

ABSTRACT

Title of Dissertation: HUMANKINDNESS: ILLNESS, ANIMALITY, AND THE
LIMITS OF THE HUMAN IN THE VICTORIAN NOVEL

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This project posits a link between representations of animals or animality and representations of illness in the Victorian novel, and examines the narrative uses and ideological consequences of such representations. Figurations of animality and illness in Victorian fiction have been examined extensively as distinct phenomena, but examining their connection allows for a more complex view of the role of sympathy in the Victorian novel. The commonplace in novel criticism is that Victorian authors, whether effectively or not, constructed their novels with a view to the expansion of sympathy. This dissertation intervenes in the discussion of the Victorian novel as a vehicle for sympathy by positing that texts and scenes in which representations of illness and animality are conjoined reveal where the novel draws the boundaries of the human, and the often surprising limits it sets on sympathetic feeling. In such moments, textual cues train or direct readerly sympathies in ways that suggest a particular definition of the human, but that direction of sympathy is not always towards an enlarged sympathy, or an enlarged definition of the human. There is an equally (and increasingly) powerful antipathetic

impulse in many of these texts, which estranges readerly sympathy from putatively deviant, degenerate, or dangerous groups.

These two opposing impulses—the sympathetic and the antipathetic—often coexist in the same novel or even the same scene, creating an ideological and affective friction, and both draw on the same tropes of illness and animality. Examining the intersection of these different discourses—sympathy, illness, and animality-- in these novels reveals the way that major Victorian debates about human nature, evolution and degeneration, and moral responsibility shaped the novels of the era as vehicles for both antipathy and sympathy. Focusing on the novels of the Brontës and Thomas Hardy, this dissertation examines in depth the interconnected ways that representations of animals and animality and representations of illness function in the Victorian novel, as they allow authors to explore or redefine the boundary between the human and the non-human, the boundary between sympathy and antipathy, and the limits of sympathy itself.

**Humankindness:
Illness, Animality, and the Limits of the Human in Victorian Fiction**

by

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Introduction

Sympathy and the Victorian Novel

In Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* (1847), Edward Rochester angrily refers to his first wife Bertha Mason as a "mad, bad, embruted" creature (357). In that one phrase, suggestions of Bertha's animality and (mental) illness are conflated with, and for Rochester reinforce, her moral failings as a woman. Such an intersection of animality, illness, and moral evaluation was common in the Victorian novel. As in this passage in which they are applied to Bertha, animality and illness in Victorian fiction both frequently represented abject embodiment in opposition to the rationality and transcendence of corporeality considered essential to full humanity. Thus, the attribution of these traits was often used, as Rochester uses them, to police the boundaries of the human. As a result, illness and animality also raised the question of the proper limits of sympathy for those aligned with those qualities. Critics have examined figurations of animality and illness in Victorian fiction extensively as distinct phenomena, but the close interconnection between them has not been explored in detail. Such an exploration allows for a more complex view of how the Victorians defined humanity itself, and of the role of that key Victorian moral virtue, sympathy, in the nineteenth-century novel.

This dissertation intervenes in the discussion of the Victorian novel as a vehicle for sympathy by positing that texts and scenes in which representations of illness and animality are conjoined reveal where the novel draws the boundaries of the human, and the often surprising limits it sets on sympathetic feeling. In such moments, textual cues train or direct readerly sympathies in ways that suggest a particular definition of the

human, but that direction of sympathy is not always towards an enlarged sympathy, or an enlarged definition of the human. There is an equally (and increasingly) powerful antipathetic impulse in many of these texts, which estranges readerly sympathy from putatively deviant, degenerate, or dangerous groups. These two opposing impulses—the sympathetic and the antipathetic—often coexist in the same novel or even the same scene, creating an ideological and affective friction, and both draw on the same tropes of illness and animality.

To make my terminology clear, throughout this project, when I refer to animality, I mean both representations of animals and metaphorical connections drawn between characters and animals. Also, I generally use the term “sympathy,” as opposed to “empathy,” as the former word is more often used and theorized within these novels themselves, and more closely associated with a compassionate response to sorrow and suffering in the texts and scenes I examine.¹ The main exception to this rule is in my discussion of Thomas Hardy’s *Jude the Obscure* (1895), in which the distinction between sympathy and empathy is significant for understanding Hardy’s conception of sympathy’s limits.

In addressing the issue of sympathy in the Victorian novel, I build on a long scholarly tradition. Theorists of the novel have often discussed the value it accrued in the Victorian era as a vehicle for awakening the sympathetic imagination. Ideas about natural moral sentiment and sympathy, as detailed by eighteenth-century moral philosophers including David Hume and Adam Smith, fed into the novel in that century, and developed as a part of the ethos of the novel in the nineteenth century.² Smith himself had described the process of sympathy, in which we “chang[e] places in fancy with the

sufferer, [so] that we come either to conceive or to be affected by what he feels” (74), as something that could occur in readers relating to “those heroes of tragedy and romance who interest us” (75). Even Charles Darwin described sympathy through reference to fiction, defining it as the process through which “when we see or hear of suffering in another, the idea of suffering is called up so vividly in our minds that we ourselves suffer” even if our sympathy is only for “the imaginary distresses of a heroine” (*Expression* 215-216). In the nineteenth century, opportunities for this kind of suffering for the “imaginary distresses” of characters were readily available, since, as Lucy Bending notes in *The Representation of Bodily Pain in Late Nineteenth-Century English Culture* (2000), “Victorian fiction was awash with physical suffering” (89)—and emotional and psychological suffering as well.

The commonplace about novels, and Victorian novel in particular, is that they function as vehicles for sympathy, specifically for expanding readers’ capacity for sympathy by encouraging them to enter into the minds and circumstances of characters very different than themselves. Many eighteenth and nineteenth-century authors, critics, and readers saw the inculcation of the sympathetic imagination, achieved primarily by readers’ identification with characters, as the novel’s primary role.³ Catherine Gallagher summarizes this conception of the novel, saying that sympathy or “compassion” was at this time

generally acknowledged to be the end of fiction. As we have often been told, fiction in the eighteenth century was believed to be a vehicle for moral sentiments. It was thought to allow the exercise of sympathy, the process by which one feels the joys and sufferings of another and may thereby be motivated to perform benevolent actions. Sympathy and the imagination, then, were linked in some ethical systems, and certain historians of the novel argue that the new cultural prestige of fiction depended on this link. Fiction, the argument assumes, makes it easy to appropriate another’s point of view, to sympathize (167).⁴

This conception of the novel's power to stir up moral sentiment gave it a moral stature, a *gravitas*, enabling its rise from a literary form considered at best mere popular entertainment, and at worst a source of danger and corruption, to one with the high purpose of expanding sympathy.

The idea of the moral purpose of the novel deeply informed Victorian novelists' aesthetics, and is perhaps best typified by the work of George Eliot, who, as David Marshall among others has noted, evaluated her characters "according to their proximity to the poles of sympathetic imagination and narcissism" (*Figure 261*). Eliot was invested in establishing the novel as a morally improving form. In *A Natural History of German Life* (1856), she wrote:

The greatest benefit we owe to the artist, whether painter, poet, or novelist, is the extension of our sympathies. Appeals founded on generalizations and statistics require a sympathy ready-made, a moral sentiment already in activity; but a picture of human life such as a great artist can give, surprises even the trivial and the selfish into that attention to what is apart from themselves, which may be called the raw material of moral sentiment. (Eliot *Natural* 144-145)⁵

Similarly, Eliot wrote in a letter:

If art does not enlarge man's sympathies, it does nothing morally. I have had heart-cutting experiences that *opinions* are a poor cement between human souls; and the only effect I ardently long to produce by my writings is, that those who read them should be better able to *imagine* and *feel* the pains and joys of those who differ from themselves in everything but the broad fact of being suffering, erring human beings. (cited in Albrecht 440)

Eliot carried this philosophy into her fiction. In "Amos Barton" in *Scenes of Clerical Life* (1857), she suggests that "perhaps I am doing a bold thing to bespeak your sympathy on behalf of a man who was so very unremarkable," but assures the reader that "you would gain unspeakably if you could learn with me to see some of the poetry and the pathos" of such seemingly insignificant people (43-44). She states directly that "I

wish to stir your sympathy with commonplace troubles—to win your tears for real sorrow: sorrow such as may live next door to you—such as walks neither in rags nor in velvet, but in very ordinary decent apparel” (59). Likewise, in *Adam Bede* (1859) she states her commitment to representing ordinary people and lives because “I can’t afford to give all my love and reverence to... rarities: I want a great deal of those feelings for my everyday fellow-men, especially for those few in the foreground of the great multitude whose faces I know, whose hands I touch, for whom I have to make way with kindly courtesy”; it is “needful that I should have a fibre of sympathy connecting me” with such people (162), she insists, evidently intending her fiction to strengthen such fibres.

Modern critics of Victorian novels like Eliot’s, however, suggest that the relationship between the Victorian novel and sympathy is more complicated than the mere expansion of sympathy and what Eliot called “fellowship in suffering” (*Scenes* 275). Audrey Jaffe’s *Scenes of Sympathy: Identity and Representation in Victorian Fiction* (2000) examines scenes of sympathy in Victorian fiction in terms of class and social dynamics, and the socio-cultural construction of identity in terms of those with whom one chooses to sympathize. What she observes of late nineteenth-century fiction was true to some extent throughout the century: “Because late-nineteenth century ideologies define identity increasingly in group terms—as, for instance, membership in a nation or in a sexual category—sympathy becomes more explicitly a matter of claiming identity with, or distance from, such group identifications” (158). Suzanne Keen’s *Empathy and the Novel* (2007) calls into question the truism that the novel expands sympathy in a way that leads to active altruism. Rebecca Mitchell in *Victorian Lessons in*

Empathy and Difference (2011) argues that “[t]he lesson of Victorian realism is that we cannot know the other” (xii), and that these novels promote empathy not through encouraging identification, but through promoting awareness of the difference, or alterity, of others—their separateness from one’s own desires and projections.⁶ Christopher Lane’s *Hatred and Civility* (2004) explores the long-ignored currents of hatred and misanthropy running through Victorian novels, noting of Charlotte Brontë and George Eliot, for instance, “the way antipathy in their novels corrupts fellow feeling” (xxvi).

Further complicating the correspondence between the Victorian novel and the expansion of sympathy is the indeterminacy surrounding Victorian definitions of the human. To enlarge the circle of sympathy was inevitably to risk including subjects previously deemed not-quite-human and thus not quite worthy of human sympathy.⁷ The prospect of that greater inclusiveness troubled novelists as often as it inspired them. While some Victorian novels do direct our sympathies to marginalized groups, others guide our sympathies away from such groups, seeking to shore up the barriers between the “fully human” subject (typically the white, western, middle-class, healthy adult male), and others who threaten to claim the status of subjects for themselves—particularly animals, invalids, women, and members of other races, nationalities, and classes. These others were figures of, in Rebecca Mitchell’s phrase, “wholesale alterity,” in which a whole group (for example, the poor) is designated other and “inhuman” (33). Such groups were sources of great cultural concern, with the potential to arouse both sympathy and deep anxiety.

While the relation of sympathy to class, race, and gender in the Victorian novel has provided fertile ground for analysis, the relation of sympathy to both illness and

animality is equally enlightening. Victorians certainly used pathologizing or animalizing discourse about women, the lower classes, and non-white races, and thus concerns of race, gender, and class are inextricable from my analysis. Gender is of particular importance to my project, as Victorians considered women not only more prone to disease and in many ways closer animals than men were, but more capable of sympathy. Physiologist Thomas Laycock in his 1869 work *Mind and Brain* used comparisons to other species to argue for women's "instinctive" sympathy, and asserted that "[e]very man who has suffered much knows how instinctively woman is a 'ministering angel'" (178). Audrey Jaffe notes that while women were "frequently imagined as sympathy's objects" (Jaffe 17), they were also seen as founts of sympathy:

[I]n Victorian discussions and, frequently, in contemporary critical analyses, sympathy tends to appear explicitly as a woman's issue. According to Ruskin, for instance, women's position within the family renders them better at feeling than men. As the centers of Victorian domestic life, women were expected to defer their own desires and work toward the fulfillment of others', and the name given that generalized identification was frequently sympathy. And that sympathy, in turn, suggested a more generalized capacity to identify with others... (17)

Paradoxically, women's supposed greater capacity of feeling for others was set alongside the supposedly less human status that aligned them with animals and with the mentally or physically infirm.

In the second half of the nineteenth century, new endeavors to improve the welfare of animals, along with the increasing cultural authority of the medical profession, brought these groups—women, animals, and invalids-- to the foreground of a social discussion that was carried on within and among novels as much as anywhere else.⁸ These novels often inextricably link representations of animality to representations of illness; they employ literal or metaphorical animals in a variety of ways—for example, to

estrangle or to encourage sympathy for an invalid, or to make a claim for animals' worthiness as objects of human sympathy (or even as subjects) in their own right. Examining the intersection of these different discourses—sympathy, illness, and animality-- in these novels reveals the way that major Victorian debates about human nature, evolution and degeneration, and moral responsibility shaped the novels of the era as vehicles for both antipathy and sympathy.⁹

Animals

In Victorian England, sympathetic concern for suffering, including the suffering both of the ill and of animals, became an increasingly powerful cultural force. Concern for animal suffering in particular flourished, even as increasing knowledge of our kinship with animals led to a countervailing suspicion and repulsion toward the animality latent in mankind. Victorians' increased sympathy for the suffering of animals was an outgrowth of and expansion on eighteenth-century thinkers' moral elevation of sympathy for pain. Adam Smith had marked "sympathy itself as pain," as an "expansive sensibility... shrinking" away at the sight of suffering (Jaffe 11). Humphrey Primatt in his 1776 *Dissertation on the Duty of Mercy and Sin of Cruelty to Brute Animals* had declared that "Pain is pain, whether it be inflicted on man or beast" (cited in Jane Spencer 41). Appeals to sympathy based on animals' capacity to feel seemed to carry more weight than appeals to their ability to think, though Hume had argued in *A Treatise of Human Nature* (1739) that animals' reasoning process "is not in itself different, nor founded on different principles, from that which appears in human nature" (Book I, Part 3, Section 16).¹⁰ In 1789, in contrast, Jeremy Bentham had argued for animal rights in *An*

Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation primarily on the basis of sympathy for suffering:

The day *may* come when the rest of the animal creation may acquire those rights which never could have been withholden from them but by the hand of tyranny... What else is it that should trace the insuperable line? Is it the faculty of reason, or perhaps, the faculty of discourse? But a full-grown horse or dog is beyond comparison a more rational, as well as a more conversable animal, than an infant of a day, or a week, or even a month. But suppose the case were otherwise, what would it avail? the question is not, Can they *reason*? nor, Can they *talk*? but, Can they *suffer*?" (cited in Garrett vii)

This question of animal suffering took on heightened significance in the Victorian era,¹¹ which, as James Turner points out in *Reckoning with the Beast*, was “an era of enhanced sensitiveness to pain.” (xi), including the pain of animals.¹² Indeed, “The suffering animal was the avatar of pure, simple, unmitigated pain.” (Turner 82); “What did people sympathize with in animals? Pain. What, in their traditional view, gave animals a right to human consideration? Their ability to feel pain. How indeed was cruelty defined if not as the deliberate infliction of unnecessary pain?” (79).

Animal rights activists’ emphasis on the suffering of animals placed them in opposition to the Cartesian view of animals as mere machines without consciousness, but in line with the general Victorian concern with pain. T.H. Huxley, a biologist and advocate of Darwinism, agreed with Descartes that animals were automata but thought they were “conscious automata” (Huxley “Hypothesis” 241), shrinking from thinking of them as merely “a superior race of marionettes, which...cry without pain” (224).¹³ He suggested that animals could feel, though not think, adding:

I confess that, in view of the struggle for existence which goes on in the animal world, and of the frightful quantity of pain with which it must be accompanied, I should be glad if the probabilities were in favour of Descartes’ hypothesis; but, on the other hand, considering the terrible practical consequences to domestic animals which might ensue from any error on our part, it is as well to err on the

right side, if we err at all, and deal with them as weaker brethren, who are bound, like the rest of us, to pay their toll for living, and suffer what is needful for the general good. (237)¹⁴

Along with such concern for pain, general interest in animals grew throughout the nineteenth century, and “animal protection embodied the temper of the age,” part of “the general urge toward compassion flowering amid the urban-industrial transformation of England and America” (Turner 36).¹⁵ Ivan Kreilkamp notes that:

Of the major reformist social movements in Victorian culture, the one surely least considered to date by critics and scholars of Victorian literature has been the political, social, and philosophical push to re-think the status of the animal and the meaning of human relationships to animals. One may think about this history as organized around such basic questions as: who is human? Who or what is a non-human, a thing or "animal"? What living things may be treated cruelly—or can a "thing" or "animal" be treated cruelly? (Does cruelty only obtain when the object is designated as human?) And how are "sympathy" and "cruelty," as two manifestations of passionate affect, linked? (“Dying” 90)

These questions were vigorously taken up by a growing animal rights movement. A great number of those behind the early animal rights movement were women—which, as Turner points out, was unsurprising, as woman conventionally “represented ‘gentleness and sympathy,’ as opposed specifically to the harsh competitiveness of the business world” (76).¹⁶ Many of the dominant figures advocating for animals were also actively involved in other humanitarian movements; Frances Power Cobbe, “the *grande dame* of English antivivisectionism” and “Baroness Burdett Couttes, probably the most influential single voice in the RSPCA in the latter half of the century,” were among those involved in other philanthropies (Turner 36).¹⁷

The animal rights movement’s successes began in 1809, when Lord Erskine pleaded for legal protection for animals, and “Martin’s Act” was passed by Parliament in 1822, protecting some domesticated animals from abuse. The SPCA was founded in 1824,

becoming the RSPCA (Royal Society for the Protection of Animals) in 1840, with the blessing of Queen Victoria, and becoming immensely influential.¹⁸ Further anti-cruelty legislation followed throughout the century, including The Act to Amend the Law Relating to Cruelty to Animals (1876), which aimed to regulate vivisection.¹⁹

While animals might be objects of sympathy, however, the brutality—or more generally, the animality—of humans was for many Victorians a source of repugnance and horror. Thus, one of the earliest targets of concern for animal rights activists was bull-baiting, because it seemed a “brutalizing” sport that rendered the spectators themselves “inhuman” (Turner 24).²⁰ Turner articulates the anxieties behind these efforts:

If animals shared our physical nature, organ for organ and sense for sense, if beasts even possessed a modicum of reason, than the only distinguishing trait of human beings was a spiritual nature; they, unlike the brutes, could control their animality by higher capacities. But giving way to passion, especially to animalistic blood lust, put this in question. In particular, when the ungoverned impulse involved cruelty to animals themselves, the threatening issue of human animality was highlighted intolerably. Who was the man, who was the beast, and where was the difference?” (Turner 24).²¹

As “Animal World,” an 1881 publication of the RSPCA, put it: “Nowhere are the brutish passions of man more displayed than in cruelty. Just so far as a man is cruel does he show less of human nature and more of the animal nature which exist together in him—just so far does he show that he has forgotten that it is the glory of the human to control the animal nature” (cited in Turner 69). Frequently in Victorian novels, cruelty to animals reveals the perpetrator himself to be less than human.

Similar concerns arose regarding experimental medicine, particularly vivisection,²² a cause of deep distress among animal lovers. Among those who signed a petition urging the RSPCA to push for anti-vivisection legislation were Tennyson, Browning, Ruskin,

and Carlyle (91). Darwin supported vivisection's necessity, but even he shrank from practicing it himself (Turner 86); he wrote in *The Descent of Man* that "everyone has heard of the dog suffering under vivisection, who licked the hand of the operator; this man, unless he had a heart of stone, must have felt remorse to the last hour of his life" (*Descent* 68).

A vivisector's developing a heart of stone was indeed viewed as a possibility. Like blood-sports, vivisection was seen as hardening the sympathies of the practitioners and inculcating cruelty, this time in the very people—doctors—who were most expected to sympathize with and comfort the suffering (Turner 87, 97).²³ Wilkie Collins depicted a devilish vivisectionist in his novel *Heart and Science* (1883); its vivisectionist character Dr. Nathan Benjulia believes that "[k]nowledge sanctifies cruelty" (Collins *Heart* 268). While he cannot answer his brother's question as to why a living dog may be dissected but not a living man, Benjulia ultimately responds that if allowed he would vivisect a human being in pursuit of knowledge (266-269).²⁴ Tennyson also suggested vivisection's brutalizing influence in his poem "The Princess" when Princess Ida, who encourages women to pursue most intellectual fields generally confined to men, recoils from anatomy: "We shudder but to dream our maids should ape/ Those monstrous males that carve the living hound" (172).²⁵

Victorian views on animals and the animality latent within human beings were also shaped throughout the century by the evolutionary science which had taken hold of the public imagination. As Turner and Laura Brown both point out, from the publication of Carl Linnaeus' 1735 "*Systema Naturae*," which grouped men with primates, and thus "may have encouraged the many students of that influential work to think more readily of

man as an animal” (Turner 8), scientists were coming to find fixed species boundaries ever more arbitrary.²⁶ But these ideas did not remain confined to scientists: “Eighteenth-century natural history... tended to bring man and beast closer together in the order of nature... The influence of these biological ideas widened as what had generally been the property of devotees of natural history filtered down into the general educated consciousness”;²⁷ thus, “The new acceptance of human animality, the new appreciation of science, the new horror of pain all impinged on one seemingly minor question, raised to public attention chiefly by the traumas of industrialization. How ought people to treat the animals around them?” (Turner 23, xii).

This question became even more important as Darwin’s description of the evolutionary process through natural selection revealed our kinship with animals.²⁸ In 1871, Darwin in *The Descent of Man* suggested that “[s]ympathy beyond the confines of man, that is, humanity to the lower animals, seems to be one of the latest moral acquisitions” (119), adding that:

as man gradually advanced in intellectual power, . . . , as he regarded more and more, not only the welfare, but the happiness of his fellow-men; as from habit, following on beneficial experience, instruction and example, his sympathies became more tender and widely diffused, extending to men of all races, to the imbecile, maimed, and other useless members of society, and finally to the lower animals,—so would the standard of his morality rise higher and higher. (121)²⁹

Works from Anna Sewall’s *Black Beauty* to Darwin’s own *The Expression of the Emotions in Man and Animals* worked to “foster the growing belief in animal subjectivity, and to embolden those who fought for the relief of animal pain,” as Deborah Morse and Martin Danahay observe (1);³⁰ in the latter book Darwin asserts animals’ ability to feel and express love and affection (Darwin *Expression* 10-11, 118), and to root morality in their social instincts.³¹

On the other hand, evolutionary ideas spilling into the social realm as the century neared its close led writers including Cesare Lombroso to propose that sensitivity to pain was a mark of refined civilization, and that those less evolved, including women, the lower class, criminals, other races, and of course animals, were less susceptible to pain (Athena Vrettos 146-152).³² This idea that, as the prominent doctor Weir Mitchell put it, “in our process of being civilized we have won... intensified capacity to suffer” (Bending 125)³³ was also influential to Hardy’s pessimistic worldview, though it never led him to diminish the suffering of animals.

In exploring Victorian conceptions of animals and animality, I owe a great deal to the burgeoning field of animal studies, which scrutinizes the very binaries that troubled the Victorians: the human and the inhuman, the humane and the inhumane.³⁴ James Turner’s *“Reckoning with the Beast”*: *Animals, Pain, and Humanity in the Victorian Mind* (1980) and Harriet Ritvo’s *The Animal Estate: The English and Other Creatures in the Victorian Age* (1987) are foundational works for thinking about animals in Victorian culture. Critics including Deborah Morse (particularly in *Victorian Animal Dreams: Representations of Animals in Victorian Literature and Culture* [2007], which she edited with Martin A. Danahay), and Ivan Kreilkamp have built on work like Ritvo’s and Turner’s to explore the role of animals in Victorian literature and culture. None of these works, however, connect the way the Victorians thought about the suffering of animals with the way they thought about that of invalids. Focusing on the novels of the Brontës and Thomas Hardy, the following chapters examine in depth the interconnected ways that representations of animals and animality and representations of illness function in the Victorian novel, as they allow authors to explore or redefine the boundary between the

human and the non-human, the boundary between sympathy and antipathy, and the limits of sympathy itself.

Illness

The rhetoric of illness worked in ways both analogous to and interconnected with that of animality in Victorian literature, raising questions about who merited sympathy and setting limits on who qualified as fully human. The connection between animality and illness demonstrates that estrangement is every bit as prevalent as sympathy in these texts, that suffering can brutalize or elevate, and that the category of the human is radically porous. Like the suffering of animals, the suffering of invalids pervaded Victorian society, and the meanings of illness in an age where the medical profession was just gaining ascendancy were in flux in the same way that definitions of the human were. Fiction is an especially excellent source of insight into Victorian conceptions of illness, since, as Jane Wood observes, “Medicine and literature looked to each other for elucidation and illustration” (1), so that “far from writing in an isolated realm of the imagination, novelists [were] critically engaged in medicine’s search for understanding of the complex processes governing emotional and sensory experience” (3).³⁵ This proved productive for novelists, who could use representations of illness either to encourage expanded sympathy and a broader recognition of common humanity, or to create antipathy toward those seen as pathological to the point of inhumanity.

Certainly many Victorians believed that invalids had a claim on the compassion of those around them, and that such sympathy was a positive force. Harriet Martineau, in *Life in the Sickroom* (1844), asserted that: “If all sorrow teaches us that nothing is more

universal than sympathy, long and irremediable sickness proves plainly, that nothing is more various than its kinds and degrees” (11). In Elizabeth Barrett Browning’s verse novel *Aurora Leigh*, the recovered invalid Marion Erle recounts her wish to be “sicker yet, if sickness made/ The world so marvelous kind” (98).³⁶

In Victorian fiction, moreover, a character’s illness is often a testing ground for his or her own moral character and for the sympathetic capacities of those around them; as Lucy Bending notes, sensitivity, to one’s own pain or to others’, “was at one and the same time a physical and a moral attribute” for the Victorians (181). But it is equally important to note that Victorian authors did not consistently champion sympathy on the part of other characters or readers as the appropriate response to illness. Illness in their novels demands a discrimination in sympathy; authors could use illness to create disgust or antipathy toward a character as easily as fellow feeling. Images of illness estranged as often as they evoked the reader’s compassion, depending on whether the author emphasized the pathos of the suffering or the distastefulness of the symptoms. Illness could dehumanize a character, or represent moral judgment either on the invalid or on those who respond to her suffering.

Some illnesses, such as consumption, are frequently represented in Victorian texts as morally elevating, and their sufferers as endowed with “spiritual eminence” (Bailin 11) or at least with rarified sensitivities, whether intellectual, emotional, or moral.³⁷ Examples include the otherworldly serenity of the consumptive Helen Burns in *Jane Eyre* and the increasing spiritual vitality of Mordecai in *Daniel Deronda*, which seems to burn brighter as he physically declines.³⁸ Such invalids may command sympathy, but others do not—for example, those afflicted with gout, like Sir Leicester Dedlock in Dickens’s

Bleak House, are more often the butt of jokes, with their illness the signifier of wealthy self-indulgence.³⁹ Other illnesses, mental illnesses in particular, even seem to dehumanize their sufferers to the level of “brutes.”

Victorian authors employed one illness in particular, insanity, especially often to evoke antipathy. Shannon Walters, discussing the intersection of disability studies and animal studies, points out that “[p]eople with intellectual disabilities, as well as people with mental disabilities, are particularly prone to being cast from the status of human if their disabilities trouble traditional notions of autonomy, agency, and rationality or if their disabilities affect how they use language,” commenting on the “presumption that reason and rationality are preconditions of one’s humanity” (474). Darwin described the “various strange animal-like traits in idiots” and the brain’s “degenerated condition in some insane patients” as due to the “reappearance of primitive instincts” reducing them to a “brute nature” (*Expression* 244). Insanity in general raised troubling questions about the limits of the human, as authors including Charlotte and Anne Brontë and Thomas Hardy all present characters who have lost their reason as reduced to an animal state.

Each of the authors in this study also more specifically creates characters marked by moral insanity, a form of insanity even better designed to dehumanize a character and to evoke antipathy in other characters and readers, since it appears more a gross moral failing than an illness. The concept of moral insanity, as Elaine Showalter explains, was one of the “cornerstones of Victorian psychiatric theory and practice[,]...[and] redefined madness, not as a loss of reason, but as deviance from socially accepted behavior” (29). Victorian psychiatrist James Prichard detailed the term in his *Treatise on Insanity* in 1835, explaining that this type of insanity is manifested in “morbid perversion of the

natural feelings, affections, inclinations, temper, habits, moral dispositions, and natural impulses, without any remarkable disorder of the intellect or knowing and reasoning faculties” (Prichard 252). As Showalter notes, his definition could be stretched to take in almost any kind of behavior regarded as abnormal or disruptive by community standards (Showalter 29).⁴⁰ The concept of moral insanity was used to police female behavior in particular, with the justification that the disease was supposedly more common in women; an 1851 article on “Woman in her Psychological Relations” in the *Journal of Psychological Medicine and Mental Pathology* claimed that this was “a disease undoubtedly much more frequent in the sex [women] than in man” due to women’s greater susceptibility to nervous stimulation (174).

As such Victorian medical writing suggests, and as Victorian fiction also indicates, women were particularly vulnerable to dehumanization in nineteenth-century discussions or depictions of illness. Medical authority at the time was decidedly masculine, and often invested in representing women as less human, because less rational and more innately pathological, than men. Women were largely excluded from being doctors; indeed, they were often seen as *too* sympathetic to display proper clinical detachment (Vrettos 90-92). Lydgate is anomalous as a doctor in Eliot’s *Middlemarch* partly because he has “flesh and blood sense of fellowship which withstood all the abstractions of special study. He cared not only for ‘cases,’ but for John and Elizabeth, especially Elizabeth” (145).⁴¹

Barred from medical authority, Victorian women were generally confined to the roles of nurse or patient, roles whose interconnections Bailin explores in *The Sickroom in Victorian Fiction*.⁴² Among the characters who alternate between these roles are

Elizabeth Gaskell's Ruth, Charlotte Brontë's Caroline Helstone, Dickens's Esther Summerson, and George Eliot's Romola. Nursing the sick, as Bailin observes, was "as sanctified an act as suffering itself" (11). In Tennyson's poem "The Princess," the supposedly natural feminine sympathies of an Amazonian female community are awakened when they begin nursing injured men, performing "Angel offices" with a "ministering hand" (195).⁴³ George Eliot made high moral claims for the sickroom as a place of sympathy in "Janet's Repentance" in *Scenes of Clerical Life*: "Within the four walls where the stir and glare of the world are shut out, where a human being lies prostrate, thrown on the tender mercies of his fellow, the moral relation of man to man is reduced to its utmost clearness and simplicity... As we bend over the sick-bed, all the forces of our nature rush towards the channels of pity, of patience, and of love" (324).⁴⁴ The compassionate figure bending over such sickbeds in many fictional Victorian scenes is a woman.

But Victorian fiction represents women as patients even more often than as nurses, echoing and reinforcing the image of women as natural invalids, physically inferior and by extension less human than men. The Victorians developed a gendered "cult of invalidism," as Dierdre Ehrenreich and Barbara English, among others, have called it, naturalizing illness in women by conflating femininity with pathology (102), seeing women as, "by nature weak, dependent, and diseased" (92). Indeed, sickness represented a "way of life" for upper and middle-class women (Ehrenreich 94).⁴⁵ Women were also disproportionately susceptible to the "white plague" of tuberculosis (Ehrenreich 101). The Victorian fixation on female pathology fed into a "morbid aesthetic" of female beauty defined by illness (Ehrenreich 98-99); this aesthetic was perhaps epitomized by

Dante Gabriel Rossetti's muse Lizzie Siddall (possibly tubercular and possibly anorexic) with her pallor and wasted frame.

Nervous disease, with which the Victorians were especially preoccupied, was similarly conceived in terms of class and gender. Doctors very commonly diagnosed hysteria and other nervous illnesses such as neurasthenia (nervous exhaustion)⁴⁶ among the upper class (Ehrenreich 93). The lower classes were seen as coarser and less susceptible, due to their less refined nerves;⁴⁷ George Eliot, for example, referred to the “hardy nervous system” of the peasant, asserting that: “We pay for greater emotional susceptibility too often by nervous diseases of which the peasant knows nothing” (Eliot *Natural History* 156). Thus, in the context of class, Victorians often thought of neurosis a product of advanced civilization, marking the rational and nervous upper classes from the unthinking, animalized lower classes.

Nervous ailments took on a different inflection in the context of gender, however. Nervous illnesses, and hysteria in particular, were explicitly gendered female, as evinced in the writings not only of novelists, but of physicians in medical texts spanning the century. In 1833, John Conolly observed that hysteria “chiefly affects women, or men of a peculiar temperament, or whose constitutions have become enfeebled by intemperance, or by excessive study, or other causes capable of debilitating the nervous system” (“Hysteria” 186); likewise, John Millingen in 1848 wrote that in women “a hysteric predisposition is incessantly predominating from the dawn of puberty” (169), and physician Horatio Donkin in 1892 observed that: “The typical subject of hysteria... is the young woman; in her organism and her social conditions the potential factors of hysteria are present in a notable degree” (197). Thus, as Jane Wood and Athena Vrettos have

argued, hysteria became “the archetypal female disorder... a condition whose clinical criteria could be modified in order to diagnose all the behaviors which did not fit the prescribed model of Victorian womanhood” (Wood 12), encompassing everything from “heightened excitability to madness” (Vrettos 60).⁴⁸ Women in the literature of the day might often be characterized by refined nervousness, but that nervousness was constantly slipping into hysteria, a manifestation of physiological and psychological inferiority rendering them closer to irrational animals than rational man.

In fact, the commonness of nervous illness in nineteenth century women is less surprising when we consider that, as Florence Nightingale lamented in 1860, middle and upper-class women had little of importance to occupy them, and at the same time little chance to escape domestic and social duties except through illness. “Bodily incapacity is the only apology valid” for avoiding such duties (*Cassandra* 210), she wrote.⁴⁹ She added that “What these [women] suffer—even physically—from the want of... work no one can tell. The accumulation of nervous energy, which has had nothing to do during the day, makes them feel every night, when they go to bed, as if they were going mad” (221).⁵⁰

In exploring Victorian illness, I am indebted to numerous critics who have examined representations of disease in Victorian literature. In *Somatic Fictions: Imagining Illness in Victorian Culture* (1995), Athena Vrettos argues that Victorian culture tried to manage potentially threatening social issues by displacing them onto more immediate matters of physiology. Miriam Bailin in *The Sickroom in Victorian Fiction* (2007) explores how in Victorian literature “the narrative cure for disorder is more often than not illness itself and the therapeutic situation constructed around it” (7). Elaine Showalter’s *The Female Malady: Woman, Madness, and English Culture 1830-1980*

(1985) provides a thorough examination of gendered attitudes towards mental illness in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Anna Kurgovy Silver, in *Speaking in Hunger: Victorian Literature and the Anorexic Body* (2002), explores the Victorian idealization of slimness and delicacy and its impact on women's health in culture and fiction. Each of these critics touches on sympathy or sensitivity—usually the special sensitivity attributed to invalids, but also the extent of sympathy that invalids evoke in fellow characters and readers. However, they do not fully examine the various ways in which Victorian authors used representations of illness to create both sympathy and antipathy, to both evoke and to repel compassion, and to indicate their characters' humanity or lack thereof.

George Eliot and Charles Dickens

When viewed as an interconnected web of issues, sympathy, animality, and illness generate a whole new set of questions about moral sentiment in Victorian fiction and complicate our understanding of that fiction's ethical and ideological purposes. This study will focus on four authors in whose novels these issues are especially foregrounded: Charlotte, Emily, and Anne Brontë in the middle of the century, and Thomas Hardy at the end of it. Their strategic uses of representations of illness and animality to direct readers' sympathies are especially interesting because these strategies often work to forward social critique in their writing. However, the use of representations of animals and illness to manipulate and complicate readerly sympathy did not in itself make these authors anomalous. They shared this novelistic practice with their contemporaries, even with the two Victorian novelists particularly associated with the idea of the novel as a vehicle for sympathy, Charles Dickens and George Eliot.

Dickens's novels famously plead for sympathy on behalf of the poor and of exploited children; Jaffe notes that for modern readers and audiences a "Christmas Carol" (1843) in particular has come to represent Victorian sympathy (Jaffe 8). Dickens himself was connected to a broad network of philanthropy, and was a close friend to Angela Burdett Couttes, a Victorian philanthropist for whom, as Beryl Gray observes, "charity towards people did not conflict with charity towards animals, nor concern for animals indicate indifference to humankind" (76). Couttes, who became Vice-Patroness of the [R]SPCA in 1839, worked with Dickens to establish Urania Cottage, a home for homeless women, which opened in 1847 (Gray 76 note 44).⁵¹

Unlike Couttes, however, Dickens did not make advocating for suffering animals a priority, though his novels show him to be keenly observant of animal behavior. Beryl Gray's *The Dog in the Dickensian Imagination* (2014) explores in wonderful detail that particular animal's prevalence, and various functions, in Dickens's work. She observes, however, the detachment Dickens maintains from these creatures; in his depictions of dogs, from the abused Bull's-Eye in *Oliver Twist* (1839) to the loyal Diogenes in *Dombey and Son* (1848), "a degree of objectivity is retained that offsets the pathos, and that is also characteristic of him when dealing with the afflictions of animals... [A]n element of comicality... keeps the danger of sentimentality at bay" (Gray 29).⁵² Nevertheless, animals and animal analogies are important to his direction of readers' sympathies. Generally, Dickens uses animal analogies either to create antipathy toward a character, like the monstrously animalized Quilp of *The Old Curiosity Shop* (1841),⁵³ or alternatively, to create sympathy for or even humanize a character. The comparisons of Magwitch to a dog in *Great Expectations* (1861) serve the latter purpose; as Ivan

Kreilkamp notes: “Such ‘likeness’ between animal and human, according to Joe and perhaps Dickens’s own logic, offered a route to an ethical recognition of ‘the other’ as deserving of hospitality and kindness” (“Dying” 91-92).

A similar logic underlies Dickens’s characterization of the poor crossing-sweeper Jo in *Bleak House* (1853), as the narrator seems to defy us to sympathize with a character whom other characters dismiss as subhuman. Fairly early in the novel, the narrator compares Jo to a dog sitting nearby: “He and Jo listened to the music, probably with much the same amount of animal satisfaction; likewise, as to awakened association, aspiration or regret, melancholy or joyful reference to things beyond the senses, they are probably upon a par. But otherwise, how far above the human listener is the brute!” (166-171). As Grace Moore points out, this analogy indicates that the dog “possesses a much richer inner life than poor Jo,” as well as being “far better cared for than his human counterpart” (209). With this contrast, Dickens, rather than dehumanizing Jo, criticizes the society that has dehumanized him, and calls on the reader to feel similar sympathetic indignation.

Dickens similarly uses illness in complex ways to direct the readers’ sentiments; Jo’s experience of smallpox, for example, performs a similar function to his animal-likeness, in that it provides a challenge to the reader—who, in Dickens’s envisioning, perhaps feels a Victorian middle-class distaste for and fear of the disease and contagion of the poor.⁵⁴ Jo is indeed contagious, and the care and sympathy the heroine Esther Summerson extends to him makes her seriously ill and ravages her face. However, the reader must choose between identifying with the inhumane Skimpole in being repulsed

by Jo—Skimpole in fact turns him out of the house—or caring about Jo, as Esther and Doctor Woodcourt do, despite a full knowledge of the effects of his disease.

In *David Copperfield* (1850), by contrast, Dickens uses illness and an association with animals to carefully contain our sympathy for a character. To some extent, the pathos of David's wife Dora's story comes from this silly "pet" (as everyone calls her) ultimately confronting illness and mortality, and from her identification with her pet dog Jip. Jip grows old as Dora grows ill, so that "Dora's condition is monitored largely through reference to *his* condition" (Gray 224). Ultimately, Jip has "the defining role in the presentation of Dora's death... [H]is imminent function is to represent her death through his own" (Gray 225).⁵⁵ The substitution of Jip's death scene for Dora's, however, while in one sense increasing the pathos surrounding the female invalid, also prevents any distressing presentation of her death that might evoke *too much* sympathy for her. Instead of directing our attention to Dora, Dickens directs it first to Jip and then to Agnes, the woman who will displace Dora in David's heart. The purpose of this narrative strategy appears to be that with the death of the "pet" (or both pets), the reader will read the transference of David's affections onto the idealized Agnes as natural and seamless. Comparing the representations of illness and animals in Dickens's depictions of Jo and Dora suggests the vastly different ways such representations could be used to guide readers' sentiments.

Perhaps even more than Dickens, George Eliot serves as a touchstone for Victorian conceptions of the novel as a vehicle for sympathy, and to some extent it is true that she "devoted her artistic career to the expansion of her readers' consciousnesses through sympathy" (Jaffe 130).⁵⁶ Eliot's novels also reflect a preference for heroines—

and sometimes male characters-- who are channels for powerful human sympathy, and thus idealized stand-ins or models for the reader. However, Eliot's novels direct readers not to indiscriminating expansion of sympathy, but to a very selective, discriminating channeling of that emotion. Rae Greiner asserts that: "Critics never tire of talking about sympathy in Eliot, but that wealth of talk is disproportionate to the narrow fund of sympathy represented in her novels" ("Sympathy Time" 300). Something of this narrowness can be detected in her tone; Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar note that her tone toward her characters "oscillates between pity and disdain," giving "the overwhelmingly oppressive sense... that her characters will constantly be tested, evaluated ethically, and found wanting" (475).⁵⁷ Lane astutely argues that "[d]espite Eliot's 'doctrine of sympathy,' enmity not only haunts her work but also undermines her fictional endings and thrives at the expense of her moral philosophy" (109).⁵⁸ I would argue, however, that her novels' representations of enmity and antipathy, rather than undermining Eliot's conception of moral philosophy, have their own place in that philosophy.

Certainly, Eliot's work consistently sets limits on the expansion of sympathy, as she suggests that complete receptivity to the suffering around us would make life unlivable. In *Middlemarch*, she famously pronounces that: "If we had a keen vision and feeling of all ordinary human life, it would be like hearing the grass grow and the squirrel's heart beat, and we should die of that roar which lies on the other side of silence. As it is, the quickest of us walk about well wadded with stupidity" (*MM* 194). This passage suggests that a little stupidity, a little insensibility, is necessary.

The protagonist of Eliot's short story "The Lifted Veil" (1859), Latimer, illustrates this message; he is able—in fact, is compelled-- to enter into the minds of others, attaining a seemingly full understanding of their thoughts and characters. This insight is, as in the passage from *Middlemarch*, "like a preternaturally heightened sense of hearing, making audible to one a roar of sound where others find perfect stillness" (Eliot "Lifted" 997). Notably, Latimer often thinks of his telepathy as a disease, as he acquires his ability to hear others' thoughts after—and perhaps due to—a period of illness.⁵⁹ Latimer asks himself: "This strange new power had manifested itself again... But *was* it a power? Might it not rather be a disease—a sort of intermittent delirium, concentrating my energy of brain into moments of unhealthy activity, and leaving my saner hours all the more barren?" (993). Latimer's telepathy is a "morbid condition of excessive consciousness" (Wood 91) and "diseased imagination" (94); it is "perception as ailment," as Bailin notes (115).⁶⁰ Furthermore, as Rebecca Mitchell points out, "Latimer's 'previsions' or 'presentiments' do not...ensure productive affective relationships, but rather the opposite" (68). In other words, his understanding does not lead to real sympathy or altruism.⁶¹

Thomas Albrecht similarly notes that Latimer's story hints at "the potential failure of Eliot's ethical theory of art" because "Latimer's experiences would seem to contradict Eliot's theory that art can and should expand our sympathy simply by granting us access to the thoughts and feelings of those around us" (Albrecht 439). However, Albrecht argues that Eliot is able to maintain her ethics of sympathy by redeeming Latimer from narcissism and allowing him to transition from antipathy to sympathy, with his former antipathetic feelings now transferred to the *femme fatale* Bertha (Albrecht 440). He

asserts that “by projecting that antipathy onto Bertha, Eliot leaves Latimer, the proxy for herself and the reader, free to convert to sympathy” (442).

The story does strongly suggest that his father’s grief when Latimer’s brother dies, and then the father’s own death, serve as catalysts for Latimer’s conversion to human sympathy (Albrecht 440-441). Latimer says that: “As I saw into the desolation of my father’s heart, I felt a movement of deep pity towards him, which was the beginning of a new affection” (“Lifted” 1004). He feels no such affection when he finally sees into Bertha’s mind, which is full of “antipathy and repulsion hardened into cruel hatred” (1007), fitting Albrecht’s image of her as a “more unequivocal embodiment of antipathy,” an image of antipathy as “pure, absolute evil” (Albrecht 442). Albrecht concludes from Latimer’s sympathy for his father but increasing estrangement from Bertha that “[u]ltimately the more disturbing conflict in ‘The Lifted Veil’ is not between antipathy and sympathy, but between an ethics based on similarity and one based on difference” (Albrecht 443).⁶² Drawing on this, I suggest that the story is more generally an endorsement of selective sympathy. Eliot implies that Latimer’s sympathy need not expand to everyone—not to Bertha, for instance--- but it should expand to those, like his father, whom the narrator deems to have a claim on it. Nor does this make the story eccentric among Eliot’s works of fiction; in fact, it illustrates the ethical framework of that fiction. Despite Eliot’s insistence, as in “Janet’s Repentance,” that “the man from whom we make it our pride to shrink, has yet a close brotherhood with us through some of our most sacred feelings” (*Scenes* 245), greater knowledge of others does not necessarily prevent such shrinking, nor does it always evoke or reveal “sacred feelings,” in her novels.

This is true even in *Middlemarch*, in which, according to Vrettos, “Eliot frequently asks her readers for acts of imaginative generosity toward even her most unsympathetic characters,” with “sympathy as the highest test of moral value” (Vrettos 110). Eliot may famously call upon our sympathy for Casaubon with her question “Why always Dorothea?” (Eliot *MM* 278),⁶³ but she is dismissive of those who would “contend that there must have been traits of goodness” in the old invalid Featherstone (323), who even in his final suffering is resolutely unsympathetic. Thus, the morally grounded Mary Garth does not waste time sympathizing with Featherstone: “Her thought was not veined by any solemnity or pathos about the old man on the bed: such sentiments are easier to affect than to feel about an aged creature whose life is not visibly anything but a remnant of vices” (315).⁶⁴ Mary has learned to judge who merits her fellow-feeling.

We can again see Eliot championing a discriminating sympathy in *Daniel Deronda* (1876). As Jaffe points out, Deronda serves as Eliot’s “exemplary sympathizer” (138) in the text, initially a “free-floating vessel of sympathy” (142) who learns to channel those sympathies so that he ultimately provides a model of “selective sympathy” (133).⁶⁵ Eliot emphasizes Deronda’s “plenteous, flexible sympathy” (307), his ability to “thin[k] himself imaginatively into the experience of others” (Eliot *DD* 436). But, as Jaffe argues: “Giving us in *Deronda* a character who not only fails to save Gwendolen Harleth but also fails to sympathize with her as well... Eliot rejects, or at least severely qualifies, the intersubjective ideal her novels have come to represent.” (131). Nevertheless, Deronda retains his exemplary status in the text, largely because of Eliot’s use of animal imagery and illness to alienate Gwendolen from the reader’s sympathies. Eliot implicitly justifies Deronda’s emotional abandonment of Gwendolen, despite the

narrator's insistence that Gwendolen is not "so unlike the rest of us... that we should cast her out of our compassion" (Eliot *DD* 232). As in her other novels, Eliot's encouragement of the expansion of our sympathies in *Daniel Deronda* is less universal, and more selective, than is commonly acknowledged.

Eliot implies Gwendolen's exile from the ethical circle of human sympathy through the consistent use of animal metaphors to describe her, the cumulative effect of which is dehumanizing. Chase Pielak points out that more than half of the novel's animal metaphors—or "animetaphors" (a term he borrows from Akira Lippit)--- refer to Gwendolen; only five to Deronda (100).⁶⁶ Gwendolen is like many of Eliot's female characters in the recurrent animal metaphors used to describe her; as Rebecca Mitchell points out, Hetty in *Adam Bede* is characterized by "the marked use of animal or nonhuman metaphors to describe [her]...She is compared to a kitten no fewer than seven times through the novel, calling to mind not only the precocious cuteness of the animal but also its sharp claws" (126 note 17).⁶⁷ The people surrounding Gwendolen as *Daniel Deronda* opens describe her as a "lamia" or "serpent" (*DD* 7). After her marriage, she is portrayed as a mastered horse or "hysterical kitten," as "[a]nimal metaphor recreates her into language as creature, dumb and helpless, without the ability to respond" (Pielak 106). In her courtship with Grandcourt, the narrator frequently compares her to a horse that Grandcourt wishes to tame.⁶⁸

Pielak argues that by rendering her animal, Eliot frees Gwen from responsibility (108).⁶⁹ But that depends upon the metaphor being used at a particular moment; metaphors of serpents, for example, which characterize both Gwendolen and Deronda's mother—whom Deronda sees as "not quite a human mother, but a Melusina" (Eliot *DD*

536)⁷⁰-- as well as Bertha in "The Lifted Veil" and even Rosamond in *Middlemarch*, indicate moral guilt.⁷¹ Early in *Daniel Deronda*, Gwendolen feels Deronda looking down on her and examining her as a "specimen of a lower order" (6), suggesting his sense of superior humanness.⁷²

Like the animal metaphors used to describe (and dehumanize) her, Gwendolen's hysteria suggests an authorial judgment of moral guilt and alienates her from Eliot's ethics of sympathy. Gwendolen's struggle with hysterical nervousness is linked to heightened sensibility but not to a corresponding capacity for sympathy.⁷³ Gwendolen's at first believes her nervous sensitivity is a mark of "general superiority" (*DD* 18).⁷⁴ But instead her "large discourse of imaginative fears" (*DD* 363) becomes the sign of her "morbid egoism," her pathological self-absorption, as Wood observes (150); "the texture of her nerves is increasingly pathologized" (Wood 143).⁷⁵

Gwendolen seems to fit the Victorian stereotype, articulated in *A Dictionary of Psychological Medicine* in 1892, of "the hysteric [as] pre-eminently an individualist, an unsocial unit, [who] fails in adaptation to organic surroundings" (Donkin 198), perhaps even one of those cases in which "it is difficult or impossible...to draw a hard-and-fast line between insanity and hysteria" (198), and whose abnormal reactions can become "actual crimes" (Donkin 198). Eliot suggests Gwendolen's potential for crime early in the novel when she kills her sister's canary for irritating her nerves (*DD* 18);⁷⁶ later, she becomes obsessed with killing her husband. She is unable to do what Deronda urges her to do—and what Lucy Snowe in Charlotte Brontë's *Villette* does, as we shall see—to "take hold of [her] sensibility, and use it as if it were a faculty, like vision" (*DD* 388).

Thus, Gwendolen's nervous premonitions have a vastly different moral significance than Mordecai's prophetic visions; likewise, the difference between Gwendolen's "monomania" (Wood 156) and Mordecai's (her fixation on Grandcourt's death, Mordecai's on his spiritual successor) is "qualitative," not "quantitative" (Wood 155).⁷⁷ Indeed, her suffering aligns her less with the purity of the visionary consumptive Mordecai than with the culpability of Deronda's ambitious mother, who is brought low by an illness which compels her to see the son she had abandoned. Gwendolen is in need of sympathy, but Daniel turns out to be incapable of giving it to her. His sympathy is never what she believes it to be: his voice, like his eyes, has "the unintentional effect of making his ready sympathy seem more personal and special than it really was" (599-600). Deronda sees Gwendolen's need for his sympathy as mutually exclusive with "an incompatible claim on him... [O]n the one side the grasp of Mordecai's dying hand on him...; on the other this fair creature in her silk and gems, with her hidden wound and her self-dread" (482). He chooses to devote his sympathy to Mordecai's suffering.⁷⁸

Eliot affirms Daniel's decision to channel all his sympathies toward Mordecai and his fellow Jews:

It was as if he had found an added soul in finding his ancestry—his judgment no longer wandering in the mazes of impartial sympathy, but choosing, with the noble partiality which is man's best strength, the closer fellowship that makes sympathy practical—exchanging that bird's eye reasonableness which soars to avoid preference and loses all sense of quality, for the general reasonableness of drawing shoulder to shoulder with men of like inheritance. (638)⁷⁹

Deronda's feelings fulfill the narrator's earlier assertion that he needed to channel his "too reflective and diffusive sympathy," which was "in danger of paralyzing in him that indignation against wrong, that selectness of fellowship which are the conditions of moral force" (308). So in his new "selectness of fellowship" or "noble partiality" he leaves

Gwendolen behind. Gwendolen may have become “more fully a human being,” as the narrator suggests (580), but is ultimately, as she herself feels, “forsaken” (690)—by Deronda, and by the narrator, who does no more than hedge her around with the same disingenuous narrative references to “poor” Gwendolen (219, 265, 299, 303, 368, 517) that also mark Eliot’s tone toward *Adam Bede*’s Hetty and *Middlemarch*’s Rosamond, those other kittens and serpents.

If even Dickens and Eliot, whose names so readily come to mind when we think of sympathy in the Victorian novel, were not unequivocal champions of expanded sympathy, the same is certainly true of the authors I examine at length in the following chapters. These chapters focus on the three Brontë sisters and Thomas Hardy because the interconnections between illness, animality, and sympathy are so inescapably foregrounded in their novels. Due to their preoccupations with both illness and the animal realm, as well as the related social critiques articulated in their works, the Brontë sisters and Thomas Hardy provide especially useful insights into the complex ways Victorian authors employed representations of animality and disease to direct readers’ sympathies.

This selection also allows for some historical arc to the project, albeit on a small scale. The Brontës provide three pre-Darwinian perspectives on the connection between the issues I explore. These range from a plea for sympathy for, and an argument for the full humanity of, the marginalized in Anne Brontë’s novels, to the depiction of a radically antipathetic world of animality and pathology in Emily Brontë’s novel, to an exploration of illness’s capacity to either dehumanize a character or to illustrate their superior, sympathetic humanity in Charlotte Brontë’s novels. Thomas Hardy provides a perspective informed by Darwin’s revelations about the kinship of all living creatures,

though also informed by late-nineteenth century views of women's moral and biological inferiority that create barriers to sympathy. This in turn leads to the fin de siècle texts I address in my Conclusion, most of which illustrate intense cultural anxiety about the relation of animal to man, and about physical health and fitness in the struggle for racial and national survival.

Chapter Summaries

My first chapter will focus on Anne Brontë, whose bold vision and astute presentation of her social world is too little recognized. Anne presents the existing social hierarchy as flawed, brutalizing and pathological in its gender socialization; she suggests that by privileging a particular type of masculinity British society aligns itself with cruelty, inhumanity, and pathology. In her novels *Agnes Grey* (1847) and *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall* (1848), she replaces the current social hierarchy with a moral hierarchy, in which women, aligned with sympathy, sensitivity to suffering, and the marginalized animal realm, are valued and granted higher stature.

My second chapter explores the way Emily Brontë used tropes of animality and illness in *Wuthering Heights* (1847) to reinforce her radical rejection of the connection between sympathy and the novel. *Wuthering Heights* is the most subversive work produced by any of the Brontë sisters: its supernatural treatment of illness and its relentless animalizing language results in characters that defy readerly sympathy by seeming quite simply “inhuman” in every sense. The novel continually blurs the boundaries between species, and between human and animal, just as its figurations of illness render characters either too repellent or too inscrutable to allow for the reader's

sympathetic identification. Indeed, the novel reveals a world of proto-Darwinian struggle in which there is no common “human” sympathy at all.

Chapter Three, on Charlotte Brontë, looks at the way her protagonists fight to be recognized as fully human in an unsympathizing world. At the same time, her characters use the language of animality to depict others as subhuman and unworthy of sympathy. In the case of *Jane Eyre*'s Bertha Rochester in particular, the novel's discourse of animality intertwines with that of mental illness to dehumanize her and to deny her right to sympathy. Next, I explore the role that repression of one's own suffering plays in Brontë's conception of full humanity, even as she depicts the pathological results of such repression.⁸⁰ Finally, I examine the gendering of sympathy in Brontë's depictions of illness, in which the capacity for extending one's moral imagination is largely the domain of women as well as invalids, rendering those marginalized groups in some sense the most fully human in Brontë's writing,

In the first of my two chapters on Thomas Hardy, I will discuss Hardy's Darwinian-inspired attempt to expand the sphere of human sympathy, while also examining the limitations of this attempt. Two of Hardy's major works, *Far From the Madding Crowd* (1874) and *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* (1892), illustrate his arguments for greater general, including cross-species, sympathy, even when full empathic understanding is impossible. Representations of illness in these novels function to depict the failure of such sympathy, and to indict those characters who do not practice it. In *Far From the Madding Crowd*, Gabriel Oak is a model of cross-species sympathy, while Bathsheba must learn sympathy, partly through Gabriel's example, partly through her own suffering, and partly through the mental illness and suffering of one of her suitors. In

Tess, Hardy draws parallels between Tess and victimized animals in a way that evokes readers' sympathy, but ultimately uses Tess's mental breakdown to alienate her from the reader and transfer sympathy to the morally redeemed Angel Clare.

The fifth chapter examines the interconnection of illness, animal cruelty, and gender in *Jude the Obscure* (1894), Hardy's most stern indictment of society's lack of sympathy for the marginalized. In doing so, it illuminates how deeply gendered Hardy's sense of the limits of empathy were. Hardy at first presents both Jude and Sue as vital subjects and worthy objects of sympathy. They are also characterized by their shared sympathy for both human and animal sufferers--- a sympathy Arabella doesn't share, despite (or because of) the fact that she herself is presented as little more than an animal. In the end, however, Hardy uses Sue's hysterical illness, which he pointedly links to her gender, to make her an "other" as completely as Arabella is in her unsympathetic animality. The novel ends with a narrative attempt to focus all our sympathy on the consumptive invalid Jude who, while himself "feminized" both by his illness and his natural sympathy for the marginalized, is depicted as the victim of women, as well as of society and fate.

The Conclusion gestures toward the way fin de siècle novels more consistently used representations of animals and illness to evoke antipathy toward individual characters and the social demographics they represent. Increasingly towards the end of the century, novels reflected a concern that illness and animality—along with the femininity with which they were often linked—should be carefully confined and limited. Concerns about degeneration and devolution led to an investment among those who represented the privileged status quo to close off sympathy from those less "evolved." Figures of illness, animality, and femininity were now often figured as threateningly deviant or degenerate,

as in Bram Stoker's *Dracula* (1897) and H.G. Wells' *The Time Machine* (1895) and *The Island of Doctor Moreau* (1896). In the figures of Dracula and his prey, *Dracula* combines anxieties about illness, feminine sexuality, and human kinship with animals. H.G. Wells' *The Time Machine* projects into the future his era's anxieties about the threats of illness, animality, and blurred gender roles to humankind, while his *The Island of Doctor Moreau* represents the animality in humans as grotesque and repulsive. Henry James's novels *Portrait of a Lady* and *The Wings of the Dove* more subtly explore the many ambivalent forms sympathy can take when directed toward invalids.

Over the course of these chapters, I hope to provide a new perspective on how novels reflected and shaped Victorian definitions of the human and conceptions of the limits of sympathy. Themes and figures appear and reappear throughout these novels--the nervous collapse, the victimized animal, the redemptive sickbed, the brutal male—all working to position characters in a particular relation to the reader's sympathy. Following these interconnected threads allows us to experience the Victorian novel in more of its complexity, fullness, and moral ambiguity.

¹ See also Rae Greiner *Sympathetic Realism* 157-161 and “Sympathy Time” 308 note 3 on the distinction between the two. She sees sympathy as associated with realism, while empathy, an “ideal of ‘fusion,’” is associated with modernism (*Sympathetic* 158).

² See Rebecca Mitchell 14-16 on the importance of Smith and Hume to Victorian ideas of sympathy. On the influence of eighteenth-century moral philosophy and moral sentiment on the Victorian novel, see especially Greiner *Sympathetic Realism* and “Sympathy Time”; see also Catherine Gallagher 167-171, James Turner 4-7, David Marshall *Figure* 167-192, Suzanne Keen 44, Rachel Ablow 1-16, and Audrey Jaffe.

³ Jaffe notes that “Victorian novels . . . helped formulate the ideological meanings borne by emotional response, chief among which were the social images and relations that accumulated around the term ‘sympathy’” (14). Turner suggests that ideas of sympathy or “benevolence,” to the extent of sentimentality, move from the pulpits to novels beginning in the eighteenth century (5), as a “flood of sympathy, embracing all people, could hardly fail to overflow its original bounds and brush with sympathy the sufferings of other sentient beings. Particularly at a time when scientific discoveries suggested a closer kinship between men and beasts . . . animals began to benefit from this exuberance of compassion.” (6-7). Suzanne Keen notes that what in the 18th and 19th centuries was called sympathy has “significant components” in common with what we now call empathy (xxii), defining the latter as feeling *with*, and the former as feeling *for*, another (xxi). She observes that literary texts “became the preeminent place of sympathy in the early 19th century . . . [T]extual and real-world sympathy became difficult to disentangle” (51), but she also argues that the “efficacy and beneficiality” of novel reading’s encouragement of emotional contagion has been questioned at every point in the novel’s development (41).

⁴ Gallagher defines sympathy this way: “To sympathize is to expand this impression called the self to include impressions originally experienced as mere ideas of another self . . . Sympathy, then, is not an emotion about someone else but is rather the process by which someone else’s emotion becomes our own. It is the conversion of the *idea* of someone else’s passion into a lively *impression* of that passion, which is indistinguishable from actually feeling the passion oneself” (169). She notes that not everyone in the eighteenth and nineteenth century saw the novel’s promotion of sympathy through character identification as positive; some saw it as a waste of sympathy (276-278). See also Ablow 7-9 on Victorian definitions of sympathy and Marshall *Surprising Effects* 3-4 on eighteenth-century definitions.

⁵ See also Thomas Albrecht 438, 450.

⁶ Rebecca Mitchell argues that realist works have a “tendency . . . to depict failures of communion that arise from one’s inability to recognize sovereignty of the individual or inability to escape solipsism” (19). The unknowability of the other, and the space for ethical engagement that it opens up, is central to my chapters on Thomas Hardy.

⁷ Jaffe notes that: “The figures Victorian society defined as objects of sympathy were, of course, its outcasts; situated outside respectable identity, they were essential to its definition” (Jaffe 18). She adds, “Victorian representations of sympathy capture the tension between an emphasis on sympathy and charity as humanitarian values, on the one hand, and an uneasy identification with sympathy’s visible objects, on the other” (19).

⁸ See Jeremy Tambling on the connection between the rise of medical authority and the rise of the novel. In contrast, Miriam Bailin argues that the institutionalization of medicine had “little impact on the representation of illness and recovery in early and mid-Victorian fiction,” pointing to the late nineteenth century as the time of “the ascendancy in England of scientific medicine based on a medical model of disease” (3). See Ch. 2 of Lucy Bending’s *The Representation of Bodily Pain in Late Nineteenth-Century English Culture* on the rise of the medical profession in the nineteenth century and its connection to the alleviation of pain.

⁹ Shannon Walters cites posthumanist Cary Wolfe: “Of the various contemporary fields of interdisciplinary cultural studies that emerged over the past decade, two of the most philosophically ambitious and ethically challenging are animal studies and disability studies.” Further, “Wolfe notes that who or what ‘comes after’ the subject—when that subject is modeled on liberal humanism with its focus on rationality, autonomy, and agency as the hallmarks of subjectivity—is a question that disability studies and animal studies can help answer” (Walters 472). Walters also makes the connection that “[p]eople with disabilities have frequently had their humanity questioned through comparisons to animals” (472-473).

¹⁰ See Hume *Treatise* Book I, Part 3, Section 16 for his defense of animal reason. Jane Spencer points out that Hume’s discussions of animals in his *Treatise of Human Nature* (1738) and his *Enquiry Concerning*

Human Understanding (1748) influenced Darwin (who read both in 1838) with their assertion of the common emotions shared by man and animal. Hume argued that “we may observe, not only that love and hatred are common to the whole sensitive creation, but likewise that their causes... are of so simple a nature, that they may easily be supposed to operate on mere animals... Everything is conducted by springs and principles, which are not peculiar to man, or any one species of animal,” adding that: “it is evident, that sympathy, or the communication of passions, takes place among animals, no less than among men” (*Treatise* Book 2, Part 2, Section 12). Thus, as Spencer observes, Hume’s works “demolish[ed] the barrier between human reason and animal instinct” (32) and “discussed sympathy... as a physical process common to human and animal” (27). See also Paul White 113.

¹¹ Heather Schell points out that “as early as 1789...Jeremy Bentham proposed in *Principles of Morals and Legislation* that our behavior towards animals should be evaluated by their ability to suffer. However, not until debates about vivisection took center stage in the animal welfare movement did the utilitarian use of pleasure and pain as the benchmarks of ethical behavior take a prominent role” (232). See also Laura Brown 24. See Jane Spencer on attitudes toward animal feeling in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries pre-Darwin.

¹² Turner discusses how industrialization helped create this shift in feeling (25-34). Teresa Mangum notes that: “Londoners of the nineteenth century lived in a veritable animal sensorium. Responses to this intimate apprehension of living, working, preening, suffering, dying, and dead animals varied intensely. Urban and animal historians alike document the extreme emotions roused by this animal assault upon the senses—from fear to disgust to outrage to compassion—and the consequent actions” (15). Jane Spencer discusses how in eighteenth century debates on the treatment of animals, the question of whether animals had souls transitioned to “questions of kindness and cruelty” (28, see also 40-42).

¹³ Descartes articulated his view of animal as mere “automatons” in a letter to the English philosopher Henry More in 1647, arguing that animals’ lack of speech “shows not merely that the beasts have less reason than men, but that they have no reason at all” (cited in Laura Brown 8). “Descartes had tried to rescue human uniqueness by arguing that beasts were only machines that appeared to feel but were actually as incapable of pain as a steam-pump” (Turner 144 note 29). See also Laura Brown 7-9, Jane Spencer 26-27 and 29, and Angelique Richardson “Darwin and Interdisciplinarity” 1.

¹⁴ In 1876 Huxley had served on the Royal Commission on the Practice of Subjecting Live Animals for Experiments for Scientific Purposes; the Commission’s investigations led to The Act to Amend the Law Relating to Cruelty to Animals (1876). See also Huxley “On the Relation of Man to the Lower Animals” in which he maintains that “even the highest faculties of feeling and of intellect, begin to germinate in lower forms of life” (239) and that “[m]an is, in substance and structure, one with the brutes,” but that “rational speech” still sets mankind apart (240). See Ritvo 35-37 on Victorian debates over animal reason/intelligence.

¹⁵ The SPCA helped “enshrine sympathy for suffering, and not only for suffering animals, among the dominant values of Anglo-American culture” (Turner 59).

¹⁶ Turner points out that:

Working hand-in-paw with pets in spreading the gospel of the heart were women. Unusually prominent in the animal protection movement from the beginning, by the 1880s women had achieved parity with (in many American societies, supremacy over) their male colleagues. They virtually dominated the work of humane education... This was only natural. The Victorian ideology of womanhood portrayed the gentler sex as having a special aptitude for such civilizing tasks... Like the heartfelt animals with whom she seemed to have a natural affinity, her intellectual weakness was more than compensated by moral and emotional strength... Woman’s role was to bring the gifts of the heart to a heartless world. This job she now shared with her spiritual soulmate, the remodeled, idealized animal. (76)

However, he notes: “Even though women composed probably a majority of SPCA members from the beginning, no society admitted them to its official leadership until the 1870s, by which time such things had become respectable” (58). See also Danahay on the connection between the roles of the Victorian woman and the Victorian pet:

Pets, along with idealized images of the home and of the angel who presided over it, fulfilled similar functions in keeping at bay a violent, carnivorous nature... Women themselves were frequently identified with domestic animals as the victims of violence. When advocating women’s rights, Victorian writers would often link the status of women as the property of their husbands to that of domestic animals. (Danahay100)

Ch. 3 of Laura Brown's *Homeless Dogs and Melancholy Apes*, "Immoderate Love: The Lady and the Lapdog," also discusses the simultaneous rise of pet-keeping and the animal rights movement.

¹⁷ Bending points out that "the anti-vivisection cause became one of the keynotes of the feminist movement" (121). She observes that "antivivisectionists were characterized as sentimental women, while vivisectionists were callous and brutal men" (120-121). See also Laura Brown 86, and see Danahay 102 on Cobbe.

¹⁸ See Harriet Ritvo 127-130, Marjorie Garber 233-234 and Turner 40-44, 58. According to Turner, "the RSPCA became the largest and perhaps most influential voluntary organization in Britain during the second half of the century" (177 note 4).

¹⁹ In the midst of such achievements, "[t]he nineteenth-century founders of 'humane societies,'" as Garber writes in *Dog Love* (1996), "still tended to keep the focus on the benefits to humanity, regarding mistreated animals as objects of charity, pity, and condescension" (234).

²⁰ See also Schell 231-232.

²¹ See also Turner 68-69.

²² See Turner 83-118. "Nowhere did Victorian revulsion from pain surface so openly as in the public outrage stirred up by scientific experiments on living animals: vivisection, as the practice was then called. Hostility to vivisection was graven into the conscience of the SPCA movement by its founders" (83). Vivisection on a wide scale came from the continent to England around 1870 (88-89); animal experimentation in general found its "vindication" in the medical advances of bacteriology in the 1890s (Turner 98-99).

²³ See also Bending Ch.4 for a detailed examination of Victorian responses to vivisection and its potentially brutalizing influence.

²⁴ Even Benjulia himself inwardly acknowledges: "If [the law] protects any living creatures, it is bound in reason and in justice, to protect all" (266). H.G Wells' *The Island of Doctor Moreau*, discussed in the Conclusion, responds to Collins' work by presenting another scientist for whom "knowledge sanctifies cruelty," and largely valorizing that position.

²⁵ See Bailin 40-47 for an excellent discussion of this passage, and of illness and medicine generally, in "The Princess."

²⁶ See also Laura Brown 31-36 on Linnaeus and his classification of humans and apes.

²⁷ See also Laura Brown 5-6.

²⁸ See Turner 60-64. Turner also notes that "Darwin himself had imbibed, from the pages of Charles Lyell's *Principles of Geology* (1830-33), the view of nature as an arena of ceaseless strife, where whole species fell victim; it was the reading of Lyell that inspired Tennyson's 'Nature, red in tooth and claw with ravine.' What religious doubt and the endless ages of geology had begun, Darwin finished..." (66).

²⁹ See Schell 246. She also notes that "In *The Descent of Man*, first published in 1871, Darwin openly asserted what *On the Origin of Species* only implied: humans are related to other animals" (230).

³⁰ See Mangum 21-22 and the essays in Angelique Richardson's *After Darwin* on Darwin's *The Expression of the Emotions in Man and the Lower Animals*. See also Martin Danahay on *Black Beauty* as an anti-cruelty tract which pleads for compassion on behalf of women and the lower classes, as well as animals. Similarly, Schell observes that:

We can point to Anna Sewell's *Black Beauty* (1878) as not only a catalyst but also a symptom of the Victorian era's increasing sensitivity to animal pain. While the entire century witnessed an unprecedented interest in the welfare of animals... this concern had not always centered on suffering. Instead, cruelty to animals had been condemned on the grounds that it coarsened the person who committed it. (231-232)

See also Bending 116.

³¹ See Richardson "Interdisciplinarity" 6 and 8, "The Book of the Season," and "George Eliot, G.H. Lewes, and Darwin." See also Paul White 119-122 and Jane Spencer. In *The Descent of Man*, Darwin had already insisted on animals' capacity for emotion, including "not only love, but... the desire to be loved" (69); he also argues that they have the capacity for reason (73). See Chapters 3 and 4 of *The Descent*; in Ch. 4 he discusses the extent of animals' capacity for sympathy (see esp. 99 and 103-104). Richardson comments on Darwin's "extraordinary capacity for fellow-feeling, not only with humans but with all life" ("Interdisciplinarity" 2).

³² See also Bending 3-4 and throughout Ch. 5 of *The Body in Pain*, which details Victorian hierarchies of suffering. Bending points out that: "If animal pain was discounted by vivisectionists in the face of physiological knowledge, then the pain of particular groups of humans could also be discredited and

denied” (177). H.G. Wells echoed Lombroso by asserting that “women felt pain less acutely than men... Their pains are more intense mentally, but less so physically” (Wells “Province” 216). See the Conclusion for more on Lombroso.

³³ See also Athena Vrettos 147.

³⁴ Ch.1 of Laura Brown’s *Homeless Dogs and Melancholy Apes* gives an excellent overview of the history of animal studies.

³⁵ See also Jenny Bourne Taylor and Sally Shuttleworth xv, xvii, and 230.

³⁶ See also Bailin 6 and 47.

³⁷ See also Katherine Byrne, esp. Ch.1, and Bailin 10-11.

³⁸ Mr. Tryan, in Eliot’s *Scenes of Clerical Life*, is another good example. Jane Wood also comments on this aspect of Mordecai (154); see also Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar 451-452 on Eliot’s repeated linking of the visionary imagination and the diseased body.

³⁹ See also Bending 92-93.

⁴⁰ Elaine Showalter here quotes Eric T. Carlson and Norman Dain, “The Meaning of Moral Insanity,” *Bulletin of the History of Medicine* 36 (1962): 131. See also Showalter 13-14 and 34-56 (esp. 49-51) for an excellent discussion of Victorian conceptions of moral insanity, and 71-98 on the way womanhood was figured as inherently pathological and women as prone to insanity. Wood likewise notes that women were “designated as medical problems by their very nature” (5). See also Taylor and Shuttleworth 229. For another Victorian description of moral insanity, see Henry Maudsley “A Case” in Taylor and Shuttleworth 266-268.

⁴¹ Vrettos observes that while Lydgate values scientific objectivity, he tends to focus on the women in the sickroom (106-107). His clinical detachment is compromised by affective modes of viewing; we also see “Dorothea’s overidentification with scenes of suffering” and “Rosamund’s narcissistic femininity in the sickroom” (Vrettos 106). Eliot was well versed in the medical discourse of her day; in the notebook she called her ‘Quarry’ for *Middlemarch*, “half of its pages are almost entirely given over to notes on medical subjects” (Theresa Kitchel in Eliot *Quarry* iii), full of notes taken from *The Lancet* (Kitchel 5).

⁴² Bailin argues that “nurse and patient are two sides of the same self” (26). Vrettos discusses *Middlemarch* in the context of “neuromimesis” and sympathy as emotional contagion in Ch.3 of *Somatic Fictions*.

⁴³ See Bailin 44-47 and James Adams 22.

⁴⁴ See also Bailin 18 and 115-117 on this passage. Bailin observes that “the sickroom for Eliot offers... a vision of absolute moral clarity, of perfect integrity of motive and deed” (110).

⁴⁵ Gilbert and Gubar also describe the Victorian “aesthetic cult of ladylike fragility and delicate beauty—no doubt associated with the moral cult of the angel-woman” (25) and the “socially conditioned epidemic of female illness” (55; see 24-26, 53-57, and 85-86). See also Wood Ch.1, esp. pp. 20-21, Taylor and Shuttleworth 165-168, and Vrettos 27.

⁴⁶ See Vrettos 148-149 on neurasthenia.

⁴⁷ See Bending Ch. 5, esp. 184.

⁴⁸ Indeed, nervous sensitivity in general could signal “both spirituality and sexuality, both imagination and disease” (Vrettos 69). Vrettos explores this topic throughout *Somatic Fictions*; for example, see pp. 12, 50-52. Wood also explores it in *Passion and Pathology in Victorian Fiction*; see esp. the Introduction pp. 3-4, 12-13; she points out that: “With its vague and flexible symptoms, hysteria encompassed both excess and restraint, and defined at once the paroxysmal lapses of self-control and the frozen internality of repression” (Wood 13). See also Gilbert and Gubar 53-59. For Victorian medical perspectives on hysteria, see Robert Carter, John Conolly “Hysteria,” Horatio Donkin, Thomas Graham “Early Marriages,” Thomas Laycock, and John Millingen, all in *Embodied Selves* (ed. Taylor and Shuttleworth.)

⁴⁹ See also Bailin 20.

⁵⁰ See Bailin 30-39 for a discussion of Nightingale’s roles as nurse and patient.

⁵¹ Grace Moore observes that Dickens’s compassionate tone in writing about these women parallels his tone in some of his writing about dogs (210). Couttes worked for the RSPCA for 60 years and became President of its Ladies’ Committee in 1870 (Beryl Gray 76 note 44).

⁵² See Moore for an excellent discussion of the triangular relationship of Bill, Nancy, and Bull’s-Eye, and of the ambiguous objects of sympathy both Nancy and Bull’s-Eye represent. See also Laura Brown 81-85 for a discussion of inter-species love between women and dogs in Dickens.

⁵³ See Christopher Lane 80-81 on this type of animal imagery in *Our Mutual Friend*.

⁵⁴ Bailin discusses illness as the “*sine qua non* both of restored or reconstructed identity, and of narrative structure and closure,” in Dickens (79-108).

⁵⁵ Beryl Gray argues that “David’s tears and heaviness [after Dora’s death] fail to elicit as much sympathy as Dickens might have wished”; Jip’s death “is too manifestly a contrived kind of enactment of the simultaneous, off-page, death announced by Agnes... to be truly pathetic,” though the dog’s aging and illness are (226). See also Moore 207 on the relationship between Jip and Dora. See also Laura Brown 83-85 on Dora’s relationship with Jip as an example of the “immoderate love” often depicted between women and lapdogs in eighteenth and nineteenth century literature; such love is both a sign of the woman’s sympathy or sensibility and a perversion or misdirection of it (78-85).

⁵⁶ See also Gilbert and Gubar 517-518 and 528 on Eliot’s attribution to women of a special capacity for sympathetic identification.

⁵⁷ Gilbert and Gubar further note that Eliot engages in “acts of vengeance against her own characters, violent retributions that become more prominent when contrasted with her professed purposes as a novelist” (479). Greiner suggests that it is in their depictions of failures of sympathy “that Eliot’s novels do their most ethical work” (301); see also Lane Chapter 4, and Greiner *Sympathetic Realism* 122-140.

⁵⁸ See Lane Ch. 4.

⁵⁹ See Rebecca Mitchell 69.

⁶⁰ Wood provides a detailed comparison of Latimer in “The Lifted Veil” with Crimsworth in Brontë’s *The Professor* in Ch.2 of *Passion and Pathology in Victorian Fiction*, “Nervous Ideals and the Disorders of Manliness” (59-109). She discusses the Victorian “analogy between female hysteria and male hypersensitivity” (70), and how “morbid imagination” was opposed to masculine rational self-control (77). Both Latimer and Crimsworth are “marginalized by their peculiar sensitivities from the kind of unquestioning toughness and vigor which denoted the norm of manliness,” and “both men register their subordination in terms of physical inferiority which is subsequently counterbalanced by their claims to mental superiority” (80). Of Latimer, she observes: “We are constantly reminded of an ‘excess’ of sensitivity, passion, imagination, susceptibility, and of ‘superadded consciousness,’ and, equally, of a ‘deficiency’ of physique, social skills, and of the power of self-regulation” (Wood 93), and that: “His enfeeblement, passivity, and morbid organization classify his condition within the language of female pathology” (Wood 97). There was a “taint of effeminacy which attached to all forms of male nervous disorders,” and fiction writers also “emphasize[d] the feminizing effects upon male characters of a hypersensitive disposition” (Wood 67). Latimer also has angina, which the Victorians called “cardiac neurosis” and “held to be a nervous disease” in the 1870s (Wood 106). See also Gilbert and Gubar 473 on the connection between Latimer’s imaginative vision and his “feminine” qualities.

⁶¹ As Rebecca Mitchell adds. “If this is what life looks like when one has genuine empathy for others—when one can truly feel what it is to be another, why should we encourage empathy?” (68). While some point to Eliot’s biography (a dark time in her life) to explain “The Lifted Veil,” as Mitchell says: “Eliot’s depiction of sympathetic extension is in line with, and not in opposition to, her larger ethical project” (68). Gilbert and Gubar also note that “[w]hile Eliot expends much of her energy in the rest of her fiction implying or explaining how imaginative identification can redeem human life through sympathy and fellowship, in ‘The Lifted Veil’ imaginative vision seems to rob life of mystery and thereby... deprives humankind of all necessary illusions” (471), but that the story is “not nearly so idiosyncratic” as it might appear in Eliot’s work (477). Gilbert and Gubar discuss this story throughout Chapter 13 of *The Madwoman in the Attic*. Wood points out that Latimer’s narration is itself made up of constant pleas for sympathy (92-93)—“already doomed, because self-centered, appeals for sympathy” (98). Latimer asks the reader: “Are you unable to give me your sympathy—you who read this? Are you unable to imagine this double consciousness at work within me?” (Eliot “Lifted Veil” 1000). See also Greiner *Sympathetic Realism* Ch.4 and “Sympathy Time” 304-307; she argues that in this story “omniscience is the murder of sympathetic fellowship” (“Sympathy Time” 307).

⁶² Albrecht argues that telepathy in this story is “a figure for a purely ethical relation,” combining distance and feeling (452). But ultimately Eliot can only represent the other in relation to or analogy to the self; thus:

Latimer’s conversion to sympathy is in this sense also a figure for the failure of telepathy, for the impossibility of facing the other as other... Through her failure to represent Latimer’s telepathy as such, Eliot suggests that an ethics based on difference may be impossible to formalize. In attempting to attain a moral position, her only recourse is sympathy, an ethics based on commonality, on what she calls the fellowship of all human beings” (453).

He further argues that “The Lifted Veil” collapses the distinction between sympathy and egotism, the “fundamental opposition within which critics have traditionally located the defining ethical conflict of

Eliot's work," because it suggests that "both sympathy and egotism relate the other back to the self, either in terms of its similarity or dissimilarity to the self... The collapse in 'The Lifted Veil' of any tenable distinction between sympathy and egotism is an indictment of sympathy as implicitly narcissistic" (454-455).

⁶³ In citations throughout this Introduction, *Middlemarch* will be shortened to MM and *Daniel Deronda* to *DD*.

⁶⁴ See Vrettos 107.

⁶⁵ Jaffe adds:

Critics tend to take Eliot at her word when she names sympathy as Deronda's chief quality. Yet in interview after interview with Gwendolen and his mother, he appears awkward, stiff, and unable to speak—unable, despite his own and Eliot's professions to the contrary, to sympathize. Scenes of this novel record not Daniel's emotional receptivity or effective counseling, but rather Deronda as a horrified and helpless spectator to situations and individuals beyond his control, stiffly delivering moral precepts that bear more on his own situation than anyone else's. (143)

She also notes that "when confronted with Gwendolen's urgent need, Deronda most frequently notices, and Eliot most frequently draws attention to, the absence or insufficiency of sympathetic feeling in him—the same absence he notes in his interviews with his mother" (147). She argues that Daniel's mother "is condemned for her lack of maternal feeling even as Eliot seems to sympathize with her grievances" (144), and that "Gwendolen, whose theatricality and self-absorption echo the Princess's, is similarly scapegoated throughout the novel to protect Deronda's sympathetic identity" (150). Images of drowning recur when he feels helpless to aid Gwendolen, paralleling his inaction with hers as Grandcourt drowns (Jaffe 151-152). See also Vrettos 77-79 and Bailin 133-134.

⁶⁶ Chase Pielak adds that "as Gwendolen loses subjectivity, animality figures her decline, while Deronda's converse position negates his demand for animal imagery" (100). Richardson argues that Gwendolen "shows kinship with animals" and that this novel "marks a shift from Eliot's earlier fiction" in presenting "the relation of humans and animals [as] less one of analogy than continuity" ("George Eliot" 156; see also 157). She notes that in Eliot's work the "idea of humans behaving like animals was often used to indicate a lack of self-control, a failure in the exercise of reason," and that in *The Mill on the Floss* "animality is something perhaps to be left behind" ("George Eliot" 141-142). This dislike for the animal side of man is common to the authors in this study, even when they encourage sympathy for animals.

⁶⁷ Gilbert and Gubar note that such uses of "the animal familiar remind us that throughout Eliot's novels the female is closely linked with the forces of nature" (497). Lawrence Rothfield points out that "Eliot thinks of Rosamond as a lower species throughout *Middlemarch*" (117).

⁶⁸ See also Wood 142-143 and Gilbert and Gubar 497 on the novel's use of horse imagery in relation to Gwendolen.

⁶⁹ Pielak, however, believes her humanity is regained with her returned subjectivity in her confession to Deronda (109): "This is the heart of the question of what it means to be human and of the possibility of transcending animality; in short, it is at the heart of *Daniel Deronda*" (110), he says, adding: "Animetaphor finally exposes the abyss of Gwendolen's animality, exposing her as creature, in order to release her humanity" (112).

⁷⁰ This despite her assertion that "[e]very woman is supposed to have the same set of motives, or else to be a monster. I am not a monster, but I have not felt exactly what other women feel—or say they feel, for fear of being thought unlike others" (539).

⁷¹ See Gilbert and Gubar 455. In "Janet's Repentance" in Eliot's *Scenes of Clerical Life*, Janet's dying husband imagines her as monstrously serpent-like and seeking revenge on him for abusing her (321-322); see Gilbert and Gubar 488-490. Eliot also refers to Gwendolen's husband Grandcourt as a reptile frequently throughout *Daniel Deronda*.

⁷² See Gillian Beer *Darwin's Plots* Chs. 5-7 and Richardson "George Eliot" on Darwinism in Eliot; see also Wood 144-147 and 160-162 on Darwinism in *Daniel Deronda*.

⁷³ Wood discusses Gwendolen's hysteria as located "within contemporary [Victorian] controversies over the organic reality of neurotic disorders" (140); see 136-162.

⁷⁴ See also Wood 141-142.

⁷⁵ See Vrettos Ch. 2 for a discussion of Gwendolen's nervousness in comparison to that of *Villette*'s Lucy Snowe; she describes both heroines as "precariously balanced between pain and imagination" (61).

⁷⁶ In the same page on which this “infelicious murder” is described, the narrator recalls a time when Gwendolen would not make the effort to bring her mother medicine, similarly establishing her lack of feeling for others (*DD* 18).

⁷⁷ See Wood 156-158 on monomania in this novel; in the novel itself, she notes, the term is used only of Mordecai (157). Wood argues that “[t]he externalized visions of Mordecai and the internalized imaginings of Gwendolen are different dimensions... of the continuum model of physiology and pathology” (Wood 154). “If... Gwendolen’s waking dreams and heightened imagination are set against Mordecai’s visionary idealism, their pathological status depends upon where the line between normal and diseased perception is drawn” (Wood 153). Vrettos argues that “Gwendolen’s spectral experiences also carry a potential challenge to Mordecai’s prophetic authority because... Eliot’s rhetoric encodes the possibility that all visionary powers are a function of nervous disease” (75). See Ch. 3 note 63 of this project for a further discussion of monomania.

