but with a nagging sense that it might be around the bend in the ordinary country road.

Chapter Four

Unhappily Ever After: Hardy, *Tess*, and the Fairy Tale Manqué

Thomas Hardy's deployment of fate takes on a new dimension when we note that "fate" and "fairy" come from the same Latin word, *fatum*. The fates and the fairies address the same question: why and how do things happen that humans can neither control nor explain? *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* (1891) both features numerous fairy and fairy-tale elements and invokes various forms of fatalism and determinism (that is, assigns responsibility to the inevitable predestination of an external directing force or assigns it to the interplay of immanent causes).⁴⁰ Hardy often gestures toward fate but stops short of placing all responsibility there; for one thing, he also emphasizes what Leon Waldoff has identified as psychological determinism. Fairy-tale plots are crucial to Hardy's construction of psychological determinism in *Tess*. Long before she meets Alec D'Urberville, Tess has a tendency to consider herself destined for the life of poverty and bad luck that has been the lot of so many others before her. Hardy frequently emphasizes Tess's ancestry—both the pagan heritage of her mother (culminating in the arrest at Stonehenge) and the D'Urberville lineage. She confronts many pre-existing narratives in the form of ballads, fairy tales, folk tales, or family histories. Hardy sets her up like a fairy-tale heroine—poor, wandering, smarter than her hapless parents, well-meaning—but whereas every dark fairy-tale plot is confirmed, every happy one is truncated or distorted. Tess's anxiety about walking a predetermined path separates her from traditional fairy-tale protagonists, who (if psychologized at all) tend to be fairly plucky and believe that they are performing their tasks independently. Tess, more like a fairy-tale reader, thinks of a story as having been told already and dictated by

⁴⁰ *Tess* lends itself to a fairy-tale reading better than any of Hardy's other novels, primarily because of its focus on a single young heroine's tumultuous entry into adulthood. *Far from the Madding Crowd*, although structured around Bathsheba Everdene, is emotionally driven by Gabriel Oak and therefore lacks the intense focus of *Tess*.

someone else.

Tess ultimately works as a sort of anti-*Bildungsroman*: Tess's maturation, like Jane Eyre's or Pip's, is the primary focus of the novel, but Tess seems not to have a fair shot at independent development because she feels forced to walk paths already laid out for her by others. The crucial distinction is in the timing: *Bildungsromane* require *Bildung*—development over the course of the protagonists' real time, so that the ending seems the logical result of their actions rather than the fulfilment of destiny. Fredric Jameson's recent *Antinomies of Realism* designates realism generally as a "consequence" of the tension of "destiny versus the eternal present" (26). While his definition may not apply universally, it certainly fits *Tess*. Is the story driven by fatalism or "only" psychological determinism? Is Tess condemned before birth by the President of the Immortals or beaten down progressively by chance encounters and her own pessimism? Does she live a fleshed-out but essentially accurate reproduction of the French (unhappy) version of "Little Red Riding Hood," or a "Cinderella" story that simply falls apart because of the modern world in which Tess lives? Was the present predetermined by the past, or do events unfold in real time?

The bulk of this chapter will take up *Tess*'s hodgepodge of pre-existing narratives (fey and fateful) and Tess's interactions with them. As in earlier chapters, therefore, I will again be considering the individual's process of coming into a position in a larger (social, geographical, narrative) structure. In addition to a history of lore, Tess belongs to a natural history as tangible as the trees and birds themselves: the evolutionary web of species Hardy learned about from reading Charles Darwin. Darwin gave a multifaceted interpretation of determinism that matched Hardy's interest in the relationship between local events in nature and their global or even cosmic context. Hardy does not talk about an individual's "place" only abstractly; he is also

interested in one's physical place and movement. Hence his attention to local folk and fairy lore; walking through the forest is for Hardy not a mere metaphor for life but a real and common rural experience. In Darwin, Hardy found a theorist interested in the relationship between the wings of the birds and the fate of the universe. Darwin, too, thus considers the way an individual comes into his or her place. As Huxley puts it in *Man's Place in Nature*, "The question of questions for mankind—the problem which underlies all others, and is more deeply interesting than any other—is the ascertainment of the place which Man occupies in nature and of his relations to the universe of things" (Darwin 280). But the echoes of Darwin in *Tess* do not sufficiently account for the substantial element of psychological determinism. I will again engage Lacan's articulation of a subject's entrapment in language and kinship structures—bound up, as in *Wuthering Heights*, with the significance and even fatefulness of the family name. Like a Lacanian subject, Tess has a disjointed, alienated experience of her relationship to the determining structure that is "D'Urberville": it seems both to propel her and to impede her every step. The frequent evocation and withdrawal of fairy-tale plots in Tess's story belongs to this cycle; though always forced to pursue them, she is disappointed every time. I will consider these three interlocking approaches to Hardy's construction of governing narratives in *Tess*: his fairy- and folk-tale elements, his various configurations of deterministic systems, and Darwinian and Lacanian accounts of temporal and spatial structures—all of which critics have examined separately but not together.

Unlike Dickens and the Brontë sisters, Hardy never reminisced about a childhood love of fairy tales. He was familiar with them as any child born in 1840 would have been, whether in oral or book form; since he read French, he may have encountered French versions. He surely encountered supernatural beings in his wide and enthusiastic reading of the Romantics. Hardy

notes in *Life and Work* that he once stayed up half the night reading *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* and "Lalla-Rookh" (51). He clearly remembered them, since in 1879 he reports a conversation about *Childe Harold* by referring to a woman present as a "Peri of the West," quoting from the poem (135). In 1866, he performed for a single night in a walk-on role in Gilbert à Becket's pantomime *Ali-Baba and the Forty Thieves; or, Harlequin and the Genii of the Arabian Nights!* at Covent Garden (Millgate 95). As of 1874, he was personally acquainted with Anne Thackeray Ritchie, who wrote updated versions of a number of fairy tales, including "Bluebeard," "Beauty and the Beast," "Riquet à la Houppe," "The White Cat," and "Jack and the Beanstalk."

It would appear that Hardy was about as aware of fairy tales as anyone else, and not particularly impressed by them. On rare occasions he refers to fairy tales in letters à la Charlotte Brontë; for instance, in an 1871 letter to publisher Malcolm Macmillan, he defends himself against negative criticism of *Desperate Remedies* by saying that because his object had been to construct an intriguing plot, he had been content to leave the characters as mere puppets, "the villain in fact being just about as human as the Giants slain by Jack" (*Letters* 1.12). Similarly, Scheherazade makes an appearance in *The Return of the Native*, though as a contrasting example: the narrator punctuates an account of a dazzling dream Eustacia Vye has one night with "To Queen Scheherazade the dream might have seemed not far removed from commonplace... But amid the circumstances of Eustacia's life it was as wonderful as a dream could be" (138). Hardy uses the fairy-tale phrase "happily ever after" on more than one occasion to denote what he considers an inauthentic, positive conclusion to a story. He alludes to the phrase in an 1889 letter to W. Moy Thomas on the subject of *The Woodlanders*, at the end of which "the reunited husband & wife are supposed to live ever after *unhappily!*" (*Letters* 1.196; italics Hardy's). Still more forcefully, he said to Raymond Blathwayt in an 1892 interview, "the optimistic 'living

happily ever after' always raises in me a greater horror by its ghastly unreality than the honest sadness that comes of a logical and inevitable tragedy" (Blathwayt 11). On the other hand, the legend of the D'Urberville coach in *Tess* contributes to the "logical and inevitable tragedy," as opposed to appearing as a *deus ex machina*. Hardy does not object to supernatural events in general, only to those that impose inconsistently happy endings.

For Hardy, an impression of tragic inevitability was a fundamental feature of human existence—it was more important to him to respect its predominance than to respect, say, the ordinary proportion of (unlucky) coincidences that occur in an average life. In an 1889 letter to John Addington Symonds, he wrote,

The tragical conditions of life imperfectly denoted in *The Return of the Native* & some other stories of mine I am less & less able to keep out of my work. I often begin a story with the intention of making it brighter & gayer than usual; but the question of conscience soon comes in; & it does not seem right, even in novels, to wilfully belie one's own views....A question which used to trouble me was whether we ought to write sad stories, considering how much sadness there is in the world already. But of late I have come to the conclusion that, the first step towards cure of, or even relief from, any disease being to understand it, the study of tragedy in fiction may possibly here & there be the means of showing how to escape the worst forms of it, at least, in real life. (*Letters* 1.90)

This statement leaves no doubt: Hardy wrote bleak stories in order to acknowledge and attempt to ameliorate the bleakness of real life. But like the Brontës, Hardy willingly sacrificed surface-level realism in order to account for a more fundamental reality. He wrote of Victor Hugo, "his misérables are not so real as Dickens's, but they show, to my mind, one great superiority, that of

universality, while those of Dickens express the particular only” (*Letters* 3.81). As to his own work, Hardy repeatedly insisted that Wessex is not southwest England; we might even say it is much like Fairyland in that it exists only as a representation. But also like Fairyland, it functions in literature to say something about the real world. Wessex is a kind of dystopia, a world actually worse than what “realism” would dictate, but only as bad as Hardy felt was necessary to force his readers to confront real and uncomfortable problems.

