POETICS OF DISLOCATION:

COMPARATIVE COSMOPOLITANISM IN CHARLOTTE BRONTË, FLORA TRISTAN, AND TORU DUTT

A Dissertation

Presented to

The Faculty of the Department

of English

University of Houston

In Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

By

Meera Jagannathan

May, 2018

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IN CHARLOTTE BRONTË, FLORA TRISTAN, AND TORU DUTT

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ABSTRACT

This thesis explores three nineteenth-century women writers, who used the autofiction genre to transcribe their familial trauma and dislocation to reconstitute themselves with the help of their empathic readers. Charlotte Brontë's novels, *Jane Eyre* and *Villette,* Flora Tristan's memoir from her travels to Peru, *Pérégrinations d'une paria,* and Toru Dutt's novella, *Le Journal de Mademoiselle d'Arvers*, are the focus of this study. Brontë's heroines, Jane Eyre and Lucy Snowe, Tristan's champion of the oppressed, "the Pariah," and Dutt's heroine, Marguerite, are auto-portraits of the women writers themselves. The protagonists articulate their trauma through an aesthetic of wounding, which effectively transfers the burden of testimony onto the readers. Their narrative strategies rely on narration and transference for what Freud calls an, "abreaction," or working through. This transference conscripts and co-opts the reader into becoming a collaborator with the autofiction. Reading these three writers together offers the reader a unique opportunity to read particular moments in nineteenth-century Europe as experienced by both the metropolitan and the colonized. These writers were deracinated from their own communities, which made them cosmopolitan by default. Their travels to distant places marked them as exiles, but at the same time, the new geographic spaces reordered their interior worlds and helped them comprehend the disenfranchised other. It is evident when reading their letters that their traumas led them to become agents of change, particularly regarding the status of women in society. I study how their individual trauma led them to engage with the collective trauma of gender, which they effectively transfer to the empathic reader through their texts. I suggest that through their masked, textual selves,

they transformed their intensely traumatic, idiosyncratic experiences into public battles about women's status in patriarchal societies.

DEDICATION

To My Mother

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This project has benefited from many enthusiastic friends and colleagues, too numerous to mention here. I am grateful to all of them for the rich conversations.

First and foremost, I must thank my supervisor, Lois Parkinson Zamora, for her support and guidance through the course of this research. A mentor like no other and a true guru whose patient guidance shaped this dissertation at every stage. My committee members, Elizabeth Gregory, Richard Armstrong, Cedric Tolliver, and Kavita Singh engaged with my dissertation with passion and energy, offering valuable comments. I thank all of them for their warm support and a wonderful defense experience.

Melanie C. Hawthorne may not have been part of my committee, but she could have been, for she read my chapters at various stages with great interest and provided valuable translation guidance when I needed it. My chapter on Charlotte Brontë began as a seminar paper for Sharon Marcus when I was a masters student at Columbia University. In her History of the Novel course I learned to read novels deeply and I owe her gratitude for encouraging me to explore the field of trauma. I experimented further with trauma theories for a conference paper I wrote on *Titus Andronicus* for a Shakespeare course I studied with Wyman Herendeen, whose feedback and encouragement led me to read it at the Trauma and Culture conference in LSU in March 2011 to a very engaged audience. Eileen Gillooly taught me the value of primary research when I took her Dickens seminar while at Columbia University.

This project engages with the notion of female solidarity, and I can personally vouch for its value. My friend and one-time colleague in the Department of English,

Cynthia Greenwood, read an earlier version of my chapter on Flora Tristan and raised interesting questions as a methodical and careful interlocutor. The chapter benefitted much from her deep commitment to my work. My friend and classicist, Cathleen O'Shea gladly undertook to read my chapter on Charlotte Brontë and gave valuable feedback on style and language. My friend and colleague from Texas A&M University, Debbie Pfuntner, who shared many strategies for successfully completing a dissertation, was a resource for all matters concerning research. Other friends offered encouragement when my energy flagged and taught me to trust my instincts when I was filled with self-doubt. All provided me with a sorority composed of intelligence and imagination, far exceeding anything I expected.

A special note of gratitude to Manuel Monteagudo Valdez and his wife, Cécile Gauvrit, whose warm hospitality and friendship made all the difference to my research in Lima, Peru, in 2016. Likewise, Upal Chakraborty made arrangement for me to do research in the National Library, Kolkata, India, in 2008, when I started my work on Toru Dutt. My friend, Bahni Mukherjee, a librarian in Kidderpore College, Kolkata, thoughtfully sent me the photograph of Toru Dutt and her sister Aru Dutt from the library archives. Without interested friends such as these, this project would not have taken shape fully.

I am especially lucky to have a family filled with intellectual curiosity and scholarly inclinations. My children, Malavika Jagannathan and Dhananjay Jagannathan, have helped me countless times with questions about style and writing, and this dissertation owes much to their brilliant suggestions over a period of nearly a decade. Their passionate belief in my project gave me the necessary ballast. But this dissertation would not have been possible without the love and faith of my husband, Jagannathan

Viswanathan, whose intellectual energy and sense of adventure allowed me to dwell in rich possibilities. My travel to three continents for research was made easy because of his meticulous planning. He read all the chapters multiple times, and I always benefitted from his thoughtful feedback. This dissertation is his as much as mine.

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AUTOFICTION AND THE AESTHETIC OF WOUNDING

This thesis explores how three young nineteenth-century women who experienced intense familial trauma turned to a particular kind of autobiography called autofiction to restore their sense of self.[1] They make use of uncommon narrative strategies for this recuperative exercise—each turning the autobiographical genre into something unique to her own needs and sensibilities, while relying on her readers' empathy to reconstitute her sense of the self. Charlotte Brontë's novels, *Jane Eyre* and *Villette*, Flora Tristan's memoir from her travels to Peru, *Pérégrinations d'une paria*, and Toru Dutt's novella, *Le Journal de Mademoiselle d'Arvers* are the focus of my study. Reading their life-writing, it is clear that their sense of rupture or displacement in society finds recuperation through language.

For this project, the genre of autobiography includes the memoirs, journals, life-writings, and fictional and quasi-fictional accounts of the self by the three authors. I focus on their main bodies of work, for it is here that they use their literary alter egos to take up the refashioning of the self on behalf of their traumatized creators. Brontë's heroines, Jane Eyre and Lucy Snowe, Tristan's champion of the oppressed, "the Pariah," and Dutt's heroine, Marguerite, are auto-portraits of the women writers themselves. Tristan is unambiguous about who the subject is in *Pérégrinations*, and it is not difficult to find

[1] The idea of autofiction was first promoted by French critic and writer Serge Doubrovsky in his *Fils* (1977), where he explored how fiction and autobiography overlap in the creating of the subject. He elaborated further on this notion of the unstable self, since the self is contingent and shifting, in his later work, *An Amour de soi* (1982), following Roland Barthes's theories of autobiography in *Roland Barthes par Roland Barthes* (1975). *Encyclopedia of Life-Writing: Autobiographical and Biographical Forms*, ed., Margaretta Jolly (London: Fitzroy Dearbon Publishers, 2001) 86-88.

documentary proof for the autobiographical in the fictional writings of Brontë and Dutt, even if they avoid explicit references to themselves. These three women writers and their narrators are deracinated from their communities and long for a collective, which I suggest is an imagined network of empathic readers and writers. This project organizes itself around two themes: one, the poetics of dislocation, and the other, the reconstitution offered by the genre of autobiography for those recuperating from familial trauma.

I have gathered together—three writers from three different countries—who transformed their intensely traumatic, idiosyncratic experiences into very public battles about women's status in patriarchal societies. Reading these three writers together offers the reader a unique opportunity to read particular moments in nineteenth-century Europe as experienced by both the metropolitan and the colonized. Owing to various displacements, they were cosmopolitans by default. It is germane to note that Tristan and Dutt occupied a stateless no-man's land between the metropole and the colony. Tristan's desire to leave France for her father's country, Peru, was a calculated move in response to years of living in the margins in France, the country that confiscated her Spanish father's fortunes, but since her family in Peru did not welcome her she returned to France within a year. Toru Dutt's stay in France and England was to mark her indelibly in ways that made her life in Calcutta, India, intolerable. Thus, her alienation in her own country made her at once a cosmopolitan and a nomad. Charlotte Brontë and her sister Emily traveled from Haworth, England, to Brussels to teach and to learn French at the Héger *pensionnat* in Belgium. It is clear when reading Charlotte's many letters to friends and family that the family's straightened circumstances and the illness affecting her sisters, Emily and Anne, put an end

to her ambition to run a school in Haworth, thus forcing her to travel to Belgium, even though she suffered acutely from homesickness.

I group these writers together as I think they share an affective affinity, in that they all experienced familial trauma that was crippling in its intensity yet enabled them to reconstitute themselves with the active engagement of their readers. Their narrations are drawn from the sedimentation of memory, resulting in multiple temporalities experienced by both the readers and the writers themselves, since the authors are the first readers of their own life-writing. My bringing together three women from the nineteenth century from three different countries might be unusual, given that they are never together in any classification, genre or period. However, my intention is to bring attention to how these writers, who were also travelers, not only represent the restlessness of the epoch, but also reiterate each other's textual and personal traumas. The nineteenth-century was a period of intellectual experimentation when notions of the self began to crystalize in interesting ways, which included the idea of the splintered subject.[2] This study of the self led to reimagining of the collective and provided the possibilities of fresh beginnings to societies. In his preface to Stéphane Michaud's collection of Flora Tristan's letters, Mario Vargas Llosa summarizes the century : «Le XIXeme siècle ne fût pas seulement celui du roman et les nationalismes, mais aussi celui des utopies.» ("The nineteenth-century was not only

[2] The late nineteenth-century was witness to interesting parapsychological explorations about the idea of the hidden or split self, when the French neurologist Jean Charcot began using hypnotism to cure hysteria. Freud studied with Charcot and working with Josef Breuer published the *Studies in Hysteria* (1895). The *fin-de siècle* also saw interest in mesmerism, the paranormal, and spiritual awakenings of all sorts—all pointing to interest in the suppressed human psyche, culminating in works such as Bram Stoker's *Dracula* and R.L. Stevenson's *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*.

concerned with the novel and nationalisms, but also with utopias").[3] I suggest that my three women writers represent these three major movements of the century, bringing their individual perspective to their feminist enterprise, be it the novel in the case of Brontë, utopia for Tristan, or nationalism (as in the idea of a righteous republic) for Dutt.

Nineteenth-century realist fiction, which is often autobiographical in nature, rose to prominence around the time when the development of the field of psychology was maturing into a verifiable scientific model. Nancy Armstrong writes that desire as the driver of the nineteenth-century British fictional narrative rose in prominence at the time when psychological evolution and economic freedom were becoming important to women writers like George Eliot, Elizabeth Gaskell and the Brontës.[4] But what really animates Charlotte Brontë's autofiction is not merely her exploration into the economic conditions of her protagonists that circumscribed their desires. Rather the force propelling this writer's text seems to be her need to transcribe into words the trauma that haunted her psychic economy in the hope of reaching emotionally nurturing readers and reconstituting herself in the process. It is indisputable that Charlotte Brontë and her sister Emily ushered in a new style of feminist writing, which explored human passions as it had never been done in the world of fiction.[5] But more importantly, the genre of autofiction provided

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[3] Mario Vargas Llosa, preface, « L'Odyssie de Flora Tristan » in *Flora Tristan : La Paria et son rêve, correspondance établie par* Stéphane Michaud, (Paris : Presses Sorbonne, 2003).

[4] Nancy Armstrong, *Desire and Domestic Fiction: A political History of the Novel* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1987).

[5] Examples of critical works on the Brontës, which study their sublimated textual desires are many, but a few important psychological studies are : Susan Gubar and Sandra M. Gilbert, "The Spectral Selves of Charlotte Brontë," *The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination* (New Haven: Yale UP, 1979); Nancy Armstrong's chapter, "History in the House of Culture," in *Desire and Domestic Fiction: A Political History of the Novel* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1987); Helene Moglen, *Charlotte Brontë: A Self Created* (Madison: The U of Wisconsin P, 1984); and John Kucich,

Charlotte with the textual space for articulating her hidden desires and for mourning her siblings and her own sense of self-erasure. My chapter looks into how her heroines articulate their trauma, or what I call, their aesthetic of wounding, in two very unusual ways: Jane's self-narration is the *bildungsroman* of an unremarkable orphan who, in adulthood, gains both economic competency and love despite innumerable childhood traumas, while Lucy's story—half-told by a narrator intensely aware of the critical, surveilling society—is a testimonial to a lifetime of slight and neglect. Both rely on the empathic engagement of their reader who experiences their trauma as a secondary witness.

Flora Tristan was an early feminist-socialist whose militancy on behalf of women was aligned to her utopian vision of a more just world. Tristan's audacious battles on behalf of women are not surprising given that her utopian ideology asserted that women were central to the reformation of society.[6] Disenfranchised by the French state which confiscated her Spanish father's estate, Tristan embarked on a dangerous journey to Peru in order to retrieve her inheritance, and wrote about her experiences in *Pérégrinations d'une paria* (1838). After her return to France in 1844, she began documenting the plight of French workers, often conducting her research under the most hazardous of conditions. Tristan spent her last years working for the workers' union and dreaming of a utopia, where universal education would be the transformative force, which would be ably guided

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Repression in Victorian Fiction: Charlotte Brontë, George Eliot, and Charles Dickens (Berkeley: U of California P, 1987).

[6] For more on how Madame Roland, Eugénie Niboyet, and other women socialists were already hard at work in changing how society treated them, see "L'Union Ouvrière," *Flora Tristan: La paria et son rêve, Correspondance établi par Stéphane Michaud* (Paris: 1995); also Claire M. Moses and Leslie W. Rabine, *Feminism, Socialism, and French Romanticism* for a detailed exploration of women socialists and their concerns (Bloomington: 1993) 17-84.

by a visionary Woman/Guide as promoted by the Saint Simonians. Her idea for the *Workers' Union* (*L'Union ouvrières*), which paid for itself by those who belonged to it, was ahead of her time. There is a distinct possibility that Marx and Engels knew of her work and were inspired by it, even though they did not acknowledge her contribution to universal workers' rights.[7] In chapter 3, I study how her voyage of self-discovery to Peru led Tristan to her advocacy for workers' rights in France, and in the process redeemed her from her self-absorbed victimhood.

Toru Dutt appeared in the literary landscape of India when the country was under British rule and was awakening to nationalist urgings.[8] The deep anxiety about the state and the self that eventually convulsed the colonized nation was beginning to manifest itself around the mid-nineteenth century, primarily as a crisis of language. The quest for national origin was played out in the public square as the conflict between the Anglicists and the Orientalists. The Anglicists thought India's education system needed to be established on the English model with English as the common language, whereas the Orientalists sought inspiration from Sanskrit and Vedic India for reconstituting the country.[9] In the Orientalist model, memory and history were inseparably linked, with India's antique past referenced by Europeans, like Edmund Gosse, Max Müller, Horace H. Wilson and others as a

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[7] Please see Sandra Dijkstra *Flora Tristan*: *Pioneer Feminist and Socialist,* (Berkeley, California: Center for Socialist History, 1984) 148-62.

[8] For her letters see *Life and Letters of Toru Dutt,* ed., Harihar Das (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1921).

[9] Lord Macaulay in his infamous and oft quoted Minute on Indian Education speech in the British Parliament (1835) argued for the English model: "We must at present do our best to form a class who may be interpreters between us and millions whom we govern; a class of persons, Indian in blood and color, but English in taste, in opinions, in morals, and in intellect." *A History of Indian Literature in English,* ed., Arvind Krishna Mehrotra (New York: Columbia UP, 2003) 5.

prelapsarian world of plenitude and purity. Moreover, the Anglicist movement gave impetus to nascent Christianizing activities, especially in West Bengal. The conversion of the wealthy, erudite Rambhagan Dutts came to symbolize for the colonists what the future might hold for the rest of the country. Not yet anxious about history like the other Indian writers of her time, Toru Dutt, a young member of the illustrious Dutt family, blithely looked to the West to lead her in her bold literary adventures, for it was in France and England where she learned to write poetry, which would lead critics to anoint her as the first Anglo-Indian poet. However, her literary forays that began in the progressive West would lead her paradoxically to turn to the mythic Indian past. I argue in my chapter on Dutt that her writings, especially her fiction, reveal a poetics of regression, inspired by a Rousseauian ethos that is preoccupied by an uncorrupted, virtuous past. In this looking back to a perfect past, her Rousseauian tendency is very similar to that of the Orientalists.

My discursive strategy for linking these three women, who use the genre of life-writing to reorder their place in the world, is not merely a provocative gesture, but an aesthetic choice. When reading their letters, I often reflected on questions such as this: what did it mean for my project that Charlotte Brontë did not like the poetry of Elizabeth Barrett Browning—who she thought used "wordy, obscure, and intricate style—when Toru Dutt loved "Mrs. Browning" as her favorite English poet?[10] I was struck by such stark

[10] For reference to Brontë's opinion about Elizabeth Barrett Browning, see her letter to Margaret Wooler (4: 2:1850), where she writes this: "… It seems the custom now very much to admire a certain wordy, intricate, and obscure style of poetry—such as Elizabeth Barrett Browning writes…." *The Letters of Charlotte Brontë,* vol. 2, Margaret Smith, ed., (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2000) 354-56. To read Toru Dutt's enthusiastic appreciation see her letter to Mary when she asks her friend, "Have you read any of Mrs. Barrett Browning's pieces? I like her poetry very much." *Life and Letters of Toru Dutt,* ed., Harihar Das (1921) 133. One critic thought that this fascination had cost Dutt dearly. E. J. Thompson writes: "It is easy to feel that, in the work done, she never escaped from the influence of her favorite English poets, such writers as Mrs. Browning, whose work did not furnish satisfactory models of prosodic models." *Life and Letters,* 832.

differences, yet at the same time it was clear that the three writers had overlapping experiences and predilections. Both Tristan and Dutt expressed annoyance when confronted with certain aspects of the native cultures that clashed with their own perceived sense of superior taste and sensibility. It was evident when reading her letters that Brontë's sense of aggrieved victimhood was redoubled when forced to earn a living teaching the children of rich trades-men and women. I wondered about Dutt's intimate knowledge of François Buloz's life, the famous editor of *Revue des Deux Mondes,* as expressed in Dutt's letter to her friend Mary, which led me to recall the nature of Tristan's famous quarrel with him.[11] Dutt also mentions the French drama critic Jules Janin, whose impressions about Tristan are famous.[12]

Musing about the common literary figures known to these writers, I concluded that the colonial Dutt was comfortable in both Tristan's and Brontë's worlds. In my imagination, Dutt sits between the Victorian and French literary traditions—a bridge connecting Brontë and Tristan. Viewed in a comparative framework—these three authors, occupying liminal positions—lie along a continuum from metropolitan to the colonial, with Tristan and Dutt uncertainly hovering between the two states. By juxtaposing the two metropolitans, Brontë and Tristan, with the writer from the British colony, I am recharting territory that is overdetermined by disciplinary exigencies that resolutely have kept them

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[11] Toru Dutt was an avid reader of the French literary magazine *Revue des Deux Mondes,* about which she thought very highly so she would have been familiar with its editor Buloz's work. In a letter about both British and French critics and poets Dutt writes: "I see from the papers that Mr. Buloz, the editor of *Revue des Deux Mondes,* has lately died." *Life and Letters,* 264. Buloz was Flora Tristan's editor, publishing her pieces on Peru till their quarrel when they parted company. I discuss this event in greater detail in my chapter on Tristan.

[12] See Jules Janin, *La Sylphide I* 5 January 1845, pp.3-8.

apart. I use a blend of methodologies taken from trauma, narrative, and feminist autobiographical theories to analyze the common elements in these writers' lives, including displacement, familial trauma, missing maternal figures, and an assertive patriarchy, in order to see how these factors shaped their textual experimentation.[13] In particular, I study how their autobiographical writings rely on the ethical responses of their imagined readers—most definitely female—for recovering from their many traumas. This study then will pivot around the concept of ethical response, since the writers I analyze rely on their readers' active engagement and use it to anchor their writing. In this regard, I pay close attention to specific narrative strategies employed by the authors to elicit the reader's engagement by way of affective language, sentimental themes, and other formalist devices, like prolespsis/analepsis and interior monologue.

Although these three writers never met, they speak to one another in interesting ways. Tristan's original trauma was due to illegitimacy and dispossession, made acute by her lack of formal education. Both Brontë and Dutt suffered untimely loss of all their siblings and turned to life-writing for recuperation. Dutt looked to Brontë as her literary precursor, especially when seeking critical response for her first published work.[14] All three were strong feminists, including young Dutt, who slyly masked her feminist

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[13] Charlotte Brontë lost her mother when very young, and Tristan's relationship with her mother, who sided with Tristan's husband Chazal in the bitter court case between her daughter and her husband, was fraught. Toru Dutt's mother, while not a cause of wounding in any way, was nevertheless unavailable in any meaningful way to her, unlike her father Govin Chunder Dutt.

[14] In a letter to her Cambridge friend Mary Martin, Dutt mentions the success of *Jane Eyre* and wonders if her volume of translation of French poems too might attract such rapturous attention. *Life and Letters of Toru Dutt*, ed., Harihar Das (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1992) 142.

tendencies in epic retellings.[15] Most importantly, all three were coming of age at a time in the nineteenth-century when colonial expansion and travel granted freedom to men, whereas women were still expected to stay behind as angels of their homes.[16] Class could disrupt this gender disparity, as in the case of Dutt, who despite her native status and gender, enjoyed considerable privileges when compared to Brontë and Tristan, the two impoverished Europeans.

I am inspired by Michael Rothberg's imaginative phrase, "multidirectional memory," which he uses to persuade those who clamor for the decolonization of trauma studies from the Holocaust. He insists that this twentieth-century event continues to be an important framing device for all who have suffered historical or catastrophic trauma. Rothberg asserts that it is not necessary to negate one in order to validate the other. Even when studying individual trauma, as in the case of trauma fiction, the metropolitan and the colonial are often forced by prevailing discourse to compete for ethical reception, thus diluting the validity of both experiences. My aim in this project is to complicate the discourse of trauma by highlighting crucial differences and overlaps in the experiences of these three women. It is important to note that the single factor that marked all three women equally was their sense of deracination. In addition to familial trauma, their

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[15] See especially her epic poem, "Savitri," which is a paean to the exuberantly free-spirited princess Savitri, who takes on the lord of Death himself, Yama, in a battle of wits, so as to bring back her dead husband Satyavan. This Orpheus prototype alerts the attentive reader to subtle cues about where the poet's priorities lay as far as female emancipation was concerned, despite her strict Christian upbringing. Toru Dutt, "Savitri," *Ancient Ballads and Legends of Hindustan* (London: Kegan Paul, 1885) 1-45.

[16] The Brontë sisters Emily and Charlotte traveled to Belgium to study at the famed Héger *pensionnat,* which was not uncommon, but Flora Tristan's travel to Peru in the *Mexicain* in 1833 as the sole woman passenger was almost unheard of. Additionally, Tristan's dangerous crossing across the desert on a mule to see her father's relations in Arequipa, Peru was as dangerous as it was unprecedented. Toru Dutt and her sister Aru Dutt were the first Indian women to travel overseas.

alienation from their own community and society shaped their resistance, since social rejection was one of the most significant formative experiences for all of them.[17]

Trauma by displacement is a site to test the conceptual framework of my project—that of three gifted, cosmopolitan women writers who deliberately chose the aesthetic of wounding to retell their stories in ways that turn traumatic life events into enabling acts of imagination.[18] A poetics of dislocation figures in their writings through the many dispossessed characters, their manipulation of the past by way of double consciousness in narration, and their use of dreams, flashbacks, and premonitions. Restoration of the self is achieved by these feminist life-writers who imagine an empathic reading community willing to shoulder the emotional burden on behalf of the troubled narrators. They also seek textual sorority with other women writers, since their isolation limits all other kinds of friendship. Thus, the three women writers' dislocation, both geographical and textual, while inflicting wounding trauma, helps them develop a cosmopolitan ethos as they reach out to their discursive networks. It needs to be underscored that all three experienced different kinds of cosmopolitanism or global consciousness, with Tristan's harnessing of her restless energy for a utopian vision for the workers of the world as the apogee of this ethical engagement. Travel for women meant a careful mobilization of meager resources,

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[17] Tristan's family in Peru rejected her claims, thus disinheriting her a second time; the Brontës were famously reclusive, and it has been suggested that intellectually they were alienated from the working-class community among whom they lived. Dutt's alienation was double-fold: as converted Christians her family was rejected by the Hindu community of Calcutta, in addition, her sudden departure from Europe left a deep trauma, which she recalls often in her letters.

[18] See Hannah Arendt *Origins of Totalitarianism* for reference to the pariah in the chapter "Jews and Society" where she suggests that the Jews' precarious placement between the pariah and the parvenu conditioned and limited their assimilation in European societies (San Diego: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1985) 54-88. The Indian untouchable has indeed become paradigmatic of the unspeakability of a particularly brutal form of exclusion.

as was the case for both Tristan and Brontë, accompanied by deep-seated anxieties about everything as evidenced by their letters.[19] All three experienced global travel in an age of rising nationalism. Even the rather provincial Brontë's writings reveal an expanding transnational consciousness, best seen in her last novel *Villette,* which betrays the author's growing cosmopolitanism even as it tries to mask her ever-growing depression about her circumscribed life.[20]

Writing as a Woman

Critics studying the autobiographies of St. Augustine, Rousseau, and Goethe—three canonical autobiographers—unfailingly note how their individual consciousness was but a reflection of the historical events shaping their lives. In other words, these personal autobiographies enact on a smaller scale the larger historical crises convulsing their individual societies.[21] Curiously this historical dimension is absent in women's

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[19] Tristan's first publication was a brochure promoting the welfare and safety of women travelers titled, *Nécessité de faire bon accueil aux femmes étrangères* (1836). Writing to her friend Olymphe Chodzko from London in 1839, Tristan shares her feelings of loneliness: "je suis en ce moment seule dans ma chamber" ("right now I am alone in my room"). Brontë's isolation away from Haworth is well-known, and her many letters reveal her alienation even when surrounded by people. Brontë writes to Laetitia Wheelwright: "Some long, stormy days and nights there were when I felt such a craving for support and companionship as I cannot express" (*The Letters of Charlotte Brontë,* vol.3 ed., Margaret Smith (2004) 39-40. Toru Dutt's yearning for intellectual companionship becomes acute once her remaining sibling and collaborator Aru died in 1875, and her many letters to her English friend Mary Martin are suffused with the pain of loneliness.

[20] See Richard Bonfiglio in "Cosmopolitan Realism: Portable Domesticity in Brontë's Belgian Novels" in *Victorian Literature and Culture,* 2012, Vol. 40(2) for an elaboration on Brontë's variety of cosmopolitanism, which offered her English readers a domesticated foreignness made palatable and portable, especially as seen in her novels set in Belgium. Also see Tanya Agathocleous and Jason R. Rudy, "Victorian Cosmopolitanism: Introduction" in *Victorian Literature and Culture,* 2010, Vol. 38 for the many complex factors at play during nineteenth-century in how Victorians perceived the self and the other.

[21] Laura Marcus draws attention to the perceived historical dimension in the way male autobiographies are traditionally analyzed. She notes this tendency in the studies by Wilheim Dilthey, Karl Weintraub, Roy Pascal and others. *Auto/biographical Discourses: Theory, Criticism, Practice* (Manchester: Manchester UP, 1994) 135-179.

autobiographies. Twentieth-century feminists have noted women's absence in documentations of history, thus underscoring the lack of a usable past or tradition.[22] Such gaps deny women representations of origins, making it difficult to construct their identities.[23] Compensatory tactics by feminists have involved "recovering" the lost past and establishing parallel traditions.[24] Careful excavations of primary sources have revealed a plethora of surprises dwelling in the archives, as witnessed by scholars looking into writings by women writers from former colonies like India and former imperial powers like France and England.[25] Feminist critics have been scrutinizing documentation by women witnesses who participated in these movements, which are often meta-narratives of their own symbolic acts or social practices, thus reinscribing the self.[26] Networks, salons, pamphlets, memoirs, and letters established discursive communities that helped women organize their efforts and also helped them blend their textual selves with their

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[22] Sandra M. Gilbert looks at this notable gap in perception between the two traditions in *Rereading Women: Thirty Years of Exploring Our Literary Traditions* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2011); an important study seeking to redress this neglect is Sidonie Smith's *A Poetics of Women's Autobiography: Marginality and the Fictions of Self-Representation* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana UP, 1987).

[23] In *Speculum of the Other Woman*, Luce Irigaray writes of the difficulties in tracing female genealogy and linguistic order given how their articulation must happen inside the symbolic order set out by men. It is not facetious to suggest that women and the victims of colonization bear special affinity with each other. (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1985).

[24] Nancy K. Miller, *Subject to Change* (1988), pp. 28. Miller points to works by feminist historians like Elaine Showalter and Ellen Moers, whose attempt at making legible both the lost traditions and texts have helped in overcoming neglect.

[25] See Moses and Rabine, *Feminism, Socialism, and French Romanticism.* for an interdisciplinary study of the texts and contexts of French feminists of the 1830s, especially note their close analysis of archival documents as a way of examining women's texts and women as writing subjects. Also, see Antoinette Burton, *Dwelling in the Archive: Women Writing House, Home, and History in Late Colonial India* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2003), where Burton examines memoirs and testimonials by women in nineteenth-century India that is largely overlooked by historians, which challenges received notions about historical documents and reevaluates the implication of memory in history.

[26] Moses and Rabine, *Feminism, Socialism, and French Romanticism*, pp.13.

recognizable public selves without attracting society's displeasure. By creating textual selves with help from these discursive networks, women were able to work together to forge new modes of collective agency.

Women writers were in fact witnesses and participants in great historical upheavals, and their personal writings thus become alternative narratives that capture subtle shifts in history.[27] Brontë was a witness to the Luddite movement, as well as anti-establishment religious demonstrations; and Tristan was a witness-participant in two revolutionary wars in the one year she spent in Arequipa, Peru, and wrote about them in *Pérégrinations*.[28] Dutt was living in France during the Franco-Prussian war of 1870 and wrote passionately in defense of France when it capitulated, even as she bemoaned its fall.[29] At the same time, all three writers exhibit the tension between a highly personal quest and a utopian vision for humanity, especially as seen in their autobiographical works, travel writings, and letters. Even Brontë, the famously shy author from the moorland, felt passionately about issues such as religion and women's condition in Victorian society, and was unafraid to express these ideas in letters to critics, publishers, and friends.[30]

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[27] See Sara E. Melzer and Leslie W. Rabine, eds., *Rebel Daughters: Women and the French Revolution* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2003) for the very different experience of women of this great historical moment, and how its gendered ideology and body politic underscored women's supplementary status in French society.

[28] Nancy Armstrong draws attention to the way violent disruptions in society were mirrored in the novels of the Brontës, Mrs. Gaskell, and others in the chapter, "History in the House of Culture" in *Desire and Domestic Fiction*, 166-202; Tristan's three chapters on the two revolutions that engulfed Arequipa, Peru, "La république et les trois présidents," "La bataille de Congallo," and "Une tentation," all capture vividly the furious battles and their disruption to ordinary life. Tristan's description of the *rabonas*, the martial women who accompanied the Peruvian men in battles, is riveting as it is admiring of the brave women.

[29] Dutt's poem, "France 1970" is part of her posthumously published collection of poems in English, *Ancient Ballads and Legends of Hindustan* (London: Kegan Paul, 1885). Dutt's emotional diary entry about the French capitulation is revelatory. *Life and Letters of Toru Dutt* (Oxford: Oxford UP,1921) 38.

[30] *Selected Letters of Charlotte Brontë*, vol. 1,2,3 ed., Margaret Smith (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2007).

Autobiography or life-writing, a genre that exalts the inner self, thus becomes, paradoxically, a vital tool for the construction of a public self. At the same time, for these writers—coming after the French Revolution and breathing the spirit of Romanticism as articulated by Jean-Jacques Rousseau—autobiography posed a special problem.[31] Rousseau relied firmly on the distinction between the public and the private, which in turn nurtured the rise of individualism and the romantic self.[32] For the self-actualizing female subject, Rousseau's precepts must be transgressed so as to engage with polyphony, chaos, uncertainty, and contingency. This becomes particularly important for the three authors whose cosmopolitanism entails a geo-political trauma in its displacement and whose ingenuity was to adapt Rousseauian romantic individualism to make their own lives legible, while broadening its scope to include their community of writers and readers. In other words, for my three women authors autobiography becomes a powerful genre to rewrite their sense of the self, and in this endeavor, they refuse the limitations placed on them by masculine directives like Rousseau's. Thus the female subject may become the radical agent of change whose autobiography may be a model for creating a communitarian ethos that is distinctly different from the masculine, Romantic, autobiographical subject.[33] Feminist critic Sandra M. Gilbert attests to this difference as

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[31] Nancy K. Miller writes in *Subject to Change: Reading Feminist Writing,* that "historically, the French autobiographer, male or female, has had to come to terms with the exhibitionist performer that is Jean-Jacques Rousseau." (1988) 49.

[32] Kathleen Hart, *Revolution and Women's Autobiography in Nineteenth-Century France* (Amsterdam: Rudopi, 2004), 47-91.

[33] Nancy K. Miller's essay "Toward a Dialectics of Difference" argues for a gendered reading as a diacritical gesture in *Women and Language in Literature and Society,* ed. Sally McConnell-Ginet, Ruth Borker, and Nelly Furman. (New York: Praeger, 1980) 258-73 and Donna Stanton's "Autogynography: Is the Subject Different?" raises important questions about women's marginalization and early feminist theories.

experienced by the modern female practitioner of the confessional genre: " [In fact] I'd like to speculate that the self-defining confessional genre, with its persistent assertions of identity and its emphasis on a central mythology of the self, may be (at least for our own time) a distinctively female poetic mode" (*Rereading* 100). I posit that autofiction could be seen as an inherently female poetics, where the subject narrates the story of the self in the past, fully cognizant that this presents the self as a disjointed, fragmented entity relying upon the empathy of the attentive reader to reconstitute itself in the present.

The concept of the individual as a separate entity is often contested in women's writings, which tend to rest on common experiences and communal solidarity. However, in the case of these three women writers, solidarity with a group does not translate into sacrificing authorial agency. At the same time, their narrators crave for the reader's solicitude. Split consciousness, exemplified by a confessional mode in writing, relies on a female reader to create an idealized intimacy. This female "self" is contingent and full of possibilities as the "self-in the-making" is made available to the reader, thus reshaping female subjectivity and agency.[34] This is particularly poignant in a trauma narrative, which by its very nature has a fractured subject impelled to tell her story while implicating the

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that displayed essentialism in *Women, Autobiography, Theory: A Reader,* eds., Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson (Madison: U of Wisconsin P, 1998) 131-145.

[34]See Catherine Belsey, "Constructing the Subject: Decentering the Text" in *Feminist Criticism and Social Change: Sex, Class, and Race in Literature and Culture* Eds. Judith Newton and Deborah Rosenfelt (New York: Metheun, 1985) 45-64 for an analysis on how ideology shapes texts with implication for feminist practice, in particular, the central idea of language constituting the self and its subjectivity. Also see Paul de Man's idea of autobiography as de-facement. De Man writes that we should reverse our understanding about life and autobiography, and that it is autobiography that writes life, and not the other way around. Does the referent determine the figure, or is it the other way around? (*The Rhetoric of Romanticism* New York: Columbia UP, 1984) 67-81.

community in both her pain and her healing.[35] In the following chapters, I explore how these three women writers experience a multiplicity of selves, and so resort to subterfuge and even duplicity when telling their stories through their alter egos.[36] In particular, when scrutinizing their life-writings, I note that their narrative strategies rely upon a carefully constructed textual self that is veiled and mysterious, aided by their blend of fact and fiction in their autobiographical writing.[37] Past events, often recalled with nostalgia, are shaped to suit present conditions, as can be seen in the many elisions and gaps intentionally left in the narratives. Strategic asides and meta-commentary are deployed to manipulate readers' reaction.[38]

Intervention of the Reader

Texts written by women create the women as writing subjects, but when examined closely the same texts project tensions and fracturing between representation and identity

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[35] Susan J. Brison's memoir-confessional is about the brutal assault she experiences in Grenoble, France and raises important questions about the nature of the self in trauma, where the Cartesian subject is fragmented and left with vexing philosophical implications in *Aftermath: Violence and the Remaking of a Self* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 2003).

[36] This masking has been noted by Dijkstra in her biography of Tristan (1992) and Lucasta Miller in her work that traces the critical writings on Brontë (2001). I noted this enigmatic tendency in Dutt in "Enigma of Toru Dutt," *Dalhousie French Studies* Special Edition "Lost Oceans" 94:1, 2011. The intriguing issue is not that these writers present duplicitous textual selves but rather, the textual self is often the hidden, real subject at variance with the performing public self.

[37] See Lyndall Gordon's *The Passionate Life* where Gordon says that as Charlotte Brontë speaks for silenced voices, her voice offered the reader a shared experience, thus allowing for restorative reading (New York: Norton, 1994) 154.

[38] It is important to recall that in *David Copperfield* Dickens too explored his childhood trauma through the blending of truth and fiction, leaving narrative gaps that are mechanisms of regulating reader response. Thus, it is not just a female narrative strategy.

in the case of Tristan, Brontë, and Dutt.[39] Nancy K. Miller writes about women writers as subjects: "[…]They expect their words to have an impact within a clearly defined readers' circle, the female autobiographers learn that they are being read as women; thus the role played by a feminine identity in the autobiographical venture cannot be overstated" (*Subject* 50). Miller adds that the underlying "pact of commitment to decipher what women have said, or more important, left unsaid" binds women readers to the ethics of responsive, responsible reading even when confronted with texts that are fragmentary (*Subject* 56). Underscoring how codes of transmission and reception are altered in women's fictions of self-representation, Miller proposes an intratextual practice of interpretation, "which in articulation with the gender overreading would privilege neither the autobiography nor the fiction, but take the two as a single text" (*Subject* 60). Raising important questions about feminist reader-response, Jonathan Culler calls attention to the two moments in the event of reading as a woman: the first one appeals to women's experience as the crucial factor governing response; the second teaches them that they have been constituted by discourse that has always been antithetical to the possibility of their reading as women.[40] If reading is a learned activity and women should stop reading as men, then the empathic woman reader can be seen as a symbolic disruption of the

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[39] Helene Moglen's feminist study *Trauma of Gender: A Feminist Theory of the English Novel* revolves around the idea of gender as the single constitutive element that produced the two very different strains in the English novel: the realist and the fantastic, and Moglen further looks at the very idea of the female subject as being fraught with tensions and inducing trauma in itself (Berkeley: U of California P, 2001). Read alongside Armstrong's *Desire and Domestic Fiction* it displaces earlier, more male-centric versions of the history of the English novel, but more importantly it offers a counter-narrative.

[40] Jonathan Culler, "Reading as a Woman," *On Deconstruction: Theory and Criticism after Structuralism* (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1982) 42-64.

established order.[41] The apostrophized dear (female) reader becomes a subversion of the existing model, making reading a political act.[42] The three women writers of fictionalized autobiographies who concern me here implicitly suggest through their narrative strategies that "to read like a woman is to avoid reading like a man" ("Reading as a Woman," 54).

Like the novel, autobiography engenders an alternative reality that binds the author (narrator), the characters, and the readers in an intimate hermeneutic circle. Nineteenth-century fiction and life-writing by women heighten this affective relationship, with its focus on female characters as observers/narrators in these works, all of which feature female protagonists through whose consciousness the world of the text is perceived. As in the novels of the Brontës, George Eliot, or George Sand, these female protagonists of autofiction are dislocated from their own communities and as a result nurse secret wounds, epitomized by their disjointed and ruptured language.[43] It is my opinion that being severed from an organic collective leads them to seek self-actualization through the collaboration of the empathic reader, who is the Other. The funneling of female perspective that helps

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[41] Culler quotes Elaine Showalter to underscore how the rules that determine reading undermine women readers: "Women have been constituted as subjects by discourses that have not identified or promoted the possibility of reading 'as a woman'." (51).

[42] In *Sexual Politics,* Kate Millet analyzes novels where women characters are portrayed in ways that lead male and female readers to comprehend them very differently. In particular, in her analysis of Brontë's *Villette* and its heroine Lucy Snowe, Millet captures the subtle cues as to the way women's experience teaches them to read a particular female character, and how it awakens the notion of difference, brushed aside often in general criticism. Millet writes, "In Lucy one may perceive what effects her life in a male-supramacist society has upon the psyche of a woman" (140). Millet suggests that Lucy's thwarted ambition to be educated, rich, and important in a male dominated society is also those of Brontë's, so women reading her feminist protagonist as Brontë meant her to be read is in itself a political act. *Sexual Politics* (New York: Avon Books, 1970)140-147.

[43] Nancy Armstrong's chapter, "History in the House of Culture" in *Desire and Domestic Fiction: A Political History of the Novel,* is a critical exposition on the way in which outside forces shaped nineteenth-century novels in England, and the manner in which disruptions in language were mimetic responses to the larger societal upheavals (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1987) 161-213.

the projected reader enter into the interior world of the main character—as when the reader enters into the consciousness of Jane Eyre, Lucy Snowe, Florita, or Marguerite D'Arvers—is not any different in autobiography where the Self enacts the drama of its life as if it were fiction, with the reader entering into a silent pact with the autobiographer. The self-enclosing, self-absorbing perspective of the protagonist is carefully nourished by a Romantic estrangement from others, so any expansion of the consciousness is predicated upon the creation of an active and engaged reader who compensates.[44] In this encounter with the Other, the empathic reader must respond to the summons to help the protagonists-narrators of autobiographies recuperate their losses.[45]

The idea of the intervention of the Other in postmodern discourse owes much to ethical philosopher Emmanuel Levinas, whose categories of "Other" and "Face" have altered the language of ethical response to catastrophic and historical trauma. The Levinasian response rests on a set of principles explored in his two major works, *Time and Other* (1947) and *Totality and Infinity: An Essay on Exteriority* (1961).[46] The self/subject (Levinas calls it "existent") does not know itself until the intervention of the Other. It is the face of the Other that sets limit to the entity understood as self, and this intervention happens by way of language when the self hears the summons or call from the Other. The

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[44] See Lucasta Miller's chapters on Emily Brontë in *The Brontë Myth* (London: Jonathan Cape, 2001) 170-225.

[45] See Martha Nussbaum "Exactly and Responsibly: A Defense of Ethical Criticism," in *Mapping the Ethical Turn in Readership: A Reader in Ethics, Culture, and Literary Theory,* eds. Todd F. Davis and Kenneth Womak (Charlottesville: U of Virginia P, 2001) Stewart Garrett writes about this same burden carried by the reader in *Dear Reader*.

[46]*Emmanuel Levinas, Time and the Other*. Trans. Richard A. Cohen, Pittsburgh, PA: Duquesne University Press, 1987; and *Totality and Infinity: An Essay on Exteriority*. Trans. Alphonso Lingis, Pittsburgh, PA: Duquesne University Press, 1969.

self then realizes both its own limits (solipsism) and its ethical responsibility for the well-being of the Other, thus developing intersubjectivity. Levinas calls the insistent presence of the Other, the "Face." The encounter with the Face of the Other speaks to the presence of alterity, which here is not destabilizing or alienating, but self-affirming in the sense that it helps the self understand the limit of "I." Trauma testimonials require the engaged and ethical response from witnesses, and thus the Levinasian Other has become a metonymy for the ethical reader/listener's relationship with the narrator who is often the victim. In his chapter, "Ethics and the Face," Levinas writes:

> The face is present in its refusal to be contained. In this sense it cannot be comprehended, that is, encompassed. It is neither seen nor touched—for in visual or tactile sensation the identity of the I envelopes the alterity of the object, which becomes precisely a content…. The facing position, opposition par excellence, can be only as a moral summons. This movement proceeds from the other. (*Totality and Infinite* 194/196)

That this encounter is situated in the field of language is made amply clear earlier in the segment:

> The fact that the face maintains a relation with me by discourse does not range him in the same; he remains absolute within the relation. The solipsist dialectic of consciousness always suspicious of being in captivity in the same breaks off. For the ethical relationship which subtends discourse is not a species of consciousness whose ray emanates from the 'I'; it puts the I in question. This putting in question emanates from the other. (*Totality and Infinite* 195)

It is not difficult to elaborate from the theory of the Face that the intervention of the reader (other) becomes vital for the writer (self) to recreate herself. The autofiction genre imagines the figure of the reader, the other, and the textual encounter both challenges and accommodates the agency of the subject, setting limits but also recreating it in new ways. It is not so much the death of the author but her rebirth in the field of the reader that is comprehended in the textual encounter.

In his discussion of William Wordsworth, Paul de Man writes this:

> We assume that life *produces* the autobiography as an act produces its own consequences, but can we not suggest, with equal justice, that the autobiographical project may itself produce and determine the life and that whatever the writer *does* is in fact governed by the technical demands of self-portraiture and thus, determined, in all its aspects, by the resources of his medium?[47]

In this art-creating-life situation, readers are left out. In de Man's account, the self redraws (reconstitutes) itself with no help from anyone, which is antithetical to what Levinas says. On the other hand, it is possible to argue that self-constitution or self-depiction depends on the nature of a number of contingencies, namely the kind of interlocutors it engages with and the situation in which the subject finds herself. This is the literary transaction method promoted by critics like Norman Holland, who think that the psychological states of the readers when responding to literary stimuli alter the response.[48] The mirror of the mind turned upon itself, which is the nature of the autobiographical

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[47] Paul de Man *The Rhetoric of Romanticism* (New York: Columbia UP, 1984) 67-81.

[48] Norman Holland, *5 Readers Reading* (New Haven: Yale UP, 1975).

genre, is really a double-faced one with one side facing the reader. One could say that all life-writings are reconstitutions of the self, and as such they demand an emotional engagement from their readers, since the very subjectivity of the narrator is born in the field of the reading/listening Other. That this activity is not necessarily solipsistic is underscored by recent discussions of literature and response that investigates how the dialogic nature of engagement with a text changes how one reads the text.

Roland Barthes, in his *S/Z*, draws attention to the collaboration or even collusion of the reader/narratee in the making of the text.[49] In fact, it was Barthes' announcement that "the birth of the reader must be at the cost of the death of the Author" that signaled a new direction for reader-response theory (*Image-Music-Text* 148). He writes about the reader as the primary agent of the text:

> Thus is revealed the total existence of writing; a text is made of multiple writings, drawn from many cultures and entering into mutual relations of dialogue, parody, contestation, but there is one place where this multiplicity is focused and that place is the reader, not as was hitherto said, the author. The reader is the space on which all the quotations that make up a writing are inscribed without any of them being lost; a text's unity lies not in its origin, but in its destination. ("The Death of the Author" in *Image-Music-Text*: 1968, 148)

In 1973, in *S/Z*, Barthes uses Balzac's story *Sarrasine* to bring home the point that intertexuality dethrones the monologic author. He went further in his displacement of the author by asserting that the text's *destinataire*, the reader, was the originator of the text.

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[49] Roland Barthes, *S/Z* Trans. Richard Miller. (London: Blackwell Publishing Inc., 1990).

Barthes set up his argument as a binary system of *readerly* and *writerly* texts.[50] Following Barthes, Gerald Prince and Paul Ricoeur's poststructuralist approach to reading has advanced our understanding about the tripartite relationship between the text, narrator, and the narratee, where reading is an event. With Kristeva's semiotics of intertexuality, textual criticism entered a new phase, but it is understood that Roland Barthes' declaration of the death of the author is what brought forth the birth of the reader. This idea of the primacy of the reader is not different from Levinas's explanation about the way our subjectivity is formed through our interaction with one another. Reader-response or literary transaction theorists Louise Rosenblatt, Wolfgang Iser, Stanley Fish and others have argued against the tenets of formalism while underscoring the aesthetics of subjective response to texts.[51]

Following these literary transaction theories comes the concept of the interpolated reader as a collaborating partner, which in recent years has become part of the discourse on the novel, with Garrett Stewart's "Dear Reader" turning into a synecdoche for a new development in the world of narrative and reader-response theories.[52] The silent partnership that implicates the reader-as-collaborator appeals to readers' sensibilities, since

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[50] See Roland Barthes, *S/Z* (1990) for how the complicated "writerly" text demands special attention from the reader, making him the author of the text he is reading compared to the "readerly" text that is linear and straightforward.

[51] For reader-response consult Louise Rosenblatt *The Reader, the Text, the Poem: The Transactional Theory of The Literary Work* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois UP, 1994); Stanley Fish "Literature in the Reader: Affective Stylistics" New Literary History, Vol.2 (1970) pp.123-162 and *Surprised by Sin: The Reader in Paradise Lost* (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1998); Wolfgang Iser *The Implied Reader: Patterns of Communication in Prose Fiction from Bunyan to Beckett* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1974). In fact, Rosenblatt is credited to being the earliest exponent of the reader-response school of criticism. See Jane P. Tompkins. Ed. *Reader-Response Criticism* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1980), p xxvi.

[52] See Garrett Stewart's *Dear Reader: The Conscripted Audience in Nineteenth-century British Fiction* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1996), where Stewart combines semiotic analysis of the texts with psychological insights into the role of the reader.

they then become vicarious participants in the midst of the social fragmentation portrayed in the fictional world. This collaboration is particularly poignant for the writer and the reader when the text is a blend of the real and the fictional, as in autobiography, for it entails dialogue. But as noted by Stewart, the readers do not always realize that they end up paying an emotional price for carrying this burden.[53] This emotional investment disturbs the reader, especially when reading autobiographies or fiction presented in the first-person. Here, the reader confronts the double bind of identification with both the narrator and the character.[54] However flattering this close reading of the text may be when presented as an intensely private event that seemingly enhances the agency of the reader, it nonetheless surreptitiously robs her, of that very agency by conscripting her attention, says Stewart (*Dear Reader* 8). This is accomplished, as Stewart notes, by way of the many narrative strategies such as direct address, emotional appeals, and other moves of solidarity that aim to regulate the reader's emotional response.[55] These frame-breaking devices rely on what psychoanalysts call "countertransference," where the analyst/reader begins to identify with the analysand/narrator and ends up uneasily carrying the burdens shared inside the folds of the textual world, while also resisting them.[56] This is particularly true

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[53] Garrett Stewart's idea on "eventuated reading" is similar, as he explores the nebulous border between text and context in connection to the way the text is read by the reader who performs this action according to the script written out for him/her (*Dear Reader* 8).

[54] Dickens's many novels carry this emotional burden for the readers, especially as the narrative is focalized through the narrow perspective of the protagonists—often very young children who must learn to navigate the adult world.

[55] See Garrett Stewart, *Dear Reader*, 3-24.

[56] For an important essay on the theory of countertransference and its implication for psychoanalysis and literary studies see Arthur F. Marotti. "Countertransference, the Communication Process, and the Dimensions of Psychoanalytic Criticism" in *Critical Inquiry*, Vol. 4, No. 3 (1978) 471-489.

for trauma narratives where the reader is the observer-interpreter, situated simultaneously both outside and inside the text.[57]

Theorizing Trauma

I look to trauma studies to help me investigate the autofictional accounts, where the first--person narrative structure works like a verifiable autobiographical text that effects a restorative change in both the narrator and the reader/audience. Literary studies of late have absorbed theories of psychoanalysis and trauma in an attempt to reconcile the two disparate fields and to elaborate on twentieth-century historical events whose cultural and ethical implications we continue to live with today. Trauma theory in literary and critical studies has shifted attention from the etiology of traumatic hysteria, as introduced by Sigmund Freud and Pierre Janet in the nineteenth-century, to its effect on consciousness and sensibilities—especially on those of the listener/reader. Freud himself was compelled to move away from a mere "pathogenic analogy between simple hysteria and traumatic neurosis" that informed his analysis in *Studies in Hysteria*, and develop a more nuanced psychoanalytical approach that focused on the process of traumatic events and the mind's recursive attempts to manage them (3). In recent literary criticism, scholars have critically examined the intersection of history, literature and the concept of trauma, while seeking new interpretations to old texts. In particular, Cathy Caruth, Geoffrey Hartman, and

[57] Marotti quotes from Norman Holland's *5 Readers Reading* for underscoring the necessity for the observer-interpreter of literary texts to acknowledge both his objective reactions to the text and the psychological processes determining them. In other words, the intellect of the observer must allow his own aesthetic or emotional reactions to art/literature to co-exist, otherwise the much-vaunted objectivity remains a mere defense mechanism against the disturbing emotional response created by works of art. See Norman Holland *5 Readers Reading* (New Haven: Yale UP, 1975).

Shoshana Felman examine the theories of trauma as put forward by Freud and Pierre Janet to analyze literary texts.

These critics have linked psychic experiences and literary expressions to reflect on historical events of the past century. In particular, these critics have placed experience, memory, and location as compelling categories to study narration of the personal kind—their theories having been derived from Freud's *Studies in Hysteria* and *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*. There, Freud and Josef Breuer examined the clinical processes of traumatic hysteria and causes of psychic trauma, and noted that, when the reaction to trauma is suppressed, the affect remains united with memory (5). In their opinion, this suppression often results in a silent suffering that is a "grievance," which may be recognized as having a "cathartic" effect only if it is expressed through an adequate mechanism for processing it. Freud calls this expression "abreaction" (German *abreagirt*)—a catharsis offered by the medium of language. In 1922, Freud took his research further in his book *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, where he examined psychic trauma as a punctual incursion on the mind, which, when it is unprocessed, installs a memory-trace that returns unbidden, as a delayed effect.[58] The mind attempts to digest this previously unclaimed experience. Freud calls this "repetition compulsion"—the reliving or reenactment of past psychic events that disrupt the present with terrifying nightmares, flashbacks, and dreams (*Beyond* 9). In this work, Freud reworked his earlier theories of trauma, which had situated all traumas in sexual repression, and instead formulated the argument positioning the eros and the ego in a tension inside the human psyche. He further

[58] Sigmund Freud, *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, C. J. M. Hubback, Trans., (London, Vienna: International Psycho-Analytical, 1922).

theorized that when the ego receives trauma, it tries to process it through revisiting in dreams, nightmares and hauntings. The writing or telling that arises out of such suffering has informed trauma theory, with critics emphasizing the power of texts that seek less to represent traumatizing events than to transmit to readers the destabilizing experience of trauma itself, thus underscoring the performative aspect of this transmission.

Caruth, coming from this tradition, investigates the relationship between experience and event that forces victims to return to their trauma in the retelling of their story.[59] In this context, she is concerned with the structural elements of texts of trauma, and believes that the most effective kind of text is one that induces trauma in its readers. Caruth looks at how the language of trauma works either to augment or assuage the wounds caused by trauma, and this is where the retelling helps the victim who is the narrator of the experience. This turns testimonial writing or autofiction into a structure that bolsters the victim's wounded psyche. Often, trauma is "unsayable" or "incomprehensible," she says, leaving the victim mute (*Unclaimed* 3). Directing our attention to Freud's examples from literature when explaining the unarticulated or 'unsayable quality' of trauma, Cathy Caruth writes:

> If Freud turns to literature to describe traumatic experience, it is because literature, like psychoanalysis, is interested in the complex relation between knowing and unknowing. And it is at the specific point at which knowing and not knowing

[59] Cathy Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience*: *Trauma, Narrative, and History* (1996) 4.