⁷⁸ Significantly, Deronda serves as a nurse at Mordecai’s deathbed, not at Deronda’s mother’s.

⁷⁹ As Jaffe observes: “Rather than promoting sympathy as a means toward understanding difference, then-- indeed, strikingly rejecting that principle in Deronda’s rejection of Gwendolen—the novel valorizes sympathy as an identification with and affirmation of similarity” (Jaffe 141).

⁸⁰ Wood notes of *Shirley* that “Brontë... pinpointed the dilemma at the centre of women’s lives; namely the obligation to suppress or conceal emotion whilst recognizing restraint itself as the cause of ill health” (Wood 15).

Chapter I

Anne Brontë, Human Brutes, and the Moral Hierarchy

“The heart so prone to overflow/
E’en at the thought of other’s woe.”
(Anne Brontë, “Self-Communion,” lines 82-83)¹

The Brontës’ novels give a vivid sense of the various ways Victorians negotiated ideas of sympathy and the human. None of the sisters’ novels are mere pleas for expansion of sympathy and humanity to the marginalized, though Anne’s novels in particular could be (and have been) misread this way. This is likely because, of the two Brontë sisters whose novels value sympathy (I will argue that Emily’s does not), Anne is the more didactic.² Her concern with the treatment of animals is also the most obvious. While each of the three Brontës felt a deep connection to the animal world that is evident in all their novels,³ Anne’s heroines in particular seem to instinctively know and live by the creed which Coleridge’s *Ancient Mariner* learns only after doing hard penance for killing an innocent animal: “He prayeth well that loveth well, both man and bird and beast.”⁴

At the same time, Anne’s works weave together the same elements that would intersect to unite women suffragists, animal rights activists, and teetotalers in the second half of the nineteenth century—for there was significant overlap between their ranks.⁵ Anne, like many activists for the rights of women or animals, espoused a redrawing of the limits of humanity to encompass previously marginalized groups. For example, as Maggie Berg argues of Brontë’s representations of animals in her first novel: “In making animals matter, *Agnes Grey* draws attention to the socially constructed nature of the Victorian chain of beings” (194). Berg also notes that the representation of animals in

Agnes Grey—and, I would argue, *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall*-- as “exploited and abused... is indistinguishable from its analysis of the objectification and exploitation of women” (177-178).⁶

Anne’s work also clearly shares the concerns and narrative strategies of more didactic works promoting sympathy for animals; for example, *Agnes Grey* in many ways parallels Anna Sewell’s *Black Beauty*, published thirty years later. Both novels link violence and cruelty with alcohol abuse, and in both novels the inhumane characters are most often men. Both novels are told in first-person so that the reader must enter the mind of a socially marginalized character, and thus (presumably) gain sympathy for the group that individual represents. (If *Black Beauty* could easily be titled “How (Not) to Treat a Horse,” *Agnes Grey* could be titled “How (Not) to Treat a Governess.”)⁷

If Anne’s novels share with other Victorian novels, including with her sisters’, a preoccupation with animals and animality, they also share the preoccupation with illness and invalids that marks the writings of all three Brontë sisters. This characteristic of the three sisters’ novels is perhaps due to the early loss of their mother and two older sisters to disease (cancer and tuberculosis, respectively), along with the shadow of alcoholism on their brother’s life and his early death (followed closely by Emily’s and Anne’s deaths from tuberculosis). In addition, as many critics have noted, Haworth itself had a remarkably high rate of disease and death during the Brontë’s lifetimes, primarily due to poor sanitation, so the sisters did not have to look far to find illness.⁸ Furthermore, the Brontës had access to medical literature not only through journals but through their father’s library, including his much-consulted *Graham’s Modern Medicine*.⁹

For Anne Brontë, and for her heroines Agnes Grey and Helen Huntingdon, kindness to those who are marginalized or powerless, and specifically to invalids and animals, is, as several critics have noted, an “index of humanity” (Shuttleworth “Introduction” xvii) or “moral index of character” (Newman 238).¹⁰ Sally Shuttleworth notes that the novel’s animal discourse has another level as well, though: animalizing language is also used as “evidence of the lower nature of children” (“Introduction” xviii), and, I would add, other groups. Likewise, Hilary Newman observes of *Agnes Grey*: “Simultaneously with the theme of animals as a moral index of character, the imagery in the novel compares some of the morally deficient characters to wild or exotic beasts... [This] thread of imagery... suggests the ‘bestly’ nature of the morally flawed. Moral growth is for them impossible” (241). These critics, however, do not recognize the wrinkle in the text’s ethical and affective fabric (and in *The Tenant’s*) created by this dual use of animality—and, as I will also argue, its dual use of illness. The problem lies in Brontë’s making sympathy a test of “humanity” so literally; those who are incapable of sympathizing with the plight of the marginalized, and who are cruel and inhumane towards those weaker than themselves, she divests of the very humanity she seeks to claim for their victims. Her novels cast those who are inhumane outside the realm of the human, suggesting that they no longer merit human sympathy.

Brontë’s tactic to direct readerly sympathy away from the inhuman(e) involves dehumanizing them with animalizing metaphors, or presenting them as repulsive and justly punished when they fall prey to disease—generally alcohol dependence.¹¹ Thus, despite the apparent expansiveness of these novels’ calls to general kindness and sympathy, Brontë’s narratives do not simply seek to expand the boundaries of the human

and of the sympathetic subject. Rather, they seek to redraw those boundaries upon a different plan—so that while this involves a proposed inclusion of some, it involves a very pointed exclusion of others, often those whom society had traditionally deemed preeminently “human.” Each of her novels exhibits the affective friction created by such dual-edged conceptions of sympathy and humanity. I will first trace the implications of these conceptions through *Agnes Grey*, in which they are developed through a complicated and atypical gendering of both humanity and health, and through a complex separation of literal animals from the morally degrading quality of animality. I will then explore the way that such themes and narrative techniques are further developed and intensified in *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall*, through that novel’s examination of the animalizing and pathological effects of male alcohol dependence.

Agnes Grey

In *Agnes Grey*, even as Agnes makes her sense of kinship with the animal realm explicit, she uses animal metaphors to dehumanize the children in her care and to ensure that readerly sympathies will be directed away from these children. Agnes’s own moral credibility and that of her narrative depends largely on her ability to present herself as victim, and these children—along with the adults who spoil and corrupt them-- as victimizers. However young, her charges must be cast outside the realm of sympathy if we are instead to feel for the governess who pulls their hair or shakes them “violently” (29) from sheer desperation.¹²

The way Agnes describes the young Bloomfields, in particular, goes beyond presenting them as ruined by adult behavior to depicting them as innately incapable of

reason or feeling. This is especially notable given the Cartesian tradition, continuing into the nineteenth century though disputed by early animal rights activists, of denying animals the capacity for feeling pain, as well as for reasoning (Bending 120).¹³ The more one could recognize these attributes in another species, the more sympathy, it seemed, that species merited, and the more unjust animal cruelty seemed. If we judge them by these standards—as Agnes’s frequent use of animalizing metaphors to describe them encourages us to do—the young Bloomfields and Murrays merit little sympathy, being both impervious to reason and “unfeeling.” Thus, while this novel may have a moral and even didactic purpose—“All true histories contain instruction,” as the novel’s opening words declare (5)—that moral may be more complex than it appears at first, and the novel itself more than a mere “simple tale of virtue rewarded,” as Juliet Barker calls it (593).

On the other hand, actual animals in the novel are held up as unjustly excluded from human sympathy. As many critics have noted, this aligns them with Agnes, whose situation renders her powerless, largely voiceless in the face of injustice, and vulnerable to cruelty. As Berg points out, the novel reveals, “through the governess’s very proximity to animals, that the governess’s very humanity is in question in a society which grants viable subject status only to those occupying the upper rungs of the ladder” (178).¹⁴ Brontë emphasizes Agnes’s sense of kinship with animals from the beginning of the novel, when Agnes describes herself as the “pet” of the family (6), and when she admits that she “was not many degrees more useful than the kitten” (6) due to her family’s indulgent treatment. Her connection with animals manifests itself again when she describes leaving home for the first time; her sorrowful parting with her beloved kitten

and favorite birds is described in much more detail than her parting from the human members of her family. This is not to say that she is totally comfortable with her status as pet—indeed, she wants to leave her home to prove that she can be more useful than the kitten. Nevertheless, her sense of kinship with animals leaves her unprepared to face a world in which pets, and “inferiors” of all kinds, are not considered worthy of considerate treatment.¹⁵ Yet this is the world she encounters, embodied in the children put into her care.

Before leaving home, Agnes feels convinced that her own experience of childhood will enable her to empathize with the children, and create a bond of sympathy between herself and them, that: “the clear remembrance of my own thoughts and feelings in early childhood would be a surer guide than the instructions of the most mature adviser. I had but to turn from my pupils to myself at their age, and I should know, at once, how to win their confidence and affections; how to waken the contrition of the erring” (12). But Agnes’s idealistic belief that her powers of empathy will be enough to create harmonious understanding between herself and her pupils proves naïve, as she encounters children who do not at all resemble her childhood self.

This is immediately clear once Agnes arrives at the home of the Bloomfields, and the novel’s early description of the value she places on animals prepares the reader to be as shocked as she is by the callousness of young Tom Bloomfield.¹⁶ Already a little patriarch, he immediately shows off the cruelty that he has been taught to associate with masculine dominance. He seeks to impress his governess with “how manfully he use[s] his whip and spurs” upon a rocking horse (19). When she says she hopes he will not treat a real pony that way, he replies, “Oh yes, I will... I’ll cut into him like smoke!” while

laying on his whip with “redoubled ardor” (19). Brontë immediately makes a connection between this violence toward animals and violence toward women, as Tom claims he is “obliged” to strike his sister “now and then to keep her in order” (19).¹⁷

Agnes’s first response to such behavior in Tom is to seek to call out whatever innate empathy is in him. As Kathryn Miele points out, “[t]he central problem facing Agnes Grey is that of how to teach someone to ‘feel’ for someone else... Mostly, she cannot understand those who make no attempt to understand others” (9).¹⁸ Agnes’s attempt to elicit Tom’s empathy is clear in the scene immediately following the one with the rocking horse, when Tom shows Agnes his traps for birds, moles, and weasels. He describes to Agnes the tortures he inflicts on the birds he catches: “Sometimes I give them to the cat; sometimes I cut them in pieces with my penknife; but the next, I mean to roast alive” (20). She tries to get him to put himself in the birds’ place, and reminds him of the capacity to suffer which he shares with these creatures: “But don’t you feel it is extremely wicked to do such things? Remember, the birds can feel as well as you, and think, how would you like it yourself?” (20). But he is not capable of grasping her point, and maintains his hierarchical, privileged distance from his victims by saying, “Oh, that’s nothing! I’m not a bird, and I can’t feel what I do to them” (21). As Miele aptly puts it, Tom displays a lack of empathy that is essentially a “moral deafness” (12).¹⁹

Despite such obstacles, Agnes clings for a long time to the hope that the children may not be totally unfeeling and heartless; she says of Tom, “I thought if he had any affections at all, I would endeavor to win them; and then, in time, I might be able to show him the error of his ways” (21), and of both children, “I thought, if I could struggle on... the children would, in time, become more humanized” (31). But “humanization” comes

to seem increasingly impossible, as Agnes's attempts to use her own childhood feelings as aids to reaching theirs fails. She is astonished at Tom's sister Mary Anne's lack of feeling, for example: "With me, at her age, or under, neglect and disgrace were the most dreadful of punishments; but on her they made no impression" (29). She finds herself "wondering most of all at this last proof of insensate stubbornness. In my childhood I could not imagine a more afflictive punishment" (30). She remembers her own "sympathetic tears and suffering for her sake" on one occasion when her sister was punished (30), but such fellow-feeling does not seem to exist in Tom or Mary Anne.

Indeed, any optimism Agnes maintains about the existence of sympathetic impulses in her pupils, or the possibility of "humanizing" them, gives way to despair at the recalcitrant wickedness of Tom and Mary Ann; it is here that her direction of our sympathies towards animals gives way to the use of animal metaphors to dehumanize her pupils, and to direct sympathy away from them. They "had no more notion of obedience than a wild, unbroken colt" (26), and "quarreled over their victuals like a set of tiger's cubs"; even four-year old Fanny "bellowed like a bull" (31). (Agnes's descriptions are by no means pure exaggeration; their own father acknowledges that the children are "worse than a litter of pigs," but blames Agnes for it [39].) She gives up trying to sympathize with them, saying, "as for kindness and affection, either they had no hearts, or such as they had were so strongly guarded, and so well-concealed, that I, with all my efforts, had not yet discovered how to reach them" (45)

Similarly, Agnes emphasizes to her mother that these children's vices are not the normal faults of childhood that she herself had shared, "for then I could have understood them," but "they *could* not be offended, nor hurt, nor ashamed; they could not be

unhappy in any way, except when they were in a passion” (49). Her mother reminds her that: “If they *could* not, it was not their fault” (49). Agnes acknowledges this, but insists that “it is very unpleasant to live with such *unimpressible, incomprehensible creatures*. You cannot love them, and if you could, your love would be utterly thrown away; they could neither return it, nor value, nor understand it” (49, emphasis mine). Anne is now determined to view the children as creatures incapable of feeling, and repelling sympathy.²⁰ This complicates any reading of the novel which, like Miele’s, presents Agnes as a model of empathy and the novel itself as having a sympathetic project.²¹

Nor does Agnes rely solely on animal metaphors to alienate our sympathies from these children; her depiction of them suggests that their cruelty is a symptom of a disease, a socio-pathology encouraged by their upbringing. Shuttleworth observes that a child’s cruelty to animals in the eighteenth and nineteenth century was often seen as a worrisome portent of more wide-ranging cruelty as adults (for example, violence to other human beings), or even as a potential sign of incipient madness (“Introduction” xiv-xvi).²² For instance, a *Lancet* article from 1856 uses instances of cruelty to animals, along with later domestic abuse and “constant habits of intoxication,” as evidence that a wife-murderer’s actions had never been “that of a mere cruel wayward boy,” but “beyond all the ordinary bounds of mere depravity” and passing “the line of sanity” (112): “As was the child, so was the boy, and so the man continued: a lunatic at large” (112). An article in the *Journal of Mental Science* in 1881 describes a type of morally insane child, often a “spoiled child,” “from infancy prone to wickedness” (*Savage* 282); such children often “take to cruelty, and become not only bullies but unmitigated brutes, torturing anything in their power, beginning with smaller birds and animals” (284). Similarly, Agnes says of her

charges that “for a child of nine or ten, as frantic and ungovernable as these at six and seven would be a maniac” (32)—“maniac” being the same word *Jane Eyre*’s Rochester repeatedly uses to describe Bertha, but also evoking the cultural fear, reinforced in both of Anne Brontë’s novels, that a child cruel to animals will become an adult dangerously cruel to other people.²³ Much as Bertha’s sexual dissipation supposedly contributes to her “insanity” in *Jane Eyre*, *Agnes Grey* represents cruelty to animals as leading to insanity--in both cases, a sort of moral insanity, especially disturbing for its social implications.

The narrator of *Agnes Grey* does not excuse such young “lunatics” of moral responsibility, as the author of the 1856 *Lancet* article argues one must do (111). *Agnes Grey* focuses on the role of nurture and cultural conditioning in perpetuating this type of madness. The novel demonstrates how boys like Tom turn into men like his uncle, who then perpetuate the cycle, encouraging cruelty early on just as they encourage another disease, alcoholism, as a token of masculinity. Suggesting such frightful pathology in children is another technique by which Agnes, and Brontë, further removes them from the realm of human sympathy.

Despite this insistence on the innate inhumanity of the children, Brontë also gives plenty of evidence for the importance of “nurture” as well as nature in creating such monsters. Though Agnes does not describe the adult Bloomfields in animal or pathological terms as often their children, they are equally thoughtless, unfeeling, and often brutal. Agnes notes their every lapse in consideration or kindness, and shows how they contribute to the pathology and brutal behavior of the children. Thus, Tom dismisses Agnes’s religious admonitions to sympathy by pointing to a more immediate patriarchal authority than God: his father “never blames him” for his treatment of birds; “he says it’s

just what he used to do when he was a boy. Last summer, he gave me a nest full of young sparrows, and he saw me pulling off their wings and heads, and never said anything...

and uncle Robson was there too, and he laughed, and said I was a fine boy" (21).

Maternal authority has given Tom no better conception of the necessity of sympathizing with animals; Mrs. Bloomfield has constructed her own superficial hierarchy determining which creatures are worthy of sympathy. As Tom says, "she says it's a pity to kill the pretty singing birds, but the naughty sparrows, and mice and rats, I may do what I like with" (21).

Likewise, when Agnes prevents Tom's abuse of the fledglings, his mother reprimands her for interfering with the boy's "amusements," and when Agnes points out that this particular amusement involved "injuring sentient creatures" Mrs. Bloomfield reminds her that "the creatures were all created for our convenience" (44). Agnes observes privately that she thinks "that doctrine admitted of some doubt," but merely replies, "If they were, we have no right to torment them for our amusement," to which Mrs. Bloomfield returns, "I think... that a child's amusement is hardly to be weighed against the welfare of a soulless brute" (44). Agnes then resorts to the traditional argument that cruelty to animals is harmful to children's characters, and quotes scriptural authority. But Mrs. Bloomfield is unpersuadable, as she espouses the traditional hierarchical notions that the novel seeks to challenge: that inferiors are there for their superiors' convenience, and do not merit equal consideration because they are not fully human, but merely "soulless brutes" (44).²⁴

Even worse is the corrupting influence of the Bloomfield uncle, through whom Brontë suggests the theme she develops at length in *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall*: that

alcohol contributes to a dulling of sympathies falsely deemed “masculine” in her society. Agnes notes his encouragement of drinking and potential alcohol dependence in Tom, whom he teaches “to imitate him in this to the utmost of his ability, and to believe that the more wine and spirits he could take, and the better he liked them, the more he manifested a bold and manly spirit, and rose superior to his sisters” (42-42).²⁵ She immediately pairs this pernicious behavior of the uncle with another that has the same effect: he “likewise encouraged Tom’s propensity to persecute the lower creation, both by precept and example” (42).²⁶ For instance, he takes the children “bird’s nesting,” encouraging their “barbarities” and undoing all Agnes’s attempts to teach them “justice and humanity” (42).

Through the uncle’s actions, Brontë also illustrates, as she does in her next novel, the links between speciesism and other forms of marginalization, particularly that of women. When he comes to hunt on his brother’s grounds, the uncle abuses his dogs so cruelly and “brutally” that Agnes wishes one of them could turn on him without consequences—perhaps a displaced representation of her own longing for revenge in an almost equally powerless position (42).²⁷ Tom makes the association between dogs and governess clear when, angered by Agnes’s mercy killing of the fledglings he had planned to torture, and seeing his uncle kick his female dog Juno, he threatens to get him to kick Agnes as well. This is not an entirely nonsensical idea, as the uncle’s attitude and behavior are just as unfeeling and contemptuous toward her, and toward women in general, as to his dogs. He is delighted that the little boy is “beyond petticoat government already”—that he defies female authority (43).

Brontë makes a similar connection between speciesism and other forms of marginalization in depicting the behavior of the Bloomfield parents. Mr. Bloomfield's cruelty and his wife's inconsiderateness (toward the governess in particular) figure symbolically through awkward meals involving meat-- the flesh of animals killed for their convenience.²⁸ For example, at her first meal in their house Agnes feels obliged to try to eat meat that is too tough for her to cut, when she would gladly have just eaten the potatoes (17); on another occasion, Mrs. Bloomfield provides her with "cold meat" (22). But Agnes is particularly uncomfortable at a meal in which Mr. Bloomfield excoriates Mrs. Bloomfield for her management of the house's meat consumption (24-25)—tellingly, one of his complaints is that the meat is not bloody enough; he wants more "red gravy" (24).²⁹

The intertwining of male privilege and brutal behavior towards those less powerful suggested by that scene, and by the behavior of the uncle, invokes themes that Brontë explores again more fully in her second novel. In both novels, this exploration also brings Brontë's representations of illness and its relation to sympathy into the foreground. One crucial way that Brontë employs illness is to represent it as manifesting (or punishing) masculine vices—particularly selfishness or lack of sympathy. In the cases where illness afflicts such unsympathizing men, it only serves to alienate the reader's sympathy from them further. Fittingly, Mr. Bloomfield eventually develops gout—a disease associated with the over-consumption of rich foods and alcohol by the wealthy, and thus a form of poetic justice, rather than a disease that would garner him any readerly sympathy.

Generally, it is the wealthy like Mr. Bloomfield whose afflictions render them more unsympathetic, but, surprisingly, something of the same narrative treatment colors the depiction of Agnes's father, signaling that gender is at issue as much as socioeconomic status in her depictions of pathologized masculinity. After losing most of his money, Mr. Grey is "completely overwhelmed by the calamity—health, strength, and spirits sunk beneath the blow, and he never wholly recovered them" (8). He falls into a spiral of debilitating depression, or, as Jane Wood puts it, "psychosomatic reciprocal aggravation," in which physical illness and depression both reinforce and are reinforced by guilt (76). Brontë depicts his depression realistically, but not sympathetically; rather, she presents it as selfish and self-indulgent on his part. Wood suggests that in this passage "male nervous disorder is represented, characteristically, as a function of a morbid imagination," implying a loss of "masculine self-control" (77). Such a depiction is unsurprising given nineteenth-century attitudes towards male "melancholy." Robert Burton in his famous 1827 tome *The Anatomy of Melancholy*, which the Brontës owned, declared that

He who... is not prepared to suffer or resist his afflictions like a good soldier of Christ, is not fit to live. It is certainly in our power to bury all adversity, as it were, in oblivion, and to call our prosperity to mind with pleasure and delight... But man, vain, weak man, instead of... arming himself with patience and magnanimity, gives way to his passions, makes no opposition to the dejection which is seizing on his soul, indulges the growing disposition to melancholy, suffers his mind to be overcome by its effects, and, by voluntarily subjecting himself to its influence, precipitates himself into a labyrinth of cares, until the disposition to melancholy becomes an habitual disease. (6-7)³⁰

This description fits with Brontë's depiction of Mr. Grey. Agnes emphasizes that her mother appeals "in vain" to Mr. Grey even when she appeals "to his affection for herself and us [his daughters]" (8). Her words are

perversed by this ingenious self-tormentor into further aggravations of his sufferings. And thus the mind preyed on the body, and disordered the system of the nerves, and they in turn increased the troubles of his mind, until by action, and re-action, his health was seriously impaired; and not one of us could convince him that the aspect of our affairs was not half so gloomy, so utterly hopeless as his morbid imagination represented it to be (8).

In contrast, the female characters demonstrate the self-discipline Wood frames as traditionally “masculine”; Agnes and her mother continue to do their duty cheerfully, with the former spurred to seek employment.

Immediately following the description of Mr. Grey’s depression, Agnes describes how the family, in financial desperation, sells their pony, “the old favorite that we had fully determined should end its days in peace, and never pass from our hands” (9). The two passages implicitly connect, as if the father’s aggravation of his own sufferings, without consideration for anyone else, leads inevitably to the misfortune of the horse being sold, just as it leads to Agnes’s terrible experience at the Bloomfields.³¹ Brontë repeatedly contrasts the self-absorption of the depressed father with the tireless activity and determined cheerfulness of Mrs. Grey and Agnes. Thus, even from the beginning, one function of disease in the novel is to symbolize the lack of consideration and sympathy on the part of the more powerful (in this case, because Mr. Grey is a man) which leads to suffering for those less powerful.

By contrast, when the sufferer is a person of marginalized or “inferior” status, particularly a woman, Brontë virtually always presents illness or fragile health sympathetically.³² Brontë frames a conversation between Agnes and her mother (in which Agnes tells her mother of the monstrous young Bloomfields) so that readerly sympathies are drawn toward Agnes through her mother’s description of the young woman’s loss of physical strength and health: “[Y]ou are a good deal paler and thinner than when you first

left home, and we cannot have you undermining your health,” Mrs. Grey says (49).

Agnes’s sister Mary, too, notices the change in Agnes, which Agnes attributes to the “constant state of agitation and anxiety” she has been enduring (49).

When Agnes moves on to work for the Murrays, Brontë again employs her slight declines in health to appeal to readers’ sympathies, and to show the lack of sympathy which characterizes her pupils (63). Her inconsiderate charges consistently make her sit in a spot in the carriage that makes her feel ill, so that when they go to church her “devotions were disturbed with a feeling of languor and sickliness” and a headache that lasts all day (63). Matilda and Rosalie merely note that the carriage never makes them sick, though they acknowledge it might if they had to sit in her seat. They also keep her waiting for her breakfast till she is ready to faint, and insist on taking their lessons outside, where Agnes says “I frequently caught cold by sitting on the damp grass, or from exposure to the evening dew, or some insidious draught which seemed to have no injurious effect on them. It was quite right that they should be hardy; yet, surely, they might have been taught some consideration for others who were less so” (63). Here the physical “hardiness” of the girls, their lack of susceptibility to illness, correlates with a moral lack of sensitivity and sympathy, in contrast to Agnes’s tenderness of conscience and constitution.

In contrast, Agnes feels sympathy precisely for those who, like her, are too often dismissed as inferior and even subhuman—the poor, particularly the sickly poor, and the animals with whom (like Agnes herself) they are aligned. Among the poor and powerless, Brontë presents illness not as repulsive or unsympathetic, much less as a just retribution; instead, as with Agnes herself, such afflictions highlight their society’s refusal to view

them with the sympathy and compassion they merit. The Murrays' callous insensitivity in the face of such suffering leads Agnes to view *them* as stupid and brutish, so much so that she fears she will descend into sub-humanity through prolonged contact with them. She compares herself to a "civilized man" living among "a race of intractable savages," who fears lest he become "a barbarian himself" (87-88); she adds:

And I, as I could not make my young companions better, feared that they would make me worse... Already I could feel my heart petrifying, my soul contracting, and trembled lest my very moral perceptions should become deadened, my distinctions of right and wrong confounded, and all my better faculties be sunk, at last, beneath the baleful influence of such a mode of life." (88)

She thus uses the same language her contemporaries used to dehumanize other races to suggest "the level" of her pupils, to which she fears that her "feelings, habits, and capacities" will sink (88).³³

The selfish lack of sympathy that so terrifies her in the young Murrays might seem to be the result of class privilege alone, since this time both of Agnes's pupils are female. But in fact Brontë sets their behavior in a gendered framework similar to that of the Bloomfields. To begin with, Brontë makes a point of emphasizing the patriarchal figures looming large in the background of the Murray household. This, of course, includes Mr. Murray. Agnes and her mother had both assumed that the higher social status of this family, headed by a "thorough-bred gentleman," would mean more considerate treatment for Agnes (50, 51). The gentleman himself, Mr. Murray, is "a devoted fox-hunter, a skillful horse-jockey... and a hearty *bon vivant*" (55). But this seemingly benign description suggests his innate enjoyment of cruelty (through his hunting) and possible alcohol dependence ("*bon vivant*"). He hardly acknowledges Agnes, but she often hears him "swearing and blaspheming against the footmen, groom,

coachman, or some other hapless dependent” (55), a sign that he has internalized the inhumanity that can attach to male privilege.

Besides Mr. Murray, Agnes meets the Murray sons, and is initially required to be their governess. One of these, Charles, Mrs. Murray describes as “extremely nervous and susceptible,” requiring the “tenderest treatment” (56), but his physical frailty does not endear him to Agnes’s sympathies. In Agnes’s description of Charles, he is much akin to the spoiled, selfish Linton Heathcliff of *Wuthering Heights*, whose invalidism makes him no less a male tyrant, but only more cowardly, selfish, and vicious. Charles, Agnes says, is “a pettish, cowardly, capricious, selfish little fellow, only active in doing mischief, and only clever in inventing falsehoods” (60-61). According to Agnes, the other son, John, is “a fine, stout, healthy boy” who is not inherently bad-natured, but due to his upbringing is “rough as a *young bear*, boisterous, unruly, unprincipled, untaught, unteachable” (60, emphasis mine). In other words, while one son is repellent in his invalidism, the other is repellently animal—the two sides of the inhumanity she sees especially in upper class males.

While her responsibility for the boys is brief, Agnes’s descriptions of the Murray daughters also rely, in a more complex way, on a male gendering of inhumanity. She describes one of them in animal terms similar to those she applies to the girls’ brother John or the young Bloomfields.³⁴ Matilda is a tomboy who loves romping with horses and dogs, and spending time in the stables. So far, her activity is benign. But Agnes observes of her that:

As an animal, Matilda was all right, full of life, vigor, and activity; as an *intelligent being*, she was barbarously ignorant, indocile, careless, and irrational, and consequently very distressing to one who had the task of cultivating her

understanding [and] reforming her manners... As a moral agent, she was reckless, headstrong, violent, and unamenable to reason. (59-60, emphasis mine)

Agnes thus associates Matilda with the sub-rational, describing her as even incapable of behaving as a human, an “intelligent being” or “moral agent,” should.

Furthermore, Matilda’s traditionally masculine qualities and pursuits inevitably accompany a streak of cruelty. In one scene, she follows her dog as it chases a leveret, and returns with “the lacerated body of a young hare in her hand” and with a “gleeful countenance” (135). When the curate Mr. Weston asks her if she had intended to save or kill the hare, she replies, “I pretended to want to save it... but I was better pleased to see it killed” (136).³⁵ Matilda then asks Agnes how she enjoyed the “fun,” asking if she had heard the hare scream, and exulting: “It cried out just like a child” (136). Her equation of the hare and a child suggests an unacknowledged recognition of the kinship of man and beast, which makes Matilda’s lack of sympathy in response to the hare’s death even more appalling and almost sociopathic.

Matilda’s more feminized sister Rosalie is a more ambiguous character. She is at once a victim associated with victimized animals, and thus deserving of sympathy, and an inhumane victimizer, thoughtless and unfeeling— and thus inhuman and unworthy of sympathy. Brontë’s representation of her in a particular scene depends largely on the level of power or privilege accorded her in that specific situation. In the scene with the leveret, Matilda’s dog catches the creature just as Weston and Agnes are discussing Mrs. Murray’s plans to marry Rosalie off to a dissolute and vicious man; this juxtaposition suggests an association between the leveret and the girl sacrificed to patriarchal convenience as well as to her mother’s greed and selfishness.³⁶ Agnes is horrified at the “heartlessness, or want of thought” which Mrs. Murray displays in pushing the “poor

creature” Rosalie into an “inauspicious match” (124) to a man the text suggests is an alcoholic and whom Rosalie will later call a “filthy beast” and “brute” (161). But as soon as Rosalie begins to seek to attract Weston, the man Agnes herself loves—begins to “plunge more recklessly than ever into the depths of heartless coquetry,” as Agnes puts it-- Agnes has “no more pity for her” (124). Instead, she concludes that “coquetry, like drunkenness, hardens the heart, enslaves the faculties, and perverts the feelings, and that dogs are not the only creatures which, when gorged to the throat, will yet gloat over what they cannot devour, and grudge the smallest morsel to a starving brother” (125-126). The “poor creature” akin to the leveret has transformed in Agnes’s mind into a vicious and reprehensible cur.

Agnes’s sympathies are further alienated from Rosalie because she sees that Rosalie is unable to recognize her “inferiors” as human beings; for example, she describes the footman as an “automaton” (157). Rosalie also delights in being the “pitiless cause,” as she herself puts it (107), of suffering to her rejected suitor Hatfield. Later she indicates to Agnes that she considers her own baby basically on a level with her poodle (151)—not because she has an elevated sense of the worth of animals or of her kinship with them, but because she does not recognize the child as fully human. Instead, she seeks to reduce the baby girl’s humanity by focusing first on her physical frailty--- her potential for illness--saying that “it may die—which is not at all improbable” (162), and then on her equivalence to a pet: “it is *only* a child, and one can’t center all one’s hopes on a child; that’s only one degree better than devoting oneself to one’s dog,” she tells Agnes (162).³⁷

Rosalie appears at her least sympathetic when her class privilege, rather than her gender, is foregrounded. Rosalie and Matilda both view the poor as inhuman.³⁸ Agnes notes that they, “chiefly owing to their defective education, comported themselves toward their inferiors in a manner that was highly disagreeable for me to witness. They never in thought exchanged places with them; and, consequently, had no consideration for their feelings, regarding them as an order of beings entirely distinct from themselves” (77). She adds: “They thought that, as these cottagers were poor and untaught, they must be stupid and brutish” (78), suggesting the dehumanizing of the poor by these wealthy young ladies.

One person, however, does share Agnes’s capacity for sympathy, and provides the novel’s one major counter-example to its depiction of men as inhumane. It is only fitting that the novel’s “hero” should be a man who (unlike the novel’s other men) is characterized primarily by his sympathy for poor invalids and for animals.³⁹ The romance between Weston and Agnes develops as they both visit the homes of such sufferers as Nancy Brown and Mark Wood. Significantly, both of the lower-class people that the novel singles out for sympathetic attention are ill: Nancy with inflammation of the eyes and rheumatism, as well as a form of depression (“religious melancholy”),⁴⁰ and Mark with consumption, from which he is dying. As Charlotte Brontë does with Helen Burns in *Jane Eyre*, and Elizabeth Gaskell does with Maggie in *North and South*, Brontë in her characterization of Mark gives a person low on the social scale a disease which the Victorians associated with the upper classes, a supposedly spiritualizing disease that suggested innate nobility, as it was believed to carry off only the best, the most spiritually refined souls.⁴¹

Likewise, Anne Brontë presents in Nancy a sensitive soul desperately in need of, and meriting, sympathy. Nancy tells Agnes that before Weston's arrival she had, in "poor health" and troubled in mind, sent for the rector, Hatfield, but he had done nothing to help her in her affliction, treating her with "scorn" instead and dismissing the seriousness of her rheumatism (80). In an almost too-tidy parallel to this, she says he "kicked my poor cat right across th' floor" (81). Hatfield has no sympathy for her afflictions of mind, soul, or body, valuing her as little as he does her cat.

In contrast, Weston tends to Nancy's physical and emotional needs, as Agnes does— Nancy says he visits her often and "since my eyes has been so bad, he's sat and read to me by the half hour together"-- and provides her with spiritual consolation. Predictably, the contrast between Weston and Hatfield extends to their treatment of animals: Nancy recalls that when her cat jumped on Weston's knee and he "only stroked her, and gave a bit of a smile," she saw that as a good sign, because "once, when she did so to th' rector, he knocked her off, like as it might be in scorn or anger" (83). Nancy attributes the rector's thoughtless cruelty to her cat to the same source as his thoughtless cruelty to herself: scorn, an attitude of looking down with contempt on someone beneath you, whom you view as less human, and thus the opposite of sympathy. Weston, on the other hand, is always considerate, and his main actions as "hero" involve rescuing animals and visiting the sick, even when it inconveniences him. For example, he rescues Nancy's precious cat from Mr. Murray's gamekeeper, who intends to kill it, risking the wrath of the squire (90-92).⁴²

We see the same stark contrast in Weston's and Hatfield's treatment of the poor consumptive laborer, Mark. Agnes learns that when the rector used to visit Mark and his wife, he would insist

on having the door kept open to admit the fresh air for his own convenience, without considering how it might injure the sufferer, and having opened his prayer-book, and hastily read over a part of the service for the sick, would hurry away again, if he did not stay to administer some harsh rebuke to the afflicted wife, or to make some thoughtless, not to say heartless, observation calculated rather to increase than to diminish the troubles of the suffering pair. (86)

Weston, on the other hand, sits beside Mark "just like a brother" (86). Mark's wife notes that when Weston visits the poor he sees and subsequently provides whatever they're in need of, despite his limited funds (87). Perhaps Weston's unusual capacity for sympathy comes from his own experience of suffering; he has lost his whole family, a tragedy which inspires Agnes to "pit[y] him from my heart; I almost wept for sympathy" (98), as he in turn will display "touching, unobtrusive sympathy" for her after her father's death (143). Here, at last, Agnes has found a man who both embodies sympathy and merits it himself.

Fittingly, the steps toward the ultimate union of these two sympathetic souls are mediated by Agnes's struggles against illness and by her affinity with animals. When she is separated from Weston, whom she fears she will never see again, Agnes begins to fall into a sort of decline or sickness typical of pining, lovelorn Victorian heroines: she says, "I knew my strength was declining, my appetite had failed, and I was grown listless and desponding," and she even temporarily wishes she were dead (149). However, less typically for a Victorian heroine, she refuses to give way to this depression, rejecting as "selfish" that escape into despair which had claimed her father, and choosing instead the active, hardworking ethos of her mother. Though Brontë always presents Agnes's minor

physical afflictions sympathetically, she consistently portrays it as selfish and inconsiderate to others to give way to mental afflictions such as depression (like Mr. Grey) or alcoholism.⁴³ Agnes reminds herself that she must not forget her mother or the welfare of the young pupils at the school they now run, and “tranquility of mind was soon restored, and bodily health and vigor began likewise, slowly but surely, to return” (150).⁴⁴

In keeping with the thematic structure of the novel, Weston and Agnes are reunited by his rescue of her dog. The terrier Snap had originally been Matilda’s dog, but the girl had hated and mistreated him for his preference for Agnes. Predictably, Hatfield had also found “great amusement” in abusing the dog (102). When Snap is given away to “the village rat-catcher, a man notorious for his brutal treatment of his canine slaves” (130), Agnes is grieved, but Weston’s rescue of the dog gives him an excuse to come and see her. She surrenders the pet to him, saying, “now that he has a good master, I’m quite satisfied” (169), and shortly thereafter surrenders herself as well, having chosen her “master” too.⁴⁵

The union of Agnes and Weston can be read as an affirmation—a reward—of their sympathetic, humane hearts and minds. But it is also significant that the majority of the novel’s characters do not evoke such sympathy in the heroine’s heart, because they themselves are incapable of humane behavior. This novel has plenty of room for antipathy as well as sympathy in its moral code, making the text’s “moral” less straightforward and simplistic than it might appear. This dichotomy is especially evident in the way that throughout the novel representations of animality and illness play dual

roles, working either to repel the reader's sympathies or to invoke them. Brontë adopted this strategy again, with greater emphasis and force, in her second novel.

The Tenant of Wildfell Hall

When *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall* was published in 1848, it was met with reviews very similar to those that had met Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights* the year before. The *Spectator* pronounced: "There seems in this writer a morbid love for the coarse, not to say the brutal, so that his level subjects are not very attractive, and the more forcible are displeasing or repulsive, from their gross, physical, and profligate substratum."⁴⁶ A review in the *Literary World* called it "coarse almost to brutality" (cited in McDonagh ix). In fact, *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall* adds breadth and depth to Anne Brontë's redirection of the reader's sympathies away from "human brutes" (Brontë *TWH* 297), however powerful those brutes may be physically and socially, towards the vulnerable. In the process of this redirection, she also redraws the boundaries of the human to exclude the human brutes and to restore many of the marginalized to full status as subjects. Thus, this "brutal" novel is in fact, as Josephine McDonagh puts it, "a critique of a brutal and brutalizing society" (x).

Yet while Brontë in her preface to the novel's second edition rejected the *Spectator*'s view that she had written "con amore" those "brutal" scenes which she claimed "have not been more painful for my most fastidious reader to read, than they were for me to describe" (Brontë *TWH* 3), there does seem to be some element of relish in her depiction of "vice and vicious characters" that sits oddly with her purported moral aims, and makes critical analogies between this novel and *Wuthering Heights* feel

plausible. And while McDonagh suggests that, in contrast to the Victorians who found the novel repellent, we today are more likely to “empathize with [the] sufferings” of the novel’s characters (xxv), our response to the brutality depicted may instead be one of fascinated repulsion. Again, such a response suggests that this work is not far removed from *Wuthering Heights*, with its simultaneously compelling and repelling representations of brutality and pathological cruelty.⁴⁷ But it also indicates that there may also be more to *The Tenant*’s “moral purpose” than its author declares. While not attempting to undermine the very concepts of humanity and sympathy in the way that I will argue *Wuthering Heights* does, *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall* continues and expands on the work begun in *Agnes Grey* of overturning social and power-based hierarchies and replacing them with a moral hierarchy in a way that constitutes a redefining of “the human.”

As in *Agnes Grey*, Brontë carries out this project through her use of representations of animality and illness to manipulate readerly sympathies. Illness is more prominent in this novel than its predecessor; as McDonagh notes, *The Tenant* frequently represents sick or injured bodies (xxii). But by far the most prominent illness in the novel is alcoholism, and Brontë develops the links between alcoholism, moral insanity, and male brutality more fully and insistently in this novel than in *Agnes Grey*. In connecting the first two, she is of her time; James Prichard in 1835 noted that the morally insane “not unfrequently... become drunkards” (254), and an essay published in both the *Quarterly Review* and the *Edinburgh Review* in 1875 described the “low forms of moral insanity, brought about by perpetual drinking,” in which a man might “reduce himself below the level of a beast by means of drinking” (Wynter 281, 280).

In describing this “low” form of behavior, I use the term “alcoholism” throughout my discussion of *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall*, because it most accurately conveys what Brontë is describing, even while recognizing that the term is slightly anachronistic, since it did not come into use until the 1850s or 1860s, and the idea of “the alcoholic” (someone addicted to alcohol) was not widely used until the 1890s (McDonagh xx note 30). Beth Torgerson also notes that the term “alcoholism” eventually replaced “intemperance” just as “recovery” replaced “reform,” as alcoholism came to be seen as a disease, not a moral crime (142, note 2). The coining of the term alcoholism in the mid-nineteenth century, as Torgerson points out, was the result of alcoholism coming to be seen as a disease, rather than a moral failing—though it has never been fully removed from a moral framework (142, note 2).

Alcoholism in Anne Brontë’s works functions both as a disease and as a moral crime. The idea of “intemperance” as a disease was certainly gaining traction as Brontë wrote this novel, and the novel reflects her culture’s, as well as her own, dual perception of alcohol dependence: a growing recognition of the pathology of alcoholism, in tension with a continuing view of the illness as indicative of moral vice, or at least moral weakness.

Brontë’s increased emphasis on alcohol dependence in this novel was perhaps the result of seeing her brother’s decline into alcoholism.⁴⁸ Around this time, she wrote in a diary paper that she had recently “had some very unpleasant and undreamt of experience of human nature” (Barker 537), and in a note in her prayer book declared that she was “sick of mankind and their disgusting ways” (McDonagh xiv). Besides having to watch her brother’s deterioration, she herself was seriously ill as she was writing the novel

(Langland *Anne* 22).⁴⁹ She also had access to journals which would have kept her informed of new medical explanations and treatments for habitual drunkenness (McDonagh xx-xxi), as well as to her father's library; his medical guide *Graham's Modern Medicine* included drunkenness among the many ailments it considered (McDonagh xxi, xx).⁵⁰ Anne Brontë follows Graham in representing chronic drunkenness as both a disease and the cause of other diseases,⁵¹ and is very much in line with developments of her time in depicting it as a mental disorder as well.⁵² Indeed, in her depiction drunkenness is very much akin to the moral insanity of some of the characters in *Agnes Grey*.

Likewise, in this novel as in its precursor, masculinity almost without exception is accompanied by an inherent confidence in one's own fully human status that leads inevitably to the persecution of the "lower" orders, distanced by species, gender, socioeconomic status, or even physical health.⁵³ No male character is immune; the novel's "hero," Gilbert Markham, has blind spots in many places where sympathy should be.

Gilbert does have some affinity for animals, which at first might suggest a sympathizing nature; for example, he forms a bond with young Arthur, and thus with Helen, through his dog. He first meets them when Arthur curiously greets "Sancho," and first gains entrance to Wildfell Hall by bringing Arthur one of Sancho's puppies as a present. Dogs frame the courtship of Helen and Gilbert; in the scene where they finally admit their love for each other Gilbert is initially "caressing" the puppy he gave to little Arthur as a pet (409). Nevertheless, Gilbert is not above cruelty to animals or complicity in such cruelty. In the first chapter of the novel, he reprimands his brother Fergus for

badger-baiting out of an objection to the idleness it signifies, not to its cruelty (12).⁵⁴

Gilbert himself is out hunting and killing birds when he comes across Wildfell Hall and has his first conversation with Helen.⁵⁵

This casual cruelty is clearly connected to his privileged masculine position; Gilbert acknowledges that he is perhaps “a little bit spoiled by my mother and sister, and by some other ladies of my acquaintance” (32).⁵⁶ His mother, indeed, tells her daughter Rose never to think of herself, and constantly to sacrifice her own preferences so that her brothers can have the best of everything. Gilbert jokes that but for Rose’s complaints, “I might sink to the grossest self-indulgence and carelessness about the wants of others, from the mere habit of being constantly cared for myself, and having all my wants anticipated or immediately supplied, while in total ignorance of what was done for me” (49-50). This self-knowledge is to his credit, as is his skepticism about his mother’s belief that when he marries, it will be his business to please himself, and his wife’s to please him (50). Throughout the novel, Brontë presents such female submission as encouraging male dominance, vice, and violence.⁵⁷ The dangers of male privilege are clear, as sinking into “the grossest self-indulgence and carelessness about the wants of others” is, of course, precisely what Huntingdon and a number of other men in the novel do, so that these words suggest the fine line that separates Gilbert from them.⁵⁸

Furthermore, despite his resistance to his mother’s rigid idea of male privilege, Gilbert’s views and behavior show that he has absorbed some of these ideas, to the detriment of his ability to evaluate or sympathize with others. His lack of proper sympathy is shown in his misjudgments of the value of those around him, particularly in his esteem for Eliza Millward and disregard for her sister Mary.⁵⁹ He is entranced by

Eliza, who turns out to be not only a shallow flirt but a vicious gossip and slanderer. Even before he comes to the conclusion that she is a “snake in the grass” (65), he compares her to another animal, “a pretty, playful kitten” (17), a metaphorical corollary George Eliot also frequently chose for charming, pretty flirts who engage in thoughtless cruelty.

Eliza’s ornamentally pretty but morally vicious *cat-likeness* is contrasted with the plainness and simple virtue of a woman whom *cats like*, as do other animals and people generally treated as inferiors. This is her sister Mary, “a plain, quiet, sensible girl... loved and courted by all dogs, cats, children, and poor people, and slighted and neglected by everyone else” (17). In one scene, Mary has a cat on her lap, loath to disturb it, and Eliza taunts her by saying that Gilbert (who is present) “detests cats, as cordially as he does old maids—like all other gentlemen” (18). Indeed, Gilbert initially thinks of Mary not only as less than human but as “little better than a non-entity” (66), until Helen’s esteem for her leads him to appreciate her value. Mary is clearly both marginalized and full of sympathy for the marginalized of all kinds; unsurprisingly, this includes a deep sympathy for invalids, as Gilbert mentions in his first description of her that she “had nursed their mother, through her last long, tedious illness” (17).⁶⁰ Gilbert’s inability to recognize her humanity is a strong early marker of the gaps in his capacity for sympathy.

The consequences of Gilbert’s internalization of male privilege, and of its undermining of his sympathies, however, are not restricted to misjudgments of character. Gilbert may not have degenerated into the bestial state to which alcoholism brings some of the novel’s other men, but his experience of male privilege has made him capable of ferocious inhumanity.⁶¹ The most obvious instance of this is his astonishingly violent attack on Mr. Lawrence, whom he believes to be his rival for Helen, not knowing him to

be her brother. This attack is prefigured by an earlier interaction, in which his capacity for animalistic brutality is suggested through his treatment of Lawrence's "pretty grey pony" (47). Encountering Lawrence on the path to Wildfell Hall, Gilbert grips the pony's bridle, though Lawrence exclaims, "you're hurting my pony's mouth! ... What makes you so coarse and *brutal*, Markham?" (79, emphasis mine). This cruelty to the feminized pony, whose small size is repeatedly emphasized in stark contrast to the "monstrous steed" (46) on which Gilbert has been riding, underscores an inequality of physical power between Gilbert and Lawrence. This makes the later assault seem akin to the abuse of women that we see practiced by the novel's other cruel males such as Hattersley. This is especially so given the somewhat feminizing descriptions of Lawrence as a "sensitive soul" (70), with a heart like a "sensitive plant," with even "a morbid delicacy of feeling" (34), and with "more delicate features and smaller bones than commonly fall to the lot of individuals of the rougher sex" (70).

Gilbert himself acknowledges that his attack on Lawrence could be viewed as the "murderous" act of a "madman" (101), and Brontë implies that it is, in effect, madness—a moral insanity akin to the sociopathic cruelty of Agnes Grey's pupils, and which, in this novel, both male privilege and alcoholism intensify.⁶² As McDonagh notes, Gilbert's "extreme emotion" (amounting almost to apoplexy) in reaction to seeing Lawrence and Helen together "shows a similar pathology to that of drunkenness" (*TWF* 424).⁶³ Gilbert knocks Lawrence off his pony by striking him with the handle of his whip, which is "garnished with a massive horse's head of plated metal" (99). Gilbert feels a "savage satisfaction" (98), even "a species of exaltation" (99), when he sees Lawrence prone and bleeding.⁶⁴ This is the violence of a spoiled boy when he doesn't get his way, and it is the

violence of men who become brutes when they give way to their anger, lust, or other vices.

After his attack on Lawrence, Gilbert carries on his violent and pitiless cruelty. His descent into brutality is reinforced by his conviction that Helen and Lawrence are lovers, and he becomes, as his brother Fergus half-jokingly puts it, “a very tiger in human form,” who comes close to fracturing Fergus’s skull for singing a love song (94). In his next conversation with Helen, he says that “though I saw she was miserable, and pitied her, I felt glad to have it in my power to torment her” (104). He once again becomes animalistic in his pitilessness, saying, “While I secretly exulted in my power, I felt disposed to dally with my victim like a cat” (106-107).

Furthermore, even nearer the end of the novel, after he has read Helen’s diaries and reconciled with Lawrence, he does not regard the feelings of others as equivalent to his own. He responds to his enforced separation from Helen with “insupportably morose and misanthropical” behavior (350), so that only with his “poor mother” is he “more humanized in [his] demeanor” than with anyone else (350). The element of pathology that those around him detect in his behavior also undermines his fully human status; Eliza Millward thinks he must be “very far from well” as he looks so changed, and his brother Fergus (again only half-jokingly) tells her Gilbert’s affliction is a “monomania” (357).⁶⁵

I lay out these scenes because they clearly connect Gilbert to the pattern of bestial males who make up much of Helen’s experience, and whose indulgence in alcoholism pathologizes and brutalizes them into subhuman creatures.⁶⁶ In Helen’s diary, the moral insanity that sometimes breaks to the surface in Gilbert appears at its most extreme as it is heightened by the effects of alcohol dependence in the lives of several men. Entering into

Helen's diary, the reader is likewise invited to view what goes on in domestic spaces, and thus to witness the almost gothic horror of brutality and sickness in upper-class British men. The intimacy and immediacy of the diary, and of Helen's narrative voice speaking through it, encourages the reader to forge a sympathetic connection with her, even as it allows us to see the secret selves of privileged males, represented at their least sympathetic.

The most important of these men, of course, is the man Helen marries, Arthur Huntingdon. Helen is warned before marrying Huntingdon that he is "a bit wildish" (115), but is convinced that she sees in his features nothing like the "lurking ferocity" (121) which marks his friend Grimsby's countenance. She even reads the earliest physical manifestation of his alcoholism, his red face, as a sign (ironically) of health (153-154). She is thus blind to both his illness and his brutality, and by extension to his character. She is therefore not very concerned by the "want of thought" that she sees as the worst of his vices (126), though her aunt reminds her that thoughtlessness "may lead to any crime" (150).⁶⁷ She is convinced that as his wife she can advise him and save him from his profligacy and "corrupting" companions (129).

Bad omens of his unsympathetic nature come early on, however. When Huntingdon and some of his companions come to visit her uncle early in their relationship, the men come specifically to hunt partridges. The men go out after breakfast with "boyish eagerness... on their expedition against the hapless partridges" (134). In contrast, Helen is simultaneously painting a picture of an "amorous pair of turtle-doves," and of a girl, perhaps like herself, looking up at the birds as emblems of love and marital bliss (135).⁶⁸ Huntingdon, entering with his gun, mocks the picture and the naivety of the

girl in it. Brontë clearly aligns Helen with both the girl and the doves she paints, but unlike them Helen has not found a fit mate. The faithful woman who creatively brings birds to life with her paintbrush and the selfish man who wields a gun to destroy such birds cannot live in mutual sympathy, any more than a hunter and his prey. Brontë further reinforces this point when Huntingdon returns from his hunt, “stained with the blood of his prey” (137).

Similarly, when Helen’s uncle invites Huntingdon to join him again to “make war with the pheasants”—a phrase which ludicrously suggests that the pheasants are equal combatants—the latter replies enthusiastically that he will “murder your birds by wholesale” (156). He is quite nonchalant about the term “murder,” though the word suggests to the reader that what he is doing is not far removed from the killing of innocent human beings. Ominously, on waking that same morning, Helen had likened herself to another bird: “the happy red-breast was pouring out its little soul in song, and my heart overflowed with hymns of gratitude and praise to heaven” (146).

Helen finally begins to suspect Huntingdon’s lack of humanity in a chapter ironically titled “Traits of Friendship,” in which she recounts “a specimen of his character... that seemed to merit a harder name than thoughtlessness” (157). This “specimen” is his lack of sympathy for his supposed friend Lord Lowborough, particularly in scenes where Lowborough’s addictions reduce him to the point of invalidism. Because the novel makes a distinction between the inhumanity of Arthur (and many of his friends) and the human frailty of Lowborough, Brontë treats the latter’s alcoholism much more sympathetically.⁶⁹ When Huntingdon’s friends had first visited them, Helen had noted that Lord Lowborough looked more serious than his companions,

and had a “sickly, careworn aspect” (131). In this case, his sickliness is a positive sign, as it indicates that to some extent he is sick of the life of vice he has been living, and this sets him up to be the most sympathetic character out of Huntingdon’s group of friends.

Through Huntingdon’s own recounting, we learn of Lowborough’s unsuccessful struggle against his gambling addiction, and the descent into debt which made him vulnerable to another addiction, alcoholism. Huntingdon pitilessly says he likes to laugh at the “bedlamites”—i.e., virtual madmen—in gambling houses, of which Lowborough was one “not willingly, but of necessity,— he was always resolving to give it up, and always breaking his resolutions” (158). He chillingly recalls the nonchalant attitude of himself and his other friends towards Lowborough’s possible suicidal tendencies, noting that the suicide would be “no great matter, some of us whispered, as his existence had ceased to be an acquisition to our club” (158). His friend Grimsby’s response to Lowborough’s addiction was to make him more desperate, taking advantage of his weakness to cheat him out of the last of his money as he approached financial ruin. Huntingdon’s response was to console him by plying him with alcohol (159). Soon alcoholism replaced the gambling addiction that Lowborough had resolutely forced himself to abandon; as Huntingdon puts it, “he soon discovered that the demon of drink was as black as the demon of play, and nearly as hard to get rid of—especially as his kind friends did all they could to second the promptings of his own insatiable cravings” (160).

Brontë sensitively renders Lowborough as a man struggling with a powerful predisposition to addiction, as Huntingdon describes how Lowborough sought to renounce his “tempters” (162), but was unable to stay long out of their corrupting company. He simply had no other support system; his social life had revolved around his

drinking and the men who encouraged that addiction. He eventually sought them out again only because he couldn't "bear [his] own thoughts" (162), "he was so weary of his own moping, melancholy mind" (162). Huntingdon eventually convinced him to return to their club, on the condition that Huntingdon would not tempt him to drink again, but his friends put tremendous pressure on him to return to his old ways. Huntingdon also indicates that while Lowborough would not "drink like an honest Christian," he became addicted to laudanum instead, veering between complete abstinence and excessive use of this replacement drug. One night Lowborough was "suffering from the effects of an overdose of his insidious comforter" (163), and Huntingdon took advantage of that situation to encourage the desperate man back into drinking. This led to "something like an apoplectic fit, followed by a rather severe brain fever"-- encapsulating the pathological effects of alcohol on body and mind (164).

Huntingdon's response to this fit was an insidious parody of the kind of "sympathy" the novel espouses as the proper response to invalids. Huntingdon describes it to Helen in terms of compassionate behavior, when it is precisely the opposite, and he even perverts scriptural language in doing so: "[W]hen he got better, I brought him back to the fold... I restored him to the bosom of the club, and compassionating the feebleness of his health and extreme lowness of his spirits, I advised him to 'take a little wine for his stomach's sake'" and then to adopt moderation, "la media-via," and "not to kill himself like a fool, and not to abstain like a ninny—in a word, to enjoy himself like a rational creature, and do as I did" (164). But this advice is obviously all wrong for Lowborough, for whom moderation is impossible, and is clearly given merely for selfish or even malicious reasons.

The text contrasts Huntingdon's insidious sympathy with the real sympathy Lowborough displays after his recovery from addiction. As Huntingdon recounts, Lowborough finally escaped the influence of alcohol when he realized that his friends wouldn't let him reform, and instead found hope in the idea of a wife. Even when his search for a better half appeared unsuccessful he managed to avoid returning to his vices, and regained some health (166). But most notably, on those occasions when he encountered Huntingdon, he showed remarkable generosity and sympathy to the friend who had shown him none, by "attempt[ing] to awaken my conscience and to draw me from the perdition he considered himself to have escaped," as Huntingdon puts it (166).⁷⁰ Such behavior starkly highlights through contrast Huntingdon's failures of sympathy. Helen certainly finds her husband's recounting of Lowborough's tale a shocking indictment of his inhumanity, and begs him in the future "never [to] make a jest of the sufferings of others, and always use your influence with your friends for their own advantage against their evil propensities, instead of seconding their evil propensities against themselves" (169).

Part of what makes the rendering of Lowborough so much more sympathetic than that of Huntingdon is the former's own awareness of his weaknesses, and determination to overcome them. In contrast, at the time he tells Helen about Lowborough's past, Huntingdon is in complete denial about the animality and disease to which alcoholism is increasingly reducing him. He asserts his own identity as a "rational creature" (not a feminized "ninny" or a mentally troubled "fool" like Lowborough), masculine, sane, and (in his view) fully human. He denies his dependence on alcohol, convinced that his knowledge of the effects of such dependence (including "madness") will protect him

from becoming “slave to a single propensity” (164). In fact, he needs the self-knowledge Lowborough possesses.

Without that self-knowledge, Huntingdon maintains his sense of his own full humanity by projecting his actual inhuman status onto others. This is evident, for example, in his verbal abuse of a servant; when Helen reproaches him, he asks, “do you think I could stop to consider the feelings of an insensate brute like that, when my own nerves were racked and torn to pieces?” (215). Characteristically, he also reproaches Helen for her lack of “compassion” and “pity” for him (215, 216).

In fact, however, Helen’s own powers of sympathy are repeatedly emphasized in contrast to her husband’s lack of it. She can “*feel* rather than see” Milicent Hattersley’s misery about her own husband’s alcoholism in her letters (219). She and Milicent each weep for each other with “sympathetic emotion,” though Helen rarely cries from self-pity (241). Helen also fears that Esther Hargrave will suffer a similar fate in marriage; she says, “It seems I should feel her disappointment even more deeply than my own” (238). Likewise, Helen feels pity for her “fellow sufferer” Lord Lowborough after he marries Annabella Wilmot; seeing the contempt with which Annabella treats him, Helen says, “I pity him from my heart, for I know the misery of such regrets” (193). She also acknowledges that she is his “fellow sufferer” in another way, once Huntingdon and Annabella start flirting (193).

Similarly, when Helen rebukes Huntingdon for laughing at Lowborough’s depressed countenance, and when he asks her, “You can feel for him, Helen—can’t you?” she replies with an expression of apparently universal sympathy: “I can feel for anyone who is unjustly treated... and I can feel for those who injure them too” (194).

Her sympathy for those who “injure” is in fact far more discriminating than her assertion suggests, as an examination of passages later in the novel reveals. But her sympathy for the “injured” is consistent. For example, her sympathy for the “unjustly treated” Lowborough deepens further after he finds out—much later than Helen—about Annabella’s affair with Huntingdon. This increase in her sympathy shows her difference from Lowborough’s supposed friends and the “nice-judging world” for whom “his refusal to avenge his wrongs has removed him yet farther beyond the range of sympathy” (294).

Helen even feels (at least initially) for her husband, since she considers that marriage has made them one flesh, and she “feel[s] for him as for myself” (222). The novel presents her capacity for sympathy positively, but by no means encourages such sympathy for Huntingdon in the reader. And alongside her sympathy she, like Agnes Grey, fears that such company (and in her case, marital union) has “debased, contaminated” her, so that she is “almost a partaker in his sins” (222).⁷¹ When, as Huntingdon’s “intemperance” grows, so does his “injustice and ill-humor towards his inferiors,” she resents and opposes him, though she rarely defends herself (222).

Helen herself receives no sympathy from other characters during her marriage except the insidious and “unwelcome sympathy” (212) of Mr. Hargrave, who seeks to take advantage of her husband’s neglect of her. After her husband’s infidelity is discovered, she despairs of Huntingdon’s ever being able to “truly feel my wrongs” (263). But she might have given up on any expectations of sympathy from him well before that; for example, when her father dies of alcoholism, Arthur is only concerned that his own comfort might be marred by Helen’s sorrow, seeing no connection between

himself and this “stranger” who has “thought proper to drink himself to death” (227). Once again, his lack of self-knowledge is connected with an inability to sympathize, either with his wife’s father or herself.

Not only does Helen receive no sympathy from her husband, but his tendency to project his own lack of humanity onto those he considers weaker and inferior comes to include her. This is clear in the charged animalizing rhetoric used by both Helen and Huntingdon to characterize his treatment of her. For example, Helen early in their marriage is discontented because she wishes he would treat her with “less caressing and more rationality; I should like to be less of a pet and more of a friend” (169). But her problem goes beyond being treated as a “pet,” as Agnes Grey is in her benevolently patriarchal family. Her husband’s view of her is consistently dehumanizing, but the manner of that dehumanization shifts to serve his own purposes. He alternately treats her as a “frail butterfly” (172) when he wants to keep her out of society (172) or a “painted butterfly” when he wants to display her in society (183). She is a “tigress” (177) or “she-tiger” (217) or “vixen” (133) when she dares to disagree with him on anything.⁷²

This animalizing rhetoric is complicated, however. Even as Huntingdon animalizes Helen, he also accuses her of being almost “above all human sympathies” when he finds her too religious (173). Thus, she is above or below the human level, as it meets the needs of his complaint or desire. Furthermore, she too makes use of such rhetoric as she seeks to warn him against making “a beast” of himself in his eating and drinking (175), and comes to see him as “given up to animal indulgences” (206).

Also complicating this rhetoric is the fact that it is not confined to the speech of the characters. For instance, the text makes literal the association Helen suggests

rhetorically between herself and a powerless pet. Helen describes the dangerousness of being her husband's "pet," as she observes him "alternately petting, and teasing [sic], and abusing his dogs" (179), just as he does her. This parallel between Helen and a literal pet is more explicit in a scene in which, under the influence of alcohol, Huntingdon abuses both Helen and a dog. When his "favorite cocker, Dash, [takes] the liberty of jumping on him and beginning to lick his face," he strikes the dog off "with a sharp blow" (179). Dash runs cowering to Helen "as if imploring protection," and won't return to Huntingdon when called back (179). Helen recalls: "Enraged at this, his master snatched up a heavy book and hurled it at his head. The poor dog set up a piteous outcry and ran to the door. I let him out, and then quietly took up the book" (179). She asks if the thrown book was intended for her, and Arthur replies, "'No—but I see you've got a taste of it,' ... looking at my hand, that had also been struck, and was rather severely grazed" (179). As Lisa Surridge notes, the abuse of the dog here suggests a level of domestic violence in this marital relationship that the text never goes so far as to make explicit.⁷³ But the dog is no mere symbolic stand-in for Helen; they are rather kin in their victimhood, alike mistreated by Huntingdon.

Just as animals play a crucial role in illustrating the fraught nature of the Huntingdons' marriage, so does the issue of illness, an issue that becomes rhetorically and physically charged for the couple. When Huntingdon wants Helen to leave him to his own devices in town, he insists that her health is declining, but she sees through his pretences of concern (185). It is he whose dissolute behavior causes his health and beauty to degenerate by the time he returns from his first absence in the city. A shocked Helen thinks: "But how altered!—flushed and feverish, listless and languid, his beauty strangely

diminished, his vigor and vivacity quite departed” (190). Helen forcefully warns her husband that his “habit” of drinking will “grow upon you... if you don’t check it in time,” and that if it does he may “disgust” her (198), just as she warns him that it could mean “the total loss of [his] health” (218).

Despite such warnings, Huntingdon continues down the road to illness, as well as to a bestial state. His self-destruction is accelerated by a visit from Hattersley and Grimsby, who encourage all the vices and self-indulgence that Helen has sought to discourage in her husband, just as they seek to lure Lowborough back into intemperance. During this visit they show the height of their alcohol-induced beastliness and (as Helen sees it) mental instability, their “innate madness, folly, and brutality” (295). Just as she fears intemperance will not only brutalize Huntingdon but make him “imbecile in body and mind” (274), Helen compares Hattersley to a “wild beast,” a “maniac,” and a “madman” as he tries to force alcohol on Lowborough (235), and then physically mistreats his own wife Milicent.⁷⁴

The inclusion of Hattersley’s behavior in this scene illustrates by proxy the depths of brutality and pathology to which Huntingdon may sink. However, like Lowborough, Hattersley ultimately serves by contrast to show how utterly inhuman, and beyond redemption, Huntingdon is. Hattersley eventually takes heed of Helen’s warnings (so ineffective with her hardened husband) that “You can’t continue as bad as you are without getting worse—and more brutalized every day” (320). He ultimately reforms when Helen compels him to feel compassion and remorse for the effects of his alcohol-induced violence toward his wife.

At first, Hattersley justifies his mistreatment of Milicent by comparing her to an animal and denying her capacity to feel: “I positively think I ill-use her sometimes, when I’ve taken too much, but I can’t help it, for she never complains... I suppose she doesn’t mind it,” he tells Helen (245), and asks how he can help his behavior to his wife when she “lies down like a spaniel at my feet... I sometimes think she has no feeling at all; and then I go on till she cries, and that satisfies me” (246). Helen, however, insists that he is causing his wife to suffer, pointing to the physical evidence of Milicent’s declining health. She makes him acknowledge that the change in Milicent in the five years since their marriage from a “little plump lassie...with a pretty pink and white face” to a “poor little bit of a creature, fading and melting away like a snow-wreath” is not just the result of naturally “delicate health,” but of anxiety and even fear of his physical abuse (321). Thus Helen begins to work his reformation in a way she cannot with her husband, who will never have the sympathetic eyes to see the change either in her own appearance, which is “wasted with many sorrows” (338), or in her state of health, which is “far from strong” though “not positively ill” (352).

Indeed, rather than acknowledging Arthur’s responsibility for Helen’s diminished health, Arthur and his mistress Annabella both blame Helen for *Arthur’s* failing health, the consequence of his intemperance. Annabella taunts Helen by suggesting that she (Annabella) could manage him and his welfare better (271); Arthur, characteristically projecting his own traits onto Helen, says her “insensate” and “repulsive” character, her “brutal insensibility,” is killing him (273). When he suggests that she drives him to drinking and “playing the brute” at the expense of his health, she finally defends herself, realizing that “he may drink himself dead, but it is NOT MY FAULT” (274).

This realization allows Helen to absolve herself (temporarily, at least) from a sense of responsibility for her husband's health. This is accompanied by a shift in her primary sympathies, and her primary concerns, from her husband to their young son. She realizes the difficulty she will have protecting little Arthur from his father's influence. She wishes Huntingdon could "sympathize with half my views, and share one half my feelings" for the child (203). Instead, Huntingdon is impatient with the child's "helplessness" and stupidity" (203), and with Helen's devoted attention to "that ugly little creature" (204). When she tells him that she hopes that he "share[s] [her] thoughts and feelings," he replies, "How the devil can I waste my thoughts and feelings on a little worthless idiot like that?" and looks at the baby through a thoroughly dehumanizing lens "as if it were some curious being of quite a different species than himself" (204). In fact, he compares the child to the lowliest of animals, a "little senseless, thankless, oyster" (205). Once again, in dehumanizing another—in this case, the child-- he projects onto little Arthur precisely his own characteristics, calling him a "little selfish, senseless, sensualist" (205).⁷⁵

Helen finally flees her husband for the sake of the child's physical and psychological welfare, fearing the "contaminating influence" (275) of Huntingdon's "corrupting intercourse and example" (276) on their son. By that point Helen roundly condemns Huntingdon and his friends as "human brutes" (297), and this is no exaggeration; even Hargrave, seeking to ingratiate himself with Helen, describes them as "irrational" and as having no one to "humanize them" in her absence (300). So disgusted is Helen with these men that she begins "to cherish very unamiable feelings against my fellow mortals—the male part of them especially" (315). But she is most distressed that

they take delight in teaching little Arthur to drink, swear, and curse his mother. They try to “make a man of him” (296)—in other words, to make a human brute of him as well.⁷⁶ Helen must struggle to protect her son’s very humanity.

However, it is not just the father’s (and his friends’) influence that Helen has to contend against in raising little Arthur in health and humanity; genetics is a factor as well. Her belief in the heritability of alcohol dependence leads her to instill in her son a revulsion for alcohol by giving it to him mixed with tartar-emetic--“just enough to produce inevitable nausea and depression without positive sickness” (313)—or giving it to him as medicine when he is sick. Hearing of this scandalizes the townspeople, who equate masculinity with drink, and claim she will make “the veriest milksop of him” (27), that she is treating him “like a girl” and will “spoil his spirit, and make a mere Miss Nancy of him” (29). Her brother backs her up, however, about the need for strict precautions when a child may be “prone to intemperance,” as for some people “temperance—that is moderation—is impossible” (37). His and Helen’s father’s life was cut short by intemperance (37), and their uncle suffered the results of it in gout (111)⁷⁷; all this, together with the hereditary and environmental influence of Helen’s husband, is certainly enough to give Helen and Lawrence a fear of the child’s propensity to alcoholism.⁷⁸

The determination to protect her son from the degeneration into brutality and pathology she has seen in so many men remains Helen’s primary concern, even when she returns to nurse her dying husband. In fact, she only goes to him out of “duty” (359), not because she still has any mistaken sympathy for him, as the text makes clear.⁷⁹ After she makes Huntingdon sign a contract giving her sole custody of their son before he can see

the boy, she writes to her brother saying, “All this may strike you as harsh, but I felt... my son’s future welfare should not be sacrificed to any mistaken tenderness for this man’s feelings” (363). She even emphasizes to Huntingdon that she is sacrificing her own feelings in being there (365), adding to her brother that she refuses to neglect the servants, her son, or even her own health by giving way to Huntingdon’s “exorbitant demands” out of “unpardonable weakness” (369). The most she will acknowledge is that she does not hate him, as “his suffering and my own laborious care have given him some claim to my regard—to my affection even, if he would only be quiet and sincere”—but of course he will not, so she “shrink[s] from him” (369). Only when he begs her to “save him” does she permit her heart to soften, and, as she writes, her “heart bled for him” (376); similarly, when he dies, she is “almost overcome by the miseries, bodily and mental, of that death bed” (381).

For the most part, however, Helen guards herself against sympathy for Huntingdon in the latter part of the book, and Brontë’s text implicitly endorses this stance. To realize how radical Brontë’s treatment of this scene is, one might compare it to a similar scene in “Janet’s Repentance” in George Eliot’s *Scenes of Clerical Life*, published almost a decade later. Robert Dempster, in that story, is another “unloving, tyrannous, brutal man” who “needs no motive to prompt his cruelty; he needs only the perpetual presence of a woman he can call his own” (Eliot *Scenes* 278). He too is an alcoholic, and he too is fatally thrown from a horse, which he has been brutally beating while drunk. His wife Janet, whom he has physically abused for years but who cannot bring herself to leave him, is delighted to “wait on him with such tenderness, such all-forgiving love, that the old harshness and cruelty must melt away for ever under the

heart-sunshine she would pour around him”(325). While Eliot does not allow Dempster moral redemption, and while she notes the “strange contrast” between Janet’s face with its “acute sensibility” and her husband’s “emaciated animalism” in the sickroom, she implicitly endorses Janet’s feelings of sympathy and forgiveness, as Janet “only yearned for one moment in which she might satisfy the deep forgiving pity of her soul by one look of love, one word of tenderness” (327).

Huntingdon’s death is similar to Dempster’s in its poetic justice: he suffers a fall from his horse while *hunting*, compounded by his pathological intemperance. He endures the prolonged, fear-filled death of a villainous character typical in this novel’s precursors such as Samuel Richardson’s *Clarissa* and successors including “Janet’s Repentance,” complete with a preemptive feeling that he is “in hell, already!” (364), and an alternation between a terror of death and a denial of it.⁸⁰ He also has no “fortitude” to bear him through the bodily pain of illness, and while the injuries from his accident are not severe, and “would have been but trifling in a man of temperate habits ... in *him* it is very different” (360). In other words, an injury sustained during one of his acts of cruelty to animals is rendered fatal by the alcoholism that led to his worst displays of inhuman behavior. Unlike in Eliot’s story, however, both illness and inhumanity are invoked and intersect to keep readerly sympathies alienated from the invalid. Brontë emphasizes that Huntindgon has cast himself out of the realm of human sympathy.

The text also insistently reiterates Huntingdon’s responsibility for his own death; he has a chance to recover, “if he will only continue to observe the necessary restrictions,” but he does not, either in food or drink; “his long habits of self-indulgence are greatly against him,” especially after a slight return of health lulls him into false

security (368). Helen is unable to restrain his self-indulgence, and can only lament: “It is deplorable to see how completely his past life has degenerated his once noble constitution, and vitiated the whole system of his organization” (368).⁸¹ His illness returns in full force after he determines to drink excessively, believing his recovery is slowed by Helen’s restrictions; likewise, after his relapse he blames her still for not reasoning him out of such a course like one should with a “rational creature” (375). But as Helen points out, such reasoning has never had any effect on him, and as the text suggests, he is no longer a rational creature, if he ever was.

Huntingdon is also unsympathetic in his lack of contrition, or of gratitude to the wife who nurses him as carefully as if she still loved him. He believes her kind behavior is merely a self-righteous triumphing over him, and curses and excoriates her in return for it. He even accuses her of having “driven [him] mad with it all” (365). As Helen points out, his own “bad spirit” will not let her alleviate his sufferings or benefit his soul (365).⁸² This is ironically all the more true given Helen’s moments of sympathy for him, and those of the reformed Hattersley (the only one of his former set to visit him), who shows “considerable sympathy,” with “more good feeling” than Helen had given him credit for [376].) In contrast, Huntingdon thinks it a “heartless” idea of Hattersley’s that Helen should have even the briefest reprieve from nursing him. Hattersley pleads that “she’s worn to a shadow already” (377). The “poor invalid” Huntingdon simply replies, “What are her sufferings to mine?” (377).⁸³ His selfish inability to feel any sympathy for Helen’s sufferings reinforces the sense that his vices are irredeemable and that he is unworthy of sympathy.

In reading this story and particularly this scene in Helen's diary and letters, and thus of necessity abandoning his stance as privileged male to enter into her subjective experience, Gilbert is trained in proper sympathy, which does not mean simply expansion of his sympathies. He feels what the text suggests is the appropriate level of compassion for each of the sufferers at the final deathbed scene: he experiences "a painful commiseration" for Huntingdon, while remaining "fully aware that he had brought every particle of his sufferings upon himself, and too well deserved them all," and a "profound sympathy for [Helen's] afflictions, and deep anxiety for the consequences to her health of those harassing cares" she has experienced (382). Here Gilbert stands in for the text's ideal reader, trained likewise to understand the situation fully and to see Huntingdon as meriting only begrudging "commiseration" while granting Helen "profound sympathy."

Significantly, Gilbert's reading of Helen's diaries and his new, more accurate views of those around him do not lead him to greater sympathy for everyone; indeed, they lead to a newly vituperative attitude and "antipathy toward the formerly bewitching" Eliza Millward, whom he now sees as a "little demon" (356), and her friend Jane Wilson, whose hopes of marriage with Lawrence he destroys, and whose subsequent fate as a despised "old maid" he seems to relish (372).⁸⁴ However, these are not characters for whom the text itself encourages sympathy.⁸⁵ Indeed, the textual insistence on poetic justice is remorseless: Grimsby dies in a drunken brawl, and Gilbert hears that the faithless Annabella, having long since abandoned her husband, dies in "penury, neglect, and utter wretchedness," though he adds that this may be "only a report" (388).⁸⁶ On the other hand, Helen's diary does radically change Gilbert's view of Mary Millward, "that

steady, sensible girl” whose “sterling worth” Helen had always recognized despite her “plain outside” (371).

Thus, if, as Anne pronounced in the preface to the novel’s second edition, “the truth always conveys its own moral to those willing to receive it” (3), Gilbert seems to have taken away the moral towards which the novel points the reader: that the true marker of humanity lies in one’s ability to value lives and apportion sympathies in accordance with a moral, rather than a socioeconomic or power-based, hierarchy.

Anne Brontë herself lived out these values until the day she died. This is poignantly evident in an anecdote from the final days before her death from tuberculosis. She was vacationing in Scarborough with her sister Charlotte and their friend Ellen Nussey in a last desperate attempt to restore her health. One day:

In the afternoon, she [Anne] drove herself in a donkey cart on the beach for an hour. She had taken over the reins herself, fearing that the boy would force the donkey to go faster than she or it wished. Anne had always been fond of animals and could not bear to see them ill-treated. When Ellen joined her she was just giving the boy a lecture on treating the animal well. (Barker 699)⁸⁷

Here in her final days Anne embodied, in her role as invalid and in her compassion for a fellow sufferer, both a fully humane subject and a worthy object of sympathy by her own standards. Likewise, in her lecture to the boy, she remained the preceptor of those carefully discriminating sympathetic values she had espoused in her novels.

¹ Cited in Hilary Newman 237.

² See Elizabeth Langland *Anne* 32-41 on the strong influence of eighteenth-century writers on Anne. She notes that Anne's "yoking of a strong moral end with an absolute fidelity to representing reality as she saw it" not only distinguishes her from her sisters, but "links her with the eighteenth century in its insistence that art should both instruct and entertain" (37).

³ Maggie Berg notes that in their diary papers Emily and Anne refuse to "distinguish between human and nonhuman members of their family," and that the "whereabouts and welfare" of their animals "are given as much space and detail" as anyone else's (195, note 10). This leveling of the hierarchical relation between human and animal is crucial in Anne's novels, and, more radically, in Emily's *Wuthering Heights*, which I discuss in the next chapter.

⁴ See Enid Duthie 17-44 on the influence of the Romantics, and their sympathy for and affinity with animals, on the Brontës. Duthie notes that Coleridge, while fascinated by the supernatural, was also "dedicated to truth to nature," and that while "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner" is supernatural, it espouses the "essential unity of creation," the violation of which must be atoned for by "spiritual suffering" (44). Rod Preece notes both Anne Brontë and Samuel Taylor Coleridge as Christians who "were adamant in their belief that the Bible required consideration for the interests of animals" (400); see also 405.

⁵ See Berg 183 and Marjorie Garber 233-234. See also Ivan Kreilkamp 87-93; he places the Brontës' novels in the context of the nascent animal rights movement, and nineteenth-century concerns with "the definition of the 'human' as an ethical, rather than biological, category" (90). He similarly suggests that "for the Brontë sisters, narrative and fiction itself raised the same questions of sympathy, antipathy, cruelty and scapegoating—and of the bounds of 'the human' as defined by and against the animal—that RSPCA narratives of animal cruelty posed" (94). He observes that Anne's *Agnes Grey* in particular "raises a set of questions about the ethical and representational limits and requirements of sympathy with animals, cruelty or violence to animals, and the depiction of such violence" (88).

⁶ See Langland *Anne* 111: "In linking women with the 'lower creatures,' Anne Brontë also suggests... that a woman may take the measure of the man from his treatment of animals."

⁷ See Kreilkamp "Petted" 92-94; he notes that "[t]o be a literate middle-class Englishperson by mid-century was to develop one's sensibility and sympathy through the vicarious experience of reading narratives of animal suffering... The shock and moral outrage raised by such narratives... became, I would even suggest, associated with the moral purposes of reading itself... These are effective and affective narratives indeed, triggering forms of powerfully mimetic sympathy" (92-93). See also Harriet Ritvo 131 and James Turner 75. See Garber 67-69 and 231-232 on the importance of *Black Beauty* to the Victorian humane movement.

⁸ See Josephine McDonagh xii; as she notes, the average life expectancy in Haworth was only 26, and Patrick Brontë advocated for sanitation and health reform (xii). See also Juliet Barker 110, 514-515, and 610-611; Duthie 13; and W.H. Helm 157. For the role of illness in the lives of the Brontës, see Helm, though some of his conclusions have been disproved by more recent studies like Barker's. He observes that "Anne was the delicate one of the family because of a tendency to asthma at an early age" (158). Langland also notes that "Anne, from childhood on, was the most obviously delicate of the Brontë children" (*Anne* 4); Charlotte Brontë herself observed that Anne from "early childhood... seemed preparing for an early death" (Langland *Anne* 4).

⁹ See Helm 163 and McDonagh xx-xxi.

¹⁰ Sally Shuttleworth uses this phrase exclusively to refer to treatment of animals, but I think it applies equally well in the novel to treatment of marginalized groups in general. See also Newman, who claims that the "ability to feel another creature's pain becomes a moral positive in *Agnes Grey*, because only the good are able to do so... Anne Brontë uses her characters' treatment of animals to indicate their moral stature" (237), and "animals both as concrete entities and in the imagery are used to convey the moral strength and failings of those Agnes meets" (241). Likewise, McDonagh observes that: "Cruelty to animals is a frequent marker of moral bankruptcy in Anne Brontë's work," (431), and Berg claims that "the whole moral scheme of [*Agnes Grey*] seem[s] to revolve around how animals are treated" (177). Berg links this concern about the treatment of animals with what she sees as the novel's feminist politics, as she argues that the novel examines how both women and animals in the Victorian era were often "dismissed from serious moral consideration" (178). Berg also notes that in all three Brontë sisters' novels, dogs are the familiars of women and "men's abuse of animals betrays their misogyny" (187). See also Duthie 95. Langland suggests that Anne's use of kindness to the marginalized, particularly animals, as a test of male character influenced

Charlotte Brontë's *Shirley* (Anne 111-112). See also Rebecca Fraser 85 on the Brontës' love for animals, sensitivity to their treatment, and evaluation of others by their behavior to animals.

¹¹ For my choice to use the term "alcoholism," see my discussion of *Tenant* on 22-23.

¹² Barker describes a similar scene which actually occurred, in which the desperate Anne, as a governess for the Inghams of Blake Hall, tied her pupils to a table leg (360). (See also note viii.) Shuttleworth notes that in this first-person narrative "no space is opened up by the author for us to stand in judgment over the narrator; we are, rather, swept up in the feelings expressed, expected... to feel indignant at the ways in which Agnes is treated by her child charges" ("Introduction" xiii; see also xviii).

¹³ See also Bending 193 on G.H. Lewes' hierarchy of "higher animals" that are capable of suffering and "lower animals" that are not.

¹⁴ Berg goes on to argue that the term "animal" was "a category employed by those at the top of the ladder to justify the exploitation of those on the bottom," that *Agnes Grey* demonstrates the link between speciesism, classism, and sexism (178), and that Brontë "espouses an egalitarian morality which would extend to animals" (193). She adds, "*Agnes Grey* employs the representation of animals to challenge and denaturalize the 'natural' hierarchy" (178). I would agree but also argue that the moral order with which the novel seeks to replace the old hierarchy is itself exclusive and hierarchical. Thus, while Berg argues (quoting from Carol Adams' claim about the Romantic vegetarians in *The Sexual Politics of Meat*) that Agnes "attempts to 'expand the human-centered moral circle that excluded animals from serious consideration'" (Berg 188), I see Agnes as also narrowing that circle in other areas to shut out certain people from fully human status.

¹⁵ See Shuttleworth "Introduction" xv, Newman 237-238 and Duthie 92. In contrast, see Berg 178-179 for a more negative view of Agnes's role as "pet."

¹⁶ Agnes's experience as a governess to the Bloomfields is probably based in part on Anne Brontë's experience as a governess to the Inghams of Blake Hall, just as Agnes's experience with the Murrays is probably based in part on Anne's with the Robinsons at Thorp Green; see Shuttleworth's notes in *Agnes Grey* 181 and 185, Langland *Anne* 14 and 97, and Barker 360. Barker calls the Bloomfield children "monstrous," and Charlotte Brontë described the young Inghams as "little monkies" in a letter (Barker 360).

¹⁷ See also Kathryn Miele 7-18, Newman 238, and Berg 180-181 on this scene.

¹⁸ Miele also places the novel in a wider context, arguing that "*Agnes Grey* illustrates Anne Brontë's perception of the development of reform sentiment among the Victorian population during a time when moral obligation toward the vulnerable was being radically reconsidered" (10). See also Kreilkamp "Petted" 87-97.

¹⁹ Miele notes that this moral impairment applies to Matilda Murray as well, "though not to such a terrible extent" (12). See also Berg 187, Kreilkamp "Petted" 87-88, and Newman 238-239 on this scene. Newman notes that "The real problem with [Tom] and his parents is that they entirely lack the ability to imagine the pain which other sentient creatures can feel" (238-239). Similarly, in Anna Sewell's *Black Beauty*, a horse says, "Boys, you see, think a horse or pony is like a steam engine or threshing machine... They never think that a pony can get tired, or have any feelings" (47-48). There are numerous references in Sewell's text to the inability of most men and boys to recognize the sentience of animals.

²⁰ As Shuttleworth notes, the Bloomfield children appear to Agnes "more like animals than the civilized, manageable human beings she had expected"; she suggests that in this view Agnes (and Brontë) was slightly ahead of her time, as it was only after Darwin's *Origin of Species* was published that many parents and psychologists in the nineteenth century "seized on the idea that the child was closer to the animal than to the human kingdom, in order to explain childhood difference" ("Introduction" xii).

²¹ See especially Miele 18-19 and Berg for such projects. Similarly, Beth Torgerson views Brontë's restructuring of moral hierarchies as much more universally inclusive and equalizing than I do, arguing that "Anne Brontë's heroines question all hierarchies of power, ideally placing everyone on an equal level: men, women, children, and animals" (133).

²² Elaine Showalter notes that Victorian doctors believed moral insanity could begin in adolescence (56). There were also a wide number of accounts circulating at this point of the century about the large number of governesses in lunatic asylums (Shuttleworth "Introduction" x), which gives context to Agnes's fears that she will be somehow contaminated by her pupils. I discuss Victorian conceptions of moral insanity in more detail in my Introduction and my chapter on Charlotte Brontë.