Hardy was skeptical of the literary realism of his day, as critics have gradually appreciated. Referring to *Tess*, Howe contends that “incidents like the one at Stonehenge are at some distance from the probable and the realistic. Almost, it is necessary for them to be unrealistic, in order that their other dimension of meaning, their relevance to the larger rhythms of the work, shall transpire” (127-8). The level of realism in *Tess of the D’Urbervilles* has been a matter of debate ever since early reviews disparaged the characterization of Alec D’Urberville as a melodramatic villain. Even *Tess* was deemed by Mowbray Morris “as much a creature of fantasy as Titania or Fenella” (218). Hardy participated in the debate on realism more generally; his 1888 essay “The Profitable Reading of Fiction,” for instance, argues, “It must always be borne in mind, despite the claims of realism, that the best fiction, like the highest artistic expression in other modes, is more true, so to put it, then [*sic*] history or nature can be” (Millgate, *Public Voice* 81). Three years later, in “The Science of Fiction,” he laments that “creative fancy has...to give more and more place to realism, that is, to an artificiality distilled from the fruits of closest observation....Realism is an unfortunate, an ambiguous word” (*Public Voice* 108). Despite such statements, much criticism has considered Hardy “through a realist, humanist lens,” and found him lacking (Shires 146). But increasingly, critics are looking at Hardy as “fundamentally” or “strategically anti-realist” (Shires 148, Widdowson 224). Although

Hardy “appears to belong firmly in the line of realistic writing” that includes Jane Austen and George Eliot, and although his work features “characters and events that might have existed in a recognizable social and physical world, prominent aspects of style and story in his writings warrant our reading Hardy’s works as other than realistic” (Riquelme 506). Rather than measure Hardy against a realist standard, then, these critics emphasize that rejection or at least flexibility of realism was part of Hardy’s intention.

Hardy drew on many non-realist genres, including classical tragedy, theatrical melodrama, and ballad; accordingly, his works feature exaggerated characters, supernatural overtones, and wildly improbable coincidences. Shires identifies in Hardy “multiple genres that do not easily co-exist”; Davidson suggests that Hardy “wrote like a creator of tales and poems who is a little embarrassed at having to adapt the creation of tales and poems to the conditions of a written, or printed, literature, and yet tries to do his faithful best under the regrettable circumstances....he wrote as a ballad-maker would write if a ballad-maker were to have to write novels” (Shires 156, Davidson 12). Davidson later elaborates on this assertion by differentiating between older folk ballads, in which supernatural beings are “commonplace,” and later ones, in which “improbability and accident have replaced the miraculous” (17). Hardy “felt that the unlikely (or quasi-miraculous) element belonged in any proper story,” but only to a certain extent; “superstitions are used in the background of his narrative; coincidence, in the actual mechanics” (Davidson 18). For example, the narrator never states definitively that Tess saw or heard the D’Urberville coach, but it lurks in the back of her mind as she moves through her coincidence-ridden life. In *Tess*, as in *Wuthering Heights*, the supernatural belongs to the rural mindset but is not officially deemed responsible for events of the plot, as it is in the “mysterious summons” of *Jane Eyre*. Hardy falls somewhere between the two Brontë novels, however, in

driving so much of the story by coincidence.

Quite early in the novel, Hardy defines Tess as scornful of the superstition associated with her mother and the past; “between the mother, with her fast-perishing lumber of superstitions, folk-lore, dialect, and orally transmitted ballads, and the daughter, with her trained National teachings and Standard knowledge under an infinitely Revised Code, there was a gap of two hundred years as ordinarily understood. When they were together the Jacobean and the Victorian ages were juxtaposed” (23). Tess looks on skeptically as Joan insists on referring frequently to the book called *The Complete Fortune-Teller* and fetishizes it so much that she refuses to let it stay in the house during the night. But by the end of the novel, Tess looks around herself at Stonehenge and says to Angel, “one of my mother’s people was a shepherd hereabouts...and you used to say at Talbothays that I was a heathen. So now I am at home” (393). Angel comments in the same scene that Stonehenge is “Older than the centuries; older than the D’Urbervilles!” (393). Running simultaneously with the story of Tess’s eventual resignation to her D’Urberville fate, then, is that of her acceptance of a deeper-seated folk ancestry.

Hardy shared with Tess both descent from a once-wealthy family and a lifelong immersion in folklore of all kinds. Ruth A. Firor’s *Folkways in Thomas Hardy*, though not very analytical, traces a myriad of references in Hardy’s writing to English folk stories and customs. Obviously these stories and customs are legion; those with a fairy or at least supernatural nature, on which I will focus, coexisted in Hardy’s world with other folklore, as biographer Millgate’s comments on Hardy’s intimate familiarity with the locality of his childhood bear out: Hardy knew “the histories of all these [local spots], their associations with old crimes or follies or family quarrels, and whatever of legend or folklore might attach to them. So the Hardy children

heard at an early age that Rushy Pond on the heath had been dug by fairy shovels, that a drowned traveller had given his name to Heedless William's Pond" (32-3). The fairy shovels and the drowned (presumably mortal) traveler are equivalent subjects of these legends. Millgate also maintains that second wife Florence's

remark...that her husband was very superstitious, 'as was natural', serves as a reminder that a world so traditional was inevitably credulous, that the 'fetishistic' outlook of a Mrs Durbeyfield...was familiar to Hardy from his own childhood, that the witches, weather prophets, and 'planet-rulers' had not yet entirely disappeared, and that he heard at first hand those tales of images burned in slow fires, of blood 'turned' by touching the corpse of a hanged man, and of other things he drew upon for his fiction (40).

As opposed to the exotic allusions to *The 1001 Nights* or continental fairy tales that appear in many other Victorian novels, the majority of Hardy's supernatural references are crucially homegrown—not fantastical impositions, but organic elements of the landscape. He likely encountered fairy lore first through music: his family regularly participated in musical events like those described in his early novel *Under the Greenwood Tree*; there he encountered such songs as "The Fairy Dance," "The Elfin Call," and "Faerie Song" (*Life and Work* 19, 78, 458). Hardy maintained an interest in folklore well into adulthood. "Faeries" occasionally appear in Hardy's poetry; in "A Spot," "lonely shepherd souls... / May catch a faery sound," and in the better-known "Shelley's Skylark" of 1887, the narrator bids the faeries to go find "the dust of the lark that Shelley heard" (Hardy, *Poetical Works* Vol. 1 176, 133). One of Hardy's many cats was named Pixie, and he wrote in a letter to Florence Henniker that he was unsure where to mail it, since "You have become such a will of the wisp lately" (*Letters* 3.86, 3.159). Around 1891,

Hardy became friends with Edward Clodd, the first president of the British Folklore Society, prompting him to read James Frazer's *The Golden Bough* at the same time as Arthur Schopenhauer's *Studies in Pessimism* (Millgate 290). In 1898 he wrote to Clodd that he had stayed up later than he meant reading Clodd's *Tom Tit Tot: An Essay on Savage Philosophy in Folk-Tale*, reflecting on the "vast & striking" body of folklore often undervalued "in this so-called literary age" (*Letters* 2.202). For Hardy, familiarity with folklore was an important component of holding on to his Dorset roots.

Tess resorts to Fairyland for imagery occasionally. One night the dairy employees take on "an elfish, moonlit aspect" as light reflects on them from buttercups (140). On Egdon Heath, the "notched tips" of the fir trees "appeared like battlemented towers crowning black-fronted castles of enchantment" (184). But most tellingly, Sandbourne looks to Angel as the novel draws to a close "like a fairy place suddenly created by the stroke of a wand, and allowed to get a little dusty" (375). The narrator goes on to reflect that "the enormous Egdon Waste was close at hand, yet on the very verge of that tawny piece of antiquity such a glittering novelty as this pleasure city had chosen to spring up" (375-6). Comparisons of edifices to fairy palaces are a dime a dozen in nineteenth-century English novels, but only Hardy's fairy palace is sullied by dust and surrounded by a prehistoric wasteland. In fact, Tess commits murder in the so-called fairy palace and then walks freely with Angel outside in the wasteland for a little while; the fairy palace is not inherently preferable to the wasteland.

References to supernatural forces and beings pop up as part of the broader folk tradition of Wessex/Dorset. Angel's rural education acquaints him with "trees, waters, and clouds, shades and silences, *ignes-fatui*, [and] constellations" (118). The *ignes-fatui* are nestled inside the sentence just as they are inside the landscape, equivalent to shadows and constellations. Later, as

Tess walks toward home just before her father's death, she traverses lands that

turnpike-roads had never penetrated. Superstitions linger longest on these heavy soils. Having once been forest, at this shadowy time it seemed to assert something of its old character....The harts that had been hunted there, the witches that had been pricked and ducked, the green-spangled fairies that 'whickered' at you as you passed;-- the place teemed with beliefs in them still, and they formed an impish multitude now. (345)

Witches and fairies are as much a part of the landscape as harts—and, for that matter, as Tess herself. Elsewhere the narrator says outright, “Like all the cottagers of Blackmoor Vale, Tess was steeped in fancies and prefigurative superstitions; she thought [it] an ill omen” when a rose thorn pricks her chin (44). Tess also worries when she hears the cock crowing at the wrong time on her wedding day, and when she learns of the D'Urberville coach, as we will see. Alec calls her a witch, and Marian comments that she looks as if she had been “hag-rode” (55, 328); the off-hand delivery of these comments suggests that they are organic to the setting. Unlike many Victorians, Tess has no particular “nostalgia for a fading British past” to render folklore appealing to her (Silver 10); if anything, she finds folk superstitions all too present.