> intersect that the language of literature and psychoanalytic theory of traumatic experience precisely meet.[60]

Caruth explains that one's own trauma is tied up with the trauma of another, thus linking the self with the other in an ethical relationship of testimonials given and witnessed even when the language of trauma is untranslatable or incomprehensible.[61]

I treat Brontë's *Jane Eyre* as an autofiction by an author who is recalling certain painful episodes of her early life through her alter ego Jane, whose compulsive returns to the very locations that caused her original trauma become a therapeutic exercise for the narrator to help effect restoration to her psyche. Geoffrey Hartman's work on memory and landscape as articulated in his many works on Wordsworth, are useful in this regard. When studying the poems of Wordsworth, Hartman says that location plays an important role in both the original event of the poet's visit to a place, which is recorded often as a loss, and in the healing that is achieved in the memory-recall, thus inalterably linking memory and place. Hartman's preoccupations with memory-landscapes inform his reflection on the transmission of trauma and its relationship to specific geographic spaces.[62] In this context, his work overlaps that of Caruth, who relies on the significance of revisiting and haunting as ways for the psyche to work through pain. Caruth traces what she calls "the textual itinerary of recurring words or figures" that stubbornly persists in bearing witness to past wounds (*Unclaimed 5*). Jane Eyre's multiple destabilizing experiences occur in particular

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[60] *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History* (1996) 3.

[61] See "The Wound and the Voice," *Unclaimed Experience*: *Trauma, Narrative, and History*. (1996) 1-9.

[62] See Geoffrey Hartman, *The Unremarkable Wordsworth* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987) 3-17.

junctures of her life and in very specific places that carry deeply painful associations. Her return to the very places where her sense of identity had been destabilized coincides with their symbolic and actual disintegration in the present, thus providing both revenge and reprieve. When Jane does not physically return, she informs the reader, with a certain satisfaction, of the changed circumstances or fortunes of her tormenters.

In trauma studies, narration is also a performance. In a trauma text, performance of the narration relies on the willing participation of the reader, and here, Shoshana Felman's work is vital for my analysis. The literary theories of trauma that Felman formulates are laid out in her co-authored study of the holocaust survivors' narratives with psychoanalyst Dori Laub. Like Caruth, both Felman and Laub examine different genres like film, diaries, and art, and using their own personal reactions as receivers of testimony, they suggest a radical approach to the healing of trauma. Felman has transformed trauma studies in her insistence on testimony and transference as curative devices that shift the burden from narrator/victim to the reader/listener.[63] This simultaneous burden of bearing witness without appropriation, along with a respect for the victim/narrator's experiences, renders the receiver-reader of the transmission, a collaborator of the narrator. "Dear Reader" gains new significance in this linking of narrator and reader. Seen through these three inter-linked theoretical perspectives, I suggest that Jane, the traumatized narrator, is attempting a self-construct through her revisiting of the trauma sites, and through the writing of the narrative.

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[63] Shoshana Felman and Dori Laub, MD., *Testimony: Crisis in Witnessing in Literature, Psychoanalysis, and History* (New York: Routledge, 1992).

In addition to the above critics, I find the theories of mourning of Nicolas Abraham and Maria Torok useful when studying Brontë's aesthetics of wounding, particularly in *Villette*. Freud's foundational essay, *Mourning and Melancholia* (1917), is the source for many of Abraham and Torok's theories in the volume translated by Nicholas Rand.[64] However, Freud and those followinlg him like, Sandor Frenczi, Karl Abraham, Nicolas Abraham and Maria Torok, do not provide any systematic theories built on these ideas. Most of the time their offerings are musings and abstract suggestions of possibilities for treating patients built on the complicated ideas set out by Freud in his essay "Mourning and Melancholia." I reach out selectively to this corpus of work, most of which have remained resistant to fixed understanding, leaving much to the readers' own judgement. Sandor Ferenczi is the creator of both the term and the concept of *introjection*. *Introjection* is the process whereby creative and constructive changes occur in the psyche, helping the self reconstruct if reconstruction is necessary after trauma. It is similar to Freud's *abreaction* or working through trauma. *Incorporation* is the mysterious embrace of the identity of the lost object (loved one) as a way to domesticate the pain of loss. More importantly, these twin concepts engendered Abraham and Torok's well-known work on cryptonomy and the intergenerational phantom. The phantom is an intergenerational wound, and Abraham and Torok recall the case of Shakespeare's tragic character, Hamlet, to drive home the point about the *phantom* that lives within the victim, experienced as a loss or a wounding gap rather than as a presence.

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[64] Nicolas Abraham and Maria Torok, *The Shell and the Kernel: Renewals of Psychoanalysis,* vol. 1, Nicholas T. Rand, Ed., Trans., (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1994).

In *Villette*, the protagonist Lucy Snowe's confessional mode shifts the burden of her personal trauma onto the reader in what Freud called "counter-transference," which is not unlike Dominick La Capra's "empathic unsettlement." La Capra writes: "… the response of even secondary witnesses (including historians) to traumatic events must involve empathic unsettlement that should register in one's very mode of address …." (*Writing* 47). In post-Freudian developments, the idea of counter-transference has moved from being a purely psychoanalytical phenomenon that occurs between analyst and patient to becoming a model for uncovering the aesthetics of transactional relationship between writer and reader. Counter-transference resistance rises as an impulse for self-control in the analyst who listens to the emotional testimony of the patient who shares her anxiety or trauma. In the therapeutic environment, when objectivity is laid aside, the analyst allows the emotional disturbance that naturally occurs inside his/her psyche as an empathic response. In this situation, a subjective response is held as the desired outcome when hearing patient testimony, much as in an encounter with an object of art, according to Arthur F. Marotti.[65] In both psychoanalysis and aesthetic experience, Freud's principle holds true, says Marotti, and he quotes Freud to drive home this point: "Everyone possesses in his own unconscious an instrument with which he can interpret the utterances of the unconscious of other people."[66] Just as the analyst in the psychotherapeutic situation develops a working model of his patient, so too, the reader of literature forms an emotional

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[65] Arthur F. Moretti, "Countertransference, the Communication Process, and the Dimensions of Psychoanalytic Criticism," *Critical Inquiry*, 4: 3 (Spring, 1978) pp. 471-489.

[66] *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, trans. and ed. James Strachey, 24 vols. (London, 1953-74).

image of the human being at the other end of the literary communication (Marotti, 476). Brontë's text transfers secondary trauma onto the reader who must negotiate with both the grieving narrator and the countertransference reactions that the text engenders inside of him/her. By the very act of entering Brontë's literary circuit, we engage with empathy and understanding with all that went on to create her identity.

In the field of trauma studies, the central principle governing reader engagement asserts that in spite of the possibility of vicarious suffering or victimhood that this might entail, readers or listeners of trauma narratives must let go of internal resistance to engage ethically with the victim-narrator. In this context it is important to remember that bearing witness to a trauma is a process that includes the listener (*Testimony* 70). Thus, an affective bond or transference is paramount for ethical engagement to occur. Taking my cue from Freud who writes in *Studies of Hysteria* that narrative recall helps victims of trauma work through its effects (what Freud calls "abreaction"), I study Flora Tristan's work as narrator Florita's attempt at recuperation where she employs the mute figure of the Pariah in her self-refashioning. While Tristan's life story seems quite novelistic in this life-writing, her travails were real. The one year she spent in the New World traveling from Valparaiso to Arequipa and to Lima is recalled in the memoir, published first in 1838, and again four years after her return to France. The memoir also raises philosophical questions about the traumatized self. If trauma fragments the self, as was the case with Tristan, how do we reconcile the fragments with the notion of a coherent, healed self—the ideal subject—promoted by those who emphasize witness testimonials? Her early deracination and dispossession create multiple fractures inside her, leaving a memory trace that is non-erasable, and experienced in recall as the incursion of the original wound. But in her

healing, she resorts to an accretion of subjectivities, multiplying the self to create endless formulations. This poses a conundrum for those who study her text as trauma narrative since it defies the norms of the trauma-healing paradigm. Interestingly, in this hybrid text, Tristan is able to draw her trauma of dispossession into a source for political energy that fuels her activism after her return to France.

Judith Herman's clinical study of various traumas is a useful guide for my analysis of Flora, the historical figure, and Florita, the victim-narrator of the life-writing. In *Trauma and Recovery* (1992), Herman brings her own life-time experience as a trained psychoanalyst to catalog both past and current practices in the field. In a departure from other works in the field, her study pays special attention to women victims of trauma, thereby providing great value for my chapter on Tristan, while simultaneously offering a counterpoint to post-Freudian trauma scholars like Cathy Caruth. Herman theorizes that narrative offers effective therapeutic healing, whereas Caruth insists on the "unsayability" of trauma, thus complicating the idea of possible healing for the victim when she shares the story. In particular, Herman's astute observations about the victims of human-induced traumas bring into focus Tristan's brand of wounding. "Victims of human-inflicted trauma are reduced to mere objects by their tormenters; their subjectivity is rendered useless and viewed as worthless," writes Herman (*Trauma* 53). This underscores Herman's point about the pernicious nature of human-induced trauma. Tristan's feverish attempts to reconstitute herself as a feminist author and as a workers' rights champion was her way to prevail over the objectification by her jealous husband who enjoyed the full patronage of the French society. To this full plate of suffering was added yet another dispossession: the one by her father's family in Peru that fissured her sense of the self further by its obliteration of her

sense of family and community. In order to reconstitute herself, Tristan becomes adept at self-narratives, inscribing herself in the world of the text and reaching out to the empathic other.

Herman sets out a few important markers in recognizing and treating unspeakable violations of women victims, and chief among them the dialectic of trauma.[67] The need to speak and to be heard by an ethical witness/audience is paramount for a trauma sufferer to heal, both in clinical settings and in literary/narrative contexts. However, trauma testimony is often complicated by the very nature of its dialectic movement, says Herman. Trauma victims hover between the urgent need to share the event and their tendency to deflect attention from it, thus dispersing sympathy and understanding even in the most empathic witness. Herman adds that both witnesses and victims are subject to the dialectic of trauma, which suggests that her theory is not unlike Freud's transference theory, where the analyst learns to accommodate the naturally-arising resistance as he or she listens to the victim's narrative. Turning to Tristan's life and writing, the dialectic of trauma is in full display in the contradictory reactions from readers, socialists, and critics, many of whom questioned the veracity of her novelistic life-writing.

The burden of pain that the victim wants to share is often too great for witnesses, as in the case of Tristan. Driven to the margins by the French society that denounced her criticism of her husband, she booked her voyage to the New World aboard the *Mexicain* in

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[67] Herman writes: "The conflict between the will to deny horrible events and the will to proclaim them aloud is the central dialectic of psychological trauma. People who have survived atrocities often tell their secrets in a highly emotional, contradictory, and fragmented manner which undermines their credibility and thereby serves the twin imperatives of truth-telling and secrecy. When the truth is finally recognized, survivors can begin their recovery. But far too often secrecy prevails, and the story of the traumatic event surfaces not as a verbal narrative but as a symptom." (*Trauma*1)

the hope that her Peruvian family would sustain her. The burden of proof in trauma narration, Herman suggests, must not rest solely on the victim. “To hold traumatic reality in consciousness requires a social context that affirms and protects the victim and that joins victim and witness in a common alliance” (*Trauma* 9). In this connection, Herman writes that the burden of testimony is shifted to the community whose support for a political movement is essential for the understanding and treatment of psychological trauma. Individual trauma is healed only through collective action. Interestingly, Tristan, years ahead in her thinking, pushed for raising political consciousness of victims of oppression, be it inside a bad marriage or in contractual labor. She understood that individual rights depended on universal rights, defined legally and politically.

Writing about the stages of recovery in trauma, Herman emphasizes the need for public recognition of the survivor, noting that “a sense of participation in meaningful social action enables the survivor to engage in legal battle with the perpetrator from a position of strength” (*Trauma* 210). Knowing that openly stated truth is what the perpetrator fears most, the victim seizes advocacy as a way to exercise power when battling not just for self but for other victims. Tristan’s pursuit of social justice, as in the case of her tour of France for garnering support for the worker’s union, is a prime example of activist resistance. Herman writes that the reconstitution of the self happens when the survivor feels “no longer possessed by her traumatic self; she in in possession of herself” (*Trauma* 202). This reconstitution permits a valid self-pride as she realizes that her adaptive qualities have led her to this renewal (*Trauma* 204). In this endeavor, Herman cautions about the tendency in some victims to pursue unrealistic ideals, particularly in the recreation of the ideal self. The healthy admiration of self may bring about feelings of

specialness in some who will then admit to no imperfection, isolating themselves with this tendency. In pursuing the argument proposed by Herman, who writes that finding a survivor mission is an important way for trauma victims to reconnect with the world, one could surmise that Tristan's deep commitment to workers' rights redeems her from her self-isolation and her earlier avatar's *mannières précieuses*. As Herman notes, "participation in organized, demanding social efforts calls upon the survivor's most mature and adaptive coping strategies of patience, anticipation, altruism, and humor" (*Trauma* 207). Tristan's lengthy memoir shows early signs of all these redemptive and restorative qualities.

In addition to Herman's study of trauma and recovery, I look to feminist philosopher, Susan J. Brison, whose remarkable memoir, *Aftermath: Violence and the Remaking of the Self*, has changed the nature of the discourse surrounding rape and physical assault.[68] Brison's intensely personal narrative, which raises searing philosophical questions about the nature of the self and what it means to survive brutal violence, is a fitting navigational aid for tracing Tristan's journey from trauma victim to utopian socialist. Brison, while tracing the paradoxes inherent in surviving physical trauma, insists that the self who survives violence is never made whole again. She then wonders about the consequences of this fragmentation for philosophical principles about the inviolable self. In particular, she is preoccupied with the idea of the autonomous self, which she views as the locus of all human agency and action. Brison suggests that we see the self as being fundamentally relational in the way others shape and define it. Furthermore, she wonders

[68] See Susan J. Brison, *Aftermath: Violence and the Remaking of the Self* (2002).

how traumatic memory complicates notions of the autonomous self. "The bodily nature of traumatic memory complicates standard philosophical quandary concerning which of the two criteria of identity—continuous body or continuous memories—should be used to determine personal identity over time" (45). Trauma narratives lend themselves to such challenging questions about self, memory, and identity.

Tristan's memoir, written four years after her return to France in 1838, poses similar questions, in addition to raising new ones about transplanted and intergenerational traumas. With regard to her aristocratic childhood years, Tristan suffered from what Pierre Janet called an "idée fixe," which is experienced by most victims of trauma, but her traumatic memory of her dispossessed childhood may not even be her own.[69] Biographers have wondered if her mother's stories had transferred prosthetic memories onto the sensitive child, giving rise to what might be termed, phantom sensibilities.[70] While Tristan's deracination was an actual trauma, her memories of happier times, that shaped her sense of what she had lost may have been imaginary, thus validating Brison's argument about drawing the distinction between continuous body and continuous memories as criteria for identity. The idea of a traumatized subject experiencing split consciousness is nothing new in the aesthetic of trauma, but Tristan's explorations of various subjectivities or consciousness reveal a rare sort of philosophical engagement with the Other. Often, the condition of trauma induces and exacerbates the victim's self-absorption, but Tristan's

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[69] Judith Herman, "Intrusion," *Trauma and Recovery* (1992) 37.

[70] Abraham and Torok's theory about the intergenerational phantom can be the model for such transmission, since the haunting trauma or "ghost" of dispossession continues to live inside Tristan. The systematic traumatization that Tristan incurred on her own was simply added to the intergenerational phantom already residing in the psyche.

commitment to ethical causes overturns this principle. This sort of engagement with a collective often gets overlooked in the field of trauma, or for that matter, in philosophy, in Brison's opinion.[71] In the field of trauma, the typical fragmented trauma subject is engaged in narrative recall in her sessions with her analyst who helps the patient delve deeper into the crypt that is her mind. In this healing paradigm, the collective or universal is irrelevant, since only the singular individual matters. Further, in trauma narratives, the imagined other/ reader becomes a participant--a co-owner of the event—thus blurring the positionality of the subject (Brison 57).[72] Healing is dependent on the other's attitude to the victim's story, and this again challenges the notion that the individual can control his/her own self-definition (Brison 67). Her fearless deployment of the self, both in life and in text, sets Tristan apart from other, ordinary victims for whom just one empathic witness might fulfill all the structures of healing.

In all three writers analyzed here, individual trauma finds an echo in the collective, but nowhere is it more acutely felt than in Toru Dutt. In Toru Dutt's fiction, which is my focus in chapter 4, mourning and melancholia are experienced primarily through the language of the nostalgic past. Her personal trauma about the deaths of her siblings was deepened when the return to England from India became an illusion, due largely to her poor health. Toru was the last surviving daughter of Govin Chunder Dutt from West

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[71] Susan J. Brison, *Aftermath: Violence and the Remaking of a Self* (2002).

[72] Writing in *Unclaimed Experience*: *Trauma, Narrative, and History*. (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), Cathy Caruth reiterates this point about witness testimonials, where the listener/audience becomes co-owner of the traumatic event, and this has now found opposition in many quarters. In this connection see Ruth Leys, *Trauma: A Genealogy* (2000); Judith Herman, *Trauma and Recovery* (1992); and Greg Forter, "Freud, Faulkner, and Caruth: Trauma and the Politics of Literary Form," *Narrative*, 15: 3 (2007) 259-285.

Bengal, India. Both her siblings, Abju and Aru, died of tuberculosis before they turned twenty. Toru died when she was twenty-one from tuberculosis, but managed to write fiction and poetry, and to publish a collection of translations of French poems. The family traveled and lived in France and England, where the sisters Aru and Toru, took classes in Cambridge. Their return to Calcutta was precipitous and endured as a lasting trauma for Toru after her sister's death. The promise of return to England faded when Toru started getting sick with the same disease. But this did not prevent her from reading, writing, and translating until her last day. Her trauma was redirected to an immersion into literary criticism and writing poetry and fiction. At the same time, Dutt was beginning to articulate, especially in her letters to Clarisse Bader, a reconstructed vision of India modeled on the country's own antique past.

In the following chapters I study how, the lack of a writing tradition for the three authors helped nurture their idiosyncratic style of life-writing, and how this helped them paradoxically to reconstruct their sense of the self.[73] Their letters provide readers with crucial clues in helping uncover some of the inconsistencies and contradictions in their autobiographical writing. All three lived at a time of unusual social ferment, but more important for this project, all three had to live with the anxiety of influence that was both handed down as their heritage by previous generations of women writers and strengthened by their contemporaries. However, they sought female networks as a way to reconstruct their own selves, so their strategies of representations often reveal their subjective and very

[73] Brontë's fraught relationship with critics is well documented, but she was willing to compromise even if half-heartedly; but Tristan refused to alter or edit her writings when her publishers demanded it, instead opted to end fruitful relationships, like with her editor François Buloz. Tristan was not formally educated and it showed in much of her early writing.

human reactions to their peers, thus helping us uncover their deep yearning to belong to a collective, even when they strained to develop their own individuality. The three authors I study here suffered from the trauma of dislocation, and so actively sought to reorder their lives through travel and imaginative life-writing. In this respect, they enlist the network of women writers and readers whose responsibilities include helping them create better public selves and thus hopefully better (re)publics. Here, life-writing turns itself back to life, helping the subjects gain self-knowledge with the active engagement from the reader. Furthermore, the intense self-scrutiny inherent in life-writing allows the self to examine itself with a critical distance afforded by time, which helps the subject negotiate with its own past while reconstructing its present. Writing about self-narratives, Barthes cautions that any attempt to read narrative closure is mere nostalgia for an unfinished past.[74] With that in mind I argue that nostalgia in life-writing describes often a past not experienced, and so it must be understood as a strategy that writers use for regulating their own narration and the readers' responses. Nostalgic reconstruction is an essential aspect in life-writing for a subject whose enforced dislocation and trauma is narrated through the language of time and memory. Moreover, narrative self-constitution plays a key role in determining identity through the recapturing of the past that flows smoothly into the living present, thus permitting a sense of continuity to the subject. It is noteworthy that the self-portraiture of these three women authors' dislocating trauma leads them to this self-distancing as an act of liberation, paradoxical it may seem.

[74] Roland Barthes, *roland BARTHES par Roland Barthes* (Berkeley: U of California P, 1994).

2. NARRATING THE SELF IN CHARLOTTE BRONTË

Life Traumas and the Aesthetic of Wounding

Charlotte Brontë was developing her autofiction when writers such as Thackeray, Scott, Dickens, Gaskell and others were shaping the literary world. When reading her letters it is easy to conclude that her relationship with their writings was conflicted. In a famous letter to poet Robert Southey, she wrote that her deepest desire is to "be forever known," but she withdrew from this rather "crude rhapsody" in a letter in the following year.[75] Like Emily Dickinson's epistolary relationship with her mentor Thomas Wentworth Higginson, Brontë's letters to Robert Southey betray her ambivalence towards the Poet Laureate, whose support she sought, but whose strictures to be more womanly she disregarded. Southey replied in a kind but condescending letter that "literature cannot be the business of a woman's life: and it ought not to be," and advised her to " keep to her womanly duties at home".[76] When the famous literary critic G. H. Lewes criticized her melodramatic tendencies in *Jane Eyre,* Charlotte took umbrage. He praised her predecessor Jane Austen, whose works he had extolled in a letter that simultaneously castigated Brontë for her lack of restraint in her writing. Writing to Lewes, Brontë passionately defended her writer's inspiration as a force from outside thus:

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[75] See Southey's kind but firm letter; Charlotte Brontë's first letter to Southey does not exist anymore, but in Southey's response written on 12th March 1847 he quotes her letter to him. Margaret Smith, ed., *The Letters of Charlotte Brontë,* vol.1 (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1995) 165.

[76] See letter from Southey to Brontë 12.3.1847. Margaret Smith, ed., *The Letters of Charlotte Brontë,* vol. 2 (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2000) 165.

> When authors write best, or at least, when they write most fluently, an influence seems to waken in them which becomes their master, which will have its own way, putting out of view all behests but its own, dictating certain words, and insisting on their being used, whether vehement or measured in their nature; new moulding characters, giving unthought-of-turns to incidents, rejecting carefully elaborated old ideas, and suddenly creating and adopting new ones. Is it not so? And should we try to counteract this influence? Can we indeed counteract it?"[77]

Brontë had to defend herself passionately against what she perceived as Austen's superficial study of human emotions when compared to sister Emily's or her own.[1] Brontë's letter to Lewes is famous for her mordant criticism of Jane Austen:

> Why do you like Miss Austen so much? I am puzzled on that point. What induced you to say that you would rather have written "Pride & Prejudice" or "Tom Jones" than any of the Waverly Novels?" I had not seen "Pride & Prejudice" till I read that sentence of yours, and then I got the book and studied it. And what did I find? An accurate daguerreotyped portrait of a common-place face; a carefully-fenced, highly cultivated garden with neat borders and delicate flowers—but no glance of a bright vivid physiognomy—no open country—no fresh air—no blue hill—bonny beck. I should hardly like to live with her ladies and gentlemen in their elegant but confined houses. These observations will probably irritate you, but I shall run the risk.[78]

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[77] *The Letters of Charlotte Brontë*, vol. 2 (2000) 9.

[78] Brontë adds to her protest some words of high praise for George Sand whose writing she finds to be far superior to Austen: "Now I can understand admiration of George Sand—for though I never saw any of her works which I admired throughout (even "Consuelo" which is the best, of the best I have read, appears to

This looking back anxiously at a perceived female superior added to her burden of being a woman writer who had to field criticisms, unfair or not, from the resolutely male literary world, even as she charted a new course for herself.

In order to counter such persistent regulation from the male establishment and their female supporters, Brontë carefully cultivated a sphinxlike quality. Biographer Gaskell notes her extreme shyness in company despite the provocative and candid portrayals of human passions in her novels.[79] As her fame grew, Brontë, during her lifetime, and her early biographers/critics, after she died, collaborated unknowingly in a similar scheme of myth-making.[80] The proliferation of sympathetic biographies[81] and mythical constructions notwithstanding, one of the issues that compels reader attention when encountering Brontë's autofiction is the candid exploration of her own psychological states, masked as first-person, fictional narratives. Many reviewers and readers were quick to note the intensely personal voice, like Eugene Forçade, who notes this in *La Revue des Deux Mondes*: [Elle était] "au premier rang parmi cettes qui écrivent des romans—manière est après tourmentée, un peu sauvage" ([She was] "among the top-rated novelists— the style

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me to couple strange extravagance with wondrous excellence), yet she has a grasp of mind which I cannot fully comprehend, I can deeply respect; she is sagacious and profound. Miss Austen is only shrewd and observant." *The Letters of Charlotte Brontë,* vol. 2 (2000) 10.

[79] Gaskell, *The Life of Charlotte Brontë* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1996) 379-383.

[80] See Lucasta Miller's chapter on the cult of the Brontës, "The Mystic of the Moors" in *The Brontë Myth* (London: Jonathan Cape, 2001) 225-255.

[81] For a documentation of the extraordinarily sympathetic biographies that were really hagiographies, see Lucasta Miller in *The Brontë Myth.* Starting with Gaskell's emotional biography, where Gaskell took liberties in altering what she felt was appropriate in order to mythologize her friend Charlotte, Miller notes how early biographers were far more sympathetic when compared to the many critics whose criticism about her novels seemed to have left lasting imprints on Brontë's mind. *The Brontë Myth* (2001).

is quite tortured, a little untamed").[82] This tormented self-exploration by the writer is encountered by the reader as an aesthetic of wounding; that is, a process by which personal trauma is sublimated in the writing, mourned, and eventually overcome.[83] In her first autobiographical novel, *Jane Eyre*, signed, "Currer Bell," Brontë was clearly recreating some of her early experiences, as in the Cowan Bridge School where the Brontë sisters studied, and about her time as teacher in Roe Head School. It was in the notorious Cowan Bridge School that the two older Brontë daughters, Maria and Elizabeth Brontë, sickened from tuberculosis and died.

The need to mourn her sisters Maria and Elizabeth, while simultaneously railing against the many injustices of the world that conspire against women trapped in genteel poverty, seems to be the overriding emotion in Brontë's first published work. But one is left wondering who is being mourned when engaging with Charlotte's most autobiographical fiction, *Villette*. Here, unlike in *Jane Eyre,* she is not expressing the loss of her siblings, yet the narrative is suffused with grief of personal loss. Her unrequited love for her French teacher M. Constantin Héger is driving the narrative in *Villette*, but it is surpassed by another, deeper wound. I suggest that in this most sophisticated of her novels she is in fact mourning the loss of a self that was not fully realized. The trauma of "doing nothing" is palpable when reading her letter to her close friend Ellen Nussey before *Jane Eyre* turned its creator into an overnight sensation in 1847.[84] In this letter dated 14 October

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[82] Margaret Smith, ed., *The Letters of Charlotte Brontë*, vol. 3 (2004) 138.

[83] Nicolas Abraham and Maria Torok, *The Shell and the Kernel: Renewals of Psychoanalysis,* vol.1 Nicholas T. Rand, trans. (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1994).

[84] See the letter to Ellen Nussey, *The Letters of Charlotte Brontë,* vol. 1 (1995) 503.

1846, Charlotte Brontë frankly shares her fears of achieving nothing because of pressing duties at home, including caring for her father that kept her away from Brussels:

> I know life is passing away and I am doing nothing—earning nothing, a very bitter knowledge it is at moments—but I see no way out of this mist—More than one favorable opportunity has now offered which I have been obliged to put aside—probably when I am free to leave home I shall neither be able to find place nor employment—perhaps too I shall be quite past the prime of my life—my faculties will be rusted.[85]

In a letter to publisher W.S. Williams she writes, "Emily's death was a mortal wound," and she feared that she too would die of the same disease as her sisters.[86] During her years in Brussels at the Héger *pensionnat*, Brontë was called to duty at home with increasing urgency when brother Branwell was sinking into drunken dissolution and her elderly father was demanding his daughter's attention. In another letter to W.S. Williams she writes about Branwell's untimely death:

> I do not weep from a sense of bereavement—there is no prop withdrawn, no consolation torn away, no dear companion lost—but for the wreck of talent, the ruin of promise, the untimely, dreary extinction of what might have been a burning and a shining light...There is such a bitterness of pity for his life and death—such a

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[85] *The Letters of Charlotte Brontë,* vol. 1 (1995) 503.

[86] *The Letters of Charlotte Brontë,* vol. 2 (2000) xxiv.

> yearning for the emptiness of his whole existence as I cannot describe—I trust time will allay these feelings.[87]

She also wrote to Ellen that the "right path is that which necessitates the greatest sacrifice of self-interest—which implies the greatest good to others—and this path steadily followed will lead *I believe* in time to prosperity and to happiness though it may seem at the outset to tend quite in a contrary direction".[88] This tension between desire and duty experienced by Brontë was not new or unusual for women. But what was unusual about Brontë's wounding was her conviction that her "genius" suffered as a result of outside forces, so too her protagonists, who are alter-egos, like, Jane and Lucy, experience interruptions to their desire at many crucial junctures in *Jane Eyre* and *Villette*. Lucasta Miller writes that this word "genius" was very important in the Brontës' lexicon, for even as children she and her siblings indulged precociously in writing poetry and romantic tales of adventure that revealed a deep connection to the "geniuses" of the Romantic movement like Byron, Scott, Wordsworth and others (2-10). In fact, Charlotte's staunch defense of her younger "genius" sibling was colored by her conviction that Emily's illness and death were partly caused by unkind critics, writes Lucasta Miller.[89]

In *Jane Eyre*, it is amply clear that Brontë, eager for public recognition of what she felt to be a rare talent for telling stories, created a very sympathetic governess with numerous childhood traumas. Yet when it was published, the universal critical acclaim that

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[87] *The Letters of Charlotte Brontë,* vol. 2 (2000) 122.

[88] See letter dated 10t July 1846 in *The Letters of Charlotte Brontë*, vol. 1 (1995) 483.

[89] Lucasta Miller *The Brontë Myth*, (2001) 235-55.

she craved did not come, and in some respects, the criticism was couched inside a rather public admonition of Brontë's tendency for flamboyance.[90] Those who were instrumental in shaping public opinion were unsparing about her excesses, even as they noted her natural flair and authentic voice.[91] In fact, some even accused her protagonists of being irreligious and anti-Christian, like critic Elizabeth Rigby of the *Quarterly Review*, who wrote that the novel is "pre-eminently an anti-Christian composition."[92] Brontë protested to a similarly vitriolic attack in the *Christian Remembrancer* in a letter to the editor: "The passage to which I particularly allude characterises me by a strong expression, I am spoken of as an alien, —it might seem from society, and amenable to none of its laws."[93] While she put on a brave front, as in her humble letter to G.H. Lewes where she owned all her faults as a novelist,[94] Brontë reacted strongly and emotionally to harsh reviews, as evidenced by her rift with friend and feminist writer, Harriet Martineau, who criticized the Brontë heroines' yearning for romantic love. Martineau wrote frankly to her friend Charlotte:

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[90] Too many reviews to cite, but see especially *The Guardian* on 1 Dec. 1847 on *Jane Eyre*, where the critic finds Charlotte Brontë's eloquent style is marred by language that is 'declamatory" or 'exaggerated.'

[91] See G.H. Lewes's praise for *Jane Eyre* as "The best novel of the season," which is high praise for the novel; also see the Tory evening paper, *Courier*, Oct 28th, which talks about the novel "inviting readers into the recesses of the heart" (*The Letters of Charlotte Brontë* vol. 2, note 4, 5) 555. One reviewer in *Eclectic Review* writes in the number for March 1853 about the 'powerful and original' genius of CB, whose works have a 'tamarind-like piquancy' unlike ordinary novels. *The Letters of Charlotte Brontë,* vol. 3 (2004) 133.

[92]*The Letters of Charlotte Brontë,* vol. 1 (1995). Elizabeth Rigby writing in the *Quarterly Review* gives a brief synopsis of the novel adding, "such is the outline of a tale in which, combined with great material for power and feeling, the reader may trace gross inconsistencies and improbabilities, and chief and foremost that highest offense a novel writer can commit, that of making an unworthy character interesting in the eyes of the reader." See the full review in the *Quarterly Review,* vol. 84, 153-85.

[93] *The Letters of Charlotte Brontë,* vol. 3 (2004) 187.

[94] See the letter of 1848 Jan 2nd in *The Letters of Charlotte Brontë,* vol. 2 (2000) 9.

> What faults there are, I think grave: but the merits are downright wonderful—As for the faults—I do deeply regret the reasons given to suppose your mind full of the subject of one passion—love—I think there is unconscionably too much of it (giving an untrue picture of life) &, speaking with the frankness you desire, I do not like its kind….[95]

Stung by this review, Brontë stopped communicating with Martineau.[96] The trauma of losing all her siblings was heightened by an acute sense of rejection by literary critics, the result of which is her autofiction that explores the aesthetic of wounding.[97]

Writing the Self: Bronte's Autofiction

Charlotte Brontë's two major autofictions have intrigued readers for their personal revelations. The Clergy Daughters' School at Cowan Bridge is portrayed unflatteringly in *Jane Eyre,* and her unrequited love for her Belgian teacher M. Constantin surfaces in *Villette* as the brittle love-story of Lucy Snowe and M. Paul Emmanuel. In these autobiographical works Brontë translates her own traumatic experiences into significant narrative arcs, and the direct apostrophes to the reader are designed to heighten the empathic relationship with her imagined readership. The reader then enters into what

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[95] *The Letters of Charlotte Brontë,* vol. 3 (2004) 117.

[96] To W. S. Williams on 10th January 1850, she writes about G. H. Lewis's review of her novel *Shirley in* highly charged language:" I wish in future he would leave me alone—and not write again. What makes me feel so cold and sick as I am feeling now." *The Letters of Charlotte Brontë,* vol. 2 (2000) 328.

[97] Scholars have noted that Brontë's extreme sensitivity was colored with a strong dislike, even hatred, for society, and how this negative emotion was harnessed to best effort in the figures of her unconventional heroines. See Christopher Lane's article "Charlotte Brontë on the Pleasures of Hating" *ELH* 69.1 (2002): 199-224 and Terry Eagleton's essay, "Nothing Nice About Them," *LRB,* Vol. 32, No.21.4 November 2010.

Garrett Stewart calls an "intersubjective textual engagement" that locks the narrator and the attentive reader in a hermetic circle, thus forestalling an aesthetic distance necessary for reading with discernment or critical judgment.[98] Additionally, the conscription (and constriction) of readers who are called to receive this confessional-style writing, which pleads for sisterly consolation and attention, adds yet another layer of complexity.[99] Brontë's heroines display the inner split of their creator, by either, masking themselves or giving into passionate, polemical histrionics, the former strategy going as far as relentless self-repression.

The trauma induced by a sensitive temperament and augmented by the mixed reception to her novels is sublimated via Brontë's auto-portraits. Her heroine-narrators transmit to her readers their need for appreciation, although frequently they profess quite the opposite. Thus, the narrator in *Jane Eyre* is an example of the insubstantial self who is forcibly stripped of all qualities in the eyes of the other characters even as she craves attention, and *Villette* offers, perversely, a narrator-protagonist who deploys the tool of self-negation for thwarting those around her. In *Jane Eyre,* Mr. Rochester calls Jane his "ghost," "fairy", "elf," and "bird", all of which suggest to the reader that Jane is an elusive, otherworldly creature. This is in contrast to the vivid, worldly beauty of the other female characters like, Celine, Blanche Ingram and Georgina Reed, and so Beauty becomes a particularly brutal kind of trauma in *Jane Eyre* that is countered by the deliberately

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[98] Garrett Stewart, *Dear Reader: The Conscripted Audience in Nineteenth-Century British Fiction* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1996) 18.

[99] See Gretchen Braun, "A Great Break in the Common Course of Confession": Narrating Loss in Charlotte Brontë's *Villette,*" for the suggestion that the burden of trauma shifts onto the reader in confessional writing. *ELH* 78 (2011) 189-212.

insubstantial narrator-victim. Scenes with mirrors, the gaze or scrutiny of the other, vivid dreams, paintings, all point to Jane's trauma. In contrast, Lucy's suffering in *Villette* has an aural quality to it, for Lucy suffers from too much information or confidences shared.

The genre of autofiction offers the possibility of self-representation, and Charlotte Brontë's first publication, *Jane Eyre* is called "autobiography" by the masked writer. In her letter to Messrs Smith Elder and Co, the publishers of *Jane Eyre,* she acknowledges their input in calling it an autobiography: "I adopt your suggestion respecting the title; it would be much better to add the words 'an autobiography.'"[100] In this work, Brontë had begun her experimental style of writing, which fictionalized her life experiences, funneling them through the perspective of her intensely emotional narrators. Honed by years of living in the alternate universe of "Angria" that she created with her brother and literary ally Branwell, this writing pulsated with suppressed passion.[101] What makes this particular autofiction potent for the reader is its expression of personal trauma through a shockingly intense voice, and second, in its capacity to transfer this trauma on to the unsuspecting reader in an effort to turn narration into a therapeutic necessity. This aesthetic of trauma

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[100] *The Letters of Charlotte Brontë,* vol. 1 (1995) 540. In this connection see Suzette A. Henke who suggests that" the texts of both autobiography and bildungsroman exfoliate in the manner of mimetic histories, but necessarily double back, like involuted Möbius strips, in haunting self-referentiality" *Shattered Subjects: Trauma and Testimony in Women's Life-Writing* (1998) xv.

[101] For a feminist analysis of how the Tales of Angria shaped Charlotte's later works, see Helene Moglen, *Charlotte Brontë: Self-Conceived* (Madison: U of Wisconsin P, 1984). Charlotte and Branwell wrote the *Tales of Angria* while Emily and Anne immersed themselves in creating the kingdom of Gondol, and critics like Lucasta Miller in *The Brontë Myth* (2001) and Helene Moglen in *Charlotte Brontë: Self-Conceived* (1984) have found the early juvenilia to have shaped the writings of Charlotte and Emily in their later years. See for example, in the *Legends of Angria* by Charlotte, where the protagonists are always high-born noble men and women with Byronic subjectivities who intensely and passionately articulate their desires, Eds. Fannie E. Ratchford and William C. DeVane (New Haven: Yale UP, 1934).

and survival, in all its brutalizing details, is made authentic by the narrator, Jane, who lives to tell the tale. This work reveals a struggle between self and others, which leads ultimately to a struggle with oneself. As in all autobiographies, it works with a double narration—of the suffering and of the telling— thus turning this into an act of resistance. The autofiction locates a dramatic center not in the powerful male but in a seemingly powerless woman whose narration both enthralls and wounds the reader in its effort to elicit an emotional response that in itself affords her a catharsis. A poetics of dislocation pervades Charlotte Brontë's autofiction, where Jane, the orphan, struggles to find her place, with Jane, the adult narrator, facilitating this through the act of narration. In this work, Jane searches for home, and her narration is an articulation of her personal pain. She resists the overwhelming events and experiences and deploys the tool of narration to control both time and space while achieving a reconstruction or reconstitution of the self in the process. I suggest that Jane, the traumatized narrator and Brontë's alter ego, is attempting a self-restoration through memory recall—a compelling and recurring *topos* in trauma and memory studies.

Brontë's reader quickly comprehends that the animating force in Brontë's autofiction is her need to transcribe into words her "unsayable trauma," and in the process reach emotionally nurturing readers and reconstitute herself.[102] This desire to share her traumatic experiences comes from a woman writer who published under a man's name is hardly surprising, and it is well documented that Brontë was ambivalent about her growing celebrity as a novelist and frequently resorted to denying authorship of the novelistic

[102] See Cathy Caruth *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins UP, 1996) 3.

sensation, *Jane Eyre*.[103] In a letter to Ellen Nussey, Brontë vehemently denies authorship of the novel writing, "I have given *no one* a right to either affirm, or hint, in the most distant manner, that I am "publishing"—(humbug!) Whoever has said it is no friend of mine. Though twenty books were ascribed to me, I should own none. I scout the idea utterly."[104] Lucasta Miller writes in *The Brontë Myth* that the negative comments about *Jane Eyre* began to intensify as they became more closely bound up with the debate over the mystery author's gender, and once the novel was widely accepted to be the work of a woman it seemed far less acceptable (17).

Brontë's letters reveal her keen interest in the intellectual circles of London, at the same time that she prefers to retreat to her Yorkshire moors. Biographers note that once the authorship of *Jane Eyre* was revealed, Brontë began attracting intense scrutiny, leaving her weary of the intrusions into her private life and desiring invisibility. In a letter to W.S. Williams, Brontë writes about a clergyman from her Yorkshire neighborhood that she saw reading *Jane Eyre* and loudly commenting about many of the characters. She writes, "He did not recognize "Currer Bell"—What author would be without the advantage of being able to walk invisible? One is thereby enabled to keep a quiet mind. I make this small observation in confidence."[105] This two-way maneuver of seeking the limelight and

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[103] Charlotte Brontë sent to publishers Aylott & Jones a collection of poems by "Currer, Ellis and Acton Bell," about which decision she explained in the *Biographical Notice* of the volume: "Averse to personal publicity, we veiled our own names under those of Currer, Ellis, and Acton Bell; the ambiguous choice being dictated by a sort of conscientious scruple at assuming Christian names positively masculine, while we did not like to declare ourselves women, because—without at that time suspecting that our mode of writing and thinking was not what is called "feminine"—we had a vague impression that authoresses are liable to be looked on with prejudice; we had noticed how critics sometimes use for their weapon of personality, and for their reward, a flattery, which is not true praise." *The Letters of Charlotte Brontë,* vol.1 (1995) 18.

[104] *The Letters of Charlotte Brontë,* vol. 2 (2000) 62.

[105] *The Letters of Charlotte Brontë,* vol. 2 (2000) 4.

withdrawing from it is reflected especially in Brontë's writing strategies for *Villette,* her most autobiographical novel**.**

The Insubstantial Self in *Jane Eyre*

If trauma is a wound more to the mind and not so much to the body, as Cathy Caruth insists in *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, Theory,* Jane Eyre's walk down memory lane is fraught with the possibility of a double wounding.[106] In Caruth's words:

> The wound of the mind—the breach in the mind's experience of time, self and the world—is not, like the wound of the body, a simple and healable event, but rather an event that is experienced too soon, too unexpectedly, to be fully known and is therefore not available to consciousness until it imposes itself again, repeatedly, in the nightmares and repetitive actions of the survivor.[107]

Freud believed that trauma victims suffer from a "repetition compulsion," a tendency to suffer from repeated wounding from the same situation.[108] Additionally, the victims also relive the trauma in their remembering, which complicates the therapeutic cure. If this is the nature of the double suffering inflicted upon the mind by unprocessed trauma, then Jane, the narrator, is risking a second violence to her psyche in the re-telling of her story.

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[106] Charlotte Brontë, *Jane Eyre* (London: Penguin Classics, 2006). I use the shortened *JE* for reference.

[107] Cathy Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, Theory* (1996) 4.

[108] In Part III in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle,* Freud explains that the repressed idea which gets lodged in the unconscious surfaces in a repetition-compulsion mode when it is least expected, particularly in therapy sessions. Trans. by C. J. M. Hubback. London,Vienna: International Psycho-Analytical, 1922) 17-26.

But, curiously, this seems to empower the narrator, who insists on recalling vividly every painful detail of the events and of the people involved in them.

In the act of narration, which is a kind of recapturing of time and space, Jane recalls her encounters with numerous instances of violence to her psyche—and one of those encounters is with the idea of physical perfection, as upheld by society. For, Beauty, in all its real and metaphorical implication as a kind of violence to the self, is very strongly reiterated all through her narrative. We could note many scenes in the novel where the subject Jane comes into contact with people who are beautiful and powerful, like her cousin Georgiana, her competitor to Mr. Rochester's affection, Blanche Ingram, and the missionary who proposes to her late in the story, St. John Rivers, where the narrator Jane describes vividly the contrast between the plain protagonist and the rest. The narrator, in these scenes, is bent on transferring the trauma caused in subject Jane onto the reader.[109] Brontë's biographer-friend Elizabeth Gaskell writes that Charlotte and her sisters were in the habit of discussing their plots as they were writing and that "it was one of these occasions- that Charlotte determined to make her heroine plain, small, and unattractive, in defiance of the accepted canon" (*Life* 247). Gaskell quotes Brontë's friend and writer, Harriet Martineau, who wrote in her eulogy about her friend, Charlotte thus:

> She once told her sisters that they were wrong—even morally wrong—in making their heroines beautiful as a matter of course. They replied that it was impossible to

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[109] See Rebecca Fraser, *The Brontës: Charlotte Brontë and her Family* (New York: Fawcett Columbine, 1990). It is important to note that the Brontë siblings devoted enormous time and energy on creating the imaginary worlds of "Gondol" and "Angria," which collectively are called their juvenilia. Marxist critic Terry Eagleton notes in a review that the unsuppressed violence in these stories by the adolescent Brontës was a reflection of their own troubled psyches. Terry Eagleton, "Nothing Nice About Them," *LRB,* Vol. 32, No.21.4 November 2010.

> make a heroine interesting on any other terms. Her answer was, 'I will show you a heroine as plain and as small as myself, who shall be as interesting as any of yours.'[110]

It is also well-known that Brontë suffered from acute self-consciousness about her own looks and height, so it not surprising that she wanted to exorcize this fact by using her alter ego, Jane, as her medium. In her biography, Gaskell gives her first impression when meeting Brontë:

> She is (as she calls herself) *undeveloped*, thin, and more than half a head shorter than I am; soft brown hair, not very dark; eyes (very good and expressive, looking straight and open at you) of the same color as her hair; a large mouth; the forehead square, broad, and rather overhanging ….[111]

Thus, the choice of a plain heroine is one more example of her own experience intruding into Brontë's textual space and shaping her autofiction.

Turning to *Jane Eyre*, from the earliest childhood memories of a miserable existence as the impecunious, unattractive child in the Reed home, Beauty is a serious threat to Jane. The looking-glass and the gaze collude in effecting a trauma on the plain child Jane, whom even the servants treat in a cavalier fashion. In the famous scene in the Red room, the child Jane ponders on her existence when comparing herself to her beautiful cousin Georgina:

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[110] Elizabeth Gaskell, *The Life of Charlotte Brontë* (1996) 247.

[111] Elizabeth Gaskell, *The Life of Charlotte Brontë* (1996) 353.

> Why was I always suffering, always browbeaten, always accused, forever condemned? Why could I never please?....Georgiana, who had a spoiled temper, a very acrid spite, a captious and insolent carriage, was universally indulged. Her beauty, her pink cheeks and golden curls, seemed to give delight to all who looked at her, and to purchase indemnity for every fault. (*JE* 18)

This revolt in the young Jane's heart, narrated by the adult Jane, carries an emotional intensity that is difficult to ignore as the laments of a punished child.[112] The young Jane is confronted with a world where notions of fair play and justice seem perversely twisted by a capricious Providence. This is a punctual blow, as described by Freud and Caruth, to the psyche, not as one-time accident but as an ongoing event, for the adult Jane experiences a wounding by negation that recurs. For the reader, the burden is felt by the overriding voice of the adult narrator, bent on transferring the anguish of the child sufferer on to the reader.

Later in the novel, in a scene of self-flagellation, Jane, after hearing about the visit of the unsurpassable Blanche Ingram to Thornhill, addresses herself sternly for having foolishly indulged in a self-induced reverie about Mr. Rochester:

> Listen then, Jane Eyre, to your sentence: tomorrow, place the glass before you, and draw in chalk your own picture, faithfully, without softening one defect; omit no harsh lines, smooth away no displeasing irregularity; write under it, "Portrait of a Governess, disconnected, poor, and plain." (*JE* 187)

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[112] Elizabeth Rigby's famously critical review of the novel includes her dislike of the child Jane, about whom she writes: "The little Jane, with her sharp eyes and dogmatic speeches, is a being you neither could fondle nor love. There is a hardness in her infantine earnestness, a frightful precocity in her reasoning, which repulses all our sympathy." *Quarterly Review* 1848 vol. 84 153-85.

This pitiless self-criticism in drawing attention to a lack of beauty and desirability in Jane, the subject, by Jane, the narrator, has the curious effect of self-doubling, or separation from self, for she is distancing from herself as she stares into the imaginary mirror that reflects back her plainness. Yet we know that this pronouncement of judgment, "arraigned at my own bar" (*JE* 186) as she words it, is not a cry of revulsion from the inside; rather it inveighs against society's idealization of physical beauty (*JE* 187). Here the trauma is induced by unspoken rules of the Victorian society and its strictures on female identity. The alternation between revolt against perceived injustice and a punishing self-judgment, which is the split inside Jane, creates repeated wounds on an already traumatized mind. Yet Jane's ability to neutralize precisely this wound when effected through her retreats into self-imposed obscurity, becomes a deliberate act of subversion of the societal rules.[113]

Trauma to the psyche is explored whenever Jane finds herself in danger of self-effacement through neglect, and the party scene is a good example. The beautiful, important people at the party in Thornhill are described in rich visual detail, as if to reinforce the original incursion of trauma, because Jane, who is also a visual artist, is acutely conscious of physical perfection. But we could, instead, note that this visual capacity offers Jane, the narrator, mastery over others. She can survey everyone, but they cannot see or observe her, for she is sitting hidden from their view, and this panoptical perspective renders her powerful as she surveys them from afar. Words describing physical charms reveal the keen eye of the artist: Blanche has a "noble bust" and "sloping shoulders"; her height is noted, in an inward slight to Jane's small stature; and her "arched

[113] See Beth Newman, "The Use of Obscurity: Jane Eyre, Lucy Snowe, and the Disposition against Display," *Subjects in Display* (Athens, Ohio: Ohio UP, 2004) 24-60.

and haughty lip" is also mentioned (*JE* 200). Later, when Mr. Rochester and the fashionable Blanche perform a charade, Jane notes the quiet interplay between them: "I recall their interchanged glances; and something even of the feeling roused by the spectacle returns in memory at the moment" and in a moment of candor to her reader she declares her love for her employer:

> I have told you, reader that I had learnt to love Mr. Rochester: I could not unlove him now, merely because I might pass hours in his presence and he would never once turn his eyes in my direction—because I saw all his attentions appropriated by a great lady, who scorned to touch me with the hem of her robes as she passed; who, if ever her dark and imperious eye fell on me by chance, would withdraw it instantly as from an object too mean to merit observation. (*JE* 215)

Both Freud and Pierre Janet wrestled with the problem of failure of memory in cathartic cure, and Janet, in particular, thought that traumatic memory was unstable and mutable, where the victim unconsciously repeats the past event, whereas narrative memory allows a redemptive reconstruction of the past.[114] Narrative memory allows the self to separate and allow the refashioning necessary for therapeutic cure, whereas traumatic memory simply re-experiences the event. When Jane retells this party scene, traumatic memory collides into narrative memory, with the real possibility that the immersion of the self in past events might become detrimental to the self in the present.

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[114] Ruth Leyes traces the history of how psychoanalysts looked at traumatic and narrative memory over a period of time in "Traumatic Cures: Shell, Shock, Janet, and the Question of Memory" *Trauma: A Genealogy* (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 2000).

When narrating the marriage proposal from St. John Rivers, Jane describes the Calvinist St. John's "Greek face;" like the Keatsian urn, the face is wrought of marble, although "beautiful in harmony," and it is cold and unmoving (*JE* 396).[115] Her rejection of him is two-fold: first is her repulsion for his repression of passion; second, is her disdain for his displacement of human passion by a cold spirituality.[116] She rejects his proposal of marriage and says to him: "If I were to marry you, you would kill me" (*JE* 475). And later when she fears the powers of his persuasion, she says, "my iron shroud contracted me; for persuasion advanced with slow, sure steps" and here, the narrator combines the imagery of religion and death—two clear dangers to her sense of the self (*JE* 475). Additionally, Jane's use of words denoting death and burial is very significant for anybody studying the text as a memoir of mourning. One sees similarly suggestive words in *Villette* where the narrator Lucy Snowe often evokes sepulchral metaphors for her conditions; Brontë drew upon similar images when describing her own conditions in life. In Brontë's letter to Ellen, she writes about feeling oppressed in Haworth: "there was a time when Haworth was very pleasant place to me, it is not so now—I feel as if we were all buried here—I long for travel—to work for a life of action…."[117] In *Jane Eyre,* St. John is thus a bigger threat to her identity and selfhood than Rochester is. But, St. John is also banished from the

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[115] See Kate Millet's segment on *Villette* for a discussion on a particular kind of wounding experienced by both Jane Eyre and Lucy Snowe when the handsome men they encounter do not find them sexually attractive. Millet notes how "Brontë was perhaps the first woman writer who ever admitted in print that women find men beautiful" and to frankly discuss female desire when faced with attractive men like St. John Rivers in *Jane Eyre* and Dr. John in *Villette. Sexual Politics* (New York: Avon Books, 1970)140-147.

[116] St. John Rivers is modelled after James Taylor, the manager at publishers Smith. Elder, and Company which published *Jane Eyre* and Brontë maintained a friendly correspondence with Taylor till his departure to India in 1851. Biographical Notes, *The Letters of Charlotte Brontë,* vol. 2 (2000).

[117] *The Letters of Charlotte Brontë,* vol. 1 (1995) 385.

narrative, sent off to distant India, much like James Taylor, the publisher friend who influenced Brontë's portrait of the Calvinist preacher.

What the reader can observe is that by the end of the novel, this obscure, plain heroine triumphs over all those who had been threats to her sense of self and autonomy. Caruth, in *Unclaimed Experience,* says that trauma is always mediated through strategies that the self employs for the recalling, telling, and representing. That the psychic renewal of the victim relies on the witness, who must listen, even when the language simultaneously defies and demands understanding, suggests that the retelling can be either enabling or crippling (Caruth 5). Here, Jane's retelling of her story is the enabling kind of trauma, for she is able to effectively reconstitute herself in the process. Seen this way, the obscurity that the child Jane rails against becomes evident later in her adult life, because the narrating act itself affords the adult narrator the enabling mediation to work through the trauma. The unprocessed memory-trace that returns unbidden to haunt the victim has disappeared, leaving the narrator with a refigured self, recreated on the very sites of trauma.[118]

Landscape of the Past

Jane's other rival is Bertha Mason, the famous madwoman in the attic. The narrator positions the subject Jane between the imposingly beautiful Blanche and the animal-like, "Vampyre" Bertha, whose soul-curdling shrieks reverberate through the pages of the text. However, by the end of the chapter, we see Jane quickly taking control of her destiny and

[118] See Freud's lengthy exploration of "repetition compulsion" in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (1922).

deciding to leave for Thornhill: "*My* powers were in play and in force" says the narrator, and thus a fragment of the past becomes an ally in her consolidation of the self in the present. Bertha poses an ontological problem for the narration and so finding a suitable argument for this uncanny presence in this ostensibly realist fiction has proved challenging to students and critics alike. But read as autofiction, this ghost of Rochester's past is not unlike what Brontë experienced in her day-dreams, many of which frightened her (*The Life* 111). Elizabeth Gaskell writes about Charlotte's morbid tendency that sought to day-dream—what she called to "make out."[119] Margaret Smith quotes from Brontë's *Roe Head Journal* about a recurring vision that came to the writer when she was alone in her bedroom, enjoying a moment of "divine leisure" after a hard day's toil. Presumably, this involved writing, reading letters, and day-dreaming:

> What I imagined grew morbidly vivid. I remember I quite seemed to see with my bodily eyes, a lady standing in the hall of a Gentleman's house as if waiting for someone…. She was very handsome—it is not often we can form from pure idea faces so individually fine (1:5).[120]

This ghostly tenor is textualized in *Jane Eyre* as a haunting presence. Turning to the dark side of the voice that speaks from the past, Freud uses the phrase "daemonic power" to describe the sufferer's disrupted temporality, thus effectively situating the haunting traumas in the unsolvable past (*Beyond* 22). Further, Abraham and Torok's work on the intergenerational phantom offers psychoanalytical insight for the presence of the uncanny

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[119] See the section, "Nervous Terrors" in *The Life of Charlotte Brontë* (1996) 109-112.

