"Defying Categorization: Stray Objects and Women's Material Practices in Nineteenth-Century Fiction"

by

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Abstract

This dissertation engages nineteenth century material objects that fall outside of established categorization and those objects' associations with contemporary, women-authored texts. A common link between these "stray objects"—be they historical stitched sampler or fictional prized necklace—is their seemingly disruptive applications that both perpetuate and overturn widespread practices. Each chapter of this dissertation focuses on a feminine craft or possession and how the metonymic histories of these objects reify their traditional application and transcend categories to construct new subjectivities or exploit widespread ideologies. Following stray examples of needlecraft, gemstones, glass, and birds reveals the complicated means through which women engaged in material practices, resisted or repurposed objectification, or positioned themselves in spheres outside the domestic realm. Most importantly, these objects signify women's connection to the nineteenth-century world in ways innumerable: as entwined with colonial meanings, subject to problematic domestication, and connected to animal ecologies. Following these strays is crucial to future scholarship, as they not only preserve historical and cultural archives, but they also provide additional glimpses into women's complex roles within the said archives. To recover these stray objects is to re-envision the role of objects as foci of rich cultural connections and subjectivities.

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I would like to first and foremost express my gratitude to my most excellent committee. Alicia Carroll, my committee chair, spent many evenings sipping coffee and brainstorming with me; her intuition was such that she always knew what I needed to hear, and so the completion of this project is indebted to her skilled guidance. I am thankful for Chris Keirstead's prompt and encouraging feedback, which taught me how to justify my chosen texts and gave me a sense of confidence. Anna Bertolet gave me a deep appreciation for needlecraft in literature (and material culture more broadly) and imprinted upon me the value of precise language. Craig Bertolet's in-depth comments on my chapters helped unify this project and rekindle my determination. Arianne Gaetano agreed to serve as my reader in the final stages of the dissertation; the outside perspective that she brought to the project was invaluable.

This journey would have not been possible without the unwavering love and support of my family. Those whom I lost along the way deserve special recognition as well; though my grief may have caused me to stagger, I now walk with pride knowing that they are watching from the stars. My friends have lifted me up in more ways than they know; CG, KG, AO, JO, ZM, SW, and CA have provided comfort and hope every step of the way.

Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to my Nana, Lucille Miller. She, after all, was the one who made this distant dream a tangible reality.

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Introduction:

Stray Meanings

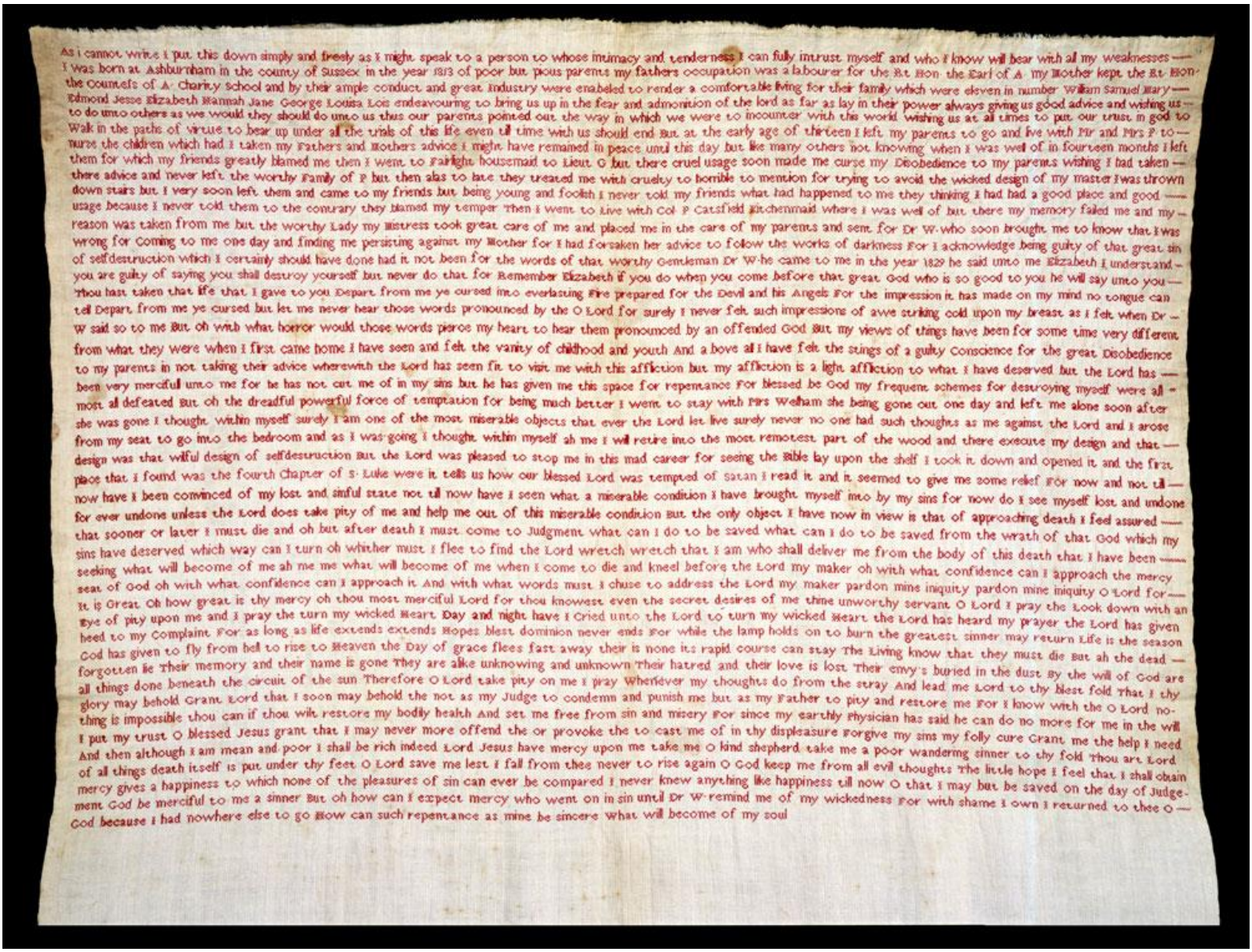
As I cannot write I put this down simply and freely as I might speak to a person to whose intimacy and tenderness I can fully intrust myself and who I know will bear with all my weaknesses —
I was born at Ashburnham in the county of Sussex in the year 1813 of poor but pious parents my fathers occupation was a labourer for the Rt Hon the Earl of A my Mother kept the Rt Hon
the Countess of A' Charity school and by their ample conduct and great Industry were enabled to render a comfortable living for their family which were eleven in number William Samuel Mary —
Edmond Jesse Elizabeth Hannah Jane George Louisa Lois endeavouring to bring us up in the fear and admonition of the lord as far as lay in their power always giving us good advice and wishing us —
to do unto others as we would they should do unto us thus our parents pointed out the way in which we were to incounter with the world wishing us at all times to put our trust in god to
Walk in the paths of virtue to bear up under all the trials of this life even til time with us should end But at the early age of thirteen I left my parents to go and live with Mr and Mrs P to —
nurse the children which had I taken my Fathers and Mothers advice I might have remained in peace until this day but like many others not knowing when I was well of in fourteen months I left
them for which my friends greatly blamed me then I went to Fairlight housemaid to Lieut G but there cruel usage soon made me curse my Disobedience to my parents wishing I had taken —
there advice and never left the worthy Family of P but then alas to late they treated me with cruelty so horrible to mention for trying to avoid the wicked design of my master I was thrown
down stairs but I very soon left them and came to my friends but being young and foolish I never told my friends what had happened to me they thinking I had had a good place and good ——
usage because I never told them to the contrary they blamed my temper Then I went to Live with Col P Catsfield Kitchenmaid where I was well of but there my memory failed me and my —
reason was taken from me but the worthy Lady my Mistress took great care of me and placed me in the care of my parents and sent for Dr W who soon brought me to know that I was
wrong for coming to me one day and finding me persisting against my Mother for I had forsaken her advice to follow the works of darkness For I acknowledge being guilty of that great sin
of self destruction which I certainly should have done had it not been for the words of that worthy Gentleman Dr W he came to me in the year 1829 he said unto me Elizabeth I understand —
you are guilty of saying you shall destroy yourself but never do that for Remember Elizabeth if you do when you come before that great God who is so good to you he will say unto you —
Thou hast taken that life that I gave to you Depart from me ye cursed into everlasting Fire prepared for the Devil and his Angels For the impression it has made on my mind no tongue can
tell Depart from me ye cursed but let me never hear those words pronounced by the O Lord for surely I never felt such impressions of awe striking cold upon my breast as I felt when Dr —
W said so to me But oh with what horror would those words pierce my heart to hear them pronounced by an offended God But my views of things have been for some time very different
from what they were when I first came home I have seen and felt the vanity of childhood and youth And above all I have felt the stings of a guilty Conscience for the great Disobedience
to my parents in not taking their advice wherewith the Lord has seen fit to visit me with this affliction but my affliction is a light affliction to what I have deserved but the Lord has —
been very merciful unto me for he has not cut me of in my sins but he has given me this space for repentance For blessed be God my frequent schemes for destroying myself were all —
most all defeated But oh the dreadful powerful force of temptation for being much better I went to stay with Mrs Welham she being gone out one day and left me alone soon after
she was gone I thought within myself surely I am one of the most miserable objects that ever the Lord let live surely never no one had such thoughts as me against the Lord and I arose
from my seat to go into the bedroom and as I was going I thought within myself ah me I will retire into the most remotest part of the wood and there execute my design and that —
design was that wilful design of self destruction But the Lord was pleased to stop me in this mad career for seeing the Bible lay upon the shelf I took it down and opened it and the first
place that I found was the fourth Chapter of S Luke were it tells us how our blessed Lord was tempted of Satan I read it and it seemed to give me some relief For now and not til —
now have I been convinced of my lost and sinful state not til now have I seen what a miserable condition I have brought myself into by my sins for now do I see myself lost and undone
for ever undone unless the Lord does take pity of me and help me out of this miserable condition But the only object I have now in view is that of approaching death I feel assured ——
that sooner or later I must die and oh but after death I must come to Judgment what can I do to be saved what can I do to be saved from the wrath of that God which my
sins have deserved which way can I turn oh whither must I flee to find the Lord wretch wretch that I am who shall deliver me from the body of this death that I have been ——
seeking what will become of me ah me me what will become of me when I come to die and kneel before the Lord my maker oh with what confidence can I approach the mercy
seat of God oh with what confidence can I approach it And with what words must I chuse to address the Lord my maker pardon mine iniquity pardon mine iniquity O Lord for —
It is Great Oh how great is thy mercy oh thou most merciful Lord for thou knowest even the secret desires of me thine unworthy servant O Lord I pray the Look down with an
Eye of pity upon me and I pray the turn my wicked Heart Day and night have I Cried unto the Lord to turn my wicked Heart the Lord has heard my prayer the Lord has given
heed to my Complaint For as long as life extends extends Hopes blest dominion never ends For while the lamp holds on to burn the greatest sinner may return Life is the season
God has given to fly from hell to rise to Heaven the Day of grace flees fast away their is none its rapid course can stay The Living know that they must die But ah the dead —
forgotten lie Their memory and their name is gone They are alike unknowing and unknown Their hatred and their love is lost Their envy's buried in the dust By the will of God are
all things done beneath the circuit of the sun Therefore O Lord take pity on me I pray Wherever my thoughts do from the stray And lead me Lord to thy blest fold That I thy
glory may behold Grant Lord that I soon may behold the not as my Judge to condemn and punish me but as my Father to pity and restore me For I know with the O Lord no-
thing is impossible thou can if thou wilt restore my bodily health And set me free from sin and misery For since my earthly Physician has said he can do no more for me in the will
I put my trust O blessed Jesus grant that I may never more offend the or provoke the to cast me of in thy displeasure Forgive my sins my folly cure Grant me the help I need
And then although I am mean and poor I shall be rich indeed Lord Jesus have mercy upon me take me O kind shepherd take me a poor wandering sinner to thy fold Thou art Lord
of all things death itself is put under thy feet O Lord save me lest I fall from thee never to rise again O God keep me from all evil thoughts The little hope I feel that I shall obtain
mercy gives a happiness to which none of the pleasures of sin can ever be compared I never knew anything like happiness till now O that I may but be saved on the day of Judge-
ment God be merciful to me a sinner But oh how can I expect mercy who went on in sin until Dr W remind me of my wickedness For with shame I own I returned to thee O —
God because I had nowhere else to go How can such repentance as mine be sincere What will become of my soul

Figure 1. Elizabeth Parker's Sampler, after 1830. Image from the V&A. See Appendix A for transcription.

Elizabeth Parker's sampler, sewn after 1830, begins with the seemingly paradoxical words "As I cannot write" (fig. 1). The laboriously sewn red letters detail her abuse and assault while working as a nursery maid. It is this paradox that makes Parker's sampler so compelling:though claiming that she cannot write, the process of painstakingly sewing the letters demonstrates her literacy. Embroidering her experiences, letter by letter, surely took longer to produce than a handwritten journal or letter; the medium itself then seems to express the desperation of her situation. Was she denied paper and pen? Permitted only needle and thread? These are questions we may never know. What we do know, however, is that the visual and emotional tone of the sampler, its blood-red letters, its anguished words, all defy the discourse of women's needlework commonly presented as the apotheosis, or the nadir, of domesticity as represented by women writers such as Elizabeth Barrett Browning in *Aurora Leigh*.[1]

There, for example, the needle threatens to "prick" Aurora herself "to a pattern" limited to "angelic reach/Of virtue, chiefly used to sit and darn" (l. 381, 404, 438-40). Aurora's objections to needlework are rooted within their ideological irony; though the "pattern" of such domesticity imbues the woman at home with purported angelic traits, such sanitizing virtue was limited to the home and appropriate disciplinary tasks—like needlework—that sought to cultivate women into passive housekeepers and wives. Indeed, the very concept of "domesticity" encompassed not only the physical walls denoted by the home but the perceived civilizing morality and private life of middle-class women at home. Critics of the Victorian novel from Gilbert and Gubar to Talia Schaffer have similarly argued that such "domestic work," be that

[1] I read about the sampler in Christine Bayles Kortsch's *Dress Culture in Late Victorian Women's Fiction*. Kortsch uses the sampler as evidence of women's "dual literacy" in text and needlework—an interpretation which is a guiding reference to my own thoughts in this section. Maureen Daly Goggin in *Women and the Material Culture of Needlework and Textiles* (2009) views samplers like Parker's as a space where those "denied access. . . .to dominant, ma(i)nstream discursive spaces, construct and engage in rhetoric" (31). To this end, this project views "women's writing" as inclusive of "(text)iles" such as needlework, handicraft, and any object created/consumed for the purposes of rhetoric or subjectivity.

needlework or handicraft, represents the confining of women to the domestic realm. However, as an object, Parker's blood-red sampler strays from this discourse, raising its own fascinating contradictions and questions.

Despite the precision and planning necessitated by embroidery, the sampler reads as an impassioned stream of consciousness, rarely employing punctuation or pause in her attempt to process her experiences. Embroidering even expressive "Oh's" and "Ah's," Parker's distressed and breathless voice is almost audible when reading the textile. The rows are tidy, the letters neat, and yet the sampler ends mid-sentence with a chilling query and even more troubling blank space: "What will become of my soul." This sampler, while engaging in a widespread domestic practice, is a strange and inaccessible union of improvisation and careful meditation, of overwhelming emotion and careful analysis. Most of all, the textile defies the very purpose of a sampler itself as a decorous show of a young woman's virtue, patience, and domestic skill. Although the sampler seems an invitation to scholars who might unlock its secrets, few people have seen or studied it as it has been neither widely displayed nor widely discussed. Currently preserved in the Victoria and Albert Museum's archives and restored by the contributions of Nigel Llewellyn and Maureen Daly Goggin, Elizabeth Parker's sampler challenges the way scholarship perceives gendered material practices, female subjectivity, and the concept of gendered "domestic" objects. [2] Irrevocably linked to the domestic sphere through its engagement in handicraft, Elizabeth Parker's sampler nonetheless demands that material culture scholarship ask new questions: how should we read domestic objects like this sampler when they overturn the limits of domestic discourse itself? How should we interpret objects that engage

[2] Nigel Llewellyn first established Elizabeth Parker's identity in 1998 in "Elizabeth Parker's 'Sampler': Memory, Suicide, and the Presenct of the Artist," published in *Material Memories: Design and Evocation*. Maureen Daly Goggin also discusses the sampler—and Elizabeth Parker's life—in *Women and Things, 1750-1950: Gendered Material Strategies* (2009).

gendered Victorian material practices such as needlework even as they overturn the gendered limits such works impose? Finally, how might liminal objects like Parker's sampler be more widely included in Victorian studies?

I suggest that rather than obscuring objects which defy categorization as this sampler does, we might seek them out. That is exactly what this dissertation aims to do. In the chapters to come, I take Parker's sampler as my inspiration, reclaiming the representation of usually unread objects in women's literature and culture which defy, rather than reinforce, domesticity, despite their taxonomic locations within domesticity itself. From women's textiles to their possession of and identification with "wild" birds, I look for stray meanings in women's Victorian literature and culture, meanings not yet owned by the field but waiting to be claimed.

The material turn in Victorian studies has allowed the literal meaning and presence of objects in literature and culture to do more than the work of symbolism or allegory. Material culture studies enables scholarship to look outward from discursive formations to objects' real-world origins and functions. From this foundation, material objects exist simultaneously and even in opposition to their symbolic or allegorical value in a literary text. To examine an object's "social life" is to "follow the things themselves, for their meanings are inscribed in their forms, their uses, their trajectories," as suggested by Arjun Appadurai (4). As many scholars have noticed, nineteenth-century literature has had a particular predilection for listing and categorizing objects, which may contribute to scholarship's own categorization of nineteenth century material objects. A core binary in this scholastic categorization proves to be similar to the binary proposed be nineteenth-century domestic ideologies; even in modern research, material practices are often defined by their place within the public or private imagination or by

their place within or without the commodified marketplace. [3] In addition to modeling research focuses after nineteenth-century categorization, scholarship prior to the material turn often read objects as allegorical rather than allowing the objects to speak for themselves. Material objects, when read as allegory, "suggest, or reinforce, something that we already know about the subjects who use them" (Freedgood 2).

What results from such a reading is a cyclical pattern in which the material objects reflect themselves back onto the characters, reaffirming discursive identities and social anxieties alike. Following these things inevitably results in "methodological fetishism," a point of view in which "it is the things-in-motion that illuminate their human and social context" (4-5). Methodological fetishism stems from the "tendency to excessively sociologize transactions in things" (5). In other words, this practice seeks to understand the human transactions in the history of things—how they reflect social behaviors or identity. Completely unwinding object from fetish is considered impossible (notably by Appadurai, Elaine Freedgood, and Michael Taussig). However, Freedgood dramatically challenges how such things might be read by approaching the Victorian novel as "a particularly rich site for tracing the fugitive meaning of apparently nonsymbolic objects" (4). Freedgood opposes reading such objects merely for their ability to imbue nineteenth-century texts with a sense of reality.[4] Looking for "fugitive meanings" reveals the histories of material objects reflected—but not outright acknowledged—in literature, such as

[3] Appadurai and other scholars have since revisited and revised the category of Marxist commodity, which, as Appadurai points out, excludes social practices of barter or modes of gift-giving. To this end, Appadurai approaches commodities not as a category of objects but as a state of objects—a "commodity situation." The commodity situation of an object is "defined as the situation in which its exchangeability. . .for some other thing is its socially relevant feature" (12). Maureen Daly Goggin and Beth Tobin are invested in distinguishing between commodities and handicraft, noting that crafts are often not commodities but still equally worthy of study within material culture studies for how they engage in and construct widespread material practices and, often, serve as a means for their owner to represent themselves.

[4] Roland Barthes first spoke to this "reality effect," noting that all these details "are reputed to *denote* the real directly, all they do—without saying so—is *signify* it" (Walder 260). In some cases, these details add nothing to the narrative itself, but, rather, contribute to the literature's sense of reality by revealing things about the subject (in an allegorical sense) and its connections to the real object (in a metonymic sense).

the connection between the mahogany furniture in *Jane Eyre* and the deforestation in Madeira caused by the importation of such furniture. While approaching objects in texts, I adhere to an approach more like Freedgood's, which attempts to return to the material by investigating the origin of these objects' creation and their relevance to their culture. While these objects are still mediated through the lens of history, reading outwards from their presentation in literature allows them to take on new meanings. Similarly, this practice also liberates new understandings of material practices in nineteenth century literature and culture.

Material objects within nineteenth-century literature may reveal a growing cultural consciousness of the proliferation of manufactured objects and colonial imports, and a blossoming consumer culture cultivated desire in the marketplace. They may, as Asa Briggs notes, introduce a newly performative culture through which "'a vast number of things which I desire' entered into a 'circle of exchange' based on choice" (5). Most of all, however, the representation of this "circle of exchange" of objects in a Victorian text may be incomplete. The object may be categorized according to its usefulness as a symbol rather than as a thing itself. A sampler, therefore, represents the tedium of Aurora Leigh's life or in a more conventional text, represents a young girl's virtue. This conventional representation, however, may become so powerful that it pushes other meanings out, making them go astray. This dissertation explores stray objects as they appear in women's literature and culture, some of which has yet to be fully explored in Victorian Studies. Reading these objects with what Freedgood refers to as a "moment of taking them literally, followed by a lengthy metonymic search beyond the covers of the text," helps reveal how past categorization within material culture studies fails objects that cannot readily be categorized or contained within the traditional spaces of the Victorian home or commodified marketplace (5). Of particular interest here then are women's objects which are

not easily domesticated: a sinister necklace, a missing heart, a monumental national diamond, a wild bird, and a suffragette's handkerchief embroidered in prison. While these objects are still mediated through the lens of history, reading against the grain allows me to locate new meanings. Returning once more to the theme of textiles, to cut a textile against the grain allows for fraying, revealing the individual threads and components of the material while rendering the product unusable for its intended purpose. To read stray objects against the grain similarly reveals the ideologies and practices from which they fray. These stray objects reveal not only their own stories, but resistance to Victorian ideologies and taxonomies which sought to categorize objects as a means of enforcing behavioral expectations and practices that strove to bring order to the British Empire, Victorian women, and the seeming conflict between the marketplace and domestic sphere.

Subverting Gendered Material Practices

While Material Culture Studies has overturned allegorical analyses of objects, other scholarship has started to overturn the discursive identities of Victorian women, lending credence to a further undoing of women's status as "Angels in the House." Talia Schaffer overturned the concept of the New Woman and discovered the Female Aesthete; Orianne Smith overturned the Angel in the House and found the feminine practice of prophecy. Each of these readings allows actual objects to signify representations of identity, communal forms of material literacy, and broader social histories. This practice is necessary because it often gives voice to the voiceless, thus allowing for a much broader spectrum of both objects' social histories and individual subjectivities. Maureen Daly Goggin refers to this intersection as gendered material practices in her book *Women & Things, 1750-1950: Gendered Material Strategies*. This phrase seeks to examine how objects are conceptualized, produced, circulated, used, and exchanged,

and it references the interaction between these practices and gendered subjectivity. As Goggin and Tobin establish, women's material practices extended far beyond cementing their position as Angel in the House or even beyond caving to desire in the marketplace. Their enactment of material practices was "informed by a deep knowledge of the materials used and as such they are participating in the creation, maintenance, and communication of knowledge about these materials" (5). Victorian women were not simply adhering to normative material practices. Their knowledge of material practice's function in both social and commodified contexts allowed them to shape those contemporary practices. Moreover, "women's manipulation of the material world is central to constructing social meanings that operate in the world beyond the traditionally prescribed and circumscribed boundaries occupied by women" (6). Material practices were not only a site of expression and female subjectivity, but also a site where women sought to shape the more widespread social meanings of things.

Though often viewed as empowering, women's influence over the social meaning of things was just as prone to proliferating and reinforcing restrictive ideologies as disrupting them. Such reinforcement often occurred by translating domesticity outside of the physical walls of the home. As Talia Schaffer suggests, handicraft was one such site of translation; by reconciling manufactured materials within the realm of handicraft, "the craft paradigm offered a satisfyingly familiar, culturally enshrined alternative to commodity culture and industrial capitalism" (10). These translations allowed women to circumscribe their traditional domestic duties by crafting consumer practices into a social "safe" material practice. A similar translation is present in the construction of shopping spaces, too. Schaffer gestures to the female bazaar, where heightened prices, pseudonyms, and a simplified barter system reconciled "[women's] labor, production, trade, and consumption with the effulgent halo of domestic leisure—thereby keeping it separate

from male economic transactions" (13). In addition to female bazaars, department stores also sought to compromise the indulgence of shopping with the safety of the home. The offered "amenities as cloak rooms, tea rooms, rest areas, lavatories, and writing rooms—in short, providing the sense of home away from home" (Lysack 21). Such amenities created a domestic bubble within the public—a quiet place of repose for women shoppers. Rather than liberating women, however, expanding the domestic sphere into public spaces similarly extended the reach of domestic discursive ideologies, thus allowing the Angel in the House to go shopping.

Though society sought to reconcile women consumers and handicraft practitioners with "safe" traditional practices, "following the things themselves" outward from the works of women and looking for stray objects that resist categorization reveals an authoritative and, at times, even subversive application of gendered material practices (Appadurai 4). Stray objects, in their liminality, resist both past and present categorization and, through this disruption, provide insight into the ideologies typically motivating their production and consumption. Through such a lens, the fear of women becoming commodities is actualized and then promptly disrupted, empowering them as consumers. Handicrafts and commodities alike are liberated from both domestic ideologies and watered-down consumer practices. Elizabeth Parker's sampler, for example, speaks out from the needlework practices as represented in *Aurora Leigh*. If *Aurora Leigh* represents needlework as being symbolical of silenced voices—those who are forced to take up pins rather than pens—then Parker's sampler challenges this perception of needlework and acknowledges both literacy and objects as liminal entities. [5] Parker's sampler emphasizes how various forms of needlework may be a form of literacy in and of itself, thus separating

[5] "Needlecraft," here, is an umbrella term invoking the finished product made with the use of sewing or embroidery needles and thread, especially those handicrafts produced by women in the home. "Needlework" refers to the process of making needlecraft. "Sewing" is treated separately; it is the mending or production of articles for non-ornamental purposes, and, in the case of seamstresses, does produce public commodities.

sewing from its associations with idealized domesticity and allowing the craft to become an alternative construction of female subjectivity. Stray objects like Parker's sampler wrest needlework from traditional gendered material practices and disrupt the plight of the woman needleworker as represented in *Aurora Leigh*, giving voice to those producing the textiles depicted in such texts about middle-class women.

Stray Objects and Female Subjectivity

This dissertation engages gendered material objects that fall outside of established categorization and those objects' associations with contemporary, women-authored texts. Due to the fluid nature of the commodity situation, historical handicrafts, marketplace commodities, and representations of these historical objects play a critical role in this analysis. A common link between these objects—be they historical stitched sampler or fictional prized necklace—is their shared stories in literature and culture, their feminine correlations and their seemingly disruptive applications that both perpetuate and overturn widespread practices. For example, while it was generally acceptable for a woman to assert her identity by embroidering a handkerchief with her initials, embroidering the experience of women suffragettes on handkerchiefs subverts socially accepted gendered material practices and women's writing practices. Like Parker's sampler, suffragette textiles reclaim the feminine practice of needlework by exploiting the perceived uselessness of fancy needlework to relay messages in and out of Holloway prison. Though the practice of embroidering handkerchiefs traditionally claimed ownership over the object, these women used embroidered handkerchiefs to construct a record of their experiences and, by appropriating the normative gendered material practice, claim those experiences as their own. Despite this, their signatures on cloth perpetuate still other aspects of needlework. After all, the

handkerchief bearing the initials of the suffragettes was woven by invisible labor in workhouses, whose hunger was not a means of protest but enforced by socioeconomic status.

Exploring both canonical works—such as *Jane Eyre*—along with non-canonical texts—such as Mary de Morgan's *On a Pincushion*—exemplifies the depth and breadth of things within nineteenth-century literature. Each chapter of this dissertation focuses on a feminine craft or possession and how the metonymic histories of these objects reify their traditional application and transcend categories to construct new subjectivities or exploit widespread ideologies.

The first chapter focuses on *Aurora Leigh*'s depiction of needlework and gendered material practices. As a text that establishes needlework in opposition to creative independence, Elizabeth Barrett Browning's epic poem stands out from other nineteenth century texts featuring needlework due to its inclusion of the seamstress figure. While Aurora Leigh's own perception of needlework consistently correlated handicrafts with the Angel in the House, her own idyllic enactment of women writers at the expense of handicrafts overlooks those seamstresses for whom needlework was the only option. Complicating this narrative is Maggie Tulliver from George Eliot's *The Mill on the Floss*. Standing out from the numerous other examples of nineteenth century fiction featuring needlework for its numerous echoes of Barrett Browning's language, *The Mill on the Floss* detangles sewing for paid labor from the cultural stigma likening such seamstresses to fallen women. The existence of real-world samplers and handkerchiefs further Eliot's attempt to liberate needlework from its ideological applications; such needlecraft appropriates the domestic crafts into the realm of the progressive and transgressive, suggesting that textiles and needlework played a far more complicated role than *Aurora Leigh* suggests. This exposes the means through which the text's representation of needlework ultimately benefits from the perpetuation of domestic ideologies at the expense of the working class; such

readings overlook those working class laborers crafting the thread and textiles from which these middle-class representations of needlework benefit.

In chapter two, Christina Rossetti's short story "Hero" also invokes the exploitation of workers—in this case those colonized under the British Empire—through her representation of a distant Fairyland and a young girl's greed for hero worship. The heroine in this story wishes to be desired by all, and so she is turned into a giant diamond that is "a glory by day, a lamp by night, and a world's wonder at all times" ("Hero" 196). Another gem famously described as a world's wonder, of course, is the Koh-i-Noor diamond, which was displayed at the Great Exhibition of 1851 and forcefully taken from British India.[6] *Punch* often remarked on how the diamond was an object of lust for its women spectators. "Hero" was published twenty years later, and the publicity of the Koh-i-Noor was almost certainly still fresh in Rossetti's mind. Therefore, the metamorphosis of animate Hero into inanimate diamond suggests that another kind of erasure occurs by associating the Koh-i-Noor with women. It erases their identities as sensible consumers (since no objects were actually for sale at the Great Exhibition), and it also erases the cultural origins and ownership of the Koh-i-Noor as an import from Indian colonies.

The third chapter studies Mary De Morgan's "The Necklace of Princess Fiorimonde**"** (1880) and explores the consequence of erasing bodies and workers alike through glass's transparent properties. In this particular fairy-tale, the titular princess turns each of her suitors into beautiful glass beads, which are admired and envied by all who see them. The material of these beads is significant, for glass is associated with the feminine, acting as both womb in stasis and permanent preserver of its creator's breath.[7] In other words, the historic associations of glass

[6] *The Great Exhibition of 1851: New Interdisciplinary Essays* edited by Louise Purbrick details publications about the Koh-i-Noor in *Punch Magazine*.
[7] For more information about these representations of glass in the Victorian information, consult Isobel Armstrong's *Victorian Glassworlds: Glass Culture and the Imagination, 1830-1880.*

exemplify Fiormionde's own immortality and eternal beauty. "The Necklace of Princess Fiorimonde" also reinforces the notion of wearing jewelry as a representative, symbolic act, for the number of beads on Fiorimonde's necklace keeps a rather literal account of her desirability. It also critiques the tradition of suitors showering their intended with jewelry by suggesting that it turns both courter and courted into objects.

The fourth chapter examines the transition of birds from commodities to species that matter from *Jane Eyre* to Watson's "Ballad of the Bird Bride." Due to Charlotte Brontë 's numerous references to Thomas Bewick's *A History of British Birds*, *Jane Eyre* proves to be a particularly rich site for tracing the representation of birds, the perceived domesticating influence of the caged bird within the Victorian home, and the means through which natural history's categorization perpetuated patriarchal and imperial ideologies, subordinating women and the Other. Speaking against this representation of domestic birds and idealized women is Rosamund Marriott Watson's (née Ball) "The Ballad of the Bird-Bride" (1889). Though lesser-studied, the representation of gulls in this Inuit-inspired folktale reflect the ideologies at work in *Jane Eyre*, but Watson's representation of birds reveals limitations to their objectification, constructing a post-Darwinian extinction narrative that strays from the ideologies represented by *Jane Eyre*. Revealing limitations to a patriarchal system of natural history, Watson positions the objectification of women and birds as a point of power and envisions an imperfect woman catering to her desire. At stake within this reading of birds' transition from commodified/collectible objects to flagship species within the conservation movement is the ecological cost of commodified consumption and the erasure of the bodies producing (and, in the case of birds, constituting) the materials consumed.

Victorian material practices often interact with gender in unseen and complicated means. Through a study of gendered objects, both handcrafted and commodified, my study frees both objects and women alike from their traditional, allegorical readings in contemporary texts. The means of consumption or crafting indicate how women not only constructed gendered material practices but, at times, benefited from imperialist, domestic, or commodified modes of consumption. Examining liminal, stray objects reveal new conceptualizations of the Victorian woman and "her" things. While many of the objects studied here are, like Elizabeth Parker's sampler, strays from the very categories to which Victorians assigned them, my pursuit of them in this dissertation both returns them to view and allows for a re-envisioning of the role of objects in constructing and resisting the gendered work of Victorian domesticity.

Chapter One

Written by Pen or Pin: Needlecraft and Domesticity

> The works of women are symbolical.
> We sew, sew, prick our fingers, dull our sight,
> Producing what?
>
> -ELIZABETH BARRETT BROWNING, *Aurora Leigh*, 1856

Nothing says domesticity more than the handicrafts of Victorian women. The answer to Aurora Leigh's question of "Producing what?," however, is a complex one. The needlecraft Aurora Leigh produces is treated as the gold standard of women's domestication, and she interprets needlecraft as the silencing of women through how such objects remain sequestered in the home. *Aurora Leigh*, then, espouses the standard perception of needlecraft as the antithesis to public writing and neglects to envision cases where needlecraft is both revealing and public.

Examining the material practice this way challenges the assumption represented in *Aurora Leigh* that needlecraft is private and writing public. Recovering "the material qualities of fictional things," as Freedgood suggests, reveals holes within the ideologies present in Barrett Browning's text (43). For example, though Aurora presents herself as a progressive heroine, she nevertheless resists needlecraft as a frivolous and inexpressive feminine pursuit, thereby preserving what Freedgood refers to as "critical cultural archives" within her dismissive assessment of needlecraft (31). In distinguishing her writing as progressive and different from restrictive domesticity, Aurora in fact perpetuates the ideologies of class and gendered difference constructed around needlecraft, and she overlooks the privilege inherent in her access to both textiles and writing materials.

But going farther afield beyond Barrett Browning's famous example, this chapter explores fictional sewing and real-world samplers and handkerchiefs that transcend needlecraft's

privacy to become "powerful epistemic practice," thereby resisting domestication and women's immurement within the private realm (Goggin 31). Published after *Aurora Leigh*, George Eliot's early novel *The Mill On the Floss* espouses much of the same language as Barrett Browning's epic poem, but provides a more balanced perspective of needlecraft through the key difference of Maggie Tulliver's use of plain sewing to procure autonomy. Though pressed on all sides by cultural conceptions of sewing as a domesticizing practice (when performed for leisure) or an amoral act (when paid labor), Maggie constructs for herself a record of resistance to her own domestication. To answer Barrett Browning's question "Producing What?," in this case Maggie produces a record of her class and gender mobility. What may be read as will in Maggie's work is the fugitive meaning such textiles contain. The titular mill on the Floss river—and Maggie's performative access to materials—complicates even her positive representation of needlework by overlooking the laborers responsible for producing her materials, both in the plain cloth and thread produced by mills both local and imported from afar.

Falling somewhere between public and private practices, such needlecraft becomes text and constructs an alternative women's subjectivity. Elizabeth Parker's sampler, for example, is especially of interest to this line of thinking. While Barrett Browning views handicrafts as being symbolical of silenced voices—those who are forced to take up pins rather than pens—Parker's diary-like sampler challenges this perception of embroidery and acknowledges both literacy and objects as liminal entities, thus liberating needlework from its associations with idealized domesticity and allowing the craft to become a construction of female subjectivity. Goggin has already done much to uncover Parker's biographical history and the means through which her sampler serves as a "rhetorical performance" (41). The handkerchief produced by Janie Terreno during the 1911 hunger strike and The Suffragette Handkerchief at the Priest House (sewn March

1912) are equally displaced objects, representing women's embodied experiences through needlecraft while also participating in another form of rhetorical performance. Putting these "text/iles" (a term coined by Goggin) in conversation with Barrett Browning and Eliot's perceptions of needlecraft and writing reveals what happens when needlecraft—and women's writing—cannot be domesticated, thereby resisting discursive gendered material practices and applying pressure to the differences signified by such practices. Moreover, well beyond these alternative symbolic meanings Barrett Browning denies to textiles, such work contains material meanings we may read into women's textiles in both texts and museum archives.

While acknowledging the importance of feminine crafts in the construction of domestic ideology is crucially important, the case for adopting nineteenth-century modes of categorization in material culture studies has perhaps been overstated, and this unintentionally crowds out other objects that defy such easy categorization. Both subscribing to and breaking expectations of gendered material practices and the public/private dichotomy, these stray objects represent conceptual problems within this approach to material culture studies. These "strays" are understudied both in museums and as texts. They represent the limitations of current scholarship by defying categorization and becoming liminal, perpetually displaced objects. Many of the sources cited in both this chapter and others examine Victorian items through the lens of contemporary categorization which, while not incorrect, limits the room for examining stray objects that don't as readily adhere to a singular category. For example. Maureen Daly Goggin and Beth Fowkes Tobin's series of women and material culture treats women as consumers separately from women engaged in the "domestic arts," or handicrafts. Though their collection acknowledges that some handicraft troubles the public/private dichotomy, it nevertheless

remains grounded within the "domestic" category. [8] Still others, such as Loeb's *Consuming Angels,* treat the women consumer as extending the domestic sphere, which suggests that the domestic sphere's boundaries as a category are still intact. Using Victorian modes of categorization does provide a useful means of equally narrowing research's focus, but it provides limited room for objects that don't subscribe to those modes of categorization, such as objects like Parker's sampler that are neither domestic nor commodified. Even Parker's sampler includes herself as the "maker" rather than gesturing to the hands that made the fabric and thread.

Beginning here with the status quo of *Aurora Leigh* studies and ending with George Eliot's more challenging presentation of needlecraft in *The Mill on the Floss*, this chapter examines how historical needlecraft—represented by a blood-red sampler and a suffragette's handkerchief signed by imprisoned women—provides insight into how nineteenth century novels perpetuated and, in the case of Eliot, challenged harmful ideologies about gendered material practices. These stray objects cannot be domesticated, though they adhere to seemingly domesticating and gendering material practices. As representations of female subjectivity, they also reveal limitations to current perceptions of women's subjectivity by emphasizing their ability and their challenges in giving voice to the indescribable. Trauma, both embodied and political, is often the element represented by these objects, which irreparably displaces them from their perceived domesticity; these stray objects often find themselves housed outside of the comforts of home and on display in museums or archives, rendering the often private, individual experiences of their makers public and equally on display. [9] Woven within their threads, then, is

[8] Part of this categorization involves associating the public sphere with paid labor and consumption in public marketplaces, whereas the private sphere is often the realm of domestic production.

[9] "Trauma" is defined in the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* as an event that "involved actual or threatened death, serious injury, or threat to physical integrity," and, at the time of the event, "the individual must have responded with intense fear, helplessness, or horror" (235). In literary theory, Cathy Caruth's definition of trauma narratives describes trauma as "the response to an unexpected or overwhelming violent event or events that are not fully grasped as they occur" (91).

a reverse discourse useful in contextualizing these stray objects and their cultureal implications. Equally important to following these strays is also tracing their material histories, which reveal the limits to such reverse discourse. Though each stray object examined seeks to overturn restrictive ideologies heaped on needlework, thereby giving voice and autonomy to their producers, they nevertheless are still enabled by voiceless laborers and millworkers producing the silks and textiles. Reading stray objects, then, not only complicates the ideologies surrounding gendered material practices, but they also contain representations of these women's privileged access to fine sewing materials.

Of Pins and Pens

Contrasting the work of pins with the work of pens, *Aurora Leigh* establishes Victorian needlecraft as an agency of women's domesticity. The poem engages widespread conceptions of Victorian needlecraft and its perceived productivity. In the poem, the question of what "women's work" produces is answered by a list of useless household objects—slippers and stools—that hold neither commodified nor intellectual value. Middle-class women's bodies are the cost of this pointless work; their eyes are dulled, their fingers pricked, for no use other than to become "something [they] are not / But would be for [the husband's] sake" (18). The fault of needlecraft, then, is not its association with women but its social use as a domesticizing factor. Aurora sees within the pursuit of crafts a means of crafting women into ideal wives. Needlecraft, from this perspective, dulls not only literal sight but also intellect. Aurora perceives needlecraft as a limiting, domesticating, and debilitating pursuit—one that limits women to familial and personal spheres. Though widespread ideologies of needlecraft certainly justify Aurora's phobia of the needle, contextualizing the relationship between Victorian women and their needles reveals that needlecraft produced far more than Aurora admits.

Much has been made of the Victorian woman and her needle. To examine Victorian needlecraft is to explore questions of gendered material practices, of domesticity and labor, of bodies and their relation to objects, and of activities enacted in public and private spaces. Because of this mutual history, studying Victorian needlecraft builds upon centuries of material practices and ideologies in which needlecraft was both gendered and domesticized. The connection between needlecraft and women has its roots in the early modern period, and, by the seventeenth century, needlecraft "provided evidence of a child's 'progress' on the ladder to womanhood" (Parker 85). Rozsika Parker suggests that needlecraft was domesticated before it was feminized, and the growing rift between public and personal/domestic spaces inculcated an "ideology of sexual difference in which notions of masculine and feminine are meaningful only in relation to each other—and a society which uses embroidery as a signifier of sexual difference" (81). Even before the nineteenth century, the production of needlecraft worked to create an ideology of gendered difference, defining the characteristics of genders through contrast. From the late eighteenth century onwards, "the role of embroidery in conveying a leisured lifestyle" became essential, relegating needlecraft to women's idle hands in private spaces (123). This shifted the purpose of needlecraft from past centuries by distinguishing between socially acceptable and unacceptable needlework; needlework performed within domestic spaces was a good use of "free" time as an instructive and entertaining practice, and it also served to conspicuously represent the availability of said free time, establishing those who could practice it as well-to-do. In the nineteenth-century, needlework done for wages was stigmatized, as it was still considered feminine but did not adhere to the differentiation of gender by permitting women to do the masculine work of being paid for labor—namely, the making of sewn garments, the dying of threads, or the production of fabric.