Tess spends much of the novel wandering, sometimes aimlessly and sometimes in search of a home, and many of her encounters with folklore occur while she is in motion. The Victorians knew plenty of stories about what can happen to travelers in the countryside. Among other things, they were liable to be led astray by pixies, will-o'-the-wisps, fairies, and other such capricious supernatural creatures. Anna Eliza Bray's *Traditions, legends, superstitions, and sketches of Devonshire: on the borders of the Tamar and Tavy* documents a “popular belief still existing...that whenever a person loses his way he is neither more nor less than ‘pixy-led’” (168-

9). Bray details various accounts of being pixy-led, often when travelers are enveloped in a sudden mist or fog or are in some extra peril. Hardy was clearly aware of such tales; one character in *The Return of the Native* warns another to be careful walking at night, on the grounds that even “them that know Egdon best have been pixy-led here at times” (36). One story in Bray’s collection *A Peep at the Pixies*, “The Lady of the Silver Bell,” is essentially similar to *Tess*. A girl named Serena is led astray by sweet music on her way to church. She follows the sounds, loses track of her physical surroundings, sees a mirage of a handsome young musician, and is never the same thereafter; the remedy that is supposed to cure her of her resulting melancholy ends up killing her. Tess is initially set on the road by her parents to follow the will-o’-the-wisp that is D’Urberville prosperity; on the way, she meets the capricious figure of Alec, who may as well be supernatural because he has so much social, physical, and above all economic power over her. Like Serena, Tess never shakes off the effects of this experience, and the seemingly palliative relationship with Angel only hastens her demise.⁴¹

As an avid reader of the Romantics, Hardy may have encountered James Hogg’s tale “Mary Burnet” (1828) or poem “Kilmeny” (1813), both of which link fairy abduction to a young woman’s sexual purity. Mary Burnet is spirited away by the fairies to avoid seduction by an unscrupulous mortal. Kilmeny finds herself targeted by the fairies because she is “pure as pure could be” (32). She returns to the mortal world after seven years, remains a month and a day, and then disappears again with the fairies.⁴² But that was in a different time—and a fictional one.

⁴¹ Bray’s Serena also anticipates Jeanie, the cautionary subject in Christina Rossetti’s *Goblin Market*.

⁴² Likely not familiar to Hardy but part of the same tradition is Leicester Buckingham’s “Burlesque Extravaganza,” *Little Red Riding Hood and the Fairies of the Rose, Shamrock, and Thistle*, from 1861, in which “a troupe of fairies give Blondinette [LRRH] a magic flower, directing her to ‘pluck a bud’ each time her virtue is in danger from Baron de Wolf, which will transport her out of harm’s way” (Hillard 187).

Tess has to contend with “the ache of modernism” (124); no fairies swoop in to preserve her from seduction. Rather, Tess stands out from her fictional predecessors in that she is virtually pixy-led by the seducer himself. The night he rapes her, Alec, like the fairies in the Hogg stories, claims to be saving her from something—her rowdy coworkers. The whole episode resembles the lore of the pixy-led: Tess’s attempt to walk home is delayed, and she is in peril because she is alone. Once Alec gets her up on his horse, he takes her to an unfamiliar area of the woods, and the fog prevents any attempt at escape. Tess thus faces a cruel twist of the familiar story of a mortal’s sylvan encounter with fairies or pixies.

Critics have recognized that supernatural folklore exists in the novel because it is integral to the world of Wessex. Vigar helpfully emphasizes how much Tess is a natural part of that tradition:

magic, so bound up as it is with indigenous history and ballad and folklore, is an inseparable part of everyday living. The medieval legends and superstitions in which Tess believes are an omnipresent reminder of her inescapable position as one of the ‘folk’, part of a vast lineage stretching backwards into infinity. Her own particular story, in its very ordinariness, is simply that of the traditional ‘ruined maid’ in ballad and folk legend....Throughout the tale the ballad atmosphere is reinforced by the extensive use of references to omens, ghosts and fairies, which belong as much to the countryside as Tess herself. (183)

As Joan Durbeyfield says repeatedly, none of the events that befall Tess is unusual in this world; nor is the possibility of hearing a fairy “whickering” at you in the forest. But Vigar goes on to point out that some of the most wrenching events in the novel, such as Tess’s rape and her arrest at Stonehenge, “are highlighted by and contrasted with the specifically ethereal, almost fairy-tale

quality of the surrounding dimly beautiful countryside....She loses her virginity in the haunts of innocence and antiquity, amongst skipping rabbits and ancient druidical oaks, and surrenders her right to life in the sacrificial temple of pagans of antiquity” (187). Neither hypothetical fairies nor Tess’s folk ancestors do her any good in these scenes; like the D’Urberville knights who “slept on in their tombs unknowing” (398), they are simply there as part of the indifferent surrounding world. The “farewell to the fairies” of Victorian nostalgia is irrelevant for Tess: the fairies and their ilk have not necessarily bid farewell to Wessex, but they do nothing to help her.

This failure distinguishes Hardy’s fiction from fairy tale (though not from fairy lore): the fairy tale champions the littlest figure (recall the plethora of youngest sons and daughters coming out on top), whereas in Hardy the same story of the small individual’s struggle can only end in defeat. Timing is crucial: for Hardy, it is always already too late because the sad story has always already been told, whereas fairy-tale protagonists frequently get in just under the stroke of midnight or the fall of the last petal. In fairy tales, the hero or heroine often succeeds in the nick of time; in Hardy, many characters live miserable lives because they fail in the nick of time. His characters never miss the boat by half an hour; they miss it by half a minute and see it sailing away. Hardy’s avowed dislike of the “happily ever after” ending encourages a reading of his novels as anti-fairy tales or fairy tales with bad endings. *Tess of the D’Urbervilles* in particular—like *Great Expectations*—demonstrates “the power of fairy-tale plots to shape people’s dreams” (Higonnet xxxiv). Even Tess occasionally dreams: en route to Talbothays at the end of Phase the Second, “some spirit within her rose...unexpended youth, surging up anew after its temporary check, and bringing with it hope” (100). The psychological determinism Hardy constructs in Tess does not depend on a constant lack of hope: it depends on a constant expectation that hopes will be dashed. Every evocation of fairy-tale plots in the novel feeds this expectation.

To begin with, *Tess* is a rags-to-riches story gone horrifyingly awry: Joan and Jack Durbeyfield believe they are turning Tess's life into "Cinderella," but no candidate for Prince status is adequate. The horse named Prince dies. Wealthy Alec turns out to be a suitor of the worst possible sort. Angel initially seems a viable substitute, but he comes too late—twice. First, he sees Tess at the May Day festivities but does not dance with her (a failure of the royal ball episode), which leads to his not being present to prevent her going to the Stoke-D'Urberville house. Second, after marrying and rejecting her, Angel keeps missing Tess's letters and ultimately forgives her too late to prevent her murder of Alec, arrest, and execution. Midnight has always already come and gone for this unlucky Cinderella.⁴³

Even more, Tess resembles Perrault's Little Red Riding Hood, who is eaten by the wolf with no woodsman in sight to rescue her and help her exact revenge. Tess's frequent solitary traipsing through wilderness recalls all the fairy tales of children journeying through and fending for themselves in the forest—Hansel and Gretel, in particular, anticipate Tess in being sent off by their parents because of their poverty. And while the Stoke-D'Urberville mansion is not made of candy, it too promises riches of a sort but delivers only danger. Still, "Little Red Riding Hood" is

⁴³ In a study of family names in fiction, one critic points out that "*Tess* reverses perhaps the most characteristic plot of fiction by beginning with the traditional end: the discovery of a name that brings with it the discovery of an entire family history. Hardy uses this reversal plot to ironize...the story of the child's happy discovery of his or her family inheritance" (Ragussis 135). Clearly Joan and Jack Durbeyfield have this story in mind when they send Tess to "claim kin" with Alec D'Urberville's mother. It is of course a variant of "Cinderella"—and one that appears more precisely in the original, 18th-century literary version of "Beauty and the Beast" discussed in Chapter 1, in which Madame de Villeneuve sidesteps the potentially objectionable ending of marrying a prince to a commoner by having a fairy reveal Beauty and the Prince to be long-lost cousins. While the protagonist of such a plotline goes from rags to riches, the larger point is that the protagonist's family thereby returns to riches after a brief spell in rags. But Tess's discovery of her D'Urberville ancestry turns out to be a mockery of the foundling narrative, just as other aspects of the novel evoke but fail to fulfill a host of fairy tales and other traditional stories. Tess's story turns out to have more in common with folktales in the family of "Rumpelstiltskin," in which the revelation of a person's true name is disastrous for that person.

a better comparison overall because Alec D'Urberville so resembles the suave wolf. Like that villain, Alec constantly accosts Tess on the road and leads her astray. That he violates her sexually is very much in keeping with the fairy tale, which has been interpreted frequently as an allegory of rape—an interpretation that many retellings of the tale have emphasized.⁴⁴ Furthermore, the wolf runs ahead to usurp Little Red Riding Hood's place in her grandmother's house; this is essentially what Alec does as a Stoke-D'Urberville in possession of wealth and position that ought to belong to true D'Urberville Tess.