²³ See Shuttleworth "Introduction" xv-xvi; she notes that this idea "was taken up in educational texts for children during the late eighteenth century, and formed part of the general advice literature of the early

Victorian period” (xvi). She also points out that “In both medical and popular culture, cruelty to animals had become a disturbing sign, yet it was also treated as an index of the very qualities needed to establish the masculinity of the upper-class male” (xv). See James Crichton-Browne 341 and Havelock Ellis “The Child as Criminal” 350-351 for Victorian perspectives on childhood moral insanity; Ellis even sees criminality of “a form to which the term ‘moral insanity’ may very fairly be ascribed’ as natural to children, with cruelty to animals as a strong component (350-351). See also Turner 8-14, Ritvo 131 and Lisa Surridge “Dogs” 6 on “the cultural belief, already well-established in Brontë’s time and confirmed by modern behavioral research, that cruelty to animals escalates into cruelty to other people” (Surridge “Dogs” 6). For a close parallel with Brontë’s ideas about cruelty, see Sewell’s *Black Beauty* 63-64; Sewell, like Brontë, sought to present cruelty as “unmanly” rather than the reverse (54).

²⁴ See Miele 12-15 on this scene, on Mrs. Bloomfield’s “hierarchy of consideration” (12), and on Agnes’s mercy killing of the birds (15). See also Duthie 93-94:

Undoubtedly...Mrs. Bloomfield included governesses as well as animals in her category of ‘inferior creatures’... But what rouses Agnes to unwonted protest is not self-defense but her employer’s callous attitude to the birds who are nature’s children... Love of animals is obviously one of the criteria by which Agnes judges character, and it is evident that she does not accept... the doctrine that they were created uniquely for man’s convenience. (94)

Newman points out that “Anne Brontë had the capacity for vicarious suffering, a quality she also endowed her eponymous heroine with. The Bloomfields’ way of treating animals is also an implicit comment on her inability to feel Agnes’ helpless and friendless state in their home... as though Agnes is too lowly to be considered as a human being and is simply an animal there for their convenience” (238). For an argument strikingly similar to Agnes’s in her conversation with Mrs. Bloomfield, see Sewell’s *Black Beauty* 233.

²⁵ In contrast, as Torgerson notes, in Anne Brontë’s novels excessive drinking isn’t portrayed as a sign of manliness, but as a “sign of unhealth that needs to be moderated, as a sin that needs to be reformed” (34).

²⁶ Berg notes that “The connection between the behaviors is explicit: both are means of enforcing supremacy,” and suggests that in both of her novels Brontë develops the link between male violence and alcohol abuse (186). Langland also notes that in both of Anne Brontë’s novels, “she links... male drinking, masculinity, and male tyranny” (*Anne* 111). Torgerson notes that in this novel there are four types of abuse based on hierarchies of class, gender, age, and species, and that Brontë uses alcoholism to bring them together (23). Kreilkamp notes that an essay Emily Brontë wrote in Belgium raises issues similar to those in *Agnes Grey* about parents condoning or encouraging children’s cruelty to animals and setting up a false distinction between human and inhuman (96-97).

²⁷ See also Berg 186-188 on “The Uncle,” and Newman 238-239; see also note xxiii above.

²⁸ See also Berg 180 and 183-186; she argues that Brontë draws on and extends a tradition of “Romantic vegetarianism” (180) to create a “feminist vegetarian text—a text that connects meat-eating to male domination” (183). (She acknowledges that Brontë herself may not have been vegetarian [194].) She notes that in *Agnes Grey* “the practices of animal hunting and the lavish consumption of meat and alcohol form the backdrop... for the bullying of people and cruelty to animals” (180), a statement that is at least equally applicable to *The Tenant*. For the much-debated question of whether the Brontë sisters abstained from meat, see also Helm 160 and 165, Barker 122-123, Fraser 67, and Kreilkamp “Petted” 95-96. Barker definitively disproves the myth that the Patrick Brontë did not allow his children to eat meat; nevertheless, many of Kreilkamp’s points about the Brontës being at odds with the “carnivorous virility” of their society, defined “in part by its investment in cruelty to animals” (Kreilkamp “Petted” 95), resonate with the moral schemas of the Brontës’ novels.

²⁹ See also Berg 185; she suggests that this scene implies domestic violence in the Bloomfield family.

³⁰ Wood suggests that Mr. Grey’s guilt comes from internalizing the social belief that those with sufficient manly willpower could resist any impulse to depression (76-77). See also physician F.C. Skey’s comments on his 1867 lectures on hysteria, which suggest contempt for those who will not make the “effort to be well,” who are “the slave, rather than the master, of [their] animal nature,” and who lack the “mental resolution which is sufficiently powerful to... throw off the sensations of lassitude” through “vigorous muscular exertion” (244), and clergyman John Barlow’s 1843 assertion that sanity itself depends on self-control (243-246); see also Henry Maudsley “Manufacture” 279-280 and 297-300, and William Carpenter; all in *Embodied Selves*, ed. Jenny Bourne Taylor and Sally Shuttleworth.

³¹ See also Langland *Anne* 113 and Berg 179.

³² Torgerson notes of the illnesses in *Agnes Grey* that “we see the drinking habits of three male characters, Mr. Grey’s depression, Nancy Brown’s eye inflammation, Mark Wood’s consumption, and Agnes’s own minor experiences of illness. Comparing this novel with the extensive treatment of alcoholism in *The Tenant*, however, we can appreciate why Anne Brontë chose alcoholism as ‘the one illness best suited for a depiction of Victorian societal ills’” (20).

³³ Berg, who sees the novel as espousing an expansion of the moral circle, finds this passage “troubling” (193), a “remarkable blind spot in a text which otherwise attempts to move down the dividing line between bodies that matter and those that don’t. My only observation—which does not constitute justification—is that it is the upper-middle class who are deemed less than human; Agnes inverts the racial hierarchy and applies it across class lines” (194). She does not explore further the significance of this reversal of traditional hierarchies and the dehumanizing of the wealthy.

³⁴ See also Berg 189-190.

³⁵ Matilda asks, “Wasn’t it a noble chase?” to which Weston responds coolly, with “quiet sarcasm”: “Very! for a young lady after a leveret” (136), suggesting that he regards her activity with the same contempt Agnes does. See also Duthie 96, Newman 240-241, and Berg 190.

³⁶ See Shuttleworth “Introduction” xvii.

³⁷ See Shuttleworth “Introduction” xxiv.

³⁸ See also Miele 10-12.

³⁹ Ironically, Rosalie in her inability to recognize his humanity describes him as “*such* a beast,” an “insensate... blockhead” (70) and “vulgar brute” (87).

⁴⁰ Notably, Anne herself was afflicted at some points in her life with the same religious melancholy; see Fraser 387, and note lxxxiii below.

⁴¹ On the characteristics which were attributed to consumptives in nineteenth century England, see especially Byrne, *Tuberculosis and the Victorian Literary Imagination*.

⁴² See also Duthie 95-96 and Berg 189 on Weston. See also Newman 239-240 and Langland *Anne* 111 on the contrasts between Weston’s and Hatfield’s treatment of animals. A similar contrast occurs in Charlotte Brontë’s *Shirley* in how the curate Malone and Robert Moore treat Caroline Helstone’s cat (*Shirley* 174).

⁴³ These illnesses were regarded by Victorians as evidences of un-Christian hopelessness on the one hand and weak will on the other; see McDonagh xxi-xxii note 29. As the second half of this chapter will demonstrate, however, Brontë’s second novel suggests an understanding of “intemperance” as a disease as well as a vice.

⁴⁴ Shuttleworth points out that “Agnes is rescued from a fatal decline, not by Mr. Weston, but by her own self-will, aided by her religious faith, and strong sense of her duty in life” (“Introduction” xxiv). See also Langland *Anne* 108-109 for a similar viewpoint; she sees the marriage at the end as simply “a coda to Agnes’s journey to autonomy” (109). Nevertheless, while they are separated Agnes suggests her lingering melancholy at being in a world without Weston through a scene that again suggests her affinity with animals. She describes feeling sympathy for some rooks she sees as twilight falls: “in sympathy for the busy citizens of the rookery, I regretted to see their habitation, so lately bathed in glorious sunlight, reduced to the somber, worky-day hue of the lower world, or of my own world within” (158).

⁴⁵ See Berg 190-193; she discusses Snap’s role as Agnes’s “alter-ego” (191), including their identification across class lines: “The pure breeding of pets took off at the same time that the hierarchy of human beings was celebrated; terriers, like governesses, were near the bottom,” in contrast to Rosalie and her French poodle (191). She also discusses the sinister aspects of this association between Agnes and Snap, and of Agnes’s return to the status of a pet with a “master.” See also Shuttleworth “Introduction” xviii, Newman 240 and Langland *Anne* 111.

⁴⁶ *Spectator*, 8 July 1848, p. 663; cited in Brontë *Tenant* 419. See also Fraser 309-312 on initial reviews of the novel; one review deplored the novel’s intimate depiction of a “civilized brute’s corrupted nature” (Fraser 311).

⁴⁷ Langland reads *The Tenant* as “a response to *Wuthering Heights*” and a critique of or moral corrective to it (*Anne* 49-50). She similarly points out the parallels and divergences between *The Tenant* and *Jane Eyre* (51-54).

⁴⁸ I am especially indebted to Beth Torgerson (esp. pp.19-37) for my discussion of Anne Brontë’s use of alcoholism. Torgerson notes that of the three sisters Anne was “the most straightforward in using literature as social critique, so her use of illness for these purposes is more overt” (15), and that Anne’s novels use illness caused by intemperance [alcoholism] to critique gender and class hierarchies of power (15). She adds that “Anne Brontë readily adopts representations of illness as her dominant metaphors for social

critiques in her two novels,” and that by the time she wrote the second novel, “she had honed her technique of using illness as a metaphor for cultural disease by focusing on one specific illness, that of ‘alcoholism’” (20). In Anne Brontë’s novels, Torgerson argues, alcoholism functions as “a symbol of social disease” and the “perfect symbol of a patriarchal system, because one can see through it the effects of the system on the perpetrators as well as those they abuse” (23). Torgerson also argues that Anne’s novels “enlarge the scope of the Victorian debate on the ‘drink question’ through their focus on middle- and upper-class drinking” (20-21). See also Duthie 111-112 and especially Paul Marchbanks 60-61; the latter argues that *Tenant* “provided Victorian readers with a rather transparent and unflattering transliteration of Branwell’s difficult behavior” (60). He implicitly faults Anne for her unsympathetic portrayal of an alcoholic, saying that: “Instead of joining contemporary thinkers... in labeling alcoholism a *disease*, or anticipating the aggregate” of factors that go into it, “she casts addiction as a product of bad character” (60). See also Fraser 267, McDonagh xvii-xxii, and Barker 626-628 on Branwell and other influences on Brontë’s representation of alcoholism; see also note xvix below. See also Langland *Anne* 17-18 and 21; she suggests that Anne may initially have hoped to save her brother from himself, as Helen hopes she can save Huntingdon, and that the novel may reflect her ultimate realization of the futility of such an effort (17-18).

⁴⁹ See also Fraser 288. Charlotte Brontë, in the preface to the 1850 edition of *Wuthering Heights* and *Agnes Grey*, asserted that the contemplation of Branwell’s degeneration led to Anne’s (in her view) misguided attempt to represent such degeneration faithfully in *The Tenant*, and that this was ultimately detrimental to Anne’s own health. Indeed, Charlotte blamed the novel for hastening Anne’s decline; see Barker 628-629, McDonagh xviii, and Langland *Anne* 46-47 and 152. Charlotte wrote that what Anne saw “sank very deeply into her mind; it did her harm” (Barker 628).

⁵⁰ Torgerson observes that the “link btwn alcoholism and male superiority dominates the social critique” in *The Tenant* (24). McDonagh notes that “[a]spects of *The Tenant* refer to a vivid and varied literature on alcohol, and suggest that in writing the novel, Anne Brontë engaged with a range of contemporary ideas about drink beyond those cases of private and personal concern”; she also points to the “expanding network of temperance societies across Britain” that at this time were responding to the perceived social threat of alcohol, and to the fact that Branwell himself (ironically) served as secretary for a time to the Haworth Temperance Society which his father established in 1834 (xix-xx).

⁵¹ See McDonagh xx.

⁵² See McDonagh xxii; she notes that the temperance movement with its insistence on teetotalism rather than mere moderation grew partly out of the “swelling numbers of drunkards in lunatic asylums” which gave “rise to fears that society was falling into alcoholic mayhem, and that drastic measures were needed to stop this decline” (xxii). In contrast, see Marchbanks 61; he does not recognize Anne’s acknowledgement of the medical component of “intemperance.”

⁵³ Langland notes that Anne’s novels, like Emily’s, show a recognition of the “cruelty to which...power and mastery can lead,” but that Anne “refuses to glorify that cruelty in a figure like Heathcliff. Anne rejects all glorification of male strength” (*Anne* 30). She calls Anne an “innovator in her depiction of masculine weakness” in characters like Gilbert Markham (56), noting that, in contrast to other nineteenth-century literary representations of male tyranny and vanity, Anne Brontë’s portraits of men who abuse patriarchal power “emphasize debility and irrationality” (57). She also notes of *The Tenant* that it “critiques the manly ideal even as it criticizes male indulgence. As in *Agnes Grey*, Brontë recognizes the extent to which manliness is associated with drinking, swearing and carousing, riding, hunting, and killing” (137).

⁵⁴ See also Duthie 107.

⁵⁵ Duthie suggests that the “major role played by hunting and shooting” in *Agnes Grey* is “evidently accepted by Agnes as part of country life, though the account of the death of the leveret shows how uncongenial she personally finds sports that involve the killing of animals. Here, as so often, her role has to be one of stoic acceptance. Anne Bronte probably experienced similar feelings when her brother found one of his pleasures in going out with the guns on Haworth moors” (98).

⁵⁶ Compare this with Branwell Brontë’s words in a letter to his friend J.B. Leyland in 1842, as he was deteriorating from alcoholism: “I have in truth been too much petted through life” (Barker 608). He goes on to mourn the consequences, including loss of youth, health, and “both mental and physical elasticity” (Barker 608). See also Langland *Anne* 130-131 on the novel’s indictment of “the degree to which Victorian society indulges men,” as evinced in Gilbert (131).

⁵⁷ The novel shows such female subservience to be self-defeating, particularly in the case of Milicent Hattersley; Helen, in contrast, exemplifies a woman with moral authority. See McDonagh xxvi and xxviii

and Torgerson 23-24; the latter notes that gender roles which demand female self-sacrifice intensify in alcoholic families and become pathological (23-24).

⁵⁸ See also Langland *Anne* 131 and 133; she notes that “The same process [of indulgence] that has made Gilbert a fop has produced a dissolute reprobate in Huntingdon” (131), and that both men demonstrate a lack of self-restraint (133). She also observes, “Modern readers have been dissatisfied with Helen’s marriage to Markham precisely because he seems different only in degree and not in kind from Huntingdon”; she attributes this to Brontë’s realism, which would not let her represent an ideal hero immune to society’s corrupting indulgence on men (133-134). In contrast, Barker sees the Markhams’ “cheerful and normal family” as a “complete contrast” with the sordid world Helen is compelled to inhabit in her marriage (629).

⁵⁹ See also Langland *Anne* 130.

⁶⁰ Mary’s father, the Reverend Millward, like her sister Eliza, stands in stark contrast to Mary’s sensitivity. His relation to animals is suggested through the description of his “by no means abstemious” diet, which (along with liquors) consists largely of “ham, hung beef, and other strong meats” (18). Brontë immediately links this alarming carnivorousness with insensitivity to invalids; he has a “laudable concern for his own bodily health,” and his diet “agreed well enough with his digestive organs, and therefore were maintained by him to be good and wholesome for everybody, and confidently recommended to the most delicate convalescents or dyspeptics” (18).

⁶¹ Langland notes that “Gilbert Markham is given to bouts of violence that are revealed to be as irrational as they are dangerous” (*Anne* 57).

⁶² See also Langland *Anne* 57-133; she also notes that in this scene Gilbert is “made to appear a madman” (57).

⁶³ See also McDonagh xxiii.

⁶⁴ Duthie notes of Gilbert’s violence in this scene that “[i]n the climate of *Wuthering Heights* this incident might not have appeared strange; in a milieu where domesticity is preferred to wildness it strikes a discordant note” (107). Rather than being “discordant,” I see this incident as linking Gilbert to the other men in the novel, whose violence is not tempered by domestic settings. This book is in fact not much less violent than *Wuthering Heights*.

⁶⁵ McDonagh observes that the French physician Jean Esquirol’s “theories of monomania were important in the development of ideas about alcoholism later in the century, that is the notion that habitual drunkenness is a compulsion and disorder of the mind” (Brontë *Tenant* 438; see also McDonagh xxii note 164). Hence, Gilbert’s behavior here links him again to the novel’s alcoholics. It also links him to Heathcliff in *Wuthering Heights*; see the next chapter note 63 for a more detailed definition of monomania.

⁶⁶ In contrast to their drunken indulgence, McDonagh suggests that the novel proposes an ethics of physical fitness and regulation or training of the body (xxii-xxiv), as well as “the need to train embodied feeling” (xxv). Torgerson suggests that these men deviate from the Victorian ideal of moderation, and that Brontë “equates excessive masculinity with male drunkenness” (34).

⁶⁷ A character in *Black Beauty* makes a similar argument about ignorance (Sewell 92).

⁶⁸ Duthie suggests that Helen’s painting of a pair of turtle doves shows Anne’s preference for doves as archetypal symbol; they also suggest Helen’s idealistic view of love (108-109). She notes that Anne uses dove symbolism in several of her poems, for example displaying both her “tenderness for the animal creation, as well as her own longing for a less restricted existence” in depicting an imprisoned bird in “The Captive Dove” (82). In another poem Anne seems to relate to the affectionateness and vulnerability of doves, and in the same poem depicts a child’s “overwhelming grief over the death of a bird” (Duthie 86): “How, if the sparrow’s death can wring/ Such bitter tear floods from the eye,/ Will it behold the suffering/ Of struggling, lost humanity?” (87). See also Newman 237, who cites these poems to suggest Brontë’s vicarious empathetic identification with the birds; see also Langland *Anne* 16 and 65-66, and Barker 511.

⁶⁹ McDonagh notes that “Lowborough’s condition, as described by Huntingdon, reads like a case history from medical writings of the time,” which detailed “the mania associated with drink”; she also suggests that Brontë’s novel may have spread knowledge about drunkenness’s medical symptoms (Brontë *Tenant* 429; see also McDonagh xxii). See also Torgerson 31; she argues that “Since the descriptions of both Lowborough’s and Hattersley’s ‘reformation’ (as well as the lack of reformation on Arthur’s part) indicate that recovery from alcoholism is simply a question of willpower, Brontë should be understood as still working under the more traditional view of drunkenness as being a moral crime, with its attendant idea of willpower being necessary to stop drinking” (31). I would argue that Brontë’s astute depictions of the

physical and psychological effects of alcohol dependence, and the rhetoric of disease and contamination that she uses to discuss alcoholism, show that she had some conception of it as a disease.

⁷⁰ Lowborough at last finds a woman he believes can “save him from destruction,” Annabella Wilmot (169). But in fact she despises him, as she frankly tells Huntingdon (167). Her mixture of inhumanity in the sense of animality and inhumanity in the sense of cruelty is evident the first time Helen sees her, and recognizes that physically she is indeed a “magnificent creature” (169)—as Lowborough had described her (167)—but also notices her “hand flirting her gold-mounted whip” (169).

⁷¹ See also Langland *Anne* 142-143.

⁷² Hattersley also calls Helen a “vixen” because she has “a will of her own” (187).

⁷³ Surridge places this novel in the context of other Victorian novels in which “marital violence is deflected from the body of the woman onto the body of a domestic animal—often a dog. In such cases, violence between husband and wife is not represented directly. Instead, the beating or wounding of an animal by the husband indirectly suggests the presence of abuse in the marriage” (“Dogs” 4). She also argues that such techniques link physical abuse to wives’ powerlessness and pet-like legal status (27). See pp. 5-6 for her discussion of this scene; she notes that the metonymic link between wife and pet is strengthened by the fact that Dash’s breed, the spaniel, is “traditionally associated with the ‘feminine’ qualities of gentleness, submission, subservience—and with a willingness to be beaten” (6). She also suggests that “by deflecting violence from the woman onto the dog, this narrative technique becomes complicit in the impulse to conceal or deny the existence of wife assault” (16). See also Maureen Adams on the connection between animal abuse and domestic violence in *Wuthering Heights*, and her similar points about the spaniel breed’s association with the abused woman (Heathcliff tries to hang Isabella’s spaniel Fanny). Notably, Anne’s own dog Flossy was a spaniel, in contrast to Emily’s large, powerful dog Keeper (Barker 698; see also Fraser 328.) Maureen Adams suggests that Flossy was the inspiration for Fanny (6). See also Garber 165-166 and 168-171 on moralizing classifications of dogs in the Victorian era.

⁷⁴ See Surridge “Dogs” 16-17 on this scene; she argues that Brontë’s “deflection of marital violence” (between the Huntingdons) first onto a dog (see note lxxvi) and then onto a secondary character may represent her attempt to “defuse or decentralize scenes of violence” in response to critical pressure (17). See also Torgerson 25.

⁷⁵ See Langland *Anne* 144. Huntingdon later resents Helen’s attention to little Arthur when the child is sick (Brontë *TWF* 220).

⁷⁶ See also Torgerson 26.

⁷⁷ The Victorians considered gout a rich man’s disease, associated with luxurious excess and self-indulgence in eating and drinking. See also Torgerson 26.

⁷⁸ See also McDonagh xxi-xxii; she notes that the novel “maintains a balance between heredity tendency and bad influence in accounting for the risks to the child” (xxi). See also Torgerson 27.

⁷⁹ Here my argument diverges from Marchbanks’; he argues that Helen’s return to nurse her husband shows that “[t]he didactic novel also preaches... that one should temper moral outrage with compassion, and balance the instinct for self-preservation with a willingness to serve” (61).

⁸⁰ He describes his own inability to repent: “I cannot repent, only fear” (380). Nevertheless, Helen’s comments on these scenes (like those to her aunt on 150) express Anne’s own Universalist belief that every soul will eventually be saved. This belief brought Anne out of an illness connected to a crisis of faith she experienced, possibly triggered by an exposure to stern Calvinistic doctrines at Roe Head School (see Barker 326-327 and McDonagh xii). See also Berg 193, Langland *Anne* 12-13, Fraser 46-48 and 113, and Helm 161. For the novel’s evocation of eighteenth century texts (including Richardson’s novels), see McDonagh xxxi-xxxii.

⁸¹ See also Langland *Anne* 133.

⁸² See Langland *Anne* 145-146 for a reading of this scene which suggests greater complicity and culpability in Helen than I think the text allows for. Torgerson, on the other hand, suggests that while Huntingdon does not grow from his experience of illness, Helen does (35).

⁸³ Soon before his death, Helen does indeed faint from exhaustion (381), and after his death she is exhausted and depressed; Gilbert notes that Huntingdon “dragged her with him nearly to the portal of the grave” (384). Nevertheless, Helen plays nurse again to her uncle, another alcoholic and “worthless old fellow” (as Gilbert calls him [386]), who dies soon after Huntingdon. See also Torgerson 35-36.

⁸⁴ At one point he grabs her arm with what he calls “a pretty severe squeeze” that makes her give “a cry of pain or terror” (392)—an action uncomfortably reminiscent of his earlier displays of violence.

⁸⁵ More troubling, perhaps, is the undeniable insensitivity he shows to anyone who crosses his path when he goes on his frenzied final pursuit of Helen, including some impoverished people he dismisses as “clodhoppers”; he raises them from their slumbers though he acknowledges they have little food or fire to make waking early worthwhile, saying “I had no time to think of them” (395). He sounds suspiciously like Huntingdon here. Perhaps the suggestion is that men, especially those born into privilege, can never fully be free from selfishness.

⁸⁶ Hattersley fares better than his friends, as he repents and changes his ways; his reformation is indicated not only by his giving up drink, but by the fact that his relationship with animals (as with his wife and family) is now largely positive and life-affirming: he becomes a successful horse-breeder, who only hunts and shoots “a little” (390). That “little” bit of hunting, however, suggests his character is not wholly changed.

⁸⁷ For a detailed and moving description of Anne’s stoical endurance of illness and her final days, see Barker 685-704. See also Fraser 317-325, Langland *Anne* 22-23, and Helm 162.

Chapter II Emily Brontë's Sinister Menagerie

“Her imagination was sometimes superhuman—always inhuman.
Wuthering Heights might have been written by an eagle.” – G.K. Chesterton, on Emily Brontë¹

“Emily... played like a young child with the tadpoles in the water, making them swim about, and then fell to moralizing on the strong and the weak, the brave and the cowardly, as she chased them with her hand.”
– Ellen Nussey²

In a crucial scene at the heart of Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights*, in which Cathy and Heathcliff have a heated dispute, Heathcliff's eyes fix on Cathy's sister-in-law, the foolishly doting Isabella. He stares hard at her, “as one might do at a strange repulsive animal, a centipede from the Indies, for instance, which curiosity leads one to examine in spite of the aversion it raises” (83). This description of Heathcliff's look captures the dynamic between the text itself and many of its readers, who feel repelled and yet curious, even fascinated, by the figures and scenes on display. That mixture of repulsion and compulsion—one wishes not to look, but cannot look away—is clearly very different from the type of engagement we might expect of a Victorian novel if we associate that genre with a sympathetic project. If Anne Brontë's novels, as discussed in the previous chapter, complicate the idea of the Victorian novel as a vehicle for sympathy, *Wuthering Heights* challenges that conception more profoundly. It avoids the devices that have traditionally been seen as functioning in novels to invoke sympathy, even basic character identification. Indeed, *Wuthering Heights* seems to alienate readers from identifying with or feeling for its characters, and the characters themselves seem to defy our efforts to sympathize with them. *Wuthering Heights* is an *antipathetic* novel in this sense: Brontë refuses to awaken the capacity for sympathetic identification in her readers.

The novel's readers intuited this from the first; early reviewers tended to describe the characters in terms of animality, deformity, pathology, and general inhumanity. A

reviewer for the *Atlas* in January 1848 complained: “There is not in the entire dramatis personae a single character which is not utterly hateful or thoroughly contemptible” (*Atlas* in *WH* 283); he suggests that through the love of Heathcliff and Cathy Brontë seeks to give “that touch of nature which makes the whole world kin,” but that “it fails of the intended effect” (284) due to Heathcliff’s selfishness (286). The reviews in *Douglas Jerrold’s Weekly Newspaper* and the *Examiner*, that same month, wondered what the moral of the story was (*Douglas Jerrold’s* 285, *Examiner* 286), with the former also asserting that “the reader is shocked, almost sickened by the details of cruelty, inhumanity, and the most diabolical hate and vengeance” (285), and the latter claiming that Heathcliff’s ferocious selfishness spoils his love, the “one portion” of Heathcliff’s nature “wherein he appears to approximate to humanity” (286). In October, the *North American Review* was repulsed by the “animal brutalities” on display in this book, and considered the “hero” of the novel, Heathcliff, a “brute-demon” made up of a “compendium” of fierce animals (*North American Review* 300).³

Nevertheless, one untitled review anticipated later criticism of *Wuthering Heights* by seeking to see sympathy and humanity as part of the novel’s project: the novel’s events and characters, this reviewer claims, are presented in a way that “appeals to our sympathies,” and adds (in similar words to the *Atlas* reviewer) that the reader of this novel “will have ample opportunity of sympathizing—if he has one touch of nature which ‘makes the whole world kin’ with... all the emotions and passions which agitate the restless bosom of humanity” (unidentified review cited in *WH* 292). From the first, then, despite the alienation and even repulsion that the novel—with its characters in what

the same reviewer calls their “wild state” (*WH* 288) -- has aroused in many readers, others have sought to fit it back into the mold of the novel as a vehicle for sympathy.

Numerous twentieth and twenty-first century critics have likewise insisted that Brontë is trying to awaken our sympathies for her characters, even Heathcliff. John Hagan, for example, argues that one of Brontë’s great achievements in the novel is to “keep alive the reader’s sympathy for both Catherine [Cathy] and Heathcliff,” however morally distasteful their behavior becomes, suggesting that even when she has strained our sympathies for [Cathy] or Heathcliff to the point of aversion, she always recalls us to compassion (305).⁴ Since his argument is based on a view of Cathy and Heathcliff as “eminently human” (317), and since he opposes “dehumanizing” readings of the novel (317), this is unsurprising.⁵ Similarly, David Sonstroem, while he notes that “*Wuthering Heights* plays a shell game with our sympathies” (59), “frustrates any alliance with [the] reader,” and “checks our sympathy at every turn” (60), still suggests that Heathcliff and Cathy “gain a certain sympathy from the reader because of the incomprehension and exclusion directed against them by the other characters” (53).⁶

The textual evidence, however, suggests that sympathy, including the reader’s, is inapplicable to the amoral world Brontë depicts, a world in which we see that humanity is too complex, too various in its constitutions, aims, interests, and motives, to provide any basis for fellow feeling. As Terry Eagleton observes, social relations in *Wuthering Heights* are themselves “inhuman” (110). More specifically, Brontë manages to convey this impression of the world through her representations of animality and illness. Her use of animals and animal imagery creates the impression that human beings vary as greatly as species, so that the conception of a unitary human nature comes to seem an inaccurate

way of understanding our relationships in and to the world. At the same time, illness functions in the novel either to elevate characters above the plane of the human in which sympathy can function, or to reveal them as weaker species in every sense, unfit to survive. For example, illness turns Cathy and Heathcliff into transcendent beings with motives incomprehensible to anyone but themselves—though decidedly *not* into deathbed saints. On the other hand, the Lintons are feeble in constitution and character, particularly young Linton Heathcliff, a figure of combined animality and illness who is too repellent to evoke sympathy. The Lintons must inevitably die out in a world predicated on what would later be termed the survival of the fittest.⁷

Indeed, Brontë's novel is in many ways proto-Darwinian. Barbara Munson Goff shrewdly comments on Brontë's "reverence for the pitiless economy of nature" (474), and this conception of nature anticipated Darwin's ideas about the natural world as a scene of struggle for survival.⁸ In an essay called "The Butterfly" which Emily wrote for her tutor Monsieur Heger, she argued, "All nature is equally mad . . . Nature is an inexplicable problem; it exists on a principle of destruction. Every creature must be the tireless instrument of death to others, or itself must cease to live" (Brontë 265).⁹ *Wuthering Heights* presents the "human" world as just such a pitiless economy, in which relationships between individual human beings have the intensity and antagonism of struggles between species for survival and dominance. Moreover, her novel has much the same effect as Darwin's writings, in that it destabilizes the idea of a common "human nature" that sets mankind apart from animal nature.¹⁰

Furthermore, in this blurring of the boundaries between human and animal Brontë looks forward not only to Darwin but even further, to the post-human and to

posthumanist philosophy like Jacques Derrida's or Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari's.¹¹ Derrida, for example, deconstructs the "caro-phallogocentrism" that places animals in binary opposition to the human, with the human always privileged.¹² But such radical questioning of human singularity and of the boundaries between the human and the animal is already there in this Victorian novel—is in fact at the heart of the novel.

Indeed, we might even understand this Victorian novel as posthumanist from the perspective of recent critical thought. Just as Derrida seeks to undermine the singularity of "The Animal," arguing against the way the word "animal" is used as a catch-all phrase for every living thing deemed not human, despite the immense differences between species ("The Animal" 31-34, 40-41), Brontë's heterogeneous animal language undermines the singularity of "the Human" as a unitary concept. There is in *Wuthering Heights* such variety within human nature that there is no fundamental common essence to human beings, no "human nature" at all, in which sympathy as traditionally understood can take root.

Brontë was not completely anomalous in that aspect of her vision; the Victorian age was one in which scientists were beginning to question the division between human and animal (Turner 18). But it was also an age deeply concerned with taxonomizing, classifying, and categorizing animals—species distinctions were ever more sharply drawn (Ritvo 12-13). Brontë channels both of these impulses. On the one hand, she creates a world in which even the most fundamental species division—that between the human species and all other species—is undermined.¹³ On the other hand, in *Wuthering Heights* the human species itself breaks down from its status as a unitary category, revealing itself to consist of as many species in need of classification as there are individuals. As Stevie

Davies notes, Brontë “divines different species within humankind itself” (104) or “diagnoses the existence of distinct subspecies within *homo sapiens*” (124). As a result, the characters are all taxonomists in their language, trying to pin each other down and classify each other by species.

The relentlessness of the characters’ use of animal language to describe each other seems to render this attempt to classify excessive and ridiculous, as wildly futile as the dying Cathy’s attempts to arrange the feathers from her pillow “according to their different species” (95). But the impulse to categorize people by species is also fundamental to the novel’s project of destabilizing the human. There is such a variety of species *within* human nature, Brontë suggests, that the very conception of a unitary “human nature,” and the sympathetic identification or “fellow feeling” that conception renders possible, is revealed as illusory.

If the world the text depicts thus resembles a “sinister menagerie” (229), it also resembles a lunatic asylum. Beth Torgerson observes that “of all the Brontë novels... *Wuthering Heights* is the one novel most obsessed with illness” (88),¹⁴ and mental illness is especially important. The characters use the labels of mental illness as they do the labels of animality to create distance from each other, if not with quite the same frequency. Catherine calls Isabella mad for loving Heathcliff (80), while Nelly describes the dying Catherine as a “maniac” (101), and alludes to Hindley’s “mania” for gambling (146). Isabella calls Hindley mad (110), as does Heathcliff, who threatens to put him in an asylum (138). *Wuthering Heights* (like *Jane Eyre*) powerfully presents the interconnection between animality/inhumanity and insanity (as well as supernatural evil) as dehumanizing forces, as when Isabella asks, “Is Mr. Heathcliff a man? If so, is he

mad? And if not, is he a devil?" (106). Nevertheless, while illness, including mental illness, become extremely important when analyzing sympathy in *Wuthering Heights*, particularly when one seeks for models of sympathy in the novel, it is the text's relentless animality that the reader must face first in entering the novel, and so it is to the menagerie, and not the madhouse or hospital, that I turn first.

Animality and Alienation

While many critics have discussed animals and animal imagery in *Wuthering Heights*, none have suggested that the function of the novel's animal discourse is precisely to alienate and frustrate sympathetic identification in its readers. Indeed, Ivan Kreilkamp, in what is perhaps the best article on animals in this novel, "Petted Things: *Wuthering Heights* and the Animal," and Stevie Davies in her excellent chapter on "Emily Brontë and Animals," while raising many of the same concerns raised in this chapter, see the novel as having a sympathetic project. Kreilkamp suggests that the idea of the pet (the domesticated animal) and the genre of the novel were both eighteenth-century inventions that developed in the nineteenth century into "major instance[s] of and vehicle[s] for the culture's high valuation of sympathy" (87). Drawing on the context of the rising power of the RSPCA and anti-vivisection literature at the time of the novel's publication, he also claims that *Wuthering Heights* is "structured by . . . questions of animality, cruelty, and pethood" (97), and that the novel problematizes "human status" (99). But Kreilkamp's conclusion is that this novel illustrates how, in the nineteenth century, "the human and the humane became defined, not only against the animal, as in earlier centuries, but in sympathy with the animal" (92).

Kreilkamp goes on to argue that the novel encourages sympathy for both animal and human through the figure of Heathcliff, who, through the author's and characters' "insistent animalization" of him, "becomes a test case for the humane treatment of animals" (97).¹⁵ For Kreilkamp, the novel's use of animal imagery encourages identification with and sympathy for the characters—at least in the "humane" reader. In contrast, I argue that the novel leaves no room for the reader to insert his or her vicarious sympathy—and that the animalization of all the characters, Heathcliff included, serves instead to frustrate such attempts to sympathize. If Heathcliff is a test case, he is a limit case for the idea of the human itself, but, as I will argue, he is by no means the only character of whom this is true.

While Davies does not see the novel as encouraging human sympathy through character identification in the way Kreilkamp does (indeed, she sees the novel as sometimes declining even to anthropomorphize human beings [113]), she, like Kreilkamp, sees Brontë as attempting to broaden our sympathies to encompass the whole animal realm. *Wuthering Heights*, in her view, suggests that "If animals are our brothers and sisters, ethical sympathies are obliged to broaden beyond the 'brotherhood of man' into a unity with the whole Creation" (111). But in a novel that resolutely discourages us from feeling sympathy even for the human characters by challenging the conception of a "brotherhood of man," why should our sympathy extend further? The language used to animalize the characters does not lift animals to the level of human sympathy, but reveals that humans are not exempt—by sympathetic moral sentiment or anything else—from the violent cycle of life which characterizes all of nature.

In this respect, this novel's project again resembles Derrida's in some ways; what Derrida says of his argument concerning animals and language might equally apply to Brontë's treatment of animals and sympathy. Like Derrida, she is not trying to claim for animals what they might not possess, but suggesting that we have no greater evidence to claim this thing (in Derrida's case language, in her case sympathy) for ourselves as humans (Derrida "And Say" 137-138).¹⁶ But Derrida never makes this application to sympathy, and this points to a significant way in which Brontë diverges as much from posthumanist theorizing about animals as from other Victorian novelists like Hardy. Rather than attempting to move animals *into* the realm of moral sentiment and sympathy, to move them into the "ethical circuit" as Derrida aims to do ("The Animal" 106),¹⁷ Brontë moves human characters *outside* that moral realm into the ahuman and amoral world of animals, largely through the animal language used to describe them.

Since my argument is partly premised on the pervasiveness of such animalizing language in the novel, it is worthwhile to list several instances of it. Most critics who have discussed the use of animal imagery and animalizing language in the novel have focused almost exclusively on Heathcliff.¹⁸ Heathcliff, with his "savage sullenness and ferocity" (51) (or "half-civilized ferocity" [75] once he's gained wealth), is the character most often described by other characters (including Nelly Dean, the narrator) in animal terms, though he is certainly not the only one. He is usually described in canine terms, which makes narrative sense, as dogs are, as Judith Weissman argues, "by far the most important animals in *Wuthering Heights*" (388).¹⁹ As a child, according to Nelly, he has "the expression of a vicious cur that appears to know the kicks it gets are its deserts, and yet hates all the world, as well as the kicker, for what it suffers" (45). Isabella tauntingly

compares him to Cathy's "faithful dog" (137). But dogs are not the only analogues to the Heathcliff species. Various characters describe him more generally as a "brute" (52, 88). Even Cathy describes him to Isabella as a "pitiless, wolfish man," a "bird of bad omen: no mate for you" (81). At Cathy's death, Nelly describes how he "howled, not like a man, but like a savage beast getting goaded to death with knives and spears" (130).

But critics who focus on the animalization of Heathcliff fail to note that no character is fully exempt from such animalization: the human world in this novel is in fact an animal kingdom.²⁰ Heathcliff sees his enemies as worms that he yearns to crush: "I have no pity! I have no pity! The more the worms writhe, the more I yearn to crush out their entrails!" he says (119). He wishes he could subject his son and the younger Catherine to "a slow vivisection" (206), presaging the centrality of vivisection to Victorian discussions of the limits of sympathy.²¹ Nelly sees the relationship between Cathy and Edgar Linton as one between predator and prey species—though, surprisingly, with Edgar as predator: "[H]e possessed the power to depart, as much as a cat possesses the power to leave a mouse half killed, or a bird half eaten" (57).²² Heathcliff taunts Edgar by saying, "Cathy, this lamb of yours threatens like a bull!" (90), and by then telling him, "Your type is not a lamb; it's a sucking leveret" (91). He later insists to Nelly that Edgar is "scarcely a degree dearer to Cathy than her dog or her horse" (117). Nelly describes Hindley as a "stray sheep" for whom the "evil beast" Heathcliff is "waiting his time to spring and destroy" (85).

Similarly, Isabella describes Hindley as "glaring like a hungry wolf" (108), and at another point says of him, "I might as well have struggled with a bear" (136). Isabella calls Cathy a "dog in the manger," to which Cathy responds by calling her a "monkey"

(80). When Isabella shows some spirit, Cathy even calls her a “tigress” and “vixen” with “talons,” while Heathcliff, as I have noted, looks at her as he might a “strange repulsive animal, a centipede from the Indies” (83). Cathy tells him she likes Isabella too much to let him “absolutely seize and devour her up” (84). Later, Heathcliff says he can “hardly regard her [Isabella] in the light of a rational creature” (118) and calls her a “viper” (138).

This animality continues to characterize the second generation. Hindley calls his son Hareton an “unnatural cub,” and threatens to “crop” him, as it “makes a dog fiercer” (58). Nelly fears that Heathcliff will turn Hareton into a “brute” (152), and Heathcliff boasts that Hareton “takes pride in his brutishness,” adding, “I’ve taught him to scorn everything extra-animal as silly and weak” (169). Cathy also taunts Hareton for being like a “brute” (191), or like a “dog” or a “cart-horse” (237). Linton Heathcliff avoids his father “as a spaniel might, which suspected the person attendant on it of designing a spiteful squeeze” (209). Nelly calls him a “monkey” (208) and compares him to a “mouse” (206), and Cathy in anger calls him an “abject reptile” (203). Young Linton himself calls the inhabitants of the Grange “detestable creatures” (181). As for the second Catherine, Nelly generally describes her as a gentle creature-- as a “dove” (146) a “stray lamb” (149), a “bird” (174), and a “mouse” (150)-- or as a genteel one (a “greyhound” [164]), though in another instance she calls her a “cunning little fox” (150), suggesting a different side of the Catherine species as she sees it. Heathcliff calls the girl an “eft” and a “snake” (210), and, in her unhappiness at the Heights, Catherine indeed becomes “venomous” (227). Even Lockwood, seemingly human society’s representative and outsider in this menagerie of a world, describes his tendency to “shrink icily into myself, like a snail” (5).

The comprehensiveness of the novel's animalizing language is thus clear.

Graeme Tytler argues that such rhetoric does not break down species boundaries or put humans and animals on the same plane; he insists that the animalizing metaphors remain metaphors, and that the "vituperative" use of this language often says more about the person using it than the one described ("Animals" 121).²³ While the use of such language does indeed compromise the user (like cruelty to animals, it is a form of violence that renders him or her animal as well), the metaphors are too integral to the novel's discourse, too much a part of the novel's world as constructed by each of its narrators, to remain mere metaphors.²⁴ More specifically, these metaphors create the sense that human society is itself a partially contained but far from harmonious ecosystem of vying species.

However, no character's "species" has only one analogue in the animal kingdom. Thus, while Heathcliff is compared most often to dogs, the novel's characters use the traits of several other species to try to describe the Heathcliff species. There is certainly a great variety of metaphors applied to each character, but this variety need not indicate the inapplicability or inconsistency of those metaphors, as Tytler argues (126). Rather, it suggests that the characters are continually trying to define and redefine the other species/characters in terms of the attributes those species/characters share with other animal species. It may also suggest what Bersani calls the novel's receptivity to humans' potential for "sliding back and forth on the evolutionary scale" (211). In any case, the novel's porous conception of the human further suggests that the characters' relationships to each other rest not on common humanity, but on separations so profound as to be almost literally species divisions. This logic is so totalizing that the reader cannot escape the lens it provides on the world of *Wuthering Heights* and its inhabitants. However

humanistically inclined the reader, he or she will be thwarted in any attempt to share vicariously in the emotions of these characters. Instead, the language of the novel forms the bars of a cage, and the reader is left, as in a zoo, peering through the bars with awed (sometimes appalled) fascination at the behavior of the wild, exotic creatures within.

Lockwood stands in for the reader as we enter this zoo or menagerie, while unwittingly also serving as one of its specimens. He is far from a reliable guide. He reveals his belief in a secure boundary between human and animal in his first interaction with Heathcliff's dogs, when he says: "imagining that they would scarcely understand tacit insults, I unfortunately indulged in winking and making faces at the trio" (6). But they do in fact object to his insults, and attack him. Lockwood then describes the dogs in terms of other animals, comparing them to the herd of possessed swine in the New Testament and to a "brood of tigers" (6); these comparisons destabilize species boundaries, since the viciousness of these dogs seems to Lockwood to surpass what can be expected from their species. As I have noted, this is typical of the discourse of the novel, in which each character is also a species, and is constantly being defined and redefined in terms of the traits he or she shares with other animal species.

Heathcliff further elides the distinction between the human species and animals, identifying himself with his dogs, when he says: "Guests are so exceedingly rare in this house that I and my dogs, I am willing to own, hardly know how to receive them" (7).²⁵ There is a slippage here between the man and his dogs. In keeping with such an elision, Lockwood again evinces the species confusion that is so much a part of the novel when he mistakes a "heap of dead rabbits" for Catherine's pet kittens (8-9).

Both of these scenarios depict not only Lockwood's inability to distinguish and categorize species properly, but also his trouble distinguishing between pet and wild animal. As Ivan Kreilkamp notes, "The sorting of animals into pet and not pet is in fact a fundamental narrative gesture of *Wuthering Heights*" (102).²⁶ Indeed, in a world where all humans are animalized, the distinction between wild and domesticated (pet) species to some extent replaces the distinction between human and animal, though it is not perfectly maintained.²⁷ We see the distinction when Heathcliff tells Lockwood of Juno, "You'd better let the dog alone . . . She's not accustomed to be spoiled—not kept for a pet" (5). (Lockwood, ignoring this advice, is attacked by Juno). In general, pets are associated with the Grange, while wild or working animals are associated with the Heights.²⁸ This distinction is itself slippery, however, especially when it is applied to the human animals. Catherine (a Grange resident), for example, seeks to make a "pet" of Linton Heathcliff, who lives at the Heights (155, 186, 207).

One could argue, however, that the spoiled and cowardly Linton Heathcliff is in temperament a creature of the Grange, while the independent, strong-willed Catherine represents some of the values of the Heights. In relation to Hareton, however, Catherine plays the Grange domesticated creature to his Heights wild animal, and ends by trying to domesticate him too.²⁹ It seems that in the second generation divisions between wild and domesticated human animals are more complicated. But then, the distinction between the two has always been a tenuous one for yet another reason: the "pets" at the Grange when roused are just as savage and vicious as the wild human creatures that inhabit the Heights. Domesticated human animals have the capacity to revert to wildness.

The tenuous distinction between pet and wild animal also subtly indicates the falsity of the apparent opposition between Wuthering Heights and Thrushcross Grange, and between “nature” and “civilization.” The spoiled, petted inhabitants of the Grange, despite their veneer of civility, are no more human or humane than the inhabitants of the Heights.³⁰ The Grange is no refuge from inhumanity.

This is immediately clear when Heathcliff’s and Cathy’s first view of Edgar and Isabella Linton is of the siblings fighting over a pet, a “little dog,” so fiercely that “they had nearly pulled it in two between them” (38).³¹ The inherent animality and brutality of the Grange is equally evident in the bulldog Skulker that Mr. Linton has a servant set loose to attack Cathy and Heathcliff, whom he believes to be intruders (Eagleton 100).³² For Heathcliff, this “devil” of a bulldog that injures Cathy and the “beast” of a servant who sets him loose are equally animals—and so, implicitly, are their masters. He has a point, since those masters themselves do not distinguish animal from human prey: “What prey, Robert?” calls Mr. Linton, thinking his servant and bulldog have caught a thief (39).

The animalities of Grange and Heights, then, are in violent competition, and this is again illustrated when Hareton’s dogs attack the second Catherine’s dogs when she comes to visit Linton Heathcliff (150). In this instance, however, the ultimate reconciliation of Heights and Grange is also foreshadowed through the use of dogs, as Hareton offers Catherine a terrier in apology (152). While she rejects his gift, the very offer hints that the “creatures” bred at the Heights and the Grange will not remain much longer in antagonism.³³ The human animals by the end of the novel will have sheathed their claws.

While the novel ends on a superficially human and humane note with the second generation, however, the scenes of inhumanity and violence are what linger with the reader. As J. Hillis Miller notes, “[n]o other Victorian novel contains such scenes of inhuman brutality” (“Emily Brontë 167); likewise, Davies observes that the novel contains “a welter of violence, both human and animal—or rather human-animal and animal” (109). Literal animals play a large role in these scenes, generally as the victims of violence.³⁴ In this novel, violence, including violence to animals, in turn reveals the perpetrator as inhuman and brutal. In a world where the distinction between human and animal is so fraught, violence to animals can take on a multitude of meanings. But in general, what Kreilkamp says of Heathcliff is true of all the characters: they become “inhuman both in [their] own animality and in [their] cruelty to animals” (105).³⁵ In keeping with Brontë’s proto-Darwinian view of social life, this is a world where cruelty and struggle are inevitable parts of life.³⁶ Cruelty to animals often functions, then, not to stress the power divide between human and animal, but as another means of presenting humans as themselves animal species, with varying degrees of power.

For example, Heathcliff’s kicking Juno to prevent her continuing her attack on Lockwood (5) can be read less as sadistic human cruelty to an animal than the mere practical violence one animal might use to check the undesirable behavior of another in the wild. The Linton children nearly tearing their dog in two in their fighting over it indicates that despite the apparent civility of their life at the Grange, they too are animals—of a breed spoiled, rather than improved, by domestication.³⁷ Lockwood’s hunting—his “devastat[ing] the moors” (232)—shows a selfish disregard for life which is itself animalistic or worse, since its purpose, as rarely in nature, is mere sport.³⁸ This

instance comes the closest of any in the novel to being a conventional example of specifically human power and wasteful “wanton cruelty” to animals. But kinds of cruelty that appear to be particular to humans are in fact still “savage,” as Heathcliff’s use of that word when he dreams of vivisectioning Catherine and his son indicates (206). Lockwood’s predatory behavior on the moors still animalizes him, rather than maintaining his hierarchized distinction from the animal realm.

The two most crucial scenes of animal cruelty in the book, however, are perpetrated by Heathcliff. One of them is recounted as a vivid memory by Cathy in her delirium, as she sorts the bird feathers from her torn pillow by species, and recognizes one of them as a lapwing’s:

Bonny bird; wheeling above our heads in the middle of the moor. It wanted to get to its nest, for the clouds touched the swells, and it felt rain coming. This feather was picked up from the heath, the bird was not shot; for we saw its nest in winter, full of tiny skeletons. Heathcliff set a trap over it, and the old ones dared not come. I made him promise he’d never shoot a lapwing after that, and he didn’t. Yet here are more! Did he shoot my lapwings, Nelly? Are they red, any of them? Let me look. (96)

Cathy’s response to this memory suggests the full ambivalence of her feelings for Heathcliff, particularly her anxiety that he may not have obeyed her in her command that he leave off wanton cruelty to lapwings.³⁹ (This anxiety, in her current state, is probably an indicator of her fear that he will not remain her obedient servant, rather than a retroactive effusion of sympathy for the lapwings as creatures distinct from her own predicament.)⁴⁰ This memory suggests that Heathcliff is capable of the wasteful type of cruelty that characterizes Lockwood in his “devastating the moors”—a purely sadistic, and thus superficially distinctively human, type of cruelty, yet one that still serves to mark Heathcliff as an unpredictably savage type of creature. And Cathy is to some extent

complicit in his cruelty—after all, she does not make him promise to stop killing *any* animals, only lapwings.⁴¹

The valences of cruelty to animals in the scene that Cathy recalls diverge from the novel's other especially suggestive scene of animal cruelty-- Heathcliff's attempt to hang Isabella's pet springer spaniel, Fanny (101). This action is a displaced symbol (and warning?) of the violence he will now practice on Isabella herself, so that one spoiled "pet" becomes the stand-in for another.⁴² It is thus perhaps more purposeful than his sadistic sport with the lapwings. Heathcliff's calling Isabella a "brach" (bitch-hound) immediately after relating this event confirms the connection between Isabella and Fanny in this scene. But something else is also at play here, in Isabella's inability to show sympathy for the very dog who is her stand-in.

Indeed, Isabella's response to this act again underscores the falsity of setting up a contrast between Heathcliff as a brute and the human[e] and genteel characters of the Grange, since they in fact are also animals within. As Heathcliff points out:

The first thing she saw me do, on coming out of the Grange, was to hang up her little dog; and when she pleaded for it the first words I uttered were a wish that I had the hanging of everyone belonging to her, except one: possibly she took that exception for herself. But no brutality disgusted her. I suppose she has an innate admiration for it, if only her own precious person were secure from injury! (118)

Heathcliff describes his son with Isabella in much the same way, as enjoying cruelty so long as it does not put his own safety at risk: "He'll undertake to torture any number of cats if their teeth be drawn, and their claws pared" (210). Again the domesticated human-animals are revealed in their capacity for cruelty to animals to be as vicious as any other species—only more cowardly. Indeed, they may be even more vicious: Isabella, for instance, is at least as complicit in the scene of Fanny's hanging as Cathy is in the

scenario with the lapwings—Isabella’s “pleading” for Fanny is much fainter than Cathy’s exhorting a promise from Heathcliff on behalf of the lapwings.

Another instance of animal cruelty, Hareton’s hanging of a litter of puppies (141), is more problematic, in the sense of its meaning being less obvious, than any of the instances discussed above. Tytler (“Animals” 128) and Lisa Surridge (“Animals” 169) insist that this action is not gratuitously violent, as Isabella perceives it, but illustrates a practice of culling unwanted puppies common in the eighteenth century, particularly in the lower classes.⁴³ But while it may not be as gratuitously vicious as, for example, Linton Heathcliff’s behavior (torturing defenseless cats), Hareton’s act is too reminiscent of Heathcliff’s attempt to hang Isabella’s dog for the similarity to be a mere coincidence. Since Isabella is again the witness of the cruelty, the similarity is intensified—though the fact that the act is recorded only in her letter may also suggest that to an indiscriminating eye like hers the Heathcliff animal and the Hareton animal appear identical. Whether the difference between the sadistic hanging of Fanny and the economical culling of puppies is actually great enough to signify the moral difference between the man and the boy is debatable. In either case, they are both deeply situated in a world where cruelty and violence are a natural and instinctive part of life, a world from which the sympathetic or humanistic reader recoils.

One argument that such a humanistic reader might make to try to come to terms with the novel is to argue that the characters are not brutish by nature, but that the violence and the animalizing language in the novel, the mutual dehumanizing of the characters, produces the very brutal behavior it evokes. Hagan, for instance, argues that Brontë shows “sympathetic” characters descending into cruelty due to circumstance in

order to suggest that Cathy and Heathcliff, too, are not “evil natures” but rather owe their cruel, vicious behavior to mistreatment and suffering (322).⁴⁴ I contend, however, that the novel encourages us to see harsh circumstances and physical and verbal violence as instead bringing out an already present, if latent, animality. After all, we never meet a “human” Heathcliff, prior to his being defined in animal terms or mistreated.

Likewise, while Heathcliff’s brutality brings out the brutality in those who suffer it,⁴⁵ that animal ferocity and inability to sympathize were always there in them to be uncovered—Heathcliff did not create it. As I have already noted, Edgar and Isabella make their first appearance nearly tearing a dog in half in their vicious quarreling—so that when Isabella takes pleasure in Heathcliff’s grief at Cathy’s death, or when Edgar refuses to forgive or ever see his sister again after her elopement with Heathcliff, these actions appear to be a further uncovering of their inhumanity, provoked, but not created by, their enemy Heathcliff. Likewise, the second Catherine may only become venomous when she enters the harsh environment of the Heights, but Nelly uses animal imagery to describe her well before then. The Catherine species, like the other individuals/species, adapts to her environment, but Catherine was never fully human(e), but rather a part of the novel’s “sinister menagerie” (229).

“Models” of Sympathy and Scenes of Sickness

In the midst of this menagerie of animality and violence, is there then no figure of the human and the humane, no model for the sympathetic reader? Those seeking such a figure may look in the most obvious place—in one of the two narrators, Lockwood or Nelly. But we have already seen that Lockwood is as embedded in the novel’s animal

world, and as unable to make sense of it, as the reader. Furthermore, if he is a model for the reader, he is a strikingly unsympathetic one—and not only because he is personally unlikeable. He himself acknowledges his reputation for “deliberate heartlessness,” though he disavows its truth (5). After he is shown reading Cathy’s diary, any reader invested in what Suzanne Keen calls the “empathy-altruism hypothesis” (vii) might expect him to be moved to identify with, and feel sympathy for, its author. But immediately after reading it, when Cathy (a child, as at the time she wrote in her diary) appears in his dream/vision seeking to enter the room, he turns on her with brutal violence, rubbing her arm against the broken glass until it is covered with blood. So much for the capacity of reading to inspire sympathy—even sympathy for the author. And so much for Lockwood as a model for the sympathetic, humane reader. Instead, he seems to embody precisely the novel’s anti-sympathetic ethos.⁴⁶

What then of the tale’s other narrator, Nelly Dean? With her common sense, common piety, and common superstition, Nelly appears to be eminently human.⁴⁷ And if one reads her narration as uncritically as Lockwood hears it, one might easily mistake her for the novel’s moral center, and the “way in” for readers seeking sympathetic identification. In that case, we might wonderingly ask her, as Isabella does in her letter to Nelly from the Heights, “How did you manage to preserve the common sympathies of human nature when you resided here?” (106). But the fact is that Nelly didn’t: there are no common sympathies of human nature, and Nelly is no more a model of sympathy than any other character.

Nelly herself encourages us to view her as a sympathetic person, and she articulates an ideal of heaven as a place of “love in its sympathy” (128). But her practical

motto, her key to action, as she expresses it to Lockwood, is, “Well, we must be for ourselves in the long run; the mild and generous are only more justly selfish than the domineering” (72).⁴⁸ Nelly is not a moral center of sympathy: she is in fact at least as lacking in “humanity” as the other characters. Her own frequent use of animalizing metaphors aside, Nelly herself admits to her “inhumanity” in leaving the child Heathcliff out on the landing of the stairs on his first night at the Heights (30). She also dehumanizes Heathcliff when he first arrives by calling him an “it” (30), in the same way Heathcliff later does to his own son (168).⁴⁹ Likewise, she consistently acknowledges her lack of sympathy for Cathy, the “haughty, headstrong *creature*” (52, emphasis mine); for instance, she says, “I own I did not like her after her first infancy was past” (52), and “she was so proud, it became impossible to pity her distresses, until she should be chastened into more humility” (53). She rejects Cathy’s attempts to give her “a feeling of how I feel” by talking candidly or sharing her dreams (63). She cannot, and does not want to, feel with or for Cathy.

Scenes of illness bring out Nelly’s lack of sympathy and humanity, whether those scenes elevate the invalid onto a supernatural or transcendent plane, or degrade them to the level of the most feeble or repellent of animals. Indeed, it is through Nelly’s responses that we can best analyze the novel’s use of illness as another force of alienation, rather than an invocation of sympathy. Cathy’s illness ultimately lifts her to transcendence, outside the realm of “human sympathy,” as she seems to have a mysterious power, or at least partial power, to will her own illness and death. Unsurprisingly, Nelly views her illnesses in the book with a complete lack of sympathy. She sees only perverse willfulness in threats like the one Catherine makes to Edgar before

their engagement, that “I’ll cry myself sick!” if he leaves her. Nelly encourages him to leave: “[Y]ou’d better be riding home, or she will be sick, only to grieve us” (57). Nelly cannot recognize that, in fact, Cathy’s use of illness throughout the novel reflects a desperate grasping of what power is available to her. Faced with dilemmas over which she has control, Catherine seeks control in the only way she can—through the destruction of her own body.⁵⁰

Similarly, when Heathcliff first leaves the Heights, and Cathy responds by waiting for him in the rain until she catches a fever, becoming “dangerously ill” and delirious in her “uncontrollable grief,” Nelly believes her to have brought the illness on herself (69), calling her “naughty” (68). She feels no more compassion than Hindley, whose response to learning Cathy is ill is: “Damn it! I don’t want to be troubled with more sickness here. What took you out into the rain?”, or than Joseph, who answers by sneering that she’s been chasing after men (69). Nelly mostly views Cathy as acting a scene, and yet is partly “terrified” by the thought that Cathy is going mad. She does nurse her, but acknowledges “I cannot say I made a gentle nurse, and Joseph and the master were no better” (69). Mr. and Mrs. Linton also tend to Cathy, but are too weak to weather the illness as she does, and die with “reason to repent of their kindness” (70), as Nelly puts it. Nelly’s wording suggests that such kindness, to Cathy, was a waste.

The antipathy Nelly displays towards Cathy, especially when Cathy is prey to illness, plays a central role in the plot from that point on. Although after Cathy’s first illness Dr. Kenneth emphasizes that she must be humored in everything and treated with care (70), Nelly continues to dismiss the physical symptoms Cathy develops in response to extreme emotional distress. This is clear in Cathy’s later, fatal illness, after the conflict

between Edgar and Heathcliff reaches a head. Nelly has by this time already come to see her loyalty to Edgar as a justification for her lack of sympathy for Cathy: “My heart invariably cleaved to the master’s, in preference to Catherine’s [Cathy’s] side; with reason, I imagined, for he was kind, and trustful, and honorable; and she—she could not be called the opposite, yet she seemed to allow herself such wide latitude that I had little faith in her principles, and still less sympathy for her feelings” (85). Thus, when Cathy finds herself torn between the two men, describing herself as “nearly distracted,” Nelly predictably ignores her threats that “I shall get wild” (91).⁵¹

Likewise, she ignores Cathy’s injunction to tell Edgar “that I’m in danger of being seriously ill. I wish it may prove true! He has startled and distressed me shockingly! I want to frighten him” (91). Cathy continues, “Well, if I cannot keep Heathcliff for my friend, if Edgar will be mean and jealous, I’ll try to break their hearts by breaking my own” (92). But she adds that this can perhaps be averted if Nelly will “represent to him [Edgar] the peril of quitting the policy [of humoring her], and remind him of my passionate temper, verging, when kindled, on frenzy” (92). Cathy is probably right about Edgar’s likely response to such a warning, but Nelly has no desire to “frighten” him with Cathy’s “selfishness,” and though she can see that Catherine speaks with “sincerity,” she thinks that “a person who could plan the turning of her fits of passion to account, beforehand, might, by exerting her will, manage to control herself tolerably” (92). Thus, she says nothing to Edgar, allowing him to provoke and distress Cathy further by trying to force her to choose between him and Heathcliff.

Nelly remains unsympathetic and detached even when the tormented Cathy falls into what Nelly calls “senseless, wicked rages,” dashing her head against the sofa and

grinding her teeth furiously (93). Soon, Nelly says, she “stretched herself out stiff, and turned up her eyes, while her cheeks, at once blanched and livid, assumed the aspect of death” (93). Edgar is terrified, but Nelly insists to him that “There is nothing in the world the matter,” not wanting him to “yield” even though she admits, “I could not help being afraid in my heart” (93). She tells him that Cathy had resolved on this fit previous to his entrance. At this point Cathy locks herself in her room and develops her final, fatal illness. Cathy refuses food, “fast[ing] pertinaciously” for several days thereafter (94). Thus, Nelly’s antipathy to Cathy leads her to prevent any reconciliation between Cathy and Edgar.

This antipathy, and Nelly’s consequent silence to Edgar, perhaps contribute to Cathy’s early death as well. In Cathy’s final days, Nelly does not tell Edgar how ill his wife is, despite Cathy’s increasingly “ghastly” countenance, “wasted face” (94), and disorder of mind. Nelly dismisses Cathy’s claim that she will die. Cathy, as she grows increasingly ill, wonders why Edgar does not come to her (94). Nelly cruelly tells her that he is well and spending his time in the library, though she acknowledges, “I should not have spoken so, if I had known her true condition, but I could not get rid of the notion that she acted a part of her disorder” (94). Cathy is shocked at this account of Edgar’s indifference, exclaiming, “My God! Does he know how I’m altered? ... He imagines me in a pet—in play, perhaps” (95). She begs Nelly to inform him how in earnest she is, and says that based on his response she will decide whether to “starve at once” or “recover and leave the country” (95). Nelly responds, “The master has no idea of your being deranged, and, of course, he does not fear that you will let yourself die of hunger” (95). Cathy exclaims that she would kill herself “directly” if she was only sure it would kill

Edgar (95). The idea of his indifference “increase[s] her feverish bewilderment to madness”; only then does Nelly at last begin to be alarmed and to remember Cathy’s first illness, and “the doctor’s injunction that she should not be crossed” (95).

The dying Cathy herself begins to suspect Nelly’s lack of sympathy: “But I begin to fancy you don’t like me! How strange!” (95). Cathy is proved right: Nelly thinks of her, “Far better she should be dead, than lingering a burden and a misery-maker to all about her” (127). Indeed, Cathy’s illness provides her a strange clarity in this matter; her delirium and apparent mental confusion—which Nelly labels “derangement,” then “insanity” (98, 99) --- is actually a transcendent perception, and she has a telling vision of Nelly’s inhumanity in the midst of a delusion: “I see you, Nelly . . . you are gathering elf-bolts to hurt our heifers; pretending, while I am near, that they are only locks of wool” (96). This vision aligns the deceptively innocuous Nelly (with her “locks of wool”) with the “inhuman” violence so often figured by animal cruelty (hurting the heifers) in the novel.⁵² She shrewdly adds, “Nelly, *you* have helped unsettle me! You should have spoken to Edgar” (98). Cathy becomes increasingly convinced of the truth of this vision: “You witch! So you do seek elf-bolts to hurt us!” she exclaims to Nelly, when she finds out that Nelly has been acting as a sort of spy (101).

When Edgar discovers Cathy’s illness too late, Nelly seeks to justify herself by blaming Cathy for her “fretting” and “eating scarcely anything,” and still maintains that “it is nothing” (99). But he too blames Nelly for her “heartless” behavior, exclaiming: “You knew your mistress’s nature, and you encouraged me to harass her. And not to give me one hint of how she’s been these three days! It was heartless! Months of illness could not have produced such a change!” (100). Nelly again tries to defend herself, “thinking it

too bad to be blamed for another's wicked waywardness" (100), and later makes the same defense to Dr. Kenneth, who fears for Cathy's life and sanity (101, 103), and suspects some cause for her illness that he does not know about. He says, "A stout, hearty lass like [Cathy] does not fall ill for a trifle; and that sort of people should not, either; it's hard work bringing them through fevers, and such things" (101).

Certainly, the astonishment of both of these men at the rapidity of Cathy's decline suggests that Nelly must feel real antipathy toward Cathy to be so willfully blind to the seriousness of her condition. At the same time, the unnatural haste of her decline suggests Catherine's extraordinary power to will herself to a speedy death.⁵³ This power begins to lift Cathy outside the human sphere even before she dies, even as she descends into "brain fever" (104); specifically, it elevates her beyond any desire for human sympathy. Though she had been distressed by what she saw as Edgar's indifference, by the time he comes to her she tells him: "I don't want you anymore. I'm past wanting you" (100). She adds that though he touches her now, both her soul and her body will soon be beyond his reach, and that "all you had in me is gone" (100). Cathy begins to develop what to Nelly seems an "unearthly beauty"; she is pale, and her eyes have a "dreamy and melancholy softness; they no longer gave the impression of looking at the objects around her; they appeared always to gaze beyond, and far beyond—you would have said out of this world" (122). The "peculiar expression arising from her mental state" seems to refute any proof of convalescence, and "stamp[s] her as one doomed to decay" (122). She is moving out of the realm of matter into a realm of pure spirit, and she seems content to think that this separates her from, rather than endears her to, those around her.

Thus, when Nelly observes as a “cool spectator” the passionate last meeting (alive, at least) of Cathy and Heathcliff, Cathy remarks scornfully on Heathcliff’s physical strength, and speaks of her own yearning to cast off her body and all material things, as they now seem mere constraints: she says she is tired of being enclosed in the “shattered prison” of her body, and yearns to escape into a “glorious world” beyond (125). Nelly, she realizes, couldn’t possibly understand this: “Nelly, you think you are better and more fortunate than I; in full health and strength. You are sorry for me—very soon that will be altered. I shall be sorry for you. I shall be incomparably beyond and above you all” (125). In fact, she is already “incomparably beyond and above” (125) any realm in which human sympathy or cruelty could touch her.

Nelly’s lack of sympathy for the dying Cathy matches her response to Heathcliff’s grief in this scene, a reaction that is the polar opposite of sympathy rising from common humanity. She evokes both illness (insanity) and animality to distance herself from Heathcliff: “[H]e gnashed at me, and foamed like a mad dog . . . I did not feel as if I were in the company of a creature of my own species” (125). It is true that later Nelly weeps for Heathcliff, but again she defines the feelings that prompt her tears in terms far removed from the sympathy of shared humanity, observing that “we do sometimes pity creatures that have none of the feeling for themselves or others” (129). Nelly here is setting herself as human against the animal Heathcliff who is incapable of the kind of pity she feels for him. In keeping with this, she says soon afterwards that Heathcliff defies her “sympathy” with “an unflinching, ferocious stare” (130).

Dehumanizing others is a way that many of the novel’s characters reveal their own animality, their own aggressive drive to be the dominant species, and Nelly is no

exception. It is as true of her as it is of the genteely-bred Isabella, who so frequently reveals her viciousness with vituperative epithets. Heathcliff's "ferocious stare" may indicate his recognition that Nelly's supposed sympathy is no sympathy at all. Indeed, she continues to animalize him rather than to sympathize: she sees his anguished dashing of his head against a tree as revealing him to be "not like a man, but like a wild beast" (130). "It hardly moved my compassion—it appalled me," she says (130). She is able to remain largely detached, excused from the burden of sympathy, because she feels she shares no kinship of species with Heathcliff.⁵⁴

Nelly's response to Heathcliff's grief at Catherine's death is thus no different than Isabella's: the latter says of Heathcliff, "I was not going to sympathize with him—the brute beast!" (133). Nelly pretends their responses are different; in that scene with Isabella, she again poses as the superior proponent of human sympathy: "Hush, hush" she tells Isabella, "He's a human being . . . Be more charitable; there are worse men than he is yet!" (134). But we have already seen that her own response to Heathcliff's grief is actually aligned with Isabella's, which is expressed in the latter's retort: "He's not a human being . . . and he has no claim on my charity" (134). This animalizing perspective is Nelly's too, and it makes it difficult for the reader to view Heathcliff's grief with fellow-feeling either—Nelly has rendered it alien, inhuman. Even if we do not share her repulsion at this point, awe seems the proper response in the face of his suffering, not sympathy.⁵⁵

When Heathcliff himself takes ill at the end of the novel, Nelly again sees his behavior as incomprehensible, and his decline as, like Cathy's, willed and willful. At first she only notices his newly "restless, anxious expression," and that his body is "sparer"

(231). He soon confesses to her that “there is a strange change approaching—I am in its shadow at present. I take so little interest in my daily life, that I hardly remember to eat, and drink” (247). He has even lost his faculty for enjoying vengeance and destruction (247). As she was with Cathy, Nelly is slow to take his illness seriously, saying “he was neither in danger of losing his senses, nor dying; by my judgment, he was as strong and healthy as ever,” other than his “monomania” for Cathy (248).⁵⁶ Heathcliff himself does not seem to anticipate death, and yet feels perplexed by his sensations: “With my hard constitution, and temperate mode of living, and unperilous occupations, I ought to, and probably *shall* remain above ground, till there is scarcely a black hair on my head. And yet I cannot continue in this condition! I have to remind myself to breathe—almost to remind my heart to beat!” (248). Then, for several days, he secludes himself, not attending meals and eating no more than once a day, in a way reminiscent of Cathy’s final days.

Nelly’s attitude changes from carelessness to perplexity, rather than to sympathy, as Heathcliff’s condition worsens. Soon his expression becomes “excited, and wild, and glad”; he is pale and trembles, with a “strange joyful glitter in his eyes” (249). When she notices him breathing quickly, Nelly finally suspects illness, but he denies having a cold or fever. He continues to refuse food; more precisely, he says, “I am animated with hunger; and, seemingly, I must not eat” (250). His smile of rapture and “ghastly paleness” make him appear to Nelly as a goblin (251), a ghoul, or a vampire (252).⁵⁷ However, she returns to a more “sensible” explanation, telling him his nerves are disordered, “and, almost entirely, through your own fault. The way you’ve passed these three last days might knock up a Titan. Do take some food, and some repose. You need

only look at yourself in a glass to see how you require both. Your cheeks are hollow, and your eyes blood-shot, like a person starving with hunger, and going blind with loss of sleep” (254). He insists, “It’s not my fault, that I cannot eat or rest... I assure you it is through no settled designs. I’ll do both, as soon as I possibly can... I’m too happy, and yet I’m not happy enough. My soul’s bliss kills my body, but does not satisfy itself” (254). His rapid “three days of decline” is roughly the same length as Cathy’s, and Heathcliff suggests that Cathy is controlling his behavior: “By God! she’s relentless... It’s unutterably too much for flesh and blood to bear, even mine,” he says. Nelly, however, believes (for the moment) that he, like Cathy, is willfully starving himself to death, and warns him that his behavior is an “obstinate fast” that could become suicide (255).

The next morning Nelly finds Heathcliff dead, with a “frightful, life-like gaze of exultation” in his eyes, which will not shut (256). Nelly notes that “Dr. Kenneth was perplexed to pronounce of what disorder the master died. I concealed the fact of his having swallowed nothing for four days, fearing it might lead to trouble, and then, I’m persuaded he did not abstain on purpose; it was the consequence of his strange illness, not the cause” (257). The cause of Heathcliff’s illness, because presented to us through Nelly’s narrow vision, remains incomprehensible, so that the reader cannot “feel for him.” Like Cathy’s, Heathcliff’s illness is mysterious in that seems to be both willed and beyond his will,⁵⁸ with a supernatural element that transcends purely human understanding.

Clearly, Nelly cannot help us understand those whose illness seems to transcend the human. But she is generally no more sympathetic to those whose illness marks them

as more lowly animals, rather than transcendent. This is clear in her attitude towards Linton Heathcliff, an “ailing, peevish creature from the first” (142), a “pale, delicate, effeminate boy” characterized by “sickly peevishness” (155), a spiritless “weakling” (156). At first, she is unsure whether to attribute his unpleasant behavior to his nature or to the treatment he receives at the Heights, conjecturing that “utter lack of sympathy had rendered young Heathcliff selfish and disagreeable, if he were not so originally” (163). And it is true that he has received little sympathy; his father has virtually disowned him except as a pawn, saying that he can see nothing of himself, only the Lintons, in such a “puling chicken,” (160), and that he has a growing “antipathy” for him (161). This might seem to suggest that Heathcliff’s treatment has worsened Linton Heathcliff, and that the latter deserves sympathy. But later, in judging the boy, Nelly recognizes in him what is true of so many of the characters—that he reveals his animality in his own incapacity for sympathy. For instance, she calls him a “wretched creature” when she sees that he has “no power to sympathize with his cousin’s mental torments” (214).⁵⁹ Ironically, Nelly uses this view of young Linton to justify her own lack of sympathy for him: “I began to dislike, more than to compassionate, young Linton, and to excuse his father, in some measure, for holding him cheap” (170).⁶⁰

In contrast, Nelly does feel some affection for Edgar Linton, who is always feeble and ends his life as an invalid, but in her narration he still comes off as weak and ineffectual, always bending to Cathy’s will. And she is quite willing to acknowledge the physical weakness that binds him to the other members of the Linton clan, making them unfit in the struggle for survival on the moors. She describes that family as being of a “delicate constitution,” and says that Edgar and Isabella “both lacked the ruddy health

that you will generally meet in these parts” (147-148). While she cannot be certain of the cause of Isabella’s death, she conjectures that both Edgar and Isabella have died of the same thing, “a kind of fever, slow at its commencement, but incurable, and rapidly consuming life towards the close” (148). Edgar is no stronger than his sister, or than his parents who fall dead from a fever that Cathy survives—he is not much stronger even than his nephew. Nelly’s words about him as a child reveal contempt, rather than sympathy, for his weakness; she describes him as one who “cried for his mama at every turn...and trembled if a country lad raised his fist at [him], and sat at home all day for a shower of rain” (45). Ultimately, Edgar’s precarious health is another marker that, like the rest of his family, he can never quite be one of the hardy people native to “these parts.” Nelly still recognizes him as essentially an outsider here, and this limits her sympathy.

Likewise, though Hindley and Nelly grew up together, his fall into alcoholism after his wife’s death means that in her opinion he is “degrading himself past redemption” and descending into “savage sullenness and ferocity” (51). As Heathcliff says with more direct callousness, “It’s a pity he cannot kill himself with drink... He’s doing his very utmost, but his constitution defies him” (59). The implication is that Hindley’s illness is, like Cathy’s, willed, and a sign of Hindley’s struggle against his own hardiness as a specimen. Eventually he does, in fact, drink himself to death, in a way that Heathcliff views as “deliberate” suicide (144-45). The doctor cannot reach him until “the beast had changed to carrion,” as Heathcliff puts it (145). Though she has some nostalgia for their shared childhood, and sorrow at his death, Nelly for most of the novel views Hindley as animalized by mental illness; for instance, she describes how the young Hareton shrank

both from his “wild beast’s fondness” and his “madman’s rage” (57), just as Isabella in one breath compares him to a “bear” and a “lunatic” (136), and Heathcliff calls him “mad” and a “toothless hound” in one speech (138).

Nelly cannot sympathize with Hindley partly because she can’t understand the value his consumptive wife, Frances, that frail specimen, had for him. She dismisses Frances from the start as “half silly,” scorning her “hysterical emotion” when she expresses her fear of dying (36). “I imagined her as little likely to die as myself,” Nelly explains, while acknowledging that Frances was thin, nervous, “coughed troublesomely sometimes,” and grew short of breath easily (36).⁶¹ “I knew nothing of what these symptoms portended, and had no impulse to sympathize with her,” she tells Lockwood, justifying herself by saying, “We don’t in general take to foreigners here... unless they take to us first” (36). Here again, she expresses an insular, limited vision of sympathy—not an expansive vision that can encompass the “other,” the outsider, the foreigner—much less the invalid or the animalized.

All this is to say that Nelly, through whose eyes we view the other characters, is exemplary, rather than anomalous, in a novel populated by those unable to sympathize. In any case, Nelly clearly provides no center of sympathetic identification on which the reader can model his or her sympathies. If the reader does experience sympathy for the characters, it must be in spite of Nelly, in reaction against her lack of sympathy—just as it must be without empathy (a full understanding of the characters’ interiorities), and in spite of the distancing effect of Brontë’s layers of narration, in which she transmits the story through not one, but two unsympathetic or at least unsympathizing narrators.

Of course, just as those narrators are not models of sympathy, neither are those with whom they fail to sympathize, even those we might expect to provide better models. One example is Edgar Linton, despite his nursing Cathy gently in her final illness out of a “duty and humanity” that makes Heathcliff sneer (120). The fact that Edgar ascribes the change in Cathy after their wedding—increased gloom, depression, and irritability-- to “an alteration in her constitution, caused by her perilous illness” (72), suggests that he himself lacks the sympathy to really understand why Cathy is suffering. Cathy paints a picture of him that is almost identical to that of his nephew, saying that he utters only “pettish, selfish speeches” in response to her happiness when Heathcliff returns, and that he “always contrives to be sick at the least cross” (77). Cathy clearly shows her own lack of both empathy and sympathy in this speech, but her words nevertheless suggests that Edgar too is capable of refusing to enter into the feelings even of the woman he loves most.

Her words also suggest that he too is capable of manipulating others through illness, and in fact, this is characteristic not only of the domineering “creatures”—Cathy and Heathcliff--- but the more petty tyrants, like Linton Heathcliff (who is genuinely ill, but exaggerates his pain) and even Isabella. Nelly notices the latter’s “ill health” when she pines over Heathcliff, and that she is “dwindling and fading before our eyes” and growing cross and peevish (79). The moment the doctor is mentioned, however, Isabella insists that her health is “perfect,” and blames Cathy for her behavior (80). While Cathy’s and Heathcliff’s willed illnesses have an aura of suprahuman intensity, the willed illnesses that link Isabella and Edgar with Linton Heathcliff show that they are still the same petty creatures that fought over a puppy. Eventually they turn against each other

again, this time when she elopes with Heathcliff. Edgar refuses to forgive her; he has already decreed that such a step would mean she was “insane,” and thus justify him in “dissolv[ing] all the bonds of relationship between them” (93). During her brief stop at the Grange after fleeing Heathcliff, Isabella observes sadly to Nelly that “Edgar has not been kind” to her (133). The Linton tribe, Edgar included, are ultimately petty, selfish, and unforgiving.

Similarly, we might expect to turn to the representatives of religion or medicine as sources of sympathy or humanity, but this is decisively not the case. The character most ensconced in a religious worldview is old Joseph, that travesty of religious charity, “the wearisomest, self-righteous pharisee that ever ransacked a Bible to rake the promises to himself, and fling the curses on his neighbors” (33). He uses his “knack for sermonizing and pious discourse” to prejudice old Mr. Earnshaw against Heathcliff, Hindley, and particularly Catherine (33). The combination of the ludicrous and the terrifying in his uncharitable attitudes are transfigured in Lockwood’s dream into the long-winded, sadistically judgmental Jabes Branderham, who twists a Biblical text about forgiveness into one calling for sadistic retribution. This dream is inspired by Lockwood’s reading Cathy’s diary entry, which focuses on Joseph’s oppressive presence. Like Jabes, Joseph delights in the idea that those around him will be severely punished for their sins. Religion is clearly not a motive for sympathy here.

Likewise, Dr. Kenneth, the representative of the medical community who reappears throughout the novel, is a man whose vocation might be expected to reflect a sympathy for suffering. But he has only callous words for Hindley as he predicts Frances’s death, saying that Hindley “should have known better than to choose such a

rush of a lass!” (51). He likewise sees Edgar’s careful nursing of Cathy in her final illness as a waste (104). He himself wastes no time on sympathetic emotion.

Another potential model of sympathy that proves flawed is the bond between Cathy and Heathcliff; the strong identification between them is not the same as sympathetic identification. According to the theory of moral sentiments so familiar to the Victorians from the works of Adam Smith and David Hume, sympathy, as Catherine Gallagher puts it, only occurs when another’s state becomes as ‘intimately present’ to us as our own, ‘losing its distinct quality of belonging to someone else’ (169).⁶² This certainly seems to resonate with Cathy’s famous pronouncement that

My great miseries in this world have been Heathcliff’s miseries, and I watched and felt each from the beginning; my great thought in living is himself. If all else perished, and *he* remained, I should still continue to be; and, if all else remained and he were annihilated, the Universe would turn into a mighty stranger . . . Nelly, I *am* Heathcliff—he’s always, always in my mind—not as a pleasure, any more than I am always a pleasure to myself—but as my own being (64).

However, according to the theory of moral sentiments articulated by Adam Smith and David Hume, sympathy, while blurring the boundaries of the self, should still maintain the integrity of the self; it depends on distance between self and other even while attempting to bridge that distance (Marshall *Figure* 179-180). As Smith observed, “Mankind, though naturally sympathetic, never conceive for what has befallen another that degree of passion which animates the person principally concerned. That imaginary change of situation on which their sympathy is founded is but momentary” (85). The identification of self and other in Cathy and Heathcliff’s love for each other, however, does not maintain the integrity of the self, except insofar as the self incorporates the other. Thus, paradoxically, it is an identification that leads to selfish narcissism, not to sympathy.⁶³ “I shall not pity you, not I. . . I shouldn’t care what you suffered. Why

shouldn't you suffer? I do!" Cathy tells Heathcliff when he visits her deathbed (124). Likewise, while Heathcliff obviously feels some identification with Hareton, and claims to Nelly that this identification is sympathy (169), it is in fact an egoistic identification that actually dehumanizes Hareton (Heathcliff says that Hareton seems "a personification of my youth, not a human being" [247]), and it certainly does not lead Heathcliff to treat Hareton altruistically.⁶⁴

The second Catherine is the character who shows what most closely resembles sympathy, particularly when it comes to tending the sick. She is depicted as radiantly healthy, but still able to feel for those who are ill. She nurses Linton Heathcliff even when his father has callously left him to die of consumption without medical aid, even though this nursing weakens her, and is equally solicitous of her dying father. At one point she nurses a third person at the same time, when Nelly comes down sick (a rare "calamity" for her [187]), and Catherine tends to her "like an angel" or "the fondest nurse" (187). "She must have had a warm heart, when she loved her father so, to give so much to me!" says Nelly (187). Catherine is also truly distressed when her momentary impatience with Linton seems to have worsened her cousin's condition, though she frankly tells him that "you've made yourself ill by crying, and being in a passion" (185). Catherine cares for her cousin despite being fully aware of his "distorted nature" (195), and despite the biological absurdity, which Heathcliff points out, of a "healthy, hearty girl" tying herself to a "little perishing monkey" like Linton (208).

Her compassion contrasts with Nelly's lack of it when Nelly calls Linton Heathcliff "the worst tempered bit of a sickly slip that ever struggled into his teens!" and says, "Happily, as Mr. Heathcliff conjectured, he'll not see twenty. I doubt whether he'll

see spring, indeed--- and small loss to his family, whenever he drops off; and lucky it is for us that his father took him. The kinder he was treated, the more tedious and selfish he'd be" (186). Nelly's speaking of his death so "regardlessly wounded her [Catherine's] feelings" (186). Catherine's gentleness is also in opposition to Heathcliff's lack of it, as he treats his dying son "tyrannically and wickedly," forcing him to court Catherine when the boy's health is too weak to allow it, "his efforts redoubling the more imminently his avaricious and unfeeling plans were threatened with defeat by death" (198).

Catherine's compassion is not returned by the selfish Linton; at first, he uses his illness to manipulate her, as he does everyone else. As he gets nearer death, however, Linton's attempts to seek and manipulate sympathy—"the peevish temper of a child which frets and teases on purpose to be soothed"-- are replaced by "the moroseness of a confirmed invalid, repelling consolation" (200). Still, he can only read Catherine's physical reaction to being trapped into marriage as the same kind of attempt to manipulate sympathy he himself has used; "she may cry and be sick as much as she pleases!" he says (213). He distances himself from Catherine by equating her with an animal; he says he "winked" when Heathcliff struck her, adding: "I wink to see him strike a dog, or a horse, he does it so hard" (214). Nevertheless, Catherine stays with him to the last, at the expense of her own health.

It would seem, then, that Catherine is exceptionally humane in others' times of illness. But we have already seen that she is not exceptionally "human," as she is fully implicated in the novel's rhetoric of animality, both in being compared to various animals and in labeling others in animal terms. While she sought to make Linton Heathcliff her "pet," she persistently animalizes Hareton as a stupid "brute" (231), and is far less ready

to own him as her kin. Indeed, her lack of sympathy for Hareton up until the end of the novel is striking, particularly as she mocks his humble efforts to better himself. At one point, when Hareton tries to apologize to her for having apparently caused a blood-coughing fit in Linton, Catherine, on horseback, gives him “a cut with [her] whip” (193). She treats him as she would an unruly horse or dangerous animal.⁶⁵

How do we reconcile the Catherine who is so sympathetic to others’ illnesses with the Catherine so unsympathetic and so quick to distance others by calling them brutes, a method used by characters throughout the novel to deny their own animality? Can she be humane without being human? Is Nelly’s depiction of Catherine as the heroine of the sickroom accurate?

