

THE ARTIST AS CRITIC:
BI-TEXTUALITY IN *FIN-DE-SIÈCLE* ILLUSTRATED BOOKS

By

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THE ARTIST AS CRITIC

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ABSTRACT

The thesis is an interdisciplinary study of first edition illustrated books produced in England at the *fin de siècle*, and offers new approaches both to illustration theory and to critical interpretation of late Victorian representations. The focus on first editions ensures that the illustrator is the first reader of the text, and that the artist and writer produce their work within a common context. I examine the ways in which the artist as first reader of the author's words provides a critical text for the verbal, and also the ways in which the reader of this bi-textual product is affected by, and participates in, this dialogue between texts. Taking as my premise that all art is discourse-specific, I examine the image/text/reader dialogue as it engages in the larger cultural conversation in which it is embedded. My examination of the bi-textual relationship of the female-coded image and the male-coded word offers a new point of entry into the *fin de siècle*. Working with a Bakhtinian dialogic model, I develop a rhetoric of illustration for five different image/text relations: quotation, impression, parody, answering, and cross-dressing.

Three prevailing discourses which motivated the production of the nineties' illustrated book, and the ideologies underlying each, are examined for their contribution to the image/text dialogue: the languages of journalism, aestheticism, and socialism. Each language is found to have a model for the illustrated book, a model underwritten by social relationships and expressed in specific artistic forms and literary styles. The "quotational"

model for the illustrated book, as represented by *The Memoirs of Sherlock Holmes*, is ideologically-driven by the discourse of journalism, and expressed in the interart forms of the representational picture and the realistic adventure story. The "impression" and "parody" models for illustrated books, as represented by *The Sphinx* and *Salome*, are produced by the individualistic discourse of aestheticism, and their dialogic relationship is constituted by the interaction of art-nouveau decorations and poetry or poetic drama. The "answering" model, as represented by *The Well at the World's End*, is produced by the communal aesthetic of socialism, and its interart form is expressed in the medieval-inspired arts-and-crafts design as it interacts with the folkart revival of the romance, the legend and the ballad. "Cross-dressing" constitutes a unique category in which image and text are produced by the same poet/artist, as represented by *All-Fellows: Seven Legends of Lower Redemption*; its underlying desire for "organic wholeness" illuminates the *fin-de-siècle* crises of gender identity, social relations, and authority.

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. . . She seeks to underpin the imagination, not to crush it, to point the way, not to tether. She is an unavowed love, and yet would wish to be more, for her place is often in the shade. All we usually know is that she exists. And yet she can be enchanting. Her name is illustration. This alone is certain; the rest is open.

Joachim Möller, *Imagination on a Long Rein*

CHAPTER ONE
TWO TEXTS, TWO HANDS, TWO LOOKS

Theories! Theories!
John Davidson, *Perfervoid*

An illustrated book is a hybrid form combining pictures and words. Typically, the letterpress takes up more textual space than the pictorial portion, at least in those works directed at adult audiences such as were produced in record numbers in late-Victorian England.¹ Illustrated books present a simple, but fundamental, critical problem: what is the relationship between image and text in the production of meaning? The traditional response usually develops within the following parameters.

The image occupies a secondary and supportive position. Clearly subservient to the significance of the written word, the picture's role is to reflect textual reality passively and uncritically — or, within certain limitations, to be interpretive while remaining sympathetic. A kind of visual translation of the verbal, the picture is made in the word's image, a lesser —

¹For the purposes of this study, an illustrated book is defined as one in which a number of representational pictures are either printed directly on the page with the letterpress, or are interleaved among the pages of the text. Thus, books which have only a pictorial frontispiece or title page (such as the *Keynotes* series Aubrey Beardsley designed for John Lane and Elkin Mathews at the Bodley Head), or books which are only decorated with ornamental borders and initials (such as most of Charles Ricketts' Vale Press productions), are outside the focus of my investigation. Children's literature and illustrated non-fiction are also excluded, with some notable "border-crossing" exceptions.

but potentially subversive — repetition of the first creation. The image is a charming — but not essential — embellishment, an adornment, an added beauty to the letterpress. While the meaning of the image is relative to the meaning of the writing, the reverse is never true: illustration is therefore marginal, peripheral, detachable. Since the image has no individual significance, but only gains meaning in relation to the written text, illustration can be ignored or omitted without loss.

A sexual relationship emerges: the image is female, the word is male. The relation of image to text in the illustrated book may best be understood by invoking the metaphor of the conventional marriage, particularly as this institution was understood — and critiqued — in the late nineteenth century. The eminent Victorian John Ruskin, for example, idealized the arrangement in which woman's role was — like that traditionally ascribed to illustration — characterized by self-renunciation rather than by self-development (*Sesame and Lilies* 60). Edward Carpenter, on the other hand, critiqued the institution from the position of the *fin-de-siècle* homosexual socialist, arguing that the traditional marriage constituted slavery for the woman: "it is for her to wipe her mind clear of all opinions in order that she may hold it up as a kind of mirror in which he may behold reflected his lordly self" (*Love's Coming of Age* 81). Both descriptions of the function of the woman within sexual relations are accurate descriptions for the function of the image within textual relations. If the two texts of illustrated books constitute two sexes, however, the illustrated book is not the meeting place for the "sister arts," but the site of sexual/textual struggle.

Traditional criticism typically judges the merit of an illustration by its degree of "faithfulness" to the text. According to Milly Heyd, for example, "there are three main types of book illustrations: those which are fully faithful to the text; those which diverge from the text but are faithful to its general spirit; and those which compete with the text" (13). Illustration theory's ubiquitous fidelity trope indicates how deeply image/text relations are embedded in a marital rather than a sibling relationship model. Sexuality — which implies both physical difference and social arrangements of power and function — is the underlying signifying structure of textuality within the illustrated book. Its multi-media form is determined, not by the analogous linking which the metaphor of the "sister arts" invokes within the pictorial tradition, but rather by the oppositional and dialogic interactions of two distinct forms of textuality: verbal and visual signs. Although there is a long *ut pictura poesis* (as a painting, so also a poem) tradition linking poetry and painting as "sister arts,"² Simonides' influential description of poetry as a speaking picture and painting as mute poetry is, as Wendy Steiner suggests, an analogy by which poetry gains and painting loses: "next to the 'speaking picture,' the mute poem seems a blighted thing," for the image "acquires not a voice but an ineffable property termed 'poetic'" (6). Moreover, the disguised hierarchy rests on a gender division underwritten by the cultural valorization of muteness or silence with the feminine and speaking or voice with the

²The *ut pictura poesis* formula in interart criticism derives from Horace; Plutarch credits Simonides with the speaking poem/mute poetry analogy. For a critical historical overview of the expressions of the pictorial tradition in English literature, see Jean Hagstrum, *The Sister Arts*.

masculine. Thus the western tradition of privileging the word over the image is already implicit within the sorority trope for the verbal and visual arts.

Indeed, although the time-honored sister arts analogy designates both verbal and visual arts as feminine, the image/text relation has always been based on a hierarchical, and gendered, model in illustrated books. The bi-textual tradition demonstrates that image and text do not have the same bodies, perform like functions, or enjoy equal status. The binary opposition implicit in picture and word is already evident in the seventeenth-century emblem book, England's first mass-produced and popular bi-textual form. Although emblems were conceived of as an integrated signifying structure, in which meaning depended on the inter-relations — and inter-dependence — of image and text, this wholeness was represented metaphorically by the dualisms of body and soul, flesh and spirit, sense and reason. Like most binary oppositions, the emblem book's flesh/spirit dichotomy represents not only an implicit hierarchy of power relations in which the right-hand term is superior to the left, but also an underlying sexual distinction whereby Eve, the woman, represents the senses and Adam, her lord and master, represents reason. Thus the word's traditional authority over the image in illustrated books is deeply embedded in cultural discourse.³

Re-figuring the illustrated book as a bi-textual product illuminates the sexually coded nature of image/text relations while at the same time drawing

³But see also Ernest B. Gilman, who in "Word and Image in Quarles' *Emblemes*" argues that the privileging of the word over the image in the English emblem book is the product of the Protestant tradition. Gilman suggests that the emblem's failure in combining image and text was not overcome until the renewal of the form in Blake. The standard critical books on emblems are Rosemary Freeman's groundbreaking 1948 study, *English Emblem Books* and, more recently, Karl Josef Höltgen's *Aspects of the Emblem*.

attention to textuality — to the social production of meaning. Indeed, the marital or sexual metaphor implicit in bi-textuality enables us to view the illustrated book as a social institution produced by, and participating in, specific cultural and historical discourses. Traditional approaches to image/text relations have tended either to deny material difference in the art forms by working with the analogy model based on a *Zeitgeist* concept, or to deny the role of history by emphasizing the formal aspects of each art's medium. (Abel in Mitchell, *The Language of Images* 38). In the last twenty years, however, two significant interpretive procedures for illustration theory have emerged: the diachronic strategy, which focuses on the ways in which literary works are represented artistically in different periods; and the synchronic strategy, which focuses on image/text compatibility (Möller 8). Each of these interpretive procedures takes the textual base as the standard by which to judge the accompanying illustration. Bi-textuality, on the other hand, implies that the image is not secondary, but fundamental to the production of meaning in the illustrated book because image and text interact in a productive dialogue. The dialogic approach to the illustrated book merges the synchronic and diachronic strategies in an effort to deal adequately with two material bodies — pictures and words — as they are produced and interact in specific cultural contexts. Bi-textual theory reads each art form as a text or body with its own signifying structure, historical tradition, and reference system, while at the same time examining the ways in which the interchange between picture and word, and their shared cultural context and subject matter, discursively produces meaning.

This interactive production of meaning takes on special significance in books accompanied by pictures in their first publication. In such books, the artist is the first reader of the author's words, and the images s/he produces to accompany the verbal text formulate a visual criticism which influences the first reading experience of subsequent readers.⁴ The bi-textuality of illustrated books is therefore constituted by critical and creative texts as well as by visual and verbal art forms. Thus the interchange which occurs in illustrated books is not only the dialogue initiated between the two sign-systems — the verbal language of the writer and the visual language of the artist — but is also the dialogue enacted between the illustrated book and the reader who receives it as an already divided double-langaged product, and who must then, as interlocutor and interloper, negotiate and create meaning out this heteroglossia. Indeed, bi-textual theory depends on the dialogic model first investigated by M. M. Bakhtin as a way of understanding the "heteroglossia" of the novel — that is, the juxtaposition of two points of view, two forms for conceptualizing the world, "each characterized by its own objects, meanings and values" (*Dialogic Imagination* 291-2). My adaptation of Bakhtin's concept of dialogism to the illustrated book indicates that my interest in the "two texts, two hands, two looks" (Derrida 152) of illustrated first editions is principally concerned with the way in which meaning is in the power of the particular contexts in which the utterance is made and received.⁵ Literary

⁴For an interesting article which focuses on the artist as a reader/producer whose work also requires reading, see David Skilton, "The Relation between Illustration and Text in the Victorian Novel: A New Perspective."

⁵After I had developed my understanding of bi-textual relations by adapting a Bakhtinian dialogic model. I was pleased to discover that dialogism

criticism, however, has privileged the word to the extent that the history of books which were published in their first instance with accompanying illustrations is frequently lost. Literary critics talk about words, not pictures, and publishers re-issue illustrated first editions without their accompanying images, as if nothing has been changed in the process. My examination of first edition illustrated books produced in the English nineties attempts to redress this gap.

Since the illustrated book presents the reader/viewer with two texts made by two hands and two looks, the process of reading and interpretation is both complex and interactive. Certainly the notion of illustration as a faithful "translation" is an inadequate, if not downright misleading, way to imagine the relationship of image and text. The translation trope in illustration theory seems to take for its model the relation of the hand-signer translating another's speech for the deaf, a kind of re-working of Simonides' notion of poetry as a speaking picture and painting as mute poetry.⁶ This tri-partite model of speaker/signer/recipient is a helpful reminder that the reader of the illustrated book is at a third remove, so to speak, from the "unmediated"

had already been applied to image/text relations from an art historical perspective. See Mary Ann Caws, *The Art of Interference*, for an interesting analysis of the "mutual interference of two objects, a visual and a verbal one," which "involves a dialogue, which the reader or observer enters into and sponsors. . ." (4). Caws focuses on writing on painting rather than on the illustrated book as a form.

⁶See, for example, Edward Hodnett, who argues that the function of illustration is three-fold — representation, interpretation, decoration — and that all three functions are to be judged by the degree to which the artist is successful in translating the verbal into the visual by realizing significant aspects of the text (13-15).

words of the text, but it neglects to take into account the way in which the recipient receives not only the visual mediation, but also the originary words. The reader/viewer cannot be "deaf" to the language of the text and receptive only to the language of the image; s/he is always an active responder and co-creator of meaning between these two signifiers. Indeed, if any translation is at work in the illustrated book, it might be more accurate to view, not the artist, but the reader/viewer, as a translator engaged in the etymological pursuit of finding a common language as s/he searches for shared roots, creates parallel meanings and developments and, in effect, makes correspondences between picture and word. As Mark W. Wartofsky's philosophical probings into perception and representation suggest, the similarity which counts as representation is created by the viewer (in Nodine 44).

If traditional literary criticism neglects the material *work* of the artist whose images interact with the text to co-produce meaning, much illustration theory neglects the *work* of the reader whose task it is to interpret both the author's writing and the artist's pictures. Bi-textual theory is concerned with the way in which the juxtaposed languages cross and interpenetrate each other. In Bakhtinian terms, the illustrated book is a double-voiced discourse in which "there are two voices, two meanings, and two expressions. And all the while these two voices are dialogically interrelated, they — as it were — know about each other . . . it is as if they actually hold a conversation with each other" (*Dialogic Imagination* 324).

Let us hear this conversation by substituting the translation trope's implicit speaker/signer/recipient model with one taken from the interchange

which occurs in common social situations. The scenario is this: one speaker is telling another an anecdote; she begins her communication with the words: "Picture this!" The words, "picture this," are an immediate signal in idiomatic English that what is about to follow is likely grounded in the life of the speaker, but that the narrative's details may be unusual or unlikely — may require some stretch of the listener's imagination. Thus the words, "picture this," also give the listener licence to create her own mental images for the other's words, images over which the speaker can have no control and in fact can know nothing about. If that listener then goes to a third person and relates the first speaker's story, complete with the tag, "picture this," the third person also creates mental images, invoked by the related story, to be sure, but also separate both from the second speaker's words and mental pictures, and from the first speaker's words, images, and life experience which initiated the whole cycle of exchange.

Bi-textuality is thus best understood as discourse in a social context in which meaning is produced according to a teller/re-teller paradigm. The bi-textual nature of illustrated books supports the dialogic model of the initial situation, in which the first speaker — the written text — implicitly says "Picture this!" to the artist. Here the tag — "picture this"— functions both as ironic self-reflection and as challenge. The idiom signals the text's awareness of its inability to find credibility and adequate expression for the experience it relates within its own discursive system. At the same time, the idiom challenges another's language to re-tell its words in alien form — to image the experience in a way that documents, verifies, or bears witness in the authorizing form of quotation. Yet the written text, like the speaker of the

dialogic model outlined above, can have no final mastery over the way in which its story is received and reproduced. The images which accompany the text are therefore always a re-telling, not only of the author's words, but also of that first reader's — the artist's — experience of them. If the images "quote" the text in the manner of citation or reference, they also introduce, by their own historical context and material form, their own frame of reference, their own point of view, and their own motifs and gestures. The reader who receives this bi-textual product is thus in the position of the third person of my initial dialogic model. The reader's work is to relate the image to the text and the text to the image, to listen and to see how these two texts, two hands, and two looks perpetually cross and interilluminate each other.⁷ Of course, once that reader is also a critic, s/he re-tells both the verbal telling and the pictorial re-telling in a potential *mise-en-abyme* of crossing stories, histories, and contexts. Such is the position of my work on illustrated books.

The dialogic crossing of languages in the illustrated book is not without struggle. Dialogism implies conflict: the conflict "between centrifugal forces that seek to keep things apart and centripetal forces that strive to make things cohere" (Holquist's Introduction to Bakhtin, *Dialogic Imagination*

⁷My employment of "interillumination" here and throughout the thesis applies to illustrated books Bakhtin's concept of the "process of active mutual cause-and-effect and interillumination" introduced by the novel and its historical contingency with the era of printing and the book, in which "completely new relationships are established between language and its object (that is, the real world). . . ." (*Dialogic Imagination* 12). In my application, the interillumination which occurs in the crossing of languages in illustrated books not only establishes completely new relationships between language and the world, but also between language and the image, and between the image and the world. But my use of interillumination also plays with the semantic relation between illustration and illumination which I explore later in this chapter.

xviii). As a site of struggle, the illustrated book both confirms and subverts the concept of "organic unity" so prevalent in late Victorian illustration theory.⁸ Its centripetal forces operate persuasively by invoking a belief system which takes as its premise that referentiality is a straightforward correspondence between picture and world — whether that world is empirical or textual. As Joel Snyder suggests in "Picturing Vision," the "copy" theory of representation is essentially an ontological approach which maintains that pictures make sense because they refer (in Mitchell, *Language of Images* 220).

Operating within this system, representational illustrations bring the illusion of presence to the written text by giving body to the voice, by witnessing and confirming the textual experience. This concept of representation finds confirmation in Mr. Ramsay, the stalled philosopher of *To the Lighthouse*. Unable to find truth beyond the letter "Q," Ramsay breaks from his metaphysical reflections to look at his wife and child framed like a picture in the window, drawing comfort and security by seeing them "as an illustration, a confirmation of something on the printed page to which one returns, fortified, and satisfied" (Woolf 53). In the cohering imperative underlying image/text relations, illustrations imply an ordered world of unproblematic correspondence, providing visual evidence for the doubting Thomas in us all. However, the gaps between perception and recognition and between image and object ensure that the logic of the representational image

⁸See Chapter Two for a fuller consideration of the organic aesthetic underlying much nineteenth-century theorizing about illustrated books.

can be located in the category of suspicion as easily as it can be located in the category of evidence (Bryson, *Vision and Painting* 43, 60).⁹

The centrifugal forces operating within the illustrated book mark the gaps in and between picture and word by exposing the two sign-systems' inadequacies as languages, and by laying bare the unstable and shifting grounds to which they refer. Such instability is endemic to bi-textuality, for illustrations always operate in a double frame of reference: they refer both to the textual world created by the verbal narrative, and to the empirical world to which the text's language refers and in which the reader's experience of making visual correspondences is situated. The reader then becomes part of this relay of image/word/world whose relations are not, in fact, a linear series of correspondences, but rather a cycle of oscillations whose authority can never be adequately situated. If, as Paul de Man suggests, "a representation is . . . persuasive and convincing to the extent that it is faithful" (in Greenblatt 2), how and under what conditions is fidelity to be judged? And to what is pictorial representation principally faithful? — to the textual world or the empirical world? to the experience of the author, the artist, or the reader? If the reader of the illustrated book objects that Aubrey Beardsley's images of Malory's *Morte Darthur*, for example, are not faithful representations of the

⁹Arguing that the concept of mimesis has traditionally depended upon a matching between image and world which assumes that perception is universal and transhistorical, Bryson insists it is in fact activated by "socially constructed and maintained codes of recognition." Thus there is a built-in gap (which Bryson describes as the line between denotation and connotation) in the representational image itself: "The logic to which the image under realism subscribes is not that of evidence, but rather of suspicion; not in the place where it is on display will truth be found, but only where it lies hidden from view, and once found there, it will be the truth" (*Vision and Painting* 43, 60).

text, is the ground for this objection the text itself or the reader's experience of the text — an experience which has in fact been partially produced and conditioned by centuries of writing on and around the Arthurian legend?¹⁰ When the artist as critic objectifies his/her reading in a pictorial representation of the text, image/word relations in illustrated books become a paradigm for interpretation in general, dramatically enacting the search for "objective ground" in criticism by their constant shifts between telling and re-telling, reading and re-reading.

Bi-textuality's centrifugal forces bring with them an *excess of seeing*¹¹ — the excess not only of the artist as first reader and re-teller's seeing, but also the excess of the reader/viewer's seeing. The illustrator's excess of seeing marks the impossibility of making language visual without the interference of another point of view, another perspective, horizon, and sight-line. Similarly, the reader/viewer's excess of seeing marks the impossibility of finding meaning transparently available "in" the text or "in" the image in an unmediated way. Bi-textual construction of meaning into wholeness locates itself in a struggle toward consummation which never results in a seamless oneness, but is always the process of a negotiated relation between the forces

¹⁰For a detailed consideration of image/text relations in this work, see my article, "Beardsley's Reading of Malory's *Morte Darthur*: Images of a Decadent World."

¹¹This concept was suggested to me by Bakhtin's investigation, in "The Spatial Form of the Hero," of the relation of self to other as conditioned by the "ever-present *excess of my seeing*" which prevents the coincidence between the two concrete horizons. Bakhtin links this excess of seeing with aesthetic activity in general, and with the production of form. See *Art and Answerability* 22-27.

which make picture and word cohere, and the forces that drive them apart.¹² The organic unity of the illustrated book — its "complete, perfect, artistic whole" — bears with it the mark of division, signalled by the illustrator's idiom betraying his/her desire "to make a hole in the page" (Pennell xii, 247).

The "whole" of the bi-textual product is thus already a "hole" — a gap marking the distance not only between the two texts, two hands, two looks which confront each other in illustrated books, but also between each sign-system's expressions and the expectations of fullness which are part of its signifying code. In this respect, illustration — traditionally treated as peripheral to the text's production of meaning — may be viewed as a *parergon*. According to Jacques Derrida's investigation in *The Truth in Painting*, a *parergon* is a supplement or accessory which is neither inside nor outside the work — a supplement whose disconcerting opposition to the *ergon*, or work itself, is nevertheless not indeterminate, but is, on the contrary, saturated with meaning to the point that it in effect gives *rise* to the work as a meaningful signification for the reader, putting the text/work in place by becoming an irreducible part of its economy, including its surplus values (22). Yet if the "*parergon* is only added on by virtue of an internal lack in the system to which it is added," what is it that is lacking in words that the image should come and supplement it?¹³ Moreover, if the notions of

¹² I am drawing here on the concept Bakhtin explores in *Art and Answerability* of aesthetics as concerned generally with the problem of consummation, or with how parts are shaped into (positional) wholes, which are never given, but always achieved in struggle.

¹³ I am paraphrasing Derrida's question about the *parergon* as a garment on a statue. His question completes itself thus: "what is it that is lacking in the representation of the body so that the garment should come and supplement it?" (57-58). In the "Parergon" section of *The Truth in Painting*

hierarchical image/text relations are dispensed with, and the word gives up its privileged position as authorizing signification in the illustrated book, the question can also be reversed: what is the image lacking that the verbal should come and supplement it?¹⁴

Illustration as *parergon* — an "ill-detachable detachment" (Derrida 59) — suggests that while images may be (and frequently have been) "detached" from first edition illustrated books, their specific contextual relationship with the word makes them also "ill-detachable" from the production of meaning. As first reader of the text, the artist is a *critic* of the author's words: the pictures s/he produces "refer" to the text in the way of criticism's method of citation, but the images also "read" the text in the way of criticism's method of interpretation and commentary by means of a situated position *vis-à-vis* the text. Indeed, the etymological roots of *illustration* indicate that historically the act of illustrating located itself as verbal criticism before it appropriated to itself a pictorial shape. Derived from the Latin *illustrāre*, "to illustrate" came into the English lexicon bearing with it the meanings "to light up, illuminate, clear up, elucidate, embellish, set off, render famous or illustrious."¹⁵ In fact, the first English usage of *illustration* is closely associated with *illumination*,

from which I am drawing here. Derrida interrogates Kant's concept of the *parergon* in the third *Critique* by investigating the implications of the examples he uses — the frames of pictures, the drapery on statues and the colonnades of palaces — which Kant distinguishes as ornamentation which is not an intrinsic constituent in the complete representation of the object (53 ff).

¹⁴In this regard, see Norman Bryson's work in *Vision and Painting*, where he explores the way in which "writing is both more and less than painting's supplement" (85-86).

¹⁵All definitions and sense histories in this paragraph are taken from the *Oxford English Dictionary*.

for at the end of the fourteenth century the words were used interchangeably to indicate spiritual or intellectual enlightenment. The economy of illustration has thus always been involved in the hermeneutic cycle of exchange between one's words and another's. Indeed, illustration locates itself as a mediator between original/sacred words and an unenlightened third party by making the first telling's meaning clear through the strategies of elucidation, explanation, and exemplification. Not until the early years of the nineteenth century did *illustration* take on the meaning to which we now principally assign it: pictorial elucidation or embellishment of a verbal work by means of visual representation.

The artist as critic takes up his/her position within this historical context as mediator/interpreter of the text's language to a third party by means of visual elucidation and embellishment. Bi-textuality in the illustrated book splits and interweaves itself along the boundaries of a creative verbal text and a critical visual text. The reader/viewer must take up the work of what Mary Ann Caws has called "the act of double-reading" (157) — the reading of images and the reading of words. The distance/contiguity of picture and word motivates the double-reader's re-reading and re-visioning in a complex social interchange inaugurated by the bi-textual dialogue. As the interpreter of two systems of signification — two systems which despite their alien forms nevertheless negotiate meaning between them in a system of exchange based on correspondence but fraught with contradiction — the reader/viewer works to co-produce meaning within (and against) an already over-determined form.

The two texts of illustrated books interilluminate each other in at least five different ways, each of which situates the artist as critic against or beside the verbal, and none of which constitutes a closed category. Bi-textuality moves in and around these ways of negotiating image/text relations, and while one strategy may predominate in a given book, there are very few illustrations which do not exhibit most if not all of these relationships in some way. The five dialogic relationships of image and text which I will be investigating are as follows: *quotation, impression, parody, answering, and cross-dressing.*

In the economy of exchange between image and text which I have named *quotation*, the relationship operates within a referential system which posits mimesis as its underlying aesthetic. The picture becomes a visual double for the word — a mirror reflection or copy of the verbal— in much the same way that a critic copies a section of the work under investigation into his/her own text, marking its status as re-presentation of another's words within the visual frame of quotation marks. The image, like the critic's citation, is a *quotation* which works both as evidence for a particular reading of the text, and as a reference which shows the context in which the critic's work is to be evaluated. To imagine that such a thing as mimetic illustration is possible, however, would be to posit the text's language as unmediated word, transparent and replete with meaning, situated in an unproblematic relationship with the world. Moreover, the concept of the innocent pictorial copy suggests that meaning is "in" the text for the artist as first reader to discover: if s/he is a good reader, s/he will know just what the text's

significant moments are, and how to convey those moments to the (perhaps less insightful) subsequent readers.

But mimesis is not that simple. Even in Western art's history of representational painting, where the two-dimensional image offers itself as a copy of the three-dimensional world, the problematics of perception and history undermine the straightforward notion of re-presentation, as Norman Bryson's work has shown. Bryson argues that mimetic theory posits "a pre-existent and plenary reality" which "The suspended eye witnesses but does not interpret." The logic of perceptualism, which depends upon the universality and transhistorical nature of visual experience, works to suppress the dimension of history from the painterly sign (*Vision and Painting* 10). The methodology for a theory of signifying practice which Bryson tentatively offers calls for attention "on one side, to the means by which the individual painting directs (rather than determines) the flow of interpretation across its surface; and on the other, the collective forms of discourse, present in the social formation and subject to their own unfolding in time, which the painting activates: activates not as citation, but as mobilisation (the painting causes the discourses to move)" (*Vision and Painting* 167-170).

If the mimetic underpinnings of representational painting are problematic, the mimetic assumptions of representational illustration are doubly so. Illustration as straightforward representation or visual/verbal correspondence posits both a transhistorical and "innocent eye"¹⁶

¹⁶Ruskin's well-known term for the painter's aim of returning to the unadulterated truth of natural optics is taken from *The Elements of Drawing*, in which he argues that "The whole technical power of painting depends on

relationship between the image and the world it reproduces, and a transhistorical and "innocent eye" relationship between the image and the text it represents. In effect, the specificity of the artist's history and context, both as viewer of the world and as reader of the text, is denied. But neither the act of perception/representation, nor the act of reading/representation is innocent. For the artist as critic who "quotes" another's words in the material language of the two-dimensional image, the problematics of citation bring with it, as Bakhtin's theorizing suggests, "varying degrees of alienation or assimilation of another's quoted word" (*Dialogic Imagination* 68). Thus, the *quotation* strategy in image/text relations is never a referential/deferential arrangement whereby the visual simply copies or translates the verbal in pictorial form, however "grounded" the pictures appear to be in the text. Rather, *quotation* is always a mobilization of discourses across and through the specific contexts and material exchanges of the illustrated book and its milieu.

As Stephen Greenblatt suggests, the *impossibility* of the project of mimesis as the direct representation of a stable, objective reality "is precisely the foundation upon which all representation, indeed all discourse, is constructed. . . . Our words are permanently cut off from what we dream of signifying, and criticism . . . must acknowledge this condition" (vii-viii). The dream of mimetic representation touches illustration on both sides of its signifying structure — that is, both on its status as visual sign with a

our recovery of what may be called the *innocence of the eye* . . ." (6). For an interesting critique of Ruskin's view of the history of art as a progress toward visual truth by overcoming traditional convention, see E. H. Gombrich's groundbreaking work, *Art and Illusion* (1960). But see also Norman Bryson's critique of Gombrich in *Vision and Painting* (1983).

referential relationship to the empirical world, and on its status as a criticism with a referential relationship to the text. The image's mirroring function in *quotation* offers the text both the narcissistic delight of seeing its own subject duplicated, and the meta-critical intensification which results from such self-reflexivity. Bi-textuality under *quotation* is thus disarmingly — and deceptively — simple: while presenting itself as an innocent reflection of the word, the image actually operates as a re-positioning commentary and critique.

Mimesis, however, is not the only posited relation between either the artist and the world, or between the critic and the text. Especially since the Romantics, mimetic theories were challenged, and in late Victorian England another relationship — expression for the arts and impression for the critic — was favored. Indeed, it was largely due to this shift in aesthetic emphasis from copy theories to expressive theories that the *ut pictura poesis* tradition was critically negligible for much of the nineteenth century, with music put forward instead as the new sister-muse for poetry. After all, as Wendy Steiner points out, the poetry/painting analogy depended on the notion of the arts' similar mirroring functions (xii).¹⁷ The shift to expression as the principal model for the arts is evident in Walter Pater's influential *The Renaissance*. Pater's famous dictum — "*All art constantly aspires towards the condition of music*" (106) — suggests that an aesthetics of referentiality or representation is an aesthetics of failure and lack, whereas an aesthetics of expression, such as

¹⁷Steiner notes that the renewed interest in inter-art analogies in the twentieth century rests on semiology rather than mimesis: that is, the new emphasis no longer stresses the arts' mirroring function, but rather their paradoxical status as signs of reality and as things in their own right (xii).

music represents, signifies the ideal creation. The notion is connected to early nineteenth-century German philosophy. Schopenhauer, for example, argued that music is the one art that is not the repetition of an idea of the external nature of the world — that is, of phenomena — but is rather the expression of "the inner being, the in-itself, of the world" (264).¹⁸

The shift to impression as the model for criticism is also signalled in *The Renaissance*, for in the Preface to the 1873 edition, Pater argues that the aesthetic critic's principal concern is to distinguish and delineate one's own impressions by asking the fundamental question: "What is this song or picture, this engaging personality presented in life or in a book, to *me*?" (xix-xx). In his polemical "The Critic as Artist," Oscar Wilde developed Pater's impressionist critical strategy into the new criticism of the *fin-de-siècle* aesthete: "the highest Criticism, being the purest form of personal impression, is in its way more creative than creation, as it has least reference to any standard external to itself, and is, in fact, its own reason for existing, and, as the Greeks would put it, in itself, to itself, an end." Wilde's argument is based on an expressionist aesthetic for the arts, for he insists that "The critic occupies the same relation to the work of art that he criticises as the artist does to the visible world of form and colour, or the unseen world of passion and of thought." Like the artist who expresses his/her personality rather than copies the external world, the critic records his/her impressions of the text. Indeed, Wilde goes so far as to say that "the critic reproduces the work that he

¹⁸See Edward Lucie-Smith, *Symbolist Art*, for an interesting exploration of the way in which the growing interest taken in Schopenhauer in the nineties influenced contemporary art. and John Stokes, *In the Nineties*, for an analysis of Schopenhauer's influence on contemporary literature and culture.

criticises in a mode that is never imitative, and part of whose charm may really consist in the rejection of resemblance. . . ." According to Wilde's formulation, criticism, like artistic creation, "is never trammelled by any shackles of verisimilitude," but rather takes the work — of art or of nature — with which it deals "simply as a starting-point for a new creation." From this point of view, the critic's (and the illustrator's) "sole aim is to chronicle his own impressions" (*Complete Works* 1027, 1032, 1028).

Impression is therefore another bi-textual strategy for the illustrated book. In the economy of exchange between image and text which falls under the name of *impression*, the system operates by moving the authority for the picture out of the word-as-ground and into the body of the artist who sees and reads, thinks and feels, and responds to the text in a process of reception and reproduction. But this reception is not the passive recording experience posited by the logic of perceptualism underlying mimesis. Rather, the reception is an activity in which the eye not only witnesses but also interprets, and in which what E. H. Gombrich has called "the beholder's share" (203) in the production of meaning out of visual experience is asserted. The "beholder's share" in reading has also received much attention in twentieth-century reception theories;¹⁹ considered as an active reader co-producing the text's meaning and then reproducing that reading experience in another form, the artist as critic is constantly moving between the shifting boundaries of *quotation* and *impression*. On the one hand, the images must have

¹⁹See Terry Eagleton, *Literary Theory*, for a critical overview of twentieth century reception theorists such as Roman Ingarden, Wolfgang Iser, Roland Barthes, Hans Robert Jauss, Jean-Paul Sartre and Stanley Fish (74-88).

enough reference to the text to allow the reader/viewer to produce correspondences; on the other hand, the images are not principally authorized by the text, but rather by the artist's *impressions* of the text. Critical re-writing of a creative work implies, as Oscar Wilde suggests, that the textual world itself is marked by inadequacy and lack, for if the world it creates were complete and perfect, there would "be nothing left for the critic to do." Thus, the strategy of *impression* employed by the artist as critic locates itself in a territory "both creative and independent" ("The Critic as Artist," *Complete Works* 1026).