As a wealthy perpetrator of sexual violence, Alec is of course also a Bluebeard figure. And Tess resembles his final wife in several ways. First, she goes to him in the first place (and suffers him subsequently) predominantly because of his wealth; compare Perrault's heroine, who lacks Tess's desperation but ultimately decides to overlook the blue beard and marry Barbe-Bleue because she is dazzled by his lavish weeklong party (Perrault 126). Alec may not have a chamber of corpses in his house, but he has had sexual relationships with other women. And while he never literally imprisons Tess, he quickly learns that her weak spot is the well-being of her younger siblings and accordingly alleviates their financial problems whenever he wants something from Tess. Effectively, then, she is trapped, both by his strategic use of wealth and by his understanding of her behavior. The heroine of "Bluebeard" ultimately escapes her husband because her brothers kill him. But Tess, always the giver and never the recipient of help in her family, has to kill Bluebeard herself. Even after the villain is killed, though, Tess is denied the happy ending of Perrault's heroine, who inherits all of Bluebeard's wealth and marries herself to a nice man who helps her "forget the evil time she had spent with Bluebeard" (Perrault 135). Tess inherits no money, and because she had to kill the villain, she also lacks freedom from

⁴⁴ See Catherine Orenstein's *Little Red Riding Hood Uncloaked* (2003) for examples and analysis.

prosecution. Angel occupies the role in the narrative of the potential second husband, but as with the “Cinderella” analogy, the timing is off: she married him before she killed Bluebeard, and even if she had waited, Angel is still less inclined to “forget” her sexual past with Alec than she is. *Tess* thus retains most of the horror of “Bluebeard” but lacks the happy ending.

While Alec is easy to compare to fairy-tale villains, Angel is a difficult mix of good intentions and misguided ideals. Angel and Tess’s relationship progresses like a version of “Beauty and the Beast” with a gender reversal and an unhappy ending. Tess occupies the role of the Beast because her status as a Fallen Woman corresponds to his external beastliness: it is a trait that makes her seem repulsive or irredeemable but is not fundamental. The stories do not match up perfectly; Beauty sees the Beast’s exterior from the first day of their acquaintance, whereas Angel does not learn of Tess’s sexual past until they are married. Nevertheless, like Beauty, Angel initially sees the fact as horrifying, then progresses to a middle ground permitting civility and communication but still leaving the door to a romantic relationship firmly closed. And like Beauty, Angel does ultimately come around to acceptance. But whereas Beauty makes it back to the Beast’s castle just in time to save him from death, Angel returns too late to save Tess.

The way *Tess* plays out after this point is most reminiscent of Madame d’Aulnoy’s seventeenth-century “Beauty and the Beast” story, called “Le Mouton” or “The Ram.” The heroine, “Merveilleuse” or “Marvelous,” leaves the Ram’s castle to return briefly to her family but stays away too long (unlike Beauty, who lingers almost too long). After initial skepticism at his beastliness, Merveilleuse has grown to love him, but she gets caught up in her reunion with her family and loses track of time. The Ram dies of despair, and Merveilleuse can do nothing to revive him; she “pensa mourir elle-même” (“thought she herself would die”; d’Aulnoy 424).

Like Angel, she professes to love the Ram but abandons him physically and emotionally, coming around too late. We cannot be sure Hardy encountered d'Aulnoy's fairy tales, but he undoubtedly would have preferred her wry irony to the last-minute miracles common to many other tales.

The Beast figure in "Beauty and the Beast" stories is the one excluded; and while he may be male, he is frequently feminized. Most strikingly, the French word for "beast" is a feminine noun, "la bête," so the pronoun in French versions is usually "elle," meaning "she." The Beast is further feminized by his association with roses in most versions. These are factors typically elided in many critics' condemnation of "Beauty and the Beast" as anti-feminist; it is overly simplistic to read the Beast as merely an allegory for the male suitor. The Beast is an outcast, enchanted and shunned because of one transgression (in some versions not even a transgression of his own but of his parents). As the Disney film highlights, he is liable to be hunted. For these reasons, in addition to the similarities with the plot of *Tess*, it is illuminating to read the Beast figure and the Victorian Fallen Woman together. "Le Mouton" and *Tess* reveal skepticism as to the feasibility of reintegrating these shunned elements into society.

Without the gender reversal, *Tess* recalls "East of the Sun and West of the Moon," a sort of "Beauty and the Beast"- "Cupid and Psyche" hybrid popular in Scandinavia and the British Isles. A White Bear comes to the home of a desperately poor family and offers them wealth if the prettiest daughter will go with him. She initially refuses but is ultimately persuaded by her father to go. They arrive at a castle, where the White Bear turns out to possess not only great wealth but also the form of a human man by night. He only visits the girl in this form in the darkness, however. After a while, the girl visits home and is persuaded by her mother to sneak a candle into the man/bear's room to see what he looks like. She does so; he wakes and laments that

because she did not hold out for a year without seeing him in his proper form, he must return to the control of an evil sorceress stepmother who will force him to marry a troll princess. The girl weeps and begs to be allowed to follow him; he replies that she can try but will surely fail because the castle “lies east of the sun and west of the moon” (Lang 23). After a difficult series of tasks and encounters with wise women and all four winds, the girl arrives at the castle and eventually succeeds in outwitting the trolls, “just in time” to save and marry the prince (28).

Numerous aspects of this story are relevant to *Tess*: the girl’s poverty, her scapegoat status in the family, her ill-advising parents, the nighttime revelation of one person’s secret, the man’s reproach and dismissal of the girl, her return to poverty, and the hard work and arduous journey that follow for her as she tries to stay alive and win him back. In other words, most of the key elements of the story except for the happy ending.

Clearly, fairy-tale cognates abound in *Tess*, always serving the tragedy. Hardy approaches fiction using many of the techniques of traditional storytelling: intense focus on one or a few characters’ struggles, secrets, reversals of fortune, and above all a strong sense of an inevitable narrative force. But he borrows from preexisting narratives only those elements that fit the tragic thrust of his larger plot; thus, he tends to evoke only fragments of fairy tales but the larger plot arcs of sad folk stories. O’Toole maintains that “ultimately... Tess’s repeated exposure to ballads and folk tales function in the same way that her exposure to d’Urberville legends does—both suggesting in a discomfiting way the non-uniqueness of her history, its conformity to a narrative archetype already in place” (87). O’Toole is right to point out that Tess has similar encounters with narratives of both her folk history and her knightly lineage; exactly how and to what extent the archetype is already fixed in place, however, needs further consideration. Across Hardy’s writings and within *Tess of the D’Urbervilles*, causality is variously attributed by the

narrator and characters to cruel fate, blind/indifferent chance, and hereditary or individual disposition. Although Hardy is notorious for subjecting his characters to an absurdly malicious fate, in fact he never fully commits to any single interpretation of causality.

The commonplace understanding of Hardy is that he portrays fate as deliberately cruel or callous, like the gods in *King Lear* who “kill us for their sport” (IV.i.39), and Hardy sometimes uses the word “sport” in just this way. *Tess of the D’Urbervilles* ends when “the President of the Immortals...had ended his sport with Tess” (397). Equally late in the poem “The To-Be-Forgotten,” the dead lament, “We were but Fortune’s sport” (*Poetical Works*, Vol. I 182). *The Return of the Native* charges the “waggery of fate” with leading Clym Yeobright to his profession (199). Words like “waggery” and “sport” characterize fate as nonchalantly capricious, much like fairies and pixies. But Hardy also portrays fate as actively malicious, as when Eustacia refers to “the cruel satires that Fate loves to indulge in” (*Return* 243). “The Convergence of the Twain,” Hardy’s poem on the occasion of the sinking of the *Titanic* in 1912, fits this category: “The Immanent Will that stirs and urges everything / Prepared a sinister mate” for the ship in the form of the iceberg, and “the Spinner of the Years / Said ‘Now!’” (*Poetical Works*, Vol. II 12, 13). In these examples, Hardy resolutely charges fate with deliberately causing events, be it for fun or for spite. As Tess puts it in “Tess’s Lament” (a lyric separate from but consistent with *Tess of the D’Urbervilles*), “I cannot bear my fate as writ” (*Poetical Works*, Vol. I 216). Like a fairy tale, this brand of fate is a story that has already been “writ” and read.

Hardy constructs causality in quite a few other ways across his writing, however. Many of his poems voice unanswered questions as to who pulls the strings. In “The Darkling Thrush,” the narrator enumerates various ways in which the world seems bleak, then hears a thrush singing joyfully and wonders whether perhaps the thrush knows something about the universe

that he does not. “To the Unknown God” addresses a “Willer... / Who makest Life become” but seems to be “masked and dumb!” and “blind.” The question “How much of consciousness informs Thy will”? receives no response (*Poetical Works*, Vol. I 228).