[120] Margaret Smith, ed., *The Letters of Charlotte Brontë*, vol. 1 (1995) 5.

in Jane's narrative.[121] In their rereading of Freud's uncanny in connection to repressed memories, Abraham and Torok suggest that the "unrepresentable" or "untranslatable" trauma, which is hidden in the crypt or vault of the psyche, returns to haunt the victim as the intergenerational phantom manifesting itself as a gap. They write about unacknowledged mourning:

> The words that cannot be uttered, the scenes that cannot be recalled, the tears that cannot be shed—everything will be swallowed along with the trauma that led to the loss. Swallowed and preserved. Inexpressible mourning erects a secret tomb inside the subject […] Sometimes in the dead of night […] the ghost of the crypt comes back to haunt the cemetery guard, giving him strange and incomprehensible signals, making him perform bizarre acts, or subjecting him to unexpected sensations.[122]

They write that the crypt of the traumatized mind holds familial secret, which they call "phantom," that locks the patient behind inaccessible graves. In their analysis, all traumas carry the residue (the phantom) of parental suffering experienced as the gap, or the unknown. If so, Bertha could be read as the intergenerational phantom from Jane's past—the maternal figure who symbolizes all women's cryptic mourning that is compelled to internal silence and madness. This relates to Gilbert and Gubar's observations in *The Madwoman in the Attic*, where they suggest that Bertha is Jane's suppressed Other whose figurative role in the plot is to be the avenging mother. Reading the "spectral selves of

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[121] Nicolas Abraham and Maria Torok, *The Shell and the Kernel,* vol. 1, Nicholas T. Rand, ed., and trans., (1994) 170-176.

[122] *The Shell and the Kernel,* vol. 1 (1994) 130.

Charlotte Brontë" hidden in the plots of her novels, they argue that her suppressed self surfaces in unusual ways. They speculate that women writers are often haunted by their lack of foremothers and that this gap emerges in rebellious ways in their texts.[123] Bertha then, is the haunting daemonic power who circumscribes the narrative of Jane and Rochester. That the encounter with the "daemonic" occurs in Thornhill, home of the sexually disturbing Rochester, is an interesting complication. Thornhill, as one of the memory-sites, seen through Hartman's theories, becomes doubly relevant, because Jane experiences her many surreal and dislocating dreams. But Thornhill is where the powerless Jane is subjected to psychosexual trauma. This is also the site of a heightened masochism, evidenced in the dialogues between Jane and Rochester.

The past as viable landscape in this text helps the narrator play with the poetics of dislocation, but it unsettles the reader at the same time through the many disjunctions it creates. Geoffrey Hartman, writing about Wordsworth, sees the processing of trauma through the sedimentation of memory, where the inassimilable parts of the past become part of the landscape and nature.[124] Hartman says that Wordsworth's unique contribution to Romanticism was in the way he "naturally brought perception and consciousness together"

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[123] Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar. *The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination* (New Haven: Yale UP, 1979) 311-399. Also see Marianne Hirsch's psychoanalytical rereading of Austen, Brontë, Eliot and other women writers from nineteenth-century, where she wonders if the absence of maternal figures in their texts can be understood in the context of the structure of the novel itself, and the social conditions that shaped it. In this context, Jane's motherlessness is seen as both subverting and capitulating to the male-centered plots of the era. "Monstrous Mothers and Motherless Daughters" *Mother/Daughter Plot: Narrative, Psychoanalysis, Feminism* (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1989) 43-67.

[124] Hartman says that in his recall of the past Wordsworth brought together nature consciousness and self-consciousness, thus ineluctably conjoining the exterior world with the interior. "Wordsworth Revisited," *Unremarkable Wordsworth* (1987) 3.

as nobody else had done before (Introduction xxv). It is evident that Wordsworth wove his temporal musings into every fresh poem that he wrote, lacing his latent memories of childhood and adolescence with the narrative present, thus revising his self-understanding in the process. A similar threading of the past and present happens in Brontë's text, with a narrator whose desire for self-constitution is shaped by her desire for authority and truth-telling, especially in her selective recall and repression as she returns to the sites of trauma.

Read this way, Jane's vivid descriptions of nature draws attention to its symbolic and ritualistic myth-like quality. Jane borrows from other literary genres, like folklore, gothic tales and myths, and aestheticizes them into her own narration, as in the scene where she meets Mr. Rochester for the first time. Here, flouting every novelistic convention, she presents the hero: "Had he been a handsome, heroic-looking young man, I should not have dared to stand thus questioning him against his will, and offering my services unasked" (*JE* 134). The context and setting seem to evoke an archetypal hero, but the reader's expectation is thwarted by the unconventional narrator's disregard for generic decorum. The text is full of allusions to myths and folktales about the natural world, which plays a significant role in propelling the narrative forward. For example, the chestnut tree, which in the narrator's mind is a symbol of the love of Jane and Rochester, is reduced to charred wood just when their mutual passion is about to reach a resolution, thus portending the doom of their union even before it has been allowed to surface (*JE* 296). Or perhaps this is really Jane's way of externalizing her desire to distance herself from Rochester, whose sexual power is overwhelming her autonomy.

Earlier, in the love scene in the orchard that is described in all its fecundity and sensual imagery, nature becomes an active participant in the narrative (*JE* 249). This scene

in the garden follows Bertha's brother Mason's violent encounter with his sister, and so feels like an Edenic interlude, where "all is real, sweet, and pure" as Rochester says when inviting Jane into it. This scene is theatrically set up as an antidote to the previous one in the dark room, where Bertha, the half-woman, half-animal, violently attacks her own brother, drawing blood. The seductive, yet innocent garden is a prelapsarian world, with "apple-trees, pear-trees, and cherry trees on one side, and a border on the other full of all sorts of old-fashioned flowers, stocks, sweet williams, primroses, pansies, mingled with southernwood, sweet-briar and various fragrant herbs," and Mr. Rochester asks temptingly, "Jane, will you have a flower?" (*JE* 251). As they walk together they reach an arbor with a rustic seat and Mr. Rochester says, "Here, Jane, is an arbor; sit down" (*JE* 251). This invitation follows the poetic convention of Romantic poetry, where in an apostrophe to the traveler, the poet draws attention to a particularly beautiful spot that has great symbolic and moral meaning.[125] Brontë was influenced by the Romantics, especially their structuring of landscape and nature as special categories for shaping moral sensibilities. Hovering between two generic worlds— the gothic and the Victorian—Thornhill holds the possibility of the Romantic sublime and a particular kind of sexual trauma for Jane, since it is the seat of Rochester's power, and its ruin at the end of the narrative is a wish fulfillment for Jane. This perverse desire reflects Jane's interiority, which is ruled by contradictory impulses of passion and reason, self-governance and romance, despite the desire inherent in her retelling. Her *bildung* or self-evolution is carefully positioned against the death, ruin

[125] See Geoffrey H. Hartman's chapter, "Inscriptions and Romantic Nature Poetry" in *Unremarkable Wordsworth* (1987) 62-78.

and decay of others, which work to consolidate her position, according to Karen Chase.[126] Thornhill's ruin coincides with Jane gaining economic competency.

The red-room episode is a violent landscape that mirrors Jane's surreal paintings that impress Rochester so well. This surrealization is an effort to distance oneself from monstrosities, when reality becomes a burden too hard to bear.[127] This is the room in the attic where young Jane is locked up by nurse Bessie following an altercation between Jane and her aggressive cousin John (*JE* 16). Jane recalls that her beloved uncle had died in this room when she thinks she sees ghostly images in the ornate mirror hanging in the dark room. She desperately cries out to be let out, ultimately fainting, and in a dramatic turn of events Bessie nurses her back to good health tenderly. Jane assures the reader that "no severe or prolonged bodily illness followed this incident of the red-room," but attests to its traumatic "reverberation to this day" (*JE* 25). The red-room is more a place of traumatic memory than a physical landscape, even though its physical characteristics are painstakingly documented. To revisit the red-room episode, before she gets locked up in the chamber of death that is the red-room, Jane is brutalized by her cousin John. Jane narrates: "I knew he would strike, and while dreading the blow, I mused on the disgusting and ugly appearance of him who would presently deal it. I wonder if he read that notion in my face; for, all at once, without speaking, he struck suddenly and strongly" (*JE* 11). Both

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[126] Karen Chase, *Eros and Psyche: The Representation of Personality in Charlotte Brontë, Charles Dickens, and George Eliot* (London: Methuen, 1984) 77.

[127] See Carol H. MacKay, "Surrealization and the Redoubled Self: Fantasy in *David Copperfield* and *Pendennis*," *Dickens Studies Annual* 14 (1985), for a reading that suggests that the monstrous is real life, which when unbearable, is often externalized, but eventually comes back to haunt the subject as surrealized dreams.

physical and verbal violence are described in careful detail. Jane says of the red room: “it was chill, it was solemn, it was silent,” thus passing the dread very effectively to the reader. The narrator further adds, “I see it clearly,” meaning that the sedimentation of memory is not turbid, but rather kept alive by the narrator, who seems to be possessed by an unnatural desire to keep the traumatic memory of the red room fresh. The gothic elements of death, decay and mystery are all present in this scene. But the red-room and the Reeds who commanded it have all been attenuated by the end of the narrative, and Jane is left with her love, strong and self-possessed. Jane comes into inheritance just when she learns that Mr. Rochester’s fortunes are ruined, so when they marry her agency is not threatened. Moreover, the act of narrating helps her therapeutically. The memory-place that was a site of stasis, hindering Jane, the subject, vanishes, leaving her fully healed, thus making it possible for the reader to see how reliving the past can help absorb trauma and heal the psyche, working as a therapeutic and redemptive force.

Jane’s autonomy has been suppressed all through her childhood and adolescence, so she has a proprietary hold over the narrative. Jane, the narrator, must claim her rightful place as the voice of authority over Jane, the character, and when she feels threatened she leaves the textual scene rather abruptly. For example, in the scene where Mr. Rochester shares the story of his past about marrying Bertha Mason, he inserts Jane into his narrative as his childlike and ‘slender” savior, whose sudden appearance into his life intrigues him:

> Impatiently I waited for the evening, when I might summon you to my presence. An unusual – me – a perfectly new character I suspected was yours: I desire to search it deeper and know it better. You entered the room with a look and air at

> once sure and independent: you were quaintly dressed – much as you are now. I made you talk ere long I found you full of strange contrasts. (*JE* 361)

This reinscribing of narrator Jane as a character reduces her autonomy, as in his words, "I made you talk," and so the narrator confides to her reader, "I was experiencing an ordeal: a hand of fiery iron grasped my vitals. Terrible moment: full of struggle, blackness, burning!" with her inner voice asking her to leave with the cautionary "Depart!" (*JE* 363). Quickly Jane retakes the rein of the telling and rejects his proposal to live with him as his mistress: "You make me a liar by such language," thus resisting ventriloquism by others (*JE* 364). This is not dissimilar to her rejection of St. John Rivers when he attempts to circumscribe her even more with his words, "You shall be mine: I shall claim you" (*JE* 464). And like Mr. Rochester with his dangerous persuasion, St. John also attempts to rewrite Jane when he tells her "I have made you my study for ten months" (*JE* 465) and later with the chilling "A part of me you must become" (*JE* 470). But Jane asserts autonomy over this coldly-written script that tries to make her a complementary part of St. John, and rejects his proposal. It is St. John who is made to depart from the scene. If trauma often occurs as a repetition compulsion, then Jane, the victim, seems to be in danger of double wounding. But towards the end of the text Jane seems to have reconstituted herself in her own words, and as such, is able to repulse the dreams of authority a man like St. John may have over her.[128]

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[128] In this psychological study of autobiographical novels, Thomas writes that the subject's desire for autonomy clashes with the dreams of authority of the Victorian society. *Dream of Authority: Freud and the Fictions of the Unconscious* (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1990).

"I will suggest—in line—with what has recently been claimed by feminist psychiatrists and psychotherapists—that every woman's life contains, explicitly or in implicit ways, the story of a trauma" says Felman in her book *What does a Woman Want?* (16). She explores this assertion by referring to the desire to tell the story by the female subject that results in an alteration in the female listener. In an earlier book, working with clinical psychiatrist, Dori Laub, Felman had studied the power of the listener/witness on fragmented testimony, and how the testimony is made whole again because of the sympathy of the listener/witness.[129] In *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, Freud writes that, since psychoanalysis was an act of interpretation, teaching the patients to abandon resistances and learn to transfer the memory is essential (17). Jane accomplishes this transference by creating her text, thus containing the "repetition-compulsion" that Freud speaks of, for overcoming repressed memory (19). He says further that, "we escape ambiguity if we contrast not the conscious and the unconscious, but the coherent ego and the repressed" (*Beyond* 19). Jane, the narrator, is the coherent subject who takes control of the repressed subjectivity of the victim Jane by way of transference. This transmission to the readers of trauma testimony encourages the performative aspect of this act.

Narration as Performance

Garrett Stewart suggests that the apostrophized asides to the inducted readers in Brontë's novels act as a chorus to the narrative flow. At the same time, he adds that the aural quality of the narration requires an inner ear, threatening to shut out readers not

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[129] Shoshana Felman and Dori Laub, M.D., *Testimony: Crisis of Witnessing in Literature, Psychoanalysis, and History* (New York: Routledge, 1992).

responsive. This, according to Stewart, is a special problem for the readers of Charlotte Brontë's fiction, since it is situated in a particular cultural moment and invests the narratives with "Victorian vibrations" that is outside the reader's temporality.[130] My special preoccupation here is in the way Jane's split selves work together in orchestrated performance, because Brontë's alter ego, Jane, the narrator, is a self-conscious performer, apostrophizing the readers periodically and thus creating a rupture in the telling. Yet, for Jane, the subject, for whom self-effacement is a vital strategy, all performance is shallow. We see this Brontëan dislike of theatrical or superficial women sublimated in *Villette* through Lucy Snowe's description of the famous actress Vashti, for by the time she was writing *Villette,* Brontë had become a sophisticated writer, especially in how she mixed facts with selective memories to finesse her narration. But in *Jane Eyre,* she was intent on writing in a deliberately unvarnished style with the hope of reaching an audience who might value her passionate intensity and her ability "to tell the truth".[131]

In *Jane Eyre,* both Céline Varens and her daughter Adèle are shown in poor light—superficial, and greedy for material things, and eager to perform for others. Ginerva Fanshawe in *Villette* is a portrait of Brontë's Roe Head School classmate, Amelia Walker, a frivolous, rich girl, and this well-known autobiographical information shows the reader that Brontë was not above using her writer's pen to avenge slights in the past.[132] In *Jane*

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[130] Garrett Stewart, "Oh Romantic Reader" in *Dear Reader* (1996) 235-274.

[131] See Editor's Note 9 in *The Letters of Charlotte Brontë,* vol. 1, where a critic writing for *The Morning Advertise* is quoted extolling Brontë's style as "a natural and an unaffected style which the reader finds it impossible to resist' even when it is given occasionally to "melodramatic" effects (1995) 555.

[132] See her letter dated 3rd November 1852 to publisher-friend George Smith about her novelistic strategies in *The Letters of Charlotte Brontë,* vol. 3 (2004) 78.

Eyre, there are many Amelia Walkers. Although our knowledge of Céline comes from Rochester's narration, it is still filtered through Jane's perspective. In the important party scene, Blanche takes part in the game of charades where she is the star performer, and becomes, in Jane's words, "showy but not genuine." She says in the same paragraph, "Miss Ingram was a mark beneath my jealousy: she was too inferior to excite the feeling" and the reader is left thinking the narrator protests too much (*JE* 215). Curiously, Jane does not feel contempt for Rochester for his performing tendencies; the reader learns that he has a great baritone, as we see him participating in the charades as well.

Earlier in the narrative, Adèle sings a song to impress her new tutor, which in Jane's opinion, is clearly unsuitable for a child, and "in very bad taste" (*JE* 121). In the scene when Rochester narrates his dark history about the French performer Céline for whom he had nursed a "*grande passion"* and who treacherously betrayed him, Jane, the narrator, derives great satisfaction in relating all the unsavory details. Her provincialism is evident as she reveals how she feels about the French woman. This is the revenge of the repressed, even though the narrator is true to the events of the past, for in the present moment, it becomes *her* production. In addition, the restoration of desire and identity through language is achieved in other ways, as in Jane's usage of hyperbole, metaphors, intertexuality and other narrative devices, even when she tries to restrain herself. Consider the scene in Miss Temple's room, in Lowood, where the young Jane gives testimony on behalf of herself:

> I resolved in the depth of my heart, that I would be most moderate –most correct; and, having reflected a few minutes in order to arrange coherently what I had to say, I told her all the story of my sad childhood. Exhausted by emotion, my

> language was more subdued than it generally was when it developed that sad theme…Thus restrained and simplified, it sounded more credible…. (*JE* 84)

The fragmentary nature of testimony in need of a sympathetic listener that Felman and Laub speak of can be understood in this scene.[133] Their theory holds that the primary trauma is that of the subject—here, a child whose vulnerability is laid bare—and the secondary trauma is of the listener, and the two are brought together through the bond of testimony (*Testimony* 57-59). We can see how this theory is valid in Jane's telling of her tale. The intense and hyperbolic narration exaggerates the sensation of affect and sentimentality, yet works to elicit suitable responses from the reader. Hartman says that many of the traumatic events in their perpetual yoking to the past split the psyche into the literal and figurative, and we see the figurative represented in language here, which preoccupies Hartman as he writes about the usefulness of trauma theory when reading literature. Hartman's theory holds that the knowledge of trauma, or the knowledge which comes from that source, is composed of two contradictory elements. One is the traumatic event, registered rather than experienced, bypassing perception and consciousness and falling directly into the psyche. The other is a kind of memory of the event in the form of a perpetual troping of it by the bypassed or severely split (dissociated) psyche. On the level of poetics, literal and figurative may correspond to these two types of cognition—in other words, it is when the Freudian repetitive trauma takes place.[134] The haunting experienced

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[133] Shoshana Felman and Dori Laub, M.D., *Testimony: Crisis of Witnessing in Literature, Psychoanalysis, and History* (New York: Routledge, 1992).

[134] Geoffrey Hartman, "Of Traumatic Knowledge and literary Studies" *New Literary History* 26:3 (1995).

by Jane, the subject, relies on the performative capacity of both the narrator, Jane, and of the sympathetic reader. This multiplication of theatrical effects adds to the disjunctions experienced by the reader whose secondary trauma is not trivial.

Reader's Trauma: Bearing Testimony

In Charlotte Brontë's letter to her publishers, Smith, Elder and Co., written on 12th September 1847, she says that she wanted to spare her readers when she did not share all her pain in *Jane Eyre:*

> Perhaps too the first part of "Jane Eyre" may suit the public taste better than you anticipate—for it is true and Truth has a severe charm of its own. Had I told *all* the truth, I might indeed have made it far more exquisitely painful—but I deemed it advisable to soften and retrench many particulars lest the narrative should rather displease than attract. (*Letters* 1:539)

The most painful episode during her early life was losing her older sisters Maria and Elizabeth, both of who died of negligence in the Covent Bridge School, and Brontë based Helen Burns on Maria in an act of homage to her saintly spirit.[135] Brontë responded to her publisher/friend, W. S. Williams on 28th October 1847 about Helen:

> You are right in having faith in the reality of Helen Burns' character. She was real enough: I have exaggerated nothing here: I abstained from recording much that I remember respecting her, lest the narrative should sound incredible. Knowing this, I could not but smile at the quiet, self-complacent dogmatism with which one of the

[135] See the editor's note 6 about Maria and Elizabeth, the two Brontë siblings Margaret Smith, Ed., *The Letters of Charlotte Brontë*, vol. 1 (1995) 541.

> journals lays it down that 'such creations as Helen Burns are very beautiful but very untrue'. (*Letters* 1:553)

The editor's note says that Brontë had confessed to her friend Elizabeth Gaskell that her sister Maria was the original of Helen Burns in *Jane Eyre*, and Gaskell writes in her biography, *The Life of Charlotte Brontë*, that Charlotte's heart "to the latest day on which we met, still beat with unavailing indignation at the worrying and the cruelty to which her gentle, patient, dying sister had been subjected at Cowan Bridge School" (57). At the same time, this retelling is also a therapeutic exercise for the very private writer who resorts to what the critic writing in *Douglas Jerrold's Shilling Magazine* called "extravagant contortions of melodrama."[136]Thus Brontë's privileging of one of the most painful episodes of her early years underscores what sites of memory hold for those who fear amnesia as erasure of the self. [137]

David Lowenthal writes that followers of Rousseau and Wordsworth saw their childhood selves shaping their adult identity, especially in their tendency to see life as an interconnected narrative.[138] He further says that "awareness of memory stimulated degrees of self-consciousness previously unknown, often narcissistic and autobiographical, usually suffused with Romantic sensibility" (Lowenthal 199). Brontë's reiterated memories of her sister Maria finds new life in the Helen Burns episode in *Jane Eyre* and draw on the

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[136] *The Letters of Charlotte Brontë*, vol. 1, EN 7 (1995) 558.

[137] For the idea of sites of memory, see Pierre Nora, *Les Lieux de Mémoire* (New York: Columbia UP, 1997). Also see David Lowenthal's finely articulated exposition on how particular spaces accrue symbolic meaning in "Past Time and Present Place: Landscape and Memory," *The Geographical Review* 45.1 (1975) 1-36.

[138] David Lowenthal, *The Past is Foreign Country* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1985) 199.

tradition of nineteenth-century autobiography but diverge from its male practioners in the way they transfer her trauma onto the reader. Jane, the adult narrator, informs her reader that Helen Burns' cemetery is in Brocklebridge: "For fifteen years after her death it was only covered by a grassy mound; but now a gray marble tablet marks the spot, inscribed with her name, and the word '*Resurgam*'" (*JE* 98). If amnesiacs fear memory loss, as Lowenthal suggests, then Helen's cemetery is a *lieu de mémoire* for both the narrator and the reader, and a visit to the past here becomes a pilgrimage.[139] Imaginatively reconstructed, Maria's death is processed through a ritualized mourning for Helen Burns, and in this way, Brontë attempts to find resolution when expressing a very private grief through a public, textual self.

In the novel, Helen grows weaker, and Jane and the kind teacher, Miss Temple, draw together to nurse the dying girl. The narrator spares no emotion. Characters, nature, and events are constructed with a blinding intensity in order to effect maximum secondary trauma on the reader who must bear the testimony. For example, in Miss Temple's room, the narrator says, with heightened sentiment: "Helen she held a little longer than me; she let her go more reluctantly. It was Helen her eye followed to the door; it was for her she a second time breathed a sad sigh; for her she wiped a tear from her cheek" (*JE* 87). The description of Helen's sweet, angelic nature and her difficult relationship with the school authorities,[140] whose active neglect of her disease causes her sudden death, all bear

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[139] In Brontë's letter from Brussels to Emily (2.9.1843) she writes about visiting the Protestant cemetery where her friend Martha Taylor was buried: "Yesterday I went on a pilgrimage to the cemetery and far beyond it on to a hill where there was nothing but fields as far as the horizon" *The Letters of Charlotte Brontë,* vol. 1 (1995).

[140] Brontë's portrait of the kind teacher is from her time at Cowan Bridge, and this fact is attested by Mrs. Gaskell, who writes that those who had been pupils in Cowan recognized both the kindly Miss Temple and the horrible Miss Scratched –the latter punishes Helen needlessly in the novel—as "they had, before,

imprints of memory-trace that Freud speaks of in *Studies of Hysteria* (285). Helen's "taste of far higher things" is infinitely superior to Jane, as she informs us frankly:

> True, Reader; I knew this and felt this: and though I am a defective being, with many faults and few redeeming points, yet I never tired of Helen Burns; nor ever ceased to cherish for her a sentiment of attachment, as strong, tender, and respectful as any that ever animated my heart." (JE 93)

Here, the overload of affect threatens to ruin the narration, yet, the reader knows at a subconscious level that Helen is about to die soon, and so tolerates the overtly maudlin language. Freud's caution that when the reaction to trauma is suppressed the affect remains united with the memory, is dramatized in this episode (*Studies* 5). Freud writes about his ambivalence regarding the success of hypnosis that in his view "the repressed idea would persist as a memory trace that is weak (has little intensity), while the affect that is torn from it would be used for a somatic intervention".[141] Additionally, Maria Brontë had been a little mother to her siblings since the death of Mrs. Brontë, and so Maria's death brings forth Abraham and Torok's intergenerational phantom that haunts the writer and her text. For the reader, the narrator's memories become sub-texts and inter-texts; the haunting is then, a rewriting.

If trauma is a punctual incursion to the psychic economy as Freud says in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, then language as an instrument of trauma needs attention, for the

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recognized the description of the sweet dignity and benevolence of Miss Temple as only a just tribute to the merits of one whom all that knew her appear to hold in honor; but when Miss Scratched was held up to opprobrium they also recognized in the writer of 'Jane Eyre' as an unconsciously avenging sister of the sufferer." *The Life of Charlotte Brontë,* vol. 1 (1996) 57.

[141] Josef Breuer and Sigmund Freud, *Studies of Hysteria* (London: Hogarth Press, 1955) 285.

text is full of wounding language. Jane is called an "animal," "rat," an "infantine Guy Fawkes," a "bird," a "heathen" among numerous other pejorative appellations. Even the narrator indulges in trauma-inducing language, perfectly aware of the effect on the reader. Often the language is vivid and descriptive in its attempt at overwhelming the reader. Jane uses metaphors throughout the narration that enrich the sensory aspect of story-telling. Metaphors of binaries abound—fire/ice, master/slave, passion/repression, and many more. This evocative language also makes it easy to see the religious-sexual tensions scattered throughout the tale, which is often laid out on a male-female grid. Mr. Brocklehurst as the threatening head of Lowood School is a metonymy for Victorian patriarchy, whose cruel sadism de-feminizes and de-sexualizes the young girls in his charge.[142] The trauma is palpable in every page where he appears, and the reader is not spared.

This collaboration of religion and patriarchy, stifling in its cruelty, is dramatized in the proposal of marriage by St. John to Jane, who realizes that his brand of altruism is in reality ownership, born of extreme religious sensibility. Yet the dialectic of free will and submission, inherent in most religious experiences, runs all through the narrative. Delirium, fever, and burning are words repeated with great regularity, and they become in the text, religious-sexual metaphors. Jane herself uses religious-sexual imagery to describe her passion for Rochester in the scene where she is "gazing' as is her wont, on her favorite subject and she says, "I looked, and had an acute pleasure in looking- a precious yet

[142] It has been suggested that Charlotte's memory of Cowan School was highly exaggerated, like Dickens' agonized recall of the year working in the blacking factory that was to haunt him for the rest of his life, but Mrs. Gaskell's biography disputes this suggestion.

poignant pleasure; pure gold, with a steely point of agony" (*JE* 202). The trauma in Jane's retelling is powerfully evocative of similarly complex passions.

How does Jane turn this auto-narration into a conscious re-possession? Felman writes in *What Does a Woman Want?*: "I will suggest *that none of us, as women, has as yet, precisely, an autobiography.* Trained to see ourselves as objects and to be positioned as the Other, estranged to ourselves, we have a story that by definition cannot be self-present to us, a story that, in other words, is not a story, but *must become* a story" (14). The act of narration by Jane, then, is an act of self will, which is contradicted by Jane's desire to submit to Rochester. Others have seen this as a master-pupil synthesis, with both Jane and Rochester taking turns in the dyad.[143] In the scene where Rochester impersonates a gypsy woman and tries to "read" her face, he imagines her face speaking to him, revealing all her mysteries, and Jane senses danger. Lulled by this narration of her own tale, Jane says," Where was I? Did I wake or sleep? Had I been dreaming? Did I dream still?"—all suggesting her languor and weakness, and we are alerted to the danger of appropriation of her testimony (*JE* 233). But this is a woman's narrated autobiography, where instead of the traditional male subject holding the female in thrall, there is instead the voice of the female narrator as the producer of her own life. "The narcissistic impulse of the ego that partially neutralizes the death-instinct thus extends the instincts of self-preservation" says Freud, and we see Jane's writing or auto-fiction as a self-preserving, but narcissistic endeavor (*Studies* 64). The focalization of the self is always narcissistic but, for the subject to

[143] Patricia Menon, *Austen, Eliot, Charlotte Bronte and the Mentor-Lover* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003).

accomplish reconstruction through transference, a certain degree of narcissism is necessary.

How does time figure in trauma and theory, and how does it impact auto-fiction? Readers encounter fragmentation frequently in the text, where Jane, the narrator, undergoes varying degrees of trauma and shifts in temporalities that are felt as invasions of the self by Jane, the subject. Julia Kristeva in *Intimate Revolt* argues that a breach of time is a therapeutic necessity—both in structural retelling of the story and the subjective retelling of it in memory recall (39). In her study on trauma she writes that the linear temporality maintained in the narrative breaks the power of the memory-trace, where the act of repetition is unaware of time and marks the psyche in an unsettling and disturbing atemporality. She says: "I am among those who believe that alongside remembering, which inscribes the past in the flow of consciousness (in linear time), alongside repeating, which signals the indestructible drive or the wish for pleasure, working-through is the central process around which the other two are articulated" (*Intimate* 36). Then this working-through, which is a narration of repressed memories, breaks time as it exists outside time.

In Jane's narration, she constantly moves in and out of the narrative temporality, as in her proleptic and analeptic asides to the reader, but more importantly, we note that her resistance stops the flow of time and freezes it while she works through her trauma.[144] In chapter 11, the narrator indulges in a meta-narrative moment:

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[144] The entire text is an exercise in analepsis or flashback. For examples of narrative prolepsis, note in the very first chapter (pp.11), Jane mentions that she discovered later as an adult that the stories Bessie would tell the children in the Reed home included Richardson's *Pamela* and *Henry, Earl of Moreland* ; on page 98, Jane describes Helen Burns's last day and adds that her grave is in Brocklebridge Churchyard, which she says gets a marble headstone fifteen years later; in Chapter 10 (pp.98), Jane calmly glides over eight years of

> A chapter in a novel is something like a scene in a play; and when I draw up the curtain this time, reader, you must fancy you see a room in the George Inn at Millcote, with such a carpet, such furniture, such ornaments on the mantelpiece, such prints, including a portrait of George the Third, and another of Prince of Wales, and a representation of the death of Wolfe." (*JE* 111)

This sudden distancing collapses narrative time, characters, and readers in one economical move. She adds, "Reader, though I look comfortably accommodated, I am not very tranquil in my mind," and the narrator's use of the present tense binds all three temporalities for the reader. Additionally, we see the narrator actively experiencing the events even as she comments on them, which in turn creates intimacy and identification for the reader. This multi temporal quality of the narration conscripts the reader, who is caught in narrative time while having to deal at the same time with a narrator bent on revisiting the past in order to forgive, as in the return to Gateshead episode Jane confronts for the final time, her aunt Mrs. Reed.

In this episode, Jane tells the reader of future changes to Georgiana and Eliza, jumping forward in the narration. While this permits the necessary mediation by way of transference and testimony to the narrator, it creates narrative disjunction for the reader. In addition, in the retelling of these sequences, narrator Jane revisits through this self-doubling her own repetitive trauma, creating a strange double loop in time. But her sense

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her life in the newly improved Lowood School, pushing the narrative into the future in one sentence; and in the dramatic scene when she goes to see her dying aunt Mrs. Reed (pp.279), Jane informs the reader that her cousin Georgina married a wealthy man sometime later in life and that her cousin Eliza took the veil.

of dislocation returns when she is back in Mrs. Reed's house, the locus of her original "gaping wound," and she writes:

> The same hostile roof now again rose before me: my prospects were doubtful yet; and I had yet an aching heart. I still felt as a wanderer on the face of the earth; but I experienced firmer trust in myself and my own powers, and less withering dread of oppression. The gaping wound of my wrongs, too, was now quite healed; and the flame of resentment extinguished. (*JE* 262)

Later, when she meets Mrs. Reed, the old trauma threatens to overwhelm her self-control and she says, "my tears had risen, just as in childhood: I ordered them back to their source" (*JE* 266). The adult Jane's retelling offers her healing, yet it is with a certain quiet satisfaction she shares her sense of self-mastery in the presence of her childhood tormentors.

In chapter 14, when Mr. Rochester unburdens his heavy past onto the slender shoulders of Jane, he compares his own turbid memory with what he sees as her "little girl" innocence: "I envy you your peace of mind, your clean conscience, your unpolluted memory. Little girl, a memory without blot or contamination must be an exquisite treasure – an inexhaustible source of pure refreshment: is it not?" (*JE* 158). The "salubrious" and "limpid" memory of his youth is replaced with a "fetid puddle," he says, to which Jane responds with authorial agency:

> It seems to me, that if you tried hard, you would be in time find it possible to become what you yourself would approve; and that if from this day you began with resolution to correct your thoughts and actions, you would in a few years have laid

> up a new and stainless store of recollections, to which you might revert with pleasure. (*JE* 161)

This is exactly what Jane has managed to accomplish by her reconstruction and manipulation of narrative memory with the distance afforded by time. In the scene when Helen dies in Lowood, she informs the reader about Helen Burns' tombstone that for "fifteen years after her death it was only covered by a grassy mound" in a prolepsis (*JE* 98). Later in chapter 10, the narrator says:

> This is not to be a regular autobiography; I am only bound to invoke memory where I knew her responses will possess some degree of interest; therefore I now pass a space of eight years in silence; a few lines only are necessary to keep up the links of connection." (*JE* 99)

Since trauma texts typically exhibit narrative rupture and resist formal features of linearity, Jane's moving back and forward reflects her breach with time. The tomb of Helen Burns represents mute trauma for young Jane who as a reconstituted adult gains mastery over the past. Thus, the belatedness at the heart of Jane's traumatic experience with the still unassimilable parts forms part of narrative cure. Brontë's text, as an imagined representation of a fictional character, Jane, helps restore the writer's sense of justice. It is the return of the repressed, cloaked though it is as fiction. Gaskell writes that Cowan Bridge School closed down under scrutiny after the publication of *Jane Eyre* and this would have given Brontë no small satisfaction.

Trauma theory, in all its variegated formulations, helps in marking the two-fold nature of trauma: one is the event and the other, the memory of the event. And I have attempted to show in my reading of *Jane Eyre* through the lens of trauma theory that Jane

ultimately gains a sense of unity and self-integration in the transference of her testimony to her reader. Through this endeavor, Jane's creator, Brontë, attempts to reach her imagined reader while sublimating her personal suffering as those of Jane's. In this retold tale, the poetics of dislocation is harnessed for a rewriting or reconstruction of the self. Here, the psyche is the text, and the writing of this text is an act of liberation from silence and capitulation. If desire is the catalyst of conflict as Nancy Armstrong suggests in her examination of the dialectic of individualism and self-abnegation, then Jane has achieved her self construction through her empowering desire to write and tell (*Desire* 79). Jane's narration, then, mediates between female subjectivity and the masculine-directed outside world, where the tension of the contradictory pulls of repression and self-assertion battle with one another. In inducting the reader into this conflict, and in her transference of her memory-trace, Jane gains mastery over herself and others. In this way, the writing of the repressed becomes a strong statement of female insubordination. Yet, Brontë is able to achieve a reconstitution of the self, alternating between the role of the subject and that of the narrator/producer. Through self-referentiality, an integrated whole is created from the fragments of the past; and in doing so, both the writing of the text and the imagined reader effect a healing.

The disabling punctual blow to the psyche that forces the mind to revisit the past that Caruth talks about is channeled into the production of this life-writing, regardless of the trap of the figurative that might shackle its authentic power, as Hartman cautions. Since the subjective reconstruction takes place in the presence of the witness/reader to the testimony, we sense the role of the dual responsibility of the witness/reader that is Felman's special preoccupation. All three critics have positioned the crisis in historical

narratives with the ethical responsibilities of the witness/reader. In reading *Jane Eyre* as a trauma narrative, and in accepting the responsibility of bearing witness, we collaborate in Brontë's reconstruction of herself. Felman quotes Simone de Beauvoir's response to Sartre, who suggested to her that she became a feminist by writing *The Second Sex*, to which she replied thus: "I *became* a feminist when the book was read and started to exist for other women" (*What Does* 12). The bond of reading then becomes collaboration in the act of becoming, and we read Jane's tale as Brontë's suppressed plot, deepening this bond. In so doing, we effect a re-reading or a re-visioning that is restorative.

Strategies of Self Repression in *Villette*

Charlotte Brontë's Byronic protagonists seemed particularly challenging to a society whose reading tastes inclined toward writers like Austen and Gaskell, and this resistance was reflected in the stormy reaction to *Jane Eyre.* In particular, the sharp reactions emanating from important literary figures and critics alike were deeply wounding to Charlotte, resulting in her desire to repress her passionate side within a textual world.[145] Jayne Mansfield writes that the Brontës reacted strongly to criticisms, which suggested that their "vulgarity" and "coarseness" came from the provincial North where they lived.[146]

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[145] Kate Millet notes how criticism from male critics had always been unfair to the Brontës: "Literary criticism of the Brontës has been a long game of masculine prejudice wherein the player either proves they can't write and are hopeless primitives, whereupon the critic sets himself up like a schoolmaster to edit their stuff and point out where they went wrong, or converts them into case histories from the wilds, occasionally prefacing his moves with a few pseudo-sympathetic remarks about the windy house on the moors, or cold maidhood, following with an attack on every truth the novels contain, waged by anxious pedants who fear Charlotte might "castrate" them or Emily "unman" them with her passion." *Sexual Politics* (1970) 147.

[146] See Jayne Mansfield, "The Critics, the Brontës, and the North" in *Brontë Studies* 36: 2 (2011) 176-183.

Charlotte, especially, was deeply troubled by what she perceived as unfair treatment by critics. I suggest that it is the trauma of negative criticism that led Brontë to write her most autobiographical work, *Villette,* in an oppositional vein. Interestingly, *Villette* is seen by critics as an unevenly written novel when compared to *Jane Eyre*, perhaps due to the many generic codes she disregarded in the text.[147] One notes the many destabilizing strategies in *Villette*, including an unreliable, duplicitous narrator who manipulates the narrative, a deliberate muddling of the text via submerged plots, and characters that slyly resemble real people in Brontë's life, as if in a *roman à clef*.

More importantly, *Villette* refutes narrative closure, leaving the readers perplexed and dissatisfied about the fate of M. Paul Emmanuel, who is engaged to be married to the protagonist Lucy Snowe. In the earlier version of the manuscript, he is clearly shown as having drowned at sea because his creator felt she had given him the proper ending. This overturning of novelistic expectations was a deliberately defiant act by Brontë, who explained her reasons to her publisher-friend George Smith in a long letter.

> With regard to that momentous point—M. Paul's fate— in case anyone in future should request to be enlightened thereon—they may be told that it was designed that every reader should settle the catastrophe for himself, according to the quality

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[147] Critics reacting to *Jane Eyre* and *Villette* have for the most part been divided about the merits of each novel, but for structural unity, *Jane Eyre* was considered superior. G. H. Lewes writes in *The Leader* of 12 Feb.1853 that *Villette* lacks the "unity and progression of interest of Jane Eyre." (Editor's Note 2 in *The Letters of Charlotte Brontë*, vol. 3 (2004) 152-53. But *Jane Eyre* generated many positive reactions. In a letter to W. S. Williams, Brontë talks about the positive reviews in the *Dublin University Magazine*, *The Critic and the Athenaeum* (Vol 1 p.459). Editor Margaret Smith notes how the *Dublin University Magazine* praised *Jane Eyre*'s "remarkable beauty" and that the heroine was like George Sand's Consuello, but "superior to her" (*The Letters of Charlotte Brontë,* Vol.1 EN 1), 550. Smith notes that in *Fraser's Magazine* G. H. Lewes writes with great appreciation about *Jane Eyre* and the writer's "quiet truth and finds the style superior to Sand and Balzac, so Brontë's emotional reactions to negative criticism was unusually sensitive.

> of his disposition, the tender or remorseless impulse of his nature; 'drowning and Matrimony are the fearful alternatives.' The Merciful—like Miss Mulock, Mr. Williams, Lady Harriet St. Claire and Mr. Alexander Frazer—will of course choose the former and milder doom—drown him to put him out of pain. The cruel-hearted will on the contrary pitilessly impale him on the second horn of the dilemma—marrying him without ruth or compunction to that—person—that—that—individual—"Lucy Snow."[148]

In biographer Elizabeth Gaskell's version of this story, Charlotte's father Patrick Brontë is said to have intervened on behalf of her readers, and had been successful in his persuasion, because Charlotte slightly altered the language in her brief final chapter titled "Finis" so as to allow readers the freedom to imagine what they wish about M. Paul and the ship that carries him home from Antigua. My aim is to show that Brontë's contrarian impulse was a result of her emotional investment in a particular kind of reader whose intuitive empathy she sought when writing this very personal story. Garrett Stewart writes that this kind of emotional appeal is tantamount to inscribing the reader into the text as character, especially since writers do conjure up a certain sort of reader who is attentive to subtle cues in the text (*Dear Reader* 52).

This autofiction is guided by the voice of a perverse and Sphinx-like narrator, Lucy Snowe, who acts to subvert every novelistic model via a mode of self-repression. Here, the textual and narrative worlds converge, but without offering a beginning, middle, and an end that would help readers make sense of the world. This autofiction is written

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[148] *Letters of Charlotte Brontë,* vol.3 (2004) 141-3.

against the grain of the marriage plot novel, and so all conventions regarding domestic fiction are dismissed.[149] More importantly, surveillance of the self by the community is countered by the canny narrator who desires to remain inscrutable till the end. The community seems to include the imagined readership as well. In this text, the monologic first-person narration helps subvert outside authority, with Lucy Snowe holding (and withholding) all the secrets. Additionally, *Villette* provided Brontë with the textual space for articulating her hidden desires for her French teacher, M. Constantin Héger, to whom she wrote passionate letters after her unhappy return to Haworth. Margaret Smith writes that Mme Héger was certain that Charlotte had taken offense when she was dismissed from the pensionnat and that she would take measures to hurt them, since Charlotte had exclaimed "Je me vengerai" when she left. Smith adds that the Héger family may have recognized their fears after reading *Villette*.[150] This fictional autobiography is written in a mode of vengeance, with Brontë wielding her pen to right past wrongs, as in the case of Mrs. Héger, the real-life model for the unlikeable Mme. Beck who inserts herself between Lucy and her mentor-lover, M. Paul. In real-life, Mrs. Héger made it known to Charlotte that she was unwelcome in the school, which precipitated Charlotte's painful departure to England. In a letter to her friend Ellen Nussey, Charlotte writes about her pain in parting from Mons Héger: "I suffered much before I left Brussels—I think however long I live I

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[149] Emily W. Heady suggests in her article, "Must I render an Account?": Genre and Narration in Charlotte Brontë's *Villette"* that Brontë's intention in mixing genres in the novel was to contest Victorians' materialist ideology, in addition to redrawing attention to a more abstract inner life, exemplified by Lucy Snowe's life of moral rectitude. *Journal of Narrative Theory*. 36.3 (2006): 341-364.

[150] Biographical Notes, *The Letters of Charlotte* Brontë, vol. 1 (1995) 63-71.

shall not forget what the parting with Mons Héger cost me—It grieved me so much to grieve him who has been true and kind and disinterested a friend."[151]

This autofiction was read like a *roman à clef* by those who were familiar with the real people portrayed in the novel, and as a consequence, increased the Brontë mystique.[152] William Rathbone Gregg wrote for *The Edinburgh Review* for the issue on April 1853 thus:

> It is clear at a glance that the groundwork and many of the details of the story are autobiographic; and we never read a literary production which so betrays at every line the individual character of the writer. Her life has evidently been irradiated with scanty sunshine, and she is beside disposed to look at life rather pertinaciously on the shady side of every landscape.[153]

In her first fictional autobiography, *Jane Eyre*, Charlotte Brontë, new to the world of literary criticism, boldly expressed the hidden and forbidden female desires through her governess-heroine. This was an act of literary and social delinquency, since both Jane and Rochester refuse to conform to societal expectations. But as the maelstrom of negative criticism that followed *Jane Eyre* threatened her sense of the self, Brontë decided to overturn reader expectation in *Villette*. Her narrator, Lucy Snowe, is shown to be a model of rectitude and self-discipline. In other words, Lucy is the antithesis of quick-talking, impulsive Jane Eyre. Brontë's decision to make Lucy Snowe boring and ordinary brought

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[151] *The Letters of Charlotte Brontë*, vol.1 (1995) 341.

[152] See Kauffman for the impact of the amorous master letters that shaped Brontë's novels in the chapter "Jane Eyre: The Ties that Bind," *Discourses of Desire: Gender, Genre and Epistolary Fictions* (Ithaca: Cornell U P, 1986) 159-202.

[153] *The Letters of Charlotte Brontë*, vol. 3 (2004) 380-90.

on the expected reaction from critics about which she notes in her letter to Ellen Nussey: "Lucy Snowe should not occupy the pedestal to which "Jane Eyre" was raised by some injudicious admirers. She is where I meant her to be, and where no charge of self-laudation can touch her." Clearly, Brontë wishes to wield her writer's agency, but this letter also reveals her deliberate decision to try and make Lucy as unappealing as possible.[154]

I argue here that due to what she perceived to be relentless criticism, Brontë deliberately created a perverse and duplicitous narrator in Lucy Snowe, who aggravates her readers even as she endures silent suffering, walled behind the crypt that she painstakingly erects.[155] This silence is a kind of scaffolding by the traumatized narrator, and it is in response to her textual suffocation, while the unwary readers search aimlessly for plot cues (and clues) that do not materialize. Lucy's textual suffocation occurs when she begins to note how she is invisible to those around her, and to counter this textual erasure, she resorts to unreliable narration.[156] In fact, her duplicitous narration is cloaked in a mode of self-repression, her character's habitual state. It is a significant fact that Brontë herself was not above being duplicitous, as in the letter to her friend Ellen about *Villette:* "The book, I think, will not be considered pretentious—nor is it of a character to excite hostility." This goes against the fact that the portrait of Mme Héger was easily recognizable; and editor M.

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[154] *The Letters of Charlotte Brontë,* vol. 3 (2004) 136-7.

[155] The reviewer in the *Guardian* for 23 February 1853 (viii.128) writes that the "somewhat cynical and bitter spirit of Charlotte Brontë's novel is because of her personal circumstances." (*The Letters of Charlotte Brontë*, vol. 3 (2004) 188.

[156] Kate Millet writes about Lucy Snowe thus: "She is a pair of eyes watching society; weighing, ridiculing, judging. A piece of furniture whom no one notices, Lucy sees everything and reports, cynically, compassionately, truthfully, analytically. She is no one, because she lacks any trait that might render her visible: beauty, money, conformity." *Sexual Politics* (1970) 140.

Smith notes how it aroused great hostility in Mme Héger, who read a pirated version of the novel in a French translation, "Bruxelles et Leipzig 1855."[157] Surveillance of the other and self-regulation are the twin principles that contain the textual world of this autofiction, which become a closed system, with the reader written out of the script. Lucy, in her desire to remain veiled to the prying eyes of Mme. Beck, who here stands for the surveilling society, perversely punishes her attentive but curious reader through her ever-increasing retreats into her silent self. This narrator's self-regulation remains intact till the end, with her self-sufficiency keeping the readers resolutely out and, curiously, defeating the purpose of this confessional text.[158]

Subverting Surveillance

In this autofiction, Brontë sets up three overlapping aesthetic strategies for underscoring her alter ego Lucy Snowe's suffering and her bold attempt at textual reconstitution: duplicitous narration as a way to subvert surveillance; mourning the cryptic self; repression as self-actualizing strategy**.** In the *Novel and the Police*, D.A. Miller observes that the world of the fiction of the nineteenth-century resembles the regulated order of the real world of the period. This critical study has transformed our understanding about how nineteenth-century novels think, but more intriguingly, how novels police the world. Miller says that "as it forwards a story of social discipline, the narrative also advances the novel's omniscient word," thereby underscoring how the monologic voice

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[157] *The Letters of Charlotte Brontë,* vol. 3 (2004) 85.

[158] See Gretchen Braun, "A Great Break in the Common Course of Confession": Narrating Loss in Charlotte Brontë's *Villette*." *ELH* 78.1 (2011): 189-212.

becomes the tool for social control in the world of the novel (27). Furthermore, he suggests that the tight economy of surveillance and subversion is often portrayed through characters who are delinquents hiding from the police, who keeps a close watch over them, as in the novels of Charles Dickens and Wilkie Collins. Sometimes this dyad works through characters who display "super-vision," which in turn is countered by those who remain resolutely secretive. I add to this that this textual circuit pulls in the readers who become, quite unwittingly, part of the surveilling community. Miller argues that "throughout the nineteenth-century, discipline, on the plan of hierarchical surveillance, normalization, and the development of a subjectivity supportive of both, progressively "reforms" the major institutions of society: prison, school, factory, barracks, hospital" (18). In *Villette*, we have a protagonist-narrator whose strong impulse is to elude scrutiny and regulation, as she shields herself from Mme. Beck who opens Lucy's drawers, reads her letters, and studies her face in order to elicit information.[159] The entire school and all its parts are made congruent with Mme Beck's totalizing vision. Curiously, the vigilant Mme. Beck and the inquisitive reader converge in the textual world, as both are driven by a curiosity about Lucy Snowe, forging a dubious partnership of regulation. This in turn is countered by a cryptic, inscrutable narrator who buries herself. The text abounds in secrets of all sorts, the best of them erected to mystify both Mme. Beck and the readers, like the one about the true identity of Dr. John and the ultimate fate of M. Paul, Lucy's love interest.

[159] For Brontë's real life trauma of being under constant surveillance and snooping at the Héger *pensionnat* see her letter dated 29th May 1843 to sister Emily, where she complains that Mlle Sophie, one of the students, spies for Mme Héger. *The Letters of Charlotte Brontë*, vol.1 (1995) 319.

In the world of the novel it is assumed that desire drives narrative, and so a subject's need for subversion or the characters' mobilization of subterfuge had not received attention outside this theoretical paradigm until D. A. Miller's study, where he argues persuasively about the complementary role played by the bourgeois society that acts as a counterpart to the police in maintaining order within the novelistic world.

> The enterprise of the traditional novel would no longer (or not just) be a doomed attempt to produce a stable subject in a stable world, but would instead (or in addition) be the more successful task of forming—by means of that very failure—a subject habituated to psychic displacements, evacuations, reinvestments, in a social order whose totalizing power circulates all the more easily for being pulverized (*The Novel* xiii).

The generic categories are mimicked in Brontë's text, exemplifying D.A. Miller's surveillance theory. The subject-narrator of *Villette*, Lucy Snowe, exhibits all the trauma of psychic displacements (especially in her clandestine love for Dr. John), with Mme Beck standing for a social order deploying totalizing power. The reader is often drawn into this regulated world because of sympathy for the narrator-victim, and the narrator calls her readers "sensible". But the reader is also mocked for her "amiable conjecture" and for harboring novelistic expectations, as in Chapter 4, which captures eight years of Lucy's life after her time with Mrs. Bretton, her god-mother, and her son, Graham Bretton:

> It will be conjectured that I was of course glad to return to the bosom of my kindred. Well! The amiable conjecture does no harm, and may therefore be safely left uncontradicted. Far from saying nay, indeed, I will permit the reader to picture me, for the next eight years, as a bark slumbering through halcyon weather, in a

harbor still as glass—the steersman stretched on the little deck, his face up to heaven, his eyes closed: buried, if you will, in a long prayer. A great many women and girls are supposed to pass their lives something in that fashion; why not I with the rest? (*Villette* 35)

This passage is a deft deflection of readerly desires and a chastisement of novelistic expectation, but it is the scene of Lucy's recurring nightmare about a ship-wreck that truly tries to discipline the wayward reader, for here is a female subject, who suffers psychic displacement many times and her recurring trauma wounds her repeatedly.[160] Surely her story cannot be expected to have happy endings, the narrator suggests. In a letter to her publisher-friend George Smith, Charlotte responds to his editorial suggestions about Lucy's nature: "You say she may be thought morbid and weak unless the history of her life be more fully given. I consider that she is both morbid and weak at times—the character sets up no pretensions to unmixed strength—and anybody living her life would necessarily become morbid".[161] In this context, Gaskell's words about her friend Charlotte is a poignant reminder about this autofiction: "What might have been her transcendent grandeur of she had been brought up in a healthy & happy atmosphere no one can tell;…and am sure I could not have borne, (even with my inferior vehemence of power & nature) her life of monotony and privation of any one to love."[162]

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[160] It is worthwhile to recall that Freud noted very early in *Studies of Hysteria* (1895) about how trauma is really to the mind rather than the physical body. Thus, narrative memory has the potential of repeat wounding for the victims.

[161] *The Letters of Charlotte Brontë*, vol. 3 (2004) 80.

[162] Letter to Lady Shuttleworth, April 7th, 1853 in *The Letters of Charlotte Brontë*, vol. 3 (2004)150.

Turning to the *leitmotif* of this trauma testimony—surveillance—the legion of pliable teachers at the *pensionnat* enables the state of pitiless surveillance instituted by Mme Beck, whose intrusiveness alerts Lucy as soon as she arrives at the school.[163] Everyone wants to know the truth about the quiet Lucy, and even Ginerva Fanshawe, the cynical *parvenu,* is tempted to glean the truth about her secretive friend Lucy, wondering aloud, "Who *are* you Miss Snowe?" (*Villette* 307). Not even M. Paul, Lucy's colleague and eventual lover, escapes the seductive power that colors this world of secrecy and detection, as when he declares triumphantly, "I know you! I know you! Other people in this house see you pass, and think what a colorless shadow has gone by. As for me, I scrutinized your face once, and it sufficed" (*Villette* 155). M. Paul is guilty of only seeking his lover's heart, as when he exults about her performance in the vaudeville, "I watched you, and saw a passionate ardour for triumph in your physiognomy," but this too is an act of detection, conducted in a milieu that is suffused with suspicion and subterfuge. D.A. Miller writes that in many Victorian novels "the work of the police are superseded by the operations of another, informal, and extralegal principle of organization and control," and we see this principle at play in *Villette,* where the entire French school, in its capacity as the regulating mechanism of Labassecour, the fictional Belgian town, joyfully participates.[164] When Lucy first arrives at the *pensionnat,* she describes Mme Beck:

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[163] The reviewer of *Villette* in *Sharpe's London Magazine* (1853) 189-90, gave a glowing tribute to Brontë's powerful descriptions of characters, especially Madame Beck who is "a masterly development of a character thoroughly […] foreign, controlling a school where espionage is essential to the safety of the pupils. English parents wishing to send their children to a foreign school should read this true *tableau*. *The Letters of Charlotte Brontë,* vol. 3 (2004) 135.