The territorial jurisdictions of image and text in the interchange of expression/impression are marked by border disputes, declarations of independence, and cautiously negotiated sovereignty associations. As Stephen Greenblatt suggests, "All artists enter into representations that are already under way and make a place for themselves in relation to these representations which are, we might add, never fully coordinated. . . . there are always conflicts of interest, strategy, and desire, so that the artist's task includes a substantial element of choice or tact or struggle. . . . that forever generates ironic submission and disguised revolt" (xiii).²⁰ The visual artist as critic enters into the representation already under way in the text with the ineluctable necessity of *making a place* for him/her self in relation to the verbal. Illustration's strategy of *impression* allows for the artist's re-telling to

²⁰Greenblatt is speaking here of representation in general as it is a part of all discourse; thus the "artist" of whom he speaks is not only the painter or the poet, but also the critic whose work is similarly caught up in the representational strategies of discourse. The citation comes from Greenblatt's Preface to *Allegory and Representation*, a collection of selected papers from the English Institute 1979-80, whose program dealt with the status of representation as viewed by artists, writers, and critics.

situate itself beside and against the first telling as an independent alternate, a self-declared separate point of view, in which bi-textuality's two texts, two hands, two looks, negotiate a relationship of opposition and conflict. Illustrators who visualize their *impressions* of the text self-consciously produce their own narrative sequences and develop their own themes and motifs which relate to the verbal either as ironic submissions (if working in conjunction with the *quotational* strategy) or as disguised revolts (if working in conjunction with the *parodic* strategy).

Bi-textuality operates within a parodic system. As Bakhtin's work has demonstrated, parody is always a dialogized hybrid. The strategy of *parody* is thus not only available to the artist as critic but indeed may be implicit in all image/text relations for the double-reader, regardless of the image's self-presentation as quotation or impression. In Bakhtinian terms, parody announces itself by the way in which "two languages are crossed with each other, as well as two styles, two linguistic points of view, and in the final analysis two speaking subjects" (*Dialogic Imagination* 76). For image/text relations, of course, the two points of view are not strictly linguistic. The image has its own material embodiment separate from — though also appropriating and saturated with — the language of the subject it shares with the text.

Yet it is by its very specificity as a foreign point of view and an alien form that the language of the image situates itself chiastically over and against the word. In this crossing of languages, styles, and points of view, *parody* enters the illustrated book by the image's way of exceeding the given context, making contiguous what is not normally associated and distancing

what is, in a relocation of meaning which works by destroying the familiar "ground" of the text and by creating new associations and new matrices for interpretation (see Bakhtin, *Dialogic Imagination* 76). While images which present themselves as *quotations* take on representational bodies, images which present themselves as *impressions* or *parodies* generally take on decorative bodies, thereby positing a different relationship to the text. Whatever relationship between figure and ground the illustrated book posits, however, images are always, as Lewis Day points out, "rhetorical by nature, concerned with persuading, seducing, and influencing the viewer," either by the "direct" means of the image's "normative associations," or by the indirect means of the image's ironic "displacement, re-emphasis, deconstruction, or the like" of its ground (in Nodine 43).

In the parodic relation between image and text, the dialogic model of two speakers in a social situation which I explored above means that, in Bakhtinian terms, "the languages that are crossed in it relate to each other as do rejoinders in a dialogue; there is an argument between languages, an argument between styles of language" (*Dialogic Imagination* 76). In the notion of "rejoinder," as in my model of a speaker telling another an anecdote which is then re-told, the concept of reference is implicit, for, as Bakhtin suggests, "one cannot understand parody without reference to the parodied material, that is, without exceeding the boundaries of the given context" (same). The parodic image always exceeds the given context of the verbal in a travesty form which permeates the illustrated book with the features which Bakhtin ascribes to dialogism in general: laughter, irony, humor, self-parody, and indeterminacy (*Dialogic Imagination* 7). To

understand how the parodic relations between image and text are negotiated, the categories of both *quotation* and *impression* are called into play, for illustrative *parody* works by citing the text in such a way that the artist as first reader's judgements, insights, and distances from the verbal are asserted — in fact, are presented as arguments against the word.

Parody as a strategy of the artist as critic asserts both the artificiality of the textual world *and* the artificiality of the images which accompany it. Parodic illustration draws attention to the *gap* between image and text — the gap between the two specific and historically-bound points of view — by fracturing the text with its own alien judgement. Its underlying aesthetic posits *mimicry* rather than *mimesis* as its basis, and it situates itself against the verbal by illuminating the distance between the word and its object by means of laughter and critique (see Bakhtin, *Dialogic Imagination* 55). Like *mimesis*, *mimicry* is an imitative aesthetic — but *mimicry* repeats or imitates in such a way as to demarcate an ironic critical distance from the form it copies. In *parody*, the dialogic relation of image to text functions as what Bakhtin calls in another context “comic-ironic” doubles, “laughing reflections of the direct word” (*Dialogic Imagination* 53). Thus, although reference is at work in *parody*, representation itself is revealed to be problematic, for the image presents itself not as a medium for making and matching in a straightforward visual equivalency of the text, but rather as a medium for sighting and targeting the gaps and indeterminacies in the verbal.

For the reader/viewer seeking correspondences between image and text, *all* illustration may be a parodic travesty of the text's language, for the representations never match the text seamlessly. Indeed, the inadequacies and

excesses of both language systems are always part of bi-textual representation. A given for the double-reader engaged in the deciphering of image and text is the inescapable untranslatability of another's words. At the same time, however, the process of double-reading demands the work of making correspondences, of determining the ways in which the two languages fit or do not fit, the ways in which they cross each other, and the ways in which images as evidence, not so much of the text, but rather of the artist as first reader's experience of the text, are dialogically related to words. Image and text in *parody* interilluminate each other both by their referential relationship as comic or grotesque doubles, and by their distanced relationship as speakers in conflict using different languages which inevitably confront each other and sometimes collide.

In the visual/verbal interchange signified by *answering*, quotation, impression, and even parody may all contribute to the production of meaning, but the dominant dialogic relation is that of two speakers in polite social conversation. Indeed, each of the categories I have outlined for the image/text dialogue is characterized by its own position statement. In *quotation*, for example, the image says to the text: I will efface myself behind your point of view by ostensibly copying and reflecting it. In *impression*, on the other hand, the image says: I will efface your point of view by asserting my own, while in *parody* the image says: I will expose the inadequacies of your point of view by means of comic doubles and ironic reflections. In the visual strategy of *answering*, however, the image implicitly says to the text: I hear and acknowledge your point of view but I wish (with respect) to offer an alternate perspective. Image/text relations in the dialogic model of *answering*

are thus both related — that is, referential — and separate. Artistically, the *answering* image assumes a shape midway between quotation's representational form and the decorative form of impression or parody. Although the pictures refer to the text — indeed, are for the most part clearly grounded in it — they function primarily not as transparent reflections of an unproblematic textual world, but rather as *answers* which offer for consideration a parallel posited world. Thus another dialogue of two perspectives, two visions, two ways of seeing the world, moves into the illustrated book out of the specificity of two contexts and positions, and two distinct material ways — the word and the image — of forming or representing those separate worlds.

The combination of representational and decorative strategies in *answering* implicitly acknowledges the impossibility of translating another's language (the word) fully into another language code (the image) without the interference of another point of view. The *answering* relationship of image and text is, in musical terms, contrapuntal or fugal. The illustrated book becomes a polyphonic composition in which the theme or subject introduced by the text is taken up by the image in another voice which does not simply echo the first subject, but rather develops and improvises on it. In a fugue, the ground melody is still heard in each orchestral section's variations, but only as it underlies the new thematic development produced by the answering musical voice which takes the theme and plays with it in different modalities, keys, ornaments, and related melodies. Similarly, in the *answering* approach to illustration, the textual subject is still seen in the image, but only as it underlies the thematic variations and decorative gestures of the new

speaker's responses. And, just as in a fugue, the relations of image and text compose together the complete work, producing meaning by their interchange of theme and answer in a complex texture which allows for the specificity of each material — each language or voice or image — to be both related and separate.

The underlying aesthetic of *answering* is not mimesis, impressionism, or mimicry, but rather what Bakhtin calls *architectonics*. At its simplest level, architectonics is "the ordering of meaning"; defined more rigorously, it involves a "necessary, nonfortuitous disposition and integration of concrete, unique parts and moments into a consummated whole" (*Art and Answerability* 209). As Bakhtin's critique of the aesthetics of empathy suggests, the positing of a sympathetic co-experience between reader and text is only the starting point for aesthetic experience proper, which begins when the reader *returns* into him/her self and begins to form and consummate the material derived from the initial projection into the other by experiencing it from within the self, and then "*completing that material . . . with features transgradient to the entire object-world of the other. . .*" (*Art and Answerability* 26).

In the material exchange between the two aesthetic forms of the illustrated book, the artist as first reader of the author's words cannot simply actualize the verbal without bringing into the image a separate point of view which is inseparable from his/her own body and its experiences. Moreover, since the artist also constructs his/her response in the alien form of lines, spaces, and contours, the *material* in which the text is answered has its own contingencies and determinations, its own ways of shaping responses and

asking questions. As Bakhtin suggests, "the material form, the form that determines whether a given work is a pictorial or a poetic or a musical work of art, also determines, in an essential way, the structure of the appropriate aesthetic object, rendering that object somewhat one-sided by accentuating some particular aspect of it" (*Art and Answerability* 93). The outward material form of the image, and its context within the history of visual representation, thus makes its own internal demands on the picture's way of producing meaning which can never be fully subsumed or suppressed by the materiality and history of the word's ways of producing meaning.²¹

Answering activates the relations of image/text/reader in a complex exchange of strategies, desires, judgements, and points of view. Indeed, the bi-textual form of the illustrated book is produced by the dynamic interchange of these three active participants. If, as Bakhtin argues, "form is the expression of the active, axiological relationship of the author-creator and of the recipient (who co-creates the form) to content" (*Art and Answerability* 306), then the *form* of the illustrated book is the expression of the active relationships of the author's words, the artist as first reader's images, and the reader/viewer's co-productive responses to the content of both picture and word in an architectonics of answering which orders meaning by moving toward the consummation of the *whole* bi-textual work. Within this complex production of form, meaning is inescapably historically bound and

²¹See also the work of Philip Gilbert Hamerton, an artist and critic who made an impassioned plea for the importance of the graphic arts in 1882. Hamerton argued that our book-training leads us "to value words and ideas more than things, and produce[s] . . . a sort of contempt for matter." Indeed, Hamerton asserts that a literary education, with its privileging of the immaterial word, gives us no conception of the close connection between matter and the artistic expression of thought (1-3).

contextual: the power of the particular context in which the utterance is made refracts, adds to, changes, and even subtracts from the meaning of the utterance when independent of context (see Holquist's Introduction to *The Dialogic Imagination* xx). This is why the image is an "ill-detachable detachment" in the illustrated book. Once the accompanying illustrations which co-produced meaning in the text's first production are removed, the context of that utterance is radically changed, and its meaning is incontrovertibly *other* than it was in its first material form.

The architectonics of answering, then, is inevitably caught up in the production of form and meaning in the illustrated book. The boundaries of image/text/double-reading constitute the structure of the teller/re-teller, reader/re-reader exchange, whether the illustrations situate themselves in relation to the word according to the category of *quotation*, *impression*, *parody*, *answering*, or *cross-dressing*. The image/text dialogue signified by *cross-dressing*, however, operates under a unique economy. Illustrations which fall under the name of *cross-dressing* are produced by the same hand and the same look which produced the words. Although bi-textuality is always a two-handed art form, the "double power to please" assumes new dimensions in the works of "The ambidextrous Kings of Art."²² When author and illustrator share one material body, but express their story in two different material forms, the relationship of *parergon* to *ergon* is displaced: the "work" can no longer be named the text and the "supplement" can no

²²The quotation is taken from Robert Louis Stevenson's "Proem" to one of his own self-illustrated volumes of verses, *The Graver & The Pen* (1882). See the facsimiles of the Davos Press in *The Works of Robert Louis Stevenson* Volume XX.

longer be named the image. Rather, because image and text share not only the body of the worker, but also the body of the work between them, both may be viewed as supplements — as clothings on a statue. The body which is thus shared between the two *parerga* cannot, then, be located in either the verbal or the visual territory, but is always in movement between them, dressing itself ceaselessly with words and with pictures. The bi-textuality of *cross-dressing* is a form straining toward the fullness of being that resides in the mythical androgyne or hermaphrodite before the fall of division into sexuality,²³ but its actualization bears with it the anxiety of identity and difference even while it gestures toward consummation in the aesthetic whole.

Still, there is a sense in which all illustrations may be viewed as cross-dressings of the word. Unlike the theory which posits *translation* as the name for the way in which images visualize language in a kind of linguistic equivalency, *cross-dressing* suggests that when the word becomes clothed with the image the similarity which exists between them is always a mask — a material masquerade with varying degrees of ability to con the reader/viewer into believing in the textual identity of picture and word. The covering garments of the image which give shape to the body of words disguise, but do not efface, the material *difference* of the two bodies — the

²³The notion of the original human as a hermaphroditic union of the sexes originates in Aristophanes' speech in Plato's *Symposium*; the popular *fin-de-siècle* concept of a "third sex" was developed out of this tradition, as I outline below (see especially Chapter 7). Because the people threatened to scale Olympus and usurp Zeus's power, the god divided the sexes to weaken without destroying them. The bisection resulted in the desperate yearning of the former halves to re-unite and make the two into one again (20-23).

body of language and the body of the image. Like the transvestite who would be recognized under the sign of *Woman*, the *cross-dressing* image presents itself in another's clothes, masquerades as the other. Yet its material body always denies and belies the clothes which mask it. Though the illustrated book's "organic unity" may be seen as the dream of the androgyne's completeness in-itself, the illustrations which cross-dress in the language of the text always play on and elaborate the differences between the two bodies, their hands, and their looks.²⁴

Cross-dressing implies complementarity: a relation of image and text in which the product is conceived, produced, and received as what W. J. T. Mitchell calls a composite whole (*Blake's Composite Art* 3). Examining the illuminated poetry of William Blake as the great exemplar of composite art, Mitchell argues that the design is not dependent on the text for its meaning, but rather that image and text exist in an inter-dependent relationship in which the work's unity depends on a *dynamic* of independent or contrary elements, each of which operates in "its own proper sphere of invention and visionary conception" (*Blake's Composite Art* 3, vii). Mitchell's methodology resists the reduction of pictures to visual translations of the verbal by insisting on seeing "the pictures on their own terms, as distinct kinds of meaning systems, containing nonverbal forms, allusions, and stylistic implications." The interpretation of composite art therefore "demands

²⁴See Elaine Showalter, "Critical Cross-Dressing: Male Feminists and the Woman of the Year," for a discussion of the *fin-de-siècle* fascination with the androgyne in theater, art, and popular fiction, which she argues is symptomatic of a period during which sex-roles were under attack and in which gender anxieties took a variety of cultural forms (120-21).

continuous cross-fertilization and discrimination between the hermeneutic strategies of literary criticism and art history" (*Blake's Composite Art* vii).

Bi-textuality inevitably engages the reader/viewer in interdisciplinary studies because image and word have different material bodies, and therefore different signifying structures, histories, and contexts. Yet because picture and word are bound up together in the same volume, each becomes a text that must be read. Thus the illustrated book opens up the whole problematic of reading images. Roland Barthes' question — "Is Painting a Language?" — is, as he suggests, "already an ethical question, one which requires a mitigated, censored answer safeguarding the rights of the creative individual (the artist) and those of a human universality (society)" (*Responsibility of Forms* 149). Barthes argues that the reading of images does not necessarily imply the introduction of linguistics and semiology into art history, but is rather "a question of eliminating the distance (the censorship institutionally separating picture and text)" in the form of "a generalized 'erography,' the text as work, the work as text" (*Responsibility of Forms* 152). As a bi-textual critic operating within this generalized view of "the text as work, the work as text," I also adapt and apply Mitchell's notion that the cross-fertilization of the strategies of literary criticism and art history can interilluminate each other.

If the interpretive methodology for reading image and text operates within this chiastic erography, however, the materiality of the graphic art cannot be exhausted by or subsumed under a language-dependent system. Indeed, the bi-textual critic must constantly ask the question Barthes poses in *Image/Music/Text*: "What is the signifying structure of 'illustration?'" (38). Although the illustrative image is shot through by and permeated with

language by its specific contextual proximity to the word, the meaning it produces by its *relation* to the word exceeds both that relationship and the signifying system of its own material form. While I have called the image a visual language, this is a provisional terminology by which I mean to situate the illustration as both a code which produces meaning in its own forms and gestures, and as a signifying structure which co-produces meaning in a dialogue with the text. But naming the image *language* also implies that the arbitrary (as opposed to "natural") relation between word and thing also obtains between image and word and image and world. Images — like texts — are material and historical constructs whose meaning, as Norman Bryson suggests, "cannot be divorced from [their] embodiment in context" (*Vision and Painting* 131).

Illustrated first editions guarantee that author and illustrator are contemporaries — that their artistic forms are produced within — and by — the same social and historical context. Reading a bi-textual product a century after it was produced also guarantees that my own culturally-determined point of view will influence my co-production of meaning. Thus, in reading image/text dialogues I must always acknowledge that all transcription systems — including my own — are inadequate to the multiplicity of meanings in illustrated books. Neither the language of images nor the language of words are monolithic or unitary structures. Clearly, the dialogic relation of picture and word is not without internal dialogism within each of its language systems. Just as the text disseminates a multitude of meanings which neither the artist as first reader, nor I as double reader, can fully

approximate or fix, so too the image is polysemous,²⁵ motivating and putting into play a number of possible meanings which can never be fully consummated, stabilized, or exhausted.

The two texts, two hands, two looks in illustrated first editions cause discourses to move by their ceaseless interchange, by the interilluminations which light up both their own and the other's blind spots. By virtue of its bi-textuality, then, the illustrated book is self-reflexive. In the teller/re-teller economy within which it operates, its structure is both critical and self-critical. As a literary form which — unlike all other genres except the novel — is not older than written language and the book, the illustrated volume is both intrinsically a part of that new era of world history inaugurated by the sign of writing, and inevitably critical of the genres which preceded it historically but which it nevertheless incorporates into its own unique structure.²⁶ Its criticism is directed not only toward the issues of generic decorum, however, but also toward the concept of representation itself — to the relations of figure and ground. Indeed, as Wendy Steiner suggests, the illustrated book itself is a symbolic embodiment of the precarious balancing

²⁵I am indebted here to Roland Barthes' assertion that "all images are polysemous," implying, under their signifiers, a "floating chain" of signifieds, which allows the reader to choose some and ignore others (*Image/Music/Text* 38-39).

²⁶This is an adaptation of Bakhtin's analysis of the novel as a supergenre which is "both critical and self-critical . . . [and] fated to revise the fundamental concepts of literariness and poeticalness dominant at the time" — a supergenre whose critique and self-critique is inextricably bound in its historical development which, unlike other genres, was initiated only in the new world era of writing and the book (*Dialogic Imagination* 10, 3-7). The illustrated book may be viewed as just such a "supergenre." Like the novel, the illustrated book has a history which is coeval with the history of writing and the book, and is therefore enmeshed in modern cultural discourses.

between the two terms of metaphor (158). Finally, and perhaps most significantly, the illustrated book's criticism is directed at the cultural discourses which both produce and participate in its own bi-textuality.

As a dialogized hybrid, the illustrated book is also self-critical. Its self-critique may first be located in the verbal text which implicitly acknowledges the lack within its own system by calling on another system to supplement it. Yet its self-critique must also be located in the image which implicitly acknowledges its own lacks and inadequacies by allowing the meaning of its form to be contingent on its relation to language. Finally, the illustrated book's self-criticism is also, by the very nature of its bi-textuality, located in the relationship of the image to the text as a critical re-telling of another's words. The reader of this self-reflexive form is caught up in the flow of interpretation across this creative/critical/self-critical movement of discourses, in whose cycle of exchange a third text, third hand, and third look must, perhaps, be added.

The artist as critic takes on the function of Oscar Wilde's "critic as artist" by resisting and challenging the arbitrary opposition between the creative and critical faculties. Like Wilde's ideal critic, the illustrator produces a "creation within a creation." Moreover, by functioning as "the beholder who lends to the beautiful thing its myriad meanings," the artist as critic reveals the ways in which criticism makes "all interpretations true, and no interpretation final" (*Complete Works* 1020, 1027, 1028, 1031). Since Wilde's argument depends on the written word as the basis for all criticism, and ends on a somewhat perverse and ironic note celebrating the word's ubiquitous power which, by "transforming each art into literature, solves

once for all the problem of Art's unity" (1032), my re-formulation and reversal of Wilde's apologia for criticism as a creative art is not without its own perversity. And yet my transformation of the critic as artist into the artist as critic is not without Wilde's secret authority. The figure Wilde evokes in his argument for the critic as artist is in fact "the decorative artist" (1031), a figure which holds within its shape the body of the illustrator. The illustrator as decorative artist is always a critic situating him/her self against or beside the words of the text by using the critical visual strategies in his/her repertoire: quotation, impression, parody, answering, and cross-dressing.

CHAPTER TWO

CONTEXTUAL/BI-TEXTUAL: AESTHETES, SOCIALISTS, JOURNALISTS

If the centuries are ever arraigned at some bar of justice to answer in regard to what they have given, of good or of bad, to humanity, our interesting age . . . might perhaps do worse than put forth the plea of having contributed a fresh interest in "black and white."

Henry James, *Picture and Text*

When John Rothenstein claimed that "the 'nineties' never existed" (79), he drew attention to the problems which accompany period designations. The difficulties are compounded when interart forms such as the illustrated book are the subject of study. Although the ubiquity of illustrated first editions in the English *fin de siècle*¹ allows for the identification of this bi-textual hybrid as a dominant literary form of the period, this identification is not free of the problematics of periodization itself.² In the first place, the final decade of the nineteenth century is not an enclosed space sufficient unto itself; it is permeated by currents and cross-

¹See Appendix, "Select Annotated Bibliography of First Edition Illustrated Books of the 1890s," for a descriptive summary of the books on which this thesis is based. The Appendix offers a range of books in all the interart categories I explore, and provides a summary of each book's contents, as a supplement to the criticism offered in Chapters 3-7. In addition to giving a general description for all works cited in the thesis, the bibliography provides a sampling of other books to indicate the range and variety of *fin-de-siècle* illustrative material.

²For an interesting series of investigations of the relations between literature and art, and of the problem of periodization, see the special issue on "Literature and Art History," *New Literary History* 3.3 (1972). But see also René Wellek, "The Parallelism Between Literature and the Arts," and Murray Roston, *Changing Perspectives in Literature and the Visual Arts*.

currents which carry it both backward to the Victorians and forward to the moderns. Secondly, the "nineties" as a period designation always exceeds its label because its artists were unified in neither their ideologies nor their expressions. Finally, the cross-fertilization of interdisciplinary studies as a critical methodology for the interpretation of illustrated books is fraught by the contradictions between art history and literary history, for neither their period boundaries, nor the critical assumptions on which they build their traditions and define their terms, always coincide. And yet the historical fact remains: within the context of the *fin de siècle*, illustrated books were not only produced in unprecedented numbers, but bi-textuality itself became a vehicle for the various social, political, and philosophical discourses which were ineluctably a part of its own dialogic form. If, as Alastair Fowler argues, "To make sense, periodization has to be conceived in terms of a convincing model of the artifact. And to remain convincing the model must from time to time be rebuilt" (500), then my exploration of the nineties depends on the artifact of the illustrated book for its persuasive model. While my use of the term, "nineties," is a provisional shorthand (which cannot escape affirming that the "nineties" actually occurred), my building and rebuilding of the model of the illustrated book takes as its premise that the bi-textual production of meaning cannot be divorced from its historical contexts, or from the contradictions and paradoxes within those contexts.

Let us take the year 1894 as an arbitrary point of entry into the nineties. In this year, three well-known illustrated books were published: *Salome*, by Oscar Wilde and Aubrey Beardsley (Fig. 1); *The Story of the Glittering Plain*, by William Morris and Walter Crane (Fig. 2); and *The Memoirs of Sherlock*

Holmes, by Arthur Conan Doyle and Sidney Paget (Fig. 3). What have these books in common other than their bi-textuality? Neither their literary genres — poetic drama, political romance, and short detective fiction — nor their artistic approaches — art-nouveau "parody," arts-and-crafts "answering," and journalistic "quotation" — is in any way acknowledged or exhausted by the simple classification, "nineties' books." The illustrated book of the English *fin de siècle* appropriates and exploits all the literary genres and artistic styles available to it, while at the same time allowing three prevailing contemporary discourses — the languages of individualistic aestheticism, socialistic arts and crafts and journalistic realism — to flow through its surfaces. As Holbrook Jackson suggests, "All the ideas and 'movements' of the time" can be located in the varying expressions and forms of the period's black and white art (291).

The appearance of the illustrated book as a dominant literary form in the 1890s has a unique history. Perhaps at no time since the era of early printed books had image and text been conceived as a composite whole to the degree that the artists, writers, publishers, and readers of the *fin de siècle* did. The notion of the book as art form is one of the predominant characteristics of the nineties, but neither the causes nor the expressions of this concept are homogeneous. To begin with, the aesthetic movement of late Victorian England culminated in the "decadent" works of the century's final decade, whose generating impulse combined what Holbrook Jackson has identified as a "romantic . . . antagonism to current forms" with a "classic . . . insistence upon new" (57). In its search for new forms, the aesthetic movement experimented with the decorated text as an object of beauty for its own sake;

its most extreme manifestation may be found in the art-nouveau book (Spencer 10). Walter Pater's *The Renaissance* gave the "beauty-for-beauty's sake" stance of the art-nouveau book not only an underlying aesthetic, but also a ready market. As James G. Nelson suggests, "Those who possessed the Paterian 'temperament, the power of being deeply moved by the presence of beautiful objects,' sought the kind of book" — typically art nouveau in style — which publishers such as John Lane produced at the Bodley Head (57).

If Pater, passionate apologist for "the desire of beauty, the love of art for its own sake" (190), is a ghostly figure behind the aesthetic movement, the development of this "art for art's sake" philosophy may be largely credited to the work of those two redoubtably passionate apologists, Oscar Wilde and James McNeill Whistler. Oscar Wilde's famous series of lectures in England and America disseminated widely the aesthete's central tenet that art should be loved for its own sake (Aslin 109), while Whistler — in lecture and in print — refuted the academic traditions of subject painting and high moral purpose by claiming that "the aim of the picture . . . 'is entirely aesthetic. Art, being concerned entirely with itself and being an end in itself, has no wish to improve the human race. . . '" (John Rothenstein 101). Certainly the fact that referentiality itself was on trial in England in the famous Whistler/Ruskin litigation of 1878 did not escape the pages of *fin-de-siècle* illustrated books, whose dialogic forms carried out similar arguments about the possibilities of representation.³

³Whistler initiated the libel proceedings against Ruskin because the critic accused him of "flinging a pot of paint into the public's face" in his *Nocturne in Black and Gold*. One of the pivotal questions the presiding judge asked Whistler in the trial was: "Do you say that this is a correct representation of Battersea Bridge?" Whistler's response — "what the picture represents . . .

Whistler and Wilde had immense impact on the development of the illustrated book. Whistler's experiments with unusual and idiosyncratic page designs in *The Gentle Art of Making Enemies* as well as in his catalogues and exhibition invitations — asymmetrical arrangements, dramatic expanses of white, and butterfly motifs fluttering throughout the text and the margins — had enormous influence on the art-nouveau book of the 1890s (Taylor 50-54). Indeed, as Ruari McLean has argued, Whistler's "*Gentle Art of Making Enemies*, 1890, . . . was part of a whole new movement in book design, which owed nothing to the Kelmscott Press, but a great deal to Oscar Wilde, [and] to ideas on art then effervescing in Paris and in Holland . . ." (233). Wilde's contribution to book design, moreover, is not limited to his role as aesthetic proselytizer. He also practiced what he preached: all his publications were designed to be beautiful objects, and most were illustrated or decorated in some way.⁴ His books may therefore be seen as both models and impetuses for the illustrated book of the nineties.

While the art-nouveau book is a product of the aesthetic movement — and therefore ineluctably a part of that movement's development into "decadence" in the nineties — it is also curiously allied with what may be seen as the antithesis to nineties' decadence: the socialist-inspired arts-and-crafts movement. Bi-textuality brought the two movements together, for both

depends upon who looks at it " — clearly locates the artist in the expression/impression aesthetic (Whistler 8).

⁴For bibliographic descriptions of Wilde's first editions, see William Andrews Clark, Jr., *Wilde and Wildeiana*, and Stuart Mason, *Bibliography of Oscar Wilde and Bibliography of the Poems of Oscar Wilde*.

were preoccupied with the notion of the "book beautiful."⁵ Certainly the art-nouveau books that Charles Ricketts produced at the Vale, and the arts-and-crafts books William Morris produced at Kelmscott, were based on the same organic principles for type and decoration, and each man respected and admired the work of the other (Taylor 76, 62). In addition, both the art-nouveau and the arts-and-crafts movements may be seen as revolts against the horrors of contemporary industrial England and its materialism, a revolt which was physically expressed by the production of books which had nothing in common with the cheap and ugly volumes mass-produced by commercial publishers. However, while both movements sought to produce the book as art object by combining image and text in an integrated and decorative design, their notions of what constitutes beauty, their conceptions of the function of the illustrated book, and their modes of production were very different.

The ostensible function of the art-nouveau book was to give aesthetic pleasure; its illustrations were independent decorations whose beauty alone gave them sufficient reason for existence. The production of art-nouveau illustrations varied from Aubrey Beardsley's mechanically-produced line drawings, to Laurence Housman's wood-engraved designs, to Charles Ricketts' original woodcuts and Charles Shannon's lithographs. Yet the productions shared the underlying aesthetic that the illustration "need impart nothing more than its own decorative existence to the beholder" (Spencer 10).

⁵See, however, John Harthan, who argues that the *Aesthetic Book*, though beautiful, is not the same as the *Book Beautiful*, to which it is nevertheless related (232).

The art-nouveau emphasis on autonomy and beauty guaranteed that its illustrators employed the artistic strategies of *impression* and *parody* in decorating their books. Although aestheticism's individualist premise is, in Whistler's words, that the artist "stands in no relation to the moment at which he occurs," in fact the art-nouveau book is not "a monument of isolation," but on the contrary is deeply embedded in the cultural discourses of its time. As Oscar Wilde himself acknowledged in his review of the "Ten O'Clock" lecture in which Whistler made these assertions, "An Artist is not an isolated fact; he is the resultant of a certain *milieu* and a certain *entourage* . . ." (Whistler 154-155, 161). Ineluctably a part of its own *milieu*, and dialogically engaged with its attendant *entourage*, the art-nouveau book is a site of struggle enmeshed in the period's political and social concerns. "Beauty for beauty's sake" may be seen as a protest against the de-humanizing aspects of industrialization which the individual could surmount only by developing a unique personal style. Thus "style" became of paramount importance to decadent artists, for through style "they exalted their notion of human ordering to such a degree that often no natural referent remains for their designs" (Reed 9).

In Aubrey Beardsley's "The Dancer's Reward" for *Salome* (Fig. 1), for example, gender anxieties are implied in the androgynous mirror-images of John's and Salome's faces, while the fears about the fate of patriarchal culture at the hands of aggressive New Women receives its most definitive period statement in the image of the dancer gloating over her decapitated prize. Moreover, the *fin-de-siècle* crisis of authority is indicated in the doubling techniques of the design, such as the Nubian arm which is also a table's

pedestal, the snaky hair which double as streams of blood, and the white collar which evokes a pair of hanging and exhausted breasts. A final displacement is effected by the impossibly small, and ungrounded, slippers, which float in unrealized space to the right of the dancer. Such whimsical decorative features, while they confirmed an individualist aesthetic, also staged a resistance to the materialist premises of Victorian society.

The book beautiful as conceived and produced by practitioners of the arts-and-crafts movement, on the other hand, approached beauty, function, and production from a socialist rather than an individualist ideology. Indeed, the arts-and-crafts movement itself, as Isabelle Anscombe points out, is not merely "a decisive change of style within the decorative arts," but also "a political struggle against the encroachment of industrialism on the workman's way of life." Behind this movement is Ruskin's medieval ideal, and William Morris's development of his own socialist theories out of that ideal (7, 63). If the art-nouveau book is closely connected with the aesthete's reactions against the historical, the anecdotal, and the moral concerns of high Victorian art (Spencer 10) as they were inspired by Walter Pater and developed by Whistler and Wilde, the arts-and-crafts book is a product of Ruskin's and Morris's espousal of the politics and ethics of art. Morris argued that it is "that very consciousness of the production of beauty for beauty's sake which we wish to avoid." Indeed, his premise is that "it is not possible to dissociate art from morality, politics and religion" (*Art and Socialism* 225, 54). Beauty for Morris is not simply the harmonious relation of type, paper, and illustration; it is also the "harmonious cooperation of the craftsmen and artists who produce the book" and the harmonious political economy "of

equality, leisure" in which such products could be enjoyed (*Ideal Book* 36, 37; *Art and Socialism* 36). Following his mentor, Ruskin, Morris defined art as "the expression by man of his pleasure in labour," and while the "most important production of Art" in his terms is "a beautiful House," the next in importance is "a beautiful Book" (*Art and Socialism* 50; *Ideal Book* 1).

The illustrated book thus became for Morris a political/religious icon, emblemizing a revolutionary way of salvation for the modern civilization which he abhorred, and surpassed in significance only by architecture. Indeed, he argued passionately that "the picture-book is not, perhaps, absolutely necessary to man's life, but it gives us such endless pleasure, and is so intimately connected with the other absolutely necessary art of imaginative literature that it must remain one of the very worthiest things towards the production of which reasonable men should strive" (*Ideal Book* 73). Morris himself strove toward the production of this worthiest of things, the illustrated book, at the Kelmscott Press (1891-1898).⁶ As William Peterson suggests, the founding of the Kelmscott Press "may be seen as the final phase of the Victorian Gothic revival," and its underlying ideas — such as "the distrust of the machine and the association of the Gothic style with a certain set of moral values" — owed much to John Ruskin (Introduction to Morris, *Ideal Book* xii). The arts-and-crafts book, as typified by Morris's work at the Kelmscott Press, is the material embodiment of political struggle; its

⁶This effort culminated in the production of the most lavishly illustrated and decorated book of its time, the Kelmscott *Chaucer* (1896). The majority of Kelmscott Press books, however, were not illustrated with plates but rather ornamented with borders and initials. (Peterson 106). For a bibliographic description of the Kelmscott Press's 52 titles, see Clark, *The Library of William Andrews Clark, Jr., Part I: The Kelmscott Press*.

production is a co-operative art form which recognizes the value of each craftsperson's⁷ contribution to the overall design. Moreover, like early printed books, Kelmscott books were produced on hand-presses with wood-engraved illustrations which simulated medieval woodcuts because Morris believed that only in this way could harmony between the typeface and decorative elements be achieved (Peterson 134). The illustrations themselves were "decorative," but not for beauty's sake alone, as according to aesthetic principles. Rather, the object of arts-and-crafts decorators as Walter Crane defined it was "beauty, not severed from truth" (*Arts and Crafts Essays* 42). Because the arts-and-crafts book was conceived and produced according to a social and co-operative aesthetic, the strategy of *answering* is the dominant mode of its illustrations.