Most often, Hardy’s poems present fate as blind or indifferent chance—equal in power to the deliberate fate portrayed elsewhere, but random. The 1866 poem “At a Bridal,” subtitled “Nature’s Indifference,” imagines Nature responding to a question by saying that she does not care. The speaker of “Hap,” also from 1866, bemoans the randomness of “purblind” chance, wishing for the rational explanation that a “vengeful god” was causing pain in order to derive enjoyment from it (*Poetical Works*, Vol. I 10). Hardy again characterizes causality as blind in “The Lacking Sense” and “Doom and She,” both published in *Poems of the Past and Present* in 1901. The title entities of the latter poem are Mother Nature, who is “unlit with sight” but vaguely aware that people are suffering, and Doom, who has vision but cannot register human emotion. In “The Lacking Sense,” personified Time asserts that the eyes of Mother Nature are “sightless,” and that she is, like humans, subject to a “primal doom.” The poem does not speculate as to the source of that doom (*Poetical Works* Vol. I 150-4). All these poems, then, attribute causality to transcendent forces that are omnipotent but not omniscient. Hardy’s poetic avatars can only speculate as to whether indifference or blindness is responsible for the senselessness of decrees of doom, but always the result is a lifetime of externally-mandated events that make no sense when put together. This is not unlike the patchwork of fairy-tale influences that seem to underlie the plot of *Tess*: instead of finding herself in a familiar narrative that she could at least recognize even if she could not control it, she finds herself hurtling through fragments of dissimilar stories like “Cinderella,” “Little Red Riding Hood,” and

“Bluebeard” without being able to implement the experience gained from any of them.⁴⁵ The events have been foretold, but they do not fit together. For Hardy, this arrangement is the worst of both worlds: events on earth are not allowed simply to play themselves out, but the forces that direct them have no logic.

Hardy’s personal writings offer similarly various constructions of fate, but on the whole he insists on its blindness. This may be partly because the public (quite understandably) took the miserable lives of his characters as indications that he believed in malicious fate. As late as 1920, he still had to distance himself from the belief that “the Power behind the universe is malign” (*Life and Work* 439). The trouble is that Hardy is inconsistent: he frequently portrays fate as indifferent or blind, but somehow always working out for the worst. His language often reflects these conflicting tendencies. In an 1893, he refers to a sense of “blind circumstances beating upon one, without any feeling, for or against” (*Letters* 2.25). Circumstances may be blind and without feeling, but they “beat” on the human recipient nonetheless. The effects of chance in Hardy’s world are always blows, never simply occurrences.

In a 1907 letter to Edward Wright, Hardy gives a mystifying illustration of “Free Will v. Necessity”:

The will of a man is...neither wholly free not [*sic*] wholly unfree. When swayed by the Universal Will (which he mostly must be as a subservient part of it) he is not individually free; but whenever it happens that all the rest of the Great Will is in equilibrium the minute portion called one person’s will is free, just as a performer’s fingers are free to go on playing the pianoforte of themselves when

⁴⁵ Soon after Sorrow’s death, the narrator of *Tess* counters a quotation from Roger Ascham by saying, “Not seldom that long wandering unfits us for farther travel, and of what use is our experience to us then? Tess Durbeyfield’s experience was of this incapacitating kind” (98). Hardy is skeptical that past experience translates into functional wisdom.

he talks or thinks of something else and the head does not rule them. (*Letters* 3.255)

Hardy's "Universal Will" recalls Schopenhauer, whose work Hardy probably encountered shortly before writing *Tess*. Schopenhauer characterizes the chief force in the universe as a single Will that flows through all beings—a universal, blind striving that can never be satisfied. For Schopenhauer, the closest one can come to exercising free will is to realize that personal satisfaction is impossible and become a resigned ascetic. Hardy's analogy of fingers playing the piano seems to imply that he wants to allow for rather more personal agency than Schopenhauer. But as any pianist knows, the "free" playing of the fingers only occurs when muscle memory of an already-learned piece takes over. The conscious brain may not be directing the fingers, but they are obeying a predetermined program. While the head wanders elsewhere, the fingers are subject to an even more rote causality than usual.

Any discussion of how Hardy portrayed the role of the human individual in the greater world must include the influence of Charles Darwin. Hardy avowed adherence to Darwin's theories throughout his life. Evolutionary theory has profound implications for systems of fate and determinism, and it is relevant to fairy and folk tales for its attention to the individual's place in a physical, vast, dangerous, and ever-changing landscape. As I discussed in Chapter One, one of the most important concepts thrust upon the Victorians by *Origin of Species* in 1859 was the physiological connection among all life forms. Often in *Origin*, Darwin shows physical characteristics that are similar across organisms, then says something like this: "What can be more curious than that the hand of a man, formed for grasping, that of a mole for digging, the leg of the horse, the paddle of the porpoise, and the wing of the bat, should all be constructed on the same pattern, and should include the same bones in the same relative positions?" (155-6). He

emphasizes more than once that all species must have a common origin; “all animals and all plants throughout all time and space [are] related to each other,” and “all living and extinct beings are united by complex, radiating, and circuitous lines of affinities into one grand system” (134, 157). For the most part, he presents this information as positive, calling it “a wonderful fact” and marveling at the underlying affinities among seemingly disparate species.

Hardy, a lifelong animal lover and advocate for animal rights, declared it obvious that “the most far-reaching consequence of the establishment of the common origin of all species is ethical; that it logically involved a re-adjustment of altruistic morals by enlarging as a *necessity of rightness* the application of what has been called ‘The Golden Rule’ beyond the area of mere mankind to that of the whole animal kingdom” (*Life and Work* 376-7).⁴⁶ Schweik connects this comment to Tess’s mercy killing of birds wounded in a hunting expedition. Hardy might have had Tess snap their necks even if evolutionary theory had never been suggested. But because it had, her action carries a stronger sense of sympathy for creatures whose situation is fundamentally equivalent to her own. Tess is described soon after killing the birds as “a figure which is part of the landscape” (280). She is more correct than she realizes when she voices apprehension about being merely “one of a long row” of indistinguishable predecessors written about in a history book (126); in fact, the long row encompasses non-human predecessors as well. The demoralizing consequence of promoting animals and plants to equal status with humans is to diminish the status of humans in the scheme of things. Darwin muses, “How fleeting are the wishes and efforts of man! How short his time!” (*Origin* 113). Obviously, such a statement would have been congenial to Hardy.

Furthermore, a human being is a replaceable and small part of a larger, cyclical system

⁴⁶ Darwin himself names as a noble quality in human beings “benevolence which extends not only to other men but to the humblest living creature” (*Descent* 254).

(as Tess is merely the D'Urberville stand-in *du jour*). Even during the comparative idyll at Talbothays, one of the chapters begins, “[t]he season developed and matured. Another year’s instalment of flowers, leaves, nightingales, thrushes, finches, and such ephemeral creatures, took up their positions where only a year ago others had stood in their place” (128). The catch-all category of “ephemeral creatures” obviously includes human beings. Not by accident did Hardy place this narrative remark right after the “one of a long row” comment and the report that Tess considers herself “true D’Urberville to the bone” (127), and right before observing that Tess and Angel “converg[ed] under an irresistible law, as surely as two streams in one vale” and “they met continually; they could not help it” (129). Tess’s story is inextricable from those of all the other life-forms around her.

Exactly what kind of determinism does this law of nature amount to, though? Peter Morton insists that “a neo-Darwinian reading of *Tess*, then, asserts the novel’s rigid determinism, its total pessimism” (48). But Darwin was not an unequivocal pessimist. He did not jettison the possibility of divine influence: “our minds refuse to accept as the result of blind chance” the sequence of life in the world (*Descent* 249). Moreover, he discusses in *Origin of Species* the relative effects of the “two great laws—Unity of Type, and the Conditions of Existence,” which amount to what we now term “nature” and “nurture” (147). What happens in the lives of organisms results from the complex interplay of these two forces. Darwin was no fatalist, and he left far too much room for happy chance to be considered a pessimist à la Schopenhauer. I am largely in sympathy with Kevin Padian’s view that Hardy was much more pessimistic than Darwin, given that “Darwin saw chance as a series of determined imponderables: only epistemological ignorance keeps us from figuring out the myriad causes behind it. For Hardy, the picture is far more bleak when he deals on a human scale. Fate directs the affairs of men” (76).

Even Hardy's occasional narrative digressions about other ways events might have turned out only emphasizes the fateful plotting: "Deterministic systems are placed under great stress: a succession of ghost plots is present. The persistently almost-attained happy alternatives are never quite obliterated by the actual terrible events. The reader is pained by the sense of multiple possibilities" (Beer 223). Hardy frequently goes out of his way to accentuate an unhappy event by pointing out how nearly it turned out otherwise—as when, for instance, he laments that from any other man than Angel, Tess's post-confession tears would have wrung forgiveness (241). Despite Beer's assertion that this puts "stress" on Hardy's determinism, though, I believe that it strengthens his fatalism. Fate's capriciousness has almost superseded determinism.

But as we have seen, Hardy is no pure fatalist either. Even when he suggests that a malevolent fate is at work, he never associates it with nature. Like Darwin, he portrays the progress of nature as more or less blind. Padian holds that the most malicious force in Hardy is human society (70). After all, he only characterizes fate as malicious some of the time; society is criticized far more consistently. More precisely, many of Tess's troubles result from the conflicting demands of unsympathetic Victorian society and blind nature. For Hillis Miller, this tension between belonging and not belonging to nature explains Tess's situation after having had sex with Alec: "Natural behavior by a human being is always more than purely natural. Tess...has done nothing different from what the rabbits and the pheasants do, but she has been made to break an accepted social law. In this her repetition of natural behavior is repetition with a difference. Part of the poignancy of Tess's story lies in its demonstration of man's distance from nature" (131). I would emphasize not so much humankind's distance from nature as the constant and fraught coexistence of natural and societal forces. Meanwhile, nature is generally associated with the past, society with present and future. One might consider Miller's assessment

an elaboration on Angel's reflection that Tess expresses "the ache of modernism" (124); doing battle inside Tess are nature and society, past and present. Darwin emphasizes that the contemporary appearance of human beings manifests their past, non-human ancestors: "man bears in his bodily structure clear traces of his descent from some lower form" (*Descent of Man* 213). We learn right away that "clear traces" of the past tend to cling to Tess in particular: as a sixteen-year-old club girl, "Phases of her childhood lurked in her aspect still" (15). This description turns out to be prescient, given that after the episode with Alec, Joan Durbeyfield can look back on it as "but a passing accident," whereas for Tess it remains "that haunting episode of bygone days" (192).⁴⁷ Tess tends to hold on to history more tenaciously than other people. In this, she resembles not her mother but the very trees: "traces of its earlier condition are to be found in the old oak copses....The forests have departed, but some old customs of their shades remain" (13). A bit like the "ghost plots" Beer highlights alongside Hardy's realized plots, vestiges of past selves persistently haunt Tess as they do her arboreal surroundings. She is haunted by what was as well as by what might have been.