With needlecraft signifying difference in both genders and spaces, such ideology relegated women to the domestic sphere as a means of establishing the public as a masculine realm of influence. Building upon these historical contexts, Victorian culture continues to use needlecraft not only as a feminine and domesticizing influence but also as a family-based, relationship-building practice. As Asa Briggs points out, "needles figured prominently within the Victorian imagination, largely because so many of them were in use in comfortable homes" (178). Briggs' assessment of the needle figures it as a domestic object—one that produces valued household objects and is used by women in well-off households. Like Briggs, Parker also notes this familial shift within Victorian material practices. Needlecraft "became implicated in an intense relationship," namely the "increasingly emotive mother/daughter relationship" (Parker 130). The emphasis on female family members perpetuated the feminizing and domesticating factors of needlecraft's past historical contexts, enabling needlecraft to become not just the work of idle hands but also work integral to the familial structure. From these contexts, Victorian needlecraft emerges as a study in difference—woven into its historic milieu are mediations on the differences between man and woman, private and public spaces, and idle craft and living work. Needlecraft that occurs within the home is viewed as a feminizing and domesticating force, distinguishing itself from the production of any public commodities within factories or by seamstresses. Even beyond this human contact, the domesticating ideology also conceals the natural fibers from which the textiles are woven or the plants or chemicals from which dye is produced. [10]

[10] "Needlecraft," here, is an umbrella term invoking the finished product made with the use of sewing or embroidery needles and thread, especially those handicrafts produced by women in the home. "Needlework" refers to the process of making needlecraft. "Sewing" is treated separately; it is the mending or production of articles for non-ornamental purposes, and, in the case of seamstresses, does produce public commodities.

Aurora Leigh condemns this difference between the perceived purpose of needlecraft as a private, domesticating force and the production of contrastingly public, expressive written works. Needlecraft's prominence within the text serves as a useful shorthand for distinguishing between women's old and new roles within society. First published in 1856, Barrett Browning's narrative poem depicts "a female figure who demonstrates those characteristics of strength, resolve, and political drive," thereby engaging "the Condition of England, socialism, utilitarianism, the 'woman question,' prostitution, education, the role of religions, the role of work, [and] life in the new urban environments" (Avery 72). As a result, Barrett Browning's own political activism translates into not only her shorthand used to distinguish between new and old women's roles, but she also seeks to unify "two seemingly incompatible plots: a female *Künstlerroman* and a feminine love story" by tackling the masculine epic poem format (Case 108). As a *Künstlerroman,* the tale concerns itself with the growth and accomplishments of Aurora as a writer, which is enabled by Aurora's rejection of domestic needlework. As a love story, *Aurora Leigh* attempts to mediate the tension between those accomplishments and Aurora's feelings for Romney. Pairing these two plot formats "represents a deeper tension within the text: that between the impulse to rebel against the restrictions of the traditional role of Victorian womanhood. . .and the desire to co-opt the ideological power of that role, to form her 'perfect artist' on the foundation of a culturally recognizable 'perfect woman'" (108).

Though Case suggests that the source of this unease is the result of plotting women within the patriarchal structure of the poem, the tension between the idea of a perfect woman and the emergence of an independent, perfect artist are not exclusive to genre conventions. Rather, this tension is also present within Aurora's perception of material practices and their

accompanying ideologies. [11] Aurora's rejection of needlecraft and its connection with the ideological "perfect woman" makes way for Aurora's emergence as an artist, thereby setting literacy and writing at odds with needlecraft through Barrett Browning's uneasy union of artist and marriage plots. Even as Aurora resists needlecraft in favor of writing—a craft that she deems more productive—her resistance of embroidery's domesticating influence instead further disseminates the view of needlecraft as a social signifier of difference. Aurora attempts to distinguish between the expressive woman artist's "spontaneous work" and the repressive domestic housewife's "forced work" (Browning 1:1058-59). She prefers the public work of writing to the private craft of embroidery; the expressiveness of embroidered décor is restrictive when compared to the capability of the written word to represent individual expression. This represents broader thematic elements of nineteenth-century heroines, who often face the dilemma of "whether to choose the constraints of domestic life as symbolized by the needle, or the freedoms of public life as symbolized by the pen" (Goggin 14). The former bears with it the expectations of a women's domesticating "work" as head of the household, represented by the figure of the Angel in the House, and anticipates her role as a morally superior person who "crafts" the home, both through handicraft and her presence, into a private haven. The latter bore with it the risks of engaging in work deemed unsuitable for women due to its publicity and, therefore, incompatible with domestic ideals.

Through this distinction, Barrett Browning ultimately perpetuates discursive ideologies and identities about needlecraft by establishing them as oppositional to the pen, whereas examining the material history of needlecraft reveals that it was also used as an expressive

[11] Ideologies, here, are approached in the same manner as Mary Poovey in *Uneven Developments*. Rather than treating them as a fixed "'set' of beliefs or a 'system' of institutions and practices," pressing against the ideologies expressed within *Aurora Leigh* and, by extension, the Victorian mindset reveals how such ideologies are "actually fissured by competing emphases and interests" (Poovey 3).

medium for expressing women's public voices as well as private ones. In other words, Barrett Browning perpetuates attitudes about needlecraft that contemporary examples of needlecraft overturn. Wielding needles to advocate for women's rights (both through the Holloway Prison handkerchiefs and modern day pussy hats) or exposing failures within the ideology of domesticity as a safe haven (like Parker's sampler) willfully use needles as a means of resisting the gendered material practices constructed around them. Still entangled within the threads producing stray objects are concerns of class and privilege, for while the reverse discourses employed by Parker, the suffragettes, or even fictional Maggie Tulliver enable the increasing emergence of publicly political and employed women, their access to fine dyes and textiles position their autonomy as distinctly middle class and conceal the voices of the working-class laborers who wove and dyed such materials.

Contextualizing needlecraft and its alternative discourses within *Aurora Leigh*, then, allows for a more forgiving reading of needlecraft and its connection to female subjectivity than Aurora openly acknowledges and underscores the privilege exercised by Aurora in her rejection of such practices. Reclaiming needlework to expose its ideological functions, from this perspective, allows the needle to serve a similar purpose to the pen in the construction of identity and self-expression. This alternative discourse for needlecraft, one that has roots in pre-Victorian practices, often exploited the craft's language of difference. Coded forms of meaning concealed within the stitching of self or expression "allowed women to make the statements that they needed to make to the people they wanted to talk to while hiding their intent from other, potentially hostile, audiences; it also enabled them to present harsh truths in a socially acceptable fashion" (Goggin 15). Though applied towards subversive practices, these middle-class productions of needlecraft were often overlooked on account of their ideological association with

domesticity, allowing messages to be exchanged without inciting widespread public defamation. Though a benefit to the women using needlecraft for such purposes, the ease with which such objects were overlooked as adhering to traditional gendered material practices may contribute to the difficulty of uncovering all instances of such practices.

Missing even within this reclamation of needlecraft is a perspective that verifies needlework as reputable profession without exploiting the impoverished worker. This, too, is present but not wholly developed within *Aurora Leigh*. Represented as the opposite of Aurora's domestic needlecraft, working-class Marian Erle further complicates the poem's happy ending and genre conventions. As the seamstress within the poem, Marian "sewed and sewed and sewed. . .[by] the tawny light" after being rescued by Romney (Browning 3:1236-37). This sewing is differentiated from the leisurely needlework of Aunt Leigh and Aurora; it is performed for practical purposes—rather than fancy, leisurely work—and is done to earn pay.

Her body is connected to the abuse of needlecraft, with her pin-pricked fingers, and also to the trauma of domestic violence and fallenness, which disrupts needlecraft's representation as a domesticating influence. Marian's needlecraft is not domesticated, but rather, associates her with the public realm of work. Marian "is other/outside/excluded/foreign because of her class, her sex, the violence to which she is subjected, and her illegitimate motherhood" (Lawson 117). Bereft of both words and handicraft to express herself, Marian's body instead bears the abuse of her work and her trauma. Here, *Aurora Leigh* engages a counter-narrative to domestic needlecraft: that of working-class women for whom needles were a means to earn a living. Marian's is "a body that does not inhabit drawing rooms," thereby fracturing Aurora's perception of needlecraft's sole purpose (domesticating wives) while perpetuating her perception of its connection to women's bodies (107). Marian's difficult life, then, serves to exemplify the cost of

the culturally perceived shift of needlecraft from necessity to idle work in middle-class and aristocratic homes. Though needlecraft for work and leisure co-existed in Victorian times, industrialization (and the advent of factory-produced textiles) helped spread the perception that working-class seamstresses were as outdated as they were unskilled. Othering the seamstress in this way allows for their mistreatment, as represented by Marian's assault and pregnancy. The plight of the working class seamstress, then, emerges more broadly as a theme through the representation of Marian's inscription of trauma on her body, and it allows for a means of exploring how both domestic and commodified needlecraft relate to women's bodies and embodied experiences.

Handicraft and Ideologies in *Aurora Leigh*

Handicraft, more broadly speaking, bears some ideological similarities to the representation of women both within Barrett Browning's text and on a broader, social scale, and it serves as a conceptual category of which needlecraft was often part. According to Schaffer, nineteenth century handicraft served numerous purposes. It was "closely associated with middle-class women's homebound status;" handicraft served as a "particularly powerful mode of circulating and publicizing" what Schaffer refers to as "major cultural ideas" (6-7). These "cultural ideas" involved making "women's separate sphere virtues visible" by testifying "to woman's skills in management, thrift, industry, and ornamental talent" (5). Such work often involved transforming organic material, wool or silk thread, for example, into a higher form.

Needlecraft required an array of materials for either reflecting nature or using it. Parker notes that fancy work embroidery utilized materials like "feathers, beetle-wings, [and] fish scales" to be woven into patterns (170). Inspired by seventeenth-century embroidery, Victorian needlecraft displayed a changing array of "roses and parrots of Berlin woolwork" or, later,

"irises, daffodils, and cranes" (183). Both preserved and transformed the use of nature as material. As Schaffer notes, "early-nineteenth-century crafts tended to present nature arranged in an orderly fashion, forced to serve a civilized end" (Schaffer 31). Even beyond needlecraft, many of Aurora Leigh's early crafts serve this purpose, calling for her to spin glass, stuff birds, and model flowers in wax (Browning 1:425). Spinning glass converted both labor and sand into an altered state. Stuffing birds and drafting model flowers sought to either preserve natural life or imitate it through synthetic materials, and these specimens, at times, provided inspiration for drawings or embroidered designs in turn. Schaffer notes that these crafts "worked to produce a sense of permanence, to turn the decaying bird's corpse into something that would last forever, radiant, orderly, scentless" (31). Both handicrafts and needlecraft, therefore, took the naturally disorderly objects and domesticized them through laborious effort, making them suitable for display within the home. This same outcome was the perceived influence of such crafts on women, as represented by Aunt Leigh's assertion that Aurora's participation in handicraft will contain her wild behavior. The relationship between nature and craft in Aurora's work recalls the image of her aunt as a preserved rose, further deepening the connection between preservationist crafts and their sterilizing, domesticating nature.

As the works of women are "symbolical," Aurora's literary task mirrors her embroidery. She transforms needlecraft into the material of her subjugation: Aurora first envisions herself as seaweed "to prick . . .to a pattern with her pin / fibre from fibre, delicate leaf from leaf, / and dry out from my drowned anatomy / the last sea-salt left in me" (Browning 1:381-384). Here, the language of preservation through fiber and needle-like pricking becomes violent. Aurora envisions her aunt dismantling her down to basic fibers, from which she might be pinned to a pattern. This requires no shortage of skill: Aurora's "drowned anatomy" must first be dried

enough to rid her of the salt while still leaving her fibers malleable and intact. The first of these transformations deals with matters of Aurora's tongue and hair. She describes how her "copious curls" are broken, and how she "left of saying [her] sweet Tuscan words" (1:385-386). In pinning her to a pattern, her aunt invokes the domesticating work of needles and her intention to rid Aurora both of her wildness (in her hair) and her foreignness (her Italian heritage). In this instance, inflicting violent preservation upon her body unifies both women's work, their bodies, and the materials they manipulate. Aurora sees herself as raw craft material, thereby connecting the practice of crafting with the sterile English femininity she sees in her aunt.

Aurora's fear of her body being crafted into new, unnatural material reveals much about the middle-class English women who "were models to the universe" in her aunt's eyes (1:446). In biting sarcasm, Aurora relays that her aunt liked women with "a general insight into useful facts, accomplishments in girls," and a "comprehen[sion] of husband's talk when not too deep" (1:413,427,431). Useful facts are limited to local information—tidbits about censuses or rivers that might make for interesting conversation. Her aunt's advice in conversation reflects that of contemporary guides to manners. Aunt Leigh's reference to accomplishments refers to handicrafts, both new crazes and preservationist arts alike. [12] Her aunt's dislikes—idle hands and frivolity—are fewer but more encompassing (1: 406, 447). Whereas frivolousness yet again invokes the language of guides to manners (Beeton, too, condemns fretting over "trifling occurrences," which is another means of discouraging frivolousness), the concept of idle hands returns to the concept of handicrafts (6). Hands and minds busy with needlecraft were safer than an unoccupied woman, who might then engage in frivolousness or other questionable behavior. Aunt Leigh's approval of needlecraft reflects the cultural acceptance of embroidery as "'not

[12] Talia Schaffer, in *Novel Craft*, discusses how Aurora's crochet was a "new craze invented in 1838," whereas her aunt's preservationist crafts were relics of "her youth." This variety is useful in that it represents a changing diaspora of feminized handicrafts even as it affirms such practices as domesticizing and feminized.

work,'" thereby dropping its status as "a profession" and "conveying a leisured lifestyle" (Parker 125). If crafts tamed nature and nurtured order, then hands dedicated to "not work" further enshrined women within the safe space afforded by the home and policed their bodies.

The domesticating qualities of needlecraft and idealized representation of these English women, as perceived by Aunt Leigh, adhere to the broader discursive identity of the Angel in the House. Needlecraft—and its ability to personalize the home and comfort the husband—figures the "house as a haven, a private domain opposed to the public sphere of commerce" (Langland 291). [13] Aurora perceives needlecraft as crafting and domesticating women, turning them into objects for husband's collections or dutiful daughters to adhere to English ideals. Aurora's perspective on handicraft reveals practices that simultaneously naturalize and denaturalize; both the use of natural objects and the crafting of natural bodies, though presented as engaging with nature, instead produce unnatural simulacrums of the raw material. Taxidermy birds, waxen flowers, and spun glass preserve but seemingly sap the subject matter of its liveliness; similarly, the crafting of women via handicraft practice into the discursive Angel in the House similarly results in a sapped liveliness, embodied literally by Aurora's pale and wan appearance under her aunt's ministrations.

This policing of women's bodies through handicraft, in part, enabled the objectification of their bodies and perceived fusion with domestic objects. In *Novel Craft,* Schaffer reveals how nineteenth century "craft items were made by the home's female inhabitant and thus appeared to be an extension of her body, as well as carrying the signs of her taste and skill" (33). Such handicrafts were thereby an extension of the woman's qualifications as a homeowner and

[13] Elizabeth Langland has identified issues with the scholarly representation of this discursive figure within Victorian novels, noting that such novels and novelists "do not simply reflect the contemporary ideology" but, rather, "by depicting a material reality filled with and interpreted through ideology, they also expose ideology" (291). Similarly, the material reality of needlecraft, as represented in *Aurora Leigh*, exposes the ideology of class and domesticity surrounding the gendered practice.

established a correlation between the aesthetically pleasing appearance of handicrafts/the woman and her perceived virtue. If crafts were "frequently described as 'pretty' or 'elegant'," then these qualities "elided the object with its maker's own body" (33). Using crafts to domesticate women, then, also worked to objectify them, irrevocably weaving their body and appearance in with their finely stitched needlecraft. This objectification, in part, is enabled by the connection of handicraft to naturalizing domesticity, which took natural, raw material and preserved (or replicated through embroidery) it in a fashion that reinforced the domesticating influence of the home.

Aurora is quick to distance herself from the naturalizing and objectifying influence of needlecraft especially. Her cross-stitched shepherdess leans "lovelorn with pink eyes / to match her shoes, when [she] mistook the silks" (Browning 1:451-452). Pink-eyes are neither "pretty" nor "elegant," and it suggests that handicraft is not a natural skill to Aurora in her raw state. Her choice of subject matter—a pastoral shepherdess—was a common focus of embroidery as early as the seventeenth century. Parker suggests that the "stitched shepherdess," as a general image, "suggests that femininity is natural," again entwining nature, domestic crafts, and women's bodies, but Aurora's pink-eyed shepherdess draws attention to femininity as a construct and challenges Parker's interpretation of such pastoral iconography (119). If "dress making, embroidery, lace making come by themselves" to household women, then a pink-eyed shepherdess defies the notion of a natural connection between gender and needlecraft by establishing it as a learned and practiced skill rather than "natural" talent (124). The pink-eyed shepherdess, therefore, reinforces what Aurora's depictions of her aunt elide: the materials used in domesticating work only appear to represent nature when, in fact, they are meticulously produced and adhere to a wider, cultural "pattern" of idealized, objectifying domesticity.

In fact, the completed pink-eyes underscore this intent. Though Aurora dismisses it because of a "mistake" over the silks, the completion of the project suggests that the poor color choice was intentional. Aurora would have noticed the pink eyes prior to completing them, and they may have been unpicked from the textile and replaced with a more proper white. Immediately following her depiction of the shepherdess, Aurora declares that "the works of women are symbolical" (Browning 1:456). Though this is followed by a list of domestic works, this line, at least, speaks to women more generally and Aurora herself, figuring her pink-eyed shepherdess as equally "symbolical." Pink eyes are often caused by irritation through weeping or strain, reflecting Aurora's accusation of needlework as dulling sight in the lines immediately following (Browning 1:457). Aurora's cross-stitch, then, represents both domestic ideal and its impact: an idealized woman with dull, irritated eyes. As a result, this little rebellion gestures to sewing not just as a naturalizing, domesticating influence but a potential medium for rebellion, even if Aurora conceptualizes this rebellion as a "mistake" in her sewing.

Though intended to represent the plight of a middle-class domestic ideal with dulled sight and tear-reddened eyes, the reference to the pink "silks" used in the production of the shepherdess's eyes also represents the privilege in Aurora's use of the material. Schaffer notes that the other handicrafts included in Aurora's regimen represent "the most high-status, difficult. . .crafts available to Victorian women" (31). Aurora's specific reference to silks rather than thread bears similar privilege. Raw silk was imported from British colonies; once ashore, such thread was often spun, woven, and dyed within the same mill or factory. According to the baptismal census from 1820 and abstracted from the 1851 census, Lancashire, western Yorkshire, and London were especially prolific sites to produce textiles. The concentration of textile mills suggests that "the close proximity of coal is causal to textile location," and this may

have been due to the "high energy input" required by the production of dyeing in particular (223).

As imported material, Aurora's pink silks were likely produced in such a mill. The production of pink silks required extensive labor to transform natural material into silk thread, echoing Aurora's fear of handicraft's propensity to preserve the natural into domestic ideal. Of course, such mills were anything but domestic. Beyond the noise and energy consumed by such mills, the laborers also had to endure coal-fueled heat in the dying of the pink silks, which contributed to the poor conditions and low wages faced by working-class laborers in such mills. It is no surprise that one of the most notorious strikes—those at the Manningham Mills—occurred at "the largest silk mill in Europe" (Barker 93). They were also largely performed by unionized male workers, with the role and rights of women laborers criticized and debated. Manningham "unquestionably perceived the recruitment of women as a means of reducing the cost and power of its workforce," and, in the aftermath of the strike, it was observed by company men that, "although women may be very bitter at first. . .still they have not the endurance and cool system of organization as the men have" (108-109). Though these strikes occurred in the late nineteenth century, the sexist opinions of the factory staff underscored the erasure of women's voices within even the most inhospitable and grueling of workplaces. Using the pink silks produced by such women workers complicates Aurora's privileged use of those silks as a form of rebellion against her own perceived oppression. Moreover, it reveals the extent to which middle-class women privileged their own voices and perceived plights over that of working-class women. Indeed, even in the case of the Manningham Mill Strikes, "middle-class female support was not wholly on the striker's side" or were "not involved in the dispute" (108). Aurora's rebellion against needlecraft, therefore, prioritizes middle-class female autonomy at the expense

of the working class, and her misuse of pink silks both contains and overlooks the plight of women laborers within Britain's silk factories.

When Aurora contemplates women's works as "symbolical," she implicates not only the contradictory relationship between nature and handicraft but also the representation of women as the objects that they produce—things carefully pricked, pulled, and crafted by mother-figures to be given to husbands. In answer to her query "producing what," Aurora imagines herself as "a pair of slippers, sire, / To put on when you're weary—or a stool / to stumble over and vex you / Or else at best, a cushion, where you lean / And sleep" (Browning 1:458-462). With these three objects, Aurora establishes a hierarchy of expected outcomes if she were to become a wife. At best, she imagines herself as a source of comfort to her husband—a means of providing him comfort or rest. At worst, she imagines herself as a perceived obstacle—something that her husband might trip over and curse at. Aurora's choice of objects is also telling; representing herself as slippers for her husband to wear, a stool to sit on, or a pillow upon which to rest his head indicates the degree to which women were expected to serve their husbands from head to toe. Though these envisioned outcomes "hurt most," Aurora acknowledges that women "are paid / the worth of [their] work, perhaps" (1:463-464). The worth of women's work is measured out in the husband's response, suggesting that "a woman was in truth embroidering to gain love" (Parker 155). Bodily conflated with objects and transformed by their crafts, this outcome was dubious. If women were paid the worth of their work, then Aurora suggests that the work is ultimately useless, as her described scenarios do not represent love but the use of an object for its intended purpose, enacting love without gaining it.

In such state, presenting handicraft as a means of transforming women into ideal daughters and wives is perceived as natural, but instead isolates those relationships by turning

them into commodified modes of exchange, differentiating between men and women by likening women to collectible objects. Reflected within the denaturalizing property of ideologically "natural" handicrafts is an implicit acknowledgement of the domestic fantasy's synthetic qualities. Domestic needlework picks apart natural materials for fiber and crafting material used in "symbolical" works, and, in doing so, needlework seeks to "prick" its practitioners to discursive, idealized patterns. Even as she decries the practice of needlework, Aurora's pink-eyed shepherdess still speaks to the potential for a more weaponized, rebellious use of the needle. Moreover, the reference to silk thread—like Aurora's reference to other costly handicraft practices—gestures to the expensive quality of the domestic materials that Aurora rejects. These fine materials speak to Aurora's class privilege and erase the means of these materials' production. The fine silks carelessly applied in Aurora's rebellious embroider bear the fugitive meanings of their importation and the exploitation of colonial laborers, presenting her crisis of self-expression and unintentionally erasing theirs. By representing the needle as a tool for sewing difference between gender, spaces, and class, the thread connecting these ideological opposites in *Aurora Leigh* is drawn taut and becomes perilously close to snapping.

The Pen and The Public

Needlework is crucial to the construction of Aurora's "superior" work, writing. The latter truly records her "inner life," which has "ample room / for heart and lungs, for will and intellect, / Inviolable by conventions" (Browning 1:478-480). This inner life unifies both mind and body, dealing with the heart and lungs as much as the mind, and her inner life, moreover, eventually informs her public writing. "Inviolable by conventions," this inner life is represented as being invulnerable to the domesticizing work of needlecraft. Aurora's protection of an inviolable writing self helps to draw a gendered binary between private domestic work and public

authorship. This public self, rising in defiance of Aunt Leigh's attempts to domesticate, represents her writing as existing in a mutual, natural relationship with her existence; unlike needlework, however, writing is truly a natural pursuit for her, even if she acknowledges that it is a craft that she must work at. It is also an expensive pursuit; the education and materials necessary for writing were both expensive and class prohibitive, much more so than cheap textiles or thread.

A heady admiration of past poets provokes Aurora to pour herself "along the veins of others" and achieve "mere lifeless imitations of live verse," and so she "made the living answer for the dead, / Profaning nature" (1:973-976). With these acknowledgements of her youthful foolishness, Aurora condemns certain modes of writing of the same shortcomings that she perceived with needlework. By merely imitating the work of others, or adhering to a proverbial "pattern" like the ones used in needlework, Aurora produces unnatural work of poor quality. The imitations of live verse that she produces are inspired by her immersion in her father's books. Her imitation resembles the preservationist crafts that she so abhorred; in making "the living answer for the dead," her work perpetuates ideologies contained within the work rather than creating new ones. Moreover, like a preservationist craft, base imitation saps the original subject matter of its livelihood, leaving only a pale imitation in its wake. Pricking her own words to the pattern of those past is no better an art, in Aurora's mind, than the domestic crafts practiced by her aunt. Her unique voice—and her public self—is prioritized over those that construct word and textiles based on patterns.

Indeed, ironically, as she privileges writing in the public realm over sewing in the private real, Barrett Browning subscribes to problematic perceptions of the difference between social

spheres of influence. [14] By limiting the meanings of needlecraft to signs of middle-class women's oppression rather than, for example, a sign of working class women's labor or of ecological depletion, Barrett Browning privileges the middle class women's story above these others who must be transcended so that Aurora may triumph over them and reach the public realm. By refusing to acknowledge domestic crafts, such as needlecraft, as means through which self-actualization is possible, Aurora severs the domestic and familial sphere from meaningful interaction with the outside world. [15] By embracing the public, Aurora reifies the private. She is the exception to the rule: the supreme, liberated individual whose voice matters. In rejecting domestic and ideological feminine traits, Aurora's perception of her desires as progressive for women nevertheless reinforce patriarchal ideologies by diminishing the importance of material practices coded as feminine . Modern feminism has overturned this perception, arguing that "liberalism is structured by patriarchal as well as class relations, and that the dichotomy between the private and the public obscures the subjections of women to men within an apparently universal, egalitarian, and individualistic order" (Pateman 282-283). This universal, individualistic order perceived within patriarchal order is indeed reflected in Aurora's assertion that truth exists in a place beyond gender, even as she resists the objectification and gendered criticism heaped upon her in public by male critics.

Pin-Pricked Seamstresses and Subjectivity

[14] Deirdre David also notes the trouble behind *Aurora Leigh's* perceived liberalism, suggesting that the poem represents Barrett Browning's "conservative sexual politics" more so than any progressive agenda (113). That said, *Aurora Leigh* was nevertheless influential to late nineteenth century feminism, even if it has its own problematic representations of needlecraft.

[15] Squires denotes this public as consisting of both state/public and the civil society/public that is traditionally perceived as private. This structuring, therefore, isolates the domestic from meaningful interaction within liberal politics/progressivism, and it further contributes to the divisive gendering of the spheres. The perceived thinking between these two spheres is also divided:

> The sort of thinking and moral reasoning generated by and required within the social relations characteristic of family life are quite distinct from those generated by and required within the social relationships characteristic of public life. The emphasis here is on empathy, relationality, and caring rather than on autonomy, individuality, and justice. (28)

By envisioning ideal domestic needlecraft as "leisurely" work, Aurora initially fails to imagine scenarios in which needlecraft is neither leisurely nor relegated to middle-class women. Exemplifying these instances are the working-class milliners, or seamstresses, who were also entangled within the tapestry of needlecraft's material practices within the nineteenth century. The seamstress, as a tragic figure, appeared "predominantly in the Victorian imagination because consciences could be pricked by revelations of working conditions" (Briggs 179). While the gendered nature of needlecraft ensured that it was a skill accessible to most women and girls (which heightened its appeal as a potential means of employment), social factors rendered the working conditions intolerable. With the rise of industrialism and mass production, "the desire for cheapness forced down the seamstress's wages; the demand for speedy production lengthened her working day" (Walkley 10). A growing consciousness of the milliner's working conditions proliferated contemporary publications and literature, and so the seamstress became subject to her own ideological discourse. This discourse hinged on the assumption of inevitable moral depravity justified by socioeconomic class, thereby creating a problematic matrix in which the working-class woman's options were dreadfully limited. In her chapter on the seamstress, Deborah Logan notes that midcentury working class women "were limited to 'marry, stitch, die, or do worse'" (25). [16] "Do worse" refers to prostitution, relegating that notion of fallenness to something worse than death. While Harris focuses on this ideology as representing anxieties about "the appearance of women in the city and in the world of waged labor," examining the role of the seamstress in *Aurora Leigh* represents more fissures within the gendered ideologies invested in by the novel's heroine (Harris 3).

[16] Deborah Logan borrows the phrase "Marry, Stitch, Die, or Do Worse" from an 1859 speech "made by American feminist Caroline Dall on behalf of lower-class women" (20). This phrase has also widely been distributed in scholarship about Victorian Women, including (as acknowledge by Logan) Helsinger, Sheets, and Veeder's *The Woman Question*.

"Pricking" Aurora Leigh's conscience is the figure of Marian Erle, whom *Aurora Leigh* struggles to represent as much as it is fascinated by her. Introduced as part of Barrett Browning's progressive activism, Marian marks one of Browning's representations of many "pressing social issues of the time—poverty, rape, prostitution, illegitimacy, the constraints on women" (107). Each of these social issues is borne within Marian's representation, but they are nevertheless riddled through with the ideologies surrounding the pure seamstress figure. Upon first encountering her, Aurora marvels how "such soft flowers [can come] from such rough roots" (3:805-806). This observation of Marian's appearance reflects her previous conviction that "lilies are still lilies, pulled by smutty hands" (3:708). Comparing Marian's images to a pure flower despite its environment relegates her to the pure figure of the working-class seamstress—one whose only recourse, at least within the literary ideology, is to succumb to temptation or retain her virtue. Aurora has no qualms about revealing the extent to which she embellishes Marian's narrative. Aurora notes that Marian relays her life story with "simple, rustic" turns, therefore justifying her decision to write "the thing [she] understood so, than the thing [she] heard so" (4:155-156). Her decision to embellish Marian's story with clichés about the working-class seamstress reinforces the discursive ideologies surrounding the figure. Positioning Marian as a "soft flower" from "rough roots" or a "lily" pulled by "smutty hands" suggests that her character is poised for inevitable corruption. A white lily handled with dirty hands will become dirtied in kind; a "soft" flower growing in inhospitable conditions will either wilt or become hardened itself. The "rough roots" and "smutty hands" signify the contaminating impact of the lower classes. Their representation is markedly disembodied, described by Aurora as "an ugly crest of faces [that] rose upon you everywhere from that crammed mass!" (Browning 4:569-570). Though Aurora fancies her embellishments as her understanding of Marian's situation, she

nevertheless subscribes to the plight of the seamstress as one who will either lose her virtue or die and presents the working-class as a disfigured, disembodied source of corruption.

This becomes even more prominent when, upon glimpsing Marian years later, the inevitability of the seamstress's fate becomes a stumbling block for Aurora when she spies her friend with a child. Aurora imagines herself writing to Romney about the occasion, glibly remarking that Marian is "not dead, but only…damned" (6: 365-366). Aurora chides herself for leaping to such conclusions but resolves to find and save Marian, quickly adding "child or no child—and if a child, then one to save!" (388-389). These second-guesses read as a moral quandary for Aurora—one that she narrowly passes by first condemning then forgiving Marian, affirming her innocence upon learning that her child was a product of assault. Even Aurora's forgiveness is figured by language adhering to the social discourse: Marian defends her honor by saying that she was "not ever. . .seduced, But, simply, murdered" (770-771). With this phrasing, she positions her assault within the perceived dichotomy of "die" or "do worse," thereby enabling Aurora to confirm Marian's continued innocence and purity. Embroiled within Marian's perceived redemption is Aurora's own demonstrated growth as a character. In questioning and then forgiving Marian, her encounter with Marian becomes "an aspect of Aurora's growth" (Lawson 106). In acknowledging the plight of the lower classes and embracing Marian as a sister, Aurora's character is seemingly ennobled through the representation of the discursive seamstress narrative. However, Aurora's ennoblement is yet another means through which Aurora benefits from discursive identities; Marian—and, by extension, the working-class and poor—serve as a device for the development of Aurora's middle-class sensibilities, which is its own problematic exploitation.

Stemming from the exploitation of the working class is Marian Erle's own exploitation, which unfolds from the varying degree to which her body is both objectified and rendered into an interpretable text detailing her experiences. When first introduced to Aurora, Marian is overlooked as an individual; Lady Waldemar instead focuses on Marian's finger that is "exquisitely pricked by a hundred needles" (Browning 3:659-660). Marian's finger, then, becomes demonstrative of her labor and, by extension, her class. That same finger "pricked by a hundred needles" invokes the extent of her labor, suggesting that her finger is pin-pricked not through a lack of skill but, rather, through the frequency with which she must work with needles. Lady Waldemar also speculates on the future of that finger, suggesting that the tie "'Twixt class and class in England" will hang on Marian's finger. Figuring a wedding ring as a "tie" suggests that her finger will be bound, in some way, potentially preventing her from acting as a seamstress through her union with a gentleman and envisioning her domestication from seamstress to wife. Though Waldemar suggests that Marian will serve as the tie between working class and middle class, the "class" may also be referring to Marian's perceived class, or value, as a woman, establishing her union with Romney as a mending alternative to her "pricked" finger.

Rather than a secure marriage, Marian's "pricked finger" come to reflect the violence enacted upon her body and the broken domesticity that she inherited from her mother, who "tries to sell Marian, quite deliberately offering up her daughter for rape" (Lawson 109). The "tie" forged between classes is not marital but sexually exploitative. Though "she knitted hose not ill, and was not dull at needlecraft," the domesticating influence of needlecraft fails to domesticate Marian or liberate her from the extreme labor of needlecraft (3:1034-34). Instead, her pin-pricked fingers provide a service for "thrifty wives," thereby reinforcing the distance between leisurely embroidery and practical, laborious needlecraft (1038). The connection between

seamstress and prostitute, horrific labor and sexual slavery is made with Lady Waldemar's intervention in Marian's outcome. Her wicked schemes capitalize on the ideological notion that seamstresses are a hairsbreadth from fallenness. Marian's sexual fall, therefore, "implicates the needlecraft milieu as an exploitative occupation in more ways than one" (34). The bodily trauma inflicted by her pin-pricked fingers is contextualized by her risk of assault and objectification; just as ladies and wives exploited seamstresses through low pay and long hours, so too were ladies complicit in establishing ideologies which subjected such workers to the horrors of assault or prostitution.

The devastating trauma heaped on Marian's body often makes her a troubling character to navigate, both in respect to *Aurora Leigh*'s narrative structure and as a figure connected to contemporary class and gendered discourses. To mesh Marian's tragic life with the "happy" arch of Aurora's growth and fulfillment as wife and artist, the narrative affords the seamstress with a means of recourse: Marian is bestowed with a voice with which to share her experiences. When Aurora first relays Marian's life history, Marian's experiences have "seemingly rendered her voiceless" (Lawson 109). Her second encounter with Aurora, though still told through Aurora's narration, depict her as emboldened by her experiences. She ridicules Aurora's hasty condemnation of her and asks what right Aurora has "to say to that, who all are happy, and sit safe and high, and never spoke before to arraign [her] right" (6: 674-75). Marian, by this point, acquires enough pique to condemn class differences and privilege as complacent in her suffering. This is reinforced by her recognition that she "cannot tell out all [her] wrong without offence to happy decent folk" (1220). Just as Marian uses her voice to implicate the middle class and their privilege, she also depicts such "decent folk" as unwilling listeners to her story, thereby requiring her to "scrupulously hint with half words, delicate reserves, the thing which no one scrupled we

should feel in full" (1221-1224). Though Marian suggests she uses "half words" to mitigate the impact of her trauma, her inability to give words to the experience itself suggests a far deeper issue. Lawson describes how "her story remains in the realm of the unspeakable, 'unrecuperated,' occurring in excess of both narrative and the law, [and returning] as symptom" (120). Though Marian equips herself with a voice to condemn unwarranted judgment, her own experiences—and, by extension, subjectivity—remain in a liminal state in which they can neither be expressed nor written but remain integral to her story and the narrative of *Aurora Leigh*. The cruel irony of Marian's acquisition of a voice is that she is incapable of expressing the trauma itself.

As a character central to *Aurora Leigh*'s moral investigation of contemporary issues, the end to Marian Erle's narrative involvement scarcely provides a resolution to her plight. Marian's lack of a happy "resolution" underscores the ideological work performed through her role as the seamstress. Tracing the causes of her "fall," Marian's embodied experiences reveal both class and gendered ideologies as the responsible parties behind her trauma. On one hand, as a pin-pricked milliner, positing her experiences as too terrible for expression (and her inability to be domesticated as a result) defies the presumed power of needlecraft as a domesticating factor. It also unifies exploitation of seamstresses' bodies with their sexual exploitation, again directing blame towards needlework as a primary sign of women's objectification and their vulnerable immanence. This is in a sense a double dodge. Browning avoids implicating middle-class women themselves sin the exploitation of working class women and natural resources who produce the tools through which middle-class women construct their respectability. And so, focused on the needle pricking and penetrating Marian's body, Barrett Browning avoids pinning blame on men themselves.

The Blood Red Sampler

Browning's use of needlework is highly problematic, foreclosing both the fugitive meanings of craft itself and its possible alternate meanings as text. As Goggin argues, textiles are more complex than Barrett Browning allows, "both participating in, and offering an alternative to, a complex web of rhetorical spaces, practices, and artifacts" (Goggin 32). Despite Barrett Browning's claims, then, textiles may construct "a space for rethinking what counts as epistemic evidence and who counts in our investigations" (32). On one hand, strong cases have been made for asking "why [women] selected such objects, what secondary gains they accrued from absolute conformity to the feminine ideal, and how they were able to make meanings of their own while overtly living up to the oppressive stereotype" (Parker 13). On the other hand, expanding the genealogy of textiles to include their very origins in the earth, the needle factory, the loom, and their passage through other women's hands well beyond the middle-class figure Aurora represents, challenges her limited reading of textiles. Indeed, reading objects that stray from their meaning and purview reveals a rich, diverse tapestry of material meaning.

Emerging from the practice of inscribing verse on samplers, Elizabeth Parker's sampler, crafted around 1830, at first glance adheres to social conventions, featuring neatly stitched rows of letters embroidered with a finely skilled hand:

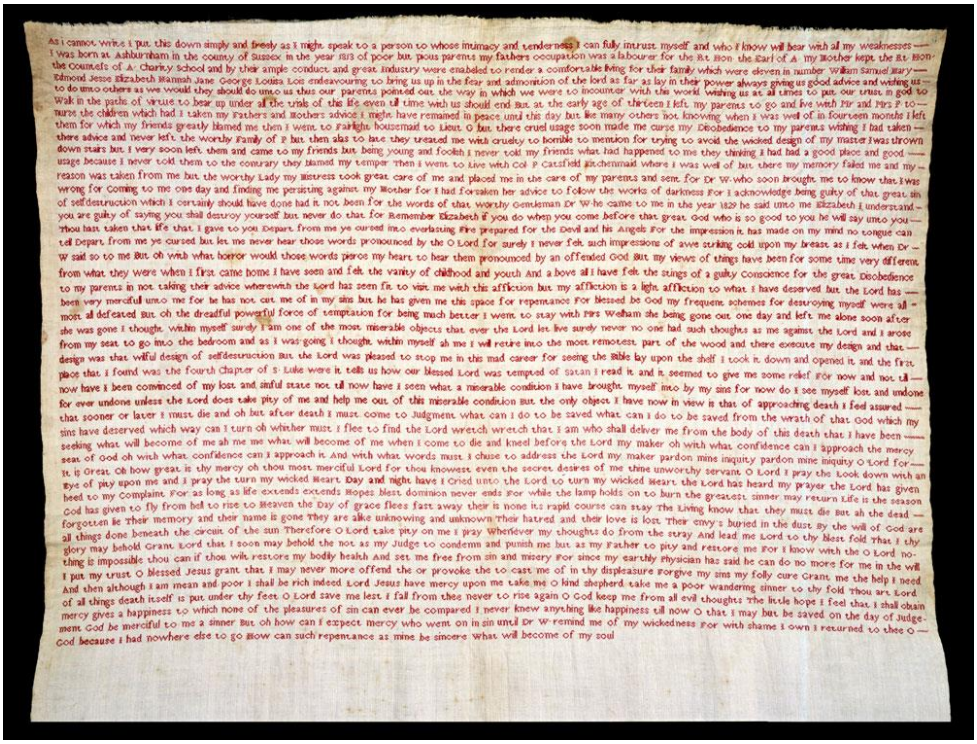

Figure 1. Elizabeth Parker's Sampler, after 1830. Image from the V&A. See Appendix A for transcription.

Closer examination reveals what Goggin refers to as "a rhetorical performance" in her analysis of the sampler (37). [17] Aurora Leigh's declaration of "I Write" finds its rebellious counterpart in the words "As I cannot write" stitched in crimson thread on Parker's sampler, which is then followed by Parker's description of her physical abuse, rape, and temptation to suicide. The details are meticulously sewn from "46 lines, 1,722 words, 6,699 characters

[17] When participating and investing in needlecraft's domesticating influence, samplers were "the place where moral sentiments were impressed upon young girls" (Parker 13). The development of women's skills runs parallel to young women's development of morals through the stitching of verses within the medium of the sampler. These samplers also marked opportunities for communal exchanges and representation of the self. Goggin notes how "the marking sampler on which young needlecrafters would practice stitching various styles of alphabetic letters and numbers" were often used "to mark household and personal items" and "circulate as a material CV" (33). Embroidering initials served as a means of inculcating ownership, and the exchange of the sampler between small groups of women allowed for a space in which identity might also be represented. Due to the sampler as a perceived means of developing moral and feminine character alongside skill, such textiles often became "the place where conflicts underlying the ideology were expressed," demarcating "the clash between individual ambition and the ideology of femininity" (Parker 13). From this perspective, the perceived "feminist turn" of material studies allows space for traditional needlecraft to be examining as dually representative of discursive identities, social ideologies, and women's resistance to domesticity.

(averaging 146 characters per line)," and the narrative ends "abruptly mid-way down the cloth, in mid-line with a powerful plea: 'What will become of my soul[?]'" (37). Though Goggin finds this textile useful as a means of investigating "what counts as rhetoric, and who counts in the creation/transformation and circulation/performance of meaning," Parker's sampler also provides a unique opportunity to investigate stray meanings in needlecraft. Emblazoned on a sampler meant to stitch the domesticated female or represent traditional women's skill, Parker describes how Lieu. G, the head figure of the household under which she is employed treated her "with cruelty to[o] horrible to mention," then goes on to describe how she was "thrown down stairs" and subject to "cruel usage" ("Elizabeth Parker's"). Parker's experiences of rape and assault are not mentioned outright but invoked within the blood-red thread and woven into the deliberate presentation of her trauma. Defying the domesticating medium in which she is "writing," Parker resists being subsumed into the medium by representing her story of domestic abuse.