In answering these questions and in reading the latter part of the novel, we must not forget our impression of Catherine when we first meet her through Lockwood, when she is sullen and “disagreeable,” speaking to Lockwood in a “scornful” manner, “more *repellingly* than Heathcliff himself could have replied” (8, emphasis mine). It is true that when Joseph tells Hareton not to escort Lockwood to safety in the storm, since he needs to “look after the horses,” Catherine says, “A man’s life is of more consequence than one evening’s neglect of the horses” (14).⁶⁶ Nevertheless, she initially seems deliberately to repel, rather than to court or display, sympathy, and her words in this particular instance are drowned out—even revealed as naïve-- by the animalizing discourse which pervades the novel so thoroughly and inescapably, and in which she is implicated.⁶⁷

Furthermore, she taunts old Joseph that she has advanced in the “Black Art,” and has the power to cause harm to animals and illness to humans: “The red cow didn’t die by chance; and your rheumatism can hardly be reckoned among providential visitations,”

she says, before threatening to “hurt [him] seriously” (13). Her teasing *may* just be teasing,⁶⁸ but it hardly fits with an image of Catherine as embodying “wholesome humanity” (Tytler “Workings of Memory” 10). It is no wonder that Lockwood decides that Catherine is in fact “not an angel” or even as “amiable” as Nelly would have him believe (228). The two narrators thus give contrasting pictures of her, and since neither of them is reliable or sympathetic, the reader is left uncertain about her true character.

Furthermore, Catherine’s transition to a “humanizing” influence on Hareton at the end feels deliberately abrupt, as does his transition from brute to patriarch. The boy who hung puppies and the young woman who played at being a witch and whipped Hareton like a horse are now presented as models of tender affection and mutual sympathy. Critics have tended to write the ending of the novel off as a flaw, or to see it as the best Brontë could do given the world she had created or her own personal constraints. For example, Torgerson calls the ending the “best possible situation within a diseased cultural system” (122), suggesting that while there is no healthy character with whom to identify, Brontë uses all these voices of unhealth to point the way to health (134). In a similar vein, Susan Gorsky argues that “young Catherine and Hareton are more simply human, and their relationship... less abnormally intense” (188), and thus healthier, than that of their predecessors (189); she admits that “[t]he first part of the novel... has more emotional pull than the second” (189), but attributes this to Emily Brontë’s being “almost certainly” (176) an anorexic herself. She adds that Brontë “obviously recognized the value of the second Catherine’s universe--a place of health and ordinary happiness,” but could only see it “through a window, like the earlier Catherine” (189). Nevertheless, she claims,

“Brontë depicts it as the place where the best resolution--and thus the best health--can be found for her time” (189).⁶⁹

Such arguments, suggesting Brontë made the former part of the novel more vivid and compelling or the latter part less so in spite of herself, or due to personal pathology, seem untenable, and do not give Brontë or her uncompromising vision of a ruthless world enough credit. The dissatisfaction we feel with the novel’s ending, the sense of a loss of intensity, and the ambiguity surrounding the humanity or inhumanity of the remaining characters, particularly Catherine, are in fact part of Brontë’s superb craftsmanship, and get at the heart of the novel’s antipathetic project. Brontë has rendered her vision of the world—a world of violent struggle between species, in which illness is a mark of the powerless or a tool used to gain power, and in which self-interest is the fundamental rule—so real, that the conventional novelistic ending rings hollow. The tidy domesticity of the human(e) young hero and heroine uniting the novel’s families in marriage feels artificial, as we still suspect that these characters are animals with (temporarily) sheathed claws. The loss of intensity is also felt as a loss in verisimilitude; Catherine and Hareton neither repel nor compel, and neither, at the end, feels fully alive.

The mutual sympathy that Brontë’s ending seems to present in the relationship between the lovers is also deliberately at odds with the world she has created. The expectation of sympathy throughout this novel has in fact been depicted as rather ridiculous: Cathy’s expectations that Edgar should “shake off his antipathy” for Heathcliff for her sake (64), or that he should be “delighted from sympathy” for her when Heathcliff returns (77), spring from her own inability to sympathize with Edgar’s feelings. The younger Catherine reveals her fundamental misunderstanding of Heathcliff

when she expects that if Heathcliff looks her in the face, he won't be able to "help being sorry and pitying" her, while in fact he responds by "brutally repulsing her," telling her he'd "rather be hugged by a snake" (210). The novel seems to support Heathcliff's refusal (or inability) to distinguish human from animal, his scorn of the idea of a "common humanity" (116), and his tendency, shared with the other characters, to classify individuals as different species. Thus we question not only the ending, but the many endings of novels like it by Brontë's Victorian contemporaries. Presentations of sympathetic, self-sacrificing characters meeting their reward in domestic bliss, Brontë suggests, are as overly-complacent and as inadequate to reality as Nelly's platitudes and pieties. Similarly, even surties about our own human status are shaken when confronted with her vision of human animals in their wild state.

Fittingly, a conflation of inhuman, superhuman, and subhuman language became integral to the public characterization of Brontë herself in the Victorian era and beyond.⁷⁰ Lucasta Miller describes how Emily Brontë was seen in the nineteenth century as simultaneously "the brutal author of a brutal book" (233), "almost bestial"--an "animal in a woman's body"-- and demonic (223-228). Elizabeth Gaskell's biography of Charlotte no doubt reinforced this view of Emily, with its inclusion of scenes of brutal violence, animality, and illness which would not have been out of place in *Wuthering Heights*—for example, Emily's ferocious beating of her dog, Keeper, to whom she was closely attached (and whose wounds she tended afterwards) while her horrified sisters looked on (268-269), or the scene (which Charlotte would later re-imagine in *Shirley*) where Emily is bitten by a dog and cauterizes the wound herself without telling a soul (268).⁷¹

Emily also bore some resemblance to Cathy in her final illness, in which she shunned sympathy as resolutely as she refused medical help; as Charlotte put it at the time: “She is a real stoic in illness; she neither seeks nor will accept sympathy” (Fraser 316).⁷² Charlotte recalled that “on herself she had no pity; the spirit was inexorable to the flesh... To stand by and witness this, and not dare to remonstrate was a pain no words could render” (Fraser 317). Like Cathy and Heathcliff, Emily exhibited “a power that seemed almost a will to die” (Fraser 316) during a rapid decline from tuberculosis, perhaps exacerbated by anorexia.⁷³ All of these vivid instances—some of the very few we know of her life—suggest someone who deliberately alienated, and perhaps did not value, “human sympathy” in any traditional sense, and who consequently strikes us as so enigmatic as to be (almost) inhuman.

Nevertheless, the conception of Emily as inhuman arose not primarily from her life, but from her creation of a novel in which humanity itself is radically reconceived as inhuman in every sense of the word. In writing *Wuthering Heights*, Brontë was fundamentally truthful to her proto-Darwinian conception of the world—a conception which challenges the very distinctions on which the idea of “human nature” rests. As a result, the attempt to arouse human sympathy is not only dethroned from its central position as a novel’s main goal, but is emptied of any value as a goal at all. To the reader desirous of sympathetically appropriating these characters’ feelings, the characters themselves seem to respond, in the words of Heathcliff to Nelly after Cathy’s death: “Damn you all! [we] want none of *your* tears” (129).

¹ Cited in James Hafley 202.

² Ellen Nussey was a close friend of Charlotte's; she recounted this anecdote in a letter to Elizabeth Gaskell. Cited in Rebecca Fraser 85 and Juliet Barker 228.

³ See also Fraser 291-293, Barker 678, and Rachel Ablow 46-47 on early reviews of the novel. One early review connected *Wuthering Heights* with *Jane Eyre* by describing Cathy and Heathcliff as "the Jane and Rochester animals in their native state" (Fraser 321).

⁴ Throughout this essay, for the sake of convenience, I refer to the first Catherine as Cathy and her daughter as Catherine.

⁵ John Hagan sees Brontë as having a "double view" of Cathy and Heathcliff, a "blend of moral disapproval and compassion" (312), and sees the novel as presenting these two characters in "the most sympathetic light" possible, given their behavior (313). Sympathy is crucial to his humanistic reading of the novel: "*Wuthering Heights* is such a remarkable work partly because it persuades us to sympathize with victims and victimizers alike," he concludes (317).

⁶ Graeme Tytler notes that "sympathy in the true sense of the word is . . . a rare thing in Emily Brontë's novel" ("Nelly, I Am Heathcliff" 179). For other authors who see *Wuthering Heights* as encouraging readerly sympathy for its characters nevertheless, see Hagan, Lin Haire-Sargeant, David Sonstroem, Ivan Kreilkamp, Bernard Paris, Graham Holderness, Larry Champion, and Charles Patterson. Most pertinently for my argument, Hagan claims that "Emily Brontë evokes our moral revulsion by employing all the resources of her art to bring [Cathy and Heathcliff's] viciousness into the sharpest relief; at the same time, she never allows her hero and heroine to forfeit our compassion" (305). Ablow (45-69) is an exception in that she sees the novel as resisting the reader's sympathy, though she discusses this in terms of its relation to the Victorian ideology of marital sympathy (she sees the novel as an "anti-sympathetic marriage plot" (67).

⁷ One of Emily's poems does seem to suggest a more sympathetic attitude toward weaker creatures (including "human" creatures). The speaker rhetorically asks herself whether she despises the "timid deer/ Because his limbs are fleet with fear," or whether she "hears with joy the leveret's cry/ Because it cannot bravely die"; she declares that she does not, and that she equally has pity on the memory of a particular man (Barker 370). However, as Barker notes, this poem (though often read as expressing her sympathy for Branwell) has an "obvious Gondal context" and may not express the author's sentiments (370).

⁸ Posthumanists and other theorists including Jacques Derrida use the term "human animal" frequently, but I am indebted to Barbara Munson Goff for her formulation of the "human animal" in *Wuthering Heights*, though her argument takes a different line than mine. She suggests that the novel is "about the colossal stupidity, arrogance, even impiety of anthropocentrism" (506), and that it is a "hypothetical experiment in the breeding of human beings, conducted to suggest how the breed has been corrupted from its native state by civilization" (480). Beth Torgerson also argues that Cathy and Heathcliff have fallen into culture (95), and that culture and illness are aligned and health and nature are aligned (96). See also Judith Weissman 383-384, J. Hillis Miller "Emily Brontë" 168-170, Enid Duthie 230, Wade Thompson 70, and Champion 58.

⁹ See J. Hillis Miller "Emily Brontë" 164 on this passage. For a passage in Darwin very similar to Brontë's worldview in this essay, see Darwin *On the Origin* 50. See also Stevie Davies 104-109 and 122-123 for an in-depth discussion of this and one other of Emily Brontë's essays, which she suggests point to the "killer instinct operative in mankind whose 'humanity' is skin-deep" (123), and see Barker 456-457, Ablow 51, Duthie 230-231, and Torgerson 91-92 on this essay. See also Barker 455 and 457-458 on other essays by Emily on illness or animals; one is a defense of cats, pointing out the resemblance between their supposed bad qualities and human traits, and stating: "A cat is an animal who has more human feelings than almost any other being" (Barker 456).

¹⁰ As Deborah Morse notes, "Brontë accepted the predatory realities of the natural world, and recognized man as animal, implicated in nature's creative and destructive courses" (182). This parallels Darwin's ideas, which, as Deborah Morse and Martin Danahy put it, made "the human more animal and the animal more human, destabilizing boundaries in both directions" (2). In contrast to my argument, Joseph Carroll gives an "adaptationist" Darwinian reading of the novel that is still invested in the idea of "human nature" and in sympathy. He claims that Brontë depicts Cathy and Heathcliff with "extraordinary empathic power" (243), though he acknowledges that "few readers have liked them" (251). Davies also sees Brontë as "profoundly engaged" in the evolutionary debates of the 1830s and 1840s, observing that while she did not live to see *The Origin of Species* published in 1859, Brontë still had a sense of the "universal competition

of species for sustenance and survival, in a carnivorous chain of violence” (103). Davies says that Brontë “did not challenge the fixity of species,” but that she “felt herself bounded and bonded by the ‘net’ which comprehends them all, believing that human beings were a degraded species of animal” (103). See also Duthie 210-213.

¹¹ On Deleuze and Guattari, see Cary Wolfe “Shadow” 42. In a similar vein, Davies notes that “Emily Brontë was an anti-humanist or post-humanist in an anthropocentric world,” while “the novel form itself is humanist, tending to reinforce the ideology which cuts humankind off from its sibling status to the animal world, permitting the other creatures only a marginal and anthropomorphized status” (111). See also Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari *Kafka*, esp. 12-15, 35-40, 46, 51, 59, 87, and *A Thousand Plateaus*, esp. 232-309.

¹² See Jacques Derrida “Eating Well” 113. Derrida in fact sees the trauma of Darwinism as producing the panic that leads to carno-phallogocentrism (“And Say” 138-139). Like Brontë, Derrida is interested in the “abyssal limit of the human: of the inhuman or the ahuman, the ends of man” (Wolfe “Shadow” 53, note 30). He rejects the idea that “animal” and “human” are singular terms (Wolfe “Shadow” 35). See also Derrida “The Animal,” Marie-Louise Mallet x, and Gerald Bruns 79-97 for Derrida’s approach to the question of animals and subjectivity.

¹³ See also Lisa SurrIDGE “Animals” 171, Davies 119-120, and Leo Bersani 197. SurrIDGE contrasts Emily Brontë’s approach with that of other Victorians, including the other Brontë sisters (“Animals” 162-163). In Charlotte’s and Anne’s novels, SurrIDGE suggests, the way anthropomorphic animal language is used indicates that “sympathetic concern for animals is valued as a predictor of human sympathy as much as for its own sake,” and “humane treatment of animals” is confounded with “a more fundamental concern with the recognition and suppression of dangerous or violent elements in society” (“Animals” 162); thus, Emily’s “departure from predominant views on animal-human hierarchy distinguishes her from Charlotte and Anne as well as from many of her contemporaries” (162-163). Bersani does not focus on the novel’s animal discourse, but his comments do point to the resonance between Brontë’s novel and Deleuze and Guattari’s concept of “becoming-animal,” which they describe as involving crossing a threshold to “a world of pure intensities” and “deterritorialized flux” (*Kafka* 13), in which “everything in the animal is a metamorphosis, and the metamorphosis is part of a single circuit of the becoming-human of the animal and the becoming –animal of the human” (*Kafka* 35). See also Deleuze and Guattari *Kafka* 12-15, 35-40, 46, 51, 59, 87 and *A Thousand Plateaus*, esp. 232-309, as well as Bruns 61-77.

¹⁴ Torgerson suggests that “illness in this novel is the dominant metaphor for flaws in land-based patriarchy,” and sees the novel as addressing the “metaphorical disease of (dis)possession” (16). She points to the novel’s connection of illness and the supernatural: “To highlight the unnaturalness of a cultural system that ultimately drains the individual’s life-blood, resulting in illnesses such as intemperance, monomania, and madness,” Brontë metaphorically uses vampires and ghosts, “aligning supernatural and natural to show the unnaturalness of the culture she rejects” (16). She argues that unlike Charlotte Brontë, Emily denies the transformative power of illness. See Torgerson 89-127. See also Dennis Bloomfield. Lakshmi Krishnan 39, and Paul Marchbanks on illness in this novel.

¹⁵ Kreilkamp claims that Heathcliff offers “the reader at once the opportunity for vicarious sympathy with his sufferings, and appalled dismay at his cruelties, [so that] Brontë’s depiction of Heathcliff produces a “continual shock” in the outraged reader . . . In this way *Wuthering Heights* defines the humane reading subject as he who can most strongly feel the pain of the animal on the operating table, most powerfully respond to the force of that “bloody spectacle” (106). Kreilkamp repeatedly refers to and employs (as in this passage) the anti-vivisectionist discourse of the nineteenth century. This use of the language of vivisection is part of his effort to set the novel in its historical and biographical context; for instance, he discusses how at the time that *Wuthering Heights* was published in 1847, the nascent animal rights group RSPCA was becoming a powerful force in England (88). In this era, according to Kreilkamp, the “display of suffering or torture of animals became occasions for the display of powerful affect—particularly sympathy—within narrative” (94). He notes that “[f]or the Brontë sisters, narrative and fiction itself raised the same questions of sympathy, antipathy, cruelty, and scapegoating—and of the bounds of ‘the human’ as defined by and against the animal [as in RSPCA narratives]. . . *Wuthering Heights* in particular I see as underpinned by a framework of such issues” (94).

¹⁶ See also Derrida “And Say” 144 note 11. On animals and language in Derrida, see also his “Eating Well” 116-117 and “The Animal That Therefore I Am,” as well as Mallet x-xi.

¹⁷ See also Derrida’s “The Animal” 26-29, and his “Eating Well” 105-118 on our ethical responsibility to animals. See also Mallet ix and Wolfe “Shadow” 19-34 on sympathy or empathy for animals in Derrida’s

work. Bruns also notes the post-humanist conception that “[e]mpathy does not draw a line between humans and animals” (76). Following Derrida’s lead, Kreilkamp argues that “‘to be animal’ is to be an other in the most fundamental way, to embody in one’s abjected body the absolute alterity of the neighbor and the utter lack of ethical or political recognition. Heathcliff, even as he becomes a human character, remains throughout the novel such an ‘animal,’ a being of ‘absolute alterity’ and unsolvable lack of paternity and origins. Brontë defines Heathcliff as a feral pet, a resident animal brought into the family circle . . .” (98-99).

¹⁸ See Martha Nussbaum “*Wuthering Heights*” 407, Kreilkamp 98, Bersani 211, Donna Reed 224, and Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar (293, 295, 296) on the animalization of Heathcliff in the novel. Tytler argues that Heathcliff’s upbringing leads him to conflate humans and animals (“Animals” 128). See also Sonstroem 55-56 and Duthie 231.

¹⁹ Weissman’s argument is that *Wuthering Heights* “suggests that the most intense human life is lived by those who adhere to the instinctive feelings which they share with dogs” (390). However, in contrast to my argument, she maintains the distinction between civilization and nature, as well as a distinction between wild and domesticated animals as analogues for human beings, and between the human and animal realms in general in the novel. On the role of dogs in the novel, see also Goff and Tytler. Surridge quotes Brontë as saying, “Man cannot stand in comparison to the dog, for the dog is infinitely too good” (“Animals” 162).

²⁰ See also Davies 119.

²¹ Indeed, he even presages the use of worms in Victorian texts and neurological tests as the limit case of sensitivity to suffering; see Bending 128-9 and 197.

²² Gilbert and Gubar (282) and Davies (128) suggest that this is an indicator of how Edgar will contribute to Cathy’s destruction. See also Torgerson 91. In contrast, see Ablow 58.

²³ Tytler says of the animalizing language that “far from negating the fundamental differences between man and beast, she [Brontë] appears intent on alerting us to the dangers of metaphorical language in general” (Animals” 121), and that “abusive and negative animal metaphors and similes” are “likely to tell us a good deal more about the mentality of the person who resorts to them than about those to whom they have reference (“Animals” 126). However, while such language may reflect back on its speaker, it does equally shape our views of, and occasionally mirrors our responses to, the characters to whom it is applied. As Tytler himself acknowledges, in contradiction to the main thrust of his argument, “Sometimes, in fact, the boundary separating man from beast seems quite tenuous in *Wuthering Heights*” (“Animals” 126).

²⁴ See Reed 227, Davies 104, Dorothy Van Ghent 153, and J. Hillis Miller “Emily Brontë” 167 on the novel’s animal metaphors. Despite Miller’s reading of the novel as one that troubles the boundaries of the human, he sees the animalization of the characters, especially that of the inhabitants of the Heights, as suggestive of Brontë’s negative moral judgment of them as human beings (168). I suggest that Brontë herself seeks to step outside the realm of the moral, and that in that her use of animal language Brontë compels the reader to view her characters through a lens other than that of moral sentiment (such as sympathy) and moral judgment.

²⁵ See also J. Hillis Miller “Emily Brontë” 166 and Duthie 229.

²⁶ Surridge also emphasizes the importance of pets in the novel; she views Brontë as in opposition to the hierarchy of tame over wild implicit in pet-keeping (“Animals” 163).

²⁷ See Davies 111.

²⁸ See Surridge “Animals” 166.

²⁹ Nelly sees this domestication as a metamorphosis from animal to human, noting that Hareton had been content with “rough animal enjoyments, till Catherine crossed his path” (231). But I read this scene as actually one of domestication rather than metamorphosis- -the Hareton species is being tamed, but no line between human and animal is being crossed, because that distinction is not a real one in the world of the novel.

³⁰ As Terry Eagleton notes: “Cultivation exacerbates natural conflict . . . Cultivation, by pampering and swaddling ‘natural’ drives, at once represses serious physical violence and breeds a neurasthenic sensitivity which allows selfish impulse free reign. ‘Natural’ aggression is nurtured both by an excess and an absence of culture” (107); thus, nature and society or civilization are not pure opposites, but civilized life is in some ways “a higher distillation of ferocious natural appetite” (107). See also Goff 502, and Bersani 201; in contrast, see Nussbaum “*Wuthering Heights*” 401-405 and Reed 225-228.

³¹ Surridge views this both as an indicator of the veiled brutality of the Grange inhabitants and of the inherent violence of the conception of property rights which underlies pet-keeping (“Animals” 168). See also Reed 214.

³² To quote him more fully, Eagleton says that the Lintons' genteel culture has a "concealed brutality" which is "unleashed in the shape of bulldogs brought to the defense of civility" (100). Surridge likewise sees this dog-attack as revealing the brutality of civility; the "inherent violence which the Grange habitually conceals," as does the young Lintons' treatment of their pet puppy ("Animals" 168). See also Davies 116-117. Kreilkamp 101-102, 110.

³³ See also Tytler "Animals" 124.

³⁴ Davies argues that "[t]he bestiality of human actions relates to the innate and conscienceless violence of the animals, and the exoneration from blame of non-human beings carries over in a complex way to the excesses of the humans" (118).

³⁵ Tytler also argues that Heathcliff's upbringing has led him to conflate humans and animals, so that his "essential misanthropy . . . find[s] expression in a persistent cruelty to animals" ("Animals" 128). He notes that Heathcliff sees both animals and people in utilitarian terms, and is "never kind or affectionate to animals" ("Animals" 128).

³⁶ Wade Thompson notes that this novel presents a world in which "pain is an elementary condition of life" (70), a "world of sadism, violence, and wanton cruelty" in which "survival depends on one's ability to be tough, brutal, rebellious" (71). Thompson adds that "In *Wuthering Heights*, the eruptions of cruelty and violence are so vivid that one tends not to notice how frequently pain is inflicted just as a matter of course" (70).

³⁷ As Surridge notes, acts of cruelty to animals align the "civilized" Grange and the "savage" Heights ("Animals" 167).

³⁸ Goff notes that for both Darwin and Brontë, "unnecessary cruelty was the distinctive feature of human behavior. In nature, death and destruction on a massive scale are necessary for the proliferation of life and variety" (495). And J. Hillis Miller notes that for Brontë "every man 'does in effect disclaim the nature of man, and degrade himself into a beast,'" so that "every man is as much a part of nature" as animals, living "by murder and murder alone," but that in fact "man is worse than any natural creature, for only he kills wantonly, for amusement, taking positive pleasure in the useless infliction of mortal pain on other beings" ("Emily Brontë" 165). See also Torgerson 91-93 and Duthie 232-233.

³⁹ See Duthie 245 and Ablow 62.

⁴⁰ Margaret Homans notes that this episode proves that "Heathcliff was as sadistic in his relatively happy childhood as he is as an adult" (18).

⁴¹ Homans makes this point as well (18). The responsibility for cruelty to animals in this scene also extends to the Lintons and the society they represent; as Davies points out, the fact that this pillow is made of bird feathers suggests that "civilization" with its luxuries in fact depends on cruelty and death (135-137). See also Torgerson 92.

⁴² Or, as Surridge suggests, this act "symbolically marks the departure of Isabella—the 'petted' product of the 'civilized' Grange—from the arena of discipline and pet-keeping into Heathcliff's world of overt violence" ("Animals" 169). See also Maureen Adams on the significance of this scene, particularly for the connection it makes between animal abuse and domestic violence, and on the association between spaniels with abused women; she suggests that Anne Brontë's spaniel Flossy was the inspiration for Fanny (6). Torgerson also notes the significance of Heathcliff's violence in this scene, given that animals were one of the only "properties" women were allowed to own in this era (160, note 24).

⁴³ Of course, the commonality of this practice in the eighteenth century need not mean that Emily Brontë, a dog lover, approved of it, or that it would not have shocked her nineteenth-century readers.

⁴⁴ See also Davies 120-121.

⁴⁵ In more human terms, Duthie observes that Heathcliff's "sadism awakens similar reactions in his victims" (232).

⁴⁶ See also Ablow 67-68 for a different reading of Lockwood's relationship to the reader.

⁴⁷ For example, Duthie says of Nelly:

She has a strong maternal instinct which leads her to mother young children, and to sympathize in a practical though never sentimental manner with the unfortunate. Even Heathcliff, disqualified at first as a foreigner, finishes by appealing to her compassion... [I]f others had had as much feeling and as much good sense as herself, he might never have developed into an agent of doom to the entire Earnshaw household... Nelly Dean, though shrewd and benevolent, has her faults, the chief among them being over-confident intervention in the affairs of the family she serves, without full understanding of the issues at stake. But hers is on the whole a beneficent influence" (226-227).

Carroll also describes Nelly as "sympathetic" to the other characters and "humane" (248).

⁴⁸ This cold, selfish practicality is echoed by Zillah, Nelly's replacement as housekeeper at the Heights; Zillah says that when she saw Catherine being mistreated, "I did pity her then, I'm sure; still, I didn't wish to lose my place, you know" (223). See also Torgerson 99 on Nelly's shifting of allegiances based on self-interest, and Champion 55 on Nelly's manipulative, meddling behavior. Gilbert and Gubar present a complex view of Nelly as both nurturing mother and meddling agent of patriarchy (291-292).

⁴⁹ See also Kreilkamp 99 and Gilbert and Gubar 294. Heathcliff repeats this dehumanization by referring to his son as an "it," a "paltry creature" (168). Similarly, Nelly calls the newborn Catherine an "it," perhaps expressing the detachment and lack of sympathy which characterizes all the adults at the birth of this "unwelcome infant" (128).

⁵⁰ See also Torgerson 114 on Cathy's futile, self-destructive struggle with illness. She argues that becoming a lady is disease-producing for Cathy (108), and that her self-division (as she is caught between Edgar and Heathcliff) leads to further illness and death (112). This echoes Gilbert and Gubar's argument that in this novel "to be a lady is to be diseased" (268), and that ladyhood is a "social disease" (269) which in Cathy's case is contracted due to her psychic fragmentation and the loss of her true self (278).

⁵¹ See also Ablow 59-62 for a reading of Cathy's "insanity" as the inevitable result of her powerlessness in marriage.

⁵² See also Ablow 61 and Hafley 208 on this scene. Hafley goes so far as to read Nelly as the novel's villain. Reed also notes that Nelly's "very lack of sympathy with Cathy . . . undermines the accuracy of her judgments. The reader is uncertain when and whether to accept her normative views . . . [T]he use of a conventional but unreliable narrator sustains an ambivalence toward those very civilized values that Nelly preaches and the savagery that pervades her tale" (228).

⁵³ Barbara Gates similarly notes that Catherine knows how to induce her own ill-health, but "her body only partially cooperates with her will, and Nelly's assumption that [Cathy] is in total control of her situation is one of Nelly's tragic miscalculations" (131). Gilbert and Gubar describe Cathy as becoming anorexic as a response to her powerlessness (282, 284-285), and even as "like her creator . . . a sort of hunger artist" (287). (See also Katherine Frank 257.) They also claim that Heathcliff develops an illness "very much akin" to Cathy's anorexia (298), and note that starving is "an all-pervasive motif in the novel" (282). Giuliana Giobbi likewise points out that starvation (especially self-starvation) is a "leitmotif in the novel" (77), and describes Cathy's illness as anorexic and manic depressive (78). Susan Gorsky also sees Cathy as suffering from anorexia (along with depression and hallucinations) as a result of powerlessness and self-division (181), and views her death as "perhaps unconsciously willed" (182), but not fully within her control. She likewise views Heathcliff's final illness as anorexic (187). See also Frank 220-221. Both Torgerson and Bloomfield find the application of the modern diagnosis "anorexic" to Cathy problematic, and note that it does not fit or account for all Cathy's symptoms or her rapid decline (Torgerson 155-156, note 1; Bloomfield 294-295). Bloomfield instead diagnoses Cathy with "manic-depressive psychosis and toxemia of pregnancy" (294). See also note 60 of this chapter. Sydney Dobell in a review of the 1850 edition in the *Palladium* praised Brontë for her depiction of Catherine's mental illness, which he said has such "symptomatic truth in its details" that it is at once a "psychological and medical study" (Dobell 297).

⁵⁴ As Nussbaum observes, "Ellen is moved to compassion for Heathcliff's loss, but she cannot really feel compassion for him—so far has he, in her view, put himself outside the common behavior of human beings" (*Wuthering Heights* 401). Kreilkamp also notes that Nelly's detachment from Heathcliff's grief comes from a sort of distancing through animalization, saying that she is "far too quick, in her dismay at his behavior, to other him as inhuman—in effect, to brand him as a 'brute'" (104).

⁵⁵ In contrast, Kreilkamp argues that Nelly, an "unfeeling witness" (103) drawing distinctions of species to distance herself from pain, is not imitated by the "affective reader;" rather, "Heathcliff's pain thus invites our pity . . . as well as our judgment on Nelly's failure to experience such feelings as strongly as we do . . . [Nelly is] the standard by which we measure our own response as superior" (104). I would respond that Brontë's use of Nelly as narrator makes it virtually impossible for the "affective reader" to identify with Heathcliff or to sympathetically appropriate his feelings, however much we recognize Nelly's lack of sympathy. His feelings are simply rendered too strange and excessive, as being above or below human sympathy.

⁵⁶ See John Prichard and Jean Esquirol "Monomania" for Victorian definitions of monomania, or "partial insanity" (Prichard 252). See also Tytler "Heathcliff's Monomania" and "The Workings of Memory in *Wuthering Heights*" 12-13, Twitchell, Bloomfield 295-297, and Torgerson 101-103 on Heathcliff's monomania. Tytler notes that monomania, well-established in medical circles by 1847, was thought of as a "disease of sensibility" and a disease of the rising bourgeoisie (102), but that a simple country doctor like

Dr. Kenneth at the time the story is set may not have recognized it as mental illness (106). Torgerson suggests that Heathcliff's monomania gives him insight into how to manipulate other characters' mental health; for example, he attempts to drive both Hindley and Isabella towards madness (102-103). See also Marchbanks 67. See also Barker 555 and 584-585 on Branwell Brontë's "monomania" (555) after his separation from Mrs. Robinson; like Heathcliff, his behavior seemed both animal and "on the edge of sanity" (585) to those around him.

⁵⁷ See Torgerson 104-105.

⁵⁸ Giobbi observes that Cathy and Heathcliff "seem to be killed by something within themselves. Their souls will their bodies into a slow and painful death by starvation" (81; see also 87). See also Gilbert and Gubar 298. Krishnan, in contrast, sees these illnesses as purely the result of an exertion of willpower, in subversion of Victorian views of illness as a collapse of the will (31-32). See also note 55 of this chapter.

⁵⁹ See also Torgerson 161 note 26 on Linton Heathcliff's lack of sympathy and empathy.

⁶⁰ Lockwood, who hears Nelly's tale while recuperating from illness, seems to be much of Linton Heathcliff's ilk, but Nelly's true feelings about him are impossible to gauge, as she has a clear agenda behind her behavior to him—to make a match between him and Catherine that would benefit her.

⁶¹ Frances and Hindley themselves try to deny the doctor's predictions of her death after Hareton's birth; "She never was in a consumption," Hindley insists, making her loss all the more of a shock to him.

⁶² Gallagher is paraphrasing David Hume here. See Hume and Adam Smith 73-107.

⁶³ See Tytler "Nelly, I Am Heathcliff" on identification between characters in this novel, particularly between Heathcliff and Cathy, as a sort of presumptive domination. See also Carroll 251 and Ablow 52-53.

⁶⁴ See Ablow 176 note 51: "Here, sympathy only enables Heathcliff to understand how best to torment and degrade his charge." In contrast, Tytler optimistically argues that Heathcliff's "implicit recognition of Hareton's humanity makes nonsense of his earlier animal metaphors for him" and of his attempts to turn the boy into an animal ("Animals" 126). (Tytler's reading of this scene is closer to my own in "Nelly, I am Heathcliff" 179, however). Interestingly, Charlotte Brontë in the Preface to the 1850 edition of the novel suggested that Heathcliff's "solitary human feeling," the "one link that connects [him] with humanity," is not his love for Cathy, which she called "fierce and inhuman," but his "rudely confessed regard for Hareton Earnshaw" (Brontë 315).

⁶⁵ Brontë often uses animals as symbols of their troubled relationship. As noted earlier, Catherine rejects Hareton's gift of a terrier as an apology for his dogs attacking hers. The initially tense relationship between them is also expressed through horses. In one scene, Hareton tries to pet her horse Minnie, clearly as a way to start a conversation with Catherine, but she tells him to "leave [her] horse alone, or else it would kick him" (190).

⁶⁶ Tytler sees Catherine's comment as illustrative of the "intrinsic humanism of *Wuthering Heights*" ("Animals" 129).

⁶⁷ Also, as Goff wryly notes, there is "little doubt that Lockwood does not sit as high as a horse in Emily Brontë's own hierarchy of animals" (499).

⁶⁸ See Gilbert and Gubar 300.

⁶⁹ Gorsky argues: "Clearly connecting health and happiness, Brontë suggests that both, along with an appropriate kind of love, are necessary for the well-being of society and the individual." (174). She claims that the two Catherine's are "contrasting models of female health and social stability" (176); the younger Catherine, in Gorsky's view, is not just physically healthy, but psychologically healthy, as is Hareton. Catherine is psychologically integrated, while her mother is divided between a relationship whose intensity is, by nineteenth-century standards, unhealthy, and another in which she cannot express her full self in a healthy way (189).

⁷⁰ The supernatural realm, like the animal realm or the state of illness, is frequently invoked to characterize or classify the characters, with much the same effect (that of alienating human sympathy). The evocation of the supernatural renders the characters uncanny for the same reason that Davies argues that the animal metaphors do—it challenges the boundaries between human and nonhuman (118). Thus, Isabella's confusion about Heathcliff's inhumanity leads her to ask: "Is Mr. Heathcliff a man? If so, is he mad? And if not, is he a devil?" (106). Isabella later insists that he is "a lying fiend, a monster, and not a human being" (119). Nelly superstitiously wonders if Heathcliff might be a "ghoul" or "vampire," saying, "I had read of such hideous, incarnate demons" (252). Indeed, for all the time the various characters spend comparing Heathcliff to a brute beast, they still find plenty of time to align him with forces of supernatural evil, comparing him to Satan/ the devil (32, 89, 134), a "fiend" (108, 119, 136, 141), a "monster" (134), and a "goblin" (133, 251). Often, the two inhuman realms, the animal and the supernatural, are fused-- as

Davies puts it, “the subhuman and the superhuman connect” (118). On the fusion of the supernatural and the natural/animal realms in the novel, see Gilbert and Gubar 293, 294, 296; Davies 118; Goff 483, 500; Van Ghent 155, 163-165; Haire-Sargeant 424, and Torgerson 103. Paradoxically, Homans claims that every time “the reader’s vision of Heathcliff is made definite by a specific comparison, he becomes more human and less demonic, even, curiously, when he is being compared to a demon” (12). Patterson likewise argues that Brontë maintains sympathy for the “demonic” Heathcliff, and that she “has things both ways at once, throwing over Heathcliff the glamour of the supernatural and at the same time maintaining reader sympathy for a very human sufferer in tragic circumstances... Emphasis on his pre-moral daemonic nature is carried about as far as possible without placing him beyond the pale of humanity” (91). I argue that Brontë’s goal is precisely to put her characters beyond the pale of humanity.

⁷¹ For a description of Brontë’s relationship with her devoted dog Keeper, see Adams, Theresa Mangum 26-27; Fraser 297, 318-319, and 328; Marjorie Garber 252-255; and Lucasta Miller 223-228. Adams also discusses the impact Keeper (and Anne’s dog Flossy) had on the entire Brontë family. Miller examines the way Emily herself came to be seen as “willfully canine” by the public. Fraser observes that Emily felt for the dog “the sort of feeling usually reserved for human beings” (318), and quotes Ellen Nussey’s observation in a letter that Keeper seemed to understand Emily “like a human being” (297). Barker describes Keeper’s grieving after Emily’s death (which bears some resemblance to Heathcliff’s after Cathy’s death), and how he howled outside Emily’s room for days (683), as does Adams (11-12). Garber discusses the other Brontë dogs as well. See also Lucasta Miller 237-238 and Davies 109-110 on public perception of Emily Brontë’s affinity with the animal realm, and the positive and negative valences this perception took on. See also Gaskell 267-269 and Barker 515 and 230-231 on Emily’s passion for animals. For the story behind the dog-bite scene in Shirley, see Fraser 342; Mangum 26-27; and Barker 230-231 and 723-724. For a discussion of Brontë’s capacity or incapacity for sympathy, see Barker 537.

⁷⁴ See Barker 630-631; 673-676, and 679-681; Frank 252-261; Gaskell 343-358; Lucasta Miller 193; W.H. Helm 162; and Fraser 315-318 on Emily’s final illness and death. Fraser describes Emily as having a Cathy-like longing for death in the months approaching her demise (295, 297-298). See also Barker 272-274, 343, 357-358, and 462-463.

⁷⁵ Katherine Frank’s biography is particularly invested in depicting Emily as anorexic.

Chapter III

Mad Animals and “Inward Wounds”: Charlotte Brontë and the Boundaries of Sympathy

In a letter to her publisher, Charlotte Brontë expressed some irritation at the way her friends Elizabeth Gaskell and Harriet Martineau spoke about her health: “They seem determined between them that I shall be some kind of invalid... Why may I not be well like other people?” (Brontë in Jung 145). This comment gives us some insight into how Brontë might have regarded Gaskell’s biography of her after her death, which is filled with details of the physical as well as emotional suffering of its subject. This emphasis on suffering, even if Brontë might have found it exaggerated, is nevertheless compelling for two reasons. First, it was easy for Gaskell to depict Brontë as an invalid—even a martyr—because Brontë’s life was indeed filled with illness and grief, including the early deaths of her mother, all five of her siblings, and finally herself. *Jane Eyre* was written while she nursed her father after cataract surgery; *Shirley* in the year during which Branwell, Emily, and Anne all died; and the early stages of *Villette* as she was suffering from mercury poisoning.¹ Charlotte Brontë herself was preoccupied with health and illness, diagnosing herself with hypochondria, which, as Sally Shuttleworth notes, “as a term in Victorian medicine,” encompassed “both the sense of imaginary perceptions of illness, and... ‘incurable despair’ and ‘melancholy forebodings’” (*Charlotte* 141). In another letter, Brontë noted of her own experience of hypochondria that it made life “a continual waking Nightmare--Under such circumstances the morbid nerves can know neither peace nor enjoyment—whatever touches—pierces them—sensation for them is all suffering” (Brontë in Barker *Letters* 156).²

Brontë's fixation on her bodily symptoms was an inheritance from her father, who, as Shuttleworth records, was deeply concerned with the health of his family; his heavily annotated copy of Thomas Graham's *Modern Domestic Medicine* (his "secular bible" [Shuttleworth *Charlotte* 27]) attests to the "minute scrutiny and medical intervention" with which he managed his household, throwing "his whole weight of patriarchal endorsement behind the authority of the medical word" (Shuttleworth *Charlotte* 11).³

Gaskell's emphasis on suffering in the biography also accords well with the tone of Brontë's novels, a tone that is often wrenchingly painful, particularly in her last two works, *Shirley* and *Villette*. Pain suffuses these works in a way that goes beyond even Brontë's descriptions of her characters' bodily or emotional afflictions. These novels seem, perhaps more intensely than any others in the English language, to be written out of pain.⁴ Judith Mitchell calls *Shirley* a novel of "painful confusion," "evinced a pain that does not derive from the story itself," the tone of which undermines its conventional romantic conclusion (58-59). Harriet Martineau found *Villette* "almost intolerably painful" (Cooper xxvi).

Not just suffering in general, but illness in particular plays a major part in Brontë's work. *Jane Eyre* is illustrative of the difficulty of escaping illness in Brontë's novels,⁵ though Jane is very much a survivor. Near the beginning of the novel, Mr. Brocklehurst asks Jane how she may avoid Hell, and she replies: "I must keep in good health, and not die" (32). Jane does manage to maintain her health throughout various situations in which it is imperiled. She rejects Helen Burns's view that illness and death are the only legitimate way to struggle against one's suffering. While Helen is comforted

that “By dying young, I shall escape great sufferings” (97), the child Jane feels “[h]ow sad to be lying now on a sickbed, and to be in danger of dying! This world is pleasant—it would be dreary to be called from it” (94).

Jane, as Rochester notes, is “tenacious of life” (143). She escapes the typhus fever that kills her parents, and that which later rages through Lowood--that “cradle of fog and fog-bred pestilence” and “seat of contagion” (99) where she lives for eight years, and of which Rochester says, “I thought half the time in such a place would have done up any constitution!” (143). She survives the fit she experiences in the red room: as she says looking back on it, “No severe or prolonged bodily illness followed this incident... [I]t only gave to my nerves a shock, of which I feel the reverberation to this day” in “fearful pangs of mental suffering” (19). She escapes the consumption that kills Helen, and survives the near-starvation and illness she experiences after fleeing Thornfield. She avoids the potential hazards of India, where she knows she would face “premature death” (466), hazards which are killing St. John at the novel’s end. Several critics, however, have noticed the irony of her ending up at Ferndean, a place in which Rochester would not even lodge Bertha because the “unhealthiness of the situation” would have made this an act of “indirect murder” (*JE* 347).⁶ The threat of pathology lingers at the end of *Jane Eyre* in this “insalubrious” site (496), creating a sense of dis-ease that marks the end of all Brontë’s novels, from the violent outburst at the end of *The Professor*, to the destruction of the natural realm by industry at the end of *Shirley*, to the ambiguous shipwreck with which *Villette* closes.⁷

Because they foreground illness and suffering to such an extent, one might expect Brontë’s novels to emphasize the importance of sympathy, since illness and suffering

make the need for sympathy so visible. But Charlotte Brontë's novels are by no means pleas for universal sympathy, nor do her protagonists model a recognition of all people's full humanity. Like her sister Anne's, Charlotte Brontë's conceptions of sympathy are complex and her characters prickly and critical. Even the well-loved Jane gives some readers the sense of being over-critical, or at least stand-offish; Julia Mieles Rodas observes of Jane that "for all readers, even those who feel profoundly attached to the text... there is some quirk in the narrative character that irks, that stands clear of our sense of intimacy" ("Spectrum" 52). Of course, this claim must be weighed against the way many readers have latched onto the text so passionately *because* of the compelling narrative voice and their identification with Jane.⁸ Nevertheless, Rodas points us towards something that distinguishes the narrative voices in all of Brontë's novels: the narrators' expressions of deep antipathy towards many of their fellow characters.

This is certainly not to say that her protagonists are incapable of sympathy; Jane Eyre, for example, has a capacity for sympathy that Rochester recognizes, telling her she will often find herself an "involuntary confidante" to others because she can "listen... with a kind of innate sympathy; not the less comforting and encouraging because it is very unobtrusive in its manifestations" (159). Nor does Charlotte Brontë foreclose readers' sympathy for all her characters, as Emily Brontë does. But certainly none of her narrator-characters share the fault of Jane Bennett in *Pride and Prejudice*, of being "too apt... to like people in general" (Austen 62). *Villette*'s Lucy Snowe wryly notes, after saying "I liked her" of another character, "It is not a declaration I have often made concerning my acquaintance, in the course of this book" (*Villette* 411). An early review of *Jane Eyre* noted of the eponymous heroine, "Never was there a better hater" (cited in

Barker *Letters* 193), and antipathy is undoubtedly a strong note in each of Brontë's narrative voices.⁹ The protagonists exult in their power to read the characters and motivations of others, but generally employ this acuity to judge— even to condemn— rather than to sympathize.

Perhaps the reason for this critical tone is the desperation of Brontë's protagonists to assert their own humanity and superiority, in the face of constant marginalization by others. As Miriam Bailin notes, these protagonists are simultaneously aware of "latent worth and public nonentity" (51): "Unlike most of Dickens's and George Eliot's protagonists, who must learn to recognize the existence and substantiality of other centers of self, Brontë's heroines need to be recognized, to emerge from a condition of latency and near invisibility through the intercession of others" (Bailin 50). One can see this pattern from the beginning of *Jane Eyre*, for example, when the unloved orphan is hardly recognized as human; as the servants Bessie and Abbot are discussing her orphaned status, Bessie suggests that "[p]oor Miss Jane is to be pitied," but Abbot replies: "Yes... if she were a nice, pretty child, one might compassionate her forlornness; but one really cannot care for such a little toad as that" (*JE* 31). From such beginnings, one can see why Brontë's narrators are determined to endeavor to assert their own moral value and full humanity, even at the expense of others.¹⁰

In this chapter, I first examine how, despite Brontë's love for animals, her narrators use the language of animality to depict other characters as subhuman, incapable of giving and unworthy of receiving sympathy. In the case of *Jane Eyre*'s Bertha Rochester in particular, the discourse of animality intertwines with that of mental illness to dehumanize her and to deny her right to sympathy. Next, I explore the role that

repression of one's own suffering plays in Brontë's conception of full humanity, even as she depicts the pathological results of such repression. Finally, I examine the gendering of sympathy in Brontë's depictions of illness, in which the capacity for extending one's moral imagination is largely the domain of women as well as invalids, rendering those marginalized groups in some sense the most fully human in Brontë's writing.

Animality, Madness, and the Subhuman

Like her sister Anne, Charlotte considered sympathy for animals a key indicator of moral worth. In one revealing scene, the two heroines of *Shirley* lay out their mutual ideal of a man as one that has sympathy for, and attachment to, animals and other marginalized or powerless groups. Shirley says, "we watch him, and see him kind to animals, to little children, to poor people" (218); the "soothsayers" she says she would consult about his merit are "the mouse that steals out of the cranny in the wainscot; the bird that in frost and snow pecks at my window for a crumb; the dog that licks my hand and sits beside my knee" (219). Shirley and Caroline could trust "one who was kind to such things," one whom "such things seemed instinctively to follow... [to] rely on" (219). Caroline says:

We have a black cat and an old dog at the Rectory. I know somebody to whose knee that black cat loves to climb; against whose shoulder and cheek it likes to purr. The old dog always comes out of his kennel and wags his tail, and whines affectionately when somebody passes... He quietly strokes the cat, and lets her sit while he conveniently can, and when he must disturb her by rising, he puts her softly down, and never flings her from him roughly; he always whistles to the dog and gives him a caress (219).

Their discussion is very reminiscent of Agnes Grey's moral evaluations of people based on their treatment of animals, as are several other scenes in Charlotte Brontë's

novels.¹¹ The young Jane Eyre, deprived of affection, leaves food for a robin (*JE* 37), while her vicious cousin John “twisted the necks of the pigeons, killed the little peachicks, [and] set the dogs at the sheep” (18). Much like Jane, *Shirley*’s love-starved Caroline Helstone leaves a piece of biscuit for a mouse, and will let no trap be set for it (*Shirley* 262), and even in near-poverty *The Professor*’s Frances Henri cares tenderly for her aunt’s cat after her aunt’s death (*Professor* 828-829). In *Villette*, Monsieur Paul shows the kindness under his gruff exterior in his tenderness to a dog that loves him.¹² One of *Shirley*’s few sympathetic male characters, William Farren, shares with Caroline “a similar interest in animals, birds, insects... [T]hey held similar doctrines about humanity to the lower animals” (447). Shirley praises another character, a young boy, because he is not like other schoolboys who “take an unnatural delight in killing and tormenting birds, and insects, and kittens, and whatever is weaker than themselves” (464).

However, as in Anne’s novels, while animals themselves are considered worthy objects of sympathy, humans who display “animal” traits are not. As in the other Victorian texts this dissertation explores, “animalism” or “animality” when applied to a human are often pejorative, though not as universally so as in Emily’s work. Charlotte Brontë makes it very clear that those who give free rein to their animal instincts—particularly those associated with sexual desire and carnality—are subhuman. Such human animals are even sub-animal, in terms of the fellow-feeling which the narrators and other characters suggest they merit.

Among these dehumanized characters are the students William Crimsworth, the protagonist of *The Professor*, teaches in Belgium, particularly the female students. In

general, he is tantalized, fascinated and repulsed by women, and his descriptions of them, as Mitchell notes, “inevitably descend to bestial imagery” (Mitchell 34).¹³ He initially expects the Belgian schoolgirls to be “angels” (*Professor* 749), but quickly judges them in the harshest moral terms based on his reading of their physiognomies. He asserts that “in less than five minutes they... revealed to me their characters” (739). In the face of one he discerns “neither thought, sentiment, nor passion” (738); of another he damningly concludes: “She was sensual now, and in ten years’ time she would be coarse—promise plain was written in her face of much future folly” (739). This latter unfortunate girl he further describes “parting her lips, as those of a hot-blooded Maroon... [S]he looked at the moment scarcely purer than Lucrece de Borgia” (739).

His further observations on the “specimens of the species ‘jeune fille’” (751) in his classroom confirm for him their “coarse indifference to the interest and convenience of every one else” (751) and their “precocious impurity” (752); he sweepingly states that “the mass of them [was] mentally depraved” (752). One he describes almost hysterically, as “Gorgon-like”; giving a phrenological reading of her head, he says, “I wonder that anyone, looking at that girl’s head and countenance, would have received her under their roof” (754):

She made noises with her mouth like a horse, she ejected her saliva, she uttered brutal expressions; behind and below her were seated a band of very vulgar, inferior-looking Flamandes, including two or three examples of that deformity of person and imbecility of intellect whose frequency in the Low Countries would seem to furnish proof that the climate is such as to induce degeneracy of the human mind and body; these, I found, were completely under her influence, and with their aid she got up and sustained a swinish tumult. (755)¹⁴

Even English-born pupils, he laments, can lose their human status “[a]midst this assemblage of all that was insignificant and defective, much that was vicious and

repulsive” (758), “acquiring an imbecile indifference to every sentiment that can elevate humanity” (757).

Shuttleworth and Mitchell are correct in pinpointing that Crimsworth’s disgust in these descriptions is a “sexual disgust” (Mitchell 33-38) at the “animal sexuality” of the schoolgirls (Shuttleworth *Charlotte* 130). However, more than gender is at play in Crimsworth’s response to the Belgians. He also classifies his male students like an “anthropologist assured of his own evolutionary superiority” (Shuttleworth *Charlotte* 132). “Their intellectual faculties were generally weak, their animal propensities strong,” Crimsworth asserts, adding that they would respond like “desperate swine” if any real intellectual exertion was demanded of them (720). In this, he claims the school is “merely an epitome of the Belgian nation” (721). At the same time, hypocritically, he acts shocked by the way the French school director Monsieur Pelet dehumanizes the Flemish: “Flamands certainly they were, and had the true Flamand physiognomy, where intellectual inferiority is marked in lines none can mistake; still, they were men” (722). He later says of Pelet’s two ushers, whom the latter describes as mere “bêtes de sommes”: “Poor fellows! If they had not looked so very heavy, so very soulless, so very indifferent to all things in heaven above or in the earth beneath, I could have pitied them” (745), hardly an expression of his capacity for compassion, though his judgment may be less venomous than when describing the schoolgirls.

Such descriptions of the Belgians could be taken as Brontë’s astute depiction of Crimsworth’s xenophobia and, in the case of the female students, his hysterical misogyny, if they were not so close to the views Lucy in *Villette* and Brontë herself in her letters express of Belgian students and Belgians in general. Brontë wrote from Belgium to

her brother Branwell that of “120 persons” in the house in Brussels “I can discern only one or two who deserve anything like regard—This is not owing to foolish fastidiousness on my part—but to the absence of decent qualities on theirs—they have not intellect or politeness or good-nature or good-feeling—they are nothing... They have no sensations themselves and they excite none” (Brontë in Barker *Letters* 113).

The most important example of a dehumanized character in Brontë’s oeuvre, however, and the one which comes most easily to mind, is not Belgian but Caribbean: Bertha Mason, Rochester’s “mad, bad, and embruted” first wife (*JE* 357). *Jane Eyre*’s madwoman in the attic has been reclaimed in various ways by feminist and postcolonial critics, most notably Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar, who claim her as a figure of feminist rebellion, and Gayatri Spivak, who offers a postcolonial critique of such a Western individualist reading,¹⁵ and by such extensions of the sympathetic imagination in fiction as Jean Rhys’s *Wide Sargasso Sea*. But Jane’s and Rochester’s language in *Jane Eyre* itself works to exclude Bertha from the realm of the human. In fact, their language doubly excludes her; their animalizing discourse is conflated with pathologizing language to render her repulsive and alien to readers. Brontë frames this language so as to foreclose sympathy.

For example, Jane’s first view of Bertha is thoroughly dehumanizing in its emphasis on beastliness: “What it was, whether a beast or a human being, one could not, at first sight, tell: it groveled, seemingly on all fours; it scratched and growled like some strange wild animal: but it was covered with clothing; and a quantity of dark, grizzled hair, wild as a mane, hid its head and face... [T]he clothed hyena rose up, and stood tall on its hind legs” (338). In Elaine Showalter’s words, Bertha is “absolutely the brutalized

animal” (67); D. Christopher Gabbard observes that Jane sees Bertha as “a disturbing humanoid form, human and subhuman combined, an embodiment of the animal-human nexus... challenging the very definition of the human” (103).¹⁶ At the same time, both Jane and Rochester repeatedly use the words “maniac” and “lunatic” to describe Bertha, keeping the discourse of mental illness in play as well.

For the most part, the novel’s discourses of animality and of insanity reinforce each other in keeping Bertha an Other, the role to which her cultural otherness perhaps already doomed her. Even critics seeking to reclaim *Jane Eyre* as more progressive in its treatment of illness or disability must come to terms with the dehumanization of Bertha: for example, Susannah Mintz, in her essay “Illness, Disability, and Recognition in *Jane Eyre*,” argues that Brontë’s novel treats disability progressively,¹⁷ but when she notes that as Rochester reveals Bertha “[i]n the horrified ‘retreat’ of the gathered polite company, anything like sympathetic ‘affiliation’... collapses entirely” (140), she could as well be talking about the potential reader’s sympathy as the wedding-attendants’. Mintz contends that the failure or breakdown of “recognition”—Mintz’s word which maps onto sympathy—when it comes to Bertha is a failure on the characters’ parts, especially Rochester’s (138-140), rather than on Brontë’s. Whether we accept this or not, the question Mintz raises remains: “[D]oes Brontë suggest that madness, unlike ailments more conventionally understood to be part of the body, precludes the very subjectivity upon which the notion of recognition depends?” (140).¹⁸ In other words, does madness preclude sympathy in a way that other illnesses do not?

Mintz’s answer to this is that, in Bertha’s madness, “*Jane Eyre* might be said to intimate a basic tenet of disability scholarship concerning mental illness... that

designations of ‘madness’ serve the perpetuation of narrowly defined conceptions of the human” (141), but she admits that her argument in general is “complicated by the representation of Bertha to the degree that she is identified as morally suspect from the start” (140). This is the crux of the problem of Bertha; where does supposed “vice” end and mental illness begin?

Patrick Brontë’s beloved copy of Graham’s *Modern Domestic Medicine* suggests that: “The combination of moral and physical causes is much more commonly the origin of insanity, than either of them singly” (392), which would seem to fit with the combination of moral and hereditary factors in Bertha’s insanity. However, Rochester emphasizes his wife’s moral deviance as the primary justification for his treatment of her,

Rochester can justify his view and treatment of Bertha as subhuman because he threads his pathologizing and animalizing language together with a rhetoric of immorality, describing her as “a nature the most gross, impure, depraved I ever saw” (*JE* 353), and even calling her a “fiend” and “demon” (346). Thus, he claims that it “is not because she is mad I hate her,” and asks Jane, “If you were mad, do you think I should hate you?” (347).¹⁹ While alluding to the hereditary nature of Bertha’s insanity—with a mother in a “lunatic asylum,” one brother a “complete dumb idiot,” and another who “will probably be in the same state one day” (352)—Rochester also insists that his wife was “intemperate and unchaste” (353), and that “her excesses... prematurely developed the germs of insanity” (353), leaving him with a “monster” that he cages in a “wild beast’s den” (356).²⁰ According to Rochester’s circular logic, Bertha’s insanity renders her animal, and her animality has rendered her insane. His “disgust” for her supposed vices came before he had her certified insane; indeed, it may have been the reason he did

so. Ultimately, he seeks in Jane “sympathy with something at least human” (337), not acknowledging his own role in stripping Bertha of her humanity.²¹

In sum, Rochester generally presents Bertha as the epitome of moral as well as manic insanity, in some respects like that of the violent and cruel male characters in Anne Brontë’s novels.²² Since Bertha is a woman, however, her supposed moral insanity manifests itself in transgressive sexual appetites, as much as in violence, as Showalter notes (67). In a letter to her editor, Brontë seemed to endorse Rochester’s dehumanizing view of Bertha’s mental illness; she wrote that it “is a phase of insanity which may be called moral madness, in which all that is good or even human seems to disappear from the mind, and a fiend-nature replaces it” (Brontë in Shuttleworth *Charlotte* 14).²³

Despite this apparent authorial judgment on Bertha, however, there is a key moment in the text in which Jane is so struck by the virulent antipathy of Rochester’s tone toward Bertha that she feels a movement of sympathy. She exclaims: “Sir... you are inexorable for that unfortunate lady: you speak of her with hate—with vindictive antipathy. It is cruel—she cannot help being mad” (347).²⁴ Here, Jane is able to feel compassion precisely because she is able to see Bertha’s insanity as an illness, something that Bertha cannot help, and not a mark or manifestation of her moral degeneracy. Jane’s momentary sympathy for Bertha, much like her flash of sympathy for Rochester’s discarded mistresses (359), suggests the possibility that Rochester’s view of Bertha is not the only one the text allows. It also seems to undermine Showalter’s assertion that Jane “never sees her kinship with her confined and monstrous double, and... Brontë has no sympathy for her mad creature” (69).²⁵

In fact, Brontë wrote in a letter that she was afraid she had been unfair to Bertha: “It is true that profound pity ought to be the only sentiment elicited by the view of such degradation, and equally true is it that I have not sufficiently dwelt on that feeling: I have erred in making horror too predominant. Mrs. Rochester, indeed, lived a sinful life before she was insane, but sin itself is a species of insanity—the truly good behold and compassionate it as such” (Brontë in Thorpe 175). By this standard, even Jane is not “truly good” in her view of Bertha, and certainly Rochester is not. It is no wonder, then, that Jean Rhys wondered “if Miss Brontë does not *want* her book tampered with!” in its depiction of Bertha (Rhys “Selected Letters” 137).

Nevertheless, Jane’s moment of sympathy for Bertha is the only moment in which she, or any other character, seems to acknowledge Bertha as a sufferer from illness, a human being meriting compassion. Once Jane hears Rochester’s story of his marriage with Bertha, her compassion is moved for him, not for Bertha: “I pity you—I do earnestly pity you,” she tells him (353). She never again directs her sympathy toward Bertha.

Rochester’s and Jane’s attitudes toward Bertha are to some extent indicative of their Victorian context; the idea of insanity as purely a disease, rather than a moral failing, was only slowly gaining traction as Brontë was writing. Many Victorian doctors still believed that a patient’s moderation and willpower over his or her “animal nature” could help him or her achieve mental health (Barlow 244).²⁶ In a letter to *The Lancet* published in 1856, nine years after the novel’s publication, a contributor commended the advances in asylums and their treatment of the insane over the previous thirty years, but noted that, despite the work of asylum reformers like Phillipe Pinel and John Conolly, efforts toward more humane attitudes and treatment of the insane, in contrast with the

“old system of brutality,” still had some way to go (*Lancet* 682).²⁷ “The triumph of science and humanity is not yet complete” (682), he said, due to “the harsh and unphilosophical doctrine—still prevalent amongst the educated classes--that insanity is not a state of disease; that it does not imply irresponsibility; that the goal, hard labor, even capital punishment, are appropriate means of cure and repression” (682). He adds that:

In the eyes of the theologians, insanity was always sin; in the eyes of our judges it is crime; it is only the physician who can discover in it the workings of disease... So long as judges, clergymen, and public writers still hold the conviction that insanity is not a disease; so long as they nurse the belief that insanity is an affection [*sic*] which all the world is competent to detect and treat; so long must the condition of the insane be a subject of the deepest anxiety. (682)

In 1847, the judgmental public attitudes this contributor opposed would have been still more prevalent, and even more so in the 1830s when *Jane Eyre* is set, and *especially* so more than a decade prior to that, when Rochester first locked Bertha up.²⁸

At the same time, *Jane Eyre* can be read as historically spurring the very sympathy it seems to foreclose. In *The Female Malady: Woman, Madness, and English Culture, 1830-1980*, Showalter explores in depth the attitudes about gender and female sexuality which shaped diagnosis and treatment of women’s insanity in the Victorian Era. She describes asylum reform efforts by figures including Conolly (Showalter 23-50) and Pinel (Showalter 203); asylums began to focus on more humane treatment for the insane, in contrast to earlier practices in which, as physician Andrew Wynter observed in 1857, the inmates were “[s]upposed to be degraded to the level of beasts, [and] as wild beasts they were treated” (Wynter 232). Showlater notes that by 1850 new legislation including The Lunatics Act of 1845 helped make the public asylum “the primary institution for the

treatment of the insane,” so that “the asylum rather than the attic was regarded as the madwoman’s appropriate space” (17).²⁹

Showalter also observes that *Jane Eyre* played a role in this transition, as it “influenced even medical accounts of female insanity,” including John Conolly’s treatise against physical restraint, which argued that “insane women should be treated in asylums rather than at home” (Showalter 68).³⁰ Indeed, in his 1856 work on the subject, Conolly could be speaking specifically about Bertha when he observes how, with an insane inhabitant:

the habitation of the family has been full of anxiety or terror. The remotest parts of it have been rendered awful by the presence of a deranged creature under the same roof: her voice; her sudden and violent efforts to destroy things and persons; her vehement rushings to fire and window; her very tread and stamp in her dark and disordered and remote chamber, have seemed to penetrate the whole house; and, assailed by her wild energy, the very walls and roof have appeared unsafe, and capable of partial demolition. To all these sources of alarm, removal to a good asylum puts an immediate end. (Conolly “Non-Restraint” 236)

In an asylum, he suggests, someone like Bertha would undergo “no less happy a change” than those she leaves behind, as “all the ingenious bonds resorted to by frightened nurses, are at once removed,” and she would be treated with “mingled kindness and caution” (“Non-Restraint” 236).

With the changing views about the treatment of mental illness that Conolly’s works suggest, Gabbard argues that by 1847, “given the reform mood, a number of readers would have identified his [Rochester’s] conduct toward the woman in his custody as negligent, abusive, and cruel—a dereliction of responsibilities” (100-101), reflecting negative and outdated attitudes about mental illness (99-100), and “inadequate and inhumane” (108). Therefore, Rochester’s attitudes and actions may not be “shared or

endorsed by the novel's implied author," Gabbard claims (100).³¹ Nor, of course, need his attitudes be shared or endorsed by the reader.

Furthermore, as critics have noted, the apparent narratorial lack of sympathy for Bertha is undermined by the striking parallels between Jane and Bertha. Shuttleworth, for example, comments on the "extended network of imagery which draws Jane and Bertha together within an associated nexus of the 'non-human'" (*Charlotte* 155).³² When Jane expresses passion as a child, other characters describe her in animal terms and question her sanity. John Reed calls her a "rat" (13, 14) and a "bad animal" (11), Bessie calls her a "mad cat" (15) and the servants look at her "as incredulous of [her] sanity" (16).³³ Later, this mixture of animality and insanity continues to characterize her in her aunt Mrs. Reed's memory; on her deathbed, Mrs. Reed says that when the young Jane confronted her for her cruelty, she felt as if "an animal that I had struck or pushed had looked up at me with human eyes and cursed me in a man's voice" (275); she adds, "I declare [you] spoke to me like something mad, or like a fiend" (267).³⁴

Rochester, too, frequently aligns Jane with animals or other small, inhuman creatures, such as fairies or sprites, and especially birds.³⁵ Of his first meeting with Jane, in which an injury had forced him to accept her aid, he recalls: "Childish and slender creature! It seemed as if a linnet had hopped to my foot and proposed to bear me on its tiny wing" (360). He also compares her to a "curious sort of bird" in a cage, "a vivid, resolute captive... [W]ere it but free, it would soar cloud-high" (162). Later, he compares her to "a wild frantic bird that is rending its own plumage in its desperation," to which she responds: "I am no bird... I am a free human being with an independent will" (293), explicitly rejecting his dehumanizing language.

If Bertha and Jane are similarly subjected to dehumanizing language, they are also similarly hemmed in by the language of pathology. Several of the novel's characters seek to align Jane with illness. Brocklehurst describes her as a source of metaphorical contagion, saying that her aunt has sent her to Lowood "to separate her from her own young ones, fearful lest her vicious example should contaminate their purity: she has sent her here to be healed, even as the Jews of old sent their diseased to the troubled pool of Bethesda" (79).³⁶ This language parallels Rochester's words regarding Bertha: "I repudiated the contamination of her crimes, and wrenched myself from connection with her mental defects" (354). Similarly, Rochester uses the discourse of female mental fragility when he fears Jane will discover his secret, attributing her sighting of Bertha to "mental terrors," "an over-stimulated brain," and "nerves... not made for rough handling" (289). As Shuttleworth observes: "Not content with defining one wife as 'maniac,' he places his future bride in the other category of female weakness: the nervous, hysterical woman" (*Charlotte* 171).³⁷

The close parallels both between the animalizing language used to discipline Jane as a child and that used to describe Bertha, and between the young Jane's "passion" and Bertha's "madness," suggest that Brontë understood how labels of animality and illness can be used to dehumanize others, and to deny them the right to basic human sympathy. Shuttleworth argues that these parallels "suggest a more searching, interrogative attitude towards the social demarcations which separate the animal from the human, and the insane from the sane" (*Charlotte* 166). But Jane herself uses the rhetoric of madness in a way that turns it into a choice, something that she can reject through moral willpower. She calls her temptation to the moral madness of becoming Rochester's mistress "insane"

(414), resolving as she leaves him to “hold to the principles received by me when I was sane, and not mad—as I am now” (365). Implicitly, she presents sanity as a matter of willpower.

The rhetoric of madness and animality come full circle at the end of the novel, when the threat of descent into subhuman insanity casts a shadow over Rochester. After hearing of the fall of Thornfield in which Rochester is mutilated, Jane says she had “dreaded worse. I had dreaded he was mad” (494). On finding him, she says he “reminded me of some wronged and fettered wild beast or bird, dangerous to approach in his sullen woe. The caged eagle, whose gold-ringed eyes cruelty has extinguished, might look as looked that sightless Samson” (497-498). She teases him: “It is time someone undertook to rehumanise you... for I see you are being metamorphosed into a lion, or something of that sort. You have a ‘faux air’ of Nebuchednezzar in the fields about you, that is certain: your hair reminds me of eagles’ feathers; whether your nails are grown like birds’ claws or not, I have not yet noticed” (503). This allusion combines references to animals and to madness; Elizabeth Donaldson argues that Rochester suffers “melancholy madness” in distinction from Bertha’s “raving madness” (23, 25-26). Graham’s *Modern Domestic Medicine* makes this distinction, referring to two types of “insanity, or mental derangement”: the ‘high’ called “mania” or “madness,” and the “low” called “melancholy” madness (393).³⁸ Rochester is also like Nebuchednezzar, whose “madness transformed him into an animal-like, subhuman figure” (Donaldson 26), though the different animal imagery (an eagle or lion, rather than a hyena) makes Rochester’s madness appear nobler than Bertha’s (26, note 18).³⁹

Jane repudiates the possibility of Rochester's madness; she assures him that he experiences "no madness; your mind, sir, is too strong for delusion, your health too sound for frenzy" (500). Despite this reassurance, Rochester must be "rehumanized," and he feels less than a man, and less than human, as a "blind lameter" (502). He fears Jane will stay as his nurse merely because she has "an affectionate heart and a generous spirit, which prompts you to make sacrifices for those you pity" (502).⁴⁰ But, as Rochester had earlier recognized, Jane's "pity" is genuine sympathy, of the kind Brontë's protagonists are always seeking: not the "egotistical pain at hearing of woes, crossed with ignorant contempt for those who have endured them," but "the suffering mother of love: its anguish is the very natal pang of the divine passion" (353-354). Jane's sympathy ends up saving him from a possible descent into the sub-human.

In *Shirley*, the eponymous heroine fears the same kind of descent into the realm of the subhuman when she is bitten by a possibly rabid dog. "Hydrophobia"—what we now call rabies—was a disease which transformed the sufferer into a Bertha-like figure of moral insanity. It is not death Shirley fears, but losing the rationality and self-control so crucial to one's humanity in Brontë's work. Shirley thinks that "the best thing that could happen to me would be to take a good cold and fever, and so pass off like other Christians" (507). In a letter to the editor of the *Lancet* in 1825, Annall Thomas Fayerman, MD., told the story of a hydrophobic patient (*Lancet* 1825 V. 5-6, 343-346), noting that in the early stages of the disease the patient asked for strait-waistcoat to prevent himself from "mischief" or any "power of outrage" (344). In the throes of hydrophobia, "[h]is face underwent during the spasm the most demoniacal contortions," and he exhibited "canine madness" and the "fury of a maniac" (345). Similarly, when

Shirley seeks out Louis Moore she admits that she has feared, in his words, being “seized with hydrophobia and [dying] raving mad” (515). She asks him to promise to keep others from her, lest she should injure them (526), and says, “If I give trouble, with your own hand administer to me a strong narcotic: such a sure dose of laudanum as shall leave no mistake” (516).⁴¹ The fate worse than death for a Brontë heroine, then, is the loss of the rationality and self-control which would render her, in her view, nothing but an animal.

Shirley’s fears come to nothing, however, and the role of the human animal in *Shirley* belongs instead to the poor workers, who are de facto treated as an animal mass by the middle classes. Brontë does not portray their hunger as sympathetically as that of the heroines, even though she was writing during the “hungry forties.”⁴² As Shuttleworth points out, the workers are “demoted... from full human status to become an animal mob,” but at the same time are the focus of “intense ambivalence” in the text (*Charlotte* 197).⁴³ They are objects of repulsion as a mob, and recipients of aid and sympathy only after their uprising is put down, when, like Caroline, they are physically debilitated. In Bailin’s words, both the mob and Caroline are rendered “visible objects of compassion as patients and victims,” and in both cases, “[p]hysical suffering is the means by which moral pressure is exerted on those with the power but not the will to alleviate economic and social ills” (Bailin 74). Suffering in both cases serves as a cry for one’s full humanity to be recognized.

Villette includes yet another figure considered subhuman by those around her. The “cretin” whom Lucy is condemned to tend over a long vacation combines, in Lucy’s opinion, the bad, mad, and embruted. At first Lucy describes her as a “poor deformed and imbecile pupil,” unwanted by her family; soon however, she says that:

[H]er poor mind, like her body, was warped: its propensity was to evil. A vague bent to mischief, an aimless malevolence made constant vigilance indispensable. As she very rarely spoke, and would sit for hours together mopping and mowing her features with indescribable grimaces, it was more like being prisoned with some tameless animal, than associating with a human being" (174).⁴⁴

Lucy admits to Monsieur Paul what a burden she found watching the cretin, and he rebukes her as unfeminine for not regarding her charge with more tenderness: "You have, then, a weak heart! You lack courage, and, perhaps, charity. Yours are not the qualities which might constitute a Sister of Mercy... [Y]ou are an egoist. There are women who have nursed hospitals-full of similar unfortunates" (227). Lucy replies, "Could Monsieur do it himself?", to which he responds: "Women worthy the name ought infinitely to surpass our coarse, fallible, self-indulgent sex, in the power to perform such duties... [L]imited are your powers, for in tending one idiot, you fell sick" (228).⁴⁵ The problematic gender bias revealed in Monsieur Paul's expectations of unflinching female sympathy should not obscure Lucy's equally problematic view of the cretin, nor the thread running throughout Brontë's work, which makes humanity and virtue dependent on rationality as much as feeling.

Illness, Repression, and Endurance

Along with its emphasis on rationality, Charlotte Brontë's conception of full humanity is also characterized by repressed suffering. Her protagonists, particularly the female ones, are profoundly emotional, feeling everything deeply and keenly, but these emotions are the more intense for being kept under strict check. Crucially, it is not only desires, passions, and appetites that they repress, but suffering itself. Often, this suffering is the product of precisely those unfulfilled passions and desires, but the distinction is

significant; in silencing themselves from any utterance of their pain, they refuse to seek the sympathy of the other characters, even when this self-silencing results in their own illness. The pain they experience is expressed fully only to the reader, who can therefore provide the sympathy so often lacking in the novel's other characters. Brontë's narrators scorn those incapable of such self-suppression as mere animals, incapable of the rational self-policing they themselves practice.

Brontë frames repression of pain as a socially conditioned response that produces cruel and pathological effects; at the same time, she presents it as a sign of her protagonists' moral strength, dignity, and autonomy. As Shuttleworth observes: "In the perverted value structures of Victorian culture... suffering becomes, for Brontë, the primary indicator of female worth" (*Charlotte* 192).⁴⁶ This is true—as long as that suffering remains largely silent, just as with the workers in *Shirley*: "Sympathy is extended to the workers only for so long as they refrain from expressing their grievances" (Shuttleworth *Charlotte* 197). Suffering has moral value if endured without outward complaint.

This imperative of silence follows on what Anna Krugovy Silver calls the "anorexic logic" of Brontë's texts (20); Brontë presents her heroines as commendable for keeping such strict control over themselves, even as those heroines chafe against their socially and self-imposed restraints. Her first heroine, *The Professor's* Frances Henri, writes essays dwelling "a great deal on fortitude in bearing grief" (*Professor* 817), as well as a poem that describes a "secret, inward wound" which breaks "bleeding" in the speaker (876). What terrifies Jane about Bertha's manic rages is partly the unrestrained visibility of Bertha's pain when she breaks free of her physical confines. What terrifies

Shirley about a vision of her future self as rabid is similarly that loss of control over herself and her emotions. In both cases, the fear is that stern “Reason,” the goddess (or “hag” [*Villette* 255]) that Jane, Lucy Snowe, and even the male Crimsworth all both invoke and resent, might lose her tight grip on them.⁴⁷ In *Shirley*, a minor character accuses Caroline Helstone of having an “ill-regulated mind,” lacking “perfect control and guidance of her feelings” (70); this is the fear Brontë’s protagonists harbor, and the result is that they interiorize pain that might not be understood.

A much-quoted passage from *Shirley* regarding Caroline Helstone’s romantic disappointment expresses most strongly this tortuous, masochistic self-silencing of one’s pain, and explicitly genders it:

A lover masculine so disappointed can speak and urge explanation; a lover feminine can say nothing; if she did, the result would be shame and anguish, inward remorse for self-treachery... Take the matter as you find it: ask no questions; utter no remonstrances: it is your best wisdom. You expected bread, and you have got a stone; break your teeth on it, and do not shriek because the nerves are martyred: do not doubt that your mental stomach—if you have such a thing—is strong as an ostrich’s—the stone will digest. You held out your hand for an egg, and fate put into it a scorpion. Show no consternation: close your fingers firmly upon the gift; let it sting through your palm. Never mind: in time, after your hand and arm have swelled and quivered long with torture, the squeezed scorpion will die, and you will have learned the great lesson *how to endure without a sob*. For the whole remnant of your life, if you survive the test—some, it is said, die under it—you will be stronger, wiser, less sensitive. (*Shirley* 107, emphasis mine)

The narrator is clearly referring to the pain caused by the repression of emotion and desire,⁴⁸ but also to how, in a vicious cycle, that suffering itself must be repressed; the great lesson is “how to endure without a sob.” This imperative to hide one’s suffering is both a social prescription for women (as the repression of emotion and desire are), and also part of the moral ethos of Brontë’s novels, and deeply embedded in the characters of her heroines. While Jane Eyre as a child may wonder, “Why was I always suffering?” (*JE*

18), this question must never be voiced aloud. Society works through its internalized dictates to effect a prohibition on female expression of pain, as Lucy Snowe recognizes: “‘But if I feel, may I never express?’ ‘Never!’ declared Reason” (*Villette* 255). As Caroline Helstone observes, “to such grievances as society cannot readily cure, it usually forbids utterance, on pain of scorn” (*Shirley* 107). Directly following the famous passage of the stone and scorpion is a less famous one, as the meditation continues: “Nature, however... is an excellent friend in such cases; sealing the lips, interdicting utterance, commanding a placid dissimulation” (*Shirley* 107). Here, Brontë naturalizes the very repression everything else in the novel shows to come from unnatural, even pathological, social constraints.

Unsurprisingly, given this ethos of silencing, what torments Caroline in particular is the visibility of her suffering, as her body makes plain what she refuses to voice as her repression leads to physical and psychological breakdown.⁴⁹ She shies away from women who seem to perceive her secret when they see her (*Shirley* 198). All she will tell Mrs. Pryor and Shirley, her closest confidantes, in the early stages of the illness, is that she is growing “nervous” and sees things “under a darker aspect than I used to do... I have an inexpressible weight on my mind which I would give the world to shake off, and I cannot do it” (243), though by that point she is already wishing she had never been born (237). Caroline’s friends have “no idea” of “Caroline’s strange sufferings... of her racked nights and dismal days, no suspicion. It was at once impossible and hopeless to explain: to wait and endure was her only plan” (245).⁵⁰ Her sufferings, as Mitchell notes, are “real, and agonizingly so. She longs for Robert throughout the novel, spends most of her time trying to suppress her feelings, and nearly dies in the attempt in an unnervingly realistic

portrayal of depression and decline” (62).⁵¹ She is depressed and wastes away in what appears to be anorexia.⁵²

In some ways, Caroline’s illness is a conventional one; as Jane Wood points out, her “decline into love-sickness draws on standard images of the consumptive heroine,” as “[u]nrequited or disappointed love was seen as a source of hysteria or consumption” (Wood 33). But the interiority with which Brontë renders her pain is unparalleled. The narrator states that Caroline is not consumptive, but repeats the traditional idea that internal “tortures” can exacerbate such illnesses:

She was now precisely in that state when, if her constitution had contained the seeds of consumption, decline or slow fever, those diseases would have been rapidly developed, and would soon have quietly carried her away from the world. People never die of love or grief alone; though some die of inherent maladies, which the tortures of those passions prematurely force into destructive action. (197)

While Caroline’s illness is not consumption, it is still exacerbated by her inner pain. The supposed effects of miasma, or poisoned air, give her illness the concrete form of brain fever (*Shirley* 423-324; Wood 36), but are only able to do so because they find in Caroline “already a fever of mental excitement, and the languor of long conflict and habitual sadness” (*Shirley* 424). Thus, she “waste[s] like a snow-wreath in thaw; she fade[s] like any flower in draught” (426) until the “livid cholera tint had vanished from the face of nature” (446), and until the sympathy of her mother eases her pain by giving her someone to whom she can privately confide it.

Caroline’s illness is a uniquely powerful example of the pathological effects of such repression, as it literally make her sick almost to death. But her illness in fact follows the pattern Shuttleworth traces in Brontë’s very earliest writing, in which women who express their desires and “release their energies” are branded “immodest or insane,”

while those who repress them “are subject to a form of self-consuming insanity—morbid fantasies destroy their peace and health” (*Charlotte* 108). Brontë thus reveals the double bind in which Victorian women were placed while also perpetuating it.⁵³

Caroline’s options in life reflect another kind of sickening double bind as well, since they seem limited to ones that require repression of pain and toleration of a “secret, inward wound.” One option is to become one of the permanently invalid—and socially invalidated—old maids.⁵⁴ Visiting and listening to one such woman, the invalid Miss Mann, whose gloomy surface conceals “a starved, ghostly longing for appreciation and affection” (186), Caroline feels compassion for her for the first time. She learns that Miss Mann has suffered “cruel, slow-wasting, obstinate sufferings” (185), and “had performed duties in her day from whose anguish many... would have shrunk appalled: she had passed alone through protracted scenes of suffering, exercised rigid self-denial, made large sacrifices of time, money, health, for those who had repaid her only by ingratitude” (184).⁵⁵ In such women, the narrator warns us, “be sure that there is a canker somewhere, and a canker not the less deeply corroding because concealed” (185). Old maids, it seems, are marked by their own inward wounds.

The text’s other old maid, the “Sister of Charity” (188) Miss Ainley, represents a total effacement of self that is only superficially healthier than Miss Mann’s bitterness: the narrator says that she “never talked of herself—always of others. Their faults she passed over; her theme was their wants, which she sought to supply; their sufferings, which she longed to alleviate... She would watch by any sickbed; she seemed to fear no disease; she would nurse the poorest whom no one else would nurse... For this goodness she got but little reward in this life” (188). Miss Mann and Miss Ainley perfectly embody

stereotypes of old maids set forth in the psychological literature of the time; an 1851 article on “Woman in her Psychological Relations” in the *Journal of Psychological Medicine and Mental Pathology* observes that old maids, due to their “non-fulfillment of their duties as women,” may be either “warmly charitable” to “suffering humanity” (like Miss Ainley) or becomes physically and behaviorally “masculine” and “unwomanly” (like Miss Mann) (174-176).

Caroline attempts to emulate Miss Ainley’s good works, but “these efforts brought neither health of body nor continued peace of mind; with them all, she wasted, grew more joyless and more wan” (190). She is left defiantly wondering: “Does virtue lie in abnegation of self? I do not believe it. Undue humility makes tyranny; weak concession creates selfishness” (198).

As unappealing as the ideal of female self-abnegation is, other models of female single life with which she is faced are equally bleak and unhealthy, and the cautionary tales of traditional women’s work and marriage provided by her aunt Mary Cave and her mother Mrs. Pryor do not make those states look much better. As a governess, Mrs. Pryor had found the constraints of her life “produce[d] mortal effects on my constitution,” while the lady of the house simply accused her of being “the victim of ‘wounded vanity’” and said that unless she were humbler “my mind would very likely go to pieces on the rock that wrecked most of my sisterhood—morbid self-esteem; and that I should die an inmate of a lunatic asylum” (382). Mrs. Pryor warns Caroline that if she took a similar position, she would “pine and grow too weak for your work; you would come home... broken down. Those languishing years will follow, of which none but the invalid and her immediate friends feel the heart-sickness and know the burden; consumption and decline

would close the chapter” (384). Significantly, when Mrs. Pryor had sought to escape such a position by marrying, she had found only further sufferings, which, she says “further shook my mind” (387). Given such options, it is unsurprising that Caroline soon cannot hope for happiness, only “varieties of pain” (231), or, indeed, of ill health.

Caroline’s famous plea for the daughters of England reflects the author’s recognition of the pathological effects of women’s roles;⁵⁶ she says: “This stagnant state of things makes them decline in health: they are never well; and their minds shrink to a wondrous narrowness” (398), and continues:

Men of England! look at your poor girls, many of them fading around you, dropping off in consumption or decline; or, what is worse, degenerating to sour old maids... Keep your girls’ minds narrow and fettered—they will still be a plague and a care, sometimes a disgrace to you: cultivate them—give them scope and work—they will be your gayest companions in health; your tenderest nurses in sickness; your most faithful prop in age” (400).

She paints women’s plight as literally debilitating, but leaves it up to men—not to women’s speech—to change the status quo; she does not call on women to voice their pain.

In the same novel, even Shirley, who normally enjoys “perfect health” since, “though warm-hearted and sympathetic, she was not nervous” (357),⁵⁷ knows as well as Caroline that pain must generally be hidden. In her case, however, this internalized prohibition is a marker of her moral autonomy. When she fears she may have contracted rabies, she is “indignant” with herself for not being able to hide her anxiety; she chastises herself: “Fool! Coward! If you must tremble, tremble in secret! Quail where no eye sees you! ... how dare you show your weakness and betray your imbecile anxieties? Shake them off: rise above them: if you cannot do this, hide them” (501). Her young relative Henry Sympson observes that she “lift[s] her head above both help and sympathy” (506).

When Louis Moore tries to find the cause of her wasting away, he insists that “confession, in your case, would be half-equivalent to cure” (511), and accuses her of “disdain[ing] sympathy” (515). She explains why she has avoided seeking out a sympathetic ear: “I am neither so strong, nor have I such pride in my strength, as people think, Mr. Moore; nor am I so regardless of sympathy; but when I have any grief, I fear to impart it to those I love, lest it should pain them; and to those whom I view with indifference, I cannot condescend to complain” (517). She has internalized the strictures of female stoical endurance, but she views them as markers of independence. Nevertheless, Shirley must finally seek out sympathy, though she knows instinctively that this will be a sacrifice of her independence. Her confession to Louis of her possible illness leads to their courtship, in which she is trammelled like a falcon.

Louis’s ultimate success in courting Shirley has already been predicted through animal imagery suggestive of the desire to dominate simmering beneath his apparent sympathy. Before their engagement, Shirley can compare Louis to her pet, her beloved dog Tartar, who is based on Emily Brontë’s own Keeper;⁵⁸ she jokes that: “you are my mastiff’s cousin; I think you as much like Tartar as a man can be like a dog” (625). Louis playfully responds by saying, “In the winter evenings, Tartar lies at your feet: you suffer him to rest his head on your perfumed lap... [H]is rough hide is familiar with the contact of your hand; I once saw you kiss him on that snow-white beauty-spot which stars his broad forehead. It is dangerous to say I am like Tartar: it suggests to me a claim to be treated like Tartar” (625). But the comparison between man and dog becomes murky because Tartar is so partial to Louis that he will obey him even over Shirley (458).⁵⁹ Pointing out that all of Shirley’s animals treat him as their master this way, Louis boasts

that “With animals I feel I am Adam’s son; the heir of him to whom dominion was given over ‘every living thing that moveth upon the earth’” (461).