In addition to natural evolution, *Tess* is concerned with the evolution of rural ways of life. Some critics have read Tess as the representative of traditional agrarian workers threatened by machinery more generally (see Kettle, Howe, and Meadowsong). Meadowsong astutely argues for an "evolutionary link" among the D'Urberville coach, the mail-cart that collides with and kills the horse Prince, and the merciless threshing-machine at Flintcomb-Ash Farm. The doom foretold by the D'Urberville coach is enacted partly through Tess's encounters with other related machines (Meadowsong 241-2). Furthermore, Hardy juxtaposes Tess's backbreaking labor atop

⁴⁷ The serial version in the *Graphic* uses a significantly biological metaphor here: a "haunting transaction of the past, the binding force of which still remained upon her conscience, concealed as it might be by *overgrowths*" (*Tess* 436 n.2; italics mine).

the threshing-machine at Flintcomb-Ash with the oppressive return of Alec to her life, suggesting a connection. Yet Alec is complicated as a symbolic figure: while he seems to embody modern wealth and power structures (particularly their usurpation of former possessors of power), he comes into her life because, deservedly or not, he also represents the ancient heritage Tess's parents want her to excavate for them. It is difficult to say whether, when Tess finally kills Alec, she is striking out at the ancient or the modern. In Meadowsong's terms, the D'Urberville coach, the mail-cart, and the threshing-machine are all complicit in Tess's tragedy.⁴⁸

Whereas Darwin probes the physical mechanics of coming into one's place in the universe, Lacan helps articulate the complex psychological aspect of Tess's travails. Lacan himself portrays psychoanalysis as building on the discoveries of evolutionary theory. He points out that "Freud himself compared his discovery to the so-called Copernican revolution, emphasizing that what was at stake was once again the place man assigns himself at the center of a universe" ("Instance" 429; Freud had made the comparison in "A Difficulty in the Path of Psychoanalysis"). Later he refers to Freud's avowed kinship with both Copernicus and Darwin: after the Earth's demotion from the center of the universe and before the self's demotion from the center of consciousness was "man's...destitution from an analogous place due to the triumph of the idea of evolution" ("Subversion" 674). Rather than being the ultimate creation of God, man turned out to be one of many steps in an indifferently constructed chain of life-forms. Lacan thus identifies heliocentrism, evolution, and Freudian/Lacanian psychology as having essentially the same effect of diminishing the importance and agency of the individual human subject—

⁴⁸ Some feminist critics have been overzealous in their denial of the importance of history in *Tess*. Murphy, for instance, declares Tess "wholly divorced from history, transformed into an aesthetic object frozen in time" (74). Murphy also treats the pagan tradition associated with Tess's mother as ahistorical, which amounts to conflating a long history with no history at all. Both assertions ignore the substantial extent to which Tess's problems are historically specific.

subordinating that subject to structure larger than he or she had previously imagined.⁴⁹

For Lacan, Freud's great discovery is precisely "the self's radical eccentricity with respect to itself" ("Instance" 435)—the heterogeneity of selfhood, or the gap in the self that is sometimes occupied by the Other. Lacan associates this discovery with Freud's famous "Wo Es war, soll Ich werden." Although the phrase is usually rendered in English as "Where the id was, there the ego shall be," Lacan prefers "Where (it) was itself, it is my duty that I come into being" ("Freudian Thing" 347-8). By emphasizing the compulsion of "duty" in the ongoing process of "com[ing] into being," this version better articulates the subject's conflict between the pull of a prescribed desire and the thwarting of all attempts to satisfy that desire. For Lacan, desire is impossible for the subject to satisfy precisely because it is never really the subject's own: "it is quite simply...as the Other's desire that man's desire takes shape, though at first only retaining a subjective opacity in order to represent need in it....Desire begins to take shape in the margin in which demand rips away from need" ("Subversion" 689). A subject's experience of desire is in fact a demand from the Other that has no correspondence to any personal need. In other words, "man's desire is the Other's desire...it is qua Other that man desires" ("Subversion" 690). A desiring subject acts in the place of the Other as a temporary representative.

Tess experiences the D'Urberville name essentially as a Lacanian subject experiences the Other. Although Lacan gives various definitions of the Other, they always hinge on language—its structure, its impetus, its purpose. The whole structure of language in Tess's life can be summed up by "D'Urberville," the word that impels her to follow a series of actions she would not otherwise have taken, in pursuit of impossible desires not her own. The ancient

⁴⁹ Leslie Stephen, one of Hardy's first editors, also compared the Copernican and Darwinian revolutions in an 1873 essay defending Darwin, "Darwinism and Divinity" (Stephen 83).

D'Urbervilles, once Tess knows of their existence, seem a fixture in the very landscape; a charwoman remarks of two D'Urberville portraits in the ancestral home, "Owing to their being builded into the wall they can't be removed" (217). Obviously, we are to take this comment metaphorically as well as literally. Moreover, Angel immediately observes when seeing these portraits that Tess's "fine features were unquestionably traceable in these exaggerated forms" (217). Tess, too, has a sense of physical kinship with the ancient D'Urbervilles; she thinks of herself as "true D'Urberville to the bone" (127). Any given D'Urberville person is simply a placeholder for a little while in the more important D'Urberville structure.

The discovery of Tess's father, Jack, that he is descended from the aristocratic D'Urbervilles opens the novel—it literally as well as symbolically precedes the appearance of Tess. Many of Hardy's novels are interested in family history—*The Well-Beloved* or *The Pursuit of the Well-Beloved*, *Jude the Obscure*, *A Pair of Blue Eyes*, to some extent *The Woodlanders*. Contextualizing the protagonist in a family history accentuates "the non-uniqueness of the individual's experience"; Hardy foregrounds "the individual's encounter with that history—that is, with narrative" (O'Toole 58, 47). This encounter is usually upsetting since it diminishes the individual's sense of agency—for Jude or for the second and third *Avice Caros* in *The Well-Beloved* as for Tess. These characters' enslavement to family destinies strikingly divides them from most fairy-tale protagonists, Jane Austen heroines, *Jane Eyre*, and Pip, all of whom transcend their families. Hardy explicitly linked heredity to destiny in a letter to Edmund Gosse in 1895, stating that the tragedy of *Jude* is due "in the main to a doom or curse of hereditary temperament peculiar to the family of the parties" (*Letters* 2.93). In *Tess*, heredity literally dominates the story, with "D'Urberville" on both the title page and the last.

"D'Urberville"'s status as a fraught family name particularly associates it with Lacan's

Other. Lacan puts great emphasis on “the name of the father”—which in French yields the homophones “name of the father” and “‘no’ of the father”—as prompter and refuser of desires. Tess’s situation is unusual in that her biological father does not actually possess the true “name of the father.” Tess has, if anything, a more jarring encounter with Lacan’s name of the father because she experiences it as a teenager, not a toddler—her experience is entirely unlike being born into a house with “Hareton Earnshaw: 1500” carved into the door, as in *Wuthering Heights*. Her discovery of this fundamental feature later in life, though, reinforces Lacan’s insistence on subjecthood as alienation. The subject encounters structures of language and kinship as simultaneously arbitrary and inevitable.

Undoubtedly, as Waldoff has said, “the conception of tragedy in *Tess of the d’Urbervilles* rests on an assumption of inevitability” (135). But this formulation does not specify whose assumption. Hardy’s narrator frequently evokes an external fate but stops short of declaring it responsible. For example, Talbothays coworker Marian insists, “You’ve no faults, deary; that I’m sure of. And he’s none. So it must be something outside ye both” (283). The temptation is strong to consider Marian a mouthpiece for Hardy, but we cannot be sure. The narrator hedges. When Angel carries the dairy maids across the stream, for instance, “almost before [Tess] was aware she was seated in his arms” (145). What does it mean to be “almost” innocent? Similarly, the narrator remarks after Tess meets Alec, “Had she perceived this meeting’s import she might have asked why she was doomed to be seen and marked and coveted that day by the wrong man” (43). Even in using the word “doomed,” the narrator does not say, “Tess was doomed to be seen and marked and coveted.” Rather, in retrospect, Tess might have looked back and wondered whether the meeting was predestined. Somewhat as Emily Brontë in *Wuthering Heights* portrays superstitious characters without quite validating their beliefs, Hardy evokes so many characters’

“assumptions of inevitability” that the reader absorbs the impression without noticing that the narrator often does not explicitly substantiate those assumptions.