"Halblithe beholdeth the woman who loveth him," from *The Story of the Glittering Plain* (Fig. 2), for example, is a wood engraving by A. Leverett after a design by Walter Crane, the friend and fellow-socialist whom Morris engaged to illustrate his romance for the Kelmscott Press (Peterson 156).⁸ The

⁷The contributing craftspersons were both female and male. However, as Anthea Callen demonstrates in her detailed investigation, *Women Artists of the Arts and Crafts Movement*, the sexual division of labor in the arts and crafts fine presses of the period fell along predictable lines of class and power, with men predominant in the areas of ownership and creative original work, and women involved in areas such as the manual labor of the presses or the interpretive work — such as embellishing, decorating, illuminating and engraving — of the creative male artist's designs. Women as original illustrators were better represented in the mass-produced work of the nineties than they were in the hand-produced arts and crafts book.

⁸*The Story of the Glittering Plain* is the only title to be issued twice at the Kelmscott Press, first in an unillustrated version and then lavishly illustrated with Crane's plates and decorated with Morris's borders. *The Golden Legend* was to be the press's first book, but the paper which Morris received from his supplier seemed more suitable for the smaller *Glittering Plain*. Peterson says that "Morris was so impatient to get his first title into print that

plate is framed and the letterpress decorated by wood-engraved borders after Morris's designs. While the mode of production reflects its press's socialist ideology, the illustrative style illuminates the nostalgic — and potentially conservative and atavistic — aspects of the arts-and-crafts enterprise by its evocation of gothic style and medieval morés, and by its static, melodramatic figures. The yearning for a time when men were men and women were women in a healthy and pure northern land is evident in Crane's figures. The erect hero is a manly, mail-clad Viking, while the supine princess is a delicate and attenuated Pre-Raphaelite woman with pillows to support her apparently spineless back.⁹ Such compositional features work both to indicate the racial and sexual anxieties underlying the crisis in authority which motivated *fin-de-siècle* discourses, and — by giving shape to an alternate world — to stage a resistance to the materialist demands of contemporary society.

The third contributing factor which gave rise to the illustrated book as a literary form in the nineties may be attributed to the development of black-and-white art in the illustrated magazines and newspapers of late Victorian England. The artists who developed their pen-and-ink trade in the world of commercial journalism were largely untouched by either the art-nouveau or

he was unwilling to wait for Crane's designs, and *The Glittering Plain* was issued in 1891 in unillustrated form; to atone for his haste, Morris published another version of *The Glittering Plain* at the Kelmscott Press in 1894 with Crane's pictures" (102, 154). Thus, the illustrated version of *The Glittering Plain* is not the book's first edition, but since Crane was already at work on the designs when Morris up-staged him, he may still be viewed as a critical first reader of the text.

⁹For a survey of this motif in *fin-de-siècle* art, see Bram Dijkstra's chapters on "The Collapsing Woman" and "The Weightless Woman" (especially the section on "the Nymph with the Broken Back") in *Idols of Perversity*.

the arts-and-crafts movements' concerns with ornament and page design; and the publishers eager to add the artists' drawings to their stock were less concerned with producing "the book beautiful" than they were with obtaining a "feature which imparts value to a Book" — the "pictorial portion," as Charles T. Jacobi called it (*Making of Books* 31). Illustrated books of this kind, then, concerned themselves principally with the additions which drawings could contribute to a good story in the tradition of pictorial journalism. If the underlying ideology is the capitalist market economy, the underlying aesthetic takes realism as its premise: the assumption is that art can reflect life in an unproblematic correspondence. The realistic illustrated book shares with the arts-and-crafts book a social, democratic, base, but its illustrator operates in the public sphere as the "objective" journalist who simply records events and scenes. By disavowing any personal agenda, realistic illustrations present themselves as uncomplicated representations whose function is to increase the enjoyment and knowledge of the reader. The artistic strategy most often employed by black-and-white illustrators of the journalistic type is therefore the method of *quotation*.

Sidney Paget's plate entitled "Come in, said he, blandly" (Fig. 3), is an illustration for "The Adventure of the Greek Interpreter" in *The Memoirs of Sherlock Holmes*. The image enters the letterpress as a concluding vignette, making no attempt to embellish the page by decoration or to integrate it by design. Rather, as the caption indicates, the illustration is engaged in quoting the text, thereby lending the scene credibility by the mere fact of repetition. This is indeed a journalistic technique. On the one hand, like the illustrated paper's use of pictures, Paget's quotational strategy has the effect of making

the text "present and undeniable, as if multiple reproduction was itself a form of verification" (Stokes 20). On the other hand, the nineteenth-century newspapers' claim that they represented "their readers as a whole" (Stokes 29) is reflected in the deliberate alignment of Paget's pictorial point of view with that of Doyle's general reader. Far from protesting against England's industrialism, journalistic illustrations in fact re-inscribe its most salient features by their pretense of being a mechanical transcription of the text, and by their attempt to deny the human individuality of the artist. On the other hand, the very mass-production of such images involves them in a capitalist economy whose anxieties and contradictions leave their traces in the material objects and characters of their realistic plates. Thus Paget's drawing exposes the younger brother's inherent anxiety about the eldest's superior powers and status by positioning Mycroft Holmes in the very armchair that his younger brother, Sherlock, has authoritatively occupied in many previous plates, and by suddenly transforming the energetic and domineering detective into a weak and callow youth.

The three texts of 1894 cited above suggest the diversity of the illustrated book's origins and expressions rather than its ubiquity. The predominance of this art form in the nineties is perhaps best indicated by Charles T. Jacobi, managing partner of the Chiswick Press. Writing at the turn of the century, Jacobi made the extraordinary claim that "At the present time very few books are published without some kind of illustration . . ." (*Some Notes on Books* 40). Before examining more closely the cultural and social currents in late Victorian England which contributed to the

establishment of the illustrated book as a dominant literary form, the technological changes which made its mass production possible outside limited fine-press editions must be examined. While it is true that the nineties' craze for collecting first editions by contemporary authors provided a market for illustrated books of the belles-lettres type (Nelson 78), and that the enormous popularity of illustrated magazines and gift-books motivated commercial publishers to provide illustrated books to appease the apparently insatiable "public appetite for illustrated material of all kinds" (Felmingham 1), it is also true that without the new photomechanical methods of production, the demands of the market could not have been so easily and cheaply satisfied. The material means of production, then, marks an historical boundary beginning around 1890 which brought its own contingencies, its own requirements, into the production of meaning in the illustrated book.

Until about 1885, the principal way of reproducing pictures for mass distribution, from the cheap penny novel to the expensive gift book, was wood engraving (Wakeman 81), a process which was both time-consuming and costly, and which made the artist's drawing only as good as the translation given to it by the intermediary engraver. However, the development in the 1880s of "process" reproduction — the use of the photographic line-block for pen-and-ink drawings and of the half-tone block for screened illustrations in monochrome or color (Felmingham 3) — had revolutionized the art of picture printing to the extent that by 1890 it "introduced a completely new epoch" in the art of the book (McLean 1). Indeed, writing at the end of the decade, artist and theorist Walter Crane suggested that the "discoveries [of photography] and its application to the

service of the printing press, may be said to be as important a discovery in its effects on art and books as was the discovery of printing itself" (*Decorative Illustration* 148). The importance of photomechanical production, moreover, is not only the cheap efficiency which made mass distribution possible. As Michael Felmingham suggests, the process block also revolutionized black-and-white art itself by providing a new stimulus to creative expression. Both Aubrey Beardsley and Phil May, for example, worked almost exclusively in pen and ink for process (Felmingham 2, 7-8). It is, perhaps, not too fanciful to wonder if Beardsley, in particular, could have been the great illustrator he was at any period prior to the process block, so closely are his artistic innovations connected with his exploitation of the technological innovations of his decade.

Yet the nineties' illustrated book also resists the historical boundary which the time-line constructed by technology demarcates. Clearly one of the great impetuses for the renewed interest in, and production of, illustrated books of all kinds, was generated by the example of William Morris at the Kelmscott Press. Far from exploiting the advances of the machine, Morris attempted to return to the ideal book of the fifteenth century by emulating medieval modes of production. The influence of Morris's counter-approach was great; as Susan Otis Thompson suggests, "By 1890 many people were concerned with the possibilities of the Book Beautiful, but they had as yet no inspirational model despite the experiments of the artists" until the establishment of the Kelmscott Press in 1891 (16). The inauguration of the Kelmscott Press thus constructs a time boundary theoretically identical with the border marked by the new reproductive technologies, but absolutely

divided from it in terms of praxis. The new photomechanical methods of production may have contributed both to the immense output of illustrated books in the nineties, and to a new approach to black-and-white art, but the example of the Kelmscott Press provided a new conception of the book as functional art object, and a new artistic approach to book design and decoration.¹⁰

Janus-like, the nineties' illustrated book looks forward and backward at once: along with its technological innovations, the *fin de siècle* in England also witnessed a renewed interest in early printed books, and an attempt to reproduce the unity and completeness of the first illustrated books in its own designs. The new attitude to book design may be seen partly as a reaction against the poorly designed, mass-produced books of what Crane called "the dark ages, between the mid-nineteenth century and the early eighties" (*Decorative Illustration* 154), and partly as an outgrowth of both the decorative and the printing revivals. The Caxton Exhibition of 1877 provided accessible models of early printed books and their woodcut illustrations for the first time, but the most important impetus for the renewed interest in book design was sparked by Emery Walker's lecture at the Arts and Crafts Exhibition in 1888. For the socialist Walker, the well-designed illustrated book provided an object-lesson for the Arts and Crafts Society's main position

¹⁰This new arts-and-crafts approach to the illustrated book was continued by C. R. Ashbee, who after Morris's death purchased the Kelmscott stock and presses (with the exception of the type), hired its principal staff members, and established the Essex House Press (1898). However, Ashbee's reverence of "the two great Masters," William Morris and John Ruskin, did not prevent him from attempting to fuse Morris's socialism with the "energy of modern Commercialism." See Ashbee, *An Endeavour Towards the Teaching of John Ruskin and William Morris* 49-52.

"that a work of utility might be also a work of art, if we cared to make it so" (*Arts and Crafts Essays* 133). Walker's lecture, however, not only inspired the arts-and-crafts book as it was produced at the Kelmscott Press. Walker also influenced the art-nouveau book as it was produced by Charles Ricketts at the Vale (Taylor 80). Moreover, since Ricketts also worked as a designer for commercial publishing firms, his conception of fine book-building was widely disseminated in the *fin-de-siècle* book market (Nelson 46-47).

As the last expression of the gothic revivalism of the sixties, the Kelmscott Press may be said to be more backward-looking than progressive, with its hand-press production and wood-engraved illustrations in the medieval style; and certainly the books it produced were ironically contrary to Morris's socialist ideology in that they were limited, both by their contents and by their price, to the wealthy connoisseur.¹¹ However, as his fellow arts and crafts practitioner, Walter Crane, suggested at the end of the decade, Morris's importance is that he was "the first to approach the craft of practical printing from the point of view of the artist" (*Decorative Illustration* 156), and in this regard his influence on the revival of interest in book design that occurred in the nineties was incalculable — but not exhaustive. As Ruari McLean points out, those artists who, "unlike Morris, were prepared to work within the printing industry as it actually existed" (234) in *fin-de-siècle* England, did the most to revolutionize and modernize the art of the book because their products were widely distributed.

¹¹For example, the Kelmscott Press edition of the *Golden Legend* was priced at ten guineas, whereas the typical Bodley Head book cost five shillings. See Morris, *The Ideal Book* 97 and Nelson, *The Early Nineties* 84.

The nineties was indeed a time when enterprising publishers combined with original artists to produce books meticulously designed and beautifully embellished. John Lane at the Bodley Head was perhaps the foremost of these commercial publishers, and the list of illustrators and designers who worked for him reads like a "who's who" of black-and-white art: Charles Ricketts, Aubrey Beardsley, Laurence Housman, Walter Crane, William Strang, to name only a few.¹² Since, as "John Lane discovered, presentation could sell even the most obscure books of poems" (Engen 93), other publishers were quick to follow his successful marketing strategy. Thus William Heinemann, J. M. Dent, Macmillan, Kegan Paul, and Leonard Smithers — often employing the same artist/designers as Lane — also produced aesthetically pleasing but commercially viable books. Usually illustrated with process reproductions of black-and-white pen drawings, these books were beautifully designed in formats which not only integrated the type and the decoration, but were also appropriate to the contents.

The nineties concerned itself with the illustrated book in unprecedented ways. Not only did it produce record numbers of this bi-textual form, but it also wrote almost obsessively on image/text relations, generating a whole secondary "literature about the making of the book beautiful" to the extent that, as Crane suggested in 1896, "the book has never perhaps had so much writing outside of it, as it were, before" (*Decorative Illustration* 153, 154). This "outside" writing produced a body of theoretical discourses in which the illustrated book became located — theories about

¹²For a complete list of Bodley Head artists, see John Nelson's Appendix B. "The Bodley Head Artists and Illustrators," in *The Early Nineties* 290-297.

book design, about the relation of typography to illustrative method, about the relation of image to text, about the function of illustration and decoration, and about the relation, finally, of art to life. Contemporary illustrative theory generally valued the decorative over the literally representational image, and this preference may be located within the dominant "organicist" aesthetic of the period.

Book illustration, strictly speaking, is an applied art; for this reason, the rise of the illustrated book in the nineties is dependent on the general revival of the decorative arts in late Victorian England. Indeed, the revival of the decorative arts reached its apotheosis, according to Walter Crane, in book design — in the production of the book itself as a functional art object (*Decorative Illustration* 183). The principles underlying decorative art thus became aligned with the principles of illustration. The most important of these principles for many decorative theorists of the period was that the ornament should be organically related to its function and form, and that the principles of its construction should be architectural; none of the theorists seemed to find anything paradoxical in an ornament's being both "organic" and "constructed" at once. Using Gothic architecture as his example in *The Grammar of Ornament*, Owen Jones defined "the perfect style of Art" as one in which the ornament is never artificially "applied," but rather "is always in perfect harmony with the structural features, and always grows naturally from them" (101). Jones's book, published in 1856 and reprinted nine times by 1910, had enormous influence on the art theorists and producers of the nineties. William Morris, for instance, used *The Grammar* as a source book, both for his own decorative motifs, and for his design theory (Naylor 21).

Morris's application of the principles of "the perfect style of art" to the illustrated book is clear in a lecture he delivered in 1892 on "The Woodcuts of Gothic Books," in which he argued that "All organic art, all art that is genuinely growing, opposed to rhetorical, retrospective, or academical art, art which has no real growth in it, has two qualities in common: the epical and the ornamental; its two functions are the telling of a story and the adornment of a space or tangible object" (*The Ideal Book* 26). Working within the same tradition, Walter Crane praises the "organic ornament" which is inventive, not imitative (*Decorative Illustration* 20), a theory which leads him to set the decorative artist above the realistic painter because decorative art not only fulfills the condition of beauty, but also the second "essential of decoration [which] is that it shall be related to its environment, that it shall express or acknowledge the conditions under which it exists" (*Arts and Crafts Essays* 42-43).

Aesthetes as well as arts and crafts proponents espoused this organicist aesthetic. Charles Ricketts, for example, citing the products of Morris's Kelmscott Press and of his own Vale Press, as well as the work of William Blake as his examples, argued "that a book (like any work of art) should be alive in its every part, an aggregate of living parts harmoniously controlled" (*Bibliography* viii). Like Morris, Ricketts was deeply influenced by Emery Walker's call to return to the integrity and beauty of early printed books, but of the two, it was Ricketts who most successfully applied Walker's principle "that the ornament, whatever it is, picture or pattern-work, should form *part of the page*, should be part of the whole scheme of the book" (*Arts and Crafts Essays* 132). As John Russell Taylor comments, though Morris subscribed to

this principle, it was "often at the expense of making the ornament dictate the form of the book rather than vice versa," as Ricketts was able to do (92). Moreover, since Ricketts also designed and illustrated books for commercial publishers such as Osgood and McIlvaine and John Lane and Elkin Mathews at The Bodley Head (Nelson 45-47), and since he directly influenced such an important nineties' illustrator and designer as Laurence Housman (Housman *Unexpected Years* 115), he may be largely credited with disseminating art-nouveau principles in illustrated books at the end of the century, just as Morris may be credited with the dissemination of arts-and-crafts principles. Such categorization, however, while it has the advantage of acknowledging Morris and Ricketts to be, as James G. Nelson suggests, the two men who revolutionized English book production and design in the early nineties (46), has the disadvantage of separating art nouveau from arts and crafts as if they were poles apart. Their origins, however, were remarkably similar, even if their expressions differed.

As John Russell Taylor has carefully argued, British art nouveau, which is notable for its "spareness and simplicity," its "interest in the arrangement of empty spaces," and its tendency to architectural principles of construction, as opposed to Continental art nouveau's elaborate filling of space and avoidance of "any hint of 'construction,'" owes much of its distinctive nature to its connection with the arts-and-crafts movement (19, 55). In this regard, although "decadent" writers¹³ typically published their

¹³The literary historical term "decadence" is used provisionally here as a tag intended to evoke a particular group of writers who have traditionally been classified under its rubric — writers such as Oscar Wilde, Aubrey Beardsley, the young George Moore, Ernest Dowson, John Gray, Lionel Johnson, Olive Custance, Arthur Symonds, Lord Alfred Douglas, Theodore

work in art-nouveau-type books, British art nouveau, as Taylor suggests, may be viewed as less like its decadent Continental counterpart, which was the end of the rococo movement, than it is — like its domestic counterpart, the arts-and-crafts movement — a reformation, with the significant difference that its reforming tendencies were "most evidently a beginning" of a new, modern, approach to the illustrated book (20, 21).

Indeed, the art-nouveau book and the arts-and-crafts book have much in common. To begin with, each had an interest, motivated by the decorative revival and the renewal of the art of printing, in the printed page as a medium for effective decoration. Not surprisingly, each also had an interest in the poet/artist William Blake as a nineteenth-century exemplar, not only of the integration of art and craft, but also of the integration of image and text. This interest inspired both art-nouveau artists, such as Laurence Housman and Aubrey Beardsley, and arts-and-crafts artists like William Strang, to emulate Blake by producing their own "cross-dressing" bi-textual products. In addition, both the art-nouveau and the arts-and-crafts movements were strongly influenced by the Pre-Raphaelites, and by Dante Gabriel Rossetti in particular. Rossetti's critical work helped re-integrate Blake into the tradition of British design (Taylor 24),¹⁴ and his pictorial work in

Wratishaw and Laurence Housman. My own view of the "decadent" writers of the nineties shares Holbrook Jackson's assessment that their enormous vitality might better be named "regeneration" (19). See John Munro, *English Poetry in Transition*, for a discussion of the difficulties and internal contradictions of classifying decadent writers (24).

¹⁴Dante Gabriel Rossetti and his brother William completed Alexander Gilchrist's biography of William Blake after Gilchrist's death; the book was first published in 1863 and a revised edition was published in 1880. Dante Rossetti also contributed a supplementary chapter dealing critically with Blake's art. See Alexander Gilchrist, *Life of Blake* (London: Macmillan, 1880).

Moxon's *Tennyson* of 1857 had both general influence on the nineties' decorative approach to illustration (Sketchley 1-2), and specific impact on such important nineties' artists as Charles Ricketts and Laurence Housman (Housman *Unexpected Years* 115). Finally, both movements were influenced in their designs and compositions by Japanese art, and in this regard, too, Rossetti had some influence, although his interest was inspired — as was that of most contemporary artists — by James McNeill Whistler. Whistler introduced Japanese prints into England in the sixties, and his designs for the Peacock Room (1876-77) had far-reaching effect on the decorative motifs of subsequent years, as is particularly evident in Beardsley's *Salome* designs (Taylor 29-30).

The art-nouveau book was deeply influenced by the implications of Japanese art. As Tschudi Madsen has argued, the impact of Japanese design on art-nouveau illustrators and book designers motivated "a radical break with traditional nineteenth-century European design, so that text and image now fused together to form an artistic whole as formerly only seen in Blake's books and in medieval illuminated manuscripts" (60). One of the main influences of Japanese prints on art-nouveau decorators was the interpretive — as opposed to the imitative — approach to representation. As Clay Lancaster has argued, "Avoidance of realism is in itself Oriental as opposed to Occidental," and the motivating force behind art nouveau was "the zeal for interpreting the thing seen or the abstraction felt" (298).

While arts-and-crafts illustrators used Japanese motifs in their decorative designs, they were on the whole less influenced by Oriental art because they reserved a skepticism about its social foundations, which they

generally ascribed to its lack of an architectural sense. William Morris, for example, argued that "the Japanese have no architectural, and therefore no decorative, instinct. Their works of art are isolated and blankly individualistic, and in consequence. . . . they remain mere wonderful toys, things quite outside the pale of the evolution of art, which . . . cannot be carried on without the architectural sense that connects it with the history of mankind" (*Arts and Crafts Essays* 35). Perhaps a little more racially tolerant, Walter Crane praised Japanese art because he saw in it a parallel with the art of the English middle ages, in which decorators "were under the influence of a free and informal naturalism." However, Crane qualified his enthusiasm with a caution against Japanese art as a model for English decorators which was more in line Morris's view: "In the absence of any really noble architecture or substantial constructive sense, the Japanese artists are not safe guides as designers" (*Decorative Illustration* 132-133).

Despite their similar origins and motivations — and, in some cases, their shared artists — arts-and-crafts books are very different products from art-nouveau books, both as physical objects and as artistic expressions. "The book beautiful" as it was produced by the Kelmscott Press was physically magnificent, but practicably unreadable, while "the book beautiful" as it was produced by art-nouveau designers at the Vale, the Bodley Head, and the like, did in many cases become what it aspired to be: a functional art object. But the illustrative forms and approaches which were motivated by arts and crafts or art nouveau were also distinct. Art nouveau may be seen as a reaction against the historicism and naturalism of the gothic revival underlying arts and crafts which, taking empathy and enthusiasm as its premise, not only

idealized the medieval style, but also referred constantly to nature as its decorative inspiration (Madsen 62, 34). The reaction against naturalism¹⁵ produced the art-nouveau goal of conveying, not a faithful representation of the motif, but rather "an 'after impression' of the essential expression, a synthesis of what had been experienced," while the reaction against historicism contributed to art nouveau's eclectic mixture of styles and motifs (Madsen 32, 64).

A comparison of Beardsley's art-nouveau design (Fig. 1) with Crane's arts-and-crafts design (Fig. 2) will illuminate the fundamental differences in the two movements' artistic styles, for each plate exhibits the features typical of its school of illustration. As John Russell Taylor's work on *The Art Nouveau Book in Britain* demonstrates, although the arts-and-crafts designers sought "to emulate the ease and directness of the decorations in early printed books, [they] were constrained still to observe nineteenth-century rather than sixteenth-century conventions about the rendering of pictorial space, so that the effect is often, despite the intentions, fussy and cluttered, and quite unlike that of the ostensible models." Art-nouveau designers, on the other hand, rejected the traditional three-dimensional effect and accepted the page "as what it is, a flat, white surface ready for decoration . . ." (60). Arts-and-crafts designers' cluttered and over-ornate illustrations demonstrated historicism's "*horror vacui*" (Madsen 47) and were often consciously medieval in character. Art-nouveau illustration, on the other

¹⁵A distinction must be made here between the use of the term "naturalism" by literary historians as opposed to art historians. In the context of graphic art, "naturalism" refers to the direct reference to nature in pictorial design.

hand, tended to be much simpler, with a great respect for white, and to demonstrate influences as various as Japanese, Greek, Celtic, Pre-Raphaelite, Rococo, Dutch, Blake, Victorian industrial design, architectural drawing, and the like (Taylor 56). In addition, while both movements shared an interest in early printed books, arts-and-crafts designers found their models, not only in early gothic woodcuts, but also in fifteenth-century incunabula, while art-nouveau designers found their models in the light, open pages of early Renaissance Italian books (Taylor 76; Thompson 26).

Although both schools of book artists were adept at ornamenting the printed page, and both conceived of themselves as decorative illustrators, art-nouveau designers operated from a "*l'ornement pour l'ornement*" aesthetic (Madsen 48), whereas arts-and-craft designers operated from the anecdotal aesthetic which sought a "unity of epical design and ornament" (Morris, *Ideal Book* 26). Finally, if Morris and Ricketts may once again be taken as representatives of their respective movements, Kelmscott Press book illustrations tended to be given the same approach in each book, regardless of content, whereas Ricketts' books were each "conceived freshly in terms of its literary materials, . . . following Ricketts's own precept that 'illustration ought to give to the book an accompaniment of gesture and decoration, perhaps also an added element of visual poetry'" (Taylor 83-84).

Many illustrated books of the period, however, were unconcerned with the production of "the book beautiful" and its notions of the integral relation between typography and page decoration. Instead of focusing on the overall design of the book as an "organic" whole, these texts focused on the seductive pleasures of the black-and-white arts of pen and ink and printed story. These

are the arts of illusion — arts which do not wish to call attention to themselves as produced artefacts, as constructed objects of beauty, because to do so would impede the way in which the fictional worlds they build must be entered and accepted as *real*. Illustrations in such books present themselves, not as visual poetry, but as visual evidence for the reality of the textual world they co-produce. This is true whether the fictional world which is visualized presents itself under the guise of realistic fiction or under the guise of fantasy masquerading as a real, alternate world. After all, pictures have a "quasi-magical relation to reality"; as Wendy Steiner suggests, they can "function like postcards" in a text (142, 148) — postcards which implicitly say to the reader/viewer, *this is a great place, wish you were here*.

Although Holbrook Jackson argues that the prevailing method of illustration in the nineties was a decorative approach which emphasized art's independence "from anything but its own materials and its own rules of excellence," and that for this reason "there were few naturalistic decorators of books" (285), in fact a large number of illustrated books produced in the period took realism, not decoration, as their starting point. These were the products of the "unaesthetic" commercial publishers and their "hack" illustrators. Generally, their publications were works of popular fiction, not "highbrow" belles-lettres productions. Unlike decorative artists, journalistic illustrators take, not interpretation, but imitation, of the world (and the text) as their aesthetic premise. As Diana Johnson suggests, these "mainstream" illustrators, dealing with subjects from everyday life, had a predilection for realistic transcription whose origin may be located in the Ruskinian aesthetic

of representational truth (9). But their conventions were also those established by the Victorian pictorial press.

Mainstream realistic illustrators were held in some contempt in the nineties, and their representations were regarded, as Malcolm Salaman suggests, as "artistic ineptitude. . . . [and] dismissed with a sneer as 'mere illustration'" (1). Ms R. E. D. Sketchley, writing on modern illustration at the turn of the century, praises "The intellectual idea of illustration, as a personal interpretation of the spirit of the text," because "such qualities are non-journalistic" (56). Working with this journalism/literature analogy, Sketchley argues that "journalism is not literature and pictured matter-of-fact is not illustration, though it is convenient and customary to call it so" (2-3). The decorative illustrator's commission, according to Sketchley, is "to be beautiful and imaginative," thereby producing "significant art"; the producer of "mere illustration," on the other hand, "making drawings for cheap reproduction in the ordinary book" is outside "the interpretive ideal" by reason of his/her journalistic approach (3, 2, 56). Certainly Paget's plate (Fig. 3) can be viewed as "pictured matter-of-fact" in Sketchley's terms.

Yet E. J. Sullivan, one of the journalistic illustrators whom Sketchley condemns for his "undelightful reporting style. . . . the 'Daily Graphic' style" (76), makes the important point in his own writing on modern illustration that *all* art is illustrative to the extent that it relies on some kind of reference — to a fact or to an idea — for its meaning (30). While he distinguishes between the illustration of fact as objective art, and the illustration of idea as subjective art, Sullivan also insists that good art requires a tension between object and subject in the artist, and that "the varying balance that is

maintained between these two factors . . . will decide the sympathetic or antagonistic attitude of the spectator, as it answers to his own mood or otherwise" (34, 32). Journalistic illustrators, then, may have produced "mere illustrations" by their strategy of visual quotation, but their theorizing allows both the artist as first reader and the reader/viewer to take up individual subject-positions which may conflict with that of the text. Indeed, Sullivan's theory contradicts the ideology under which realism practices — which takes as its premise a universal belief system about the relation of art to life among all viewers — by introducing the possibilities for ways of seeing which exceed straightforward correspondence.

The origins of illustrated books of the journalistic type may be located, then, not in the socialist convictions of arts and crafts, nor in the individualistic premises of aesthetic art nouveau, but rather in the democratic appeal of the mid-century rise of black-and-white art in illustrated newspapers and magazines. Indeed, an essential feature of *fin-de-siècle* "new journalism" was that it represented the expansion of the press "as part of the spread of democracy." Moreover, as John Stokes points out, "the key to the expansion and multiplication of the publications lay in reduced costs" (16, 17). Like illustrated books, illustrated periodicals were revolutionized by the advance of photomechanical methods of reproduction. Until the late 1880s, the black-and-white drawings of the contributing artists were re-produced by the large wood-engraving industry which had developed in the fifties and sixties. However, the introduction of the process block destroyed the wood-

engraving industry (McLean 156, 228)¹⁶ and contributed to "an enormous increase in the number of illustrated papers and books and a great revival and advance in black-and-white drawing" in the nineties (Thorpe 9). The amazing output of illustrated magazines in this period prohibits a full analysis, but it is interesting to note that each of the three approaches to illustration which I have examined — journalism, arts and crafts and art nouveau — also had periodical vehicles to give form to its artistic views; and to note that, once again, the categorization is provisional, since boundaries were constantly being crossed.

As Walter Crane recognized, nineties' black-and-white art permeated every aspect of Victorian society: "It is the most vital and really popular form of art at the present day, and it, far more than painting, deals with the actual life of the people; it is, too, thoroughly democratic in its appeal, and associated with the newspaper and magazine, goes everywhere — at least, as far as there are shillings and pence — and where often no other form of art is accessible" (*Decorative Illustration* 169). The realistic approach to illustration is found most frequently in the period's daily paper, where the image accompanied the new journalism's sensational crime coverage, exposés of poverty and human tragedy, and trumpeting of empire and nationalism. England's first

¹⁶The career of Clemence Housman is representative. An accomplished wood-engraver, Clemence worked for a firm which did reproductive work for *The Graphic*, *Black and White*, and other illustrated papers in the eighties. However, as her brother Laurence writes in his autobiography, the craft of wood-engraving was "strangled to death by the 'process' block," and her employer was forced to close down shop in the early nineties. From that time on, Clemence worked mostly for belles-lettres type productions, such as the books written and illustrated by Laurence. See *Unexpected Years* 110.

illustrated daily paper, the *Daily Graphic*, was established in 1890 (Thorpe 57); by the end of the decade, it vied with two dozen other dailies for its readership, one of the selling features being the addition of sketches by pictorial journalists (Stokes 17).

Illustrated weeklies like *The Sketch*, self-styled "A Journal of Art and Actuality," also proliferated. An offspring of the *Illustrated London News*, its aim was to present topical news from a humorous point of view (Thorpe 84). Other pictorial magazines focused on the combination of story with picture in the tradition of *Once a Week*, *Good Words*, or *The Cornhill Magazine*. Representative of this type of periodical is *The Strand*, founded by George Newnes in 1891, and memorable for its introduction of Conan Doyle's and Sidney Paget's *Sherlock Holmes* to an eager public (Thorpe 147-48). Also notable is *The Idler*, co-founded in 1892 by the novelists Jerome K. Jerome and Robert Barr, under whose joint editorship the magazine was principally a good literary magazine with poor illustrations. However, after the fifteenth volume, Arthur H. Laurence and S. H. Sime took over the editorship, and developed the magazine into a respectable artistic production, with a "strong sympathy and encouragement for black-and-white art" (Thorpe 152-161). Together with *The Butterfly* (of which see below) and *The Pall Mall Gazette*, *The Idler* represents, for James Thorpe, "the best achievement of English magazine production during the nineties" (162). *The Pall Mall Magazine* was established by Lord Frederick Hamilton and Sir Douglas Straight in 1893 with the intention of producing "a magazine which would appeal to readers of intelligence and, for the quality of its contents, would be worth keeping" (Thorpe 163). *Black and White* (established 1891) combined pictorial

journalism of the week's important events with illustrative representation of literary contributions (Thorpe 77-83).

All the artistic contributors to this type of illustrated paper or magazine, however, were not simply black-and-white realistic illustrators. Although some prominent contributors — such as A. S. Boyd, E. J. Sullivan, Harry Furniss, Fred Pegram, Herbert Railton, Linley Sambourne, J. Bernard Partridge, Phil May, Sidney Paget, J. A. Shepherd, F. H. Townsend, Gilbert James, Patten Wilson and Gordon Browne — may be so classified, other artists who contributed work to these publications — such as Charles Ricketts, Charles Shannon, Aubrey Beardsley, Max Beerbohm, Frank Brangwyn, L. Raven-Hill, S. H. Sime, and Laurence Housman — may not. The black-and-white illustrators last named, many of whom have connections with the art-nouveau decorative movement, are not artists of the arts-and-crafts school. Yet, when we turn to the illustrated periodicals which gave graphic form to art-nouveau and arts-and-crafts' principles, there is again this blurring of boundaries, for in many cases, the same artists contributed drawings to both types of publications.

The arts and crafts movement was first given voice and body in *The Hobby Horse* (1886-1893), a publication of The Century Guild; yet its artists — Arthur Heygate Mackmurdo, Heywood Sumner, Herbert Horne, William de Morgan, Selwyn Image, and Frederic Shields — were, according to John Russell Taylor, "at the threshold of art nouveau proper." The work they contributed to *The Hobby Horse* not only did much "to put over the ideas and familiarize the styles of most of British art nouveau's chief exponents" (36), but also did much, as Walter Crane argued, to "keep alive true taste in

printing and book decoration, when they were but little understood" (*Decorative Illustration* 156). Indeed, Robin Spencer suggests that *The Hobby Horse*, as "the first of a whole series of illustrated periodicals in the eighties and nineties. . . . can also be seen in the context of a steady development of new attitudes to the graphic arts which by the end of the century resulted in an entirely new status for illustration" (125-26).