[164] D.A. Miller, *The Novel and the Police* (Berkeley: U of California Press 1988) 3.

> It is true that madame had her own system for managing and regulating this mass of machinery; and a very pretty system it was: the reader has seen a specimen of it, in that small affair of turning my pocket inside out, and reading my private memoranda…"surveillance," "espionage,"—these were her watch words…Often in the evening, after she had been plotting and counterplotting, spying and receiving the reports of spies all day, she would come up to my room. (*Villette* 73)

And later in the same section, we are told that Mme Beck would "glide ghost-like through the house, watching and spying everywhere, peering through every key-hole, listening behind every door." Mme Beck, "who ruled by espionage" was a "first-rate *surveillante*" and possessed both unnerving administrative powers and complete supervision via her panopticon-like gaze. Mme Beck presumes her school to be a delinquent milieu, for how could a police state thrive without lawbreakers?[1] D.A. Miller suggests that nineteenth-century fiction begins to register the ideological processes of the discipline state, reinforcing and containing the work of the police through informal means, like characters who are part of a coercive system (*The Novel* 3). Mme Beck in *Villette* exemplifies this extra-legal authority. Even Mme Beck's daughter Désirée needs a close watch, as she had a habit of stealing things that she desired, "Désirée a besoin d'une surveillance toute particulière," confides Mme Beck to Lucy (*Villette* 94). When Lucy first appears at the school for a teaching position, Mme Beck calls M. Paul to assist her in gleaning Lucy's character from scrutinizing her face.[165] Brontë's heroines always thrive in being contrarian

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[165] This was the era when the now discredited science of phrenology was popular. Brontë's characters often resort to the supposed scientific study of the face to learn about the private desires and motivations of others, as in the famous scene in *Jane Eyre* when Mr. Rochester dresses up as a gypsy woman and pretends to read Jane's face and palm. *Jane Eyre* (2006) 227-233.

when facing a threat to selfhood, and Lucy is no exception, for she wraps herself inside silence as a way to remain impenetrable to such an extent that she denies narrative truth even to her empathic readers. In the chapter titled "Dr. John," there is a moment at the end of a segment when she almost betrays the truth about him to her readers.

> As he passed me in leaving the room, turning his face in my direction one moment—not to address me, but to speak to madame, yet so standing, that I almost necessarily looked up at him—a recollection which had been struggling to form in my memory, since the first moment I heard his voice, started up perfected. …Listening, as he passed down the long vestibule out onto the street, I recognized his very tread; it was the same firm and equal stride I had followed under the dripping trees. (*Villette* 96)

The reader has no suspicion here that Lucy is manipulating the narration, planting destabilizing ideas inside the reader's head about Dr. John. It is not until the important chapter *Auld Lang Syne* that Lucy reveals to us that she had all along known who "Dr. John" really was.

> The discovery was not of today, its dawn had penetrated my perceptions long since. Of course I remembered young Bretton well; and though ten years (from sixteen to twenty-six) may greatly change the boy as they mature him to the man, yet they could bring no such utter difference as would suffice wholly to blind my eyes, or baffle my memory."… I first recognized him on that occasion, noted several chapters back, when my unguardedly-fixed attention had drawn on me the mortification of an implied rebuke…. (175)

Such duplicity has roots in her invisibility to Graham, and the trauma of remaining unknown to one who had spent months with her in his mother's home is why Lucy keeps the secret about his identity to herself. Graham, in his blindness, effectively erases the subject Lucy, even as he pours confidences into her ears about his secret passion for the flighty Ginerva—thus wounding her twice. In fact, the entire chapter *Auld Lang Syne* is about Lucy's invisibility. The erasure of the subject Lucy is why narrator Lucy Snowe has to stay mute about many crucial plot developments. As she explains in the next paragraph:

> To *say* anything on the subject, to *hint* at my discovery, had not suited my habits of thought, or assimilated with my system of feeling. On the contrary, I had preferred to keep the matter to myself."… "As to spontaneous recognition—though I, perhaps, was still less changed than he—the idea never approached his mind, and why should I suggest it"? (*Villette* 175)

Characters in this novel act as if the subject Lucy simply does not exist except when it suits their purpose, forcing narrator Lucy to retreat to her deep vault carrying her secret sorrow with her.

Mourning the Cryptic Self

To understand the narrator's strategy of secrecy as resistance to being erased as a subject, I turn to the creative categories articulated by Nicolas Abraham and Maria Torok, particularly, that of cryptic mourning and the intrapsychic tomb—both forming a metaphor for the burial of an unspeakable loss. This theory owes much to Freud's essay, "Mourning and Melancholia," and it imaginatively offers the twin concepts of "introjection" and "incorporation" for comprehending the complicated motives behind mourning. They write:

> *Incorporation results from those losses that for some reason cannot be acknowledged as such.…* Without the escape-route of somehow conveying our refusal to mourn, we are reduced to a radical denial of loss, to pretending that we had absolutely nothing to lose. There can be no thought of speaking to someone else about our grief under these circumstances. The words cannot be uttered, the scenes that cannot be recalled, the tears that cannot be shed—everything will be swallowed along with the trauma that led to the loss. Swallowed and preserved. Inexpressible mourning erects a secret tomb inside the subject. (*The Shell* 130)

In *Villette*, we have a narrator-victim who often speaks of the trauma of being rendered lonely and mute, since what she suffers is quite "unsayable," and thus beyond the scope of her bourgeois reader, who cannot understand the psychic topography of this mourning subject. It is in this manner that this trauma testimony arrives at the hands of the attentive reader, who is then expected to excavate the buried plot hidden in the narrative: a submerged drama where Lucy Snowe is the sole star. The submerged plot was Brontë's way of aestheticizing her utter alienation in the Héger household and for sublimating her unrequited love for her teacher, M. Héger. Lucy's self-repression is conjoined with a sense of deep longing for friendship, revealed in the chapter where Lucy is left all alone in the large school. Brontë's letter to Ellen about her situation in the Belgian school gives us clues to her mental state when left all alone:

> I feel it most on the holidays—when all the girls and teachers go out to visit…. I try to read, I try to write but in vain I then wander about from room to room—but the silence and loneliness of all the house weighs down one's spirits like lead…. I own I was astonished the first time I was left alone thus—when everybody else was

> enjoying the pleasures of a fête-day with their friends—and she knew I was quite by myself and never took the least notice of me".[166]

The chapter "The Long Vacation" is suffused with a brooding loneliness that haunts Lucy, because this is when she is all alone in the *pensionnat*, as everybody has gone for a holiday. Lucy says: "I was sure this hope would shine clearer if I got out from under this house-roof, which was crushing as a slab of a tomb" (*Villette* 160).[167] Echoes of this trauma of loneliness can be felt when reading Brontë's letters. Writing to friend Laetitia Wheelwright in April 1852, Brontë talks about her recent illness when pain is augmented by loneliness:

> It cannot be denied that the solitude of my position fearfully aggravated other evils. Some long, stormy days and nights there were when I felt such a craving for support and companionship as I cannot express. Sleepless—I lay awake night after night—weak and unable to occupy myself—I sat in my chair day after day—the saddest memories my only company.[168]

Brontë's siblings had all died— the last three in one year—and this catastrophic trauma clearly impacted her writing in *Villette*. She often wrote in her letters to friends and family about her loneliness in the Héger household, where paradoxically, she was surrounded by people all the time. Writing to dear friend Ellen, Brontë explained her situation: "it is a

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[167] See *The Letters of Charlotte Brontë,* vol.1 (1995) 325.

[168] *The Letters of Charlotte Brontë,* vol.3 (2004) 39-40.

curious position to be so utterly solitary in the midst of numbers—sometimes this solitude oppresses me to an excess."[169]

Earlier, in the summer of the same year, she wrote to Emily that her "condition was like Robinson Crusoe—very lonely".[170] Nicholas T. Rand explains the idea of cryptic mourning as articulated by Abraham and Torok:

> The secret is a trauma whose very occurrence and devastating emotional consequences are entombed and thereby consigned to internal silence, albeit unwittingly, by the sufferers themselves. The secret here is intrapsychic. It designates an internal slitting; as a result two distinct "people" live side by side, one behaving as if s/he were part of the world and the other as if s/he had no contact with it whatsoever. (*The Shell* 100)

The intrapsychic tomb thus preserves the trauma of inexpressible mourning, and patients conjure up the "phantom" of the lost loved one who is buried alive in the crypt. Taking my cue from this theory, I note in *Villette* Brontë's need to both articulate her sense of loss, mostly about her own situation, and to simultaneously hide it. In particular, her unrequited love for M. Héger informs the sense of acute suffering one feels when reading this autofiction, as the critic writing for *The Guardian* notes succinctly: "Charlotte Brontë's vocation is in depicting suppressed emotion and unreturned affection." (*Letters* 3: 133). The psychological affect that readers feel with Brontë's autobiographical fiction is always one of repressed emotion and loss. This was because she wanted the personal details about

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[169] *The Letters of Charlotte Brontë,* vol.1 (1995) 333-4.

[170] *The Letters of Charlotte Brontë,* vol.1 (1995) 329.

her life to remain unknown. Catherine Winkworth, a friend of Gaskell, writes in a letter to her friend Emily Shaen about *Villette* that "it tells one a great deal about Miss Brontë herself—and what a story it tells" (*Letters* 3: 141). This tearing down of the mask, which Brontë carefully wore in public, by perceptive readers is what drove Brontë to hide herself via her alter ego Lucy.

Lucy resorts to metaphors of drowning, sea-wrecks and storms, especially as a way to caution the reader about approaching upheavals to her life. Apart from images of burial, sea storms portend deep trauma for Lucy, as she notes often in meta-narration. In this text, I comprehend sea wreck as the narrator's metaphor for her submerged self. In Freudian terms, all dreams are repressed wishes. If so, Lucy's dreams of the sea and drownings contain definite clues about the hidden plot. In other words, dreams confer authority to the traumatized subjects, so they could rewrite the narrative of their life (*Dreams* 10). The night at Miss Marchmont's, her first employment after the idyllic months with the Brettons, Lucy gets a forewarning in the keen and piercing wind that wails, "a plaint, piteous and disconsolate to the nerves, trilled in every gust." She confides to the reader that three times in the course of her life she has had similar sense of foreboding: "—this restless, hopeless cry—denote a coming state of atmosphere unpropitious to life" …."I listening and trembled." (*Villette* 38). Her aural trauma does not abate even when her employer sleeps, for she sits up listening to the fearsome howling of the wind. Even natural events conspire to inflict wounds on her senses. Brontë writes to friend Ellen Nussey about the feeling of "heaviness" and how the "quicksilver invariably falls low in storms and high winds—I have ere this been warned of approaching disturbance in the atmosphere by a sense of bodily weakness and deep, heavy mental sadness—such as some would call

presentiment—presentiment indeed it is—but not at all supernatural."[171] Ronald R. Thomas notes how the frequently occurring dream sequences in the nineteenth-century novel were a way for novelists to explore the unconscious, particularly in the first-person narration, which foregrounds the language of personal experience. Thomas writes that the autobiographical fiction, "in its effort to recover and reconstruct the material of the past and to make it into a life-story, echoes our attempts to appropriate the images of our dreams, to identify them as aspects of our waking lives, and to understand ourselves from them" (*Dreams* 6). Thus, the domain of the first-person novel and dream production, are very similar to each other and influence one another, for in both instances, the self recreates or replenishes itself through a careful orchestration of its autonomy, reaffirming the subject as the agent.

Further complicating Lucy's desire for an empathic friend at the *pensionnat* is her conscription as audience-listener to those around her, and this aural trauma further propels her need for the suppressed or submerged plot where she can exert full authority. This is because the submerged plot of the dream is where the subject recreates its life and experiences with complete authority over its narrative, which is similar to autobiography. Thus Lucy Snowe's "realist" fiction mode is, really, a subterfuge for what is suppressed, as her desire is for a narrative self-representation where she is in charge of her life. Thomas writes of the opportunity for narration that arises for the characters in a novel when they share their dreams with others, since it allows them to define "an inaccessible self" (*Dreams* 11). Lucy shares her dreams and nightmares with her readers who are thus

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[171]*The Letters of Charlotte Brontë*, vol.2 (2000) 346.

allowed access to her unconscious, hidden in a crypt otherwise. Again and again in the text, Lucy refers to images of burial, and this coincides with a trauma that is aural in nature.

Lucy gets buried deeper into the crypt as confidences are poured relentlessly into her ears. The list of confidences shared are: Miss Marchmont tragic story of her long dead love; Giverva's "Isidore" story, which is about Graham and Ginerva's secretly conducted love affair; Graham unburdening about his love for the superficial Ginerva; the talkative teacher at the *pensionna*t whose late-night prattle is singularly self-focused; and the gothic mystery about the buried nun. Narrator Lucy relates the gothic story of the nun in a chapter titled "Casket," which layers yet another textual complexity to this already complicated text. The young nun is supposed to have committed sins "against her vow," and lay buried in a vault "on whose surface grass grew and flowers blossomed," and Lucy adds that on moonlight it is possible to see her ghost dressed in "her black robe and white veil" (107). But it is Ginerva whose ceaselessly self-absorbed chatter that breaks down Lucy's self-possession.

> She teased me with a thousand vapid complaints about school-quarrels and household economy…I bore with her abuse of the Friday's salt-fish and hard eggs—with her invective against the soup, the bread, the coffee—with some patience for a time; but at last wearied by iteration, I turned crusty and put her to rights…. (*Villette* 85)

Being forced to forever bear witness to others' troubles effects a hollowing out of the character Lucy. Miss Marchmont, when she employs Lucy as caretaker, tells her that she looks "worn out," and the narrator says, "I saw myself in the glass, in my mourning-dress,

a faded, hollow-eyed vision" (36). Earlier in the story, before arriving at Miss Marchmont's she says, "As far as I recollect, I complained to no one about these troubles. Indeed, to whom could I complain?" (35). Later in the text she writes that she is "inured to suffering," as she is forever the witness to others' fulfillment, never to her own (50). A similar sense of loss is echoed in many of Brontë's letters.

Self-Repression as Self-Sufficiency

To read self-repression as the subject Lucy's manifestation of self-sufficiency, especially as a counter-point to a coercive bourgeois ideology, is a temptation when one recalls Brontë's sense of textual and cultural illegitimacy. It is important to note that Victorian sensibility, as expressed by fictional characters, has often been studied as a self-negating virtue, says John Kucich.[172] Kucich argues that the insular and autonomous desires experienced by characters in Victorian fiction are seen to be in opposition to the ideology that extolls collective identity or community.[173] He writes:

> Although repression is often imagined by Victorian novelists as a form of social duty, explicitly presenting its anti-individualism as a surrender to collective will, it finally engenders an isolated subjectivity, through its silences and through the withdrawal implicit in its operation….Through repression, characters in nineteenth-

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[172] John Kucich, *Repression in Victorian Fiction: Charlotte Brontë; George Eliot; Charles Dickens* (Berkeley: U of California P, 1987).

[173] This conflict between individual desire and collective values gets dramatized in the eighteenth and early nineteenth-century sentimental fiction in France, initiated by Rousseau's *La Nouvelle Héloïse*. In the hands of women practioners, the sentimental fiction both affirmed and contested the central ideology, says Joan Hinde Stewart in *Gynograph: French Novels of the Late Eighteenth-Century* (Lincoln; London: U of Nebraska Press, 1993); also see Margaret Cohen's *The Sentimental Education of the Novel* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1999).

> century fiction restrict self-negation to an internal, emotional consummation that scrupulously preserves individual will and emotional inviolability from penetration by others." (27)

Lucy Snowe, a Victorian subject, domesticates the collective energy when she withdraws herself in what seems to be an act of self-negation. The entire text is a summation of her inviolable will. And nowhere is her strong will power in display as when she denies herself the requisite happy ending. The figure of the nun as a symbol of self-suppression appears three times in the narrative, and in the final appearance, the nun accomplishes her design. Lucy sees the nun, as a fleeting figure three times in the text, and she appears as if to warn subject Lucy of her vow to suppress herself. The third time the figure of the nun has a greater lesson to impart. When Lucy comes into her room and thinks she sees the nun on her bed: "What dark, usurping shape, long, and strange?...It looks very black, I think it looks—not human. …My head reeled, for by the faint night lamp, I saw stretched on my bed the old phantom—the NUN (*Villette* 470).[174] Very soon Lucy discovers that the "usurping shape" is just a long black stole with a white veil laid out on her couch, with a note pinned that says: "the nun of the attic bequeaths to Lucy Snowe her wardrobe. She will not be seen in the Rue Fossette no more" (474). Lucy later learns that it is a joke played on her by Giverva's lover M. Haval, but the nun seems to have bequeathed her wardrobe to Lucy—the wardrobe of renunciation and self-suppression—and Lucy symbolically dons it when she denies a happy ending to herself. John Kucich writes that

[174] The figure of the nun plays a significant role in the memoir of Flora Tristan and in Toru Dutt's autofiction, thus leading me to suggest that all three women writers were curious about the idea of self-abnegation, even as they were passionately invested in their own desires to inscribe themselves in the textual world.

erotized repression was the Victorian society's collective will at work, with the community positioned in opposition to the individual, and writers like George Eliot actively promoted the dissolution of self-interest in favor of the collective energy expended through established institutions (25). Brontë harnesses the powerful aesthetic of negative sublime through Lucy Snowe, whose act of self-abnegation is really a reassertion or reconstitution of the self.

Apart from self-denial, the strategy of self-repression can be seen at play in Lucy's rejection of showy, theatrical characters, particularly women. Just like Jane Eyre, whose self-effacing quality was always etched in contrast to superficial women like Blanche Ingram or Céline, Lucy draws a line between herself and those around her she perceives as threats.[175] Disruptions to Lucy's sense of the self include the flighty Giverva, the emotionally dependent woman-child Paulina, and even the flamboyant and passionate actress Vashti whose stage presence is threatening to Lucy's sense of rectitude. When Lucy is forced to take part in vaudeville, as a last resort decision by M. Paul, she suffers through the performance as if it is yet another trauma. Turning to Paulina, who it is clear does not meet Lucy's high standard, the reader meets her first when Lucy is at the Bretton's house. Paulina makes her presence in the text first as a little girl, but it is very easy to see Lucy's disdain for her emotional dependency as she sits at Graham's feet, on the rug, looking up with adoration. Without Graham's company she wilts, but she is equally dependent on her father's love and attention. Her tendency to get absorbed in one person, often male, leads

[175] See Nancy Armstrong's suggestion that Brontë's heroines always express their desires for their men through triangulation of mimetic desire, represented by superficial women positioned in opposition, like Blanche Ingram and Ginerva Fanshawe (1987) 193-195.

the narrator to call her a "monomaniac" (13).[176] Paulina is full of impetuousness and utterly impervious to dissembling—this, being her worst trait in Lucy's eyes. Lucy finds her candid emotions oppressive and calls her a "busy-body" (15). Even more, she finds fault with Paulina's doting father who seems blind to his daughter's flimsy nature. The reader who is familiar with the portrait of Mr. Rochester's ward Adèle in *Jane Eyre* is bound to find echoes here. In a scene that reveals great psychological insight into Paulina's character, Lucy says that "her pleasure was to please Graham" (28) and adds, "I found her seated, like a little Odalisque, on a couch" (30). This domestication of women's desire calls for a pre-ordained script, and Paulina does not fail the test where passion is mere performance. Lucy positions Paulina's abject desire for a man on one end with her own subdued desire, held inside with great pride, on the other. Brontë's narrators carefully etch their own superior character in marked contrast to more showy women. By rejecting the performances of the actress Vashti, Giverva, and the childishly pleasing Paulina who marries Graham in the end, Lucy aligns herself with the self-denying nun, who here stands for self-sufficiency achieved through self-repression. This was Bronte's aesthetic of asceticism, which combines the white heat of passion with a self-effacing renunciation.[177]

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[176] Interestingly, the narrator describes herself by the same pejorative term when she fears that she has lost the letter from Dr. John, described in the chapter, "The Letter," which betrays her own emotional dependency on Dr. John (246).

[177] This contradictory impulse is similar to Emily Dickinson's poetics, where deep passion is held back by design, an aesthetic studied by Roger Shattuck in "The Pleasures of Abstinence: Mme de LaFayette and Emily Dickinson" (*Forbidden Knowledge: From Prometheus to Pornography* New York: St. Martin's Press, 1996, 109-136). In this chapter, Shattuck suggests that Dickinson, like the Princesse de Clèves, deliberately chose the role of exultant abnegation as an aesthetic in her poetics, since it is clear that she was not bereft of passion herself; rather she enjoyed a "heightened awareness that mediates between intensity and moderation" (134). In many poems, which at a superficial reading combine the white heat of desire with a self-effacing renunciation, Dickinson explores the aesthetic of asceticism that tortured her artistic soul. Shattuck asserts that the reader learns after many readings that only abstinence is possible for a passion this all-enveloping, this powerful. Here, the negative sublime employed is one of all variations and all possibilities, including

The reader learns that only abstinence is possible for a love this all-enveloping, this powerful, and the negative sublime employed is thus one of possibilities—including renunciation, as in the case of Lucy, and death, as in the case of M. Paul.

Self-determinacy through internal debate becomes an elaborate mechanism of self-perfection for Jane Austen's heroines, says Nancy Armstrong, and one could note a similar psychological wrestling with the self in Brontë's protagonists.[178] Kucich writes that the ambiguous melding of expression and repression, as experienced by characters in Victorian fiction, is due to the careful positioning of the individual desire in opposition to the community. Speaking about Brontë, Kucich says that in contrast to her fiery protagonists in her juvenilia, she reimagined her later heroines to be clinically distanced from herself. In her pursuit of self-repression as a model of self-sufficiency, he writes that "Brontë herself often seems anxious to persuade us that she, too, is free—to take a clinical view of her heroines' self-conflict—most notably, in her sardonic attempts to distance herself from Lucy Snowe" (*Repression* 35). In Lucy's case, the careful orchestration of her desire is through a self-affirming capability, which can be alienating to her readers even as it becomes her narratorial advantage. But it is, at the same time, scaffolding erected by a victim-narrator whose secret mourning is via her submerged plot, where she is free to reorder and reimagine herself. This reconstitution is not a theatrical performance of the suffering self; rather it is an attempt to garner understanding through quietude and self-

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renunciation and death. A similar self-affirming renunciation can be seen in *Villette* when Brontë denies Lucy Snowe and M. Paul the happy ending.

[178] Nancy Armstrong, *Desire and Domestic Fiction: A History of the Novel* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1986)161-202.

repression. When she comes to Miss Marchmont's house after leaving the Brettons, she says, "Thus, there remained no possibility of dependence on others, to myself alone could I look. I know not that I was of a self-reliant or active nature; but self-reliance and exertion were forced upon me by circumstances, as they are upon thousands besides…(*Villette* 36). This fortifying self-sufficiency has been thrust upon Lucy.

In this particular brand of auto-fiction where self is the subject, repression or even self-negation is seen as a self-actualizing exercise, with the narrator often indulging in explorations of altered or disrupted states while working through her trauma with the aid of her selective, attentive readers. In her famous biography, Gaskell notes how Charlotte was given to intense day-dreaming. In the segment titled "Nervous Terrors," Gaskell recounts how when Brontë was working as a teacher at Miss Wooler's she was regularly overcome by nightly terrors so powerful that it was recounted in *Jane Eyre* (*The Life* 111). In *Villette* one encounters many such scenes, usually with ship-wrecks or storms. Here, we encounter a narrator who is bent on self-erasure as a deliberate, narrative design, because this means complete mastery of the self, which is a surpassing desire for Lucy Snowe even more it is for Jane Eyre. Jane's reconstituted self retains self-mastery only in retrospect and memory recall, whereas Lucy's self-control is marred just once during the long vacation at the *pensionnat*, when she is all alone and enters the deep vaults of her own troubled subconscious. Jane's tale is a *cri de coeur* of a child victim whose trauma is mitigated by the sharing and is worked through the distanced voice of the narrating self, whereas Lucy's is a shared story that gets unfolded in the narrative present. Thus, in *Villette*, the narrative distance afforded by time simply does not exist, as both the narrator-victim and her readers experience the narrative development together.

However, this solidarity gets unmoored when the reader realizes that the narrator has kept a vital piece of information to herself. This suppression is particularly daunting for the reader who lives in the narrative present with the narrator whose confessional tone has created a tight bond between them. But when the reader realizes that she has been led astray about certain crucial elements of the plot, as in the identity of Dr. John at the *pensionnat*, the bond is weakened. The reader learns later that Dr. John is actually Graham Bretton, known to the reader as the sympathetic if indolent son of Lucy's godmother Mrs. Bretton, This ruse, played on the unsuspecting reader, who must deal with a narrator that is both supplicating and duplicitous by turn, fractures solidarity. In this respect, Lucy differs from Jane who is almost relentless in her sharing, as each traumatizing event is recalled by a subject whose confessional mode is both tentative and teasing as in "Reader, I married him." This sorority is laid aside in *Villette*, where the truth lies submerged in the repressed plot, for the truth cannot be told, even to the most empathic reader. This in sum is how the esthetic of wounding is experienced by readers of *Villette.*

3. FLORA TRISTAN'S SEARCH FOR THE IDEAL

Life, History, Traumas

Flore Tristán y Moscoso was a rebel daughter of France and Peru, born in 1803 to a French *émigrée*, Anne-Pierre Laisnay, and an aristocratic Peruvian, Don Mariano Tristán y Moscoso, who met while he was stationed in Spain. Simón Bolívar was a good friend of Don Mariano Tristán, and as a little girl, Flora had occasions to witness Bolivar's regular dining at her parents' home in Spain.[179] But her parents' marriage was not consecrated through the church, so it was not recognized in France, which branded Flora and her brother Mariano illegitimate. This shadow of illegitimacy was to haunt Tristan all her life, carrying as it did the incursion of original trauma, recalled again and again in her writing. With Mariano Tristán's sudden death in 1807, his family was plunged into poverty, as the French government—at war with Spain—seized his estate. Her family was soon reduced to the margins of society, which forced her to earn a living as a lithographer's apprentice.[180] At her mother's advice, she married her employer, André Chazal, an engraver, and soon realized her mistake. But since divorce was outlawed in France after the Restoration in 1816, and would not be restored until 1884, she was trapped inside a loveless marriage.[181] In the course of the next thirteen years, she wrote many pamphlets and petitions for the

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[179] See Susan Grogan, "Childhood Stories" *Flora Tristan: Life Stories* (London: 1996) 14-25; also, Dominique Desanti, "A Bastard under Restoration," *A Woman in Revolt: A Biography of Flora Tristan*, trans. Elizabeth Zelvin (New York: 1972) 3-14.

[180] In his obituary, Eugène Stourm suggests that the story of the adolescent Tristan "stricken with poverty" contributed to her rise as a working-class hero and helped sell the legend of the "Pariah." Susan Grogan, *Flora Tristan: Life Stories* (1996) 17.

[181] Divorce was made legal in 1792 and was revoked by Louis XVII in 1814.

dissolution of unhappy marriages, comparing such loveless unions to slavery. She was beginning to outrage the bourgeoisie by her daring feminist arguments that would lead to a second wounding: public disparagement by the French society.[182]

Separating from Chazal after her daughter Aline accused him of incest, Tristan left her three young children with her mother to travel to London in 1829, to work as a maid for a couple of rich English ladies. Details about Tristan during this period are not available. She would travel again to London in 1839 for the fourth time. During her several stays in England, Tristan was able to closely observe the working-class conditions in England, which she portrays with great acumen and sensibility in *Promenades dans Londres* (1840). This work, which is part documentation of working-class conditions and part manifesto of universal workers' rights, drew public attention to her remarkable talents.[183] In *Promenades,* Tristan reveals a surprising talent for observation and analysis without succumbing to the usual temptations of the documentarian even when studying prisons, workers, and brothels at close quarters. She avoids moral platitudes and feigned objectivity—twin banes of those who study social problems—even when she declares she is a social scientist on a mission.[184] Thus she was able to render a very sympathetic portrait of the oppressed poor, often exclaiming with anger and disgust at the inequity that constituted the modern capitalist economy of London. This painter of modern life, instead, had the flair of the *flâneuse*, but without the bored aloofness that is associated with her

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[182] See *Léttres, réunies, présentées et annotées par Stéphane Michaud,* Paris: Seuil (1980) 75.

[183] This was also published under the title *Une Ville Monstre* (1842).

[184] Flora Tristan, trans. Jean Hawkes. *The London Journal of Flora Tristan* (London: Virago, 1982).

masculine counterpart.[185] She called London "la ville-monstre" for the way the city treated the working poor and the socially marginalized.[186] In 1833, when her pension from her father's estate in Arequipa stopped coming, Tristan embarked boldly on a search for her Peruvian family.

She traveled across the dangerous desert to meet her uncle Pio Tristan in Arequipa, in order to plead her cause as the impoverished daughter of his dead brother. Returning to France in 1834 after a year when her mission failed, Tristan became a passionate advocate for workers' rights and continued to publish on a variety of causes. In particular, she was engaged in writing polemical essays, which railed against the unfair Napoleonic Civic Code that subjected women to many new inequities. In these published works, one notes Tristan's artful methods for breaking the hold of the unremitting misogyny of the prevailing society. Her strategy included self-constructions that were by turns boldly assertive or pitifully abject. Perhaps this polarity was a careful strategy, intended to elicit both admiration and sympathy while deflecting criticism.[187] However, it failed to forestall criticism from the elite about her activism and her writing. The *Pérégrinations d'une paria* (1833-34) had just been published, where Tristan mournfully compared her lot to the untouchables from India, while at the same time mounting a ferocious battle on behalf of

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[185] See Catherine Nesci, *Le Flâneur et les Flâneuses: Les Femmes et la Ville à l'Époque Romantique* (Grenoble: Ellug, 2007) for a gendered account of the nineteenth century French phenomenon of *flânerie* as practiced by Sand, Tristan and others that is often overlooked by those studying this urban movement. Also, Deborah E. Nord, *Walking the Victorian Streets: Women, Representation and the City* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1995), 118-119.

[186] Michel Baridon pays special attention to this expression used by Tristan to describe the greatest city at that time in his essay, "Flora Tristan: Peintre de "La Ville-Monstre" dans *Les Promenades dans Londres*," *Un Fableux Destin: Flora Tristan,* ed, Stéphane Michaud (Dijon, EUD, 1984) 38-51.

[187] Sandra Dijkstra, *Flora Tristan: Feminism in the Age of George Sand* (London: Pluto Press, 1992).

all wronged women.[188] At this time, she was beginning to chart a very public, textual challenge to redress what she saw as intolerable injustices, such as women's low status in society, unfair divorce laws, and the death penalty.[189] In fact, Tristan sent an impassioned petition to the Chamber of Deputies in 1838 for the abolition of the death penalty after the *Journal du peuple* published her opinion on the subject.[190] In the previous year, she had written a lengthy letter to the Chamber of Deputies petitioning in favor of divorce.[191]

Tristan was also being drawn to the ideas of French socialists such as Charles Fourier, Saint-Simon, and Barthélemy Prosper Enfantin, and, following their precepts, wrote pamphlets and letters to authorities, addressing universal workers' rights. While in England, she met Robert Owen, Daniel O'Donnell, and other British socialists who led her to formulate her own utopian ideas on universal education and about workers' rights in *The Workers Union*.[192] During her travels, she was a witness to simmering class tensions, as displayed by the sullen mood at her meetings, with many openly questioning the nature of Tristan's subversive actions. Still, she worked tirelessly to raise public consciousness of

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[188] When reviewing her Peruvian memoir, the venerable *Journal de débats* found her criticism of French society excessive, noting that despite her eloquent plea France was not a country where women's liberties were in danger. *Journal de débats,* 13 Février 1839.

[189] See her letter to famous feminist Eugénie Mouchon- Niboyet, where Tristan suggests that the two women activists should work to bring their ideas together, *Lettres,* ed. Stéphane Michaud (Paris: Editions de Seuil, 1980) 58.

[190] Susan Grogan, *Flora Tristan: Life Stories* (London : Routledge, 1998) 224.

[191] *Léttres, réunies, présentées et annotées par Stéphane Michaud,* Paris: Seuil (1980) 75.

[192] The workers' union was remarkably original in its idea as a self-sustaining model, paid for and supported by the workers whose lives it aimed to change. In this enterprise, she assumed the Wise-Mother/Guide role, as articulated by the utopian Saint-Simonians, whether the workers she fought for liked this maternal guidance or not. In particular, she found great resistance from women workers who were suspicious of the motives of this aristocratic-looking woman demanding their husbands' cooperation for forming the workers' union.

their state, as she felt that women were central to the cleansing and reconstitution of society.[193] In 1844, not quite successful in her mission for the workers' union despite relentless work, she died of a fever while trying to raise money for a group in Bordeaux. It is important here to note that the revolutionary strains of the July Monarchy of 1830, which promoted the Romantic ideas of Charles Fourier and Saint-Simon, also extolled the mystic qualities of the woman and of the artist, while rejecting the rampant materialism that was spreading among the bourgeoisie.[194] Tristan's one novel, *Méphis ou le prolétaire* (1838), examines the roles of the artist and the dreamer in a society plagued with inequities.[195] In this romantic but experimental novel, she explored the idea of the perfect human being as an androgynous being. This novel reflects the prevalent social ideas floating in French society at that period—in particular, those of the Saint-Simonists, like Prosper Enfantin and Charles Simon Claremont-Ganneau. Tristan, who felt rejected by her community and family, came into her own during this period, drawing the energy and Romantic notions of the communitarian ethos of the Saint- Simonians for whom the woman symbolized the Wise-Mother/Guide/Messiah who would lead the society out of disintegration and into wholeness.[196] However, this change of role was a double-edged

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[193] Biographers Desanti in *A Woman in Revolt* (1976) and Grogan in *Life Stories* (1992) portray Tristan's ambitions for the workers' betterment in a very sympathetic light, but others like Dijkstra express ambivalence about Tristan's self-construct as the Wise-Mother. See Dijkstra, *Flora Tristan: Feminism in the Age of George Sand* (1992). Tristan's own impressions about the workers, as seen in the journal from her tour of France (*Tour de France*), paint the picture of an impatient, aristocratic woman, whose desire for change ran counter to realities.

[194] Sandra Dijkstra, Introduction. *Flora Tristan: Feminism in the Age of George Sand* (1992)1-6.

[195] Flora Tristan, *Méphis*, 2 vols. (Paris : Ladvocat, 1838).

[196] Sandra Dijkstra, "'Womanhood' in Nineteenth-Century," *Flora Tristan: Feminism in the Age of George Sand* (1992) 7-18.

sword, often keeping women away from the public arena in the name of their privileged positions as maternal guides. The previous era had seen women *salonières* enjoy the same sexual liberties enjoyed by aristocratic men, but with the Wise-Mother role assigned to women, they were turned into nurturers of families and children, thus, effectively curtailing their public presence.[197]

Tristan, with a uniquely feminist voice, was largely successful in consolidating the maternal guide role that was so passionately articulated by the Saint-Simon utopians. Starting with her brochure of 1836, *Nécessité de faire bon accueil aux femmes étrangères,* where she outlined safety protocols for women traveling alone, she embarked on an activist writing mission. She did not wish to emulate her contemporary, George Sand, whose romantic novels centered on the problems of love; instead, Tristan chose a more communitarian role for women, beginning with the common set of restrictions applied to their condition in life, and isolated herself in the process. This made her, in her own words, a "pariah" in French society, unlike Sand, who was immensely popular with the intellectual class, despite her eccentric sartorial habits and bohemian life. This difference in approach to her audience set Tristan on a collision course with the upper class and intellectuals.[198]

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[197] See Alison Finch, "Conditions for Women Writers," *Women's Writing in Nineteenth-Century France* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2000) 8-18. Especially, see Finch's chapter, "Flora Tristan and Léonie d'Aunet," which underscores the realities of working-class women who had to resist "Rousseauian misogyny" when coming out of their homes to work and feed their families. *Women's Writing in Nineteenth-Century France* (London: 2000) 118-130; Joan W. Scott's study, *Only Paradoxes to Offer: French Feminists and the Rights of Man* (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1996) looks at how the Rights of Man robbed French women of their own.

[198] Sandra Dijkstra, "The Manifesto of a Pariah," *Flora Tristan: Feminism in the Age of George Sand* (1992) 27-55.

Tristan's last, unfinished work is her journal from her tour of France, published posthumously as *Tour de France* (1973).[199] This journal was diligently maintained by Tristan, who wrote down her impressions every night after meeting with workers and activists. Revealing surprising insights about people and places, this journal is her most mature work, as noted by translators Doris and Paul Beik.[200] They draw attention to the fact that Tristan was often very sick during this period, but sustained herself with writing her notes after returning from meeting workers, be it in Lyons or Marseille. During her travels, she was under constant threat from the police, who hounded her for creating disturbances—a lifetime of surveillance, according to Stéphane Michaud, who asks poignantly if she felt safe at any time in her life:

> Poursuivie par son mari, puis par la police, qui, au moment du tour de France, surveille ses mouvements et cherche à lui dérober ses papiers, jetée à la rue son propiétaire, quel dépôt aurait-elle pu garder? (*Lettres* 9)
>
> Pursued by her husband, then by the police, who during her time in the tour of France, surveil her movements so as to divest her of her papers, thrown in the street by her landlord, in which abode will she find safety?

Michaud's observation highlights her trauma of dislocation, at home nowhere. But propelled by her deep conviction and missionary zeal, Tristan persevered, talking in meetings and returning to her hotel to write in her notebook. The journal lacks polish, yet

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[199] The manuscript of *Tour de France* was recovered from the files of J. L. Puech, author of *La Vie et l'oeuvre de Flora Tristan* (1925) and published in 1973 by Éditions Tête de Feuilles.

[200] *Flora Tristan: Utopian Feminist: Her Travel Diaries and Personal Crusade*, ed. and trans. Doris and Paul Beik, Bloomington: Indiana UP (1993) 124-171.

is vitalized by her passionate reactions to local ignorance, apathy, and provinciality. Read together with her Peruvian memoir, the journal provides valuable insights into the nature of trauma testimonials. While the former has all the hallmarks of a crippling trauma, the latter proffers an example of enabling trauma—the twin categories that constitute the transmission of wounding and the consequent melancholia or recovery. It is pertinent to ask why some traumas are crippling when other kinds of wounding enable or strengthen the victim bringing forth a transformative recuperation. In this context, it is worthwhile to note that trauma victims often create a life-mission or project as a way to broaden their consciousness for moving toward a more complete healing. Tristan is able to transmute her suffering into art and broaden the appeal of a narcissistic exercise. It is this transference to others, what is at heart, a story about the self, that makes *Pérégrinations* a complex text. Tristan's advocacy for workers' rights, as seen in her *Tour de France*, was clearly a life-mission that gave her renewed purpose and will, facilitating her rebirth. The Peruvian journal is very important to consider in any evaluation of her life and work. But more importantly, the tour of France that she undertook with a missionary zeal toward the end of her life would not materialize without her trip to the New World in 1833; for it was while she was in Peru that she reimagined her life-mission and reinvented herself as a workers' rights champion.

Until recently, Flora Tristan[201] remained a mystery—her life and work eclipsed by her brilliant contemporary, George Sand.[202] Even during her lifetime she was mistaken for the more famous writer, like the time newspapers noted that George Sand was shot by her husband on the street, when it was really Tristan who received a bullet in her back from her jealous husband André Chazal.[203] She is now seen as an important feminist-socialist who came into prominence in the age of the Saint-Simonian utopians and wrote with vigor and passion about the plight of workers.[204] This has given rise to speculation that Marx and Engels knew of her work, but were mute about the source of their inspiration.[205] Remarkably, Tristan today sits in the European imagination alongside Madame de Staël, Mary Wollstonecraft, and George Sand—women writers who thought of women's rights as fundamental human rights. In Peru, she is accorded great respect as one of their national

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[201] After some deliberation, I decided to refer to Tristan by her French name and not the Spanish Tristán, which I will use whenever I refer to her family on her father's side. Tristan herself chose to write her last name in the French fashion, which helped me make my decision. This way, I think I honor both her heritages. Early in her life she formally changed her name from the Spanish Flore to the French Flora Tristan, as noted by critic Susan Grogan in *Life Stories; Flora Tristan* (London: Routledge, 1998) 6.

[202] See Dominique Desanti, "Flora Tristan: Rebel Daughter of the Revolution" in *Rebel Daughters: Women and the French Revolution* edited by Sara E. Melzer and Leslie W. Rabine (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1992) 273-287.

[203] There was precedent for this attempted assassination by Chazal, and his lawyer presented this in his defense, as in the case of Madame Obry who was murdered by her husband in the *rue Richelieu.* Susan Grogan, *Flora Tristan: Life Stories* (London: Routledge, 1998) 32. In Tristan's case, the bullet remained lodged in her back, as the surgeon was unable to remove it. She carried it till her death, the physical souvenir of a particularly brutal trauma.

[204] Tristan's activities for creating the workers' union, which is the focus of her journal that was published posthumously as *Tour de France,* shows deep commitment if not sensible strategizing.

[205] In their first joint publication, *La Sainte Famille ou Critique de la critique contre Bruno Bauer et consorts* (1845), Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels talk of Bruno Bauer's opinion on Flora Tristan's *L'Union Ouvrière*. Engels mocks Bauer's Hegelian tendency when Bauer calls Tristan's ideology "le dogmatism féminin" (25). But this does not clear the doubt if Marx and Engels had read Tristan's *L'Union Ouvrière* themselves. However, Sandra Dijkstra's analysis of Tristan's London Journal, *Promenades dans Londres,* shows that Engels knew *L'Union Ouvrière* well, which was by then in its fourth edition (*Flora Tristan*: *Pioneer Feminist and Socialist,* (Berkeley, California: Center for Socialist History, 1984) 148-62.

writers, with a woman's center named after her.[206] In France, there are schools and women's centers that proudly carry the name of one whose relationship with the country was at best ambivalent.[207] Many writers unfailingly note that she was painter Paul Gauguin's grandmother, although she did not live to see him herself.[208] Undoubtedly, these are impressive achievements for an autodidact who battled illegitimacy and a sense of social inadequacy all her life. Her personal writings and published works are hard to ignore, not merely for their ardor in seeking justice for many oppressed people, but also for their note of personal pain. Tristan's design to reorder the world according to her utopian ideals is couched in the rhetoric of wounding that paradoxically anoints her the sole savior of humanity. She is at once one with the people and apart from them, and this double consciousness—of victim and visionary activist—runs through her life-writing and fiction.

Narrating Text, Performing Trauma

The *Peregrinations of a Pariah* is an exploration of new terrains, the geographic location of the New World being just one representation of space out of many.[209] In this text, Tristan explores her own subjectivity, while at the same time studying her family and

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[206] There is a shanty town called Flora Tristan some miles from Arequipa, a city made famous by her illustrious family. I was advised not to visit, as my guide could not guarantee my safety.

[207] EN 5, *Flora Tristan: Lettres, réunies, présentées, et annotées par Stéphane Michaud* (1980) 10.

[208] See Mario Vargas Llosa, *Way to Paradise*, trans. Natasha Wimmer (New York: Picador, 2003); also see Charles Neilson Gattey, *Gauguin's Astonishing Grandmother: A Biography of Flora Tristan* (London: Femina Press, 1970).

[209] For this chapter, I use Jean Hawkes's edited translation of Tristan's memoir (London: Virago, 1986). The original French version runs to more than 950 pages. Periodically I looked at the three prefaces in the French original, where Tristan elaborates on her mode of writing and the conditions that colored her impressions of people and places.

community through the lens of rational criticism. Looking back at France from the perspective afforded by her self-imposed exile, Tristan, in her role as narrator Florita, comes in touch with her innermost self in Peru, in addition to learning to encompass a wider community in her concerns. This communitarian ethos further impels her to get caught up in the fever of the revolutions convulsing the country at that time, bringing her into contact with presidents, army generals, and leaders. Her subject positions multiply quickly as each space is navigated with audacity and imagination. The proliferation of the self suggests that it is a complex edifice, with an ability to absorb and project many facets. What began as a personal quest to right the injustice meted out by the Tristán family quickly develops into a battle for the public sphere, fueling Tristan's ambition to model her political life after Señora Gamarra, the ousted president's wife, who was engaged in seizing political power for herself. However, the reader is surprised at the sense of aggrievement that runs strongly in the text even when her new experiences feed the writer's desire for expanding her sense of the self. The aesthetic of wounding in the text winds itself around the exploration of the self and the other through the twin spheres of the psychological and the sociological, with the latter enlarging to feed her revolutionary impulse. All spatial navigations reveal Tristan's experimentation with the idea of utopia; the quest for perfection is ever the preoccupation, be it the perfect self, community, or polity. When she describes her often tumultuous interior space, Tristan speaks candidly in many asides to the reader about the intensity of her emotions, as the subterranean journey matches in excitement her adventures in the new land. The private testimonial often reads like a public quest for justice, thus taking on a political dimension.

To briefly sum up the main chapters of the text: Tristan travels as the only female passenger on the *Mexicain,* which leaves the port in Bordeaux, halting briefly in Praia on the African coast. The crew survives powerful storms near the Bay of Biscay, before anchoring in Valparaiso. Tristan crosses the dangerous the desert with a group of men, who volunteer to accompany her on horseback, to reach her ancestral home in Arequipa where she spends the bulk of her time observing local people and their customs, when not quarreling with her uncle about her inheritance. She is not successful in her mission to get what is due from her uncle. In the meantime, she is caught in the middle of the civil war between supporters of President Domingo Nieto and those opposed to him, which she described vividly in the chapter, "Battle of Cangallo." In between witnessing the wars, she visits the convents of Santa Rosa and Santa Catalina, told in the chapter, "Convents of Arequipa." Followed by this interlude, Tristan confides to her readers about her flirtation with revolutionary ideas in the chapter, "A Temptation," after which she leaves Arequipa for Lima. In the chapter, "Lima: its manners and morals," she describes the women of Lima in great ethnographic detail. The memoir abruptly ends with her visit to a sugar plantation in Chorillos.

Tristan's exploration of the sociological zone accrues particular significance for the reader, especially when the realities of the New World begin to awaken her solidarity, be it for her cousin, Donna Carmen's tragic story, or for the slaves she encounters both in Praia and in her uncle's plantation. In addition, the oppression perpetuated by the Creole elite on the common people gives Tristan a platform from which to engage with abstract ideas about the human condition. Spanish America fares poorly in comparison to the more enlightened colonies of North America, which she finds worthy of the best European

traditions. The sociological exploration sees Tristan at her best; her breach with her community—France—is replaced by an enlarging consciousness that will eventually mark her as the first woman utopian, even as it affords her restoration from personal trauma.[210] It is in her engagement with the Other that Tristan begins her journey as a revolutionary activist. Moreover, the revolutionary impulse dormant inside Tristan awakens only in Peru, leading to an efflorescence of her latent talents later in France that would lead her to her survivor mission—the workers' rights movement.[211] Participating in the revolutions in Peru imparts valuable lessons to Tristan about harnessing people's collective energy for a noble cause, a clear preoccupation for the Saint-Simonian utopians.

In *Peregrinations*, the utopian vision of the right to work and of human progress as a collective effort that characterized Tristan's later writings is less present than a far more self-conscious, theatrical self-production. This was, in effect, a memoir written four years after her return from Peru, thus giving her ample time to formulate her writing strategies. Starting with her voyage aboard the *Mexicain*, where she is the only woman passenger, Tristan carefully describes everybody as if they were characters in a play, with herself as the long-suffering heroine. The sentimental language in the text is ironized by Tristan's surprising sense of the comic. In addition, her many pragmatic strategies include playing coquette to the smitten captain, thus assuring herself safe voyage under his protection. Yet when she is in her uncle's plantation home in Peru she is reduced to marginal status, both as a French woman in the New World and as the illegitimate daughter of her father, so

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[210] See Mario Vargas Llosa's introduction in *Flora Tristan: la paria et son rêve*, correspondance établie par Stéphane Michaud (2003), where he underscores her unique status as the first female utopian.

[211] See Judith Herman's definition of "survivor mission" in *Trauma and Recovery* (1992) 207-11.

Tristan feels like a victim. In particular, her shame at being given two of the darkest rooms in the outermost section of the large mansion threatens to overwhelm her determination to stay and stake her claim to her father's estate. Florita, the narrator, shares her emotional turmoil with her readers who comprehend that her victimhood is not without cause. At the same time, the Andalusian Florita of her adolescent memory is beginning to fade, replaced by a highly rational, French Flora, as when she decides to stay even after a bitter quarrel with her uncle.

It is not hard for the reader to enter into a sympathetic mode when reading about her many difficulties, especially because Tristan is given to vivid descriptions of both her surroundings and her interior states. All performances are enacted under the gaze of the reader, for Tristan's text is produced with special thought to her readers, real and imagined. Frequently, she gives narrative space to a wide variety of people who share their stories. Additionally, the story-within-a-story structure in the text reflects generic hybridity. At the same time, in this genre-defying, hybrid text, it is quite apparent that Tristan is self-conscious about possible, critical resistance in the reader—the bourgeois reader—which she tries to forestall by way of asides, prolepsis, and social commentary couched in the language of universal love and tolerance. For example, when describing the first time Mr.Chabrié declares his love for her in Praia, Tristan writes about her earlier self, which was enamored of passion and love, a superficial concern for an apostle with a mission. This passage is for illustrating her gradual metamorphosis to a better self:

> In 1833, love was a religion in my eyes; from the age of fourteen my ardent soul had worshipped it. I considered love as the *breath of God,* the life-giving force from which all goodness and beauty proceed. I put my faith in love alone, and

> judged any human being who could live without a pure, devoted and eternal love as scarcely higher than the other animals God created; I love my country, I wanted to help my fellow men, I admired the marvels of nature; but none of these were sufficient to fill my soul. Only a passionate and exclusive love for a man afflicted with the sort of misfortune that exalts and ennobles its victims could have satisfied me. (*Peregrinations* 20)

Tristan's sentimental language here is for the benefit of her nineteenth-century reader, for she writes in the style of the idealists, like Sand. When she is witness to the brutal whipping of the slave by M. David, the American consul stationed in Praia, she runs to the slave's rescue: "The man's face was covered in blood. I ran forward to defend him against his oppressor, since slavery had paralyzed his strength" (29). This scene conscripts the enlightened, bourgeois reader's commitment to her side of the equation; at the same, it marks Tristan as the benevolent cultural traveler who will right any wrong that she witnesses. The memoir is also peppered with acerbic wit that leavens the frequently maudlin, theatrical turns, especially when she is speaking about women's condition as being akin to slavery in marriage or disclosing the truth about Pio Tristan's parsimony when asked to share the family fortune with his niece. Critics have averred that the language of trauma is unsayable or incomprehensible, thus rendering the victims mute, but in Tristan's text, we see a heightened sense of the self-as-victim that keeps her boldly vocal.[212] When talking about Pio Tristan, she sets up the protagonist/adversary binary as if in a novel, thus revealing her psychological insights about reader expectations. Tristan's

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[212] Cathy Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins U P, 1996.

text is scattered with theatrical flourishes, but she is able to hold the reader's attention by way of her enlarging consciousness that moves away from mere self-pity or solipsism**.**

Additionally, this travelogue/memoir describes vividly Tristan's time in Valparaiso in Chile, Arequipa, and Lima, but what fascinates the reader is how she recalls her earlier, intolerant self, before being schooled in the New World. She explores her psychological state candidly, giving her readers solidarity with the writer.[213] She acknowledges her insularity in an earlier time:

> I must admit that in 1833 I was still narrow-minded: I thought only of my country and hardly considered the rest of the world at all. I judged the opinions and customs of other countries by the standards of my own: the name of France and everything related to it had an almost magical effect on me. At that time, I thought of the English, the Germans and the Italians as so many *foreigners*: I did not see that all men are brothers and that the whole world is their home. (*Peregrinations*12)

Here, the narrator's desire is to avert reader's criticism by owning her earlier, judgmental self. This strategy of forestalling readers' reactions to what comes later helps the narrator, even when readers realize that they have been co-opted.[214] Switching from the theatrical language that fires up the first few pages of the memoir, Tristan moves smoothly into a conversational, documentarian voice as she captures the visual impact of the mixed group that constitutes the travelers aboard the *Mexicain.* This is at variance with the strong sense

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[213] Christopher W. Thompson notes in "Women Travellers and Autobiography," about how Tristan shares her psychological states with the reader, especially since the genre of autobiography permits this "frankness" of exchange. *French Romantic Travel Writings: Chateaubriand to Nerval* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1992) 245-289.

[214] See Garrett Stewart, *Dear Reader: The Conscripted Audience in Nineteenth-Century British Fiction* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1996) 18.

of victimhood that suffuses the first few pages, especially when she describes her inner torment while riding toward the port:

> Like a condemned man being taken to his death, I envied the lot of the country women coming into town to sell their milk, the men going to work. We passed the city park, and I bade farewell to its lovely trees, recalling with feelings of profound regret the times I have walked beneath their shades. When we reached the steamboat the sight of all the people saying goodbye to their friends or making their way towards the surrounding countryside only increased my distress. God only knows how I overcame the impulse to say to M Berterta: 'In heaven's name, save me!' But the presence of so many people served as a grim reminder of the society that had banished me from its midst. At the memory my tongue froze and my body broke out in a cold sweat. (*Peregrinations* 1)

Tristan's description of her painful departure from France highlights the complicated nature of dislocation, at the same drawing the solidarity of the empathic reader. The strong suggestion of being imprisoned runs through much of her writing, but it is particularly acute in this text, whether she is describing the stifling hospitality of her Peruvian family and their aristocratic friends, or when sharing impressions about her visits to the vault-like convent of Santa Rosa in Arequipa. The *Peregrinations,* published four years after her return from Peru in 1848, clearly engages in memory-recall as therapeutic necessity; at the same time, Tristan also has a flair for drama as evidenced by the heightened emotions at display. Narrative memory serves her well as she reinstates herself at the center of the text, exercising the aesthetic of wounding, whereby pain is deployed in a productive manner to

harness suppressed energy. As the ship leaves the port, she has another bout of indignation at the thought of her uncaring compatriots:

> 'You fools! I pity you, I cannot hate you. Your disdain hurts me, but my conscience is clear. I am the victim of the very laws and prejudices which make your own lives so bitter, but which you lack the courage to resist. If this is how you treat those whose lofty souls and generous hearts lead them to champion your cause, I warn you that you will remain wretched for many years to come.' (*Peregrinations* 2)

She then assures her readers that this outburst restored her spirits and that she spends her first night writing her "last letters," thus continuing to play the condemned prisoner role. But quickly, she switches to her ethnographer's voice and gives vivid descriptions of the passengers of the *Mexicain*, while documenting her own acute suffering from sea-sickness that she attributes to her sensitive nature: "Persons of an emotional nature feel its cruel effects more intensely than others" (*Peregrinations* 6). This sensibility permeates Tristan's self-referential narrative. Every encounter and experience is funneled through her own perspective, as she draws the reader into this self-as-referent paradigm. However, this narrative design displays important metacognition about the self-in-the-making. In this dialectic of trauma, pain as an aesthetic is both exploited and assuaged via performance. Some have noted that the *Peregrinations* provided Tristan with a vehicle to speak for all the women who wanted to free themselves from their husbands.[215] Others like Sandra

[215] See Dominique Desanti, *A Woman In Revolt: A Biography of Flora Tristan* (1972) 124.