In an attempt to understand her trauma, Parker turns to verses, noting how she "found the fourth Chapter of St. Luke w[h]ere it tells us how our blessed Lord was tempted of Satan" ("Elizabeth Parker's"). The turn to voice—and question of her redemption—both utilizes and contradicts the traditionally perceived purpose of the sampler. The references to verse and concern over the outcome of her soul seeks to rectify the moralizing practices of sampler production with the violence of her trauma. The abrupt end and blankness at the bottom of the textile outline the precise limitations of this moralizing influence, suggesting that while Parker may seek redemption, the needlecraft cannot moralize Lieu G.'s assault of her or the rift in domesticity such treatment creates. The blank space suggests that there is work left to be done on the sampler itself and, by extension, within Parker herself. This is reflected in her description of herself as "one of the most miserable objects" ("Elizabeth Parker's"). By attempting to process

her trauma with the practice of samplers, Parker instead unifies her experiences and body with the textile, resulting in an object that both adheres to and defies gendered material practices.

At stake within Parker's sampler is the perceived "privacy" of the domestic space, which seeks to exclude domestic women from the public and social spheres. Parker's horrifying and disturbing experiences "verge on the edge of the non-narratable, and is thus replete with manifest evasions, silences, and distortions in its representations of both the woman's body and the domestic sphere it inhabits" (Lawson 6). Though not referring Parker's sampler explicitly, Lawson's description of domestic violence as an invisible/private and liminal experience reflects the rhetorical function of Parker's attempts to reconcile her experiences within domestic ideologies. Goggin also notes Parker's strategic use of silence, interpreting the phrase "As I cannot write" as signaling "a self-imposed silence—a metaphorical cutting off of her tongue and hands" (37). Refusing to write on the matter implicates a desire to keep such experiences private, and this, per Goggin, suggests that "she was trying to abide by one of the long-standing injunctions to women to be chaste, silent, and obedient" (39). As an assaulted woman contemplating suicide, Parker's chastity and obedience are not accessible. Goggin remarks that silence, too, is not entirely possible, "given the devastation she suffered on physical, psychological, and spiritual levels" (39). Parker's inability to remain silent about her experiences is, perhaps, magnified by the sampler's isolation from its intended purpose. As a textile meant for display and circulation within women's circles, the presence of her trauma on textile also begs for its circulation, permanently rendering her experiences as both visible and public. Doing so overturns the domestic's division from the public/private dichotomy by implicating the domestic sphere's role in the violation of her autonomy.

This rhetorical purpose is also present in the current condition of the sampler. Perpetually on display in digital format, Parker's trauma is both accessible to those browsing the V&A's site and inaccessible on account her experiences' incomprehensible nature. Physically, the sampler remains stored within the Victoria and Albert Museum's archives. Because Parker's sampler also marks a "stitching of the self" (to again borrow Goggin's phrasing), it follows that the exhibition of her sampler also displays the inscription of trauma on her physical body. Isobel Armstrong, in describing the Grotesque under glass, describes a principle at work with Parker's sampler: "here the incised body and its ornament become one being, and the aesthetic create[s] a double body through a contradictory principle of violation and integration" (215). Archiving the sampler as an object for study marks not only the violation of Parker's body but the other violations implicated within its existence: the suturing of gaps between domestic/private and public, the female body and its objectification, the ideologies of fallenness and its implication of innocent women. This practice defies the sampler's traditional practice as something that might be proudly displayed in a domestic setting or circulated among friends and family. Parker's text exists as a stray object; it cannot be domesticated or displayed within the home or alongside other samplers within a museum. The nature of the medium and its message make it incoherent within the space of the museum or the field of handicraft studies.

As an object removed from its traditional purpose, an analysis of Parker's sampler challenges discursive representations of domesticity, drawing attention to experiences within female subjectivity that defy expression and categorization. The repetition of women's crafts as they appear in Barrett Browning's *Aurora Leigh* and within the broader canon has prevented study of more disturbing, less domesticated objects both in literary and material culture studies. Just as Marian Erle haunts the text of *Aurora Leigh*, such stray objects haunt the boundaries of

material culture studies and indicate the limitations of ideological material practices. In addition to studying Barrett Browning's poem, studying a text such as Parker's sampler as a text itself opens a critique of the claims made about the needle/pen debate in Victorian cultural and literary criticism.

Plain-Sewing in *The Mill on the Floss*

Published just four years after *Aurora Leigh*, George Eliot's *The Mill on the Floss* (1860) capitalizes on similar language to Barrett Browning's but resists such language's domestic ideologies. With sampler and handkerchiefs serving as temporal poles to *The Mill on the Floss*'s publication, Maggie Tulliver's work as a seamstress contributes to needlework as a liberating pursuit quite simply because, unlike sampler, kerchief, or Aurora's shepherdess, Maggie pursues plain-work rather than fancy-work. The skill of her plain-work and its use as a means of supporting self and family suggest that the boundaries of stray needlecraft are not delineated by embroidery alone. Eliot effectively acknowledges sewing not just as a reputable means for women's employment, therefore disrupting the tragic figure of the seamstress, but also as a means of representing women's experience.

Like Aurora, Maggie resists both domestic ideals and needlework as a domesticating practice in her youth. The narrator, though sympathetic throughout to Maggie's plight, first introduces her as "a mistake of nature" (13). This description afforded to Maggie's character comes on the heels of her mischief, in which Mrs. Tulliver suspects that the young girl is playing by the Floss river. Physically unified with the outdoors through her mischief at the riverbank, the "mistake" refers not to the natural world but the natural order of the home and the behaviors perceived as "natural" for a young girl. When instructed to do needlework as a nine-year old girl, Maggie protests, "in a vehemently cross tone, 'I don't *want* to do my patchwork'" (Eliot 13). Her

childhood vehemence causes Mrs. Tulliver to liken her to "a wild thing" (12). As a "wild thing," Maggie can neither be tamed nor domesticated. As a result, Maggie's refusal to commit to her needlework and her youthful wildness inspire even her lower middle-class family to categorize her as something outside of the realm of domesticity.

Maggie's body, too, is figured as both an object and othered in a way that renders her unsuited for domesticity. As a child, Mrs. Tulliver describes her as "too cute for a woman"; by being "too cute for a woman," more than her age precludes her from the category of womanhood and desirability as a wife. Her intelligence namely ensures that, like "a long-tailed sheep," Maggie will "fetch none the bigger price" (12). Objectified as a commodified sheep, this depiction suggests that Maggie will not marry well for both her physical body and her sharp disposition. Throughout the novel, the narrator emphasizes the foreignness of Maggie's dark hair and dark eyes; her dark hair cannot be tamed nor woven into "plaits," prompting her to recklessly cut it short (12-13). From her childhood, her dark skin links her to vagrant gypsies, causing her Aunt Pullet to remark that her brown skin will "stand in her way i' life" and eventually prompting Maggie to run away and "go to the gypsies" (64, 99). Building on the commodification of her body, Maggie's darkness similarly lowered her perceived value as wife. Though some found the "nomadic 'bohemianism' of Gypsy life attractive," Gypsies were more often "stereotyped as separate 'races' whose beliefs and customs were alien to Englishness" (Nord 122). As a result, Maggie's darkness both othered her from English domesticity and increased her exoticized value (though not her value as a wife), eventually prompting Stephen to view her as a "tall, dark-eyed nymph" (Eliot 347). Her darkness, therefore, while distancing her from the Angel in the House, increases desire through her dangerous, exotic appearance. In representing others' assessment of her body to foreshadow her eventual fallenness, positioning

the narrator distance's Maggie's profession and independence from her wrongful accusations of fallenness.

Maggie's independence first surfaces through her thirst for books, and these books are instrumental in recovering needlework as a means of self-sufficiency and independence. Despite Maggie's love of books, she often "wished for books with *more* in them," and decries what she learned in many books as "the ends of long threads that snapped immediately" (265). The "snapped threads" of dream-worlds cannot bear the weight of reality; they are not enough to "dull her sensibility to her actual daily life" and provide an equally unsatisfactory "explanation of this hard, real life" (265). The snapped threads, then, signify a failed seam between reality and fiction; most fail to codify Maggie's struggles in a way that provide guidance and, by extension, fail to reflect her experiences as a woman and as someone impoverished. Only one book reaches Maggie as "an unquestioned message," which is described as not "written on velvet cushions to teach endurance to those who are treading with bleeding feet on the stones" (270). This book does not attempt to soften experience with cushions or flowery language. Figuring other texts as an object of domestic comfort—a cushion to lean on, to borrow Aurora's words—supposes that fiction is a fine distraction for those with the leisure for it. The "velvet cushions" are echoed in the following lines by what the narrator describes as the "claret" and "velvet-carpets" of "good society," which is merely a "very expensive production" (270). The connection of plush velvet suggests that books, like good society, may also be a similar production, thereby reaffirming fictitious constructs rather than offering a realistic glimpse into a "wide and arduous national life" (270). This message drives Maggie's decision to fling away her books "with a sort of triumph that she had risen above the need of them" when she first turns to

sewing, which serves to foreground sewing—rather than writing—as a reliable means of navigating experiences and keeping Maggie firmly connected to reality (272).

Though the pin was often encoded as an alternative to the pen, as represented by Parker's "As I cannot write," envisioning the content of her books as "snapped" threads—or poor quality materials for needlework—Maggie prioritizes sewing as a means of not just self-proficiency but also skilled creation. When it comes to writing, Maggie dismissively reflects that "she could make dream-worlds of her own" but ultimately "no dream-world would satisfy her" (265). Her lack of satisfaction stems in part from the "velvet" cushion provided by such fiction, but it also connects to the value of labor. Sewing requires considerably more skill for Maggie than the construction of fiction. Her "complicated stitchings" are "falsely called 'plain'" (272). In her work, she finds both stimulation and an opportunity to develop skill, noting that "in moments of mental wandering" she may attach a sleeve the incorrect way to a shirt (272). As such, creation by pin requires more conscientious effort and focus than creation by pen for Maggie, and it proves to be a reliable means of economic income that is both gratifying through the skill that Maggie develops and through the independence that it brings her.

Maggie is brazen in her decision to take up the needle as a means of self-sufficiency; rather than getting her work "in a more quiet and indirect way," Maggie askes for work "at a linen shop at St Ogg's" (271-272). Rendering her decision to sew as publicly visible, Maggie also displays her ability to pay off her family's debt through labor, shifting her prescribed role from dutiful housekeeper to provider. The visibility of this work also decenters the public/private dichotomy, shifting the quietness of sewing into the public sphere. Though not representative of trauma, her sewing nevertheless represents her experiences, her grief, and self-prescribed humility, rendering these otherwise interior subjectivities equally public. At her work, she is

described as having a "new inward life" that was visible when "handing diligently over her sewing" (272). Rather than reducing her to a unhealthy pallor, Maggie's sewing brings out "a gradually enriched colour and outline of her blossoming youth" (272). In her public performance of sewing, her increased health, and her awakening "inner life," Maggie strays from the discursive ideologies representing needlecraft as either degrading labor or domesticizing leisure, once again borrow similar phrases and symbols as *Aurora Leigh* to opposite effect of the poem. Her decision to make a public performance of her employment, along with her heightened health, overturns the presumed shame of such work and suggests that sewing can be a dignified means of earning a living and contributing to the family economy.

Maggie's dedication to her sewing as a practical and expressive pursuit enables her continued resistance to needlework's socially prescribed domesticating work, which ultimately dissolves needlework as a signifier of class. This works to the effect of equalizing sewing with middle-class embroidery. As much as the dark-haired Maggie is bent over her sewing, so too does the fair-headed Lucy—her cousin and wholly domesticated woman—work steadily at her embroidery, often in the form of "worsted flowers" growing from beneath her fingers (349). When her sewing is praised by both Lucy and Stephen, their assessment hinges on their understanding of embroidery's role within the home. Lucy describes Maggie's work as "beautiful" and begs "a few specimens [from Maggie] to show as fancy-work" (349). Suggesting that Maggie share fancy-work—rather than plain sewing—acknowledges Maggie's skill with the needle while also seeking to correct her behavior, encouraging her to construct fancy-work samples to exchange within women's social circles. This practice would adhere to the gendered material practices of samplers, seeking to once again sanitize and domesticate Maggie's work through more socially approved application of needlework. Acknowledging this, Maggie

dismisses Lucy's request quite bluntly: "Plain sewing was the only thing I could get money by; so I was obliged to try and do it well" (349). Grounding her needlework in utilitarian terms draws attention to the necessity of Maggie's sewing as a means of combatting her poverty and maintaining her autonomy. Lucy's assumption that one form of needlework may easily translate into the other suggests transference between the skills of embroidery and sewing, or, at least, the assumption that a woman skilled at one is equally trained in all forms of needlework. In such state, Maggie's adaptive sewing—which can be translated into needlework signifying both leisure and poverty—translate her needlework into "the marker of cross-class womanliness," whereas Lucy—limited in seeing only the potential for fancy-work in the plain—represents only the production of ideological domesticity and invests wholly in plain and fancy needlework as indicators of class (Homans 169).

The fact that Lucy, herself, is producing embroidery to be sold at a Charity Bazaar further muddles the boundaries between both women's needlework. Whereas Maggie's exquisite needlecraft earns her independence through skillful labor, Lucy's participation in the bazaar works to objectify herself more so than her needlecraft through the imitation of a commodified marketplace, and it underscores the irony of Lucy's embarrassment over Maggie's frank discussion of her labor. As Homans discusses at length, the "men do not take seriously their purchases of bead-mats and wrist-warmers. What they are consumers of is women's sexuality" (174). The staging of the bazaar—and the perceived sale of even middle-class and wealthy women's bodies—reveals further holes within the ideological construct of sewing for pay as amoral or lower-class. Sewing for profit, at least in the case of Maggie, allows for financial and intellectual autonomy even if it fails to wholly prevent the objectification of her perceived "exotic" body. In the case of Lucy, the pretense of a sanitizing domesticity and the performance

of a "fake" marketplace reveals how "classed" needlework still exploits women's bodies and conceals this exploitation by differentiating it from the exploitation of working-class labor. The connection between Lucy and Maggie similarly reveals how the distance between the Angel in the House and the Fallen Woman is a constructed language of difference that prioritizes male desire and consumption. The proximity of women's needlecraft sold at a fictitious bazaar and needlecraft sold by seamstresses reveals the relatively little difference between both forms of consumption, as does the presumed transference of skill between plain and fancy needlework.

By especially engaging "plain-work," George Eliot's *The Mill on the Floss* engages concerns similar to Parker's sampler through the development and independence of Maggie Tulliver. Her sewing works to mend the gaps between the domestic sphere and public by publicizing the means of her income. Though objectified for her physical appearance, the financial and intellectual independence allowed by her sewing—framing her as provider rather than housekeeper—challenge the ideologies of fallenness surrounding the seamstress figure, and Lucy's own participation in a staged bazaar further blurs the lines between "fancy" and "plain" work and middle and working-class needlecraft. Reading Maggie's sewing as strays similar to the other examples of this chapter allows Maggie to stand as a cross-class representation of womanliness even in the wake of her wrongful implication as a fallen woman. Maggie's "plain-sewing" produces objects which materialize the extent to which she strays from traditional domestication. Her plain shirts stray from the traditional meanings of women's textiles in Victorian literature. They raise the question of how many more objects and things in women's literature and culture have yet to be examined because their meanings stray from dominant understandings of domestic ideology. These things matter because their very materiality records

women's engagement of and resistance to the latter through the work of their hands or their plots.

Stray Needlecraft

Rozsika Parker's exploration of twentieth-century radical needlecraft notes that "it is crucially important to recognize how diversely women have lived and resisted the specific forms of sexual oppression operating in different cultures and classes. And embroidery continues to illustrate to this day the heterogeneity of women's work" (211). Central to Parker's analysis of embroidery as a revolutionary, radical outlet are the suffrage handkerchiefs on display in The Museum of London from the hunger strike of 1911. Though these handkerchiefs were drafted well after Parker's sampler and the textile opportunities missed by *Aurora Leigh*, these handkerchiefs also serve as an example of textiles crucial to the domestic ideology of the long nineteenth century and hence to the feminist turn of material culture in Victorian studies. In seeking to liberate women from the domestic sphere and secure votes in the public, political realm, Parker notes how embroidery "was employed not to transform the place and function of art, but to change ideas about women and femininity" (197). This connects to the widely-held belief that women, through their material culture practices, both engaged with and altered ideologies surrounding these objects. Janie Terreno's handkerchief, with its suffragette hues of purple, white, and green and milieu of signatures, is central to Parker's assessment of revolutionary textiles. Parker describes Terreno's work as "adulatory embroidery," noting that "the Suffragettes were forbidden to talk to their leader in Holloway [prison]," resulting in the destruction of prison property and the women's refusal to eat during their imprisonment.

Janie Terreno's Handkerchief from the Hunger Strike of 1911

Even beyond *The Subversive Stitch*'s assessment, however, the handkerchiefs have taken on a life like that of Elizabeth Parker's Sampler. As testament not only to the Women's Social and Political Union's platform but also to the trauma inflicted on their bodies, handkerchiefs like Terreno's are rarely included in discussions of the needle and the pen debate; they are also irrevocably displaced from the domestic and defy categorization. Parker describes the London Museum's two suffrage handkerchiefs with an air of triumph:

> The delicate embroidery declared that the supposed weaker sex was being subjugated to the torture of force-feeding—and resisting. They signed their names in the very medium which was considered proof of their frailty, and justification for their subjugation. (201)

This description of the handkerchief notes the union between embroidery's discursive ideologies and the possibility of wielding the needle as a rebellious weapon. In some ways, the needle was

preferable and more accessible than the pen; “writing paper was sometimes not allowed” in Holloway Prison, “but needle and thread seemed to have escaped notice” (Wheeler 6). Embroidery, therefore, marked not only a radical medium to be adopted and transformed by suffragettes; it also provided a medium through which they could express their experiences (and smuggle them out of Holloway prison) where pen and paper were inaccessible. Combining the embroidery conventions of initialing and reflecting nature through its delicate violets, this handkerchief brings “together the tradition of political petition and protest with a female social tradition by which guests would embroider their signatures for their hostess to commemorate a visit” (Parker 200). This is also a sign of their privilege and class status. Like Aurora’s silks, these materials used in the construction of political textiles were certainly produced in mills, underscoring the degree to which certain bodies mattered in early feminism. Their ability to use these materials within prison without restriction also represented a degree of special treatment, even as they endure the trauma of being force fed.

Revelatory and rebellious in equal parts, the names of the women on both Terreno’s textile and other suffragette handkerchiefs put their experiences on display as much as their political platform. The photograph of Mrs. Pankhurst and Christabel, stitched onto the center of the handkerchief, visually combines the initials with their means of production, drawing attention to both the identities and bodies of the women involved in the handkerchief’s craft and imprisoned within Holloway Prison. Here, it is worth noting that Janie Terreno’s four-month imprisonment was the result of “’scornfully refused’ fines” that “purposefully instigate[d] imprisonment” (Wheeler 5). This symbolic imprisonment helped cohere the WSPU’s political agenda, but it also subjected the women to abuse at the hands of the patriarchal authority imprisoning them. Terreno “faced the full impact of a prison experience” when compared to

members of the women's league and some militant members of the WSPU (6). Of the women imprisoned, Terreno was one of many force-fed during her hunger strike, thereby disabling her from using her body as an additional means of going on strike. Being force-fed indisputably is a traumatic, debilitating experience, but the difference between Terreno's imprisonment and some of her fellow women connects their embroidered names to their bodily experiences.

The Suffragette Handkerchief at The Priest House, West Hoathily. Holloway Prison, March 1912

Moderate women's league members "were usually treated with restraint and the WSPU militants more harshly," and "in some cases titled and well connected women were treated preferentially" (6). This difference in treatment of women—and the class ideologies driving the preferential treatment—is emphasized through the current means of displaying such handkerchiefs. The names on display now serve the rhetorical purpose of categorizing the differences in woman's experiences. Some handkerchiefs, such as the suffragette handkerchief pictured above, are often

accompanied by a restorative effort to identify the women behind them. Identified within these extended, public records are the women's prison sentences, their charged "crime," and whether they were subjected to force-feeding during their imprisonment. Some initials on the handkerchiefs remain unidentified, leaving the experiences and endured abuse of those women unquantified and inaccessible.

As stray objects, suffragette handkerchiefs served the dual purpose of representing female subjectivities and political platforms. From the perspective of a more traditional feminist turn in material culture studies, studying the suffragette handkerchiefs reveals the way that embroidery was not just shaped by domestic ideology. In the right hands, the needle could be weaponized into constructing subjectivities rather than adhering to discursive identities. As objects that seek to utilize and reform the purpose of embroidery, the tension inflicted on embroidery's gendered ideologies speaks not only to the triumph of women suffragettes but also their trauma. Beyond the restructuring of embroidery's feminine associations, the names embroidered on the handkerchiefs also necessitate looking for those embodied experiences that cannot be expressed but are nevertheless inscribed on women's bodies. These handkerchiefs cannot be domesticated as records of the women's treatment while imprisoned.

Like Elizabeth Parker's sampler, this turns such textiles into liminal objects—both publicly on display in exhibitions and privately representative of individual experiences (especially seen within the differing colors of sewn signatures). Such textiles continue to serve the rhetorical purpose of drawing attention the liminality of trauma, the necessity of recording it, the seemingly contradictory inability to properly "write" it, and the silenced voices of laborers transforming raw material into silken thread. By invoking the traditional sampler's purpose as a moralizing and distributable textile, Parker seeks to moralize herself and break her silence on an

unspeakable trauma. This results in the domestic textile's failure to both domesticate and operate within a distinctly private sphere; as an object on display within the V&A's digital archives, the trauma inflicted on Parker's own body is also on display, unifying the inscription of violence on her body with the feminine subjectivity enabled by needlecraft. The Suffragette Handkerchiefs work in a similar fashion.

Conclusion

Stray objects form Victorian women's literature and culture, the blood-red smapler, Maggie's plain sewing, and the suffragette's handkerchiefs are material things that challenge discursive ideologies in Victorian culture. *Aurora Leigh*'s condemnation of handicrafts, however, is not as liberal or progressive as Aurora perceives it to be. In rejecting handicraft as a means of self-expression or meaningful work, Aurora perpetuates the practice of viewing domestic work as "other" to both public and private autonomy. Though she perceives herself as breaking from the pattern that Aunt Leigh restricts her to, this creates a problematic structure in which she unwittingly perpetuates the subjugation of women by "othering," rather than reclaiming, the domestic sphere with which they are associated.

By placing the feminine work of handicraft and the masculine work of writing, Aurora insists that her writing expresses truths of experience that transcend mere objects. Following the latter outwards from *Aurora Leigh* not only justifies reading their intersections with gendered material practices, but it reveals objects and things that occupy liminal spaces and defy categorization, even straying from gendered discourse in ways unaccounted for by middle-class-centric feminism. Such stray objects and discourses deserve equal time. Reading them is crucial to hearing new voices, and to re-reading canonical works like *Aurora Leigh* and *The Mill on the Floss* against the grain. This much is represented through a close reading of Maggie Tulliver's

plain shirts. In Eliot's novels such simple things underscore the frailty of discourse and its dictating of ontological categories: distinctions between classes, fancy and plain needlecraft, public and private spaces, pins and pens, and, lastly, fallen and angelic women.

It is time such objects, difficult though they may be to "read" come out from the archives. Overturning *Aurora Leigh*'s discursive ideologies allows for possibilities where these stray objects—and the experience inscribed onto both them and the bodies of those constructing them—might be read and understood, broadening the concept of material practices beyond the limiting public/private strictures and categorization that reinforces ideologies of class and gendered difference. Earlier I spoke of cutting against the grain, a process which causes fraying, revealing individual threads and components of the material while rendering the product unusable for its intended purpose. To read stray objects as I have read textiles here, is to reveal their material power to fray discursive ideologies and practices. These stray objects reveal at times resistance to Victorian ideologies and taxonomies, and, at the same time, often implicated their owners in new stories quite separate from an author, owner's, or maker's allegorical understandings.

Chapter Two

"A World's Wonder at All Times": The Koh-i-Noor, India, and Gendered Subjectivities in Christina Rossetti's "Hero"

The Victorian importation, possession, and display of other nation's objects proves Arjun Appadurai's claim that following "things themselves" locates the meanings "inscribed in their forms, their uses," and particularly "their trajectories" (4). In the case of gemstones, "domestic" possession and British display of another nation's goods brings the empire "inside" the British home and middle class where ironically these practices repeat the act of military colonization and consolidate, from inside the home, the violence of colonial possession (Daly). Much has been written about the extensive trade of such things in Victorian England, the transformation of Indian shawls, for example, into English women's personal property, and the resulting construction of the middle-class English woman's authority and subjectivity in Victorian England through such commodities. [18]

Imported gemstones of national importance, however, such as the Koh-I-Noor, prove a different matter entirely, as their uniqueness, names, size, and scale as well as their prominence within the imagination of colonizer and colonized alike complicates any attempt at domestication. In Christina Rossetti's rarely discussed tale "Hero: A Metamorphosis," Rossetti traces not the proper domestication of a "barbaric" national gemstone into an object suited for the Victorian parlor, but, rather, the transformation of a colonizing woman into the stone itself. This tale has hitherto been neglected in academic discourse despite its continuation of the tone,

[18] Suzanne Daly in *The Empire Inside: Indian Commodities in Victorian Domestic Novels* discusses the significance of such shawls in *Mary Barton* and *Vanity Fair*, noting that the authenticity of imported shawls was linked to the respectability of the women who wore them.

style, and themes of her major work "Goblin Market" (1862). [19] In this tale, however, the material aspects of the object, its huge scale as well as its resemblance to the most famous stone of the Victorian period, prove an obstacle to the easy with which more mundane objects may be subsumed into the Victorian parlor and nation. In fact, the "Hero" figure experiments with the material in general. She desires first to become the stone herself, not to possess imported indicators of domestic wealth and respectability, but to experience the pleasures of the consuming gaze by transforming into "a supreme object of admiration" ("Hero" 192). Her journey begins as her wish is granted, and she is transformed into a resplendent gem that recalls the famed diamond, the Koh-I-Noor. The materiality of this objectification initiates a dizzying series of transformations, the forms of which are all revered and commodified by public attention.

Reading imperial jewels, particularly the Koh-I-Noor, in Christina Rossetti's "Hero" allows those gemstones and jewels to represent themselves, rather than to become an allegorical extension of Hero's character. In Freedgood's *The Ideas in Things: Fugitive Meaning in the Victorian Novel*, Freedgood argues that objects carry knowledge that "bears on the grisly specifics of conflicts and conquests that a culture can neither regularly acknowledge nor permanently destroy if it is going to be able to count on its own history to know itself and realize a future" (2). Taking objects "literally," as Freedgood encourages, provides insight into those deeply embedded cultural meanings (5). Tracing cultural archives in the text reclaims not only what gemstones and diamonds meant to Victorians, but also what they meant and mean to their country of origin. In the case of national gems like the Koh-I-Noor, the cultural meaning of the diamond is public; such a stone was never destined for typical use in jewelry or decor. Though

[19] The short story was original published in *The Argosy* in 1866 before being included in *Commonplace and Other Stories* four years later (R.W. Crump).

commodified, such diamonds are rarely exchanged within traditional marketplaces; national stones are rarely possessed by an individual as an heirloom once imported but displayed in a fashion that reflects the nation. In this way, diamonds of national importance are different form smaller jewels; they are signs of conquest and contain the soul of a nation. Rossetti, herself, explores the difficulty of domesticating a diamond as famous as the Koh-I-Noor. The diamond in "Hero" then provides glimpses into the famous gem's representation of and within public life, and, unlike most Victorian colonial objects, it allows a woman to have the experience of hero worship and brilliance. Diamonds like the Koh-I-Noor cannot be wholly domesticated; instead, they remain inexorably connected to the cultural imagination of multiple countries and cannot be incorporated into the Victorian home like other jewelry or possessions, either. Although they remain linked the gendered material practices and ideologies constructed around more common gemstones, the difference between a national stone and the latter shifts its meaning and Hero's experience into the public rather than the private, domestic realm.

Reading "Hero" complicates and deepens our knowledge of Rossetti's ideas about women and heroism itself. It also deepens our knowledge of how Victorians remythologize colonial gems, expropriating their original stories and replacing them with those of the colonizer even when they are used against the grain of domestic ideology. [20] Plucked from their origins, such stones were put on display so that their splendor could be consumed in public sites like the Great Exhibition. The display and/or selling of gemstones imported from British colonies also proliferated stereotypes about those colonies. For example, Victorians perceived India as a place

[20] The term "remythologize" is inspired by Isobel Armstrong's discussion of glass's myth-making. Armstrong refers to myths as tapping "those archaic elements of culture, the knot or navel (to transfer Freud's metaphor from individual to collective), where meanings are mysterious, as well as attempting to re-form narrative to interrogate the modern" (204). A myth, therefore, is something that represents a moment of intersection in culture, where history has congealed into a shared cultural idea or experience. To "remyth" resembles Armstrong's second definition about re-forming narrative in that remythologizing is an attempt at forming the mythography surrounding an object or subject, typically by erasing a pre-existing narrative.

of unparalleled wealth and thought that it must be the source of all gemstones. While India's extravagant tastes in gemstones were often disparaged, its wealth was also perceived with a similar mysticism as depicted in the wonders of Fairyland in Rossetti's tale. Rumors about the Koh-i-Noor's origin in particular circulated wildly, resulting in some depictions like Wilkie Collin's *The Moonstone: A Romance* where the diamond rests in the forehead of an imagined deity (Young 347). Unlike in Collins' text, however, the great diamond in Rossetti's "Hero" is not cursed. Instead, it is a passage to the colonizing woman's experience of public life, beginning with the great gemstone whose history is sacrificed to Hero's pleasure.

The Koh-I-Noor in the Colonial Imagination

Rossetti's story of the great stone that recalls the Koh-I-Noor is problematic then not because it domesticates Hero or the diamond, but because it conceals the history of the latter. Gems like the Koh-i-Noor were never sold, though they were sometimes transferred with conquered territory or donated to religious temples. In seeking to possess the Koh-I-Noor themselves, the British staged a *durbar*, "or ceremonial meeting, with the defeated twelve-year-old Maharaja, Duleep Singh, compelling Singh to offer the diamond directly to the queen," as a symbol of conquest (394). Clearly, the child ruler was coerced or simply robbed. Kevin Rushby suggests that "the gift" of the Koh-i-Noor was especially problematic, given that the young Maharaja also signed away his kingdom and all its treasure during the *durbar* under Dalhousie's prompting (Rushby 34). In this light, the Koh-i-Noor plays the role of a surrender, signaling the Maharaja Singh's submission to Britain. The EIC did not know of this *durbar* until two weeks after its completion. The ceremonial staging surrounding Britain's colonial acquisition of the stone sought to reinforce their colonial mission as a refining and largely peaceful influence. To India, the Koh-I-Noor represents the coercion and exploitation of Duleep Singh and, more

broadly, India itself under British rule. The Koh-i-Noor, after its initial display, was critiqued by some spectators for being "dull and disappointing" to the extent that *Punch* "referred to it as the 'Mountain of Darkness'" (Kinsey 392). Such critiques, according to Kinsey, stemmed out from the Koh-i-Noor's advertisement of being representative of British conquest in India. After the exhibition, "the prince consort had the diamond, then about 186 carats, recut" so that its appearance better matched what it was purported to represent (392). The meaning of this diamond was carefully constructed, both through the staging of its display and through how it was recut (both physical and conceptually) to reinforce Britain's colonial mission.

It is difficult not to connect Singh's submission of the Koh-i-Noor to the description of the Hero diamond being "torn in a moment" from the hands of an orphan in Rossetti's tale ("Hero" 195). Indeed, Singh himself was something of an orphan. His predecessors were assassinated; in exile in Britain, Duleep was also estranged from his mother.[21] When seen from this perspective, Rossetti's shorthand history of the Hero diamond appropriates the Koh-i-Noor's long history of being passed from dynasty to dynasty, ending in Singh's hands before it was placed on display and, eventually, on the Queen's crown. Therefore, British acquisition of the Koh-i-Noor ultimately erased Singh's ownership and previous inheritance of the diamond from its history, instead reducing Singh to a child caught up in the politics. Unfortunatel, Rossetti's story mirrors these historical events but makes the central figures in the stone's exchange her own characters: the lily-white Hero and her people.

Eventually, Singh too became reflective of Britain's colonial mission. As Kinsey points out, Singh and the Koh-i-Noor alike "performed an important symbolic function on an empire-wide scale: the Maharaja and the diamond could be seen as 'vehicles' for disseminating the

[21] Taylor notes that Singh became a *habitué* of the court and friend to the young Prince Alfred during his exile in Britain.

promise of imperial intervention" (395). Even as Queen Victoria put the Koh-i-Noor on display, so too was her dominion over Singh also on display.[22] Singh was famously painted with a miniature of the Queen about his neck; after having the diamond recut, Queen Victoria famously showed the gemstone to him, at which point he "reenacted the handover of the gemstone as a sign of his submission" (394).

The former should be differentiated from the latter, although to many it seemed as if even a major national stone such as the Koh-i-Noor simply washed up on the shores of England as a "gift." Kinsey establishes that the Koh-i-Noor's fame, at 105.60 metric carats and measuring 36.00 by 31.90 by 13.04 millimeters, deals less with its physical attributes and more with its "history as an artifact of conquest within geopolitical power struggles pertaining to the South Asian subcontinent and beyond" (391). The diamond captured the imagination of the Victorian public, and it served as the Indian Court's centerpiece at the Great Exhibition of 1851. The diamond became irrevocably entangled both in gendered dialogues and colonial nationalism from the point of its debut. Enclosed in glass and gilded display case, it was hard not to see the Koh-i-Noor as a miniaturized version of how Britain perceived their hold on the Indian colonies**.** The diamond was often so conflated with the Indian people that even its cut was representative of Britain's colonial mission in the territory. At the Great Exhibition, "the diamond was poorly cut, and therefore unable to display its true 'purity and lustre'," and so it "resembled the same India replete with raw materials" (Purbrick 166). More to the point, it served as testament that India lacked the taste to cut the diamond properly, thus making it a practice in excess. The cut of

[22] Refer to Danielle Kinsey's text "Koh-i-Noor: Empire, Diamonds, and the Performance of British Material Culture" for additional insight into Singh's relationship with Queen Victoria (and the reception of the British public to this relationship). Of note is Thomas Babington Macaulay's reference to Singh as an "elite Indian 'go-between'," which infers that Singh would make an apt ambassador for British sensibilities (394).

the diamond at the Great Exhibition was made to preserve the diamond's size, and so it was perceived that India valued the grandness of an object over its craftsmanship.[23]

Even in modern times, the diamond is "traditionally supposed to bring good luck to a woman who wears it, but ill-luck to a man" (Holmes 36). This note of fantastical elements was rife in Victorian adventure tales, and that, combined with India's perceived extravagance, justified that its treasures were ripe for the taking.[24] "Treasure-gathering scenes" of contemporary literature often spoke of "treasure as simply being there for the individual's taking," which "[deflected] attention from the prosaic fact that a key source of wealth in India was labor power" (Daly 71). In other words, by spinning a narrative of India as a place rife with treasures and magic, Victorians largely justified the plundering behavior for those engaging in such behaviors. Acknowledging that labor resulted in the acquisition of these treasures and artefacts from India would undermine the glamorized tales of plunder circulating about the colonization of India. The Koh-I-Noor's display in the Great Exhibition was similarly meant to capitalize on the mystique of India while reinforcing Britain's Colonial mission; the diamond "could not have been seen without the knowledge of the plundered resources" (Armstrong 231). Presented as a major attraction in the Great Exhibition, the diamond was widely covered in periodicals and "replicas of the diamond were sold on the Strand" (231). These attempts at remything the diamond and the colonization of India ironically backfired: the purported "Mountain of Light" was widely viewed as a disappointment. Guidebooks to the Great Exhibition also sensationalized "the history of murder, expropriation, and illicit possession of the

[23] Purbrick suggests that India's perceived obsession with grandeur resulted in their inability to understand how to fully increase the value of the Koh-i-Noor. The irony behind this perception, of course, is the fact that the Koh-i-Noor was not cut in India; rather, the disputed cut was performed by the Venetian lapidary, Hortensio Borgis, who was fined and then executed for his "unartist-like" work (167).

[24] Kinsey discusses how the diamond's perceived curse inspired the aforementioned novel by Collins, which is a detective novel about the theft of a gem (359).

diamond" (231-232). Despite the strategic attempts to remyth the colonial conquest of India, the diamond could not live up to the fantastic descriptions of bounty-filled lands, nor could its strategic display as the jewel of Queen Victoria's Empire wholly erase its existence as barbaric possession with a history of national conquest, violence, and greed, publicly celebrated through the display of the diamond in England. A legion of domesticated women must have been needed to soften the historical realities of the stone.

At first, it seems that such a discourse is clearly portrayed in Rossetti's "Hero," where gemstones from Fairyland wash up on the shores of "Man-Side;" there a fishing village relies on the arrival of such gems, flotsam from Fairyland, without questioning their production or prior purpose. Once there, the gems are turned into the stuff of domestic life, supporting the white villagers' domesticity, purchasing cottages and food. However, soon, there are cracks in this domestic script. Both Hero's fiancé and her father, it seems, would sacrifice her for access to the source itself. This prompts Hero to feel slighted and to seek more and more admiration. When she gets the chance to travel to Fairland, upon finding a lost fairy princess who needs to return home, she takes it. Upon arriving on Fairyland, Hero is oblivious to the magical sights. She wants to become a gem herself, like those she has previously found on the shore, and she will ransom the fairy princess to satiate her own desire.

Rossetti's "Fairyland" is a "pigmy nation," attended by an usher who is "green like a grasshopper," the Fairy Queen sits atop a "dormouse" as her throne (191-192). The extravagant environs occupied by the Fairies are inscrutable and beyond the comprehension of Man-side. Theirs is a fusion of natural and man-made so natural that it is nearly uncanny. While the setting seems idyllic, a few impossibilities suggest that the setting is not meant to be entirely understood or trusted. While at peace with the animals, the fairies are also represented as being like the

animals. This is a more forgiving picture of a colonized Other than Rossetti's "Goblin Market," which is problematic for how it fuses foreign bodies with animals and disfigured goblin men, but even this representation has disturbing elements. "Corridors carpeted with butterfly wings" query what happened to the rest of the butterfly (191). Similarly, a stair-case of a "single tusk" alienate raw material from animal, suggesting that these extravagant features were constructed at the expense of nature, even as the faeries remained closely connected to it (192). Such imagery speaks to the feminine extravagance of Fairyland, ruled by a queen, but also links the strange connection between raw material (natural objects) and *animus* or magic. Normally outside the comprehension of Man-Side, these things, lavish possessions, seem suddenly in reach. The abundance—and the magically pre-existent properties of the objects—justifies their taking. Rossetti's depiction of the Hero diamond's acquisition from only Man-Side's perspective adheres to Victorian England's own wrongful expropriation and remythologizing of gemstones. Their importance within this story hinges upon the importance placed on them by Hero and her desires.

In her analysis of colonial treasure, Suzanne Daly juxtaposes the adventure narratives of plunder against "a history that in the domestic novel. . .begins once the gem has entered England" (71). Once imported and refined, these same gemstones, according to Daly, become markers of female domesticity and class. This perception stems from gemstones' close association with Victorian women, who "were assumed to wear gemstone ornaments more commonly than men" (68). In India, a "prolific amount of jewelry" was worn by both men and women because of its rich and complex associations with religion and power (Barnard 10). In Victorian Britain's eyes, then, the abundance of jewelry affirmed that the Indian was "essentially irrational" while simultaneously justifying India as a "land of eternal essences" or, rather,

endless wealth (Lamont 308). A gem of the Koh-i-Noor's importance, however, complicates the process of transforming colonial imports into domestic goods.

As the centerpiece of the Crown of Queen Elizabeth the Queen Mother, the Koh-i-Noor continues to draw both crowd and controversy. There has been a movement in recent years to return the Koh-i-Noor to India, partly as a means to "atone for Britain's colonial past" in the wake of India's booming economy (Baggini). While "at least four countries" have since laid claim to this diamond, "The All India Human Rights & Social Justice Front, a non-governmental organization, had filed legal proceedings in London's High Court to get the diamond back" (Chan 14). Despite this, India's Solicitor General Ranjit Kumar insists that the Koh-i-Noor "belongs to Britain" and reinforces that "the Koh-i-Noor is not a stolen object" (14). Those arguing for its return still see it as representative of Indian identity, claiming that it rightfully belongs to its place of origin. Kumar's perspective suggests that the diamond was willingly given to Queen Victoria and has since become Britain's property (12).

These modern, divisive perspectives represent the degree to which Britain's revision of the diamond's meaning has concealed the true nature of its acquisition. As a stolen, colonial object, the diamond occupies a liminal space, bearing meaning and significance in both the English and Indian imagination. Modern discourses have shifted focus away from the nineteenth-century gendered language, but the modern obscurity of the Koh-i-Noor's rightful ownership establishes how nineteenth-century gendered and imperialist rhetoric wrongfully sought to erase its Indian origins and identity. Similarly, the contested ownership also indicates the degree to which the diamond, despite being an object of national importance, was unable to be wholly colonized or domesticated by Colonial Britain. Their refusal to return the diamond speaks to its representation within the colonial zeitgeist as a symbolic transference of power, and, as a

persistent symbol of annexing colonial property, the ongoing dispute over the diamond's rightful home reveals underlying anxiety about its inability to be transformed into an exclusively British possession. Though still connected to the idea of Indian excess and domestication by middle-class women, the Koh-i-Noor's scale prevents it from being exchanged within traditional marketplaces. As a diamond perpetually on display, its displacement from India and exclusion from middle-class households ultimately represents a failure to domesticate the gem. The domestic novel may explore the narratives of those diamonds capable of being domesticated, like *The Eustace Diamonds*, but fairytales like "Hero" reflect what happens when diamonds of a fantastical scale are resistant to the rhetoric of importation and domestication. Whereas domestic diamonds align and erase the violence of conquest and plunder, as Daly suggests, a diamond whose foreignness imbues it with seeming magical properties resists the remythologizing of its history within the British Empire.