The Century Guild artists were distinguished by their use of the whiplash line, derived from their idolization of Blake, but this art-nouveau-like characteristic was combined with influences less typical of that movement (Taylor 68-69) — influences deriving from the arts-and-crafts propensity toward naturalism and historicism. And yet, as Taylor suggests, the difference between the work of the Century Guild artists and that of the art-nouveau artists "is not so much in the elements that go to make up their style . . . but in the way these elements are combined" (70). Perhaps more representative of the arts-and-crafts school of illustration is *The Quest* (1894-96), published by the Birmingham Guild of Handicraft. Its artists — Charles M. Gere, Edmund H. New, Bernard Sleight, H. Payne, Mr. Mason, Arthur Gaskin, Mrs. Gaskin, Miss Bradley, Winifred Smith, Mary Newill, and Celia Levetus — produced drawings "according to the canons of Kelmscott" (Sketchley 6). Indeed, the connection was so close that Gere, New, and Arthur Gaskin actually did illustrative work for Kelmscott Press (Crane, *Decorative Illustration* 165). Walter Crane, himself an arts-and-crafts man (Taylor 67), praised the Birmingham School for its "romantic feeling in story illustration" and for its "sincere attempt to apply what may be called traditional principles in decoration to book illustration" (*Decorative Illustration* 168).

Walter Crane's own work as a decorative illustrator offers a good example of the way in which arts-and-crafts and art-nouveau distinctions can blur. The "spiritual father" of The Century Guild (Taylor 64), Crane was strongly influenced by Ruskin, was connected with William Morris's work at the Kelmscott Press, and was the socialist first president of the Arts and Crafts Exhibition Society (1888 - 1890). Yet his contemporaries also saw him as a leading figure in the aesthetic movement (Naylor 124), and his own decorative illustrations exhibit undeniably art-nouveau-like characteristics, particularly in his use of Blake's sinuous line. Certainly the tangled briar, floral motifs, and peacock of his plate for *The Glittering Plain* (Fig. 2) are features typical of art nouveau. Despite his elevation of the decorative artist, however, Crane was capable of calling art nouveau "that strange decorative disease" and of indignantly denying that it should in any way be considered "the offspring of what properly considered was really its antithesis — the Morris school of decoration" (*Morris to Whistler* 232). For Crane, aestheticism's real meaning "was a sincere search after more beauty in daily life" and art nouveau was nothing more nor less than "a cult of the ugly" (*Morris to Whistler* 66, 232), presumably because it claimed to have no social agenda or moral base. Thus its decorative features could be viewed as the proliferations of diseased growth emanating from a perverse personality, rather than as the organic effusions of a healthy society.

The last type of illustrated periodical of the nineties, which may loosely be called "art nouveau" or aesthetic because many of its editors and contributors were associated with these movements, is represented by publications notable both for their brief lifespans, and for their original

approach to the form. *The Butterfly* (1893-5), edited by L. Raven-Hill and Arnold Golsworthy, may perhaps typify the productions of this type, in its non-commercial approach to the artistic periodical and in its high quality of black-and-white work, both in drawings often inspired by Japanese prints, and in reproductions of Japanese prints themselves (Thorpe 170-4). Undoubtedly the most infamous of these periodicals, however, is *The Yellow Book* (1894-95), which was published by John Lane and Elkin Mathews with Aubrey Beardsley as art editor and Henry Harland as literary editor (Thorpe 187). The periodical gave its color to the "Yellow Nineties" (Weintraub 99), and came to its scandalous end with Oscar Wilde's conviction, since the writer was unfortunately carrying a yellow-covered French novel — mistakenly thought to be a copy of *The Yellow Book* — at the time of his arrest, and since Beardsley was — after the scandal of the *Salome* illustrations — so closely connected with him in the public's eye (Brophy 86). If art nouveau as a style is eclectic, then the art-nouveau periodical, as represented by *The Yellow Book*, is a study in artistic eclecticism, with contributions from such disparate artists as Sir Frederick Leighton, P. R. A., Aubrey Beardsley, Laurence Housman, Walter Crane and Patten Wilson. Indeed, volume nine was entirely illustrated by members of the Birmingham School, and its overall artistic effect, according to James Thorpe, evokes *The Quest*, Walter Crane and William Morris (190).

Established in 1896 after the Wilde *débauche*, *The Savoy* was Beardsley's next periodical venture, which he undertook with Arthur Symons as literary editor and Leonard Smithers as publisher. Perhaps because Smithers allowed Beardsley more editorial freedom than did Lane (Thorpe 191), the artistic

contributions to this periodical are more determinedly modern, if not strictly art nouveau, than those of *The Yellow Book*, as is indicated by some of the artists whose work was published. In addition to Beardsley, such artists as Charles Shannon, Charles Conder, Joseph Pennell, William Rothenstein, Max Beerbohm, and Walter Sickert contributed. *The Savoy's* aesthetic is announced in Beardsley's first editorial: "For us, all art is good which is good art." The individualistic ramifications of this aesthetic informed the periodical's "cult of the personality" which was closely associated with the decadence. George Russell, for example, refused to touch *The Savoy* because it was "unclean" (Weintraub 162, 213, 159).

Beardsley's decorative style may also be viewed as the primary inspiration of an important branch of art nouveau which developed in Glasgow in the nineties (Taylor 125). Indeed, according to Tschudi Madsen, "the purest expression of the Art Nouveau style" in Britain was associated with the Glasgow School of Art (166). *The Evergreen* (1894-97) was a Scottish quarterly, published in Edinburgh by Patrick Geddes and in London by T. Fisher Unwin, whose four numbers took over two years to publish (Thorpe 192-5). A significant contributor was William Brown Macdougall, whose work was also published by *The Yellow Book*, and who illustrated a number of art-nouveau-style books in the nineties, often in conjunction with his wife, writer Margaret Armour. The outstanding illustrator connected with Scottish art nouveau, however, is Jessie M. King. As Taylor suggests, "she has strong claims to be considered one of the most original and accomplished of all the art nouveau book-artists in Britain, and a worthy third in the triumvirate of

greats along with Ricketts and Beardsley" (123, 138).¹⁷ Also associated with the Glasgow School is the work of Mary and Frances Macdonald. Indeed, the unusually high profile of female original artists in the north caused Meier-Graefe to exclaim at the turn of the century: "In Glasgow British art was no longer hermaphrodite. It passed into the hands of women."¹⁸

As one of the triumvirate of great art-nouveau artists in the nineties, Charles Ricketts also published an influential periodical, *The Dial*, under the joint editorship of his long-time companion and friend, Charles Shannon. Like many periodicals of its type, however, its influence and importance far exceeds its duration. Charles Hazlewood Shannon and Charles de Sousy Ricketts first published *The Dial* at the Vale in 1889, but the second issue did not appear until 1892, and its fifth number in 1897 was its last (Thorpe 200). *The Dial* is significant not only because it gave Ricketts his first venue for page design after Emery Walker's influential lecture of 1888 (Taylor 80-1), but also because its first number brought Shannon and Ricketts into contact with Oscar Wilde, who, impressed with what he saw in the periodical, encouraged Ricketts to design books, and began a literary/artistic relationship with the

¹⁷Unfortunately for the scope of this study, Jessie M. King's illustrative work did not begin until after the turn of the century. But see her sixteen full-page watercolor illustrations to Oscar Wilde's *The House of Pomegranates* (London: Methuen, 1915). The art-nouveau style, with floral and vegetative motifs inspired by Asian art, is a beautiful interpretation of the oriental and delicately overpowering lushness of Wilde's fairy tales. It is interesting to compare King's illustrations with the black-and-white designs, very Pre-Raphaelite in style, of Charles Ricketts' early work in *House of Pomegranates* (1891). King also illustrated William Morris's *The Defence of Guinevere* (London: John Lane, 1904), which Taylor says is her finest book (132).

¹⁸In Madsen 168. Madsen is quoting from Meier-Graefe, *Entwicklungsgeschichte der modernen Kunst*, I-III (Stuttgart 1904-5, Vol. II 620).

two illustrators (Nelson 44-45). Shannon also collaborated in another illustrated venture, this time with Gleeson White: *The Pageant* (1896-7). Like *The Yellow Book*, *The Pageant* sported a curious array of illustrators, including Sir John Millais, Whistler, Housman, Crane, and Reginald Savage (Thorpe 200-1).

The context in which the bi-textual form which dominated the *fin de siècle* was produced is complex. Rather than a linear series of developments or a set of enclosed categories, the contributing social, philosophical, and aesthetic threads weave in and out of the illustrated book's intricate history, making its origins a tangled web and its destinations forever in the making. The textures and colors of the three main strands — aesthetic art nouveau, socialist arts and crafts, and journalistic quotation — cannot easily be separated and laid out side by side, for the fabric constantly changes as each strand trespasses and encroaches into the other's warp and woof. Yet, whatever shape the beautiful book assumes, for the double reader bi-textuality is always, as Walter Crane once wrote, "a double pleasure" (*Morris to Whistler* 75).

CHAPTER THREE

QUOTATION

The subject is indeed a large one, if we reflect upon it, for many people would tell us that journalism is the greatest invention of our age. . . . it touches the fine arts, touches manners, touches morals. . . . journalism is the criticism of the moment at the moment, and caricature is that criticism at once simplified and intensified by a plastic form.

Henry James, *Picture and Text*

Quotational illustrators quote their texts in the same way that contemporary pictorial journalists quoted life in the daily papers. Indeed, these tasks of illustration and journalism were typically performed by the same graphic artists. While the representational form of the image under quotation betrays the period's desires for verisimilitude and for objective accuracy, such desires are indicative of the crisis in authority and the fears of instability which marked an era fraught with social change. Significantly, the desire for a clear correspondence between representation and life was re-figured according to a sexual trope in a contemporary adage of the "new journalism": "accuracy is to a newspaper what virtue is to a woman."¹ Thus

¹The remark, which became a truism for journalism, was first made by Joseph Pulitzer, the publisher who changed the nature of the American newspaper in the 1880s, creating the New Journalism in this country at the same time that it developed in England. See Pulitzer in Coblenz (12), and the *Encyclopedia of American Journalism* (Vol. I., 403 ff). My understanding of the New Journalism in the English *fin de siècle* has been especially assisted by John Stokes's chapter, "Is it a Revolution?: The Economics of the New Journalism and the Aesthetics of the Body Politic," in *In the Nineties*.

the period's demand for "social realism"² in the illustrated press's representations of life indicates a fundamental anxiety about the possibilities of represented truth: just as a woman may *not* be sexually faithful, so too the journalistic report, in picture or in word, may *not* be an innocent representation of life. Like the woman's virtue, the newspaper report's and the quotational image's accuracy always operates within the category of suspicion.

In an age whose understanding of "reality" was reflected in, and constituted by, the daily presentations of the illustrated paper, realistic narratives and representational images in fictional books were both determined and judged by the ways in which they could credibly reproduce journalistic discourse. In "Of the Kings' Treasuries," for example, John Ruskin's lecture on the value of literature — the value of great men and great books — the celebrated man of letters quotes a long passage from his "store-drawer" of newspaper clippings. In the published version the paragraph is printed in red because "the facts themselves are written in that colour." The paragraph is the report of a coroner's inquest on the death by starvation of Michael Collins; Ruskin cites the article as evidence for the way in which the community despises compassion, a virtue which could be recuperated by right reading. Implicitly, one branch of this right reading is represented by Ruskin's drawer full of sensational and socially-critical press-cuttings. By means of the new techniques of "social realism" which late nineteenth-century journalism began to develop, the newspaper became a standard of morality and honesty and a vehicle for presenting the "true facts"

²See especially Simon Houfc's chapter, "Social Realism 1850-1890," for a good overview of the development of this aspect of the pictorial press in Victorian England.

of poverty, crime, and war to the reading public — a vehicle whose discourse was powerful enough to insinuate itself into an address on what educated males ought to read to make them the Kings of immense treasuries (*Sesame and Lilies* 34-39).

But the social realism of contemporary journalism was itself a conventionalized genre, influenced by both art historical and literary traditions, and determined by what the reading public would accept as a truthful correspondence to life. One aspect of Victorian journalism, especially as it developed after the founding of *The Graphic* in 1869, was that the daily paper became a vehicle for showing "the sufferings of the poor, the destitute and the ill, as they existed in the cold light of Victorian charity." As Simon Houfe's work on British illustration has shown, however, the graphic artists who practised the new social realism gave their subjects poignant reality by using the techniques of Hogarth, Dickens, and George Eliot — in short, by imitating art rather than life (152). Thus, the traditions of caricature and romanticism contributed to the period's conception of truthful representation and objective reporting. Houfe demonstrates that a second aspect of Victorian journalism was the illustrated newspaper's significant connection to empire and nationalism. The Crimean War inspired not only a newly intense jingoistic discourse, it also created an almost insatiable public demand for knowledge — for specific details of information, for grandiose pictures of battle and domestic pictures of the soldier's daily life.

To meet the public's demand, a new profession was created: the special artist who provided "eye-witness" coverage of war. But here, too, as Houfe points out, reality was conventional and objectivity censored. On the

one hand, the artist's on-site sketches were influenced by his attitude and his medium as well as by the art historical tradition of battle paintings. On the other hand, every sketch sent from the Crimean was placed before the War Minister and Queen Victoria for approval before it was dispatched to the lithographers (138). The "special artist" whose depictions of social reality in east end slums, or international reality at the edges of empire, therefore produced, not an "objective" representation of events, but rather an institutionally censored and meta-referenced discourse which accorded with a specific ideology. As Anthony Smith points out in "The Long Road to Objectivity: and Back Again: The Kinds of Truth we get in Journalism," by the end of the century

Journalism became the art of structuring reality, rather than recording it . . . The journalist looks — metaphorically speaking — now to his right, now to his left, as he searches for the senses in which his account will be accepted within the rubric of objectivity. In performing this very task, he weaves the tapestry of reality which society accepts — or rejects — as being a true image of "things as they really are." The journalist has come to supply the needs of a large social machinery which defines the interim phases of reality. The techniques of journalism have come to consist in skilful filling of pre-defined genres, each of which stands for a certain definition of the audience's needs.

(in Feltes 66-67)

The multi-generic — and bi-textual — journalistic discourse which produced a reality mode for a large reading public in *fin-de-siècle* England is closely connected to the mass-produced illustrated books of the same period. These works of popular fiction — many of them belonging to the new adventure story genre — were not interested in creating the book as a

beautiful art object, but rather with constructing a credible world in bi-textual space. The quotational strategy of such illustrations is deeply embedded in journalistic discourse. Newspapers are, after all, quotational representations of reality — they quote life by offering eye-witness reports, interviews, and on-site pictures, and they establish authority by citing experts. By employing the techniques of the new journalism, such as realistic drawings which lent the verbal text material validity and gave the reader/viewer voyeuristic pleasure, such stories could align their narratives with news stories. This alignment contributes to the "reality-effect" of realistic writing and representational illustration in the illustrated book. Since, as Holbrook Jackson comments, *fin-de-siècle* journalism exploited "The political prejudices of the average man and his need for romance by proxy . . ." (54), the fictional narratives which re-presented contemporary biases in romantic stories which masqueraded as real reports of actual events reflected not only the authorizing strategies of the newspaper, but also the needs and desires of its readership.

The 1890s saw an immense output in books accompanied by quotational images. Most often, these images accompanied the realistic narratives of adventure stories and domestic or historical novels, although they also sometimes embellished the fantasy genre. The Victorian practice of serializing such illustrated stories in newspapers meant that these fictional adventures were read along with the factual adventures reported by the press, that is, "along with the news of the day — the major political and economic events, the murders and sex scandals" (Green 19). It also meant that the illustrated adventure story, for example, was intrinsically a part of a

capitalist market economy, since rising and falling newspaper circulation indicated the serial's popularity — or lack of it. Thus readers were, as Martin Green suggests, also "involved in the writing of adventures" (same), a re-positioning of reader as writer which had already been introduced by the new journalism's "Letters to the Editor" page (Benjamin 234). When the stories were published in book form, the material traces of the largely middle-class readership's ideology — its capitalism, its paternalism, its racism, its imperialism, its sexism and the like — were ineluctably a part of the dialogic relations of image, text, and double-reader. The dialogue of the quotational image and the authorizing word is not a unified voice signifying the hegemony of cultural power, however, but rather a double-voiced discourse which illuminates the fractures in representation which allow for — and even motivate — other discourses and multiple meanings.

The popular adventure story offers a particularly interesting site of bi-textual struggle not only because its representational strategies are those of contemporary journalism, but also because — like the illustrated paper itself — the adventure story's bi-textual form became a vehicle for the intense anxieties surrounding gender, class, and race which preoccupied the *fin de siècle*. Indeed, these anxieties may be intrinsic to the genre itself because most adventure narratives were directed specifically at a white, middle-class, male readership — the sons of the British Empire (Showalter, *Sexual Anarchy* 80). As Green's study of adventure fiction reveals, "adventure books are and always have been masculinist — aimed at men, and celebrating manliness." If, as Green suggests, "Adventure is the name for experience beyond the law, or on the very frontier of civilization" (3), then

the bi-textual discourse of illustrated adventure books is a dialogic investigation of the law and its limits, and of the thresholds of power.

Adventure narratives share certain characteristics: they are concerned with male-bonding, with heroism and manliness, with the boundaries of class, gender, caste, and race, and with those aspects of the law signified by property and propriety. Typically written in a realistic mode, adventure stories are also multi-generic, citing not only journalistic, but also other non-fictional discourses such as biography, history, and travel or exploration narratives.³ Their realism is concerned not with what *is* but with what can be *taken for real* — with what might be possible on the frontiers of experience. Since their actions take place in this marginal space, the adventure story's heroes are, as Green points out, "by definition outlaws" (29). In this chapter I shall look at three *fin-de-siècle* adventure books, each representing a different approach to the genre, and each illuminating different bi-textual concerns: *The Memoirs of Sherlock Holmes* (1894) by Arthur Conan Doyle and Sidney Paget, *Black Heart and White Heart* (1900) by H. Rider Haggard and Charles Kerr, and *Perfervid: The Career of Ninian Jamieson* (1890), by John Davidson and Harry Furniss.

The Memoirs of Sherlock Holmes is a series of "realistic" tales calling themselves "adventures" which take place in the well-known locale of

³See Martin Green, who notes that "much of adventure writing is nonfiction and labeled biography, sailing/climbing/diving narrative, explorer books, or descriptions of revolutions, battles, and guerrilla warfare. When contemporary and far off in space, this is journalism; when far off in time, even if nearby, it is history. This is adventure reading without being called adventure. . . ." (37-38). My understanding of the nineties' adventure story has been greatly assisted by Green's *Seven Types of Adventure Tale: An Etiology of a Major Genre*.

contemporary London and environs. The stories create their reality-effect by employing the discourses of biography and journalism. Moreover, their grounding in the "real" is reinforced by the text's emphasis on the scientific and the factual, by the narrative's self-presentation as investigative reportage, and by the image's representational form. The narrative's ideological position is indicated by its presentation of a virtually self-enclosed masculine world and by its emphasis on class, property, and the law. Its hero, Sherlock Holmes, is an "outlaw" in the sense that his detective enterprise consistently operates outside the legal apparatuses and institutions which constitute civilized England. *Black Heart and White Heart*, on the other hand, is a novella of the "exotic" adventure type, located in the heart of unknown Africa during the climactic moment of the Zulu war of 1879. The exotic adventure story motivates both realistic and romantic discourses. Although the narrative purportedly tells a story that really happened, and is located within the parameters of a definite geography and historical event, its distant setting on the edges of civilization allows the text simultaneously to cite the discourses of sexual fantasy, magic and the supernatural. Thus the exotic and the improbable are naturalized by the textual self-presentation as history. Featuring Philip Hadden, an outlaw white adventurer in the Transvaal, the story explores the issues of empire, racial and sexual identity, and property.

Unlike either *The Memoirs of Sherlock Holmes* or *Black Heart and White Heart*, *Perfervid* is a "fantastic" adventure novel which is both romantic and ironic but which is nevertheless told in a realistic mode, with a frame narrator located in a specific locale relating the tale to a specified

audience. Essentially a romantic quest narrative, this ironic adventure story cites mainly fictional rather than non-fictional discourses, but its subtitle — "The Career of Ninian Jamieson" — also aligns the narrative with the genre of biographies of great men, and its textual concerns are principally occupied with the issues of heroism, class, and property. Its two-part structure features two "outlaw" heroes, a father and a son. Ninian Jamieson is the outlaw who would usurp the English throne itself, while his son, Strongsoul, is the outlaw who leaves civilization to engage in a series of criminal and violent adventures.

Operating within this multi-generic economy, the quotational images produced by Sidney Paget, Charles Kerr, and Harry Furniss both confirm and undermine the reality-effect created by the texts' citations of factual discourses. On the one hand, the image lends the text credibility by offering the double-reader a visual confirmation of the verbal narrative. This essentially reassuring function works by aligning the fictional representations to the real world as it was represented in the illustrated press. Indeed, the illustrators whose black-and-white art presents itself as eye-witness reportage of the text were schooled in pictorial journalism, and their images bring with them the material traces of the "factual" world as recorded in the illustrated daily. Trained in the journalistic method of "objective" representation, these illustrators produced images which appear to quote textual reality by means of a visual imitation. On the other hand, the image's own meta-narratives, and its dialogic relation to the word, illuminate the text's status as a fictional construct embedded in cultural discourses. Since the artist as critic re-marks the text by bringing his own point of view into the image he makes,

quotational bi-textuality is the site of struggle for the dominant representation. Both image and text are constituted by their artists' points of view, the exigencies of their media, their literary or pictorial traditions, and the cultural contexts in which all these factors are determined. Within this dialogic relationship, the co-production of meaning by the reader is an activity mobilized by the material traces of the histories, contexts, and bodies of the illustrated book.

Perhaps the best known — and least investigated — illustrated books of the nineties are the Sherlock Holmes stories produced by Arthur Conan Doyle and Sidney Paget.⁴ A number of contributing factors, all of which may be subsumed under the category of modes of production, explain the meteoric rise to popularity of *The Adventures of Sherlock Homes*.⁵ To begin with, neither Doyle's *The Sign of Four* (1890), nor his earlier *Study in Scarlet* (1888), caught the popular imagination. Indeed, the character of Sherlock Holmes raised so little interest that one critic of *The Sign of Four* did not even mention Holmes and his methods in his moderately favorable review

⁴I have only been able to locate two studies which deal with Paget's illustrations for the Holmes series in any depth: James Montgomery's *A Study in Pictures* and Walter Klinefelter's *Sherlock Holmes in Portrait and Profile*. Neither study constitutes a critical approach to the inter-relations of image and text: the illustrations are viewed as "authentic" portraits and described as such. Frederic Dorr Steele, an American illustrator of Doyle's stories, also offers a short but interesting critique of "Sherlock Holmes in Pictures" in Starrett's *221B Baker Street*.

⁵"Adventures" was published in two series. The twelve stories in the first series were published from July 1891-December 1892, and the twelve stories in the second series from December 1892-November 1893. Both series of stories were entitled "The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes" in *The Strand*, but when Newnes published the second series, it was given the title *The Memoirs of Sherlock Holmes*.

of the book (Murch 171). But with the publication of the short stories, "The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes," the intrepid detective and his obtuse biographer became popular figures whose lives the public followed with passionate interest. The curious phenomenon of the public's belief in the real existence of Sherlock Holmes and John Watson subsequent to the *Strand* publications — to the extent that after the death of the detective in "The Final Problem," people wore mourning bands in the streets of London (Nordon 204) — has its historical origins in the production and reception of these twenty-four short stories.

Clearly, the popularity and credibility of Sherlock Holmes and his world are intimately related to the presentation of his "Adventures" in *The Strand Magazine*. Established at the beginning of the decade, *The Strand* was unlike any magazine to date, with its innovative editorial policy of including an illustration on every page (Higham 88). Aimed at a bourgeois, middle-class audience, and widely distributed in railway bookstalls to attract white-collar commuters, *The Strand's* contents, as Stephen Knight suggests, "define the magazine's ideology: prominent are the biographies of successful men, stories about courage and adventure, features about new machines. But there are also stories that realise bourgeois sentimental morality. . ." (70). *The Strand's* immediate success may be ascribed both to its pictorial content — which included story illustrations, portraits of the rich and famous, and a free Royal Academy print with each issue (clearly an appeal to the middle-brow audience by democratizing art)⁶ — and to its literary content of realistic

⁶In April of 1891, the enclosed Royal Academy print was "Lancelot and Elaine." by the thirty-one year old Sidney Paget (Higham 88).

adventure stories augmented by quoted life in the form of interviews with celebrities. According to Charles Higham, "more than 300,000 copies were sold in the first month, an unprecedented event in the history of British magazine publishing" (88). With such a popular format, it is not, perhaps, surprising that those readers "who thought that *The Strand* was a continuation of Fleet Street and nothing else" (Fearsall 98), should receive the portraits and narratives of Holmes and Watson as authentic portrayals of actual contemporary lives.

The immense popularity of the *Strand* Sherlockian series may also be accounted for by Doyle's switch of genre from the novel to short fiction. After looking over a number of new monthly magazines coming out at the time, Doyle presented Greenhough Smith, the literary editor of *The Strand*, with a proposal for a series of stories which were each to be complete in themselves, yet connected by a single central character: Sherlock Holmes (Doyle, *Memories* 90). As A. E. Murch notes in *The Development of the Detective Novel*, "this was a brilliant plan of construction" which took into account the circulation needs of the monthly magazine, the emotional needs and time constraints of its readers, and the financial and temporal needs of the writer (171). But magazine serialization also meant that Doyle's writing would be part of a capitalist mode of literary production in which managerial control of the text was strongly marked by editorial decisions, including the choice of illustration (see Feltes 65). Thus, although the episodic nature of the sequence certainly contributed to the public's familiarity with Holmes and Watson, there is another, non-literary source, both for the characters' popularity and for their credibility: Sidney Paget's illustrations. Doyle had no

part in the selection of Paget as illustrator, yet by approaching the *Strand* with his series proposal, the author would have known that virtually every page of his stories would be accompanied by images.⁷

Doyle's Sherlock novels had been illustrated previously, in both magazine and book form, by no less than six illustrators,⁸ but it was not until Sidney Paget illustrated the *Strand* series of stories that the iconography of Holmes and Watson was established. Indeed, Paget has good reason to be named "The Artist Who Made Holmes Real" (Paget 41), for not only did his images become authoritative for subsequent representations in advertisements, books, theater, and film, but they also contributed to contemporary readers' conception of — and belief in — the fictional characters. When Paget illustrated Sherlock Holmes, he made him "noble, famous," thus re-inscribing an original meaning of "to illustrate."

⁷However, after the popular success of the first two Sherlock series, Conan Doyle recognized the intimate relationship of Paget's pictorial work to the text — and to the reader. When (perhaps responding to public pressure for more Holmes stories after the detective was killed in "The Final Problem") Doyle wrote to Greenhough Smith with a proposal for a new Holmes story, *The Hound of the Baskervilles*, he specifically requested that Paget be selected as illustrator, should the story be accepted for publication (Montgomery 11).

⁸D.H. Friston produced four drawings for the publication of *A Study in Scarlet* in *Beeton's Annual* in 1887. Charles Doyle (the author's father) provided six drawings for the publication of *A Study* in book form by Ward, Lock & Co. in 1888. The next edition of *A Study*, brought out by Ward Lock & Bowden in 1891, was illustrated with forty drawings by George Hutchinson; these were reprinted in a number of subsequent printings. The publication of *A Study* in 1895 in the Christmas number of *The Windsor Magazine* was accompanied by seven drawings by James Grieg. The first publication of *A Sign of Four* in *Lippincott's Magazine* included a frontispiece by an unknown illustrator (the plate did not depict Holmes and Watson, however). The first book publication of *The Sign* by Spencer and Blackett in 1890 had a frontispiece by Charles Kerr. See Klinefelter 3-14.

The ideological connection of adventure stories to contemporary journalism's representation of events on the frontiers of civilized experience is indicated by the managerial choice of a "special artist" to illustrate the Holmes stories for *The Strand*. After Doyle's series was accepted for publication, art editor W. H. Boot wrote to Mr. Paget, whose pictorial work he had seen and admired in connection with the sensational coverage of the Gordon Relief Expedition, to engage his work for the series. Because Boot did not know the special artist's first name, however, his letter to "Mr. Paget" did not go to the journalist who had done the eye-witness reporting for the *Illustrated London News*, but rather to his older brother, who was also a graphic artist. Thus, by an error in circumstance, Sidney Paget, rather than Walter, got the commission for the Holmes series (Hardwick 51). The editor's intended selection indicates that *The Strand's* marketing strategy for the Holmes series was to present a narrative which could be taken as "real." The style of the pictures would be associated with the journalist's eye-witness reportage of contemporary events, and the narrative's "adventures" would implicitly be connected to the exotic adventures depicted by special artists for illustrated newspapers. The chance selection of Sidney Paget, who was both a "social realist" for the press and an exhibiting portrait painter (Houfe 154), gave *The Strand* a "real" celebrity — a character whose adventures seemed grounded by the traits of journalistic representation but also a face and figure which could take its place among the magazine's portraits of the rich and famous as a handsome, romantic, hero.

Paget's realistic style is in dialogue with Doyle's realistic style. As M. M. Bakhtin has pointed out, "the clearest and most characteristic form of an

internally dialogized mutual illumination of languages . . . [is] an artistic representation of another's linguistic style, an artistic image of another's language" (*Dialogic Imagination* 362). In image/text relations, this comes down to what E. J. Sullivan describes as the necessary adaptation of illustration technique to the style of the writer (100): realistic narrative evokes the representational image. Although Sidney Paget's images present themselves as visual quotations of the text, however, they are not simply mechanical transcriptions; rather, their production involves work and labor, and brings with it the material traces of the worker's body.⁹ The inter-illumination which results from this crossing of verbal and visual languages calls into question the very nature of the real, thereby motivating questions about authority and representation. As Linda Nochlin's art historical study demonstrates, although realism operates under the illusion of verisimilitude, "there can be no perception in a cultural vacuum, and certainly no notational system for recording it, unaffected by both the coarser and subtler variants of period, personality and milieu" (51).

Paget's successful quotational strategy for producing images which appear to be literal transcriptions of the text (Thorpe 148) is effected by aligning his point of view with that of the narrator, Watson, who in turn aligns himself with the reader. Neither Paget's nor Watson's relationship to the text, however, is actually aligned with the reader's experience. Rather, each occupies a place of ironic knowledge from which they must simulate

⁹See Holquist's Introduction to Bakhtin's *Art and Answerability* for an explanation of Bakhtin's conception of understanding as a form of quotation, and of his endeavor to outline the relation between knowing/quotation and physical labour (xlii-xliv).

ignorance. Watson's "little sketches" depend for their effect, as his detective friend acknowledges, "upon your retaining in your own hands some factors in the problem which are never imparted to the reader" ("The Adventure of the Crooked Man" 272).¹⁰ Watson's self-alignment with the reader contributes to the success of his ingratiating narrative, for he is "a figure with whom the reader feels a comforting comradeship when he, too, 'sees but does not observe,' and needs to have the implications of a clue explained" (Murch 179). Similarly, Paget's success as an illustrator depends on the way his visual point of view aligns itself with the eyes of the Watson/reader. Such a strategy, however, establishes an ironic rather than an objective relationship between image and text. Indeed, an illustrator's position with regard to a short story is always ironic: though s/he is in the position of the full knowledge of the writer, s/he must place him or herself in the temporal space of the reader, whose knowledge is limited to the sequential unfolding of the narrative.¹¹

Like Watson, Paget stands in a double position in relation to the text: he is both the writer who knows the secret of the mystery (and therefore

¹⁰All references to stories in *The Memoirs of Sherlock Holmes* and *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes* are taken from *The Original Sherlock Holmes* and will be given parenthetical reference by story title (where not otherwise noted) and page number.

¹¹This is not necessarily true for novels, especially for serialized novels, for which the illustrator may only receive a portion of the text at a time, and is therefore — like the reader — largely unaware of how the subsequent narrative will unfold. But the magazine illustrator of the short story usually receives the whole text to be illustrated. Paget's diary indicates that his mode of production involved reading the story a few days before he began work on the drawings. Sometimes he would put off the drawings until the last possible minute, and work all night to meet the publisher's deadline (Paget 43).

which details are important) and the reader who knows only as many facts or details as the narrative has to that point provided. The effect of this perspective on the Holmes stories is both to *heighten* their realistic illusion — by providing a material grounding for the textual representation — and, paradoxically, to *undermine* their realistic illusion — by ironically revealing the artifice of the fictional world. As David Skilton remarks in another context, illustrative plates work "metafictionally, too, in reminding us of the fact that a plot is worked out 'in advance' of our reading, and that, whether in serial . . . or in book form, the story, or such of it as is here prefigured, 'exists'" (314).

Reality becomes a trope, a rhetorical device, in the Holmes series in much the same way that it was in the contemporary pictorial press. Significantly, Watson's narrative stance consistently aligns itself with that of the investigative reporter, for his alleged interest in chronicling his friend Holmes's adventures is with the public's right to the truth. Thus his labors are directed at correcting the false reportage of events in the daily papers by offering in public print "for the first time" the real facts of the case. Indeed, Watson's journalistic preoccupations and strategies are accurately described in an 1895 article on contemporary reporting methods in *The New Review*:

By the New Journalism, I take it, we mean that easy personal style, that trick of bright colloquial language, that wealth of intimate and picturesque detail, and that determination to arrest, amuse, or startle, which has transformed our Press during the last fifteen years.

(in Stokes 15)

Moreover, Watson's subject matter — the stories of the dark criminal elements which lodge within even the most respectable Victorian

households — was one of the preferred topics of the New Journalist. Certainly the narratives' emphasis on the *interview* as a method for gaining the truth — an important aspect of the New Journalism which encouraged "the belief that every event originated with an individual and that public activities could be best explained by hidden motives" (Stokes 21) — participated in journalism's strategies and values. But in addition to "features such as 'investigations' and 'interviews,'" an important aspect of the New Journalism was that these features "were frequently accompanied by pictorial illustrations," thereby not only increasing "human interest," but also taking full advantage of the text's sensational possibilities (Stokes 19). Thus the accompaniment of Watson's journalistic style by Paget's character illustrations and scene-of-the-crime depictions played a fundamental role in the journalistic authenticity of the Holmes series. As a graphic artist specializing in social realism,¹² Paget's "*Daily Graphic* style" was not only familiar to readers of the popular press, but also associated with the presentation of actual contemporary events. Indeed, Paget's wood-engraved drawings present themselves with the same materiality — the same lines and textures — as the wood-engraved reportage of pictorial journalists.¹³

¹²Paget worked for the *Illustrated London News*, the *Graphic*, and the *Sphere*.