It is clear early on that Louis sees Shirley as another creature to master. He calls her “my leapordess,” (628), “something to tame first, and teach afterwards: to break in, and then to fondle... To establish power over, and then to be indulgent to” (626). He reminds her of the French lessons in which he had her recite “Le Cheval Dompté”—“the tamed horse” (493). Louis decides that:

I was not made so enduring as to be mated with a lamb: I should find more congenial responsibility in the charge of a young lioness or leapordess... I fear I should tire of the mute, monotonous innocence of the lamb; the nestling dove which never stirred in my bosom; but my patience would exult in stilling the flutterings and training the energies of the restless merlin. In managing the wild instincts of the scarce manageable ‘bête fauve,’ my powers would revel. (528-529)

Once Shirley has agreed to marry him, he exults: “Pantheress!—beautiful forest-born!—wily, tameless, peerless nature! She gnaws her chain: I see the white teeth working at the steel! She has dreams of her wild woods, and pinings after virgin freedom” (635). The narrator reinforces these metaphorical connections: “There she was at last, fettered to a fixed day: there she lay, conquered by love, and bound with a vow. Thus vanquished and restricted, she pined, like any other chained denizen of deserts. Her captor alone could cheer her... [I]n his absence, she sat or wandered alone; spoke little, and ate less” (644).⁶⁰ As these animal images suggest, to confess the need for sympathy may heal an inner wound, but in return it requires an abdication of autonomy and power.

Similarly, in *Villette*, Lucy Snowe considers it both virtuous and self-preserving to endure pain without complaining or seeking sympathy; she does not let even the reader in on the loss of her family and its attendant grief (39). She approves of other stoics, like

her first employer, Miss Marchmont, who is “patient under physical pain, though sometimes perhaps excitable under long mental canker” (41).⁶¹ On the other hand, Lucy feels contempt for those who cannot hide their suffering; very early in her acquaintance with Ginevra Fanshawe, she says: “Many a time have I noticed, in persons of Ginevra Fanshawe’s light, careless temperament... an entire incapacity to endure: they seem to sour in adversity” (63). Ginevra’s character never changes: at the end of the novel she complains of the trials of motherhood with “a perfect shout of affliction—never woman was so put upon by calamity: never human being stood so in need of sympathy... Under every cloud, no matter what its nature, Ginevra, as of old, called out lustily for sympathy and aid. She had no notion of meeting distress single-handed,” yet ends up “suffering as little as any human being I have ever known” (527).⁶² Lucy sees such appeals for sympathy as inversely correlated with the amount of actual suffering endured.

In contrast with Ginevra, Lucy does not entrust other characters with her inward wounds, and this serves to intensify a narrative voice marked not only by pain, but by pathology. Athena Vrettos refers to her as a “hysterical first-person narrator” (50), while Shuttleworth asserts that Brontë “creates in Lucy Snowe a figure whose psychological stability is always in question,” a figure who allows her to explore “neurosis” (Shuttleworth *Charlotte* 219).⁶³ Elaine Showalter likewise suggests that Lucy “comes close to madness. She is tormented by agonizing depression, loneliness, and anxiety, leading to hallucinations and breakdowns” (70).⁶⁴ Brontë’s construction of an unusually nervous, psychologically fragile character was deliberate; she wrote to her publisher W.S. Williams of Lucy:

You say that she may be thought morbid and weak, unless the history of her life be more fully given. I consider that she is both morbid and weak at times; her

character sets up no pretensions to unmixed strength, and anybody living her life would necessarily become morbid. It was no impetus of healthy feeling which urged her to the confessional, for instance; it was the semi-delirium of solitary grief and sickness (Brontë in Shuttleworth *Charlotte* 227).⁶⁵

Lucy's narrative is an illness narrative; not only is she "constitutionally nervous" (*Villette* 406) and probably clinically depressed,⁶⁶ but she also starts her career in a world tailored around the invalid she tends, Miss Marchmont, into whose identity she almost merges:

Two hot, close rooms thus became my world; and a crippled old woman, my mistress, my friend, my all. Her service was my duty—her pain, my suffering—her relief, my hope—her anger, my punishment—her regard, my reward. I forgot that there were fields, woods, rivers, and an ever-changing sky outside the steam-dimmed lattice of this sick-chamber; I was almost content to forget it. All within me became narrowed to my lot. (42)

Even Lucy's appetite "needed no more than the tiny messes served for the invalid" (42). This invalid's lifestyle shapes Lucy's whole approach to life, as she denies her desires, wishes, and emotions. Though she says "when I thought of past days, I *could* feel," she believes that "[a]bout the present, it was best to be stoical; about the future—such a future as mine—to be dead. And in catalepsy and trance I held the quick of my nature" (120).⁶⁷

Lucy often represents this self-repression in images of torture; one example is her metaphor of Jael driving a nail through Sisera's skull to represent the "[p]ain and mutilation of the repression of desire" (Mitchell 72; see *Villette* 121).⁶⁸ Several critics have pointed out that the mysterious nun appears at moments when Lucy is struggling to repress her sexual desires, as when she buries John Graham's letters.⁶⁹ But the nun (and Lucy's burying of the letters) also represents the burying and silencing of suffering.⁷⁰

Lucy, who refuses to confide her pain to anyone (except, sometimes, the reader), is pursued by an externalized figure of this silent suffering.

Lucy's resolve to endure without complaint, like Caroline's and Shirley's, results in a failure of health, under which it cannot be sustained. Breaking down during a long vacation, in which her solitude is especially pronounced, she falls into a "peculiarly agonizing depression [which is] succeeded by physical illness" (176). Her pain is not only unexpressed, but almost inexpressible: "Suffering, brewed in temporal or calculable measure, and mixed for mortal lips, tastes not as this suffering tasted" (176). She feels helpless to stop her own nervous collapse: "I said, 'I really believe my nerves are getting overstretched: my mind has suffered somewhat too much; a malady is growing upon it—what shall I do? How shall I keep well?' Indeed, there was no way to keep well under the circumstances" (176). Lack of human recognition and sympathy for her plight is at the heart of this suffering: "a want of companionship maintained in my soul the cravings of a most deadly famine" (175), she says, and "I was perishing for a word of advice or an accent of comfort" (178).

In her desperation for sympathy, Lucy seeks it in what is, for her, its most suspect form, the form most threatening to her autonomy: the Catholic confessional. She finds "the mere relief of communication in an ear which was human and sentient... the mere pouring out of some portion of long accumulating, long pent-up pain... had done me good" (179).⁷¹ Trying to explain this confession later to Dr. John, she says:

I suppose you will think me mad for taking such a step, but I could not help it: I suppose it was all the fault of what you would call my 'nervous system.' I cannot put the case into words, but my days and nights were grown intolerable; a cruel sense of desolation pained my mind: a feeling that would make its way, rush out, or kill me—like (and this you will understand, Dr. John) the current which passes through the heart, and which, if aneurism or other morbid cause obstructs its

natural channels, seeks abnormal outlet. I wanted companionship, I wanted friendship, I wanted counsel. (206)

Despite the dangers of Catholic confession, including Père Silas's attempt to persuade her to become a nun, Lucy finds temporary relief in merely expressing her pain.

She finds even more sympathy and comfort while recovering from her collapse, when she has the caring presence of Mrs. Bretton as well as Dr. John at her side. She observes that "it is not everybody... whom we like to watch us, to wait on us with the proximity of a nurse to a patient. It is not every friend whose eye is a light in a sickroom, whose presence is there a solace: but all this was Mrs. Bretton to me" (201).⁷² Like Jane Eyre with the Rivers family, or Caroline Helstone with Mrs. Pryor, Lucy finds herself nursed to recovery by a suddenly-discovered family or surrogate family. She knows, however, that there are limits to the empathy even Mrs. Bretton can feel for her, as "the details of what I had undergone belonged to a portion of my existence in which I never expected my godmother to take a share"; comparing Mrs. Bretton to a "stately ship, cruising safe on smooth seas," and herself to a life boat moored between a dark boathouse and a stormy sea, she says: "No, the 'Louisa Bretton' never was out on such a night, and in such a scene; her crew could not conceive it; so the half-drowned life-boat man keeps his own counsel, and spins no yarns" (202).

Lucy knows that "but moderate demand of affection must be made" of the Brettons; she entreats "Reason": "Do not let me think of them too much, too fondly...[L]et me be content with a temperate draught of this living stream: let me not run athirst, and apply passionately" (199). She believes that "occasional, amicable intercourse, rare, brief, unengrossing and tranquil" is the most she should expect from them (199). Since she speaks of "them" it is clear that she is not merely expressing the

need to hide her romantic feelings from Dr. John, but the need to subdue her own longing for a more complete sympathy and care both from him and his mother.⁷³

The limits of empathy in Lucy's case parallel the limits of medicine; Dr. John acknowledges the limitation of his medical understanding of her suffering and thus of his ability to help her: "Medicine can give nobody good spirits. My art halts at the threshold of Hypochondria; she just looks in and sees a chamber of torture, but can neither say nor do much" (205).⁷⁴ Lucy powerfully articulates the limits of the world's ability to comprehend, and thus truly sympathize with, mental illness, and her sense of the subsequent need to repress the suffering such an illness causes:

The world can understand well enough the process of perishing for want of food: perhaps few persons can enter into or follow out that of going mad from solitary confinement. They see the long-buried prisoner disinterred, a maniac or an idiot!—how his sense left him—how his nerves first inflamed, underwent nameless agony, and then sunk to palsy—is a subject too intricate for examination, too abstract for popular comprehension. Speak of it! You might almost as well stand up in a European market-place, and propound dark sayings in that language and mood wherein Nebuchadnezzar, the imperial hypochondriac, communed with his baffled Chaldeans. And long, long may the minds to whom such themes are no mystery—by whom their bearings are sympathetically seized—be few in number, and rare of reencounter. Long may it be generally thought that physical privations alone merit compassion, and that the rest is a figment. (303-304)⁷⁵

In the face of the futility of public expression, Lucy returns to her resolve to repress her suffering, the resolve shared by all of Brontë's female protagonists.

Lucy's repression of her own need for sympathy also reflects a larger social silencing of suffering evident, for example, in the 1851 advice manual *Sickness, Its Trials and Blessings*, which the Brontës owned. The author, Priscilla Maurice, advises:

The longer sickness is continued to any one, the more truly does he learn that sickness is a hidden state. Much even of that portion of your life, which in health would be seen and shared by others, is from henceforth shut up... You will often

have to learn that few persons understand your state at all; that even those who earnestly desire to do so, make great mistakes, which often give you great and (as you are apt to think) needless pain. . . . Beware, therefore, of expecting too much; of taking it as a matter of course that everyone sees and knows your trials, and ought to avoid adding to them. Do not be looking out for this kind of understanding; do not expect to meet with it often; and thus you will be spared much bitter disappointment and sorrow of heart. (14)

Maurice's reader is reminded that illness is a "hidden state" (176), and that to expect complete sympathy for such a state is misguided, even wrong.⁷⁶ This is the philosophy that Brontë's protagonists seem to carry in their bones.

There is a pervasive physical corollary to the strict repression these characters practice: their bodies serve to reflect their self-discipline and sometimes their inner deprivation. They make a virtue of taking up little physical, as well as emotional, space. Their physical slightness does not equate to health, however. Shuttleworth suggests that by making her heroines "small, slight and nervous" Brontë places her them "on the margins of womanhood" at a time when women's appearances were evaluated for reproductive fitness (*Charlotte* 82-83). At the same time, as Shuttleworth also points out, Frances Henri, Jane Eyre, and Caroline Helstone all gain some weight when they find happiness in love.⁷⁷ In *The Professor*, Crimsworth notes that Frances loses the look of "wan emaciation" and her form becomes "rounder" (*Professor* 802) in her love for him; Jane, in love with Rochester, says, "My bodily health improved; I gathered health and strength" (*JE* 172). But these heroines still remain slender, a signal of their moral refinement. This suggests that Brontë is interested in a different way of measuring female value through the body than the reproductive: she seems to privilege (without unequivocally endorsing) the anorexic aesthetic of her self-renouncing characters over

the free reign of the appetites figured in the superfluous flesh of her more sensual, often animalized, characters.

Thus, Brontë's novels often equate physical frailty, slightness, or irregularity with moral superiority. She often presents her physically robust characters as lacking moral sensitivity; for example, Bertha, who is physically powerful, "a big woman... and corpulent besides" (*JE* 338), "as robust in frame as she was infirm in mind" (354), has "a nature the most gross, impure, depraved," at least according to Rochester (353). In contrast, Jane is tiny, Lucy Snowe is thin, and Caroline and Shirley each come close to wasting away. As Anna Silver observes regarding Brontë's novels in general, Brontë:

consistently links fat and promiscuous sexuality, stupidity, and the lower classes, finally validating hunger over gluttony. Virtually all the villainous characters are large (just as they are usually relatively dark-skinned), while the virtuous characters are invariably slim (just as they are pale or at least fair). Brontë's novels are complicated and ambiguous novels, caught in the anorexic logic of Brontë's culture at the same time as they depict the suffering of the hungry woman (20).⁷⁸

The anorexic logic to which Silver refers is primarily applicable to female characters. But even the male narrator of *The Professor*, Crimsworth, finds validation of his moral and mental superiority in his slender form. He acknowledges that "in form I was greatly inferior [to my brother]—thinner, slighter, not so tall. As an animal, Edward excelled me far; should he prove as paramount in mind as in person I must be a slave" (*Professor* 669). This is only superficially self-deprecating; as Shuttleworth points out, "the deft assimilation of Edward's virility to the sphere of animality leaves the way open for William to claim the higher ground of mental superiority" and greater sensitivity (*Charlotte* 126).⁷⁹

Crimsworth's (and Brontë's) perception of the inverse relationship between weight and sensitivity come to the fore when he moves to Belgium; Crimsworth's Belgian students are all, predictably, plump ("forms full, even to solidity, seemed to abound" [737]). His discovery of the Swiss-English Frances Henri affects him all the more because of her contrast with these students, as, "not having seen any appearance of sensitiveness in any human face since my arrival at Belgium, I had begun to regard it almost as a fabulous quality" (771). He comments on the "slightness of her figure," and says: "I felt assured, at first sight, that she was not a Belgian; her complexion, her countenance, her lineaments, her figure, were all distinct from theirs, and, evidently, the type of another race—of a race less gifted with fullness of flesh and plenitude of blood; less jocund, material, unthinking" (776). These physical signs of inner delicacy and sensibility do not help her with her students; Crimsworth observes that:

[T]hey would inflict upon her exquisite suffering... [A] pupil whose sensations are duller than those of his instructor, while his nerves are tougher and his bodily strength perhaps greater, has an immense advantage over that instructor, and he will generally use it relentlessly, because the very young, very healthy, very thoughtless, know neither how to sympathize nor to spare. Frances, I fear, suffered much. (785)

Her sensitivity appeals to him, and her correspondingly thin frame is equally appealing because it signifies her acquiescence to his ideal of "self-denial and self-control" (824). She may possess "a flame... of natural feeling, natural passion," but "the more dangerous flame burned safely under the eye of reason" (824). Unlike Bertha (or *Villette's* Vashti) she keeps the fire of her nature down.

Jane Eyre's sensitivity and self-disciplined character are similarly reflected in her physical form. Brontë constantly emphasizes her smallness; in the novel's very second paragraph Jane refers to her "consciousness of [her] physical inferiority" to her more

robust cousins (9), which, “actually suggests an opposing sense of mental superiority” (Shuttleworth *Charlotte* 153), and moral superiority as well. In the first few pages, the novel sets up a contrast between Jane, physically and emotionally undernourished, and her over-fed relatives, especially her cousin John. John’s detestable, spoiled nature is indicated by his lack of self-control over his appetite for food. He is “large and stout for his age,” with “thick limbs and large extremities. He gorged himself habitually at table, which made him bilious, and gave him... flabby cheeks” (12). The physical and moral contrast he provides to Jane is repeated later not only by the unrestrained and “virile” Bertha (338), but by Blanche Ingram, a woman Rochester crudely and contemptuously describes as “[a] strapper—a real strapper, Jane: big, brown, and buxom” (253), and “an extensive armful” (289). Jane believes Blanche “advocated a high tone of sentiment; but she did not know the sensations of sympathy and pity” (216); thus, Blanche’s ample form corresponds to a shrunken moral character.

Jane’s contrasting physical slightness, as well as the rigid control she exerts over all her bodily appetites, suggest her tendency towards self-deprivation, asceticism, and self-denial. But she also has a passionately emotional side, and strong physical desires, making her keenly capable of the emotional and physical suffering she feels she must repress. Jane’s growth to full maturity in large part involves her learning to find the mean between extremes, the extremes of succumbing to the purely physical passions that she feels would reduce her to an animal and succumbing to the unhealthy self-destructiveness that also attracts her.⁸⁰ But it is always clear that animal physicality is the worse fate.

Lucy Snowe recognizes the danger of the two extremes, and is even more disgusted than Jane by fleshy corporeality. She feels innate moral and intellectual

superiority to her Belgian students, because of their difference in nationality and religion. This leads her to dehumanize them as a “wild herd” (*Villette* 88) and “swinish multitude” (91), and she links their full bodies to the heaviness (as she perceives it) of their minds and moral sentiments. She sees their Catholic upbringing as having made them “robust in body, feeble in soul, fat, ruddy, hale, joyous, ignorant, unthinking, unquestioning” (141). Similarly, when women’s bodies are presented as spectacles, she is more attracted to the pathological self-destruction of the reed-thin actress Vashti than the voluptuous amplitude of the painted Cleopatra, who hangs among other paintings of “complacent-looking fat women” (222). Of Cleopatra, she says: “I calculated that this lady, put into a scale of magnitude suitable for the reception of a commodity of bulk, would infallibly turn from fourteen to sixteen stone. She was, indeed, extremely well fed; very much butcher’s meat—to say nothing of bread, vegetables, and liquids must she have consumed to attain that... affluence of flesh” (223). In contrast, Vashti is physically a “frail creature,” “wasted like wax in flame” (286). “Place now the Cleopatra, or any other slug, before her as an obstacle, and see her cut through the pulpy mass as [a] scimitar,” challenges Lucy; “Let Peter Paul Rubens... bring into this presence all the army of his fat women,” and this “slight rod of Moses” would destroy them (287).⁸¹ Vashti’s body renders her almost a spirit, while Cleopatra is merely a “commodity” and a “slug.”

However, Vashti signifies dangerous temptations as well; while not claiming too much space physically, she does so emotionally, breaking the prohibition on self-expression of female pain. While she is a “spirit” due to her incorporeal presence, Vashti is still “a spirit out of Tophet” (287), “Hate and Murder and Madness incarnate” (286). In

part, she seems evil and dangerous to Lucy because she refuses to repress her suffering, instead performing it publicly and with fierce honesty. Lucy observes that:

To her, what hurts becomes immediately embodied: she looks on it as a thing that can be attacked, worried down, torn in shreds. Scarcely a substance herself, she grapples to conflict with abstractions. Before calamity she is a tigress; she rends her woes, shivers them in convulsed abhorrence. Pain, for her, has no result in good; tears water no harvest of wisdom: on sickness, on death itself, she looks with the eye of a rebel. Wicked, perhaps, she is, but also she is strong (287)⁸²

To perform one's suffering instead of concealing it is wickedness, Lucy suggests, but she can also acknowledge that it grants a kind of strength, and this complicates Brontë's usual moral imperative of silent endurance.

Brontë's emphasis on suffering in silence is further complicated by the fact that occasionally, as with Lucy in the confessional, her heroines can no longer internalize all their pain, and instead verbalize it in a passionate outburst. Furthermore, such speech often brings about good results, and does indeed give the speakers increased power over their destinies. For example, when *Villette's* Lucy Snowe fears she will never see Paul Emanuel again, she says: "Pierced deeper than I could endure, made now to feel what defied suppression, I cried--- "My heart will break!" (530), an exclamation which allows her and Paul Emmanuel to make their love clear to each other in defiance of others' schemes to part them.⁸³ Similar emotions lead Jane to confess her feelings for Rochester after he has cruelly taunted her:

In listening, I sobbed convulsively; for I could repress what I endured no longer. I was obliged to yield; and I was shaken from head to foot with acute distress... The vehemence of emotion, stirred by grief and love within me, was claiming mastery, and struggling for full sway; and asserting a right to predominate: to overcome, to live, rise, and reign at last: yes,-- and to speak" (291).

And speak she does: Jane bursts out to Rochester a reminder that she is a human being, asking: "Do you think I am an automaton?—a machine without feelings?" (292).⁸⁴ Jane's

eruption of speech leads Rochester to quit his taunting, propose, and acknowledge her his equal.

Furthermore, Jane seems to retain through the rest of the novel an awareness of the danger of repressed pain. When she sees the unhealthy repression often expected of women manifested in the male St. John Rivers, she seeks “an aperture in that marble breast through which I can shed one drop of the balm of sympathy,” because she feels that: “With all his firmness and self-control, he tasks himself too far: locks every feeling and pang within—expresses, confesses, imparts nothing. I am sure it would benefit him to talk...” (428). But St. John makes it clear that he wants no compassion: “You give me a larger allowance of sympathy than I have a just claim to,” he tells Jane, also telling her that his sufferings have not made him more attuned to the sufferings of others, but rather left him still “a cold, hard man” (432). His interest in Jane is due to his belief in her capacity for “sacrifice” (465); as he points out, it is “not because I deeply compassionate what you have gone through or what you still suffer” (432). Later, Jane comes to see his self-assessment as accurate, and is more timid in offering him her sympathy, much less seeking his: “he seemed so little to need sympathy, that, so far from venturing to offer him more, I experienced some shame at the recollection of what I had already hazarded” (456). Nevertheless, she feels it would be healthier for him to seek a sympathetic ear.

Brontë’s ambivalence about expressing one’s suffering also emerges in a letter regarding unmarried women, in which she suggested that they should “complain as little, bear as much... as possible,” but acknowledged that “when patience has done its utmost and industry its best” then “the sufferer is free, is entitled, at last to send up to Heaven any piercing cry for relief, if by that cry he can hope to obtain succor” (Brontë in Barker

Letters 190).⁸⁵ The reader is left to wonder if the cry may only to be directed towards Heaven, or if it may be expressed to others. In general, Brontë presents suffering in silence as the nobler course, but she occasionally suggests that a sufferer in extremity has no alternative but to speak her pain.

Sickbed sympathy, Gender, and the Moral Imagination

Brontë's protagonists' determination to repress their own suffering, I have argued, indicates their possession of the rational self-control integral to full humanity in her novels. At the same time, these characters also prove their full humanity through their sympathy for the sufferings of others, particularly in illness. Jane Eyre proves her moral worth through her compassion at the sickbeds of friends and enemies alike; she holds Helen as the consumptive dies, but also goes to see her dying aunt Mrs. Reed, who has always hated her. She forgives the wrongs Mrs. Reed has done her, and says: "I came back to her now with no other emotion than a sort of ruth for her great sufferings, and a strong yearning to forget and forgive all injuries" (265), feeling only that her aunt is a "poor suffering woman" (276). In turn, Jane is the recipient of sympathetic sickbed care: When she arrives at the Rivers' house, a caring family materializes about the "poor, emaciated, pallid wanderer" (*JE* 389), just as it does for Lucy at the Brettons' after her breakdown, and for Caroline when her mother comes to tend her.⁸⁶

The differences in capacity for sympathy, as illustrated in such scenes of illness, are often gendered in Brontë's texts. The contrast between the "spontaneous, genuine, genial compassion" of the Rivers sisters, Diana and Mary, and the cool "evangelical charity" of their brother St. John is not lost on Jane as she convalesces in their household (*JE* 399). St. John examines a sobbing Jane "like a physician watching with the eye of

science an expected and fully-understood crisis in a patient's malady" (461).⁸⁷ He dismisses his sisters' concerns for Jane's health, insisting that "she is not such a weakling as you make her... Her constitution is both sound and elastic—better calculated to endure variations of climate than many more robust" (458). His reason for saying so is selfish; he wishes Jane to accompany him to India. When she points out that "I should not live long in that climate," he sneers at her for being afraid for herself (421). In contrast, his sister Diana thinks it is "madness" for him to expect Jane to go where she "would not live three months" (478). Jane realizes that St. John, for all his virtue, "forgets, pitilessly, the feelings and claims of little people" (479).

This gendering of sympathy is even more evident in *Shirley*. The narrator's proclamation that "All men, taken singly, are more or less selfish; and taken in bodies they are intensely so" (171) seems definitively gendered in the world of this text.⁸⁸ For example, Robert Moore doesn't bother to learn the extent of Caroline's illness. In contrast, when his brother Louis Moore is also sick with fever, perhaps (like Caroline) partly due to a "miasma," this illness only serves to secure him greater attention from Shirley, the woman for whom he pines (*Shirley* 481-483). Similarly, when Robert is injured, Caroline struggles to find a way to his side.

This is not to say that all the women in *Shirley* are sympathetic to suffering. Mrs. Yorke is the type that would "nurse like a heroine in a hospital full of plague patients" (566), but her sympathy for sufferers not in her power is virtually non-existent. She has an "antipathy to a shrinking, sensitive character" (411), and tells Caroline, whom she considers "morbid" and "delicate" (412):

You feel! Yes! yes! I daresay, now: you are led a great deal by your feelings, and you think yourself a very sensitive, refined personage, no doubt. Are you aware

that, with all these romantic ideas, you have managed to train your features into an habitually lackadaisical expression, better suited to a novel-heroine than to a woman who is to make her way in the real world, by dint of common sense? (409).⁸⁹

Hearing later that Caroline is ill, she dismisses it as mere “hypochondriac fancies” (426). On the other hand, a few male characters are genuinely sympathetic: the primary examples are the kindly vicar Mr. Hall, who cares for the poor “like any nurse” (368); the gardener William Farren, who is poor but not embittered, and who loves animals; and young Henry Sympson, “little, lame, and pale” but sensitive (456).⁹⁰

However, while women like Mrs. Yorke can display antipathy to sufferers, and while some male characters are sympathetic, most of the men in the novel are insensible to others’ sufferings and devoid of moral imagination. They subject women and the poor to illness, neglect, and deprivation. Examples range from the gluttonous curates who never visit the sick of their parishes (4-5), to Caroline’s deceased father, a “man-tiger” (454) whom she remembers locking her in a room for weeks, often forgetting to feed her, and returning “like a madman, furious, terrible; or—still more painful—like an idiot, imbecile, senseless. She knew that she had fallen ill in this place, and that one night when she was very sick, he had come raving into the room, and said he would kill her, for she was a burden to him” (105). More generally, in class conflict “the fighting animal” is roused in the novel’s men, and becomes “quite paramount over the rational human being” (351). But three male characters in particular illustrate a lack of moral imagination: the rector Helstone, Hiram Yorke, and Robert Moore.

Helstone is Caroline’s uncle, whom Brontë frequently compares to a bird of prey—a hawk, falcon, or kite (10, 11, 12), and who, while not “diabolical,” is “almost without sympathy” (37). This is evident in his relationships with his wife (deceased at the

time of the novel) and his niece. His wife, Caroline's aunt Mary Cave, haunts the text as a ghost of silent suffering in marriage, "a girl of living marble; stillness personified," a "monumental angel" (52). The narrator tells us that: "Nature never intended Mr. Helstone to make a very good husband, especially to a quiet wife. He thought, so long as a woman was silent, nothing ailed her," and she, "after a year or two, was of no great importance to him in any shape" (53). She had fallen into a "lingering decline" from consumption (53), and at her death the women who had nursed her were scandalized by her husband's "dry-eyed" demeanor: they "had had opportunities of learning more of the deceased lady's nature, of her capacity for feeling and loving, than her husband knew" (53).

Caroline too suffers from the lack of tenderness in her uncle; she once almost dares to tell him so: "'Uncle, I wish you were...more--' 'More what?' Sympathizing was the word on Caroline's lips, but it was not uttered; she checked herself in time: her uncle would indeed have laughed if that namby-pamby word had escaped her" (197). When Caroline and Shirley wonder if all men are like Helstone, Shirley says, "if I were convinced that [all men] are necessarily and universally different from us—fickle, soon petrifying, unsympathizing—I would never marry" (217). When Caroline grows ill, Helstone complains of young women: "To-day you see them bouncing, buxom, red as cherries, and round as apples; tomorrow they exhibit themselves effete as dead weeds, blanched and broken down" (196). He admits that "the vague, superfine sensations" of women baffle him, so that "when they pine for they know not what—sympathy—sentiment—some of these abstractions—I can't do it: I don't know it; I haven't got it" (443). He has no compassion to offer.

Likewise, Mr. Yorke, in Brontë's phrenological reading, is "without the organ of Comparison—a deficiency which strips a man of sympathy" (47), as "[h]e could not place himself in the position of those he vituperated... [H]e could not realize the effects of such and such circumstances on himself, similarly situated" (47). He also has "too little of the organ of Benevolence" (47), so that "he would sometimes wound, and wound again, without noticing how much he hurt, or caring how deep he thrust" (48). Finally, he lacks "ideality" or "imagination"—but, Brontë ironically remarks, "that can scarcely be called a fault... Who does not think it a rather dangerous, senseless attribute—akin to weakness-- perhaps partaking of frenzy—a disease rather than a gift of the mind?" (48). Lacking the "disease" of imagination, Yorke is unable to realize the pain of others.

Caroline's beloved Robert, for most of the novel, is as stony as Helstone and as hard-headed as Yorke. He is self-serving "to the exclusion of philanthropic consideration for general interests" (27); he does not "deliberate much as to whether his advance was or was not prejudicial to others," and he "never asked himself where those to whom he no longer paid wages found daily bread" (29). Thus, the starving poor who have lost employment under him "were left to suffer on" (30). Caroline, hearing him read from *Coriolanus*, is appalled that "you sympathize with that proud patrician who does not sympathize with his famished fellow-men, and insults them" (93). In contrast, Shirley, as a land-owner, may also be fierce as a "tigress" if the poor rise up against her (270), but she at least understands that they are her "fellow-creatures" (363), and that their hatred of the rich is generated by suffering. She also expresses her responsibility to help them, "to allay this suffering and thereby lessen this hate" with philanthropy (271), since if she

does not, she says, “my brother’s blood will some day be crying to Heaven against me” (270).⁹¹

Likewise, Robert also seems almost insensible to the change in Caroline as she grows ill, though he sees her on the one occasion he visits the rectory.⁹² In contrast, Shirley is perceptive; calling Caroline a “solitude-seeking, wounded deer,” she asks, “Are you afraid Shirley will worry you, if she discovers that you are hurt, and that you bleed?” (264). She also detects an unhappiness which “corrodes” in Caroline, and asks, “Will pity do you any good, Lina? If it will, take some from Shirley: she offers largely, and warrants the article genuine” (267).

While Shirley cannot help Caroline, it is unsurprising, given the novel’s depiction of men, that only a woman can and will help Caroline recover from her pining for Robert. When Caroline finds out that this woman, Mrs. Pryor, is her mother, the sickroom becomes a place of mutual sympathetic exchange, as “[s]he and her nurse coalesced in wondrous union” (425). Mrs. Pryor nurses Caroline, but they reciprocally offer comfort and sympathy to each other (434).⁹³ “I will comfort you,” Caroline tells the older woman at one point in “a pitying accent” (434); soon afterwards, when Mrs. Pryor laments, “I have suffered! None saw—none knew; there was no sympathy,” Caroline pleads that she “take comfort” (437). Then “the child lulled the parent, as the parent had erst lulled the child” (438-439). This appears to be just what Caroline needs; the exchange of love and sympathetic attention is enough to cure her, without the romantic love or attention of Robert.

Ultimately, Robert does become less insensitive, but it takes illness to soften him to sympathy with others’ sufferings, including those of his impoverished workers.⁹⁴ (In

this, he resembles John Thornton in Elizabeth Gaskell's *North and South*.) Just as Shirley was bitten by a potentially mad dog, Robert is shot by a madman (and drunkard).⁹⁵ He is subjected not to the nursing of skilled, tender women, but to the fumbling, even damaging, nursing of his sister and Mrs. Yorke, and then left to the care of the masculinized, violent (and thus, predictably, enormous) Mrs. Horsfall, who is "no woman, but a dragon" (568) or "giantess" (569). Henry Sympson tells Caroline that Moore is kept in "solitary confinement. They mean to make either an idiot or a maniac of him, and take out a commission of lunacy. Horsfall starves him" (596-597). Like Rochester, Robert is stripped of the negative aspects of his masculinity, and feels "more pitiable than formidable" (609). The experience leaves him so exhausted he fears he shall fall into "decline," and when he finally sees Caroline he tells her that "the state of my mind is inexpressible—dark, barren, impotent" (587). She tells him: "I understand your feelings: I experienced something like it. Since we met, I too have been very ill" (587). When she elaborates, he marvels: "You speak my experience" (587), apparently able at last to relate to another's suffering. He feels remorse that he was not there for Caroline as Mrs. Pryor was when she was ill (588), and remorse more generally for "that sickness of body and mind she owed to me" (647).⁹⁶

This experience of injury and physical vulnerability reinforce a softening that began when Robert "looked a little into reality" in Birmingham (545), and saw how social conditions, not natural laws, rob the poor of their humanity. He says:

I saw some, with naturally elevated tendencies and good feelings, kept down amongst sordid privations and harassing griefs. I saw many originally low, to whom lack of education left scarcely anything but animal wants, disappointed in those wants, ahungered, athirst, and desperate as famished animals: I saw what taught my brain a new lesson, and filled my breast with fresh feelings... Something there is to look to... beyond a man's personal interest... To respect

himself, a man must believe he renders justice to his fellow-men. Unless I am more considerate to ignorance, more forbearing to suffering, than I have hitherto been, I shall scorn myself as grossly unjust. (545-546)

He ends the novel with the same realization of his responsibility to the poor that Shirley had instinctively, and he vows to be more “liberal,” less “selfish” to his workers.⁹⁷ His return to a dominant role over Caroline and even over the natural environment at the novel’s end, however, ominously suggests that his heart could turn back into stone. This is the more likely because hard-heartedness is virtually the natural male state, and almost a condition for masculinity, in the novel.

Brontë’s association of both illness and gender with the capacity to extend one’s moral imagination—in other words, to sympathize—also permeates *Villette*. As Vrettos points out, the “fictive connection between illness and sensibility was... well established by the time Brontë began writing *Villette*; indeed, it was a familiar literary trope that had descended to the level of parody and cliché” (59). But Brontë brings freshness to the theme through the powerfully-realized consciousness of Lucy Snowe, in which sensibility and illness are linked. Lucy’s narrative is shaped by illness, but this is a strength, rather than a defect. Lucy’s illness and suffering give her a kind of narrative authority because they render the hearts and sufferings of others transparent to her keen observation, even as her own suffering goes unacknowledged.⁹⁸

For instance, though at the novel’s start Lucy claims to be calmer than the child Polly, whom she dehumanizes repeatedly as “it” or “creature” (10), she seems to have a heightened awareness of that child’s sensitivity to the world. For example, she “perceived [Polly] endured agony. She went through, in that brief interval of her life, emotions such as some never feel; it was in her constitution: she would have more of such instants if she

lived” (25). Lucy follows this observation by saying that “I, Lucy Snowe, was calm” (25). But while Polly may, as Lucy asserts, be one of those “sudden, dangerous natures—*sensitive* as they are called” which “offer many a curious spectacle to those whom a cooler temperature has secured” (16), Lucy is sensitive herself, not of as calm or cool a temperament she claims. As Shuttleworth notes, we feel the “pressure of her emotional identification” with Polly, especially when she wishes Polly would utter a hysterical cry (Shuttleworth *Charlotte* 223; *Villette* 17).⁹⁹ At one point, she admits that her thoughts “ran risk of being hardly more rational than that child’s [Polly’s] mind must have been” (15).¹⁰⁰ It is rare for a Brontë heroine to confess the fragility of her own reason, but Brontë portrays Lucy’s anxious perception as a sign of superior moral imagination.

In contrast to this emotional awareness is Dr. John Graham Bretton’s insensibility and lack of empathy, which spring from a mixture of masculine and medical superiority and authority.¹⁰¹ He sees Lucy either “scientifically in the light of a patient” (283) or as “a being as inoffensive as a shadow” (351). He dismissively blames Lucy’s nerves, as Rochester does Jane’s, for her emotional distress (*Villette* 202, 205). He believes her vision of the nun is psychosomatic, “a case of spectral illusion... following on and resulting from long-continued mental conflict” (277) and recommends that Lucy be more cheerful.¹⁰² “No mockery in this world ever sounds to me so hollow as that of being told to cultivate happiness” (278), Lucy thinks bitterly.¹⁰³ Frustrated with his reductive view of her experience, Lucy observes: “Of course, with him, it was held to be another effect of the same cause: it was all optical illusion—nervous malady, and so on. Not one bit did I believe him; but I dared not contradict: doctors are so self-opinionated, so immovable in their dry, materialist views” (285).

Lucy's experience of illness during the long vacation gives her this ability to criticize Dr. John, as it provides her with a keener perception of his lack of feeling for others:

[Th]e sympathetic faculty was not prominent in him: to feel, and to seize quickly another's feelings, are separate properties... Dr. John had the one gift in exquisite perfection; and because I have admitted that he was not endowed with the other in equal degree, the reader will considerately refrain from pronouncing him unsympathizing, unfeeling: on the contrary, he was a kind, generous man. Make your need known, his hand was open. Put your grief into words, he turned no deaf ear. Expect refinements of perception, miracles of intuition, and realize disappointment. (212)

She is able to set his public philanthropy alongside his "ravenous sentiment" of "masculine self-love" (220-221), in order to evaluate and understand him better than he can understand her.

The contrast between Lucy and Graham is especially evident in the scene in which they see the King of Labassecour at a concert, and Lucy recognizes the monarch's suffering from hypochondria--"that darkest foe of humanity—constitutional melancholy" (238)-- while Dr. John does not. Her personal experience gives her insight: "There sat a silent sufferer—a nervous, melancholy man. Those eyes had looked on the visits of a certain ghost—had long waited the comings and goings of that strangest spectre, Hypochondria... dark as Doom, pale as Malady, and well-nigh strong as death" (238).¹⁰⁴ The king's suffering is "invisible" to all but Lucy: she says, "I could not discover that one soul present was either struck or touched" (239). Vrettos suggests that Lucy is "projecting her own sensibility onto others and reading their neurosis as her own... In this way, the king appears as both an independent sufferer of immediate pain and a symbolic extension of Lucy over which she wields hermeneutic control" (65).¹⁰⁵ The line between projection and sympathy, as Vrettos' comment suggests, is blurry, but since Dr. John was so blind in

Lucy's own case, the reader is more likely to believe Lucy is seeing something Dr. John can't than that she is seeing something that isn't there. As with the nun that haunts her, what Dr. John would call "spectral illusion" has in reality a substance outside of Lucy's self. In the case of the king, she is able to truly see this sufferer because of a faculty of sympathy inseparable from her own diseased sensibility.

Similarly, Dr. John's insensibility in the face of Vashti's performance of her suffering reveals his inability to match Lucy's powerful sensibility, while also suggesting "his indifference to the inner movements of female experience" (Shuttleworth *Charlotte* 238).¹⁰⁶ His response in this scene also lets Lucy read him even more clearly: she observes that he may be "*impressionable*" but is "*unimpressible*": "the breeze, the sun, could move him—metal could not grave, nor fire brand. Dr. John... *could* feel... but his heart had no chord for enthusiasm" (288); she notices his "smile so critical, almost so callous! I suppose that for natures of that order his sympathies *were* callous" (289).

Despite Dr. John's shortcomings, *Villette* also provides a male contrast to the insensible men in Brontë's novels. The outwardly stern Paul Emanuel is, as Lucy describes him, a man with a heart which is "not an ossified organ: in its core was a place, *tender beyond a man's tenderness*; a place that humbled him to little children, that bound him to girls and women" (376, emphasis mine).¹⁰⁷ Lucy's love for him grows as she learns more of his kindness. She finds in him a man who also sees the nun, both literally and in the symbolic sense that his sensibility is aligned with, and a match for, hers.

Coda: The Case of Crimsworth

An appreciation of the complex intersections of gender, illness, animals, and sympathy in Brontë's novels as a whole allows for a greater understanding of the

perplexing aspects of her first novel, the posthumously published *The Professor*. This novel contains two apparently inexplicable and poorly-integrated scenes: a description of struggle with mental illness and a scene of violence against an animal. The novel's narrator is another puzzle, full of contradictions that leave the reader unsure how to feel. In light of the thematic connections between *The Professor* and Brontë's other novels, however, these puzzling features are more explicable.

The narrator is the most important of these features, as he seems to form a barrier rather than a bridge between the reader and the text. Numerous critics and readers have expressed difficulty sympathizing with Brontë's first—and only male—narrator, William Crimsworth. Judith Mitchell describes Crimsworth as an “unpleasant narrator” (32), “eminently unlikeable as well as unreliable” (31); she adds that his first-person narration does not “mak[e] us sympathize with him” (31). She argues that this is an “unusual and difficult achievement on Brontë's part,” and that “Brontë invites her reader... to stand aside from Crimsworth's point of view” and from his “distinctively male” foibles or “neuroses” (31-32). Similarly, Shuttleworth says that “[a]s readers we are not allowed to be complicit with Crimsworth” (*Charlotte* 138).

But if Crimsworth does “nothing to elicit the reader's sympathy” (Shuttleworth *Charlotte* 37) it is not, or not only, because Brontë is criticizing the particular male attitudes that he embodies. In fact, many of his seemingly misogynistic views are expressed by her female characters as well. For example, his judgment of old maids, the “race whom all despise,” who become “ossified” by their obsession with “self-control” is harsh: “Anatomists will tell you there is a heart in the withered old maid's carcass—the same as that of any cherished wife or proud mother in the land—can this be so? I feel

inclined to doubt it” (*Professor* 872). But it is not so different from the views expressed by the narrator of *Shirley*, or even by Crimsworth’s own beloved Frances, who imagines that “[a]n old maid’s life must be void and vapid—her heart strained and empty,” and that if she herself had ended this way she would “have spent existence trying to fill the void and ease the aching. I should have probably failed, and died weary and disappointed, despised and of no account, like other single women” (911). In this case as in others, it is difficult to disentangle Crimsworth’s opinions from his author’s.

In *The Professor* there is no clear separation of the author’s viewpoint and the male narrator’s, as there is in *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall*, in which Anne Brontë skillfully reveals the flaws in her narrator’s attitudes and behavior and holds them up for readerly judgment. In contrast, Crimsworth is an unsuccessful narrator and character because in him Charlotte Brontë attempts to merge into one character what in her later novels will always be at least two. She casts him first in the role of the sensitive, perceptive, mistreated protagonist with whom we identify (like Jane Eyre or Lucy Snowe); in his brother’s employ, he describes himself as “weary, solitary, kept down like some desolate tutor or governess” (676). But she then has him cede that role to Frances Henri and become the stern, dominant “Master” figure, the recreation of Brontë’s beloved tutor Monsieur Héger who in the novel (as not in life) appreciates and loves his gifted pupil. This strange transition is the reason why, as Jane Wood observes, Crimsworth “is, by turns, feminized and aggressively masculine” (Wood 88).¹⁰⁸ What is most relevant for the purposes of this essay, however, is the text’s illustration of the pathological effects of the effort Crimsworth puts into attaining a dominant male role. His transition to a fully

male role is marked by a debilitating bout of hypochondria which otherwise remains a puzzling interlude in the text.¹⁰⁹

Before his attack of hypochondria, Crimsworth had asserted that his virtue kept him from the pathological despair which might assault more intemperate men. He describes such men explicitly as both bestial and diseased; they sound much like Anne Brontë's Arthur Huntingdon, Emily Brontë's Hindley Earnshaw, or perhaps even Branwell Brontë himself from an uncharitable but eerily prescient view:

[W]e rarely savor the acrid bitterness of hopeless anguish; unless, indeed, we have plunged like beasts into sensual indulgence, abused, strained, stimulated, again over-strained, and, at last, destroyed our faculties for enjoyment; then, truly, we may find ourselves robbed of hope. Our agony is great, and how can it end? We have broken the spring of our powers; life must be all suffering—too feeble to conceive faith—death must be darkness—God, spirits, religion can have no place in our collapsed minds, where linger only hideous and polluting recollections of vice; and time brings us on to the brink of the grave, and dissolution flings us in—a rag eaten through with disease, wrung together with pain, stamped into the churchyard sod by the inexorable heel of despair.

But the man of regular life and rational mind never despairs. (814)

Given his equation of rationality, emotional control, and virtue, Crimsworth prides himself that even when he thinks he has lost Frances Henri, “being a steady, reasonable man, I did not allow the resentment, disappointment, and grief engendered in my mind by this evil chance, to grow there to any monstrous size; nor did I allow them to monopolize the whole space of my heart” (815).

While Crimsworth maintains his rationality in adversity, however, success brings without warning an attack of “Hypochondria,” against which he is helpless “prey” (884). He seeks to contain this experience under the medicalized term of “reaction,” saying his “nerves” were jarred “because my soul, of late rushing headlong to an aim, had overstrained the body's comparative weakness” (884). He had suffered from

hypochondria for a year in boyhood, and he recalls “[h]ow she would discourse to me of her own country—the grave—and again and again promise to conduct me there ere long” (884). He describes hypochondria as a woman, indeed a “sorceress” with powerful “spells,” but cannot understand why she should return now, when he has apparently found fulfillment (884-885). He says, “I repulsed her as one would a dreaded and ghastly concubine coming to embitter a husband’s heart towards his young bride,” and eventually he recovers, having “said nothing to anybody of what I felt” (885).”

Despite his recovery, his comparisons of hypochondria to a sorceress or concubine suggest how deep its allure and temptation are for him. This is all the more notable since hypochondria as he describes it is clearly not just a preoccupation with health, but a deep depression and even suicidal despair, as the sorceress seeks “to lure [him] to her vaulted home of horrors” (885), whispering of “Necropolis” (884).

As we saw with Anne Brontë’s description of Agnes Grey’s father, the cultural emphasis on willpower made giving way to melancholy like Crimsworth’s a shameful thing for men; as Wood observes, “[m]en were constantly being reminded that willpower was the property which gave them a natural advantage over women and beasts, and that the prevention of nervous disease was a matter of exerting their superior will” (Wood 76). Physician John Barlow illustrated this viewpoint when he wrote in 1843:

[T]he being sane or otherwise, notwithstanding considerable disease of the brain, depends on the individual himself. He who has proper direction of the intellectual force, and thus obtained an early command over the bodily organ by habituating it to processes of calm reasoning, remains sane among all the vagaries of sense; while he who has been the slave, rather than the master of his animal nature, listens to its dictates without question even when distorted by disease,-- and is mad (Barlow 244).

Crimsworth's bout of hypochondria also represents the feminine inside himself which he seeks to purge, and serves as the culmination of the fear and hatred of women which is a by-product of his attempt to claim dominance and superiority.¹¹⁰ (He personifies hypochondria as a "hag" as well as a sorceress and concubine [884]).¹¹¹ As Wood explains, the Victorian "cult of masculinity" associated a nervous temperament and hypochondria in men with effeminacy and weakness; formerly desirable traits, including "sensitivity to the needs and feelings of others" became "undesirable weaknesses" (Wood 73). Indeed, "the association between sensitivity and unmanliness had taken hold in medical and popular opinion," so that "[t]enderness and sympathy [were] incompatible, it seems, with the toughness and combative instincts necessary in a man's world" (74).¹¹² Crimsworth's illness threatens to align him with the despised "ornamental members of society who are living examples of an intense sensibility, whether morbid or genuine, who... are only ill because they fail in mental effort" and in "vigorous muscular exertion," as a Victorian surgeon described nervous men in 1867 (Skey 196).

Crimsworth's hypochondria is thus the manifestation of all that threatens his newfound masculine dominance: irrationality, lack of willpower, and femininity. To obtain his dominance, he has had to temper his "weak point," i.e., "sensibility" and "the sentimental" (747), and become capable of being a "Master" characterized by rationality and forcefulness. He enacts the character of Master in his behavior toward his female students, and even in his relationship with the school directress Mademoiselle Reuter. He at first he sees Mademoiselle Reuter as "passionless" (744) and masculine in her embodiment of "abstract reason" (743), but soon she takes on the subordinate female

role, as she behaves with “slavish homage,” hovering around him “like a fascinated bird” (782). This, he says, “instead of softening my heart, only pampered whatever was stern and exacting in its mood,” for “[s]ervility creates despotism” (782). Even with Frances Henri, Crimsworth always takes on the Master’s role to which he has grown accustomed, asserting that “it was her pleasure, her joy to make me still the master in all things” (907). Imperfect control over himself would make that position insecure.

Crimsworth’s need to maintain perfect mental equilibrium also marks his uneasy friendship with Yorke Hunsden, a character who makes him insecure for more reasons than critics have generally recognized. Several critics have discussed how Hunsden’s “ambiguous sexuality,” “possible homosexuality” (Mitchell 41), and “sexual amorphism” (Shuttleworth *Charlotte* 128) appear threatening to Crimsworth.¹¹³ Crimsworth describes how “small, and even feminine, were his [Hunsden’s] lineaments”; even Crimsworth’s own slight physique is “harsher and squarer,” and he thinks that Hunsden’s face, which combines the “morose bull” with the “mischievous girl” (688), “might produce the same effect on a lady that a very piquant and interesting, but scarcely pretty, female face would on a man” (*Professor* 688). But it is not only his ambiguity of gender and sexuality that render Hunsden threatening. Crimsworth notices gloomy “eclipses” (677) that overcome Hunsden, and either projects or recognizes aspects of himself in them: “I discerned that there would be contrasts between the inward and outward man; contentions too; for I suspected his soul had more of will and ambition than his body had of fibre and muscle. Perhaps, in these incompatibilities of the ‘physique’ with the ‘morale,’ lay the secret of that fitful gloom; he would but could not, and the athletic mind scowled scorn on its more

fragile companion” (688). Crimsworth could easily be speaking here about the contradictions within himself which give rise to hypochondriacal gloom.

Crimsworth’s dislike of Hunsden’s more traditionally “masculine” traits are similarly self-revealing; he suspects that Hunsden is “one of those characters who, sensitive enough themselves, are selfishly relentless towards the sensitiveness of others” (690). He suspects “despotism” and an “overbearing” nature in Hunsden, even as the latter imagines what a despotic, overbearing lord of the manor Crimsworth would make were he not rendered a poor man with “no power” (690). To establish himself as a man with power, Crimsworth needs to distance himself from the “friend” who, like himself, has only a tenuous hold on masculinity, a hold maintained with “relentless selfishness,” and whose gloomy moments remind Crimsworth of his own unstable rationality.

These insecurities make it less extraordinary that Crimsworth becomes more violent the more successful he is in achieving his goals. This violence, however, shows how far he’s come since his brother’s brutality repulsed him and created a fierce “antipathy” between them (684). At that time, he recognized his physical inferiority to his brother, but reveled in his mental and moral superiority. Edward had been the one characterized by violence, demonstrating his brute strength first by whipping his horse until his “ruthless hand... compelled him to submission” (670), then by attempting to whip William himself, exclaiming, “I wish you were a dog! I’d set to this minute, and never stir from this spot till I’d cut every strip of flesh from your bones with this whip” (696).

In contrast with Edward’s brute force, the William Crimsworth of the novel’s beginning had felt an identification with his mother’s portrait, which Hunsden described

as lacking “character and force,” with “too much of the sen-si-tive,” contrasting her delicate beauty with the more robust Mrs. Edward Crimsworth (the “finer animal” [679]). Edward’s similarly patrician delicacy had caused Hunsden to sneer that he would never make a tradesman or man of business (680, 690-691). But given the chance, William is not much different from Edward, who, as Hunsden predicts, becomes a “tyrant to his wife” (862). When Frances Henri accepts William Crimsworth’s proposal, the metaphor he uses to describe her is chilling: she is “as stirless in her happiness as a mouse in its terror” (880). Just as ominously, the morning of their wedding he finds her weeping and shaking (900). Later, on seeing a picture of Hunsden’s beloved Lucia, Frances wistfully imagines her as one who “once wore chains and broke them,” though she is hasty to add-- “correcting herself, as if she feared misinterpretation,”--“I do not mean matrimonial chains” (916).¹¹⁴

Even when he has attained both wife and social status, Crimsworth can only maintain his sense of masculinity through violence.¹¹⁵ After the first meeting between Hunsden and Frances, Hunsden and Crimsworth get into an absurd wrestling match, akin to the senseless acts of violence which mark Charlotte Brontë’s sisters’ novels *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall* and *Wuthering Heights*. Hunsden expresses rage that Frances should treat Crimsworth with “deference,” “as if you were something superior!” (899). By discrediting Crimsworth’s superiority to his wife, Hunsden threatens to undermine Crimsworth’s newfound, insecure dominance.

Crimsworth also turns to violent male socialization in raising his son Victor. Both Hunsden and Crimsworth, parading their masculinity, express concerns that Frances will make “a milksop” of Victor (917). Crimsworth says of the boy, “I never saw a child smile

less than he does,” but he is still suspicious of Victor’s “susceptibility to pleasurable sensations almost too keen, for it amounts to enthusiasm” (917). For example, Crimsworth dislikes the “partiality amounting almost to affection” that Victor feels for his few toys, worrying that “this feeling, directed towards one or two living animals of the house, strengthens almost to a passion” (918).

One of these animals is a dog (called Yorke) that Hunsden gives Victor; the child “would go nowhere, do nothing without Yorke; Yorke lay at his feet while he learned his lessons, played with him in the garden, walked with him in the lane and wood, sat near his chair at meals, was fed by his own hand, was the first thing he sought in the morning, the last he left at night” (918). When Yorke is bitten by a rabid dog, Crimsworth shoots Yorke immediately, “where he lay licking his wound” (918). He leaves the dead dog outside for Victor to find, and soon the child is crying over his pet “in a passion of wildest woe” with “sounds of anguish” (918). The boy sobs: “He might have been cured—you should have tried—you should have burnt the wound with a hot iron, or covered it with caustic. You gave no time” (919). Frances tries to comfort Victor, especially by telling him that Crimsworth is not cruel, “for that idea seemed to give exquisite pain to poor Victor” (919).¹¹⁶ Crimsworth has exerted his dominance, and is later pleased to find in his son “scant sparks of the spirit... which kindles the passions to a destroying fire” (920).

Soon even this is not enough; Crimsworth feels he must wound the “compassion, affection, [and] fidelity” he earlier commended in his son (920), in order to simultaneously toughen him up and keep him down. His complete loss of ability to feel sympathy even for his own son permeates his cool remark that: “He must soon go to

Eton, where, I suspect, his first year or two will be utter wretchedness: to leave me, his mother, and his home, will give his heart an agonized wrench” (921). Part of the danger of Victor’s staying home, Crimsworth believes, would be that:

though Frances will not make a milksop of her son, she will accustom him to a style of treatment, a forbearance, a congenial tenderness, he will meet with from none else. She sees, as I also see, a something in Victor’s temper—a kind of electrical ardour and power—which emits, now and then, ominous sparks; Hunsden calls it his spirit, and says it should not be curbed. I call it the leaven of the offending Adam, and consider that it should be, if not whipped out of him, at least soundly disciplined; and that he will be cheap of any amount of either bodily or mental suffering which will ground him radically in the art of self-control. (920-921)

“Salutary suffering,” he is now convinced, must make his son “a wiser and a better man” (921).

In Crimsworth’s attitude towards his son at the novel’s end, Brontë suggests that the drive to match a conception of normative male humanity results in pathology, cruelty to animals, and loss of sympathy for those in a powerless position. She brings to the fore the issues which will be at stake in all her later novels, as each protagonist struggles to garner recognition as fully human in a world full of hard hearts.

¹ See Helen Cooper xxiii and Miriam Bailin Ch.2, esp.48 and 52; Bailin argues that, despite Brontë's tragic personal experiences, illness is often paradoxically therapeutic in her novels, so that "illness, in a very real sense, becomes the measure of health" in her work (52).

² Sally Shuttleworth notes that in this letter, as in *Villette*, there is "a sense of powerlessness in the face of physiological tyranny" (*Charlotte* 235). Jane Wood notes that Brontë associates hypochondria with "morbid introspection and the nervous temperament" (63). See also Beth Torgerson 12, Bruce Haley 26-30, Wood 90 note 54, and *Villette* 572 note 9.

³ In this he was not unique; as Shuttleworth notes: "the Victorian middle classes were obsessed with the health and regulation of their own minds and bodies" (*Charlotte* 11). See also Cooper xxxiv and Torgerson 9. See Robert Keefe "Introduction" and Ch.1, Shuttleworth *Charlotte* 19-33, and Torgerson 1-3 on the biographical context behind Brontë's depictions of illness, including her own ambivalence about doctors and the unhealthy conditions of life in Haworth.

⁴ They are also, as Shuttleworth notes, preoccupied with "medical knowledge and power" (10), and with "the borderlands of sanity" (*Charlotte* 12). Her father, too, was preoccupied with "the threat of nervous disease and insanity" (Shuttleworth *Charlotte* 11).

⁵ As Julia Rodas, Elizabeth Donaldson, and David Bolt point out, *Jane Eyre* was published "on the cusp of developments of normalcy and modern medicine as we know it" ("Introduction" 4) and "participate[d] in an emerging modern medical discourse" (3).

⁶ See esp. Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar 369.

⁷ See also Shuttleworth *Charlotte* 181 and Bailin 73.

⁸ Like Rodas's argument that Jane can be read as a figure on the autistic spectrum, her references to Jane's resistance to readerly intimacy are more applicable to Lucy Snowe, the profoundly recessive heroine of *Villette*. Rodas notes that autism's principal feature is "an unusual degree of inwardness, aloneness, and independence" ("Spectrum" 58), which is a good description of Brontë's narrators in general and Lucy in particular. See also Judith Mitchell 31-32 on the "narrative stance" of Crimsworth in *The Professor* as one "of withholding, of secrecy" (32).

⁹ See also Christopher Lane Ch. 3 on the prevalence of hatred and misanthropy in Brontë's novels. Shuttleworth even suggests that Charlotte and Emily Brontë are distinguished from their contemporaries by "the absence of an overarching moral frame to their work," having "no overall moral vision" (*Charlotte* 246, 247). This fits with my reading of Emily's work, but not of Charlotte's.

¹⁰ See also Susannah Mintz 132, Shuttleworth *Charlotte* 160-161, and Bailin 10 on the metaphorical meanings of consumption in the Victorian era, and of illness generally in *Jane Eyre*. Recent criticism, including several essays in the *The Madwoman and the Blindman: Jane Eyre, Discourse, and Disability* (ed. David Bolt et al.), has rightly challenged the reduction of illness and disability in *Jane Eyre* solely to metaphor or symbol; the authors view this interpretive strategy as erasing "embodied experiences of impairment and disability," making it "difficult for many readers to engage with, or even recognize, the profusion of impairment and disability in the novel" (Rodas et al. "Introduction" 2-3, 9). This is especially true of metaphorical readings of Bertha's insanity or hereditary mental illness; see Donaldson 12-16, 20-21, and 27-28. See also Mintz 129 and 132-135 on balancing the literal and the metaphorical when reading illness in the novel, and see Donaldson 16-22 on biological destiny and Victorian physiognomy in *Jane Eyre*.

¹⁰ See also Shuttleworth *Charlotte* 181 and Bailin 73.

¹¹ Elizabeth Langland observes that Anne Brontë's idea of kindness to the marginalized, especially animals, as a test of (male) character influenced *Shirley* (*Anne* 111-112).

¹² See *Villette* 455-456, 460, and 462.

¹³ See also Shuttleworth *Charlotte* 134.

¹⁴ The "least exceptionable pupil," a girl named Syvlie, is not animalized, but she is sickly; Crimsworth asserts that "her physical organization was defective," and links this to her submission to Catholic authority (756). On phrenology and physiognomy in Brontë's work, see especially Shuttleworth *Charlotte*; see also Cooper xxxviii-xxxix.

¹⁵ See Gilbert and Gubar Ch. 10 and Gayatri Spivak 247-251; see also Donaldson 12-14 and Shuttleworth *Charlotte* 2 and 164 for additional criticisms of Gilbert and Gubar's reading; Shuttleworth calls it "ahistorical" (*Charlotte* 2). See also Donaldson 11-12 and 27-28 on Rhys and for a response to Gilbert and Gubar's interpretation of Bertha as a feminist. See Rodas et al. "Introduction" 3 on Spivak's reading of Bertha's madness as representing the "human/ animal frontier that is central to the imperialist project" (3).

¹⁶ See also Shuttleworth *Charlotte* 165-166. D. Christopher Gabbard also notes that Rochester exhibits Bertha like a scientific or monstrous spectacle in this scene, as was sometimes the case with lunatics in asylums (97-99); see also Mintz 139-140.

¹⁷ “In its emphasis on intersubjective regard as a means of disrupting hierarchical binaries of dis/ability... the novel seems intriguingly forward thinking,” (130), she argues, adding that “[t]he novel openly displays troubled bodies— not to make them the intriguing or pitiable spectacles of the readerly stare, but rather to return, time and again, to the scene of potential recognition” (Mintz 132).

¹⁸ Mintz’s answer to this is that, in Bertha’s madness, “*Jane Eyre* might be said to intimate a basic tenet of disability scholarship concerning mental illness... that designations of ‘madness’ serve the perpetuation of narrowly defined conceptions of the human” (141).

¹⁹ Quite sensibly, she replies, “I do indeed, sir,” though he insists that she is wrong, and that he could never feel for her the “disgust” and “deep antipathy” with which Bertha’s vices inspire him (353).

²⁰ See also Donaldson 21-22 and Shuttleworth *Charlotte* 166.

²¹ As Mintz notes, “even the apparently good characters (such as Jane herself) sometimes fail to grant a legitimate subject position to others when bodily distress seems to amplify difference” (145).

²² Victorian psychiatrist James Prichard detailed the distinction between the various types of insanity in his *Treatise on Insanity* in 1835; Bertha certainly fits the manic type of “intellectual derangement” he describes, but as Rochester describes her before she was locked in the attic, she fits Prichard’s description of moral insanity in which a woman “becomes violent and abrupt in her manners,... talks loudly and abusively against her relations and guardians... Sometimes she uses indecent expressions, and betrays without reserve unbecoming feelings and trains of thought” (Prichard 254). See also Henry Maudsley.

²³ See also Shuttleworth *Charlotte* 67.

²⁴ See also Shuttleworth *Charlotte* 167-168 and Gabbard on this scene. I disagree, however, with Shuttleworth’s contention that “[n]owhere does she [Jane] endorse Rochester’s statements of disgust” about Bertha (*Charlotte* 16-168).

²⁵ Donaldson likewise notes that feminist critics and contemporary readers seem to have a sympathy for Bertha that Brontë does not share (12). Gabbard contradicts this notion; see esp. 91.

²⁶ See Showalter 30.

²⁷ See Jenny Bourne Taylor and Shuttleworth *Charlotte* 227-228 on the reform of insane asylums. For Victorian perspectives on this reform, see also Samuel Tuke, Andrew Wynter, Jean Esquirol “Mental Maladies,” John Conolly “The Non-Restraint System,” and the anonymous author of “The Cure of Sick Minds,” all in Taylor and Shuttleworth.

²⁸ A less compassionate view of the insane asserted itself again after 1870, as psychiatric Darwinists viewed insanity as “the product of organic defect, poor heredity, and an evil environment,” and “the lunatic as a degenerate person of feeble will and morbid predisposition” (Showalter 18).

²⁹ She adds that: “Whereas lunatics had formerly been regarded as unfeeling brutes, ferocious animals that needed to be kept in check with chains, whips, strait-waistcoats, barred windows, and locked cells, they were now seen instead as sick human beings, objects of pity whose sanity might be restored by kindly care” (8). See also Showalter 31-33 on the gradual abolition of physical restraint in Victorian treatments of mental illness; see also Shuttleworth *Charlotte* 34-56 and Rodas et al. “Introduction” 3-4 on this legislative and cultural shift. Shuttleworth similarly notes that “no longer were the insane regarded as an outcast group, a subhuman species to be locked away with paupers and criminals... While earlier theorists had tended to emphasize the animal nature of the insane, the moral managers now stressed their membership of a common humanity” (*Charlotte* 34)

³⁰ See also Donaldson 14.

³¹ He suggests that Jane learned a better way to care for the disabled by seeing how the Rivers treated her in her illness (93), and argues that:

Narrated by Jane in the mid-1840s, when public policy reforms were being instituted for improving the treatment of mentally ill and disabled people, Brontë’s novel can be understood as incorporating these reforms and reflecting negatively on Rochester’s custodial care practices. In other words, the novel’s closing chapters have Jane enact in miniature the spirit of the national reforms and, by so doing, Brontë’s narrative thematizes the transition from one caregiving paradigm to another, from custodial care to caring labor. (Gabbard 92)

See also Mintz 141-142 for a similar point. Shuttleworth likewise sees Thornfield as representing the prior era in which the insane were treated as animals (*Charlotte* 160).

³² See also Shuttleworth *Charlotte* 151-153, 158, 164-166, and 176. See also Gilbert and Gubar Ch. 10.

³³ See also Shuttleworth *Charlotte* 154 and Margaret Torrell 76. Torrell discusses how the traditional overlaps between embodiment, disability, and femininity play out in this novel; see esp. 77.

³⁴ See also Rodas "Spectrum" 55-56.

³⁵ See also Torrell 76, Enid Duthie 151, and Mintz 145. Brontë also often compares the two heroines of *Shirley* to birds; Shirley calls Caroline a "mateless, solitary bird" (*Shirley* 235), for example, and the narrator describes Caroline and Shirley as resembling "a snow-white dove and a gem-tinted bird of paradise," respectively (299). Caroline reminds Henry Sympson of "what he had once felt when he had heard a blackbird lamenting for her nestlings, which Matthew had crushed with a stone" (574).

³⁶ See also Torrell 76 and Essaka Joshua 116.

³⁷ See also Torrell 77 and Gabbard 101.

³⁸ Bolt likewise refers to Rochester's "melancholia" at this point (34, 46-48), noting that at this time "melancholia was widely defined in terms of alterity, indeed madness" (48). He also says that "Brontë's notion of impairment is... animalistic" in this scene, as "the blurring of the boundary between the human and the animal invokes the notion of a lower evolutionary status" (36).

³⁹ See also Joshua 124-125 on the analogies between Rochester and an eagle, and between Rochester's condition and Nebuchednezzar's animalizing madness; see also Shuttleworth *Charlotte* 179-180. But Jane also speaks about herself, along with Rochester, in animal analogies, saying: "The water stood in my eyes to hear this avowal of his dependence, just as if a royal eagle, chained to a perch, should be forced to entreat a sparrow to become its purveyor" (507). Gabbard reads Jane's efforts to "rehumanize" Rochester as a positive sign that "rather than equating people with disabilities with the subhuman, as Rochester had done, Jane will acknowledge their full humanity" (108).

⁴⁰ See Torrell 84-86 on Rochester's struggle to reconcile his masculinity with disability. See also Mintz 130 and Bailin 46 and 71-72. As Joshua notes, critics have read Rochester's blindness as both divine punishment and a gain in spiritual insight (119). Joshua takes the view that it is a spiritual gain, not a punishment (119-127). See also Mintz 146-149 on the significance of Rochester's impairments.

⁴¹ See also Shuttleworth *Charlotte* 209 on this scene. The dog turns out not to have been "mad," just a victim of her owner's abuse (*Shirley* 615). The belief persisted into nineteenth century, however, that cruelty to dogs could in fact cause rabies (James Turner 134-135).

⁴² See also Shuttleworth *Charlotte* 185 and 189-191. The text itself is set in 1811-1812, during the time of Luddite riots.

⁴³ The workers play the role of the riotous Bertha, with Caroline as the self-consuming Helen Burns (Shuttleworth *Charlotte* 186). See also Shuttleworth *Charlotte* 203. However, both workers and women experience "privation in a society ruled by unrestrained competition rather than justice and compassion" (Bailin 56).

⁴⁴ Gilbert and Gubar argue for the cretin as Lucy's double (414); Shuttleworth suggests that the cretin stands "as a warning projection of a model of mind where the physical is dominant, and the passions and propensities are not subject to any mental restraint" (*Charlotte* 234). See also Bailin 61-62 on this "negative image of nursing" (61). Joshua argues that "Brontë's account of disability in *Villette* is much less sympathetic [than in *Jane Eyre*]. Miss Marchmont is an eccentric invalid with a commanding nature who shows little sympathy for others, and a character known only as the 'cretin' is described as deformed, animal-like, and mendacious" (Joshua 127 note 13). See also Showalter 70-71: "Like the nun, the cretin is an externalized representation of Lucy's own primal but now stunted desires; she is the hungering, restless, untamed part of the self that Lucy has tried unsuccessfully to cage and starve. After this episode, Lucy finally loses control..." (71). Paul Marchbanks reads the cretin, as well as Bertha and *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall*'s Arthur Huntingdon, as stand-ins for Branwell in their mental disorder and need for care (64-66), as well as the "oscillation between duty and revulsion" they inspire in other characters (65).

⁴⁵ See also Shuttleworth *Charlotte* 236-237.

⁴⁶ Shuttleworth notes that "Charlotte Brontë's letters, from her youthful days onwards, bear witness to her determined adoption of these ruthless principles of self-regulation, in despite of, or even because of, the psychological pain inflicted" (*Charlotte* 23). For Victorian women, "repressive self-control became a goal in its own right, and internal pain a source of pride" (Shuttleworth *Charlotte* 24). However, Brontë's ambivalence is evident in another letter, in which she writes: "I doubt whether suffering purely mental has any good result unless it be to make us by comparison less sensitive to physical suffering" (Brontë in Shuttleworth *Charlotte* 193).

⁴⁷ See *The Professor* 832 and *Villette* 255-256; see also Cooper xxxiv-xxxv and xxxvii.

⁴⁸ Shuttleworth's *Charlotte Brontë and Victorian Psychology* explores this theme in depth. See especially Shuttleworth *Charlotte* 196-197; see also Mitchell 66 and Bailin Ch.2.

⁴⁹ See also Torgerson Ch.2; Shuttleworth *Charlotte* 186 and 203-210; Bailin Ch.2; Athena Vrettos 39-43; and Wood 10, 25-26, and 31-41 on Caroline's decline and brain fever. Bailin describes the illness as a "passive form of self-assertion" on Caroline's part (61); Vrettos describes it as a type of somatic communication, and notes that: "As the reader becomes progressively attuned to the semiotics of Caroline's illness, Robert seems to become increasingly insensitive" (41). See also Vrettos 195-196 note 22 on the four illnesses in *Shirley*. Mitchell argues that:

As readers, we are permitted none of the aesthetic pleasure that is often associated with the scenario of "suffering beauty"; the graphic realities of Caroline's ordeal preclude that particular escape. Also, rather than observe her suffering from the outside (as we largely do in the case of Hardy's Tess, for example), we experience it from the inside in the form of Caroline's self-torturing thoughts... Caroline's suffering, if not her desire, is indubitably subjectified; she is not a (beautifully) suffering object, whom we are free to appreciate from a distance, but a (painfully) suffering subject with whom we are asked to identify from within. (Mitchell 69)

⁵¹ Mitchell observes that: "The part of the novel that is most vivid, the part that we retain, is the desperate sadness and depression of Caroline's unassuaged need for love" (59). The novel's message, Mitchell continues, is that "of the prevalent mood: that love is painful (you can die from it, in fact), that marriage is difficult but the alternative is terrible, that women can only wait passively for love to come to them" (60). "Caroline evokes our pity" as well as our anger on her behalf (Mitchell 67).

⁵² See also Deirdre Lashgari, Mitchell 67, and Gilbert and Gubar 390-391.

⁵³ See also Shuttleworth *Charlotte* 179: "A cultural system which defines women as aggressively sexual beings, but maintains that both repression and expression of sexuality will lead to madness, establishes the perfect model for self-mutilation." See also Wood 15 and 28-29. Jane Eyre says: "It is madness in all women to let a secret love kindle within them, which, if unreturned and unknown, must devour the life that feeds it" (*JE* 186).

⁵⁴ For an excellent discussion of *Shirley*'s depiction of spinsterhood as a "physiological disaster" (199) in Victorian medical context, see Shuttleworth *Charlotte* 198-203. Wood also notes that Brontë "merely reproduces the standard rhetoric on old maids" when she depicts the effects of celibacy on their health (24). See also Keefe 135-137. See Nina Auerbach Ch. 4 for a view of the Victorian old maid as a more subversive figure; she discusses Charlotte Brontë on 111-112, 127-128, and 132.

⁵⁵ More specifically, the narrator states that she had been "an unwearied watcher by lingering deathbeds; that to prolonged and unrelaxing attendance on the sick the malady that now poisoned her own life had its origin; that to one wretched relative she had been a support and succor in the depths of self-earned degradation" (186).

⁵⁶ See also Shuttleworth *Charlotte* 201-202 on this scene.

⁵⁷ According to Gaskell, Shirley represents what Emily would have been "had she been placed in health and prosperity" (315).

⁵⁸ For example, the scene in *Shirley* in which Shirley parts Keeper from a fight with another dog (364) is based on an actual event with Emily and Keeper.

⁵⁹ Throughout the novel, Tartar seems directly to intuit people's moral characters; he is devoted to Shirley, tolerant of the decent Mr. Sweeting, and vicious towards the mean-spirited curates Donne and Malone; see esp. *Shirley* 283-285.

⁶⁰ See also Mitchell 61-62. Caroline also describes Shirley as a "lioness" who has "found her captor" (610).

⁶¹ It is significant that Brontë uses the same word, "canker," for the old maid Miss Marchmont (who lost her beloved) as for the old maid Miss Mann in *Shirley*. Miss Marchmont says: "I doubt if I have made the best use of my calamities. Soft, amiable natures they would have refined to saintliness; of strong, evil spirits they would have made demons; as for me, I have only been a woe-struck and selfish woman" (46).

⁶² Ironically, Ginevra believes Lucy to have strong nerves and to "feel nothing," telling her: "You haven't the same sensitiveness that a person of my constitution has. You seem to me insensible both to pain and fear and grief" (524). Lucy also inwardly applauds Madame Beck for conquering her unreturned attraction to Dr. John, though she points out that the directress's having an occupation, and having "neither strong feelings to overcome, nor tender feelings with which to be miserably pained," must have helped (116).

⁶³ Shuttleworth also claims that "*Villette* represents [Brontë's] most explicit engagement with Victorian psychological theory and medical practice" (*Charlotte* 219). Similarly, Showalter suggests that in *Villette* "Brontë made use of more current ideas about insanity [than in *Jane Eyre*] to explore the psychological

contradictions in nineteenth-century women's lives. The metaphor she chose for this was 'solitary confinement'" (Showalter 69). Showalter also notes that Brontë was shaken by observing the effects of solitary confinement on her visits in 1853 to the Bethlem (Bedlam) asylum and Pentonville prison (69-70). See Showalter 69-71 for a discussion of mental illness in *Villette*. Shuttleworth also comments that Lucy "appropriates to herself theories of female predisposition to neurosis and monomania" (*Charlotte* 242). Vrettos notes that "[a]lthough much of the attention paid to nervous disorders by the medical profession occurred after the publication of *Villette* in 1853, Charlotte Brontë had some exposure to prevailing theories of neurosis through consultations about her own recurring nervous symptoms" (57). See also Torgerson Ch.3 on how Lucy's neurosis shapes the narrative, and Gilbert and Gubar Ch. 12 for a discussion of Lucy's metaphorical "schizophrenia" (403).

⁶⁴ She adds that Lucy "is surrounded by monitory figures of female confinement, with whom she explicitly identifies. Her first employer, Miss Marchmont, is a hysterical cripple... In Miss Marchmont's service, Lucy too begins to go mad in her solitude..." (Showalter 70).

⁶⁵ Shuttleworth notes that here Brontë suggests that insanity "can be socially created" (*Charlotte* 228). Vrettos extends Brontë's point about the confessional by arguing that "Lucy's confession functions as a physical expression of her disease... a narrative outlet for the overflow of sensation" (67). See also Cooper xxiv-xxv.

⁶⁶ See Cooper xxxii-xxxiii and 578 note 7.

⁶⁷ See also Keefe 160-161.

⁶⁸ See also Shuttleworth *Charlotte* 241.

⁶⁹ See especially Showalter 70; Shuttleworth *Charlotte* 226; Vrettos 61-62 and 68; and Cooper xxxi-xxxii. See Shuttleworth *Charlotte* Ch. 10 on Lucy's self-suppression in *Villette*; she argues that "*Villette* does not fundamentally endorse the doctrine of control which had been so central to *Jane Eyre*" (232), and that ultimately "Lucy's efforts at regulation are no longer seen to be healthful" (233). She adds that Lucy's success, however limited, "actually stems from her allowing her passion to break bounds as she defies Madame Beck" (232). Vrettos points out that even when the nun turns out to be a man in disguise, "the diagnosis of Lucy's sensibility remains intact, the continuing trope for Lucy's disease, a synonym for nervous excitability" (68). She adds that the nun demonstrates how "nervous sensitivity could signal both spirituality and sexuality, both imagination and disease" (69).

⁷⁰ In contrast, Mitchell sees Lucy's burying the letters from Dr. John as therapeutic, an act from which she emerges "if not triumphant, then at least stronger and saner" (74; see also 70).

⁷¹ In contrast, Shuttleworth sees the confession to Père Silas as "the nadir of her [Lucy's] mental state" (*Charlotte* 224).

⁷² Similarly, we learn that Polly is a "sunbeam" in a sickroom (*Villette* 475). See also Keefe 19-21 and *Villette* 569 note 9 in on the corresponding incident in Brontë's own life.

⁷³ Such self-repression tends, she says, to give conduct "that turn which Reason approves, and which Feeling, perhaps, too often opposes," leading to a "better regulated" surface appearance (200).

⁷⁴ As Wood notes: "That hypochondria brought torments which, by their very nature, were largely invisible to outside observers who notice only the sufferer's peculiarities of temperament was documented in the Brontë's medical manual, Thomas John Graham's *Popular Domestic Medicine*" (88).

⁷⁵ See also *Villette* 582 notes 12 and 13, and see Shuttleworth *Charlotte* 235-237 on Lucy's hypochondria. Lucy also expresses the need for repression through metaphors, including animal metaphors:

The hermit—if he be a sensible hermit—will swallow his own thoughts, and lock up his own emotions during these weeks of inward winter. He will know that Destiny designed him to imitate, on occasion, the dormouse, and he will be conformable: make a tidy ball of himself, creep into a hole of life's wall, and submit decently to the drift which blows in and soon blocks him up, preserving him in ice for the season. (*Villette* 295).

At another point, she says: "I suppose animals kept in cages, and so scantily fed as to be always upon the verge of famine, await their food as I awaited a letter" (297).

⁷⁶ Maurice also encourages stoical endurance of pain with metaphors very like Brontë's; for example, bread: "It is no use hiding from yourself that you are from henceforth to be tried. Face it all; look fully at it; expect suffering; receive it as your daily portion; and when you say, 'Give us this day or daily bread,' remember that you are asking for your daily portion of suffering: yet never forget also that you are asking for your daily portion of strength, which you will surely receive." (15). She also uses the metaphor of caged birds: "It is a painful thing truly to feel as in a cage; and it offers the constant temptation to beat your wings against the sides of it; but stay on the perch quietly, and you will not feel the bondage and imprisonment of

your cage. And after all, it is God who has shut you in; and therefore you are safe there, and there only” (16).

⁷⁷ See also Shuttleworth *Charlotte* 83 and 140. At the novel’s end, Hunsden teases Crimsworth about his lucky escape from Zoraide Reuter: “Brown says she weighs twelve stone now; you see what you’ve lost” (922).

⁷⁸ Helena Michie also notes that “the Brontës use plumpness as a sign of a fallen nature” (22). Anna Silver deserves to be quoted at greater length here in her discussion of Charlotte Brontë’s ambiguous attitude towards food and hunger:

In Brontë’s work, hunger is always painful. Moreover, women’s lack of appetite (or inability to eat) is not an innate sign of feminine “nature,” as it is in Dickens’s work, but represents in large part a criticism of social roles, most specifically women’s inability, because of constructions of femininity, to speak their desires. Unlike Dickens’s heroines, who do not eat because they do not have desires, Brontë’s heroines have desires but can learn to repress them . . .

Although repression and starvation are painful . . . Brontë does not go so far as to validate hunger unequivocally. Rather, she repeatedly favors suffering over the easy pleasures of appetite and dissolute sexuality. Since repression is signified by starvation, then it should come as no surprise that the licentious women in Brontë’s novels . . . are all plump. Brontë’s negative representations of the corpulent female body demonstrate her ambiguous and complicated position toward women’s desires and her qualified acceptance of the Victorian aesthetic ideal of the slim woman (81-82).

See also Lashgari; Gilbert and Gubar Ch. 11; and Mitchell 47, 57, 66, and 72-74 on thirst and hunger as metaphors (especially metaphors for love) in Brontë’s novels. Matthew Arnold saw *Villette* as nothing but “hunger, rebellion, and rage” (Cooper xxvii).

⁷⁹ See also Wood 80-81 and 102.

⁸⁰ She does not want to be emotionally self-indulgent like her cousin Georgiana, whose sister Eliza describes her as an “absurd animal,” a “fat, weak, puffy, useless thing . . . cry[ing] out that [she is] ill-treated” (271). Neither, however, does she wish to be as coldly ascetic as the austere Eliza, a “selfish heartless creature” (272) (according to Georgiana), who expresses her idea of living “as an independent being ought to do” as “seek[ing] no one’s company, conversation, sympathy, [or] forbearance” (272), living “for, in and with yourself” (271). Both sisters, Jane realizes, lack “true, generous feeling” (272).

⁸¹ Crimsworth in *The Professor* taunts Hunsden on his ideal woman, whom Crimsworth describes as “the tallest, fattest, most boneless, full-blooded of Rubens’ painted women,” saying he would not envy him such a woman (899).

⁸² Underscoring this point, Lucy says of Vashti: “Suffering had struck that stage empress; and she stood before the audience neither yielding to, nor enduring, nor in finite measure, resenting it; she stood locked in struggle, rigid with resistance” (286).

⁸³ Brontë herself wrote in a letter to her Belgian “Master” Monsieur Héger: “One suffers in silence as long as one has enough strength and when this strength fails one speaks out without too much weighing of one’s words” (Brontë in Keefe 26; see also Keefe 27. Shuttleworth also notes Brontë’s writing to Monsieur Héger of “the impossibility of keeping silent and thrusting suffering down” (Shuttleworth *Charlotte* 66).

⁸⁴ See also Shuttleworth *Charlotte* 87 and Rodas “Spectrum” 66.

⁸⁵ See also Shuttleworth *Charlotte* 162.

⁸⁶ See Bailin 62; she suggests that illness is the condition for such emotional rewards in Brontë, and that debility is “her private language of the heart” (62).

⁸⁷ See also Shuttleworth *Charlotte* 10 and 177 and Bailin 25.

⁸⁸ William Farren expresses the same sentiment, in less gendered terms, later in the novel, saying: “Human natur’, taking it i’ th’ lump, is naught but selfishness” (332).

⁸⁹ Wood sees Mrs. Yorke as expressing Brontë’s own sense of self-conscious fictionality and of the link between thwarted desire and the wasting women represented in art and novels. Wood refers to “narratorial suggestions that Caroline is consciously playing a role; the role of the consumptive romantic heroine” (36) and to the novel’s “hints at Caroline’s complicity in her suffering” (36). In *Villette*, Madame Beck’s daughter does playact illness for attention, and Ginevra accuses Polly of “invalid airs to attract medical notice” (*Villette* 299).

⁹⁰ Wood refers to the “empathy” between Farren and Caroline once the latter leaves her sickroom (Wood 40): “For Caroline, the garden and not the sickroom becomes the convalescent respite” (Wood 40), she argues, adding that: “Low class and male sex are radically transformed by Brontë into healing influences”

(Wood 40). Unsympathetic as Louis Moore may seem to the twenty-first century reader, Brontë possibly meant him as another exception, since he tends the sick (*Shirley* 482) and nurses his pupil Henry “better... than any woman could nurse” (634).

⁹¹ See also *Shirley* 334-335.

⁹² Caroline receives the “boon” of meeting Robert “as an imprisoned bird would the admission of sunshine to its cage” (*Shirley* 253). This comparison resonates with another image in the novel, when at a school celebration twenty cages of canaries hang above the women’s heads (296).

⁹³ See Bailin Ch. 2, esp. 64. Vrettos observes that mother and daughter “become virtually interchangeable during Caroline’s illness” (43). Shuttleworth and Wood call into question the value of Mrs. Pryor’s possessive influence, and her embittering message about marriage (Shuttleworth *Charlotte* 207-208; Wood 37-41); in contrast Vrettos sees Mrs. Pryor as the ideal nurse because she can interpret the bodily signals of her daughter’s emotion, helping her recover health and identity (42-43)

⁹⁴ Lane observes that “Caroline Helstone’s efforts to determine whether [Robert] has enough sympathy to be a viable husband” are linked to his becoming a better landowner (89). See also Bailin 70-76; she notices that the physical dependency of the workers, which is the condition for his compassion, only renders them more subject to him.

⁹⁵ See *Shirley* 641; Michael Hartley, the culprit, ultimately dies of “delirium tremens.”

⁹⁶ See also *Shirley* 648.

⁹⁷ See also *Shirley* 646-647 and 649.

⁹⁸ Vrettos says that “Lucy’s body is all eyes; her disease is that of the visionary” (Vrettos 68). See Vrettos Ch. 2 on the relation of Lucy’s neurosis to her narrative control.

⁹⁹ Shuttleworth suggests that Polly is an alter-ego for Lucy, on whom she projects her fears of her own nervous disorder/hysteria and monomania (*Charlotte* 223, 229-232). She notes the “anguish of self-portrait” in Lucy’s description of how she feared for Polly as a child, and observes of Lucy’s implication that Polly would have turned out differently under harsher circumstances, that it suggests that mental illness “is incipient in us all” (*Charlotte* 231).

¹⁰⁰ Lucy sees in Polly a “monomaniac tendency” (*Villette* 15); see also note 3 in *Villette* 551.

¹⁰¹ The masculinized Madame Beck (see note 89 above) provides another contrast; she sneers at Lucy’s “nervous excitability” (86), but possesses worse faults herself: she is “devoid of sympathy,” though not without a general “rational benevolence”; “no private sorrow touched her: no force or mass of suffering concentrated in one heart had power to pierce hers” (82).

¹⁰² See also Showalter 70.

¹⁰³ As Shuttleworth observes, Lucy objects to his “reduction of her to a bundle of symptoms, open to his professional definition and control” (*Charlotte* 234). See also Shuttleworth *Charlotte* 12, 114, 220-221, and 234-235; she suggests that the “obvious unreliability of Lucy Snowe’s text tempts the reader into assuming the position of medical authority occupied by Dr. John and offering a diagnosis in the pathology of the proffered tale and its author” (114), but that “[t]he question of Lucy’s actual instability must remain unanswered if we, as readers, are to avoid falling into the error of Dr. John in assuming unproblematic access to a realm of hidden truth” (229). She also suggests that Brontë incorporated “Graham” into Dr. John’s name as an allusion to her father’s *Graham’s Domestic Medicine* (222). See also Bailin 63; she notes that historical shifts in medicine had made unhappiness “a product of the nervous system rather than the soul.” Wood also observes that “in Charlotte Brontë’s work we are made acutely aware of the discrepancy between a woman’s subjective experience of illness and distress and the objective interpretations and designations put upon it” (18).