An integral element—one more available in novels than in poetry since characters’ lives unfold gradually—is the role of timing in one’s perception of fate and coincidence. Van Ghent astutely observes that Hardy’s ordering of events in *Tess* contributes to the feeling of supernatural cause. In general, “magical interpretation... consist[s] in seeing one event or thing as a ‘mimicry’ of another—a present happening, for instance, as a mimicry of some future happening; that is, magic makes a system out of analogies.... Poets and novelists do likewise with their symbols” (van Ghent 207). Van Ghent juxtaposes Robert Burns’s symbol from “The Banks o’ Doon” of a rose thorn—the false lover stealing the singer’s rose but leaving the thorn with her—with Tess’s chin being pricked by a thorn of Alec’s rose early in their acquaintance. The difference is in the timing: Burns’s speaker laments the lover’s recent betrayal and looks down at the thorn as a fitting symbol, whereas Tess’s thorn “‘mimics’ a seduction which occurs later” (van Ghent 207-8). Thus Hardy’s thorn is, like Burns’s, an illustration, but it also functions for Tess as an omen (*Tess* 44). Miller, too, ventures that destiny may be in the eye of the beholder. He contends that “the pattern of repetitions in difference forming the design of Tess’s life... produce[s] similarity out of difference and are controlled by no center, origin, or end outside the chain of recurrent elements” (142).⁵⁰ The pattern, for Miller, is less a fateful imposition than a self-fulfilling prophecy.

⁵⁰ Miller rarely cites theorists in the chapters of *Fiction and Repetition*, but in the introduction he acknowledges a general debt to several theorists. Since one of them is Lacan, I presume that this comment on *Tess* was inspired by Lacanian statements such as this one: “the effect of full speech is to *reorder past contingencies by conferring on them the sense of necessities* to come, such as they are constituted by the scant freedom through with the subject makes them present” (“Function” 213, italics mine). For Lacan, subjecthood involves the construction of sense-making narratives where none intrinsically exist.

The tangled threads of free will and fate in Tess's experience support Waldoff's suggestion that "an important form of determinism in Hardy's fiction is psychological" (149). While no one, least of all Hardy, would blame Tess for her tragic fate, her tendency to believe herself doomed is self-reinforcing. She tells her brother that they live on a "blighted" planet—an opinion formed long before she had ever heard of the D'Urbervilles (31). And it only intensifies afterward; soon after she leaves Alec, the narrator characterizes her guilt as "a sorry and mistaken creation of Tess's fancy—a cloud of moral hobgoblins by which she was terrified without reason"; but "the world is only a psychological phenomenon, and what they seemed they were" (85).⁵¹ Hardy's most dramatic example is the legend of the D'Urberville coach: catching sight of a carriage just after her wedding, Tess remarks, "I seem to have seen this carriage before, to be very well acquainted with it" (213). Feeling particularly guilty that day for having married Angel, she demonstrates no surprise at the ominous tale he then sketches for her. Much later, she hears from Alec the full story:

This sound of a non-existent coach can only be heard by one of D'Urberville blood, and it is held to be of ill-omen to the one who hears it. It has to do with a murder, committed by one of the family, centuries ago....One of the family is said to have abducted some beautiful woman, who tried to escape from the coach in which he was carrying her off, and in the struggle he killed her—or she killed him—I forget which. (354)

This oracle is ambiguous, but its connection to Tess and Alec's relationship of mutual violence is

⁵¹ Compare the narrator's comment toward the end of *The Woodlanders* that Hintock woods "had to Grace [Melbury] a touch of the uncanny, and even of the supernatural," whereas for Marty South and Giles Winterborne the sights and sounds of the very same woods "were simple occurrences whose origin, continuance, and laws they foreknew" (309). The woods seem full of the supernatural if one expects them to be.

obvious. Of course, the legend does not make her kill him, any more than Giles Winterborne of *The Woodlanders* suffers and dies solely because he feels from the beginning “that the fates were against him” (69). But by the time she learns the story of the D’Urberville coach, Tess has become so used to disappointment that it seems natural to believe herself ill-fated.

In a crucial twist, however, Hardy identifies susceptibility to a feeling of doom as itself a D’Urberville trait: when Tess defers meekly to Angel’s conditions for their separation, “her submission...perhaps was a symptom of that acquiescence in chance too apparent in the whole D’Urberville family” (253). Hardy’s use of “perhaps” is characteristically cagey. Nevertheless, the notion of “acquiescence in chance” is telling. Hardy seems to mean here that Tess, *qua* D’Urberville, is predisposed to choose to resign herself to destiny. Thus, even though Hardy suggests that “the *idea* of an inescapable heredity could act more powerfully than the trait itself” (Keen 29, italics in original), he binds Tess doubly by psychological and hereditary determinism. Like the paradoxical arbitrariness and inevitability of Lacan’s Other, these twisting threads of causality only amplify the sense of incoherence and alienation in Tess’s life.

There is always a disconnect between what fate, in the form of the D’Urberville narrative, sets up and what Tess’s real, material circumstances allow. Tess’s family has the true lineage but no worldly wealth, while Alec’s has plenty of wealth but no D’Urberville blood. They are not family, and Alec does not marry Tess; their relationship is a cruel bastardization of what the story might have dictated. Tess derives no material advantage from her D’Urberville blood because she occupies the opposite social position from her knightly ancestors. The narrator reminds us more than once—most notably, in the rape scene—that many of the wrongs perpetrated against Tess were once perpetrated against hapless peasants by her ancestors. “So much,” the narrator wryly remarks when Angel does not dance with Tess at the beginning of the

novel, “for Norman blood unaided by Victorian lucre” (17). Tess comes to realize this shortcoming early on; en route to Talbothays, she “felt akin to the landscape,” knowing that nearby are “the bones of her ancestors—her useless ancestors....she almost hated them for the dance they had led her” (102). These D’Urberville knights, who “slept on in their tombs unknowing” during Tess’s execution, do nothing to help Tess (just like the fairies in the forest), but she feels bound to play her part in the D’Urberville narrative nonetheless.

Hardy bombards Tess with snippets of stories and fragmented explanations of cause-and-effect. The existence of multiple explanations is more important than the intricacies of the systems themselves: together they contribute to Tess’s experience of inconsistency. Her life seems to follow one fairy-tale paradigm after another, but the fragments make no coherent whole for her to understand and learn from. Sometimes the horrible events that befall her seem the product of pure chance, other times of a deliberate fate; she is saddest at “happy” moments like her wedding to Angel because she is constantly flinching before the next blow. She suffers like a D’Urberville without enjoying D’Urberville wealth. She feels compelled to play her part in the cycles of nature, but she is punished for failing to adhere to the incompatible demands of Victorian society. Even if she had escaped the tangle of predetermined paths, her D’Urberville susceptibility to fatalism would have prevented her from trusting her freedom. She is forever walking toward a new home while dragging along the problems of the old one. Tess is as surrounded by fairies and fairy tales as other Victorians, but every happy ending that comes into view turns to dust, lifeless as the dream beckoning from the D’Urberville tombs.

Conclusion

As Dickens realized early on, fairy tales are very much about transformation. Thus they were apt tools for a generation of novelists who wanted to investigate just about everything. In many cases the evocations of fairy tales were undoubtedly deliberate; in the others, such evocations indicate just how deeply fairy-tale plots and situations penetrated all forms of storytelling. Either way, the fairy-tale incorporations I have discussed raise a series of complex questions worthy of a final summing up.

One common thread, particularly apparent in Chapters 1 and 4, is how novels that incorporate fairy tales construct plot and fate. The question of fate in fairy tales is complicated. On the one hand, they seem to follow very familiar patterns, more rigidly than other kinds of stories (particularly longer and more detailed ones like novels). On the other hand, they offer literally wonderful surprises, again generally more than other kinds of stories, and often feature disruptions in the usual course of things. For example, many traditional fairy tales championed the youngest sibling because ordinarily primogeniture and associated conventions for girls meant that the youngest had the fewest resources; to triumph was thus a surprise. Yet over time this narrative tradition became itself entrenched; A.S. Byatt's 1998 "The Story of the Eldest Princess" swings the pendulum back the other way, featuring a heroine who fears she is doomed to fail by virtue of being the eldest daughter. Patterns begin to feel inevitable remarkably quickly.

Both Pip and Tess are implicitly accused of misusing story patterns by applying them too rigidly to their own lives; the perception of inevitability is at least powerful as "actual" inevitability. These characters suffer from a disconnect between their expectations and their present circumstances. Whereas Pip is excessively optimistic, Tess is excessively pessimistic.

Both habits are detrimental. Pip believes himself sheltered in a happy fairy tale so neglects to live responsibly and pay attention to his real present circumstances. Tess at least contributes to her misfortunes by assuming she is trapped in a sad fairy tale. Hardy never quite lands on a single brand of determinism in *Tess*, but Dickens in *Great Expectations* firmly steers the reader toward the conclusion that in fact Pip's life was not plotted, but that all events followed naturally from all others (recall Brooks's contention that Pip undergoes a "cure" from plot"). As a *Bildungsroman* and an at least generally realist novel, *Great Expectations* requires this conclusion. So does *Jane Eyre*, but Jane seems remarkably unaffected by a perception of inevitability. Though subject to harsh surroundings and permeable by outside influences, she seems in control of herself. She permits incorporation of some features of Helen, Bertha, Rochester, and even St. John. A crucial contributor to the absence of a feeling of fate in Jane's story is precisely the correspondence between her actions and perceptions and the surrounding events. Cause-and-effect is more than immanent: it rests in Jane. Even though Pip, too, narrates his own story and Tess, too, exercises influence on her own life by the perceptions she has, Pip realizes the truth of his circumstances too late and Tess only makes hers worse; neither character attains the ultimate harmony Jane reaches with her environment.