Victorian Britain's language of excess, domestication, and fertility establishes India in especially feminine terms, establishing it as a body capable of being conquered and yielding a wealth of offspring. Just as Indian jewelry had to be domesticized through its translation into Victorian markers of class, so too did India's land have to be similarly harnessed and protected by the imperial mission. This interpretation of fertility and femininity links to women wearers of gemstones and anxieties about their protection of "the diamond within" as *Punch* emphasized through the echoing of their hoopskirts with the shape of the Koh-i-Noor's cage (Kinsey 407). If plundering bore with it the language of rape, then women's cultural connection to plundered gemstones translated into anxieties about preserving feminine virtue and purity, presenting them paradoxically as both objects to be desired and protected. As a result, the desiring language and

gaze thrust upon the domination and domestication of India was informed by Victorian anxieties about the female body.

Standing in for the feminized native who allows a nation's worth to be signified by a giant "bauble," such stones' transference from an "uncivilized" to a "civilized" form of consumption sought to domesticate them within Victorian culture. However, when Rossetti's tale transforms a human woman into a colonial object, it reflects cultural anxiety about the ongoing commodification of women in a society dedicated to purportedly moral patterns of consumption. At the same time, the heady and thrilling experience of becoming a series of "objects of supreme admiration" introduces Hero into a distinctly public life. The tale explores dangers that commodification presents for both women and imperial objects alike, but it also explores women's pleasure in becoming public subjects. Just as imperial objects are often remythologized in the marketplace, so too are women at risk of similar objectification and valuation on the marriage market. Beginning with the great diamond, however, Hero become much more than just a wife, she becomes sharply undomesticated things: a highly skilled opera singer's voice, a beloved queen and national icon, and a vibrant exotic plant.

Even as the tale's language invokes the stratified and entangled meanings of the traffic in jewels between colonized and colonizer, Rossetti's "Hero" draws attention to questions of an object's ownership and social histories with several startling effects which often seem to complicate the moral of "Goblin Market." In Rossetti's famous poem, heroic Lizzie resists the allures of the marketplace, reviving her sister with the juices borne on her skin. The Goblin Men are contemptable figures within the text, evoking racist iconography with their appearance and peddling deadly, foreign fruits. As Robin Sowards notes, "the problem with the fruit is that its origins are remote rather than local" (118). Sowards suggests, then, that the Goblin Men and

their produce's corruption stems from their foreignness. In the case of "Hero," imports are the property of wise fairy folk rather than contemptuous Goblin Men. The tale seems to warn against the consumption of goods produced by "Fairyland" without condemning the "fairies" themselves, suggesting that the means through which Indian goods are taken and put into both literal and figurative marketplaces elsewhere is a harmful practice. The story's subtitle—"A Metamorphosis"—reflects the transformation of immature being into seemingly inanimate cocoon and, finally, mature adult, posing Hero's time in the inanimate gemstone as part of her transformation from girl into woman. However, as in Goblin Market, the coda is unsatisfying in Hero, with the character's ultimate domesticity unable to compete at the narrative level with the story of Hero's many transformations.

The Hero Diamond

Hero's metamorphosis into a wide variety of material objects, indeed, is far more compelling than the "workaday" world she originally inhabits. In contrast to the latter, on Elf-Side, mountains "[glitter] with diamonds and opals as with ten thousand fire-flies," but on Man-Side, the range "presents…a leaden sameness of hue. . .enriched throughout with mines of gems and metals" ("Hero" 184-184). The greatest difference between the magical Fairyland and the human Outerworld is a lack of vision into the origin of things and the labor behind their creation. "Hero" focuses on the fishing village beyond these mountains, where only children (due to their purity of heart) seem able to cull the gems from Fairyland. At the border of Fairyland, they collect its dazzling flotsam from their shores to sell: "now a fiery carbuncle blazed upon the sand; now a curiously-wrought ball of gold or ivory was found imbedded among the pebbles; sometimes a branch of unfading sea-weed. . .or a jeweled starfish" (184). Such magical things become commodities in Man-side, a prominent part of the fishing village's economy and

imagination. Forss, when first shown a necklace of sparkling red beads from Fairyland, remarks that he would "make his fortune" in the "best market" if he could accrue enough fairy treasures (186). If fishing was unproductive, the citizens would send their children to the shores "hoping by such means to repair [their] failure" (185). In the tale, Fairyland's treasures were considered an appropriate and even desirable means of generating income. The discovery of gemstones and other treasures from the water echoes the primary means of discovering such plunder in colonial terroritories, like India, where raw diamonds were often found by prospecting in rivers.

In the tale, the spectacle of stones washed up on the beach, also taps into the idea of India as a spectacle to be plundered, a discourse promoted by the Great Exhibition's display of loose gem stones, cut and uncut. "Hero's" representation of the Hero diamond contrasts with the tale's representation of smaller gems as uncut "flotsam." Rossetti links these to narratives about Indian gemstones, many of which were cabochon or uncut stones, valued for their size and natural appearance by the British middle class. Nancy Armstrong details how "very few people had ever seen loose stones" prior to the Exhibition, and they "were astonished at their possible sizes and varieties of colour" (51). The variety of colors—and the spectacle therein—suggests that even these loose stones were already cut. A description of the gemstones further cements both their polished presentation and deep association with British colonies.

Gems with a blue color were called "Oriental Sapphires"; similarly, red stones were called "Oriental Rubies" (51). Each description associates the gem with its foreign place of import, exoticizing these treasures through their place of origin. Just as Rossetti's loose gem stones appear fully formed on the shores of Man-Side with the labor of their production erased, so did these goods from imperial colonies appear with little to no history of their production. Suzanne Daly notes that Indian commodities on English shores mark distinctions of taste, class,

and income level.[25] The origin and labor of these commodities are often forgotten; instead, these objects become representative of Victorian respectability in a consumer culture, shawls and gems derive part of their value from their perceived exoticism, yet they also suggest the superiority of British women, their "liberation" from the means of production themselves. Appropriated for British domesticity, the thing becomes a sign of British difference and colonial power.

This problematic appropriation is certainly clear in Man-Side. As the British "deflect attention from the prosaic fact that a key source of wealth in India was labor power, once it was properly harnessed to the British cause", so do the descriptions of the Fairyland erase the presence of labor altogether, instead presenting its material culture as magical commodities to be looted (Daly 71). Fairyland's bounty reflects the Victorian notion that the Empire's treasures stemmed from its access to exotic goods rather than its labor, thereby representing the colony as a veritable treasure trove awaiting plunder.

In the tale, then Rossetti mystifies jewels as a resource to be discovered seemingly without cost. Fairyland's seeming excess of jewels is so common that the inhabitants "trod on sapphires" as floors ("Hero" 191). This mirrors colonial accounts of India, such as Pliny the Elder's *Natural History* which "gives a fanciful account of an Indian jungle floor virtually paved with diamonds" (Daly 61).[26] Like India, Fairyland is **"**the fabulous source of such precious commodities," but it is for Man-Side to transform their meaning into value as commodities rather than as a spectacle of national identity (183). This understanding establishes India as a place of extreme—and untapped—treasures, a place also seemingly ignorant of its own "treasures."

[25] Suzanne Daly, in *The Empire Inside: Indian Commodities in Victorian Domestic Novels*, notes that this erasure is primarily gendered. Upon the moment of importation, the objects accrue domestic associations; in most English novels, we do not see the means by which these materials are obtained—we only see them once they enter British households, where they are often offered up as gifts to women.

[26] This was furthered by colonial accounts of India, such as Pliny the Elder's *Natural History* which "gives a fanciful account of an Indian jungle floor virtually paved with diamonds" (Daly 61).

Though still presented as a resource, Fairyland has a seemingly magical use for its treasures beyond Man-Side's comprehension, and Rossetti's representation therefore challenges the imperial rhetoric of India's ignorance. This is best represented through the fairy's decision to transform Hero into the diamond to fulfill her wish of preeminence, suggesting that they knew the worth of such a magnificent gem.

The magical appearance and collection of gemstones in Man-Side mirrors the discourse of expropriation that accompanied both affordable and magnificent historical gems. Rather than domesticating such things, however, Rossetti explores the material pains and pleasure of their display in public. Hero, too, is on display in a "guarded booth," as on shilling days at the Exhibition; the Koh-i-Noor was similarly "'ornamented' by policeman on watch nearby" (166). She takes on the stone's vitality as "a glory by day, a lamp by night, and a world's wonder at all times" ("Hero" 196). Rossetti's language evokes the grandiose language heaped onto the actual diamond, which also described it as being a lamp-like "Mountain of Light" (Purbrick 165). The tale mirrors the collection of the historical diamond for in the tale Hero as Diamond is pulled from the hands of an unnamed orphan; Hero's diamond being "torn" from the orphan implicates that the gemstone took something of the orphan with it when it was ripped away. "Strong" contenders fight over the Hero diamond until it, at last, is in the possession of the victor. Upon her transformation from woman into material object, Rossetti details the plundering of the transformed Hero. The following describes Hero's return to the fishing-field as a diamond:

> She outshone every beauty, she eclipsed the most brilliant eyes of the colony. . .soon greedy admiration developed into greedy strife: her spark kindled a conflagration. This gem, in itself an unprecedented fortune, should this gem remain the property of a defenseless orphan whom mere chance had assigned it? From her it was torn in a

> moment: then the stronger wrested it from the strong, blows revenged blows, until, as the last contender bit the dust in convulsive death, the victor, feared through the settlement for his brute strength and brutal habits, bore off the prize. (195-196)

The missing element from the English history of the Koh-i-Noor is violence, an element restored in this depiction of the Hero gem's acquisition. Rossetti's choice of words evokes the story of how the Koh-i-Noor was seized, and it stands to reason that the "polluted bosom" described by Hero belongs to the nation of England itself ("Hero" 196). Rossetti's language connects England to the violent struggle that followed the Hero diamond's discovery, which connects their political maneuvering to physical violence. As will be seen, the English consumption of the diamond reinforced its connection to the Queen, and so played a role in the remythologizing of the Koh-i-Noor's meaning. However, in Rossetti's tale, the diamond is not just a rock, but a thing with the "spark" of life, challenging the idea that things, objects, and materiality itself is inert rather than alive.

This ontological reframing is clear in Goblin Market when fruit is given magical powers. But it is even clearer here in "Hero" when the binary oppositions of active/passive, vital/inert are rewritten. The bloody strife resulting from the Hero gem's discovery replicates problematic European histories of the Koh-i-Noor which describe its exchange "a maze of fluctuating dynasties," passing from ruler to ruler as early as the beginning of the fourteenth-century (Watson 184). While one history holds that the diamond came from the mines of Golconda, Watson's alternative history suggests that the diamond may have been found far earlier in history. [27] In this version, the diamond was not mined, but, rather, "scraped from river-gravels in the dry season, especially of the Krishna and Godaveri rivers of southern India" (184). The idea

[27] Francis Watson suggests that the diamond was found in Pre-Aryan times. As a result, the number of hands through which the diamond passes in this history is too complicated to fully relay here.

of the diamond being washed along by river currents resonates with Hero being washed ashore after her transformation, and whoever discovered the gem would surely be a laborer like the orphan who discovered Hero, whom spent their days scouring the dried riverbeds for similar gems. In both the Koh-i-Noor's and Hero diamond's history, these acts of labor are dismissed as "mere chance"—an act of discovery rather than work that requires hours of searching.

From this point, Hero eventually finds herself on display as the diamond, "enthroned on a cushion of black velvet," until she ends up on a coronet of the much beloved Princess Lily (197).[28] Similarly, the Koh-I-Noor found its final resting place in a crown, where it was believed to

> shine, and shine, too, with purest ray serene. For there is not one of those who have held it since its original possessor, who can boast so just a title to its possession as the Queen of England can claim. (Kinsey 396)

Like the Koh-i-Noor, the Hero diamond's final resting place proves to be an emblem of monarchal rule, establishing both stones' setting within the crown as a purifying and effectively cleansing the diamonds of their bloody history. Hero's eventual redemption draws into question her willingness to allow economic and political value to overrule bloody conquest. The Hero diamond's connection to the Koh-i-Noor presents Britain's attempts at erasure and remything the gem as equally suspect, and the ongoing queries about the diamond's ownership underscore the degree to which these histories cannot be fully erased by commodifying colonial objects.

[28] While the Koh-i-Noor was not originally displayed on a cushion like the one mentioned in "Hero," the display was changed after the diamond was accused of being an imitation. Kinsey describes how "gaslights illumined the cage and the stone within, now on **"**a black velvet cushion" (405). This suggests that, if Rossetti had seen or read about the gem, it was after this change had been made when the diamond's shine was aided by sunlight and gaslight alike. From the "cushion of black velvet," the Koh-i-Noor was also eventually set in a crown, too, which further establishes a link between the fictitious gem of "Hero" and actual gems like the Koh-i-Noor.

The worth of the Hero's diamond seems to be primarily its aesthetics; the diamond is described as "by day blazing even in full sunshine, by night needing no lamp save her own lustre" (196). Its commodified value is complicated by the inclusion of Hero's soul within the diamond, which causes the diamond to glow even by night. The idea of Hero being transferred—and bid upon—without her consent is problematic; while Rossetti's audiences are aware of the soul within the diamond, the other characters within the story are not, and so they appraise the diamond for its visual worth rather than the ideas—and, namely, the person—held within. In other words, viewers of the Hero diamond are oblivious to the source of the gem's internal glow and its history. [29]

By positioning Hero's internal presence as the source of her diamond's glow, Rossetti's text draws attention to how an object's exterior may belie the meaning located within its material history. Even Rossetti's subversion of Victorian diamond discourse is still problematic from a post-colonial perspective. Though Rossetti's language resists the narratives surrounding the Koh-i-Noor's acquisition, this should not be mistaken for sympathy for India. Instead, Rossetti's "Hero" appropriates the stone in order to explore the colonizer's pleasure in entering the public realm as a hero herself. In her analysis of colonial treasure, Suzanne Daly suggests that the heroic adventure narratives of plunder are at odds with "a history that in the domestic novel. . .begins once the gem has entered England" (71). In this model, both women and gemstone's narratives were separate from the heroic narratives of plunder and treasure; representing her

[29] Similar rhetoric was applied to the actual Koh-i-Noor, whose name means "Mountain of Light". Whereas the Koh-I-Noor was described as the shining "jewel in Victoria's crown," the general reception of the diamond was less positive (Young 345). The diamond commonly was described as "nothing more than an egg-shaped lump of glass" (Young 346). William Thackeray, in one of his articles for *Punch*, expressed a similar sentiment. He described the jewel as "a shining thing like a lambent oyster," only to realize on his second visit that "was not the jewel—that was only the case, and the real stone was that. . .which [he] took to be an imitation in crystal" (Purbrick 197). Thackeray suggested that the presentation of the diamond is what results in the diamond's glow, and a closer look was needed to distinguish the actual object from the ideas enclosing and enclosed by it.

protragonist as colonizing heroine, then, capitalizes on this problematic gendered narrative paradigm while allowing Hero the luxury of being both plundering hero and imported, desired object.

Women and Foreign Goods in "Hero"

Indeed, Hero's transformation into the diamond initiates her other transformations throughout the fairytale. Hero's desire to be worshipped begins when her father and her love tell her they would part form her for the wealth of Fairyland. Forss reasons that it's best to go to the Outerworld markets, as doing so would ensure him a fine house and a wife (meaning Hero) upon his return. Hero may not join Forss or her father in this spectacular public market, however, because her "little feet" are incapable of crossing either the mountains or the sea ("Hero" 187). Hero lacks the ability to see their justifications for what they are, and so assumes that "they do not love [her] as much as [she] loves them" (187). Hero's perception of their answers suggests not love but value. Both of her questions carefully juxtapose the value of her companionship against the value of wealth. From their answers, she perceives that Forss values growing rich in the markets more than he values her companionship. Similarly, her interpretation of her father's response suggests that she thinks he would rather grow rich off of her than have her near.

This crisis of value is further represented by her thoughts following. She believes that her father "should not leave [her] to be fifty kings, and [she] would not leave Forss to go to Fairyland, much less Outerworld" (187). This establishes, at least from Hero's perspective, a system of commodification in which company and companionship has its equivalent worth in wealth. While Hero esteems her father and Forss at values that are unrealistically steep, her concern is that their value of her is far more tangible. Hero's flaw as a character, therefore, stems

from the importance that she places on economic value, and her inability to see the reasoning behind her father and Forss's answers establishes this flaw as a failure of perception.

The men's willingness to leave her results in her desire to transform her appearance to become the sole object of their desire. She attempts to improve her appearance by wearing "a wreath of gorgeous blossoms" when "once a lily was ample head-dress," and she "grudged any man's notice to her fellow-maidens" (187). Despite these attempts at improving herself, she no longer participates in the work of domestications and "no longer brought home fairy treasures" since "such could only be found by the innocent" (188).

Her exchange with Princess Fay exemplifies this desire. Upon discovering that the Princess has washed ashore from Fairyland, "a suspicion of the truth" flashes across the fairy's mind, and she quickly offers up a bargain: "What gift shall I give you so that I may return to my home in peace?" (190). Rather than request the love of Forss or her father, Hero instead asks to "become the supreme object of admiration," and held "fast her little captive" until it was clear that her wish was to be granted (191). Rossetti's word choice naturalizes the idea of captivity. Upon arriving in Fairyland, Hero's visual perception worsens. She is "blinded, deafened, stultified by self," and so she passes "unmoved through crystal streets, between fountains of rainbow" (192). In her desire to become an object of admiration, she has become blind to all other marvels. Though her treatment of Forrs and willingness to hold Princess Fay hostage allude to the severity of her corruption, her thinking nothing of the sights and sounds within Fairyland illustrate the degree to which her desire has blinded her. She is not blind to the existence of Fairyland but driven by a thirst of what it represents. Hero wants something more.

Hero's desire to become, rather than to consume or domesticate, objects of desire is not punished, nor is her blindness representative of anything but her focus on indulging in her

wishes. While it may reflect Victorian anxieties about women shoppers bypassing sensible behavior in their effort to indulge in commodified desire, it presents this indulgence in a way that tantalizes and excites. While women's visual consumption of gemstones like Hero or the Koh-i-Noor was primarily deemed shallow and silly, it was also sexualized by many publications that noted how the "Koh-i-Noor [enabled] women in to indulge themselves through the spectacle of the diamond" (407). Just as "people watching" serveed as part of the experience at the Great Exhibition, this practice allowed bodies to be confused with the objects on display.[30] By this logic, the Great Exhibition became a place where infungible objects and bodies alike conflated with fungible commodities, and where objects were alienated from their origins, be they products of foreign or native labor. In one illustration by *Punch,* for example, the gilded cage of the diamond visually echoes the hoop skirts of the women spectators. The visual symmetry "[allows] for commentary on the protection of the 'diamond within"' and suggests that the spectacle is "facilitating 'dangerous' sexualities" (Kinsey 407). Positioning desire as sexual through the echoed iconography of gemstone and female anatomy underscores an inability to decipher female desire as anything but sexual, resulting in the risk of perceived fallenness by publicly indulging in this desire. Hero's occupation of the diamond, however, nullifies such ideologies by positing her desire as aesthetic and commodified; her desire is not directed towards men or sexual gratification but towards desire and admiration itself, reclaiming the experience of being "looked at" as one of pleasure. Hero's exciting transformations underscore how such anxieties were grounded in the perceived insatiability of female desire and the instability in social

[30] Isobel Armstrong notes that the objects on display at the Great Exhibition often fused the organic form with object. At the Great Exhibition of 1851, "the incised double body as ornament, compounded of anamorphosis and anthropomorphism is the dominant form of objects under glass" (Armstrong 218). From this emerges the grotesque, which provokes viewers into considering the production of a thing even as it is displaced.

ideologies that giving into female wishes may cause. [31] Hero's very name undermines anxieties about female desire by subversively heroizing the act of giving into personal desire rather than a bombastic act of selflessness.

Material Metamorphosis

Hero's journey gives her particular insight into the pains and pleasures of spectacular things. She comes into intimate contact with the marketplace, and, in this way, she is able to gain unique perspectives on the process of display itself. Becoming the thing displayed, she looks out at the shopper, reversing the discourse of the Great Exhibition in which the Koh-I-Noor was famously exhibited. If consumer desire "is first produced within the marketplace through technologies of looking, through window-shopping and the consumption of advertisements," then the Great Exhibition was this technology's moment of inception (Lysack 41). From the Great Exhibition stemmed modern practices of window-shopping, advertisement, and the concept of a shopping experience which tantalized consumers with the mystifying technology of sight. Women, in particular, were liberated by the opportunity to "window-shop" for that which could not be purchased. In the Exhibition, and, soon, department stores, women could indulge in the practice of "just looking." [32] While many did not have the funds or ability to purchase their

[31] Lysack references how anxieties about shopping "extended from a logic that equated loitering with prostitution, and women in the market with women on the market" (36). So, women lingering in the marketplace were at risk of becoming mistaken for consumable goods. Similarly, there was also anxiety over women using sound judgement in determining which wares to purchase. Following the Women's Property Acts, women were more and more enabled to manage their household from within and without. This practice was so widespread that, in some respects, a young lady's entry into the world was also marked by her entry into the world of goods. Because of shopping occupying a vexed position between anxieties about women's behaviors and an acceptance of their emergence into the marketplace, dual discursive identities were formed around the woman shopper: "on the one hand, household managers who practiced an economics of thrift; on the other, extravagant women spenders who spent resources allocated for the home on themselves" (84). Even this language reflects cultural anxieties over women in the marketplace, as it establishes two polarizing identities similar in rhetoric to the Angel in the House and the fallen woman.

[32] Miller notes how department stores took their cues from the Great Exhibition, allowing for an open space of exchange in which "walking through shops. . . was a private affair" (57). This privacy also proved ideal for women shoppers, and so department stores strove to make it even more comfortable by offering comforts similar to those available within the domestic sphere.

own wares, “the ability to enter stores without purchasing anything, freed them up to shop with greater liberty” (Miller 65). The Exhibition, therefore, served as a safe space where everything—and nothing—was subject to the desires of the female consumer. However, Hero sees this from another perspective: from that of the thing desired.

If the widespread perception of the Exhibition was a safe-space, Hero’s narrative challenges those assumptions. Now a living thing, the stone contains a spirit and is animated, both looked at and looking out. Though the Exhibition obscured the origins of the objects on display, it stabilized the meaning of things as mere consumable commodities without stories of their own. Hero’s presence within the stone challenges the assumption that objects are simply “raw materials which nature supplies to the industry of man,” “machinery by which man works upon those materials,” “manufactures articles which he produces,” or, finally,” the art which he employs to impress” as the categorization of displays within the Exhibition suggest (Hobhouse 40). Such categorization values objects based on their proximity to an exterior “man,” and it orders them by virtue of their own metamorphosis from raw material to art or manufactured commodity. Hero’s metamorphosis—which contains in the middle of its trajectory two talented, powerful women and ends with raw material in the form of plant—challenges the categorization and valuation of the Exhibition and its influence over Victorian’s perception of material worth. [33] Most importantly, her transformation challenges the idea that raw materials are essentially waiting to be domesticated and successfully integrated into society.

Just as Hero’s transformation from objectified women to material object represents the instability of things, so too was this paranoia palpable even within the optimism of the Exhibition

[33] Richards describes how the Great Exhibition “permanently altered the conditions of advertising” and “define[d] the most familiar imperatives of modern commodity culture” (21). In addition to advertising, both Richards and Mille discuss the Exhbition’s role in centering visual spectacle in the shopping experience. Lastly, Richard’s attributes the organization of modern shopping plazas to the Exhibition through the “elaborate traffic pattern for channeling people around things” (4).

and its proud display of the Koh-I-Noor. *Punch* most acerbically depicted "a grimy miner presenting to the Queen a 'magnificent black diamond'—a big chunk of coal" and another drawing featured "a panegyric of coal as 'the most precious jewel in the crown of England" (Attick 196). Ensconced within these depictions is a fear of the instability of things; in shifting the meaning of the Koh-I-Noor to suit colonial narratives, the fear of it losing its value altogether is contained within the fear of the diamond undergoing a backwards metamorphosis from diamond to coal, which is the raw material transformed into diamond through the application of pressure and time. The idea of metamorphosis represented in "Hero"—which represents growth through seemingly miraculous and magical transformation—works in reverse here, unwittingly constructing a reverse discourse. The undomesticated diamond, at risk of transforming from mountain of light into lump of common coal, highlights the instability of things and the meanings heaped upon them, regardless of their desirability, beauty or perceived economic worth. Hero experiences and benefits from this instability first hand, represented by the ease with which she "quitted the presence," "quitted the gem," "experienced a shock," or changed forms "the next moment" with "an instantaneous sharp pang" ("Hero" 194, 198, 205). In her quest to be worshipped, Hero's transformations occur with an expediency represented by the simplicity of "quitting" and a rapidity that shocks. The sharp pangs and shocks create a pain that precedes the pleasure of being desired, underscoring the instability of both things and the fleeting focus of desire. Her transformations occur too quickly to be described as conscious thought, occurring with all the impossibility of a diamond magically reverting to coal.

From these contexts, "Hero" emerges as a on things which may stray from the options of the Great Exhibition in which they are either "raw material" or finished objects. "Hero" elaborates on the moral center of "Goblin Market" by removing the consequences of yielding to

desire and revising the image of female heroism. This (Hero)ine unleashes the power and lure of metamorphosis, not just consumption, unleashing the vibrant lives of things themselves and allowing women to experience not just consumption but intense intimacy with the thing consumed. Hero's story arc requires not redemption but experience; she is allowed to explore her desire without punishment but a contract that empowers her with impulsive, instant choice represented by the speed and number of her transformations. Prior to being transformed into the diamond, the Fairy Queen outlines the terms of Hero's commodification:

> If, at the end of the year, you return to claim this pre-eminence as your own proper attribute, it shall then be unconditionally granted; if, on the contrary, you then or even sooner desire to be released from a gift whose sweetness is alloyed by you know not how much of bitter shortcoming and disappointment, return. ("Hero" 194)

Hero, therefore, can indulge in her desire to become an object of her choosing or return to her body if she is disappointed by the object's underlying substance. The Fairy Queen warns of the difficulty of being "the object of admiration," noting that she cannot "ennoble the taste of those who look upon [Hero]" (193). In such state, the object of supreme admiration is something that is not consistent, dependent as it is on the taste of the masses.

Indeed, Hero departs from the diamond when Princess Lily is more admired than the diamond. [34] Just as it was the lack of adoration which prompted her to become the supreme

[34] The Hero diamond as a cultural object owned by Princess Lily provides insight into how Queen Victoria herself was part of the spectacle, and, thereby, a presence visible—but distorted—in the objects on display. The question of the diamond's proper ownership did not widely proliferate in Victorian society (in fact, after the episode with the orphan and corrupted victor, the Hero diamond is lost among a "casket of treasures" owned by the Queen), but its presence within the Exhibition was a curiosity ("Hero" 197) So, if Queen Victoria's presence was part of the spectacle at the Great Exhibition, then so too was her image conflated with the "barbaric" diamond. Rossetti conceptualizes this connection by allowing Hero to "colonize" Princess Lily's heart. Queen Victoria's consumption of the diamond—and her attempt to refine its meaning in alignment with her colonial agenda—enables her to be commodified alongside the diamond. Similarly, Hero's own investment in commodified value results in her own transformation into object, and culminates in her colonization of women's bodies as well as objects.

object of admiration, so too is it an adoring gaze that prompts her occupation of Princess Lily's heart. When the Prince remarks that he was looking at Princess Lily rather than the diamond's radiance, "Hero experienced a shock," and the diamond "lost its supernatural brilliancy as Hero quitted the gem for the heart of Lily" ("Hero" 198). Her occupation of Princess Lily's "pure heart" enables her a modicum of satisfaction, during which she is in "a secluded palace" and "reflected by a hundred mirrors" (198). Even in the privacy of the palace, Hero is still on display within glass, this time in the form of her reflections. But as the "spectator becomes a spectacle," "the mirrors' multiple images also publicly reproduce and compound desire" (100). So, just as Hero took great pleasure in inciting desire through the spectacle of herself as the diamond, so too does she enact a visual desire in the heart of Princess Lily through the abundance of mirrors, which refract and reflect her desire to be the supreme object of admiration. Even more importantly, it is this connection with the gallery of mirrors that enables Princess Lily to become an "object" of desire rather than a person, thereby enabling Hero to occupy her heart.

But this, too, quickly becomes an insufficient home for the ambitious Hero, who is quickly transformed into the voice of songstress Melice Rapta. [35] The introduction to Hero's next home is the first major deviation in the story from Hero's perspective, and, with this, Rossetti establishes a shift in the narrative from objects in direct correlation with the Great Exhibition to more local artistry. As a well-loved songstress, Melice Rapta is what Hero wishes to be. She produces both a visual and auditory commodity through her performances, which is consumed at the cost of admission. When the Prince "through eyes and ears [drinks] deep of beauty," Hero immediately finds herself in the heart of Rapta, once again gauging the woman's worth through the adoring eyes of the Prince ("Hero" 200). Rapta represents what Hero craves: the ability to

[35] As a singer objectified by the male gaze, it is worth noting that "Melice Rapta" roughly translates into "raptured by malice" or "melody," both of which prove to be true within the scope of her tale.

command desire. Melice's most prolific performance is marked by her "pouring forth her soul in passion," and then celebrates her "hour of supreme triumph" by "merely [weeping] like a woman" (201). This suggests that Melice is both in command of the desire she inspires and her own feminity, combining the thrill of being admired with unrestricted emotional expression.

Rather than being perceived as hysteric or unladylike, the expression of herself through singing allows Melice a modicum of control over her own commodification. This is accomplished through the sincerity of her performance, as represented by her passion and weeping, which links substance with appearance. Even this measure of control over incited, commodified desire is imperfect. In this new form, Hero's presence enables a performance like no other. But unbeknownst to Hero, this performance was Melice's last. Upon discovering her hitherto unknown parentage, Melice opts to "withdraw into a private sphere and fix her residence with a maternal uncle," spurning more prestigious relatives in favor of this quaint new home ("Hero" 199). Hero fails to realize that Rapta has already concluded her career, having selected a "small cottage" as her "own selected home" (201-202). It takes her many days to return to this humble place, and this journey becomes an exhibition in its own right, flanked as she is by members of the upper-class "taking a last view of her countenance" (202). Melice's story plays out as a parallel to Hero's: once an object of supreme admiration, Melice chooses a humble home with her maternal uncle, "rejecting more brilliant offers" made from other wealthy kin (199). Here, Melice is afforded full agency over her own commodification, resisting the grandeur of her fame in favor of family. Her return to privacy after her exciting public performances as a singer reveals not only the instability of commodified desire but also the instability of boundaries separating public and private. Even as she retreats to private retirement, Melice remains subject to public desire, as evidenced by both her and Hero's escort of admirers on their journey.

Nevertheless, the promises of a private, domestic retirement constitute a stasis unbefitting of Hero's many-staged metamorphosis into adulthood, and it is not long before she transforms yet again.

Both Hero and Melice soon arrive in the country, where Uncle Treeh's preoccupied nature is injurious to Hero's pride. Upon learning that a rare, exotic seedling is the subject of his interest, Hero finds herself in the thirsty roots of a young plant. This plant proves to be an "alien seed" brought by "a seafaring man of semi-barbarous aspect," and, therefore, another object imported from distant lands (204). With this, Hero finds herself "burrowing beneath the soil in the thirsty sucking roots of a plant not one-eighth of an inch high" (205). This language—the concept of a seed wrested from foreign soil and "thirsty roots"—heavily resembles the rhetoric used to describe the Goblin Men's fruit, and, therefore, this foreign flower poses a similar representation of addictive desire. While Uncle Treeh revels at the sight of a bud on Hero's stalk, Hero notes that "his step was becoming feebler, and his hand more tremulous" (205). His condition worsens until he collapses in front of the blossom, "his glazed eyes still riveted on his favourite nursling" (206). Here, too, the dangers of indulging in foreign desires are prominent, but they are a threat to the male desirer and colonizer rather than the woman who has colonized not one but two objects imported from distant lands.

Like the diamond, the flower stems from a history of masculine, colonial violence: that of importation and commodification. The plant is housed in a conservatory, the invention of which "encouraged the importation of new species into Europe and England" on account of how "flowers could be grown in all seasons" (Tennenbaum 16). This compulsive urge for importation and cultivation of foreign flora is reflected by Uncle Treeh's self-destructive need to nurture Hero's plant. Rossetti describes in great detail the work put into caring for Hero as a plant,

noting how she was "watched by an eye unwearied as that of a lover." Treeh surrounds the plant with quicklime to protect it from snails; he fumigates it to similarly deter "its infinitesimal foes," thus allowing the product of his labor to flourish (205). Just as Hero's diamond is valued for its exotic origins, so too does Uncle Treeh tend to "the first-born of an unknown-race" (205). The seed's value as a commodity is not established until after Uncle Treeh's death. The gardener left in the care of the grounds attempts to sell the house and land to a "magnificently attired lady" and her husband (207). The gardener remarks that the gardens contain "several very rare plants" and indicates Hero to be "a specimen quite unique" (207). Here, the worth of Hero's plant is figured by being exotic. Rather than esteeming any value in the plant, the woman instead remarks that the greenhouse should be "the exact spot for a ruin" (207).

While Hero implicates the woman's "taste" as the guilty party behind the slight, the woman's assertion of crafting Hero into a "ruin" marks her inability to see and desire Hero's spark within the plant. In other words, the woman's disregard for Uncle Treeh's labor stems from her inability to recognize the potential history behind the foreign plant's importation or Hero's vibrance, thereby disrupting the assumption that imported commodities are necessarily luxury commodities or that the interior meaning of things is consistent across observers. Her assertion that a "ruin" be constructed in place of the conservatory alludes to the future of both imported goods and those assume that their meaning is fixed. Once their foreignness is forgotten or rewritten into ruin, imports not easily translated into common household objects—like alien seeds or magnificent gemstones—fall out of favor and recognition despite the labor behind their productions or social history, leading to their figurative ruin as objects that may be domesticated.

Through this exotic seed, Hero ultimately witnesses what Laura and Lizzie also learn from the "Goblin Market": the "mechanism by which commodification and orientalism work is a

violent one, since both depend on a wrested and concealed othering in which objects are assigned representation value as exotic commodities" (Lysack 38). Both diamond and foreign flower serve as bookends to this understanding, as each details a scenario in which an object is commodified through violence, put on display, and then reconstructed into crown or ruin. The Hero diamond was wrested from foreign soil, undergoing a re-cutting of its history during its transformation from Fairyside flotsam to monarchal coronet. While Hero was not witness to the acquisition of the flower's foreign seed, Rossetti's lengthy description of the labor behind it—and the later reference to its value—speaks to the visitors at the Great Exhibition who marveled at objects without truly contemplating their origins or craft. The shifting meanings of both seed and diamond gesture to both the interior life and instability of things. Their meaning is not inert but always alive and in flux, sometimes influenced by outside remythologizing or, more interestingly, sometimes imbued with stray meaning.

The narrative structure enclosed two women in the middle of these objects, structurally reflecting Hero's own year of pre-eminency within animate and inanimate things. Hero's occupancy of Princess Lily's heart or Melice Rapta's voice represents the degree to which women's bodies may also be caught up in the politics of objectification and commodification. In the story, Princess Lily is rather literally colonized by the ideas within the diamond by having Hero occupy her heart. Melice Rapta, meanwhile, represents a parallel to Hero through her manipulation of desire and return to home. More importantly, the fact that foreign objects serve as bookends to Melice and Princess Lily's objectification underscores the extent to which colonial narratives and gendered discursive identities are connected. It also suggests that women, even without Hero's indulgent transformation, may also share desires and enjoy the experience of adulation, even if it comes at the cost of commodification. As representation of monarch and

renowned artist in kind, both women wield a certain amount of power and inspire enough admiration to temporarily sate even Hero.

The balanced structure of Hero's metamorphosis also follows a pattern of reversal, starting from completed diamond and established fame and concluding with an imported, unknown plant destined for ruin. The gradually reducing acclaim in Hero's quest for desire draws to attention the degree to which certain women and objects stray from the ideologies of material consumption of domesticity in kind. Such large objects as national diamonds could not be normalized, and small foreign objects like the seed quickly fell out of fashion. Nineteenth-century authors' incorporation of lesser imports helped conceptualize an idea of British colonies, traces of which may be found in Rossetti's depiction of Fairyland, but large gemstones like the Koh-i-Noor, challenge this conceptualization even within fiction due to its national importance.

A Concluding Redemption

Rossetti's tale, like "Goblin Market," explores the hidden violence of colonial possession and objectification for women, but it also envisions a new form of heroine. Hero, like Lizzie and Laura, is subject to the violence of colonial plundering. Couched in this narrative of female suffering is also the idea of transformation, rebirth, and empathetic hope, even after Hero's vision is stultified by her desire and her innocence is lost. Unlike "Goblin Market," however, Hero is given the space to indulge in her desire without punishment or the threat of death. Hero, upon being returned to Man-Side, lies on a "lily-raft," and she herself is "crowned with lilies, at rest" ("Hero" 208). An idyllic peace with nature—and the color white—characterize the purity of Rossetti's heroine. This image attesting to her renewed angelic purity is quickly followed by the image of her at the hearth, surrounded by her children. Hero warns them that "only home is happy" and "only love is sweet first, and last, and always" ("Hero" 211). At first

glimpse, this line resembles many of Rossetti's other heroines, who extol the virtue of love, companionship and domesticity. As a happy wife and mother, it seems that Rossetti has relegated her heroine to the realm of domesticity once and for all. As Jan Marsh notes, the pains of Hero's adulation "are not very persuasively drawn," and the seemingly moralizing coda insufficiently counters the thrill and delight of Hero's experiences (Marsh). But desire appears within the flush of her children's cheeks, the quickness of their breath, and their kindled eyes upon hearing of Hero's pre-eminence (211). Her assertion that "only home is happy" is delivered, most pointedly, with a "convincing smile," and these mantras are only extended after describing her story in detail and eliciting such a response from her children (211). The convincing smile suggests concealment of some sort—a performance for the children's sake. Though seemingly the epitome of idealized domesticity, the concept of "only home is happy" is not meant to restrict her children to the hearth but prevent them from visiting Fairyland and becoming caught in the allure of treasures from foreign shores. The subsequent retellings of her story, however, seems designed to inspire not just desire in her children but also their admiration and love. Hero seems to have learned no moral lesson from her metamorphosis but satiated her desires. Even as a mother, she remains the hero of her own story—a heroism derived from indulgence in her own desires. Hero strays from the traditional meaning of her name, envision a magical world where being desired is akin to bombastic, selfless heroism.

Despite Hero's resistance to domestic ideologies, her experience occurs at the expense of the foreign goods that she inhabits. The same lily-whiteness that attests to her purity also distances her from the magical influence of the colonized other, and while her assertion that "only home is happy" strives to prevent her children from becoming colonizers themselves, the imported objects in the tale are not returned home. In this way, objects of national importance to

lands far away continue to have their meaning expropriated by the colonizer's tale told from the perspective of their side of the sea. The story of Hero's diamond is exclusively focused on Hero's journey within the stone; its origins and prior purpose remain obscured by the colonial narrative of its acquisition on Man-Side's shores and eventual purchase by Princess Lily. Once Hero's soul departs the diamond, the narrative affords the abandoned gem no further detail, thereby also abandoning the question of the Hero diamond's rightful ownership. The exotic plan, similarly, is left to be restructured into ruin. This, implicitly, seems to acknowledge Britain's difficulty of domesticating and incorporating objects like the Koh-I-Noor into a national identity rather than an object representative of colonial agenda and violent acquisition.

While Rossetti's Fairyland is bereft of the racially charged imagery found in "Goblin Market," the land's feminine representation and gem-encrusted depiction nevertheless represent other problematic conceptions about Indian territories within Victorian narratives. Such descriptions reflect fanciful, imperial accounts that represent British India as a veritable treasure trove awaiting plunder, and "Hero" perpetuates the strategically feminized discourse about India as a result. Even as Rossetti's "Hero" preserves these colonial discourses, the fairy-tale provides an invaluable glimpse into how gendered material practices transcribed harmful discursive identities onto both British India and Victorian women consumers.

This perspective may only be achieved by studying the material objects and, in the case of the Hero diamond, the rather literal identities held within them**.** The language surrounding Hero's diamond gestures to both imported gems' colonial history and how their presence within the Great Exhibition was read. The violence with which these treasures were seized and exported to the marketplace implicates colonizer and colonized alike. While the violence speaks of the Koh-i-Noor's Indian history as an object of ancient conquest, Rossetti's own representation of

the jewel reflects the degree to which varying and diverse British meanings were written onto the diamond, none more prominent than the narrative which established it as the jewel of the British crown and, therefore, the emblem of Victoria's "refining" influence on India.

The display of Hero's diamond also reflects, in its fractals, the actual, physical bodies that were conflated with the Koh-i-Noor. Becoming "the lodestone of the fairer sex," it becomes the thing itself in the cultural imagination. The Koh-i-Noor often failed to meet expectations, and its failure to impress incurred paranoia about both the women who desired it and its stability as a thing. Hero's invocation of this national diamond appropriates its shifting meanings to liberate female desire, detaching the pleasure of being desired and looked at from the discursive Victorian anxieties about women's consumption. Though her metamorphosis is at times problematic from a post-colonial perspective, her numerous transformations are nevertheless thrilling in their representation of a new heroism that hinges on the indulgence of female desire and the celebration of things as bearers of living, shifting, and, occasionally, stray meaning.

Looking At and Looking Through: "The Heart of Princess Joan," "The Necklace of Princess Fiorimonde," and Glass Culture

The representation of glass within Victorian fiction establishes how, as Isobel Armstrong suggests, glass is an "antithetical material" and "holds contrary states within itself as barrier and medium" (11). Glass, when used in lenses or windows, helped Victorians diversify their modes of seeing even as it served as a barrier between the spectator and the subject of their gaze. As a commodity, glassware and jewelry made for portable property—trinkets which helped consumers constitute the self through their possessions. When such Victorian glass is transposed from realist fiction into fairytale, the magical possibilities of the genre often magnify its antithetical attributes, allowing for impossible magic to emphasize the nature of its production and its relationship with vision and the self. Plain glass within a magical context also represents the instability of glass; without the aid of magic, fairytale glass can hinder or enable vision, preserve objects on display, or conceal the inner life of thing within its seemingly transparent properties. This complicates glass's association with the domestic; its transparent properties, though capable of obscuring and serving as a barrier, also complicated the boundaries of public and private spheres through the transparency of windows.