¹⁰⁴ Shuttleworth notes that in this scene “[m]edical knowledge is matched by experiential understanding and found wanting” (*Charlotte* 235). See also Wood 90, Vrettos 65-67, and Bailin 51 on this scene.

¹⁰⁵ Vrettos points out that “Brontë suggests that Lucy is able to read the subtle symptoms of human emotion precisely because her nerves are sensitized, because she too is a silent sufferer... Lucy’s hermeneutic sensitivity, enhanced by nervous disease, allows her to interpret the world [so as] to grasp its invisible and subjective truths” (66); Lucy provides “a model of the sensitive narrator-reader who is physically attuned to scenes of suffering” (Vrettos 99). Thus:

[Her] nervous sensibility translates into narrative perspicacity. Throughout *Villette*, the fixity of Lucy’s narrative gaze marks unique moments of spiritual sympathy that set her apart from those with ordinary sensibilities and project her into their lives with an uncanny power to interpret the drama within... [Thus] Lucy’s nervousness enhances her narrative authority at the same time that

it necessitates acts of narrative containment... Lucy finds that the subtlety of her perceptions is inseparable from the condition of her nerves (Vrettos 67).

See also Cooper xxxiii.

¹⁰⁶ Shuttleworth adds that: "As in his medical practice, he is insulated from any attempt to understand the causes or experiential detail of the cases he is examining through his possession of a socially validated system of classification which allows him to speak with unreflecting authority" (238). She notes that in this scene Lucy conflates artistic and medical materialism (*Charlotte* 237-239), adding: "Whilst the artist reduces woman to a material expanse of flesh, and the doctor to a mere encasement of nerves, Vashti reveals a true union between the worlds of mind and body: abstractions, the experiential details of mental life which physiology cannot describe, are given material form" (239).

¹⁰⁷ Brontë's enigmatic comment in a letter to her publisher on M. Paul's obscure fate toys with our idea of sympathy: "Drowning and Matrimony are the fearful alternatives. The Merciful... will of course choose the former and milder doom—drown him to put him out of his pain. The cruel-hearted will on the contrary pitilessly impale him on the second horn of the dilemma-- marrying him without ruth or compunction to that—person—that—that—individual—'Lucy Snowe'" (Brontë in *Villette* 603 note 9).

¹⁰⁸ Wood argues that "Brontë's narrative problematizes rather than sanctions the attributes of tough impassivity with which Crimsworth has to contend in a man's world" (108).

¹⁰⁹ Shuttleworth calls it an unexplained "disturbance" in the text (*Shuttleworth Charlotte* 144); see also Duthie 130-131. See Shuttleworth *Charlotte* 141-145 and Chapter 2 of Wood's *Passion and Pathology in Victorian Fiction* for an examination of Crimsworth's hypochondria in historical context.

¹¹⁰ See also Mitchell 39.

¹¹¹ Shuttleworth suggests that "the very relaxation of control consequent on his sense of achievement brings to the fore all his unacknowledged fears surrounding his social and sexual identity" (*Charlotte* 141). She also points out that "[w]ithin mainstream medical writing, male hypochondriasis was frequently related to forms of sexual fear" (*Charlotte* 142). See also Wood 85-90.

¹¹² Wood explores this topic in depth in Chapter 2 of *Passion and Pathology in Victorian Fiction*.

¹¹³ See also Shuttleworth *Charlotte* 131.

¹¹⁴ Frances could also be speaking about Crimsworth when she accuses Hunsden of valuing logic over feeling, saying: "I suppose you are always interfering with your own feelings, and those of other people, and dogmatizing about the rationality of this, that, and the other sentiment, and then ordering it to be suppressed because you imagine it to be inconsistent with logic" (895)—all of which sounds very much like Crimsworth's own attempts to control and suppress feelings in favor of reason. Frances sees such an approach to life, "as if it were right to crush any pleasurable sentiment that God has given to man," as misguided, especially when the sentiment is one that expands sympathy, that "spreads man's selfishness in wider circles" (895).

¹¹⁵ Wood observes that his narrative "is one in which events and relationships are marked at every turn with antipathy and confrontation" (79). See also Shuttleworth *Charlotte* 132.

¹¹⁶ Mitchell also notes that: "Even Crimsworth's relationship with his son, Victor, is one of control, and of violent control, as the dog-shooting incident illustrates" (44). Shuttleworth argues that "[s]ymbolically, the scene can be read as Crimsworth's ruthless attempt to exorcize the feared contaminating influence of Hunsden on his son... The narrative emphasis of these final pages falls on the violent restraint which underpins the attainment and construction of self-controlled masculinity" (*Charlotte* 146). See also Gilbert and Gubar 334-335 and Keefe 84.

Chapter IV Thomas Hardy and the Kinship of Fellow-Creatures

“Altruism, or the Golden Rule, or whatever ‘Love your Neighbor as Yourself’ may be called, will ultimately be brought about, I think, by the pain we see in others reacting on ourselves, as if we and they were a part of one body.”-Thomas Hardy, from *The Life of Thomas Hardy* (235)

In turning to the works of Thomas Hardy after those of the Brontës, or even George Eliot, one is struck by the generosity of his tone. His antipathies all seem (at first) to be directed toward larger forces and institutions, not individuals. As Virginia Hyman notes, there are few villains in Hardy’s novels, and we generally feel some sympathy for even the most flawed characters (82-83). This generosity, as we shall see, has its limits, but it is consistent with the value Hardy places in all his works on expansive, non-judgmental sympathy. In this chapter I will examine how two of Hardy’s major works, *Far From the Madding Crowd* and *Tess of the d’Urbervilles*, illustrate his arguments for greater general, including cross-species, sympathy, even when full empathic understanding is impossible. I will also explore the way representations of illness in these novels function to depict the failure of such sympathy, and to indict those characters who do not practice it. In doing so, I hope also to illuminate how deeply gendered Hardy’s sense of the limits of empathy are, and, in *Tess*, the way in which figurations of illness, animals, and animality ultimately undermine readers’ sympathy for even Hardy’s most beloved female heroine.

Hardy’s argument for sympathy was partly an outgrowth of his response to the Darwinian theory of evolution. Unlike the *fin de siècle* authors I discuss in my Conclusion, Hardy did not react with horror to Darwin’s “extended argument about the kinship of humans and animals,” as Paul White puts it (121). Nor did he see the need to

anxiously reaffirm human uniqueness or superiority in response to Darwin's claim that humans "cannot any longer believe that man is the work of a separate act of creation" (Darwin *Descent* 602) nor class mankind in a "distinct kingdom" separate from the animal kingdom (*Descent* 143). On the contrary, he heartily embraced the notion of the kinship of all living things, seeing in it the greatest argument for an expansion of sympathy for the marginalized, particularly in the animal realm.¹ In a 1910 letter to the secretary of the Humanitarian League he wrote:

Few people seem to perceive fully as yet that the most far-reaching consequence of the establishment of the common origin of species is ethical; that it logically involved a readjustment 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. Possibly Darwin himself did not wholly perceive it, though he alluded to it. While mankind was deemed to be a creation apart from all other creations, a secondary or tertiary morality was considered good enough towards the "inferior" races; but no person who reasons nowadays can escape the trying conclusion that this is not maintainable. (cited in Joanna Brown 290)²

This reading of Darwin suited Hardy's own instinctive compassion for animals and concern about their sufferings. His love of animals in his own life is well known; he was the fond owner of multiple pets and a supporter of animal rights, repulsed by "the present blackguard treatment of animals generally," as he put it (cited in Dutta 201), and writing often to the press on animal welfare issues. As Ronald Morrison discusses in his article "Humanity towards Man, Woman, and the Lower Animals: Thomas Hardy's *Jude the Obscure* and the Victorian Humane Movement," Hardy was actively involved in the Victorian humane movement, and increasingly so around the turn of the century, after the publication of *Jude the Obscure* (65-67). He was also (with some reservations) an anti-vivisectionist; he and his wife Emma were members of the London Anti-Vivisection Society (Morrison 79 note 9), and he wrote in a letter that "the practice of vivisection,

which might have been defended while the belief ruled that men and animals are essentially different, has been left by that discovery without any logical argument in its favor” (cited in Joanna Brown 290).³ He even served on the Central Executive Committee for the Council of Justice to Animals, which advocated for humane slaughter methods, and he left money both to that organization and to the RSPCA after his death (Morrison 66). He wrote numerous poems about animals, and one of these, “Compassion,” he wrote to celebrate the centenary of the RSPCA (Joanna Brown 115).⁴

Hardy’s love for animals also permeates his novels, in which he suggests that all living creatures are worthy of sympathy, as all suffer under the laws of nature and of society. As he wrote, “What are my books but one plea against ‘man’s inhumanity to man,’ woman, and to the lower animals?” (cited in Hyman 9).⁵

Of course, to recognize in Hardy’s works a plea for greater compassion is hardly new. As early as 1975, Hyman could write that “few critics can miss the value Hardy places on ‘loving-kindness’ or altruism, but such comments seem so commonplace as to be almost embarrassing clichés” (8). She points out that Hardy emphasizes this one value—loving-kindness-- with remarkable consistency, seeming to “prize it almost to the exclusion of all others” (9),⁶ and that “his works seem both to express and to evoke a kind of sympathy for all living creatures” (9). She adds that “the recognition of the necessity for moving beyond theological attitudes and metaphysical responses toward a more conscious awareness of the objective reality and specificity of the ‘other’ is really at the heart of Hardy’s evolutionary theory” (118).⁷ From reading any of Hardy’s writings, it is clear that this “otherness” includes the otherness of animals. Gillian Beer suggests that:

The two major emotional and creative problems which evolutionary theory forced on Hardy were to find a scale for the human, and a place for the human within the

natural order. Like Darwin, an ambiguous anthropomorphism pervades his writing—an anthropomorphism which paradoxically denies human centrality and gives the human a fugitive and secondary role in his system of reference but not in his system of values. (“Finding a Scale” 458)

For Hardy, the human is decentered but not devalued—as Beer suggests, his works still express his “humanism” (“Finding a Scale” 452).⁸ Darwinian theory, for Hardy, elevates nonhuman species without debasing the human.

However, while Hardy deeply valued compassion for animals and stressed the interconnection of human and animal, he had a more ambivalent view of animality in humans. Such animality may not always evoke antipathy for a character the way it does in the Brontës’ novels. But, as Hardy himself said, “the higher passions must ever rank above the inferior—the intellectual tendencies above the animal, the moral above the intellectual” (cited in Hyman 127). Thus, animal passions are inferior to intellect—though, notably, intellect is inferior to morality, with morality in Hardy’s schema meaning sympathy and compassion, not adherence to doctrine. In general, Hardy appreciates some amount of animality in a person: the vivacity and “naturalness” of many his heroines, and his refusal to judge their sexual desires, is evidence of this, as is Tess’s “appetite for joy” (*TD* 149). The narrator of *Tess of the d’Urbervilles* muses, for example, that Angel Clare would have been a “nobler man”—i.e., one more capable of sympathizing with others—“if he had had more of the animal in him” (191).⁹ Alec, in contrast, is too driven by “animalism” (*TD* 239) and animal instincts, as is (to an even greater extent) Arabella in *Jude the Obscure*. Their animality is completely incompatible with sympathy for others; Arabella, as Hyman notes, is “the egotist in its most natural and vigorous form” (155). Thus, animality can make a character more at one with the natural world and all its creatures, or, alternately, less capable of sympathy.

If animals in Hardy's novels often signify the need to extend our sympathy, illness in these novels often results from the failure of such sympathy. Granted, the role of illness in Hardy's argument for sympathy and loving-kindness is more subtle than the role of animality. Hardy's heroines are relatively healthy and vigorous in contrast with their often frail counterparts in other Victorian novels; at least, they are no more prone to illness than Hardy's men.¹⁰ When illness appears, it is generally compounded by psychosomatic elements such as stress, as Tony Fincham observes (56).¹¹ Such stress-compounded illness is usually the result of romantic troubles, and virtually always a sign that someone has failed in sympathy and loving-kindness. And here Hardy's gender bias comes into play: often, though not always, it is the capricious or elusive heroine whose failure of sympathy brings illness and even death to a man. In this way, a male character's illness becomes a sign of authorial judgment of a female character, and even a tool to create antipathy toward her in the reader. In contrast, illness in a female character, while sometimes evoking sympathy, often serves only to estrange her from the reader's sympathies, at least in Hardy's later novels.

Another peculiar aspect of Hardy's argument for sympathy shapes his depiction of gender and species difference; this is the pervasive suggestion throughout his work that sympathy for those different from ourselves must exist, of necessity, without full understanding, or what we would now call empathy. Suzanne Keen helpfully makes the distinction in *Empathy and the Novel*, noting that sympathy is feeling *for* another, while empathy is feeling *with* another (xxi). Keen notes that "significant components of what psychologists today call empathy appear under the label of sympathy in the works of eighteenth-century philosophers David Hume and Adam Smith" (xxii). Smith wrote, for

example, of sympathy as putting oneself in another's "situation, and... lodging... our own living souls in their inanimate bodies, and thence conceiving what would be our emotions in this case" (Smith 79). This certainly blurs the distinction between "feeling for" and "feeling with" someone, and the same blurring occurs in Victorian novels' treatment of sympathy. As Rebecca Mitchell notes in *Victorian Lessons in Empathy and Difference*, "separating sympathy from empathy as depicted in nineteenth-century works is made difficult as identification—the feeling "like" associated with empathy since the word's twentieth century coinage—is aligned so closely with sympathy" (16).¹²

For the purposes of this chapter, I have separated them out in the way Keen does to distinguish sympathy (in terms of compassion, feeling for someone) from empathy (identification, feeling with someone). Though Hardy would not have used the latter term, it is the impossibility of empathy that makes sympathy both more difficult and more imperative in his novels. Hardy's works emphasize that we can never know what another person (much less a creature of a different species) is thinking and feeling, but that we should have sympathy for them nevertheless.

This concern with the limits of empathy is evident as early as his first published novel, *Desperate Remedies*, in which the heroine Cytherea Grey laments the impossibility of anyone perfectly empathizing with another's feelings, and that "nobody can enter into another's nature truly" (236); when reminded of her "social duty," she protests:

Though it may be right to care more about the benefit of the many than for the indulgence of your own single self, when you consider that the many, and duty to them, only exist to you through your own existence, what can be said? What do our own acquaintances care about us? Not much... [T]hey will never, never realize that it was my single opportunity for existence, as well as of doing my duty, which they are regarding; they will not feel that what to them is but a

thought, easily held in those two words of pity, ‘Poor girl!’ was a whole life for me; as full of hours, minutes, and peculiar minutes, of hopes and dreads, smiles, whisperings, tears, as theirs: that it was my world, what is to them their world, and they in that life of mine, however much I cared for them, only as the thought I seem to them to be. (*DR* 236)

These comments parallel the narrator of *Tess*’s words that Tess

was not an existence, an experience, a passion, a structure of sensations, to anyone but herself. To all humankind besides Tess was only a passing thought. Even to her friends she was no more than a frequently passing thought. If she made herself miserable the livelong night and day, it was only this much to them—“Ah, she makes herself unhappy.” If she tried to dismiss all care, to take pleasure... she could only be this idea to them—“Ah, she bears it very well” (*TD* 71).¹³

Hardy’s novels reinforce this idea of the impossibility of total empathy, while still championing the need for a sympathetic response to others. This leads naturally to his representation of cross-species sympathy; as Elisha Cohn observes, Hardy suggests that a recognition of the *otherness* of animals “challenges without dispersing the human privilege necessary to motivate compassion,” and is vital to Hardy’s “ethic of care” (500-501) as well as to social critique (517).¹⁴

This recognition of “otherness” in Hardy’s works, and the resultant difficulty or even impossibility of empathy, is equally or even more evident across gender as across species. If anything, gender functions as a barrier to empathy even stronger than the species barrier. Hardy’s novels often emphasize the mysteriousness of women’s thoughts, feelings, and motivations to men. It seems that the gap between the genders widens the gulf that sympathy must bridge, and that empathy cannot. That gulf often widens at moments when “the antagonisms of sex to sex” (*JO* 166), as the narrator of *Jude the Obscure* puts it, come to the fore. This divide between the genders also often leads to a tendency (both in Hardy’s narrators and in his male characters) to seek to interpret

women through stereotyped generalizations—what Judith Mitchell refers to as “the blatantly sexist remarks that are scattered throughout his oeuvre like some kind of sexist graffiti” (“Hardy’s Female” 172),¹⁵ through speculations about biological difference, or through idealization. These approaches are ultimately dehumanizing, and tend to estrange the reader’s sympathies from the female characters.

In each of Hardy’s novels, the anxiety surfaces that there is something fundamentally and essentially other about a woman that makes her unknowable to men. These novels obsessively explore the “nature” of women from every angle, but remain restlessly unable to settle on any satisfactory answer as to what a woman is, or why she behaves as she does.¹⁶ Perhaps, as Katherine Rogers suggests, Hardy “could not quite see them [women] as human beings like himself” (257). His portrayal of male and female minds as fundamentally different may have been influenced by Victorian scientific debates about the difference in sizes between the male and female brain; in his *Life*, he records “an interesting scientific discussion” in 1893 with Sir James Crichton Brown, in which the latter explained that “[a] woman’s brain... is as large in proportion to her body as a man’s” (275), and arguments based on the supposition of women’s inferior brain power were put forward by other Victorian thinkers including the biological determinist Henry Maudsley throughout the century (Maudsley “Cerebral Development”). In any case, Hardy was of his time in his depiction of his characters’ minds as being just as gendered as their bodies.

Hardy’s own sense of the limitations of his artistic and personal comprehension renders his depiction of women generally more ambivalent than sympathetic, and even sometimes antipathetic. As Lascelles Abercrombie noted in 1929, Hardy’s view of

women is “a little cruel, *not as tolerant as it seems*, thoroughly a man’s point of view” (cited in Dutta 8; emphasis mine). Shanta Dutta’s *Ambivalence in Hardy* explores Hardy’s ambivalent treatment of women, and in her Introduction she sums up decades of critical debate on Hardy’s attitude toward women—an attitude which critics have placed at all points on the spectrum from misogyny to total sympathy, compassion to cruelty, anger to identification (1-21).¹⁷ The source of his shifting attitudes, I argue, was his sense of the limits of understanding between the sexes, particularly the limits of men’s understanding of women.

His sense of the unknowability of women by men also made it impossible for Hardy to grant his readers full access to his female characters’ consciousnesses, even as his fascination with women led him to make them the center of his art. Hence the sense of exclusion and slightly melancholy envy discernible in his letter to a contemporary female novelist about her work:

I am much interested in learning from the female characters the things that go on at the back of women’s minds—the invisible rays of their thought (as is said of the spectrum) which are beyond the direct sight or intuition of man. I recollect Leslie Stephen once saying to me that he liked women’s novels for that reason; they opened to him qualities of observation which could not be got from the ablest of novels by men. (cited in Dutta 191)

Instead of representation of the “invisible rays” of women’s thought, inaccessible to the male novelist, Hardy offers his readers an endless interpretive game, inviting them to participate in the hermeneutic activity of deciphering women. His novels seem to assume a reader who shares the narrator’s, and the male characters’, outsider’s perspective of women and eagerness to decipher them. Numerous critics have noted the extent to which Hardy’s heroines function as feminine texts to be interpreted by male

narrator, characters, and reader.¹⁸ Nicola Harris astutely links such interpretive effort to Hardy's gendered sense of limited omniscience:

Though undoubtedly one of the most sensitive and perspicacious of male writers exploring women in Victorian literature, he was forever at one remove from a complete understanding of his heroines who perplexed and teased him without mercy. Watching his heroes flail around painfully, sometimes fatally, in their determination to know, and thereby control, their female counterparts, induced Hardy to concede to the final inaccessibility of the subversive feminine text precisely because it is feminine. . . . Hardy's heroines remain, in the last instance, inscrutable and ineffable enigmas. They were one puzzle or linguistic conundrum he could not solve. (34)

Thus, despite their neverending puzzling over women's nature and motivations, Hardy's novels ultimately suggest his growing sense that women can only be seen, known, and represented by men through some obscuring lens.

Further hampering readers' sympathetic identification with Hardy's female characters is the way that we only view Hardy's women from the outside; however much we may think we know them, all our knowledge is based on the realism and detail with which their exteriors are visualized.¹⁹ The work of Judith Mitchell is especially helpful in recognizing this pattern in Hardy's writing. She contends that "none of Hardy's heroines . . . functions as a fictional subject":

This may seem like an absurd assertion, given the distinctive personalities of such characters as Bathsheba, Eustacia, Tess, and Sue: a close examination, however, reveals the subjectivity of these characters to be largely illusory, and the seeming absurdity to be a function of Hardy's persuasive realism. His female characters are seen almost entirely from the outside, in terms of physical description, action, and dialogue. . . . Most of these characters, like Tess, are physically present in an immediate and very sensual way, which tends to obscure the fact that their point of view is explored only superficially. ("Hardy's Female" 179)

She goes on to illustrate how such "elisions of female consciousness" manifest in Hardy's avoidance of the use of free indirect discourse to reveal his heroines' thoughts, an avoidance which means that "we are admitted only sketchily to the inner lives of his

heroines” (“Hardy’s Female” 180). She concludes that “the consciousness being explored” in Hardy’s passages about women is really “that of the male observer” (“Hardy’s Female” 182), adding that in the “scopic economy” of Hardy’s novels “male consciousness is explored subjectively (through free indirect speech, for example) while female consciousness is elided in favor of the obsessive objectification of women by the male gaze” (*Stone* 183).²⁰

This would explain why, as Rogers points out, we can never empathize with his heroines (even Tess, the one we *sympathize* with most) the way we can with his male protagonists—for example, Jude, whose tragedy in many ways mirrors Tess’s, but who has a realistically human consciousness closely entwined with the narrator’s, while Tess is known from the outside (249-251). Thus, with Hardy’s heroines, even Tess, we remain in the position of observers and interpreters, so that sympathy can never become empathy.

This outsider’s perspective was likely more an imaginative necessity than an aesthetic choice on Hardy’s part; he presented women from the vantage of an outsider continually seeking some window into their mysterious beings. If his women are puzzles, conundrums, mysteries, riddles, enigmas, or texts, as critics have variously described them, it is because for Hardy this is how women necessarily appear to men. The male author’s relationship with his female characters thus mirrors the interpretive stance of men to women in the real world, as Hardy saw it, and he displays his characters trying (and usually failing) to bridge the gap between the sexes through sympathetic action.

I will turn now to *Far From the Madding Crowd*, Hardy’s first major novel, which strikingly illustrates his emphasis on the necessity for cross-species sympathy, and

in which representations of animals and of illness frame a tale of moral potential fulfilled through an increase in sympathy. Then I will examine how in *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* Hardy's depictions of illness and animals work to direct readers' sympathies onto shifting characters, and the way those shifts reveal Hardy's gender bias. In the next chapter, I will explore how in *Jude the Obscure* Hardy's concern about the limits of empathy between the sexes leads to an antipathetic narrative stance towards women as sources of pathology and animality. At the endings of *Tess* and *Jude*, I will argue, Hardy deliberately shifts readers' sympathies from a female to a male character, so that not only empathy, but sympathetic response to the female characters is sacrificed.

Far From the Madding Crowd

Far from the Madding Crowd is one of Hardy's early works, in which one can see him beginning to shape his ideas about the relation of animality to humanity, the need for sympathy without empathy, and the pathological results of failures of sympathy, particularly between the sexes. This early work is relatively optimistic; for example, he celebrates the natural health—and healing capacity—of Gabriel Oak, the sympathetic (and sympathizing) moral center of the novel, and awards him (not the handsome Troy nor the unstable Boldwood) survival, romantic fulfillment, and the promise of reproductive success.²¹ The novel's plot hinges on whether Bathsheba will learn to value and to match his capacity for sympathy. Bathsheba's moral potential, her capacity to feel and act on sympathy, develops through her experience of suffering, both her own and that of others; the illnesses and deaths of the farmer Boldwood and Fanny Robin serve as markers in that development.

The text measures Bathsheba's growth in sympathy against the sympathetic capacity of Gabriel Oak. Hardy makes this otherwise unprepossessing male character his hero because Gabriel appears to have developed sympathy as part of his deep connection to his natural environment. The value Hardy places on closeness to and sympathy with animals and the natural realm is as evident here as in any of his works. As Ivan Kreilkamp notes in his excellent essay on the novel, *Far From the Madding Crowd* can be read "not as a narrative rooted around singular human subjects, possessing automatic priority, but as a representation of multiple life forms in interaction and interrelation... Hardy's 'natural' or nonhuman world as fully embedded into and inextricable from the human or social world" ("Pitying" 475). More succinctly, the novel "teaches readers, too, to pity the sheep and to push beyond an exclusively human-centered perspective" (Kreilkamp "Pitying" 475). Kreilkamp focuses almost exclusively on Gabriel's role, but Hardy throughout the text trains the reader into attentiveness to the existence and sufferings of all living creatures. In describing a particularly freezing night, for instance, he mentions that: "Many a small bird went to bed supperless that night among the bare boughs" (69). This comment destabilizes the anthropocentric perspective of the reader, coming after a description of the effects of the cold on people, and implicitly placed on an equal level with that description.

It is fitting, then, that Hardy sets up his protagonist Gabriel Oak as a hero not through any obviously striking qualities, but, initially at least, through his being so fully in tune with the animals who share his life.²² In Kreilkamp's words, Gabriel "possesses a 'humanity' that is itself defined by a willingness to broach species barriers" ("Pitying" 478). He is especially gifted in caring for sheep, his "speciality from his youth" (*FMC*

59), which is significant due to Bathsheba's symbolic role throughout the text as the "little ewe lamb." In II Samuel, Nathan chides David for stealing a man's one "little ewe lamb," by which he means a man's wife, named Bathsheba.²³ Bathsheba's name suggests that she is the lamb, and belongs with a particular shepherd, the shepherd who is seen tenderly caring for lambs at the very beginning of the novel and throughout the text.²⁴

The novel also suggests Oak's appropriateness as a husband to Bathsheba from the beginning by illustrating their mutual affinity with animals. At the beginning of the novel, both are seen caring for young animals, and soon afterwards both oversee the births of twin animals at the same time: sheep in his case, cows in hers. As he is associated with sheep (and with his loyal dog George²⁵), her kinship with horses is evident from the moment Gabriel falls in love with her; he sees her lie down on the back of the horse she is riding, seemingly at one with the animal, and "at home anywhere between a horse's head and its tail" (*FMC* 66). Oak's early attempts to court Bathsheba are mediated by animals; he even attempts to bring her an actual ewe lamb. Perhaps more ominously, the idea of Bathsheba suggests to Oak "possibilities of capture" (73), and she herself taunts him by saying that she needs "someone to tame me... and you would never be able to" (80).²⁶ After he becomes her employee, however, their different associations with animals emphasize the gap between them. Her frequent position on horseback then literalizes the separation between her and her shepherd, as she is often looking down on him from horseback while he is on foot.²⁷ Their social separation likewise prevents her from recognizing his moral worth.

Gabriel, as Bathsheba suggests, is not much of a tamer, because he lacks the necessary cruelty, instead displaying deep sympathy for both animals and human

beings.²⁸ Gabriel even regrets the fact that his lambs will eventually be killed: “Oak was an intensely humane man... A shadow in his life had always been that his flock ended in mutton—that a day came and found every shepherd an arrant traitor to his defenceless sheep” (*FMC* 86).²⁹ Thus, when his younger dog chases all the ewes off a cliff, Oak’s “first feeling [is] one of pity for the untimely fate of these gentle ewes and their unborn lambs,” and he realizes his own financial ruin only secondarily (86). Such sympathy for animals leads organically to unselfish sympathy for other people: Oak’s next thought is relief that he is not married to Bathsheba, so that she does not have to share his poverty (86).

Hardy again explicitly connects Gabriel’s capacity for cross-species sympathy for animals to his ability to sympathize with humans when Gabriel first meets Fanny Robin.³⁰ In giving her some money he accidentally touches her wrist, and is alarmed because her pulse is “beating with a tragic intensity. He had frequently felt the same quick, hard beat in the temporal artery of his lambs when overdriven. It suggested a consumption too great of a vitality which, to judge from her figure and stature, was already too little” (101). He responds with concern and compassion, for “he had felt himself in the penumbra of a very deep sadness when touching that slight and fragile creature” (101). In this scene, as Kreilkamp argues,

Sympathy, it is implied, requires a capacity for tactile receptivity to the “throb[bing]” organic life of others—to bodies that, whatever species they may be, share many of the same physiological responses and process. This is a key idea for Hardy, that the quality of sympathy is most directly manifested in care for and attention to vulnerable bodies, which may or may not be human ones. When Hardy describes Fanny Robin as a “slight and fragile creature,” he is in a sense “creaturing” the human, situating the human subject in a broader category of animality. (“Pitying” 477)³¹

Thus, Gabriel's sympathetic attentiveness to the needs of animals develops organically into a similar sympathetic attentiveness to the sufferings of human "creatures."

Gabriel's sympathy for Fanny is matched by only one other creature—importantly, not a human one. As Fanny struggles on toward the Union house where she will die, no human being comes to her aid, but she meets an unexpected source of sympathy—a dog. This dog, a canine counterpart to the loyal and sensitive Gabriel, seems to have an intuitive sense of sympathy that to Hardy makes him an archetype of what is best in his species: the narrator calls him the "ideal embodiment of canine greatness" (326). Like Gabriel, this dog demonstrates the potential for cross-species sympathy, for a kinship of all creatures in suffering and in loving-kindness. Fanny leans on his shoulders and lets him lead her to Casterbridge: "Her friend moved forward slowly, and she with small mincing steps moved forward beside him, half her weight being thrown upon the animal. Sometimes she sank... The dog, who now thoroughly understood her desire and her incapacity, was frantic in his distress on these occasions..." (327). The dog's "thorough understanding" of Fanny's situation and his "distress" for her again suggest the possibility of sympathy across species, despite barriers against full empathy. Nevertheless, Hardy cannot let this scene pass without a touch of the bitter irony that pervades his later works, as he shows how rarely the human species displays such loving-kindness, particularly across species boundaries. When at last Fanny arrives at the Union house, a man stones the dog away (328).

The callous actions of such characters show how rare and valuable true sympathy is among humans, so that only Gabriel seems to match the unselfish compassion the dog displays. Furthermore, along with this capacity for sympathy, Gabriel, like the sturdy oak

his last name evokes, is physically stable, an exemplar of physical as well as moral health. He appears in one scene, with four lambs over his shoulders and his dog at his side, as “an epitome of the world’s health and vigor” (156). Furthermore, he is not only healthy, but a healer. He is regularly seen nursing young lambs from a “death’s-door plight” (162) back to health.³² As we have already seen, this familiarity with disease in animal bodies attunes him to Fanny’s fragile state of health. Gabriel’s healing powers are especially evident in a famous scene in which Bathsheba dismisses him from her employment out of anger, only to be compelled to call him back to save her sheep. The sheep are dying after eating too much clover, and he is the only one who can save them. The good shepherd appears, bearing a lance, the “instrument of salvation,” which he uses “with a dexterity that would have graced a hospital-surgeon” (193).

While Oak is a stable pillar of altruistic sympathy (and the egoistic Troy is incapable of all but the most fleeting sympathy), Bathsheba has the potential either to develop or to submerge her sympathetic faculties. It is unclear for much of the book whether egoism or altruism will win out in her. This complexity in her character is (as so often in Hardy) depicted in her face, in which her “pleasant eyes” are “contradicted” by her lips and teeth, which suggest “heartlessness” when she smiles (179).

Hardy makes it clear that Bathsheba is capable of sympathy; in fact, it is largely her deep capacity for sympathy which makes her feel she owes Boldwood her hand after she sees how seriously he takes her valentine. Her heart “swell[s] with sympathy” for Boldwood when he first proposes to her (179), and later she tells him, “I do pity you—deeply—O, so deeply!” (259).³³ Hardy suggests that her sympathy *is* worth something morally. Her capacity for sympathizing with Boldwood certainly exceeds Troy’s, as the

latter callously tells the discarded suitor, “Better kill yourself” (289). Gabriel nevertheless blames Bathsheba for inadvertently attracting Boldwood in the first place by sending the valentine. He tells her that “even... if you were inclined toward him, you might have let him find it out in some way of true loving-kindness, and not by sending him a valentine’s letter” (186). Bathsheba’s sending the valentine is, then, a failure to measure up to Hardy’s ideal of loving-kindness, which involves an extension of the sympathetic imagination, and of which Gabriel is the novel’s arbiter. Granted, it is a failure on a small scale and with extenuating circumstances, but it has profound repercussions.

Gabriel sets Bathsheba an example of sympathy for Boldwood, particularly as the latter slides into mental illness. Oak’s sympathy overcomes sexual rivalry when he, “for a minute, rose above his own grief in noticing Boldwood’s” (296). In fact, he feels sympathy for more than a moment, for he seems especially attuned to and concerned for his rival’s decline in health and spirits. At one point, he observes to Boldwood that the farmer looks “strangely altered,” and thinks “that whatever he himself might have suffered from Bathsheba’s marriage, here was a man who had suffered more” (315). Gabriel again shows his remarkable ability to overcome the narrowness of romantic jealousy after Boldwood shoots Troy, as Gabriel’s “anxiety was great that Boldwood might be saved, even though in his conscience he felt that he ought to die; for there had been qualities in the farmer which Oak loved” (449).

Bathsheba comes in time to appreciate Oak’s unselfish capacity for sympathy, and thus to appreciate—and fall in love with—Oak himself:

What a way Oak had, she thought, of enduring things. Boldwood, who seemed so much deeper and higher and stronger in feeling than Gabriel, had not yet learnt, any more than she herself, the simple lesson which Oak showed a mastery of by every turn and look he gave—that among the multitude of interests by which he

was surrounded, those which affected his personal well-being were not the most absorbing and important in his eyes. Oak meditatively looked on the horizon of circumstances without any special regard to his own standpoint in the midst. That was how she would wish to be. (354-355)

Bathsheba attempts to emulate Gabriel especially in his ability to be charitable to his rivals in love—no small feat for a Hardy character, as Hardy continually emphasizes that jealousy and selfishness are central to romantic love. She struggles to be like Gabriel in her response to the dead Fanny, once she realizes the girl was her husband's lover. She fights with "determined rebellion against her prejudices, a revulsion from a lower instinct of uncharitableness, which would have withheld all sympathy from the dead woman" (353).³⁴ Later, she again shows her growth in sympathy by planting flowers on Fanny's grave, with "superfluous magnanimity" overcoming her "narrower instincts" (381).

Her sympathetic response also grows through her own experience of suffering, even as that suffering crushes her egoism: "Taking no further interest in herself as a splendid woman, she acquired the indifferent feelings of an outsider in contemplating her probable fate as a singular wretch" (384). Boldwood recognizes the change in her, and takes advantage of it, and of her sympathy for him:

What he would try to recognize was that the severe schooling she had been subjected to had made Bathsheba much more considerate than she had formerly been of the feelings of others... There was a substratum of good-feeling in her: her self-reproach for the injury she had thoughtlessly done him might be depended upon now to a much greater extent than before her infatuation and disappointment. (392).

In these assumptions he is correct; on seeing how much he still loves her, Bathsheba "sympathized deeply... [H]er pity for the man who so persistently loved on to his own injury and permanent gloom had betrayed Bathsheba into an injudicious considerateness

of manner, which appeared almost like tenderness” (411). Though she “almost feared him... even whilst she sympathized” (414), Boldwood wins her promise to marry him.

In her sympathy for Boldwood, she has become more like Gabriel; indeed, she and Gabriel are bound in mutual sympathy for this man, whose illness no one else recognizes. Despite Boldwood’s increasingly “excited and unusual moods,” “nobody imagined that there had shown in him unequivocal symptoms of the mental derangement which Bathsheba and Oak, alone of all others and at different times, had momentarily suspected” (446). Only after his death does the larger community find “pathetic evidences of a mind crazed with care and love” (446), and become convinced that “Boldwood had not been responsible for his later acts... It was astonishing, now that a presumption of insanity was raised, how many collateral circumstances were remembered to which a condition of mental disease seemed to afford the only explanation” (447).³⁵ Boldwood’s madness closely approximates the “erotomania” described by the influential French physician Jean Esquirol, in which the sufferer is “pursued night and day, by the same thoughts and affections, which are the more disordered as they are concentrated or exasperated by opposition,” and which leads to neglect of all other concerns (Esquirol 258-259). The attunement of Gabriel and Bathsheba to Boldwood’s illness is the result not only of their close association with him, but of their special sensitivity to the change his mental illness causes in him.

Ultimately, while she may not reach Gabriel’s sympathetic heights, nor become a healer as he is, Bathsheba grows enough in sympathy that she becomes a nurse, a “Florence Nightingale,” as Hyman puts it, to her dying husband Troy.³⁶ After Boldwood shoots him, Bathsheba holds him on her lap and covers his wound (440-441). She tends

to everything pertaining to his corpse as well, exerting “superhuman strain” at the expense of her own health; once she has done all she can for him she falls into “fainting fits” and requires medical attendance (443). This is followed by a “low fever” and “utter prostration,” as if in a final symbolic purge of whatever egotism, vanity, or selfishness may yet remain in her (450). Her emotional healing is only complete when, “in an absolute hunger for pity and sympathy” (455), she turns to Gabriel, leading to their acknowledgment of mutual love.

When one reads the novel in this way, as the story of a woman learning sympathy through suffering until she is a match for the sympathetic hero, the ending strikes one differently as well. The narrator’s comment at the end of the novel that Bathsheba “never laughed readily now” (465), while it indicates that suffering (and perhaps marriage) has tamed and subdued her, may have a more positive signification than is immediately apparent. It was in her smile, after all, that one could read Bathsheba’s potential for “heartlessness” (179). Now that potential has been replaced by a broadened capacity for sympathy, making her a match for Gabriel as they both display the expansive loving-kindness that constitutes the novel’s moral ideal.

Tess of the d’Urbervilles

Hardy’s two late masterpieces, *Tess of the d’Urbervilles* and *Jude the Obscure*, in keeping with their tragic tone, place even more emphasis than his early works on the relationship between suffering and sympathy. For Hardy, this relationship was insistently cyclical; those who are most capable of sympathy suffer most, and those who suffer are made more capable of sympathy.³⁷ Jude and Tess are exemplary characters in this sense (at least until the end of *Tess*). They are also the two characters for whom Hardy seems

most invested in eliciting readerly sympathy. However, the gendering of sympathy in both texts is in tension with that primary impulse towards sympathy. In the case of *Tess*, while Hardy invokes sympathy for his heroine, that sympathy is never empathy. In fact, her sufferings serve to advance not her own moral regeneration, but that of a male character, Angel, toward whom the narrator ultimately steers our identificatory sympathy—in other words, our empathy. The association of *Tess* with animality, and the role of illness in the novel, play a crucial role in directing readerly affect in this way.

However, it is important to examine first the way the “otherness” of women is established in *Tess*, for this is what allows the narrator to ultimately render her an object of sympathy, but not a subject with whom we can empathize. As I suggested in my introduction to this chapter, Hardy’s use of free indirect discourse is not gender-balanced; in this novel, from the scenes at Talbothay’s on, we are permitted access to Angel’s subjectivity, while watching *Tess* and her sufferings from an ever-increasing distance. Angel is certainly one of *Tess*’s victimizers, yet Hardy does not present him in wholly unsympathetic terms; in fact, the frequency and ease with which he enters Angel’s point of view suggests a level of identification which will become even clearer with *Jude*, and which is nowhere evident in the depiction of Angel’s obverse, the villainous Alec.³⁸ Hardy is also akin to Angel in that he idealizes *Tess* almost as much as Angel does, holding her up as the essence of pure womanliness.³⁹

Tess’s interiority, unlike Angel’s, remains mysterious, leading Alec, Angel, and the narrator into attempts to interpret her. As Marjorie Garson notes, “Hardy has set up his narrative in terms of the dangers of misreading his heroine” (140), and Angel and

Alec each misread Tess in terms of sex generalizations,⁴⁰ always based on a lack of real knowledge of the woman involved.

Similarly, instead of offering a representation of her inner life, Hardy characterizes Tess largely in terms of her visualized presence. Asking what constitutes the “real” Tess, Kaja Silverman observes: “The category that comes most immediately to mind—her interiority—does not provide a satisfactory answer, since what the narrator characterizes as her ‘soul’ or ‘consciousness’ is often so fully exteriorized as to bear little resemblance to any classical definition of those terms” (22); she adds, “Tess’s subjectivity begins with the construction of her body, and that construction exercises a determining influence on what, for lack of a better word, I will call interiority” (23).⁴¹ As Silverman’s hesitation to use the word “interiority” suggests, however, Tess’s body becomes a replacement for (rather than a determining influence on) an interiority that is otherwise unavailable and unrepresentable. What Hardy cannot convey about Tess through omniscient entrance into her inner life he seeks to convey through the “meanings” of her body.

Critics have made much of the obsessive insistence with which Hardy brings his heroines’ physical presences before the reader, especially in the case of Tess;⁴² feminist critics in particular have been as uneasy with this insistence on female physicality as Hardy’s most conventional Victorian readers, though for different reasons. Like Silverman, they have rightly sensed that this intense visualization replaces a representation of female subjectivity. Rogers observes that “Tess’s physical beauty . . . distracts attention from her mind” (250), and Judith Mitchell suggests that the narrator’s “obsessive focus on Tess’s corporeal being, her lovable exterior” makes her “a text in

itself that the narrator is privileged to interpret. The fact that he cannot always ‘read’ Tess accurately fosters the impression of a mysterious reality called ‘Woman’ at the same time that it obviates the need for the reconstruction of female consciousness” (*Stone* 191-92).⁴³

As these comments suggest, gender gets in the way of male interpretation of Tess and of entering into her experience,⁴⁴ as Angel himself is aware in at least one instance: “‘She is a dear, dear Tess,’ he thought to himself, as one deciding on the construction of a difficult passage. ‘Do I realize solemnly enough how utterly and irretrievably this little womanly thing is the creature of my good or bad faith or fortune? I think not. I think I could not, unless I were a woman myself’” (171). In keeping with this statement, the female characters are usually able to understand and deeply sympathize with each other, as no gender gap stands between them. Even on her wedding day, when she is tormented by uncertainty about her actions, Tess sees the other dairymaids and “forg[ets] her own dogging shadow when contemplating theirs,” even convincing Angel to kiss them (25). Likewise, her sympathy for their misfortunes steels her to confess her secret to Angel (175). In turn, they show generosity and even selfless loving-kindness towards her throughout the novel, as when Izz sacrifices her own chance with Angel by acknowledging Tess’s love for him. The dairymaids’ biological similarities also unite them—even merge them – in their suffering under sexual selection (115).⁴⁵

Angel has a more theoretically developed moral sense than these milkmaids, but cannot share their intuitive sympathy for Tess. Nevertheless, the scene of his greatest failure of sympathy for Tess is contrasted with small epiphanic moments of recognition that Tess has an individual subjective experience that should be valued; indeed, he realizes that:

Tess was no insignificant creature to toy with and dismiss; but a woman living her precious life—a life which, to herself who endured and enjoyed it, possessed as great a dimension as the life of the mightiest to himself. Upon her sensations the whole world depended, to Tess; through her existence all her fellow-creatures existed, to her. The universe itself only came into being for Tess on the particular day in the particular year in which she was born. The consciousness upon which he had intruded was the single opportunity of existence ever vouchsafed to Tess. . . . How then should he look upon her as of less consequence than himself . . . ?
(*TD* 121)

Unfortunately, this insight doesn't last long, as he continues to see Tess only through the lens of his own ideals, so that his feelings in the passage above and his sense that "[i]t was for herself that he loved Tess; her soul, her heart, her substance" (*TD* 129) are ironized and undercut by what follows.⁴⁶ He generally either typifies Tess as a "fresh and virginal daughter of Nature" (95), a "fresh and interesting specimen of womankind" (102), or idealizes her as a goddess, a "visionary essence of woman, a whole sex condensed into one typical form" (103). Only very rarely does he realize that her imperfections "g[i]ve the humanity" that makes her lovable (118).⁴⁷

The inability to look at a person as an individual is always, for Hardy, a sign of a failure in sympathy. We see this exemplified in Angel when Tess confesses her past to him, and becomes for him representative of her whole gender, so that he feels an "ebullition of bitterness against womankind in general" (189), "allowing himself to be influenced by general principles, to the disregard of the particular instance" (269). Put another way, he, like many of Hardy's male characters, has missed the particular (Tess as individual) in generalized assumptions about what women are or should be, so that: "In considering what Tess was not he overlooked what she was" (208).

Angel's inability to sympathize with Tess comes partly from his being "more spiritual than animal" (151); as the narrator notes: "Some might risk the odd paradox that

with more animalism Clare might have been the nobler man” (191). Paradoxically, his love would have been more human (and humane) had it not so fully transcended “animal” instincts. His love has been “ethereal to a fault, imaginative to impracticability,” with a preference for “an ideal presence that conveniently drops the defects of the real” (191-192); it is therefore inhuman, precluding human sympathy for frailties or imperfections. Since his love has transcended the animal—including the human-- realm, he is unable to recognize Tess as the woman he loves once his illusions of her perfect purity are shattered. Though he himself has a sexual secret to confess, he is unable to realize that, as Tess points out, their secrets are “the same” (177); thus, while she sees him after his confession as “her double” (176), he is unable to sympathize, much less empathize. Nevertheless, there is a “back-current of sympathy through which a woman of the world might have conquered him,” but Tess humbly accepts his judgment, so that she becomes the figure of “Apostolic Charity” (189)—loving-kindness—in contrast to Angel’s failure in this respect.

Tess is also “nobler” than Angel precisely because she has some of the “animal” in her. It may be Tess’s connections to the natural and animal realms—connections Angel initially lacks—that make her, for at least the first half of the novel, both more capable of sympathy and more appealing to the reader’s sympathy than he is, despite the lack of insight Hardy provides into her subjectivity. Tess’s suffering consciousness may not be on display, but it is externalized in the animal imagery so integral to Hardy’s portrayal of her. Hardy’s consistent associations of Tess with Nature, and particularly with victimized animality, are clearly meant to evoke the reader’s sympathy.⁴⁸

Some critics have found such associations problematic, dehumanizing, and dismissive of Tess's individuality, and they have a point.⁴⁹ Particularly unsettling, for example, are Hardy's comparisons of Tess (89) or of both Tess and Marian (224) to flies moving across the landscape, "of no more consequence to the surroundings" than such flies (*TD* 83). Another scene oddly compares Tess to a "friendly leopard" (146), an inappropriately predatory image. But for Hardy, Tess's animality doesn't make her "lesser." It aligns her with the natural world, and thus distinguishes her from artifice, and from the particularly human failures of loving-kindness that in this novel resonate more than the inevitable cruelties of Darwinian nature. Most crucially, it connects her with a world of suffering creatures, for whom Hardy also seeks to elicit the reader's sympathy.

Some of these creatures, like Tess, are human. Throughout the book, Hardy uses the word "creature" to describe human beings, emphasizing their connections with the rest of creaturely life and also invoking sympathy for the abjection and sufferings of these fellow "creatures." The Durbeyfield children, for example, are called "poor creatures" (15), and Hardy later notes that Nature's plan is rarely conducive to the happiness of her "poor creature[s]" (31). As Elisha Cohn notes, the word "creature" conveys human abjectness, while also connecting humans to the "universality of suffering" which is inevitable for living things.⁵⁰

In establishing the creaturely nature of abject humanity, Hardy lays the groundwork for sympathy with the sufferings of animals themselves. The horse Prince's death, for instance, is more than foreshadowing of Tess's rape and/or Alec's murder, and more than a convenient plot device. The death has a pathos of its own, quite apart from its effect on the Durbeyfield family or even on Tess. Hardy uses the same term to

describe the horse as to describe the Durbeyfield children and Nature's children in general; even before the accident, Prince is a "poor creature" (21), and a character in his own right (however briefly), "rickety" like the cart and "looking as if he could not believe that at that hour, when every living thing was intended to be in shelter and at rest, he was called to go out and labor" (20).⁵¹

Furthermore, the technique Hardy uses to describe the horse's possible thoughts in the passage above is the same as that which he uses to suggest women's thoughts; often they *appear* "as if" they are thinking a particular thing, but their thoughts remain conjectural. Hardy often "guesses" at his heroines' thoughts and motivations with statements like: "Whatever Tess's reasoning, some spirit had induced her to dress herself up neatly as she had formerly done" (*TD* 71).⁵² That Hardy uses the same technique with Prince may highlight his dehumanizing approach to his female characters, but it also underscores his promotion of sympathy across species boundaries as across gender boundaries, even when those boundaries mean that full empathy is impossible.

Tess herself is exemplary of such cross-species sympathy. She even "regard[s] herself in the light of a murderess" (24) after Prince's death. The use of the word "murderess" foreshadows Alec's fate, but also suggests that the usually human-exclusive term "murder" (rather than merely "killing") can be applied to other species. Hardy makes it very clear that Tess's self-reproach about the horse's death is a crucial factor in her agreeing to seek out Alec d'Urberville and claim kin.⁵³ This is largely, of course, because of the financial effect of the horse's loss on her family, but her guilt cannot be reduced to that fact alone. The image of the "poor horse Prince," "the unhappy Prince," from whose wound "his life's blood was spouting in a stream" (22), has a pathos entirely

its own. Hardy thus evokes sympathy for an animal who functions as an integral part of the Durbeyfield family (23).⁵⁴

At the same time, the shabby but regally named Prince functions as Tess's counterpart, her fellow victim of hap or destiny. Like Tess, he endures suffering stoically until further endurance is impossible: "Prince stood firm and motionless as long as he could; till he suddenly sank down in a heap" (22). From this point forward, Hardy continues to evoke sympathy for his heroine, and suggests her inner experience, through the progression of her association with animals. At each place she works she is in some way either involved with the caretaking of animals or witness to their victimization, until the point at which she is completely alienated from nature and the "appetite for joy" (149) or "invincible instinct towards self-delight" (79) that pervades nature.⁵⁵

Her first employment is watching over Mrs. d'Urberville's birds—a "community of fowls" of which she is to be "supervisor, purveyor, nurse, surgeon, and friend" (42). Mrs. d'Urberville's house shows "traces everywhere on this side that some occupant of its chambers could bend to the love of dumb creatures" (43); unfortunately, her son Alec's connection to the animal realm is more sinister. Alec's seduction of Tess is linked to moments on horseback or in a horse-drawn carriage, always with an undertone of violence. He terrifies her by driving her recklessly in a carriage, and won't slow until she gives him a kiss. When Tess wipes his kiss from her face, he tells her she will be sorry for it, and "flourish[es] his whip anew" (41)—whether at Tess, who has "murdered" a horse and will murder Alec, or at his horse who has supposedly killed a man and tried to kill Alec (39) is ambiguous. Hardy uses Alec's dominance over the horse to signal his dominance over Tess—a cruel dominance against which she, like the horse, will

ultimately rebel. Hardy further emphasizes Tess's creaturely subjection to Alec in this scene through the helpless way she looks at him, "her large eyes staring at him like those of a wild animal" (40). The danger latent in this scene comes to fruition in a later one, in which Tess leaps up into the saddle behind Alec to escape quarreling women after a dance, putting herself in his power and leading directly to her rape.

Similarly, following the rape, Tess's work experience back at Marlott suggests the violence which has been done to her through the violence the reaping machine enacts on the small creatures it encounters, as they desperately cling on to life but are inexorably borne down:

Rabbits, hares, snakes, rats, mice, retreated inwards as to a fastness, unaware of the ephemeral nature of their refuge, and of the doom that awaited them later in the day when, their covert shrinking into a more and more horrible narrowness, they were huddled together friends and foes, till the last few yards of upright wheat fell also under the teeth of the unerring reaper, and they were every one put to death by the sticks and stones of the harvesters (68).

Meanwhile, Tess is standing in the fields, and she too is symbolically injured by the process: "A bit of her naked arm is visible between the buff leather of the gauntlet and the sleeve of her gown; and as the day wears on its feminine smoothness becomes scarified by stubble, and bleeds" (69).

At idyllic Talbothays, in contrast, neither Tess nor animals are victimized; she works as a dairymaid whose particular cows know and love her touch. Yet Hardy's metaphors connecting her with animals at this point evoke sympathy by indirectly suggesting the gradual tragic shift in her state of mind. As her romance with Angel blossoms there, her "buoyant" walk is "like the skim of a bird which has not quite alighted" (153). When he first speaks harshly to her after their wedding, however, she

reacts “like a wounded animal” (171). After he leaves her, there is “something of the habitude of the wild animal in the unreflecting instinct with which she rambled on” (216).

The metaphorical connection between Tess’s suffering and that of animals reaches a climax in the moment that she finds a large number of pheasants “lying about, their rich plumage dabbled with blood... all of them writhing in agony,” and dying slowly from the wounds inflicted by sportsmen’s guns (219). Tess thinks of these hunters:

She had occasionally caught glimpses of these men in her girlhood, looking over hedges or peering through bushes and pointing their guns, a bloodthirsty light in their eyes. She had been told that, rough and brutal as they seemed just then, they were not like this all the year round, but were, in fact, quite civil persons; save during certain weeks of autumn and winter when... they ran amuck, and made it their purpose to destroy life—in this case harmless feathered creatures, brought into being by artificial means solely to gratify these propensities—at once so unmannerly and unchivalrous towards their weaker fellows in nature’s teeming family. (218-219)

In contrast to these hunters, who seem capable of putting aside their humanity towards their “weaker fellows” whenever bloodlust takes them, Tess—herself a hunted creature, like a “bird in a clap-net” (228)⁵⁶-- recognizes herself as a member of “nature’s teeming family,” and can therefore sympathize deeply with the birds: “With the impulse of a soul who could feel for kindred sufferers as much as for herself, Tess’s first thought was to put the still living birds out of their torture, and to this end with her own hands she broke the necks of as many as she could find” (219). Tess, the “murderess” of Prince and future murderess of Alec, here acts the part of Providence—the only Providence available—to these birds in her mercy killings. As Cohn notes, her sympathy here involves a sense of uniquely human (as separate from animal) agency that allows her not

merely to feel sympathy for the birds, but to determine their fates (514-515).⁵⁷ But the fact that they are her “kindred sufferers” is still stressed.

Indeed, rather than seeing the birds’ suffering as qualitatively less important because they are not human, Tess sees their suffering as objectively, quantitatively greater than hers:

“Poor darlings—to suppose myself the most miserable being on earth in the sight o’ such misery as yours!” she exclaimed, her tears running down as she killed the birds tenderly. “And not a twinge of bodily pain about me! I be not mangled, and I be not bleeding, and I have two hands to feed and clothe me.” She was ashamed of herself for her gloom of the night... (219)

As she leaves them, she goes “onward with fortitude, her recollection of the birds’ silent endurance of their night of agony impressing upon her the relativity of sorrows, and the tolerable nature of her own, if she could once rise high enough to despise opinion” (219). Her attitude and behavior towards the birds exemplifies two aspects of sympathy that Hardy keeps in tension: it demonstrates both her humanity (in the sense of humane behavior), and paradoxically, her sense of kinship with other (suffering) creatures.⁵⁸

When Tess comes to work at the grim farm of Flintcombe-Ash, the narrator increasingly invokes this connection between Tess and suffering animals to suggest her increasing entrapment. After Tess strikes Alec with her glove when he comes hunting her at Flintcombe-Ash, the narrator refigures her act of violence as another example of her creaturely suffering, and thus maintains our sympathy for her: “‘Now punish me!’ she said, turning up her eyes to him with the helpless defiance of the sparrow’s gaze before its captor twists its neck... ‘Once victim, always victim; that’s the law’” (261). The metaphor employed here turns Tess from the aggressor to a desperate dying creature

futilely struggling against her killer. It thus not only excuses this act of violence, but prepares us to view her greater act of violence (killing Alec) in a similarly charitable way.

At Flintcombe-Ash, more explicitly than at Marlott, Tess also becomes a creature victimized by manmade (mechanized) cruelty, in the form of the threshing machine.⁵⁹ This machine is a “red tyrant,” which “kept up a despotic command upon their [the workers’] muscles and nerves” (255). The ability of this machine to reduce individuals to a subhuman—even sub-creaturely—existence is represented by the engine-man, a “dark motionless being,” like a “creature from Tophet,” grimy and isolated, his eyes turned inwards, “hardly perceiving the scenes around him, and caring for them not at all” (255). Tess is not reduced to this purely mechanical level, though Hardy has already described her movements as she works at Flintcombe-Ash as “mechanical” (224). Instead, Hardy aligns her again with an injured animal; after a stint working on the threshing machine, Tess looks as “weak as a bled calf,” as Alec puts it (263).

However, at this very point in the novel, Hardy begins to try to redirect readerly sympathies away from Tess and toward Angel Clare. He does this by shifting from the novel’s animal metaphors to representations of illness. First there is Angel’s fever obtained in Brazil, a “severe illness from which he had suffered shortly after his arrival” and which has “never wholly left him” by the time he begins his journey home (267). This illness and suffering are purgative and redemptive; the physical alterations they bring about align with the new, altered moral perspective he gains while abroad. He comes to value the “pathos” of life, and to contemplate what really constitutes morality (267). His view of Tess becomes more sympathetic, particularly as he is influenced by the words of a friend who says Angel was wrong to leave his wife. This friend dies of the

same fever that had stricken Angel, and his remarks are thus “sublimed by his death” (268). The illness of himself and another thus enable Angel’s moral growth in sympathy and loving-kindness, leading him to return to Tess.

Tess, meanwhile, finds her own life shaken by illness and death, but for her they presage moral destruction rather than redemption. From the moment Angel rejects her, symptoms of her imminent mental deterioration are already visible: “Throbbingly alive as she was still, under the stress of her mental grief the life beat so brokenly that a little further pull upon it would cause real illness,” the narrator warns (186). And the “further pull” inevitably comes, precipitated by more illness. Her mother’s serious ill health causes Tess to leave her job to go care for her, and her father dies shortly thereafter, forcing Tess’s family to move out of their house. Alec takes the opportunity to prey upon Tess’s vulnerability, her “weak place”—her sympathy and affection for her siblings, whose fate is insecure (276). Mr. Durbeyfield’s death gives Alec greater leverage, and he tries to persuade Tess to move the family into a cottage he owns. Hearing her young siblings singing an innocent hymn, her heart is torn, as she realizes that, in default of any other Providence, “it behooved her to do something; to be their Providence” (282), much as she had to be Providence to the dying pheasants. In this case, however, it is her own neck that must be broken—when she is, ultimately, hung. The first step toward this self-sacrifice is her return to Alec, and in making this choice—a choice both selfless and immoral—Tess also precipitates the loss of her own sanity, and indeed, her own humanity.⁶⁰

When Angel finds her, he sees that she is a mere “corpse,” alienated and dissociated from her own body: “his original Tess had spiritually ceased to recognize the

body before him as hers—allowing it to drift, like a corpse upon the current, in a direction dissociated from its living will” (299). Angel bears the physical marks of illness and suffering—he thinks of himself as a “mere yellow skeleton” (298). Tess, in her final anguished conversation with Alec, even fears that Angel “is dying—he looks as if he is dying” (301). But Angel’s physical alteration in fact signifies a moral rebirth, while Tess’s mental deterioration is an arbiter of her moral decline.

Tess’s dissociation from herself makes her somehow less culpable for the ensuing murder of Alec, but at the same time distances the reader from her. When she tells Angel of what she has done, she is “[u]nable to realize the gravity of her conduct” (304), and seems to Angel as if “she was in some delirium” (303). Despite all the sympathy the narrator has created for her, using (among other things) the imagery of suffering animals, he now backpedals, so that our sympathy will ultimately lie with the newly sympathizing Angel. Angel’s fever purges his faults, while Tess’s mental deterioration alienates her from the reader’s sympathetic identification. Tess’s “moral sense,” as Angel observes, is “extinguished...altogether,” along with her capacity for moral agency (304). The Tess with whom the reader has sympathized no longer exists. Her suffering has not perfected her capacity for sympathy, but annihilated all moral feeling. As Angel comes to realize, she has succumbed to a sort of moral insanity: “he supposed that in the moment of mad grief of which she spoke her mind had lost its balance, and plunged her into this abyss” (304). Though Hardy represents her moral insanity more sympathetically than that of several characters in the Brontës’ novels, she is still, like them, reduced to something less than human, and her mind is even less accessible to the reader than it was before.⁶¹

In contrast, Hardy allows Angel to be redeemed as a moral agent, to atone for his previous failures of sympathy. When Tess tells him of the murder, his sympathies are not repelled from her (though her action horrifies his moral feelings), and he quickly recognizes his duties of loving-kindness towards her. This time, he responds correctly: “Tenderness was absolutely dominant in Clare at last,” the narrator says, and Angel determines never to desert her again (304).

Since Tess is no longer Tess, however, this change in Angel can do her little good. While he may now be a match for the former Tess in his capacity for sympathy, the new Tess is no longer a match for him.⁶² Where Bathsheba’s suffering makes her a moral match for Gabriel in *Far from the Madding Crowd*, Tess’s and Angel’s sufferings drive them apart, creating a moral gulf between them. Tess’s ability to recognize this on some level is evident in her fears that he will “despise” her eventually for what she’s done (308, 312), and in her efforts to pair him with her sister Liza-Lu, who is “gentle and sweet... all the best of me without the bad of me” (311). Tess has only enough moral feeling left to wonder briefly at the difference between her recent behavior and the sympathy for all creatures that previously characterized her: “How wickedly mad I was! Yet formerly I could not bear to hurt a fly or a worm, and the sight of a bird in a cage used often to make me cry,” she says (308). The narrator stresses here that Tess’s capacity for sympathy has fled along with the stability of her mind.

Hardy uses one last image of animality at the end of Tess’s life, as if in a final effort to spur compassion on her behalf, even while her mental illness has placed her beyond identificatory sympathy. She lies like a sacrificial animal on the altar, the “stone of sacrifice” at Stonehenge (312). But even such animal imagery now functions primarily

to emphasize the loss of her humanity: sleeping, her breathing is “quick and small, like that of a lesser creature than a woman” (312).⁶³

In the novel’s final scene, Hardy reinforces Tess’s alienation from her own capacity for sympathy, and thus from the reader’s identifiatory sympathy. He makes Tess physically absent from the scene of her own execution; the narrator’s focus is now squarely on Angel Clare. The latter stands with his new bride-to-be to watch from a distance the raising of the black flag that signals Tess’s fate. The last lines of the novel depict Angel and Liza-Lu walking off together to begin a new life, hands joined. Yet the first line of that final paragraph resonates most powerfully, if only for the vagueness of its accusation: “Justice was done, and the President of the Immortals (in Aeschylean phrase) had ended his sport with Tess” (314). The word “sport” echoes back to the scene in which Tess mercifully played Providence to the pheasants wounded in “sport” by ending their misery. Through this echo, Hardy denies his role as “President of the Immortals”—as the sadistic force, the bloodthirsty sportsman, who has entrapped Tess and caused her suffering. Instead, he claims the providential role Tess took on towards the pheasants, tenderly killing them to end their sufferings. That, Hardy implies, is the best a sympathetic author can do at the end for his injured fellow-creature, Tess. The reader too is encouraged to sympathize with her as an object of pity, while the respective illnesses of Tess and Angel, along with the latter’s more accessible interiority, have rendered him more suitable for sympathetic identification.⁶⁴ In *Jude the Obscure*, as the next chapter explores, the gender bias implicit in such authorial manipulations of sympathy comes to the fore.

¹ Paul White asserts that Darwin's "theory of instinctive sympathy challenged prevailing divisions and hierarchies between the human and the animal... Darwinian sympathy was not just an emotional bond with another, be it human or animal. It was more potentially transformative—a process of becoming another, especially if that other was an animal" (113). At the same time, he observes, Darwin propounded a "distinctly human and philanthropic form of sympathy" extended "to 'lesser' members of society, to imbeciles and the sickly..." (White 127; see also 128).

² Hardy continues: "And though I myself do not at present see how the principle of equal justice all round is to be carried out in its entirety, I recognize that the League is grappling with the question" (cited in Joanna Brown 291). See also Joanna Brown 295, George Sherman 304, Hyman 12, Ronald Morrison 65 and 77 note 1, Rod Preece 402, and Elisha Cohn 494-495. Cohn discusses Hardy's increasing commitment to animal welfare in his life and work, and how it informed his ethics of altruism. As part of her attempt to account for the "relationship between the sympathetic and the antihumanist representation of animals in Victorian works" (520), Cohn points out that "animals play two divergent roles in Victorian literature: they can be figures in a radically new conception of ontological continuity as well as objects of sympathy" (494-495). Cohn also points out that Darwin himself was reluctant to take the step Hardy takes from the concept of biological continuity among species to an expansion of ethical thought (406-497). See also Preece 411-413 on Darwin's ambivalent attitudes towards vivisection and other issues of cruelty to or sympathy for animals; Preece's article challenges the idea that Darwinism led to new moral attitudes or sympathetic behavior towards animals.

³ See Sherman 306-307; Morrison 78-80 (notes 4-14); Shanta Dutta 138 and 158-159; and Joanna Brown 113-114. Morrison argues that in the 1890s "Hardy could not lend his complete support to the antivivisection cause since at that time he believed that experimentation on live animals might yield significant medical advances for humans" (67); this is in keeping with Morrison's claim that Hardy "usually withheld unconditional support for humane causes" (67). Hardy's basic position, however, seems to be captured in his observation that "if the practice [vivisection] be defended [as I sometimes hold it may] on grounds of its being good policy for animals as well as men, it is nevertheless in strictness a wrong, and stands precisely in the same category as would stand its practice on men themselves" (cited in Joanna Brown 290), as Morrison himself acknowledges (77 note 2). But, unlike his wife Emma, Hardy did not consider vivisection the primary cause of animal suffering; in a letter, he wrote that "I think more cruelties are perpetrated on animals by butchers, drovers, and cab-people, than by vivisectors" (cited in Joanna Brown 115). See Morrison 68 on the differing attitudes of Thomas and Emma Hardy to vivisection, and on the feminine gendering of the anti-vivisection movement.

³ See also Morrison 65.

⁴ See Hardy *The Works of Thomas Hardy* 782-783. See also Morrison 78 note 6.

⁵ See also Morrison 65 and Dutta 212-213.

⁶ See also Dutta 84, 91, and 102.

⁷ Furthermore, she points out that Hardy believed the universe itself was growing more conscious and sympathetic (12-13), and that human evolution was leading to greater sympathy and altruism as well, so that eventually, as Hardy wrote, pain "shall be kept down to a minimum by loving-kindness" (cited in Hyman 15). See also Joanna Brown 290-291 and 300. But Alexander Fischler notes that: "In Hardy's view of evolution... the thrust to altruism is forever threatened by reversion to egotism" (263). Dennis Taylor discusses a parallel idea to altruism, "Charity," in *Jude the Obscure* as the "supreme... norm by which everything else is measured" (xxxiii).

⁸ Gillian Beer elaborates on this: "Though the individual may be of small consequence in the long sequence of succession and generation, yet Hardy in his emplotment opposes this perception and does so by adopting again and again the single lifespan as his scale" ("Finding a Scale" 452). See also Joanna Brown 295.

⁹ For the purpose of in-text citations and endnotes, *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* will be abbreviated as *TD*, *Jude the Obscure* as *JO*, *Desperate Remedies* as *DR*, *A Pair of Blue Eyes* as *PBE*, *Far from the Madding Crowd* as *FFMC*, *The Return of the Native* as *RN* and *The Woodlanders* as *WO*. *The Life and Work of Thomas Hardy* will be referred to in shorthand as *The Life*.

¹⁰ See Morgan 160; she notes that “[t]he sickroom, in Hardy, is not reserved, as it was in Victorian society, for woman” (160). No doubt the fact that these heroines are largely working class, rather than high society ladies, plays a role in this.

¹¹ See esp. Tony Fincham 5, 16-17, 37, 41, and 117-158.

¹² Rebecca Mitchell argues that a recognition of such alterity is crucial to the ethical project of realist novels in general; see x-xii, 1-18. Her chapter on Hardy is on 70-87. She employs the term empathy “to describe the affective relationship between the self and the unknowable other,” because she wishes “to emphasize the inassimilability of that other” (18).

¹³ See also Hyman 40.

¹⁴ Cohn suggests that Hardy’s approach to animals in his later works is more akin to Derrida’s theories than to Gilles Deleuze’s and Felix Guattari’s “anti-humanist” ones. Something similar to Deleuze and Guattari’s idea of the radical continuity between species *is* present in Hardy throughout his oeuvre; see also D.E. Musselwhite, esp. 515. But, Cohn says, “Hardy cannot portray living beings as fluidity in process and as separate when separateness seems necessary to initiate social critique. The discourse of becoming, then, cannot overtake that of the creature, because only the stabilization of categories of species and emphasis on human agency can ground the ethical imperative of care that Hardy comes to advocate” (517). Thus, Hardy contracts “animality to the ability to feel pain and stress[es] the human capacity to feel, articulate, and act upon sympathy” (518).

¹⁵ See also Katherine Rogers, Judith Mitchell *Stone* 155-208, Rosalind Miles 33-34, and Mary Childers 324-325.

¹⁶ Hardy was certainly not alone in his era in posing the question “What is woman?” (cf. Shires “Narrative” 59). In fact, he was engaged in an “ongoing nineteenth-century discourse about ‘Woman’s Nature,’ as Kristin Brady observes (87). See also Jane Thomas 27-51 and Patricia Ingham 57. Yet Hardy is unique in the anxiety and intensity that characterize his focus on this question, and the variety of methods with which he tries to approach a solution.

¹⁷ See Dutta 13 and Penny Boumelha 2-3.

¹⁸ See especially Jo Devereux, Nicola Harris, and Morrison. Devereux discusses the way Elfride in *PBE* is “reduced to a text open to male exegesis because of her gender” (“Heroine” 22). Harris examines in depth the way that “Hardy’s women embody an inexplicable, unstated discourse that defies determinacy” (31). See also Thomas, who points out that Hardy’s novels “participate in the attempt to subjugate and construct the feminine at the level of language whilst displaying an increasingly self-conscious awareness of the limitations of such a process” (134). See also Kaja Silverman, esp. 20-24.

¹⁹ The strength of Hardy’s illusion may explain why critics including Thomas have praised his “intuitive insight into women’s psyche” (2). Miles also praises Hardy’s “deeply intuitive understanding of feminine nature” (25), saying he was “especially good” at conveying women’s experience “as *they* feel it, rather than as it looks from the outside to men” (27), while at the same time acknowledging that the “keen penetration of the female mentality” he had a reputation for was “possibly more apparent than real” (28). Likewise, Irving Howe, noting that Hardy “liked women” (406), attributes to him a “curious power... almost as if he were not locked into the limits of masculine perception but could shuttle between, or for moments yoke together, the responses of the two sexes,” a “gift of creeping intuitively into the emotional life of women” (406). Yet he quickly qualifies this: “Except perhaps with Sue Bridehead, [Hardy] was seldom inclined to plunge into the analytic depths which mark the treatment of feminine character in George Eliot’s later novels; but if he did not look as deeply as she did into the motivations of female character, he was remarkably keen at apprehending female behavior. He had observed and had watched, with uneasy alertness” (407). See also Lynn Pykett 157 and Boumelha 32.

²⁰ Judith Mitchell continues: “Hardy seems at once peculiarly intimate with and peculiarly dissociated from his female characters, creating an authorial distance from them that seems too close physically and too remote in other ways. His unwillingness or inability to explore the consciousness of his heroines has led to much critical bafflement as readers try to deal with the enigmatic personalities Hardy thus presents them with” (“Hardy’s Female” 184). See also Miles 28.

²¹ Hardy seems to suggest in later novels like *Tess* and *Jude* that survival of the fittest “does not always mean survival of the best,” as Victorian psychiatric Darwinist Henry Maudsley put it (cited in Showalter 119); T.H. Huxley made a similar point in 1893 (Huxley “Evolution” in *Darwin* 327). Indeed, the characters most capable of sympathy, Hardy’s novels often suggest, are also most susceptible to suffering, including illness.

²² As Joanna Brown observes, there are characters in Hardy's novels who "achieve a special rapport with Nature, and this seems to give them, or accompany in them, a moral superiority" (286). She lists Gabriel Oak alongside Giles Winterborne and Marty South of *WO* and Clym Yeobright of *RN* as examples (286). See also Joanna Brown 193-194 and Cohn 502-503.

²³ Ivan Kreilkamp also discusses the significance of this parable to the novel ("Pitying" 479-480).

²⁴ Kreilkamp also notes that "Hardy repeatedly submerges Gabriel Oak's individuality into a broader category that includes nonhuman animals" ("Pitying" 476), as "the word shepherd incorporates the animal into the human, or merges the animal—the sheep—and the human" (477). He adds that "Hardy represents the sheepfold as a place of pastoral care, as a zone of species indistinction where sheep, dogs, and human being overlap, co-influence, and sometimes even seem to merge" (477). Oak's sympathy and attunement with nature is such that he can read the messages of its creatures, as when their movements signal the coming of a storm (*FFMC* 300).

²⁵ See *FFMC* 73; he is also compared to his other dog on 89. See also Fincham 167.

²⁶ As Boumelha points out, "[i]mages of taming pursue" Bathsheba (33).

²⁷ A scene of Bathsheba's riding away with Boldwood cuts short another in which Gabriel's sheep-shearing skill leads to a strangely erotic moment between himself and Bathsheba, as she watches how "skillfully" he shears a ewe (198). When Boldwood appears, and Bathsheba rides off on horseback with him, the social superiority they share is figured by their positions on horseback, removed from Gabriel and his sheep. This scene echoes one in Hardy's previous novel, *A Pair of Blue Eyes*, in which Stephen Smith, an upwardly mobile but still working-class architect, watches his former lover, the aristocratic Elfride, ride off on horseback with her more socially acceptable new lover, Knight (*PBE* 327). In both cases, the power and class implications of horsemanship are clear. Near the end of the *FFMC*, while Bathsheba's experiences humble her, Oak simultaneously rises closer to her social level when she makes him bailiff; this is symbolized by his being given "a horse for his sole use" to ride as he superintends both Boldwood's farm and her own (391). See Elsie Michie's "Horses and Sexual/Social Dominance." Bathsheba's other suitor, the dashing Troy, is also thematically associated with horses, but in ways that suggest his irresponsibility, cruelty, and duplicity, not his moral or social stature. He bets recklessly on horse-races, and his horsemanship later becomes part of a literal circus act as he takes on the role of "Mr. Francis, the Great Cosmopolitan Equestrian and Roughrider" (401).

²⁸ As Kreilkamp notes, Gabriel is linked to the Judeo-Christian image of "the good shepherd" and of pastoral care, in which the sheep-herder is able "to turn cross-species pity or empathy into the action of protective care and governance," and whose relationship with his animals is "represented as a form of caretaking more than biopolitical domination" ("Pitying" 475). See also Ronald Blythe 21.

²⁹ See also Kreilkamp "Pitying" 478.

³⁰ See also Kreilkamp "Pitying" 477.

³¹ Fanny, like Tess after her, is an eternal victim. Like Gabriel, Fanny is associated with animals, but in her case the association highlights her fragility, rather than her strength. Even her last name, "Robin," suggests a birdlike delicacy. It is not clear what, besides her pregnancy, weakens her after Troy's desertion, but it seems that more than a miscarriage may be to blame for her death. Possibly an illness, or simply weakness from starvation, overtakes her. When asked what she died from, Joseph Poorgress notes that she was always frail: "I don't know for certain, but I should be inclined to think it was from general neshness of constitution. She was such a limber maid that 'a could stand no hardship, even when I knowed her, and 'a went off like a candle-snoff, so 'tis said" (335). Later, however, he reflects that the cause of death could have been consumption (a traditional and Hardyan end for cruelly-treated lovers), which he describes in accordance with a conventional nineteenth-century understanding of the illness: "Her death might have been brought on by biding in the night wind... for people used to say she'd go off in a decline; she used to cough a good deal in winter time" (338).

³² Gabriel's small library also includes books on veterinary practice; Kreilkamp discusses the rise of modern veterinary science, and of the understanding of the inseparability of human and animal disease, at the time of the novel's publication ("Pitying" 478).

³³ In contrast, Hardy emphasizes that "Farmer Boldwood, whether by nature kind or the reverse of kind, did not exercise kindness here. The rarest offerings of the purest loves are but a self-indulgence, and no generosity at all" (*FFMC* 181).

³⁴ Hardy also reminds us that Bathsheba is deserving of sympathy in this situation too: "Capacity for intense feeling is proportionate to the general intensity of the nature, and perhaps in all Fanny's sufferings,

much greater relatively to her strength, there never was a time when she suffered in an absolute sense what Bathsheba suffered now" (*FFMC* 360). After Troy's death, Liddy fears Bathsheba will go out of her mind like Boldwood, and says, "Poor thing; her sufferings have been dreadful; she deserves anybody's pity" (448). See also *FFMC* 352 and especially 364-365.

³⁵ This leads members of the community to sign a petition that Boldwood's legal sentence (death) be reconsidered: "The prompters were a few merciful men who had perhaps too feelingly considered the facts lately unearthed, and the result was that evidence was taken which it was hoped might remove the crime, in a moral point of view, out of the category of willful murder, and lead it to be regarded as a mere outcome of madness" (*FFMC* 447). They ultimately succeed, and the sentence is changed to "confinement during Her Majesty's pleasure" (449). The text also suggests Boldwood's insanity may be hereditary (295). See Fincham 185-186 on Boldwood's "Obsessional Compulsive Love-Sickness" (185). See John Bucknill for a Victorian consideration of the extent of moral responsibility in the criminal insane.

³⁶ See also Hyman 50-51.

³⁷ As Hyman points out, Hardy seeks to awaken the "social sympathies" (25) through the representation of pain and suffering (24-25); she argues that for Hardy happiness and altruism "were mutually antagonistic" (22).

³⁸ See Marjorie Garson 136 and 141, Simon Gatrell 109-139, and Rosemary Sumner 129-146 for complex discussions of Angel.

³⁹ See Garson 142 and Blake "Pure Tess" 699, 701, and 705.

⁴⁰ Garson's analysis of this novel raises many of the same issues (140-141). See also Higonnet "Woman's Story," Boumelha 120-121, Ingham 72, and Morrison 186-227.

⁴¹ Silverman analyzes Tess as an object constructed by the male gaze, and suggests that the "relay between male gaze, female exteriority, and female interiority renders the distinction between Tess's body and soul largely irrelevant" (23). In contrast, Howe asserts that "Hardy presents [Tess] neither from the outside nor the inside exclusively...; she is apprehended in her organic completeness, so that her objectivity and subjectivity become inseparable" (421). See also Boumelha 120-123 on the problem of Tess's consciousness.

⁴² See also Miles 31 and Pykett. Pykett is especially relevant in her analysis of the "female body as problem" (158). Jane Pugh seeks to read the meanings of Tess's body as Hardy portrays it at several instances in the text, and she too notes that Hardy's emphasis on portraiture is at the expense of a representation of internal qualities (26-156). In contrast, see Hyman 106.

⁴³ Rather than being a mere "distraction" from his omission of female subjectivity, then, Hardy's "detailed portraiture of women" (Judith Mitchell "Hardy's Female" 183) is one of his strategies to gain a limited window into women's inner lives. Lynn Pykett notes this, though she does not elaborate the idea fully: "Hardy is working in a system of representational codes in which the female body is rendered as a series of (usually eroticized) fetishized physical parts, the enumeration of which gave a privileged access to feminine interiority" (159). Cf. Pykett 1 and 165; Helena Michie 112-14; and Rebecca Mitchell 79-81.

⁴⁴ In contrast, Charles Pettit argues that the novel deals with the "otherness" of other people (173), and attributes the male characters' misinterpretations of Tess largely to the fact that "each individual is beyond the reach and understanding of the other" (176), a gender-blind analysis, as men are not unknowable others in Hardy's novels in the way women are.

⁴⁵ See also Peter Morton 440-441, Beer "Descent" 449, and Beer "Finding a Scale" 453.

⁴⁶ See also Rebecca Mitchell 83.

⁴⁷ Angel's inability to see Tess apart from generalizations or projections is especially problematic given that he is learning on the farm to see members of the lower class as individuals, rather than manifestations of the class-based stereotype of "Hodge." The narrator notes that, after Angel has spent some time at the farm, "[t]he typical and unvarying Hodge ceased to exist. He had been disintegrated into a number of varied fellow-creatures, beings of many minds, infinite in difference" (93). See Pettit 175-176, Hyman 132, and Higonnet "Woman's Story" 19. See also Blake "Pure Tess" 696 and Higonnet "Fictions" 202.

⁴⁸ See Musselwhite, esp. 515, and Cohn 503-504. Cohn notes that Tess is aligned with "the novel's images of damaged animality, connecting passivity and immanence with vulnerability to suffering" (507). Cohn's argument, which in many ways parallels mine, is that *Tess* "offers a repudiation of cruelty, valorizing Tess for sharing the narrator's sympathy for abused animals" (509).

⁴⁹ See Cohn 504 and 508.

⁵⁰ Cohn adds that “the term ‘creature’ also sheds a recuperative, sympathetic light on specifically animal suffering” (509-510). She argues that the novel posits interspecies relationships as “inherently unethical” (510), as illustrated by the death of Prince under “exploitative labor” (510-511).

⁵¹ See also Sherman 305-306 on this scene.

⁵² This does not, as Judith Mitchell asserts, underline “the narrator’s fundamental lack of interest in depicting his main character’s inner workings in any detail” (*Stone* 192), but instead acknowledges his sense of inability to do so. The same is true of a host of similar narratorial guesses in Hardy’s novels—as when the narrator can only tell us what Geraldine Allenville’s emotions “probably” were in *An Indiscretion in the Life of an Heiress* (51, 74), or attributes her behavior to “some reason or other” (57), leaving the reader to conjecture about her actual character and motivations, or when at the end of *The Trumpet-Major* Anne Garland’s character is still conjectural enough that the narrator offers up a range of possible reasons for her behavior—from “pique” to willfulness to “coquettish maliciousness” or “any other thing” (303). Behind this uncertainty, Hardy is indeed, like all his male characters, very interested in women’s inaccessible mental workings—perhaps especially because they *are* so inaccessible. But he can only convey those inner workings indirectly, through interpretation and speculation.

⁵³ See *TD* 25, 34, and 38.

⁵⁴ See also Elliot Gose 426-427.

⁵⁵ See also Boumelha 122-123 on Tess’s association with nature.

⁵⁶ See also Morton 444 and Howe 411 on the hunting imagery surrounding Tess in the novel. Cohn also notes that by “[e]quating animality with the potential for suffering, the novel [*Tess*] emphasizes hunted powerlessness” (514). See also Gose 428 and 429.

⁵⁷ See also Cohn 514-518, Hyman 116, and Joanna Brown 295 on this scene.

⁵⁸ See Joanna Brown 181-192. Brown notes that: “birds were strongly symbolic for Hardy. They often represent those made helpless and captive, both by humankind and by the laws of the universe” (182), and that in particular “Tess and the suffering game-birds symbolize the cruelties both of man and of the universe” (186). She also observes that Hardy’s heroines “are often imaged as trapped birds” (183). See Hardy’s poem “The Puzzled Game-birds” (*Hardy The Works* 135) and Morrison 80 note 16 on Hardy’s opposition to the killing of large numbers of game-birds on estates and to other bloodsports. See also Patricia Stubbs 68 on this scene.

⁵⁹ See also Cohn 513.

⁶⁰ Gose notes that after losing Angel Tess “reverts first to the peasant level with her family, and then below that to the animal level after she leaves them” (430).

⁶¹ Howe likewise notes that: “The narrative voice now draws sharply away from Tess the individual, and for an interval we see her mainly from a distance, in the rhythms of sickness and recovery,” but he sees this as merely a technique to heighten Tess’s “representativeness” (414). Hyman notes that Tess’s love for Angel now “excludes concern for all others”; it as a destructively exclusive kind of love, and “the return of her feelings and attitudes toward Angel has extinguished her natural sympathy altogether. She has become less than what she had been formerly” (119). (However, Hyman argues that at the end of the novel Tess “extends her concern beyond herself” in joining Angel and Liza-Lu [120].) Poole remarks on the “terrible disembodiment” Tess suffers at the end of the novel. See also Gose 430-431.

⁶² See also Hyman 138-140.

⁶³ See also Boumelha 123. Kathleen Rogers even calls Tess the “least human” of Hardy’s protagonists (16).

⁶⁴ My argument contrasts with Dutta’s claim that Hardy has no ambivalence towards Tess, and that “Hardy’s emotional commitment to Tess is so total, so personal, and so sincere... that it seems perverse to question his sympathy” (x). See also Dutta 93.

Chapter V
“Hoggishness and Hysteria”:
Sympathy, Cruelty, and the Female Other in *Jude the Obscure*

Hardy’s last two major novels, *Tess of the d’Urbervilles* and *Jude the Obscure*, are especially suffused with his ethical system, but of *Jude* in particular he said it ““makes for humanity—more than any other I have written” (cited in Dennis Taylor xxxi).¹ The novel suggests that by humanity he meant the awakening of sympathy, not the conventional morality (defined by proper conduct) whose proponents were so offended by the novel. Nor does that term “humanity” extend only to behavior to humans; he wrote in a letter that the novel promoted the “inculcation of *Mercy*, to youths and girls who have made a bad marriage, & to animals who have to be butchered” (cited in Dennis Taylor xxxi).² As Elisha Cohn argues, “the steps Jude takes to alleviate animal suffering provide clear moral assessment and advocate a model of evaluative responsibility for care, even if the model faces severe practical challenge. *Jude the Obscure* explicitly laments birds starved, rabbits trapped, pigs slaughtered, horses beaten, and children unloved in a robust critique of social institutions” and offers “an imperative of care” as an alternative (Cohn 519-520).³ Thus, *Jude* is a novel about the crucial importance of sympathy.

If *Jude the Obscure* seeks to inculcate such sympathy, however, it also emphasizes even more relentlessly than *Tess* Hardy’s vision of the correlation between the capacity for sympathy and the capacity for suffering. Dennis Taylor suggests that the novel’s “raw emphasis on suffering” indicates Hardy’s rejection of “the biblical notion which he had accepted as late as *Far from the Madding Crowd*, that suffering is a training of the soul,” and thus redemptive (xxxix).⁴ At the same time, if Hardy is writing about the

killing effects of the letter of the law, Taylor suggests, than “the two things outside the letter of the law [are] suffering and mercy” (xxxii); he calls these “Hardy’s two great principles, [which] stand as his great later Victorian alternatives to the Letters that kill” (xxxiii). The protagonist Jude embodies both mercy and (ultimately) suffering; his merciful and sympathetic nature is opposed to all systems that oppress living creatures, but that very capacity for sympathy sets him painfully at odds with his world. Jude’s exemplary sympathy may in fact be his tragic flaw in the world he inhabits.