Dijkstra have suggested that this was a vengeful project.[216] Dijkstra writes that she "assimilated the Tristan y Moscoso family into her project of revenge, despite her strong attraction to them […]" (*Flora Tristan* 16). I suggest that this attraction was based on her need for kinship and community, attested by her declaration to her fellow passenger, Mr. David, when he relentlessly condemns all aspects of Peruvian society: "I was born in France, but I belong to my father's country"! However, a little later when she is forced to decline Chabrié's marriage proposal, she informs the reader, "I am a pariah in both worlds;" her dislocation from France is reinforced in the New World, rendering her homeless yet again. This transitory citizen who belongs to neither country fully experiences the weight of the social instability that is automatically conferred on one dispossessed as she.

In the chapter titled, "Valparaiso," Tristan shares with her reader the dark premonitions that haunt her, signifying some misfortune to come. The precariousness of her situation is brought home as she struggles to come to terms with her status as a newly arrived immigrant. The *Mexicain* has anchored in the port of Valparaiso, Chile, and Tristan is boarding in the house of a Frenchwoman.

> That night I was unable to sleep. I had a presentiment that some new misfortune was about to fall upon my head. At every crisis in my life I have had similar premonitions. I believe that when we are destined for great suffering, Providence

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[216] Dijkstra in fact goes so far to state that the entire memoir was for slaking Tristan's desire for revenge against a whole host of perceived enemies, such as French society, Chazal, Pio Tristan and her powerful Peruvian family, just to name a few. Thus her "martyrist mission," that Dijkstra speaks of, becomes her compensation for suffering, to which I add that the publication of *Peregrinations* becomes a therapeutic necessity (*Flora Tristan* 14). Dijkstra writes that she "assimilated the Tristan y Moscoso family into her project of revenge, despite her strong attraction to them […]" (*Flora Tristan* 16).

> prepares the way for us with secret warnings which would heed more carefully if we were not invariably led astray by reason. After a thousand conjectures I assumed the worst: my grandmother dead, my uncle rejecting me, and myself alone, six thousand miles from home, with no friend, no fortune, no hope. (*Peregrinations* 56)

This falls in line with Freud's suggestion about the traumatized victim's need for working through unprocessed wounding via reliving it. He called such reenactment "repetition-compulsion," experienced often through hauntings, dreams, and nightmares (*Beyond* 9). In nineteenth-century fiction, a dream or a premonition is a strategic tool that the first-person narrator uses to share his/her interior struggles with the reader.[217] Tristan, in this case, follows the generic pattern of the fictional narrative with this intimate revelation to her reader. She wants the reader to know that her dispossession is never far from her mind, and the wakeful dream can even be interpreted as wish-fulfillment of her fear.

Tristan's premonition evokes memories of her original incursion: dispossession brought upon by the French State. Fearing a repeat of the original trauma she says: "The prospect was so appalling that its very horror restored my courage, and I awaited events with resignation" (*Peregrinations* 56). She writes about her acute suffering once she learns from M. Miota that her worst fear has come true—her grandmother had died in Arequipa the day she left Bordeaux:

> Some forms of suffering are so far removed from normal experience that no words can describe them. Such were the pangs I felt at this death which destroyed my

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[217] See Ronald R. Thomas, *Dreams of Authority: Freud and the Fictions of the Unconscious* (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1990) 1-16.

> hopes. I did not shed a single tear, but remained motionless for more than two hours, staring fixedly at the sea. They brought me food and I ate: during this crisis of inextinguishable grief, my soul was completely detached from my body. There were two selves inside of me, one physical, responding to questions and conscious of the exterior world, the other spiritual, with its own life of visions, memories and premonitions. (*Peregrinations* 57)

Tristan confesses to her reader about how she experienced two distinct selves while responding to the tragic news about her grandmother. In a later part in the *Peregrinations*, M. Chabrié, the captain of the boat, proposes marriage, thinking she is single, but unable to tell him the truth about her status as a married woman, she suffers acutely, experiencing the pain of a split self:

> He left me, and I threw myself upon my bed, my body shattered with fatigue. Now my body slept and my soul remained wide awake. Those who have experienced such nights can truly say they have lived centuries in other worlds. The soul breaks free from its outer covering and soars aloft in the realm of thought. In its thirst for knowledge it flies like a comet past thousands of spheres, absorbing in its course waves of light which it reflects on its dear ones below. Freed from the body and its demands, the soul responds to the power which emanates from God, and in its freedom it is conscious of its identity and destiny. (*Peregrinations* 58)

The idealized images reveal her passionate desire to break free of the many structures that imprison her. Tristan, the nomadic subject in search of a home, is dealt an agonizing blow with the news about her grandmother, since her long journey to the New World had been built on the premise of receiving a warm welcome in her father's family. She writes how

"some forms of suffering" remain in the realm beyond language. Tristan further explains the nature of her suffering, which is caused by her inability to accept the kindly Chabrié's proposal, since divorcing Chazal is unthinkable due French laws. Her embodied self has been reduced to nothing by a whole host of authorities, like the French state, church, and her cruel husband, Chazal. Yet, traveling afar to the New World, she is unable to break free of the old world's systematic oppression. Jules Janin's impression of Tristan as someone who cast a spell on those encountering her rings true when the reader considers the pathos of M. Chabrié.[218] In fact, when scrutinized, Tristan's efforts and her convoluted strategies to both attract the captain's attentions and repel his advances appear naïve at best, and disingenuous at worst. But to proclaim her as embracing either of these strategies would diminish her precarious situation as a woman traveler. What she was trying to accomplish in undertaking such a perilous voyage was enormous and in order to ensure her safety aboard the ship she made the wise, if cynical strategy of keeping Chabrié at her side.

She informs the reader that the following day she announced to M. Chabrié that she was traveling to Arequipa alone, to his utter distress. His devotion and friendship had sustained her through the difficult and dangerous sea voyage, but she is unable to confess the truth about her married status to him, and so she decides to leave him. She shares with the reader:

> From the moment I took the decision I felt strong and free from all anxiety. I experienced that inner satisfaction so beneficial when we know we have done right.

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[218] See Jules Janin, *La Sylphide I* 5 January, 1845, pp.3-8.

> I found I was quite calm: I had just won a victory over the *self.* The voice of virtue had prevailed (*Peregrinations* 60).

Tristan decides to let go the opportunity for freedom and love afforded to her by M. Chabrié, as that would entail living under false pretensions. It is not far-fetched to suggest that the idealization of a perfect self for Tristan begins in the New World, as if the new terrain helped her free herself from the shackles of Old Europe. Denys Cuche writes about Tristan's travel to Peru:

> Le Pérou, pour elle, c'est d'abord une quête d'identité, un voyage à la recherché d'elle-même. Le Pérou représente encore pour elle la découverte d'un pays et d'une société autres. Enfin, le Pérou transforme son destin de façon decisive, et inaugre son combat social.[219]
>
> Above all, Peru, for her, is a quest for identity, a voyage of self-discovery. Peru represents yet for her the discovery of a country and a foreign society. Finally, Peru transforms decisively her destiny, and unveils her social struggle.

The travel-as-quest is not a cliché in Tristan's situation; rather it is reformulated so as to fuel her need for perfection, which manifests as small battles won against the embodied self, fought predominantly in her mind. French idealism and Romanticism at this time in history were elaborating on a Messiah figure who would lead the disintegrating society into renewal and rebirth.[220] Tristan's messianic quest for perfection was but a natural

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[219] Denys Cuche, "Le Pérou de Flora Tristan: Du Reve a la Réalié," *Un Fableux Destin: Flora Tristan, présenté par* Stéphane Michaud, (Dijon : Editions Universitaires de Dijon), 1984, 19.

[220] The search for the ideal human being was a special concern with the Saint-Simonian utopians, who valorized feminine sensibility in the belief that the recuperation of the society would be led by a Woman-Guide. Claire G. Moses and Leslie W. Rabine, *Feminism, Socialism, and French Romanticism* (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1993) 1-16.

corollary to the revolutionary strains of utopian socialists, Romanticists, and feminists, all of which were reorganizing French society and promising a "new age."[221] Admittedly, her idealistic visions for society were not yet in play until she returned to France in 1834, but the strong undercurrents of utopian ideals were beginning to reveal their influence when she was in Peru. Her year in her father's country would help in how she imagined her role in spearheading a movement on behalf of the workers.

The narrative of the *Peregrinations* assumes an epic structure in the scene when she finally meets her arch enemy, Pio Tristán, on the "Bay of Islay, off the coast of Peru."[222] In this chapter, Tristan prepares her reader for how matters were at that time between Pio and herself. She says picturesquely that by writing her letter of 1829 to her uncle, where she gave a truthful account of her parents' marriage, she had "cut her head into four pieces" (69). Elaborating further, she addresses the reader about her lack of worldly knowledge that had led her to believe that all the world valued honesty. Dealing with her uncle would prove otherwise.

> The reader will find proof of my sincerity in the above letter, which illustrates my complete ignorance of the world, my belief in honesty, and that blind trust in good faith which assumes that others are as good and as just as oneself. My uncle, who had professed so great a love for his brother, was soon to open my eyes […]. (*Peregrinations* 72)

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[221] Moses and Rabine, *Feminism, Socialism, and French Romanticism* (1993)1-16.

[222] The translator's note says that such a place does not exist anywhere. See the Introduction in *Peregrinations of a Pariah*, trans. Jean Hawkes (London: Virago, 1986) xxxi.

In this passage, Tristan makes the empathic reader invested in her cause, and by providing proof of her innocence, she forestalls any incredulity on the part of the reader. Without a doubt her uncle is a canny manipulator, who uses her letter to relinquish all responsibilities toward a dear brother's child, writing this in response:

> Moreover, in the correspondence I maintained with my brother until shortly before his death, there is strong, albeit negative, proof of what I affirm; my brother never once mentioned this union, an extraordinary fact when we had no secrets from one and another… Let us accept, then, that you are only the natural daughter of my brother. (*Peregrinations* 74)

At that time, Pio Tristán was the Prefect of Arequipa, and narrator Florita informs the reader about his valor and ability as a soldier when giving the historical background of the Tristán family's connection to Peru. Displaying psychological insight, she says about her uncle: "He had to be surrounded by a brilliant retinue and a flock of servitors: in short, he did not feel he was alive unless he was engaged in some grand enterprise" (79). In other words, Pio Tristán needed a life-mission or adventure to sustain his feeling of self-worth. The astonishing resemblance Pio bears to his niece in this respect suggests that she saw her arch-enemy engaged with her in an archetypal battle. However, Pio Tristán resembles his niece in one other significant aspect: the power of his personality. She writes about his magnetism when she finally meets him:

> I stayed a long time with my uncle: his conversation had an irresistible attraction for me. However, we had to retire for the night, and although it was so late, I could hardly bear to drag myself away. My uncle had bewitched me, and while I enjoyed

> the happiness of being near him, I did not dare to reflect on what awaited me at his hands, I was so completely under his spell. (*Peregrinations* 135)

This curious mix of fear and attraction should recall the words of the drama critic, Jules Janin, about Flora. Janin's article on Tristan after her death speaks of the spell that Flora Tristan cast on everybody with her exotic beauty and coiled energy.[223]

Florita, the narrator, devotes an entire chapter to describe Don Pio Tristán and his family. But sadly, her uncle's greed for money ends any dream of a family reunion she had while embarking on this travel. Pio's avarice is underscored in the scene when they quarrel about money owed to her.

> I can only say that my mood of sympathy was immediately replaced by an excess of indignation so violent that I thought it would kill me. For a while I paced the chamber unable to speak. Then I stopped before my uncle, gripped his arm, and said in tones he had never heard me use before: 'So, Don Pio, you deliberately and heartlessly reject the daughter of that brother who was a father to you, to whom you owe your education, your fortune, and everything you are today. And in return for all that you owe him, you, who have an income of three hundred thousand francs, condemn me to a life of misery; you have a million of mine, yet you abandon me to poverty, you force me to despise you, you, my only relation, the sole repository of all my hopes. You inhuman, dishonorable, faithless man, I hereby reject you in my

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[223] Janin writes vividly about the tumultuous emotions that Flora created in all who encountered her: "on avait peur de la rencontrer, et cette peur était mêlée d'une certaine joie" ("one felt fear when meeting her, and this fear was mixed with a certain joy"). Janin's words about the fear mixed with joy she created in those who met her are curious even for a famous dramatic critic, for whom hyperbole and flourish would be natural tools of the trade. See *La Sylphide I* 5 January, 1845, pp.3-8.

> turn. I am not of your blood, I leave you to the reproaches of your conscience. I want nothing from you. I shall leave your house this evening and tomorrow the whole town will know how ungrateful you are to the memory of the brother, whose name you cannot mention without tears, how cruel you are to me, and how basely you have betrayed the trust I was foolish enough to place in you. (*Peregrinations* 143)

Pio loses his status as a beloved uncle and is relegated to being mere "Don Pio." The formal address signifies deepening rift between uncle and niece, as Florita comes to understand that his parsimony is deeply ingrained. The revenge fantasy inherent in her threat that she would reveal the truth about his betrayal to the memory of his departed brother demonstrates the variegated ways traumatic memory shapes the healing. Florita exhibits all the manifestations of a trauma victim whose resistance to mourning includes revenge fantasies, her rational (French) side takes over and she submits to the council of Althaus, her cousin, whose sage advice acts as palliative. She writes:

> I submitted because of my children's interests. If I brought my uncle before the courts, if I made a scandal, I would alienate him forever; I stood little chance of success against a man of his influence, and in losing the lawsuit I would also lose the protection he could give my children. (*Peregrinations* 146)

Flora Tristan did not live to see her daughter Aline travel to Peru to her great uncle Pio's home where she received his love and protection for five years.[224] But in 1833, Don Pio

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[224] Tristan's only daughter Aline traveled to the New World in 1849 with her husband, Clovis Gauguin, who died of an aneurism on landing. This sad turn of events guaranteed that the aged Pio would take Aline and her two children, Fernande and Paul, under his care without reservation. Dominique Desanti, "The

was adamant about not giving Flora her due and cemented their rupture with his decision, thereby assuring that her memoir would indict him. When the *Pérégrinations* was published in 1838, the furious Tristán family had copies publicly burned in the city square in both Lima and Arequipa, in addition to burning her in an effigy. She writes in a letter to influential journalist Louis Desnoyers about this incident, with a rationalist's disdain for those who burn books:

> J'ai reçu ce matin des nouvelles de Lima – on m'apprend des choses que nos intelligences européennes se refusent à croire – *Les Républicains* encore barbares ont été si profonde blessés des vérités que j'ai dites sur leur compte qu'ils m'ont *brûlées en effigie* sur le *théâtre* de Lima—et sur la *grande place d Arequipa.* Cette brutale et grosière stupidité en dit plus que je n'aurais pu le faire cent dans volumes de Pérégrinations![225]
>
> This morning I received news from Lima – I learned of things our European minds will find it hard to believe—*the Republicans,* still barbaric, have been so deeply wounded by truths that I said about them that they have *burnt me in effigy* in Lima *theater*—and *in the square of Arequipa.* This vicious and crude stupidity says more than I ever could have said hundred times in the volumes of the Peregrinations!

She wonders about this trait of savagery in her compatriots when she mentions bull-fighting. Thus, book-burning and bull-fighting are drawn into a single criticism, both

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Gauguins: Mother and Son" in *A Woman in Revolt: A Biography of Flora Tristan* (New York: Crown Publishing Inc., 1972) 275-81.

[225] *Lettres* (Paris: 1980) No. 58, 1838 pp. 87. The Plaza de Armas, or the main square of Arequipa continues to be the main public arena for people to gather in the evenings. This today includes tourists to the city.

actions highlighting the savagery and gross stupidity of the unenlightened.[226] It is important to note how she frames her sensibilities as "European" when she writes "nos intelligences européennes," marking the differences between the continents unambiguously. Gone is the Spanish Florita who proudly cried out to M. David in the boat to the New World, "I was born in France, but I belong to my father's country!" (*Peregrination* 48). But the light-hearted banter in this letter also reveals that Tristan, on her return to France, was well on her way to recuperating from the many traumas. While Tristan was contemplating taking her case of dispossession to the courts in Lima after the battle of wits with Pio, Tristan writes him a letter:

> If in the first flight of my justified indignation I desired to set before the tribunal of men the spectacle of these wrongs, after a few days of reflection I felt that my failing strength would not permit me to endure the anguish which the scandal of such a lawsuit would cause me. I know, uncle, that not everybody would be affected in this way, and that there exist persons base enough to stand up in court and shamelessly reveal the crimes of their father and mother, as well as their brother, in their desire for a handful of gold. As for me, the thought alone is enough to make me ill. (*Peregrinations* 149)

She ends the chapter with a passage that reveals the recreation of an ideal self. In this passage, Tristan once again reaches for a poetic register to transmit her serenity to her reader:

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[226] See the chapter titled, "XVI: Lima et ses moeurs" for a detailed description of the bull-fighting that she called "boucherie," ("butchering") *Pérégrinations d'une paria* (Lexington: 2006), pp. 380-406.

> By now I felt I had plumbed the very depths of despair, and I must say, if only for the consolation of the afflicted, that once I had reached this point I found an inexpressible pleasure in my pain, a heavenly joy I had never dreamed could exist. A superhuman power transported me into higher realms from which I could see the things of the earth in their true light, stripped of the deceptive glamor in which men's passions clothe them. Never in my life have I been more calm: if I could have spent my life in solitude with books and flowers, my happiness would have been complete. (*Peregrinations*151)

This is a remarkable passage, for it not only supports Herman's theory of the idealized self, but it also validates Freud's intuition about the co-mingling of pain and pleasure in the human psyche. Writing in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle,* Freud draws attention to the meta-psychology of what lies beyond pleasure and suggests that in the economy of the mind, pain is accommodated in the same way as pleasure. This, in his mind, essentially assures that stability is maintained (*Beyond* 4). But on closer reading, Tristan's sentiment symbolizes not the Freudian economy of pain and pleasure but something else. It veers towards an aesthetic of pleasure-in-pain that sits comfortably with her self-image as an apostle who must embrace the twin human conditions with equanimity. Tristan explores the recreation of the ideal self in earnest in this scene, especially when she declares that rather than accept money from her uncle, she "preferred to remain poor" (151). Despite Dijkstra's persuasive arguments that *Pergerinations* was just a textual project of revenge, it is not difficult to conclude that a need for justice has replaced Tristan's earlier desire for vengeance. It is still refutable that the *Pérégrinations* was a polemic against all kinds of

injustices, including the one meted out to her by her uncle, but it is not a project of vengeance.

Exploration of the Sociological Self

Tristan's travel on a mule in the dangerous desert and mountain passes that she undertakes in order to go to her father's ancestral home in Arequipa grips the reader's imagination.[227] Tristan, with great flair, expresses her excitement about meeting new people and seeing new places to her readers, and this is especially true when she is in the ancestral home of the Tristáns. Her mother had transmitted memories of her family's heritage to the little girl, and narrator Florita recalls her dreams of her father's house with barely contained emotions:

> So here I was in the house where my father was born! This was the house to which I had so often been transported in my childhood dreams, when the presentiment that I should see it one day had first taken root in my heart and thereafter had never left it. This presentiment sprang from the idolatrous love I had borne my father, a love which still keeps his image alive in my thoughts. (*Peregrinations* 98)

The reconnection with a community—her father's family—marks a turning point in this nomadic subject's life. Tristan, in her role as immigrant, has to navigate the myriad customs and traditions of her newly adopted country. However, as she informs us frequently, she feels constrained in particular by the formalities that rule good behavior in

[227] This chapter was submitted to publisher Buloz as an article for the *Revue de Paris*, but was never published. I had earlier detailed Tristan's battle with Buloz which damaged their relationship effectively in 1837.

the Peruvian upper-class milieu. She has this to say about the custom of receiving endless visitors: “People are like this in a new country: there is always an element of tyranny in their hospitality” (99). She writes about the city’s rhythm of life thus: “The reader can hardly have failed to perceive that life in Arequipa is extremely boring. It was especially so for me, as I am so active; I could not reconcile myself to the monotony” (132). It is evident that she finds many aspects of the Peruvian elite life suffocating, but she gamely perseveres, thanks largely to her cousin Dona Carmen, who follows impeccable decorum at all times. Her meeting with her cousin Dona Carmen, who suffers silently after a disastrous, love-less marriage, trains the reader to note Tristan’s move of solidarity. Her cousin’s tragic story begins with smallpox that leaves her deformed and ugly, thus forcing her hand in a marriage of convenience to a handsome “rake” who plunders her fortune. Reduced to penury, she is forced to come back with her child to live in her family’s home, after the death of her husband. Giving free rein to her emotions when comparing such women as herself or Dona Carmen who suffer indignities due to the unchanging nature of religious morality, Tristan writes about society’s complicity in maintaining the status quo:

> People found in the ugliness of the wife and the beauty of the husband sufficient justification for the plundering of her fortune and the constant indignities to which she was subjected. Such is the morality which proceeds from the indissolubility of marriage! After that Dona Carmen never uttered a murmur of complaint, but, adopting an exaggerated view of human wickedness, she banished all affection from her heart and admitted in its place only sentiments of hatred or disdain. (*Peregrinations* 101)

Tristan experiences her first earthquake in this scene, and when the frightened Dona Carmen exclaims "Loathsome country!" she asks Carmen, "If it is so loathsome, cousin, why do you stay?" She then proceeds to tell the reader that she looked at Dona Carmen with a feeling of superiority as she informed her cousin about individual will and how not exercising it denotes slavery. This exchange between the two women—one European and the other from the New World—carries dramatic overtones. Nobody in the Tristán household is aware of Flora's marital status or the fact that she is a mother of two children. Defending her own seemingly pusillanimous choice of remaining within the confines of a rigid society, Dona Carmen says:

> Ah! Florita, it is plain to see that you have not been oppressed by a tyrannical husband, dominated by an arrogant family or exposed to the wickedness of men. You are not married, you have no family, you have been free in all your actions, absolute mistress of yourself; you have no obligations towards society, so you have never been affected by its calumnies. Florita, there are very few women in your fortunate position: most marry very young and their faculties can never develop because they are all oppressed to some extent by their masters. You do not realize how much this secret suffering paralyses the morale of even the most fortunate and gifted women; at least, this is what happens in our backward society. Is it any different for you in Europe? (*Peregrinations* 106)

In this passage, Tristan, as narrator Florita, utilizes the age-old, travel-as-critique to question societal mores, but she layers it with drama and irony. Imbued with sympathy for Carmen, Florita, the narrator, wants the reader to weigh the merits of Old Europe with those in the New World regarding the status of women. Where the narrator stands on this

issue is not a secret. This dramatic scene is not narrated to elicit reader sympathy; rather it is a way to coerce the male establishment into a rational debate about the condition of women. [228]

Tristan's French upbringing elicits much interest in Peru, as women and men throng to meet the visitor, hoping she would impart wisdom to her "backward" cousins. Ironically, the differences are erased in the way both worlds treat women. When Carmen confides tragically to her cousin, "Oh Florita, marriage is the only hell I acknowledge," Tristan writes about the way marriage lays waste women's talents, as she feels Carmen's sorrow mirrored in her own suffering. "So, I thought to myself, married women here are just as unhappy and oppressed as they are in France, and the intelligence God has given them is doomed to sterility and inertia" (106). This movement between self and the Other is particular to women's autobiography, where the self is always re-inscribed in the field of the Other. This is made pertinent when we consider the male critical reaction to Tristan's memoir. Critic "G" condescendingly writes that unlike Jean Jacques Rousseau's autobiographical *Confessions,* whose stylistic lapses do not detract its merits, Tristan's text could only be read as a novel.[229] We can safely assume that this critic's voice was one among many.

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[228] Predictably many did not take this criticism kindly, like the critic for the *Journal de débats.* Critic "G," who vociferously defended the standards of French society in his response to her memoir, is quite dismissive of any criticism of French society when compared to the Spanish colony. To underscore his point, he quotes Voltaire's lines about Spain: « Les Espagnols ne se present pas, à ce que je vois. Ah! quels lambins!» [228]("The Spanish do not make an impression, the way I see it. Ah! such slowpokes!") Unlike Voltaire, Tristan tries to achieve a more nuanced critique of her host country, even when she finds some of their customs appalling. More importantly, she tears down the veil of self-satisfaction of her French compatriots by showing how they were not any better than a "half-civilized," new colony on the other side of the world. *Journal de débats,* 13 Février, 1839.

[229] Comparing Tristan's memoir to Rousseau's work, critic "G"writes: « Les confessions, dont Jean Jacques donna le singulier example au monde en lui léguant modèle de style incomparable; les confessions

Scholars of women's life-writing have said that the code of private language develops between a feminist text and feminist audience, where it is assumed that the reader will be able to decode the language.[230] This passage reveals to Tristan that while her unique talents make her special, she needs the wider community of women. The self-as-model is displaced in favor of an empathic solidarity. It is quite apparent in this scene that Tristan feels the tragic waste of women's natural talents is the most egregious affront perpetuated by society. This criticism will be echoed later in *Promenades dans Londres* (1840), where Tristan faults English society for subjecting women to a "most abominable despotism." She begins her chapter thus: "What a revolting contrast there is in England between the extreme servitude of women and the intellectual superiority of women authors!"[231](*Promenades* 244). Women's condition preoccupied Tristan wherever she went. And this sentiment marks the *Pérégrinations* as a feminist text first, and as trauma testimony second. Her trauma testimony is never merely about the self, but is inclusive of her community of women. It also erases, momentarily, the sharp differences between France and the New World; but the differences would be sharply redefined on the day of the feast of Our Lady of Ransom.

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sont presque toujours un genre du mérite et d'intérêt qui fait aisement pardonner les négligences d'écrivain. » ("The Confessions by Jean Jacques offers the unique example to the world in its bequeathing of an incomparable model of style; the confessions are almost a book of virtue and good behavior which makes it easy to excuse the negligence of the writer") *Journal de débats,* 13 Février, 1839.

[230] Sara Mills, "Reading as/like a Feminist" ed. Sara Mills, *Gendering the Reader* (New York: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1994) 25-46.

[231] See "English Women," *The London Journal of Flora Tristan,* trans. Jean Hawkes (London: Virago, 1982) 244-61.

Tristan speaks with contempt about the religious customs of Peruvian society, and with particular disdain for rituals—Catholic and Indian. Her withering scrutiny spares neither the aristocratic women who watch such spectacles in bored idleness nor the colonized peasants who seek them as reprieve from their misery. Reading about her reactions to the celebration for the day of the feast of Our Lady of Ransom, it becomes evident to the reader that often in Peru her dislocation is not just of place, but of time as well. This is apparent when she witnesses a theatrical production put on by the peasants and slaves for the benefit of the ruling class. She writes in horror about their musical forays, "They mutilate Lope de Vega and Calderon"!:

> It was a novel experience for me, a child of the nineteenth-century century, to see a Mystery play performed before such a huge audience, but the most instructive spectacle was not the play but the coarseness, brutality and rags of the people themselves, whose extreme ignorance and stupid superstitions took my imagination back to the Middle Ages.[232] (*Peregrinations* 108)

Tristan's reaction underscores her displacement in a land that is culturally alien to her rational French being. In the preface to the first edition, titled, "Aux Péruviens," she marks the culpability of the upper class very clearly:

> J'ai dit, après l'avoir reconnu, qu'au Pérou, la haute classe est profondément corrumpue, que son égoïsme la porte, pour satisfaire sa cupidité, son amour du

[232] Often symbols and metaphors from the mainland (metropole) are brought in as itinerant items for domesticating and familiarizing new colonies, with physical objects forming part of the colonial symbols. In particular, items that were organizing metaphors for the empire, such as the church, the cross, and rituals, helped domesticate alien lands and new people for the colonists. More often than not, as Tristan discovers in her year in Peru, this strategy helped the elite consolidate power, as church and military worked in step with the ruling class to keep the masses gullible. See Elleke Boehmer, *Colonial and Postcolonial Literature*, 2nd edition., (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2005) 49-56.

> pouvoir et ses autres passions, aux tentatives les plus anti-sociales; j'ai dit aussi que la'abrutissement du people est extrême dans toutes les races dont il se compose. (*Pérégrinations* 6)
>
> After having recognized it for what it is, I have said that in Peru, the upper-class is deeply corrupted, sustained by its egotism, for satisfying its cupidity, its love of power and its other passions, down to its most anti-social efforts; I have also said that the stupefying of the people is severe in all the races which comprise it.

Her own aristocratic family is not spared in her critique, as she notes with astonishment how Carmen joyfully witnesses all the church performances. "Dona Carmen, whose passion for any kind of spectacle is such that she would be quite capable of going first to church to see Christ crucified (which is always enacted during Holy Week in South America), then to the theatre to applaud the tight-rope performers, then to a cock-fight, all in the same evening" (111). About her aunt Joaquina, Pio's wife, Tristan says that she had an "instinctive dislike" for her from the first time she met her. Joaquina practices the art of superficial humility, for "in Peru nothing is esteemed more than duplicity" (139).[233] Tristan has withering criticism for the ruling classes:

> I felt genuinely distressed at the degradation of the people here. Their happiness, I told myself, has never counted for anything in the plans of the ruling classes. If the latter had really wanted to organize a republic they would have sought to encourage the growth of civic virtues at every level of society by means of education; but as power, not liberty, is the goal of the bunch of adventurers who take it in turns to

[233] I saw the portraits of Joaquina and Pio Tristán in the Casa Tristán in Arequipa. Pio is dressed in military regalia, while his wife Joaquina Tristán is arrayed in high society clothes fit for her station.

> exercise authority, the work of despotism proceeds, and in order to keep the oppressed people in a state of submission, they join hands with the priests to perpetuate superstition and prejudice among them […] there is the most arrogant presumption joined to the most profound ignorance. (*Peregrinations* 111)

Does she speak here as a proud French citizen, a "child of the Enlightenment" who is alienated by the New World's ignorance and superstition, or is she voicing the desires of a rebel daughter of Peru who wants nothing better than to tear down the carefully constructed colonial edifice of her new country? Despite the ambiguity, the empathic reader is certain that her criticism is mainly directed at the rich and the powerful. Later, she writes about Arequipians and their need for "diversions because of their total lack of education, which also makes them very easy to please" (124). Universal education as a prescription for societal ills is ever her reaction as seen here:

> Lorsque l'universalité des individus saura lire et écrire, lorsque les feuilles publiques pénétreront jusque dans la hutte de l'Indien, alors rencontrant dans le peuple des juges dont vous redouterez la censure, dont vous rechercherez les suffrages, vous acquerrez les vertus qui vous manquent. (*Pérégrinations* 6)
>
> When there is universal education, when public announcements penetrate through to the Indian hut, then in the people you will come across judges whose censure you will dread, and from those you seek the mandate, you will acquire the virtues which you lack.

The preface also offers hope when she says, contradicting her opinion elsewhere, that Peru was the most advanced civilization discovered by the Spanish, and that the native people possessed innate wisdom and resources which could be harnessed to revive it. To this

should be added, she writes, knowledge about the arts of Asia and Europe, which could make Peru first among the nations in the New World (*Pérégrinations* 7). But this was still only a utopian dream in 1833. Her deep anguish is plain to see when she writes about the degradation of the people. Interestingly, Tristan sees the administration of North America as a superior accomplishment brought on by the more enlightened Protestant ruling class that she says valued hard work and education, unlike the ritual-bound Catholicism in South America. This becomes a clear preoccupation later when she is a witness to the revolutions. She writes about the differences between the two continents:

> When one considers the wonders freedom has worked in North America, one is astonished that the South should still be a prey to political upheavals and civil wars, until one looks a little closer at the difference in their climate and in the moral outlook of their peoples. In South America needs are simple and easy to satisfy. The distribution of wealth is still very unequal, and begging, the inseparable concomitant of Spanish Catholicism, is almost a profession. […]. In British America, on the other hand, morals and customs evolved under the influence of liberal political and religious ideas, and communities lived close together. The climate was exacting and the people retained their industrious habits of Europe. As wealth could be acquired only by cultivating the land or engaging in legitimate trade, it was fairly equally divided. (*Peregrinations* 169)

This indictment of New World customs by an Old World traveler is nothing new, but what is unusual is how Tristan's keen desire to restructure and reorder this colonial society is situated in very practical ideas about universal education. She always returns to this central issue, no matter what group she studies. Her keen desire for institutional reforms is a

reflection of the ideology of the utopians. Adding to this point, Mario Vargas Llosa acknowledges that in this text she does paint a feudal and violent society whose economic and social divisions are sharply etched, and where racial disparities lead to constant tensions. But he says that Tristan achieves a sense of balance in her portrait of her father's country when she praises the women of Lima for their fierce independence and grace and finds much to admire in the *rabonas,* the martial race of women who fearlessly accompany men in battles.[234] Thus, for Tristan, women represent the redeeming factor in an otherwise backward colony.

Tristan's feminist solidarity is ever present when she writes about social issues confronting women. Vargas Llosa calls her persistent interest in the feminine ideal her "primordial domain" (Introduction 11). And nowhere does this preoccupation appear more compassionately than when she talks about a young relative, Dominga, who impulsively joins the convent, only to run away from it later. In the chapter, "Convents of Arequipa," Tristan manages to convey the terrible ordeal suffered by her young relation, Dominga, but refuses to endorse her decision to seek refuge inside the convent of Santa Rosa.[235] The tragic story of a young woman disappointed in love sacrificing herself to the convent is not a new convention in French texts, but what might surprise the reader is how Dominga's story does not elicit uncritical sympathy from the narrator.

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[234] See Mario Vargas Llosa, introduction, *Flora Trsitan: La Paria et son Rêve,* ed. Stéphane Michaud (1995) 11.

[235] This chapter was published by François Buloz in the *Revue de Paris*, in the 27 November 1836 issue, and earlier in the same year, Tristan's article, "Les femmes de Lima" appeared on 25th September. Buloz received a letter from the literary critic and poet, Saint-Beauve recommending that Buloz publish Tristan's piece on the convents with some small revisions. See EN 11, *Flora Tristan: La Paria et son Rêve,* ed. Stéphane Michaud (Paris: ENS, 1995)75.

> She was only sixteen when an excess of spite and wounded self-esteem drove her to renounce the world. The foolish child had cut off her hair with her own hands, and casting it at the foot of the cross, had sworn in the name of Christ that she would take God as her spouse. The story of the *monja* (nun) made a great stir in Arequipa and Peru. (*Peregrinations* 187)

However crippling Dominga's trauma of having been jilted for a rich widow might have been, it did not prevent her from coming up with a fantastic ploy to escape. Tristan's other cousin, Manuela, gets to tell the story that is almost gothic in its structure, for Dominga makes her escape from the bowel of misery that Santa Rosa is with the help of a slave woman who smuggles her out in a casket, disguised as a corpse. Dominga's story does not suggest renunciation as the ideal; rather it is a cautionary tale for those suffering from excess sensibility. Tristan hints at a comparison to herself: she too suffered from wounded sensibilities, but was able to harness her traumatic experiences for social action, thus redeeming them. This survivor-mission draws on her past trauma, but she is able to transcend it, by making it a gift to others.

The convent of Santa Catalina appears sunny and joyful when compared to the prison-like Santa Rosa.[236] Additionally, the nuns in Santa Rosa indulge in "petty jealousy, base envy and cruel spite they harbor toward one another" (190). In Santa Catalina, Tristan becomes an object of great curiosity as the young nuns surround her with happy noises. She writes:

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[236] Having spent an entire day in Santa Catalina, I can attest to Tristan's judgment. It is bright with pleasing gardens and fountains. The Mother Superior's room, where Tristan stayed, looks elegant, if dusty, with an alcove bed and satin drapes.

> So here I was once again inside a convent, but what a contrast with the one I had just left! What a deafening noise, what joyous cries when I entered! '*La Francesita! La Franceista!'* I heard on all sides. Hardly was the gate open than I was surrounded by at least a dozen nuns all speaking at once and laughing and jumping with joy. One pulled off my hat, another took my comb, a third tugged at my leg-of-mutton sleeves, because, they said, such things were *indecent*….In short, they turned me this way and that like children with a new doll. (*Peregrinations* 193)

This joyful scene with the young nuns surrounding the smartly dressed Parisian is meant to highlight the humanity of Santa Catalina, whose Mother Superior is an ardent fan of Rossini. She tells narrator Florita that "one note of that genius does more for the moral and physical welfare of humanity than the hideous autos-da-fé of the Holy Inquisition ever did for religion" (198). Mother Superior's indictment of the Church's policy is economical and effective. When Tristan and her cousins leave Santa Rosa, after three days she describes their departure:

> At last we stepped across the threshold of the massive oaken gate, bolted and barred like the gate of some citadel, and no sooner had it closed behind us than we all began to run down the long wide street of Santa Rosa, crying, 'God! What happiness it is to be free!' All the ladies were weeping, the children and slaves were dancing in the street, and I confess that I was breathing more easily. (*Peregrinations* 192)

It would not be wrong to read Tristan's experiences in the two convents through gendered lens, for Santa Catalina evidently is at odds with the High Church run by men. The music-

loving head of Santa Catalina, along with her lively, joyful nuns, represent the feminine energy that utopians like Tristan clearly held in reverence. The tastefully decorated cloisters, the well-kept gardens and fountains, the elegant dresses of the young nuns, all create a warm and picturesque spiritual space, unlike Santa Rosa, which is like a garrison.[237]

Many have noted Tristan's intolerant and highly charged language when she first sees African slaves up close, but her evident repugnance for the slave trade redeems her in the mind of her empathic reader.[238] When the *Mexicain* embarks in Praia, she meets Mr. Tappe, a former missionary, who has abandoned his apostolate for the more profitable slave trade. Bemoaning the English abolition of the slave trade, he informs her that they had made it very difficult for those like him. At dinner she watches with revulsion as Mr. Tappe eats: "His nostrils dilated, he licked his pale lips, the sweat ran down his face. I thought he looked like a wild animal. When he had gorged himself thoroughly, his features gradually resumed their normal expression (*Peregrinations* 22). Clearly, Tristan wants to show Tappe's bestial nature. He is a priest-turned-predator who preys on humans. Later she witnesses a brutal whipping of a slave at the hands of the suave and gentlemanly American consul, who is their host. She is appalled by the dissonance, as seemingly civilized men and women indulge in wanton cruelty. Madame Watrin defends this practice to her French visitor: "I can understand that such customs seem strange to you, because

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[237] I could not go inside the Santa Rosa which is closed for visitors. It is grey and forbidding, with iron gates barring the outside world, and looks just as Tristan describes it.

[238] See Jean Hawkes's introduction in *Peregrinations of a Pariah* (London: Virago, 1996) xi. Also see Sarah C. Chambers for how Tristan's memoir differs from other writers for the way it pays close attention to the presence of African slaves in the aristocratic homes in Peru. *From Subjects to Citizens: Honor, Gender, and Politics in Arequipa, Peru 1780-1854* (University Park: Pennsylvania State UP, 1999) 79-80.

you were brought up in a different society, but if you were to live here for a week, you would no longer even think about them" (30). Reacting to this revelation, Tristan writes: "I found such a callous attitude revolting and could not wait to get away from this society and all it stood for" (*Peregrinations* 30). It is not until much later in Arequipa that she would realize that her family's fortune, like all other landowners', is built upon the enslavement of the Native Indians and Africans. She would debate this issue again with the owner of a sugar refinery near Chorrillos, Mr. Lavalle, about the inevitable abolition of slavery, adding this for the reader's benefit:

> [But] slavery had always aroused my indignation, and I was overjoyed when I learned that a band of English ladies had vowed to stop eating sugar from the colonies and buy only sugar from India, even though the duties imposed on it make it more expensive, until the Bill of Emancipation had been passed by parliament. […]. May this noble example be followed on the continent!"[239] (*Peregrinations* 284)

Tristan's challenge to the elite in the New World is not carelessly thrown, and her deep revulsion for the slave trade is made very clear when she visits the two slave women imprisoned for infanticide: "One was eating raw maize; the other, who was young and very beautiful, turned her large eyes upon me in a look which seemed to say: I let my child die because I knew he would never be free like you, and I would sooner have him dead than a slave" (*Peregrinations* 286). At a glance, this scene might strike a sceptic as a calculated performance, with Tristan embellishing the trite trope of the White Woman's Burden. One

[239] The sugar plantation of Mr. Lavalle is where Juan Batista University in Chorillos, Lima is situated. The main house, Lavalle's, with its ornate architecture, is still there.

might even wonder if Tristan is underscoring in a subliminal way that the French pursuit of liberty is unattainable to lesser people. Visually, the scene reinforces two imperial tropes: the degraded slaves/natives seeking salvation and the mitigating arrival of the European who promises civilizational change. Yet, those aware of Tristan's deep and unwavering commitment to the proletarian cause will recognize that her horror at the cruelty and degradation that she witnesses is not feigned. Often she compares her own unhappy, indissoluble marriage to slavery, thus displaying the trauma of injustice, be it about divorce laws or human right abuses. When commiserating with the misery of the slave women, who, in desperation, commit infanticide, Tristan, the traumatized victim, becomes their ideal spokeswoman. To this effect, the pariah and the African slaves are tethered to her wounding. Many failed to comprehend that Tristan is attempting to be an ethical witness to the atrocities she sees by bringing them into the public arena. Critic G, an unrelenting sceptic, writes about Tristan's predilection for pariah status:

> Seraient-ce par hasard les nègres qui exploitent cette plantation que visite Mme Flora Tristan ? On y voit fourmiller quatre cents nègres, trois cents négresses et deux cents négrillons. Ces pauvres noirs ne seraient-ils pas en droit de s'écrier: Ah! Madame, si vous êtes une paria, faites nous l'honneur de nous dire ce que nous sommes?
>
> Would it be a coincidence that the slaves are exploited in this planation that Madame Flora Tristan visits? One sees four hundred slave men swarming, three hundred slave women and two hundred slave children. Would the poor blacks not

be right to cry out: Ah! Madam, if you are a pariah do honor us by telling us what are we? [240]

Trauma specialist Judith Herman brings attention to the public nature of trauma testimonials, which begin as spiritual, cleansing exercises in their truth-telling nature, but often get transformed, into quests for political justice.[241] While it is true that Tristan would chastise Victor Schoelcher in a letter for neglecting French proletarians while favoring the condition of "slaves in foreign countries," it does not diminish her righteous indignation when she comes face to face with the horror of the slave trade in America. This is what we see Tristan attempt to do with her engagement with the revolution that is suddenly upon them in the chapter intriguingly titled, "A Temptation."

The Revolution is vividly brought home first in the chapter, "Battle of Cangallo." Her testimony to this history-shaping event is remarkable, for here, nestling in the memoir of a woman witness/participant, is history-in-the-making. If her activist resistance all through her life is the ultimate restorative for trauma healing, then what do we make of her "temptation" to seize the mantle of power from Seňora Gamarra? Gamarra usurps the presidency from her pusillanimous husband and struts around in male clothes. Evidently Tristan saw some aspect of Gamarra in herself and formulated a strategy to use political intrigue as a refuge from loneliness. She writes when the battle begins:

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[240] *Journal de débats* 13 Février, 1839.

[241] Quoting from the work of Inger Agger and Soren Jensen, Herman writes that "in the telling, the trauma story becomes a testimony…. Testimony has both a private dimension, which is confessional and spiritual, and a public aspect, which is political and judicial. The use of the word *testimony* links both meanings, giving a new and larger dimension to the patient's individual experience" (*Trauma* 181).

> I resolved that I too would enter the arena, and having been for so long the dupe of society and its prejudices, I would try to exploit it in my turn. I am in the midst of a society in revolution, I told myself; let us see what role I can play, what instruments I can use. (173)

But toward the end of the chapter, she conquers the temptation in yet another battle over the self. It is without a doubt that she experimented with a variety of causes while in Peru: she is hit with a crisis of faith when she learns about her grandmother's death and the shattering of family/community, feeling "utterly alone," a sentiment never quite leaving her. Perhaps she was inspired by a grandiose feeling of specialness, seeking public recognition as way to keep interest in her alive. Tristan's motives appear ambivalent to anyone reading this startling account of her surprising interest in political intrigue, but it undoubtedly makes for a remarkable narrative while underscoring her inner resolve not to succumb to self-aggrandizement. An apostle's burden is indeed heavy.

Imagined Reader, Re-Imagined Self

Since this is a trauma text, the narrator-victim expects a restoration of the self to occur via the figure of the imagined reader, who is the silent dialogic partner. The narrator consciously attempts to both conscript and co-opt the reader, whose emotional responses are expertly shepherded by the text. More often than not, it is the narrator's anticipation of the reader—especially in the coded address to the reader's opinions, desires, or judgment—that shapes many scenes. Early in the memoir, Tristan writes in a prolepsis about the internal changes that reshaped her earlier, intolerant self as a way to forestall her reader's reactions when she describes other people and races. She says that by the end of

her stay in Peru, she came to see the New World inhabitants not from a European's perspective, but from that of an oppressed, deracinated woman who realizes that she has no chance of gaining anything of her family's fortune. This is when the memoir takes on the polemical tones of an oppositional text. The empathic reader notes the highly charged language and theatrical affect. Tristan is self-aware of how she presents herself. For example, when she describes her late-night arrival at her uncle's home in the street of Santo Domingo in Arequipa, she writes: "A group of slaves stood at the gate; as we approached they hurried inside to announce us. My entry was just like one of those scenes of pomp and ceremony that you see in the theater" (95). Early in the text, her description of her travel on the *Mexicain* has the full flavor of a high society lady needing the tender chaperoning of her boat captain Chabrié, who innocently becomes her suitor-protector. She is surrounded by gallant and protective men who are moved by her air of refinement and mystery, but by the middle section of the memoir, in Arequipa, where she comes up against the resolutely greedy uncle Pio, the reader senses a change in the tone and purpose of the text. The first night in her uncle's house in Arequipa, Tristan is given two small, dark rooms away from the main house and near the stables.[242] She writes in dramatic fashion:

> A profound sadness invaded my soul as I examined the place my family had allotted me, and I felt some apprehension about my uncle and his avarice….This is characteristic of my uncle. Head of a large family, immensely wealthy, a man

[242] In my trip to the Casa Tristán in Arequipa in September 2015, I saw the set of rooms given to Tristan through an iron gate. It was as she describes in her memoir: dark and dismal, "an icy cavern" it certainly looked from distance.

> whose personal merit and high position bring him into contact with the best his country can provide, yet all he can offer his friends and relations is an icy cavern where you need a light in the middle of the day if you want to read! The thought made me blush for shame, and I was so upset that it was nearly dawn when I feel asleep. (99)

Despite the emotionally charged language in this passage, the engaged reader's sympathies are assured.

Tristan reads her uncle's parsimony in the dismal set of rooms given her, and thus prepares her readers for what comes later in the highly theatrical scene when she confronts her uncle about disinheriting her (143). She is very insightful about what her female readers expect from a travelogue such as hers, where she meets new people, like Dona Carmen. She writes: "Before I go on with my story, I think I should introduce the reader to my cousin Dona Carmen Pierola de Florez, who would have been between thirty-eight and forty when I met her" (100). Tristan gives detailed a description of Carme's attire, down to noting that "[Carmen] is very fond of clothes and dresses with taste, but in a style rather too young for her age" (100). The female reader's curiosity about the sartorial habits of foreigners is anticipated by the resourceful narrator, who is not above flattery. Tristan reveals acute self-awareness about what her bourgeois readers expect from a text such as this when she writes, "Perhaps our Parisian ladies would like to know how the ladies of Praia dress for special occasions" (*Peregrinations* 17).[243] She is the cosmopolitan traveler

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[243] Garrett Stewart writes: "The mentioned reader, whether addressed in second person or ascribed in third, marks the site of an implicated response, however minimal, by which the reading subject is gradually taken for granted in the narrative text, granted to it and so assumed by it, assumed and presumed upon." *Dear Reader* (1996) 27.

who has the duty to educate her French readers on the fashions and mores of the world. The Wise-Mother/Guide is never far away. When describing the African slaves in Peru or the interesting group of women who accompanied the men in battlefield she calls *rabonas* (ravanas), Tristan displays warmth and admiration, leading readers to believe that the condition of the woman has always been an overriding principle with her, over and above the category of the foreign/alien Other; but the insightful reader notes that it only manifests after an internal dislocation that happens in Peru. Tristan's trauma of deracination from upper-class French society takes her on a perilous voyage to Peru that was supposed to afford her legitimation, but instead she experiences fragmentation and double dislocation in the New World, which eventually lead her to self-actualization of a different sort. She confesses to being bereft of hope in the world, thanks to the niggardly uncle who resolutely remains immune to her charms and claims to family.

The language of trauma is said to be "mute" or "unsayable," but in Tristan's *Pérégrinations*, a voluminous text of nine hundred and fifty pages, we see a heightened performance of the self-as-victim.[244] She identifies herself as a feminist-proletarian, and arrayed against her in this effort, she suggests, is the entire world, but especially, the powerful Tristan family members. Here, deracination is experienced by the nomadic subject as an on-going, delegitimizing trauma. Unsure about where she belongs, Tristan experiments with multiple avatars; a multiple being is born whose destiny will be to reshape the very imperfect world. The many destabilizing traumas are internalized and processed so as to sculpt a powerful personality who nonetheless projects vulnerability.

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[244] See Cathy Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience*: *Trauma, Narrative, and History*. (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996) 3-4.

Some of this projection comes from Tristan's manipulation of her image to suit the need at hand, whether as a "woman of letters" or as "Wise Guide".[245] Critics note how she collaborated with portrait artists to create a carefully crafted image of herself, thus contributing to her growing myth as a woman author with a sensational, even scandalous, personal life. Self-narration is taken to new heights when she suggests in a letter, written in July 1839 to her artist-friend Charles-Joseph Traviès, that she would like him to do a portrait of her dressed as a "Pariah" for the promotion of *Pérégrinations.* She writes:

> Songez, mon cher frère, que ce portrait sera celui de la *Paria* --- de la femme née Andalouse et condamnée par la Société à passer sa jeunesse dans les larmes et sans amour! Enfin de cette pauvre femme assassinée et traînée devant des juges non pas comme *victime* mais comme *coupable.* Cette femme dont le coeur, le cerveau, les lèvres sont encore bouillants de jeunesse et dont les cheveux sont blancs! [246]
>
> Consider my dear brother, that this portrait will be that of a *Pariah* – of a woman born Andalusian and condemned by Society to spend her youth in tears and without love! In a word this poor woman is assassinated and dragged before the judges, not as victim but as a culprit. This woman whose heart, brain, lips are still burning with youth and whose hair is white.

The thematization of suffering inherent in this self-portraiture is clear. But Tristan is in fact attempting to translate her apostolic mission to her audience, while asserting to the world that a *déclassée* can gaze back, and with courage. Such a portrait, unfortunately, does not

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[245] See Susan Grogan, *Flora Tristan: Life Stories* (1998) 1-8.

[246] Flora Tristan, *Lettres.* ed, Stéphane Michaud (1980) 102.

exist among the many conventional portraits of Tristan. Jules Janin, the famous dramatic critic at the *Journal de débats,* has left us a somewhat Romantic description of his impression of her in *La Sylphide.* The readers are treated to an image that is equal parts banal and intuitive: the banality of his orientalism collides with his perceptive understanding of her troubles.[247] While it is easy to find his orientalism risible, it is important to remember that Tristan orchestrated the image of herself as an exotic woman from a faraway place. Very early in her life, her mother's implanted memories of an aristocratic family shaped Tristan's sense of grandeur, and the "Andalusian story" began to take shape in her mind. Often she listened to her mother's tale of swashbuckling heroes like Simón Bolívar, who frequented her parents' home in Spain.[248] Additionally, the Tristáns hailed Montezuma as their ancestor on their mother's side.[249]Adding to this

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[247] « J'ai connu l'héroïne de ce roman; elle avait toutes les qualités d'une heroïne; quand je la vis, pour la première fois, elle était admirablement jolie, si ces deux mots: *admirable* et *jolie*, peuvent aller de compagnie. D'une taille élégante et souple, d'un air de tête fier et vif, les yeux remplis des feux de l'Orient, une longue chevelure noire qui lui pouvait servir de manteau, le teint brun […] toute jeune qu'elle était, on comprenait, toute de suite, qu'elle s'inquiétait plus déplaire que d'être trouvée belle; c'était, pour elle, une émotion oubliée ou méprisée; elle parlait en s'animant par degrés, puis tout d'un coup elle redevenait pensive; elle était active, une heure; puis après elle s'abandonnait à sa nonchalance naturelle; […] violente au fond de l'âme, profondément irritée, malheureuse de n'être pas reine quelque part, sinon d'être reine partout, elle était un sujet d'étude très-inquiétant et très-curieux; on avait peur de la rencontrer, et cette peur était mêlée d'une certaine joie.» ("I knew the heroine of this novel; she had all the qualities of a heroine; when I saw her, for the first time, she was strikingly lovely. If these two words: *admirable* and *lovely* can go together. Elegant and supple of form, proud and vivacious in manner, eyes filled with the fires of the Orient, long black hair that could serve as a cloak, tawny complexion […] young though she was, one knew straightaway that she was concerned more about displeasing than attracting attention for being beautiful ; it was for her a forgotten or despised emotion; she spoke coming to life little by little, and all of a sudden she became pensive again; she was animated for some time; then she abandoned herself to her natural nonchalance […] fierce to the depth of her soul, easily irritated, otherwise, unhappy not to be queen of some place, even being queen of all places. She was a very disturbing and very curious subject of study; one felt fear when meeting her, and this fear was mixed with a certain joy.") See *La Sylphide I* 5 January, 1845, pp.3-8.

[248] See Dominique Desanti, *A Woman in Revolt: A Biography of Flora Tristan,* New York: Crown Publishers, (1976) 9-10.

[249] See Paul Gauguin, *Avant et Après* (Paris: G.Crès, 1923)

seduction of the past were affirmations about Uncle Pio Tristán's standing in the present; for he was the grand aristocrat of Peruvian society, but owed his success in life to his elder brother, Mariano Tristán. In her letter to Pio that she writes in 1829 she reminds him of his obligations to his brother's daughter:

> Je ne désire pas, monsieur, que l'aperçu des malheurs dont je vous ai bien faiblement esquissé les traits vous en fasse découvrir les details!...Votre âme, sensible au souvenir d'un frère qui vous aimait comme *son fils,* souffrirait trop en mesurant la distance qui existe entre mon sort et celui qu'aurait dû avoir la fille de Mariano…, de ce frère qui, frappé come d'un coup de foudre par une mort subite et prématurée (une apoplexie foudroyante), n'a pu dire ces mots: "Ma fille…, Pio vous reste…". Malheureuse enfant![250]
>
> I do not want you to discover the details of our hardships, about which I have barely given you a glimpse… Your heart cherishes the memory of a brother, who loved you as *his own son,* and will find it painful to learn of the contrast between the reality of my life and what might have been expected for the daughter of Mariano… and that this brother, while being struck down by untimely death (a sudden fit) said these words…"My child…you still have Pio…". Unlucky child!