The recently reclaimed author Mary De Morgan (1850-1907), writing from the heart of the Arts and Crafts movement, is particularly adept at parsing the politics of glass and visual culture. This is certainly the case in her second collection of tales, *The Necklace of Princess Fiorimonde and Other Stories* (1880). Deeply engaged with both Victorian "glass culture" and its scopic practices, De Morgan often casts sight in a central role in her tales and demonstrates glass's antithetical properties by playfully juxtaposing the invisible with the visible. Two tales from this collection, "The Heart of Princess Joan" and "The Necklace of Princess Fiorimonde,"

particularly invoke the magical attributes of glass and explore how it mediates or impedes vision. In "The Heart of Princess Joan," a glass lens serves as the only means of reliably sorting the real from the fantastic. The lens leads Prince Michael, the tale's hero, through darkness and across unexplored seas, its scopic properties making a crimson star visible only to him. In "The Necklace of Princess Fiorimonde," glass obscures reality as portable, personal property, allowing Fiorimonde to carry her suitors with her as dazzling crystal beads. Just as her beautiful appearance hopelessly distracts her viewers from her wickedness, so too does the beauty of these beads conceal the cursed men trapped within. Through talismanic lens and fantastical beads, De Morgan sorts the experience of "looking at" from that of "looking through." Linking the latter to insight into labor and moral fiber, these tales speak to the difficulties of truly seeing in a consumer society.

The Necklace of Princess Fiorimonde and Other Stories includes a rich critique of modern technologies and political and gender ideologies which bear the mark of the political and artistic radicals with whom De Morgan worked and lived. [36] "The Heart of Princess Joan" and "The Necklace of Princess Fiorimonde" represent not only De Morgan's deft hand at social commentary, but also her particular brand of socialist feminism. Fowler notes that De Morgan's "balanced treatment of both sexes in her work . . . depicts men and women alike capable of

[36] Marilyn Pemberton points out that those same luminaries – William Morris, the Burnes-Jones family, her own biological family which included her brother William De Morgan, Morris's ceramicist, her father John De Morgan, the mathematician, and her mother, Sophia De Morgan, the feminist and spiritualist – have wrongly put De Morgan herself in "the shadows" when her work stands on its own merits. Zipes points out in his introduction to *The Oxford Companion to Fairy Tales* that Mary De Morgan "allows for women's voices and needs to be heard" (xxvi). More recently, Alicia Carroll has argued that De Morgan's first collection of tales, *On a Pincushion and Other Fairy Tales* (1877) creates "distinctive magical ecologies" that engage the "early green" ethos of the Arts and Crafts community (104). Some modern scholars, such as James Fowler, suggest that the second collection is even "stronger" than De Morgan's inaugural volume, attributing this strength to the development of the tales' political themes (Haase 256). Whereas her first publication "translated contemporary issues such as the woman question ('A Toy Princess') and the wages of industrialism ('Siegfried and Handa')," into moralistic tales, De Morgan's second collection of tales colorfully depicts arguably more morally complex "trails of the human heart, the marketplace, and the body politic" (257). From a dazzling - and wicked - necklace of crystal beads, each of which entraps a Princess's unwanted suitors, to the powerful talismanic lens of "The Heart of Princess Joan," the problem and pleasures of seeing through glass to perceive what it entraps, conceals, and reveals are presented as a central theme of the collection.

behavior ranging from heroism to folly or wickedness" (225). The titular princesses from either tale, for instance, contrast strongly in matters of moral virtues and visual perception. Princess Joan, though initially heartless, demonstrates her visual acuity and goodness at the tale's conclusion by heroically rescuing Michael from imprisonment. Princess Fiorimonde, meanwhile, is wicked and incapable of seeing beyond the surface. Through this equal treatment, De Morgan resists what Pemberton refers to as the tale's otherwise "fairly traditional plot structure" (132). Prince Michael does rescue the titular Princess and earns her hand in marriage, but his "happily ever after" is hard won through the tale's correction of his objectification of Princess Joan. Similarly, Gervaise must resist the allure of Fiorimonde's beauty in his quest—a feat that he may not have been capable of without the aid of Fiorimonde's wise and courageous maid. In lieu of the genre's usual bombastic heroism, then, De Morgan instead establishes her heroes as worthy suitors for how they learn to look through both people and things with empathy. The literal re-vision of the heroic male perspective through the technology of glass, coupled with De Morgan's diverse and empowered representation of women, reinforce these tales' importance. Such representation of this technology represents glass as something more than a domestic object or collectible.

The reclamation of sight in "The Heart of Princess Joan" and "The Necklace of Princess Fiorimonde" is especially suited for analysis given their concurrent themes. Each tale features princesses whose beauty is wrongfully esteemed as value, drawing a connection between exterior appearance and internal goodness. The flawed, male heroes of either story negotiate the limitations of their own gaze by understanding glass's antithetical nature. In each, bodies become conflated with commodities. A woman's heart and male suitors become objects on display, and each transformation is enabled by an old crone's magic. Both tales engage traditional fairytale

conventions even as they overturn them, making this pair representative of De Morgan's ideologies but also of Victorian anxieties about vision's reliability. In such state, exploring one tale provides a lens for the other. In distinguishing between "looking at" and "looking through," De Morgan distinguishes between aesthetic and utilitarian uses for glass, and she uses this distinction to explore matters of female subjectivity and its intersection with gendered material practices such as consumption or collection.

Glass Culture and Victorian Fairytales

The power of glass in De Morgan's writing suggests the nearly enchanting power of new glass technologies which emerged during the Victorian period and had the effect of revolutionizing the way culture perceived seeing and industrial production or labor itself. As Isobel Armstrong has argued, the affordability of glass in late Victorian culture allowed for a convergence of public and private spaces by way of large plate glass windows, and glass as a medium generated nearly infinite aesthetic purposes, appearing not only in cascading glass chandeliers but also in cultural practices such as window shopping and museum exhibits. Glass also paved the way for both microscopy and photography. To the society that revolutionized the production of glass and its treatment, glass was nothing short of magical. Although scholars are well-acquainted with the example of George Cruikshank's "elastic glass slipper," and the wicked mirror in "The Snow Queen," few authors capture both the magical appearance of glass and its power to see into gendered ways of seeing with quite the same deftness as Mary de Morgan.

In "The Heart of Princess Joan," glass allows Michael to see reality even as it distorts the natural world. It is reflected in Princess Joan's eyes and in Michael's vision of the old wizard's peculiar book of moving figures. At the same time, the tale represents the properties of glass as a manufactured medium in numerous other places, recalling the production of photography or the

construction of an observatory. Finally, the tales also represent glass's powers to conceal, be that the concealment of its contents or its modes of production. Buildings without windows ironically serve as locations for exhibition and an encounter with a reflection illustrates glass's vexed relationship with the labor that produces it. In "The Necklace of Princess Fiorimonde," the seemingly magical appearance of new beads on Fiorimonde's necklace recalls the mass-production of similar beads within Victorian markets, and despite their perfect clearness, revealing a spectacular array of colors at their core, their transparency reveals nothing of the suitors trapped within. Whereas glass serves as an invisible barrier in "The Heart of Princess Joan," the presence of glass in "The Necklace of Princess Fiorimonde" is far more magical, obscuring vision with beauty and reflection rather than transparency. In such state, these tales enact the scopic properties of glass, distorting reality in order to question certain ways of seeing.

As Isobel Armstrong argues, things displayed under glass, or behind glass, are talismans of a scopic culture in which seeing the object provides insight into its reality. In truth, glass complicates the process of this gaze, for it serves as a boundary that "is both a point of contact and a division" (Armstrong 207). Though visual contact with an object under glass seems possible, the viewer is, in fact, looking through an object even as they are looking at one. The gaze, therefore, is mediated by the translucency of glass; glass serves as a boundary between viewer and object even as it allows the contact to occur. In addition to mediating the contact between viewer and object on display, Armstrong contends that glass simultaneously displaces and provides a sanctuary for the thing on display.

In discussing the presence of a lily in the conservatory, she remarks that the glass "makes the conservatory a refuge for the exotic" and succeeds in "reversing the process of expropriation" (215). The conservatory functions as a sanctuary ironically even for plants or objects taken,

looted, or stolen from their homes; it "preserves" the item in question and protects it from unjustified possession by providing it a place to belong. But, in accomplishing this, the conservatory—or the exhibit—also works to displace the item on display by distancing it from its original purpose, means or creation, or place of belonging. Armstrong suggests that "the very form of the exhibition implies that things function in some ideal space designated and waiting for them—somewhere else" (221). This results in a paradoxical state of existence where the purpose of the objects on display is preserved but permanently lost. This is largely due to "the pressure of [the glass'] absent forms," which persists even after the objects have been freed from their glass exhibits and lenses (Armstrong 221). The glass, therefore, also serves an antithetic purpose by still applying pressure where it is not. A similar displacement occurs through photography. Nancy Armstrong points out that a common argument against such visual representation is that "mass produced images [are] deleterious because they keep us from seeing an object in its original wholeness and specificity" (1). When a photograph replicates an original, the original becomes conjoined with the train of copies that replicate it. In this way, a photograph acts in a way similar to Isobel Armstrong's exhibition. The glass camera lens removes the photograph's subject from its context by framing the scene for display, and the photograph's duplicate prints become forever linked to the original, detaching it from its original existence. Both things under glass and the presence of photos figure largely in the Victorian parlor, as represented in the works of both Nancy Armstrong and Isobel Armstrong. The family photography can preserve, through the application of glass lenses, the very image of domestic haven; the display of possessions under glass both displays and protects property within the Victorian home, reflecting in its surface the protective presence of the Angel in the House. Conversely, this method of display could also be appropriated to critique the artificial and superficial representation of

women, allowing the glasshouse or exhibit to perpetuate domestic ideologies as much as sexist ones. Both the display of objects through exhibition and the duplication of images through photography figure prominently within De Morgan's writing, though, however, they are not always in accordance with these prevalent glass-culture theories. By invoking the subversive attributes of plain glass in a fairytale context, De Morgan ultimately disrupts the perceived domesticating influence of glass.

These concepts of presence through absence and transformative glass resonate with the fairy tale genre as much as Mary De Morgan's tales themselves. Nineteenth-century fairy tales occupied new thematic spaces made possible by equally new technologies. Though few dealt with literal fairies, fairy tales often depended "on a sense of ineffable presence, the immaterial materialized in another kind of body, another kind of self" (Newton xi). Therefore, fairy tales were often marked by an intangible presence, typically of a magical variety, that often expressed itself in a more tangible form, whether through transforming into another body or fracturing and dividing the self. While this "ineffable presence" sometimes presented itself in the form of a manufactured object, this theme of transformation most often occurs through the moulding and manufacturing of reality. Many of De Morgan's contemporaries recognized this transformation of modern technologies and subjectivities into fairy tale fiction. Ruskin, in his lecture on Fairy Tales, remarks how "the colour-print, the magic-lantern, the electric-light, and the—to any row of ciphers—magnifying lens" made it "very interesting to consider what we may most wisely represent to children by means so potent, so dazzling, and, if we will, so faithful" (82). Ruskin recognizes that new modes and technologies of seeing in the real world necessitate their faithful reproduction within the fairy tales themselves—a transfiguration of seeing technologies into language and fiction. Isobel Armstrong most prominently sees a similar transfiguration in

Cruikshank's "Cinderella" and its treatment of the glass slipper: "the *elastic* glass shoe emerges from a literalism that is now sufficiently conscious of the real agony of glass . . .to be uneasy, unable to see it as magical or symbolic" (207). As such, the counterintuitive purpose of the glass within the text—that of an elastic shoe— makes the slipper feel remote from actual magic. The "spun" elasticity of the glass implies that the slipper is not the product of magic but, instead, manufacturing, and the fragility of glass necessitated intense labor to produce a woven, elastic slipper. The slipper, therefore, works to transpose literal technology and labor into the realm of the fairy tale. It illustrates the degree to which the process of producing an item—specifically the production of glass—is intangible to the consumer by transposing the production of the good into myth.

Glass and Scopic Culture in "The Heart of Princess Joan"

"The Heart of Princess Joan" begins with a Queen's unwise attempt to promise what she cannot see: the wealthy future of her child. In her presumption, she angers the fairies, who steal the infant girl's heart as punishment. As a result, the girl—named Joan— grows into a beautiful princess who is nonetheless incapable of feeling or loving. In a neighboring kingdom, Prince Michael sees an image of the princess in a wizard's magical book and becomes enamored of the lovely girl. Though the wizard warns him away from the heartless Princess Joan, Michael promises to return her heart, vowing that if he cannot find it within seven years she may marry someone else. The wizard gifts him with a piece of magical glass that will help him find Joan's heart. After travelling across strange lands and an unexplored sea, Michael discovers a sealed castle. A gray man near its entrance tells Michael that he may enter the castle as soon as a seemingly non-magical snake hatches its eggs. Sadly, the snake and its eggs are enchanted, and they never hatch. After years of grueling labor, Michael finally cries over the eggs, causing them

to hatch; he enters the castle and avoids a series of ruses by seeing through them with the magical piece of glass. At last, Michael is rewarded with Joan's heart, and he is able to return Joan's heart to her, after which they wed. The magical glass has done its work.

De Morgan transposes the modern magic of technologies, commodities, and labor into "The Heart of Princess Joan." [37] De Morgan's magical objects, when isolated from their means of production, reflect such socialist sympathies. In the old wizard's tower, for example, magic has produced the impossible: a building with "no joins" and "no windows" (Morgan 84-85). The absence of the joins in the stone inspires awe; it seems forged from a single stone, by superhuman craftsmanship. Its site, poised on a "high hill," "round" in shape, makes it a perfect watchtower, yet, the entirety of the tower is "pitch dark," excepting the room occupied by the old wizard which is "light as day" (85). Yet, the wizard's vision and magical books containing moving images place him in the role of the photographer; the darkness of the tower brings to mind the advent of shutter technologies, which allowed photographer complete darkness from which they might better see out or through a lens. According to Armstrong, "a darkened interiority signals a transformation of the optical unconscious" where "the eye becomes isolated among the sensoria, hyper-alert to cognitive and sensory demands that *pass through* a prior medium" (267). The "optical unconscious" refers to an invisible, mediating factor affecting vision akin to the subconscious's influence on thoughts; controlling vision through darkness or isolation enables an increased awareness of those invisible things affecting sight and its interpretation. The wizard, in other words, has established an environment which isolates him from the outside world, ensuring that his sight is unmediated by anything other than his own "eye" or vision. If a "darkened interiority signals a transformation of the optical unconscious,"

[37] Fowler notes how, "as someone who moved in the Pre-Raphaelite and Arts and Crafts subcultures, De Morgan would have known the value of a good, well-made thing, and the aesthetic, moral, and economic bankruptcy occasioned by an exploitative, speculative market system" (228).

then the wizard's tower, with its darkness and narrow passageways, marks an effort to limit what might unconsciously mediate and affect his vision.

The tower, atop its high hill, round in shape, and meticulously arranged to expedite vision, serves as the wizard's observatory in the tale. The contemporary descriptions of such facilities reflect the seemingly magical construction of the tower. David Aubin shares a description from a guidebook on the Paris Observatory, in which it is described as "a most curious piece of architecture, having in it neither wood nor iron" featuring "a geometrical staircase" (3-4). These traits were consistent throughout observatories, and the tower's "winding staircase" and "one huge stone" construction echoes the fantastical language of the guidebook (De Morgan 84). In the nineteenth century, "the number of astronomical observatories worldwide rose from fewer than three dozen to more than two hundred," and De Morgan's inclusion of the wizard's tower reflects the boom in observatories and their role in the nineteenth century imagination (Aubin 2).

The properties of glass and its mass production enabled this surge, resulting in a similar revival of astronomy through the mass production of telescopes. While discussing William Herschel, a prominent nineteenth-century astronomer-theorist, Armstrong notes how he "spoke of 'Seeing' through the telescope as a form of knowing 'how to,' 'an art that must be learnt'" (256). Seeing and perceiving, therefore, were cultivated as both labor and artform in the practice of astronomy. De Morgan transposes both labor and artform into seemingly magical intuition through the wizard. Just as Herschel spent "'[M]any a night. . .practicing to see,'" so too does the wizard practice seeing in his magical observatory (256). His eyes are as "bright as two candles," and his room is depicted as containing both books and mythical instruments alike (Morgan 85). The brightness of his eyes speaks to the effectiveness of his sight and his intelligence, and the

books and instruments suggest that his "practicing to see" involves both a literary education and a meticulous study of the outside world. His room is further connected to an observatory by its perceived proximity to the heavens via a lamp "filled with sunbeams" (85). By connecting the wizard with the budding science of astronomy (and, as will be seen, demonstrating his knowledge of the outside world), De Morgan unifies technology with magic and seeing with labor.

As a result of the observatory's construction, the wizard is a mystery to those in the surrounding village who are resistant to visiting him and sharing the darkness of his tower. The introductory text reveals that the King, Queen, and "all the country" are "afraid of the old magician" because they have never climbed the tower to "see the old man at his work" (85). Their fear, therefore, is the direct result of a failure of sight. The absence of windows fails to provide a medium for outside observers to look in at the wizard, and this apparent lack of transparency—coupled with their reluctance to climb the stairs to see him—prevents them from comprehending the wizard. [38] Only Michael ventures to look into the dark and visit the old man; only Michael ventures forth to understand his technology of vision and his labor or "work," hence, he is the only member of the community to know "the old sorcerer well," the only one who does "not fear him at all" (84). Rather than accepting the tower's lack of transparency as its reality, Michael's willingness to look as the wizard does exhibits a deeper understanding of seeing's relation to labor. Seeing and understanding the wizard cannot be achieved without witnessing his technique; the latter is a form of labor, like the physical labor of scaling the tower stairs.

[38] In particular, this deals with what Armstrong refers to in her introduction as a "glass consciousness and language of transparency," or the concept of "public glass," which ultimately extolled and encouraged the age-old axiom of "seeing is believing" (Armstrong 1)

Michael's physical and intellectual labor to see gives him access to a complex, moving picture display once inside the tower. Despite his correct perception of the wizard, this moving picture display reveals Michael's vision still has a few substantive shortcomings. In the wizard's dark room, where photographs of the outside world might be "developed," Michael is given a peek into "an enormous book full of coloured pictures of little men and women about three inches high each." The wizard explains that these images "are living portraits, too, for they move and look just like the originals" (86). The magic book demonstrates the work of the wizard's particular lens, his ability to "translate an object into myth," for it transposes the actual objects being observed—the kings and queens—into miniatures of "three inches" high (Armstrong 207). Michael wonders at the wizard's visual possession of them, particularly of Joan. The descriptions of the figures encourage viewers to be "conscious of the photograph," or illustration, in this circumstance, "as image" (N. Armstrong 255). Miniaturized and isolated from their natural environment as the figures are, they represent an image rather than a reality for the figures depicted.

However, just as Michael objectifies Joan's image, exclaiming "she is the most beautiful creature in the world," the image of the princess turns and smiles "at him until he smiled back again and could not move his eyes from it" (Morgan 87). This scene proves remarkable for the gaze exchanged between object and observer. Though the figures represent rather than accurately depict their real-life counterparts, Joan actively turns and gazes back at Michael from the page. The exchange, therefore, is not merely an individual looking upon an inert image; it proves to be an "encounter" in which Michael confronts and is confronted by Princess Joan's visual beauty. The two men gazing at passive bodies (and Joan, in particular) recalls Laura Mulvey's analysis of how sexual difference controls interpretations of images. Though Mulvey's article deals with

narrative cinema, the principles of looking are also present on the film-like moving images of the Wizard's book. Michael derives pleasure from "direct scopophilic contact with the female form displayed for his enjoyment" (839). Initially, this contact follows the model of active male viewer and passive, objectified female image, but Joan's returned gaze occludes Michael's scopophilia and disrupts her passivity as visual subject. As her look challenges the male gaze, it evokes Mulvey's psychoanalytic take of the "woman as representation [signifying] castration, inducing voyeuristic or fetishistic mechanisms to circumvent her threat" (843). Michael's attempts to reconcile the hardness of her gaze with his interpretation of her form, in this light, represent his attempts to fetishize Joan and indicate one of many shortcomings in his perception.

This exchanged gaze proves even more intriguing on account of Joan's eyes, which are "clear and hard as glass" (90). Her eyes, then, possess the transparent properties of glass, and, moreover, their transparency and hardness display her heartlessness. In this heartbreaking moment, the eye contact exchanged between Michael and the Joan in the book represents Michael's encounter with the "glass" barrier itself. Just as he accepts the figures in the book as "real" without distortion, so too does he mistake Joan's beautiful gaze as love. More to the point, he mistakes Joan's gaze as being for him. In looking at an actual picture, "the observer was looking at an object as it was seen by another observer," and so it logically follows that Joan's gaze is directed towards the magic through which her image was captured rather than Michael himself (N. Armstrong 75). In other words, the transparency of the image and Joan's gaze cause Michael to mistake "looking through" for "looking at." The wizard attempts to correct Michael by advising him "not to look at her. . .for she will bring nothing but trouble to all who know her" (Morgan 90). The wizard's dismissal of Michael's interpretation—and the fairytale's prior revelation of Joan's heartlessness—indicates a facet of De Morgan's moral. Michael fails to

understand that the duplicate image provides no insight into the staging and presentation of the real, and this is represented as a failure to "look through" the image.

Unwittingly, Michael is consuming the stereotype of fairytale princess through his mistaken interpretation of Joan's image; he is unaware of how the image occludes the reality of her heartlessness. [39] His failure of sight, therefore, involves not only the nature of the image but also the nature of the woman. The image transforms Joan's body into a representation of her interiority, which conflicts with her actual heartlessness. Elizabeth Miller also notes "women's bodily inscrutability" in her discussions of Arthur Conan Doyle's "A Scandal in Bohemia," noting the frequency with which fiction frets over the deceptiveness of women's outward appearance as represented in photography (40). Here, too, does Joan represent an "enigmatic text," for her image's appearance and seeming eye-contact represent failures of scopic culture and nothing more (41). The wizard's book "offers image as a substitute for and barrier to the truth of individual identity," masking, in its simplicity, the absence of Joan's heart. It serves as a point of contrast for Michael's eventual encounter with actual glass (N. Armstrong 246). Her gaze, which stares out invitingly at Michael, serves the opposite purpose of photos of women and girls framed in Victorian Parlors. Whereas such photos were meant to be displayed and consumed by looking at, Joan's image seemingly stares back and invites the adoring observation of the viewer through her perceived eye contact. Her gaze is the one empowered; Michael's visual consumption of her is flawed.

[39] Nancy Armstrong's assertion that "visual representations of 'the body' are deleterious because they operate as stereotypes to occlude the subjects inhabiting specific bodies" further reveals how the image warps Joan's appearance (1). Though Michael opts to interpret her image in a particular fashion, her representation within the book itself represents her in a shallow, limited fashion that conceals more than it reveals. It is "folly to believe a photograph can capture some element of humanity," as it culminates in the perception that "the transformation of [a woman's] body into a sign of the moral and emotional qualities contained within that body" (N. Armstrong 110-112).

De Morgan challenges the photographer's ability to "see" women through her representation of human vulnerability to scopic culture, exploring in Michael's visit to the wizard photographer's studio the susceptibility of the visitor to the gap between appearance and reality. To aid this human weakness, the wizard offers a helpmeet to adjust Michael's vision: a talismanic lens. The glass, itself, is simply described as a "small, round piece," and those words are the extent of its physical description (Morgan 100). The lens contextualizes Michael's quest within the realm of the image rather than the material. Though his quest is to return Joan's heart to her, this is done with the intent of reconciling her outward appearance with her inward identity. In this quest, the lens mediates Michael's vision, allowing him to observe both visible and invisible things. The first of these invisible things is the stars. When viewed through the lens, their light refracts into "jewels of all colours" from which Michael must find the "deep glowing red" star (101). The magic lens transforms the white light of stars into a visible, prismatic spectrum, further recalling the Victorian discovery of astronomy and telescopes. The lens constructs for Michael a portable observatory of sorts by allowing him to observe the stars as they truly are.

Though seemingly the stuff of magic, this transformation of the heavens into jewel-toned spectacle also appears elsewhere in the Victorian imagination. In her poem, "The Song of the Star," Christina Rossetti describes a similar scene, referring to the planets as "Amethystine, roseate, / golden, silvery, glowing blue, / Hueless, and of every hue" (340). Rossetti invokes light's visual instability. When refracted properly, even the "hueless" heavens take on "every hue." Here, too, technologies of seeing become indistinguishable from fairy magic. Just as Victorians used "the classic Newtonian origins of the spectrum . . .[as] the earliest lens-screen experiment," so too does the lens and the multi-hued stars represent Michael's first

experimentation in harnessing vision and image (Armstrong 265). His heavenward gaze speaks to the wizard in his observatory, suggesting that Michael is on his way to becoming another expert "seer." The lens allows him to see the stars not as they are, but, rather, enables him to decipher the prismatic qualities of their light.

By following the crimson star, Michael practices a new, celestial application of seeing. His failure to turn his gaze earthward with the magical lens results in seven years' hard labor. The crimson star leads him across untraveled ocean to a mysterious, prison-like castle, where he encounters an "old man" with "dull gray eyes" (Morgan 103). The man rejects Michael's offer of money and, instead, decrees Michael his "slave" until the serpent's eggs hatch. Upon seeing the serpent sitting on its eggs, Michael rejoices: "Gladly. . .for no snake could take seven years hatching its eggs" (105). Once again, his assumption about the serpent is a failure of sight. The serpent's eggs are magical, and both snake and eggs remain unchanged for years. He understands, after attempting to kill the serpent, that "it is not the fault of the poor snake that its eggs are not hatched," and he realizes that it is likely enchanted like him, "and waits as patiently for them" (111). He weeps over the eggs, causing them to hatch. Rather than serpents, the eggs yield "no one fully formed animal," but, rather, a strange and multi-colored amalgam of foot, leg, tail, and head (112). The grotesque beast affirms the enchantment of the eggs, warping the interiority of the eggs by making them produce parts rather than a whole. Multi-colored like refracted stars, the image of these malformed creatures visually echoes the use of Michael's lens, suggesting that the helpmeet may have aided him in properly identifying the eggs as enchanted.[40]

[40] Marilyn Pemberton elaborates on the beast's unnatural appearance by using this scene as proof of De Morgan's "abhorrence of vivisection" (132). While Pemberton notes that it is not clear how outspoken De Morgan was in protesting the scientific practice, representations of divided bodies in her tales suggest that "the idealization of the individual parts of the female form as being another kind of vivisection; both aesthetic and scientific processes being

After this realization, Michael is able to use his lens effectively, seeing through magical glamour when he is tempted by a yellow fairy in the castle of hearts. In this case, the glass provides a reliable technology that exerts power over the magic of the fairytale. First, the yellow fairy approaches him as "a stately dame dressed in black velvet," then as "a little child with bright eyes and hair," and, lastly, as Princess Joan "dressed in white and gold" (De Morgan 114). While Michael is fairly quick to distrust his vision with the first two disguises, he nearly believes that he is gazing at the real Princess Joan. He gives "a cry of joy and [holds] out his arms to clasp her in them," and he wonders if he has "truly won her" (119). This encounter with Joan's image is his final test: his decision to gaze at Joan through the lens, revealing the yellow witch's true form, illustrates how Michael no longer confuses "looking at" with "looking through." Just as Joan's image does in the wizard's enchanted book, the witch's enchanted body produces an inscrutable image. Michael is only able to comprehend what he sees by gazing through the lens, at which point he sees "a wizened old woman, robed in yellow, with an evil yellow face and evil yellow eyes" (115). While the yellow fairy controls her image through magic, Michael's visual expertise with his lens allows him to simultaneously simplify and magnify the view, enabling him to see beyond magical glamour and analyze the scene for what it is.

Through the magical lens, De Morgan gestures to invisible forces beyond magical enchantments that influence vision. Miller suggests that "vision is not a transparent, unmediated, or direct process, but is 'framed' by conditions both internal and external to the viewer" (Miller 45-47). This allows for a unique interpretation of the meaning behind the glass lens's placement

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a violation of the body" (24). Building on Pemberton's contributions, the vivisected beast, constructed of living but divided parts, also reflects Joan's own physical vivisection. Not only is her heart removed, but her image is also divided, rendered substanceless by the absence of any interior emotion. While the serpent serves as another visual test of discerning the enchanted from the real, it also awakens Michael to his blindness pertaining to Princess Joan and his own idealization of her beauty.

within the tale. When Michael pulls out the "magic glass in his bosom" to view the yellow fairy crone, he reveals its location to be definitive (121). The wizard too draws the glass "from his bosom," and the proximity of the glass to actual hearts is no mistake, nor is the disappearance of the glass after its use has subsided a matter of coincidence (100). The location of the glass lens—near the heart—speaks to the internal human conditions (like emotion or bias) that mediate vision. The lens allows Michael a measure of control over this 'framing' and inculcates a sight that incorporates other capacities, such as labor and thought. Michael's increasing perception reflects a "historicized notion of sight" which "appears interwoven with concurrent developments in visual technology" (28). The magical glass invokes the observatory, the prism, and the photographic lens through its application, representing these new technologies of seeing by revealing invisible and incomprehensible magic. The weight of the glass in Michael's breast pocket also serves as a material reminder about his labor and trials' purpose, as it did when the yellow fairy's "cup struck against the magic glass" and reminded him not to drink (Morgan 119). His quest calls for him to question the legitimacy of sight by being mindful of what may not be immediately visible, and he accomplishes this through an increasing awareness of the variables affecting vision, be they internal prejudice or external magical glamour. This ability to frame a scene in order to see the invisible stands in stark contrast to the convolution of looking-through and looking-at as exhibited by Michael previously, and his increased mindfulness of invisible things proves to be the core of the fairytale's moral.

Labor, Exhibition, and Perception in "The Heart of Princess Joan"

Indeed, to see without perceiving in Mary de Morgan's tale is powerfully equated with "having" or "getting" without labor or cost, thievery like the theft of Joan's very heart by the yellow fairy at the outset of the tale. The Queen promises that Joan will "have a fine palace, and

jewels, and lands to [her] heart's content" (Morgan 79). The yellow fairy appears and counters the Queen's promise, asking "whose help will [she] seek to get her all these fine things" (79). The Queen fails to see that the little yellow woman is a fairy, and she "haughtily" declares her right to such gifts, saying "I am Queen of the land, and can have what I please" (80). Yet, a fine palace needs an architect and laborers; jewels require an artisan's hand in order to be shaped from rough gemstone. As such, the theft of Joan's heart—and its subsequent exhibition — marks a cruel but oddly appropriate punishment. It establishes the degree to which wanton consumption without an awareness of and respect for the labor behind the objects exists as a type of "heartlessness." Moreover, it renders the product of the Queen's literal labor of pregnancy and motherhood inert, for Joan's heartlessness causes her to be cold to all including her mother. In such state, Michael's labor is equal parts heroic journey and remuneration. The yellow crone certainly acknowledges that Michael has won the heart, but she also demands that he "tell the Queen how many years of toil and labour her proud words and boasting have cost" (Morgan 120). The Queen's lack of perception is two-fold: just as she refuses to acknowledge the yellow fairy's words and power, so too is she unable to see the labor behind her wealth.

The perverse exhibition of Joan's heart, or, moreover, its transformation into something to be looked at, illustrates how things that are divided from their original context exist as broken, empty things—simulacrums in their own right. The exhibition of caged hearts in the interior of the exhibit features lush and exorbitant décor, which becomes "lovelier" further inside of the castle, replete with "carved gold and silver and ivory" that recall the extravagance of conspicuous consumption and so marks an effort to constitute a specific image—or representation—through the careful arrangement of objects (Morgan 115). Michael must consistently refuse consumption and its somnolence, refusing sumptuous banquets and repose to

retrieve the heart. At the center of the castle is what appears to be a lavish "banquet all laid ready," and the yellow hag repeatedly pressures Michael into consuming food or wine from this banquet (Morgan 115). All these decorations serve as topological indicators of wealth and conspicuous consumption just as they serve as objects meant to be on display. Through his lens, Michael finds that the corridors of the castle are "dreary and bare, [and] made of cold stone" (122). The extravagant décor and the rows of caged hearts descend into substanceless displays and images. As Armstrong suggests, their display of the exhibit through figurative glass "accelerated . . . [the] culture of endless consumption" (206). It renders other displays of wealth, particularly those which pay no respect to the labor behind commodities, as entities equally lacking in substance.

Talairach-Vielmas points out that this method of display was also associated with women. In particular, he notes how the glasshouse—or exhibit—was often used as "a metaphor to convey the artificiality of 'the nature of women'" (Talairach-Vielmas 90). This artificiality is represented not only by the Queen's insistence on conspicuous consumption, but also the actual shallowness of Princess Joan. Just as Joan's beauty is artificial without her heart, so too are the fripperies of the castle impossible without the labor of their production. By putting seeing without perceiving and getting without labor into dialogue, De Morgan similarly contrasts the practices of viewing within the exhibit and the observatory. Awareness of "looking through" is an awareness of all the unseen things framing and mediating the gaze. Conversely, the exhibit engenders a different kind of looking, one that conflates "looking through" with "looking at" and presents the viewers with the illusion of accessibility to the displayed object.

At the end of the tale, Michael's gift for perceptive vision is rewarded. He triumphantly returns with Joan's heart, only to find that his kingdom's citizens no longer recognize him. Seven

years of labor take a toll on his outward appearance, making "his hair. . .thin and streaked with gray, and his face furrowed and seamed (110). When he approaches a page-boy and other servants, the page-boy "burst[s] out laughing," and the servants become "very angry" and resolve to "punish the beggar-man for his impertinence" (125). They are unable to see Michael for who he is and instead mistake him for an entitled "beggar-man." Their lack of perception is remedied by Princess Joan, who, upon receiving the heart, exhibits her own keenness of sight. She turns "her palfrey's head towards the prison window, and push[es] her white arms through the bars to clasp the prince" (128).

Figure 1: Illustration by Walter Crane in *The Necklace of Princess Fiorimonde and Other Stories.*

Walter Crane's illustration provides a moving illustration of Princess Joan's perception. In the image, she strains upwards to clasp Michael, and she is only focused on him despite the chaos of the wedding procession behind them. The lines of the road tiles and brick wall further isolate the activity of the parade from their reunion, and this visual distance reinforces the acuity of Joan's

sight. Even in the midst of a chaotic procession, she still sees and recognizes Michael. In mutual surprise and joy, both of their bodies reach through the prison bars. This disruption of the barrier between them represents Joan's ability to see through the barrier of Michael's appearance and vice versa. At a glimpse, she is able to discern how "hard [he] must have labored for [her] through these long years" (129). In this moment, appearances become unified with reality: Joan's beauty regains its substance through the return of her heart, and Michael is physically inscribed by his labor.

Joan's recognition also enables the citizens to see through Michael's outward appearance. They praise Michael's labor more than the product of his labor itself, noting that "no one else could ever have found the heart of Princess Joan" which makes Michael a "good King" (130). Michael's labor makes him a worthy recipient of Joan's heart, which was once objectified as extravagant goods wrongfully displayed. Michael is "dressed in purple and gold, . . . [and] brought a fine white horse with a grand gold saddle and jeweled bridle" (130). These displays of wealth, however, cannot offset Michael's own "gray and worn" appearance (129). As such, Michael's value shifts from that of the scopic (when he was praised for being as good as he was handsome) to the laborious. His outward appearance, offset by his luxurious clothing, speaks of both the physical and perceptive labor invested in obtaining Joan's heart. This shifts the display in the Victorian home where things are often displayed without a visible sign of their journey. Michael's aged appearance challenges that discourse by underscoring his own labored journey, and Joan's recognition of him also marks a recognition of his journey—and, more broadly, the journey "things" go on as well.

To be sure, De Morgan's engagement both of glass and scopic culture allows her to critique dominant modes of seeing in Victorian culture. The fairytale extols the value of

differentiating between the experiences of "looking at" and "looking through." It first accomplishes this by portraying Michael's own foolishness upon confronting and being confronted by Princess Joan's deceptively appealing photographic image. Despite the knowledge that proper sight requires labor—as exemplified by his willingness to scale the wizard's magical observatory—he still misinterprets how glass as a lens can distort and simplify, severing its subject from reality. Similarly, he neglects to acknowledge the internal variables that affect his vision and encourage him to objectify Joan, thus conflating her outward beauty with substance. It is not until he sees Joan for himself and receives the only literal piece of glass in the text that he truly grasps the proper application of scopic culture. The actualized piece of glass revolutionizes his ability to see, drawing his attention to the invisible presences that mediate his vision. While his quest reveals perception as active, rather than passive, seeing, it also speaks to the value of "looking through" an object to decipher the labor behind its production.

Indeed, it is a neglect of labor's value that sets the core conflict of the fairytale into motion. The Queen, Joan's mother, is mistrustful of the "little people," here represented by an enigmatic yellow-eyed female fairy of great power. She is also willfully ignorant of the labor that enables her life of luxury, and so, as punishment, her own maternity is rendered inert through the theft of her child's heart. Michael's acknowledgement of vision's failure and his acceptance of a magical lens, conversely, allows him to see beyond the substanceless displays of conspicuous consumption in the exhibit of hearts. His sight, ultimately, benefits not only himself and Joan but also the people of their future kingdom. In such state, the story justifies not only Michael's happy ending but also the wealth that he becomes heir to. De Morgan establishes Prince Michael as a worthy fairy tale hero on account of his empathetic vision, which ultimately values labor and humanity over superficial beauty and objectification. Though this tale ends in marital bliss, it

shifts narratives which align consumption and the domestic woman just as it shifts the meaning of objects on display—and the visibility of the labor that produced them—within a typical Victorian home.

Glass as an Invisible Barrier in "The Necklace of Princess Fiorimonde"

Princess Fiorimonde's display of "objects" under glass, however, resists marital bliss and further displaces the domesticating influence of glass through her sensational transformation of male suitors into collectible glass beads. Her marvelous necklace features beads "as clear as crystal, but shining with all colours" (10). The clear purity of crystal, as evoked by this description, recalls the Victorian fascination with glass's purity. This purity, however, conceals the contents of her beads, allowing Fiorimonde to turn the table on the marriage market by turning those that would objectify her into beautiful and desirable property themselves. Idealized purity, then, allows this delightful villainess to indulge without corrupting her own image, making Princess Fiorimonde's glass beads the ultimate undomesticated object.

Armstrong refers to this fascination with clear glass as Victorian's predilection to "transcendent transparency" and notes how, earlier in the century, "purity meant the play of light on cut crystal" (222). "Purity," in this case, refers to the flawlessness and perfect clearness of the glass, which was often erroneously conflated with purity through virtue. The production of cut glass to maximize both its clear appearance and its refraction of light spoke to its desirability. A presumed outcome of so exquisitely produced glass was that "it was possible to drink in light as well as wine, resulting in the *consumption* of purity" (222). The belief that consuming purity, here referring to flawlessness, is comparable to consuming virtuous purity was endemic to scopic culture. Fiorimonde's beads reflect these qualities, promising purity through their pristine appearance and playful refraction of light, and, therefore, superficially promise the same

consumption of purity and light in the princess herself. Never explicitly referred to as glass, Fiorimonde's magical necklace successfully imitates the desirable refraction and purity of glass, ironically concealing her wickedness through their unblemished appearance.

Though widely desired in nineteenth century glass culture, the descriptions of perfectly "pure" glass and their application on frivolous beads recalls one vocal critic of crystal glass beads: John Ruskin. Ruskin suggests that glass which is "exquisitely clear in its substance, true in its form, accurate in its cutting" should prompt society to be "ashamed of it" (*Stones* 196*)*. Glass beads, Ruskin cautions, are "utterly unnecessary" without "design or thought employed in their manufacture" (196). Ruskin's warning and admonition of such perfect finishes also bears weight when assessing the glass-like qualities of the bead, as they allude to the beads' unnatural means of production. In other words, "perfection" is not naturally attainable, and, while visually appealing, the description of Fiorimonde's glass-like beads and Ruskin's objections to their real-world equivalent draws under question not only the true nature of the beads' purity, but also their value. As "utterly unnecessary" objects, the clear-glass perfection of Fiorimonde's beads allows her to resist marriage and collect her suitors—which she perceives as equally unnecessary. Resisting marriage through the desirous indulgence in luxury possessions is subversive by allowing Fiorimonde—rather than her male suitors—to profit from the courtship through the satiation of her desire and the increased value of the necklace with each bead.

The perceived fungible worth of Fiorimonde's beads recalls how commodified value might exist despite (and, perhaps, in spite of) the affective value of portable property. To this end, Fiorimonde's reference to her beads as "jewels," supplanting glass beads with priceless gems, is especially telling (5). Having one of these precious "jewels" is not enough for the vain princess. When Yolande compliments her on the marvelous bead, Fiorimonde cries "I think one

bead alone looks ugly and ungainly; soon I hope I shall have another, and another, and another, all as beautiful as the first" (Morgan 12). Reflected within Fiorimonde's beloved beads is a principle of valuation and scopic culture that permeates the tale: that idealized, perfect image translates to fungible, commodified value, and the consumption of such images leads to their desired collection. Fiorimonde's concern with superficial image renders her blind to the suitors within the beads. After King Pierrot transforms into a bead, Fiorimonde revels in the invisibility of his presence with her taunting exclamation: "Aha, my proud lover!" she exclaims "Are you there?" (Morgan 10). After reducing the "proud lover" to perfectly clear object, Fiorimonde again remarks on the commodified value of her suitor-turned-bead: "my necklace bids fair to beat all others in the world" (10). This swift transition is a manifestation of Ruskin's own fear. Celebrating the acquisition of her first bead, Fiorimonde marvels at her new possession "without a thought for the possible human diminishment involved in [its] production" (Fowler 233). Indeed, Fiorimonde revels in this very human diminishment: rather than allowing these men to marry her and inherit her kingdom, Fiormonde instead displays their bodies as glorious, radiant trophies. Her beads' value stems from idealized surface rather than substance. This valuation comes at the expense of the labor and bodies coded at the glass's interior, ensuring that the flawless, transparent finish serves as a barrier rather than a mediator of vision.

Fiorimonde's wickedness delighted and tantalized readers and inspired De Morgan to position her as the main draw to her collection of fairytales. A review in the *St. James Gazette* of *The Necklace of Princess Fiorimonde* collection focuses especially on the titular story, describing Fiorimonde's wickedness as "a good deal of freshness and ingenuity of fancy" (Review 13). This effusive praise is consistent across contemporary reviews, many which praise the uniqueness or "handsomeness" of "The Neckless of Princess Fiorimonde." Fiorimonde's

appeal comes from her villainry's representation as an empowering female fantasy. Like "Hero," this empowerment is enabled through Fiorimonde's indulgence in her desire to both consume and be desired, but rather than dressed as a new form of Victorian heroism, De Morgan instead constructs a fin de siècle woman criminal much like Elizabeth Miller's New Woman Criminal, representing the same appeal through her "celebrat[ion of] the *pleasure* of such transgression" and "ability to evade. . .by manipulating beauty, glamour, disguise" (5). Though wicked and a villainess, the transformation of male bodies into dazzling glass beads, therefore, is meant to tantalize readers.