¹³Illustrated newspapers and monthlies in the early nineties still frequently reproduced pictorial plates by wood engraving rather than by process blocks. Paul Hogarth argues that wood-engraved reproductions of original drawings by pictorial journalists often obliterated the essential style of the original, to the extent that the majority of Victorian press illustrations looked alike (31). Although Paget's drawings in *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes* were reproduced by at least six different engravers, the plates for *The Memoirs of Sherlock Holmes* were all executed by a single engraver, P. Nauman, who signs most of the plates P. N. (Klincfelter 18-20).

The image/text dialogue in *The Memoirs of Sherlock Holmes* illuminates the middle-class ideological concerns and anxieties underwriting the investigations of both the contemporary press and the detective story: the threat to property and ownership signified by the presence of crime within respectable bourgeois England. Stephen Knight's work in *Form and Ideology in Crime Fiction* demonstrates the way in which Doyle is selective about both the crimes which Sherlock Holmes investigates, and the criminals whom he apprehends. As Knight suggests, the crimes are all threats aimed at "the tangible forms of property, the totems of an acquisitive and money-conscious society," while the criminals themselves "are not unregenerate members of a professional gang, or part of those 'dangerous classes' who genuinely did threaten bourgeois London. They are respectable people gone wrong, turned aside from their proper roles" (90). If, as Knight indicates, "Selection of setting is a crucial ideological feature in crime fiction, and the physical world in which Holmes operates is basically that of the natural audience of *The Strand Magazine*," then that setting is established in important ways by Paget's images, just as his illustrations are also occupied with the detection of crime and the figuring of criminality.

"The Adventure of Silver Blaze," the first story in *The Memoirs of Sherlock Holmes*, demonstrates the degree to which the image/text dialogue both authenticates and displaces the narrative's representation of detection and the law. The involvement of the reader/viewer in this project, moreover, is structured by the illustrations themselves, which work to situate him/her firmly within the middle-class milieu of the text. For example, the introductory plate, "Holmes gave me a sketch of events" (Fig. 4), encodes the

reader within the text because it implicitly situates the middle-class commuter, who has just purchased his copy of *The Strand* or *The Memoirs* at the railway bookstall, and has now settled down in his train to read a new Holmes' adventure, in the same location as the detective himself.

"Holmes gave me a sketch of the events" is a familiar depiction of Holmes and Watson travelling in a train. This image is especially familiar because it corresponds so exactly with the present-day reader's conception of the two characters and their milieu. Here is the late nineteenth-century smoking carriage (the sign may be read in reverse on the left window), complete with roomy upholstered seats, carpet, padded door with its window open for air, and a ventilation shaft above. Here is Watson, reclining in his seat at left, the image of the respectable, humorless, and common-place Englishman in a derby hat, smoking his cigar in comfort; and here is Sherlock Holmes — more *outré* than his companion in his Inverness cloak, deerstalker hat, over-long hair, and dandyish spats — leaning forward intensely, with his lean, ascetic face slightly turned, and his long fingers marking out the points on his palm as he outlines "the essential facts of the case" ("Silver Blaze" 186). The image, however, would have been familiar to contemporary readers for another reason: this plate closely duplicates a previous Holmes/Watson/train representation in the earlier *Adventures of Sherlock Holmes*.¹⁴ "Holmes gave me a sketch of the events" quotes not

¹⁴ See the first plate, "We had the carriage to ourselves," in "Adventure IV.— The Boscombe Valley Mystery." The composition is almost identical, except that in "We had the carriage to ourselves," Holmes is not sketching on his hand with his finger, but rather on a pad of paper with a pen. The earlier picture suffers from much poorer engraving than the later rendition, whose outlines and shadings are carefully handled. But the train was also a conventionalized setting for Victorian illustrations: the railway car provides a

only the text of the story it locates itself in, but also the image named "We had the carriage to ourselves," and refers in this way back to the "Boscombe Valley" story and its text. Despite their familiarity, their correspondence, their credibility, Paget's plates undermine the reality-effect of Doyle's narratives by exposing the self-referential nature of the text by means of a dialogue which extends beyond the fictional frame.

The meta-fictional effect of Paget's illustration demonstrates both the way in which the artist as critic contributes to bi-textual meaning, and the degree to which his work within the serialization economy determines textual production itself. Paget's Holmes is not, in fact, Doyle's character, with "a thin razor-like face, with a great hawk's-bill of a nose, and two small eyes, set close together on either side of it" (Doyle, *Memories* 101). Paget's Holmes is a handsome and eccentric dandy, and his embodiment brings the artist's own history into the stories by their constant physical referral to the body of his brother, Walter, who was Sidney's model.¹⁵ Even the famous deerstalker hat presented in this image — and associated so firmly in the

convenient frame, and the positioning of figures lends itself to character illustration and caricature. See Harry Furniss's first vignette in *Perfervid*, which introduces Ninian Jamieson and Cosmo Mortimer as they meet as chance travelling companions (Davidson 7). No doubt the most famous of Victorian railway-car illustrations is John Tenniel's picture of Alice travelling with a goat and a man in a paper hat (usually identified as Disraeli) in *Through the Looking Glass* (Carroll 218).

¹⁵Walter Paget's physical resemblance to the fictional Sherlock sometimes resulted in cases of mistaken identity by a public who persisted in believing in the real existence of the detective. Winifred Paget relates family anecdotes about Walter being accosted as "Sherlock Holmes" when attending Musical Recitals or dining in St John's Wood (41-42).

popular imagination with the detective — has no textual base.¹⁶ The deerstalker was Sidney Paget's own favorite form of headgear (Paget 44). Significantly, Paget's romantic representation of Holmes became confirmed by the stories themselves after "The Boscombe Valley Mystery" which the railway-car illustration of "Silver Blaze" quotes. According to Ronald Pearsall, Doyle "went along with [Paget's] more romantic image" in his own textual descriptions, beginning with this fourth story in the series (54). Significantly, this story also marks the moment at which the public's demand for Sherlock Holmes began to contribute to the writing of the stories. Encouraged by a committed readership, *The Strand* editors began to apply pressure on Conan Doyle for more stories than the six agreed on in the original contract.¹⁷ The complex human and institutional relationships

¹⁶This is true not only for the story in question, in which Holmes is described as wearing an "earflapped travelling cap" ("Silver Blaze" 185), but also for the entire Sherlockian canon, in which Doyle gives Holmes a variety of headgear, but never a deerstalker. The deerstalker becomes the sign of the authentic Holmes portrait for Sherlockians. See especially Klinefelter, who distinguishes between the true and the counterfeit portrait by the presence or absence of the deerstalker. William Gillette, the actor who "made Holmes real" on the stage in *fin-de-siècle* London and America, clinched his deal with writer Conan Doyle by appearing "in character" at their first meeting at a railway station. He wore a caped overcoat and a deerstalker (Higham 153-54). Curiously, after Gillette's popular stage portrayal of the detective — always in a fore-and-aft — the deerstalker appeared more frequently in Paget's drawings (Montgomery 8-9).

¹⁷Doyle's original contract was for six Sherlock stories, for which he was paid thirty guineas (Paget was paid twenty guineas; see Higham 94). Already wearying of Holmes, Doyle asked for — and got — £50 per story to continue the series up to twelve stories. When a second series of twelve stories was requested, Doyle asked for what he considered to be a prohibitive fee in order to free himself of his character; but *The Strand* paid him the £1000 that he demanded, and Doyle's only way of ridding himself of Holmes — and of "the temptation of high prices" which was connected with what Doyle "regarded as a lower stratum of literary achievement" — seemed to be to end the life of his hero. See Doyle, *Memories and Adventures* 94, 93, and S. C. Roberts 5.

which motivate the image/text dialogue of *The Memoirs* — Paget's chance assignment as the illustrator, his use of the chosen artist, Walter, as his model, his influence on the textual production and reader reception of the authentic Sherlock Holmes — contain, as Knight suggests in a more limited context, "a fine revealing irony; inside the all-explaining image are fragments of human chaos: beneath the production of the text lie the strains the text is dedicated to resolving" (84).

Like all the stories in *The Memoirs*, "The Adventure of Silver Blaze" is preoccupied with resolving the chaos of the unexplainable into an ordered representation by solving the mysteries of a crime and apprehending a criminal. The movement from the opening scene's disorder to the denouement's resolution is defined by Holmes's investigation of an "extraordinary case, which was the one topic of conversation through the length and breadth of England" — "the singular disappearance of the favourite for the Wessex Cup and the tragic murder of its trainer," John Straker (185). The text's concerns with ownership and property are indicated by the widespread public anxiety felt after Colonel Ross's loss of Silver Blaze, while the speculative implications of this loss — signified by the racetrack and its bookmaking practices — are indicative of the capitalist ideology which underwrites these values. Moreover, it is within this market economy that fractures in law and order (as represented by Holmes and his detective project) are revealed. The irony of "The Adventure of Silver Blaze" is that there is no criminal to apprehend — Straker meets his death by accident, not murder — and that the crime of fixing the race and influencing the track's

betting odds is in fact not the crime of the apprehended bookmaker, Fitzroy Simpson, but rather the crime of the detective himself.

Holmes does indeed detect the "facts of the case": first, that Straker was killed by his horse as he was attempting to lame it with the intention of betting heavily on the second favorite, winning largely, and redeeming the debts he has incurred through his mistress's extravagance; and second, that Silver Blaze subsequently ran across the fields to the rival stable at Mapleton, where the groom, Silas Brown, seeing *his* chance to fix the race in favor of his own horse, Desborough, hid Silver Blaze by using the old horse faker's trick of dyeing the identifying white marks on its head and foreleg. Having discovered the secrets of the unfortunate Straker's "double life" (199), and of Silas Brown's duplicity, Holmes engages in his own deception. He tells Colonel Ross not to strike Silver Blaze's name from the list, engages Brown to run the disguised horse with his regular jockey in Ross's black and red colors, and sits back to enjoy the wild effects that Silver Blaze's known disappearance, coupled with the presence of his name on the racing card, have on the subsequent betting (197). In other words, Holmes himself fixes the Wessex Cup race.

Thus, although the project of the entire Holmes series is to figure the detective as "a final court of appeal in doubtful cases" ("The Adventure of the Musgrave Ritual" 249), in "The Adventure of Silver Blaze" he is in fact deeply implicated with criminality. Indeed, when Holmes describes his profession as "living by my wits" ("The Adventure of the Musgrave Ritual" 250) — a description usually designating the life of crime — there is an implicit identification between the detective and the criminal — between law

and crime, order and disorder. Moreover, because Holmes's motivation for fixing the race is located in the personal affront he feels from Colonel Ross's highhanded lack of deference to his remarkable powers, the narrative reveals the degree to which the concepts of moral and legal propriety are cultural products. Indeed, law and order are re-figured as class struggle, for the bourgeois professional defeats the complacency of the landed gentry, presumably to the deep satisfaction of the readers. While the mainly middle-class readers of the Sherlock Holmes stories may share the detective's "little amusement at his [the owner's] expense" (195), the pleasure of seeing bourgeois values reflected in the text is offset by its simultaneous reproduction of bourgeois anxieties. Since Holmes triumphs by employing an unnecessary, and dramatic, subterfuge — by disguising the truth and fictionalizing fact — the reader's complacent assurance in an underlying authority, a "ground" for representation and the law, is undermined.

Paget's illustrations to the Sherlockian series illuminate textual concerns because they work both to reassure belief in an ordered universe and to confirm the suspicion that the representation of "reality" is an unstable enterprise fraught with contradiction and struggle. Indeed, the image/text dialogue, itself a struggle for order and meaning within a context of specific ideological concerns, draws much of its energy from the way in which the factual representations of the illustrated paper are quoted by the fictional representations of the illustrated book. Paget's sequence of illustrations for "Silver Blaze" closely follows the conventions of pictorial representation for sensational crimes in the Victorian press. Deriving from the seventeenth-century broadside tradition, which would cover a crime by a series of plates

beginning with the deed itself (or the discovery of the corpse), and ending with the trial and execution of the culprit, nineteenth-century newspapers were full of illustrated crime stories (Hogarth 23). Paget's "They found the dead body of the unfortunate trainer" is within this tradition of pictorial journalism, as is the final picture, "He laid his hand upon the glossy neck," in which Holmes reveals the real murderer of John Straker.

Like the special artist's crime coverage, the plate entitled "They found the dead body of the unfortunate trainer" (Fig. 5) presents itself as an eye-witness report at the scene of the crime. From the top of the page the reader/viewer plunges down into the horrible discovery of the corpse of John Straker which lies stretched out at the bottom of the picture plane. The illustration makes a "hole" in the text — actually forces the letterpress into the restrictions of a narrow linear column at left — to reveal the sensational secret whose truth the narrative will ultimately disclose. The reader/viewer's position becomes that of the voyeur who looks through a peephole to see the nasty details of life on which the polite world closes doors. This strategy allows Paget to quote factual and fictional discourses at the same time. As Thomas Boyle's fascinating investigation into the connections between Victorian reportage and sensational fiction demonstrates, the crime coverage of the time blurred fiction with fact in a manner which was calculated both to appeal to the appetite of the voyeur and to disrupt middle-class complacency (21).

Paget's strategy of being Watson's eyes in the text — presenting visually only so much and no more than what the narrator has revealed at that point in the adventure — is a rhetorical device which pretends to efface

the artist's eyes and hands from the production. However, the role of the eye-witness which is thus created by the image is not the objective presentation it appears to be. In the first place, the depicted scene is never seen by the narrator, Watson, or by his narrative source, Holmes, who simply recounts the crime's presentation in the daily press. Indeed, within the context of the narrative itself, which begins with Watson's description of Holmes in their Baker Street flat, surrounded by "fresh editions of every paper which had been sent up by our newsagent only to be glanced over and tossed down in the corner," and then goes on to deliver Holmes's quotational summary of the newspaper reports (185), Paget's image seems to be lifted from the pages of one of the illustrated dailies which the detective has consulted. In the second place, Paget silently removes two of the actual eye-witnesses who discovered the body. Although the text says that four people (Mrs. Straker, the maid, and two stable hands) "found the body of the unfortunate trainer," the artist shows only one man and one woman peering over the crest of the hill (188). The facts of the case have been tampered with to accommodate the needs of the illustrator: his compositional requirements, his time restrictions — and his recognition, perhaps, that two observers may stand in the place of the many readers with whom they are visually aligned. But Paget's drawing also offers the observant viewer a material clue to the horrible secret of John Straker's murder which neither Holmes nor Dr. Watson sees. In addition to drawing the reader's attention to the significant cravat and knife in the trainer's hands, Paget also inscribes the mystery's solution on the corpse itself, for on Straker's battered skull is the U-shaped imprint of a horse's hoof.

Paget's illustrations, then, place the reader/viewer in a position of power and authority superior to that of the text itself by providing clues which draw attention to the act of double-reading. Thus the illustrated Holmes stories undermine their realistic illusion because the pictorial presentation detaches the reader from too-complete an identification with the ingenuous narrator by involving him/her in the act of detection. When a scene or a character is important enough to be depicted, the reader may be fairly confident that s/he is being offered a material clue. This position of ironic knowledge is especially true for the many illustrations of Holmes in disguise. Although Watson consistently fails to recognize his friend, the man in the mask is always Sherlock Holmes to the discerning reader/viewer, whose experience of the text has taught him/her that when an apparently unimportant or chance-met character is given visual treatment, that figure is likely the detective in masquerade. Moreover, Paget provides iconographic signals which alert the reader/viewer to the figure's true identity. His portraits of Holmes as Holmes are almost always in profile or three-quarter face, and the few frontal depictions close the eyes of the subject. In contrast, Paget's portrait of Holmes in disguise is typically a full-frontal depiction in which the eyes of the subject look directly at the viewer. While Paget's pictures of the "real" Holmes are always grounded by roughly sketched-in backgrounds, the disguised Holmes typically floats in an unrealized background of cross-hatched shadows.¹⁸ The reader/viewer's ironic

¹⁸The exception is Paget's portrayal of Holmes as a venerable Italian priest in the plate entitled "My Decrepit Italian Friend" in "The Final Problem." Here Holmes as priest is portrayed in profile, seated in a railway carriage. Both the fully realized setting — the railway carriage has been the detective's

knowledge is constituted by his/her interlocked gaze with the disguised and ungrounded subject. The most compelling interchange of looks occurs in the illustration, "Professor Moriarty stood before me," from "The Final Problem." Here the iconographic signs — the unrealized, shadowy background and the single figure whose gaze arrests the viewer — provide a critical reading of the text which argues that Moriarty is Holmes's disguised "other."¹⁹ This critical reading is further emphasized in the composition which shows Moriarty leaving Holmes's Baker Street apartment. "He turned his rounded back upon me" works by a *dopplegänger* effect, for the face of Moriarty is a depraved double for Holmes.

Paget's illustrations provide the material traces which hold the clues to the narrative's secrets by minimalizing their backgrounds in order to blur what is not relevant to the solution and to foreground what is. The pictures themselves thus become clues, but they are not simply clues to the mystery of events — they are also clues to Paget's critical reading of the text. The illustration entitled "A Curious Collection," from "The Adventure of the Musgrave Ritual," is a case in point (Fig. 6). Perhaps one of the best illustrations in the entire series, this vignette offers a commentary not only on the nature of Holmes's detective enterprise and the reader/viewer's interpretive task, but also on the cultural discourses in which they are

milieu repeatedly — and the angle of the composition — the nose is the nose of Holmes — make the reader's detection of the figure's identity inevitable.

¹⁹While other such single figures appear in Paget's illustrations — such as the portraits "Mycroft Holmes" from "The Adventure of the Greek Interpreter" and "Jack Prendergast" from "The Adventure of the Gloria Scott" — the portrait of Moriarty has physical traits of Holmes (his cadaverous face, aquiline nose, domed forehead, and lean body) by which the reader/viewer has been taught to recognize Holmes.

embedded. Like most of Paget's drawings, the plate is unframed except by the text, and its background is roughly sketched in by means of a medallion shadow of cross-hatching. The open trunk in the foreground and the seated figure of Holmes in profile which is in line with it dominate the composition. Indeed, they duplicate each other, for Holmes holds a smaller box in his hands, whose contents, like those of the large trunk, are invisible to the viewer. The contents are not invisible to Holmes, however: he looks down at the hidden objects with intense absorption and supercilious knowledge. Behind the open trunk, and to Holmes's right, Watson sits stolid and observant, his gaze fixed, not on the large opening and its unknown curiosities, but on the invisible objects which Holmes is apparently turning over within the smaller box. The caption, "A Curious Collection," quotes Watson's words (first presented in the letterpress at the right of the inset vignette), but the image which is thus tagged resists the anchorage of the verbal inscription by its refusal to reveal any trace of the collection: "a crumpled piece of paper, an old-fashioned brass key, a peg of wood with a ball of string attached to it, and three rusty old discs of metal" (248-49).

Instead, the illustration focuses on curiosity: the curiosity not only of Watson who sees but does not know, but also of the reader/viewer who neither sees nor knows. This curiosity is conveyed by the image of the two boxes which *seem* empty but actually (according to the text) hold papers and relics which not only "have a history," but "*are* history" (249). The bare details of the plate's iconography — a box from within a box, the gaze of Watson, and the hidden eyes of Holmes as he looks at what no one else sees — are a pictorial interpretation of the narrative strategies of the Sherlockian

canon. Although Nordon argues that Paget faithfully portrays — even creates — the famous Holmesian penetrating gaze (219), the illustrations consistently show the curiosity of *Watson's* unobservant gaze, for Holmes himself is most often depicted with his back or profile to the viewer.

Indeed, because they take the position of the eye-witness who sees but does not observe, Paget's illustrations are always on the *thresholds* of interpretation — the thresholds of the hidden truths of the narrative's secret. Thus the image's refusal to visualize the objects under scrutiny ironically exposes the text's fascination with the fetishes of power and property. "The Adventure of the Musgrave Ritual" tells the story of the deeply divisive struggles which motivate the relations between classes and genders. Holmes's client, Charles Musgrave, an "exceedingly aristocratic type," and "a scion of one of the very oldest families in the kingdom" (250), is also the preserver of class and privilege, signified by the ceremonious passing down of the Musgrave Ritual from father to son which has gone on since the seventeenth century (252). Musgrave's indifferent acceptance of privilege is signalled by his lack of curiosity about the Ritual, whereas his intelligent and ambitious butler, Brunton, has "a clearer insight than ten generations of his masters" and deduces that the Ritual's "strange catechism" is in fact a code which will lead to a hidden treasure (254, 253). Brunton is quite right: the treasure which the Ritual directs him to "is nothing less than the ancient crown of the Kings of England," lost by Charles II (258). Holmes discovers the meaning of the Ritual by realizing that the Butler "saw something had escaped all those generations of country squires, and from which he expected some personal advantage." But when the secret formula leads them to the

hidden spot, and the heavy stone is raised, Musgrave and Holmes find the dead body of Brunton hanging over an empty trunk and the treasure gone. By imagining "how I should myself have proceeded under the same circumstances," Holmes reasons that Rachel Howells, a maid whom Brunton had jilted, and who had disappeared soon after the butler's strange disappearance, had been enlisted as the thief's accomplice (257). Holmes concludes that when Brunton was in the cellar chamber she replaced the stone in a passion of vengeance and ran off, throwing the treasure sack in the lake. The crown is indeed found in the lake, but Rachel Howells is never seen again, and is thought to have immigrated to the colonies. Thus the murder of the butler with aspirations to property and status beyond his proper rank goes unpunished — indeed, is looked upon as a fitting nemesis — while the vested rights of the landed aristocracy are acknowledged by Musgrave's retention of the crown as a totem of his privilege (258).

The unseen objects in Holmes's collection are also fetishes of power: they represent the impressive success of his third case which enabled him to establish his "lucrative connection" (249). The image/text dialogue, moreover, illuminates the narrative's concerns with the discourses of power by situating the double-reader in a position from which s/he can observe — and participate in — the struggle. In the box-within-a-box motif of "A Curious Collection," Paget draws attention to this threshold on which the reader/viewer stands and gazes, this place at once inside and outside the text from which s/he reads the facts of the case. But this iconographic sign also signals the way in which Paget "frames" the reader/viewer's position on many thresholds throughout *The Memoirs*. In "The Adventure of the

Musgrave Ritual" alone, the motif is repeated another three times: first in the plate entitled "He sprang to his feet," which puts the reader/viewer in the place of Musgrave who, with his back to the viewer, looks in through the open library door at the enclosed space which holds the trespassing butler; second, in the plate entitled "This was the place indicated," which is one of the few Paget illustrations framed on all four sides by heavy black lines, and which uses that border to create the effect of looking into a room/box which holds the contemplative Holmes while Musgrave again stands on the threshold of the open door looking in; and third, in the plate entitled "It was the figure of a man," which creates the effect (aided by the letterpress column) of looking into a box with Holmes and Musgrave who peer down from the open trap door at the crumpled figure of the dead butler which hangs over a gaping trunk.

Many of Paget's ninety illustrations for *The Memoirs of Sherlock Holmes* carry out the box-within-the-box motif so powerfully delineated in "A Curious Collection," and repeated with such effect in the sequence of plates for "The Adventure of the Musgrave Ritual."²⁰ Plate after plate depicts figures on thresholds; sometimes these figures are blocked by a solid obstruction; sometimes they pass through openings unimpeded; sometimes

²⁰Paget actually provided ninety-seven drawings for the second series of Holmes stories published in *The Strand*. However, when the stories were published by Newnes in book form as *The Memoirs of Sherlock Holmes*, the second story in the periodical series — "The Adventure of the Cardboard Box" — was omitted because of its adulterous content, and only eleven of the twelve stories were included. One of Paget's drawings for "The Cardboard Box" was used in the book to illustrate the opening of "The Resident Patient." The plate depicts Holmes lounging on the sofa, with Watson in a contemplative pose in the armchair, with a discarded newspaper at his feet. See Klinefelter 16 and 98.

they violently break through closed doors. Even drawings not composed by the tension of this inside/outside design create the effect of an inner box by the way in which they are set into the letterpress. The reader/viewer is confronted on virtually every page with an inset vignette which cuts a hole into the text — a hole to be looked into for traces of the secret. These inner boxes place the reader/viewer on the thresholds of knowledge in the pursuit of truth, a positioning which representational images in general work to achieve. According to Norman Bryson, the "idea of realism in the image" depends on the establishment of a threshold within the representational sign — a threshold which divides the textual or discursive from the figural (*Word and Image* 12). Paget's illustrations of Conan Doyle's text create these thresholds, these divisions between the discursive and the figural, these negotiations between the fixed and the free, the closed and the open. And, like Watson's story-telling, with its own boxes-within-boxes in the form of the embedded narratives of Holmes and his clients, Paget's drawings suggest that in the framing strategies of quotation, in the double-voiced discourses of representation, the "facts of the case" can never be given without the interference of another point of view.

The bi-textual production of the Holmes narratives ensures that the dialogic relations of image and text operate within a specific ideological framework which works to validate its middle-class readership's preoccupations with property, ownership, and the law, while at the same time undermining its assumptions of authority by drawing attention to the ways in which "fact" is fictionally produced by discursive practices. The enormous popularity of H. Rider Haggard's illustrated adventure stories is

also embedded within a cultural discourse of power relations. Certainly adventure's masculinist genre, with its valorization of white middle-class male superiority, offered its readers the reassurances they needed in an era characterized, as Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick has noted, by the "highly visible crisis" of "the power relations between the genders and the relations of nationalism and imperialism" (2). The bi-textuality of *Black Heart and White Heart*, for example, is signally concerned with the issues of sexual and racial superiority within a colonial context.

By setting his story on the frontiers of empire during a specific historical event, Haggard is able to mobilize not only the realistic discourses of history — thereby grounding his romance in a working belief-system — but also to mobilize male fantasies of power because the exotic setting allows for the description of bodily experiences that are (by convention) prohibited within the confines of respectable, civilized, England. Charles Kerr's mechanically-reproduced, full-page illustrations confirm the textual presentation as history because they comprise a series of six figure drawings such as one might expect in biography or travel literature; indeed, they draw on Kerr's expertise as a portrait painter (Houfe 359) to create a reality-effect akin to Paget's Sherlockian portraits. At the same time, however, they exploit the exotic and romantic setting by presenting naked black female flesh in four of the seven plates.²¹ Moreover, since Haggard's narrative displays a deep

²¹The text is actually illustrated by six full-page plates, but one of these, "A very picture of gentle despair," appears twice: once as the frontispiece to the entire volume and then again facing its textual source at the opening of Chapter IV (34). The composition shows Nanca, the Zulu heroine, standing naked beside a pole with a white mantle loosely draped around her, and the sick Philip Hadden lying on the ground behind her.

ambivalence about the empire's assumptions of racial superiority, pitting a noble Zulu Warrior, White Heart, against a mercenary English adventurer, Black Heart, image and text are engaged in a struggle for the dominant representation of the story's meaning, for Kerr's plates consistently establish the point-of-view of the middle-class male's position of power.

The story's setting in the Transvaal at the time of the first English war with the Boers and Zulus (1879) is underwritten by the publication in book form of *Black Heart and White Heart* (1900) at the very moment when the "initial phase of 'imperialistic patriotism'" initiated by the second Boer War was eroding and liberal public feeling began to deplore the war (Ellis 160).²² Thus the text's ambivalence about the issues of British racial superiority and colonial rights were reflected in its turn-of-the-century readers. Since the narrative progresses climactically to the scene of England's first overwhelming imperial defeat — the Isandhlwana massacre of almost 1800 armed British soldiers by Zulu warriors fighting with knobkerries and assegais (Ellis 63) — by way of a story which shows the moral and physical superiority of the black Nahoon over the white Philip Hadden, the story could be read as a critical exposé of the limitations of chauvinism. But not, curiously, of empire. Significantly, the narrative mediates the anxieties mobilized both by the conclusion's chaotic battlefield of inglorious British defeat, and by Philip Hadden's murder by avenging black hands, by providing

²²The story was first published in magazine form in January 1896 by the *Africa Review*. See Ellis's bibliography. In its book publication, under the title *Black Heart and White Heart and Other Stories*, the story was the first of three separate novella-length adventures; also included were "Elissa" and "The Wizard." Charles Kerr also illustrated the last story, but F. H. Townsend illustrated "Elissa."

a reassuring epilogue which indicates that the empire, ultimately, triumphs: "Today Nahoon is one of the Indunas of the English Government in Zululand . . ." (65). Thus, despite its depiction of Zulu superiority on both a national and an individual scale, the narrative actually evokes a belief "in a divine right of a great civilising people — that is, in their divine mission"²³ by showing how a noble African deserves an honorable place within British institutions of power.

Charles Kerr's drawings illuminate the text's ambivalences about white superiority by inverting the representation of the relationships of power to sexuality.²⁴ Like Haggard's epilogue, Kerr's pictorial tactic also has a reassuring effect because it re-locates the (male-positioned) reader into a dominant position. Kerr's strategy is not unlicensed paraphrase, however, but rather authorized quotation, for the adventure *is* preoccupied with the female body as a site of struggle between contending males. Indeed, according to Haggard's "Author's Note," the tale is not an adventure at all, but rather "a story of the courtship, trials and final union of a pair of Zulu lovers in the time of King Cetywayo." In fact, *Black Heart and White Heart* shows nothing of the courtship of Nahoon and Nanea — the couple is already betrothed when the story begins — but rather focuses principally on their trials, for Nahoon's claim to Nanea is challenged first by the fat old chief Maputa, then

²³These words were spoken by Rider Haggard in an introductory address to the Anglo-African Writers' Club at the Grand Hotel, London, on 20 May 1898. Haggard was introducing the keynote speaker, close friend Rudyard Kipling (in Ellis 156).

²⁴See Michel Foucault's work in *The History of Sexuality*, where he argues that the notion of sex which evolved at the end of the nineteenth century "brought about a fundamental reversal: it made it possible to invert the representation of the relationships of power to sexuality . . ." (155).

by King Cetywayo and finally by the white trader, Philip Hadden, in what can be described as an escalating scale of male status and power. If Nahoon "wins the girl," it is only because his "White Heart" gives him the greatest stature.

Haggard's combination of realism (the historical setting, the specific locale, the names of actual people involved in political struggle) and romance (the exotic location, the presence of witch doctors and cannibals, the pools of doom and haunted woods) offered his readers the vicarious pleasures of the armchair adventurer. Kerr's pictures confirm these pleasures because his visualization of the male-fantasy aspects of the narrative gives his viewers voyeuristic satisfactions prohibited in the literature of civilization. Certainly the sensuous exhibition of naked female *white* flesh could never have been allowed in realistic depictions of English courtships.²⁵ Indeed, the contemporary artist Harry Furniss tells the story of how one of his illustrations for a romantic tale was censored by his editor simply because his depiction of a well-dressed middle-class courting couple standing by a garden gate had not included the presence of a chaperone in the background! (Furniss 100-101).²⁶ By escaping civilization's laws of propriety on the

²⁵I stress realistic illustrations here. There was some room for depictions of female nudity in decorative illustrations, as Beardsley's and Muckley's designs attest (See Figs. 15, 17, 20, 22). Although some of Beardsley's pictures were censored, this was usually for "perverse sexuality" rather than for nudity. See Chapter 5.

²⁶Furniss quotes the letter in which the editor rebukes him for his "worldly ways: 'Dear Sir, — Will you kindly give Charles Thorndike a beard, and show an aunt or uncle or some chaperon in the distance; the subject and treatment is hardly suitable otherwise to our young readers'" (101). The demand for a beard on the man is intriguing in this censorship context, and suggests the institutional ways in which concepts of masculinity were — and are — constructed.

frontiers of empire, the image is free to re-present colonial struggle as a property battle located in the black woman's body.

The image's appeal to the salacious appetites of the reader/viewer is evident in the plate "O Black Heart and body that is white and beautiful, I look into your heart" (Fig. 7). The illustration depicts a significant encounter early in the narrative in which Philip Hadden and Nahoon are re-named by a Zulu witch-doctress known as the Bee and their entire story is foretold as the narrative of Black Heart's ultimate defeat by White Heart (15-22). The exotic and romantic setting is established by the swirling spirals of smoke and the mist of the distant cataract, the rude enclosure dotted with a circle of human skulls, and the dramatic encounter of the naked Bee and the two men. Despite the textual representation of Nahoon as Hadden's superior in every way, his portrait here suggests that he is both physically and intellectually *inferior*, for he stands behind the white trader in a slumped posture signifying native fear and superstition. On the other hand, Hadden's strong and indifferent posture, with his legs set wide and his hands akimbo on his hips, signals the civilized rational man's superiority to the mumbo-jumbo of African spirituality. But the image's ideological point of view is most evident in the presentation of the Bee herself. Although the witch-doctress is described in the text as an "old lady" whom Hadden conventionally addresses as "mother" (16), the image re-presents her with a young and nubile body. This depiction manages to subvert and quote the text at the same time, for the narrative does concede that "She was still a finely-shaped woman" (17). Thus the dialogic relations of image and text allow the reader/viewer to enjoy the fantasy that all naked female flesh is sexually available and physically

attractive. Indeed, Kerr's luminous highlights on the Bee's breasts and thighs, and his positioning of her in a posture potentially available to both the dominant white male of the plate and to the penetrating male gaze of the viewer — but not to the Zulu warrior — suggest that, as a property, woman is subject to sexual colonization in the same way that Africa is subject to racial colonization.

The quotational image in *Black Heart and White Heart* works dialogically with the narrative to produce a bi-textual meaning which shows the extent to which *fin-de-siècle* adventure literature's principal project was to confirm the contemporary ideology in which "Manhood was the affirmed or superior term in dozens of value-bearing polarities of thought" (Green 41). This patriarchal discourse allows the verbal narrative to define Nahoon's superiority as a *man* to Hadden while at the same time licensing the pictorial text to re-define gender superiority in terms of white power. The mysteries of colonial Africa become aligned with the secrets of the female body: both are constructed as objects subject to the authoritative male gaze. This representation of the story's meaning is the product of the dialogic relations of picture and word. Although the narrative itself displays uncertainties about the inherent superiority of the middle-class Englishman, the artist as critic's compositional choices and strategies work to mediate textual anxieties by offering a reading of the text which confirms the reader/viewer's sense of authority and gives him a position of power within the text.