This letter, sadly, was her undoing. Biographers and critics note how the parsimonious Pio Tristán refused to give anything beyond a tiny pension to his niece Flora, mostly because she made the fatal mistake in this fervent letter of disclosing the truth about her parents' marriage. This dispossession by her Peruvian family left her deeply scarred; at the same,

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[250] Stéphane Michaud, *Lettres réunies, présentées et annotées.* Paris: Seuil (1980) 45-46.

she was beginning to see French society as an enemy, since the revised law of the *Code Napoléon* had been used to force her to stay in an unhappy marriage. As France and Spain had been at war at the time of her father's death, the French state confiscated Mario's estate and house, leaving his family destitute. Thus, young Flora, growing up poor in Montmartre after her father's untimely death, had developed a bifurcated identity: that of an Andalusian aristocrat, "Florita," who paradoxically, develops a proletarian sensibility because of what France did to her.[251] After meeting her, the socialist Simon Ganneau acerbically named her "paria archduchesse."[252] Later in her life, Flora simply adjusted this split consciousness to accommodate a few more identities, such as passionate feminist, utopian writer/ maternal guide, and workers' rights champion. In the words of feminist critic Sandra Dijkstra, Flora was a disinherited daughter, a disillusioned wife, and a *déclassée* who set herself against all the institutions that had oppressed her.[253] It has been suggested that displacement and alienation become central themes in her writings so as to awaken reader's sympathy.[254]

Tristan elaborates her mission in life as a sacred, almost religious duty to her readers in the introduction to *Pérégrinations*:

> Nous concourons tous, même à notre insu, au développement progressif de notre espèce: mais, dans chaque siècle, dans chaque phase de sociabilité, nous voyons

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[251] Susan Grogan, *Life Stories: Flora Tristan,* London: Routledge, (1998) 24.

[252] Stéphane Michaud, *Flora Tristan, la paria et son rêve*, (Paris: 2003) 152.

[253] Sandra Dijkstra, *Flora Tristan: Feminism in the Age of George Sand* (1992) 17.

[254] Kathleen Hart, "Tracing New Routes: Flora Tristan's *Peregrinations of a Pariah*," *Revolution and Autobiography in Nineteenth-century France* (Netherlands: 2004) 47-90.

> des hommes qui détachent de la foule, et marchent en éclaireurs en avant de leur contemporains; agents spéciaux de la Providence, ils tracent la voie dans laquelle, après eux, l'humanité s'engage. Ces hommes sont plus ou moins nombreux, exercent sur leurs contemporains une influence plus ou moins grande en raison du degré de civilisation auquel la société est parvenue.[255]
>
> We all contribute, unbeknownst to us, to the gradual development of our world: but, in each century, in each phase of human camaraderie, we see men who stand apart from the masses, marching in front of their contemporaries, as guides; special agents of Providence, they mark the way forward for humanity to follow. Many of them exercise an influence, small or big, on their contemporaries, in step with the level of civilization that the society has reached.

This self-image as a uniquely gifted writer runs through all her writings, leading her to reject categorically editorial suggestions from her publishers. Judith Herman's observation that some trauma victims develop a grandiose feeling of specialness comes to mind, as Tristan's sense of her mission and talents were setting her apart from others' judgement. She dismissed editing advice from François Buloz, who was to publish her article about her crossing of the desert that would later form her chapter titled, "Le Désert" in *Pérégrinations*.[256] Instead, in a strongly worded letter, she accuses him of high treason against her poetic sensibility. In the extract given below one can see that her letter is filled

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[255] Introduction, *Pérégrinations d'une paria,* French edition, (Paris: Bertrand, 1838) 8.

[256] François Buloz, after editing *Revue des Deux Mondes* for more than fourteen years had become the editor at the prestigious *Revue de Paris* and published Tristan's article, "Lettre á un architecte Anglais" in March of 1837. See editor's note and Appendix, *Lettres,* ed. Stéphane Michaud (1980) 68 & 221.

with grammatical errors and arbitrary spellings, due largely to her lack of schooling. Yet her indignation at what she calls Buloz's *mutilations* of her language is astonishing for its sheer scale of ambition in a writer who was just entering the world of letters.[257] Buloz's apologetic response reveals that he comprehends he is dealing with a formidable woman. Soon after this exchange, he would sever ties with her.[258] Please note the grammar mistakes sprinkled in this letter, which are Tristan's.

> Monsieur Buloz --- mon vieil ami m a rapporté la conversation que vous aviez eue avec lui; il parait que vous trouvez que le fragment de mon voyage *contient beaucoup de fautes* Cela m étonne; mon manuscript a été lu en entire par deux hommes qui se sont fait un nom dans la littérateur, et que je croyais assez de mes amis pour me dire la vérité à cet égard, ils ont porté une grande attention dans leur examen et c'est encouragée par leur suffrage que je crois pouvoir livrer mon voyage a l impression. Si ces M^{rs} avaient, par inadvertence, laissé échapper quelques fautes je vous aurais une bien sincère obligation de me les signaler, et m'empresserais de les corriger. Mais si ces fautes sont du même genre que celles que vous avez *cru voir* dans les deux dernières lettres sur Londres, nous ne serons jamais d'accord – Car je vous déclare que *ces sortes de fautes* sont ce que j'appele mes *perles.* Je considère les suppressions que vous avez faites comme autant de

[257] All grammar and vocabulary mistakes in this extract are Tristan's. One can note that accent marks are missing for many words and that she uses punctuation arbitrarily, all of which get refined in *Les Pérégrinations d'une paria.*

[258] See Buloz's response where he acknowledges his "mistake" asking for her pardon, and the relationship snaps after her angry letter, says the editor. *Lettres* (1980) 70.

crimes de lèse- poëtique… Je vous envoie ces retranchements et vous prie de me dire si ce ne sont pas véritables *mutilations.*[259]

Mr. Buloz – my old friend reported a conversation you had with him: it seems you have found that my piece on travel *contains many mistakes* This astonishes me; my manuscript has been read fully by two men who are well known in literary world, and who are sufficiently close to me to tell me frankly if this is so; they have been thorough in their examination and encouraged by their vote of confidence I believe I can serve up the printed document of my travels. If these men had, inadvertently, overlooked some mistakes I entreat you to let me know, and I would immediately correct them. But if these mistakes are similar to those that you believed you saw in my last two letters on London, we can never agree with each other. For I insist that these kinds of mistakes are what I call my *pearls*. I consider removing them, as you have done, *treason against art*. I send these excised parts to you and tell me if they are not truly *mutilations.*

Writing to Hippolyte Delaunay, the editor of the magazine *L'Artiste* that published chapters from her novel *Méphis*, Tristan adamantly refuses to make changes to the manuscript, citing the *Dictionnaire de l' Académie Française* to make her arguments.[260]

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[259] *Lettres* (1980) 68-69.

[260] Occasionally, her tactic was to use soft power, as when the writer Eugène Briffault published a withering criticism of the *Pérégrinations* and noted her maladroit use of certain words, Tristan simply sent him a copy of her *Promenades,* writing thus: « Je n'ai pas oublié l'article que vous avez fait sur mes Pérégrinations; votre jugement, quoique bien sévère était cependent empreint d'une équité --- aussi je vous envoie mon livre sur Londres soumets d'avance a toute votre rigueur. » ("I have not forgotten the review you wrote on my Peregrinations; your judgement, although very harsh was nevertheless balanced – I am also sending you my book on London and preparing myself for your rigorous critique.") *Lettres* 86. She pleads with him not to be severe toward *Promenades,* with this line, «pour cette fois soyez indulgent.» ("for this time be lenient.") See EN in *Lettres* (1980).

Despite Tristan's powerful sense of urgency about her mission, many important social figures failed to be persuaded, either by her personality or by her passionate writings. Famously, George Sand dismissed her as "a comedian," which effectively diminished Tristan's appeal to many intellectuals of the day.[261] Charles Poncy, a working-class poet and protégé of Sand, had praised Tristan's *Promenades dans Londres,* but dropped his friendship after Sand's uncharitable remark.[262] Likewise, Agricole Perdiguier, the craft-guilds advocate, found her passionate writings exhausting, preferring instead the more cerebral and cool George Sand. He refused to support Tristan's efforts in forming the Workers' Union and did not meet her when she was doing her tour of France despite her many attempts to meet him.[263] Tristan bitterly complained in a letter to Pierre Moreau, the farmers' rights champion, that Perdiguier does not introduce her to workers.[264] Many found her over-large ambitions and relentless drive for refashioning society unworkable. At the same time, Tristan had only herself to blame for her failure in reaching out to the network of socialists already working at many of these issues. Stéphane Michaud writes in a mordant indictment thus:

> Fermée aux voies propres de l'association ouvrière, rebelleaux lenteurs de la démocratie, insensible enfin aux remonstrances amicales comme à l'ironie

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[261] Stéphane Michaud, introduction, *La paria et son rêve* (1995) 9.

[262] *Lettres* (1980) 136.

[263] See Stéphane Michaud's editorial notes about this quarrel between Tristan and Perdiguier (1980) 244.

[264] *Lettres* (1980) 168.

affecteuse de ses partenaires, la messagère s'épuise à crier à la vanité. (*La paria et son rêve* 123)

Closed off to the distinctive channels of the workers' association, to the resisting slow drag of democracy, in a word, indifferent to friendly criticism, like the affectionate irony of her partners, the messenger is worn out calling out her vanity.

Criticism of her 'vanity' has echoes elsewhere.[265] But many of the negative reactions arose simply because Tristan was a woman author, opines Susan Grogan, citing Tristan's friend Antoine-Laurant-Appollinaire Fée, whose comment about her condition as a woman writer was surprisingly candid: "If the book of the workers' union had come from O'Connell or Owen, who have rarely had such sensible ideas; if some great writer, Chateaubriand, La Mennais, or Lamartine, had published it, it would have created an enormous sensation" (*Life Stories* 76).[266] It is interesting to note here that the criticism from the male establishment was hauntingly similar to what Brontë suffered in England around the same period. Much like Robert Southey's admonishment to Charlotte to "mind her womanly duties at home," Jules Janin would write after her death that Tristan forsook her family and home for the sake of fame.[267]

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[265] See "Flora Tristan et le Mouvement Féministe et Syndical D'Aujourd'hui" where the anonymous writer notes that the socialists' tepid reactions to her ambition was due to Tristan's projection of a wounded vanity (*la vanité blesse*), which displaced workers' voices, resulting in the rancorous relationship between them. *Un Fableux Destin*: *Flora Tristan*, Ed. Stéphane Michaud (1984)16.

[266] Grogan quotes from Appollinaire Fée's book *Voyage autour de ma bibliothèque* (1856), where he remembers his friend Flora fondly.

[267] Jules Janin wrote after Tristan's death: "But by what right, I ask, does a young woman, who could and should live in her private bourgeois world, and who is not forced to […] why does she go wallowing in the depths of debauchery beyond all decency, beyond all moral limits? All this is horrifying even to recount, and one wonders whether exposing oneself to such reckless adventures does not reveal a curiosity that is actually deranged." Susan Grogan, *Flora Tristan: Life Stories* (1996) 75-76.

Predictably, her bold adventures, both in Peru and in the seedy parts of London, came under sharp criticism for their "unwomanly" displays and forceful language. The critic who simply signed as "G" wrote a long review of the *Pérégrinations* in the influential *Journal de débats*, rejecting Tristan's desire to reengineer society and its established mores, in particular, laws pertaining to the status of women:

> Malgré les attaques éloquentes d'un champion bien autrement redoutable que les *Mémoires d'une Paria*, les femmes en France continuent et s'accommoder fort bien de leur condition, et si de temps à autre la propagande fait quelques prosélytes au sein même des familles qui pouvaient se croire à l'abri de tells prédictions, il n'est peut-être pas indifférent d'expliquer ces tristes conquêtes.[268]
>
> Despite the eloquent attacks from a formidable champion in the *Memoirs of a pariah*, women in France carry on nicely and are content with their lives, and if from time to time the propaganda converts a few proselytes from families who think they are sheltered from such prognostications, it is not unimportant to explain these sad conquests to them.

While this particular critic did not disparage Tristan's writing skills as many others had done, critic "G" took apart all her arguments for divorce rights and women's status in post revolution France. The negativity rife in such reviews must have extracted a toll, but amazingly, Tristan simply persevered. Like Charlotte Brontë, Tristan did suffer as a result of an unduly sensitive temperament that felt oppressed by criticism of her writing skills, but she, unlike Brontë, was able to fight back. However, even though she did not react

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[268] *Journal de débats* 13 Février, 1839.

quite as emotionally to negative reviews as Brontë did when *Jane Eyre* was published in 1857 Tristan had to navigate far more treacherous paths of the institutionalized misogyny of French society.

Moreover, Tristan's textual battles were fought for the right to be heard in the public arena and not so much for the desire to be read in the secluded world of domestic fiction or life-writing, traditionally seen as women's milieu. Her literary ventures were in fact platforms for her larger social agenda, which included a grandiose proposal to change all aspects of society. Individual trauma of a literary writer had to be submerged in the collective trauma of suffering women and exploited workers, whose lives she aimed to reorder through her various social schemes. But since the personal and the political are mutually constitutive, Tristan established for herself an important historical mission: that of inextricably linking women's emancipation with humanity's destiny. While laudable, Tristan's ambition met with derision more often than with sympathy, and this was largely due to her strident impatience with whom she dealt.[269] "L'aristocratique Flora […] ne tolère aucune objection" ("The aristocratic Flora […] tolerated no objection"), writes Michaud (*La paria* 123). In fact, her famous temper and self-righteousness did not bring her favor among the luminaries of the day, as many were resistant to her playing the martyr.[270] Her 1844 letter to George Sand, seemingly in a move of solidarity, comes after Tristan had dismissed Sand's works as mere romantic tales in 1838 in the second preface

[269] Stéphane Michaud, *Flora Tristan: La paria et son rêve* (1995) 122.

[270] Read Stéphane Michaud's critical analysis about how Tristan made enemies easily by refusing to compromise *Flora Tristan: La paria et son rêve* (1995) 122-123.

to *Pérégrinations*.[271] This passage in the preface is a thinly veiled denigration of Sand's works:

> Je me trompe: un écrivain qui s'est illustré, dès son début, par élévation de la pensée, la dignité et la pureté du style, en prenant la forme du roman pour faire ressortir le malheur de la position que nos lois ont faite à la femme, a mis tant de vérité dans sa peinture, que ses propres infortunes en ont été prensenties par le lecteur. Mais cet écrivain, qui est une femme, non contente du voile dont elle s'était cachée dans ses écrits, les a signés d'un nom d'homme. (*Pérégrinations* I, 12)
>
> I could be wrong: a writer who is celebrated, since the start of her career, for superiority of thought, dignity and purity of style, seizing the novel genre, underscores the misfortunes that our laws have imposed on the woman, and so faithfully presents this in her portrayal that her own misfortunes are sensed by the reader. But this writer, who is a woman, not content to hide herself in her books, signs them with a man's name.

The pointed reference about a woman writer who hid behind the mask of a man's name was clearly aimed at Sand, and it found its mark. This disparagement of such an established writer as Sand is audacious. Perhaps Tristan needed to carve out a space for herself in a somewhat crowded literary scene, with famous feminist writers like George Sand, Anaïs Ségalas, Hortense Allart, Madame Roland, and others trying to make their

[271] The *Pérégrinations* was first published in two volumes in January 1838 by Arthus Betrand and the same year, Charles Ladvocat republished the memoir. Volume 1contains the Dedication, Preface and Foreword with the Dedication, "Aux Péruviens" addressed to the citizens of Peru, the Preface detailing her mission in writing this deeply personal text, and the Foreword explaining her unusual biography and her situation at the time of the writing of this memoir.

stand in a man's world.[272] Or maybe Tristan sincerely wanted to convey the impression that the *Pérégrinations* charted a unique path in female literary production. However, the open criticism of Sand in the preface did Tristan no favor, as Sand would not forget this insult, taking her circle of influence away from the late comer. In a remarkably bold move, Tristan wrote to Sand in 1844, suggesting that it was Sand's duty to support "an apostle" like Tristan:

> J'ai pensé que *le poète* pouvait venir aide à l'*apôtre,* et c'est à ce titre d'*apôtre en l'humanité* que je viens, au moment d'entreprendre une mission apostolique, vous demander votre appui. Oui, votre appui; car c'est ainsi que l'humanité a procédé jusqu'à ce jour: les poètes ont été ses rois, ses idoles: et les apôtres ses maudits, ses martyrs.[273]
>
> I thought that *the poet* should come to the help of the a*postle,* and it is this title of a*postle of humanity* that I claim, I ask for your support as I set about the apostolic mission. Yes, your support; for it is thus humanity has advanced to this day: the poets have been its kings, its idols: and the apostles its wretches, its martyrs.

In describing herself as an "apostle," Tristan is aligning herself with the ideal of self-abnegation, which she clearly saw to be in opposition to Sand's flamboyant and bohemian lifestyle. Her tendency for self-sacrifice matched her self-image as a savior, propelling her to work at a feverish pace towards the end of her life. Often she alluded to Christ's sacrifice even though she was not a practicing Catholic. All these vehement overtures and

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[272] See Dijkstra, "Manifesto of a Pariah" for an interesting analysis about this feud, started by Tristan. *Flora Tristan: Feminism in the Age of George Sand* (1992) 32- 33.

[273] *Flora Tristan: la paria et son rêve* (2003) 236.

emotional imaginings did not court a sympathetic circle of socialists. She desperately wanted to harness the remarkable energy of Victor Schoelcher, the abolitionist and author of *Abolition de l'esclavage*, for her workers' union. But when he did not respond to her letters, she unfairly accused him of being partial to the cause of African slavery in foreign lands while neglecting his own proletarian compatriots.[274] This wounded sensibility would cost her dearly. She wrote to socialist Charles Fourier in 1835, expressing her admiration for his "sublime" doctrines and begging him to find a way to use her talents:

> Je vais peu dans le monde que je n'ai jamais aimé, et mon caractère mélancolique et peu agréable pour la société me rend très difficile à former des liaisons. Je n'ai plus qu'une aptitude, c'est le travail, le désir ardent de pouvoir me render utile, de server la cause que nous aimons avec tant de pureté, employez-moi, ah! employez-moi! Je vous en aurai une gratitude infinite. (*Lettres* 57)
>
> I move little among people that I don't like, and my character, melancholic and not eager for company, makes it very difficult to form connections. It is only for work that I have a talent, the ardent desire to prove useful, by serving the cause we love with such purity, employ me! ah! employ me! I will be eternally grateful.

Earlier, in the same year, she had sent him a copy of her pamphlet *Nécessité de faire un bon accueil aux femmes étrangères*, along with her letter, where she wrote that in her he would find an uncommon force ready for action.[275] But with the acceleration of the pace of her public works, especially for workers' rights, she began to isolate herself from her

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[274] *Flora Tristan: la paria et son rêve* (2003) EN on Victor Schoelcher, pp.322.

[275] *Lettres*, Ed. Stéphane Michaud (1980) 56.

natural milieu that included her young daughter Aline. Writing from London in 1839, to her dear friend Olymphe Chodzko, Tristan says she is miserable and homesick: "je suis en ce moment seule dans ma chamber" ("right now I am alone in my room"), adding pitifully, "Oh! Paris où es-tu?," ("Oh! Paris where are you?"), as the realization of her lonely quest becomes clear to her. Family and intimate friends are pushed to the background in this "messianic quest," suggests Stephane Michaud.[276] This is the beginning of her disconnection with her close circle, and it is indicated by both her alienation from real people and her growing intimacy with the abstract notion of "humanity."

Tristan wrote and held meetings on behalf of her "new" community: the proletariats. Yet ironically, this workers' rights champion did not have the vocabulary or the working-class idiom to reach the proletarians whom she desperately wanted to impact, so many simply walked out of her meetings. Often, as in her journal from her Tour de France, she did not hide her impatience for their culpability in their own degradation, and this impatience is even more pronounced in the *Pérégrinations,* where she writes about the conditions of African slaves and Native Indians of Peru. Her writings were full of abstract ideas about an idealized community, and one wonders if the abstract ideal of universal workers' rights had helped destabilize her relationship with actual workers whose support

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[276] Michaud writes : « Fini le temps des effusions intimes: Olymphe, Traviès, Évrat lui-même s'effacent progressivement. Oubliées aussi la famille et cette Aline, future mère de Gauguin, qui avait fait le Bonheur de ses jeunes années et pour la garde laquelle elle était tant battue. Un autre partenaire a envahi la place: 'Mon amant à moi, c'est humanité' s'exclaime-t-elle. En cette grande époque de sa vie, où elle se donne tout entier au service de l'affranchissement des femmes et ses travailleurs, la cause humanitaire comble sa soif d'être aimée et son désir de jouissance. » ("Gone are personal outpourings: Olympia, Traviès, Évrat himself gradually fades. Also forgotten is the family and this Aline, future mother of Gauguin, who had brought joy in her younger years for whose protection she had fought so much. Another partner has taken her place: 'My beloved is humanity,' she exclaimed. In this important juncture of her life, where she gives herself up completely to the service of emancipation of women and workers, the humanitarian cause satisfies her thirst to be loved and her desire for enjoyment."). Stéphane Michaud, *La paria et son rêve,* pp.152.

she needed in order for her workers' union to succeed.[277] Her self-isolating tendency is clear to see, as when Tristan throws light on the divergent lives of the two classes in Peru, calling those living outside her own privileged milieu, "*la race moutonnière*" ("the sheep race").[278] The sheep race then, did not wish to be led by someone whose social boundaries limited her understanding of their lives.

Starting with the autobiographical travelogue, *Pérégrinations,* and moving on to *Méphis, Promenades,* and finally *L' Union ouvrière*, the reader begins to notice the steady generic change in Tristan's writing—from a fictionalized autobiography/memoir to a workers' rights manifesto. While testimony is still the privileged mode in her writing, Tristan's reader realizes that her sense of displacement is to be redeemed only through advocacy. One discerning critic insists that Peru marked the point of departure in her life-mission, conferring upon her the power of speech and language as she negotiated the parole of the common people:

> Le voyage au Pérou joue un rôle décisif dans la vie de Flora Tristan. On a pu même écrire à juste titre que sa vie se divisait en deux grandes étapes: avant le Pérou et après le Pérou. Pérou bouleverse l'existence de Flora, ses ambitions, ses projects […] déjà dans les *Pérégrinations* sont en germe toutes les œuvres à venir de l'auteur.[279]

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[277] Stéphane Michaud, *Flora Tristan: La paria et son rêve.* (2003) 153.

[278] See Flora Tristan, *Pérégrinations d'une paria* (2015) 46; also see Christine Planté, "Flora Tristan: Écrivain méconnu?" in *Un Fableux Destin: Flora Tristan* ed. Stéphane Michaud (1984)160.

[279] Denys Cuche, "Le Pérou de Flora Tristan: Du Rêve de la Réalité" in *Un Fableux Destin: Flora Tristan* (1984) 19-37.

> The voyage to Peru plays a decisive role in the life of Flora Tristan. One could even write an accurate description that her life was divided in two great stages: before Peru and after Peru. Peru jolted the soul of Flora, her ambitions, her projects […] already in the *Peregrinations* one sees the kernel of all the future works of the writer.

She set out on the *Mexicain* on her birthday, the voyage marking a new birth, a new self, as Denis Cuche writes. This also marks the death of her former, French self, for she would return in a new avatar. It is important to acknowledge that Flora Tristan was a non-conformist in that she saw the self as model for everything. If autobiography is a series of narrated episodes whose construction heightens the realism and drama of life, then the life-writing must also reflect the different facets of the narrator. Additionally, the generic hybridity of trauma narration—here, a mix of fiction, memoir and ethnography—mirrors the fragmentation of the victim-narrator. Thus content and form work in tandem to support the notion that the act of writing is crucial to trauma survival.

Trauma testimonials teach that the subject's individual psychic history and all the contexts involved in its formation play an important role in the therapeutic retelling. It is irrefutable that Tristan suffered from her complex of being a victim; but it also true that she suffered dislocating trauma that left her yearning for an imagined community so that she could recuperate. I have shown in this chapter that Tristan's strategy in writing this text is two-fold: one is to construct her readers as a group of well-read, sophisticated Parisians; the other is to position herself as the wounded and wronged victim who needs her imagined community of readers to help her reconstitute her fragmented self. This structuring relies on a strategy of conscription of the readers by co-opting their empathic

collaboration. Garrett Stewart writes that it is the interpellated reader[280] who is in the service of the text, constituted as a subject by the text/narrator. [281] However, I suggest instead that it is the subject-narrator who gets reconstituted or restored in the field of the Other, the reader; the imagined, empathic reader is the force that helps Tristan reimagine herself, and in this she is helped by the silent figure of the Pariah. One cannot deny that she was writing to impress her contemporary readers with her tales of the exotic foreigners that she encountered in her stay in the New World, but they must be differentiated from the readers who are constructed by the narrative—here, the imagined and empathic readers who understand her need for therapeutic healing.

The *Peregrinations of a Pariah* is her account of her perilous voyage to the New World and is a testament to her feminist project. Furthermore, Tristan is forced into being the Other while adapting to new situations and new people, yet she manages to balance several identities with a lightness that comes with practice.[282] Her trauma narrative depends on the willing engagement of her empathic readers; so it is important to raise questions about the figure of the Pariah who becomes a symbol of her deracination and Tristan's imagined community of readers who help her reimagine the self. The cultural framework for her nineteenth-century bourgeois readers would have included a faint, half-

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[280] Stewart's audience is both interpolated, as in being inserted into situations, and interpellated, as in receiving the address. Please see chapter, "On terms with the Reader: The Interpolated Audience," *Dear Reader* (1996) 25-55.

[281] Garrett Stewart summarizes this: "This is the audience not only narrated to but also narrated" "Readers in the Making," *Dear Reader: The Conscripted Audience in Nineteenth-Century British Fiction* (1996) 3-25.

[282] Jennifer Law-Sullivan, "Liberté, Égalité, Sororité: Flora Tristan and the Contact Zone Between Race & Gender" (*Nineteenth-Century French Studies*, 39. 1 & 2, 2010-2011) pp. 62-76

perceived idea about the abject Pariah living in the mysterious Orient; yet this liminal figure becomes the point of departure for the text. Despite cautions from Wolfgang Iser, Stanley Fish and Jonathan Culler that seeing women as readers of women's text poses a problem, I argue that Tristan's imagined readers are women. As Nancy K. Miller asserts in her ground-breaking study, women autobiographers know that they are speaking to female readers while being conscious that they are being read as women.[283] More importantly, Tristan knew that her bourgeois readers, both real and imagined, would intuitively recognize this figure of patient victimhood that is a synecdoche for suffering. To state simply, at one level, the submissive, long-suffering figure of the Pariah is artfully deployed to fulfill the narrative exigencies of an aristocratic European who seeks empathic engagement from her readers. Who better to instantly evoke sympathy than the untouchable? But what the writer does not realize until quite late in the narration is the curious fact that, inscribed in this oppositional text, which is equal parts polemical and sentimental, is the silent Pariah who gives shape and purpose to the text. The subaltern is not being ventriloquized; on the contrary, it is the figure of the Pariah that gives Tristan her strength and determination, for it is in the self-imagining as a subaltern that Tristan gains new perspective about her life-mission and thus, herself.

Flora Tristan needed legitimation from French society and even though she did not seek in the New World, she gains it retrospectively when writing her autobiography about

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[283] See Nancy K. Miller's *Subject to Change: Reading Feminist Writings* (New York: Columbia UP, 1998), which is a study about French writers of autobiography like George Sand, Daniel Stern, Simone de Beauvoir and others, and here, Miller writes that women autobiographers expect their words to carry special currency within a clearly marked "reader's circle", for the women autobiographers know that they are read as *"women."* Thus, the role that female identity plays in such life-writing cannot be overstated. 50-51.

the New World and its inhabitants. Her deracination from French society becomes the single traumatic event that is recalled in this therapeutic text. Her solidarity with the oppressed classes in the New World cannot be disputed; however, she saw herself first and foremost as a European of French origin. She speaks in polemical accents of a revolutionary to the bourgeois reader, but uses all the bourgeois strategies for documentation of foreigners that include careful scrutiny of the colorful and the spectacular, thus playing to the reader's expectation for the exotic. The travel-memoir genre is utilized as a trauma text for recalibrating her memory and for manipulating narrative time. And by treating readers as trusted allies against all odds, during her stay in an alien land, Tristan gets healed. She goes on to become a vocal champion for workers' rights soon after the publication of *Pérégrinations,* making it her mission in life. In all this, the narrative depends on a subject who is fragmented, as required in a poetics of trauma, with the subject reaffirming a process of working through which is the structure of trauma narration. In this recuperative exercise, the narrator-victim is aided by her imagined empathic readers, and in a curious overturning of narrative design, also by the mute pariah who helps Tristan reconstitute her sense of the self.

4. SEDUCTION OF THE PAST IN TORU DUTT

Making of a Genius

Toru Dutt's name is not unfamiliar to lovers of Anglo-Indian poetry. Her elegant sonnets, "Our Casuarina Tree," "Baugmaree," and "The Lotus," are frequently included in Victorian anthologies and fin-de-siècle collections of Anglo-Indian poetry.[284] She died when she was just twenty-one years old in 1877, but her near constant writing and translating have left readers with many letters, one French novella, *Le Journal de Mademoiselle D' Arvers* (1879), a half-finished realist novel in English, *Bianca or The Spanish Maiden*, and a volume of nearly one hundred and seventy five French poems translated with notes titled, *A Sheaf Gleaned in French Fields* (1876).[285] Additionally, a collection of ballads and sonnets was also published posthumously, under the title, *Ancient Ballads and Legends of Hindustan* (1882), with an introductory memoir by the famous critic Edmund Gosse. Her literary career began in Calcutta, when *The Bengal Magazine* published her essays on Leconte de Lisle and Henri Vivian Derozio, an Anglo-Indian poet,

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[284] Elleke Boehmer, ed., *Empire Writing: An Anthology of Colonial Literature 1870-1918* (Oxford: The Oxford UP, 1998) 69-72; Rosinka Chaudhuri, "The Dutt Family Album: And Toru Dutt," *A History of Indian Literature in English,* ed. Arvind Krishna Mehrotra (New York: Columbia UP, 2003) 53-69; Tricia Lootens, "Alien Homelands: Rudyard Kipling, Toru Dutt, and the Poetry of Empire," *The Fin-de-Siècle Poem: English Literary Culture and 1890s,*ed. John Bristow (Athens, Ohio: Ohio UP, 2005) 285-310; Mary Ellis Gibson, "From Christian Piety to Cosmopolitan Nationalisms: The Dutt Family Album and the Poems of Mary E. Leslie and Toru Dutt," *Indian Angles: English Verse in Colonial India: From Jones to Tagore,* ed., (Athens Ohio: Ohio UP, 2011) 181-226; Tricia Lootens, "The Locations and Dislocations of Toru and Aru Dutt," *A History of Indian Poetry in English,* ed., Rosinka Chaudhuri (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2016) 82-97.

[285] *Bianca: Or the Spanish Maiden* appeared from January to April of 1878 in *The Bengal Magazine.* The French novella was published first in 1879 with an introduction by Clarisse Bader, and under the author's name, a line notes, "Jeune et célèbre Hindoue de Calcutta, morte en 1877." The markers, "young" and "famous Hindu," along with the date of her death denote the reasons for her posthumous fame in European literary circles (Paris: Didier et Cie, 1879).

in December, 1874. She had started translating into English French Orientalist Clarisse Bader's *La Femme dans l'Inde Antique* when she died of consumption. The correspondence between the two women suggest that Dutt continued to form literary networks even as she worked in near isolation, attesting to the tenacious bonds that women writers formed in that period when they were both writers and empathic readers of other women. This textual sorority sustained them when they had to confront the realities of their male-dominated societies.

Toru Dutt was the youngest of the three children of a wealthy Christian man, Govin Chunder Dutt of Calcutta, who took his daughters on overseas travel at a time when few women journeyed outside India. When his son Abju died of tuberculosis in 1865 at the age of fourteen, Mr. Dutt took his daughters Aru and Toru to France in the hope of preventing the spread of the disease to his remaining two children. Sadly, Mr. Dutt's well-laid plans would go waste, with Aru dying of consumption in 1874, and Toru succumbing to the same disease in 1877. But in 1869, Europe beckoned and the Dutts arrived in France, settling comfortably in Nice. England had little to offer by way of education to female students then, as the Higher Education of Women in Cambridge University had not yet been established (*Life* 21). France, far less insular than England, thus became for Toru Dutt the location that shaped her literary sensibilities most. It was in France that Dutt first developed what I call her "poetics of regression," which influenced her major works, and is noticeable particularly in the French novella. This is a poetics marked by a strong Rousseauian desire to retreat back to an earlier period of innocence and plenitude—a prelapsarian world—where virtue and order reigned supreme. In its Freudian connotation, this sensibility is a refusal to accept maturing sexuality, but in Dutt's case, it was more a

turning away from the suffocating life in Calcutta. Additionally, the severe limitations that were placed on her imagination and growth as a writer by her family's return to Calcutta—"such a horrid place"—contributed to this backward movement to a mythic past, which was therapeutic.[286]

Further, this turn toward a therapeutic past helps Dutt mourn her siblings' deaths, in addition to helping her come to terms with her own. She would die before she could participate in the growing Indian nationalism, which propelled Indian women to march alongside the men, bravely tearing off the stifling curtains of the *zenana* in the process.[287] Unlike the women in France who had marched with men for "liberté, égalité, and fraternité" during the Revolution only to see their hard-won rights erased in 1804 by the Napoleonic Code, Indian women's rights surprisingly continued to remain intact after India won the hard-fought freedom struggle in 1947. Toru Dutt did not live to see the momentous change in the country, but she was part of an early movement that wished to break open the doors of the *zenana*. In Dutt's epic poem, *Savitri,* the poet's libertarian overtures through her eponymous heroine suggest that she saw rich possibilities for women in India's future. This poem then conflicts with the poetics of regression of her fiction,

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[286] Dutt writes that "Calcutta is such a horrible place, socially and morally: backbiting and scandal are in full swing" in a letter dated May 13, 1876 (*Life and Letters)* 159; in another letter dated June 26, 1876, she writes, "Calcutta is a very sink of iniquity. Not only among the Hindus (in the midst of whom there are many respectable and nice people), but even among the Bengali Christians, the *moral* is so execrable." *Life and Letters* (1921)168.

[287] The *zenana* was a closed section inside a home, but especially in upper-class homes, to keep the women cloistered, effectively imprisoning them. It became the metaphor for the condition of Indian women in India around this period. According to historian Antoinette Burton, British suffragettes used it as a weapon to throw at their brethren to assert their own superior status within British society. "Are we to be compared to Indian women sitting inside the zenana?" was a rallying cry that tried to instill a sense of shame in their men, and it worked. For more see Antoinette Burton, *Burdens of History: British Feminists, Indian Women, and Imperial Culture, 1865-1915* (Chapel Hill: North Carolina UP, 1994).

which is clearly influenced by Rousseauian ethos and its preoccupation with the domestication of women, especially as articulated in Rousseau's two novels, *Julie ou la Nouvelle Héloïse* (1861) and *Émile* (1862).[288] In this chapter, I look closely at Dutt's novella as well as the Notes accompanying her book of translations of French Romantic poets. More than the Notes themselves, the critical reception of them are revelatory of how she was perceived by writers from her own era.

The Dutt family's premature return curtailed Toru's efflorescence, which would have found nourishment in Europe in a manner befitting her talents. This "halted traveler" had to find a way to write, despite the arresting of her poetic development in colonial Calcutta where her family was ostracized due to their Christian conversion.[289] Dutt alludes to this marginalization several times in her letters to her Cambridge friend Mary E. Martin. In a letter dated 28 February 1876, she shares the information that she and her family were not invited to a cousin's wedding: "She is a Hindu and so is her family, so of course we were not invited" (Das 128). Later, in a letter dated March 24th the same year, she confides to her friend:

> We do not go much into society now. The Bengali reunions are always for men. Wives and daughters and all woman-kind are confined to the house, under lock and key *à la lettre*! and Europeans are generally supercilious and look down on

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[288] I have written about the internal tension in Dutt's poetry and fiction in an article entitled, "The Enigma of Toru Dutt," where I looked into the many eighteenth-century French literary influences that shaped Dutt's poetics even as she was coming under the sway of the Orientalists. *Dalhousie French Studies,* Vol 94. Spring 2011.

[289] See Geoffrey H Hartman for the image of William Wordsworth as a halted traveler who experiences the sublime only with a distance afforded by time, frustrating his consciousness as poet as a result. *Wordsworth's Poetry 1787-1814* (New Haven, CT: Yale UP, 1971) 17.

> Bengalis. I have not been to one dinner party or any party at all since we left Europe. (*Life* 141)

This double humiliation, meted out by both the "supercilious" colonials and her own intolerant Hindu compatriots, struck deeply. Ironically, the Dutts freely moved in the heart of the empire in England, only to find themselves alienated in their own country.

The return for the native is often traumatic, but it was specially wounding for Dutt, who was enamored of the "free air of England" and longed to settle in the Lake District.[290] Her poetics of regression was a refuge into an imagined, perfect world, which she sought as respite while she lay sick and dying, in what she considered an alien city. In other words, for Dutt, the trauma of return was sublimated via a regression into the past which promised restoration, and can be noted in the theme, setting, and language of her writings. For example, both *Le Journal de Mlle D'Arvers,* her French novella, and *Bianca*, her half-finished English novel, are set in aristocratic homes in what could only be termed idyllic settings; both Marguerite, the heroine in the French novella, and Bianca, the eponymous heroine of the English novel, lead charmed lives in France and England respectively. Both are auto-portraits. The novella, partly inhabiting the gothic world, is heavily didactic and is suffused with sentimental discourse—a genre of writing made popular by women writers in eighteenth-century France. These writers followed the model of self-regulation laid out by Rousseau in his novels.[291] A preoccupation with virtue characterized all of Rousseau's

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[290] In many letters, she yearns for England, and Westmoreland in Lake District, in particular, but letters dated May 9, September 19, and November 17, all in 1874, throb with emotional intensity about England. *Life and Letters of Toru Dutt* (1921) 61, 66, 70.

[291] Jean Hinde Stewart, *Gynographs: French Novels by Women of the Late Eighteenth-Century* (Lincoln: U of Nebraska P, 1993).

works, with his fictional self--construction articulating an utmost refinement of the model self.[292] This model subject and the vocabulary of virtue that it engendered influenced the thinking of revolutionary leaders like Saint Just and Robespierre, among others.[293] Turning outward from the self-absorption of the exemplary man in *Confessions*, Rousseau set out to erect a society of perfect beings in *Social Contract*, *Émile*, and *Julie ou La Nouvelle Héloïse*, the novel that elevated righteous sentiments. In particular, the Rousseauian model circumscribed women within their homes as submissive wives and virtuous mothers. This model of domesticity—as set out in Rousseau's novel *Julie*—was used by the establishment to justify limiting women's participation in the public square. A prime example of this interdiction is in the tirade of Louis Prudhomme, the influential editor of *Les Révolutions de Paris*, who assailed women gathering in public in the 1793 issue with this devastating criticisim: "Julie Wolmar would not have taken her children to the citizenesses' club."[294]

Dutt's novella follows the prescriptive Rousseauian model, her characters behaving with the correct sentiment at all times. Moreover, the France of Dutt's novella is a fictitious place, existing outside modernity—a mythical place of godly people where religion and virtue hold sway. This was not the France that the Dutt family encountered,

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[292] See J.J Rousseau, *Confessions* (Paris: Éditions Gallimard, 1963).

[293] Carol Blum, "Rousseau's Virtue and the Revolution: A Statement of the Problem," *Rousseau and the Republic of Virtue: The Language of Politics in the French Revolution* (Ithaca and London: Cornell UP,1986) 24-27.

[294] Julie Wolmar is the name of Rousseau's famous heroine in his novel, *Julie ou la nouvelle Héloïse*, and was seen as the model of womanhood. About Prudhomme's attacks on women see Carol Blum, "The Sex Made to Obey," *Rousseau and the Republic of Virtue: The Language of Politics in the French Revolution* (1986) 209-210.

but a France of her imagination, inspired by a Rousseauian preoccupation with virtue. In fact, Dutt was convinced that the fall of France in the Franco-Prussian War of 1870 was due to the French people's spiritual vacuum, and wrote the following entry in her diary:

> Alas! Thousands and thousands of men have shed their hearts' blood for their country, and yet their country has fallen into the hands of their enemies. It is because many were deeply immersed in sin and did not believe in God?... Oh France, France, how thou art brought low! Mayest thou, after this humiliation, serve and worship God better than thou hast done in those days—Poor, poor France, how my heart bleeds for thee![295] (*Life* 38)

Here, the amalgamation of patriotism and virtue creates a moral imperative for saving France. She also wrote an emotional poem to this effect, "France: 1870," which imagines France as a young woman, lying wounded, and the poet cries out to good Samaritans like England to help the once mighty nation:

> Not dead, --oh no, she cannot die!
> Only a swoon, from loss of blood!
> Levite England passes her by,
> Help, Samaritan! None is nigh;
> Who shall staunch me this sanguine flood? (*Ancient* 129)

Both the diary entry and the poem are noteworthy in their emotional cadence and patriotism, in addition to their religious fervor. It is not difficult to surmise from this that

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[295] Clarisse Bader notes in her emotional preface to Dutt's *Le Journal de Mademoiselle D'Arvers* (1878) that the young writer's love for France reminded her of the words of S.A. R. le prince of Galles who exclaimed to his people «Tout mon cœur est avec la France» (Preface, 1878 Edition, xiii).

Dutt would have felt that India's "capitulation" at the hands of the British was also due to her fall from virtue. After all, this fits in with the pattern of Orientalist ideology that was beginning to seduce Dutt in the last year of her life. She would write to Mary from Calcutta in 1876 that "Calcutta is a very sink of iniquity. Not only among the Hindus (in the midst of whom there are many respectable and nice people), but even among the Bengali Christians, the *moral* is so execrable" (*Life* 168). Morality and virtue were overriding concerns in the pious Christian home of the Dutts, but more important to note is how their ideology fits the Rousseauian notion of a society of perfect beings.[296]

Dutt's ballads, on the other hand, are retellings of epic tales about courageous princes and princesses from Indian mythology. This was a natural outcome of her return to India, where she had started her study of Sanskrit. It is important to note that the topoi in both the fiction and poetry are from an earlier era. At the same time, this regression into a perfect past would be further shaped by her new-found European Orientalism, evidenced by her ballads. Starting from the time of the Indian Mutiny of 1857, there was a sudden interest in reshaping the Indian people either along the Anglo model or the ancient Indic model favored by the Orientalists. The Orientalists deployed India's mythic past in their efforts to displace the British Empire and its modernizing project.[297] However, in their

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[296] Carol Blum, "A Society of Perfect Beings," *Rousseau and the Republic of Virtue: The Language of Politics in the French Revolution* (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1986) 54-73.

[297] The Great Indian Mutiny of 1857, or the Sepoy Mutiny, as Indians called it, was a catalyst for hardening colonial brutality against the natives. The Mutiny started in the barracks, with Hindu and Muslim soldiers rebelling against the use of bullets allegedly made out of pig fat, an anathema to both groups, and it soon grew into a full-fledged mutiny of the Indian army. The British put it down with great force, forever altering the laissez-faire attitude of the previous era and establishing a more rigid division between the colonists and the colonized. For further reading, please see William Dalrymple, *The Last Mughal: Fall of a Dynasty, Delhi 1857* (London and Delhi: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2008).

enterprise of the myth of the antique land, they visualized an unbroken link between the Aryan civilization of ancient India and the modern--day Christian religion. In its arbitrariness, this ideology upheld Sanskrit as the Vedic language of ancient India, but dismissed Indian vernacular languages and the ritualistic Hindu religion. Around the same time, some Bengali nationalists like Bankim Chandra Chatterjee were attempting a very different kind of regeneration for their colonized country.[298] Chatterjee exhorted his countrymen to write in Bengali like the poet Michael Madhusudan Dutt, whose lyrical blank verse earned him the sobriquet, "Milton of Bengal." Madhusudhan Dutt wrote effortlessly in English as well even as he called himself a "literary patriot" (Mehrotra 120). These various projects for the reconstitution of the nation gave birth to a new textual nationalism, which sought inspiration from Indian languages and Indian histories.[299] Dutt was beginning to participate in both of these different textual reimaginings when she died. Although her fluid movements among three different cultural traditions—French, English and Sanskrit—limit the extent to which one could call her nationalistic, or even Indian, her

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[298] Arvind Krishna Mehrotra, ed., *A History of Indian Literature in English* (New York: Columbia UP, 2003) 12.

[299] Around the time of the Bengal Renaissance, the southern states experienced calls for renewal, especially in Madras, home of the Tamils. The Madras Renaissance owed its provenance to the strengthening self-myth of the Tamil people whose passion for their tongue had seeped into the national resistance movement against the British. Effectively conflating a passion for their mother- tongue, Tamil, with love for the mother, the Tamils artfully channeled the at large anti-British sentiments to fuel their quest for self-determination. Large posters of the 'Tamil Mother' appeared in newspapers and magazines, draped in the national flag, churning emotions and giving extra fillip to the anti-British resistance from the South. Tamil poet Subramaniaya Bharathi became the unifying voice of this resistance from the South, his compositions seeping into the daily parlance of even unlettered Tamils. But this passion for indigenous languages in the Dravidian South turned disturbingly political soon after India's independence, when the newly created administration of Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru declared, unwisely, that the North Indian language Hindustani (Hindi) would be the national language. This unleashed such violence across the four states in the Dravidian South that the Prime Minister was forced to withdraw his ordinance. For a richly detailed study on the topic see Sumathi Ramaswamy, *Passions of the Tongue: Language Devotion in Tamil India, 1891–1970* (Berkeley: U of California Press, 1997).

letters to Bader suggest that she was seduced by the Orientalist-led resurgence of the once-proud Indian civilization.[300] Reading her many letters alongside her fiction and poetry, then, becomes vitally important for understanding this young writer. The letters are intertexts containing numerous original translations as well as quotations from French poems and critical notes on many contemporaneous writers and their works. In addition, they describe many current historical events both in India and in Europe, written in Dutt's idiosyncratic manner that displays child-like naiveté at times and penetrating intelligence at other times. Readers will benefit from reading her letters, which detail the many traumas of her circumscribed literary life in Calcutta.

It has been said that Aru and Toru were the first Bengali women who traveled to Europe.[301] In fact, they were the first Indian women to travel outside India, leading more women to follow in the fin-de-siècle.[302] They stayed in the Hôtel Helvétique in Nice for a few months while studying at a French *pensionnat*, which helped Toru become fluent in the language and culture she came to love most. Apart from two letters to her cousin Arun, no document remains of her stay in France, leading James Darmesteter to write wistfully: «On aimerait à avoir plus de details, sur leur court séjour en la France, qui eut un influence,

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[300] Meenakshi Mukherjee argues in "Hearing her own Voice: Defective Acoustics in Colonial India" that Toru Dutt was neither an Orientalist nor an Indian nationalist, but just a Bengali writer reformulating Bangla-inspired local tales. *The Perishable Empire: Essays on Indian Writing in English* (New Delhi, India: The Oxford UP, 2000) 89-116.

[301] Harihar Das, *Life and Letters of Toru Dutt* (London: The Oxford UP, 1921) 19.

[302] See Antoinette M. Burton, *At the Heart of the Empire: Indians and the Colonial Encounter in Late-Victorian Britain* (Berkeley: U of California Press, 1998) for a fascinating account about three upper-class Indian women who traveled to Britain in the fin-de-siècle. Burton argues that their presence in the "heart of the empire" creates disjunctions in colonial discourse about citizenship and Englishness.

étonant sur les idées et l'imagination de Toru. Le français devint sa langue favorite, comme la France, les peoples d'élection» (*Essais* 271). ("One would love to know more about their short stay in France, which played an astonishing influence on Toru's ideas and imagination. French became her favorite language and like France, its people were her favorite"). However, the letters from France and later ones from Calcutta provide an intimate view of a finely cultivated mind that was eager to embrace new experiences afforded serendipitously by her family's upper class connections. The letters and writing from this period in Toru's life also stand as eloquent testimonials to her allegiance to French causes, as in her diary entry on 29 January 1871 about the French capitulation in the Franco-Prussian War; in particular, she notes the beauty and serenity before the war and the misery after:

> 29th January 1871, London, No.9, Sydney Place, Onslow Square.
>
> What a long time since I last wrote in this diary! How things have changed in France since the last time I took this diary in hand. During the few days we remained in Paris, how beautiful it was! What houses! What streets! What a magnificent army! But now how fallen it is! It was the first among the cities, and now what misery it contains! When the war began, my whole heart was with the French, though I felt sure of their defeat. One evening, when the war was still going on, and the French had suffered many reverses, I heard Papa mention something to mama about the Emperor, I descended like lightening, and learnt that the French had capitulated. I remember perfectly how I ascended the stairs, and told the news to Aru, half choked and half crying. (*Life* 38)

Clarisse Bader, quoting this in her preface to Toru's posthumously published French novella, also notes that "the child was barely fifteen at that time, the Asiatic girl has drawn and written our patriotic sufferings with an anguish worthy of a French woman" (*Life* 37). Toru also wrote in the emotional poem, "France: 1870," about the same event that appears in her posthumously published work, *Ancient Ballads and Legends of Hindustan*. (129-30). A new kind of nationalism was shaping her interiority, which was trans-border and polyglot, thus defying established ideas about nation-states. She could be French and Indian, English and Bengali, all at once. But above all else, this patriotism was firmly melded with virtue.

Both sisters immersed themselves in all that France had to offer to the privileged classes. After a few months in France, the Dutt family left for London, where they stayed in a large furnished house in Sydney Place, Brompton (*Life* 22). Biographer Harihar Das says that "it was here that Toru began to develop a taste for translating poetry and later wrote poetry herself" (*Life* 22). The sisters often collaborated, as in their translations of French poems, *A Sheaf Gleaned in French Fields,* where Aru has some fine pieces.[303] The echoes with the Brontë siblings Emily and Charlotte are many, not only in the sisterly collaboration, but in how their juvenilia marked their later writings.[304] In the case of the

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[303] Edmond Gosse's encounter with the collection has been recounted in many places, about how the unattractive stained packet containing the manuscript lay unopened till Gosse carelessly skimmed the pages, only to be halted by a poem of unusual beauty: Aru's elegant translation of Victor Hugo's "Serenade" that begins, "Still barred thy doors!" that was "his surprise and almost rapture to open at such verse as this." *A Sheaf Gleaned in French Field,* introductory memoir, 2nd edition (London: Kegan Paul & Co, 1878) vii-xxvii.

[304] Govin Chunder Dutt writes in his preface to the new 1880 edition of *A Sheaf Gleaned in French Fields* about the sisters' plans for a joint effort at writing a novel: "The great ambition of the sisters was to publish a novel anonymously, which Toru would write, and Aru, far more dexterous with the pencil, should illustrate." (London: C. Kegan Paul & Co) ix.

Dutt sisters, one could argue that they were barely out of their teens when they both died, which arrested their poetic development. Perhaps it could even be said that the only writings we have are their juvenilia. However, in the case of Toru at least, the signs of maturing literary imagination are many. Interestingly, *The Dutt Family Album,* which came out in 1870 in London, was timely, further easing the way for Toru and her family to move in the London literary circles.[305] This they did, with great flair and confidence, their wealth and deep knowledge of European culture and languages helping them break down barriers. One could recall Charlotte Brontë's disastrous London season as the author of *Jane Eyre* for a contrasting picture, for Brontë was indelibly marked by her family's straightened circumstances. Her extreme sensitivity about her humble home life, in addition to her barely concealed animus towards the bourgeoisie, would severely curtail her movements in the fashionable circles. Brontë's discomfort in the London circles was mitigated a little by the literary luminary, Thackeray; but even his best efforts were unable to halt her precipitous journey back to Haworth "to walk invisible" again.[306] The extreme isolation and hardship that haunted Brontë could not be overcome—not even by the overwhelming success of *Jane Eyre.*

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[305] *The Dutt Family Album* (London: Longmans, Green & Co, 1870) was a collection of original sonnets, hymns and poems written by Toru's father Govin Chunder Dutt, his brothers, cousins and nephew Omesh Chunder Dutt. The most illustrious of this family was the writer and administrator Romesh Chunder. Dutt. This volume also included pieces by Michael Madhusudan Dutt, the "Milton of Bengal."

[306] Reacting negatively about her fame when *Jane Eyre* was published, Charlotte Brontë wrote to W.S. Williams, her publisher-friend: "What author would be without the advantage of being able to walk invisible?" *The Letters of Charlotte Brontë,* vol. 2 (2000) 4. Also see Rebecca Fraser's chapter "Writing Jane Eyre" for a detailed elaboration about this famous episode in the novelist's life in *Charlotte Brontë: A Writer's Life* (2008) 261-276.

In this particular aspect, the Brontës' contrast with the Dutts could not be sharper. Far from feeling resentment, the Dutt family felt they represented Calcutta's best culture and gentility, so they blended effortlessly in London's cultural milieu. Toru Dutt's remarkable assimilation into European society thus overturns easy assumptions about colonial encounters, for in her case the reductive binaries do not apply. The family journeyed to the heart of the empire, apparently unencumbered. This in turn, would define their precipitous return in 1874 to Calcutta, as a deeply scarring trauma for Dutt. One could call this event her "traumatic incursion," as it would be recalled repeatedly in her letters.[307] Freud asserts that if unprocessed, the original traumatic event would be recalled in memory, an "abreaction," as a way to heal therapeutically. This is the "repetition compulsion" that Freud says will be manifested as dreams, flashbacks and nightmares, since the original trauma is unprocessed (*Beyond* 9).[308] This repetition-compulsion needs to be worked out, preferably through testimony. The first-person narration of *Le Journal de Mlle D'Arvers* offers Dutt the confessional mode to be able to share her grievous wounds with her empathic reader. Additionally, the trauma text contains nightmares, visions and premonitions that become tools for "abreaction."[309] The many letters to Mary Martin also become a therapeutic mechanism that allows her to acknowledge the family's painful

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[307] Freud's description of a traumatic incursion recalled as traumatic memory is set out in his collaborative work with Josef Breuer, *Studies in Hysteria*, trans. James Strachey (New York: Basic Books Inc., 1895).

[308] See Sigmund Freud, *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, trans. C. J. M. Hubback (London, Vienna: International Psycho-Analytical, 1922).

[309] Josef Breuer and Sigmund Freud, *Studies in Hysteria* (1895) 5.

departure from Europe due to their father's fear for their health in cold climate, leading to their eventual isolation in a city she did not like.