In addition to the pleasure of criminal transgression, Fiorimonde's glass-like beads and magical cord represent how manufactured, perfect goods conceal labor rather than mediate vision. Like Cruikshank's woven glass slipper or the Wizard's join-less tower, the gold cord of Fiorimonde's necklace represents a similar manufactured impossibility that draws attention to the necessity of labor even as it erases it. The ends of the cord are connected like a necklace, but "no one could see the joins," and "however much you pulled, it would not break" (5). Though magically produced, the strength of the cord and the invisible joins attest to the invisible process of manufacturing. Despite the wonder of its design, both princess and suitors believe the cord useless without adornment. Pierrot asks Fiorimonde why she wears the cord, noting that there is neither "jewel nor ornament about it" (9). The act of grasping the cord serves as the only labor behind the production of crystalline beads in the fairytale realm. Circling fingers about the cord hung bodies upon its strand like beads, transposing living, breathing flesh to transparent manufactured marvel. While Fiorimonde interprets her perfectly clear beads as attesting to their value, their flawless transparency erases rather than reveals.

As mass-produced feats of technology, her beads contain the bodies of the fairytale suitors and underscore the fugitive meaning of the real-life laborers who produced actual clear glass beads. There are many depictions of the working condition of such laborers, but Ruskin's image of "beads dropping beneath their vibration like hail" as a result of "hands vibrating. . .with exquisitely timed palsy" artfully depicts both the worthlessness of the mass-produced beads and the dehumanizing conditions under which such commodities were produced (*Stones* 196). The falling hail of mass-produced glass beads is reflected in the hailstorm of Fiorimonde's own production of beads. Fiorimonde collects suitors until her golden chain was "well-nigh covered, yet there always was room for one bead more" (Morgan 19). The remainder of her suitors plink onto the page in a similar maelstrom of names: "King Adrian, Prince Sigbert, Prince Algar, and many more" (18). [41] Glass beads necessitated the painful purification of impure substances, annealed by extreme heat in dire, life threatening environments. The purity of the final glass erases both the labor and the breath of the laborers contained within. The transformation of suitors from flesh and blood to "puff of smoke" pays homage to the breath and bodies of these laborers (Morgan 9). In wantonly collecting these beads for their pure appearance, Fiorimonde consumes without minding the bodies behind the production of her prized possessions. Here, the beads' magical imitation of glass serves as a barrier, rendering the value of craftsmanship and labor invisible through the production of idealized perfection. Objects favored for their mass-produced uniformity and production, therefore, mark another failure of scopic culture, and greater perception is needed to decipher the bodies of laborers concealed within. On one hand, this allows De Morgan to take Ruskin's paranoia of glass beads' frivolity and run with it,

[41] Armstrong, in discussing the transformation of workers and materials alike within the glass factory, associates the erasure of working-class, glass-factory laborers with breathlessness. The breathless shock of those watching the production of glass "bears witness to the artisan's own loss of breath in the process of making glass," and such visitations revealed "the pain exacted by modern purity" (Armstrong 27). Glass, as a manufactured product, exemplifies both the agony of its production and the preserved breath of the laborer.

reworking his resistance to women consumers into a feminist force capable of objectifying and consuming men. On the other hand, Fiorimonde's indulgence in glass beads whose properties reflect real material necessitates a reading of the laborer's silenced voices, found in representation of things' interior life through the containment of her suitors.

Rather than concealing working-class laborers, De Morgan critiques class standards by transforming nobility into the transparent but obscuring medium of glass. Enraptured and delighted by Fiorimonde's beauty, suitor after suitor is rendered invisible by their fascination with surface. Fowler also draws attention to an inversion of both Victorian class standards and fairytale trope, noting that "seconds, the friend Gervaise and maid Yolande" prove the heroes of the fairytale rather than Prince or Princess (233). Fowler assigns too tidy a moral to this triumph of the little maid and the prince's faithful friend: "Love and work in the winding road they take us should not lead to the dwarfing of self or others" (233). Instead, however, the use of "seconds" as heroes underscores the degree to which Princess Fiorimonde, as holder of both beads and fairytale collection title status, is meant to be the main attraction. Indeed, though Gervaise and Yolande are rewarded for their heroism by both material gifts and a happy marriage at the tale's conclusion, and their domestic bliss proves to be under constant threat of being imbalanced by Fiorimonde's continued existence, as will be seen. While resisting the superficiality of the marriage market and the dehumanization of others is certainly among De Morgan's goals, a closer look at Fiorimonde's "punishment" reveals how De Morgan is experimenting with new plots outside of the marriage plot for women, even if the story's perceived "happy ending" is enabled by the readjustment of male vision as in "The Heart of Princess Joan." In this way, domestic bliss is both enabled by the disruption of the male gaze and constantly under threat by the existence of the undomesticatable Fiorimonde.

It is Yolande's perception that saves the day. "A bright-faced girl with merry brown eyes" that "was not beautiful like Fiorimonde," Yolande suspects "her of her wicked ways" while the rest of the kingdom was susceptible to her beauty (11). When revealing Fiorimonde's wicked ways to Gervaise, Yolande stresses that she has "watched that necklace growing" (24). Only her gaze, unaffected by the veneer of beauty and perfection, is able to mediate the transparency of the beads to see the bodies concealed within. In order to prove a worthy accomplice in defeating Fiorimonde, Yolande must also instruct Gervaise in the art of looking through Fiorimonde and her beads. When Gervaise first sees Fiorimonde resting peacefully, he begins "to think Yolande spoke falsely, when she said [Fiorimonde] was so wicked" (26). Before caving to the assumption that Fiorimonde's beauty must equal moral purity, Yolande directs his attention to the beads, pointing "with her finger to each bead in turn" (27). Here, Yolande adjusts Gervaise's vision with her own labor of sight. Without her guiding Gervaise on where to look, the man would have fallen prey to his own idealization of Fiorimonde's vision. Yolande permanently alters Gervaise's perspective of the princess by accidentally transforming herself into a bead. Yolande's bead is "brighter and clearer than the others" and singular in refracted color with a "warm red hue like the red dress Yolande had worn" (28). This added clarity of the glass resembles the lens from the "Heart of Princess Joan" and the red star it rendered visible. Like Prince Michael's lens, Yolande's bead permanently transfigures Gervaise's vision.

Now capable of perceiving Fiorimonde's desire to craft and consume images of objectified perfection, Gervaise tricks the princess into transforming herself into actual object and attempts to return Fiorimonde's tantalizing transgression to the realm of moralizing fairy tale. Fowler describes Fiorimonde as a "one-woman goblin market" that represents "the inevitable conclusion of the pursuit of one's desire at the expense of humanity—the headlong

movement from object to object that ultimately results in death" (233). Rather than just the consumption of objects outlined by Fowler, Fiorimonde more aptly represents the outcome of desiring (and consuming) an objectified and idealized image. Gervaise uses Fiorimonde's need to be this image against her. First, Gervaise taunts Fiorimonde by claiming that he has seen another woman more beautiful than Fiorimonde. Pemberton notes a connection between this ruse and the "magic mirror in 'Snow White,'" and this connection to a preoccupation with reflection (and, therefore, image) draws attention, once more, to the shallowness of Fiorimonde's perception (126). Both Fiorimonde and her witch tutor know that Gervaise's claims are untrue; the witch attests to making Fiorimonde "the most beautiful woman in the world" (Morgan 35). Despite that, Fiorimonde's need to control her image through the enhancement offered by magic allows Gervaise's taunts to destabilize her, causing her "breast to heave and her eyes to sparkle with rage" (31). Having attacked Fiorimonde's carefully produced image, Gervaise next takes advantage of Fiorimonde's preoccupation with conspicuous consumption and desire by fashioning a "rude necklace" out of "acorns and haws, and hips" which he conceals in "his bosom" (36).

Once again, materials kept near the heart in De Morgan's tale prove useful in the deconstruction of ruses. He suggests that his necklace, constructed of natural materials, "pleases" him more than Fiorimonde's fantastic beads (37). His word choice is crucial in representing his adjusted vision. Rather than being delighted by his necklace's beauty, he attests that plain necklace of natural materials brings him greater joy. He also claims that there is "no necklace like [his] in all the world," which is also true. Because it is something that he labored to make, he ensured the uniqueness of his creation despite its flaws. Viewing the crudely constructed necklace as an affront to her own dazzling beads, Fiorimonde mistakes the natural necklace as

the product of cosmetic magic and assumes that "it was worn by the woman whom he thought more beautiful than I" (38). Fiorimonde's transgressive desire to be supremely desired herself renders her blind to Gervaise's stratagem. In a fit of rage, she seizes her necklace and is turned into a bead herself, thereby meeting "the evil fate she had prepared for so many others" (Morgan 39). Within the transparent glass, Fiorimonde's eternal containment within a crystal-clear bead represents how beauty does not always represent goodness, thereby challenging the contemporary association of clarity and clearness with purity.

Fiorimonde's stasis within her glass prison and subsequent public display represents her both as an undomesticated object and as an incarnation of Victorian anxiety. After her entrapment within a crystal bead, she—as literal object—is "hung. . .outside the town-hall" (41). Fiorimonde's stasis within her sphere glass casket subverts the fate of other well-known fairytale princesses, who sleep ensconced within glass and on display (like Snow White) or must be fitted with glass (like Cinderella) to be released from their magical curse. Andrew Miller connects the public display of women to "fairy-tale princesses in the crystal casket" by noting that she "could come to life—but she could also remain dead for eternity" (68). At the tale's end, Fiorimonde has become a woman on display under glass, which returns to the theme of women being objectified within public, windowed spaces through the male gaze. Such ladies under glass "embodied fear as well as. . .ambivalent desire" within Victorian minds (68). Though Fiorimonde's wickedness is on display under glass, so too is her superficial desirability through the bead's glimmering appearance. Her necklace is no longer appropriate or contained within the domestic sphere; glittering and gleaming in the sun, "all who saw it knew that it was the wicked Princess Fiorimonde who had justly met her fate" (42). The singular crystal bead, therefore, nullifies the visual effect of its purity being equivalent to virtuousness; instead, the

necklace becomes an emblem of female desire and transgressive pleasure. Indeed, the appearance of the bead still presents a dangerous allure, and, through its invocation of fairytale tropes, intimates that the Princess might one day be freed, disrupting the domestic bliss enabled by her containment.

Beauty, Cosmetics, and Superficial Beauty in "The Necklace of Princess Fiorimonde"

Even beyond the titular necklace, Fiorimonde's appearance allows De Morgan to further extemporize on the difference between "looking through" and "looking at." Fiorimonde's fate establishes the moral of the tale: surface is not mutually synonymous with substance, and a deeper form of perception is necessary for sorting the beautiful from the wicked. This is a prevalent concept from the story's introduction, which describes Fiorimonde as being:

> so beautiful that every one thought she must be good as well, instead of which the Princess was really very wicked, and practiced witchcraft and black magic, which she had learned from an old witch who lived in a hut on the side of a lonely mountain. (1)

Whereas Princess Joan's beauty was rendered insubstantial on account of a curse, Fiorimonde's beauty attracts suitors even as it conceals her wickedness. Her wickedness is a matter of both character and labor. De Morgan quickly reveals that only Fiorimonde "knew that [the witch] lived there," and "it was only the witch's arts which had made Fiorimonde so beautiful that there was no one like her in the world" (2). In travelling to the lonely mountain, Fiorimonde exerts labor towards her own wickedness, ensuring that her veneer of beauty helps conceal her fascination with the arcane. The shortsightedness of those within the kingdom ensures that this is easy work for Fiorimonde: they conflate her beauty with goodness. Fiorimonde's beauty represents wickedness rather than goodness—an incarnation of paranoia over the inscrutable

female form. The men of the text, in particular, prove vulnerable to Fiorimonde's bewitching beauty. Her first suitor, King Pierrot, "was delighted with Fiorimonde's beauty," and the same language is used to describe the reaction of Fiorimonde's second suitor, Prince Hildebrandt—he, too, is "delighted" (Morgan 8,14). Even Gervaise, aware of Fiorimonde's true nature, struggles with the allure of her appearance. Upon staring at her sleeping form, Gervaise nearly "forgot to look at the glittering beads hung round her throat, in wondering at her loveliness" (27). The ease with which Fiorimonde enacts her wickedness—and her appearance's effect on even enlightened observers—speaks to how men objectify women based on their appearance, and their continued vulnerability to the charms of her beauty shows how she has appropriate this objectification for her benefit and pleasure.

Fiorimonde's deceptive appearance critiques Victorian cultural practices and ideologies, some of which were close to De Morgan's home and hearth. Indeed, other scholars, such as James Fowler, have noted how Fiorimonde's "white skin, ample golden hair, blue eyes, rosy lips, and sumptuously ornamented neck" make her a "Pre-Raphaelite stunner" (233). Rather than espouse the idolization of this appearance, "De Morgan acknowledges the seductive brilliance of beauty while swerving from the drift toward pure aestheticism advocated by Pater" (233). Even beyond Fowler's recognition, there is something of another famous Pre-Raphaelite "stunner" in Fiorimonde's appearance: that of Elizabeth "Lizzie" Siddall. [42] Her brother-in-law, William Michael Rossetti, describes Lizzie as "a most beautiful creature. . .tall, finely-formed with a lofty neck. . . [with] greenish-blue unsparkling eyes, large perfect eyelids, brilliant complexion, and a

[42] The more frequent spelling of Elizabeth Siddall's last name, "Siddal," is intentionally avoided here. As noted by Emily Orlando, Deborah Cherry, and Griselda Pollock, a "wedge has been driven between the still problematic historical individual E.E. Siddall and 'Siddal,' the product of and for art historical texts" (Orlando 612). The spelling of "Siddal," in other words, is the production of Dante Gabriel Rossetti and others who made a Pre-Raphaelite muse of the woman. While discussing the hollowed-out version of her appearance in the wicked Fiorimonde, it is prudent to distinguish Siddall as a person from the fairytale image.

lavish heavy wealth of coppery golden hair" (Ash 4). Though Fiorimonde's hair is more gold than copper, the similarity in language is striking. This connection between Pre-Raphaelite model and fairytale princess is deepened by Walter Crane's illustration.

Figure 2: Illustration by Walter Crane in *The Necklace of Princess Fiorimonde and Other Stories.*

Fiorimonde looks the part of idealized muse in this image. Lounging by a pool, her reflection poses a warning: Fiorimonde's face is not reflected in the glass-like surface. The reflective properties of the water gesture to how Fiorimonde herself, like a reflection, is all surface without depth; the absence of her face suggests that her image is not to be trusted. Traditional marble statues stretch behind her, drawing a visual line at which Fiorimonde is the head. The visual connection between woman and statue emphasizes the legendary nature of her beauty, visually suggesting how she might also be a worthy subject for art. The marble statues also draw attention to how, like art, Fiorimonde's appearance is the result of craft and idealization. To cease her witchcraft would cause her to "lose her beauty," suggesting that her resemblance to the Pre-Raphaelite ideal is a temporary veneer won by dark magic (Morgan 2). Here, too, magic yields

similar results to manufacturing. Rather than the technological marvels found in "The Heart of Princess Joan," this magic manufactures idealized beauty and ideologies, as is reflected by Princess Fiorimonde's production of herself as a Pre-Raphaelite stunner. Unlike these "stunners," however, who were objectified by the male gaze, Fiorimonde delights in inciting and exploiting the desire created by her cosmetically altered appearance.

At stake, here, is the artificiality of certain beauty practices and ideologies. By describing Fiorimonde's appearance in Pre-Raphaelite idealized language, De Morgan overturns the passivity of other Pre-Raphaelite models. This critique is echoed in Rossetti's "In an Artist's Studio," which "concerns her brother Dante Gabriel Rossetti's relationship with Elizabeth Siddall, critique[ing] a paradigm in which the male artist paints his model. . . '[n]ot as she is but as she fills his dream'" (Orlando 614). This, in itself, suggests an act of erasure that diminishes women's natural appearance and imposes male ideals over her body. Woman's bodily autonomy may be endangered by idealized images, but Fiorimonde's transgressive criminal behavior takes revenge on this objectification through her consumption of male bodies. Whereas Pre-Raphaelite models were exploited for male artistic vision, Fiorimonde envisions a female fantasy in which men's souls were consumed for women's aesthetic desires. Fiorimonde's witchcraft and construction of her image is just that: craft and artifice enabled by her own vision.

Just as Elizabeth Siddall's career as an artist is often overshadowed by Dante Gabriel Rossetti's portraits of her, so too did the idealization of female beauty assign a commodified and sexualized value to its image. De Morgan critiques this idealization of Pre-Raphaelite women rather than the women themselves. The delight of the suitors around Fiorimonde—and their susceptibility to her artificial beauty—suggests the degree to which both Fiorimonde's wickedness is enabled by the men's idealization of her form. Indeed, as Emily Orlando suggests,

while "'truth to nature' was supposed to be a guiding principle for the young artists who called themselves the Pre-Raphaelites, fidelity to nature was eventually abandoned in favor of a pursuit of a highly unnatural ideal" (618). Ruskin famously supports this philosophy, noting that "the first principle of Pre-Raphaelitism [is] that no drawing should be made except from nature itself," and from this proclamation, he goes on to critique a highly stylized portrait of a tiger, noting that such representations of "*ideal* beast" harms "powers of perceiving truth and beauty" (*The Stones* 49) Although Orlando focuses her research on how the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood represented its muses as death-like and fading, Ruskin's critique of what Orlando refers to as a "highly unnatural ideal" is nevertheless present within Fiorimonde's representation. Even as her magic enhances her appearance, it also works to denaturalize nature itself. From a bewitched "handful of peas" to transforming "a small, brown bird" to a size "as large as an ostrich," the princess's magic focuses on transforming emblems of idealized, naturalized domesticity into a warped version of itself (Morgan 3). As will be seen, the domestication of birds in cages proved a powerful image for domestic ideologies, speaking to the domestic sphere's ability to tame nature. An ostrich, however, is too large for the cage of domesticity. Fiorimonde's witchcraft, then, not only gestures to her wickedness but also how her flawless visage wrests an abstract nature from the realm of naturalized domesticity and objectified beauty. Connecting Fiorimonde's appearance to the Pre-Raphaelite ideal indicates how her appearance is the product of society obsessed with appearance rather than the result of nature, and it cautions against these idealized bodies and their allure. Though past scholarship has noted Fiorimonde's connection to Pre-Raphaelite ideals and the potentially problematic nature of those ideals, none have yet identified how Fiorimonde's manipulation of those ideals decenters domestic ideologies.

Though witchcraft may be the stuff of fairytales, the careful use of magic to preserve appearances also resembles the Victorian woman's use of cosmetics. The Victorian woman was increasingly invested in cosmetics despite its health and social risks. Miller, in *Framed*, associates this interest with consumer society's fascination with image. According to Miller, "consumerist rhetoric fed women an essentially opposite theory of the image: to be looked at can be a position of power, if one vigorously consumes in order to construct the image that affords the most power and control" (71). This desire to construct an image of power through consumption explains Victorian interest in cosmetics despite commentators railing against the "'Girl of the Period,' 'a creature who dyes her hair and paints her face, whose sole idea of life is plenty of fun and luxury" (51). Cosmetics, therefore, occupied a strangely antithetical space: on one hand, women perceived makeup as a means of controlling their own image by conforming to consumerist rhetoric. Makeup ensured that they were perceived as desirable and subscribed to the commodified, idealized standards of beauty.

On the other hand, "to be visibly made-up was still considered indecent" (Miller 80). Not only was makeup associated with the so-called "fallen women," but it also inspired anxiety and cultural crisis in men. The division of women into "two categories, the fallen and the virtuous. . .ideologically depended on sustaining clear, visible difference between them," and Victorians, as a result of these discursive identities, in some part "expected to see the vices and virtues of feminity 'written on the body'" (Walkowitz 50). Makeup obscured these external signifiers, thereby further complicating the tenets of Victorian scopic culture and causing great anxiety in men. At stake with makeup is the same thing at stake with photographs or books of magical, moving figures like the one in "The Heart of Princess Joan": the inscrutable bodies of women. Makeup and the practice of engaging in consumerism often enabled the manipulation of men

through altered image and the indulgence of desire. Shopping for cosmetics was a kind of pleasure seeking which allowed women to be more than dutiful angels in the house. When women seek their own pleasure, men are frightened they will no longer exist just for their own consumption. Fiorimonde's recourse to witchcraft marks a mode of consumption similar to what women using cosmetics indulged in. By seeking to control her image, Fiorimonde consumes the idealized image that she perceives will give herself the most power. The Princess, then, is the result of a society which simultaneously imposed unnatural, idealized expectations on women's bodies and stigmatized them for utilizing artificial, cosmetic technologies to achieve this appearance. The root of this seeming contradiction is control: idealized expectations were only viewed as appropriate when within the realm of patriarchal desire. Women seeking to control their own bodies and aesthetic decentered this patriarchal control and resisted idealized image as synonymous with domesticity.

Miller suggests that the "proliferation of cosmetics and other feminine beauty products signifies how the feminization of consumer capitalism shifted the terms of women's oppression, so that women became increasingly sexually commodified under the auspices of an image-centered consumer culture" (84). Wielding power through the manipulation of image, women became agents of inciting desire and were vilified for the engaging in such cosmetic culture for how such culture enabled the manipulation of men. Disparity between made-up appearance and natural appearance was often criminalized by men "within the context of the marriage market" (Niles 67). Not only were Victorian men anxious about visually decoding fallen women and virtuous women, but emerging anxieties focused on how women's inscrutable bodies jeopardized the marriage market and the exchanges there. When "impurities are signaled by an admixture of false hair, false height, false curves, and false complexion, the female body now signifies mere

replication—an approximation of female beauty that reinforces the market standard" (71). This approximation endangers the institute of marriage by promising a purity of "product" where there is only artificial alteration.

As Niles suggests in her discussion of Wilkie Collin's *Man and Wife*, "if cosmetics are avowed as fraudulent, then the marriage market, so dependent upon the regularization of Beauty that cosmetics appear to give, would collapse" (72). With this in mind, it is no wonder that Fiorimonde fears the cessation of her beauty in the wake of marriage. Not only would she be condemned for the practice of witchcraft, but the inauthenticity of her beautiful appearance would also render the power of her idealized appearance inert. Only marriage poses such a threat to the wicked Princess by robbing her of her magical power and dominion over her kingdom. The manufacturing of her beautiful appearance gives Fiorimonde the power to beguile and bewitch those around her, but it is also what makes her so alluring to her suitors since her appearance also renders her as a sexually commodified body available on the "marriage market."

While Fiorimonde employs witchcraft to enhance her beauty and attempt to control her image, it is unusual that her mentor does not similarly alter her appearance. De Morgan makes much of the "old witch's" age, her "croaking voice," and her "wicked and hideous" appearance (1-3). As a peddler of witchcraft and, by extension, magical cosmetics, the appearance and age of the witch espouses other notions about the inscrutable bodies (and, therefore, virtues) of women sellers. The famous trial of Madame Rachel, infamous purveyor of cosmetics that promised to make women "Beautiful For Ever," marked an epoch of this crisis. Though her business had undercurrents of blackmail and other unscrupulous pursuits, "popular depictions of Rachel as a procuress, a prostitute, and an abortionist hovered over press coverage, suggesting that her villainous appeal was due to widespread apprehension about women's participation in public,

capitalist enterprise" (Miller 78). As the press coverage of Madame Rachel's trials also revealed, the saleswoman was also on trial for failing to adhere "to Victorian standards of respectable feminine behavior" (Miller 79). Not only were these accusations levelled against her own femininity, but they were also directed towards anxieties about her "corrupting" her customer base and enabling them to deceive men in turn.

Her fictional representation in Collins's *Armadale* through the character of Mother Oldershaw reveals how Victorians perceived the sellers of cosmetics as traffickers of age. Collins implies that anyone who availed themselves of Oldershaw's services were "customers of hags who restore decayed beauty" (Niles 79). If "hags" are the purported purveyors of cosmetics, then their wares cannot be trusted; otherwise, they would use the products on themselves. Moreover, as exemplified by the trial of Madame Rachel, peddling cosmetics was thought to lead to the seller inciting unladylike behavior in that of her customers. Given these contexts, the old witch strikes the figure of a cosmetics peddler in her own right. Hag-like and croaking, her appearance gestures to the cosmetic nature of the magical practices that she teaches. If her craft were truly capable of making Fiorimonde "Beautiful For Ever," then, presumably, she would not strike such wicked appearance. In addition to reflecting the popular narrative of wicked women selling makeup, the witch also engages a trope exclusive to fairytales themselves. As an isolated and hideous witch, she was "capable of passing beyond the border between civilization and wilderness" and, thereby, "lived apart from the direct control of husbands and fathers and the indirect control of organized, patriarchal society" (Silver 175). The witch, therefore, serves to destabilize domestic ideologies by existing beyond the influence of Fiorimonde's father and his kingdom. Her witchcraft enables Fiorimonde to jeopardize the marriage market by cosmetically (and artificially) enhancing the Princess's appearance, and,

moreover, the witch's craft serves as a means for Fiorimonde to indulge in transgressive pleasure by "help[ing] her with all her tricks" (Morgan 2). Unlike Fiorimonde, however, the witch remains unpunished by the tale's conclusion, suggesting that her craft still poses a threat.

The Collection of Commodified Bodies

The representation of beauty and cosmetics in "The Necklace of Princess Fiorimonde" gestures to how idealized, patriarchal representations of beauty intersected with anxiety about women in the marketplace to oppress rather than empower. Women indulging in the purchase and use of cosmetics perceived such merchandise as a means of controlling their own image, allowing them to manipulate male desire while satiating their own. The insecurity created by the manipulation of their image caused such women to be vilified for their "artificial" beauty, and those entrepreneurial women who sought to sell cosmetic technologies were similarly represented as fallen women or morally corrupt and feared for their ability to coerce other women into their practice. At their core, these anxieties mark a crisis of scopic culture. By being unable to distinguish, visually, between "pure" beauty and crafted image, idealized beauty and its conjunction with discursive identities seemingly destabilized the male objectification of their bodies within the limits of their economic access to such products. This is represented by Fiorimonde's control of her image through witchcraft; her manipulation of her image proves to be a wicked incarnation of male anxiety, allowing her to literally objectify them as punishment for their attempted consumption of her objectified body.

Just as Fiorimonde adopts male beauty standards through her magical cosmetics, so too does she adopt masculine behavior through her collection of suitors, which marks the limits of the fantasy enabled by her wanton consumption of men's souls. Upon learning that her father

intends to have her wed in order to gain an heir for his kingdom, Fiorimonde turns to the old witch for help, and the witch offers her a few different solutions:

> Would you like them to become dogs, to come at your call, or birds, to fly in the air, and sing of your beauty, or will you make them all into beads, the beads of such a necklace as never woman wore before, so that they may rest upon your neck, and you may take them with you always. (Morgan 4)

Of these options, the beads stand out not only as the option which Fiorimonde selects but also as the only option whose desire stems from aesthetics alone. With the dogs, Fiorimonde would gain the obedience of her suitors; with the birds, she would obtain their praise. As objects, the beads represent not only portable possessions, but they would further enhance Fiorimonde's appearance. Upon hearing this option, Fiorimonde claps her hands in glee and says "that would be best of all, to sling them upon a string and wear them around my throat . . . great princes and kings [will] adorn me, and all their greatness shall not help them" (5). Obedience and praise—or, rather, the commodified labor represented by the dogs and birds—are not nearly as valued by Fiorimonde as decorating herself with the greatness of those she has subjugated. Transforming her suitors into portable, decorative commodities similarly reduces their titles and social value to such, and, in doing so, reflects the practice of taking a wife for similarly superficial reasons. Her indulgence in vanity represents the degree to which a pursuit of idealized, unnatural beauty does not overturn the power of the male gaze but, rather, causes Fiorimonde to participate in similar modes of oppression against her suitors. Her witchcraft turns her suitors into objects of commodified desire, thereby just reversing the trafficking of bodies in marriage and engaging masculine modes of oppression.

The reversal of trafficked bodies in the marriage market is identifiable in Fiorimonde's language about her new possessions. Reflecting upon the devious nature of the plan, Fiorimonde revels in the perceived glamor of the beads: "little will the courtiers know whence come my new jewels" (Morgan 5). Fiorimonde refers to her suitors not as beads but "jewels," and she supposes that both men and women of the court may be envious of her treasure's source. Fiorimonde suspects that they may assume that her "jewels" came from other suitors, reaffirming her "worth" as a potential wife. Within Victorian society, "custom-made jewelry is almost always defined simultaneously by its romantic significance and its cost," suggesting that "such jewelry is meant to represent the potential transmissibility of affect" while maintaining "an ominously handy relationship to the coils of mere fiscal exchange" (Plotz 32). Furthering what Plotz says about custom jewelry, Fiorimonde's necklace allows for the perceived transfer of her beads's sentimental and fiscal value onto herself. In her hopes that the courtiers will wonder at the source of her beads, Fiorimonde heaps both value systems upon her necklace. The transmissibility of affect occurs through the exchange of gifts, which hinges on reciprocity. [43] Her suitors, as beads, will enhance her beauty by making her seem desired and, therefore, desirable.

Another source of the courtier's perceive wonder would be the esteemed, fungible worth of the beads—a commodified value which exists in spite of a thing's perceived infungible value. Here, gift-giving merges with markets of commodified exchange, and therefore connect her suitor's bodies—ensconced within the crystal-clear beads—to both gifts and fungible goods. Rubin argues that the source of women's oppression occurs outside of Marxist theory and within

[43] Marcel Mauss, in *The Gift,* establishes how this reciprocity works even in "primitive" societies. He notes that gift-giving establishes a moral bond within the exchange; in giving a gift, the giver shows their generosity. The act of receiving a gift shows respect, and returning the gift demonstrates a sense of honor and nobility. This closely correlates the exchange of gifts with morality. In the case of Fiorimonde, she only benefits from the dual nature of receiving gifts, which demonstrates both respect and generosity. In artificially performing the act of receiving gifts, Fiorimonde ultimately enhances her image of moral goodness.

sex/gender systems. By invoking her beads' value as both gift and fungible good, Fiorimonde's valuation of her suitors reflects a system in which "marriages are a most basic form of gift exchange, in which it is women who are the most precious of gifts" (Rubin 173). Here, the "gift" of women exchanged exists outside of a purely capitalist and commodified system. Because "it is women who are being transacted, then it is the men who give and take them who are linked, the woman being a conduit of a relationship rather than a partner to it" (174). If not for the intervention of witchcraft, the gift exchange would have been between her father and her suitor, ensuring "when [the king is] too old, he shall be king in [his] stead" (Morgan 2). Fiorimonde would make a gift in ensuring the kinship between the King, her father, and his newly acquired heir. Of course, the inverse is true in Fiorimonde's case: the magic cord enables her male suitors to become "the most precious of gifts." Upon successfully turning her first suitor into a bead, Fiorimonde describes the bead as "the best gift he, [King Pierrot], could give me" (11). Her suitors become the bodies exchanged as gifts, ensuring that Fiorimonde avoids becoming an exchanged object until the end. The infungible value of the beads as gifts represent her desirability through her representation of their affective value, but they also enable her to overturn the traffic of women as gifts within the marriage exchange, ensuring, instead, that she has an endless supply of male "gifts" with which to decorate herself.

Conclusion

By negotiating how glass serves as both a barrier and a mediator of vision, Mary De Morgan's fairytales utilize the modern technologies enabled by clear glass to critique the limitations of scopic culture. The fairytale genre allows De Morgan unique opportunities for such social commentary. As it did in Christina Rossetti's "Hero," transfiguring actual bodies into commodified objects creates space for fantasies of female desire. In the "Heart of Princess Joan,"

the use of a lens as a means of locating Joan's heart with a broader exhibition draws attention to the importance of vision as a method of labor; "looking at" may miss the invisible barrier presented by the glass between objects on display and the viewer, whereas "looking through" the glass bears a consciousness of both the labor behind the object on display and the alienating nature of the glass barrier itself. The marvels of the observatory, photography, and telescopes manifest themselves in De Morgan's distinction between types of seeing. "Looking through," in such a state, means identifying the hand of craftsmanship or the interiority of things. Here, also, true vision figured as labor-intensive.

In both "The Heart of Princess Joan" and "The Necklace of Princess Fiorimonde," idealized beauty—as enabled by magical moving images or cosmetics—impedes vision and serves as a barrier. Merely "looking at" such idealized images perpetuates the notion that exterior beauty must equal interior goodness, thereby perpetuating anxieties about the inscrutable female body when exteriority fails to align with interior morality. De Morgan critiques the dangers of seeking to understand women by surface alone through her dual princesses, whose surfaces conceal both wickedness and literal heartlessness in turn. "Looking at" women, then, is a social mechanism through which male pleasure is derived, and it is a mechanism through which the subject of the male gaze is objectified. In "The Heart of Princess Joan," hard labor corrects Prince Michael's vision, preventing the objectification of Princess Joan and allowing the tale to end in marital bliss.

Complicating this fairytale model of a heroic quest concluding in marriage is the wicked Princess Fiorimonde, who manipulate her own image to enact revenge on her male suitors. Her fantastic necklace of glass beads proves to be the mechanism through which her revenge is wrought and also a means of satiating her desire, turning Ruskin's concerns about the frivolity of

glass beads and women consumers into the stuff of patriarchal nightmare and transgressive delight. Though the balance within the fairytale is restored, once again, through the adjustment of a male hero's vision, Princess Fiorimonde looms large over both the tale and collection of tales in which the story is published. Her display as a glass bead serves as visual reminder of how her manipulated beauty destabilized a marriage market dependent on the trade of women's bodies, and its continued display also gestures to her potential to return to prominence. As a villain, her resistance of the traditional fairytale marriage plots and indulgence in transgressive pleasure jeopardizes the moralizing domesticity of other fairytales, causing both her and her story to stray from domestic ideologies. The allure of Fiorimonde's wickedness construct a female fantasy, and De Morgan's experimentation with women's plots may, in part, be responsible for the prioritization of more moralizing tales within the categorization of fairytale canon. Though "The Heart of Princess Joan" and "The Necklace of Princess Fiorimonde" may be something like strays themselves, the tales' subversion of a traditional narrative calls for a material reading of its contemporaries—one that unifies the magic of Victorian technology with the polemics of its labor and gender politics. This conscientiousness of the invisible is only visible when the story itself is, hypothetically speaking, examined with a fine critical lens.

Chapter Four

"Resolute, Wild, Free:"

Birds, Women, and Domestic Ideology in *Jane Eyre* and "The Ballad of the Bird-Bride"

Present within the women's domain of the parlor as both darling pets and objects to be collected, birds unsurprisingly migrated from the domestic sphere into Victorian women's literature. Indeed, their presence within the latter served the ideological work of making domestic arrangements seem natural. The stuffed birds of *Aurora Leigh* speak to handicraft's attempt at taming nature, metaphorically underscoring the deathlike sequestering of women within the domestic sphere. The scale of the songbird enchanted to the size of an ostrich by Princess Fiorimonde in "The Necklace of Princess Fiorimonde" for example reflects how she, too, is "unnatural" and poorly suited for the "cage" of the domestic sphere. In "Hero," the Fairy Queen whistles like a bird, reinforcing her magical connection with a bountiful—and exploitable—nature. In each of these examples from past chapters, birds have metonymic qualities; they gesture to broader material and cultural meanings, be that a language of "nature" that domesticates women or naturalizes colonial plundering and the transformation of living things themselves into domesticated possession. Indeed, the consumptions of birds—as pets, collected specimens, or even replicas—translates them into property. The possession of exotic, imported birds helped justify colonial exploitation in the same fashion as other objects (such as imperial gemstones) from distant terroritories; "domesticating" native species reaffirmed the perceived moral influence of domesticity and humanity's dominion over nature by containing the exterior, natural world inside the normative, domestic walls of the Victorian home.

Most studies of domesticated objects are used to read female subjectivity; here, they will be read for the gendered ecological narratives they construct. This chapter examines the translation of wild bird into commodified property in Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* and Rosamund Marriott Watson's "Ballad of the Bird-Bride" and how this commodification linked the domestic realm both to Victorian extinction narratives and, indeed, to the extinction of birds themselves. This representation practice both reflects and constructs an awareness of birds as a species that matter, a "flagship" species, singled out as a focus of extinction anxieties. Though the "caged bird" presented by domestic spaces and motherhood in the earlier text may seek to represent dominant culture's control over women's autonomy and female desire, by the end of the century this trope has come to link women's subjectivity to the problem of extinction in Watson's poem. In the latter, extinction is the inevitable outcome of the domestication and commodification of both birds *and* the Angel in the House. As a pre- Darwinian text, *Jane Eyre* invokes but does not acknowledge the innumerable ways that humans impact biodiversity and diminish flourishing *passerine* bird communities. [44] In contrast, "Ballad of the Bird-Bride" acknowledges the inevitability of extinction outright, using the growing concern over the viability of seagulls and their widespread habitats to reveal just how far-reaching human environmental impact truly is. While one text asserts the ease with which birds reinforce the moralizing influence of Victorian domesticity, the other indicts the impact domesticity itself has on both women and wild things.

Though many nineteenth-century texts widely use birds as a representation of domesticity, *Jane Eyre* is an especially rich site for examining material ecologies due to its representation of a real-world natural history text. Brontë's incorporation of Thomas Bewick's *A*

[44] "*Passerine*" describes *Passeriformes*, the perching bird order, and contains over half of the known bird species. This term is often used to describe songbirds, though the order encompasses far more divers species.

History of British Birds (1831), provides insight into the cultural representation of birds, the widespread, commodified consumption of these representations, and the impact this representation had on their populations. *Jane Eyre* is well-known for having nearly "one-hundred bird references" in which "human characters in the novel behave as certain species of birds were said to behave in nature" (Wallace 251). The bird imagery is often interpreted as a glimpse into Jane's desire for freedom, Bertha Mason's wildness, or Rochester's raptor-like, controlling nature. [45] While most scholarship has been directed towards examining how such characters' bird-like qualities enrich the characters, there has not yet been any analysis that speaks for birds as living things that are closely associated with the domestic sphere and as perceived proof of humanity's refining influence on nature as its custodian. *Jane Eyre*'s association of birds and women with the domestic sphere takes the personification of birds a step beyond Bewick's representation and assigns domestic ideals to erase bird's natural behavior. Both heroine and birds alike are imbued with idealized domestic traits, which is inspired by the widespread consumption of natural history texts and the domestic ideologies enshrined within them. Proliferating the assumption that birds exposed to civilization will simply adapt and become domesticized when taken into captivity, *Jane Eyre* overlooks the impact of industrialization, monoculture, and avian collection on songbird populations within the early nineteenth century. Read in this way, *Jane Eyre* offers unique insight into a pre-Extinction mindset—one that represents humanity and nature as harmoniously co-existing and enabling the consumption of birds as both ideological domestic ideal and material object.

[45] Other women characters, such as Tess in *Tess of the D'urbervilles* and Miss Flite from *Bleak House*. The same can be said of the connection of men with raptors, as exemplified by Tennyson's "The Eagle" or Robert Browning's collection of an eagle feather in "Memorabilia." Though worthy examples of this cultural trend, these texts do not explicitly invoke real-world natural history like *Jane Eyre.*

In contrast to *Jane Eyre*'s abundant and optimistic representation of birds, Rosamund Marriott Watson's lesser studied "Ballad of the Bird-Bride" instead uses avian imagery to depict both the extermination of idealized domesticity while reaffirming humanity's potential to drive birds—particularly white-feathered waterfowl—to extinction. [46] As a fin-de-siécle poet, Watson's poem engages the fairytale trope of a supernatural wife who, in this case, happens to be a magical arctic gull. The Bird-Bride can shed or don her feathers at will, physically unifying woman with captured bird. When her husband kills some of her kin, the Bird-Bride frees her home and hearth, returning to the wild and bemoaning the loss of her sisters. While this fairy-tale structure would be familiar to nineteenth-century readers, examining how the Bird-Bride represents both captive wife and animal bears significant connections to a growing awareness of unnatural, human-driven extinction and, particularly, a predatory masculinity threatening the well-being of women and seafowl alike.

Commodified Animals and Domesticity

Studying the birds in either text must acknowledge the paradoxical view of animals held by Victorians, who saw them as collectible objects as much as living beings. Sarah Amato, in *Beastly Possessions*, argues that "animals were central to Victorian culture," and in all their "guises, animals functioned as commodities, valued possessions whose existence reflected the status, aspirations, and fantasies of their human owners" (9). Animals, both living and dead, were certainly part of conspicuous consumption, and, like the material practices discussed in previous chapters, their consumption allowed for a manipulation and proliferation of social ideologies. Harriet Ritvo's *The Animal Estate* gestures to this aspect of human-animal exchange in part by

[46] Though not the only text dealing with Darwin's contributions (such as references to natural selection in *Middlemarch* or *Daniel Deronda*), the "Ballad of the Bird-Bride," like *Jane Eyre*, fuses real-world natural history and conservation with fiction through its use of seafowl. It is especially conversant with *Jane Eyre* for how it specifically engages avian extinction.

distinguishing the "material animal" from the "rhetorical animal." Ritvo notes that the material animals "were at the complete disposal of human beings," expressing the trade and commodification of animals within nineteenth-century culture, while the rhetorical animal "offered unusual opportunities for manipulations" (5). The rhetorical animal dealt with how these animals were represented within cultural imagination, treating them as a means of constructing and distributing ideas. According to Ritvo, these two treatments of animals were not mutually exclusive; both representations ensured that "their positions in the physical world and in the universe of discourse were mutually reinforcing" (Ritvo 5). While serving disparate functions, both the rhetorical animal and the material animal served as a means of controlling and commodifying nature, and, by mutually reinforcing these individual roles, this established animals as "decorative objects . . .that are regularly interpreted politically to reinforce Victorian values and attitudes" (Moine 154). As such, even commodified animals traded as objects were capable of being manipulated to enforce or reflect nineteenth century ideas.