The image/text dialogue of *Perfervoid* also produces a bi-textual meaning in which the pictures homogenize the word's unpleasant or uncomfortable implications. The bi-textual problem here is indicated by the

combination of quotational illustrations with an ironic and fantastic narrative. John Davidson's *Perferoid* is a novel whose bi-partite form, disunified styles, and ironic engagement with the romantic adventure genre, work to displace the reader's assumptions about the possibilities of an ordered representation of life — and therefore, ultimately, about the existence of a sanctioned authority. The book's first part, "The Career of Ninian Jamieson," tells the dramatic and comic story of "the man who would be king." Ninian Jamieson, having determined that he is destined for greatness, decides to establish himself as the King of Scotland, as the true descendent of the Stuart line. Since his campaign includes reviving the customs of his ancestors, he presses Cosmo Mortimer, a little man with passionate theories, into his service as a court-jester. Dressed in the Elizabethan attire of the courtier and the fool, Ninian and Cosmo depart in the dead of night to begin their quest. However, they get no farther than a few miles away, where Ninian meets and falls in love with his cousin Marjory Morton. The next morning Jamieson discovers he is bankrupt and, forced to give up his quest, settles down in Mintern to be a grocer.

The second part, "The Pilgrimage of Strongsoul and Saunders Elshander," is a narrative told by Cosmo Mortimer twelve years later to his Great Men's Club. He tells a story related to him that morning by Ninian himself about his son's quest for greatness in the form of Christian's pilgrimage to the Celestial City. In the company of his squire (the grocer's boy, Saunders), Strongsoul engages in a series of improbable and increasingly violent adventures which culminate in the murder of "Grislybeard," the rescue of the Duke of Moredun's daughter from this villain's clutches, and

the conferment of honor by Queen Victoria herself. Although *Perfervid* presents itself as a romantic adventure story (or stories), with multi-generic references to the authenticating forms of biography, quest romance, and Christian pilgrimage, the text's ironic stance suggests that its actual project is to interrogate and undermine the notion of "authorized" representation. As Mary O'Connor's work on Davidson demonstrates, "Ambivalence is often at the core of Davidson's work as he continually adopts some traditional form and then proceeds to dismantle and subvert all its constituent parts" because his "Utopian goal [is] to do away with all conventional limitations, including genres — in order to describe the world in which he lived. . ." (12, 13).

A well-known and popular *Punch* artist, Harry Furniss approaches Davidson's text from the point of view of the comic pictorial journalist, supplying both full-page plates and inset vignettes to illustrate the narrative. Like all quotational illustrations, these images authenticate the textual experience by grounding its story in the material world. Moreover, because *Perfervid's* story is fantastic, Furniss's realistic drawings lend the bizarre narrative credibility. According to Diana Johnson, the Victorians had a predilection for realism in fantastic illustration — a preference which originated in Ruskin's critical writings, with their insistence on precise and accurate detail in the rendering of stories, no matter how fanciful (9).²⁷ Before turning his hand to the *Perfervid* illustrations, Furniss had already distinguished himself as a fantastic realist with his illustrations to Lewis Carroll's *Sylvie and Bruno* (1889), and his *Perfervid* drawings suggest that he

²⁷See "Fairy Land," Ruskin's fourth lecture in *The Art of England* series delivered at Oxford while he was a Slade Professor (especially 149-155).

reads Davidson's ironic social narrative as roughly the same kind of book as Carroll's children's story.²⁸ As visual critic of *Perfervid*, Furniss produces a reading of the story which is both literal and subversive. His focus on the high-spirited aspects of the narrative asks the reader to enter a fairytale world where laughter is a comforting communal chuckle at fantasy's escapist project. This literal representation of the fantastic aspect of Davidson's story works by suppressing its complex ironic stance. However, because Furniss quotes only one aspect of the narrative — an aspect which the text itself critiques — laughter becomes a displacing energy which separates image and text into ironically polarized realms of meaning.

Although Davidson's meta-fictional playing with multiple discourses is comic and entertaining, the text is actually engaged in exploring the serious problem of representation itself — with how both individuals and institutions are determined by the authoritative cultural narratives of power such as chivalric romance, Christian pilgrimage, capitalism, nationalism, imperialism, heroism. Thus *Perfervid* is pre-occupied with the issues of fact and fiction, the thresholds of life and art on which meaning is constructed. Indeed, both Ninian's and Strongsoul's quests for greatness actually constitute a search for self-identity defined as finding one's appropriate narrative.

Ninian formulates his quest — and his identity as a great man — as a result of his "two passions common to boys — novel-reading and exploring"

²⁸Indeed, there is a similarity in graphic style in these two books which is in part accounted for by Furniss's practice of using his own children — two boys and a girl — exclusively for his models in all his drawings of children. See Furniss 114.

(31). By the time he is eighteen, he has abated his passion for fiction by reading two thousand novels, but, as he tells Cosmo Mortimer, his other passion "continues unabated; and I have been all over Europe, not in trains, but on my feet, or on horseback" (32). He gave up reading novels because he had begun to read Scotch history; and it was this reading which led him to the discovery that he is the the "sole representative of . . . [the Stuart] branch, . . . legitimately, and by divine right, Ninian I., King of Great Britain, France and Ireland" (42, 44). Thus he found his "true self" (45), but it was not until he read Carlyle's *Heroes and Hero-worship* that he felt "in myself the power to govern Britain as it has never been governed." His views of rule include imperialist expansion on an enormous scale: the re-colonization of all the English-speaking world, including America, the destruction of the Russian empire, the Christianization of Turkey, the peopling of Africa and the opening of China, and, in short, the mission "to dictate to the world" (48-49). Not surprisingly, Ninian's imperialism is founded not only on a belief in the right to power of great men, but also on a belief in racial superiority: "the more absolute the monarchy the more marked the nationality"; thus, Ninian I. will be an absolute monarch, and Scottish nationalism will regain its former glory (99). But even such grandiose dreams must have a material base, and when Jamieson becomes a bankrupt due to capitalist speculation, he is forced to admit that "My money and my dreams have melted away . . ." (125). Without "the power of money" (126), Ninian can aspire to no political power, and must revert to the life of the petty-bourgeois grocer in Mintern. The irony is that Ninian's life as a middle-class shopkeeper with a wife and a

son is reported to be a happy and even enviable one, as Cosmo Mortimer testifies twelve years later (139).

Strongsoul has apparently inherited his father's passion for reading and for adventure, but in the son the narrative desire has intensified itself into the reading and re-reading of a single book. Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*, the boy tells Saunders, is "the greatest book in the world. Once you have read it you don't need, and you don't want, to read any other. All that you want to do is to become a pilgrim" (153). Thus, when Strongsoul embarks on his quest for greatness, his narrative is structured by Greatheart's pilgrimage. Although he learns early on in his quest that he is wrong to expect "that everything would happen to me just as it happened to Christian" (153), he remains adept at re-formulating his experiences to bring them in line with those of his textual model. Physically re-living the life of Christian, of course, involves literalizing and materializing the spiritual, and it is in this tension between the spiritual and the material — or the fictional and the physical — that Strongsoul's pilgrimage must be understood. Because Strongsoul's quest is also motivated by the capitalist narrative of class, in which it is inherently right that the grocer's boy, Saunders, should be the squire and pack-bearer to the grocer's son, Strongsoul, the middle-class myth of upward mobility also enters the narrative. In an ironic contrast to his father's material quest, Strongsoul's spiritual pilgrimage is materially rewarded by the Queen herself, who professes herself to be "very much amused" (247) by his exploits at story's end. If Ninian's quest for political power results in the down-scaled life of the Scottish tradesman, his son's quest for spiritual aggrandizement

apparently results in the promise of political power in the shape of a seat in the British House of Lords as Lord Strongsoul of Dunmyatt (250).

Perfervid's material/spiritual dialectic is signified by the text's obsession with the relations between names and power: "Change the name and you change the thing" (118).²⁹ This theory — one of many put forward by Cosmo Mortimer in the book's first half — may also be viewed as the central problem of *Perfervid's* image/text dialogue. Since Part One is in many ways a high-spirited spoof on the conventions of the romantic adventure, while Part Two uses the form of adventure fantasy to explore the darker implications of the genre, the dialogic relations of image and text become increasingly tense in "The Pilgrimage of Strongsoul." Book Two shows how the hero alters names and things to create his own fictional universe. Beginning with his own name, the boy changes the people and objects of his world by re-naming them according to the experiences of Greatheart in *Pilgrim's Progress*. Travelling with an oaken staff and a heavy burden, Strongsoul reads the material world allegorically: by naming the men and women he meets on his pilgrimage giants and giantesses, he makes their bodies figural. Having thus changed their reality by the power of naming, Strongsoul is authorized to do battle with vagrants of all kinds, maiming and wounding both men and women, and eventually killing a man. Significantly, all those whom he violently attacks occupy a lower class

²⁹Mortimer's name-changing/thing-changing theory concludes a misogynist (and ironic) reading of the "real" world in which he argues that women are fools, and their only hope for wisdom is to change their appellation to "men": "All children must be called boys, and all adults men. It's infallible. Change the name and you change the thing." The evidence for his argument is that women writers only manage to write great novels by assuming male names such as George Eliot, George Sand, and Currer Bell (118).

status than does Strong soul, and the ultimate effect of this class struggle is to advance the boy out of his own bourgeois identity into the ranks of the aristocracy.

Furniss's illustrations are assimilated by Strong soul's fictions to the extent that he takes the boy's constructed experience as the actual ground for his images. Thus Furniss represents the wayfarer whom the boy names "Grislybeard" as a literal giant rather than as the ordinary man he presumably is (Fig. 8). Not only the size and girth of the man's limbs, but also his wild hair and his curious bare-legged garb, signal that this image represents a giant from the iconographic tradition of fairytale representation. Moreover, Furniss's depiction of Strong soul here and elsewhere in the text confirms that the boy is the hero he calls himself: the small figure raises his cudgel ready to do battle with evil against all odds, while his squire (the grocer's boy, Saunders) grips the giant's collar from behind to enable the knight to strike the vanquishing blow. By simultaneously quoting the conventions of fairyland and Strong soul's representation of his experience, Furniss's drawing makes the figurative literal. However, the assimilation of the image to one character's viewpoint results in its alienation from the narrative as a whole to the extent that the dialogic relations of picture and word ironically expose the fictionality of Strong soul's — and Furniss's — reading. "Grislybeard" is not, in fact, a giant, but an "ill-enough-looking man" who "was walking very fast, like one who had some important business awaiting him . . . ". Moreover, the text's ironic stance illuminates the critical distance between the "real" ground and Strong soul's figurative reading, for the traveller "would certainly have passed the pilgrims had Strong soul not

stepped in front of him and said, 'I know thee. Thou art giant Grislybeard, and thou hast slain many pilgrims whom thou hast dragged out of the king's highway; but now I will avenge their blood upon thee. Wherefore, come on'" (180).

Although Strong soul reads his pilgrimage allegorically, the reader lacks his conviction, for the text disrupts the reading experience by willfully vacillating between literal and figural presentations. The narrative is narcissistic and meta-fictional to the extent that the reader is manipulated into two contradictory positions with regard to the text: acceptance of Strong soul's fictional world — whereby the reader agrees to read the narrative as fantasy — and criticism of the implications of that fictional world — whereby the reader refuses to accept that re-naming changes things. Both these attitudes toward Strong soul's fictionalizing are present in the text itself which, far from being the innocent fairytale which Furniss's illustrations represent, is actually in dialogue with and against itself about the nature of reality, of spirituality, of greatness, of heroism, of power. We are indeed gullible readers, conned by a duplicitous narrative, if we forget that the man named Grislybeard "had no intention of doing them any harm" (180), or if we accept without question the Queen's acquittal of Strong soul's murderous crime and her promotion of him into the "Celestial City" as represented by an Oxford education and an English title with eventual entrance into the House of Lords. This is, after all, a very material ending to a spiritual quest.

The text keeps the reader guessing as to the real nature of Strong soul's experience by subverting both the figural and the literal readings of its narrative. On the one hand, the detail that "there was no royal visit to the

Duke of Moredun last summer" (253) — the time when Strongsoul's pilgrimage allegedly occurred — undermines the reader's belief not only in the boy's experience, but also, significantly, in the seriousness with which one is to take the material reward for his exploits. On the other hand, the revelation that the man named "Grislybeard" does indeed become one who drags people off the highway to slay them — first because he captures and imprisons Strongsoul and Saunders, but most importantly because he turns out to be a mercenary hired to abduct and kill Pansy, the Duke of Moredun's only child — displaces the reader's skepticism in the notion that re-naming changes things. Ultimately, the reader's experience of *Perfervid* is one of manipulation, a dramatic pulling in and out of the contexts of life and art, in which the distance between reality and representation is shown to be a conventional one. Furniss's illustrations do not quote this internal dialogue, but rather re-present one side of the argument. Like Strongsoul's reading of *Pilgrim's Progress*, Furniss's reading of *Perfervid* is uncritically literal. The subversive effect of this literality is its masking of the narrative's self-criticism to the extent that the reader/viewer could receive this bi-textual product not as social criticism, not as meta-fictional interrogation of the nature of reality, but rather as the story of a wandering boy with a vivid imagination.³⁰ Furniss's quotational strategy works within what Roland

³⁰This is indeed the way in which Davidson's biographer, J. Benjamin Townsend, receives the narrative. Since he calls attention to Furniss's illustrations, and names "The Pilgrimage of Strongsoul" a "delightful study of a child's imagination," within the confines of a single sentence, I suspect that his reading has in fact been influenced by the visual representation of the story (161). Earlier in the biography, however, Townsend grounds his reading of the text in Davidson's life, saying that by the age of six the writer was a daily reader of *Pilgrim's Progress*, and that "In his whimsical story, "The

Barthes calls "the code of literalness," which depends on the assumption "that the word has only one meaning: the right one" (*Criticism and Truth* 39). Davidson's text, however, critiques the literalist code by putting into play many meanings at once. Thus the bi-textual production of meaning in *Perfervid* is a struggle between image and text for the dominant representation of the story which aligns itself to the book's own preoccupations with the material ways by which meaning is structured.

While quotational illustrations in general operate within the assumptions of the literalist code, they also work to expose its limitations by mobilizing many meanings and by illuminating the cultural conflicts in which representations are made. Literality assumes that one-to-one correspondences are possible between image and word, between image and world, and between word and world. Thus we have authoritative discourses which insist on accuracy in journalism and faithfulness in illustration. As we have seen, however, such comfortingly anchored representations are not available to the producers (or receivers) of either journalistic reportage or quotational illustration. If the quotational image's accuracy in the illustrated book is like virtue in a woman, then bi-textuality shows the degree to which the image is engaged in establishing its own agendas and its own self-definitions, its own discourses of power and knowledge. Indeed, bi-textuality's dialogic relationships critique the assumptions behind the literalist code by drawing attention, in a variety of methods and gestures, to the gaps which perforate image/world/word, and by illuminating the ways in

"Pilgrimage of Strong soul" (1890), he was to record the impact of this book upon the imagination of a sensitive, fanciful boy" (35).

which all representations participate in — and produce — cultural discourses. The reader/viewer of quotational illustrated books stands on a threshold whose grounds constantly shift and whose footholds are insecure. In the end, the representations of image and word are not determined by their correspondences with each other or the world, but rather by the reader's critical effort at making meaning out of the confirmations and contradictions of the dialogic crossing of visual and verbal texts.

CHAPTER FOUR

IMPRESSION

The critic is he who can translate into another manner or a new material his impression of beautiful things.

Oscar Wilde, *The Picture of Dorian Gray*

"Picture and poem," according to Dante Gabriel Rossetti, the progenitor of *fin-de-siècle* decorative illustrators, "bear the same relation to each other as beauty does in man and woman: the point of meeting where the two are most identical is the supreme perfection" (*Collected Works* 1.510). Following Rossetti's lead, art-nouveau artists sought to create a new beauty and a new perfection in illustrated books by asserting the image's right to autonomous creation, thereby emasculating the authority of the engendering word. The result is a blurring of gender/genre roles of signification in the illustrated book which declares itself in a new bi-sexual and/or bi-textual form. Indeed, the dialogues between image and text show that the illustrated book's form and content both participated in *fin-de-siècle* cultural discourses. As many recent writers have demonstrated, anxieties surrounding sexuality and gender roles — synecdochically represented in the popular imagination by images of the "masculine" New Woman and the "effeminate" decadent — produced new discourses in the late nineteenth century which both structured and fractured the period's forms of knowledge

and power.¹ If nineties' commentators like Max Beerbohm, for example, saw the "amalgamation of the sexes" as "one of the chief planks in the decadent platform" ("A Defence of Cosmetics," in Beckson, *Aesthetes and Decadents* 159), art-nouveau illustrators made bi-sexuality one of the principal concerns of aesthetic bi-textuality.

Rossetti's analogy illuminates not only the style and artistic/critical approach of his *fin-de-siècle* inheritors, but also their characteristic motif: figures of ambiguous gender. In a decade of high sexual anxiety,² the decadent consciousness of nineties' art-nouveau illustrators was obsessed with threshold themes — the androgyne, the sphinx, the satyr. This obsession is emblemized by the anarchic roles of image and text in decadent or aesthetic books inspired by Rossetti's decorative approach to illustration. As William Vaughan points out, the originality of Rossetti's illustration theory lies in his unusual inversion of traditional gender roles for image/text relations, for — unlike any contemporary commentator — Rossetti assigns the *male* role to the picture and the *female* role to the text (in Möller 158). By rejecting the traditional "female" role of passive and subordinate reflector of the word, nineties illustrators who followed Rossetti's lead took on the "male" roles of active and independent invention. If the traditional assignation of female/male roles to image/text relations still holds good for the art-nouveau

¹See, for example, Bram Dijkstra's *Idols of Perversity*, Linda Dowling's "The Decadent and the New Woman in the 1890's," Elaine Showalter's *Sexual Anarchy*, Eve Sedgwick's *Epistemology of the Closet*, and, of course, Michel Foucault's *History of Sexuality*.

²For a good overview of the images of sexual crises that typify *fin-de-siècle* art, see Elaine Showalter, *Sexual Anarchy: Gender and Culture at the Fin de Siècle*.

book, then illustrations produced by decorative artists become the anarchic "New Women" of bi-textuality, insisting on their right to speak in their own voice, to create autonomous systems of meaning, and to be equal in all respects to their textual counterpart, most often the work of a decadent writer.³

Rossetti's illustration theory and Wilde's critical theory illuminate the practice of artists whose main objective in decorating a verbal text was to record their own impressions in a new and beautiful form. Because he was clearly unconcerned with finding visual analogues for the text, Rossetti's designs for Moxon's *Tennyson* introduced a new decorative approach to late Victorian book illustration — an approach which, by the end of the century, had freed itself "of the traditional constraints of representation" to the extent that images could exist "in the book as a kind of autonomous alternative to the text" (Vaughan in Möller 159). What interested Rossetti in Tennyson's "Palace of Art," for example, was not the text itself so much as the opportunity it gave him, as he said, to "allegorise on one's own hook, without killing for oneself and everyone a distinct idea of the poet's" (in Salaman 3). In other words, Rossetti treated the text in the way that Wilde

³See Linda Dowling, "The Decadent and the New Woman," for an interesting study of the historical affinities — both in the public perception and in the practitioners' own art and objectives — between the New Woman and the decadent. But see also Showalter, who in *Sexual Anarchy* examines two mutually exclusive, yet co-existing, contemporary perceptions of the relationship between the New Woman and the homosexual — one based on identity (amalgamation of the sexes) and one on difference (polarization of the sexes). Both writers agree that the popular press of the period saw both the New Woman and the decadent/homosexual as harbingers of social apocalypse and cultural decline.

was later to say critics should: "simply as the starting-point for a new creation" ("The Critic as Artist," *Complete Works* 1029).

Indeed, in language which recalls Wilde's "The Critic as Artist," contemporary art critic R. E. D. Sketchley praises Rossetti's innovative (and influential) approach to illustration: "Not the words of the text, nor those things precisely affirmed by the writer, but the spell of significance and of beauty that held his [Rossetti's] mind to the exclusion of other images, gave him inspiration for his drawings" (2). Sketchley locates the "interpretative" ideal in modern illustration in the work of the decorative black-and-white artists who, like Rossetti, sought to realize "The intellectual idea of illustration, as a personal interpretation of the spirit of the text" (56). The decorative illustrators she cites as her examples are all art-nouveau artists: Walter Crane, Laurence Housman, Charles Ricketts, Charles Shannon, T. Sturge Moore, William Brown Macdougall, Granville Fell and Patten Wilson.⁴ What makes their illustrations beautiful and imaginative is "The deliberate and inventive character of their art" (56) which, like Wilde's own interpretive ideal, moves the ground for representation out of the verbal text and into the mind of the artist as critic.

Unlike quotational illustrators, who produce "factual" images in the journalistic style, decorative illustrators self-consciously produce personal responses to the texts they embellish. Far from subordinating their personal vision and artistic concerns to those of the writer, these "intellectual" artists strive to realize and embody their own ideas, often in the form of

⁴Sketchley unaccountably omits from her analysis the most famed and influential decorative illustrator of all the nineties artists, Aubrey Beardsley.

idiosyncratic and highly personal symbols and motifs which have little direct relation to the verbal text. Recognizing their innovative approach to the form, art-nouveau artists typically avoided the term "illustration," preferring to call their images "decorations," "embellishments," "embroideries," "semblances," "designs," and the like. The refusal of art-nouveau illustrators to subordinate their visual art to the verbal art of the writer could result in either a new balance in the marriage of image and text or in an anarchic power struggle for the dominant representation. The first occurs most often in books whose image/text relations are governed by "impression"; the second in bi-textual relations governed by "parody."

"Impression" in image/text relations refers not to artistic style but to critical approach; indeed, in terms of art history, impressionist art is clearly unlike the linear and symbolic techniques of art nouveau. "Impression," however, is a term used both by contemporary art nouveau and literary theorists to describe their work. Art-nouveau illustrator Laurence Housman, for example, called William Blake — the artistic inspiration for both Rossetti and the black-and-white artists who followed him — "the true impressionist, who 'ever drew what he saw as it impressed him'" (Engen 32). Similarly, in his article on "The Decadent Movement in Literature" (1893), Arthur Symons argued that "the terms Impressionism and Symbolism define correctly enough the two main branches" of the Decadent movement, and suggested that decadent writers "who flash before us certain aspects of the poetry of London" are merely doing what the impressionist painter, "Whistler had ever done, and in another art" (in Beckson, *Aesthetes and Decadents* 136, 150).

As a critical approach to art, "impression" is essentially an individualist aesthetic, initiated in Walter Pater's *The Renaissance* and later developed by Oscar Wilde, particularly in *Intentions*. Pater had argued in his Preface that the critic's role is not objective and disinterested as Matthew Arnold's famous dictum would have it, but rather subjective and personal: "'To see the object as in itself it really is,' has been justly said to be the aim of all true criticism whatever; and in aesthetic criticism the first step towards seeing one's object as it really is, is to know one's own impression as it really is, to discriminate it, to realise it distinctly" (xix). In his famous essay, "The Critic as Artist," Wilde reiterates much of his master's notion that the function of criticism is not to describe the object but rather to delineate the subject's perception when he asserts that the critic's "sole aim is to chronicle his own impressions" and that the highest criticism is "the purest form of personal impression" (*Complete Works* 1028, 1026). Arguing that criticism is like decorative art because it is not imitative and seeks no resemblance, Wilde asserts that criticism "seeks to reveal its own secret and not the secret of another" (*Complete Works* 1031-32, 1028). Both Wilde's critic and the decorative illustrator are engaged, not in reflecting their texts, but rather in what Bakhtin calls *consummating* their texts. Noting his inalienable difference from the *other* — the personal friend, the fictional character, the text itself — Bakhtin speaks of "that excess of seeing which opens out from this, my own, place outside him [i.e., the other]," which enables his reading experience to "enframe him, create a consummating environment for him out of this excess of my own seeing, knowing, desiring, and feeling" (*Art and Answerability* 25). In their role of artist as critic, decorative illustrators are not

concerned with any "literal" correspondence between their images and nature or between their images and the text. Neither the world nor the word provide the ground for their figures. Rather, in books such as *The Sphinx* (1894) by Oscar Wilde and Charles Ricketts, and *Songs of Love and Death* (1896) or *Thames Sonnets and Semblances* (1897) by Margaret Armour and William Brown Macdougall, the artists seek to realize and chronicle their own impressions in a new material — decorative art-nouveau lines — and to consummate bi-textuality with their own ways of seeing, knowing, desiring, and feeling.

The Sphinx is frequently identified as the quintessentially "decadent" book produced in the nineties. There are various reasons for this, running the gamut from biographical/historical factors to issues related to subject matter and to linguistic concerns. Its author, of course, was seen by his contemporaries as not only the typical aesthete, but also as the most notorious "decadent" of his day. When one considers that the term "decadence" was a nineties' euphemism for "homosexuality" (Showalter, *Sexual Anarchy* 171), that *The Sphinx* was the first of Wilde's works "to hint at 'hidden vices'" and the last of his works published before his trial and incarceration, and that the author himself avowed that he delayed its publication because "it would destroy domesticity in England" (Hyde 31), one is not surprised that the social/moral meanings of decadence have traditionally been applied to the poem. Moreover, *The Sphinx* touches all the strings on the *fin-de-siècle* decadent's harp: French poetry and painting's fascination with the Egyptian Sphinx, the obsessive concern with sexuality and specifically with "strange

lusts," the re-animation of myth or the classical past with a modern spirit of exhaustion, the *femme fatale* and homoerotic yearning. Equally with its social context and its subject matter, however, language and style also make *The Sphinx* a decadent poem. As Linda Dowling's work on *Language and Decadence* demonstrates, decadent literature is "a counterpoetics of disruption and parody and stylistic derangement, a critique not so much of Wordsworthian nature as of the metaphysics involved in any sentimental notion of a simple world of grass and trees and flowers. The world as it then survives in Decadent writing is by contrast a belated world, a place of hesitations and contrarities and exhaustions" (x). Moreover, according to Gayatri Spivak, one must understand decadent style principally as a literary language whose "reference seems to be not to a world of nature but always to a world already made into artifice" (227). Thus decadent writing implies a kind of parodic and self-conscious inter-textuality.⁵

When Wilde responded to the accusation that the meter of *The Sphinx* was that of Tennyson's *In Memoriam* with the grave reply, "No, it is printed quite differently" (Hyde 31), his wit, as usual, was both funny and à propos. His remark foregrounds the decadent notion of written language as fundamentally artificial: autonomous, willful, and arbitrary.⁶ Transforming Tennyson's envelope quatrains into octosyllabic couplets does in fact alter the

⁵In this regard see Michele Hannoosh's detailed study of *Parody and Decadence* as it relates to late nineteenth-century French writers. Hannoosh develops a theory of parody based on "an intertextual, and specifically Riffaterrean, model of literary theory" (3).

⁶See Linda Dowling, *Language and Decadence*, for a full analysis of decadent language and style as an autonomous artificial dialect.

effects of both rhythm and rhyme. In the attenuation of the long drawn-out lines the hidden rhymes interlace, become decorative arabesques which ornament the lines like carefully-placed jewels whose value as unique word is as important — if not more so — as semantic meaning. By narcissistically drawing attention to its own artifice in its lusting after strange rhymes (catafalque/Amenalk; obelisks/Basilisks; Hieroglyphs/Hippogriffs; sarcophagus/ Tregelaphos, and the like), the poem offers a counterpoetics of linguistic and aesthetic disruption. Indeed, Wilde's use of Tennyson's verse pattern is a parasitization of the host form in a self-conscious and deliberate parody typical of decadent writing.⁷ *The Sphinx* parodies *In Memoriam's* desire for physical connection over time and space with the unattainable love object, mimics the earlier poem's ambiguous attitude to the consolation of the Christian faith, and exploits its homoerotic subtext. Other intertextual references are, of course, to the writings of Poe, Swinburne, and Baudelaire, among others, and to the paintings of Gustave Moreau, although for Ricketts, as we shall see, the poem's most important reference points are Keats and Pater. But *The Sphinx* is also engaged in self-parody. Wilde's jewelled and luxurious poetic style, with its loving attention to the unique word, delights in showing, as Dowling suggests, "how complete a world can be fashioned out of mere archaisms and argot" (*Language and Decadence* 144).⁸ If *The Sphinx*

⁷In *Decadent Style*, John Reed argues that "Decadent art is self-conscious. It knows what it is doing to its host form and sometimes manifests that self-consciousness as self-parody" (10).

⁸In this passage Dowling is not speaking of *The Sphinx* specifically, but of the parodic mode in Victorian literary Decadence generally. Her description of "argot and archaisms" derives from Wilde's description of Huysmans' *A Rebours* in *The Picture of Dorian Gray*.

is a poem about desire and seduction by the flesh, it dilates upon its subject in a style concerned with aesthetic desire and seduction by language.⁹

The illustrator's response to this art of seduction is a fascinating piece of visual criticism, appreciation, and insight. In some ways Oscar Wilde and Charles Ricketts are a perfect bi-textual couple. Like Wilde, Ricketts was an aesthete, a homosexual, and a raconteur. Unlike Wilde, who professed to live for art but spent most of his mature life in expensive social dissipation, Ricketts lived for art to the extent of foregoing meals and transportation so that he could produce and collect works of art. Unlike Wilde's promiscuous and flamboyant sexuality, Ricketts lived in a quiet way with his friend and artistic partner, Charles Shannon, for fifty years. But like Wilde, Ricketts was a vivid and entertaining conversationalist who could hold the floor by the force of his personality, the acerbity of his wit, the fascination of his opinions and the astonishing breadth of his knowledge. Although his senior by twelve years, Wilde viewed Ricketts as his equal, and spoke of his home in the Vale with Shannon as "the one place in London where you will never be bored" (Raymond 37). Finally, like Wilde, Ricketts was influenced by both Rossetti and Pater and was fascinated by French painting (particularly the work of Gustave Moreau) and literature (especially Baudelaire).¹⁰ Curiously, his first professional drawing outside hack illustration for magazines dealt with the

⁹See Regenia Gagnier, who argues that *The Sphinx* "is the summa of Wilde's art-as-seduction." Gagnier identifies Wilde as the seducer-Sphinx, and Marcel Schwob, the book's dedicatee, as the student (44-45). But see also Barbara Charlesworth, who sees *The Sphinx* as a self-seducing piece of auto-eroticism (61).

¹⁰The biographical details in this paragraph are taken from Delaney's biography of Ricketts and Ellmann's biography of Wilde.

"Sphinx" theme, and he continued to draw and sculpt versions of this ambiguous mythological creature for most of his life.¹¹

The Sphinx was a poem that Wilde spent some years producing¹² and, according to one reviewer, had "long had a reputation in MS" before it was published in 1894 (Beckson, *Oscar Wilde* 165). Certainly Charles Ricketts heard Wilde reading from *The Sphinx* manuscript at the Vale long before he saw the completed poem he "built, decorated and bound" for John Lane and Elkin Mathews at the Bodley Head (Ricketts, *Defence* 24). Although Ricketts had done previous work as both an illustrator and a book designer, *The Sphinx* was, according to T. Sturge Moore, "the first book which Ricketts made one thing from cover to cover" ("Introduction"), for he was entirely responsible for its physical production, including choice of paper, cover design, decorations, overseeing printing, binding, and so forth (Nelson 96-7). The text, comprised of eighty-five couplets, is distributed unequally on the pages, with the divisions determined by the artist's sense of design: "the small

¹¹After seeing some of Ricketts' illustrative work in the *Magazine of Art* and *Black and White*, Lord Frederic Leighton, president of the Royal Academy, commissioned him to do a drawing on the subject of his own choice, "of the same imaginative and fanciful character as those I have seen." Ricketts drew "Oedipus and the Sphinx," a drawing inspired by Gustave Moreau's work, who was a major influence on Ricketts (Delaney 46- 48). Ricketts continued to produce work inspired by the Sphinx, including a second series of "Sphinx" drawings designed around 1908 for an American edition of Wilde's poem which was never in fact published. Ricketts' drawings introduce a whole new series of symbolic motifs into his Sphinx repertoire. Unlike the delicate and restrained 1894 plates, these drawings are outsize, aggressive, and painful, with images of bondage, constraint, and agonized desire. Calloway includes reproductions of both "Sphinx" series.

¹²According to Montgomery Hyde, *The Sphinx* "was begun about 1875, when Wilde was an undergraduate, more or less completed in Paris in 1883, subject to minor alterations during the next ten years and eventually published in book form — with 'decorations' by Charles Ricketts — by Elkin Mathews and John Lane in 1894" (30).

bulk of the text and unusual length of lines necessitated," as he said, "quite a peculiar arrangement of the text."¹³ The peculiar arrangement extends to the design of the opening pages, for the decorative title page is on the verso, facing the first page of the text.¹⁴ The poem is printed in capitals throughout, in an effort, as Ricketts said, "towards a book marked by surviving classical traits."¹⁵ Classical traits were also to be found in the pictures, in which the artist attempted "to evolve what one might imagine as possible in one charmed moment or place" through the eclectic combination of "those affinities in line work broadcast in all epochs." Ricketts identified *The Sphinx* as "the first book of the modern revival printed in three colours" (*Defence* 25), a feature which contributes to the book's unusual charm. While the text is printed in black ink, and the initials, the catch words, and the lettering on the title page are in bright green, the running titles and the illustrations are in rusty-red. Printed in a limited edition of only 250 copies, much of which was destroyed in a fire at the Ballantyne Press,¹⁶ *The Sphinx* is an extremely rare

¹³In his review in the *Pall Mall Gazette*, W. E. Henley (a determined opposer of "decadence" in literature) took particular exception to this aspect of the book's design: "the distribution of these precious eighty-five is about as Fin-De-Siècle a business as you ever saw: for on one page there are as many as nine, and on another there are as few as one, and on another you shall count some five, and on another yet are four, or six, or two, as Providence hath willed" (in Beckson, *Oscar Wilde* 168).

¹⁴This was a feature of the Kelmscott Press book as well — a practical example of Morris's theory (which Ricketts shared) that the opening should be treated as a single unit. Laurence Housman often uses the double-page opening method by facing the frontispiece to the title page and uniting them in a single decorative border. This decorative feature is also present in Beardsley's *Salome* designs (see Chapter 5).

¹⁵See the half-page plate, "The Moon-Horned lo" (Fig. 9), for an example of Ricketts' page design and lettering.

and beautiful example of a nineties' aesthetic bi-textual product. Indeed, it deserves its reputation as "perhaps the most remarkable book of the period" (Philip James 58).