For Hardy, however, the “responsiveness to suffering” (Dennis Taylor xxiii) Jude shares with his author was no flaw at all,⁵ so that the novel’s indictment rests on everyone and everything but Jude.⁶ Hardy is invested in rendering Jude perfectly sympathetic. This, in turn, leads him to ultimately direct our sympathies away from the heroine, Sue, by pathologizing her, just as he animalizes Arabella. He thus invokes our antipathy toward the novel’s female characters by making them emblematic of the forces that destroy Jude. A strong gender bias undermines the novel’s apparent appeal for universal sympathy.

Jude and the Hostile World

In the first chapter of the novel, the schoolmaster Phillotson, leaving for Christminster, tells the young orphan Jude: “Be a good boy, remember; and be kind to animals and birds, and read all you can” (10). This advice is perfectly suited to Jude’s disposition, but it promotes precisely the aspects of that disposition that will make Jude’s life unhappy.⁷ His “reading all he can” will fill him with academic aspirations which can never be fulfilled due to his class status. More germane to my argument, however, is the

injunction to be kind to animals and birds. The personal consequences of such kindness appear almost immediately, as Jude deviates from his duty of scaring away the hungry rooks on Farmer Troutham's land and corn. The narrator observes that:

[A]t length his heart grew sympathetic with the birds' thwarted desires. They seemed, like himself, to be living in a world which did not want them. They took on more and more the aspect of gentle friends and pensioners—the only friends he could claim as being in the least degree interested in him...
 “Poor little dears!” said Jude aloud. “You shall have some dinner—you shall. There is enough for us all. Farmer Troutham can afford to let you have some. Eat, then, dear little birdies, and make a good meal!”
 They stayed and ate, inky spots on the nut-brown soil, and Jude enjoyed their appetite. A magic thread of fellow-feeling united his own life with theirs. Puny and sorry as those lives were, they much resembled his own. (15).

Jude's “fellow-feeling” for the birds here is a rare moment in Hardy where cross-species sympathy crosses over into empathy, as he identifies strongly with the birds and their “thwarted desires,” so that he is almost feeling *with* as well as *for* them. This is all the more striking as the rest of the novel maintains more firmly than any other Hardy novel that empathy across *genders* is virtually impossible. Whether with animals or women, however, Jude's sympathy and its manifestation in altruistic action result in his suffering.

In this particular case, Farmer Troutham discovers what Jude has done, and, unimpressed by the boy's plea that “Mr. Phillotson said I was to be kind to ‘em” (16), beats Jude savagely.⁸ Nevertheless, Jude's sympathy with his fellow-creatures is undiminished; the narrator tells us of the boy walking home:

Here he beheld scores of coupled earthworms lying half their length on the surface of the damp ground, as they always did in such weather at that time of year. It was impossible to advance in regular steps without crushing some of them at each tread.
 Though Farmer Troutham had just hurt him, he was a boy who could not himself bear to hurt anything. He had never brought home a nest of young birds without lying awake in misery half the night after, and often reinstating them and the nest in their original place the next morning.... This weakness of character, as it may be called, suggested that he was the sort of man who was born to ache a good deal

before the fall of the curtain upon his unnecessary life should signify that all was well with him again. He carefully picked his way on tiptoe among the earthworms, without killing a single one.⁹

This passage illustrates Lucy Bending's observation that Jude is "born to suffer not because it is part of the human condition to suffer, but because of his ability to feel with the seeming sufferings of lower creation" (199).¹⁰ Indeed, Hardy had a sense, expressed in many works including his autobiography, that the more "evolved" one's own sensitivity is, the more one is doomed to suffer, an idea particularly relevant to the character of Jude. In *The Life of Thomas Hardy*, which he ghost-wrote, Hardy noted that: "We [human beings] have reached a degree of intelligence which Nature never contemplated when framing her laws, and for which she consequently has provided no adequate satisfactions" (169).¹¹ At another point in *The Life*, he reflects on

A woeful fact—that the human race is too extremely developed for its corporeal conditions, the nerves being evolved to an activity abnormal in such an environment. Even the higher animals are in excess in this respect. It may be questioned if Nature, or what we call Nature, so far back as when she crossed the line from vertebrates to invertebrates, did not exceed her mission. This planet does not supply the materials for happiness to higher existences. Other planets may, though one can hardly see how. (227)

Besides the over-development of sensitivity in humans and other "higher animals," the scene with the rooks points to another flaw in Nature: "some flaw in the terrestrial scheme, by which what was good for God's birds was bad for God's gardener" (*JO* 16).¹² Jude on some level perceives this already: "Nature's logic was too horrid for him to care for. That mercy towards one set of creatures was cruelty towards another sickened his sense of harmony" (18).¹³ Jude here echoes T.H. Huxley's assertion in *Evolution and Ethics* (published two years before *Jude the Obscure*) that "the cosmic process has no relation to moral ends," and that what is "ethically best" is "opposed to

that which leads to success in the cosmic struggle for existence” (Huxley “Evolution” in *Embodied* 319).¹⁴

Jude’s gloomy view of the world at this point mirrors Hardy’s own worldview. In a letter to the Editor of *The Animals’ Guardian*, Hardy wrote of “my own conclusion—the difficulty of carrying out to its logical extreme the principle of equal justice to all the animal kingdom. Whatever humanity may try to do, there remains the stumbling-block that nature herself is absolutely indifferent to justice, & how to instruct nature is rather a large problem” (cited in Joanna Brown 279). In another letter, he mused:

In regard of [blood] Sport, for instance, will the great body of human beings... ever see its immorality? Worse than that, supposing they do, when will the still more numerous terrestrial animals—our kin, having the same ancestry—learn to be merciful? The fact is that when you get to the bottom of things you find no bedrock of righteousness to rest on—nature is unmoral-- & our puny efforts are those of people who try to keep their leaky house dry by wiping the waterdrops from the ceiling.” (cited in Joanna Brown 281)¹⁵

Jude’s similar recognition paves the way for his depressive tendencies, which are suggested early on; as a young boy faced with disappointment he wishes “he had never been born” and “wish[es] himself out of the world” (31).

Near the end of the novel Jude’s victimization is again given an analogue in the suffering of an animal; this time, the pathos is heightened by sickness. He has been weakened earlier by a chill that turned into a “severe illness” (319); the narrator notes “the increased delicacy of his normally delicate features, and the childishly expectant look in his eyes” (319). As he stands in a crowded street in Christminster on Remembrance Day, he describes himself as “a sick and poor man,” a “paltry victim to the spirit of mental and social restlessness that makes so many unhappy in these days!” (327). And then:

As a sort of objective commentary on Jude's remarks there drove up at this moment with a belated doctor, robed and panting, a cab whose horse failed to stop at the exact point required for setting down the hirer, who jumped out and entered the door. The driver, alighting, began to kick the animal in the belly.

"If that can be done," said Jude, "at college gates in the most religious and educational city in the world, what shall we say as to how far we've got?" (*JO* 327-328)¹⁶

In a world so marred by cruelty, Jude's life is marked by a longing to find someone who has a similarly sympathetic heart, as his own causes him such suffering and loneliness. But he is relentlessly disappointed. For example, when hearing a beautiful hymn, he thinks of the composer:

What a man of sympathies he must be! ... [H]ow he would like to know that man! "He of all men would understand my difficulties," said the impulsive Jude. If there were any person in the world to choose as a confidant, the composer would be the one, for he must have suffered, and throbbed, and yearned. (194)

In fact, the composer is a thoroughly worldly, materialistic man, who intends to give up music for the wine business (195). The irony could hardly be less subtle, as alcohol metonymically represents all the earthly troubles that drag Jude down.

The meeting with the composer is only one of many instances in the novel which show the world in general as unsympathetic. As Cohn observes, the world of *Jude* is particularly bleak because no character other than the titular one displays much loving-kindness or altruism; "with the possible exception of the widow Edlin, all the minor characters are indifferent or hostile," and Jude becomes a victim of their egotism (151). Thus, in Cohn's words, "Hardy deliberately isolates Jude by providing him alone with the characteristics he most valued" (151).¹⁷ These characteristics are the intertwined ones of sensitivity, the capacity to suffer, and sympathy; thus, the novel illustrates Hardy's observation that: "You may regard a throng of people as containing a small minority who have sensitive souls; these, and the aspects of these, being what is worth observing. So

you divide them into the mentally unquickened, mechanical, soulless; and the living, throbbing, suffering, vital, in other words into souls and machines, ether and clay” (*Life* 192).¹⁸ The lack of loving-kindness and altruistic sympathy among the mass of humankind is best encapsulated in one of the novel’s most famous lines, as the young Jude waits for someone to comfort him but “nobody did come, because nobody does” (31).

The schoolmaster Phillotson at first appears as if he might be an exception to the rule, a figure of sympathy in the harsh world Hardy presents. Instead, he backslides into one of the novel’s most pronounced examples of failure in loving-kindness, specifically in his treatment of his wife Sue. He behaves altruistically toward her in letting her leave their marriage, showing a humane sensitivity to her needs as an individual and disregarding general convention. Given the perplexity Sue causes him, this kindness suggests his capacity for sympathy even where empathy is impossible. He decides that “it is wrong to torture a fellow-creature any longer; and I won’t be the inhuman wretch to do it, cost what it may!” (230). The weight of public opinion is against him in this display of unselfish behavior; his friend Gillingham tells him that “as to ordinary opinion, your position is indefensible” (247). Gillingham’s own view of Sue is expressed thus: “I think she ought to be smacked, and brought to her senses” (232). Yet Phillotson’s resolve is strengthened by his sense that he is “doing his duty by one who was at his mercy” (232); “I would have died for her; but I wouldn’t be cruel to her in the name of the law,” he tells Gillingham (235). He pays for his kindness by losing his job and suffering a “serious illness” after the strain of his expulsion (248), an illness that further confirms readerly sympathy for his suffering. As the narrator says later, “No man had ever suffered more

from his own charity, Christian or heathen, than Phillotson had done in letting Sue go” (357).¹⁹

Later, however, Phillotson loses this sensitivity in his desire for Sue; the destructive Arabella is the catalyst. She and Gillingham dehumanize Sue when they speak of her to Phillotson. Arabella taunts him for his kindness to Sue by comparing Sue to a recalcitrant horse: “*I shouldn’t have let her go. I would have kept her chained on—her spirit for kicking would have been broken soon enough! There’s nothing like bondage and a stone-deaf taskmaster for taming us women*” (318). Despite Arabella’s contention that women must be “tamed” by sterner treatment, Phillotson at the time merely says: “I cannot answer you, madam. I have never known much of womankind” (318). Nevertheless, the seeds of his future action have been planted.²⁰ When Phillotson takes Sue back, Gillingham, again embodying society in general, expresses his approval: “I was always against your opening the cage-door and letting the bird go in such an obviously suicidal way,” he says, but cautions that “you must tighten the reins by degrees only” (366). The two animal metaphors Gillingham uses emphasize that Phillotson is now engaged in an act of entrapment and control.

The reversal in Phillotson’s attitude toward Sue is also indicated by his now viewing her not as Sue, but as depersonalized “Woman.” He says, “Women are so strange in their influence, that they tempt you to misplaced kindness. . . . A little judicious severity, perhaps,” and confidently asserts, “I know woman better now” (366). The narrator is clear that his supposed increased understanding of women is really just the result of his “physical wishes” (366), which inure him to the psychological agony and physical repugnance with which Sue is returning to him. He acts on self-interest, as he

acknowledges: “I confess there seems a touch of selfishness in it. Apart from her being what she is, of course, a luxury for a fogey like me, it will set me right in the eyes of the clergy and orthodox laity, who have never forgiven me for letting her go” (365).

Likewise, later “for the second or third time he felt he was not quite following the humane instinct which had induced him to let her go” (369). He has far less understanding or compassion for Sue as an individual than when he released her from their marriage. Even Gillingham wonders “whether the reactionary spirit induced by the world’s sneers and his own physical wishes would make Phillotson more orthodoxly cruel to her than he had erstwhile been informally and perversely kind” (366).

Phillotson’s backsliding is a gloomy indictment of the world in which he lives, a world which punishes true sympathy.

Arabella’s Brutality

Despite Phillotson’s failure of sympathy, however, it is ultimately women who disappoint Jude’s longings for mutual sympathy and for a refuge of tenderness in a rough world. In this novel, Hardy directs antipathy towards female characters—and “womankind” in general-- to a degree unprecedented in his earlier work. This may explain why, as Shanta Dutta observes, “discussions of Hardy’s misogyny tend to concentrate on *Jude*” (126).²¹ Jude is victimized by two women who exploit his sympathy and kindness. The text associates one of them with animality in a particularly negative way, while it associates the other with pathology. Together, Hardy suggests, these women drive Jude to ruin.²²

Arabella, Jude's wife, is the animalized figure. She is a pig-breeder's daughter who notoriously introduces herself to Jude by throwing a pig's penis at him (*JO* 38); they have their first discussion with that "limp object" hanging on a rail of a bridge between them (40).²³ Their courtship continues with a chase after her father's pigs (51-52), and with her later getting Jude to reach into her dress to find an egg (wrapped in a pig's bladder) hidden between her breasts (55). The narrator describes her as "a complete and substantial female human—no more, no less" (39) in the 1898 version of the text; in the manuscript and Wessex editions, more tellingly, she is "a complete and substantial female animal" (*JO* 419 note 11).²⁴ Margaret Oliphant in her famous review called Arabella a "human pig" (139). Arabella's physical "coarseness" (39) matches her coarseness of character, and she appeals only to the "animal" instincts in Jude himself. From the beginning he recognizes that there is "something in her quite antipathetic to that side of him which had been occupied with literary study and the magnificent Christminster dream" (41).

Arabella traps Jude as ruthlessly as Alec traps Tess; it is a case, as the narrator of *Tess* says of Alec's violation of Tess, of "the coarse appropriat[ing] the finer" (*TD* 57). Arabella speaks about and to Jude with a "fierce tone of latent sensuousness" (50) or a "tigerish indrawing of breath" (54). Jude is portrayed as powerless to resist; he follows her "like a pet lamb" (53), and his sexual responsiveness to her—what Hardy coyly calls "commonplace obedience to orders from headquarters, unconsciously received" (39)—is the result of a force greater than himself. This force is "as if materially, a compelling arm of extraordinary muscular power seized hold of him," and it "seemed to care little for his reason and his will, nothing for his so-called elevated intentions, and moved him along,

as a violent schoolmaster a schoolboy he has seized by the collar” (44). Hardy thus portrays Jude as the victim of overpowering forces that draw him to Arabella; the narrator even calls him the “predestinate Jude” at this point (44). But the force that most strongly predestines Jude to marry Arabella is his sympathy and kindness; when she pretends to be pregnant, he cannot do otherwise. Nevertheless, before long he “kn[ows] well, too well, in the secret center of his brain, that Arabella was not worth a great deal as a specimen of womankind” (57), a judgment with which the narrator clearly concurs. In their marriage, Jude feels like an animal “caught in a gin which would cripple him,” potentially forever (62). The equation of human and animal suffering here does not reduce Jude as Arabella’s animality reduces her, but aligns him with other victimized creatures.

The crucial pig-killing scene that follows soon after their marriage even more clearly aligns Jude with other creatures in suffering, suggesting Jude’s and the pig’s mutual victimization by Arabella. In its depiction of Jude’s capacity for sympathy and Arabella’s lack of it, the scene also draws readerly sympathy to Jude and evokes antipathy for Arabella. Prior to this point, her vigorous earthiness could perhaps still endear her to readers, despite her dishonesty and selfish manipulation of others to get what she wants. After all, there is a touch of Hardy’s other country-bred heroines in her sheer appetite for life.²⁵ But in this scene Hardy deliberately portrays her casual cruelty in graphic terms designed to repulse the reader from her.

The scene begins with Jude lighting a fire with sad reflections “on the reason of that blaze—to heat water to scald an animal that as yet lived, and whose voice could be continually heard from a corner of the garden” (62). When the couple finds out that the pig-killer is not coming, they are compelled to do the job themselves. The difference in

their attitudes is evident immediately, as Jude is appalled when Arabella casually mentions that the pig has been starving for two days, to “save bother about the innerds” (62). “This accounts for his crying so! Poor creature!” cries Jude (62). The text continues to emphasize the contrasts between Jude’s response and Arabella’s throughout the scene. “Upon my soul I would sooner have gone without the pig than have had this to do... A creature I have fed with my own hands,” exclaims Jude, while Arabella calls him a “tender-hearted fool” (64). While he is determined to kill the pig quickly, she insists that “[t]he meat must be well-bled, and to do that he must die slow... Every good butcher keeps un bleeding long. He ought to be eight or ten minutes dying, at least” (64). The kindly Jude refuses to do this, and pleads for her to “have a little pity on the creature!” (64).²⁶

Along with what it portrays about the characters, this scene, even more than the scene with the pheasants in *Tess*, also serves to stress that animal suffering has its own intrinsic importance. It shows that Hardy was serious about using his writing for ethical purposes; he offered it to the publication *The Animal’s Friend*, where it was published as “A Merciful Man” in 1895 (Cohn 519).²⁷ Furthermore, just as Jude does when he describes the pig as crying, Hardy attributes traditionally “human” emotions to the pig as it dies: it cries out first in “surprise,” then in “rage,” then in “despair,” and finally in “agony” (64). As it dies, the pig rivets “his glazing eyes... on Arabella with the eloquently keen reproach of a creature recognizing the last treachery of those who had seemed his only friends” (64). Hardy describes the “scene of slaughter,” with blood splashed vividly on the snow, as a “dismal, sordid, ugly spectacle—to those who saw it as

other than an ordinary obtaining of meat” (65) “It is a hateful business,” Jude says, and Arabella’s cool reply is “Pigs must be killed” and “Poor folks must live” (65).

Much like Tess when Prince dies, Jude after the pig-butchery feels himself the murderer of a “fellow-mortal”:

Jude felt dissatisfied with himself as a man at what he had done, though aware of his lack of common sense, and that the deed would have amounted to the same thing if carried out by deputy. The white snow, stained with the blood of his fellow-mortal, wore an illogical look to him as a lover of justice, not to say a Christian; but he could not see how the matter was to be mended. No doubt he was, as his wife had called him, a tender-hearted fool. (66)

The narrator, however, clearly presents such tender-heartedness as sympathetic and morally superior to Arabella’s callous practicality. After all, Hardy himself had received “scoffs at his impracticable tenderheartedness” toward animals—in his case for objecting to the use of horses in battle (*Life* 325-326). As Cohn observes, the pig-killing scene “valorizes Jude’s sensitivity as opposed to Arabella’s brutality. His social world, of course, is not quite ready to host that sensitivity, and tends to collapse Jude’s intensity of care into unintended indifference” (519).²⁸ Arabella’s brutality and indifference to others’ suffering may be why, as Dutta points out, there is a “long-standing critical tradition which holds that Arabella is probably the only woman towards whom Hardy shows any animosity” (122).

Arabella’s role throughout the text continues to be as a foil to Jude’s sympathy. When she leaves him and remarries, he grants her a divorce, and his only concern is lest her bigamous second marriage should be exposed, because, he says, “I don’t want to injure her in any way” (238). Similarly, when Arabella later visits him claiming to be in trouble, he feels an “inconvenient sympathy” for her (264), and tells Sue: “I love her little enough now, but I don’t want to be cruel to her” (264), adding that “one can’t be a brute

in such circumstances” towards an “erring, careless, unreflecting fellow-creature” (265-266). As Arabella shrewdly observes of Jude: “Never such a tender fool as Jude is if a woman seems in trouble and coaxes him a bit! Just as he used to be about birds and things” (270).²⁹

Given the toxicity of her relationship to Jude, it is fitting that Arabella should later take up work as a barmaid, dispensing liquor and self-loathing to her former husband. Given her depiction as a figure and promoter of brutalizing, unhealthy vice, it is also fitting that her second husband is a tavern-owner (Cartlett), and that both Cartlett and herself, when they next appear in the novel, show signs of “becoming affected by the liquors he retailed” (290). Jude is aware that she draws him toward what he sees as his coarser instincts, and experiences a sense of “degradation” when he sleeps with her. He knows equally well that she has “no more sympathy than a tigress” (183). Nevertheless, his consistent compassion still colors his feelings for Arabella: “If he could only have felt resentment towards her he would have been less unhappy, but he pitied while he contemned [sic] her” (186).

Sympathetic Sue

In contrast with Arabella, Sue is at first presented in a sympathetic light, and the animal metaphors used to describe her reflect this. If Arabella, like Alec d’Urberville, is too “animalistic,” Sue’s nature is distinctly lacking in animality; Jude comments on her “lack of animal passion” (260), and in the manuscript and serial she is described as a “woman with not a throb more of the animal in her than was necessary to give her sex” (*JO* 439 note 8). Like Angel Clare, she would perhaps have been “nobler” with a little of

the animal in her. Thus, the only animal to which Hardy compares her is a bird—the most ethereal of earthly creatures—and he repeats this comparison multiple times. Birds were one of Hardy’s favorite metaphors for women; he used the comparison for virtually all his heroines.³⁰ (One might think especially of Thomasin in *The Return of the Native*, of whom the narrator says, “All similes and allegories concerning her began and ended with birds” [180].)³¹ Sue’s association with birds seems to fit Ronald Morrison’s argument that Hardy “most generally associates Jude and Sue with animals to exhibit their sensitivity, kindness, and fragile emotional and physical states, while he associates Arabella with animals to emphasize her coarseness and apparent cruelty” (70-71).³²

As a birdlike creature, Sue is also vulnerable, which at first endears her to readerly sympathy. Jude is as usual our model for such sympathy; at one point he, sensing her unhappiness, tells her, “I can see through your feathers, my poor little bird!” (211). After finally giving way to having sex with Jude, she says “The little bird is caught at last!” with “a little sadness showing in her smile,” though Jude reassures her, “No—only nested” (268). At her happiest she appears with Jude “flexible and light as a bird” (296).

Sue also seems (at least relatively) sympathetic for much of the book because she appears to match Jude’s concern for his fellow creatures, animal as well as human. A key example of this is the scene in which Jude is awoken one night by the “cry of a rabbit caught in a gin,” and cannot bear to think of it stoically “bearing its torture till the morrow, when the trapper would come and knock it on the head” (213). The parallels between the rabbit’s painful endurance and that of Tess’s pheasants is striking, and, as in

that scene and the scene of the pig-killing, Hardy uses the sensitivity and sympathy of his protagonist to protest cruelty to animals:

He who in his childhood had saved the lives of the earthworms now began to picture the agonies of the rabbit from its lacerated leg. If it were a “bad catch” by the hind leg, the animal would tug during the ensuing six hours till the iron teeth of the trap had stripped the leg-bone of its flesh, when, should a weak-sprung instrument enable it to escape, it would die in the fields from mortification of the limb. If it were a “good catch,” namely, by the fore-leg, the bone would be broken, and the limb nearly torn in two in attempts at an impossible escape. (213-214)

Jude has the same impulse that Tess does with the pheasants; he “could rest no longer till he had put it out of its pain” (214), so he determines to perform a mercy killing. No sooner has he done this than Sue appears; she has had the same idea. Her response to the rabbit’s pain is precisely Jude’s; she says, “I heard the rabbit, and couldn’t help thinking of what it suffered, till I felt I must come down and kill it! But I am so glad you got there first... They ought not to be allowed to set those traps, ought they?”³³ Here, Jude and Sue are equally reminiscent of their tragic ancestors, of whom the Widow Edlin says, “They was always good-hearted people, too—wouldn’t kill a fly if they knowed it” (282).³⁴

Similarly, when financial circumstances force Sue and Jude to auction their property, Sue is distraught to lose her pet pigeons, which the auctioneer describes as “a nice pie for next Sunday’s dinner,” and which are won by “a neighboring poulterer, and... unquestionably doomed to die before the next market day” (307). Seeing them at the poulterer’s shop that evening, Sue impulsively sets them free, to the fury of their new owner. In explaining to Jude what she has done, she exclaims, “O why should Nature’s law be mutual butchery!” (308). In this lament over not only man’s, but nature’s, cruelty to living creatures, Sue is clearly aligned with Jude’s (and Hardy’s) sympathy for animal life.³⁵

The compassion here evident for animals is also occasionally present in Sue's sympathy for other people. In particular, she shares Jude's deep compassion for Little Father Time, Arabella's son and (Arabella claims) Jude's own. "The poor child seems to be wanted by nobody!" exclaims Sue when she hears of him, and "her eyes [fill]" (274). Roused by this, Jude declares that it shouldn't matter to him whether the child is his by blood or not, as "[a]ll the little ones of our time are collectively the children of us adults of the time, and entitled to our general care. The excessive regard of parents for their own children, and their dislike of other peoples', is, like class feeling, patriotism, save-your-own-soul-ism, and other virtues, a mean exclusiveness at bottom" (274-275). Sue is sympathetic to the child in spite of the fact that it might be Jude's (a pique to her sexual jealousy), as Jude is sympathetic to him despite the fact that he might *not* be. Sue would like to think the child is not Jude's, but in any case avers that she will "do the best I can to be a mother to him," and even suggests that she could overcome her antipathy toward marriage, since it might make "a more natural home" for the child (275).

This expansion of sympathy aligns her with Jude in sharp contrast to Arabella, who has no sympathy to spare even for her own son, and who, "with her usual carelessness... had postponed writing to Jude about [the child] till the eve of his landing," so that there is no one to meet Little Father Time when he arrives (276). Sue, while her "super-sensitiveness [is] disturbed" by the boy's arrival, and by his evident physical resemblance to Jude, melts when Father Time asks if he can call her "mother" and begins to cry: "Sue thereupon could not refrain from instantly doing likewise, being a harp which the least wind of emotion from another's heart could make to vibrate as readily as a radical stir in her own" (279).³⁶ This reveals a warmer, less selfish side of her "super-

sensitiveness,” as opposed to the kind linked to her self-absorption--as when Jude speaks compassionately to her and the narrator notes that “Sue was always much affected at a picture of herself as an object of pity, and a tear came at this” (299). Sue’s sensitivity allows Jude to see her as much like himself; he says later that they are “both too thin-skinned” and that they are “horribly sensitive—that’s really what’s the matter with us” (286). The narrator confirms their similarity in this respect by describing them as “the supersensitive couple” (305).

Furthermore, Sue at first seems to counteract what Jude sees as the coarsening influence of Arabella. Arabella, not Sue, first drives Jude to deep—indeed suicidal--depression and to alcohol. Soon after the scene of the pig-slaughter, he goes out onto a frozen lake and feebly attempts suicide. When he fails, he turns instead to alcohol, recalling that “[d]rinking was the regular, stereotyped resource of the despairing worthless” (71). He attempts to pick himself up again after Arabella leaves him, and goes to Christminster determined “to avoid morbid sorrow even though he did see the uglinesses in the world” (73),³⁷ and thus away from the unhealthy state of mind and degrading behavior into which Arabella has led him. Sue, like Christminster itself, at first draws Jude away from what he sees as the baser instincts Arabella had aroused; soon after meeting Sue, he thinks, “What a wicked worthless fellow he had been to give vent as he had done to an animal passion for a woman, and allow it to lead to such disastrous consequences; then to think of putting an end to himself; then go recklessly and get drunk” (92).

As Jude’s reflection on his behavior suggests, his drunkenness works in a vicious cycle with his depression every time he feels disappointed or betrayed, confirming his

conviction that “he was at bottom a vicious character, of whom it was impossible to expect anything” (119). Hardy ensures that Jude maintains our sympathy in his struggle with alcohol by showing how steadfastly Jude shuns his tendency to drink when not thwarted by external forces that tip the balance in his “constant internal warfare between flesh and spirit” (193). The narrator observes that Jude has never sought liquor “from taste, but merely as an escape from intolerable misery of mind” (193).

Hardy had depicted working class alcoholism as a form of escapism with varying degrees of sympathy in other novels’ characters, from Michael Henchard in *The Mayor of Casterbridge* to Tess’s parents and the dairymaid Marian in *Tess*. But with Jude in particular he suggests that, when trampled down, the protagonist reinforces his own sense of degradation through a form of escape which he knows to be beneath him. Arabella appears to him as the dark angel luring him to dissipation, and Sue as the guardian angel protecting him from it.

Thus, Sue initially protects him from a disease to which he is predisposed. It is true that under the fear of losing Sue to Phillotson, combined with his receiving a dismissive letter from the head of a college, Jude again gets drunk (117). But with “a sudden flash of reason” and “disgust” (122), he flees to Sue in contrition, heartily promising her to abstain from alcohol. He knows he is “melancholy mad, what with drinking and one thing and another,” but is convinced that he could avoid drink “if I had any kind of hope to support me!” (125). Later, after he has again been brought low by Arabella, Sue instinctively (and accurately) fears that he has “tried to drown your gloom!” (186). “And you came to hunt me up, and deliver me, like a good angel!” he exclaims (187). Sue seems to Jude “the sweetest and most disinterested comrade that he

had ever had,” and this makes him “heartily ashamed of his earthliness in spending the hours he had spent in Arabella’s company” (187). After this, he again “verily [believes]” he has “overcome all tendency to fly to liquor” (193) and “cured himself of drunkenness” (266). Sue’s influence, in contrast to Arabella’s, makes him want to shun such behavior.

As the novel progresses, however, Sue becomes a cause of, rather than a guardian against, Jude’s tendencies to depression and alcohol dependence. He visits a bar after Sue’s marriage, after a “ghastly half-hour of depression” in which “there returned upon him that feeling which had been his undoing more than once—that he was not worth the trouble of being taken care of either by himself or others” (178). Sue’s absence after her first marriage works in tandem with Arabella’s presence; the first drives him to a bar, the second, as Arabella makes her reappearance as a barmaid, draws him back into a sexual relationship not based on love.

Sue is also destined to play a role in Jude’s destruction because he seeks in her precisely what she cannot give: not only sexual passion, but a fulfillment of what he calls his “wish for intellectual sympathy, and a craving for loving-kindness in my solitude” (98). While in their happiest moments he is charmed by her “sympathetic words and ways” (292), at other times he suspects that she cannot in fact return his feelings, as when he tells her, “Sue, sometimes, when I am vexed with you, I think you are incapable of real love” (240). Tormented by his feelings for Sue after her marriage to Phillotson, he begins to consider the women he usually views as polar opposites, Arabella and Sue, as being alike in their feminine destructiveness:

Strange that his first aspiration—towards academical proficiency—had been checked by a woman, and that his second aspiration—towards apostleship—had also been checked by a woman. “Is it,” he said, “that the women are to blame; or is it the artificial system of things, under which the normal sex impulses are

turned into devilish domestic gins and springes to noose and hold back those who want to progress?" (217)

The narrator immediately reinforces this suspicious attitude toward women, noting that: "It had been his standing desire to become a prophet, however humble, to his struggling fellow-creatures, without any thought of personal gain," but that his entanglements with Sue and Arabella have made this dream an impossibility (217).

Sue, Gender, and the Limits of Empathy

Hardy's positioning of Sue alongside Arabella as a mutual destructive influence seems largely based on these characters' one common quality: their womanhood. Another consequence of Sue's status as a woman in this novel is that, while she retains readerly sympathy for much of the book, empathy is impossible given the novel's stress on the inaccessibility of her interior life. Sue herself seems to recognize this when she remarks, "So few could enter into my feeling" (215). The difficulty of interpreting Sue is central to *Jude the Obscure*. Hardy took as much care with his "characterization" of Sue as of Tess; he spoke of the "difficulty of drawing the type" (Steig 263), and repeatedly revised the scenes in which she appears in order to represent her correctly (Langland "Perspective" 13). Yet she appears in the text not as a representation but as a representational vacuum to be filled by interpretation. This allows Hardy to shift his depiction of her from largely sympathetic to deeply antipathetic, reducing Jude's ideal companion to a mere pathological force.

Feminist critics have stressed the lack of interiority in Sue that allows for such wide-ranging interpretations of her character. As Brady notes, she is not "internalized"—in contrast to "the constant references by the narrator to Jude's mental state"; her

thoughts and feelings are elided, “rarely depicted or described but instead . . . suggested by her words and actions and guessed at by the narrator or by Jude” (96).³⁸ While Jude believes Sue to be his female counterpart, and while the narrator at times reinforces this view by emphasizing “the complete mutual understanding” which makes them “almost the two parts of a single whole” (292), the course of the lovers’ relationship suggests that Jude’s understanding of Sue remains anything but complete: “His Sue’s conduct was one lovely conundrum to him” (136). Their gender difference, or at least his perception of it, remains an insurmountable obstacle to Jude’s viewing her as a human individual: “If he could only get over the sense of her sex, as she seemed to be able to do so easily of his, what a comrade she would make” (153), he thinks.

Jude is alternately caught between interpreting Sue as typically female, a “revelation of woman” (102), and being perplexed by her indecipherable and possibly pathological individuality—“the elusiveness of her curious double nature” (209).³⁹ Jude’s attempts to interpret Sue’s individual nature through generalization are very clearly a response to his sense of a vacuum in knowledge or understanding of Sue’s nature and motivation.⁴⁰ As Dutta notes, “The narrator and Jude try to grope their way to an understanding of her tragedy by invoking an essentialist view of women” (119). Sue’s unknowability undermines Jude’s (and the narrator’s) sense of the two lovers’ likeness, of what the narrator calls the “perfect . . . reciprocity between them” (203), leaving Jude only stereotypes to fall back on. As Sue tells him, “You don’t know what’s inside me” (139).

Jude tries to nullify this threatening sense of otherness by idealizing Sue, and these idealizations make them Shelleyan doubles, so he can see in her “as it were the

rough material called himself done into another sex—idealized, softened, purified.”⁴¹ Phillotson too finds a way to understand Sue in her “extraordinary sympathy, or similarity” with Jude, which makes her no more than Jude’s idealized double: “They seem to be one person split in two!” he says (229). This “Shelleyan” (231) reading of woman as double erases the need to interpret Sue, since her otherness is converted to complementariness.

The threatening differences of Sue’s gender, and of her peculiar nature, are neutralized for Jude so long as he can see her as essentially like him. Jude thus insists on their complementariness, telling Sue, “[Y]ou are just like me at heart” (202). Her response to this reading is characteristically ambivalent. She says they may be alike at heart, but “not at head” and “[n]ot in our thoughts! Perhaps a little in our feelings” (202); at another point, however, she too refers to “our perfect union... our two-in-oneness” (338), and this contradiction suggests her own uncertainty in response to others’ interpretations of her.⁴²

Sue herself provides few windows through which we can interpret her. Her own sense of self seems to be ambivalent. Like Tess, she both resists and internalizes the social stereotypes of women through which men read her. She also realizes that stereotypes have led to the destructive cramping of women’s natures into conventional roles (205), and she resists being mere chattel in marriage, given away “like a she-ass or she-goat, or any other domestic animal” (170). But she can only seem to resist conventional expectations of women by aligning herself with men in their linguistic and intellectual dominance, in opposition to the majority of women, whom she sees in stereotyped terms as weaker and earthier. She often stresses her difference from most

women, as when she says, “I have no fear of men, as such, nor of their books. I have mixed with them... almost as one of their own sex. I mean I have not felt about them as most women are taught to feel” (147), or “I daresay it happens to lots of women; only they submit, and I kick” (215).

Yet Sue’s ambivalence is evident in that when it suits her she tries to explain her own behavior in typically gendered terms,⁴³ suggesting that the “curious unconsciousness of gender” (149) Jude uneasily observes in her is superficial. For instance, to protest Jude’s labeling her a flirt, she explains her behavior by saying: “Some women’s love of being loved is insatiable” (204). Her recognition of how her former admirer, an undergraduate, suffered for her leads her to align herself with her own sex as she disparages it: “That’s how men are—so much better than women!” (148). Her conception of herself as a woman is evidently full of contradictions. Thus, while she is proud of her sexual emancipation, she still muses that “better women would not” have remained virginal as she has, and worries about consequent interpretations of her as unwomanly or abnormal: “People say I must be cold-natured,--sexless—on account of it. But I won’t have it!” (149).⁴⁴

Perhaps because of her ambivalent sense of herself, Sue’s attempts to explain or interpret herself to Jude are singularly unhelpful: “I am so cold, or devoid of gratitude, or so something” (237) is a typical example. In resisting Jude’s sexual advances, she says: ‘Put it down to my timidity... to a woman’s natural timidity when the crisis comes. . . . Assume I haven’t the courage of my opinions. I know I am a poor miserable creature. My nature is not so passionate as yours!’” (239). She even asks Jude to interpret her own nature for her: “I am not a cold-natured, sexless creature, am I, for keeping you at such a

distance? I am sure you don't think so!" (267). It is as if her actual nature is as hazy to her as to Jude, Phillotson, and the narrator, and this renders readers' efforts to identify with her doubly difficult.

Hardy's biological essentialism further compounds the problem; while he portrays Sue's resistance to oppressive ideologies sympathetically, he still reinforces these ideologies by encouraging the reader to interpret Sue's (and Arabella's) behavior in terms of their gender, rather than presenting them as individuals with fully realized inner lives.⁴⁵ Throughout the novel, the narrator, like Jude, evaluates Sue in terms of her peculiarity or representativeness, her womanliness or abnormal sexlessness, the ways she is like or "unlike a woman in ordinary" (*JO* 364).⁴⁶ Similarly, while Sue's attempt to conform to gender ideology at the novel's end is a degeneration from her former (at least theoretical) unconventionality, Hardy suggests that Sue's behavior—in particular her return to Phillotson—is inevitable due to her biological status as one of the "weaker" sex.⁴⁷

However much he recognized that cultural constructions of femininity are part of the "artificial system of things," this novel suggests that Hardy could not get past the sense of women's essential otherness, which he saw or came to see as biologically based. He famously expresses this biologically-rooted essentialism in the narrator's comments on the young women at Melchester Training-School, that "every face bear[s] the legend 'The Weaker' upon it, as the penalty of the sex wherein they were moulded, which by no possible exertion of their willing hearts and abilities could be made strong while the inexorable laws of nature remain what they are" (*JO* 141).⁴⁸

In Hardy's world, this biologically-based weakness of a woman emerges especially when she is under extreme pressure. The pressure of sexual rivalry is one such force reducing women to their essential common denominator; for example, under "the oppressiveness of an emotion thrust upon them by cruel Nature's law" (the law of sexual selection) Tess's fellow milkmaids become de-individualized and reduced to their gendered essence: "The differences which distinguished them as individuals were abstracted by passion, and each was but a portion of one organism called sex" (*TD* 115).⁴⁹ In *Jude* the pressure of her children's deaths leads to Sue's breakdown, which Hardy frames as at least partly the result of womanly weakness.

Sue's "weakness," when combined with her emotional inaccessibility, allows Hardy to direct readers' sympathy away from her. It also enables him to shift from presenting Sue as (to some extent) fitting Jude's ideal of her to presenting her as a typically destructive woman.⁵⁰ Her biological weakness, like so much else about her, is simultaneously inevitable given her status as "woman" and also the result of her unique neuroses. Hardy is able to suggest both causes through Sue's propensity to hysteria, which he hints at throughout the text. The narrator refers to her as a "mere cluster of nerves (359), and alludes to her "nervous temperament" (94), "nervous quickness" (209), "nervous manner" (233), and "nervous quiver" (166). The bird imagery that characterizes her thus suggests not only an ethereal, fleshless quality, but, as Alexander Fischler suggests, her propensity for hysterics and erratic behavior (256).

Hardy suggests the same delicate mental equilibrium through his characterization of her (through Jude's eyes) as "the ethereal, fine-nerved, sensitive girl" (218), and through her aunt's distaste for Sue's "high-strained nerves" (110). Even Jude's

description of her “thoughtful, quivering, tender... and... sensitive” nature (111) suggests that the very attributes which might seem to make her a good match for the thoughtful, tender, sensitive Jude, actually *in her* indicate instability (“quivering”). She herself is frightened by what she calls her “aberrant passions, and unaccountable antipathies” (205).

Early critics sought to explain Sue with the understanding of pathology current at the time; as Jane Wood notes, they “saw Sue’s exceptionality as essentially sick” (204). Thus, they referred to her “fantastic greensickness” and described her as “an incurably morbid organism” (cited in Kathleen Blake “Sue” 703).⁵¹ Edmund Gosse saw her as a “terrible study in pathology,” a “maimed ‘degenerate’” with a “warped and neurotic nature” (Gosse 280).

Numerous critics have also connected Hardy’s depiction of the neurotically nervous Sue with the late nineteenth-century idea of the “New Woman.”⁵² In his Preface to the novel’s 1912 edition, Hardy himself claimed that a reviewer had described Sue as “the first delineation in fiction of the woman who was coming into notice in her thousands every year—the woman of the feminist movement—the slight, pale ‘bachelor’ girl—the intellectualized, emancipated bundle of nerves that modern conditions were producing” (*JO* 468).⁵³ Thus, her status as “intellectualized” and perhaps “emancipated” is inextricably bound up with her being a “bundle of nerves”—inherently unstable.⁵⁴

Wood connects Sue’s nervous decline with cultural, medical, and literary narratives of the 1890s in which the New Woman was depicted as a “constitutionally morbid type” (163) destined to nervous collapse due to over-application of her feminine (and thus inferior) mental powers (166). Women in general were seen, paradoxically, as

simultaneously less evolutionarily developed than men and yet as having nervous systems “evolved to an over-refined delicacy and sensitivity”; thus, they exemplified both “reversion and refinement” (Wood 172), both of which suggested their physiological defectiveness.⁵⁵ But this was especially true of the New Woman, who denied her social and supposedly biological limits. Theories of “biological determinism, together with the supposed greater susceptibility of women to neurosis, produced a climate in which women’s nervous illnesses were increasingly seen as the physiological consequences of their reluctance to comply with prescribed social and sexual roles” (Wood 163).

Victorian psychologist Henry Maudsley presented a dire view of educated women, warning that due to the “tyranny of their organization”—women’s physiological organization-- “a system of female education... laid down on the same lines, follow[ing] the same method, and hav[ing] the same ends in view, as a system of education for men” would be futile and even physically dangerous (Maudsley “Cerebral” 380-381). Victorian philosopher Herbert Spencer warned that too much education in women produced a “physical degeneracy [that] hinders their welfare,” as could be seen “[i]n the pale, angular, flat-chested young ladies, so abundant in London drawing rooms” (Spencer 373). These deterministic views fit with the representation of Sue and her nervous decline. As a New Woman, Sue has advanced too far and yet not far enough for health of mind and body. As Elaine Showalter succinctly notes, “New Women and nervous illness seemed to go together” (137).⁵⁶

Beyond mere nervous instability, however, Sue also displays a cruelty that borders on sadomasochism. The “cruelly sweet” Sue (*JO* 172) asks Jude to give her away at her wedding to Phillotson, and tells him: “‘I like to do things like this,’ ... in the

delicate voice of an epicure in emotions, which left no doubt that she spoke the truth” (173). As she continues to needle Jude in his suffering on this occasion, he begs her not to “be so awfully merciless” (173). The narrator enters directly into Jude’s thoughts as he tries to decide whether to attribute Sue’s “colossal inconsistency” to her gender or her own “peculiarities,” perhaps even psychological abnormality.⁵⁷

How could Sue have the temerity to do it—a cruelty possibly to herself as well as to him? Women were different than men in such matters. Was it that they were, instead of more sensitive, as reputed, more callous, and less romantic; or were they more heroic? Or was Sue simply so perverse that she willfully gave herself and him pain for the odd and mournful pleasure of practicing long-suffering in her own person, and of being touched with tender pity for him at having made him practice it? He could perceive that her face was nervously set, and when they reached the trying ordeal of Jude giving her to Phillotson she could hardly command herself; rather, however, as it seemed, from her knowledge of what her cousin must feel, whom she need not have had there at all, than from self-consideration. Possibly she would go on inflicting such pains again and again, and grieving for the sufferer again and again, in all her colossal inconsistency. (174-75)

The narrator confirms this view of Sue as enjoying being the cause of suffering; for example, in one instance when she decides not to write to Jude, she says to herself, “I hope it will hurt him very much... He’ll suffer then with the suspense—won’t he, that’s all!—and I am very glad of it!”—Tears of pity for Jude’s approaching sufferings at her hands mingled with those which had surged up in pity for herself” (218).⁵⁸

Given her capacity for cruelty, Sue fits another unsympathetic late nineteenth-century stereotype besides the “New Woman”: she reflects the *fin de siècle* fascination with the *femme fatale*. Hardy’s pattern of creating destructive women comes to its tragic culmination in *Jude*, in which Sue’s and Arabella’s failures of sympathy help destroy the sympathetic Jude and leave him dying of consumption. But, as Fischler notes: “Very early, with Bathsheba in *Far From the Madding Crowd*, women’s games with men

revealed their lethal potential” (261); the careless actions of Bathsheba precipitate Boldwood’s descent into madness, foreshadowing the epigraph to *Jude*: “Yea, many there have been who have run out of their wits for women...” (*JO* 8).⁵⁹ Even the fragile Elfride in *A Pair of Blue Eyes* is, like Sue, presented as at least partially responsible for her first lover’s death from consumption.⁶⁰ But perhaps most significant to *Jude* is the relationship between Grace Melbury and Giles Winterbourne in *The Woodlanders*. Grace is recognizably a prototype for Sue (though far less interesting), and her relationship with Giles also prefigures that between Jude and Sue, as her evasive behavior and conventionality (like Sue’s evasive behavior and relapse into conventionality) at the expense of her lover leads to his death from typhoid fever.⁶¹ As Tony Fincham points out: “The reader knows that Giles was not killed by a bacterium; he died from a broken heart” (53). Grace herself acknowledges, “He died for me!” (*WO* 290).⁶²

If one of Elfride’s and one of Grace’s lovers dies of consumption or typhoid, two of Sue’s die of consumption,⁶³ positioning her uncomfortably close to the ghoulish, even vampiristic women of less “realistic” fin de siècle fiction. Hardy presents these illnesses as springing directly from Sue’s withholding sex from men who, the narrator suggests, are entitled to it. Describing her time with an undergraduate prior to meeting Jude, she explains how she agreed to live with him, but found that:

he meant a different thing from what I meant. He wanted to be my lover, in fact, but I wasn’t in love with him—and on my saying I should go away if he didn’t agree to my plan, he did so. We shared a sitting-room for fifteen months... till he was taken ill, and had to go abroad. He said I was breaking his heart by holding out against him so long in such close quarters; he could never have believed it of woman. I might play that game once too often, he said. He came home merely to die. His death caused a terrible remorse in me for my cruelty—though I hope he died of consumption and not of me entirely.” (148)

As Hyman points out, Sue, despite recognizing the effect her withholding herself from the undergraduate in close quarters had on him, “repeats the pattern, first with Phillotson and later with Jude” (168). Hearing the story of his predecessor causes Jude to look at her “as if to read more carefully the creature he had given shelter to” (159); he feels that “she was treating him cruelly, though he could not quite say in what way” (149-150). Shortly afterwards, when she moves from argumentation to tenderness, he wonders: “Was it that which had broken the heart of the leader-writer; and was he to be the next one? ... But Sue was so dear!” (155). Later, the story of “the poor Christminster graduate whom she had handled thus, returned to his mind; and he saw himself as a possible second in such a torturing destiny” (240).

Sue herself admits to Jude her usual pattern of cruelty followed by remorse and self-reproach: “[S]ometimes a woman’s *love of being loved* gets the better of her conscience, and though she is agonized at the thought of treating a man cruelly, she encourages him to love her while she doesn’t love him at all. Then, when she sees him suffering, her remorse sets in, and she does what she can to repair the wrong” (241). Referring to Phillotson, Jude replies, “You simply mean that you flirted outrageously with him, poor old chap, and then repented, and to make reparation, married him, though you tortured yourself to death by doing it” (241). She admits that: “Well—if you will put it brutally!—it was a little like that” (241).

Her relationship with Jude was founded on similarly muddled motives. Later she tells Jude more directly that in the beginning of their relationship, she “had thought I ought in charity to let you approach me—that it was damnably selfish to torture you as I did my other friend,” but that she wouldn’t have given way to his sexual desire except for

jealousy of Arabella (352-353). She says: “At first I did not love you, Jude; that I own. When I first knew you I merely wanted you to love me. I did not exactly flirt with you; but that inborn craving which undermines some women’s morals almost more than unbridled passion—the craving to attract and captivate, regardless of the injury it may do the man—was in me” (353). As Fischler notes; “in keeping with her repentant stance, she now presents herself not as the freedom-loving little bird whom Jude and others would catch and confine, but as the one who herself had an inborn ‘craving to attract and captivate,’ and who, though frightened, could not stop preying or let the prey go once he was caught” (260). In other words, she suggests that (like Arabella) she has been a predator all along. Thus, she acknowledges of their relationship that “however it ended, it began in the selfish and cruel wish to make your heart ache for me without letting mine ache for you” (353).

Given such admissions on Sue’s own part, it is easy to see why male critics in particular have cast Sue both in pathological terms and as a *femme fatale*;⁶⁴ for example, Dennis Taylor discusses her “frigidity” which “entangles three men, causes the death of two and the moral corruption of a third” (xxv), though he then backtracks to suggest attention deficit disorder and hyperactivity as potential alternatives to frigidity (xxv-xxvi). A male defensiveness characterizes Declan Kiberd’s 1985 discussion of Sue’s “narcissism” and the way Sue displays the “characteristic psychological disturbances of the last century and this” (99), which he connects to the threatening androgyny he sees resulting from second-wave feminism. The antipathy Sue can arouse is encapsulated in Desmond Hawkins’s description of her as “just about the nastiest little bitch in English literature” (cited in Blake “Sue” 703). Hyman, in more tempered language, notes that Sue

lacks loving-kindness or charity, even as she “continually makes demands on the charity of Phillotson and Jude” (166), that her love is limited because it is without compassion, and that her unresponsiveness is ethical as well as sexual (Hyman 166). She adds: “It is Sue’s very lack of fellow-feeling, her need for charity, which attracts her to the two men who are capable of giving it,” and that “she is driven by the need to conceal her absence of fellow-feeling even from herself” (Hyman 166).⁶⁵ That lack of fellow-feeling, to the point of selfishness, is an increasingly crucial part of Hardy’s depiction of Sue as the text nears its close.

Sue’s collapse into hysteria after her children’s death ultimately only magnifies her selfishness and lack of sympathy. Jude’s sympathy for her—his only partially-successful efforts to “[keep] back his own grief on account of her”-- “stimulat[e] Sue to efforts of sympathy which in some degree distrac[t] her from her poignant self-reproach” (337), but she is invariably swept back into her own suffering and self-pity: “‘I am a pitiable creature,’ she said, ‘good neither for earth nor heaven any more! I am driven out of my mind by things!’” (339). With the deterioration of her psychological stability, Sue’s earlier Hardyian understanding of suffering-- that “at the framing of terrestrial conditions there seemed never to have been contemplated such a development of emotional perceptiveness among the creatures subject to those conditions as that reached by thinking and educated humanity” (342)--disintegrates into fear of a divine persecutor and punisher. She tells Jude that “the ancient wrath of the Power above us has been vented on us, His poor creatures, and we must submit” (342).⁶⁶

Her sadomasochism is also brought out by her hysteria; Hardy’s emphasis on this works to redirect any sympathy the reader might feel for her suffering onto Jude, whom

she makes suffer, instead. She begins to fixate on the need for “self-abnegation,” insisting: “Self-renunciation—that’s everything! I cannot humiliate myself too much. I should like to prick myself all over with pins and bleed out the badness that’s in me!” (345). Though she claims to be renouncing herself, she is in fact more selfish than ever, as in her masochistic penance she shuts Jude out, rather than sharing their suffering together.

Jude realizes that she is “not the Sue of the earlier time” (343), and his efforts to sympathize are now mingled more than ever with attempts to interpret her in terms of her personal or gendered weakness. He exclaims that “affliction has brought you to this unreasonable state!” adding: “What I can’t understand is your extraordinary blindness to your old logic. Is it peculiar to you, or is it common to all women? Is a woman a thinking unit at all, or a fraction always wanting its integer?” (351). When she says that she is still Phillotson’s wife by rights he responds that such thoughts are “your weakness—a sick fancy, without reason or meaning!” (343), and even “perverse” (346). He laments the “deterioration,” of her intellect (350), and that “the blow of her bereavement seemed to have destroyed her reasoning faculty” (360). Later, after her re-marriage to Phillotson, he tells her, “I would argue with you if I didn’t know that a woman in your state of feeling is beyond all appeals to her brains. Or are you humbugging yourself, as so many women do about such things . . . ?” (*JO* 388-89). He likewise laments the “[s]trange difference of sex, that time and circumstance, which enlarge the views of most men, narrow the views of women almost invariably” (400). This resort to biological essentialism suggests that the narrator’s earlier statement, indicating that Jude could “read every symptom of her [Sue’s] mental condition” (189), is no longer true, and probably never was.

The picture of Sue continues to darken as she begins to affectively distance herself from Jude. He pleads:

“And now you would add to your cruelty by leaving me! ... O Sue!” said he with a sudden sense of his own danger. “Do not do an immoral thing for moral reasons! You have been my social salvation. Stay with me for humanity’s sake! You know what a weak fellow I am. My two Arch Enemies you know—my weakness for women, and my impulse to strong liquor. Don’t abandon me to them, Sue, to save your own soul only! They have been kept entirely at a distance since you became my guardian angel! Since I have had you I have been able to go into any temptations of the sort, without risk. Isn’t my safety worth a little sacrifice of dogmatic principle? I am in terror lest, if you leave me, it will be with me another case of the pig that was washed turning back to his wallowing in the mire!”

Here Hardy accomplishes many things at once: he emphasizes Sue’s moral responsibility for Jude’s welfare, and the potential that her cruelty could precipitate him back into alcoholism and lust, as well as suggesting that she is turning to the “save-your-own-soulism” Jude had earlier deplored.⁶⁷ Jude’s comparison of himself with a pig underscores this criticism of Sue; it recalls the scene of the pig-slaughtering earlier, so that Sue’s cruelty becomes bound up with Arabella’s.⁶⁸

In contrast with Sue’s self-absorption, Jude retains his characteristic sympathy for her for a long time. While he acknowledges that she has made him suffer, he fears she has suffered even more (353-354), and even places the blame for their failed relationship on his own “selfish” seduction of Sue (354). The narrator says that: “She was so sadly sweet in what he called her wrong-headedness that Jude could not help being moved to tears more than once for pity of her” (361). Jude later laments: “I’d have sold my soul for her sake, but she wouldn’t risk hers a jot for me. To save her own soul she lets mine go damn!... But it isn’t her fault, poor little girl—I’m sure it isn’t!” (375). The narrator, too, retains some sympathy for Sue; hence the undeniable pathos in the depiction of her rending the nightgown she’d bought to please Jude “with all her might, the tears

resounding through the house like a screech-owl” (364), even as the scene, with its striking similarity to the delirious Cathy tearing her pillows in *Wuthering Heights*, reinforces the sense of Sue’s mental alienation.

There is likewise some pathos in the depiction of the toll that her mental state takes on her physical one. As Wood notes, in her determination to subdue the flesh Sue exhibits symptoms of a disease just being classified at the end of the nineteenth century—anorexia nervosa, a disorder was first named and diagnosed by William Gull two decades before the novel’s publication (Wood 210-212).⁶⁹ On her wedding day, Sue appears thus:

Sue had never in her life looked so much like the lily her name connoted as she did in that pallid morning light. Chastened, world-weary, remorseful, the strain on her nerves had preyed upon her flesh and bones, and she appeared smaller in outline than she had formerly done, though Sue had not been a large woman in her days of rudest health. (368)

Later, she tells Jude that she has “wrestled and struggled, and fasted, and prayed,” and “nearly brought my body into complete subjection” (388). Widow Edlin tells her, “you have no body to speak of—you put me more in mind of a sperrit” (393), and when Sue comes to Phillotson in her ultimate act of penance she is a “thin and fragile form” (397). Widow Edlin feels sympathy for the “little thing” (398), and the reader still may as well. However, empathy, as with Tess, is impossible, as Sue’s mental processes are so opaque. And as in *Tess*, the novel parallels a moral (and psychological) decline on the heroine’s part with the moral growth (Angel) or elevation (Jude) of a male character. As Penny Boumelha observes, Sue “is made the instrument of Jude’s tragedy, rather than the subject of her own” (148).

Jude’s Destruction

At the end of *Jude* the narrative turns sharply away from Sue to focus in much more detail on Jude's physical and emotional deterioration, which never taints his moral stature, as the text explicitly or implicitly blames it on women. After losing Sue, Jude turns to self-destruction, first by walking on a path where "boughs dripped, and coughs and consumption lurked" (362). When Sue remarries Phillotson, Jude sinks into "misery and depression," and turns "into a public house for the first time during many months. Among the possible consequences of her marriage Sue had not dwelt on this" (373). Sue's thoughtlessness and Jude's despair allow the novel's other *femme fatale*, Arabella, to return and complete Jude's destruction.

All through the novel to this point, the narrator has kept alive the reader's antipathy to Arabella by showing her lack of sympathy. Even after the death of her son, she is "utterly unable to reach the ideal of a catastrophic manner" (347). She can't be bothered to come to the funeral, though she claims of her son that "naturally I feel for him" (347), and goes on to "talk with placid bluntness about 'her' boy, for whom, though in his lifetime she had shown no care at all, she now exhibited a ceremonial mournfulness that was apparently sustaining to the conscience" (348).

The narrator's depiction of Arabella only becomes more condemnatory as, after Sue's remarriage, Arabella seeks Jude out, playing expertly on his sympathies. She begs him "in kindness" to take her in, and "[u]nable to be harsh with her," Jude does (370-371). When he goes in despair to a tavern, she follows him plies him with alcohol in a way reminiscent of Huntingdon and his diabolical friends in Anne Brontë's *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall*, until Jude has been "personally conducted through the varieties of spirituous delectation by one who knew the landmarks well" (375). Arabella, the "woman

of rank passions” (378), then leads the drunken Jude back to her house and (it is implied) enacts again her role as the novel’s Alec-like seducer. She keeps Jude full of liquor for days, before he has a chance to recover, and then throws an alcohol-drenched party. Her intention is to get Jude so inebriated that he will remarry her, which she achieves by making him “tipsy by her special knowledge of that line of business” (381), and by appealing to his sense of honor. Characteristically, and in contrast to Arabella, Jude’s response is framed in terms not only of honor, but of altruism: “I have never behaved dishonorably to a woman or to any living thing. I am not a man who wants to save himself at the expense of the weaker among us!” (382).

Unsurprisingly, being linked again to Arabella hastens Jude’s physical deterioration. Their inauspicious wedding is followed by a decline in Jude’s health from “indifferent” to “precarious,” and he displays the signs of consumption, becoming languid and coughing “a good deal” (384). Arabella ironically complains about having to support an “invalid husband,” and asks him, “Why didn’t you keep your health, deceiving one like this? You were well enough when I married you” (384), just as she later says he’s been “clever... to get a nurse for nothing by marrying me!” (398). While Jude grows indifferent to her verbal “abuse” (398), he responds to her accusations at one point by saying, “I have been thinking of my foolish feeling about the pig you and I killed during our first marriage. I feel now that the greatest mercy that could be vouchsafed to me would be that something should serve me as I served that animal” (384).⁷⁰ While this is a clear expression of a death-wish, the subtext of his equating himself with the pig is that Arabella is *not* killing him quickly and mercifully, the way he killed the pig, but rather killing him the way she wished to kill the pig, slowly draining him of life and blood. The

narrator's references to Samson and Delilah, introduced during their courtship (46), and invoked again at this point (378), likewise suggest that she is sapping his strength.

Arabella is a vicious inversion of the angel at the sickbed, and has no qualms in exerting her now superior strength over Jude. He longs for Sue to come and see him, and begs Arabella to write to her, but Arabella only taunts him (385). At this, he threatens her, but she knows him too well: "You couldn't kill the pig, but you could kill me!" she exclaims. "Ah—there you have me. No—I couldn't kill you, even in a passion. Taunt away," he replies, "coughing very much, and she estimated him with an appraiser's eye as he sank back ghastly pale" (386). Here the crucial difference between Hardy's presentation of Tess and that of Jude is evident; Jude's illness wastes his body, but his mind (despite periods of inebriation) remains intact, and with it his sympathy and sensitivity. He descends into depression, but never into madness, and so never commits a crime that could alienate him from the reader's sympathies. Hardy portrays Jude as a martyr, with women as his primary persecutors.

The first of these persecutors drives him to seek out the second. Arabella promises at last to write to Sue, but "Arabella, like other nurses, thought that your duty towards your invalid was to pacify him by any means short of really acting upon his fancies" (386). As a result, he goes out into a rainstorm to seek Sue, though "it seemed impossible that any sick man would have ventured out to almost certain death" (387). Arabella's response is: "If he's such a fool, let him be! ... I can do no more" (387). The narrator evokes the reader's sympathy for Jude in reaction against Arabella's heartlessness, describing Jude, "pale as a monumental figure in alabaster" with his "thin form" and "without an umbrella," walking through the rain (387). "On his face showed the

determined purpose that alone sustained him, but to which his weakness afforded a sorry foundation. By the uphill walk he was quite blown, but he pressed on” (387), much like the victimized Fanny Robin in *Far From the Madding Crowd*.

Desperate as Jude’s condition is, Sue fails to respond with compassion, and this failure has dire consequences. Infused with the sense of Jude’s suffering, the reader is primed to read Sue’s final abandonment of him with indignation. His “last appeal” to her seeks to bridge their estrangement and connect them in their suffering and distress: “We’re both remarried out of our senses” (390). Being now only a “melancholy wreck of a promising human intellect,” as he puts it, Sue is unable to respond. Yet he continues to plead, until she appeals to his “pity” one last time in asking him to leave her, and he complies (390). Then comes a key moment: “As he passed the end of the church she heard his coughs mingling with the rain on the windows, and in a last instinct of human affection, even now unsubdued by her fetters, she sprang up as if to go and succor him. But she knelt down again, and stopped her ears with her hands till all possible sound of him had passed away” (390). In this moment, Sue condemns herself; her behavior is arguably worse than Arabella’s, as the former acts unsympathetically because she is incapable of sympathy, while Sue deliberately stifles her sympathy so that it cannot manifest as altruistic loving-kindness.⁷¹

Hardy seems to have designed this act of Sue’s to place her not only beyond empathy, but beyond sympathy. Thus Hyman, for example, sees Sue Bridehead as the epitome of a certain kind of Hardy character, one who is meant to engage our sympathies through their intellectual advancement, only later to disengage those sympathies because

of their lack of moral feeling and the consequent suffering they cause themselves and others (Hyman 34). She argues that:

By presenting Sue at the beginning in a most attractive light as an intellectually advanced free spirit, Hardy at first engages the reader's sympathies. But by shading her with limitations of increasingly apparent seriousness, he gradually disengages that sympathy until, ultimately, like Jude, the reader rejects Sue. Apparently Hardy hoped that by leading the reader to reject Sue he would effect a catharsis of egotism within the reader himself. (34-35)⁷²

If this reading is correct, then the reader may well be expected to conclude, with Jude, that Sue is "not worth a man's love" (*JO* 389), a fairly damning dismissal.

If the idea of the sympathetic Hardy writing off one of his heroines that way seems unusual, it is not anomalous. In *The Hand of Ethelberta*, the reader, like Christopher Julian, ultimately dismisses Ethelberta as "no longer worthy of our interest or our concern" (Hyman 54).⁷³ Hardy himself admitted his disinterest in Grace Melbury (Dutta 88), who like Sue is an inaccessible "conjectural creature" (*WO* 36).⁷⁴ Sue's hysterical behavior works not only to estrange but to infuriate the reader. There is something very astute in the comment of a reviewer Hardy mentions in his Preface to the 1912 edition, who regretted that "the portrait of [Sue] had been left to be drawn by a man, and was not done by one of her own sex, who would never have allowed her to break down at the end" (*JO* 468).⁷⁵ Perhaps what this reviewer meant was that a female author would not use Sue's breakdown to estrange her from readers' sympathy.

In contrast with his treatment of Sue, Hardy redoubles his efforts to evoke the reader's sympathy for Jude at the novel's end, in reaction against Sue's stifling of her own sympathy. As Hyman puts it, "Hardy shifts the burden of the [sympathetic] response onto the reader... By seeing what Sue does, we are made to feel what she *ought* to do" (152).⁷⁶ To heighten our sympathy, the narrator again details Jude's physical sufferings

and frailty; how “in the teeth of the north-east wind and rain Jude now pursued his way, wet through, the necessary slowness of his walk from lack of his former strength being insufficient to maintain his heat” (390), as “the deadly chill . . . began to creep into his bones” (391). He arrives back in Christminster “literally tottering with cold and lassitude” and “compelled to lean against the wall to support himself while coughing” (391), his face “corpse-like” (392). He tells Arabella that he had intended, by walking out in the rain, both to see Sue and to indirectly commit suicide; his desire is to “put an end to a feverish life which ought never to have begun!” as he knew the weather would aggravate his “inflammation of the lungs” (391).⁷⁷ The narrator further insists on the natural delicacy of Jude’s constitution, suggesting that Jude had never been “stout enough for the stone trade,” which Jude suggests “began the mischief inside” (398). His physical delicacy reinforces the sense of an innate refinement in Jude which would have been better suited to Christminster scholarship than to stone-masonry.

Jude’s final descent into martyrdom follows, as Arabella’s cruelty to him is compounded by her calling in a singularly unsympathetic representative of the medical establishment. Several critics have noted Hardy’s generally negative depictions of doctors (Fincham 4); Fincham sums up these characters as “almost without exception portrayed as unprofessional, incompetent, and unscientific; not only that, but they generally overcharge their patients, whilst remaining themselves impecunious” (77).⁷⁸ *Jude’s* Vilbert epitomizes the worst kind of medical practitioner, and is a fitting emblem of self-interest presiding where sympathy should be. A presence hovering in the background throughout the text, he is an “itinerant quack doctor, well known to the rustic population, and absolutely unknown to anybody else, as indeed he took care to be, to

avoid inconvenient investigations” (26). When he breaks a promise to the young Jude, the latter, despite being an “unsophisticated boy” at that point, can see from this “what shoddy humanity the quack was made of” (29). He is first described selling lard to a poor woman at an exorbitant price as a “certain cure for a bad leg” (26-27). He likewise claims to be the “only proprietor of those celebrated pills which infallibly cure all disorders of the alimentary system, as well as asthma and shortness of breath,” as well as “golden ointment, life-drops, and female pills” (27); with the last of these, the text suggests he helps Arabella ensnare Jude into their first marriage (56).⁷⁹

Arabella’s responsiveness to Vilbert at the novel’s end further reveals her callousness to Jude. When she calls Vilbert in to tend to the dying Jude, Jude angrily sends him away, but by that time Arabella and Vilbert are lovers; she has even snuck him the very love-potion he sold her (295-296). Justifying herself by the rationale that “[w]eak women must provide for a rainy day,” and that “it’s well to keep my chances open” since Jude is sure to die soon (401), Arabella sets her sights on marriage to Vilbert.

The novel cements readerly antipathy to Arabella and sympathy for Jude in the novel’s final scene. As Jude lies dying with his face “so thin that his old friends would hardly have known him,” Arabella is narcissistically gazing into her looking glass as she curls her hair (402-402). She is tired of nursing him, and wishes to leave: “She looked at Jude, critically gauged his ebbing life, as she had done so many times during the late months” (402), and then abandons him to take part in the festivities going on outside. When Jude is awakened by his own coughing he begs for water, calling out in vain for both Sue and Arabella. The fact that he calls for Sue as well as Arabella reminds the

reader of Sue's complicity in this martyrdom—that she, like Arabella, has abandoned him to die.

Biblical references further underscore Jude's final role as a tragic martyr. Jude's connection with suffering figures of the Bible is a recurring motif in the text; for example, Sue compares Jude to the martyr St. Stephen (205). At another point, Jude thinks what a "poor Christ" he makes (124). At the novel's bitter ending, he recites the bleak words of Job, the blameless sufferer, wondering why he was born, his words cruelly punctuated by "Hurrahs!" from revelers outside his window (403).⁸⁰

This ending suggests Hardy's bleak view of humankind. One reviewer, Jeannette Gilder, complained that "Hardy's view of humanity is comprised of 'hoggishness and hysteria'" (Lerner and Holstrom 113).⁸¹ Reductive as this comment is, it does encapsulate quite well Hardy's view of *womankind* if extrapolated from the end of *Jude*. On the most reductive level, Jude perishes because he is brought down by women, stereotypically embodied as "hoggishness" (Arabella) and "hysteria" (Sue). But it is not the ending of the novel alone that foregrounds the destructive power of women; that theme resonates throughout the novel, beginning with its epigraph from Esdras: "Yea, many there be that have run out of their wits for women, and become servants for their sakes. Many also have perished, have erred, and sinned, for women... O ye men, how can it be but women should be strong, seeing they do thus?"⁸² But Hardy never lays on Jude the responsibility of men implicit in this epigraph (not to strengthen women by becoming their slaves); Jude's sympathy and loving-kindness, though he perishes for it, is still the implied ideal. The world is not worthy of Jude, Hardy suggests, and neither are women.

The novel's ultimately antipathetic tone towards women may be due to the "gradual disenchantment with women" that Dutta remarks in Hardy during the 1890s (214), though it is evident on a more minor scale in his earlier works. Its corollary is Hardy's increasingly pessimistic view of the possibility of sympathy across genders. In *Jude*, Hardy comments on the "antipathetic" mood typical of "the average husband and wife of Christendom" (296), but this is not merely an indictment of marriage; as he wrote in a letter: "seriously I don't see any possible scheme for the union of the sexes that [would] be satisfactory" (cited in Dennis Taylor xviii).⁸³ As Dennis Taylor observes, Hardy had an underlying sense of a "battle of the sexes" which "sometimes overrides the individual's welfare," and which has distinctly Darwinian overtones: a "law of the jungle, the war of the sexes, the law of the survival of the fittest" (xxvi). Hardy notes in *The Return of the Native* that "selfishness is frequently the chief constituent of... passion, and sometimes the only one" (RN 132).⁸⁴ This does not suggest much hope at least for romantic relationships between men and women, as selfishness is the primary barrier to sympathy in his novels. *Jude the Obscure* suggests that Hardy grew ever more pessimistic about the ability of sympathy to bridge the gap between the genders which a lack of full understanding (and thus of empathy) has created. This lack of understanding, along with the vagaries of sexual jealousy, makes sympathy and loving-kindness too often alien to romantic love.

What is needed, as Hardy suggests in *The Woodlanders*, is "a sympathetic interdependence in which mutual weaknesses are made the ground of a defensive alliance" (WO 183), not unlike the relationship between Gabriel Oak and Bathsheba. But such matches, based on sympathetic interdependence, are rare in Hardy's work, due to

the essential difference he believed divided the sexes. This is all the more surprising, since he insists on the possibility of such sympathetic interdependence, based on “mutual weaknesses,” between humans and other species. His novels suggest that for some people, at least, sympathy can quite easily bridge the barrier between species—that sympathy is possible, in such cases, even without full empathy.

A character’s compassion for fellow-creatures in the natural world suggests for Hardy a radical capacity for loving-kindness. In an early novel like *Far From the Madding Crowd*, this capacity in Gabriel is linked to heightened sympathy for other human beings as well, especially for those who are suffering. The same is true of the more tragic Tess and Jude, but the sympathy they display finds no return. In Jude’s case, Hardy seems to place the primary blame for failures of sympathy on women, and in both *Tess* and *Jude* he ends by pathologizing the female minds he cannot penetrate. It is as if, while he embraced the kinship of species, he could never quite lay hold of the insight he was groping towards as early as his first novel, *Desperate Remedies*, that “after all, woman are Mankind, and . . . in many of the sentiments of life the difference of sex is but a difference of degree” (*DR* 173). Perhaps he came the closest in *The Woodlanders*, describing how the barrier between a spectator and such a “conjectural creature” as his heroine could be overcome: through the practice of “patient attention which nothing but watchful loving-kindness ever troubles itself to give” (39).

¹ See also Elisha Cohn 510 and Virginia Hyman 34.

² See also Ronald Morrison 70.

³ However, Cohn also argues that in *Jude*, animals appear “solely in the ethical sense,” urging us to compassion rather than pointing to our shared animality (519).

⁴ In contrast, Hyman sees suffering as necessary to moral progress even in *Jude* (35).

⁵ See Morrison 81 note 22 on Hardy’s sensitivity to animal suffering early in life.

⁶ Alexander Fischler, in contrast, sees Hardy as presenting Jude’s kindness to “birds” (women) as a weakness, though it elicits sympathy (252 and 261-262). The moral of the story, he says, is “simplistic”: “kindness does not pay” (261). “Jude is pronounced fatally weak from the start because he cannot hurt anything, because he has kindness to excess” (261).

⁷ See also Fischler 250-251.

⁸ See Fischler 263 and Morrison 71-72.

⁹ See Lucy Bending 197-202 for a detailed analysis of this passage.

¹⁰ See also Cohn 519. Hyman also notes that in Hardy a character’s capacity for suffering often “signifies their greater moral and intellectual awareness” (37). She argues that Hardy often leaves his more advanced characters with a “painful awareness of the difference between *what is* and *what ought to be*. But for Hardy, what ought to be lies not in some ideal past but somewhere in the future, in the kind of conscious intellectual and emotional responses that both see and feel humanity to be ‘part of one body’” (37)

¹¹ See also Hardy’s *Life* 153. See also Jane Wood 198-200, Aaron Matz 16-17, and Penny Boumelha 138-139; Boumelha talks about Hardy’s idea of “the mind as an evolutionary mistake” (139). Hardy’s poem “The Mother Mourns” features Nature lamenting that she “had not proposed me a Creature/... so excelling/All else of my kingdom in compass/ And brightness of brain,” and that mankind with its new insight holds her in “doubt and disdain” (Hardy *The Works* 101).

¹² For the purpose of in-text citations and endnotes, *Tess of the d’Urbervilles* will be abbreviated as *TD*, *Jude the Obscure* as *JO*, *Desperate Remedies* as *DR*, *A Pair of Blue Eyes* as *PBE*, *Far from the Madding Crowd* as *FFMC*, *The Return of the Native* as *RN*, and *The Woodlanders* as *WO*. *The Life and Work of Thomas Hardy* will be referred to in shorthand as *The Life*.

¹³ See also Dennis Taylor xxviii-xvix.

¹⁴ Huxley, however, maintains a more optimistic worldview that mankind “may modify the conditions of existence” (“Evolution” in *Embodied Selves* 321).

¹⁵ As Joanna Brown points out, Nature in Hardy can be either indifferent or “actively hostile to woman and man” (280), and when cruel, “Nature is cruel, both to her own lesser creatures, and to human beings” (281). In a 1902 letter, Hardy wrote that “Pain has been, and pain is: no new sort of morals in Nature can remove pain from the past and make it pleasure for those who are its infallible estimators, the bearers thereof... [T]o model our conduct on Nature’s apparent conduct... can only bring disaster to humanity” (*Life* 338-339); T.H. Huxley similarly wrote in 1893 that “the ethical progress of society” depends “not on imitating the cosmic process... but in combatting it” (Huxley “Evolution” in *Darwin* 328). Hardy’s idea of Nature’s cruelty is vividly illustrated in the Darwinian nature descriptions in *WO*; for example, one passage casually refers to “[o]wls that had been catching mice in the outhouses... and stoats that had been sucking the blood of rabbits” (*WO* 22). Hardy’s poem “Before Life and After” similarly refers to a time when “none suffered sickness, love, or loss,” until “the disease of feeling germed” (Joanna Brown 277).

¹⁶ Like Dostoevsky, Hardy on several occasions uses horses in his fiction as examples of pure undeserved suffering; the most horrific example is the depiction of Alfred Neigh’s horses in *The Hand of Ethelberta*. Hardy also deplored the sufferings of horses in war (*Life* 325-326; see also Joanna Brown 115 and Morrison 79 note 13), as in his poem “Horses Aboard” (Hardy *The Works* 747). In his *Life* he likewise records scenes of cruelty to horses; see 159, 220, and 265 for some of Hardy’s comments on the cruelty of cab-drivers to horses in particular. See George Sherman 305-306. See also Morrison 76; he argues that this scene challenges Jude’s general association of urban refinement with sensitivity and rural lower-class life with cruelty.

¹⁷ Hyman notes that Sue’s behavior to Jude is of a piece with the rest of the novel in this respect (151).

¹⁸ But see also *The Life* 269: “[H]ow strange it is that we should talk so glibly of ‘this cold world which shows no sympathy,’ when this is the feeling of so many components of the same world—probably a majority—and nearly everyone’s neighbor is waiting to give and receive sympathy.”

¹⁹ Despite all this suffering, Phillotson goes even further, realizing he should give Sue a divorce “in kindness to her” as the only “merciful course” (252). See also *JO* 247-248 and 253.

²⁰ See also Fischler 262-263.

²¹ Irving Howe likewise notes that Hardy is “quite capable of releasing animus toward his women characters and casting them as figures of destruction” (406).

²² See also Dutta 123-126; she notes the discourse of “destructive” women that runs through the novel (124) and that “Jude is destroyed by the collusion of two women” (123). Margaret Oliphant, in “The Anti-Marriage League” in *Blackwood’s Magazine* in 1896, noticed much the same thing (139-141).

²³ Hardy wrote in a letter that the throwing of the “offal was... intended to symbolize the conflict of animalism and spiritualism” (*JO* 419 note 10). See also Morrison 72. Morrison observes that: “Throughout the novel, Hardy associates Arabella with pigs and the connotations pigs typically suggest in Western literature: ignorance, selfishness, and brutish sensuality... But not only does Hardy associate Arabella with pigs, the most unrefined and offensive of animals, he repeatedly associates her specifically with the slaughter of pigs” (72).

²⁴ See also Shanta Dutta 121, 130, and 168-169.

²⁵ See also Dutta 120-123, Dennis Taylor xxvi, and Morrison 80 note 19. Early reviews show that Hardy succeeded in creating antipathy for Arabella by animalizing her; “most Victorian critics were repulsed by Arabella’s earthiness” (Morrison 80 note 19). Early critics often found Hardy’s women in general too animalistic; see Boumelha 2.

²⁶ See also Morrison 72-73. Hardy wrote in a letter to a friend that “I fully expected that, though described in that particular place for the purely artistic reason of bringing out Arabella’s character, it might serve a humane end in showing people the cruelty that goes on unheeded under the barbarous regime we call civilization” (cited in Morrison 79 note 8).

²⁷ See Hardy’s *Life* 289. See also Morrison 67; Morrison suggests that attacks on this scene only strengthened Hardy’s support of the humane cause.

²⁸ Hardy makes further use of Arabella’s insensitivity toward the pig to create antipathy for her in one more scene. He uses that cruelty to suggest Arabella’s soiling and spoiling of Jude’s ideals, as she gets lard on Jude’s books (*JO* 68).

²⁹ Dennis Taylor notes at least one instance where Hardy altered a comment of Arabella’s from the manuscript version to avoid giving her “too much sympathy” (*JO* 421 note 5).

³⁰ See also Fischler 252-255; Dutta 172-173; and Joanna Brown 125-132 and 188. Brown notes that birds are “one of his [Hardy’s] most significant symbols” (125), and that birds feature in over a hundred of his poems (131). Fischler discusses the misogynistic culmination of Hardy’s bird-heroines in the “bird-bride” Sue (254), and even punningly describes *Jude* as a “case against the ways of birds with men” (255).

³¹ See also Hyman 79, Joanna Brown 183-184, and Fischler 252-253.

³² See Morrison 75 and 80 note 18 for a more class-based analysis of Hardy’s animal imagery.

³³ See also Bending 200 on this scene.

³⁴ Notably, of these ancestors the woman went mad after her husband was hanged (282), foreshadowing Sue’s own mental breakdown and Jude’s martyrdom.

³⁵ See also Fischler 258 and Dutta 172-173. Morrison argues that Sue, like Jude, is associated with animals primarily to emphasize her victimization (75-76), but the rest of his article suggests that this parallel breaks down at the end of the novel, when Hardy’s investment is in presenting Sue as one of the victimizers of Jude.

³⁶ She later notes of Father Time that: “The cloud upon his young mind makes him so pathetic to me; I do hope to lift it one day!” (299). In *JO* 456-457 note 9, Dennis Taylor observes that the serial emphasizes even more “the theme of the evolving future altruism of the human race, with Sue as adoptive mother the precursor” (457). See also *JO* 448 note 6. Hyman sees Jude’s reaction to Father Time as more altruistic than Sue’s, as Jude doesn’t care if Father Time is his; he has the “detached parental feeling” characteristic of altruism (159-160). Declan Kiberd goes so far as to claim that “Sue’s lack of real interest in her children is the most obvious indication of her fundamentally narcissistic personality,” suggesting that she “reject[s] her own motherhood,” and placing the full blame for the children’s death on her lack of traditional female nurturance (97). In contrast, see Kathleen Blake “Sue” 723-724. See also Tony Fincham 14 and 25; he argues that Hardy’s fictional world “remained essentially non-procreative; when children did appear they were signifiers of tragedy” (25).

³⁷ It is fitting that Jude's son by Arabella should be an embodiment or exaggeration of his own depressive tendencies; in a fit of "aggravated despondency," little Father Time kills himself and his siblings partly due to his "morbid temperament"; Jude says "It was in his nature to do it" (*JO* 336). Sue also attributes his actions partly to his "incurably sad nature" (339). The doctor has told Jude that the child is representative of a "coming universal wish not to live" (337). See *JO* 449 note 2 on Paul Dombey of Dickens's *Dombey and Son* as a possible source and a similar "chil[d] made prematurely old by abuse or neglect" (449).

³⁸ Cf. Judith Mitchell "Hardy's Female" 183: "The reader, like Jude, is left to 'interpret' her thoughts from her actions and her dialogue, a fact that undoubtedly has much to do with the mystery that has always surrounded her character in the copious amounts of criticism it has occasioned." She notes that Sue is "perceived from the outside rather than the inside. We are never given access to her consciousness, so that she remains an enigma rather than a true subject" (Mitchell "Hardy's Female" 179-80; see also 200). See also Dutta 113-114, 169-170, and 220; Boumelha 147-48; Patricia Ingham 55; Rebecca Mitchell 70-71; Hyman 165; Kristin Brady 96; and Anne Simpson 56. For a partially dissenting viewpoint, see Rosemary Sumner 182-184. Kiberd, in a chapter on Sue striking in its male defensiveness against feminism, blames Sue herself for her lack of "an authentic inner life," while praising Hardy's capacity to show Jude's "growth from within" (98). Hardy's treatment of women's consciousness as mysterious is characteristic throughout his work, but in the case of Sue may have been heightened by his reading similar representations of women in New Fiction such as George Egerton's (Kiberd 90-93, 135).

³⁹ See Boumelha 142, Simon Gatrell 103-104, and Elizabeth Langland "Perspective."

⁴⁰ See also Brady 96-97. She observes that Sue's individual perversities have led her to take on the role of an intellectual New Woman, but that "her womanhood insures that her radical ideas will lead only to inconsistency and hysteria—that she will be reduced by her female body, in other words, to 'a fraction . . . wanting its integer'" (97).

⁴¹ See *JO* 435, Part Third, Ch.3, note 5. See also Rosemarie Morgan 140-142; Marjorie Garson 162; Elaine Showalter 101; Hyman 156; Jo Devereux *Patriarchy* xii and 123; and Sumner 123-124 and 133.

⁴² Sometimes Sue encourages Jude's idealization, as when she has him quote Shelley to her (244).

⁴³ Cf. Robert Heilman 311 and 321.

⁴⁴ See also Blake "Sue" 716-717.

⁴⁵ See also Dutta 220. See also Boumelha 15, 37, and 129-130 on Hardy's biological determinism, though she does not believe that Sue's collapse is tied to "biological destiny" (145) nor "the sign of some gender-determined constitutional weakness of mind or will, but a result of the fact that certain social forces press harder on women in sexual and marital relationships" (153).

⁴⁶ See also Boumelha 142. As Brady notes, the line between Jude's thoughts and interpretations and the narrator's cannot always be clearly drawn; the boundary often collapses, especially when free indirect speech is used, and the two often echo each others' interpretations of women (97).

⁴⁷ Cf. Rogers 255, Showalter 101, Mary Childers 330, Langland "Perspective" 18, and Mary Jacobus "Sue" 321. For a dissenting viewpoint, see Philip Mallett (esp. 215).

⁴⁸ Thomas is right to point out, however, that the context of this passage does acknowledge social "injustice" as a factor oppressing these women, alongside biological determinism (48-49). See also Langland "Perspective" 21; Dutta 212; Rosalind Miles 41-42; and Blake "Sue" 707-708, 720-721, and 726. For a more positive view of Hardy's relation to Darwinian constructions of female sexuality, see Kattie Basnett. Dennis Taylor also discusses biology and genetic inheritance as another factor causing suffering in the novel, particularly in those temperamentally unfit for marriage (xxvii). See Hardy *The Life* 246-247 for the experience that may have inspired this passage.

⁴⁹ See Blake "Pure Tess" 694. See also Gillian Beer "Descent" 240 on sexual selection in this passage.

⁵⁰ See Michael Steig 263.

⁵¹ See also Blake 205.

⁵² See, for example, Wood 164-214; Dutta 113 and 139; Blake "Sue"; Brady 96-97; Lynn Pykett 165; and Kiberd 85-102. Kiberd classifies both Sue and Arabella as androgynous New Women; he points out that while Arabella "conforms externally as far as she can to the conventions of her time, she conforms only to manipulate those conventions to her own material advantage," and has no real respect for sexual or gender norms (91). Kiberd also argues that Sue's "radical dogma is more a form of self-therapy than an honest struggle for social change" (98). Blake in "Sue" argues for Sue's feminist credibility, while calling the novel a "classic formulation of flirt psychology, all the more remarkable for linking the flirt to the feminist"

(718). Blake also notes that when Hardy considered a dramatized version of the novel, projected titles included “the New Woman” or “A Woman with Ideas” (“Sue” 704).

⁵³ See also Dennis Taylor xxv, Boumelha 134, and Blake “Sue” 704. Blake also notes that in the Victorian era hysteria was one of the “maladies” believed to result from sexual frustration (“Sue” 714).

⁵⁴ Hardy commented on Sue’s sexual instinct as “healthy so far as it goes, but unusually weak and fastidious” (cited in Wood 205), adding that “[t]he abnormalism consists in disproportion, not in inversion” (cited in Dutta 114).