Though birds were kept as pets well before the Victorian period (and the same could be said of the caged bird as an image of women's imprisonment), the caged bird was adapted easily to represent the separate sphere occupied by the Angel in the House. Just as the caged bird brought joy to its owners at the expense of its freedom through song and companionship, so too did the Angel in the House serve as the moral authority and caretaker within the home, safely separated from the corruption and temptations posed by the outside world. Both bird and women were widely interpreted as choosing the cage—or the comforts of home—over the dangers of the public sphere; the choice of the cage was meant to be mutually reinforcing. [47] Women

[47] Though prominent in literature, this interpretation of bird and woman of "choosing" the cage was equally represented in the arts. Elaine Shefer discusses how, in Deverell's *The Pet* (1852), "both the positioning of the birds and their relationship to the woman make it clear that all of them have chosen the confinement of a 'cage'" (437).

conditioning birds to choose their cage celebrated their moralizing power by asserting that they could domesticate anything; similarly, the birds choosing their cages encourages women to do the same with their home by showing the degree of contentment possible within confinement. Indeed, Moine refers to the "pet in the parlor," which was meant to "drive out the antagonistic forces of individualistic market-driven society from the Victorian home" (154). Both home and cage were perceived to be a protective barrier from the public, corrupt sphere occupied by men; the visibility of the bird in the cage and the glimpses of the bird's day-to-day life through the bars reinforced the idea that the domestic woman was also contained in the home. Her display as a man's lovely possession or pet there make her was hyper-visible (in that her domestication could be seen through her adornment of her home and moral influence on the household) and in progress. Women's practice of keeping birds as pets made them complicit with the very ideology which domesticated them. From this interpretation of the material animal's cultural work, women's keeping of birds as pets became a domesticizing influence comparable to the ideological works of handicraft, and, at least in this view, it distances the domestic space from the commodified marketplace.

Most importantly, this ideology assumes that all parlor pets *can* be domesticated, reinforcing an elastic kind of adaptivity in native and exotic animals. In this case, the ideological work of Victorian domesticity, which treated the home as a morally sanitizing environment, is conceptually conflated with genetic domesticity, and no distinction between the two was made until Charles Darwin's publication of *The Variation of Animals and Plants Under Domestication* in 1868. By modern definitions, genetic domestication is "a developmental process under human control," and "other animals that are kept, but not bred over generations for a particular use, nor

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Most famously, William Holman Hunt's *The Awakening Conscience* (1853) draws a similar correlation between a kept woman and uncaged bird; a risk of being "uncaged" is to be preyed upon, as shown by the nearby cat.

subjected to any particular kind of selections, cannot be termed domestic animals, even in the widest sense" (Hemmer vii, 1). Whereas dogs, cats, horses, and even ducks or geese may be genetically domesticated, this does not apply to pet birds, which are "wild animals kept in captivity and sometimes tamed" (1). As popular an image as the caged bird is in the representation of domesticity, its inability to be truly domesticated makes birds an especially rich and complex parlor pet to study, distinguishing it from other material animals—like dogs and cats—and allowing for a reading of birds as stray objects.

The gendered cultural work of bird collection led to their exploitation. Plumage, for example, was viewed as an "essential part of Victorian and Edwardian fashion," and the rampant hunting and collection of birds for this fashion as largely blamed on the women consuming the fashion rather than the men hunting the birds, prompting Virginia Woolf to express rage against "a gender-biased anti-plumage argument" (Adams 264). Even beyond the collection of plumage, the birds themselves were viewed as highly desirable, both as "specimens" to be studied and as "pets" to be exhibited in aviaries. The cage served as a means of display, allowing bird keepers to express affluence through their collections. Bird and feather collection, reinforced by the desirability of birds as objects to be collected, ultimately led to decreased biodiversity at best or extinction at worst.

The collection of exotic birds in particular proved another example of conspicuous consumption that was widespread, and this was fueled by their representation in natural history texts that naturalized Victorian ideologies about domesticity, the Empire, and humanity's role within nature. In his instructional text *Birds of the British Empire,* W.T Greene spends the opening chapter effusing about native British birds against the backdrop of the Empire; though Greene praises native bird's strength of song and beauty, the aim of his bird descriptions are

often contradictory. Of the Bearded Tit, Greene remarks that the bird is "perfectly harmless and entirely useful, and needs all the protection that can be afforded to it" (16). Commodified, unspecific "usefulness" is offset in this quote by a call for conservation, but it also recalls ideas of "usefulness" as being a virtuous, human trait. This ambivalence continues in the bullfinch entry, where Greene notes that the young will "sell for various sums from 10*s.* to £20 each" while praising the bullfinch for the "good" they do in the wild (50). With birds in the British Empire, Greene observes the natural habitats and behavior of Indian birds, but more commonly references their tolerance of captivity, noting which species "bear confinement well," "live well in a cage," or "nest freely as canaries" in aviaries (170). *Birds of the British Empire*'s scientific naturalism is seemingly offset by these remarks about caring for captive avian species, as is the marketable desire of such avian collections as fashion items or as pets. The ambivalence of commodified collection and personified praise of birds is a theme consistent across most natural history texts.

Emerging natural history texts draw attention to the text as a "collection" of birds in and of itself, rendering natural history texts as object. Natural history texts such as W.T. Greene's or, more famously, Thomas Bewick, James Audubon, and John Ruskin's are equally participant in the material distribution of birds. The writers of such texts "often felt compelled to gain control of this idea of nature—to define or circumscribe it" (Gates 11). Through the careful description and depiction of birds, defining both native and foreign birds sought to control the idea of nature itself. These authors participate in what Ritvo refers to as "systematic natural history," in which the presentation of a "rationally ordered and easily comprehensible" natural kingdom "developed as an expression of human dominion over the natural world" (Ritvo 14). Within such texts, this

"dominion" served multiple hegemonic purposes ranging from furthering Britain's imperial or religious agendas or simply supporting Britain's perceived heightened intellectual capacities. [48]

Charles Darwin's theories created a cultural moment of crisis for these widespread conceptualizations of humanity's role—and connection to—the natural world and the exploitation of birds as domestic(ating) property. His publications contributed two major ideas to the Victorian imagination that disrupted the previous work of natural history: the concept of unnatural extinction, which challenged humanity's perception of birds as infinitely adaptive, consumable resources, and the concept of unnatural domesticity, which forced a wedge between the previously conflated genetic and ideological domesticity. In *The Variation of Animals and Plants Under Domestication*, Darwin distinguishes domestication from domesticity by a careful study of physiological differences between domesticated animals and their natural counterparts, suggesting that unnatural selection—or domestication—occurs when "breeds show adaptation to his [humanity's] wants and pleasures" (Darwin 4). Though seemingly supporting man's favorable influence on nature, *The Origin of Species* and *The Variation of Animals and Plants Under Domestication* both assert that this unnatural selection often evades humanity's willful control. Both through the process of domestication and through industrialization, man "unintentionally exposes his animals and plants to various conditions of live, and variability supervenes, which he cannot even present or check" (Darwin 2). Not only does this decenter humanity (here represented in a patriarchal "him" and "man" by Darwin) as the harmonious

[48] The production of natural history texts, pairing meticulous wood carvings with observed information about each species, spoke to the skills and perceived authority of their authors as much as they revealed information about the wondrous natural world. George Cornewall Lewis observed that "a knowledge of the proper science, and a peculiar training of the senses, are requisite. . .and therefore...a witness who possess these qualifications is far more credible than one who is destitute of them" (Dawson 7). Because of this, such opinions "were authoritative and implicitly trusted, free from any of the suspicions that clung to the testimony of mere common. . .observers" (7-8). This trust in the accurate depiction of specimens allowed for their visual consumption.

steward of nature, but it supposes that humanity's influence on nature is both inevitable and uncontainable.

Because of the widespread consumption of natural history texts, the cultural moment of crisis created by Darwin's contributions translated into a literary one. Evolutionary and Extinction theories were "assimilated and resisted by novelists who. . .tested the extent to which is can provide a determining fiction by which to read the world" (Beer 2). Extinction myths—that which seek to "appropriate and . . .recast inherent mythologies, discourses, and narrative orders" to represent Darwin's theories—became conceptual opposites to the creation myth, framing extinction as an inevitable conclusion to creation and stressing natural resources as limited (Beer 2).

Engaging birds as objects and the "collection" of birds in natural history texts, both *Jane Eyre* and "The Ballad of the Bird-Bride" represent the material practices surrounding bird "collecting," their proximity to women in the domestic sphere, and these intertwining ideologies' perceived and actualized influence on avian wildlife. If *Jane Eyre*, as a Pre-Darwinian text, expresses optimistic ideas about bird's proximity to humanity and the domestic sphere, then "The Bird-Bride" turns *Jane Eyre*'s assumptions on their head, speaking instead to the Anthropocene and the concept of extinction. The nineteenth century saw not only human dominion over nature questioned, but it also gave rise to an increasing awareness of humanity's negative impact on nature due to industrialization and monoculture. It is no small irony that the perceived domesticating influence of the Victorian household was part of the problem, encroaching on wilderness as cityscapes expanded and diminishing available habitats.

Bewick, Brontë, and Birds

Birds appear in the first pages of *Jane Eyre*, in which Jane is delighted by the prospect of not going on a walk and instead curling up with Thomas Bewick's *A History of British Birds* in a window-seat. The book itself makes many appearances, first cradled in the lap of a young Jane, then as a weapon in the hands of John Reed, and lastly envisioned as a presence on Gateshead's shelves when she returns as an adult. The ubiquitous, material presence of the book represents the similarly widespread presence of the ideas and ideologies ensconced within.

The book's material presence within the text and Jane's interest in its pictures speaks to Brontë's own nostalgia. [49] Bewick's influence was noteworthy enough that, at the age of sixteen, Brontë wrote "on Bewick's death. . .a twenty-stanza poem" entitled "Lines on the Celebrated Bewick" (Wallace 251). The elegiac poem Bewick draws attention to his book itself as an object, inviting readers to "turn the page" before describing the text's images. The poem invites others to read along, turning pages to browse the contents of the book and consume its contents as they might a magazine. Brontë's reference to the "many winged inhabits of the air. . .as those that now the skies and waters sweep" echoes the similar cataloguing of birds within the books, which were divided into volumes based on birds visible on land and "water" birds (Alexander 15-16). Though such categorization was prominent within the practice of natural history, Brontë's instructions to turn the page and careful reflection of Bewick's organization emphasize the text as a material object intended for visual consumption, suggesting that the depiction of the birds within might be consumed in a similar fashion.

The birds, for Jane Eyre, Brontë, or even Bewick's readers more broadly, were not the only point of fascination within the text. Alongside Bewick's painstaking illustrations of the birds and the information about them are "vignettes, small, almost microscopically detailed" that

[49] This seminal text of natural history "transported [Brontë] back to her childhood," and it played a crucial role in the Brontë sibling's education, having been introduced to the household "when Charlotte was twelve years old" (Wallace 251).

were “often unrelated to the bird whose description they follow, or, indeed, to any bird” (Stedman 36). Brontë’s poem concerns itself primarily with these miscellaneous vignettes, which is less of a disservice to a book dedicated to the natural history of native birds than it may seem. Jane Stedman, in her examination of Charlotte Brontë and Bewick’s influence, suggests that “Bewick’s own preference was for these little pictures” (36). Though much has been made of how removed these vignettes are from the actual focus of *A History of British Birds*, Brontë’s poem draws attention to the shared theme of nature between these seemingly random illustrations.

Turning the book’s pages within each stanza, Brontë describes Bewick’s depictions of “common Nature that we see/ In England’s sunny fields, her hills and vales,/ On the wild bosom of her storm-dark sea” (Alexander 9-11). “Common” suggests that such scenes bear a certain universality, as though they are accessible to a large group through their representation in the text and by simply stepping outside. Of course, the images depict an abstract nature; through readers may expect to find similar scenes outdoors, the vignettes are manufactured to represent Bewick’s conceptualization of local and foreign landscapes. Such imagery inspires Brontë’s “childhood’s days [to] return again in thought, / . . . [and] wander in the land of love and light” (33-34). In these stanzas, Brontë’s core focus is on how these small vignettes represent Bewick’s Britain as the “land of love and light.” The stanzas contextualize the book’s focus on birds within the greater milieu of their native environment and, by extension, the natural world’s role within English culture.

Bewick’s vignettes depicted alongside wild birds are often human-centric, day-in-the-life images that position the birds as existing within and alongside the world of humans. A man drives a plow following Bewick’s entry on the Lark; pastoral scenes of men on horseback, snow-

covered lodges, or a housewife hanging up laundry follow still other entries on common buntings and tit mice (Bewick 197, 192, 237). In this context, even the vignettes of natural settings bear humanity's implicit presence, suggesting that their depiction is enabled by human observation of the scene. Despite this emphasis on human observation, it is worth noting that part of these image's allure was their availability to be consumed from the comforts of home, allowing the reader to experience a manufactured, commodified representation of nature without the associated work of stepping outside to observe it.

A particularly intriguing vignette features a painstakingly detailed fingerprint over what appears to be an image of a farmhouse and horse.

Figure 1. From Bewick's *A History of British Birds, Vol. I*, Page 181

The fingerprint's positioning is almost haphazard in appearance, off-center of what otherwise appears to be a complete scene. As it is a woodcut print, however, the placement and carefully preserved whirls indicate intent. It is unknown whether the fingerprint is Bewick's own, but its implications remain consistent regardless of the ownership: just as manmade structures affect the natural landscape, so too does the act of observing both native landscapes and the wildlife therein leave a proverbial "print" on the environment. Implicit within the thumbprint and in the idyllic

illustrations of humanity and nature coexisting is the concept of impact. Bewick's envisioned "fingerprint" on nature was one of utopian co-existence, where people not only live alongside nature but refine and improve it. To leave a "fingerprint," however, is to leave a trace, to alter, to impact.

Bewick's etching represents a growing awareness of human impact on the landscape even as it attempts to reinforce humanity's dominion over the wilderness. This vignette, therefore, is a visual representation of the phenomenon well described in Ritvo's *The Animal Estate*, suggesting that Bewick's work "embodie[s] a sweeping human claim to intellectual mastery of the natural world"—a sentiment that is mirrored by Brontë's proclamation of Bewick's "genius" (Alexander 12). Even Bewick's depictions of foreign lands are contextualized in this way. Brontë describes a "traveler [standing] lone on some desert heath" which appears "before the expectant eye" with the turn of the page (53-54). Rather than envision the lone figure as native to the desert environment, Brontë instead suggests that the traveler is Bewick, questioning where "will the lonely traveler lay his head" as a metaphor for Bewick's passing (62). Connecting even the foreign landscapes to Bewick suggests Britain's reach in studying and understanding even the most remote natural habitats, expanding Britain's impact on the natural world. Brontë's representation of Bewick's text in her elegiac poem, then, establishes two major points crucial to approaching its presence in *Jane Eyre*: first, *A History of British Birds* allowed a catalogued and manufactured means of consuming an abstract nature from the comfort of home, allowing a wide audience to experience natural history without engaging in it. As will be seen, this presentation of catalogued nature was highly gendered, reinforcing gendered ideologies through the categorization of birds and assessment of their adaptability. Secondly, as a pre-extinction and pre-Darwinian text, Bewick's shows humanity's "fingerprint" and ever-expanding reach into the

natural world nevertheless prefigure the Anthropocene, reflexively predicting an irrevocable impact on nature and the birds juxtaposed with the vignettes.

Beyond the book's physical presence within the story, both the ideas and images portrayed in *A History of British Birds* make appearances with similar frequency. Characters within the "novel behave as certain species of bird," and Brontë especially "uses *British Birds* as a guide when illustrating these similarities" to "add deeper insights into the nature of her characters while displaying her extensive knowledge of local folklore and classical mythology" (Wallace 251).[50] To this end, the references to *A History of British Birds* invoke the structure, information, and illustrations of the actual text, and these ubiquitous references reinforce not only the folklore presented within Bewick's text, but also reinforce Brontë's own status as a learned woman. That said, while the metaphorical and symbolic representations of Bewick's text are well-researched, the text's appearance in *Jane Eyre* is most fascinating when read for the ideological work that carries over from Bewick's text to the novel. Whereas Jane often conceptualizes the bird imagery as a metaphor for her freedom, the use of Bewick's language predominantly returns to the domestic representation of the caged bird by implying that a bird-like Jane will tame and domesticate Rochester through her moral superiority.

Jane notably identifies herself as a bird first and foremost, and, while the species reflect the rich biodiversity represented in Bewick's text, the general type is almost exclusively songbirds or captive birds. As Emily Roberson Wallace suggests, the first bird likened to Jane is "a hungry little robin" for whom Jane leaves out bread crumbs at Gateshead Hall (Wallace 40).

[50] Jane Stedman suggests that Bewick's illustrations appear "implicitly or explicitly" through Jane's descriptions of the illustrations within the book and, eventually, through Jane's own mirroring of those vignettes in her artwork and watercolors (37). Susan B. Taylor goes so far as suggesting that Charlotte Brontë creates her own "verbal vignettes" in *Jane Eyre*, noting that Bewick's work "offers a model for integrating seemingly marginal material in to the body of a work through the device of the 'vignette,'" which serve as a "narrative strategy for incorporating Jane's potentially explosive passions" (6).

The robin's chirruping for food—and Jane's willingness to leave crumbs—once again seems lifted from Bewick's classification of the bird, which is similarly described as begging for crumbs. The robin "approaches the house, taps at the window with his bill, as if to entreat an asylum" (Bewick 157). The robin's entreaty represents an attempt to choose the "asylum" offered by the enclosure of the house and, by extension, the cage. Jane's offering of food also reinforces this domesticating exchange; just as the robin is represented as choosing the cage through the echoing of Bewick's language, so too is Jane's care of the bird in accordance with a woman's role as caretaker within a household. This exchange between robin and Jane, notably on the day before her departure to Lowood, foreshadows Jane's "enclosure in stultifying roles and houses, and her attempts to escape" (Gilbert 341). Jane sees in the robin her own quest for asylum, first from the Reeds at Lowood, then from Rochester.

Despite personifying the bird as a beggar, Bewick also praises the bird for its domestic habits and refers to the familiarity of the bird within the British imagination. According to Bewick, the robin's "well-known familiarity has attracted the attention and secured the protection of man in all ages," which suggests that the robin has not only adapted to request help from humanity, but that "man," specifically, has taken the robin under his protection in kind. This protection is inspired by the robin's proximity to domestic spaces both in behavior and in idealized traits. Bewick expresses great admiration for the robin's nesting habits, in which "it prepares for the accommodation of its future family" (155-156). This degree of self-sacrifice also reflects the expected role of the women in domesticity, who is expected to exert similar effort in her own "nest-making." Of Bewick's entries, his depiction of the robin, its dedication to family and desire to be indoors, and its animated dependence on their charity, is among his most personified entries. His "use of personification is fairly complex, for while he often criticizes the

personifications created by others, he nonetheless ascribes his own personifications to various birds" (Taylor 7). This personification enables Bewick to represent the robin as a domestic ideal, suggesting that even a wholly wild animal may be drawn to the allure of domesticity and its cage.

Bewick's entries for the other birds referred to in *Jane Eyre* follow similar patterns of personification and idealization. Jane refers to her "lamb-like submission and turtle-dove sensibility" in her behavior with Rochester prior to their wedding date; Rochester refers to Jane as "skylark," "dove," and "linnet" in turn, (Brontë 278, 315, 317, 447). Of the lark, Bewick praises the bird's artful singing while noting that their ground-dwelling and nesting habits expose "them to the depredations of the smaller kinds of voracious animals" (Bewick 194). This yet again alludes to the lark's need for asylum and even protection by representing them as vulnerable. The doves prove to be "willing attendants on man, and depend on his bounty, seldom leaving the dwellings provided for them," and they are "emblematic of peace and innocence. . . [and] faithful to their mates" (314-315). Once again, Bewick's personification is two-fold: the loyalty of doves when provided "dwellings" to inhabit increases their desirability as creatures to be collected; as birds emblematic of purity and faithfulness, Bewick's language connects their willingness to "choose" man-made dwellings to traits idealized within women housekeepers. The linnet is described in similar terms. Its song is "lively and sweetly varied," and "its manners are gentle, and its disposition docile" (255). Of most interest with the linnet is its adaptive nature. In captivity, the linnet "adopts the song of other birds" in its cage, and "has been taught to pronounce words with great distinctness" (255). The novelty of mimicry—in both linnets and pet parrots—increases their commodified value as pets. The promise of mimicry near descriptions of the linnet's gentle and docile disposition speak to its status as a wild bird easily

translated to family pet rather than contribute to any scientific knowledge of linnet's behavior in the wild.

The types of songbirds associated with women in *Jane Eyre* and women's writing more broadly "prove more likely, due to their size and temperament, to make apt indoor pets" (Marchbanks 120). Reinforcing the beauty of songbird's "music," therefore, in some ways speaks to the delights they might provide while captive. Each of these species in Bewick's classifications are praised for their docility, sweetness of song, and, at times, their dependence on humans, susceptibility to predation, and adaptive nature to coping with captivity. Like the figure of the robin, this prefigures *passerines*, or the order of songbirds, as easily malleable and imbues them with domestic traits typically reserved for the Angel of the House, figuring them as easily domesticated and, once in captivity, domesticating influence. The bird's easy adjustment to the home reinforces the efficacy of the home as a sanitizing, moralizing environment, all while also increasing the commodified value of such birds for collection. In such state, Rochester's choice of birds in describing Jane –and their close association with Victorian domestic ideals— underscores the commodified value and domestic ideologies embedded within Bewick's personification of birds. It also reveals the assumption that even wild birds may "choose" the cage, as exhibited by Bewick's portrayal of the window-tapping behavior and dove's faithfulness to their caretakers.

Jane's struggles with Rochester and St. John prove that the "protection from man" experienced by proverbial wild birds has its catches. One such potential downfall is the fickleness of the perceived protector; whereas Bewick suggests that a wild bird almost assuredly finds protection, "finding the patriarch for protection" within Victorian society "is often no easy matter and can be influenced by the whims of romantic preference" (Lydon 24). In the case of

Jane Eyre, these whims often involve the revision—or domestic domination—of Jane that "compromise[s] or seek[s] to alter her essential self" (Anderson 244). Rochester seeks to make Jane his mistress, aggressively pursuing her to adopt this role even after the revelation of his bigamy.

St. John similarly tries to make a missionary of Jane. Ascribing her traits that "leaned to the ideal," St. John routinely assigns Jane work, first as an instructor at Moreland, and then demanding her to be his "helpmeet and fellow-laborer" in India (Brontë 360). Jane does "not love [her] servitude" and wishes "many a time" for St. John to "neglect her" instead of administering both care and expectations upon her (405). In ascribing "ideal" traits to Jane, St. John attempts to coerce Jane into a "servitude" that closely resembles the Angel in the House. According to Sally Mitchell, the "pure woman's life was supposed to be entirely centered on the home, . . . preserv[ing] higher moral values, guard[ing] her husband's conscience, guid[ing] her children's training, and help[ing] regenerate society through her daily display of Christianity in action" (Mitchell 266). Indeed, in describing Jane as potential "helpmeet and fellow-laborer," St. John implies that she will fulfill this role. Of course, the perfect woman—which was, indeed, the perfect wife—"was an imaginary construct" and one of many "strategies of discourse. . .to control individuals" (Armstrong 23). The imaginary construct of the "perfect wife" wrongfully ascribes impossible traits onto women, restricting them in a way that easily resonates with the image of a caged, wild bird. The caged bird "represents an archetypal image of women's imprisonment in Victorian literature and art," and it "interrogates their circumscription in metaphorical cages (of frustrated aspiration, objectified plaything, and inhabitant of either brothel or convent) and reinforces as fitting their 'ideal cage' of the house" (Anderson 240-241). Encaged both physically within the household and metaphorically through the restriction of

desire, subjectivity, and expression, the women/bird connection proves to be another method of domesticizing and moralizing women within the Victorian imagination. Connecting Bewick's presentation of songbirds to the Angel in the House underscores the inherent tension present within the idea of the caged bird: though Bewick's language extols the power of domesticity over wild birds, the caged bird can just as easily represent women (and birds) as commodified captives. The Angel in the House holds women's agency as the director of the household and their objectification and submission in perpetual tension.

In echoing Bewick's language to conceptualize her heroine, Brontë nevertheless adopts his systematic natural history and does so notably at the expense of the birds. Figuring Jane as a bird both in need of humanity's protection and resisting the cage of domesticity reinforces that such harmonious coexistence between humanity and nature is possible, even if it is complicated by the presence of discursive identities and domestic ideals. Modern understanding—and, as will be seen, the emergence of the concept of "extinction" following Darwin's contributions—has complicated Bewick's personification of *passerines*. The robin's window-tapping behavior praised by Bewick is, in fact, the bird's confused reaction to encountering its own reflection on glass, an artificial construct. This encounter between bird and man-made object does not affirm the adaptiveness of *passerines* to human houses but refutes it; the bird's collision with an artificial reflection of itself, both literally in the glass and figuratively in its presumed motivation for tapping, prefigures a more violent impact between bird and glass through window-strikes.

Only recently have ornithologists attempted to trace the impact of window-strikes on *passerine* populations, but it is estimated to be "greater than any other human-associated source of avian mortality" (Klem 407). Modern estimates place bird-strike fatalities in the billions, and identify, specifically, "clear and reflective windows" as the cause, necessitating the appropriate

"marking" of windows to prevent these needless casualties (406). The very technology which aided the Victorian observation of and fascination with birds—and the barrier which both separated and unified the homes' interiors with nature—proves to be one mechanism through which songbird populations are invariably affected by humanity. At stake not only with the presentation of window-tapping but also the correlation of birds with women is erasure. The belief that window-tapping and food begging represented the desire of wild birds to occupy domestic spaces (thereby increasing their desirability as pets) conceals the harmful impact of windows on passerine populations, overlooking what is now known to be the most significant factors of songbirds in populated areas and naturalizing the domestication of songbirds. This erasure is enabled by affixing idealized domesticity to songbirds, as represented in both *Jane Eyre* and Bewick's *A History of British Birds*.

Raptors, Predation, and the Natural Order in *Jane Eyre*

In her invocation of Bewick's *A History of British Birds*, Brontë's extended use of bird metaphors addresses the patriarchal role within domestic ideology and the natural landscape as well. Whereas Jane is repeatedly characterized by a bird's dependence on men, suitability for cages, and susceptibility to predation, Rochester is conversely categorized as an eagle and falcon in turn. When he aggressively turns on Jane, "his full falcon-eye flashing," his appearance causes Jane to tellingly "quail," establishing their exchange as one between predator and its natural quarry (Brontë 277). His hair reminds Jane of "eagles' feathers," bestowing upon Rochester a reverse anthropomorphism that does not invoke angelic tendencies (as wings on women might) but rather speaks to a dangerous disposition. If the bird imagery points to Jane's project of domesticating Rochester, the presentation of Rochester as a raptor—a breed which defies

domesticity even by Bewick's standards—gestures to further tensions in the consumption of birds and the proliferation of ideologies within Bewick's natural history.

The association of men with raptors and women with songbirds originates from natural history's practice of categorization. Both volumes of Bewick's *History of British Birds* strategically "presented the animal kingdom as rationally ordered and easily comprehensible" by grouping the birds in an "ordering of kinds" (14). Bewick's natural history, in this way, "elaborated a hierarchical vision of creation, with humanity at the apex" (14). In such state, some birds are treated as superior to others across the two volumes, which in and of themselves group birds based on their chosen habitats of land or water. *A History of British Birds,* Vol. 1 groups its avian subjects by their diets before resorting to broader groups like warblers, finches, and grouse. Birds of prey act as the pinnacle of the first volume, fittingly serving as the "first Order of birds" due to their "rapacious" appetites and hunting prowess (Bewick 3). The ordering within sections depends not on size; the falcons precede the eagles, which precede the buzzards (here correctly referring to hawks of the *buteo* genus rather than vultures).

Of the falcons, Bewick begins with the larger species, noting their "elegance" or rarity before moving on to the smaller species of merlin and kestrel (8,10). Bewick's meticulous categorization not only works to create a hierarchy within the animal kingdom, but it also mirrors early modern characterizations of birds of prey. The Peregrine Falcon, for example, bears a position of prominence in Bewick's text as the third falcon (and fourth raptor total); in traditional early modern falconry, the "Fawken Peregrine" is similarly listed fourth and designated for "erles," and it is only preceded by "a Gerfawken" for kings, a "Fawken gentill" for prince," and "a Fawken of the rock" for a duke (MacDonald 52). The early modern falconry hierarchy forgoes kestrels in favor of the larger Merlin, which is listed last as being a "hawke for a lady" (52).

Unsurprisingly, Bewick includes the Merlin close to last, providing entries for the "Merlin" followed by the separately listed "Female Merlin" (15-17). Though Bewick does not directly link the raptors to human gender, foregrounding the falcons and utilizing a similar ordering of species suggests that the early modern hierarchy persists into nineteenth-century consciousness, reflecting a hierarchy of gender as well as class within the structuring of the birds.[51]

Bewick's *A History of British Birds* preserves the assumption that "humans and birds were organized the same way, shaped according to the same clear social hierarchy" (Macdonald 52). The introductory text follows this perceived gender hierarchy, often referring to the eagle in masculine terms and suggesting that "he can provide with ease for the sustenance of himself and his mate" (Bewick 7). Whereas the early modern hierarchy was designed to inculcate an understanding of social structure and enforce class, Bewick's *A History of British Birds* perpetuates ideologies about gender, albeit in an implicit rather than explicit fashion. Depicting Rochester as an eagle or falcon, therefore, reflects society's perceived ordering of man and woman. This brand of natural history genders bird species, envisioning a world where men are like raptors and women like songbirds. The relationship between Jane's quailing and lark-like depiction is telling when compared to Bewick's categorization, which depicts falcons (particularly the Hobby) as preying "chiefly [on] Larks and other small birds" or "partridges and quails," both in the sport of falconry and in the wild (14). If natural history seeks to create a hierarchy within the animal kingdom, particularly a hierarchy based on diet, and this hierarchy performs the ideological work of affirming male superiority, then it comes as no surprise that a

[51] There is something to be said about Bewick's decision to list falcons by size but have the separate, female entries follow the jack merlin and male kestrel. Raptors are sexually dimorphic, meaning that the female of each species is typically larger than their male counterpart. To this end, Bewick's decision to list females last despite having actual specimens for reference is telling.

metaphorical predation and consumption of women translates into the gender hierarchy from natural history's patriarchal roots.

Representing man as predator poses danger to not only women but the birds themselves, suggesting that the harmonious balance between humanity and nature may erase humanity's consumption of birds. The concept of the cage provides an imperfect and confining degree of protection for both birds, preserved and limited through the concept of collection, and women, through their perceived influence for the domestic sphere. As the apex predator of the novel, Rochester envisions Jane as a "curious sort of bird," which he later envisions "bend[ing] with finger and thumb" (Brontë 141, 323). The violence of Rochester's desire to bend, tear, and rend speaks not only to the violence of molding women into idealized domestic figures, but also to a more literal threat of violence under the patriarchal household. Complicating these ideas is the nature of the caged bird. No matter Rochester's aggression, the cage invites Rochester to "consider the resolute, wild, free thing looking out of it, defying [him], with more than courage" (323). This suggests that, no matter the "bird's" propensity to mimic voice, sing sweetly, or adapt well to its confinements, the contained creature remains "resolute, wild, free." The cage itself becomes a barrier to Rochester's desire to enforce his own power and superiority: "whatever I do with its cage, I cannot get at it!" he exclaims, "If I tear, if I rend the slight prison, my outrage will only let the captive loose" (323). The perceived pet cannot be domesticated by Rochester; this is ideologically an impossibility, given the women's role in domesticating, and a physical one, given that a songbird may be tamed but not truly domesticated. This allows the domestic woman's "dominance over all those objects and practices we associate with private life" and, therefore, a modicum of power (3). This is an imperfect power, one that shields the woman insofar as she exists within the "cage" that contains her.

The masculine rage inspired by the dilemma of the captive bird also works to the negative effect of inspiring collection, yet again impacting both women and real-world *passerine* populations through the collection's exploitative properties. Though Rochester's rage over the caged bird focuses on Jane, his previous debaucheries and the captivity of his first wife speak to his attempts to "collect" other women. This process he describes as seeking his "ideal of woman amongst English ladies, French countesses, Italian signoras, and German Grafinnen" (Brontë 316). His first attempt at ensnaring a woman was Céline Varens, whom he "liberated from his protection" after discovering her infidelity (Brontë 147). Upon hearing of Adèle's destitution, Rochester takes her to "grow up clean in the wholesome soil" of England despite previously "acknowledging no natural claim on Adèles' part to be supported by [him]" (147). Blanche Ingram, scheming as she is, is strung along by Rochester as a means of exposing Jane's true affection, and her presence represents, as suggested by Gilbert and Gubar, marriage as both a prison (with their pantomime of Bridewell) and a market (with the imperative to literally "bride well") (350). Rochester's rage stems from these "caged birds" inability to meet the domestic standards culturally engrained and perpetuated by the avian imagery.

This dissatisfaction is echoed in the use of specimens in natural history texts, which enable both the gendered hierarchy of avian categorization and the catalogued, commodifying presentation of birds. Just as women's inability to live up to the domestic idealizations spurred on Rochester's collection of them, so too did dissatisfaction with poorly preserved bird specimens enable their exploitation. Prior to Bewick's publication of *A History of British Birds,* he was invited to Barnard Castle to examine specimens for his woodcut art. He wrote to a friend "commenting on the enormity of the task and his dissatisfaction with the badly stuffed specimens" (Bewick Society). The enormity of the task suggests that there were a great many

specimens to sort through, and their poor preservation rendered them largely useless for Bewick's art. Abandoning this collection, *A History of British Birds* was, instead, drawn from his "own experience or from fresh specimens sent to him by his many friends and admirers" (Bewick Society). Many specimens were drawn from living counterparts, as the Corncrake, "which was taken from a bird that ran about his own room" and later converted to a "specimen which is still to be seen in [Newcastle]" (Dobson 97). Drawing from prepared specimens, in part, explains some of the personifications; though careful in the depiction of detailed feathers, physiology, and other physical traits, the process of preparing a specimen is fraught with error. It may result in poorly preserve skins, as Bewick discovered in Barnard Castle, or the specimen arranged in a way to represent a bird's "excellent attitude" in a simulacrum rather than a faithful reproduction to nature. The fine line between living pet, like the Corncrake, to specimen delineates how the collection of specimens, both living and dead, resulted in their "death" within their ecologies. On one hand, this isolation of the specimen from its habitat ensures that what is presented as "natural order" is not always truly representative, enabling the manipulation of their categorization and the perpetuation of gendered ideologies as factual. On the other hand, the presentation of such birds in natural history texts like Bewick's, their widespread popularity (that was likely furthered by the publicity of *Jane Eyre*), increased the commodified desire for and consumption of birds.

To reconcile the tensions created by the commodified and categorized caged bird, Brontë enlists the imagery of falconry to restore order between man, woman, and nature. After Bertha destroys both herself and Thornfield, Rochester is blinded and loses a hand. Though Rochester still has hair like "eagles' feathers," Jane quips that she cannot discern whether his "nails are grown like birds' claws or not" (Brontë 444). While her remark questions his personal hygiene,

his human nails relate back to his comparison as an eagle or falcon, whose predatory prowess is dependent on their talons and eyesight. Regardless of the state of his talons, his blindness renders him harmless and ineffectual as a predator.

Conceptually, his blindness serves the same function as "hooding" a wild raptor, which keeps the bird "calm and secure" and ensures that "its attitude [has] shifted into neutral about almost everything other than food" (Holderman 21). Hooding, and blindness, work to produce the appearance of tameness even in the wildest of raptors, and serves as an essential part of "manning," the process by which raptors are acclimated to human interaction. Rochester's disfigurement marks a reversal of the natural order established by Bewick and other tomes of natural history. Brontë likens him to a "royal eagle, chained to a perch, forced to entreat a sparrow to become its purveyor" (447). With the raptor's prey now as caretaker, Rochester instead becomes Jane's kept bird, reversing both gender roles and subverting the food chain. This, superficially, functions as a satisfactory happy ending. Rochester's disfigurement conceptually renders him ineffectual as a predator, enabling Jane to adopt a position of power within her own conceptualization of natural history. While superficially giving Jane authority and safety in her relationship with Rochester, Brontë fails to completely subvert the ideologies perpetuated in *Jane Eyre* through her use of Bewick's *British Birds*.

Jane Eyre is still likened to a sparrow, which Bewick suggests "never leaves us, but is familiar to the eye at all times," implicating her attachment to Rochester (Bewick 247). Similarly, Rochester remains a masculine bird of prey, now subdued. Like the caged bird, an eagle or falcon cannot be wholly domesticated or dominated. Bewick references captive birds of prey only three times, each of which refers to the falcon or eagle's use for taking live, wild prey, even in the clutches of captivity (9, 14, 15). The image provided by Brontë of a sparrow

providing for a tethered eagle is impossible. Unlike caged songbirds and parrots, which may be handled to interact, talk, and express affection to their owners, the bird of prey is predominantly food motivated and "trained through their stomachs—through associating the falconer with food" (Macdonald 98). Even this association is slight. Every bird of prey not captured as a nestling or fledgling may be returned to nature, reverting to its wildness despite being perfectly tamed a season prior. In adapting the language of natural history to express the relationship between man and women within the domestic sphere, Brontë's solution for her heroine's empowerment is rendered both unnatural and unmaintainable within Bewick's constructed "natural" order.

Naturalizing Captivity

A broader look at Bewick's depictions of birds reveals more troubling implications about the perceived "natural" order of men and women, birds and raptors. Using "crow" and "rook" interchangeably to describe Bertha Mason, Brontë links Bertha to the *Corvidae* family which can be found "in every part of the known world" (Bewick 70). [52] According to Bewick, corvids "are restless and noisy, easily tamed, and capable of being taught to articulate words, and to obey the voice of their master" (70). Whereas these traits conceptually link crow kind to the other species of caged birds in *Jane Eyre*, gesturing to traits that helped commodify and popularize pet birds, the global representation of crow-kind distinguishes them from the other British birds represented in *Jane Eyre*. Jane's perception of Bertha as a "carrion-seeking bird of prey" uniquely depicts Bertha as an unnatural creature who feeds on death and defies the connection between women of idealized character and harmless songbird (313). This suggests that Bertha only superficially appears capable of being domesticated and domesticating Rochester in kind. Rochester described Bertha in similar terms, noting how he "found a fine woman. . .tall, dark,

[52] This family includes larger birds like crows, magpies, rooks, and jays.

majestic" in Jamaica (Brontë 310). Though she appeared to adhere to domestic ideologies, Rochester admits that he "never loved, . . .never esteemed. . .[nor] even know her," and he was "not sure of the existence of one virtue in her nature," listing "modesty, benevolence, candour, [and] refinement" as traits that he should have looked for (310). After noting the absence of these virtues, he notes that he "should never have a quiet or settled household" as a result of his mistake (311). Rather than "easily tamed," both Jane and Rochester's depictions of Bertha decry her as restless noisy, and poorly suited for domestic space, and they reflect the widespread perception of corvid kind as "pests," assigning them a false ecological value (pests and blights on the landscape) based on their inconvenience to humans.

Othering her from other English women, Rochester grounds Bertha's madness in her "matrilineal legacy" and "ethnic identity" (Donaldson 106). In other words, her madness is in some way inherited form her ethnicity and mother, both of which are factors that failed, at least in Rochester's eyes, to properly domesticate her. He decries her "nature [as] wholly alien to [his]; her tastes obnoxious" (Brontë 311). His disgust of his wife stems from her foreignness, which mirrors the rook's foreign and native nature. Rochester's depiction of his wife "constructs Bertha as a disabled because she is the colonial Other," (Nygren 119). In this way, Bertha's association with crow-kind also represents Rochester's misinterpretation of her appearance. Just as crows may exists in both Britain and Jamaica, Rochester perceives no difference in character between a Jamaican and British bride. His wrongful assumption is that her appearance as a "fine women" would be enough to naturalize her to a British household. Introducing a foreign subject to Britain under the pretense of improvement echoes Britain's colonial mission in foreign territories, suggesting that British domesticity may hold sway over people as much as material objects imported from afar.

Bertha's connection to *Corvidae* is echoed by the undesirable rookeries at Thornfield, whose "cawing tenants" bring unpleasant noise (Brontë 96). The "clustered dark" of the rookery is also capable of hiding the home visually altogether, threatening the peace of what little domestic haven Thornfield might provide. Foregrounding Bertha's threat to Jane's happy union with Rochester against the rookeries' physical alteration of Thornfield's landscape posits Bertha and rooks as undesirable members of domestic "havens" and native ecologies alike. The rookeries' impact on landscapes are symptomatic of the problem rather than the problem itself. Spreading populations, monoculture, and industrialization diminished suitable habitats for avifauna, leaving conditions that only are suitable for specific species. This creates a pattern of "biotic homogenization that threatens to reduce the biological uniqueness of local ecosystems" (McKinney 883). The species that tend to flourish within such settings tend to be either opportunistic scavengers, such as crow-kind, or nonnative species integrated into urban landscapes through naturalization attempts. In this way, Bertha represents the high, ecological cost of importing wildlife from foreign landscapes.

Contemporary thought saw the distribution of species as beneficial or even justified. The Zoological Society of London, which had "'the intention of bring species from…every part of the globe, either for some useful purpose or as objects'," served as a nineteenth century "acclimisation society" (7). The efforts of the Society and individuals has been traced to as early as 1847, the same year that *Jane Eyre* was published. This naturalization often sought to alter the ecosystems of a region, often through the introduction of new avifauna, as the now-invasive rooks in New Zealand (introduced in the late nineteenth century) or the black swans introduced to control watercress (7). This behavior was driven by the belief that humanity held a harmonious role with nature and could, therefore, alter it to better control populations of animals

that posed a threat to human production of crops or the aesthetic of a landscape. Outside of the society, still others "adopted naturalization as a hobby," and some "were motivated by aesthetic amenity and nostalgia" for "brightly coloured plumage or musical song" (8-9). These hobbyists engaged in a commodified acclimisation that prioritized species for their perceived value, whether that is for plumage or song, while unwittingly causing the destruction of others. This, still, is another risk of commodifying birds for song or plumage; "brightly coloured plumage" especially was associated with foreign, exotic birds. Through the desire to have these species close to home in more than just natural history text, invasive species altered even native ecologies through the belief that releasing them in native territories would naturalize imported species to the pre-existing ecosystem.

Though naturalization cannot be directly linked to the representation of Bertha, those ideologies are nevertheless present in Bertha's association to rookeries, Rochester's assumption of her adaptability as a "foreign species," and her perceived impact on both the landscape of Thornfield. Bertha as a rook exists as a construct of Britain's perceived civilizing and domesticating impact on colonies and, more broadly, nature. The rook also represents some of the inherent risks of commodified collection through way of its perception as an invasive and undesirable species. Though Rochester invests in the adaptability of foreign species to Britain landscapes and domesticity, the failure of Bertha to adapt prefigures the negative impact of the attempted naturalization, even if extinction was not yet a recognized consequence of human interference with nature. Bertha is, perhaps, the most disturbing representation of assumed harmony between man and nature—and a representation of how commodified foreignness negatively impacts both wildlife and women.