Critical reviews of *The Sphinx* were mixed, but generally unenthusiastic.¹⁷ The book did not sell and was, like all of Wilde's publications, a financial disaster. Ricketts attributes the book's failure to the Bodley Head's publication earlier that year of Wilde's *Salome*, with Beardsley's bourgeoisie-shocking decorations (Raymond 38).¹⁸ According to his biographer, J. G. P. Delaney, "The novelty of Ricketts's brilliant and original designs was lost after the shock and scandal of Beardsley's work, which not only contained erotic elements but also openly caricatured Wilde" (82). Ricketts himself considered the *Sphinx* drawings his best work as an illustrator, but admitted that Wilde did not agree with his estimation: "Wilde's verdict on my *Sphinx* designs was different. 'No, my dear Ricketts, your drawings are not of your best. You have seen through your intellect, not your temperament'" (Raymond 38).

¹⁶Ricketts mentions the loss of "a considerable portion" of the unsold copies of *The Sphinx* at the Ballantyne Press in his *Oscar Wilde: Recollections* (38), which he "co-published" in 1932 with the imaginary French author, Jean Paul Raymond, a writer Ricketts had first invented in 1929 in his privately issued *Beyond the Threshold* which he pretended was his translation of Raymond's French.

¹⁷See Karl Beckson, *Oscar Wilde: The Critical Heritage*, for a sampling of contemporary reviews. Beckson notes that despite Wilde's reputation as a dramatist at the time of *The Sphinx's* publication, the book was not widely reviewed (19ff).

¹⁸Ricketts goes farther than this and ascribes his lack of fame as an illustrator generally to Beardsley's overwhelming success. In 1915, he wrote that "My book-illustration work has been swamped for ever by the success of Beardsley . . ." (*Self-Portrait* 227).

Ricketts saw Wilde's poem, however, not only through his own way of knowing, but also through his own ways of desiring and feeling. His excess of seeing therefore creates a consummating environment for *The Sphinx*. Ricketts' choice of scenes to be illustrated, his introduction of new and highly personal symbols, above all his decorative style, combine to make the images equal and independent partners in the image/text dialogue. As Gleeson White wrote in a contemporary review, Ricketts' *Sphinx* designs "forbear to arrogate supreme importance to themselves. Although dominating the page, they do so with a courteous affection of being merely decorative adjuncts; yet all the time they maintain their dignity unimpaired" (86). Beside the excesses of Wilde's opulent and luxurious verse, Ricketts' delicate line drawings seem restrained and understated. But in true "Book Beautiful" manner, the graphic style is not meant to match the writer's prosodic style, but rather to harmonize with the typeface.¹⁹ While the large expanses of blank page and the delicacy of the designs respond primarily to the disposition of type on paper, however, the tension of Ricketts' sinuous arabesques also comments on the intricate knottings and interlacings of Wilde's couplets. And there is a seductiveness in the art-nouveau undulating line which re-scores the passions and desires of the poem with its own whiplash.

While Ricketts' designs do attend to the subject of Wilde's poem, the artist treats the text principally as an opportunity to "allegorize on his own

¹⁹In his appreciative review of the artist's work in *The Pageant* in 1896, Gleeson White wrote that Ricketts conceived the book as a whole, with all its parts in harmonious balance: "In the illustrations to *The Sphinx*, where the type, sparsely planned to decorate large pages, supplies a modicum of text, the pictures are also in delicate lines, with masses of white to balance and accord with the matter of the book" (86-91).

hook" in the way of Rossetti. One of the most fascinating examples of this independent symbolic development by the artist is the half-page plate, "The Moon-horned Io" (Fig. 9).²⁰ The design is vertically divided, featuring a group of nude female figures with decoratively looping hair on the left balanced against the open picture plane at right. Undulating lines of desert sand — a motif repeated in other *Sphinx* designs — fluidly join the two sides of the composition. As an example of book illustration, the plate recalls Rossetti's famous design of St. Cecilia for Tennyson's "Palace of Art," in which the artist illustrated, not a significant moment in the text, but rather one of the tapestries incidentally described as part of the palace's decor, creating in the process an entirely new Cecilia.²¹ Here Ricketts, too, seizes on one of the poem's decorative images, a half-line that is simply part of the speaker's long series of questions about the Sphinx's history and knowledge:

And did you talk with Thoth, and did you hear
the moon-horned Io weep?
And know the painted kings who sleep beneath
the wedge-shaped Pyramid?²²

²⁰Ricketts continued to have a personal fascination with Io: early in the twentieth century he sculpted "Io and the Nymphs." See Darracott 75-6.

²¹See William Vaughan, "Incongruous Disciples: The Pre-Raphaelites and the Moxon Tennyson," for an interesting and more detailed account of Rossetti's illustrations (in Möller 148-160).

²²All citations of *The Sphinx* are taken from Oscar Wilde, *Complete Poems* (833-842). In Ricketts' design for the 1894 edition, the integrity of the couplet is retained by the use of long lines (See Fig. 9).

The moon-horned Io of the plate is not the wandering heifer seeking relief from the torment of gadflies which the textual image evokes.²³ Rather, Ricketts' design depicts her after her transformation in Egypt, where her weeping ceased and she became identified with Isis — that is, with female power rather than female victimization. The enclosed space created by the overlapping of female bodies suggests woman's terrifying self-sufficiency, while the fierce face of the Pre-Raphaelite woman with her chin in Io's neck suggests both sexual passion and vampirism.²⁴ The identity of Io's three supporting women cannot be learned from the poem, for Ricketts' image develops its own mythological themes in a personal symbolism. As a scholar with wide-ranging classical and iconographic knowledge, Ricketts was no doubt aware that Io was associated with the Danaids, women who lived by the Nile and were famed for killing their husbands (Hamilton 281). Perversely, Ricketts' design both celebrates the beauty of same-sex love and delineates the decadent's fear of what Mario Praz has called the Fatal Woman. In "The Moon-faced Io," as throughout the *Sphinx* designs, Ricketts develops, as Gleeson White recognized, an "imagined poem in line" which not only demands from the reader/viewer "a poetic vision hardly less keenly sustained than that of" Ricketts himself (83), but also provides a pictorial counter-narrative which decorates the text with its own idiosyncratic combination of mythological motifs and modern moods.

²³Unless otherwise noted, I am indebted throughout this chapter to Hyde's *Annotated Oscar Wilde* for explications of mythological and classical references in *The Sphinx*.

²⁴These motifs are wide-spread in late nineteenth-century art. For an exhaustive survey of the "iconography of misogyny" and an analysis of the images in historical context, see Bram Dijkstra.

Like Wilde's ideal critic, Ricketts does not seek to explain the poem, but "rather to deepen its mystery" ("The Critic as Artist," *Complete Works* 1032) by evolving his own symbols, his own mythologies. In this regard, it is interesting that his friend and fellow mythologist, W. B. Yeats, citing the illustrations for *The Sphinx* as his example, called Ricketts one of "the great myth-makers and mask-makers" who "seem to copy everything, but in reality copy nothing" (371). As art historian Edward Lucie-Smith points out in *Symbolist Art*, the *Sphinx* drawings leave "no doubt about their inventiveness, nor about their essentially Symbolist character" (135). Ricketts himself called his work "unashamedly literary" (John Rothenstein 178) and, like most symbolist or decadent art, Ricketts' designs are literary not only because they self-consciously refer to specific works of art, but also because they demand to be read.²⁵ Indeed, Ricketts' designs may be viewed as the practical expression of his personal artistic theory of "Document." Ricketts articulated this theory in the aesthetic manifesto he published in the second number of *The Dial* (1892) under the title, "The Unwritten Book." *Document*, he says, is "common to all good art." "Inseparable from the garment of individuality," *Document* is less concerned with "vraisemblance"

²⁵See John Reed's "Introduction" for a good analysis of the similarities and differences between Symbolist and Decadent art. Simply put, Reed suggests that although Decadent art is also a symbolic and literary style, it does not reach toward the transcendence sought by Symbolism — it is a dissolving, rather than a cohering art (14). Reed later suggests that Ricketts cannot generally be categorized as a Decadent artist, for his style lacks "the anguish of suggested incompleteness": "in *The Sphinx* he approximated Decadent style because it was suitable for his subject, but he comes close to it in few other places" (171). Ricketts himself, however, writing in 1911, called the *Sphinx* drawings "the most typical thing I have done so far, or the work which expresses the larger part of my temper" (see Delaney 85).

than with being the "record of some remembered delight." *Document* is "a monument of moods" which is "convincing to the spectator as a thing known yet not of necessity the symbol of borrowed story. . ." (in Calloway 13-14). Ricketts' designs for *The Sphinx* are convincing precisely because they document so persuasively his highly individual critical reading of the text.

Ricketts' critical approach to the poem is established on the title page, which presents a symbolic representation of his reading of *The Sphinx* — a sort of visual thesis statement for his critique — rather than the traditional encapsulation of the text one might expect even from decorative artists of the period (Fig. 10). In his earlier collaboration with Wilde, *A House of Pomegranates* (1891), for example, Ricketts' very Pre-Raphaelite title page depicts a maiden in a pomegranate garden working at an embroidery tambour whose roundels are taken from vignettes which decorate the ensuing stories.²⁶ By contrast, Ricketts' title page for *The Sphinx*, which doubles as a frontispiece, looks forward to the more severe and classical opening pages he designed for such books as John Gray's *Spiritual Poems* (1896) and Michael Field's *Fair Rosamond* (1897) or *The World at Auction* (1898). Moreover, its allegorical style recalls the pictorial emblems which introduce many Renaissance books, while, in a curious interfusion, its subject matter evokes the work of both Dürer and Gustave Moreau.²⁷ Stephen Calloway calls this remarkable title page "perhaps the most perfect of Ricketts' designs" (44).

²⁶Laurence Housman, whose illustrative technique was greatly influenced by Ricketts, and whose designs always had a Pre-Raphaelite quality to their nervous art-nouveau style, used this title-page technique frequently. See especially *The House of Joy*.

²⁷I am thinking here principally of Dürer's "Melancholia" engravings and Moreau's series of Sphinx paintings. But see also Stephen Calloway, who

The picture plane is shared by two figures: a small Sphinx in the bottom right, and a much larger allegorical figure, the statuesque "Melancholia," on the far left. The design suggests that these figures are to be read as both opposed to and linked to each other. The background of the composition is filled with a tracery of vines and grape bunches whose sinuous stem originates under Melancholia's left breast and swirls around the picture plane in a complicated series of knots and loopings, to terminate as the base on which the Sphinx rests its forelegs. The figures are also situated on similar mounds. On the left, Melancholia presides over a pile of abundantly heaped grapes; on the right, the Sphinx occupies a barren mound with one isolated — and ignored — cluster at its feet. Rather than focus on the fruit within reach, the Sphinx stands on its hind legs, its head upraised, its mouth open, stretching with every sinew toward a grape bunch just out of reach above its head.

The allegory of desire suggested by the half-bestial protagonist and the grapes might, perhaps, recall Aesop's fables. But such a reading does not take into account the curious introduction of the figure of Melancholia, for whom there is no textual referent, and whom the design binds so integrally with the Sphinx. In any case, Ricketts is not so much interested in providing a moral commentary à la Aesop as he is fascinated by the kinds of intertextual relationships Wilde's poem about desire and excess have evoked in him. While Ricketts' figuration of Melancholia gazing at the Sphinx may establish the poet's mood, as Gordon Ray suggests (163), it does so principally by way of

argues that the most important influences on Ricketts' early drawing style were Rossetti, Dürer, and Gustave Moreau (11).

literary allusion to Keats's "Ode on Melancholy" (283-84), for most of *The Sphinx* is occupied in high-spirited "glutting" rather than conventional sorrow. Indeed, the combination of the grape motif with the marmoreal physiognomy of the robed and beautiful Melancholia suggests that the title page works to re-inscribe the last lines of Keats's famous poem:

Ay, in the very temple of Delight
 Veiled Melancholy has her sovran shrine,
 Though seen of none save him whose strenuous tongue
 Can burst Joy's grape against his palate fine;
 His soul shall taste the sadness of her might,
 And be among her cloudy trophies hung.

Ricketts' critical insight into the poem is that the speaker's exuberant catalogue of the Sphinx's exotic amours inevitably turns "to poison while the bee-mouth sips." In other words, it is the speaker's "strenuous tongue" which causes his sudden recoil at the end of the poem; in the art of seduction, the excesses of both sexual fantasy and aesthetic delight house melancholy. The interpenetration of beauty and pleasure with torpor and melancholy, which Keats's ode suggests is apparent only to those capable of achieving the extreme limits of sensual joy,²⁸ is graphically reinscribed on Ricketts' title page by the organic linking of Melancholia and the Sphinx with the vegetative growth of the design. Moreover, Ricketts develops the point in other illustrations by repeating the image of the robed figure. In Plate 4, "The Labyrinth in which the Twy-formed Bull was stalled," a mysterious female

²⁸Mario Praz notes that the idea expressed in Keats's "Ode on Melancholy" is confirmed by Baudelaire: "La mélancolie, toujours inséparable du sentiment du beau." and argues that the indissoluble union of the beautiful and the sad is a common feature of Decadent writers; the fusion of Beauty and Death was typically represented by what Praz calls The Fatal Woman (30 ff).

figure looks on from the distance at the dramatic confrontation between the two mythological creatures. In Plate 7, "The Fig-Tree splits the Pillars of the Peristyle,"²⁹ the Sphinx is depicted on the threshold of a ruin, looking back at a robed figure who bears a light and wears a winged headpiece. This robed figure may be Melancholia or Io, or even both at once: Montgomery Hyde, for instance, seems to think the Melancholia of the frontispiece is actually the moon-horned Io herself (51, n. 8).

Ricketts' reference to Keats also indicates his critical assessment of Wilde's affinity with (and indebtedness to) his Romantic predecessor. The judgment is not entirely complimentary. Like Wilde, Ricketts was a great admirer of Keats, but the artist had some reservations about the romantic poet's greatness. Although he valued Keats's poetry enough to produce a beautiful copy of his poems at the Vale Press, over which he spent many long hours on the woodcut initials, Ricketts, on the whole, found Keats "too immature, 'the poet of desire rather than experience.'" But then "Ricketts never admitted any of Wilde's work into the first class" either, according to his friend T. Sturge Moore ("Introduction"). Perhaps in *The Sphinx* Ricketts found Wilde to be, like Keats, a poet of desire rather than experience. That Ricketts subconsciously associated the two poets is suggested by a dream he recorded in his diary in 1905. In his dream, Ricketts meets the ghost of Keats,

²⁹Ricketts' illustrations for *The Sphinx* bear no legends, and there is no table of contents which names the plates. The titles given here are taken from Stephen Calloway, but whether he supplies these titles himself, or whether he is using titles Ricketts gave to his original drawings, is unclear. The originals were drawn in pen and grey ink on pink prepared paper. Calloway says that the original drawings "have even greater nervous quality of line than the process blocks" (16).

who talks like Wilde and even tells a story about Christ that strikes the dreamer "as a crib from Oscar" (*Self-Portrait* 118-119).

But the critical reading of Wilde's poem adumbrated by the title page is not exhausted by examining its intertextual relationship with Keats's "Ode on Melancholy." There remains the artist's rendering of the Sphinx itself to consider. What is most interesting in Ricketts' visualization of the Sphinx here and in other designs is the ambiguity of the creature's sexuality. Although in some plates the Sphinx seems to be the "half woman and half animal" described by the text, in most of them, and particularly in the title-page representation, the mythological beast seems to occupy a threshold region of sexuality between male and female. In the light of the discourse surrounding sexuality which developed at the end of the century, which saw homosexuals as "an 'intermediate sex,' 'exactly at the threshold between genders'" (Showalter, *Sexual Anarchy* 172), the sexual ambiguity of Ricketts' Sphinx may be a comment on the homoerotic underpinnings of the poem. As if to emphasize this reading, Ricketts places no breasts on the muscled torso of the title-page Sphinx, and gives it the suggestion of a phallus between its haunches.

Ricketts' illustrations for *The Sphinx* focus on the theme of desire without fulfillment, a typically *fin-de-siècle* state of nervous excitement which tenuously balances tumescence and emptiness, tension and flaccidity. Despite the text's erotic catalogue of the Sphinx's love affairs, the images do not visualize the imagined couplings. Instead, the designs respond to the rhetorical form of the question in which the Sphinx's loves are cast by the

speaker as an indicator of doubt, possibility, contingency, even negation.³⁰ Of the ten illustrations³¹ Ricketts provides to accompany the poem, the images with the most sexual tension are those which focus on same-sex desire — such as "The Moon-Horned Io" or "Crouching by the Marge" — or on desire without a sexual object — such as "On the Reedy Banks" or "By the Hundred-Cubit Gate." It is not, however, subject matter alone which places the images in dialogue with the text, but also their visual language. As T. Sturge Moore recognized in his monograph on Ricketts in 1933, "His line, as in the best *Sphinx* work, is so fused with the desire both of the eyes and the spirit, that the forehead aches apprehending its precision" ("Introduction").

In Plate 3, "Crouching by the Marge" (Fig. 11), the sexual themes of the poem, and Ricketts' critical responses to them, are made visually explicit. It is interesting that, in this illustration for a story of male lovers — Antinous, favorite nineties' model for manly beauty, and the Roman Emperor Hadrian (Adrian in the text) — the Sphinx should be given breasts, in the only unambiguously "half woman and half animal" representation in the entire pictorial series. The lines of the Sphinx's arched body in the lower right are fraught with nervous tension and expectation, while all the curved lines of the water ringing the central island seem to be carried away, like Blakean flames, from the Sphinx toward the object of her desire. The graceful, nude form of Antinous, with one finger to his lips, stands beside a pile of rocks

³⁰This is not true for Ricketts' second series of *Sphinx* drawings, which includes a design representing the coupling of the passionate Sphinx with the giant form of "the Horned God" in an image reminiscent of Gustave Moreau. See Calloway, Plate 104, p. 91.

³¹Nine, including the title page, are full-page, and one ("Moon-horned Io") is a half-page plate.

diagonally across from the Sphinx on the left. On the island are three vari-
 formed trees: a curiously forked, but not quite barren tree, encircled by a vine,
 stands between two with full foliage. The tree on the right, like the tall
 rounded cliffs behind the Sphinx, has a fruit or flower depending from it.
 Clearly, the plate is full of iconographic symbols which have less to do with
 the textual referents than they do with the artist's critical response to them.
 Minimally, the illustration responds to the following lines in the text:

Sing to me of that odorous green eve when crouching
 by the marge
 You heard from Adrian's gilded barge the laughter
 of Antinous

And lapped the stream and fed your drouth and
 watched with hot and hungry stare
 The ivory body of that rare young slave with his
 pomegranate mouth!

Although the personal symbolism of Ricketts' iconographic details cannot be
 interpreted unequivocally, there are general features in this image, typical of
 decadent art, and suggestive of Ricketts' reading of the poem, which can be
 explored. Figuring the Sphinx in this plate as a devouring Fatal Woman
 places her in the context of decadent images of the "destructive *femme fatale*
 like Salome, Herodias, the Queen of Sheba, Delilah, the Sphinx, Circe, and
 Astarte, ruthlessly drawing men to their ruin" (Hannoosh 50). Thus Ricketts'
 Sphinx in "Crouching by the Marge" participates in — and produces — a
 terrifying emblem of female power that prowls throughout the *fin de siècle's*
 "iconography of misogyny," as Bram Dijkstra's exhaustive study of *Fantasies*
of Feminine Evil in Fin-de-Siècle Culture demonstrates (viii). Moreover, the

late Victorian aesthete's idealized alternative — and the potential victim — of the devouring woman is also part of Ricketts' design: the beautiful boy.

"Crouching by the Marge," in fact, expresses nineties' sexual anxiety as much as it illustrates specific lines in Wilde's poem. The Sphinx is portrayed as a powerful and designing female who cannot escape from her animal nature, from the sensuous desires of the flesh. Thus her lower body is bestial, horrific, and her womanly features intimidating rather than desirable. She seeks to destroy all men upon whom her gaze falls. Opposed to this powerful figure is the delicate body of Antinous — nude to indicate his vulnerability, but also nude to recall the poses of Greek statues, for, as Eve Sedgwick suggests, the late Victorian cult of Greece was synecdochically represented by statues of nude young men (136). And the aesthetic movement's cult of Greece, of course, constituted both the valorization and the idealization of love between men. Antinous, like most beautiful young men in the visual iconography of the later nineteenth century, is an androgynous figure rather than a stereotypically virile male.³² He holds a finger to his lips signifying — what? His secret love affair with the Emperor? His imminent death by drowning? Or is Ricketts portraying Antinous here as the perfect object of male desire, the body which offers joy in the "temple of Delight"? Is Antinous, in other words, Ricketts' decadent image of Keats's "Joy, whose hand is ever at his lips / Bidding adieu" — an image dilating self-consciously

³²The androgynous male is also a feature of our own *fin-de-siècle* visual iconography, as witness Walt Disney's *Beauty and the Beast*, where the transformed prince is depicted as a feminized man, whereas the villain is depicted according to an aggressive masculine stereotype.

on Wilde's themes of beauty, joy, desire, and melancholy as they relate to the aesthetics of homoeroticism?

The beautiful and vulnerable body of Antinous, with his flambeau drooping into the water, is separated from the Sphinx by the pool which circles the island between them. The three trees, a bit of perpendicular art-nouveau line work, are unquestionably integral to the aesthetic form of Ricketts' design. But they also convey an intellectual idea, a symbol. In my reading, the two framing trees represent the polarized sexes which are marked by difference, figured here by the distinct foliage of each. The central, barren tree, with its curious forked growth at the top and the sinuous vine undulating around its trunk, suggests the "third sex" outside compulsory heterosexuality — the intermediate and threshold sexuality of non-generation which Ricketts himself occupied unequivocally but which Wilde — as the father of two children — did not.

Wilde's bi-sexuality is conveyed in the poem itself by the initial evocation of the Sphinx as female love object for the fantasizing male student, a creature who is "beautiful and silent," "lovely langorous," and sexually arousing. On the other hand, his homosexuality is expressed by his speaker's fascination with the Sphinx's possible same-sex liaisons — her "shameful secret quests" with a Nereid and the goddess Pasht — for, as Richard Dellamora argues, one function of lesbian fantasy in late nineteenth-century literature is to enable a disguised discourse of male/male desire (75). Moreover, the speaker's sexuality is made patently clear at poem's end by his revulsion from woman-as-beast, figured by the castration metaphor of "Atys with his blood-stained knife." Indeed, his concluding question — "Are

Abana and Pharphar dry that you come here to slake your thirst?" — aligns the speaker of "Some twenty summers" with the beautiful boy, Antinous, who also fed the drouth of the insatiable, and devouring, feminized Sphinx.

The Sphinx may be viewed as Wilde's homage by way of poetic imitation of Pater's famous word painting, *La Gioconda*. Like Pater, Wilde takes for his theme the *femme fatale*, a subject which both men — together with many of their *fin-de-siècle* brethren uncomfortably contemplating the New Woman³³ — find both fascinating and repelling. Like Pater's Mona Lisa, who with her weary eyelids, "is expressive of what in the ways of a thousand years men had come to desire," Wilde's Sphinx has seen "A thousand weary centuries"; the way in which she also symbolizes what men had come to desire is made explicit by the speaker's attempt to penetrate her "strange thoughts and fantastic reveries and exquisite passions" (Pater 98). Moreover, like Pater's beautiful and decadent "Lady Lisa," whose beauty houses not only decadent exhaustion but also the frightening power of the destructive female vampire (99), Wilde's Sphinx, with its "subtle-secret smile," is both exquisite and grotesque, desirable and devouring. As Mario Praz recognized some years ago, Pater's *La Gioconda*, the most typical and ubiquitous late Victorian Fatal Woman, appears with a curious alteration of appearance in Wilde's *The Sphinx* (246).³⁴

³³See Elaine Showalter (*Sexual Anarchy*) for a good overview of late nineteenth-century attitudes to the New Woman as expressed in literature, and Bram Dijkstra for a survey of cultural approaches to women in the visual arts of the period.

³⁴But see Dellamora, who argues that Pater made da Vinci's Mona Lisa into "a 'new sphynx,' a mythical creature that is both male and female," and that her hermaphroditic nature is part of her seductiveness because this

Ricketts' designs deliberately draw the reader/viewer's attention to the Gioconda/Sphinx connection in a number of ways. First of all, the aestheticized renaissance style of the frontispiece is a visual citation of Pater's famous essay on "Leonardo da Vinci" in *The Renaissance*. Secondly, Ricketts' unauthorized introduction of Melancholia into the frontispiece suggests that the artist is directing the reader, not only to Keats, but also to Pater, who begins his description of *La Gioconda* by saying: "In suggestiveness, only the *Melancholia* of Dürer is comparable to it; and no crude symbolism disturbs the effect of its subdued and graceful mystery" (97). In addition, the ambiguous sexuality of Ricketts' male/female Sphinx evokes Pater's re-creation of the Mona Lisa as "a transvestite self-portrait" (Dellamora 144) who becomes "the symbol of the modern idea" (Pater 99). The bi-textuality of *The Sphinx* embodies the bi-sexuality of its subject, thereby motivating contemporary discourses of desire and identity. Finally, Ricketts pays Wilde — and Pater — the compliment of taking their art criticism seriously by putting it into practice.³⁵ In "The Critic as Artist," Wilde argues that no one "cares whether Mr. Pater has put into the portrait of Mona Lisa something that Leonardo never dreamed of," because he has made "the picture . . . more wonderful to us than it really is" (*Complete Works* 1028-9). The same may be said of Ricketts' drawings for *The Sphinx*: ultimately, the double-reader does not care that he has put things into his

sexual transformation allows for a new discourse of desire to enter the aesthetic expressions of homosexuality at the *fin de siècle* (145).

³⁵As an art critic himself, Ricketts' style and approach also connected with Pater rather than Ruskin, in both judgment and style. According to Joseph Darracott, Ricketts and Pater "share the same brilliance of phrase, the blending of personal and artistic judgements, the same high ideals of art" (88).

designs that Wilde never dreamed of, because his artistry has made the poem more wonderful than it really is by creating a consummating environment for it. Following Wilde's theory in "The Critic as Artist," Charles Ricketts' visual criticism of *The Sphinx* achieved what Arthur Symonds said of Pater's *Studies in the Renaissance*: he "made of criticism a new art" (in Beckson, *Aesthetes and Decadents* 149).

The dialogic relationship of image and text motivates the visual criticism of the artist out of the verbal discourse of the writer. "When such an influence is deep and productive," as M. M. Bakhtin notes in another context in the *Dialogic Imagination*, "there is no external imitation, no simple act of reproduction, but rather a further creative development of another's (more precisely, half-other) discourse in a new context and under new conditions" (347). The artist as critic who responds to the text s/he reads by recording its emotional and intellectual impact by means of decorative symbols which convey his or her *impression* of the reading experience must have a strong sympathy with the writer's words, or the embellishments are in danger of becoming parodic send-ups. Not surprisingly, perhaps, the image/text relationship governed by impression — a relationship both independent and consummating — is often based on a real-life relationship between the artist and the writer. As we have seen, Oscar Wilde and Charles Ricketts made an ideal bi-textual couple for an illustrated book in the aesthetic mode. They not only had mutual interests and sympathies (aesthetic, scholarly, sexual), but also had full respect for each other's craft —

their relationship was bracing rather than deferential. Another nineties' couple who, like Ricketts and Wilde, collaborated on a number of books, is the almost unknown poet, novelist, scholar, and translator, Margaret Armour, and the painter, etcher, wood engraver, and illustrator, William Brown Macdougall. Armour and Macdougall both originated in Scotland, although they also lived in London, Paris, and Germany; they were married, although it is not clear when this event occurred.³⁶

Indeed, almost nothing is known about this prolific pair who produced six illustrated books together between 1895 and 1898, and collaborated on at least one more in the new century.³⁷ For the most part,

³⁶Birthdates and marriage dates are not available. Macdougall died in 1936 and Armour in 1943. Of Armour even less is known than of Macdougall; even her name seems to be an area of uncertainty in the bibliographies I have consulted. *The Guide to Supernatural Fiction*, for example, hazards the guess that her married name is "perhaps Macdougall," while the *Science Fiction and Fantasy Literature Index* enters the name "Armour, Margaret, as a *pseudonym* for Margaret Macdougall! R. C. Alston's recent bibliography, *A Checklist of Women Writers: 1801-1900*, indexes her in what I take to be the real facts of the case: "Armour (afterwards Macdougall), for *Who Was Who Among English and European Authors*, listing her under "Macdougall, Margaret" (despite the fact that she never, to my knowledge, published any of her books under her married name) states unequivocally that she married W. B. Macdougall, though without giving the date. My guess is that they married close to the turn of the century — that is, after their intensely productive period — after which the usual domestic interruptions prevented Armour from producing at her previous rate. She did, however, write a novel in 1910 (*Agnes of Edinburgh*) and spent much of her time in scholarly endeavors, such as a verse translation of Heine in three volumes, and a translation of Wagner's Ring Cycle in two volumes (illustrated by Arthur Rackham). For the most part, Macdougall seems to have ceased his illustration work at the end of the century. In addition to the books he produced with Armour in the nineties, Macdougall also illustrated *The Book of Ruth* (1896), Keats's *Isabella* (1898), D. G. Rossetti's *Blessed Damozel* (1898), and the *Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam* (1898).

³⁷See the biographical *The Home and Early Haunts of Robert Louis Stevenson* (1895), the translation from mediaeval German, *The Fall of the Nibelungs* (1897), the edited and abridged selection of stories, *The Eerie Book* (1898), and the books of poetry: *Songs of Love and Death* (1896), *Thames*

these are very "ninetyish" productions, with large expanses of blank space around the text, elegant binding and black-and-white decorations in the art-nouveau style. Although Armour and Macdougall are little known now, and lacked the notoriety of Wilde and Ricketts in their time, they were nevertheless received with somewhat more enthusiasm by the contemporary press. *Songs of Love and Death*, their first book of illustrated poetry, was given fairly good reviews, despite the fact that the poems were praised for their "naturalness" while the designs were praised for their artificiality. Armour's verse was appreciated principally for its "genuine" quality "without the least trace of exaggeration or artificiality" — that is, for a lyric voice which continued the great Victorian tradition rather than cultivated the artificial language of *fin-de-siècle* decadents. Macdougall's images, on the other hand, were praised for the contrasting merit of being "quaint and modern in character" — for using the sophisticated and artificial visual dialect "of Mr. Aubrey Beardsley's black and white, but none of the morbid suggestiveness which has set so many people against those of the latter."³⁸

Margaret Armour's poetry, particularly in *Songs of Love and Death*, deserves to be better known, for at its best, her voice has a restraint and a muted irony akin to Christina Rossetti's. Armour has a musical ear and

Sonnets and Semblances (1897), and *The Shadow of Love* (1898). Also see the translation from the German, *Gudrun* (1928).

³⁸The review citations are taken from "Some Press Opinions of *Songs of Love and Death*," printed at the back of *Thames Sonnets and Semblances*. With regard to Macdougall's style, see Simon Houfe, who says that his style changes distinctly after 1894, when he published a drawing in *The Yellow Book* and came into contact with Aubrey Beardsley. "From this point," according to Houfe, "his illustrative work is symbolic and sombre with a great emphasis on black and white contrasts, but he lacks the wit of his great predecessor" (379).

manages lyrical forms well. Although she never attempts the difficult villanelles or rondelles esteemed by the decadents, she does experiment with early Anglo-Saxon verse traditions, and particularly with the use of emphatic meters with short, accentual lines as refrains. In *Thames Sonnets and Semblances*, where she experiments with eight variations of the Petrarchan sestet, she also shows herself to be adept with the sonnet form. William Brown Macdougall's art work, on the other hand, is mannered and derivative. As a decorative illustrator, he has neither the intellect nor the artistry of a Charles Ricketts or an Aubrey Beardsley. Thus his linear decorations appear as half-finished black-and-white symbols whose overall meaning — either within the context of their own compositional space or in the context of the verbal text they decorate — is often difficult to determine. One feels that they are meant to be clever and modern and succeed only in being modern. Macdougall's illustrations do not, for the most part, "stir the imagination," which was Oscar Wilde's sound estimation of the function of illustration ("The Critic as Artist," *Complete Works* 1030). However, they do decorate Armour's verse with his emotional — and sometimes obscure — impressions in art-nouveau motifs.

It would be fascinating to know the method of production for the couple's first volume of decorated verse, *Songs of Love and Death*. Did poet and decorator choose the poems to be illustrated together, or was Macdougall given free rein? Did they critique each other's work in progress, and, if so, did they make alterations in response? Such questions cannot be answered until further biographical details about this nineties couple come to light, although the fact that Macdougall did not illustrate Armour's subtly ironic send-up of

chivalric love, in which she takes the male voice ("A Love Idyll"), raises intriguing questions about the artist's wit and insight. Moreover, although the favored poetic subject for the eleven illustrations is the love or dream lyric, even the assumption that Macdougall is the addressed beloved of Armour's "straight" love poetry is perhaps premature, no matter how intriguing it might be to speculate on the illustrations as stylized portraits of artist and writer. What can be inferred from the poetry, however, is that Armour was a passionate woman who desired a life undetermined by stereotypical gender roles. In other words, she seems to have been a nineties' New Woman: independent, ambitious, articulate, knowledgeable. What can be inferred from the images is that Macdougall both knew and feared this in Armour. His Art Nouveau Women, with their limp and spineless bodies, static poses, binding clothes, and oppressive enclosures, stand in a dialogic relationship to the strong and active poetic voice. In their decorative attempt to de-activate that voice, the images express male fear of the challenge to traditional culture occasioned by the rise of New Women.

In "Call Me, O Sleep!" (Fig. 12), Macdougall constructs an image replete with self-conscious art-nouveau motifs. The sinuous line of the decorative poppy border echoes the arabesque of the design's central female figure, who is given an artificial halo by the unnaturally pruned branches of the tree behind her. The figure is constrained by a series of frames which enclose her. The first frame is composed of the binding folds of her flowing cape which constrain her body and the circular branches which frame her head. The second is the double row of perpendicular trees with spade-like heads which form a narrowing passageway for the figure. The third frame is the heavy

brick wall of the background which ensures her enclosure, and the last is, of course, the floral border of the design itself. The whole design is reminiscent of Beardsley's "La Beale Isoud at Joyous Gard" from the *Morte D'Arthur* (1894), but with neither the earlier design's literate legibility nor teasing incongruity. However, Macdougall's decorative illustration does suggest at least two possible impressions of the text. In order to read his response with any accuracy, however, it is first necessary to look at the poem itself:

Call me, O Sleep! into thy garden close,
 For fairer than the myrtle and the rose
 To me the languor of thy poppy red.
 Without, the birds of night wheel overhead,
 And Fear, on furtive foot, a-tremble goes.
 Then safe into the bowers of repose,
 That blossom where the Stream of Quiet flows,
 Named Lethe in the valleys of the dead,
 Call me, O Sleep!