How much do outside forces affect interior experiences? This is the question both of fatalism/determinism and of another common thread most apparent in Chapters 1-3: the relationship between self and other. "Beauty and the Beast" and "Bluebeard" are essentially about varying levels of distinction between self and other. They begin from opposite directions: whereas in "Beauty and the Beast" Beauty must learn to recognize her underlying affinity with an animal-like character and then the Prince must decide whether he minds marrying a commoner, in "Bluebeard" the wife must learn to distinguish herself from Bluebeard's past

wives and distance herself from her husband. On the whole, fairy tales have more to do with distinction than similitude. They typically feature clear-cut good and evil characters, distinguish the youngest siblings from the others, single out worthy individuals, unmask evil, and send protagonists through “other” spaces like the forest. Furthermore, fairy tales often eliminate duplicates in the form of (step)parents and grandparents when the young protagonist approaches adulthood; “Little Red Riding Hood” and “Snow White” are well-known examples. But things look different from outside the story: fairy-tale characters are only minimally distinguished from characters fulfilling similar roles in other tales, or even from people in real life. They tend to be sketches of types, each a stand-in or repository for many individuals. Even so, most fairy-tale protagonists simply progress along the journey and makes their own decisions, unaware of the preexisting narrative patterns that make that journey seem destined from the reader’s perspective.

“Beauty and the Beast” and “Bluebeard” have a particularly substantial interest in the uniqueness of the protagonist with respect to other characters in the stories. The novels I discuss, via their incorporation of these two tales, ask several related questions: How do you tell the difference between self and other? What defines different “kinds”? How do you forge and maintain the self? How do you incorporate parts of others without incorporating all of them? What kinds or degrees of difference can be accepted into the self? Does taking the other into the self always amount to violence? *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall* and *Jane Eyre* echo central plot elements of “Bluebeard” and “Beauty and the Beast,” and, like them, stage these questions in marriage. But *Great Expectations* and the two Doppelgänger novels address the same fundamental questions, too, regardless of lacking the literal plot structure of either fairy tale. *Wuthering Heights*, as usual, is something of an outlier; it contains pieces of both fairy tales’ plots but ultimately conceives of self and other in a way entirely its own.

These novels present various solutions to the problem of other beings. Jane Eyre forges her independent self both by deliberately selecting elements of other selves that she encounters and by effectively deciding which fairy tales she is willing to participate in. In loving Rochester despite his imperfections but refusing to become yet another of Rochester's mistresses and thus one of Bluebeard's indistinguishable wives, she throws in her lot with "Beauty and the Beast." Dickens implies that Pip ought to open himself up more; he is in need of precisely the "Beauty and the Beast" message. Having opened up once, to Miss Havisham and Estella, Pip does not significantly modify himself again until finally forced to appreciate Magwitch and Joe. Ironically, he is too busy re-fashioning himself externally to notice his need for moral growth. Both Doppelgänger novels, meanwhile, conclude that human beings cannot manipulate the borders of the self as much as they might want to (help from science and unexplained magic notwithstanding); both Dorian Gray and Henry Jekyll must accept that they are multifaceted beings instead of attempting to relegate less desirable aspects of themselves to designated others. Other is part of self, self is part of other. One would think, then, that Catherine and Heathcliff ought to live happily ever after—each of them looks at the other as an equivalent being. But they have no understanding of "part"; Catherine does not say "Heathcliff is part of me," she says "He is more myself than I am." Erring on the opposite end of the spectrum from the other characters examined here, they conceive of themselves as entirely identical. Tess, similarly, needed to learn to distinguish herself better, to avoid becoming "one of a long row" of predecessors in history. A precarious definition of an acceptable perception of self and other is emerging—which would bear out Girard's insistence that societal peace always rests on a tenuous balance. Model yourself on others, but not too literally. Acknowledge traits held in common with the other, but do not get carried away.

Questions of how to define and interpret traits held in common with others took on particular urgency in the Victorian period after the public absorbed the theories of Darwin, which I explicitly engage several times in the dissertation. Darwin's work is in many ways the intersection of the major issues discussed above: determinism and the relationship between self and other. Indeed, the question of selfhood includes the question of agency: what is the extent and nature of the sovereignty of the self? Is the individual in control or constantly acted upon by "others," meaning other selves or other outside influences? How does the individual fit and act within a larger system of beings and environment? In different ways, novelists had already been asking the questions Darwin pursued. Where does the individual come from? How does he or she relate to others? Does his or her birth designate a fixed path, or is there room for chance or free will? Does someone pull the strings of the universe? What distinguishes human beings from animals? How much do individuals influence each other? How does heredity work? How do you make distinctions among individuals? Why do some individuals' paths through life seem easier than others'? A question for literature scholars, then, is whether writers addressed such questions differently after Darwin. Certainly he sharpened such questions and provided rich ways to talk about them, as Hardy's work particularly shows. And, as Freud and Lacan pointed out, he contributed to the gradual ousting of humankind from a central spot in the universe. A human being after the revelation of evolution is no longer inherently distinct from other life.

Darwin's effect on narratives of determinism is less stark, both because he did not offer a single interpretation of universal cause and effect himself (scholars continue to debate his position) and because many religious interpretations of the universe already deprived human beings of unadulterated free will. Instead, Darwin's ideas suggested additional possibilities for thinking and writing about determinism. Clearly he influenced both Dickens and Hardy, but in

very different ways, appropriate to the beliefs both writers held beforehand. Dickens made the mostly positive interpretation that we are all connected by something deeper than ourselves, whereas Hardy was more struck by the implication that human beings are just as subject to the vicissitudes of nature as all other beings, despite supposedly superior intelligence and civilization.

For Lacan, as for Hardy, Darwin's theory indicated the limits of human agency within a larger structure. As he said, Lacan follows Darwin in further de-centering man from his universe. But he rarely considers the rest of nature, as Hardy and Darwin do, and again unlike Darwin, he prioritizes perception over essence. Whereas Darwin demonstrates at length exactly how beings are connected, Lacan devotes his writing to a system of Real, Symbolic, and Imaginary that is purely psychological—it has no tangible existence. Lacan's focus on the subject's experience and on the use and implications of language makes his work especially applicable to literature. For literature scholars, it can be difficult to let go of the impulse to figure out, say, the real explanation of determinism in *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* or the underlying central significance of *Wuthering Heights*. Lacan's theory is apt for juxtaposition with them because it is too complex to function as a simple hermeneutic device; Lacan discourages glib interpretations as much as Hardy and Brontë do. Instead of demonstrating a way to untangle the knots of causality and relationships, his theory enriches our understanding of those knots.

Although I have predominantly contrasted Lacan with fairy tales, one could also do the opposite. As with Hardy, it is primarily the happy endings of many fairy tales that distance them from the Lacanian paradigm. The beginnings and middles have much to do with Lacan. First, most fairy tales begin with some destabilization or disruption in the protagonist's position. Lacan articulates the beginning of subjectivity (essentially life in general) as the cuts of subjection to

the laws of language and kinship—that is, alienation from stable meanings. Throughout a fairy tale, the protagonist typically undergoes a journey through a multitude of strange encounters and situations, usually with a strong symbolic import. The goal is to regain stability, ideally with a restoration or rise (depending on the protagonist's initial status) to possession of plenitude. Similarly, a Lacanian subject moves through life by pursuing a chain of signifiers of his or her desire, metonymically and metaphorically linked to each other. The subject believes that they lead ever closer to that locus of plenitude supposedly possessed earlier in life (before the Lacanian cuts, before the fairy-tale destabilization). Both the fairy-tale protagonist and the Lacanian subject think of themselves as self-sufficiently following the road to success; the difference is that only the former turns out to be correct.

Like species, fairy tales evolve. Hardy once wrote to Edward Clodd of a folk story, “You will be able to classify this no doubt, & say exactly where it belongs in the evolutionary chain of Folk Lore” (*Letters* 2.136). No fairy or folk tale exists in isolation. We could think of Victorian fiction as an environment in which fairy tales and lore particularly thrived; or, on the other hand, of fairy tales and lore as resources that Victorian novels made great use of in order to flourish. The fairy-tale elements I have identified throughout this dissertation cover ranges of positive and negative inflection, conspicuousness and subtlety, irony and sincerity, triumph and pathos. Some contrast with the characters' real lives; others provide behavioral models; others still illustrate internal states of mind. In the era of the hermeneutics of suspicion, discussions tended to focus on ways fairy tales have been manipulated by various oppressors. As necessary as it is to be alert to such uses of fairy tales, I am far from convinced that fairy tales are always oppressive. They are not “always” anything. Each new version of or allusion to a fairy tale deserves to be considered on its own terms, and in the context of the evolution of the story family as well as the

historical and geographical context of the particular text.

Very little escaped the purview of Victorian fiction, and the fairy tale was no exception. What is remarkable, though, is how fully fairy tales were woven into novels' treatments of other issues. Fairy tales both represented an escape from the industrialized modern world and provided ways to think about and encounter that very world. Like *Beauty and the enchanted Beast*, fairy tales and Victorian novels are far more intimately connected than they initially seem.

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