The Bird-Bride

Famously using finches to decenter previous works of avian natural history, Darwin's *The Origin of Species* revolutionized nineteenth-century perceptions of humanity's relationship with an abstract nature. Scholars like Gillian Beer have done much to trace the influence of Darwin on the Victorian imagination and literature, suggesting that the "Darwinian myth" was the outcome of so dramatically reconfiguring humanity's perceived role in the natural world. As Beer argues, Darwin's theory suggested "that man was not fully equipped to understand the history of life on earth and that he might not be central to that history" (15). Decentering humanity from the role of harmonious steward and staggeringly uprooting the core beliefs of systematic natural history, Darwin's extinction narratives reconfigure the ideologies represented by *Jane Eyre*. No longer was human influence viewed as refining; his "print" on the world now bore with it threats of irretrievable extinction. The emergent Darwinian myth focused on "fears that decadence may be an energy as strong as development, and extinction a fate more probable than progress" (Beer 135). In addition to shattering humanity's perceived relationship with nature, the connection of decadence to extinction also drew under question the commodification and consumption of nature. For the first time, natural resources—like feathers and bird specimens—were suddenly perceived as a finite resource.

Despite the staggering impact of Darwinian theory on literature, the shift in belief systems scarcely dissolved the cultural connection between woman and bird, though it did reinforce birds' "stray" properties by providing scientific backing for their resistance to both genetic and ideological domesticity. Though less studied than *Jane Eyre*, Rosamund Marriott Watson's "Ballad of the Bird-Bride" provides a post-Darwinian perspective on *Jane Eyre*'s themes of domesticity, marriage, and women's relationship to the caged bird with a key difference: in Watson's work, the assumed adaptability of bird and woman alike is overturned by

the potential of extinction, cementing the Bird-Bride as a stray in her own right. Capitalizing on concerns over diminishing sea fowl populations, this tale depicts a gull being collected by a man, transformed into a wife, and, in time, driven to extinction. Depicting a bird with woman traits (rather than the opposite) plays on the closeness of "bird" and "bride" in more than just spelling, and it undoes much of what *Jane Eyre* represents in terms of domestic ideology. The Bird-Bride remains bird first and foremost; though she is temporarily tamed, she is not domesticated, nor does she "choose" her cage so much as she becomes a captive held within it. As a result, the Bird-Bride ultimately disrupts the perceived domesticating influence of the house with her wildness. Envisioning the last of a species as bereaved mother allows the tale to envision the extinction of domestic ideologies, and it ultimately presents the finality of extinction as an apocalyptic crisis affecting both humanity and wildlife.

"Ballad of the Bird-Bride" was published in January 1889, appearing in an issue of *Harper's* before being published as the title-poem in Watson's poetry collection the same year. The "Eskimo" folktale is told from the discarded husband's perspective rather than the titular bride, and he reveals at the outset that both his wife and his children have fled, though he "loved them well" (Watson 1). Describing his home as "waste and wild," the speaker's arctic landscape is nevertheless occupied by grey gulls that turn into young and beautiful women at will. From his hiding place, the hunter captures the fairest of these supernatural women, and she eventually becomes his wife under the condition that he not kill her gull kin. Of course, in a bout of starvation, the speaker breaks his oath, and the wife and children don grey plumage and fly away. The poem concludes with the speaker's chilling assertion that the family is still his despite their more concrete ties to the arctic wildness. Though the husband reproaches the wife for abandoning him, the forcefulness of the husband in domesticizing his wife and his murderous

betrayal ends not in marriage but in rupture and departure. The possessiveness and violence of the speaker instead suggests broader instabilities within the institution of marriage and its perpetuation within the Victorian domestic sphere, gesturing not only to humanity's propensity to hunt seafowl to extinction, but also foreshadowing the extinction of the ideal wife., the institution of marriage, and, indeed, domesticity itself.

The "animal wife" myth structure proves to be an apt venue for exploring Watson's thoughts on marriage and extinction. In most versions of the tale archetype, a flock of swans lands in a body of water, shed their feathered frock, and reveal themselves to be beautiful women. Variations of this tale exist in Swedish, German, and Japanese folklore, and while this mythic structure saw a resurgence in the nineteenth century, some versions—like the Japanese variation—have existed for far longer. [53] The "heroes" of the tale trap the beautiful bird women, most commonly "swan maidens," by stealing their feathered frock, preventing them from transforming back into their animal form and separating them from their sisters. The women's dependence on their skins not only links women with objects, rendering these women collectible like their clothes, but the concept of collecting "skins" similarly objectifies the collection of specimens or hunting trophies, positioning the "animal wives" as both object and prey. For these birds, their exposed body becomes the cage that confines them to domestic life, and the predatory nature of the men "hunting" for their skins allows their violent abduction into the roles of wife and mother.

In some versions, the women are happily wed to their captors; in others, the women retrieve their feathered garb and escape their would-be captors. In all cases, the woman remains

[53] The Swedish variation is entitled "The Swan Maiden" and appears in Jerman Hofberg's *Swedish Fairy Tales,* published in 1890. *Grimm's Fairytales* and Ernest Meier's "The Three Swans" strongly feature human beings enchanted into swan's plumage. "The Robe of Feathers" is a Japanese folklore in which the husband steals a white feathered robe (Jacobs).

intrinsically linked to her wild origins, suggesting that these wives merely act tame instead of becoming truly domesticated. The "animal wife" structure reveals women's purportedly "wild" nature while also anticipating "the construction of the Victorian lady, fated to be objectified and sold in marriage," which Talairach-Vielmas notes is in "many a Victorian fairy tale dealing with the nature of woman" and biological determinism (104). The wildness of the bird-women necessitates their domestication by man within the context of the traditional versions of these tales, reinforcing both women's connection with birds and nature and man's predatory collection (and consumption) of specimens from the natural world.

The choice of animal in most "animal wife" tales—typically a swan or similar white-plumaged bird—contrasts starkly with Watson's choice of grey gulls inhabiting an unforgiving, frigid landscape, which works to express new anxieties about extinction. Watson likely drew her inspiration from Hinrich Rink's 1875 volume of Greenland Inuit tales, which "includes. . . 'The Man Who Mated Himself with a Sea-Fowl'" (Schacker 19). The selection of an Eskimo tale embodies concerns about not only the disappearance of wildlife but also the disappearance of entire people or cultures. In this version of the tale, the husband is unaware that the women are also gulls before he decides to steal the clothes of "the one he thought the prettiest" (Rink 145). This crucial difference positions his perceived dominion over women themselves, forgoing the tale archetype's justification of entrapping "wild" women. When the other women panic and fly away in bird-form, the hunter physically restrains the woman to prevent her from fleeing and withholds her clothes. The "old bachelor" refuses to venture out and leave his wife in fear that she would flee. In order to regain some freedom, the wife reassures the husband that he "mayst leave me without fear," reaffirming her love for her husband and his ability to depend on her (146). Rendering her husband complacent with promises of domestic platitudes proves to be the

mechanism of her escape. She eventually goes on walks with her two sons to gather feathers and escapes when they have gathered enough feathers to build wings with which to fly, reassuring them that they are "akin to birds" as part of their inheritance from their mother(146).

When they gather enough feathers, the wife fastens the feathers on her children and then herself to transform them into birds. The husband pursues them, arriving at an elegant house just in time to hear his wife rejecting a marriage proposal because she already has "another husband" (148). When her husband tries to retrieve her once again, she and her children fly away a second time as birds, and he turns to see that the house they once occupied has been transformed into a decrepit "gulls-hill" in their absence (148). Despite the discarded husband's attempts at power, the wife's ability to transform both form and home positions the power squarely with her, envisioning an environment crafted and maintained by her compliance with domestication.

In choosing this version of the tale over the more elegant swan maidens, Rosamund Marriott Watson overturns the pristine beauty of the traditional "bird-brides." As a woman, the Bird-Bride is "fair" with "long white arms," but when her and her children transform into gulls, "grey plumes cov[er] them all, / shoulder and breast and brow" (Watson 2,4). Despite this, when mourning for the loss of his wife, the husband calls to his "winged white wife," suggesting that his objectification of her as a domestic ideal has similarly affected his perception of her appearance, envisioning her as a beautiful white bird rather than homely gull (5). The discrepancies between the abandoned husband's narration and the actual events extend beyond the inconsistencies in his representation of his wife as contrastingly pure and idealized or grey and self-liberating.

In Watson's version of the Eskimo tale, the wife offers no indication of her happiness in her captive marriage; instead, the speaker suggests that she "full sweetly. . .smiled" when he

brings her “safe to [his] warm snow house” immediately after her abduction, and the speaker intones that she “loved [him] dear and leal” after she bears his children (2). The discrepancies between the husband’s perception of his wife’s love and her subsequent escape draw into question the validity of the husband’s perception, which is quite significant due to his claims of ownership at the poem’s conclusion:

Ay, ye once were mine, and, till I forget,

Ye are mine forever and aye,

Mine, wherever your wild wings go,

While shrill winds whistle across the snow

And the skies are blear and grey. (5)

The representation of “aye” and “mine” suggest a desperate grasp at possession rather than actual belief in his affirmation; the emphasis is meant to convince both husband and listener of his rightful ownership, as though the repetition may alter reality. He links his lingering possession of his wife to his memory of her and the consistency of weather in the arctic climes, which suggests mastery not only over his wrongfully imprisoned wife and children but also over the inhospitable landscape. Watson, therefore, is drawing into question not only the husband’s claim to possession over his wild wife but also his dominion over the landscape that she inhabits, suggesting that he has control over neither woman nor nature.

The husband’s continued assertion of control and his investment in traditional domestic ideologies results in the story’s tragic turn. When “sharp hunger gnaw[s] [them] sore,” the husband departs to hunt, leaving his wife and children contained within the home. The husband’s “bow twang[s] thrice with a swift, straight shot, / and slew [him] sea-gulls four” (3). The husband implicitly justifies his actions due to the hunger of his family, suggesting that not just

himself, but also his wife and children were hungry by saying "us." Despite this, the husband "shoots only three arrows but kills four birds," which "suggests that in killing her sister gulls he also attacks his wife" (Leighton 167). Here, too, the husband's attempts at "providing" for the family turn to violent aggression against the wife. Conceptualizing his attack on his wife—and his break in his vow to her—as "slaying sea-gulls four" serves as a further attempt at justifying his actions by overlooking their kinship and viewing them, exclusively, as prey objects rather than individuals. Even as the speaker admits to hurting his wife, his language justifies it while attesting to his own masculine skills as a hunter, suggesting that he could bag more quarry than he fired arrows. The "swift, straight" shot of his bow underhandedly praises his skill, justifying his murder of women by positioning it in the natural order of hunter-provider and prey. Moreover, it reasserts his masculine value as a hunter by justifying the whole-sale slaughter of birds as representative of his skills with the bow rather than focusing on his broken promise to his wife.

Upon the husband's betrayal, the grey landscape once filled with gulls turns red, prompting the bird-bride to yet again "beat her long white arms on high" (3). The marring of her image with grey—not white—feathers disrupts her husband's description of her virtues; the appearance of grey feathers belies how the bird-bride was only perceived to be ideal rather than truly adapted to domesticity. Rather than admonishing the husband for his mistake, the bird-bride instead calls to her children with the rousing cry of "the hour is here" (3). This apocalyptic language invokes a sense of inevitability, connecting the predictable passage of time with the termination of the marriage. "The hour is here" leaves no room for recovery, and the flight of the Bird-Bride with her feathers and "children three" is tinged with similar inevitability (5). Departing with her children, who also don feathers, distances them from the husband's domain.

The bride and her children's return to the wild beyond the husband's reach marks not just the end of their marriage but the termination of the family and the domestic haven within which the bride and children were captive. This departure imagines a historic moment, suggesting that the hour has come for women's release from captivity, marriage, and domesticity—all one and the same.

"The hour is here" also represents the departure of the native wildlife from humanity's reach, suggesting that the inevitable human impact on nature results in species retreating from human view. The "retreat" of the bird-bride and her children suggests that her departure is no mere "migration" from reach. As the three remaining gulls, there is no hope for future generations, both respect to the husband or the gulls. Already, the artic landscape was scarcely populated by diverse wildlife, and the murder of more gulls than needed for survival further altered the face of the landscape, literally bloodying it with the deaths of the remaining wildlife. As a result, the husband's betrayal marks an environmental crisis from which there is no return, rendering the landscape permanently inhabitable. The husband's punishment figures the issue of extinction as one not just affecting the future of wild species but also the future of man. There is no indication that the husband is the only remaining man on earth, but the cessation of his bloodline and its correspondence to the extinction of the gulls underscores how extinction is a unifying problem. The careless destruction or consumption of wildlife impacts not just the husband but future generations, too,

With the departure of both bird and bride in one, Watson critiques the violence of men towards women and, more broadly, birds. The poem contains what Heise refers to as "the rhetoric of decline," featuring "the trope of the end or disappearance of nature, which in various ways has come to form part not only of the environmentalist perspectives, but also of theories of contemporary culture and society more broadly" (50). The inevitability of the Bird-Bride's

disappearance with her kin and offspring and the blood-soaked landscape "translates the demise of the species into narrative" (62). This translation of extinction into narrative constructed a form of what Gillian Beer refers to as "imaginative history," which sought to "domesticate" evolutionary and extinction theory, "to colonise it with human meaning, to bring man back to the centre of its intent" (7). Extinction narratives, to this end, involve not only the translation of a species' demise into narrative format, but also the attempted domestication and recovery of said species—an ironic re-centering of humanity in a midst of a conservation movement made necessary by their intervention in nature.

In "Lost Dogs, Last Birds, and Listed Species: Cultures of Extinction," Heise refers to Quanmen's depiction of the Dodo's extinction as an example of this kind of narrative. The depiction of the last Dodo's death focuses "on a single specimen [that] he envisions as female, which allows him to portray her in the well-worn elegiac clichés of the bereaved mother and wife" (62). Unifying the new concept of extinction (and humanity's role in unnatural extinction) and clichés of domestic ideologies suggests the extent to which extinction narratives also involved notions of domesticity. In the case of "The Ballad of the Bird-Bride," Watson's depiction draws on these tropes. Though her extinction narrative does depict the bereaved woman and wife figure, it overturns attempts at domesticating extinction theory by representing the connection between mother, wife, and species as the extinction of all three. The bird-bride's decision to depart marks the death of the idealized wife preserved in this fairy-tale archetype and in nineteenth-century literature more broadly. The husband's inability to see his wife as wild grey gull necessitates her departure; he incorrectly believes her to be tamed without seeing how her connection to bird-kind causes her to stray from the role of white-winged Angel in the House. Watson adopts the myth of extinction to empower female desire by suggesting that, like

the birds they are so often compared to, the discursive identity of the ideal wife may also be a practice subject to extinction through man's mistreatment.

In asking that her kin be preserved, the bird-bride also rails against the destructiveness of turning living things into domestic possessions. Collecting birds—as specimens, in cages, as ornament, as trophy, or as wives—is an act of violence. The impact of these actions is extinction, an unnatural selection, which occurs as a result of masculine wanton destruction, as if men have destroyed the world. Here, too, the fleeing gulls, vanishing beyond the reach of the husband, reflect broader Victorian ideals and growing concern over extinct birds. While the Dodo was at the forefront of extinct avian species, "famously extinguished around the year 1680," its extinction could be explained away by the extremely localized dodo populations and their flightlessness (Cowles 699). The extinction of widespread seafowl populations was far harder to comprehend for Victorians. By 1858, "the great auk. . .a flightless seabird once spread widely across the North Atlantic, had been rumoured extinct for a decade" (698) Concerns over diminishing seafowl populations led to the 1869 Sea Birds Preservation Act, which was "Britain's first national legislation on behalf of non-game animals" (709). Though considered to be non-game animals, nineteenth century naturalists such as Alfred Newton acknowledged the "threats to nesting populations of these birds by shooting parties" (710), and so a closed-season was created to protect them during breeding season. This act, however, was not passed purely out of ecological concerns: the seafowl were perceived as useful to sailors as indicators of land; in poor weather, sailors could hear them on the distant shores they occupied, and the silence left by their extinction would pose a very real risk to naval traffic.

The threat of seafowl extinction and its representation within the Bird Bride, therefore, draws attention to two crucial points in the nineteenth century's growing awareness of human

impact on avifauna: first, unnatural selection reaches well beyond even populated areas, impacting even the distant habitats of arctic seafowl. To this end, Watson's use of gulls in her depiction of the Bird-Bride establishes seafowl as a "flagship species," which was used to mobilize "public support for conservation efforts" (61). The popularity of such "flagship" species was often motivated by aesthetics, as in the pure-white plumage for which the bird-bride was coveted, or utility, as in seafowl's usefulness to sailors or exploitation by shooting parties.

Second, the distance of many seafowl species from England greatly complicated the observation of their population sizes. As Heise suggests, the extinction of the dodo suggests that "the demise of the last individual of a species. . .is less ecologically significant than the factors that lead a species to become so rare that such circumstances can put it at risk" (61-62). Though Victorians (and, to an extent, modern society) were fixated on the "last" of the species, Heise places ecological significance on the causes of the species' decline in population rather than focusing on the death of the "last" of a species. The "last" is just that, representing an ecological impact well beyond reparation; identifying the factors leading to a species' decline is far more critical. The impossibility of tracing seafowl populations once they have migrated further decenters humanity's dominion over the natural world; though humanity may negatively impact their populations, the seafowl ultimately represent animals both affected by humanity yet beyond their reach due to their ability to survive inhospitable landscapes. Moreover, the nineteenth century concern over seafowl also reveals problematic implications to the concept of "flagship" species, which often turn the conservation mission's gaze to far-flung and exotic species rather than native English birds, represented, here, by Watson's choice to tell an "Eskimo" myth—a problematic term with roots in colonial exploitation to underscore the exotic origins of her tale.

Though adapting extinction myths to envision the extinction of domesticity may mark an appealing disruption of the social order, tracing the cultural impact of idealized bird and bride reveals the limitations of domestic ideologies and the notion of "flagship" species. Drawing on the similarities between bird and bride, Watson elaborates on the connection between animal and woman within the Victorian consciousness, using it to critique the husband's inaccurate idealization and objectification of the "animal-wife" figure. In this version of the fairytale, Watson invokes Darwinian myth to represent the extinction of the ideal wife.

Watson also draws upon contemporary concerns over seafowl populations, representing the Bird-Bride as a gull to connect the fairytale's moral to the growing need for wildlife preservation and the emergence of "flagship species" in the name of preservation. In expressing concern over the extinction of her grey-gull kin, the bird-bride's flight to distant lands similarly reflects the threat of extinction for species with widespread habitats. Previously viewed as immune to humanity's influence due to their distance from populated areas, seafowl were nevertheless subject to the same exploitation and destruction as gamebirds. On one hand, they had the potential to be revered for their white plumage; on the other, they were nevertheless subject to the same exploitation and destruction as gamebirds. In drawing attention to both of these traits within "Ballad of the Bird-Bride," Watson ultimately underscores the problematic aspects of such flagship species, who were central to the conservation movement not for their ecological value but for their role in human myth-making and ideologies.

Conclusion

Tracing the intersection of birds and women in pre- and post- Darwinian texts reveals not only the commodification and consumption of birds, but also how these material practices went hand-in-hand with the proliferation of domestic ideology and the objectification of women.

Though living beings, bird were often perceived as valuable possession, regardless of whether they were kept as pets, collected as specimens, worn as fashion, or displayed in cages. The caged bird, especially, has been of particular interest to this research for its rich cultural implications. Both Charlotte Brontë and Rosamund Marriott Watson detail the ways caging birds and women within domestic ideologies are injurious to both. Invoking Bewick's *A History of British Birds, Jane Eyre* implicitly perpetuates its ideologies of mankind's mastery over nature and, more specifically, an anglocentric understanding of worldwide nature. In representing Jane as a variety of songbirds, Brontë likens her heroine to species Bewick identifies as easily commodified as domestic pets on account of their idealized traits, and so perpetuates the assumption that even the wildest of birds would choose the cage of domesticity. The endowment of domesticized birds with idealized traits further cements the connection of women with bird, and it reflects the categorization of women into discursive identities as untenable as the personified and human-like behaviors bestowed on birds by Bewick. Most importantly, reading for the birds themselves reveals the way that personified behaviors represent not their adaptability to domesticity but, rather, their vulnerability to it.

The robin tapping on the window is not seeing humanity's protection but confronting its own reflection. The bird and window exchange gestures to the inception of window-strikes as a major detriment to *passerine* populations, and it gestures to how natural history erased such risks to wildlife by presenting them as evidence as a harmonious coexistence between humanity and nature. Even beyond the invisible barrier posed by glass, the representation of diverse avian species in *Jane Eyre* occurs in the midst of cultural ideologies that would negatively impact biodiversity, ranging from offering birds human food to naturalizing foreign avian species. As a pre-Darwinian text, *Jane Eyre* does not acknowledge the potential of extinction but participates

in the commodification and categorization of birds. Allowing the birds to speak for themselves reveals the ways that systematic natural history constructed domestic ideologies which negatively impacted their population and decreased biodiversity.

The cage—which is necessary in the keeping of domestic birds—and the threat of predation further complicate the connection between humanity, woman, and bird. The "cage" figures literal imprisonment through the pinioning of wings and physical restraint, gesturing to a similar restraint and violence in the objectification and collection of women's bodies. The cage also represents a force alteration of its captives; the domestic bird ceases to be a domestic object without the cage, without which the bird would quickly revert back to its wildness or perish in inhospitable habitat. The cage as an object also served to shelter the pet bird from the threat of predators. Likening the cage to the household does not alleviate this threat but shifts the role of predator onto the husband—a concerning trend that is only reinforced by Brontë's likening of Rochester to eagle or falcon. Jane is only able to subdue Rochester by maiming him, robbing him of flight and sight in a means that symbolically links him to falconry.

Whereas her use of bird imagery and the representation of Bewick's text is meant to explore and critique the institution of marriage, Brontë's comparison of Rochester to bird of prey adheres to the categorization within Bewick's *A History of British Birds,* which prioritizes birds based on their diets and echo early modern prioritization of birds of prey based on class and gender. Likening Rochester to such predatory birds reifies the gendering of birds as similarly developing a hierarchy of the genders, ideologically subjugating the women as songbirds beneath the masculine birds of prey.

Moving beyond the categorization of natural history to the threat of extinction constructed by such ordering, Rosamund Marriott Watson elaborates on the connection between

bird and women within the Victorian consciousness. She uses the bird-bride connection to critique not only the husband's inaccurate idealization and objectification of the "animal-wife" figure, but to envision a world where female desire—represented as nature's call and its wildness—may be free to migrate at will. Watson's transforming pseudonyms and continued claim of *The Bird-Bride* reflect her heroine's ability to don grey feathers at will, and the "distant haunts" of seafowl envisioned as harsh and unforgiving in *Jane Eyre* and *British Birds* become a landscape shaped by the bird-bride's emotions. The arctic climes turn blood red with anguish at her husband's betrayal, reinforcing not only women's perceived link with nature but her dominion over it. Though the husband/hunter continues to express his possession of the wife, the discrepancies in his narrative reveal the superficiality of his claims and critique the institution of marriage for the violence with which wives are objectified. In this version of the animal-wife fairytale, Watson invokes the Darwinian myth to represent the extinction of the ideal wife.

Watson also draws upon contemporary concerns over seafowl populations, representing the Bird-Bride as a gull to connect the fairytale's moral to the growing need for wildlife preservation and the emergence of "flag-ship species" in the name of preservation. In expressing concern over the extinction of her grey-gull kin, the bird-bride's flight to distant lands similarly reflects the threat of extinction for species with widespread habitats. Previously viewed as immune to humanity's influence due to their distance from populated areas, seafowl were nevertheless subject to the same exploitation and destruction as gamebirds. Linking the husband's murder of grey-gulls to the vulnerability of seafowl breeding sights to shooting further decenters man from his dominion over nature, suggesting that extinction is the inevitable outcome to man's predatory and violence nature. The very nature of flagship species works to rectify mankind's harmful influence on ecosystems, but the prioritization of certain species that

matter over others is rarely based on their ecological value but on their perceived worth to humanity. Such flagship species often value aesthetics, gendered attributes, or perceived exoticism rather than their role in native ecosystems, causing the threat of the bloodied artic landscape to foreshadow a similar ecological crisis in native soil.

In both *Jane Eyre* and "The Ballad of the Bird-Bride," tracing the commodification of birds and their association with women in the domestic sphere exposes how domestic ideologies are injurious to both. Though the "cage" presented by domestic spaces and motherhood may seek to control female desire, extinction, as suggested in Watson's subversion of the bird-wife trope, is the inevitable outcome for the white-winged Angel of the House. The perceived connection between birds and women on the birds themselves is of utmost importance to examining these texts. *Jane Eyre* and "The Ballad of the Bird-Bride" ultimately read as pre- and post- Darwinian perspectives when examined for their ecological implications. In supposing a harmonious coexistence with nature with man at its center, *Jane Eyre* invokes but does not acknowledge the innumerable ways that the association of birds with idealized domesticity inspires their consumption. Imbuing birds with personified, domestic traits overlooks the impact that humanity has on avian populations; treating birds as objects to be collected also erases the extent of their consumption and its impact on biodiversity. "The Bird-Bride" acknowledges the inevitability of extinction outright, using the growing concern of seagulls and their widespread habitats to reveal just how far-reaching humanity's environmental impact truly is. Capitalizing on the widespread practice of gendering and domesticating extinction narratives, "The Bird-Bride" represents stray meanings through its representation of both extinct species and extinct domestic ideologies. This wrests power over extinction and nature narratives from men, represented by the husband's

voice, and instead imagines the death of the idealized wife and mother alongside reduced biodiversity.

Conclusion

Following Strays

The idea of "recovering" stray objects from nineteenth-century literature and culture is a project less invested with placing these objects back into categories than with tracing the trajectory of their wanderings. Stray objects—be they handicrafts, possessions, or animals—enrich the too limited archive of Victorian studies. They necessitate the difficult task of discussing what treads beyond the limits of domestic discourse and categorization. These strays are forever displaced from their culturally prescribed purpose and, therefore, invaluable for the fissures and cracks they reveal in those ideologies. As this project has illustrated, following them yields entangled meanings, overturns previously conceived notions of gendered material practices, and complicates literature's (and scholarship's) propensity to categorize material objects.

Beginning with a locus of gendered material practices, needlecraft, my project examines such stray objects against widespread ideologies about feminine crafts and objects. *Aurora Leigh*, with its many representations of needlecraft, provides a telling glimpse into the socially perceived use of needlework and its ideological functions. As seen, Elizabeth Barrett Browning categorizes needlecraft through binary opposition: needlecraft is private work, while writing is public; ladies' needlework should be for leisure, but needlework for income was performed by working-class women, who were only a hairsbreadth from fallenness. To Aurora, needlework is a domesticating influence and, therefore, a restrictive pastime which conforms women into impossible domestic ideals. Though Aurora's rejection of needlework is framed by her growth as

a writer, representing needlecraft as a lesser mode of communication nevertheless perpetuates harmful ideologies about domesticity. Figuring needlework strictly as a "leisure" activity serves to illegitimatize those seamstresses for whom needlework served as a means of survival. Rejecting needlework is a rebellion enabled by socio-economic privilege. If Victorian canon prioritizes only these stories, then such a canon repeats this privilege.

Examining needlecraft as an object capable of engaging these ideologies while straying from their influence allows for a revealing glimpse into domestic ideologies, gendered material practices, and the dissemination of both. Elizabeth Parker's sampler, discussed both in the first chapter and introduction, proves that sampler production is not simply a display of domestic discipline, but also a display of resistance to domestic ideology. Parker uses the socially perceived purpose of samplers—to illustrate needlework skill *and* to draw attention to the invisibility of domestic abuse, rendering her traumatic experiences public by way of needle and thread. Overturning existing discursive readings needlecraft blurs the lines between public/private strictures, repositions needlecraft as a text, and uses the socially prescribed link between women's body and sewing to trace Parker's trauma in blood-red thread. The suffragettes of Holloway prison wielded needles in a fashion that similarly strays from prescribed domesticity. The very assumption that *Aurora Leigh* operates under, which decried needlework as a dulling and useless pastime, allowed the suffragettes access to needles and, therefore, a means to memorialize their mistreatment.

Moving outwards from handicraft to possessions coded as "feminine" reveals still other stray meanings in material culture. Representing the importation of gemstones from foreign colonies, the resplendent diamond at the heart of Christina Rossetti's "Hero" is multi-faceted. Bearing Hero's spirit within, the diamond first fulfills the girl's wish to be "a supreme object of

admiration" ("Hero" 192). This union between heroine and diamond most notably works to reveal the complicated connections between Victorian women and imported goods, the Victorian parlor and distant colonies. It is well known that the domestic possession and display of fine Indian gemstones in the shape of personal jewelry brings the British Empire to the British home and middle class where domestic consumption brings home the fruits of colonization abroad.

Invoking the Koh-i-Noor, Rossetti encounters in the gemstone an object that cannot be truly domesticated and recut to fit Britain's colonial agenda. As a thing of great value and historical meaning, the Koh-i-Noor's prominence within the imagination of colonizer and colonized alike disrupts any attempt at domestication. By transforming the woman "Hero" into a massive imported gemstone, "Hero" explores the transgressive pleasure that objectification on a grand scale presents when a female character's desire turns her into a national stone itself. The violence of Hero's transformation and trade as a diamond recalls the burden women wear in displaying the violence of military colonization and possession. Usually manageable through the wearing of shawls and personal jewelry, or the possession of exotic plants, here colonial possession is not so easily domesticated. Instead, the object of desire overwhelms and defines our "Hero," transporting her into public view .

Through this fantastic difference, as in "Goblin Market," Rossetti maps a new critique of female subjectivity for the woman shopper through the attempted domestication and commodification of both women's bodies and imperial objects within the marketplace. As in that poem, Rossetti's new expression of female heroism is marked by a woman's recovery from the "fallen" status of her body's objectification and commodification. Rossetti's treatment of the diamond, however, still prioritizes the meanings and purposes assigned to the object by the colonizer rather than the colonized. After Hero's spirit departs the gemstone, the diamond itself

vanishes from the story without further reference. Still, preserved in Rossetti's representation of the Koh-i-Noor is a useful examination of how such objects defy categorization, revealing how the process of "domesticating" imported objects in Victorian homes heaped harmful discursive identities onto both British India and Victorian women consumers.

The property of glass appears in the diamond's transparent surface. Though not an easily traceable object that may be exchanged like needlecraft or jewelry, glass was nevertheless considered a feminine medium in Victorian culture. [54] This was due in part to the proliferation of plate glass windows, which added transparency to the physical boundaries between private and public life (and between the outside world and the domestic, as exemplified by *Jane Eyre*'s birds tapping on homes' windows). Engaging glass and scopic culture more generally, Mary de Morgan sorts the experience of "looking at" from "looking through" by demonstrating how glass serves as both barrier and mediator to vision. Using the fairytale genre to render modern technologies as magical marvels, a plain glass lens and pools of light—here represented by Fiorimonde's infamous necklace—represent the invisible biases influencing vision in both "The Heart of Princess Joan" and "The Necklace of Princess Fiorimonde." In each, the transformation of bodies into commodified objects of cultural significance connects these bodies to material practices and their cultural contexts. Joan's body is transformed through the theft and exhibition of her heart, though her appearance continues to beguile. Only a glass lens can adjust the vision of the tale's hero, Michael, enough for him to see her heartlessness and return her stolen heart. As one so objectified, Joan's own vision needs no adjustment, and she is able to see through Michael's haggard appearance and embraces him. Princess Fiorimonde—beautiful, wicked, and

[54] Isobel Armstrong, in *Victorian Glassworlds*, discusses how the display of products under glass accelerated a feminized commodification of both goods and bodies (as discussed in previous chapters), but Armstrong also discusses the "reproductive" and "fertile" elements of glass which preserves and even nourishes life (in the case of hothouses like the one discussed in "Hero").

cunning in turn—similarly outlines the deceptive nature of appearance, drawing on the magic of cosmetics to enhance her appearance. Wishing to be desired without the drudgery of marriage, Fiorimonde transforms her would-be suitors into resplendent glass beads. These beads—and Fiorimonde's entrapment in her own witchcraft—represents her both as a stray object and as a figment of Victorian paranoia made real, representing beauty that is weaponized to reap revenge on men for their objectification of women's bodies. Fiorimonde's criminal behavior and resistance to marriage mark De Morgan's fairytales as strays themselves for their correction of male vision and resistance to the "happily ever after" ending that dominates fairytales prioritized by "canon."

Further representing the diversity of these stray objects and their meanings are the birds haunting each of the previous chapters in this project. Closely correlated with the domestic sphere and women, the nineteenth century collection of birds in the parlor, in books, and as décor transforms birds within the Victorian imagination into objects without truly domesticating them. Tracing the correlation between women and birds reveals how such ideologies harm both. Women are encaged by impossible discursive ideals heaped upon them; the biodiversity and conservation of birds are at risk due to the wanton consumption of birds as material goods and the widespread assumptions pertaining to their adaptability.

Filled with rich avian imagery, *Jane Eyre* is among the most prolific of nineteenth century texts drawing from a burgeoning interest in natural history. Though much scholarship examines how Bronte's bird descriptions enrich the novel's characterization, there has yet to be any analysis that examines the natural history of *Jane Eyre's* impact on native bird populations. Just as modern knowledge has overturned the belief that birds simply adapt to humanity's presence, so too do "unnatural" moments in *Jane Eyre*'s avian depictions gesture to

shortcomings of these pre-extinction narrative assumptions. In depicting a sparrow caring for an eagle, a foreign bird as a native species, and migrant birds willingly approaching domiciles for food, Bronte reveals areas where widespread beliefs about birds collide with actual nature; a sparrow cannot care for an eagle, birds tapping on glass are confronting their reflection rather than begging for food, and foreign birds cannot be naturalized to native landscapes without ill effects on bio-diversity.

As an extinction narrative, "The Ballad of the Bird-Bride" adapts a classic fairy-tale formula to engage growing concerns about avian conservation, notably changing the heroine's bird-form to that of a gull. Engaged with both the extinction of the Angel of the House and seafowl, Rosamund Marriott Watson reveals the inevitability of extinction in the face of man's violence, reshaping the connection between birds and women to critique man's negative impact on each. The "bird-bride" ironically proves to be neither bird nor bride, existing as both magical gull and woman and as a wife who abandons her husband. Examining these texts side-by-side establishes how birds themselves are stray objects, broadly connected with the domestic sphere while paradoxically never able to truly be domesticated.

These objects provide a fruitful challenge to current material culture studies, enabling research to break free of nineteenth century methods of categorization. Material culture studies has learned to pursue those fugitive meanings in objects, to borrow Elaine Freedgood's phrasing, but stray meanings differ in the key trait of intention. Still connected to histories barely acknowledged in their literature, the stray objects outlined above intentionally deviate from their intended purpose, and, therefore, represent lost or homeless objects that fall outside of the normal conventions of approaching and categorizing material culture studies. As a result, these stray objects are not widely studied. Elizabeth Parker's sampler, which inspired this research,

was crafted with the intent of overturning the sampler's prescribed purpose. Even the Koh-i-Noor, elusive as it was for Rossetti, was recut to represent the British Colonial agenda rather than serve the purpose of domestic jewelry, and while it is not "lost" in a physical sense, its display as an image of the British Empire and crown has caused some of its rich history to vanish.

Following these stray examples of needlecraft, gemstones, glass, and birds reveals the complicated means through which women engaged in material practices, resisted or repurposed objectification, or positioned themselves in spheres outside the domestic realm. Most importantly, these objects signify women's connection to the nineteenth-century world in ways innumerable: as entwined with colonial meanings, subject to problematic domestication, and connected to animal ecologies. These are only a sampling of the stray objects lurking between the lines of nineteenth-century literature and beyond. Following these strays is crucial to future scholarship, as they not only preserve historical and cultural archives, but they also provide additional glimpses into women's complex roles within the said archives. To recover these stray objects is to re-envision the role of objects as foci of rich cultural connections and subjectivities. Only then can these objects be restored to view.

Appendix 1

Transcription of Elizabeth Parker's Text Sampler

As I cannot write I put this down simply and freely as I might speak to a person to whose intimacy and tenderness I can fully intrust myself and who I know will bear with all my weaknesses I was born at Ashburnham in the county of Sussex in the year 1813 of poor but pious parents my fathers occupation was a labourer for the Rt Hon the Earl of A my mother kept the Rt Hon the Countess of A Charity School and by their ample conduct and great industry were enabeled to render a comfortable living for their family which were eleven in number William Samuel Mary Edmond Jesse Elizabeth Hannah Jane George Louisa Lois endeavouring to bring us up in the fear and admonition of the lord as far as lay in their power always giving us good advice and wishing us to do unto others as we would they should do unto us thus our parents pointed out the way in which we were to incounter with this world wishing us at all times to put our trust in god to Walk in the paths of virtue to bear up under all the trials of this life even till time with us should end. But at the early age of thirteen I left my parents to go and live with Mr and Mrs P to nurse the children which had I taken my Fathers and Mothers advice I might have remained in peace until this day but like many others not knowing when I was well of in fourteen months I left them for which my friends greatly blamed me then I went to Fairlight housemaid to Lieut G but there cruel usage soon made me curse my Disobedience to my parents wishing I had taken there advice and never left the Worthy Family of P but then alas to late they treated me with cruelty too horrible to mention for trying to avoid the wicked design of my master I was thrown down stairs but I very soon left them and came to my friends but being young and foolish

I never told my friends what had happened to me they thinking I had a good place and good usage because I never told them to the contrary they blamed my temper. Then I went to live with Col P Catsfield kitchenmaid where I was well of but there my memory failed me and my reason was taken from me but the worthy Lady my Mistress took great care of me and placed me in the care of my parents and sent for Dr W who soon brought me to know that I was wrong for Coming to me one day and finding me persisting against my Mother for I had forsaken her advice to follow the works of darkness For I acknowledge being guilty of that great sin of selfdestruction which I certainly should have done had it not been for the words of that worthy Gentleman Dr W. he came to me in the year 1829 he said unto me Elizabeth I understand you are guilty of saying you shall destroy yourself but never do that for Remember Elizabeth if you do when you come before that great God who is so good to you he will say unto you Thou hast taken that life that I gave to you Depart from me ye cursed but let me never hear those words pronounced by the O Lord for surely I never felt such impressions of awe striking cold upon my breast as I felt when Dr W said so to me. But oh with what horror would those words pierce my heart to hear them pronounced by an offended God But my views of things have been for some time very different from what they were when I first came home I have seen and felt the vanity of childhood and youth And a bove all I have felt the stings of a guilty Conscience for the great Disobedience to my parents in not taking their advice wherewith the Lord has seen fit to visit me with this affliction but my affliction is a light affliction to what I have deserved but the Lord has been very merciful to me for he has not cut me of in my sins but he has given me this space for repentance. For blessed be God my frequent schemes for destroying myself were all most all defeated. But oh the dreadful powerful force of temptation for being much better I went to stay with Mrs Welham she being gone out one day and left me alone soon after she was gone I

thought within myself surely I am one of the most miserable objects that ever the Lord let live surely no one ever had such thoughts as me against the Lord and I arose from my seat to go into the bedroom and as I was going I thought within myself ah me I will retire into the most remotest part of the wood and there execute my design and that design was that wilful design of self destruction But the Lord was pleased to stop me in this mad career for seeing the Bible lay upon the shelf I took it down and opened it and the first place that I found was the fourth chapter of S. Luke where it tells us how our blessed Lord was tempted of Satan I read it and it seemed to give me some relief for now and not till now have I been convinced of my lost and sinful state not till now have I seen what a miserable condition I have brought myself into by my sins for now do I see myself lost and undone for ever undone the Lord does take pity of me and help me out of this miserable condition. But the only object I have now in view is that of approaching death I feel assured that sooner or later I must die and oh but after death I must come to Judgement what can I do to be saved what can I do to be saved from the wrath of that God which my sins have deserved which way can I turn oh whither must I flee to find the Lord wretch wretch that I am who shall deliver me from the body of this death that I have been seeking what will become of me ah me what will become of me when I come to die and kneel before the Lord my maker oh with what confidence can I approach the mercy seat of God oh with what confidence can I approach it. And with what words must I chuse to address the Lord my maker pardon mine inquity pardon mine inquity O Lord for It is Great Oh how great is thy mercy oh thou most merciful Lord for thou knowest even the secret desires of me thine unworthy servant. O Lord I pray the Look down with an Eye of pity upon me and I pray the turn my wicked Heart Day and night have I Cried unto the Lord to turn my wicked Heart the Lord has heard my prayer the Lord has given heed to my Complaint. For as long as life extends extends Hopes blest dominion never

ends For while the lamp holds on to burn the greatest sinner may return Life is the season God has given to fly from hell to rise to Heaven the Day of grace flees fast away their is none its rapid course can stay. The Living know that they must die But ah the dead forgotten lie Their memory and their name is gone They are alike unknowing and unknown. Their hatred and their love is lost. Their envy's buried in the dust By the will of God are all things done beneath the circuit of the sun Therefore O Lord take pity on me I pray Whenever my thoughts do from the stray And lead me Lord to thy blest fold. That I thy glory may behold Grant Lord that I soon may behold the not as my Judge to condemn and punish me but as my Father to pity and restore me For I know with the O Lord no thing is impossible thou can if thou wilt restore my bodily health And set me free from sin and misery For since my earthly physican has said he can do no more for me in the will I put my trust O blessed Jesus grant that I may never more offend the or provoke the to cast me of in thy displeasure Forgive my sin my folly cure Grant me the help I need And then although I am mean and poor I shall be rich indeed Lord Jesus have mercy upon me take me O kind shepherd take me a poor wandering sinner to thy fold Thou art Lord of all things itself death is put under thy feet O Lord save me lest I fall from thee never to rise again O God keep me from all evil thoughts The little hope I feel that I shall obtain mercy gives a happiness to which none of the pleasures of sin can ever be compared. I never knew anything like happiness till now O that I may but be saved on the day of judgement God be merciful to me a sinner But oh how can I expect mercy who went on in sin until Dr W remind me of my wickedness For with shame I own I returned to thee O God because I had nowhere else to go How can such repentance as mine be sincere What will become of my soul (Goggin 43-46)

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