There are numerous incidents detailed in Dutt's letters to Mary that highlight the family's easy camaraderie with European writers. During their time in London, the family began corresponding with the famous translator Chevalier de Chatelain, a close friend of Victor Hugo. This epistolary connection remained unbroken even after they moved back to Calcutta.[310] They also became well acquainted with Thackeray's daughter when they lived in Cambridge.[311] In addition, the Dutts moved intimately with many in the British political circle, including the Viceroy of India, Lord Lawrence. A witty exchange often recounted by writers who knew Toru Dutt well gives insight into the already subtle and complex mind of the young writer. To Lord Lawrence's admonition to the young sisters that they should not read too many novels, Toru replies, "we like to read novels," and adds, "because novels are true, and histories are false" (*Life* 23). Quoting this episode, Clarisse Bader, in her preface to Toru's novella, *Le Journal de Mlle D'Arvers,* remarks in true Orientalist fashion: «En lançant gaiement ce paradoxe, Toru Dutt se montrait une vraie fille de cette poétique race hindoue qui aime à remplacer l'histoire par la légende.»[312] ("In responding joyfully with this paradox, Toru Dutt proved to be a true daughter of this

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[310] The fame of Jean Baptiste, Chevalier de Chatelain, mainly rests on the fact that he translated Shakespeare's plays into French.

[311] Dutt refers to Miss Thackeray in a letter to Mary Martin dated 16 September 1876, when praising Thackeray's novel, *Esmond*: "Miss Thackeray, whom we met at Cambridge at Trinity Lodge, told us, I remember, that her father took the greatest pains with *Esmond,* more than with any others of his works, and that he, too, used to think it his best work." *Life and Letters* (1921) 209.

[312] See Clarisse Bader, preface, "Toru Dutt: Sa Vie et Ses Œuvres" in *Le Journal de Mlle D'Arvers* by Toru Dutt (Paris: Didier et Cie, 1879) i-xxxvii.

poetical Hindu race, who prefers legend to history"). Bader, in her Orientalist preoccupation about the "Hindu race," misses the ready wit and intelligence that is behind this remark. Current novelists like, Hugo, Thackeray, and Walter Scott were popular with the sisters as both read widely. In a conversation with Sir Edward Ryan, the Vice-Chancellor of the University of London, Dutt declares her special fondness for Thackeray and Trollope, saying, "There is nothing sensational in Trollope; that is what I like best in him. His novels are so like ordinary life." And in another place, she writes that Scott's hero in his novel *Waverly* is ordinary, and hence its special charm.[313] This is curious, because her own novels, owing to her poetics of regression, read like stylistic romances laced with heavy doses of Christian didacticism.[314] It is quite likely that she was trying to impress Sir Ryan with her answer. At the same time, one remembers that in her letters to her Cambridge friend Mary Martin, she reiterates her preference for many other realist writers, like Thackeray, Thomas Hardy and George Eliot. Her penchant for writing romantic tales about the high-born can only be understood as a therapeutic necessity of the poetics of regression.

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[313] Like Charlotte Brontë, Toru was an avid reader of Thackeray and followed all his novels closely. Her letters from Calcutta to her Cambridge friend Mary Martin are peppered with references and quotations from many writers, with Thackeray making frequent appearance, including in one letter where she notes that he was born in Calcutta. *Life and Letters of Toru Dutt* (1921) 28.

[314]In her collection of translations, *A Sheaf Gleaned in French Fields,* Dutt notes with characteristic frankness about Victor Hugo, whose writings she admired but felt should come with a caveat. Comparing Hugo with Lamartine, a religious poet, she writes: "There is much in Victor Hugo—far greater poet though he be—which it would not be wise to put into the hands of young people whose principles have not been sufficiently formed; but Lamartine may be placed indiscriminately in the hands of all."(London: Kegan Paul & Co, 1880) 342. In a letter she cautions Mary about reading *Les Misérables* that "it has some bad parts" and advises her to read just extracts. In an earlier letter Toru cautions that "Musset and Béranger are sad to say, immoral." *Life & Letters of Toru Dutt* (1921) 186, 217.

In 1870, the family moved to England, staying in London for some time before moving again to Cambridge, where the sisters attended the Higher Lectures for Women (*Life* 39).[315] Evenings spent in the theater in Drury Lane, carriage rides to the museums and Covent Garden, daily horse riding and conversations about Dickens and Shakespeare were all part of the enviable life-style of the Dutt sisters in London. It was not surprising that Europe as a place of enchantment began to take root in her imagination. In a letter to her cousin, Omesh Dutt in Calcutta, she writes about the Franco-Prussian War: "You seem to be quite a Republican, and very much against the Emperor. I am not, though" (*Life* 36). The resemblance to the Brontës even includes a preference for the monarchy, with Toru Dutt clearly stating her political leaning. However, her marked admiration for Victor Hugo's *Les Châtiments*, a collection of poems written when Hugo was in exile from Louis-Napoleon, complicates this for the reader. She quotes whole poems and her own English translation of many others in her letter to Mary.[316] This collection is an excoriation of the emperor's many faults and is brutally unsparing. Yet, in her letter to her cousin she sounds like an admirer of the inept emperor. In comparison, the Brontës' admiration for royalty was unwavering. Their juvenilia is filled with passionate stories about swashbuckling, Byronic heroes like the Duke of Wellington and Duke Zamorna, who were prototypes for the heroes in their mature novels.[317] It is then very difficult to state which way Dutt's preference lay.

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[315]The reasons are not known as to why Mr. Dutt decided to move the family from Nice.

[316] See letters dated April 23, 1875, which has two long pieces from Dutt's translation of Hugo's *Les Châtiments*. *Life and Letters* (1921) 87-88.

[317] See Rebecca Fraser, *The Brontës: Charlotte Brontë and her Family* (New York: Fawcett Columbine, 1990).

In a letter from England, Dutt writes to her young cousin Arun about their varied activities:

> We went to the Mildmay Park conference. We heard Saphir, who is the translator of Auberlen from the German, deliver a speech".…We are getting on capitally with Mr. Pauer. I am now learning with him *Schmetterlinge* or *Butterflies*…. Aru is learning a Sonata by Mozart, edited and revised by Mr. Pauer. (*Life* 34)

The creation of the self here is through negotiations with a multi-lingual, cosmopolitan world, rare for a European woman, rarer still for an Indian girl at that time. Edmund Gosse writes about Dutt's talents: "She brought with her from Europe a store of knowledge that would have sufficed to make an English or a French girl seemed learned, but which in her case was simply miraculous."[318] The resulting polyglot sensibility would be reflected in all she wrote, including her many letters which display her facile knowledge of many different literatures. It cannot be overstated that Toru Dutt was merely an adolescent at this time. Clarisse Bader recounts a poignant story about young Toru, as told by her grieving father after her death, which instantly captures the Dutts' multi-lingual home and the genius it reared:

> I have already said she read much; she read rapidly too, but she never slurred over a difficulty when she was reading. Dictionaries, lexicons, and encyclopedias of all

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[318] Edmund Gosse, introductory memoir, *Ancient Ballads and Legends of Hindustan*, Toru Dutt (Kegan Paul & Co, London, 1885) xiii. Fortunately for Toru, Gosse did not prescribe "orientalist" solutions like he did with the other great Anglo-Indian woman poet, Sarojini Naidu, to whom he advised, "to write no more about robins and skylarks, in a landscape of our Midland counties, with the village bells somewhere in the distance calling the parishioners to church, but to describe the flowers, fruits, the trees, to set her poems firmly among the mountains, the gardens, the temples, to introduce to us the vivid populations of her own voluptuous and unfamiliar province; in other words, to be a genuine Indian poet of the Deccan, not a clever machine-made imitator of the English classics". Edmund Gosse, introduction, *The Bird of Time* by Sarojini Naidu (London: William Heinemann, 1912) 5.

> kinds were consulted until it was solved, and a note taken afterwards; the consequence was that explanations of hard words and phrases imprinted themselves, as it were, in her brain, and whenever we had a dispute about the signification of any expression or sentence in Sanskrit, or French, or German, in seven or eight cases out of ten, she would prove to be right.... It was curious and very pleasant for me to watch her when she lost. First a bright smile, then thin fingers patting my grizzled cheek, then perhaps some quotation from Mrs. Barrett Browning, her favorite poetess, like this: "Ah, my gossip, you are older, and more learned, and a man", or some such pleasantry. (*Life* 25)

Trauma and Textual Sorority

Their differences in class notwithstanding, the similarities between the Dutts and Brontë sisters are striking, not only for the way tuberculosis devastated both families, but also for the precocious childhood writings which shaped their later works. Even more intriguing is the role played by the French language in structuring syntax and themes in the writings of both Toru and Charlotte. Both Aru and Toru studied French abroad in a *pensionnat*, like the Brontës sisters. It is well-known that Emily and Charlotte went to Brussels to study in the famous Heger Pensionnat, with M. Contantin Heger showing particular interest in their learning, as he saw great potential in them.[319] This complicated Charlotte's emotional life to such an extent that she used him as a model for M. Paul Emanuel in *Villette* as a way to exorcize the hold of his magnetic personality on her. The

[319] See Rebecca Fraser, "Pensionnat Heger" in *Charlotte Brontë: A Writer's Life* (New York: Pegasus Book, 2008) 153-177.

Dutt sisters were also sent to a *pensionnat* when they lived in Nice, and later, in Cambridge, they would study French under the direction of M. Boquel (*Life* 39). This was during the months of their attending the Higher Lectures for Women in the University. They also studied French privately with M. Gerard at St. Leonides (*Life* 39). Toru draws the parallel with Charlotte Brontë in her letter to Mary Martin:

> The *Life of Charlotte Brontë* by Mrs. Gaskell, induced me to read some more of Miss Brontë's works; *Shirley* is well-written and interesting; *Villette* is a failure; there is one character which is interesting, a French 'professor', M. Paul Emanuel; he sometimes reminds me of M. Boquel. (*Life* 156)

Later, in the same letter, Toru writes, "As I am writing, I am taking a look now and then at *Villette*. I was just now quite amused at a description of M. Emanuel's bearing 'en classe'; it is like M. Boquel" (*Life* 160). Was Toru conscious about the striking parallels between her life and that of the more famous novelist whose novels often troubled her? A better question may be, did she consciously try to imitate, in her French novella, the gothic-flavored *Jane Eyre*, which she evidently admired despite her caution about its morality? Writing to Mary, she notes:

> All the Brontës were rather inclined to the sensational in their works, but they are wonderfully interesting. *Wuthering Heights* treats of the supernatural, I have heard, for I have never read the book; I have only read *Jane Eyre* by Charlotte Brontë. Though the *moral* is not very high (for the authoress favours bigamy), the work is written with a masterly power, and shows a gift of discerning characters, which is wonderful in a woman. If you commence the book, you will not be able to sleep unless you finish it! (147)

However, it is very clear that there was no physical attraction or sexual tension between the French tutor and the Indian girls, unlike what happened to Charlotte Brontë with regard to M. Heger. This too is symbolic of the poetics of regression, brought on most likely from the strict Christian upbringing, which elevated scriptural teachings and literature. Unlike the Brontës, whose juvenilia are suffused with barely suppressed violence and sexual imagery, the Dutt sisters reveal an almost child-like innocence in their early writings. At this time, Toru Dutt was developing her writer's craft, aided by her voracious reading and constant writing, so looking for models in the literary world would have been a natural thing to do. She draws further comparison with Brontë when the only work published during her lifetime, *A Sheaf Gleaned in French Fields,* starts attracting critics' attention. With an excitement natural in a young writer she notes the echo with her more famous predecessor:

> I wonder what the papers will say of my book. Of course there will be *for* and *against*, and I have already armed myself with stoicism. When *Jane Eyre* was first brought out, of course there were some papers which cut up the book. Thackeray, who was a friend of Miss Brontë, went to see her the day after, to observe how she read and took an attack on her book which had appeared in one of the leading daily papers.[320] (141)

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[320] The Thackeray-Brontë kerfuffle is one of the great stories in literature, with Brontë's dedication of her very popular novel leading to scandalous tales that "Currer Bell," the mysterious author of *Jane Eyre,* was actually Thackeray's mistress. The novel had unconsciously drawn attention to Thackeray's personal life, which included a "mad wife in the attic." See Lucasta Miller, *The Brontë Myth* (2000), for a detailed examination of this famous incident. What Toru, living in isolation in Calcutta at the time of writing this letter, did not know was that Thackeray's "visit" to Charlotte Brontë was in reality a stormy and unpleasant party scene, when the famously secretive writer refused to humor Thackeray's arch suggestion that everybody knew she was "Mr. Currer Bell," the writer of *Jane Eyre*. But after she heard that the great

It is germane to note that like Brontë, Dutt was self-conscious about her "genius," a Romantic notion of the transcendence of the human spirit, which would have been compelling in one who was dying of an incurable disease.[321] In particular, battling her own isolation, Dutt is conscious of the cloistered lives of the talented Brontës and the toll it had imposed on them. She mentions Gaskell's *Life of Charlotte Brontë* many times in the letters to Mary, including a quotation from the evocative epigraph from Elizabeth Barrett Browning that paints the utterly bleak lives of the sisters in the moors of Yorkshire:

> To think of those three young sisters in that old parsonage, among the lonely wild moors of Yorkshire, all three so full of talent, and yet living so solitary amid those Yorkshire worlds! … How sad their history is! How dreary for the father to see one by one all his children die, and to live on alone and infirm, in that solitary parsonage in Yorkshire! In truth there is no greater tragedy in fiction than what happens in our real, daily life. (*Life* 153)

She adds that the "quotation in the beginning of the book from Mrs. Barrett Browning is very appropriate, at least so it seems to me":

> Oh, my God,
>
> Thou hast knowledge, only Thou,
>
> How dreary 'tis for women to sit still

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novelist admired her novel very much, Charlotte dedicated the second edition to him. Charlotte Brontë, preface to the second edition of *Jane Eyre* (London: Smith, Elder & Co., 1848).

[321] See Lucasta Miller, *The Brontë Myth*, for an examination about the notion of the "genius" that played a major role in the creation of the myth of the Brontës (London: Jonathan Cape, 2001) 235-55.

On winter nights by solitary fires

And hear the nations praising them off. (*Life* 153)

This is a prime example of the empathic reading practiced by women writers with regards to works by other women, for often they borrowed and were inspired by each other, creating textual bonding such as this. The salons from the previous century had been replaced by textual networks when women read each other's diaries, memoirs, novels and auto-fiction, which in turn became their imagined community. In Toru's case, the parallels with the gifted Brontë sisters are not superficial, and Dutt must have been sensitive to them. After losing her sister Aru in 1874, she probably gained a deeper sympathy for the tragic Brontës, especially when reading the convincing, if sentimental, biography written by Mrs. Gaskell that valorized the two geniuses, Emily and Charlotte. Moreover, the intuitive understanding that Dutt reveals of the Brontës is sadly marked by her own experience with similar trauma, as losing her two siblings increased the possibility of her own death from the same disease. In an eerie echo of Dutt's description of the condition of the elderly Patrick Brontë, her father Govin Chunder Dutt, would write to Clarisse Bader after Toru's death in 1877 with the deep anguish of a father losing all three children so young:

> There was never a sweeter child, and she was my last one. My wife and I are left alone in our old age, in a house empty and desolate, where once were heard the voices of our three beloved children…. Why should these three young lives, so full of hope and work, be cut short, while I, old and almost infirm, linger on? (*Life* 310-11)

Perhaps conscious of the real possibility of early death, Toru wrote to Mary:

> And it is four years since we met! How swift Time passes. I was about sixteen then, 'in my life's morning hour, when my bosom was young'—now I am getting quite old, twenty and some odd months, and with such an old-fashioned face that English ladies take me for thirty! I wonder if I shall live to be thirty.[322]

She would not, and this further recalls to the reader Brontë's own premonitions about her mortality, and anguish about not achieving what she set out to do: "to be forever known."[323] It is well documented that Charlotte suffered from anxieties about dying like her siblings, and wrote to Ellen Nussey about not finishing what she had set out to do, "What have I done these last thirty years? Precious little" (Fraser 272).[324] Toru would also suffer the pangs of arrested potential. She died while beginning her translation of Clarisse Bader's orientalist work, *La Femme dans l'Inde Antique.* The correspondence between the older French Orientalist and the young Indian girl is touching in the warm sentiments expressed. Bader writes thus on 16 February 1877, giving her permission for the translation:

> Eh quoi! C'est une descendante de mes chères héroïnes indiennes qui desire traduire l'oeuvre que j'ai consacrée aux antiques Aryennes de la presqu'île gangetique! Un semble voeu, émanant d'une telle source, me touche trop

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[322] *Life and Letters of Tour Dutt* (1921) 155.

[323] See Southey's famous letter where he admonishes Charlotte to mind her "womanly duties at home." Charlotte Brontë's first letter to Southey does not exist anymore, but in Southey's response written on 12 March 1847 he quotes her letter with the phrase, "to be forever known." *The Letters of Charlotte Brontë,* vol. 1(Oxford: The Oxford UP, 1995) 165.

[324] See Rebecca Fraser, *Charlotte Brontë: A Writer's Life* (London: Penguin Books, 2008). To read the full letter, see *The Letters of Charlotte Brontë,* vol. 1, Margaret Smith, ed., (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1995) 503.

> profondément pour que je ne l'exauçe pas. Traduisez donc *La Femme dans l'Inde Antique,* mademoiselle; je vous y autorise de tout mon Coeur; et j'appelle de tous mes voeux le succès de votre enterprise. (*Life* 44)
>
> How amazing! That a descendant of my dear Indian heroines wishes to translate the work that I dedicated to the ancient Aryan women from the Gangetic isle! A similar commitment, coming from such a source, moves me so profoundly that I must grant it. Go ahead and translate *The Woman in Ancient India*, Miss; I authorize it with all my heart; and I wish you the utmost success in your enterprise.[325]

This anointment of Toru as a neophyte has all the solemnity of a sacred ritual, as the reconstitution of the country was a spiritual quest for the European Orientalists. Bader notes that Dutt is a Christian, a vitally important fact for Orientalist ideology which mixed Christian theology with Vedic myths:

> Vous êtes Chrétienne, mademoiselle: votre livre me le dit. Et,en vérité, votre role nous permet de bénir une fois de plus la divine religion qui a permis à une Indienne de développer et de manifester cette valeur individuelle que le brahmanisme enchaîna trop souvent chez la femme. (*Life* 45)
>
> You are Christian, Miss; your book tells me this. And in reality, your commitment compels us to bless once again the divine religion, which has let an Indian girl nurture and reveal this unique moral value, which Brahmanism has shackled too often in women.

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[325] The translation of the correspondence between Bader and Dutt is mine. For my textual analysis of Dutt's novella, I use the simple but readable English translation by N. Kamala who brought out a critical edition in 2005 (New Delhi: Penguin Books). A later translation appears in Chandani Lokugé's *Toru Dutt: Collected Prose and Poetry* (New Delhi: The Oxford UP, 2006).

This passionate endorsement from Bader was joyfully received by Dutt, who responds with the fervor of a new believer thrilled that her country's Vedic era heroines have inspired a French woman:

> Et je suis fière de pouvoir le dire que les héroïnes de nos grandes épopées sont dignes de tout honneur et de tout amour. Y a-t-il d' héroïnes plus touchante, plus amiable que Sîta? Je ne crois pas…La plainte de Sîta quand, bannie pour la seconde fois, elle erre dans la vaste fôret, seule, le désespoir et l'effroi dans l'âme, est si pathétique qu'il n' y a personne, je crois, qui puisse l'entendre sans verser des larmes. (*Life* 46)
>
> And I am proud to be able to say that our great epic heroines are worthy of all your honor and love. Is there a more moving and more lovable heroine than Sita? I don't think so…Sita's lamentation, when banished for the second time, as she roams in the vast forest all alone, with despair and fear in her soul, is so pathetic that nobody can hear, I believe, without shedding tears.

Bader's last letter dated September 1877 would not be read by her young friend who died on 30 August 1877. It is clear from reading her letters that Toru Dutt's trauma of dislocation was two-fold: one was due to her departure from England, the land of her literary dreams; the second was its corollary, her alienation in Calcutta.[326] This two-fold trauma is textualized in her fiction and in her letters to her Cambridge friend, Mary Martin, and is also shared by the reader as the secondary trauma of the witness.

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[326] While France and French literature clearly marked Toru's literary inclinations, it is England she mentions repeatedly in her letters. All but two of her letters from France were destroyed.

Trauma of Return and Dislocation

The Dutt family returned to Calcutta in 1873 in the P. & O. steamer, *Peshawar*, and the four remaining years of Toru's life would be marked by this agonizing event. In many letters to her Cambridge friend Mary Martin, Dutt recalls her happier days in England. "'Oh to be in England now that April's here!' sing I with Robert Browning," she writes in a letter where she notes that "we all want so much to return to England" (*Life* 64). She writes, "We miss the free life we led there; we can hardly go out of the limits of our own Garden …." with the caveat, "but before we go we must get *quite well*," presumably speaking about Aru and herself (*Life* 63). Often, in a single letter, the same sentiment is echoed many times: "No noontide walks here as in England! If you walk even a mile or two, you are sure to have cholera! We do miss our country walks in England" (*Life* 61). Disease and death stalked the Dutt family, so her fear of a deadly contagious disease is not unjustified. But Calcutta posed a risk not only to her health, but also to her literary and cultural aspirations. Moreover, the Hindu community's rejection and judgment were additional burdens. When Toru writes in a letter to Mary that they "(we) can hardly go out of the limits of our own garden," she means that they cannot avoid the prying eyes of the community, which restricted their movement and freedom. Contained within the confines of the garden, Toru's dream for the "free air of England" is not only about the freedom to indulge in intellectual pursuits, but also concerns her unrestricted physical movement in the country.

One recalls the Brontë sisters' increasing isolation in Haworth, which was physical and cultural, especially after their return from Belgium. The Brontës, originally from Ireland, despised the surrounding community of bourgeois and petit bourgeois of

Yorkshire. Their richly imagined literary worlds provided narrative escapism that helped sustain them. Similarly, Dutt relied on her near-constant reading and writing in isolated Calcutta. Her correspondence with Mary provides the only window to the outside world. In many letters she enquires about familiar places events, and people, sometimes repeatedly. Her homesickness for England grows in intensity with each passing month, and in the last year of her life, the letters to Mary begin to change from being hopeful to becoming resigned. In 1865 her sister Aru dies, Toru writes that "Westmoreland is a place where Papa longs to live, for it was by the Windermere Lakes that Wordsworth lived, and you know he is Papa's favorite poet. Southey used to live at Keswick, and Coleridge and Professor Wilson of *Blackwood's Magazine* had their homes there too" (*Life* 66). This passage is revelatory for both the touching homage to the Romantic poets and the stunning familiarity with which she refers to literary critics and luminaries of the era. Westmoreland, she implies, will be the family's natural grounds, as much as it was for Wordsworth and Coleridge, presumably both on account of the Dutts' easy life-style and their literary inclinations. Often, she speaks about other writers as if she were their associate, on equal footing. This is particularly evident in the notes to her translations of French poets, where she proffers advice to many seasoned poets on rhythm, syntax, and meter.[327]

The sunny expectation of returning home to England is frustrated by Toru's failing health. Adding to her pain is the sudden death of Aru, who was the lively spirit of their Garden House:

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[327] I elaborate on this topic in my segment "Burden of History." Also see E.J. Thompson's review in *Life and Letters of Toru Dutt,* Harihar Das (Oxford: The Oxford UP, 1921) 342-49.

> Now, without her, the place seems so lifeless and deserted that Mamma can hardly bear going there. We are thinking of disposing of it, if we go to England; for if we go, as we all wish to, again, we shall settle there. The free air of Europe, and the free life there, are things not to be had here. We cannot stir out from our own garden without being stared at, or having a sun-stroke. And the streets are so dirty and narrow, that one feels quite suffocated in them..... (*Life* 68)

Surveillance, a societal tool for regulating and maintaining conformity, is the family's bane. "Being stared at" could not have been easy for a sensitive, young girl. Thus, the majority culture's imposition of conformity on a cosmopolitan family, who lived a richly imagined life of non-conformity was in itself a punishment. Toru's tragedy is at many levels as evidenced by this passage. She would sublimate this pain in the half-finished English novel *Bianca*, which begins with the dramatic death of the elder sister Inez, who leaves behind a grieving father and a young sister. The departure from England was made worse by the family's ostracism in the larger Hindu community in a city that was, and is still, overcrowded and dirty.

It is important to remember that class played a role in Toru's expectations and desires, and this complicates the empathic reader's engagement with her writings. Calcutta was no match for the serene beauty of England, which was fortunately available to the prosperous Dutts who were sheltered from the seamier side of the metropole, as it was described by novelists like Dickens, Wilkie Collins, and Mrs. Gaskell. Toru Dutt was an adolescent when the family lived in England, but it is remarkable how little she saw or knew the "monstrous city" that informed the writings of numerous thinkers, poets, and

novelists of the era.[328] The England of her experience was the one that offered her family "free air," while it shackled many others in service of its fast-paced industrial economy. This England is half-created by her imagination, which was fueled by her harking for the ultimate location of enchantment. "Oh for the walks in Cambridge with you," she cries out in the same letter to Mary, as she shares that they "see very few people here, except our own relations and friends—indeed we seldom go out of our own house and garden" (*Life* 69). In this respect, paradoxically, her rich family's dislocation is not very different from that of the impoverished Brontës, whose lack of an organic community of intellectuals was a deep wounding that was therapeutically reimagined through the eerily emotional worlds of their novels. Toru's isolation sought comfort through her reaching back into the past, which shaped all her writing. This reordering of an imperfect world offered scaffolding for her trauma, when the orderly, imagined, mythic past became a bulwark against the intolerable present.

Moreover, the interruption to her education caused by the sudden departure from England was incalculable, for western-style education was still in its nascent stage in India of the mid nineteenth-century. She writes about working on arithmetic with her father at home. "We are looking for a German master: it is hard getting a good one here; I wish we were in Cambridge under the teaching of Herr Steinhelper" (68). This yearning for what England could offer to someone of her intellect was natural. She writes how her father

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[328] Flora Tristan referred to London as "la ville monster" in her *Promenades dans Londres* (*The London Journal of Flora Tristan*), echoing the horror felt by many who saw the industrial city as a gigantic monster swallowing up the unfortunate and the marginalized. *The London Journal of Flora Tristan*, trans. Jean Hawkes (London: Virago, 1982) 244-61.

wants to buy horses and a carriage, but she is "dead set against it". She adds by way of explanation, "I tell him if he allows himself to be entrammeled in Calcutta by equipages and gardens, we shall never go to Europe again" (72). Her fear of encumbrances that might prevent them from leaving India is valid. And in a letter written later that year, she says that her doctor advised her father to take her to the North-West Provinces (Afghanistan) so she can recover from a chest infection: "Ah! We do not mean to go such a little way from Calcutta as that: when we travel it will be for a trip to Nice and St. Leonides!" (75). This is not a peevish rejection of a trip inside India, but a fear of normalizing their lives in the country which had to remain alien if they were to leave it. But reality starts to sink in as her ill health makes the move to Europe moot. Writing to Mary about the severe winter that England experienced in January of 1875, she adds, "Oh, how I should like to be there! Though Papa tells me to thank my stars that I am out of all this severe weather with my cough" (76). Consumption had started its scourge, for, increasingly her letters to Mary mention how sick she has been.[329] Yet the dream of "merry England" never leaves:

> Last Monday we took a long drive all around the Maidan; we went along the river for a long time; such a number of vessels were anchored there; two or three steamers were just having their steam up, ready to start for merry England; I had a great mind to tell the coachman to stop, and get up in one of those 'homeward bound steamers'! (77).

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[329] See for example the letter dated November 13, 1876, where she casually says, "You know I always suffer from an increase in cough, spitting blood and congestion of lungs, every winter since our return to India. I kept pretty well last winter, but last week it all came back again. I, of course, felt too weak and ill to write. I am better now, though." *Life* (1992) 237.

This deeply emotional *cri de coeur* resonates with the reader who pauses to recall that her inability to reach the shores of England is due to the progression of tuberculosis. The desire to climb aboard one of the "homeward bound steamers" has a desperate ring to it, for "the native quarters of Calcutta are so dirty, narrow, and blocked up. […]" (77). The deracination in Calcutta, which is alienating to one whose sensibilities have been shaped by wide European vistas, is not inconsiderable. When the reality of the no-return begins to take hold, due largely to her failing health, she writes to Mary in 1876, that "the return to England is becoming a very vague and shadowy thing; it grows fainter and dimmer every day almost" (210). Her alienation is at many levels, and it is not only because she was Christian in a majority Hindu city. The famously boisterous city and its religious processions during the "Doorga-Poojah," the Festival of the Goddess, are frequently criticized by Toru who uses colonialist language. Sounding very European, Toru writes in many letters about the "exquisite discordance" created by the loud music during Pooja week. In a letter dated 11 January 1875, she says: "Our ears were deafened by the continual din of drums, fifes, flutes, discordance! The holidays are now over, and Calcutta has re-entered into its lethargic state" (*Life* 78). In 11 October 1875, she notes again about the havoc created by the *Doorga- Poojah*:

> Last Sunday was the day that the Hindus throw the goddess Doorga into the river, after a three days' worship! The streets were crowded to excess, processions, with the goddess, I mean with her image, borne in triumphal throne and with music, marched towards the river. We thought we should be able to escape all the noise and crowd by going to Baugmaree for a day or two, but somehow we were prevented. (*Life* 101)

This is very similar to how Flora Tristan describes the religious processions and church service in Arequipa: "The music is always dreadful: there are two violins and a kind of bagpipe as well as the organ, and they are all out of tune, and the singing they accompany is so ragged, that it is impossible to stay a quarter of an hour without feeling irritable all day" (*Peregrinations* 126). In both cases, native sounds are shattering to ears tuned to western classical music. The Dutt sisters were learning piano and western classical music even after their return to Calcutta in what can only be seen as a determination to preserve their European tastes. While Tristan herself did not exhibit any special talents for music, she was articulating her distaste for non-European art forms as a French woman. Thus, in both situations, the contact zone is described as offensive to refined, European sensibilities.[330]

Toru's dialectics of isolation is both self-created and driven by a sense of alienation due to the family's inability to conform to Indian society. The letters are testimonials to this wounding. Freud and Breuer, when writing about the consequences of a non-processed psychic trauma, note that language makes the distinction in the way in which one describes a "silent injury as mortification" (8). "If the reaction is suppressed, the affect remains attached to memory," they caution in the same passage, which allows me to posit that Toru's abrupt departure from England was the primary traumatic event that marked her, in addition to the secondary trauma of her siblings' deaths. Toru's life in England was not unlike Tristan's life before her father Mario Tristán's sudden death—an upper-class life that consisted of soirées, dinners and conviviality. The memory of an aristocratic life that

[330] Like most I am indebted to Marie. L Pratt for the phrase. *Imperial Eyes: Travel, Writing, and Transculturation* (London: Routledge, 2008).

was suddenly snatched away would indelibly mark Tristan. In the case of Toru, her siblings' deaths cut short her intellectual life in Europe, for her parents feared for the life of their only surviving child in colder climes. Denying her growth, and possibly education in the form of Upper Lectures at Cambridge, the return to India was a traumatic incursion like no other. Deprived of her natural milieu in Europe, Dutt was constrained to live in near isolation till her last days in Calcutta. Her many letters to Mary Martin reveal the tortured child-genius, thirsting for learning and books while frequently pining for the "free air" she had lost. Toru Dutt was a cosmopolitan, inhabiting a multilingual space, on whom the confines of a limiting domesticity played havoc. Her circumscribed domestic life was not unlike Charlotte Brontë's, but Dutt's constraints were layered and complicated—not in the least by persistent sickness.

Poetics of Regression in *Le Journal*

One of the overriding moral concerns for the Dutt family was a virtuous society.[331] Virtue, individual and collective, was according to their Christian worldview, the panacea for society's ills, and this is borne out by many of Toru's letters to Mary Martin on the topic.[332] I suggest in this segment that a preoccupation with virtue was part of a larger

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[331] The Rambhagan Dutts' *The Dutt Family Album* (1870) contains numerous poems that are religious in tone, as noted by critics writing in British newspapers and literary magazines.

[332] Toru Dutt and her family were Protestants, and I come to this conclusion mostly from her alluding to the family's regular their visits to the 'Old Church' (Old Mission Church), which was built by Johann Zachariah Kiernander, a Swedish Lutheran missionary, in 1770. It was Calcutta's sole Protestant church. Toru mentions the pastor Rev. Welland and the "grand and magnificent church" in her letter to Mary (*Life and Letters,* 72) The Church Missionary Intelligencer and Records, a monthly journal published by Church Missionary House, Salisbury Square, 1880, notes in its memoriam about Rev. J. Welland's death and how he was highly regarded by his Indian parishioners. Pp.170-175. Biographer Hariharr Das notes how Toru's mother Kshetramoni Dutt was a well-known philanthropist and scholar, who left a substantial amount to the

predilection for Dutt's poetics of regression, which is expressed primarily in her fiction and poems, but is also reinforced frequently in her letters. I borrow the phrase from Robin Howells's book, *Regressive Fictions: Graffigny, Rousseau, Bernardin*, where Howells argues that the three eighteenth-century writers' texts were driven by a Freudian psycho-cultural regression to recapture some "imagined original state of plenitude and innocence."[333] I argue that Dutt's novella is not only emblematic of the sentimental genre made popular by Rousseau, but encapsulates the central theme in his novel, *Julie*, which is the duty of self-denial. Rousseau's epistolary novel is about a fallen young woman, Julie, whose return to virtue via a respectable marriage and motherhood redeems her. The novel emphasizes virtue as abstraction in many passages, but overwhelmingly, it underscores the role of the performance of virtue as a way to display Julie's internal metamorphosis. Julie's passionate love affair with her tutor, Saint-Preux, is forgiven when she gains respectability through her marriage to Wolmar, a dull but respectable middle-aged man with whom she has three children. She virtuously resists Saint-Preux's pleas to leave her respectable life in favor of a life of passion with him, and is martyred when she jumps into the lake to save one of her children. Her tragic death is deeply unsatisfying to the reader who is left wrestling with questions about a life of such extreme virtue. If the new genre ushered in

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Oxford Mission Church in Barisal (now Bangladesh), which is considered one of the most beautiful churches in Asia.

[333] Howells explains how the first-person novel-memoir of the eighteenth-century arose as a rejection of the tri-partite institutions of Church, monarchy, and social hierarchy, favoring instead an idealized family as the source of happiness. In addition, this cult of the family and the child-like innocence of the subject displaced Enlightenment values and reinstalled Judeo-Christian ones, as set out in Augustine's *Confessions*, which was the "founding text of inwardness," followed by Rousseau's *Confessions*," the founding text of modern autobiography (Howells 2). The rise of inwardness allows for the "Je/I" to become the agent of narrative, with diaries, journals, and memoirs forming a new sub-genre within the novel. Robin Howells, *Regressive Fictions: Graffigny, Rousseau, Bernardin* (London: Legenda, 2007)1.

the primacy of the subject "I," Julie's act of self-denial, which falls in line with society's rigid code about the fallen woman, displaces it. As if to dismiss such anxieties, Rousseau's alter-ego, Saint-Preux, writes to Julie thus: "In what people call honor, I distinguish between that which is founded on public opinion and that which is derived from self-esteem. The first consists in vain prejudices no more stable than a ruffled wave, but the second has its basis in the eternal truths of morality."[334] In other words, we are to treat Julie's denial of passion and love in favor of a moral life as a self-driven choice and not as merely following society's moral codes. Similarly, Dutt's protagonist Marguerite dies in childbirth following her respectable marriage to Captain Lefrère. However, Dutt's text is able to defy or at least disturb some of the codes of the sentimental genre due to the text's flirtation with the gothic. Dutt's refusal to work within the established literary tradition of the sentimental genre makes Marguerite's death far more interesting than Julie's, even when this blending of genres fails in its artistic ambitions. Perhaps Dutt intended to write in an oppositional mode, like some of the eighteenth-century women writers who challenged literary conventions, but is not quite successful.

It is important to recall that the imposition in the late eighteenth-century of the new ethical order formulated by the Napoleonic Code of 1804 was particularly hard on women, since it resulted in effacing the public woman and enshrining her as the nurturing mother in the private space of the home.[335] Thus, women in France lost all the public privileges they

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[334] Part I, Letter XXIV, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *La Nouvelle Héloïse. Julie or The New Eloise.* Trans. Judith H. McDowell (University Park, Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania State UP, 1968) 67.

[335] See Alison Finch, "Conditions for Women Writers," *Women's Writing in Nineteenth Century France* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2000) 8-18. Also see Sandra Dijkstra, "'Womanhood' in Nineteenth-Century," *Flora Tristan: Feminism in the Age of George Sand* (1992) 7-18 and Naomi Schor, "*Triste Amérique:* Atala and the Postrevolutionary Construction of Women" in *Rebel Daughters: Women and French Revolution.* Sara E. Melzer and Leslie W. Rabine, eds., (New York and Oxford: Oxford UP, 1992) 139-156, for the

had gained during the French Revolution, thanks in part to the Rousseauian model of female containment. The utopian narratives of fresh beginnings coincided with the Napoleonic Code of 1804 that conflated the feminine with the state, with the woman becoming an allegorical figure who was effectively effaced from the public sphere. This era witnessed women writers like Isabelle de Charrière, Marie Jeanne Riccobini, Sophie Cottin, Félicité de Genlis, and others who sublimated female desire in novels through subtle subversions.[336] Their novels undercut the prevailing strictures against women through covert revisions, irony, and oblique sentiments.[337] In the previous century, Madame de La Fayette challenged assumptions about female sexuality and desire, but her subversion of societal norms was through a heroine who refuses to participate in the patriarchal system.[338] Her Princess de Clèves is positioned between extremes of women protagonists who either displayed excessive self-abnegation or died as fallen angels. But this covert rebellion was displaced by a group of writers in the following century who were clearly seduced by Rousseauian sentiments.[339] Dutt wrote her journal-novel either when she was studying in France or soon after her move to England, and it reveals the

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disastrous consequences for women of the Code, especially in terms of marriage equality and divorce rights, which set back women's rights gained during the French Revolution at least a century.

[336] Joan Hinde Stewart, *Gynographs: French Novels by Women of the Late Eighteenth Century* (1993).

[337] See Joan Hinde Stewart, "Vocation and Provocation," *Gynographs* (1993) 1-23.

[338] Madame de La Fayette's *Princesse de Clèves* is still considered an important feminist text even when the protagonist abdicates love at the end of the story and goes to live in a convent. Madame de La Fayette, *La Princesse de Clèves* (1678). Later, Madame Garrfigny's intriguing epistolary novel *Lettres d'une Péruvienne* (1747) refined this idea even further.

[339] A few examplars of novels by women who were inspired by Rousseau are Jeanne Le Prince de Beaumont, *La nouvelle Clarice* (1767), Anne Louise Elie de Beaumont, *Lettres de marquis de Roselle* (1764), and Isabelle de Charrière, *Lettres de Mistriss Henley* (1784).

sentimental model in writing auto-fiction in eighteenth-century France.[340] The closed economy of this fiction concerns itself with a private, nuclear family that underscores the intimate moments enclosed in the diary. Dutt's French novella exemplifies this eighteenth-century moralistic genre, however tempting it may be to ascribe her didactic tale to excessive Indian sensibilities, as one acerbic critic did.[341] I am not making a claim that Dutt was a disciple of Jean-Jacques Rousseau. However, her family's derivative piety, which arrived via India's colonial masters, owed its ethos to thinkers like Rousseau, whose anti-modernizing tirades in the *First and Second Discourses* and the *Confessions* had brought human perfectibility as the desired goal for all endeavors. Above all, the principles that Rousseau laid out in *Émile* and *La Nouvelle Héloïse* had established ways to reorder a society of perfect beings through an emphasis on sentiment, which perfectly describes Dutt's novella.[342]

Rousseau's epistolary novel was autobiographical, and thus invited the reader to identify the hero with its creator, blurring narrative and textual boundaries. "Deliberate self-projection under the guise of fiction" is how M.H. Abrams describes Rousseau's art[343] Furthermore, the memoir or epistolary novel persuades the reader to identify with the narrator's perils via affect. Rousseau himself was influenced by the sentimental fiction of

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[340] Robin Howell suggests that this was primarily a Protestant movement, arriving from Germany and England, and slow to spread in France, where stories about the aristocracy still held sway.

[341] See *The Examiner* Jan 4, 1879, pp. 4.

[342] For further reading about Rousseau's design for reordering society see Carol Blum, "A Society of Perfect Beings," *Rousseau and the Republic of Virtue: The Language of Politics in the French Revolution* (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1986) 37-56.

[343] M.H. Abrams, *The Mirror and the Lamp: Romantic Theory and the Critical Tradition* (London: The Oxford UP, 1953) 98.

Richardson whose *Clarissa* set the structure for first-person narrative centered on theatrical emotions and affect. [344] Dutt's *Le Journal de Mlle D'Avers*, written as a diary, proffers a similar affect to the reader, who is conscripted by the text to engage with it in a performative role. There is hardly an explicit apostrophe to the reader in this text, but the reader's empathic engagement is implicit in the many expressions of excessive piety and emotion. This is true even if the reader feels constrained by the moralistic text which presumes a similarly inclined reader. Additionally, its lack of irony jars the modern sensibility, making the reader acutely conscious of the temporal distance separating her from the young narrator of the journal. Unlike Jane Austen, whose ironic wryness in *Northanger Abbey* pits the formal rules of the gothic against the exigencies of readerly reactions to sentimental fiction in an effective dueling partnership, Dutt's novella is uncertain about where it belongs. Yet the epilogue is written in a surprisingly realist mode as it details the protagonist Marguerite's confinement and death, bringing the text closer to the naturalism of Hardy or George Eliot. Interestingly, the critic writing in *The Examiner* reserves particular contempt for the epilogue for what he calls a flagrant disregard of "propriety," and the many "nauseous horrors" minutely described—a tendency he says, was peculiar to "Asiatic minds."[345] The epilogue poses an enigma: why did the author decide to lapse into contemporary realism when the entire novella eschews any verisimilitude to real life in nineteenth century France? Additionally, the epilogue, written in third person, a priori creates a disjunction in a novella that masquerades as a diary, but it

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[344] Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *La Nouvelle Héloïse Julie, or The New Eloise,* Trans. Judith H. McDowel (University Park: The Pennsylvania UP, 1968) 8.

[345] *The Examiner,* Jan 4 1879, pp. 23-24.

is the break with genre in the crucial part of the narrative that perplexes the reader. There are two kinds of destabilizing factors that rupture the text for the reader: the generic confusion arising out of the blending the conventions of a gothic tale with a moralistic one; and the first-person narration in the main novella changing inexplicably to a third-person narration in the epilogue. Both occur as a result of Dutt inadvertently following the prescriptions of the poetics of regression to the detriment of her creativity. Moreover, we see the two irreconcilable sides of this enigmatic writer in the many internal disjunctions residing in the novella.

Briefly, the story begins with the birthday celebrations for a young convent - returned Marguerite, who lives a charmed life in a chateau in Breton with her parents.[346] General D'Arvers, her father, and Madame D'Arvers, her mother, elicit great respect and affection from neighbors and poor tenants alike. Their neighbors are the Countess of Plouarven and her two eligible sons, the melancholic Dunois and the merry Gaston. The D'Arvers family welcomes Captain Louis Lefrère, a young friend of the family, who proposes to Marguerite, but with little success. Meanwhile, the Plouarvens' hospitality leads the ingénue frequently to their chateau, culminating with her falling in love with the older Dunois, who is charming to the young girl, but does not declare his intentions. Around the same time, Marguerite, in her role as the neighborhood angel, intervenes in the life of a poor tenant and sends their beautiful daughter, Jeanette, to the Plouarvens' castle to be employed as a housemaid. Both Plouarven brothers become infatuated with Juliette, leading to coldness between them. The reader is also told that some strange mental illness

[346] The narrative convention of a birthday signifying new birth—here, a textual rebirth for the author of the diary—is an interesting strategy by Dutt who had planned for a long writing career.

runs in the Plouarvens family, but that does not prepare the reader adequately for Marguerite's feverish entry describing how Count Dunois has killed his brother Gaston in a fit of jealousy and mad rage. After a trial he is sentenced to fifteen years of hard labor in prison.[347] Marguerite languishes in deep depression, but is nursed back to health by the faithful Louis Lefrère. She accepts his proposal of marriage this time, and as the newly married couple look to a lifetime of joy, Marguerite dies tragically in childbirth. The novella often reads like a gothic, piquing the female reader's interest, which is thwarted by the more sentimental and moralistic scenes liberally sprinkled throughout the text. The journal entries alternate between events propelling the narrative toward gothic suspense and those pulling it back to scenes of sentimental praying or virtuous actions, which have the effect of arresting narrative flow.

It is likely that Dutt set out to write a novel like *Jane Eyre,* which she admired, despite finding it to be sensationalistic. But Dutt struggles to overcome the self-imposed circle of virtue and sentiment. Since the gothic genre was a mode for exploring female sexuality, it was natural that Dutt would occlude her textual adventures that she felt were overtly transgressive. If the gothic genre helped channel female desire into more subterraneous paths, the moralistic fiction authored by women in eighteenth-century France resisted prevailing societal structures in a more subtle way. It accomplished this by portraying virtuous women—whose desires were subsumed by self-abnegation or death—thereby denying moral satisfaction to the punitive, moralistic society. One could say that the self-denial started by Madame La Fayette in *La Princesse de Clèves* set the standard. It

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[347] *The Examiner* Jan 4, 1879.

is well-documented that the rise in surveillance in this period impacted women in particular, and their modesty and chastity became overriding concerns.[348] In this context, a woman author was the ultimate transgressor, as many women writers in France used the prescribed model of the sentimental, domestic fiction that was hailed by Rousseau to both conform and contest their roles (*Gynographs* 7). But there are sufficient parts in Dutt's novella where it steps into the gothic world to salvage the novella from its moralizing. Dreams, visions, and premonitions form welcome intrusions in an otherwise maudlin tale, and help prepare the reader emotionally for the tragic death of the protagonist. Dutt's novella is a traumatic retelling of the relentless grip that death had over her family, thus the visions and nightmares validate Freud's "repetition-compulsion" theory. Unlike the critic from *The Examiner* who found the details about Marguerite's confinement and sickness excessive, the empathic reader will then comprehend the therapeutic necessity for "all the unpleasant minutiae of a woman's confinement" detailed here.[349]

As in all texts where the narrative is concerned with self-regulation, there is a possibility that the reader unwittingly becomes part of the surveilling community.[350] Interestingly, the protagonist displays excessive piety and prays fervently under the watchful eyes of the engaged reader whenever she is aware of her naturally arising

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[348] Restif de la Bretonne's treatise, *Les Gynographs, (*1777) articulated an unusual and "obsessive preoccupation" with women's desires and sexuality and asserted the need for constant surveillance and vigilant enforcement of their submission at all costs. Joan Hinde Stewart, *Gynographs: French Novels by Women of the Late Eighteenth-Century* (1993) 1-5.

[349] See *The Examiner,* Jan 4 1879, 23-24.

[350] D.A. Miller writes in *The Novel and the Police* notes that the displacement of the police in the novel occurs when the act of surveillance is taken over by the larger community. He writes that often they work in tandem, and "the two systems of regulation beautifully support one another" (1988) 8.

desires.[351] In fact, the overt religiosity expressed by Marguerite halts the narrative flow and threatens to overwhelm even the most receptive reader who has been co-opted by the confessional mode of the text. The co-optation is due to the fear that the reader might be led away from the intimate, imagined sorority and become part of the surveilling community. This becomes apparent whenever the narrator feels guilty about crossing the invisible moral code. It is pertinent to note that the ideology behind most eighteenth-century French fiction was Christian piety and forbearance, even when many women writers of this period subverted traditional notions.[352] Perhaps Toru was familiar with the novels written in the earlier century, but in her letters, she only mentions nineteenth-century French and English novelists, so her old-fashioned ethos and style in her novella is revelatory of her poetics of regression. The act of praying as a mechanism of self-regulation occurs with astonishing frequency in this text, and is always accompanied by Marguerite's confessions at the altar. The confessional burden is shifted to the reader who finds herself in the strange position of having to give absolution to the narrator who seeks constant approval, despite leading what appears to be a blameless life. The novella carries the bifurcated subjectivity of an ingénue who is eager to explore her naturally arising desires, but at the same time feels trapped by the weight of the virtuous life expected of her. For an auto-fiction, the text is unable to project the vital, exuberant personality of its creator, and thus it fails in its mission of mirroring. If Marguerite is

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[351] Marguerite is clearly Catholic, not surprising for a French girl, who has spent time in a convent; additionally, her frequent prayers while holding her rosary is a clear indication of the D'Arvers family's religious affiliation.

[352] Jean Hinde Stewart, *Gynographs: French Novels by Women of the Late Eighteenth-Century.*

indeed a faithful auto-portrait, then it reveals to us the two irreconcilable sides of Dutt. Apart from the narrator-protagonist's superficial resemblance to the author, the text is replete with anecdotes that ring familiar to the careful reader of Dutt's letters. Both households, real and fictional, are suffused with a deep Christian ethos that is more eighteenth-century France than contemporary Europe. The Dutts took their Christian duty seriously and gave alms regularly to poor families in Calcutta, which Dutt notes in many letters.[353] Likewise, in the novella, Marguerite goes to visit the poor tenants and farmers who live in her father's estate and helps them with a generosity that could only come from a pious nature. Marguerite does not dance at the ball in the Plouarven chateau, and one could easily imagine that Toru's parents would have frowned upon this as a frivolous activity. More than anything else, loss by death is the single common thread connecting the Dutt family with the fictional world of the D'Arvers family.

Beginning with the chilling murder mystery, which is introduced to the reader when Marguerite hears about the terrible secret that shrouds the castle, the narration is in full gothic mode. Apart from the legend of the tomb, the Plouarven family hides a terrible secret about an ancestor, Count Arthur de Plouarven, who had committed a murder in the underground passage in the tenth century (*The Diary* 73). The delicious frisson that the reader feels is aided by the early description of the castle as having a "gloomy air" (33). But if the reader imagines that she is to be conscripted into becoming the young narrator's

[353] In particular, Dutt mentions about how they fed many families who were struck by famine, a regular event in British India She writes, "There has not been much rain this year, and the famine is beginning to be felt in Lower Bengal; already famine-stricken people are coming down from up-country. I hope that this time it will be not so great as it was some years ago, while we were at Calcutta. I remember then, there used to be come to our garden, women, men, and children, thin as skeletons, all their bones sticking out; when food used to be given them, it was painful to see how they fell greedily to it" *Life and Letters* (1992) 69.

collaborator for unlocking the secret code to the castle he/she is bound to be disappointed, for the text suddenly is awash in sentimentality with the narrative arc touching all nodes of virtue. Yet for all the overtly religious and maudlin piety that is disconcerting to the modern ear, the novella reveals itself as an autofiction to the empathic reader. The novella was inspired by a famous trial, as noted by the critic reviewing it in *The Examiner* and James Darmesteter.[354] Perhaps Dutt read about it in the newspapers when she lived in France. Following the conventions of the gothic, the innocent young Marguerite is invited to stay at the Château de Plouarven, which she learns has a dark secret. She describes the castle in the entry dated 7 September: "Here I am finally, in the old castle; I like the place. The castle has an air of grandeur, but there is something gloomy about it that makes me sad and pensive despite myself when I am all alone" (*The Diary* 33).[355] This description of the castle and its effect on the young girl follows again the conventions of the gothic. Later in the woods, the count pays her extravagant compliments, and she feels the power of his charm when he sings. But when she retires to her room she falls down before the crucifix and prays: "May God forgive my trespasses and guide my wandering footsteps. I am your servant, O my Lord, have pity on me" (38). This is not a simple prayer, but a desperate plea for direction, as Marguerite falls under the spell of the darkly seductive Count Dunois and needs the cross to remind her not to transgress the script of this moralistic tale.

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[354] *The Examiner* Jan 4, 1879; also see Darmesteter, who notes the novella's provenance : « Le sujet, si je ne me trompe, est inspiré par un drame de famille, un fratricide par jalousie, qui fit, il y a quleques années, beaucoup de bruit en Bretagne.» ("The subject, if I am not mistaken, is inspired by a family drama, a fratricide due to jealousy, which made a sensation in Brittany.") *Essais de littératures anglaises,* 2nd ed. (Paris: Libraire de Delagrave, 1890) 276.

[355] I use N. Kamala's translation of the novella for my analysis, with occasional look at the original, now available online at the Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris.

The very next entry, on 11 September, has the count sharing the romantic legend of the castle tower about his ancestor Catherine, who died pining for a handsome rider who stays in the castle for one night. Her ghost appears on moonlight nights in December, we learn. This scene has a chilling effect on the reader who begins to hope that this might be a gothic tale hidden behind all the tearful, praying scenes. The reader also wonders if Catherine's fate is a caution for those who love with such abandon. The narrator shows mastery in creating atmosphere, particularly when she wishes to pass on a sense of dread to her reader, as when the housekeeper Thérèse tries to convince Marguerite that she should reward Louis's love with marriage. Thérèse tearfully describes his trauma of rejection in great detail and says, "He loves you to death" (65). When she leaves, the narrator writes:

> The breeze became cold. The stars were all pale; I closed the window. The icy air entered the room sharply and seemed to enter my very bones. A vague premonition of great unhappiness took hold of me, and I shut the window again. I fell on my knees next to the crucifix, "Oh, God! Be with us always!"… The church bell is chiming midnight, it is time that I went to sleep. (66)

This is the sort of scene that might seem repetitive to the irate critic writing in *The Examiner*, and at a superficial level it appears to be so. But, the narrator builds up a sense of dread with the "icy air," which in turn enters into her bones—a suggestion of grave danger and even death. In this context, the praying becomes a plea for life and is not superfluous as it may be in other places in the text. About her very first visit to the castle Plouarven, the narrator writes, "The castle has an air of grandeur, but there is something gloomy about it that makes me sad and pensive despite myself when I am all alone" (33). Thus, the castle, as the place of temptation for Marguerite, is fraught with inexplicable

menace, especially when she is alone. “The bleak and sad castle” is briefly bathed in sunlight, as if to suggest that the innocent Marguerite might be its savior (33). The text is replete with binaries like light/dark, sin/innocence, and decay/renewal, indicating its hidden gothic sensibility. Marguerite’s unblemished life is set up in polarity to the Plouarvens—who carry the seeds of decay and disease in their blood—as in the madness that runs in the family. If so, an infusion of child-like innocence would offer renewal, and such a narrative arc would have made the novella remain true to Rousseauian ethos and still remain within the framework of the gothic. But Dutt, due largely to her youth, is unable to exercise the complex maneuvering needed to accomplish this. In *Jane Eyre*, Charlotte Brontë utilizes all the gothic elements only to overturn them in the epilogue, which reveals an attenuated hero with whom the narrator-protagonist lives in domestic harmony. Dutt, not yet a powerful writer like Brontë, is burdened by her own Christian principles, so is unable to resolve the complications arising out of her fidelity to two very different genres.