⁵⁵ Wood notes that the fiction of the 1890s was preoccupied with death and disease, particularly nervous disease (173), and argues of the time period that: “Once the theories of female inferiority, finite energy, and nervous degeneration were considered together, it was not a huge step to the virtually unchallenged prognosis of mental and physical debility that attended those women who, increasingly in the last decades of the century, sought educational and economic equality with men” (166). In this culture, independent women were believed to be especially prone to neurasthenia, or nervous exhaustion, and neurasthenic women were seen as portents of “nervous degeneration” (163). She argues that Sue is “[r]educ[ed] to the primitive reflexes of a simple life form and, at the same time, refin[ed] to the point of unviability, [so that] Sue’s nervous pathology spans the evolutionary scale” (212). See also Jenny Bourne Taylor and Sally Shuttleworth 292, and Barbara Ehrenreich and Deirdre English 113-118 on the linking of New Women and hysteria.

⁵⁶ In Chapters 5 and 6 of *The Female Malady*, “Nervous Women: Sex Roles and Sick Roles” (121-144) and “Feminism and Hysteria: The Daughter’s Disease” (145-164), Showalter discusses at length the links that Victorian psychiatric Darwinists, and the culture at large, drew between nervous illness and “New Women,” and between hysteria and feminism. She mentions Sue on 146. See also Showalter 18, 55, and 120 and Boumelha 37-38; Boumelha also notes that in anti-feminist works of the fin de siècle, New Women are often punished through a “mental or physical collapse” (96), which sounds strikingly similar to Sue’s case.

⁵⁷ See also Wood 200-214.

⁵⁸ For a more sympathetic view of Sue’s behavior (and Hardy’s presentation of it) see Blake “Sue,” esp. 716-722.

⁵⁹ Fischler, suggesting that *JO* is “an illustration of the ways of maids with men, bearing an undeniably misogynist bias” (260), adds that “Hardy’s heroines had been coquettes from the first... Sue and Arabella, however, become incarnations of women’s power over men” (261). See also Boumelha 38 and Dutta 3-5 on the “ruinous potential of women” (Dutta 4) and their role as “emotional vampires” (Boumelha 38) in Hardy’s novels, and Stubbs 80-82 on how “their personal psychology is lost in [Hardy’s] habit of seeing them first as agents of a destructive destiny, and only second as people” (81). Eustacia of *RN* might be seen as a *femme fatale* in terms of literally causing illness; see Fincham 44-45 and Boumelha 50 and 55. This is especially true given her association with the beautiful adder that bites Mrs. Yeobright; the combination of the bite and Eustacia’s apparent cruelty kills the older woman. (But see also Dutta’s discussion of Hardy’s ambivalent sympathy for Eustacia [37-55], as well as her discussion of Vivette in *Two on a Tower* [57-71] and Felice Charmond in *The Woodlanders* [73-91], all ambivalently presented *femme fatales*.) Even the rational, placid Elizabeth Jane of *The Mayor of Casterbridge* can be read as such a heartless, destructive woman at the end of the novel, if we believe that her neglect kills Henchard as it kills the canary.

⁶⁰ See *PBE* 127-128 and 332. See also Fincham 125-126.

⁶¹ See also Dutta 88-89. See Fincham 50-53 for a persuasive medical argument that Giles’s illness is typhoid.

⁶² The narrator speaks of Giles’s “self-sacrifice” for Grace (*WO* 282), making him, like Jude, a martyr to love.

⁶³ See also Fincham 126.

⁶⁴ See also Dutta 115-116.

⁶⁵ Hyman also notes that, morally, Jude’s growth is contrasted with Sue’s decline (152). Hyman suggests that Sue is, however, a catalyst for growth of altruism in Jude and (temporarily) Phillotson (166).

⁶⁶ Like Sue, but more like Alec in *Tess*, Arabella too undergoes a short-lived religious conversion after her second husband’s death. She explicitly draws the connection between herself and Sue, while emphasizing Sue’s more hysterical nature: “she’s took in a queer religious way, just as I was in my affliction at losing Cartlett, only hers is of a more ‘sterical sort than mine” (356). See also Wood 206-214 for a sensitive reading of Sue’s descent into disease which comes to slightly different conclusions than mine.

⁶⁷ Ironically, Sue quotes to Jude the verse “Charity seeketh not her own” (361). He replies, “In that chapter we are at one, ever beloved darling... its verses will stand fast when all the rest that you call religion has passed away!” (361-362). See also Dennis Taylor xxxii.

⁶⁸ See also Morrison 74-75.

⁶⁹ Wood also notes the connection in late nineteenth-century medical thought between anorexia, hysteria, and neurasthenia (210-212). Fincham discusses three cases of anorexia in Hardy’s fiction, but (surprisingly) does not include Sue among them. Two are from short stories, and one from Hardy’s early novel *Under the Greenwood Tree* (Fincham 150-152). In *Under the Greenwood Tree*, Fancy Day’s anorexic behavior is clearly purely deliberate and manipulative; Hardy does not give it nearly the psychological motivation or force of Sue’s. This may well be because *Under the Greenwood Tree* was published over a year before William Gull first coined the term, and described the disorder, anorexia nervosa (Fincham 150). It is not unlikely that Hardy acquired knowledge of the disease as a disease in the more than two decades between that publication and the publication of *Jude*.

⁷⁰ See also Morrison 75 and 77. He notes that “Jude can compare himself to the pig, his fellow-creature and fellow-victim, to gain our sympathies, while Arabella is degraded by her continual association with pigs” (77).

⁷¹ In a similar scene in *RN*, Clym deliberately looks away so that he “might not be tempted to softness” as he turns his wife Eustacia out of the house (*RN* 274); see Hyman 34. Unlike Sue, however, Clym is able to redeem himself as an altruistic character; see Hyman 51-53.

⁷² See also Hyman 163 and 166.

⁷³ See also Dutta 26.

⁷⁴ Critics have echoed Hardy’s lack of interest; Fincham, for example, refers to Grace as “the most insipid of Hardy’s heroines” (93) characterized by “inner insubstantiality” (113), and describes her as existing in a “vacuum” (113), adding that she is “thoroughly unconvincing as a true Hardy heroine in the Tess mould” (113-114). See also Boumelha 100-101, 112, and 114, and Sumner 82-98, on Grace’s lack of identity. In contrast, Blake argues that “Hardy fiction shows a deepening and interiorization of his understanding of feminine characters,” and sees Sue as having a “center of self that Hardy must have imagined from the inside” (“Sue” 726 note 32). See also Boumelha 98-99 on Grace as a prototype for Sue.

⁷⁵ See also Blake “Sue” 725-726; Dutta 119-120 and 128-129; and Wood 167. Blake insists that “Sue’s breakdown is not a judgment on her” (726).

⁷⁶ See also Hyman 153. Hyman, who observes that “[m]ost readers and critics have acknowledged Hardy’s remarkable power of evoking feelings of sympathy and tenderness” (149), points out that our sympathy for characters like Tess and Jude is strengthened by our awareness of the inadequacy of other characters’ responses to them; thus Hardy “evokes in the reader the feelings of sympathy that the characters *ought* to have” (149).

⁷⁷ Fincham intriguingly suggests that “Nearly all deaths in Hardy can be... interpreted as indirect suicide” (10), “almost always the triumph of mind over matter” (15). He discusses Hardy’s “continuous interest in suicide” (240). See also Fincham 38, 41, 226-245, and 248.

⁷⁸ See also Fincham 77-83 and 249; he discusses incompetent doctors in *Jude* and in Hardy’s first published novel, *Desperate Remedies*, a novel in which hospitals are compared to slaughter-houses (Fincham 81). In his fourth chapter, Fincham also discusses Dr. Fitzpiers of *WO*, comparing him to Lydgate from George Eliot’s *Middlemarch*, but focusing on his unethical behavior as a doctor (77-116). Fitzpiers’s lack of sympathy for his patients is evident in his saying to Grace that “I daresay I am inhuman... but I do honestly confess to you that I feel as if I belonged to a different species” than his patients (*WO* 161).

⁷⁹ As Fincham notes, these are probably abortifacients (19). See also Fincham 77-79 and Boumelha 152.

⁸⁰ See also *JO* 30-31; Dennis Taylor *JO* 410 (Title-Page note) notes that St. Jude is “traditionally invoked as the saint of hopeless causes.”

⁸¹ See also Morrison 78-79 note 8.

⁸² See also Fischler 260-261.

⁸³ See also Fincham 204 and Blake “Sue” 725.

⁸⁴ See also Hyman 98 note 2.

Conclusion: Fin de Siècle Nightmares of Antipathy

“The nineteenth century has gone bankrupt through an over-expenditure of sympathy.”
-Oscar Wilde, *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (44)

“I can sympathize with everything, except suffering... I cannot sympathize with that. It is too horrible, too distressing. There is something terribly morbid in the modern sympathy with pain.”
- Oscar Wilde, *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (44)

Anxieties about illness and animality increased over the second half of the nineteenth century, as English culture struggled to come to terms with various shocks: Darwin’s theories, continued devastation by mysterious diseases and epidemics, and the rise of the feminist movement were among the most significant. Increasingly towards the end of the century, novels displayed a concern that illness and animality, like other kinds of “otherness,” should be carefully confined and limited. Growing anxieties about degeneration and devolution post-Darwin, a concern with national fitness, and the impact of the woman’s movement gaining traction all led to an investment among those who represented the privileged status quo to close off sympathy from those supposedly less evolved (and thus potentially dangerous to society).¹ Stephen Arata has suggested that “the turn away from sympathy was perceived by many as the defining feature of late-Victorian realism” (“Realism” 158);² non-realist novels go even further, offering the reader nightmares of antipathy.

Much of the writing of the time displays “the representation of difference as inferiority,” as Athena Vrettos notes (145), whether that difference was “poverty, criminality, [or] racial inferiority” (146). Miriam Bailin sees in the late nineteenth century “the transformation of the representation of illness as adaptation to illness as deviance.

Illness increasingly became the badge of the outsider... or else the epithet directed at such 'misfits' in defense of an endangered status quo" (142).³ Figures of illness, animality, and indeed even femininity were now often figured as threateningly deviant or degenerate. Kelly Hurley, in *The Gothic Body*, describes the resurgence of Gothic fiction at the end of the nineteenth century as managing and aggravating "anxieties about the shifting nature of 'the human'" (6); she argues that such fiction is "convulsed by nostalgia for the 'fully human' subject... yet aroused by the prospect of monstrous becoming" (4). Fin de siècle Gothic, she argues, enacts "the defamiliarization and violent reconstitution of the human subject" (4) and presents the spectacle of the "abhuman" (not-quite-human, abjected) body (3).⁴ In this conclusion, I shall use Bram Stoker's *Dracula* and H.G. Wells' *The Time Machine* and *The Island of Doctor Moreau* to examine the way fin de siècle anxieties about the instability of the human manifest in literary depictions of illness and animality as horrifying, designed to evoke only antipathy in the reader. I shall conclude by examining how Henry James's turn-of-the-century novels employ representations of animality and illness to explore the tenuous possibilities for sympathetic engagement in the modern world, displaying a keen awareness of the moral ambiguity of sympathy itself.

Precursors: Sensation Novels

Many of the fears that fin de siècle novels depict, as well as the strategies for evoking antipathy that they employ, were already present in the sensation novels of the 1860's, though the fears are not enlarged to such monstrous proportions, nor the tone quite so aggressively antipathetic tone. Works such as Mary Elizabeth Braddon's *Lady Audley's*

Secret (1862) and Wilkie Collins's *The Woman in White* (1860) were among the works that anticipated fin de siècle narrative techniques and preoccupations. One of these preoccupations was an anxiety about the instability of species distinctions, an uneasiness that would become a full-scale panic in the works of fin de siècle writers. Susan Bernstein observes that the appearance of sensation fiction as a genre "coincided roughly with the 1860s 'ape anxiety' spurred by *The Origin of Species*" (66), and refers to the "cultural uneasiness around boundaries that the reception to Darwin and to sensation novels both exemplify" (67).⁵ The animal imagery in *Lady Audley's Secret* suggests the potential monstrous reversion of women in particular to mere beasts. As Bernstein notes, while Alicia Audley is associated with horses, "a metaphor for spirited heroines [that] also implies a power that is ultimately tamed and within traditional structures of family and the home," characters "who signify a more nefarious threat to social ordering are linked with undomesticated animals... Lady Audley is cast as a Lamia" (Bernstein 73). The protagonist Robert Audley also envisions Lady Audley as a "mermaid beckoning his uncle to his destruction" (Braddon 244).⁶ She thus gestures toward the animalized and monstrous female creatures—beetle-women and vampire-women—of the fin de siècle.

Sensation novels were also precursors to fin de siècle texts in their preoccupation with nervous disease and mental illness. The sensation novel itself was viewed as a "pathological form" with a "potentially unhealthy effect," as Jenny Bourne Taylor observes ("Introduction" xii). Critics of sensation novels derided them as a "virus" or "mania" (Jenny Taylor "Introduction" 3); Oxford philosopher Henry Mansel, writing in the *Quarterly Review* in 1863, derided them for "preaching to the nerves," and for both

fostering and feeding a “diseased appetite” (Mansel 482-483).⁷ Nervous ailments and other diseases also formed much of the content of these novels; as Vrettos notes, such texts “emphasized criminal behavior, nervous sensitivity, and incipient madness, and they refigured the haunted mansion of gothic fiction as the Victorian asylum” (60). Braddon in *Lady Audley’s Secret* expresses the fragility of sanity, the “narrow boundary-line between sanity and insanity” (Braddon 341), the easiness with which anyone can slip into madness:

Mad-houses are large and only too numerous; yet surely it is strange they are not larger, when we think how many helpless wretches must beat their brains against this hopeless persistency of the orderly outward world, as compared with the storm and tempest, the riot and confusion within:--when we remember how many minds must tremble upon the narrow boundary between reason and unreason, mad today and sane tomorrow, mad yesterday and sane today. (206).

Even while suggesting the terrifying instability of sanity and prevalence of madness, however, Braddon does not suggest that we should sympathize with the criminally insane, as madness and criminality blur in the titular villain/heroine of *Lady Audley’s Secret*. At the end of Braddon’s novel, the doctor who recommends Lady Audley’s incarceration in an asylum takes great pains to emphasize both her hereditary insanity and her moral culpability.⁸ Doctor Musgrove declares she suffers from “latent insanity! Insanity which might appear only once or twice in a lifetime... and it would only arise under extreme mental pressure. The lady is not mad; but she has the hereditary taint in her blood. She has the cunning of madness, with the prudence of intelligence. I will tell you what she is, Mr. Audley. She is dangerous!” (372). In his suggestion that a “dangerous” or “tainted” woman might as well be a mad one, he is reminiscent of Rochester speaking of Bertha. Furthermore, heredity here already performs the function Hurley sees it performing in fin de siècle Gothic fiction as “a source of contamination” or

“infection” (Hurley 66). The slippage between madness, illness, evil, and crime works against the evocation of sympathy for the mentally ill.

The Woman in White similarly makes illness something deserving of antipathy, particularly if that illness is neurasthenic weakness. It satirizes nervous ailments in men through Mr. Fairlie, a character whose delicate nerves, as the other characters are fully aware, are merely an excuse for selfishness. Marian Halcombe says of him: “I don’t know what is the matter with him, and the doctors don’t know what is the matter with him. We all say it’s on the nerves, and we none of us know what we mean when we say it” (37). The self-described “invalid” (43) has, according to the protagonist Walter Hartright, “effeminately small” features, and a “frail, languidly-fretful, over-refined look—something singularly and unpleasantly delicate in its association with a man, and, at the same time, something which could by no possibility have looked natural and appropriate if it had been transferred to the personal appearance of a woman” (42). Walter admits that “my sympathies shut themselves up resolutely at the first sight of Mr. Fairlie” (42). His lack of sympathy seems to be justified, as he quickly discovers that “Mr. Fairlie’s selfish affectation and Mr. Fairlie’s wretched nerves meant one and the same thing” (43).

Mr. Fairlie describes himself as “a bundle of nerves dressed up to look like a man” (342) without any of the self-conscious anxiety George Eliot’s Latimer or Charlotte Brontë’s Crimsworth feel about their feminizing nervousness. Nevertheless, as Jane Wood observes, in the second half of the nineteenth century the “perception of the male nervous sufferer was one of a social, sexual, and psychological anomaly in a culture of robust and resolute manliness” (60), and Collins “exploits the taint of moral weakness

that clung to the nervously sensitive man” (71); what would once have been the “mark of civilized refinement... had become an anachronism in an industrial economy where a more muscular manliness was required to meet the demands of the family, the nation, and beyond that, the empire” (Wood 71-72).⁹ Collins himself acknowledged in the Preface to the novel’s 1860 edition that among readers “Mr. Fairlie found sympathetic fellow-sufferers, who remonstrated with me for not making Christian allowance for the state of his nerves” (Collins 5).

At the *fin de siècle*, Mr. Fairlie’s style of suffering would continue to be viewed with ambivalence. On the one hand, nervous illness still had some cultural cache as a mark of refinement, with “feeling—in this case primarily physical sensibility—as one of the defining characteristics of civilization,” as Vrettos observes (146). This is certainly how Mr. Fairlie sees himself. Likewise, neurasthenia, the nervous exhaustion that enjoyed a vogue at this point, being “ideally suited to the concerns and preoccupations of the last decade of the century” (Wood 174), implied a “relationship between pain and culture” (Vrettos 148).¹⁰ The corollary of this was a belief in “diminished sensory awareness as a crucial mark of otherness,” and in the “physical insensitivity of the lower classes, ‘savages,’ and nonwhite races” (Vrettos 146-147).¹¹ At the same time, a great capacity for pain and suffering was a liability in imperial conquest, as “physical resiliency seemed necessary for evolutionary success and racial survival” (Vrettos 147).¹² Henry Maudsley would write that it was “inevitable” that those who “from inherited weakness or some other debilitating causes, have been rendered unequal to the struggle of life should be ruthlessly crushed out as abortive beings in nature” (Maudsley “On the Causes” 298). Frail figures like Mr. Fairlie hardly seemed likely to survive in a world of evolutionary as

well as imperial conflict, while the young protagonist Walter Hartright proves that he would through his adventures in the South American wilderness.

The Woman in White thus illustrates the era's conflicting attitudes toward illness, but it also foregrounds what would become another fin de siècle locus of ambivalence: animals and animality. The villain Count Fosco's affection for animals serves only to highlight his indifference to the suffering of other human beings. The Italian count's "extraordinary fondness for pet animals" (216) may seem to mark his superior refinement: "He would blandly kiss his white mice, and twitter to his canary-birds, amid an assembly of English fox-hunters, and would only pity them as barbarians when they were all laughing their loudest at him," Marian observes (216-217). She reflects that he is "as nervously sensitive as the weakest of us...He winced and shuddered yesterday, when Sir Percival beat one of the spaniels, so that I felt alarmed of my own want of tenderness and sensibility, by comparison" (216). When he sees a beggar with a "shriveled monkey," Fosco gives the monkey a pastry in what he calls "the sacred name of humanity" (558), calling the creature "My poor little man!" with "grotesque tenderness" (558). But when the beggar himself pleads for a penny, the count turns away "contemptuously" (558). His sympathy for animals is inversely proportional to his sympathy for human beings.¹³ In the novels of the end of the century, a sympathy or affinity for animals took on an even more sinister aspect.

Fin de Siècle: Degeneration and Devolution

The distrust of interspecies sympathy that Collins's novel expresses would, as the century progressed, become an outright fear of the animal elements in man's own nature.

Darwin himself positioned animals as far more sympathetic than the animality in man.¹⁴

At the end of *The Descent of Man*, Darwin described encountering Fuegians who reminded him of “wild animals” and realizing with horror that “such were our ancestors”: “their long hair was tangled, their mouths frothed with excitement, and their expression was wild, startled and distrustful. They possessed hardly any arts, and like wild animals lived on what they could catch; they had no government, and were merciless to every one not of their own small tribe” (613). He asserted:

He who has seen a savage in his native land will not feel much shame, if forced to acknowledge that the blood of some more humble creature flows in his veins. For my own part I would as soon be descended from that heroic little monkey, who braved his dreaded enemy to save the life of his keeper, or from that old baboon, who descending from the mountains, carried away in triumph his young comrade from a crowd of astonished dogs—as from a savage who delights to torture his enemies, offers up bloody sacrifices, practices infanticide without remorse, treats his wives like slaves, knows no decency, and is haunted by the grossest superstitions. (613)

Others, however, were more troubled by their kinship with animals. James Turner in *Reckoning with the Beast* notes that:

Darwinism struck a particularly troubling note because human descent from such brutes implied that even Victorians could literally have inherited their ferocious nature. Did the thin veneer of civilization cloak a ravening beast raging at its flimsy chains? Many anxious souls feared that it might. This worry was not new, but the explosion of scientific knowledge and the revolution in scientific belief during the middle years of the century had intensified the fear painfully. Man, stripped of his uniqueness, had been plunged naked into the jungle world of nature, and it frightened him... This semi-conscious terror crept into novels like Robert Louis Stevenson’s *Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* and H.G. Wells’ *The Island of Dr. Moreau*. (67)¹⁵

Many Victorian writers also feared a reversion to mankind’s former beastly state. Beginning with the 1857 *Treatise on the Degeneration of the Human Species*, by the Frenchman Benedictin Augustin Morel, degeneration occupied the cultural

consciousness—and thus the literature—of Victorians in the later years of the nineteenth century.¹⁶ As Wood observes: “Fears of nervous degeneration on a massive scale, not helped by the ‘Whirlpool’ of modern life, had been gathering momentum in the wake of evolutionary theories of descent” (Wood 176).¹⁷ Edwin Ray Lankester, a biologist and friend of H.G. Wells, in his 1880 book *Degeneration: A Chapter in Darwinism*, defined degeneration as “a gradual change of the structure in which the organism becomes adapted to *less* varied and *less* complex conditions of existence” (Lankester 314), and gloomily pointed out that:

With regard to ourselves, the white races of Europe, the possibility of degeneration seems to be worth some consideration. In accordance with a tacit assumption of universal progress—an unreasoning optimism—we are accustomed to regard ourselves as necessarily progressing... and as destined to progress still further. On the other hand, it is well to remember that we are subject to the general laws of evolution, and are as likely to degenerate as to progress. (Lankester 315)

T.H. Huxley similarly pointed out in 1888 that “it is an error to imagine that evolution signifies a constant tendency to increased perfection... Retrogressive is as practicable as progressive metamorphosis” (“Struggle” 162). Max Nordau in his bestselling *Degeneration*, which was published in England in 1895, and which Hurley calls “*the* book of the 1890s” (Hurley 76), wrote that “the prevalent feeling is that of imminent perdition and extinction... In our days there have arisen in more highly-developed minds vague qualms of a Dusk of the Nations... To the voluptuary this means unbridled lewdness, the unchaining of the beast in man” (Nordau in Ruddick 210).¹⁸ Nordau, who proclaimed a “connection between hereditary degeneration and the spiritual and moral decadence he claimed to observe in contemporary art and literature” (Wood 177), raised the grim spectre of a return to a savage state, as did criminologist Cesare

Lombroso's theory of the criminal type; the atavistic "criminal man" was "literally a throwback to his bestial forebears, a living fossil of stunted evolution" (Turner 67).¹⁹

In *Criminal Man* (1876), Lombroso describes the born criminal as "an atavistic being who reproduces in his person the ferocious instincts of primitive humanity and the inferior animals," and who shares with "savages and apes" qualities including an "insensibility to pain" (Lombroso, cited in Hurley 92). "The Female Offender," in the title of Lombroso's and Guglielmo Ferrero's 1893 work, was the most liable to reversion.²⁰ For Lombroso, as Hurley points out, the only "fully human subject was the (non-criminal) white European adult male" (Hurley 94) and within his work "the woman, the child, the 'savage,' and the animal become interchangeable" (Hurley 97). Henry Maudsley similarly warned that the appearance of "animal traits and instincts" in mentally defective "idiots" and the insane was a sign of "extreme human degeneracy," indicating that "the human brain may revert to, or fall below, that type of development from which, if the theory of Darwin be true, it has gradually ascended by evolution through the ages" (Maudsley "Idiocy" 329, 328). He asserted that there is a "brute brain within the man's... Why should a human being deprived of his reason ever become so brutal in character as some do, unless he has the brute nature within him?" (329). Given such anxieties, it is unsurprising that "the motif of devolution occurs again and again in the fin de siècle Gothic" (Hurley 63).²¹

One novel using this motif, Richard Marsh's *The Beetle*, plays on fin de siècle anxieties by depicting an atavistic figure who defies species boundaries, or indeed any boundaries of identity. The Beetle-Woman's "racial difference and species fluctuability," as well as its "metamorphic sexuality" as Hurley notes, combine to make it "abhuman"

(125). The creature's fearsomeness comes from "a material body which resists classifications within categories of sexual and species identity from which 'the human' takes its meaning" (Hurley 142).²²

Similarly, in Robert Louis Stevenson's *Dr Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, both animality and pathology are linked to moral evil. This moral evil, embodied in Hyde, is all the more terrifying because the novel makes it very clear that Jekyll is not the "good" to Hyde's "evil," but has contained Hyde all along. Hyde represents all the animality in man that the Victorians distrusted; he is frequently described as resembling a monkey, as Deborah Morse observes:

In post-Darwinian English culture, as one might expect, the animal is often envisioned as a devolved human being, as in, most famously, Stevenson's *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (1885). This classic tale of the good and evil in all men, of the double self--- the public and private identities of late Victorian man---is of course also a tale of the animal in man. The respectable Dr. Jekyll has repressed all of his natural, animal self, which is then violently distorted before it emerges as the regressive Mr. Hyde. Hyde is "simian," often described as "ape-like." (186)²³

Jekyll's transformations into Hyde also appear to his friend Utterson, as a sort of illness; when Jekyll seeks a potion to return him to his Jekyll self, Utterson assumes he is seeking a cure for some mysterious disease.²⁴ Humankind as embodied in Hyde is both animal and illness, bestial and pathological. He raises automatic antipathy in all who see him.

Dracula

Of all fin de siècle novels, however, Bram Stoker's *Dracula* is perhaps the one that best illustrates the use of tropes of animality and illness to evoke antipathy for those deemed "Other." In the figures of Dracula and his prey, *Dracula* combines anxieties about illness and degeneration, racial and national otherness, female sexuality, and

human kinship with animals, only to expel these dangers through the power of Western technology and male homosocial bonding. The protagonists are “gentlemen” who “by nationality, by heredity, or by the possession of natural gifts, are fitted to hold [their] respective places in the moving world” (Stoker 334). They include a doctor who specializes in mysterious diseases (as well as being a “humanitarian and medico-jurist” [334]), another doctor who runs an insane asylum, another lawyer, an English lord, and an American whose laconic masculinity the novel repeatedly stresses.²⁵ Their opponent Dracula, as Vrettos observes, exists in “an abnormal state of corporeal immunity that threatens... to feminize, criminalize, or racially alter” the culture he invades (Vrettos 156).²⁶

Much of the first half of the book takes the form of a medical mystery, posing the question: What disease is killing Lucy Westenra? Her symptoms, as Katherine Byrne describes in detail,²⁷ are very similar to tuberculosis, the dreaded “white plague” which so often seemed to steal the young and beautiful. Lucy breathes in “long, heavy gasps, as though striving to get her lungs full at every breath” (Stoker 125). She grows weak, “languid,” and pale, with a “drawn, haggard look” (130). She writes in her diary: “My face is ghastly pale, and my throat pains me. It must be something wrong with my lungs, for I don’t seem ever to get air enough” (149). Dr. Seward, however, fears that “it must be something mental,” and summons Van Helsing, a specialist in “obscure diseases” (153). Lucy is, at this point, primarily an invalid. Even before Dracula finds her, Lucy is given to somnambulism and has dangerously susceptible nerves.²⁸

Lucy’s nerves also reveal her latent kinship with the animal realm, as they manifest themselves in sensitivity to animal suffering; seeing Lucy “quite upset” by a man’s

cruelty to his dog, Mina Harker says: “I greatly fear that she is of too super-sensitive a nature to go through the world without trouble” (120). Later, as both a vampire’s prey and a vampire predator preying on children, Lucy becomes animal-like. She leaves wounds on the children’s necks “such as might be made by a rat or a small dog” (243), or by some “malignant species” (267).

The novel mocks sympathy for animals such as Lucy displays; when Dracula takes the form of a dog to disboard the ship which he has taken to England, having killed the whole crew over the voyage, a local newspaper writes that “[a] good deal of interest was abroad concerning the dog which had landed when the ship struck, and more than a few members of the S.P.C.A, which is very strong in Whitby, have tried to befriend the animal. To the general disappointment, however, it was not to be found” (111)—disappointment, even though the newspaper notes that the dog is clearly a “fierce brute” who has torn out the throat of another dog and slit its belly “with a savage claw” (111). To readers who recognize the dog as Dracula, the S.P.C.A.’s concern seems ludicrous—as does the “mourning” for the lost dog which the paper later records, directly after the novel includes the heart-wrenching details of the doomed captain’s diary of the voyage (118).

As these satiric details and Lucy’s ultimately vampiric animality suggest, *Dracula* links both animals and the animal in man—or, more to be dreaded, the animal in woman—with supernatural evil.²⁹ When a zookeeper who makes a brief appearance in the novel asserts that “there’s a deal of the same nature in us as in them there animiles [sic]” (187), the suggestion is ominous. Van Helsing asks Dr. Seward if he knows “wherefore the qualities of brutes are in some men, and not in others” (262). Most

obviously, Dracula, who is “brute, and more than brute” (324), has “power over the brute world” (348); he can transform into a dog or bat, and “can command all the meaner things” (324) from wolves to rats.³⁰ The novel especially emphasizes his power to command wolves and parallels this with his power to command women, as he dominates them with “the same imperious gesture” (53).³¹ (“You can’t trust wolves nor women,” the zookeeper observes [188]). Dracula’s face is “hard, and cruel, and sensual,” with teeth “pointed like an animal’s” (235). Jonathan Harker first feels “repulsion and terror” toward Dracula when he sees the vampire crawling like a lizard down the side of the castle, and wonders, “What manner of man is this, or what manner of creature is it in the semblance of man?” (47).

The female vampires who dwell in Dracula’s castle, and who are most often described as “voluptuous” (51), are even more animalistic in their lust and their blood-lust; Jonathan recalls in his diary one of them displaying “a deliberate voluptuousness which was both thrilling and repulsive, and as she arched her neck she actually licked her lips like an animal, till I could see in the moonlight the moisture shining on the scarlet lips and on the red tongue as it lapped the sharp white teeth” (52). Jonathan has to defensively assure himself that his wife Mina has “naught in common” with these “devils of the Pit” (73). For a pure young woman, transformation into such a dangerous animal is a fate worse than death; after she is attacked by Dracula, Mina pleads for “euthanasia” at Van Helsing’s hands should she show signs of vampirism, in almost exactly the same way that Charlotte Brontë’s Shirley after a dog-bite pleads that Louis kill her should she show signs of rabies.

Mina escapes becoming like the animalized women in Dracula's castle; her friend Lucy, however, whose roles as predator and prey we have already noted, seems to have dangerous appetites linking her to the female "devils"; when three men propose to her, she wonders, "Why can't they let a girl marry three men, or as many as want her?" (81). In the novel's moral schema, this may explain why Lucy succumbs to Dracula's power and becomes a vampire quite early in the novel, and why she must be-- quite brutally—extinguished. Bernstein observes that while "[w]omen in relation to animals in... sensation novels of the 1860s offer an ambiguously humorous angle on femininity in flux," the novels of the 1890s are different: "the aggressive women lurking in novels of the decade such as Bram Stoker's *Dracula* imagine a powerfully embodied femininity, more carnal than ladylike in all manner of appetites" (77).³²

Lucy is thus already in a sense a vampire even before she is Undead—indeed, it requires blood transfusions from four men to replace the blood she's lost to Dracula and thus (temporarily) save her. These transfusions are sexualized just as vampirism is—Van Helsing fears it will "enjealous" Lucy's fiancée to know that other men have given her their blood (176), and that fiancé considers himself married to Lucy because he gave her his (235). (Van Helsing later laughs that this would make Lucy a "polyandrist" [240]—just as the reader knows she had once expressed a wish to be.)³³ However, the consumptive or anemic appearance she presents while the vampire is stealing her blood is morally preferable to her plump and rosy-cheeked appearance when she becomes Undead like the vampire women at Dracula's castle, with a similar "death-beauty" (292), along with a "voluptuous voice" (220), "languorous, voluptuous grace" (289) and "voluptuous smile" (288). Her "sweetness was turned to adamantine, heartless cruelty,

and the purity to voluptuous wantonness” (288), Seward says, recalling how his love for her turned to “hate and loathing” when he sees the change (288). “She seemed like a nightmare of Lucy... the pointed teeth, the bloodstained, voluptuous mouth—which it made one shudder to see—the whole carnal and unspiritual appearance, seeming like a devilish mockery of Lucy’s sweet purity” (292).

After the men have driven a stake through Lucy’s heart (though before they cut off her head) they are relieved to see that unnatural beauty fade back to her “wasted face and form,” to see the return of “the traces of care and pain and waste” which are linked to her “sweetness and purity” (296).³⁴ Similarly, Mina, when bitten by Dracula, is in danger of becoming like the women in Dracula’s castle, who call with “voluptuous lips” for her to join them (505), but Van Helsing, once he has done the “butcher work” (510) of destroying the “exquisitely voluptuous” (509) female vampires, is reassured that Mina looks “thin and pale and weak; but her eyes were pure” (511). He says of Mina: “I was glad to see her paleness and illness, for my mind was full of the fresh horror of that ruddy vampire sleep” (511). A pure woman is a human woman, one who has escaped the carnality which reduces her to an animal.

Potent as this threat of animality is in *Dracula*, a corollary threat of madness runs just as strongly through the novel. This is a work in which virtually all the characters, at one point or another, fear that they are, or that another character is, going mad-- from Jonathan Harker’s “brain fever” after fleeing Dracula (143) to Seward’s fear that Van Helsing may be “unhinged” or “mad” (279-280). Van Helsing even hints intriguingly, Rochester-like, that he has a wife “dead to him” because her “wits [are] all gone” (240-241). It is thus fitting that an asylum plays a central role.³⁵ One of the novel’s

protagonists, representing medical authority, is Dr. Seward, who runs the “immense lunatic asylum” (75) attached to the house Dracula purchases. Seward is fascinated by special cases of abnormal minds, thinking how much he might achieve if he penetrated “even the secret of one such mind—did I hold the key to the fancy of even one lunatic” (97). The most interesting of these minds for Seward is that of his patient and “pet lunatic” (319), Renfield. Seward admits there is “something of cruelty” in the way he treats Renfield, trying to probe his mind (83). His attempts, as Mina describes them, of “trying to read one’s thoughts” (75-76) may seem to grasp at empathy, but really grasp at power over those he reads; they do not spring from any desire to cultivate his own sympathy. (“I can fancy what a wonderful power he must have over his patients,” Mina observes [75].)³⁶

In his turn, Renfield seeks his own form of power, one which reflects *fin de siècle* anxieties about both mental illness and the relation between humans and animals. Seward notes of Renfield that “his redeeming quality is a love of animals,” but that it is a very twisted kind of love, with “such curious turns in it that I sometimes imagine he is only abnormally cruel” (93-94). Renfield’s mental illness involves a perverse desire to appropriate the animal other; he is a “zoophagous (life-eating) maniac” who desires “to absorb as many lives as he can” (97). He collects flies, and then spiders to which he feeds the flies, and then birds to which he feeds the spiders. His next step is to ask for a kitten, presumably to eat the birds, but Seward refuses him, so Renfield eats the birds himself and starts the process over, collecting flies (95-97). “The blood is the life!” he exclaims (193). The novel suggests that the ultimate result of his consumption of animals would be cannibalism, as he may in his illness have lost any distinction between human and animal

life. Seward is tempted to “complete the experiment” by seeing how far Renfield will go: “It might be done if there were only a sufficient cause. Men sneered at vivisection, and yet look at its results today” (97).

Renfield’s mental illness also reduces him, in the eyes of the other characters, to an animal state; in his rages he is “more like a wild beast than a man” and must be “caged” (140), according to Seward, and a workman expresses pity for Seward “for havin’ to live in the house with a wild beast like that” (212). Renfield falls under Dracula’s thrall because he shares his animality and his moral insanity.³⁷

Dracula himself is a kind of madman; Van Helsing says the “philosophy of crime” is also “a study of insanity” (469), and that it teaches him that Dracula, who has only a “big child-brain” (416), is “the true criminal who seems predestinate to crime” (470): “The Count is a criminal and of criminal type. Nordau and Lombroso would so classify him, and qua criminal he is of imperfectly formed mind” (470).³⁸ Dracula is Other in every conceivable way, and even the application of such semi-scientific labels serves the characters to distance him all the more.³⁹ The novel clearly evokes only antipathy for Dracula.

Indeed, the only source of sympathy in *Dracula* is Mina’s “sweet sympathy” (314) and “infinite pity” (314). Mina even feels that “I suppose one ought to pity anything so hunted as the count,” though she then adds: “That is just it—this Thing is not human—not even beast. To read Dr. Seward’s account of poor Lucy’s death, and what followed, is enough to dry up the springs of pity in one’s heart” (312). Her sense of Dracula as “hunted” contrasts with Dracula’s earlier position as hunter, as he tells Jonathan Harker early on that “you dwellers in the city cannot enter into the feelings of the hunter” (25).

But the men of the novel in fact enjoy hunting, and the lines between predator and prey blur in the latter part of the novel, as they follow his trail back to Transylvania. They are determined to “drive him to bay” and “run down our old fox” (402) having experience as “hunters of wild beasts” (423). They also describe him as a “tiger,” a “man-eater,” running from “the village from which he has been hunted” (441).

In one scene, however, a small door appears to open in the novel for sympathy with that absolute figure of alterity, Dracula; unsurprisingly, Mina is the one to open it. Mina, ironically, can only really pity Dracula once she has become his prey and sees herself as unclean, since the vampire has both drunk her blood and made her drink his, making her, as he puts it, “blood of my blood; kin of my kin” (296). Van Helsing feels she has been “infect[ed]” (441), “tainted as she is with that devil’s illness” (488). She too views herself as morally and physically diseased: “Pulling her beautiful hair over her face, as the leper of old his mantle, she wailed out: ‘Unclean! Unclean! Even the Almighty shuns my polluted flesh!’” (408). Her experience leads her to plead with the men that their destruction of Dracula not be “a work of hate” because: “The poor soul who has wrought all this is the saddest case of all. Just think what will be his joy when he too is destroyed in his worser part that his better may have spiritual immortality. You must be pitiful to him, too, though it may not hold your hands from his destruction” (425). She tells her husband that she fears that someday “I too may need such pity; and that some other like you—and with equal cause for anger—may deny it to me!” (425).⁴⁰ Her husband marvels at her “sweet pity... a pity that made my own hate of the monster seem despicable” (427).

Mina is capable of sympathy for the devil, so to speak, even while she uses her telepathic connection to Dracula's mind to help his hunters track him down.⁴¹ In this novel of antipathy, however, Mina's sympathy is a rare exception, and never allowed to interfere with the central task of the novel's men, which is to destroy Dracula and the threat of otherness he embodies.

The Time Machine

H.G. Wells' *The Time Machine* reflects similar cultural concerns about the threat of otherness, but also reflects on the motives of our selective sympathies. The novel is a Darwinian nightmare, a deeply pessimistic dystopia based on anxieties about the threats of illness, animality, and blurred gender roles to humankind, while at the same time hinting at humanity's delusive desire to dissociate from the most troublingly inhuman aspects of our nature.⁴²

The novel's protagonist, the Time Traveler, reaching the year 802,701, wonders what "strange developments of humanity, what wonderful advances upon our rudimentary civilization" (21)⁴³ he will see in the future, though when he arrives he is afraid: "What if cruelty had grown into a common passion? What if in the interval the race had lost its manliness and developed into something inhuman, unsympathetic..?" (23). His fear is close to the truth. What he finds are two descendants of humanity: one of which is enfeebled, almost invalid, and the other of which is monstrously animal.⁴⁴

Both of these post-human figures represent degeneration, a crucial theme in the novel, as Nicholas Ruddick notes (28), and an idea which was "becoming common knowledge" as a counter-principle to progressive evolution (31).⁴⁵ At the time "[i]t was feared that

humanity in the 1880s might actually have reached its peak, and down the darkling road ahead lurked devolution and extinction” (Ruddick 31). Wells himself, in an 1891 essay called “Zoological Retrogression,” attacked optimistic “Excelsior biology” (Wells “Zoological” 164), insisting that there is “no guarantee in scientific knowledge of man’s permanence or permanent ascendancy” (167), and writing that: “Isolated cases of degeneration have long been known... [I]t is only recently, however, that the enormous importance of degeneration... has been suspected and its entire parity with evolution recognized” (164).⁴⁶ As Vrettos observes: “Degenerationists writing in the 1880s and 1890s argued that the human species was becoming increasingly enfeebled—through everything from syphilis, insanity, feminism, radicalism, crime, and immigration to the stresses of modern civilization,” leading to a “steady decline toward racial suicide” (Vrettos 147). Wells’ novel illustrates the logical conclusion of these fears.

Each of the two types of creatures the Time Traveler encounters embody a different type of human degeneration. The Eloi seem to take to its extreme the Victorian trope of the lovely female invalid, delicately wasting away. The Time Traveler describes the first Eloi he closely observes as “being a very beautiful and graceful creature, but indescribably frail. His flushed face reminded me of the most beautiful kind of consumptive—the hectic beauty of which we used to hear so much” (24).⁴⁷ While the Time Traveler sees no evidence of contagious disease in this future world and believes disease has been eradicated, the suggestion of refined illness surrounds the Eloi, and the “white leprous” (34) face of the stone sphinx he encounters on first arriving, with its “unpleasant suggestion of disease” (23), seems to color their whole culture.⁴⁸ He is astonished by their “physical and intellectual inadequacy” (35), and has “never met

people more indolent or more easily fatigued” (28). He attributes their lack of vigor, curiosity, and physical and mental power to their lack of hardship and descent into “decadent humanity” (39)—“This has ever been the fate of energy in security; it takes to art and to eroticism, and then come languor and decay” (35). To the Time Traveler, they represent “humanity on the wane” (31), products of “degeneration” (48) who “had decayed to a mere beautiful futility” (54).

While partially delighted by this “fragile thing out of futurity” (24), the “exquisite creatures” (25) who speak in coos, dress in silky robes, and adorn their guest with flowers, he is also disturbed by the Eloi’s apparent lack of reason, wondering: “were these creatures fools?” (25). French psychologist Théodule Ribot had suggested in 1873 that the hereditary passing on of mental impairment could be “a cause of decay,” even ending in “total extinction of intellect” (306), and this seems to have been the case with the softened intellects of the Eloi. At the same time, their “refined beauty” (48), as well as their delicacy, affectionate natures, and lack of intellectual inquisitiveness, all resemble the ideal of the Victorian lady in its extreme form.⁴⁹ They are as much like the passive and delicate Laura Fairlie, heroine of *The Woman in White*, as they are like her mentally enfeebled doppelganger Anne Catherick.

Since the Eloi are not all female, however--- they lack “specialization of the sexes” (30)-- their effeminacy and androgyny also reflect fin de siècle anxiety about increasing androgyny and the blurring of gender roles that feminism and the “New Woman,” as well as the male aesthete, threatened-- a fear of “sexual anarchy,” as Wood puts it (178). Gender confusion becomes unacceptable to the Time Traveler in the context of the quasi-romantic relationship he forms with an Eloi named Weena, so he arbitrarily decides that

“she” is female: “my little woman, as I believe it was” (41), he proprietarily calls her. He says of Weena, “She always seemed to me, I fancy, more human than she was, perhaps because her affection was so human” (60). Next to the Eloi, he feels like a superior (more masculine) breed of human: “I was differently constituted. I came out of this age of ours, this ripe prime of the human race” (55).

If the Eloi have regressed in physical and mental strength, the Morlocks represent a devolution back to a more animal form. The Time Traveler had immediately recognized the Eloi as human, though “child-like” (25). (Weena is “exactly like a child,” a “little doll of a creature” [42].) But he instantly sees the Morlocks as animals, as “white, ape-like creature[s]” (43) that evoke “the old instinctive dread of wild beasts” (44). While the Eloi have a “soft hairless visage” (30), the Morlocks are hairy, and of one he “cannot even say whether it ran on all-fours, or only with its forearms held very low” (45).⁵⁰ He describes each Morlock he sees as a “monster,” “human spider,” “Lemur,” or “Thing” (45), observing that:

It was not for some time that I could succeed in persuading myself that the thing I had seen was human. But, gradually, the truth dawned on me: that man had not remained one species, but had differentiated into two distinct animals: that my graceful children of the Upper-world were not the sole descendants of our generation, but that this bleached, obscene, nocturnal Thing, which had flashed before me, was also heir to all the ages. (45)

Proceeding from the “problems of our own age” he says that it “seemed as clear as daylight to me that the gradual widening of the present merely temporary and social difference between the capitalist and the Laborer was the key to the whole position” (47).⁵¹ Thus, the “splitting of our species along lines of social stratification” means that “above ground you have the Haves, pursuing pleasure and comfort, and beauty, and below ground the Have-nots, the Workers getting continually adapted to the conditions of

their labor” (47). This is the “logical conclusion” of the “industrial system of today” (48). The “great triumph of Humanity” he’d hoped to find had “not been simply a triumph over Nature, but a triumph over Nature and the fellow-man” (48). Now the once “mechanical servants” feed on the former “favored aristocracy” (54): “Ages ago, man had thrust his brother out of the ease and sunshine. And now that brother was coming back—changed!” He realizes that, as Ruddick puts it, “[t]he effete, helpless Eloi are... descended from the Victorian moneyed upper classes, who used to metaphorically prey upon (i.e., exploit) the lower classes, but in an ironic reversal of fortune are now literally preyed upon by the descendants of their victims” (34). Yet the Time Traveler feels no sympathy for the subterranean remnants of the once-exploited lower classes: he finds them too animal, too subhuman.⁵²

Indeed, he feels the same disgust at considering the Morlocks his descendants as some Victorians did at considering their non-human ancestry. He continues to find the Morlocks “nauseatingly inhuman” (53), a “new vermin” (49), “brutes” (63), and “human rats” (69). They seem to him “something inhuman and malign. Instinctively I loathed them” (54). “I felt a peculiar shrinking from those pallid bodies. They were just the half-bleached color of the worms and things one sees preserved in spirit in a zoological museum... Probably my shrinking was largely due to the sympathetic influence of the Eloi, whose disgust of the Morlocks I now began to appreciate” (49), he says. In contrast, in considering the predicament of the Eloi he says: “from the bottom of my heart I pitied this last feeble rill from the great flood of humanity” (58).

The Time Traveler indeed finds himself instinctively sympathetic with the Eloi, and is horror-struck that the “inhuman sons of men” (the Morlocks) cannibalize them. He

futilely tries to “look at the thing in a scientific spirit. After all, they were less human and more remote than our cannibal ancestors of three or four thousand years ago. And the intelligence that would have made this state of things a torment had gone. Why should I trouble myself? These Eloi were mere fatted cattle, which the ant-like Morlocks preserved and preyed upon—probably saw to the breeding of” (58-59). This rationale is unsustainable when he looks at Weena, so he tries other means of tamping down his inconvenient sympathy for her kind, with equal unsuccess:

Then I tried to preserve myself from the horror that was coming upon me, by regarding it as a rigorous punishment of human selfishness. Man had been content to live in ease and delight upon the labours of his fellow-man, had taken Necessity as his watchword and excuse, and in the fullness of time Necessity had come home to him. I even tried a Carlyle-like scorn of this wretched aristocracy in decay. But this attitude of mind was impossible. However great their intellectual degradation, the Eloi had kept too much of the human form not to claim my sympathy, and to make me perforce a sharer in their degradation and their Fear” (59).⁵³

The Time Traveler has clearly chosen to throw his lot—and his sympathy—in with the Eloi, whom he judges more human than the Morlocks. But, as Hurley points out, he actually has more in common with the Morlocks (86). For one thing, they are the ones in charge of machinery—which is why they try to steal the Time Machine, even partially taking it apart “while trying in their dim way to grasp its purpose” (Wells *TM* 73). This shows they have more curiosity, as well as “perforce more initiative, if less of every other human character,” than the Eloi (72), and initiative and curiosity are surely the Time Traveler’s guiding impulses. Furthermore, his appetites are more like the Morlocks’ than the Eloi’s. The Eloi are “strict vegetarians, and while I was with them, in spite of some carnal cravings, I had to be frugivorous also” (28). On first seeing the Morlocks’ food, however, he thinks: “The Morlocks at any rate were carnivorous! I remember wondering

what large animal could have survived to furnish the red joint I saw” (52). On returning to the nineteenth century, the Time Traveler’s first priority is satisfying his carnivorous impulses: “Save me some of that mutton. I’m starving for a bit of meat” (17), he says, refusing to tell his story till he has finished the mutton, and exclaiming: “What a treat it is to stick a fork into meat again!” (18). This similarity to the Morlocks is all the more discomfiting given that the “large animal” feeding the Morlocks is the Eloi. After Weena’s death, the Time Traveler even returns to comparing the Eloi to cattle of the kind he might eat: “Very pleasant was their day, as pleasant as the day of the cattle in the field. Like the cattle they knew no enemies and provided against no needs. And their end was the same” (71-72).

Furthermore, just as he shares the Morlocks’ carnivorous appetites, the Time Traveler also shares their capacity for violence, saying at one point: “I longed very much to kill a Morlock or so. Very inhuman, you may think, to want to go killing one’s own descendants! But it was impossible, somehow, to feel any humanity in the things” (63). He later feels “strange exaltation” in fighting them with an iron bar (69), and when they are blinded by daylight is “almost moved to begin a massacre of the helpless abominations” (71).

The narrator tries to extract a sympathetic moral from the Time Traveler’s tale, and ends the story by referring to the remains of some flowers Weena gave the Time Traveler, and which the narrator now possesses, as “witness that even when mind and strength had gone, gratitude and a mutual tenderness still lived on in the heart of man” (83). Mutual tenderness seems a weak consolation, however, in a novel which, as Ruddick points out, “practically dismiss[es] the whole of human history, past, present,

and future” (12), and to find in this ending an “implied plea for the application of humane ethics to social evolution,” as Ruddick does (44), seems something of a stretch. The presiding tone of the novel is antipathy toward anything non-human or less than fully human. Perhaps Wells himself noticed this when he wrote, upon rereading *The Time Machine* in 1924, that he found it “hard” and “what is rather odd... a little unsympathetic” (Wells “Preface” [1924] 248).⁵⁴

The Island of Doctor Moreau

While Wells in later life may have been struck by the antipathetic tone of *The Time Machine*, most readers would not find it nearly as “hard” or “unsympathetic” as the next novel Wells published, *The Island of Doctor Moreau* (1896). This later novel uses the blurring of species boundaries to evoke the readers’ antipathy even to other human beings. Wells would later claim that in *The Island of Doctor Moreau* he wished to give “the utmost vividness to that conception of men as hewn and confused and tormented beasts” (cited in Wells *Island* 94 note 45); he also called the novel his attempt to “express my vision of the aimless torture in creation” (Wells “Preface” [1934] 255). An anonymous sketch of Wells in *Bookman* in 1895 said that the novel “deals grotesquely with some of the possibilities of vivisection, and will present certain novel and exceedingly unpleasant monsters to the reader’s imagination” (*Bookman* 278). Wells himself acknowledged that it is “rather painful” to read (“Preface” [1934] 252).

The painfulness of the novel is partly due to its grisly subject matter; the novel’s narrator, Prendick, is stranded on an island with a rogue vivisectionist who is trying to turn animals into people. But the moral vision of the work is equally unsettling; it is

established by the novel's scientific men, who all see sympathy as weakness.⁵⁵ Moreau's assistant Montgomery, for instance, insists he only saved Prendick's life "as I might have collected a specimen" (75), and is irritated by his own "want of nerve" when he is disturbed by the screams of the puma Moreau is vivisecting. Prendick himself struggles to ignore those cries, finally going out of earshot:

The emotional appeal of those yells grew on me steadily, grew at last to such an exquisite expression of suffering that I could stand it in that confined room no longer... It was as if all the pain in the world had found a voice. Yet had I known such pain was in the next room, and had it been dumb, I believe—I have thought since—I could have stood it well enough. It is when suffering finds a voice and sets our nerves quivering that this pity comes troubling us. (94)

Hearing the "emotional appeal" of the puma merely compels Prendick to go out of earshot; the impulse to alleviate suffering comes only when the sounds the puma makes have modulated into human screams: "It was no brute this time. It was a human being in torment!" (107). He rushes to try to help, wondering if "such a thing as the vivisection of men was possible" (108), before his fear of becoming one of Moreau's "animalized victims" (110) leads him to briefly flee again.⁵⁶ By the time six weeks are out, however, he hears "without a touch of emotion the puma victim begin another day of torture" (171).

In general, "and especially to another scientific man," Prendick sees "nothing so horrible in vivisection" (90). He describes how the "notorious vivisector" Moreau (90) was "howled out of" England when an anti-vivisectionist's "gruesome pamphlet" exposed his crimes (violating the Cruelty to Animals Act of 1876) and a "wretched dog, flayed and otherwise mutilated" escaped Moreau's house (89). Prendick admits that "[i]t may be he deserved to be [exiled]" and that "some of his experiments, by the journalist's account, were wantonly cruel" (89); nevertheless, he maintains: "I still think the tepid

support of his fellow-investigators, and his desertion by the great body of scientific workers, was a shameful thing” (89). Prendick may sometimes question Moreau, but retains his allegiance to him throughout the novel, from the moment he discovers that Moreau is not turning men into beasts (and thus posing a threat to Prendick), but the reverse.⁵⁷

Nevertheless, the creation of beast-men still frighteningly suggests the instability of the separation between human and animal. The sight of these creatures—whom the captain early in the novel calls “worse than beasts” (78)-- gives Prendick “a queer spasm of disgust” (82). Like the Morlocks, they are “grotesque half-bestial creature[s]” (97), “monsters” (99), or “Thing[s]” (100). Their defiance of species categories renders them monstrous: “What on earth was he—man or animal?” Prendick wonders of one of the first he sees (100). Prendick suspects that Montgomery has a “sneaking kindness for some of these metamorphosed brutes, a vicious sympathy with some of their ways” (153), and this “evident sympathy with the Beast People... tainted him to me” (170).⁵⁸ Prendick himself feels “all too keenly that they were still brutes” (152), saying that: “Each of these creatures, despite its human form... had woven into it... the unmistakable mark of the beast” (99).⁵⁹ In this text, Kelly Hurley observes, the human body “reveals its morphic compatibility with, and thus lack of distinction from, the whole world of animal life, including those species occupying different lines of descent. Humanness in general is fractured across many boundaries separating the human from the not human” (Hurley 103).

The text strikingly blurs those boundaries as the beast-men assure themselves of their humanity by following laws that forbid their fundamental impulses: “Not to go on all-

Fours; *that is the Law. Are we not Men?*” (*Moreau Island* 117), but remain “grotesque caricatures of humanity” (119)—as, indeed, all the human characters do. All of the novel’s characters are animalistic beneath their veneers, as Hurley notes (105-107).⁶⁰ The drunken captain is a “brute” (*Moreau Island* 71). Prendick is always in danger of “the contagion of these brute men” (118), and ultimately, when they revert to “a kind of generalized animalism” (198), he lives for a long time with them, and as one of them.⁶¹ And, as Hurley argues, “[w]hile the brilliant Dr. Moreau may represent the apex of human intellectual evolution, he is nonetheless as ‘inhuman’ as, perhaps more inhuman than, any of his grotesque creations—bereft of the civilizing emotions of compassion and pity” (Hurley 109). The beasts observe of Moreau that “The Master does not bleed nor weep” (143), and, as Leon Stover points out: “To bleed is both to be empathetic and to be mortal” (cited in *Wells Island* 158 note 143). Moreau appears to his creatures as a pitiless god.

From Moreau’s perspective, however, and perhaps from Wells’, his conquering his natural sympathies is precisely what makes him fully human. When Prendick asks Moreau, “What is your justification for inflicting all this pain? The only thing that could excuse vivisection to me would be some application---,” Moreau dismissively tells him that “it is just this question of pain that parts us. So long as visible or audible pain turns you sick, so long as your own pain drives you, so long as pain underlies your propositions about sin, so long, I tell you, you are an animal, thinking a little less obscurely what an animal feels” (137-138).⁶² He argues that: “The store men and women set on pleasure and pain, Prendick, is the mark of the beast upon them, the mark of the beast from which they came! Pain! Pain and pleasure—they are for us, only so long as we wriggle in the dust”

(141). He chides Prendick for what Stover calls his “utilitarian pain-pleasure morality” (cited in Wells 137 note 103). His own ability to overcome any sympathy for the creatures he tortures assures him of his fully human status, even as it aligns him with the capricious cruelty of natural selection itself; thus, he describes his experiments saying: “The thing before you is no longer an animal, a fellow-creature, but a problem. Sympathetic pain—all I know of it I remember as a thing I used to suffer from years ago... To this day I have never troubled about the ethics of the matter. The study of Nature makes man at last as remorseless as nature” (141).⁶³

The “problem” the beast-men pose for Moreau is their tendency to remain animal-like:

And least satisfactory of all is something that I cannot touch, somewhere—I cannot determine where—in the seat of the emotions. Cravings, instincts, desires that harm humanity, a strange hidden reservoir to burst suddenly and inundate the whole being of the creature with anger, hate, or fear... First one animal trait, then another, creeps to the surface and stares out at me... But I will conquer yet. Each time I dip a living creature into the bath of burning pain, I say, This time I will burn out all the animal, this time I will make a rational creature of my own. (147)

Moreau is annoyed that the animals revert to their animalism, that “the stubborn beast flesh grows, day by day, back again,” and sees beneath the “mockery of rational life” lived by the beast-men “nothing but the souls of beasts, beasts that perish” (147). To the extent that they are beasts or beastly, his creatures—and indeed, other human beings—have no claim on his sympathy. Yet while other writers might have condemned Moreau as a villain, a deluded mad scientist, or at least morally insane, neither Wells’ text nor Prendick see Moreau’s lack of sympathy as sick so much as heroic, despite “his mad, aimless investigations” (168) and the suffering they cause.

One might argue that the text evokes some sympathy for human beings, caught like the allegorical beast-people in the “perpetual internal conflict between instinct and injunction, rough hewn to a reasonable shape” by the “deity of natural selection” (Wells *Island* 94 note 45). The text suggests that all humans, like these beast-men, try to assure themselves of their humanity by creating religious injunctions against their most natural propensities, for fear of being sent to the “House of Pain” (118) by their creator.⁶⁴ But even reading this much sympathy into the text may be too much, given Wells’ own “antihumanistic” ideologies (Stover in Wells 128 note 86). Wells wrote, Moreau-like, in 1925: “If mankind is ever to achieve a new order of life in a world civilization, [its] natural tendencies will have to be overridden” (cited in Wells *Island* 146 note 120). Like Moreau, Wells valued the perfecting of the human species, the “utopian conquest of nature,” and the “‘experimenting spirit,’ whatever the suffering of its victims” (Stover in Wells *Island* 135 note 97, 157 note 141).⁶⁵ Wells was also a proponent of vivisection, insisting that the belief that animals feel pain is “speculation,” that the “struggles and outcries” of animals under vivisection expend energy that would otherwise be felt as pain, and that pain is really a “guardian angel” of “harsh tenderness” in any case (Wells “Province” 214, 217, 215). It is unsurprising, then, that *Moreau* dismisses sympathy for the sufferings of vivisected animals “carven and wrought into new shapes” (133).⁶⁶

Furthermore, Wells advocated not only vivisection but what Arthur Koestler termed “vivisection morality” (Stover 45). As a prototypical figure of the eugenics movement, Wells believed the unfit would need to be eliminated for society to reach perfection (Stover 18-19).⁶⁷ He wished to replace the chance cruelty of natural selection with the utopian cruelty of a scientifically-directed selection (Stover 22-23), and was disgusted by

delays to human progress caused by “the kindly disastrous toleration and good fellowship of our time,” as he wrote in 1933 in *The Shape of Things to Come* (cited in Stover 42).⁶⁸

Wells’ expressed worldview implies strict limitations on who qualifies as fully human, a view which manifests itself in Prendick’s revulsion and antipathy toward most of his fellow humans at the end of the novel. He fears the animal within them: “I could not persuade myself that the men and women around me were not also another, still passably human, Beast People, animals half-wrought into the outward image of human souls, and that they would presently begin to revert, to show first this bestial mark and then that” (204). He sometimes feels he sees not one face with “the calm authority of a reasonable soul. I feel as though the animal was surging up through them; that presently the degradation of the Islanders will be played over again on a larger scale... And even it seemed that I, too, was not a reasonable creature, but only an animal tormented with some strange disorder in its brain, that sent it to wander alone” (206). If Prendick ends the novel as an animal with a disordered brain—a sick animal like most of his fellow human beings—the text suggests that this is because the ideas of men like Moreau have not yet risen to social prominence, have not yet had the chance to burn out all that is weak or beast-like in us.

Wells later insisted that his novels are “appeals for human sympathy quite as much as any ‘sympathetic’ novel” (Wells “Preface” [1934] 253). But this seems mere perversity, given the hatefulness of a work like *Moreau* and of Wells’ own ideology of “inhumane humanitarianism” (cited in Stover 49). His readings of Darwin and Huxley brought him to a wildly different place than Hardy’s did, a place which disowns the claims of one’s

fellow-creatures. And his moral hierarchy is almost a precise inverse of Anne Brontë's, in which sympathy is the primary value.

Henry James, Invalidism, and the Turn of the Century

If *The Island of Doctor Moreau* suggests a deep cultural ambivalence toward animals and animality at the turn of the century, Henry James's novels *The Portrait of a Lady* and *Wings of the Dove* suggest, in a quieter vein, a similar ambivalence surrounding illness at this time. In *The Portrait of a Lady* (1881), characters reveal their capacity for sympathy or lack of it through their behavior to the consumptive Ralph Touchett. Madame Merle rather callously describes Ralph's consumption as giving him an occupation, even an identity:

Fortunately he has consumption; I say fortunately because it gives him something to do. His consumption's... a kind of position. You can say: "Oh, Mr. Touchett, he takes care of his lungs, he knows a great deal about climates." But without that who would he be, what would he represent? ... I persist in thinking your cousin very lucky to have a chronic malady so long as he doesn't die of it. (196-197)

Gilbert Osmond likewise says of Ralph: "His health seems to me the best part of him; it gives him privileges enjoyed by no one else" (490).⁶⁹

Even the heroine Isabel maintains an emotional distance from Ralph's illness for most of the novel, thinking of it "not [as] a limitation, but [as] a kind of intellectual advantage: it absolved him from all professional and official emotions and allowed him the luxury of being exclusively personal," so that "when she had pitied him it was only on reflection" (337). She feels the full devastation of his illness only when its reality is made tragically clear at Ralph's deathbed. Ralph himself, who feels his illness has restricted him to "mere spectatorship at the game of life" (148), expresses the ambiguous

blessing of the sympathy he receives: “When people forget I’m a poor creature I’m often incommoded. But it’s worse when they remember it!” (151). The novel suggests that both cold-hearted dismissal of Ralph’s invalidism and romanticization of the intellectual gifts traditionally associated with it stifle the characters’ capacity for sympathy with him.⁷⁰

Wings of the Dove (1902) similarly explores the complexities of sympathy for illness. The novel is on one level the story of a beautiful and tragic invalid, and in that sense repeats familiar Victorian themes. Milly “still retains the Victorian sick person’s odor of sanctity and power to redeem, though on a drastically reduced scale,” as Miriam Bailin observes (139). But the novel is also a reflection on sympathy, especially the different types of sympathy or failures of sympathy Milly Theale inspires in other characters. The narrator tells us that Milly “worked—and seemingly quite without design—upon the sympathy, the curiosity, the fancy of her associates, and we shall really ourselves scarce otherwise come closer to her than by feeling their impression and sharing, if need be, their confusion” (James *Wings* 100). Part of the novel’s reflection on sympathy involves the distinction between the type of sympathy Milly herself seeks to avoid (pity), and the type she actively seeks out (perfect understanding).⁷¹

Athena Vrettos aligns these two types of sympathy with the characters of Susan Stringer (Milly’s companion) and Sir Luke Strett (her doctor). Susan Stringer “sets herself up as the proper interpreter of Milly’s life and Milly’s disease” (Vrettos 113), but she engages in “overidentification” (114), so that “although [she] is redeemed by her sympathetic devotion to Milly, her appropriation of her friend’s life is finally no less systematic than other characters’ attempts to appropriate Milly’s money. Each makes Milly the means to his or her own particular end” (Vrettos 114). In contrast, the physician

Sir Luke Strett views Milly with “detached observation and medical authority” (115), which Milly prefers.⁷²

In her desire to avoid pity, Milly keeps her illness (never named) hidden,⁷³ and James does the same, never letting it manifest itself too clearly. Despite her illness, she is, as Lawrence Rothfield observes, almost “disembodied” (166), due to the “near-total sublimation of the medicalized body” in the novel (174). Even her death-scene, that staple of Victorian novels, happens offstage. Neither Milly nor James are interested in the type of pity elicited by displays of physical suffering. But in avoiding pity, Milly plays into the hands of those who are determined not to let sympathy for her prevent their using her, as Kate Croy does. Kate and Merton find it reassuring that Milly “has none of the effect—on one’s nerves or whatever--- of an invalid”; Kate declares that “the beauty of her [Milly]” is that she “won’t smell, as it were, of drugs. She won’t taste, as it were, of medicine,” even as she approaches death (261). Kate admits to Merton that this makes things easier, as she says “I’m a brute about illness. I hate it” (261), adding “From illness I keep away” (262). The narrator observes of Kate that “[*s*]/*he* would never in her life be ill” (194); she is, as Merton jokes, “strong as the sea” (262). She and Merton revel in their mutual health, the “selfish gladness of their young immunities” mixing with their “pity” for Milly (262).

Milly’s keeping her illness out of sight allows Kate and Merton to avoid letting compassion predominate in their relationship with Milly until her final decline. But Merton later sees that they were caught in a “conspiracy of silence” that allowed them to ignore the “great smudge of mortality across the picture, the shadow of pain and horror” behind the brave, beautiful front Milly presented (423).⁷⁴

The novel's animal imagery further reinforces that the novel's scheming characters, and Kate in particular, are indeed "brute[s] about illness," while emphasizing the grace Milly shows as she faces mortality. Milly recognizes in Kate a "wild beauty" that may indicate something "the least bit brutal" about her (144). At another point she has the "violent image" of Kate as "a creature who paced like a panther" (210). In contrast, Milly herself is the "dove" of the title, a suggestive association that she cherishes even as she connects it to her tenuous mortality: "*That* was what was the matter with her. She was a dove" (210).⁷⁵ Doves, as Merton realizes, "have wings and wondrous flights, have them as well as tender tints and soft sounds," and in the end, Milly's wings "spread themselves for protection" over all those she loves (370). What was "the matter with her"—her physical vulnerability—is intimately connected with her ability to generously spread those wings, and on her death to "spread them the wider" (460). These animal images encourage the reader to sympathize with Milly and to recognize the violence behind the behavior of the other characters.

The ethical ambiguities of sympathy are thus central to this novel, as they have been in all the novels explored above. One could read *Wings*, as Vrettos does, as advocating a "controlled sympathy" balanced between Sir Luke's detachment and Susan's emotional identification (118). Or, like Miriam Bailin, one can read its message as darker, seeing this novel as exposing "the solidarity engendered by suffering... as a sentimental, even a murderous lie" (138).⁷⁶ In either case, *Wings of the Dove*, like *The Portrait of a Lady*, challenges the reader to evaluate closely his or her own sympathetic responses to fictional characters and to living subjects. Indeed, James makes that self-reflection a possible

addition to the novel's ethical and social value, a new way the novel can give readers a lesson in sympathy.

Whether depicting illness, animals, or human animality, the novels discussed in this and the previous chapters are all deeply invested in directing readers' sympathies. As we have seen, however, they do not do so in any one predictable way. Some seek to elicit readers' antipathy toward characters and the social groups they represent, and even those that apparently champion the value of sympathy often depict compassion as a resource which should only be allowed to flow into specific channels. In exploring the limits of sympathy and mapping its proper terrain, the authors of these novels also posited their own definitions of the fully human subject, a concept whose instability fascinated and frightened them. Recognizing the variety of ways in which Victorian novelists struggled with questions of who was kin and who was other, who merited sympathy and who did not, allows us to appreciate the complexity of the Victorian moral imagination, and its legacy for all of us who inherit the world born out of its conflicts.

¹ Audrey Jaffe notes that:

Because late nineteenth-century ideologies define identity increasingly in group terms—as, for instance, membership in a nation or in a sexual category—sympathy becomes more explicitly a matter of claiming identity with, or distance from, such group identifications. Indeed, in these late-nineteenth-century texts expressions of individual identity (identity that might be defined as difference from others) become increasingly difficult to differentiate from expressions of cultural identity (identity defined as membership in a group). (Jaffe 158)

Susan Bernstein suggests that:

By this time, persistent challenges to traditional marriage and family included a growing feminist movement, theories and practices of alternative sexualities, and the New Woman fiction and poetry linked to such critiques of gender and sexuality. Concurrently at the end of the century, Darwin's speculative account of change in nature in *The Origin of Species* had evolved into social Darwinism and eugenics. As connections across boundaries became more apparent, from species to genders and genres, the lines between became more insistently calcified. (77)

Athena Vrettos notes that “a widespread concern about racial survival... grew increasingly prominent in the latter decades of the nineteenth century” (Vrettos 124), and that late-nineteenth century writers “expressed fears about racial and cultural progress through narratives of health and disease” (144); see also Vrettos 125. See also Kelly Hurley, esp. 3-20, and Kathleen Spencer, esp. 203-204.

² See also Rae Greiner *Sympathetic* 157-158.

³ However, Miriam Bailin adds, some decadent writers who “disdained normalcy and all it implied of bourgeois Philistinism” reclaimed and valorized illness as the source of what made them psychologically exceptional (142).

⁴ Hurley also discusses the indebtedness of fin de siècle Gothic fiction to medical and social sciences; see esp. 3-20.

⁵ Bernstein adds that: “Like mythological forms of female hybridity including mermaids and sirens that devolved into the ubiquitous femme fatale of late-Victorian culture, the blur of woman and animal appearing... in depictions of sensation heroines of the 1860s marks a kind of watershed moment in this ongoing debate about nature and gender” (66). *The Woman in White*, for example, features Marian Halcombe, whose body not only mixes masculine and feminine traits but “further hints at simian origins... Marian's body is a conglomeration of diverse parts that blur gender and racial categories, further accented by simian strains through her large jaw, hairiness, and low forehead” (Bernstein 72).

⁶ See Nina Auerbach 107 on how Braddon mingles Victorian conventions of angelic and demonic femininity in her depiction of Lady Audley. W.F. Rae argued that “Lady Audley is at once the heroine and the monstrosity of the novel” (cited in Jenny Bourne Taylor “Introduction” xv).

⁷ See also Jenny Bourne Taylor “Introduction” xiii.

⁸ See Havelock Ellis “Criminal Heredity” for a late-Victorian discussion of female “moral insanity” (332). See also Jenny Bourne Taylor “Introduction,” esp. xvii-xxxviii, on Lady Audley's moral insanity. Elaine Showalter (71-73) argues that the novel “presents a subversive feminist view of puerperal mania and its murderous results” (71), asking: “Is Lady Audley's secret that she carries hereditary insanity? Or is the secret that ‘insanity’ is simply the label society attaches to female assertion, ambition, self-interest, and outrage?” (72).

⁹ His effeminacy “arouses a repugnance akin to that felt by medical men for the pitiful creatures whose debility they attributed to moral weakness or lack of will” (Jane Wood 72).

¹⁰ See Wood Ch. 4 (163-214) on neurasthenia in the literature and culture of the fin de siècle.

¹¹ Mr. Fairlie disparages servants as “persons born without nerves” (Collins 46).

¹² “Was fitness measured through physical strength and endurance or through intelligence? Was it embodied in muscles or nerves?” (Vrettos 147). See Vrettos 142-154 and Lucy Bending 69-75.

¹³ Furthermore, Fosco's apparent tenderness for animals is nothing but a sign of his desire to influence and control, as he does with the “savage” bloodhound he awes into submission (217). He seems like a man “who could tame anything,” as he has tamed his wife: “If he had married a tigress, instead of a woman, he would have tamed the tigress” (Collins 213).

¹⁴ See also Paul White in *Angelique Richardson* 114-116.

¹⁵ See also Deborah Morse and Martin Danahay “Introduction” 4 and “Nature” 101. *The Times*' review of *The Descent of Man* “hinted broadly that if people thought they were beasts, they would act accordingly:

‘Morality,’ if Darwin’s theories prevailed, ‘would lose all elements of stable authority’” (Turner 67).

Turner also observes that:

The animal trapped within—whether it sought escape in sex, in crime, or simply in the unspecified barbarity of bloodstained, untamed nature—posed a frightening threat. For some, this threat assumed its rawest, most bestial form in cruelty to animals... The more common worry that, in abusing animals, humanity nakedly exposed its own animality, had bothered people earlier in the century, but the animal within had only been glimpsed behind the veil of human uniqueness. By the sixties and seventies that veil hung in tatters, and the beast snarled in full daylight. The issue thus grew much more sensitive and explicit. (Turner 69)

¹⁶ See Hurley 66 and Kathleen Spencer, esp. 203-207.

¹⁷ See also Jenny Bourne Taylor and Sally Shuttleworth 287-292.

¹⁸ See also Bram Dijkstra 212 and 272-275 on Nordau.

¹⁹ See Dijkstra on Lombroso, esp. 91, 101-102, 158-159, 212, 277, 289, 325, 343, and 367. See also Hurley 10 and 55-113, esp. 89-102. Her chapter “Chaotic Bodies” (89-113) discusses Lombroso. She also observes that he describes women as naturally less sensitive to pain, rather than more refined in sensibility (99). See also Ernest Fontana and Bending 216-220 and 237.

²⁰ See note 19 above. *La Donna Delinquente (The Female Offender)* was translated into English in 1895; *L'uomo Delinquente (Criminal Man)* was translated into English in 1911.

²¹ Hurley Ch.3 (65-88), “Entropic Bodies,” discusses the presence of degeneration anxieties in fin de siècle Gothic fiction; see esp. 74-77 on Nordau. Bending notes that Nordau also derided anti-vivisectionists as sentimental (127).

²² See Hurley 124-147 on *The Beetle*. Cannon Schmitt also observes that “*The Beetle* takes the eponymous creature as an embodiment of exotic and feminized evil” (37, note 7).

²³ See also Auerbach 102-103. See also Bending 154-164; despite Hyde’s sinister animality, Bending links the novel to anti-vivisection rhetoric contemporary with it, arguing that Stevenson suggests the brutalizing influence of loss of sympathy and of inflicting pain on others.

²⁴ See also Bailin 14-15.

²⁵ Vrettos describes *Dracula* as an example of “Imperial Gothic,” offering “nightmare visions of imperial expansion that contemplate the specter of invulnerable health and racial superiority” (155); see also Stephen Arata “Occidental.” *Dracula* combines “health, strength, and longevity with... reproductive power” (Vrettos 156). He is an example of “natural and supernatural selection” (Vrettos 156). Vrettos adds that: “From almost the beginning of *Dracula* we are presented with a scientific community that works together to combat the vampire by studying his symptoms, developing hypotheses, diagnosing his ‘disease,’ and effecting a cure” (170).

²⁶ See also Arata “Occidental.” Stoker himself overcame a sickly childhood to become a vigorous athlete (Vrettos 217 note 26).

²⁷ See Katherine Byrne Ch.4 (124-149).

²⁸ See also Auerbach 22-24. Byrne notes that Lucy’s sensitivity has often been read as hysteria (134). See also Christopher Bentley 30-31 on vampirism as “a disease and a perversion possibly amenable to medical treatment” (31) in this novel.

²⁹ See Dijkstra Ch. 10, esp. 342-348, on the novel’s bestial depiction of women. See also Gail Griffin 142-145 on the link between vampirism and animalism in *Dracula*, and on its “wolflike women” (145).

³⁰ As Vrettos observes, the rats themselves can be seen as “instruments of disease, suggesting that *Dracula*’s invasion is a modern form of plague that threatens to overwhelm the population of England” (218 note 34).

³¹ See also Auerbach 16.

³² See also Phyllis Roth, Griffin, Dijkstra 344, Auerbach 22-24, Hurley 121-122, Elizabeth Signorotti 621-622, and Kathleen Spencer 209-211.

³³ See also Christopher Craft 121, Dijkstra 344-345, Griffin 140, Roth 60, Signorotti 623, Bentley 27-28, and Kathleen Spencer 210.

³⁴ See also Craft 122-124, Dijkstra 345-246, Signorotti 624, Roth 30, Griffin 144, and Kathleen Spencer 211-212.

³⁵ Seward also says: “I sometimes think we must be all mad and that we shall wake to sanity in strait-waistcoats” (377). At another point, Van Helsing tells Seward: “All men are mad in some way or the other; and inasmuch as you deal discreetly with your madmen, so deal with God’s madmen, too--- the rest of the world” (162).

- ³⁶ At one point Seward says of Renfield: “I decided I would enter into his mind as well as I could and go with him” (372), which sounds like Smithian sympathy but is in fact an attempt to dominate his patient.
- ³⁷ See also Burton Hatlen 127-128 on Renfield’s madness.
- ³⁸ See Fontana for a discussion of Dracula as Lombroso’s Criminal Man, and as a “survival” of, rather than a throwback to, an atavistic state (160); he also discusses other characters’ atavistic qualities. See also Dijkstra 343 and Kathleen Spencer 204 and 213.
- ³⁹ Hatlen discusses the aspects of Dracula’s “otherness” in detail.
- ⁴⁰ See also Byrne 133-134.
- ⁴¹ Mina’s sympathy is an exception in a novel which links even illness to selfishness, not sympathy; serious illness is linked to a “spiritual pathology,” an “ordered selfishness,” “something like the way Dame Nature gathers round a foreign body an envelope of some insensitive tissue which can protect from evil that which it would otherwise harm by contact” (Stoker 164), according to Seward. Lucy likewise observes that “sickness and weakness are selfish things and turn our inner eyes and sympathy on ourselves, while health and strength give Love rein” (173).
- ⁴² See also Hurley 55-64 and Nicholas Ruddick on Wells’ engagement with Darwinism and with the writings of Thomas Huxley; Wells dwelt on the theme of “the future of humanity in the light of Darwinian—and Huxleyan—ideas” (Ruddick 17), of “human destiny in the light of evolutionary ideas” (Ruddick 28).
- ⁴³ All citations from the text of *The Time Machine* are from the Penguin 1979 edition.
- ⁴⁴ See also Hurley 79-88 for a reading of *The Time Machine* in the context of fin de siècle anxieties about degeneration and entropy.
- ⁴⁵ See Ruddick 30-35. He notes how much darker the fin de siècle view of evolution was than the optimistic view Darwin presents at the end of *The Origin of Species* earlier in the century (31), and that Wells in the 1890s “would scathingly dismiss optimistic associations between evolution and progress as ‘Excelsior Biology’” (32; see also 43). See also Hurley 55-113 and Leon Stover 17-18.
- ⁴⁶ “What have my books been... but the clearest insistence on the insecurity of progress and the possibility of human degeneration and extinction?” he wrote in a letter later in his career (Wells “Letter” (1939) 244).
- ⁴⁷ See also Byrne 37-38.
- ⁴⁸ A sphinx is also, of course, a blending of the human with the animal, just as the Morlocks are.
- ⁴⁹ Hurley also notes this (82).
- ⁵⁰ In his 1894 essay “The Man of the Year Million,” Wells’ speculative future man is more Eloi-like than Morlock-like, having lost his animal traits: “So much that is purely ‘animal’ about him is being, and must be, beyond all question, suppressed in his ultimate development... We notice this decay of the animal part around us now” (Wells “The Man” 177).
- ⁵¹ “Even now, does not an East-End worker live in such artificial conditions as practically to be cut off from the natural surface of the earth?” (54).
- ⁵² Wells was a socialist, but his socialism was of a sort that saw the miserable poor as human refuse, just like the indolent rich, with neither contributing to the state; these are what he called the “Penniless Unemployed” and the “Consuming Unemployed” (Stover 20), the future Morlocks and Eloi. See also Ruddick, esp. 17 and 34-35.
- ⁵³ As with the Morlocks, the Time Traveler feels nothing but antipathy for the last remaining creatures even further into the future—the “monstrous crab[s]” with “evil eyes” (76) and (later still) something even more primordial.
- ⁵⁴ He is even “left doubting” whether, if time travel allowed him to meet the H.G. Wells of 1894, they “would get on very well together” (Wells “Preface” [1924] 248).
- ⁵⁵ See also Neville Hoad 209.
- ⁵⁶ See also Hoad 197-202. Hoad observes that “[s]hared species-being appears necessary for sympathy” in this novel—necessary, though not always sufficient (201). Later, Prendick performs a mercy-killing of the Leopard Man before Moreau can take it back to the House of Pain, but only because Prendick momentarily “realize[s] again the fact of its humanity” (166).
- ⁵⁷ Hoad discusses the text as shuttling between a biological definition of the human as simply a distinguishable species and a definition of the human as a carrier of certain attributes that might be called ethical—the human as humane... The stakes of this task of distinguishing the human for the novella can be reduced to the following: ethically, the unhuman cannot make equivalent claims on both the narrator’s and the

reader's sympathy. The human, in contrast, produces ethical imperatives around the claims, not always reconcilable, of sympathy and justice. (189-190)

⁵⁸ This is one of the reasons Prendick ultimately believes Montgomery is "in truth half akin to these Beast Folk, unfitted for human kindred" (182).

⁵⁹ As Stover notes, when Prendick believes the beast-creatures are humans that have been animalized, he "overstates [their] humanity," while when he realizes they are animals that have been humanized he "overstates their beastliness" (128). He even tries to incite the Beast-Men to revolt against Moreau's tyranny when he believes they were originally men (126-127); when he finds out they originated as animals, that revolt is his greatest fear.

⁶⁰ See Hurley 18, 29-31, 40, 50-51, and 102-113 on *The Island of Doctor Moreau* as a fin de siècle Gothic text.

⁶¹ "In retrospect it is strange to remember how soon I fell in with these monsters' ways," he recalls (195), but he talks as little as possible about that time, other than describing the reversion of the Beast Men (196-197). He admits, however, that "I may have caught something of the natural wildness of my companions" (204).

⁶² See Stover 39-44; he discusses Wells as responding to Jeremy Bentham's utilitarianism ("pig philosophy," as Carlyle called it) (Stover 40). Prendick later reasserts his reservations about Moreau's project: "Had Moreau had any intelligible object I could have sympathized at least a little with him. I am not so squeamish about pain as that. I could have forgiven him a little even had his motive been hate. But he was so irresponsible, so curious. His curiosity, his mad, aimless investigations, drove him on, and the things were thrown out to live a year or so, to struggle, and blunder, and suffer; at last to die painfully" (Wells *Moreau* 168).

⁶³ As Stover observes, Moreau "represents vanguard over-man" in Wells' "literature of power" (Wells 159 note 144). For Wells, Prendick's humanistic sympathies are limitations preventing him from understanding Moreau's purpose (Stover 25-26). "It is not the humanizing of animals, but the deanimalizing of man with which Moreau is concerned" (Stover 14). See also Bending 167-176 on *Moreau*, vivisection, and Wells' view of the necessity of pain.

⁶⁴ Prendick at one point sees in them "the whole balance of human life in miniature," and thinks:

Poor brutes! I began to see the viler aspect of Moreau's cruelty. I had not thought before of the pain and trouble that came to these poor victims after they had passed from Moreau's hands. I had shivered only at the days of actual torment in the enclosure. But now that seemed to be the lesser part. Before they had been beasts, their instincts fitly adapted to their surroundings, and happy as living things may be. Now they stumbled in the shackles of humanity, lived in a fear that never died, fretted by a law they could not understand; their mock-human existence began in agony, was one long internal struggle. (168)

Stover observes that for Wells "Moreau's purpose is to end this agonizing conflict between two levels of human existence, between natural man and artificial man insufficiently artificialized"—i.e., insufficiently purified of his beastly nature (14). "The remedy for misery and sin—that painful internal struggle—is not to excite appetites which all cannot satisfy, but to destroy this appetite—to 'burn out all the animal.' The remedy, in short, is the pain to end pain" (Stover 41).

⁶⁵ Wells believed an "intelligent minority" of benevolent dictators would need to reconstruct humanity (Stover 13). He sought "the subordination of the will of the self-seeking individual to the idea of a racial well-being embodied in an organized state" (Wells cited in Stover 15). See also Stover 30-33.

⁶⁶ Wells suggested that "pain is not scattered so needlessly and lavishly throughout the world as the enemies of the vivisectionist would have us believe" (*Text-Book* 220). Like Moreau, he fantasized that: "If we concede the justifications of vivisection, we may imagine as possible in the future, operators... taking living creatures and molding them into the most amazing forms" ("Limits" 223).

⁶⁷ See Wells "Human Evolution," esp. 229-230.

⁶⁸ Wells wrote in 1934: "For the purposes of revolutionary theory the rest of humanity matters only as the texture of mud matters when we design a steam dredger to keep a channel clear" (cited in Stover 45).

⁶⁹ In contrast, Caspar Goodwood, "though he was not supposed to be a man of imagination, had enough to put himself in the place of a poor gentleman who lay dying at a Roman inn" (495), and befriends Ralph. So does Henrietta Stackpole, who had initially scoffed at the idea of Ralph's being too ill to work (88).

⁷⁰ See also Byrne Ch. 6 on Ralph's consumption in relation to Victorian concerns about masculinity.

⁷¹ Vrettos notes that James “transforms medical questions into aesthetic ones... Milly’s illness actually facilitates her status as an object of aesthetic pleasure, and we are asked as readers to consume Milly’s body as delicately as her disease has” (111).

⁷² See also Lawrence Rothfield 163-174 on Strett as the “ethical physician,” a “‘genius’... of tact and sympathy” (165). He sees Strett’s “medical approach” to Milly’s “pathological romancing” as “superior, both ethically and therapeutically, to that of those who misleadingly offer Milly romantic impressions” (171). He argues that “it is the physician’s ‘splendid economy of medical knowledge rather than Milly’s extravagant flightiness that James endorses” (174).

⁷³ As Vrettos notes: “Although James never names Milly’s illness, critics have generally assumed it to be tuberculosis because James’s cousin Minny Temple, who was the inspiration for Milly Theale, died of tuberculosis” (211-212, note 43).

⁷⁴ See also James *Wings* 318-319.

⁷⁵ See also James *Wings* 210-211.

⁷⁶ Rothfield argues that: “It is easy enough to read Milly as a sheer victim of others, but she herself participates in the conspiracy of silence by not sharing the truth of her illness with anyone” (168). He suggests that “Milly’s peculiar pathos is that she fails to recognize that in turning to romance she is denying her own real[ity], the complexities and potential freedoms inherent in her own medical determinism” (173).

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