In the scene when the Count comes to take Marguerite for another visit to the castle, the narrator describes the effect of the December weather on the castle grounds with words like “deserted” and “desolate.” She writes:

> The sun was warring with clouds, it was very cold.… The whole area seemed deserted; the wind howled outside, the tree branches bereft of their leaves were swaying strangely. I turned away from the desolate view and sat in front of the fire. I soon went down, and the count met me on the staircase. (73)

This is when the Count informs her about the terrible secret of the castle, the murder by his ancestor, Count Arthur. Since we know that madness runs in the family, the reader

wonders if the Count's ancestor had been infected with the familial malady, and if so, Marguerite's life could be in danger. We are told later in the narration that the Countess is turning mad when Marguerite visits the grief-stricken woman after her son is taken to prison. Dutt deploys the gothic aesthetic convincingly in order to evoke pity and terror. Two other gothic elements enter the narrative: one is the mention of the saintly Sister Véronqiue's tomb, which the narrator describes as being of white marble, the color of purity. The other is death, aestheticized through sublime horror in Marguerite's dream, described in her last journal entry. But death makes its appearance even earlier, in a ballad that the narrator remembers on the day of her wedding to Louis, and in an eerie echo, is sung aloud by Louis's friend some months later. As they come out of the church, people throw flowers, and Marguerite recalls the following refrain from a poem about a beautiful bride:

> All the paths would moan,
>
> For the beautiful dead lady is going to come out,
>
> Would wail, would wail,
>
> For the beautiful dead lady will pass by! (105)

This juxtaposition of desire and death is an effective strategy, and in the hands of a more mature writer it might have paved the way for narrative sublime. Marguerite wonders if this fate would befall her, thus slowly preparing her reader for the inevitable end. The second time this ballad appears in the narrative is when Louis's army friend, Monsieur Viart, visits them in Nice. He sits at their piano and sings the song of Jasmine with its devastating refrain, and the narrator wonders if this "was a warning, repeated twice?" She adds, "Listen! It is the end; the beautiful bride is carried to the tomb," anticipating her own

fate in the beautiful lady's death (117). This "Listen!" is an apostrophe to the reader to pay attention to how this story—Marguerite's story—will end. At the same time, by bringing in a ballad about the death of a beautiful bride, the poetry-loving Dutt—through her auto portrait Marguerite—domesticates this fearsome adversary who stalked her family. Contained in a ballad known to many, death then becomes less fearful, and even banal. When Louis and Marguerite ask for other songs, M. Viart claims not to recall any other melody. Singing the song of death, M. Viart thus performs the role of the dirge singer in the ballad of Marguerite. It is not a digression to note here that many of the poems in Dutt's volume of translation, *A Sheaf Gleaned in French Fields,* are about death. Charles Nodier's poem, "The Young Girl" is about the death of a girl who had loved and died, looking beautiful in her veil:

> She was lovely indeed---and what was her crown?
>
> A hope vague and soft and embellished each day;
>
> Love to perfect her seemed loth to come down,--
>
> Peace!-- There's her hearse passing by on its way.[356]

The admonition to the reader by the poet to be quiet, "Peace!" is very similar to Marguerite's caution to her reader, "Listen!" in the ballad.

The reader recalls the Count's legend of the tower about Catherine, who died of love. Is this a caution about love by Dutt, who we know praised self-abnegation as the ultimate virtue? Death makes a final, terrible appearance in the feverish dream that overwhelms Marguerite by the familiar form it takes. She describes her dream to Louis:

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[356] See Charles Nodier, "The Young Girl," Toru Dutt, trans. *A Sheaf Gleaned in French Fields* (London, 1880) 26.

> I dreamt that I was alone, lying in bed, when suddenly there was a knock at our bedroom window. I got up, but I was tired and I was scared; I didn't dare open the door when I heard my father's voice that spoke to me from his room, "Open your door, Marguerite, it is your husband." I got up and I opened the door. Nobody. I went down to the drawing room, thinking that I will find you there. You were indeed there, close to the window, your back to the door; I couldn't see your face. I lifted my eyes towards you, and then your turned your head and looked at me. My God! It was hardly your face. It was the face of Death, and on that I woke up.'(131)

This passage has the sublime horror of a true gothic, especially in how the narrator combines the familiar with the uncanny, a classic gothic strategy. But it also suggests that the other side of Love is Death. The journal ends here, and Marguerite's death is told in the epilogue. The death of domestic angels was a popular convention in many Victorian novels, so perhaps Dutt was following writers like Mrs. Henry Wood and Dickens, whose novels portrayed suffering domestic angels. But a more compelling argument is to see this textualization of death as a domestication strategy by the writer who had to work through her trauma. The recurring visitation by Death in the text then is a reminder to the reader of its insistent and insidious presence in the Dutt household.

When looking at the moralistic tale contained in the novella, one notices how the narrator's articulation of death becomes almost beatific. A very different kind of death is described by the narrator early in the story. Far from the sublime aesthetic of the gothic, the journal entry on 18 September is about the pious Sister Véronique dying in the aptly named convent of Mater Dolorosa. The narrator writes:

> How pale she was! She was holding a small ivory crucifix in her hand. I sobbed. 'Poor Marguerite! You really liked me then?' she said softly, brushing her hand over my head. 'Do not cry, my child. I will be so happy, up in heaven! We will recognize each other there. This world is full of sorrow and afflictions, but close to our Father, 'there will be no longer any mourning, or tears, or work, and God will wipe away all the tears from our eyes.' '' (42)

The narrator describes the nun's last moments and adds that she attended the funeral.

> I saw her in her coffin, her crossed hands were holding the crucifix, her pale face was illuminated with a strange light, her lips were smiling, she seemed to be sleeping rather than dead, and she was dressed all in white. My tears flowed but gently. It seemed to me that heavenly angels were in the room and were looking after the saintly dead….I placed a lily on the coffin that I had plucked that very morning. White candles lit up the cortège…. (43)

This scene is overloaded with sentiment and affect; the dying young nun is described as being bathed in a glow of saintliness. The critic in *The Examiner* has withering words to describe such scenes, accusing the author of excessive piety and praying.[357] This scene is a moral allegory about a life of virtue that only the figure of a nun in the cloister could convey. Was Dutt making these pious overtures to allay criticism about her forays into the gothic, which if we remember her words about *Jane Eyre,* she found to be irresistible if

[357] Please read *The Examiner* Jan 4 1879, where the critic suggests instead of repeating verbatim the many scenes of praying the author could have just said, "Compare p. 9" and saved herself much trouble.

sensationalistic?[358] The reader senses Dutt capitulating to death in such scenes. At the same time, the reader is aware of slipperiness in the text, which tries to harmonize two very different genres unsuccessfully. Dutt's fascination for self-denial as the ultimate act of virtuous conduct is apparent when reading her letters. But it is not the self-conscious abnegation made popular by the protagonist of Madame La Fayette whose act of ultimate sacrifice is self-affirming; rather the renunciation admired by Dutt rests on the idea of godly virtue. In her letter to Mary Martin on 26th October 1876, Dutt talks admiringly about the convent scenes in *Les Misérables*: "The descriptions of the quiet life the nuns lead in their Convents are very beautiful; their abnegation is something so grand that it fills one with awe" (*Life* 230). In the very next paragraph in the letter, she talks about Théophile Gautier's well-known poem, "Á Zurbaran," addressed to the religious painter Francisco de Zurbarán about his famous paintings of monks. The poem extolls the ascetic life, and the poet wonders: "Quel crime expiez-vous par de si grands remords?" That representations of self-denial and piety as portrayed by Sister Véronique and Zurbaran's monks were lauded by Dutt should come as no surprise to anyone familiar with her life as a Christian.

At the same time, the death scene of the saintly sister becomes a special caution to a romantic reader who imagines a happy ending to Marguerite's story. When reading about Sister Véronique's decline, Marguerite writes: "She is only twenty-six years old! It is too early to die, to leave this beautiful world where we enjoy the bounties of our Lord" (42). This is an auto-fiction, so these words have an uncanny and melancholic echo for the empathic reader, who is aware of Dutt's own untimely death at twenty-one. However, it is

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[358] Read Dutt's letter dated April 24, 1876, where she notes her mixed emotions evoked by *Jane Eyre*. *Life* (1992) 147.

undeniable that the interminable, sentimental scenes are disconcerting even to the most empathic reader. Everyone has their "eyes welling up with tears," when they meet for the first time or when they depart. A single act of goodness gets everybody to cry a little, giving credibility to *The Examiner*'s blistering review of such excessive sentimentality. The long-suffering reader, besieged by an overdose of Christian moralizing and vaporish characters, begins to long for the gothic, which even if sensationalistic, promised to be interesting. On other occasions, the pious sentiments seem not just superfluous, but to arrest narrative flow. Early in the diary, on 24 August, when Louis visits them for the first time, Marguerite writes about a cloudless sky:

> I thought of the goodness of the Lord towards us sinners. Glancing at the fountain, I spotted a sparrow quenching its thirst there. Each time he drank, he lifted his head to the sky as if to thank his Creator, the father of all goodness. Lord, give me a heart sensitive to your good deeds and to your mercy! (26)

The text abounds in espousal of virtuous sentiments such as this. Dutt was following the valorization of nature as promoted by Rousseau in *Julie,* where carefully crafted scenes such as this reflect the emotional state of the characters. Rousseau's sensitive hero, Saint-Preux, feels that his soul responds to nature in unique ways. In Part One, Saint-Preux feels that "nature is dead" in his eyes when he thinks he will not see Julie anymore (Letter XXVI) and in Part Four, Julie's wild and disordered garden suggests to Saint-Preux her authenticity (Letter XI).[359] Following the description of nature and the narrator's emotional reaction to what she sees outside, we learn that Dutt's protagonist visits the oldest woman

[359] Part I, *La Nouvelle Héloïse*, 71-75; and Part IV 304-315.

in the village, the poor Corraine. Jeanette is cooking a meagre soup but miraculously Marguerite pulls out bacon and cauliflower to add to the potage and bakes a dozen potatoes, thus "making a good meal for the poor people […]. Jeanette followed me till the small compound; she wanted to thank me, but I closed her mouth with a kiss. Her eyes were filled with tear; mine were too for that matter, despite all my efforts" (26). She adds that she returned home, "singing a country air". This scene begs our credulity, but more importantly, it is unsettling in its reduction of the trope of the benevolent rich girl handing out largesse to the poor country folk who weep with gratitude. Dutt is imitating the sentimental fiction where characters routinely display interiorization of socially sanctified virtues in a performative way.

The epilogue details Marguerite's childbirth and her death. Written in the third person, its authoritative narrator hovers over the young family in their tragic hour. The epilogue raises two important questions:1) Why did Dutt choose a third person narration in a diary, ostensibly written as an authentic account of the young Marguerite? and 2) Was this epilogue added by somebody other than Dutt? If the switch to the third-person narration was indeed Dutt's rhetorical choice, what can the reader deduce from this? The epilogue gives rise to suspicion that it had been somebody else, possibly her father, who authored this. Such a possibility creates a curious disjunction in the text and distances the young diarist's authorial presence, which had drawn the reader into a circle of intimacy. At the textual level, it gives rise to suspicion that this is a result of regulatory surveillance by Dutt's vigilant father. Almost all of Toru's letters from France and England were destroyed by him, leaving French writer, James Darmestater, to lament the paucity of her writings

from Europe.[360] Since this novella was published by her father after Dutt's death, it is likely that he had edited the novella by writing a culturally sanctioned ending to the "diary," and also had the unhappy task of writing an epilogue for a work that was left unfinished due to its author's sudden death.

When a novel culminates with the death of the protagonist, what Garrett Stewart calls "decentering"—"a chasm opening between word and world"—is created between the narrated and textual world, as the stylistic closure that is the end of the journey for the main character also indicates a lexical end for the narrated text (*Death* 6).[361] This gap or chasm is particularly acute in auto-fiction where the reader has been invited to identify with the narrator-subject whose death spells the end of the relationship. In Dutt's novella, the "death" of the first-person narrator occurs before the death of the protagonist Marguerite, when the former is abruptly dismissed from the text, resulting in the fissuring of the narrator-subject. This rude displacement of the first-person narrator in effect erects a boundary between the empathic reader and the text. The vicarious participation by the reader in the first-person narration had forged an emotional connection between the narrator and reader, which gets broken with the erasure of the narrator. The epilogue contains the most important scene in the entire novella: the tragic death of Marguerite, the narrator-diarist whose emotional confessionals had included the reader as part of the text's sorority. But the first-person narrator-diarist is replaced by a third-person narrator who

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[360] See James Darmestater, *Essais de littératures anglaises*, 2nd ed. (Paris: Libraire de Delagrave, 1890) 270.

[361] Garrett Stewart, *Death Sentences: Styles of Dying in British Fiction* (Cambridge, Mass : Harvard UP, 1984).

narrates the birth of Marguerite's child and the mother's death the following day. There is a distinct change in the tone and affect from the diary entries. A new mature voice displaces the first-person narrator, who was given to flights of sensibility while being wracked with unreasonable guilt. Perhaps the new mature voice suggests that the new role of motherhood will alter the realities of Marguerite's life. Further, in the epilogue we enter a morbid world, because the shadow of death is already upon the young mother when the doctor declares that she is too feeble to nurse the baby. This segment, which had so incensed the critic in *The Examiner* for the details of confinement such as nursing, is written in the realist mode. The gothic and the sentimental genres have been pushed aside for a realism that is elegant in its brevity of emotions. The third-person narrator is direct when writing about Marguerite's death: "It was her habit since childhood to say this prayer before sleeping. She closed her eyes; her lips half opened, and her pure soul flew away to her God's bosom, and Marguerite slept the sleep of death" (147). The lines have a stark simplicity that is more effective than Marguerite's excessive emotion in her description of Sister Véronique early in the diary. In the previous segment, in a diary entry, the narrator shares her frightening dream about death with Louis and startles him by declaring, "Louis, when the trees will flower again, I will no longer be there; I will be lying under the cold grass" (130). Marguerite gently indicates here to her husband that she too must conform to the laws of nature. As if to reinforce this churning of birth and death, the epilogue begins with the birth of Marguerite's child and ends with her death. Yet this premonition about her own death in one so young strikes the reader as macabre. The forewarning to the reader is in evocative language, as the narrator draws on the imagery and symbolism of death and renewal from nature as she watches the trees standing close to the window: "I got up and

we remained standing close to the window, looking at the dead leaves that were slowly getting detached from the trees and that came and brushed against the window panes with the whisper of butterfly wings" (130). Dutt, who considered herself as a poet, excels in her descriptions of nature when she is free of the desire for moralizing.

Many of Dutt's translations of French poems are elegiac, dealing with themes of love and loss. In the poem, "The Fall of the Leaves" by Charles Millevoye, the youth pining for his lady arrives at the woods he had loved and looks to the falling autumn trees as a sign that his end is near.

> He said, and went…and came back not back.
>
> The last leaf from the bough that fell
>
> Signalled his last day on the earth.
>
> Clouds in the heavens hung scowling, black;
>
> When beneath an oak of sovereign girth
>
> They laid him in his lonely cell.
>
> But she the loved one to the wood
>
> Came never.… (*A Sheaf* 25)

Like the beautiful young girl who dies of unrequited love in Charles Nodier's funereal poem, the young man in Millevoye's poem—who reads symbolism in the falling leaves of his own death—is also betrayed by love. Turning back to the novella, is Dutt's character Marguerite suggesting to the reader that deep passionate love is punishable by death? The reader wonders if the narrator's dutiful love for the dull Louis (*devoir)*—a kind of martyrdom—is not sufficient penance for her unrequited, but wrong love for the seductive

Count (*vouloir)*. The reader recalls that the exacting of death as punishment for moral failing is the prescribed norm in moralistic fiction.[362]

The third-person narrator of the epilogue describes scenes of maternal confinement in great detail, including Marguerite's decision to breast-feed her baby:

> The baby suckled; the young mother looked at him, happy and proud, an inexpressible joy made the blood mount her cheeks, when for the first time she felt her baby press her breast, her husband seated beside her, his hand on the shoulder of his young wife, contemplating her happiness, smiling. (136)

The decision, by the omniscient narrator, to show us Marguerite's deep maternal commitment is another nod to Rousseau and his ideas of a righteous republic, but for the critic writing in *The Examiner,* this reveals the Asiatic mind's inability to grasp the basic norms of Western civilization:

> The nauseous horrors, which even elderly married ladies only mention in whispers, are here printed at full length in large type on beautiful paper. This concluding chapter confirms the belief which we have always held, that even the most civilized Asiatic is utterly unable to grasp the principles which underlie the cultivation of Western nations. He is devoid of a certain sense of propriety, of the *modus in rebus,* which would prevent even the most eccentric French or English author from

[362] See for example, Julie's death in *La Nouvelle Héloïse* is set up as the only viable option for a fallen woman. Julie leaves a last letter to her lover Saint-Preux where she implores him to be a virtuous man. About their fateful reunion she says, "It is Heaven's blessings to have prevented it, thereby, without a doubt, preventing misfortune" (405). Thus, she sees heavenly justice in her own death.

> handling certain subjects which an unwritten and unspoken law has preserved from public discussion.[363]

Clearly for this critic who was writing from a metropolitan center, the epilogue is yet another example of the deviant and degenerate "Asiatic" mind. However, it was Enlightenment advocacy of maternal nurture in a country where the institution of wet-nursing by poor women was routine that informs Marguerite's actions. Rousseau, in *Émile*, valorizes breast-feeding by the mother as the foundational act of maternal devotion that helps sustain the republic, thus conflating the role of the private mother with a very public maternity. In the Rousseauian worldview, the republican mother nourishes not just her children, but the entire nation. "It is to you I address myself, tender and foresighted mother!" Rousseau apostrophizes early in Book I (37). This address also conscripts the mother whose spiritual duties he will enumerate in detail in this section.[364] He begins with her duties when the child is in infancy when she must nourish this citizen of the republic herself. Speaking about swaddling, he asks: "Whence comes this unreasonable, this unnatural custom?" adding that the outsourcing of motherhood—hiring wet-nurses—suggests a degeneration of the French people (44). "There is no substitute for maternal solicitude," he declares (45). "Do you wish to bring everyone back to his first duties? Begin with mothers. You will be surprised by the changes you will produce. Everything

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[363] *The Examiner,* 4 Jan 1879, 23-24.

[364] For a detailed study on how Rousseauian ideology and regulatory surveillance colluded to pressure women in eighteenth-century France to nurse their children, see Mary Jacobus, "Incorruptible Milk: Breast Feeding and the French Revolution," *Rebel Daughters: Women and the French Revolution,* eds. Sara E. Melzer and Leslie W. Rabine (Oxford: The Oxford UP, 1992) 54-75.

follows successfully from this depravity" (46).[365] He adds in cautious optimism: "But let mothers deign to nurse their children, morals will reform themselves, nature's sentiments will be awakened in every heart, the state will be re-peopled.…Women have stopped being mothers.… No mother, no child" (*Émile* 46). Clearly, in Rousseau's opinion, the impossible task of raising an entire country of moral beings rests on the Woman-as-Mother. In the case of Dutt, her protagonist Marguerite's choice to nourish her child thus follows the utopian urging of preceptors such as Rousseau, and so is hardly an example of the deviant "Asiatic" mind.

Interestingly, child abandonment was common in eighteenth-century France, and Rousseau himself abandoned all five of his children to the *Enfants Trouvés* or the Foundling Hospital, thus complicating his discourse on women's duty as guarantors of family.[366] Rousseau used his idea of the virtuous republic to galvanize what he saw as a country awash in immorality and godlessness, and so he harnessed the affect of the maternal to legitimate his vision for reordering society. I suggest that Rousseau's affirmation of a virtuous life, private and public, fueled Dutt's poetics of regression. Thus, it is quite natural that she utilized her novella to articulate her idea of the virtuous mother whose nurturing of her infant was symbolically tethered to larger anxieties about the nation. What the critic in *The Examiner* failed to recognize was that Dutt drew poetic inspiration exclusively from French sources, especially the French Romantics, which is

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[365]All quotations are from Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Émile. Or On Education*, trans. Allan Bloom (New York: Basic Books, 1979).

[366] See Carol Blum, *Rousseau and the Republic of Virtue: The Language of Politics in French Revolution* (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1986.

readily apparent to anyone familiar with her letters where she alludes to them constantly. Unlike the English Romantic poets, French Romantic poets like Alphonse de Lamartine, Victor Hugo, Gérard de Nerval, Alfred de Musset, Alfred de Vigny, Leconte de Lisle and others, were not uncomfortable with religion. At the same time, if giving birth is a time-tested method for ensuring one's immortality, then this scene becomes a therapeutic narration, filled with special symbolism and imagery. The virtuous republic will be intact, securely represented in the image of the perfect family, here represented by Marguerite, Louis and their son. In the context of sentimental virtue, the end of Marguerite's story achieves Dutt's purpose in writing this novella: to articulate a vision for a virtuous society through the representation of an ideal family and to gain self-restoration in the process.

James Darmesteter writes about what he finds fascinating about the novella:

> Je ne dirai que quelques mots de *Mademoiselle D'Arvers,* qui a surtout un intérêt de curiosité. Comme œuvre d'une Hindoue de dix-huit ans, qui n'avait que quelques années de français et n'avait été en France que six mois, c'est un tour de force littéraire sans exemple. (*Éssais* 275)
>
> I will only say a few words about the *Mademoiselle D'Arvers,* which interests mostly as a curiosity. As the work of an eighteen-year old Hindu, who has not had many years of French and had been in France for hardly six months, it is a literary tour de force without parallel.

However, Darmesteter acknowledges the limitations of the author, writing: «Il ne faut pas chercher dans le roman une analyse des caractères bien profonde, ni bien puissante ; c'était un sujet tragique et écrasant qui demandait un Balzac ou une George Eliot.» ("One should not look for deep and powerful analysis of the characters in this novel ; the subject is tragic

and weighty, demanding a Balzac or a George Eliot") (277). This mild reproof is hardly surprising, given the limitations of the text as noted in my analysis. Darmesteter also notes this : « Mais il ya des étincelles et des divinations de poète ». ("But there are hints of poetic insights") (277). Thus, the novella, which was read by critics as a curiosity from India, is redeemed by its poetic sensibility. The chief aesthetic pleasure for the empathic reader resides in those poetic moments when the text forgets to moralize, and instead, simply aims to please. Readers for this text are more like "confessors or chaplains," than therapists.[367] The symbiotic relationship forged in the act of reading reasserts the nature of sublimated desire and submerged narration. In confessional texts such as this, readers, by simply reading, offer sustenance—bearing testimony to both the narrator-victim's wounding and to the therapeutic aim of the genre of auto-fiction.

Burden of History

Any critical study that treats Dutt as a French writer, as I do, must acknowledge the crucial role that French poetry played in shaping her. In her collection of translated French poems which generated great excitement for the reasons I detail below, she shows intuitive understanding of the difficult French meter while sharing musings in her Notes segment about her favorite poets. This attests to the fact that she saw herself first as a translator and only tentatively ventured into original versification in English. Singularly self-aware of her own gifts as a polyglot, cosmopolitan translator and writer, Dutt keenly sought a place in the French pantheon. Her notes engage the reader not merely for the way they inform and

[367] I am inverting Garrett Stewart's idea about readers' role in Brontë's *Villette*, which he says calls for readers to be therapists, "silently taking in without need for absolution." *Dear Reader* (1996) 257.

elucidate, but for the tone of intimacy with which Dutt speaks to her community of poets. The empathic reader benefits when engaging with the entire corpus of her work—translations, letters, and fiction—for they speak to one another in intertexts and allusions. Often in her letters to Mary she shares her on-going translations that she is getting ready for *A Sheaf Gleaned in French Fields*, about which she was inordinately proud. Yet this volume, which should have secured Dutt's literary legacy, gets only a passing glance from critics. At the same time, it is important to acknowledge that when it was published, the volume of translations was well received. The famous poet and critic, André Theuriet, writing in the *Revue des deux mondes* says this of her collection of French translations:

> Le goût qui a présidé à la composition de cet herbier poétique n'est pas toujours irréprochable; les fleurs rares et les herbes folles y sont étalées dans un ordre assez confus; mais les plantes couchées sur la page du livre n'ont pas trop perdu leur fraîcheur, et la plupart ont gardé la portée et la physionomie qu'elles avaient sur le sol natal. Les traductions sont en général exactes et la traductrice a reproduit assez heureusement la forme des strophes, l'entrelacement des rimes et l'allure de rythme qui caractérisent les pièces originales. (Theuriet, 1877: 674)
>
> The taste which formed the composition of this poetic herbarium is not always without fault; the rare flowers and the crazy herbs there are spread in a disorderly fashion; but the plants laid out on the page of the book have not lost too much of their freshness, and most retain the impact and shape that they had under their native sun. The translations in general are exact and the translator has reproduced quite felicitously the shape of the verse, the interlacing rhymes and the allure of the rhythms that characterized the original pieces.

More importantly, her notes generated great excitement, not only for their literary acumen but for what they represented historically. This historical figure of Dutt was built carefully and was invested with a particular burden—that of being an emblem of India's hoary past while also standing as a promise to its future. It rests with the empathic reader then to free her off this temporal bind while perusing her work.

It is important to recall that when Toru Dutt died on 30 August 1877, at age twenty-one, she was in the process of translating Clarisse Bader's *La Femme dans L'Inde Antique* into English. During Dutt's brief life she had seen just one of her works published, *A Sheaf Gleaned in French Fields*, in 1876.[368] She was very proud of the positive reviews this received in both the Indian and English press. "I shall soon be vain by all the praise!" she writes to Mary (*Life* 159).[369] The supplementary notes elicited special attention for their idiosyncratic observations on nearly one hundred French poets. Often, she incorporates criticism from other poets and writers. A sample entry is on the Romantic poet, Alexandre Soumet, written as supplementary information for the translated poem, "La Pauvre Fille" ("The Foundling" 37), where Dutt notes that Soumet's grand ambitions to soar above everyone does not match his skills as a poet:

> Alexandre Soumet lived between the Classical and Romantic schools of French Poetry. He had been brought up in the old school, and could not therefore join the new, except in a timid and hesitating way, although he felt the superiority of it. […]

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[368] The first edition that was published by Saptahik Sambad Press of Bhowanipore in 1876.The *Sheaf* would see a second edition published in India in 1878 and a third by Kagan Paul, London in 1880.

[369] Please see letter dated November 13, 1876, where she writes, "The *Sheaf,* after that *Examiner* notice, is much in demand. People sometimes think that Toru is a fictitious person, and that the book is the work of some European!" (239). She quotes an entire page from a review in the *Englishman, Friend of India,* and the *Indian Charivari,* where the critics have high praise for her knowledge of two foreign languages. 174-176.

> Soumet is said to have always kept the plume of an eagle on his desk, not to write with, but "to have always present in his thoughts that a poet such as he aspired to be must build his eyrie on the highest summits,--must wheel in the regions of the sky." "This cursed plume of the eagle," says M. Léon de Wailly, "was his ruin." Had he not attempted so much, he could have left a more durable reputation. He had sufficient means to defray a moderate ambition, but he wasted his patrimony in mad enterprises, like many another conceited literary spendthrift. As it is, writers with less merit and less ambition, placed in circumstances more propitious, have, simply by attempting what was in their power to accomplish, acquired titles more real and more durable than Soumet to the esteem of posterity. (*A Sheaf* 381)

This note on Soumet captures the tragedy of a poet who attempted too much. Earlier in the note she suggests that since he was not a Milton, he ought not to have ventured to write on epic themes.[370] The bold criticism, given to seasoned poets is impressive in its cozy familiarity and daring. It is not surprising that many reviewers from her time marveled that a sick and dying young Bengali girl in faraway Calcutta knew so much about French poets and could write with such confidence about their lives and works. E. J. Thompson, in his supplementary review in Harihar Das's *Life and Letters of Toru Dutt* (1921), has this to say about the notes:

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[370] See E.J. Thompson's review where he notes Toru's casual friendliness to notable French poets. Supplementary review, *Life and Letters of Toru Dutt,* Harihar Das (Oxford: The Oxford UP, 1921) 342-49. About the "masculinity of criticism," Dutt writes in a letter to Mary Martin dated May 13, 1876, that the *Madras Standard* thinks she is a man. "I was rather amused and (shall I confess it?) perhaps a little flattered at this mistake." *Life* (1992) 157.

> But the *Notes* are astonishing beyond anything in the text. It seems impossible that an Indian girl, at such an age, should have had such knowledge of French literature. And in the *Notes*, while never merely foolish even when boldest, she deals with French masters as one assessing the work of equals, and it seems hard to tell which to admire more—the range of reading, or the independence and masculinity of criticism. (371)

At the same time, critics noted some glaring gaps of knowledge in the Notes, which they ascribed correctly to her youth and isolation. In its 26 August 1876 issue, *The Examiner* drew attention to some anomalies:

> The notes display considerable learning with some odd omissions. For instance, Miss Dutt had no idea about death concluding the lives of many of her favorites. She will grieve, we are sure, to learn that neither Charles Baudelaire nor Alexander Smith are in a position to profit from the prim little advice she gives to each. We are bound also to give the news to her of the death of her adoration, Saint-Beuve. (966-67)

In the preface to Dutt's posthumously published volume, *Ancient Ballads and Legends of Hindustan*, Edmund Gosse writes in the same vein:

> The notes are no less curious, and to a stranger no less bewildering. Nothing could be more naïve than the writer's ignorance at some points, or more startling than her learning at others…. For her, André Chenier was next in chronological order after

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[371] E.J.Thompson, supplementary review, *Life and Letters of Toru Dutt* (Oxford: The Oxford UP, 1921) 342-49.

> Du Bartas. Occasionally she showed a profundity of research that would have done no discredit to Mr. Saintsbury or "le doux Assellineau."[372]

That Gosse compared her to two of the finest critics of literature of the period is surprising considering Dutt's youth and inexperience. Interestingly, her fame rests today mainly on *Ancient Ballads and Legends of Hindustan*, her collection of original sonnets and ballads in English, also published posthumously in 1882. Dutt's modest output may not justify the kind of critical response it received but for the facts that she had written with great flair in three different languages and died tragically before reaching the age of twenty-two. [373] In fact, E.J. Thompson touches on this very point about how knowledge of her biography hampered a critic who wanted to objectively evaluate her work:

> The fact of her fame may be quite simply stated. So far as actual performance goes, Toru Dutt's English fame rests on two books, neither of any great size, and one published posthumously.… But, further, both are affecting by the number of indications they contain of possibilities of development often in directions where the poet's real achievement was slight. There are outcroppings of veins that were never, during her brief day of work, touched to any considerable extent. It is the knowledge of this that compels diffidence and hesitation in criticism of her

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[372] Edmund Gosse references two well-known critics of English and French literature, George Edward Bateman Saintsbury (1845-1933), who was considered one of the finest critics of French literature, and Charles Asselineau (1820-1874), writer, critic and close friend of Charles Baudelaire. *Ancient Ballads and Legends of Hindustan* (London: Kagan Paul, 1882) vii-xxvii.

[373] The critic in *The Pall Mall Gazette* notes that Edmund Gosse's review of Toru Dutt was unusually fair and not sentimental in tone like the others. "Except for a rather irrelevant and not very pointed concession to the popular love of anecdotage, Mr. Gosse's biography of Toru Dutt is all that such an essay ought to be. He does not, as Marjorie Fleming complains that many writers do, "express himself too sentimentally," and it was difficult to repress sentiment when writing about a girl of such wonderful genius so early taken away." "Hindoo Poetess," *Pall Mall Gazette,* 21 Apr. 1882:5.

> verse.… The metres used by Toru Dutt are nearly always of the simplest, and her use of them is marred by much crudity. Yet against this must be set the many signs of haste and lack of opportunity to finish. (374)

Reviewers, by force of decorum, were restrained when writing about the jarring dissonances they noted in her poetic outpourings. Her tragic death from consumption magnified her writing as heroic endeavor in the face of adversity. At the same time, they were truly impressed by the kernel of unusual talent nestling behind her imperfect prosody. This compelled them to engage with one whose writings they faulted for hybridity and syncretism, even when they graciously praised her ability to express thoughts in European languages. This ambivalence was often couched in orientalist rhetoric, carrying the full burden of imperialism that sought easy remedies for India's maladies. Could this young "Hindu poetess" be the savior of the benighted country, many wondered, even as they inveighed against what they perceived to be her unsuccessful attempts at colonial mimicry.[375] E.J. Thompson had this observation about Toru Dutt's brief life-story in his review of her life and works: "If the scanty plot can bear, in so brief a space of years, so promising a harvest, what an enrichment of their nation would come, if the same possibilities of development came to the whole of Bengali womanhood?"[376]

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[374] See E.J. Thompson, supplementary review, *Life and Letters of Toru Dutt* (1992) 342.

[375] In a brief review of the collection of translations of French poems titled, *A Sheaf Gleaned in French Fields,* the writer draws attention to the genius of the "Hindoo race": "The 'Sheaf' is a collection of translations by this young girl (she died when she was little more than twenty-one) from a considerable range of modern poetry. That she should have acquired such a mastery of two languages not her own is quite an uncommon phenomenon, and would be a considerable proof if were one needed, of the intellectual capacity of the Hindoo race." *Pall Mall Gazette*, 11, March. 1881:12.

[376] Harihar Das. *Life and Letters of Toru Dutt.* (London: The Oxford UP, 1992) 342-49.

At the same time, critics also attempted to fix the identity of this transnational, cosmopolitan writer either as Hindu/Indian or Christian/European depending on their own predilection.[377] Where to situate this young Indian poet in the pantheon of global literature proved to be a challenge, as many tried to tread carefully while evaluating her uneven work. Critics, even to this day, struggle with her easy fluidity in occupying seemingly disparate worlds.[378] The Variorum section in *The Examiner* had this unusual observation in its obituary:

> We regard this young Hindu lady as the most eminent poetic genius that Anglo-Indian literature had hitherto produced; the specimens we quoted in our review were marvelously skillful and melodious. We learn, from the prefatory memoir to the new edition, that she was equally versed in two other languages foreign to her birth—Sanskrit and French.[379]

Clearly the writer of this obituary implies that Toru had, to her credit, even learned the language of her ancestors, since Sanskrit was just as foreign to her as French. He could not have been privy to the knowledge that her Christian family with its cosmopolitan culture had ensured that she was more European than Indian. She began to learn Sanskrit only

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[377] See Ellen Brinks, "Translating Hindustan: Toru Dutt's Poems and Letters," *Anglophone Indian Women Writers 1870-1920* (New York: Routledge, 2013) 25-57.

[378] Alpana Sharma's "In-between Modernity: Toru Dutt (1856-1877)" in *Women's Experience of Modernity, 1875-1925*,ed. Ann L. Ardis and Leslie W. Lewis, notes that Dutt inhabited a hybrid place, an "in-between modernity," and this is an argument that is repeated by others who resist locating her in one particular culture or country (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 2003) 108. Meenakshi Mukherjee, while arguing that Dutt cannot be described as being either a pan-Indian poet or an Orientalist one, nails her down as a Bengali writer from Calcutta, thus locating Dutt in an even smaller geographical space that she calls, "narrow and tentative." Meenakshi Mukherjee, "Hearing Her Own Voice: Defective Acoustics in Colonial India" in *The Perishable Empire: Essays on Indian Writing in English,* (New Delhi: The Oxford UP, 2000) 89-116.

[379] See the Variorum in *The Examiner*, June 15 1878.

after the family's return to Calcutta. On the other hand, Edmund Gosse, writer and Orientalist from England, asserted that Dutt was of "the Hindu race" when critiquing *The Ancient Ballads*:

> She was pure Hindu, full of the typical qualities of her race and blood, and, as the present volume shows us for the first time and persevering to the last, her appreciation for the poetic traditions of her ancient religion, though her faith in Vishnu and Siva had been cast aside as childish things and been replaced by a purer faith.[380]

Even when acknowledging the fact that Toru, like her extended family, had converted to Christianity, the "purer faith," Gosse still found traces of her "Hindu" race and blood unmistakably structuring her poetics, whereas, French Orientalist and critic James Darmesteter, writing in *Essais de littératures anglaises*, declared her to be one of his country's poets:

> Pour le lecteur français, ce livre offre un charme particulier et est plus vivant et plus vibrant qu'il ne peut l'être pour un lecteur anglais. Ce n'est pas sans cause qu'il ne contient rien ou presque rien de la poésie du dix-septième ou dix-huitième siècle, qui pourtant aurait aisément fourni bien des choses supérieures à quelques-uns des morceaux choisis par miss Dutt : c'est parce qu'elle était réellement, et avant tout, une Française de notre siècle, une Française de nos jours, dont le coeur et l'imagination battaient de tout ce qui nous agite à cette heure.[381]

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[380] Edmund Gosse, introductory memoir, *Ancient Ballads and Legends of Hindustan*, 2nd edition, (London: Kagan Paul & Co., 1885) xi-xii.

[381] James Darmesteter, *Essais de littératures anglaises*, 2nd ed. (Paris: Libraire de Delagrave, 1890) 277.

> For the French reader, this book offers particular charm and is more alive and vibrant than to an English reader. It is not without cause that it contains almost nothing from the poetry of the seventeenth or eighteenth-century, even if that might have easily provided it with better pieces in comparison to some of those chosen by Miss Dutt, it's because she was really, and before all, a French woman of our century, a French woman of our days, whose heart and imagination churn to what concerns us at this time.

Here, Darmesteter underscores the historic urgency of Dutt's contributions while tethering her firmly to the preoccupations of the nineteenth-century. A border-crossing cosmopolitan like Dutt—fluent in many languages—is unable to elude the relentless grip of localizing tendencies. Many French and English reviewers, with a generosity honed by Enlightenment humanism, posited that India's own rich soil had helped produce this poet. The generosity arrived by way of colonial design. Aware of their historic mission during this critical period of high colonialism, critics in British and French nineteenth-century journals, like *Revue des Deux Mondes, The Pall Mall Gazette, The Literary Examiner* and *The Friend of India* often alluded to India's glowing journey into the future, symbolized by this young, autochthonous genius. In *Life and Letters of Toru Dutt,* biographer Harihar Das situates Dutt's precocious talents in the native soil, made rich through indigenous cultivation: "It will interest the reader to learn something about the family from which the poet descended, more especially as genius must derive much of its form, if not its force, from the environment in which it has been nurtured" (1).

However, it is important to observe that this self-conscious reference to a native genius drawing sustenance from indigenous soil is situated in a moment of history. At this

time in colonial India, the notion of the genius of the soil was a fraught one, colored by Indian anxieties about the nation and its traditions—both in states of atrophy due to British colonization.[382] From the colonial perspective, while the present conditions in India conveyed only gloom, the country's ancient Vedic past offered a glimpse of its rich traditions that might be employed for birthing native talents. Writing in the foreword to Harihar Das's biography, H.A.L. Fisher describes Toru as "the child of the green valley of the Ganges" whose "sheer force of native genius" had earned her a place in the company of English poets.[383]In Fisher's understanding, the sheer force of native genius that helped produce pieces of "delicate poetic quality" was unmistakably Indian. The allegory evoked here suggests that like the sacred river Ganges gushing from the earth, the young poet's lyrical outpourings owed their special quality to native eco-systems. But rather than see this as a triumph of indigenous poetics, many English and European critics concluded that this just portended hope for the country's modernizing project, especially with a dose of a selective deployment of India's past. This idea of rebirth via the usable past was not new to India, but it had an urgency rooted in a particular historic moment for Indians when fierce

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[382] I draw attention here to Ananya Vajpayi's refined argument about the twin crises of self and state in India of the mid nineteenth-century. Her thesis is informed by Alasdair MacIntyre's notions about the crises of traditions. She writes that this crisis in self and state led India's founding fathers to look to the near and mythic pasts for a reconstitution in the present for their country's ills in their fight for "Swaraj' or self-rule from the British To this I add that the founding fathers, all of whom studied in the West, were strongly influenced by Enlightenment ideas and liberalism, and in their striving to remake India were actually responding to the movement started by western Indologists and Orientalists. This reassertion, or wresting, by Indian leaders of the Hindu-Dharmic principles out of western hands was a turning point in the history of modern India. See Ananya Vajpayi, introduction, *Righteous Republic*: *The Political Foundations of Modern India* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP (2011)ix-xxiv.

[383] H.A.L. Fisher, foreword, *Life and Letters of Toru Dutt* (Oxford, 1992) vii-ix.

debates about remaking the country were reaching a new crescendo.[384] "In the long history of the contact and interfusion of East and West, I doubt whether there is a figure more encouraging or significant," concludes Fisher in his observations about Dutt (*Life* ix). Fisher implies that along with raiding its own antiquity, the country needed to replenish itself with a jolt of western modernity—seen here in the figure of young Toru Dutt—so as to move it forward. In the minds of these writers, the figure of Dutt offered a possible model for this judicious blending of history, space, and time. Dutt was seen to belong to the "race" of legendary Indian women like Sita and Savitri, at the same time she was seen as holding out a promise to modern Indian womanhood.[385]

I suggest that we read Dutt's writings in the context of the crisis of the tradition that India faced during this period when the Orientalists and Anglicists battled for the implementation of educational reforms.[386] For Indians, history was a burden—the unshakable weight of some five thousand years bearing upon a fledgling nation that had the arduous task of both absorbing European enlightenment values and rediscovering its own curative past. It is perhaps more pertinent to consider if Dutt was, of her own volition,

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[384] See Lois Parkinson Zamora for a non-Hegelian affirmation of America's assimilated past which is seen to confer historical continuity to its writers even as it produces an "anxiety of origins. *The Usable Past: The Imagination of History in Recent Fiction of the Americas* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1997).

[385] *Life and Letters of Toru Dutt* (1992) 347.

[386]The "Orientalists would have been called "Indologists" in a different era. The word does not connote in any way to Edward Said's powerfully argued thesis in *Orientalism.* Orientalists like William Jones and Warren Hastings were instrumental in unearthing many valuable Sanskrit texts and translating them into English, thus making them available for the first time to the larger world. William Jones established the still running Asiatic Society in Calcutta, which is the oldest archival library-museum in India. The eighteenth-century colonialists were eager to learn about the cultures of the land they owned, with Hastings' translation of the Indian sacred text, *The Bhagavad-Gita*, reaching a new height in benevolent, colonial cultural transaction. All this came to an end with the 1857 Indian Mutiny, which permanently altered and hardened the relationship. For further reading, see William Dalrymple, *The Last Mughal: The Fall of a Dynasty: 1857* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2014).

marching purposefully towards the future, as might be surmised by her deep engagement with modern European cultures and literatures. Or was she forever trapped by the false promise of the past? At this time in the country's history, Indian crisis about tradition and the self collided often with colonial anxieties about influence.[387] The mostly historicist critical reception of her life and writing points to how Toru Dutt was emblematic of this dialectic. What one critic called her "in-betweenness" was both cultural and temporal, for, she was neither fully Hindu/Indian nor Christian/European, but a little of both—symbolizing the cross-cultural currents enveloping the country during this period.[388] It is possible to see Dutt as a figure of the moment, caught in a temporal bind, neither able to reach far back to a restorative past nor move proleptically to the future, despite shades of unusual modern sensibility seen in at least one of her works.[389] Part of Dutt's incomplete legacy is wrapped up in the irrevocability of her untimely death, but a bigger reason is that tradition and history conspire to deny easy resolution to her story.

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[387] Ananya Vajpayi, *Righteous Republic: The Political Foundation of Modern India* (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 2012)

[388] Alpana Sharma, "In-between Modernity: Toru Dutt (1856-1877)" in *Women's Experience of Modernity, 1875-1925,* ed. Ann L. Ardis and Leslie W. Lewis (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 2003) 108 that Dutt inhabited a hybrid place, an "in-between modernity," is echoed elsewhere;

[389] Ellen Brinks writes that Dutt's dialectical sensibility was at play in her poems, something that was lacking in the earlier generation of poets from the family of Dutts (New York: Routledge, 2013) 27.

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APPENDIX

PHOTOS FROM HAWORTH, CALCUTTA, AND AREQUIPA

Fig. 1. Richmond, George. *Charlotte Brontë*. National Portrait Gallery, London. Google Images. Web.

Fig. 2. Brontë, Bramwell. *Portrait of Anne, Emily and Charlotte* was done by their brother, Bramwell Brontë in 1834. National Portrait Gallery, London. Google Images. Web.

Fig. 3. Unknown. *M. Constantin Hegér*. Circa 1865. Wikimedia. Web.

Fig. 4. Charlotte's husband Reverend Arthur Bell Nicholls. Bronte Society. Google Images. Web.

Fig. 5. The Brontë Parsonage and family cemetery, Haworth. Google Images. Web.

Fig. 6. Charlotte Brontë's little book, pen and ink. Photograph. (Reproduced with permission from the Brontë Parsonage Museum, Haworth).

Fig. 7. The Dutt residence in Maniktala, which used to be an upper-class neighborhood in mid-nineteenth century. Google Images. Web.

Fig. 8. Toru Dutt. Wikimedia. Web.

Fig. 9. The Dutt sisters: Toru with sister Aru. Print. Courtesy a friend.

Fig. 10. Toru Dutt's cemetery in the Christian Cemetery, Maniktala, Calcutta. Google images. Web.

Fig. 11. Old Mission Church, Calcutta, where the Dutt family attended services. Founded in 1770 by the Swedish Lutheran missionary Johann Zachariah Kiernander, the Mission Church is the oldest Protestant Church in Calcutta (Kolkata). Google Images. Web.

Fig. 12. Jagannathan, Meera. *Old Mission Church, Kolkata today.* 2018. Digital photograph.

Fig. 13. Jagannathan, Meera. *Inside Old Mission Church*. 2018. Digital photograph.

Fig. 14. Jagannathan, Meera. *A View of the Pew, Old Mission Church*. 2018. Digital photograph.

Fig. 15. Oxford Mission Church, Barisal in present day Bangladesh. Toru Dutt's mother Mrs. Kshetramoni Dutt left a generous legacy when she died. It is considered to be one of two largest churches in Asia. Google Images. Web.

Fig. 16. Jagannathan, Meera. The three peaks of the volcanic mountain in Arequipa described by Tristan in her memoir. Tristan writes: “We climbed the last mountain, and when we reached the last summit, the vast chain of the Cordilleras and the three giant volcanoes of Arequipa spread before us” (*Peregrination* 85). 2018. Photograph.

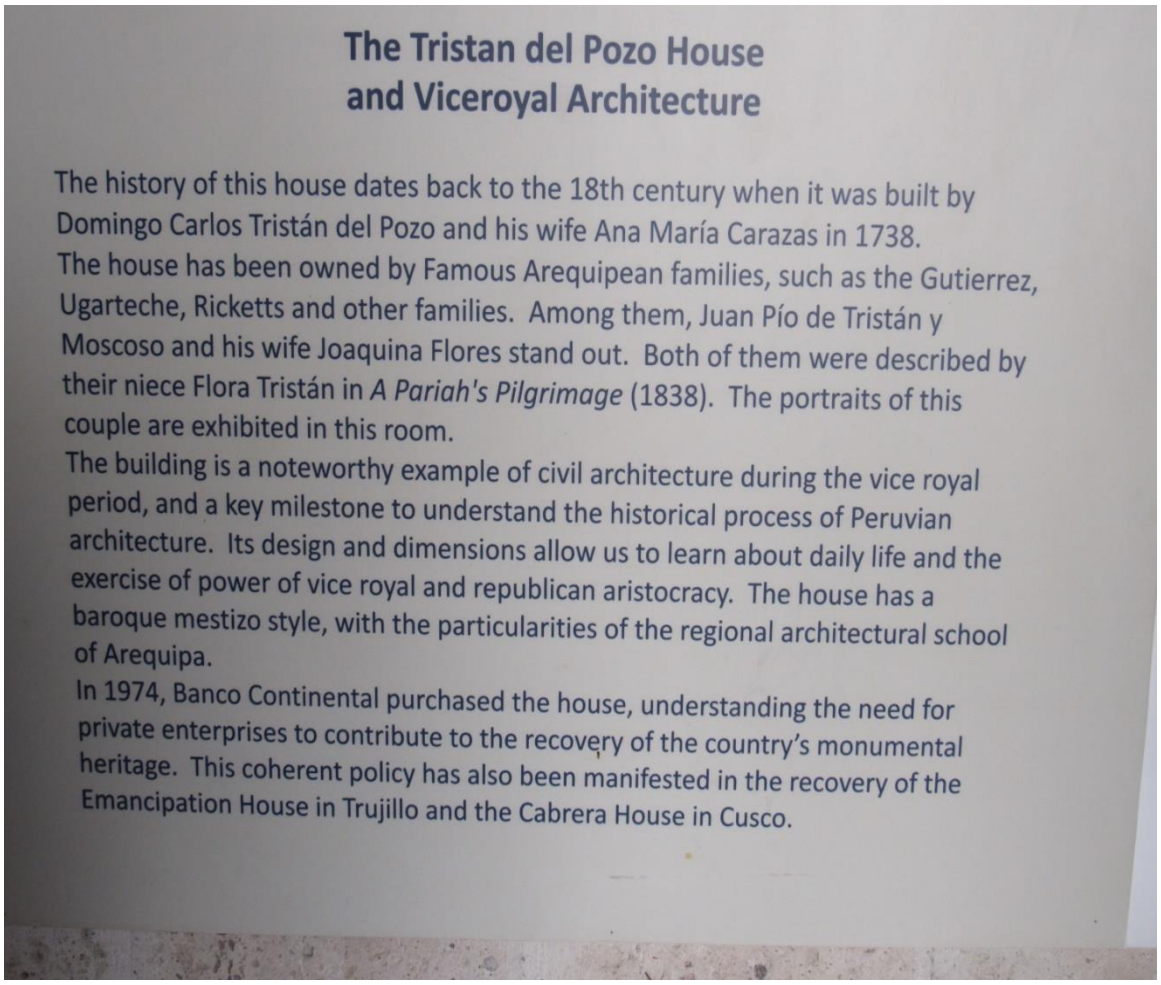
Fig. 17. Unknown. *Portrait of Flora Tristan in Le Charivari*. 1839. Galérie de la Presse, Google Images. Web.

Fig. 18. A stamp was issued in 1918 by France to honor Tristan. Google Images. Web.

Fig. 19. Portrait of Flora Tristan. Google Images. Web.

Fig. 20. Jagannathan, Meera. View from across the road: Casa de Tristán, Arequipa, Peru. 2016. Digital photograph.

Fig. 21. Jagannathan, Meera. Don Pio Tristán and Joaquina Tristán. The portraits hang inside a foyer room in the Casa de Tristán. 2016. Digital photograph.



The Tristan del Pozo House and Viceroyal Architecture

The history of this house dates back to the 18th century when it was built by Domingo Carlos Tristán del Pozo and his wife Ana María Carazas in 1738.
The house has been owned by Famous Arequipean families, such as the Gutierrez, Ugarteche, Ricketts and other families. Among them, Juan Pío de Tristán y Moscoso and his wife Joaquina Flores stand out. Both of them were described by their niece Flora Tristán in *A Pariah's Pilgrimage* (1838). The portraits of this couple are exhibited in this room.
The building is a noteworthy example of civil architecture during the vice royal period, and a key milestone to understand the historical process of Peruvian architecture. Its design and dimensions allow us to learn about daily life and the exercise of power of vice royal and republican aristocracy. The house has a baroque mestizo style, with the particularities of the regional architectural school of Arequipa.
In 1974, Banco Continental purchased the house, understanding the need for private enterprises to contribute to the recovery of the country's monumental heritage. This coherent policy has also been manifested in the recovery of the Emancipation House in Trujillo and the Cabrera House in Cusco.

Fig. 22. Jagannathan, Meera. A brief history of the Casa de Tristán mounted on a wall inside the mansion. 2016. Digital photograph.

Fig. 23. Jagannathan, Meera. View from the outside of the dark rooms given to Flora, during her stay in the Casa De Tristán. Flora writes: "I wondered if my father ever had lived there, and the idea lent all the charm of the paternal roof to a place which had chilled my heart with its cold and gloomy air from the moment I had crossed the threshold. […]. The sun never penetrated this suite, which in its shape and atmosphere was not unlike an underground cave. A profound sadness pervaded my soul as I examined the place my family had allotted me, and I felt some apprehension about my uncle and his avarice." (*Peregrinations* 98). 2016. Digital photograph.

Fig. 24. Jagannathan, Meera. Plaza de Armas, Lima. When the Peregrinations were published, Pio Tristán had copies burned in the Plaza de las Armas (main square) of Lima and Arequipa, in addition to burning effigies of his niece.2016. Digital photograph.

Fig. 25. Jagannathan, Meera. Plaza de las Armas, Arequipa and the main cathedral. 2016. Digital photograph.

Fig. 26. Jagannathan, Meera. Religious procession in the Plaza in Arequipa, just like the ones Flora Tristan witnessed in 1833. 2016. Digital photograph.

Fig. 27. Jagannathan, Meera. The austere Santa Rosa convent in Arequipa. The convent does look like a garrison, with its grilled, forbidding exterior, as described by Tristan. Visitors are not allowed, so I satisfied myself with this view from the road. It was from Santa Rosa that Dominga, the young nun and relative of Tristan, made her bold escape from convent life. 2016. Digital photograph.

Fig. 28. Jagannathan, Meera. Santa Catalina and the Moorish-inspired main church. The visually beautiful and vast Santa Catalina. "…a veritable labyrinth of lanes and alleys….," writes Tristan in the chapter, "Convents of Arequipa." 2016. Digital photograph.

Fig. 29. Jagannathan, Meera. Santa Catalina. Tristan writes with great appreciation about the fountains and gardens inside Santa Catalina. 2016. Digital photograph.

Fig. 30 . Jagannathan, Meera. One of the many kitchens inside Santa Catalina. Tristan describes the delicious food served by the nuns, especially the cakes and pastries which she liked. 2016. Digital photograph.

Fig. 31. Jagannathan, Meera. A modern-day bakery in Arequipa. Trsitan notes that Arequipians are very fond of sweet dishes. It holds true even today, with many shops devoted to selling cakes like this one. 2016. Digital photograph.

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Fig. 32. Jagannathan, Meera. One of the “streets” inside Santa Catalina. 2016. Digital photograph.

Fig. 33. Jagannathan, Meera. Tristan's detailed descriptions of the room lead me to speculate that this was the room, preserved just as it was in mid nineteenth-century, when Tristan spent several nights while visiting Santa Catalina. "In ten years of travel I have often had to change lodgings and beds, but I do not remember ever feeling such a delightful sensation as when I slept in the charming little bed of the Mother Superior of Santa-Catalina" (*Peregrinations* 195).
"Oh what a love of a cell! And how our smart Parisiennes would like it for their boudoir!...As a final elegant touch there was a table covered with a rich cloth in the middle of the room, and on it stood a large tray containing a tea set with four cups, a cut-glass carafe, a glass and everything necessary for refreshment" (*Peregrinations* 194). 2016. Digital photograph.

Fig. 34. Jagannathan, Meera. A nice bedroom, may be a head nun's, at Santa Catalina. 2016. Digital photograph.

Fig. 35. St. Francis cathedral, Lima. Writing about the magnificent cathedral in Lima, Tristan notes: “Among the religious houses for men, the most remarkable is the monastery of St. Francis. Its church is the richest and the most unusual of all those I saw.” (*Peregrinations* 261). Google Images. Web.

Fig. 36. Juan Batista University, in the suburbs of Chorillos in Lima, which is built on land owned by M. Lavalle, the sugar plantation owner that Tristan met. She writes about having lengthy arguments with M. Lavalle about the sins of slavery. Tristan did not think much of the place, writing "In my opinion the people of Lima have chosen as their seaside resort the most arid and disagreeable spot on the coast: it is called Chorillos." (*Peregrinations* 280). Google Images. Web.