And call my love, too, lest he be of those
 For whom, in vain, thy plot enchanted grows;
 That we may slumber, till the night be sped,
 On pillows, drowsy-sweet, with poppies spread,
 Such as Persephone, dim-dreaming, knows,
 Call me, O Sleep! (23)

One might read Macdougall's response to the poem as an artistic impression of Sleep's "garden close," in which the speaker is enclosed safely in "the bowers of repose." In this reading, the central figure's limp form and expressionless face indicate that she is asleep, lulled to drowsiness by the poppies which compose the decorative border of the design. The difficulty with this reading is that other illustrations in the volume — notably "Grieve not, Belovéd!," "Love Shall Stay" (another design indebted to Beardsley),

"Castles in the Air" and "The Spirit of the Twilight" — as well as designs in other books altogether, such as *The Book of Ruth* — show that, as Sketchley argues, "the conventionalized landscape backgrounds, the long, straightly-draped women," with "Their unimpassioned faces, unspontaneous gestures," are simply part of Macdougall's habitual repertoire — or, to quote Sketchley more exactly, "the expression of Mr. Macdougall's sense of beauty" (27).³⁹

Macdougall's artistic style and sense of beauty, however, are historically bound and culturally determined. While the limp women who people art-nouveau designs in general may be expressive of the period's Pre-Raphaelite sense of beauty, they also respond to the ideological pressures of the time, which expressed its desire to keep the sexes polarized — to keep men manly and women womanly — by spiritualizing women out of their bodies. Women who insisted on having bodies were portrayed by art-nouveau designers as destructive females and femme fatales of whom the Beardsley Woman is perhaps the most famous type. Idealized women, on the other hand, were portrayed as angelic or immaterial figures without skeletons, whose flowing forms could be treated as simply an exercise in line, whose bodies had no meaning beyond decorative effect. The multiple enclosures framing the central figure in Macdougall's design for "Call Me, O Sleep!" suggest a desire to keep women "in their place" and an exaggerated

³⁹Sketchley is here describing the female figures in *The Book of Ruth*; her argument is that this book seemed to offer "a new reading of the ancient charm of the story" through "the artificiality of the whole impression," and that subsequent books illustrated by Macdougall "showed that the manner was not assumed" but was rather his typical style, in which "faces are de-characterized in accordance with the desire to make the whole figure the symbol of passion, and that without emphasis."

cultural anxiety about the power of women if allowed to move out of their static decorative roles.

Much of Armour's poetry, on the other hand, suggests that *her* desires were directed toward moving out of the woman's traditional role as passive ornament. In "I, Too, Would Sing," for example, her speaker is not interested in silent oblivion, but expresses instead the "masculine" ambition to "entune love-ditties, loud and clear, / For all the world to wonder at and hear" (26), while in "A Dream," the speaker's narrative follows what Carolyn Heilbrun describes, in *Writing a Woman's Life*, as the traditional male plot line rather than the woman's:

Where are the hills to cross over?
 Where are the rivers between?
 How shall I seek him — my lover?
 Which is the road he hath been?

Hills shall not tower betwixt us,
 Streams shall not keep us apart,
 Vain are the seas that have fixed us
 Sundered and heart from heart.

You are dumb, but a dream I dreamed,
 That I clad me in white to go
 Where he dwelled in a garden seamed
 And dug in the winter snow.

I rode as a princess proud—
 Black horses and marshalled men,
 All wrapped in a silken shroud,
 And hid from the people's ken.

I stopped where the yews hung over
 A door in the brown earth's side,
 And lo! he was there — my lover,
 And clasped me for all my pride. (33-34)

In a reversal of traditional motifs and images, the male is the passive beloved associated with nature — enclosed in the earth and frozen in a winter garden — who must wait silently for the coming of the prince[ss]. Similarly, the female is the active seeker, the story-teller, the dreamer and the quester, who defies all obstacles (hills and streams and seas) in order to ride, in shining white, and at the head of a military procession, up to the death-garden where her lover needs her awakening kiss.

Macdougall's accompanying design for this polemical lyric does not, on the surface, attempt to de-activate the female (Fig. 13). The sweeping diagonal lines of the female figure's draperies give a sense of movement rarely present in Macdougall's line work. But the movement is constrained because the design is over-crowded and the decorative effects distract from, rather than consolidate, the overall symbolic meaning of the composition. How are we to read, for example, the leafy tree in the lower right, whose perpendicular thrust detracts from the movement of the woman's arm, and whose incongruity makes it appear as a piece of patchwork added to a finished work, except as a hasty citation of the text's yew tree which undermines the design's decorative effect? Aside from the weakness of the composition, however, the design does suggest that in this case, at least, Macdougall's impression of Armour's poem responds with a balancing wit and insight into the limitations of gender roles in Victorian society. His corpse-like or sleeping male figure is a stand-in for the stereotyped Victorian woman, for he is not only etherealized into the heavens of stars and moon, but he is also provided with angelic wings to show his higher spiritual status. His pale face, bloodless

lips, and closed eyes suggest that, like his cultural counterpart, he is fleshless, passive, innocent, and dependent. Together, picture and poem provide a "dream version" of sex-role reversals, with the dead and spiritualized male in the image complementing the active female voice of the text to play up the contradictions in culturally-constructed gender. But underlying this reinforcing dialogue between picture and word is a subversive debate whereby the image expresses an anxiety which undermines the assertion of female desire in the text. In this reading, the scene records the meeting of the fatal or cannibalistic vampire woman with the mesmerized and helpless male corpse. In this case, the tree which seems thoughtlessly added to the design is actually placed there to camouflage the artist's subversive response by forcing the viewer to look at the picture as a vertical, rather than a horizontal scene, in which male fear of "woman on top" is emblemized by a scene of necrophilia.

If image and text in *Songs of Love and Death* explore sexual identities and gender roles by way of presenting two points of view which are both linked and separate, the bi-textuality of *Thames Sonnets and Semblances* develops an even greater autonomy between picture and word, artist and writer. Indeed, as the title suggests, the link between image and text is provided, simply, by a shared locale, the Thames, while each point of view develops separately in the form of sonnets or semblances. The designation, "semblances," highlights the approach to book illustration called impression, for a semblance does not arrogate to itself the "reality" sought by representation, but rather presents itself as show without reality — as an outward appearance, a look or aspect. Certainly these "semblances" do not

ground themselves in the text at all, but exist as an independent counter-narrative, a second series of "views" of the Thames. This independence is reflected in the table of contents, which presents a list of twelve "Sonnets by Margaret Armour," and (on a separate page) twelve "Semblances by W. B. Macdougall," each with their own titles. The format of the book, too, is less a text with illustrations than it is a series of alternating points of view. Each full-page plate, printed on the recto, is introduced by a half-title on the verso with the number and title of the picture (e.g. "Semblance VI. Westminster from Waterloo Bridge"), followed by a blank verso and then the poem, which is numbered, but untitled, on the recto.⁴⁰ The book's title, *Sonnets and Semblances*, admits there is a problem in bi-textuality — a gap between language and image which can never be closed to make a perfect fit, a seamless match. The physical separation of image and text in the volume — the fact that there are no facing or touching pages — emblemizes this fissure. At the same time, however, the correlations between picture and word work to suggest that within the inalienable differences of male and female, image and text, some kind of mutually illuminating connections and crossings can be made.

Macdougall's semblances are not art-nouveau line drawings but rather impressionistic wood-block designs which seek to convey something of the feel and mood of the place from which Armour's lyric voice speaks. Thus they are, on the one hand, representational images which refer to specific geographic locales and, on the other, decorative images whose dialogic

⁴⁰The exception is the last Sonnet and Semblance, which share the title, "Way for the Dead," and which develop similar themes.

relationship with the sonnets seeks to embellish rather than to illustrate — to enlarge the context with a separate point of view, thereby consummating the word's environment. In *Semblance I*, "Lambeth Reach" (Fig. 14), which also serves as the frontispiece to the volume, the reader/viewer is presented with a view of London at night (or just before dawn) — a city of dark buildings brooding over a wide and empty river. The sleeping city is neither idealized (as in Wordsworth's "Westminster Bridge") nor made monstrous (as in Lord Alfred Douglas's "Impression de Nuit"). The lightening sky may suggest the coming of day, but it does so without conveying a sense of renewal. Indeed, in some ways the plate presents a city frozen in its own death, motionless and unmovable. The sonnet which this semblance accompanies, however, is a love lyric which makes the lover's traditional complaint against time — a *carpe diem* in a female voice:

Walk with me, love, upon the paven shore,
 And, 'mid the purple and the wav'ring gleam,
 Wander away an hour of bootless dream,
 Then turn thy heart to mine and love me more.
 For soon the hour of loving will be o'er,
 And, as the lights that flit upon yon stream,
 We shall be gone, and other days shall beam,
 And other suns rise radiant as of yore.

Ah, look not back! The yesterdays so sweet
 Make dark the morrows that we shall not greet.
 And look not on, for who shall show us how
 Is traced the narrowing pathway for our feet?
 Recall no promise; breathe to me no vow;
 But take me to thy heart and love me now. (13)

The connections between image and text seem tenuous. It may be that Lambeth Reach was a favorite place for the lovers to meet and walk in the evenings. But such biographical detail is not provided for the reader/viewer in either image or text. S/he must make what correspondences s/he can between the sonnet in which a female lover asks to live in the sensations of the moment and the semblance which offers nothing but a view of the river and city from Lambeth Reach.

Indeed, the relations between image and text in *Thames Sonnets and Semblances* typify the problems that are inherent in illustrating poetry — especially lyric poetry — in the first place. Since poetry itself is not in the strict sense representational, how can the artist produce images which represent what is symbolic and metaphoric to begin with? According to E. J. Sullivan, illustrations simply cannot "match" the fine line of verse, and the artist has the difficult task of illustrating, not merely the "facts" of the text, but also the poet's "exaltation" (148-49, 158). Sullivan himself was a representational illustrator of the journalistic school who tried to quote the verbal text with care and precision. His contemporaries of the decorative school of illustration found a way of responding to verse which did not require the conventional imitative method of quotation. Instead, in a new independent form of invention, decorative illustrators sought to record their own impressions of the texts they embellished and critiqued, thereby initiating a new cross-border discourse between image and text. If, as Bakhtin suggests, two people will always see things differently, but the difference can be reduced by assuming an approximate position (*Art and Answerability* 23), then the differences between the artist's and writer's points-of-view are

reduced to the degree that an approximation of view-points is achieved through the imaginative empathy of the artist. In bi-textual work of the impressionist kind, the empathy ensures that the artist as critic provides embellishments which consummate the text by developing their own decorative concerns and critical responses. In image/text relations governed by parody, however, the difference between the two points of view is not reduced by empathy and approximate positions, but enlarged by rebellion and critical distance.

CHAPTER FIVE

PARODY

Art itself is really a form of exaggeration; and selection, which is the very spirit of art, is nothing more than an intensified mode of over-emphasis.

Oscar Wilde, "The Decay of Lying"

As art springs from personality, so it is only to personality that it can be revealed, and from the meeting of the two comes right interpretative criticism.

Oscar Wilde, "The Artist as Critic"

Ada Leverson, the novelist with a caustic tongue whom Oscar Wilde called the Sphinx, was extremely taken with Charles Ricketts' 1893 design for John Gray's *Silverpoints*, principally because its minimal letterpress was surrounded by a wide expanse of blank page. "When I saw the tiniest rivulet of text meandering through the very largest meadow of margin," she wrote,

I suggested to Oscar Wilde that he should go a step further than these minor poets; that he should publish a book *all* margin; full of beautiful unwritten thoughts, and have this blank volume bound in some Nile-green skin powdered with gold by Ricketts (if not Shannon) and printed on Japanese paper. . . .

Wilde elaborated on the Sphinx's *jeu d'esprit*, saying he would dedicate the book to her and have "the unwritten text illustrated by Aubrey Beardsley" (Weintraub 79). *Silverpoints* was published in the week of 4 March 1893 (Ellmann, *Oscar Wilde* 369). The same month finds Wilde inscribing a

presentation copy of the original French edition of *Salomé* to the twenty-one year old illustrator: "March '93. For Aubrey: for the only artist who, besides myself, knows what the dance of the seven veils is, and can see that invisible dance. Oscar." The following month Beardsley published his homage to the play in the first issue of *The Studio*: the famous *J'ai Baisé Ta Bouche Iokanaan, J'ai Baisé Ta Bouche*.¹ The publisher, John Lane, was immensely impressed by this drawing, as was Oscar Wilde; the immediate result was the selection of Beardsley to illustrate the Bodley Head's English edition of *Salomé* instead of Charles Ricketts, who had illustrated or designed almost all of Wilde's published works to date (Nelson 238-39).

Wilde's playful choice of Beardsley to illustrate his "blank volume," full of "beautiful unwritten thoughts," is re-stated seriously in his recognition of the artist's equal ability to "see the invisible dance," and is finally given practical confirmation in the form of a contract for £50 to produce ten drawings for *Salomé* (Nelson 99). How are the tropes "unwritten text" and "invisible dance" re-inscribed, illuminated, and critiqued by the dialogue between image and text in the most infamous illustrated book of the nineties? What vision did Ricketts lack and Beardsley ostensibly possess that made Wilde pass over his usual artistic collaborator, even though Beardsley himself thought that Ricketts should have been given the *Salomé* job and he

¹This drawing was redone for the publication of *Salomé*, and appears as the last full plate in the book, under the title "The Climax." The second version eliminates the nervous elaboration of the hairy lines and is much more severe in its effect. Beardsley's biographer, Stanley Weintraub, posits that Wilde saw "*J'ai Baisé ta Bouche . . .*" before publication, and that the inscription in his presentation copy of *Salomé* to Beardsley is actually a reference to the artist's drawing (55).

The Sphinx ? (Raymond 52)² And why, in the end, did Wilde both admire and dislike Beardsley's reification of the invisible dance in *Salome*? According to William Rothenstein, Wilde objected to Beardsley's decorations on the grounds of *style* : the Japanesque designs were out of keeping with the spirit of his Byzantine text (1.184). Charles Ricketts' story, on the other hand, is that Wilde objected on the basis of *content* : "My Herod is like the Herod of Gustave Moreau — wrapped in his jewels and sorrows. My Salomé is a mystic, the sister of Salammbô, a Sainte Thérèse who worships the moon; dear Aubrey's designs are like the naughty scribbles a precocious schoolboy makes on the margins of his copybook" (Raymond 51-52).

Wilde's critical view of Beardsley's naughty scribbles and anachronistic designs suggests that the issue for the writer was not aesthetics but authority. The pictorial flouting of the word's style and content disrupts not only the traditional decorum of image/text relations, but also implicitly calls into question the notion of referentiality itself. Yet Beardsley's displacement of the hierarchical power relations embedded in traditional bi-textual discourse is actually authorized by Wilde's own theory for the (un)referential relations between the critical/creative enterprises. In "The Critic as Artist," Wilde had argued that the creative work "may be merely of

²*Salome* and *The Sphinx* were being prepared for publication at the same time, and were published within five months of each other (*Salome* in February 1894 and *The Sphinx* in June 1894). Although *The Sphinx* was commissioned and completed first, *Salome* was the first to be published by the Bodley Head. There is some controversy over which artist influenced which, but it seems fair to say that Ricketts' illustrations for *The Sphinx*, seen by Beardsley while he was working on the *Salome* drawings, were likely an inspiration for Beardsley, who took in influences of all kinds without losing his individual style (see Taylor 94). Ricketts admired Beardsley's *Salome* drawings, but believed they betrayed his dislike of Wilde (Raymond 51-52).

value in so far as it gives to the critic a suggestion for some new mood of thought and feeling which he can realise with equal, or perhaps greater, distinction of form, and, through the use of a fresh medium of expression, make differently beautiful and more perfect" (*Complete Works* 1044). Wilde claimed he had created Beardsley (Ellmann, *Oscar Wilde* 290), and, insofar as the *Salome* drawings constitute Beardsley's version of the "artist as critic," it may be said that Beardsley had learned Wilde's lesson in autonomous creation only too well. In effect, he treats Wilde's creative text as a "blank volume" to be inscribed with the beauty and perfection of his own black-and-white medium, his own decorative form, rather than as the authorizing ground for his figures. Indeed, it seems likely, as Stanley Weintraub suggests, that what Wilde actually objected to in Beardsley's drawings was not that they were irrelevant, or that their style was inappropriate, but rather that they "were reversing the usual relationship of writer and illustrator. They were as serious as they were impudent, and possessed so much power independent of the text . . . that Oscar's play was in danger of being in the embarrassing position of illustrating Aubrey's illustrations" (59).

The dialogic relation of image and text in *Salome* illuminates the parodic approach to book illustration while taking part in a larger cultural conversation about the location of authority and the nature of representation. Both Wilde's text and Beardsley's images take up the thematics of representation and authority, but argumentatively — with critical distance between the two points of view. The confrontational style and ironic critical distance indicate that the image/text relations of *Salome* are parodic. This is not to say, as so many critics have done, that Beardsley's illustrations satirize

Wilde's play.³ As Linda Hutcheon has pointed out, satire, unlike parody, "is both moral and social in its focus and ameliorative in its function" (16). Milly Heyd's exhaustive study of Beardsley's art confirms Hutcheon's definition. Heyd argues that Beardsley's work is ironic rather than satiric because it is neither moral nor social, and is not committed to an alternative world (3, 8-9). Far from being satiric, Beardsley's ironic, self-reflexive art constitutes a parodic approach to illustration which is, as John Reed points out, typically decadent (9-10).

Decadent art is by nature parodic because it is self-conscious, artificial, and intertextual. Moreover, because it is both imitative and fascinated by individual style, decadent art is itself a dialogized form, always engaging in conversations with the other — the other painting or poem or song — within itself. Walter Pater's style, for example, the *modus exemplum* for decadent writers, was admired by Oscar Wilde precisely because it was parodic — that is, it was both imitative and transforming. In his review of *Appreciations* (1890), Wilde praises Pater for "often catching the colour and accent and tone of whatever artist, or work of art, he deals with," and goes on to describe how Pater imitates the various styles of Coleridge, Shakespeare, Wordsworth and Sir Thomas Browne in the essays he writes on them, while still retaining an essential critical difference, and, in effect, transforming the works he writes on with his own style and point of view (in Stanford 85-86). This alteration of the host form is of paramount importance to the imitation which parody

³This view was popularized by many of Beardsley's contemporaries, and has been frequently repeated in the work of both literary critics and art historians. See especially Arthur Symons, who called Beardsley "the satirist of an age without convictions" (*Aubrey Beardsley* 32).

ironically achieves by its method of "playing with multiple conventions," its "repetition with critical difference" (Hutcheon 7).⁴ Parodic illustrations, as we shall see, operate precisely by repeating textual concerns with critical distance and by ironically playing with a wide variety of conventions taken from both the verbal and the visual art lexicons. This ironic play and repetition introduces laughter into the illustrated book, a laughter which, as Bakhtin suggests, is evoked by exceeding the limits of language — by destroying familiar associations and creating new matrices for interpretation (*Dialogic Imagination* 237). In bi-textual parody, the artist's excess of seeing constitutes a surplus which confronts the verbal text with an alien judgment. Parodic illustrations work *beside* as well as *against* the word to produce an ironic counter-narrative which illuminates by inversion and interrogates by confrontation.⁵

Like impression, parody is a reader-response approach to illustration which uses decorative rather than realistic techniques to visualize the artist's critical reading of the text. As we saw in the last chapter, both the impressionistic and the parodic approaches to book illustration in the

⁴Hutcheon's definition of parody which I cite here is, however, specifically limited to twentieth-century visual arts, literature, and music. I adapt Hutcheon's theory to my purposes here and throughout the chapter by both widening her application and altering her context. In my general theorizing about parody in this chapter I am principally indebted to M. M. Bakhtin's *Dialogic Imagination* and to Michele Hannoosh's *Parody and Decadence*. The latter's section on "History and Theory" (9-26) has been especially helpful in widening my understanding of the historical implications of parody, both in its classical origins and its decadent developments. Finally, like Bakhtin and Hannoosh, and unlike Hutcheon, I see parody as a comic form.

⁵As Hutcheon points out, the original Greek meaning of *parodia* is "counter-song," and the prefix, *para* means not just "counter" or "against," but also "beside" (32).

nineties were typically produced by art-nouveau style artists who worked to achieve a new independent and intellectual approach to the bi-textual form. But the decorative illustrator who approaches the text parodically takes Rossetti's "interpretive ideal" to its anarchic extreme by subversively setting out "to see the object as in itself it really is not" (Wilde, "Critic as Artist," *Complete Works* 1030) — that is, to redefine it ironically by mimicking its identifying features within a new critical context. Unlike the consummating impressionistic illustrator, the parodic artist decorates the verbal in such a way as to draw attention to the *gap* between image and text. Thus, while independent impressionistic decorations are described as "harmonizing" with the spirit of the text, parodic decorations are frequently vilified as anarchic and irrelevant images which compete with the text for the dominant representation of the subject. If both impressionistic and parodic images may be called the New Women of nineties' bi-textuality, parodic illustrations are New Women of the militant variety, challenging the authority of the word on every page and aggressively asserting their right to representation — their right to be subjects rather than objects in the production of meaning. This aggression is symbolically inscribed on the title-page credits for *Salome*, which read as follows: "Salome: A Tragedy in One Act: Translated From the French of Oscar Wilde: Pictured by Aubrey Beardsley." With a grammatical flourish, Beardsley subversively consigns Wilde to a passive role in the production of *Salome* and claims an active role for himself.⁶

⁶Weintraub suggests that the title-page description of the illustrative contents as "Pictured by" rather than "Illustrated by" helped to mollify Wilde's earlier disapprobation of the images (72). Ellmann describes in some detail the arguments over the wording of the title-page credits, which principally had to do with Beardsley's opinion that it would be dishonest to put Lord Alfred

While the symbolic method of impression develops an independent but related system of mythological motifs, the symbolic method of parody produces motifs which are either mimicking quotations of the author's word, or are deliberately opposed to the textual presentation in order to startle the reader/viewer into a shocked recognition of the different ways in which the two speakers in the image/text dialogue are "picturing" their material. Perhaps the most notorious of such illustrations is Beardsley's "Black Cape" drawing for *Salome*, which features a single female figure in outlandish contemporary costume, and which the artist himself referred to as "simply beautiful and quite irrelevant" (in Nelson 239). The reader/viewer's immediate response to a drawing of this kind is to ask what possible relation it could have to the text. The second response is to begin to develop solutions to the image/text fracture — in other words, to engage at once in a critical and interpretive act. This engagement of the reader is deliberately incited by parodic illustration, which depends on the active participation of the reader/viewer for its effect.

Since the ground for image/text relations in such drawings as "The Black Cape" cannot be fully determined, the dialogic relations governed by parody participate in the questioning of authority — or patriarchal order — that is part of *fin-de-siècle* culture. As Elaine Showalter demonstrates in *Sexual Anarchy*, "By the 1890s, indeed, the system of patriarchy was under attack not only by women, but also by an avant-garde of male artists, sexual radicals, and intellectuals, who challenged its class structures and roles, its

Douglas's name on the title page, when the translation had been so much altered by Wilde (*Oscar Wilde* 380).

system of inheritance and primogeniture, its compulsory heterosexuality and marriage, and its cultural authority" (11). The rebellious autonomy of images in parodic book illustration is embedded in this counter-cultural discourse. Moreover, the title role in *Salome* embodies this anarchic rebellion because she is both a woman and an artist. Indeed, one way in which Beardsley's images parody Wilde's play is by taking on the title role for themselves. If Beardsley's relationship to Wilde was, as Richard Ellmann suggests, "strange, cruel, disobedient" (*Oscar Wilde* 355), then it was uncannily like Salome's relationship to Herod. Parodic illustrations are part of a larger cultural discourse which questions the natural right of instituted hierarchies, whether of state/individual, male/female, or text/image relations. Parodic illustrations produce their critiques by inverting expected hierarchies, thus transgressing cultural norms in a new form of sexual/textual anarchy.

It is no accident that the locus for this struggle is the body of a woman: Salome. As Françoise Meltzer has remarked, "What is intriguing about Salome, among other things, are the periods during which she becomes an object of interest" (15). At precisely that moment in history when, as Michel Foucault has taught us, sexuality was being transformed into discourse, thus making possible the formation of a "reverse" discourse that allowed homosexuality to speak on its own behalf (101), decadent art re-discovered the forgotten Salome.⁷ According to Foucault, the nineteenth century *produced*

⁷Meltzer identifies times of cultural crisis as moments when Salome becomes a representational theme. She was a favorite of the Roman decadent writers in the fourth century, and became a representational theme again during the middle ages, when the Crusades sparked renewed interest in John the Baptist. But it was in the nineteenth century that Salome danced to center stage (15-18).

homosexual identity by generating medical and juridical discourses of perversion and transgression which were characterized by an intensification of the body and by a representation of illicit desire outside the economy of reproduction (122, 43, 48, 54). For the *fin-de-siècle* decadent, the love of beauty for beauty's sake, art for art's sake, or the moment for the moment's sake, could also be the love of sex for sex's sake, and one reason for Salome's ubiquity in this period is that the dancer and her dance came to symbolize just this interfusion of art and sex — or textuality and sexuality — in aesthetic representation.

Like the sphinx, Salome is a late nineteenth-century symbol of the *femme fatale*, a cultural inscription of female power and male anxiety.⁸ But Salome is more than a predatory vampire woman with cannibalistic designs on men. She is also a symbol of the subversive artist whose art defeats the powers of the state and undermines the authority of the church. Since both of her targets are patriarchal institutions, the decadent's love/hate relationship with the dancer and her dance simultaneously establishes an identification with Salome as an artist — which constitutes a critique of the dominant ideology — and an aversion to Salome as a woman — which reaffirms patriarchal misogyny. T. Sturge Moore described Charles Ricketts' fascination with the Salome theme in a way which I take to be paradigmatic for the *fin-de-siècle* decadents' ambivalent re-tellings of her story: "The life of a saint at the mercy of the twinkling feet of a girl — the most revered head danced off by a naked virgin — could anything be less providential? Youth,

⁸For a good overview of literary and pictorial treatments of the Salome theme in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, see Bram Dijkstra, Chapter XI.

beauty, daintiness on one side; asceticism, fanaticism, barbarism on the other" ("Introduction"). While the first half of Moore's analysis re-produces the dominant patriarchal ideology, the second half displaces this position by the puzzling parallelism which reverses the good/bad identities of John the Baptist and Salome, thereby initiating a covert attack on the very notion of a sanctified power structure embedded in the concept of providence. The *fin-de-siècle* Salome is a figure produced by both the dominant discourse of her age *and* by its contingent, aligned, "reverse" discourse.

If Salome is the "icon of the ideology of the decadents" (Marcus 3), she is so because she represents a challenge to cultural authority as represented by the patriarchal order.⁹ One of the most popular motifs in *fin-de-siècle* art and literature, the Salome theme was taken up pictorially by Gustave Moreau and poetically by Flaubert, Mallarmé, Heine, Laforgue, and Huysmans.¹⁰ *Salome* as produced by Oscar Wilde and Aubrey Beardsley, however, arguably provides the period's definitive Jewish princess, and not simply because both author and artist include these illustrious forbears in their intertextual references, thereby re-producing the dancer's contradictory nature as innocent virgin and seductive devourer.¹¹ Each artist makes the "invisible dance" his own, and the dialogic crossing of image and text illuminates the ways in

⁹See Elaine Showalter, *Sexual Anarchy*, for a comprehensive argument about the way in which decadent ideology may be viewed as a challenge to the patriarchal order.

¹⁰See Michele Hannoosh for a fascinating examination of Laforgue's decadent parody, *Salomé*, which he argues is both critical and self-critical of this ubiquitous French Decadent theme (148-169).

¹¹Mario Praz argues that Wilde's *Salome* is nothing more than a plagiarism of his French sources, although he concedes that, "as a parody, *Salomé* comes very near to being a masterpiece" (298).

which Wilde's re-telling of the Salome story both writes against and reinscribes the discourses of power. Wilde's text duplicates Ricketts' fascination with Salome by precariously balancing a reverential fascination in the form of aesthetic identification with her as an artist against a patriarchal desire for law and order.

Beardsley's Salome is not Wilde's Salome and they do not dance the same dance. Taken together as one bi-textual product, however, *Salome* powerfully re-enacts the period's cultural anxieties about the decline in authority and its relation to illicit desire as emblemized by both homosexuals and New Women. Indeed, the dialogic confrontation and crossing of image and text dramatizes a struggle in the politics of representation which illuminates the play's theme of sexual politics. Wilde's Salome is unique in nineteenth-century representation because for the first time her story is told from her point of view: instead of being a passive pawn in a political game, Salome becomes an active figure whose sexual desire and transitory art form both constitute critiques of contemporary culture. As Regenia Gagnier suggests, "In the work which he felt was his best illustration of art for art's sake, through the figure of Salome, he portrayed sex for sex's sake, without purpose or production" (165). But as the central character of the play, and the only one — until the final scene — who makes things happen, Salome represents more than a critique of materialism by art's non-utility and illicit desire's non-production. As a dancer, Salome also represents art's performative power: her dance and its effects demonstrate art's revolutionary potential to disrupt the institutions of power and introduce a new state of

anarchic freedom for the individual.¹² Indeed, by her intensification of the body and its desires and pleasures, Salome embodies the political aesthetic of anarchic Individualism which Wilde espouses in "The Soul of Man Under Socialism" (*Complete Works* 1079-1104).

If Wilde assumes a female subject position in the telling of Salome's story, Beardsley counters by re-presenting her from the conventional male perspective. This traditional reading continues to be re-inscribed in contemporary criticism. Briefly, the conventional interpretation avoids the subversive themes of the play and reads "the play entirely from the male characters' points of view, imputing to Wilde internal landscapes of voyeurism, castration fears, and sadomasochism" (Gagnier 165). Thus, instead of seeing Salome as an artist figure who represents the decadent aesthete's subversive hope in the struggle against cultural authority, Beardsley exaggerates her proportions as predatory devourer: she appears as the larger-than-life threat of the aggressive New Woman to effeminate decadent males. Rather than taking on Salome's position, as does Wilde, Beardsley takes on Herod's position — thus establishing the voyeuristic viewpoint for the reader/viewer — and Jokanaan's position — thereby focusing on male fears of castration at the hands of a masculinized woman, a focus which is compellingly clear in "The Dancer's Reward" (Fig. 1).

¹²Jane Marcus offers one of the most comprehensive readings of Wilde's Salome as a New Woman and a revolutionary figure: indeed, she takes my identification of Wilde's female subject position in *Salome* a step further by arguing that he "writes from the lesbian position" (17). However, she focuses on the political and aesthetic features of Salome and pays scant attention to the significance of sex and desire. She also dismisses Beardsley's critical and interpretive work as misrepresentation.

Because he mimics textual motifs with a critical distance, Beardsley's opposing viewpoint also constitutes a critique of the internal dialogism of Wilde's text. Beardsley's counter-narrative illuminates the ways in which Wilde writes from Herod's as well as from Salome's position, thereby reproducing both revolutionary and conservative discourses. Although Gagnier is correct in her assessment that "Beardsley's androgynous decorations confirm that Wilde chose a girl to represent desire in order to organize a struggle against the forces of law" (169), the images make their point by parodic disruption rather than by quotational affirmation. Indeed, Beardsley's visual critiques are incisive revelations of both the text's "unwritten thoughts" — its subversive sexual/textual themes — and its "invisible dance" of representation. As a decorative illustrator, Beardsley develops his own symbolic motifs which re-appear throughout his works: fetuses, androgynes, hermaphrodites, grotesques, butterflies, Pierrots, feminized males, and masculinized women. As a critic, Beardsley combines these sexual symbols into an ironic reading of Wilde's play which offers a transforming counter-narrative for *Salome*.

While Beardsley and Wilde were not, as were Ricketts and Wilde, a perfect bi-textual couple, their artistic relationship is perhaps the second inevitable occurrence of the nineties. The other is Wilde's arrest and imprisonment for living the life of a homosexual aesthete. The publication of the bi-textual *Salome* and the publication of Wilde's bi-sexuality are, moreover, related.¹³ As James Nelson suggests, "The *Salome* which Wilde

¹³Neither Beardsley nor *Salome* were mentioned in any of the three Wilde trials, however (Weintraub 125).

created, Beardsley decorated, and the Bodley Head published was the ultimate expression in English of the literary and aesthetic movement which ended with the arrest of Wilde the following year" (243). If Beardsley was "as necessary a corner-stone of the Temple of the Perverse as Oscar Wilde" (Jackson 91), the fall of that institution in 1895 is implicated in the conviction of Wilde, the abrupt termination of the decadent movement, and the economic and social ostracization of Beardsley.¹⁴ The extent to which Beardsley, Wilde, and the decadence — with all its unsavory sexual connotations — were associated in the public mind is made clear in an article written by Haldane Macfall immediately after Wilde's conviction in May 1895. Writing for *St Paul's*, Macfall declared that the art of Wilde and Beardsley was neither English nor modern: it had "no manhood" and was "effeminate, sexless and unclean" (in Weintraub 131).¹⁵

It was, indeed, for the erotic and sensational qualities of Beardsley's art that John Lane added the young artist to the Bodley Head stable of illustrators. The patronage had less to do with Lane's aesthetic sense than it had with his business judgment. His artistic appreciation of Beardsley may be summed up in his effusion over the artist's technique: "What workmanship! *He never*

¹⁴When Beardsley heard of Wilde's conviction, his immediate response was "I suppose I shall have to leave the country." In fact, a group of conservative writers, led by Mrs. Humphrey Ward, got Beardsley fired from the Bodley Head (for which he was also working as art editor of *The Yellow Book*) by telling Lane that if he did not get rid of Beardsley, they would take their work to other publishers (Weintraub 79, 126-9).

¹⁵As Wilde wrote in "The Critic as Artist," it is always Judas who writes the biography" (1010). Haldane Macfall became Beardsley's biographer in 1928. In fairness, however, it should be added that Macfall did revise both his personal opinion and his artistic appreciation of Beardsley.

goes over the edges!" (William Rothenstein 1.133). Lane's marketing strategy for *Salome* was clearly to exploit as much as possible the text's erotic content, and Beardsley was the artist of choice for sensationalism of this sort.¹⁶ Despite the fact that Lane's business acumen later prompted him to suppress some of Beardsley's plates,¹⁷ the artist's final designs "included more 'erotic' details than had ever been seen before in a book openly published and distributed in England." As Stanley Weintraub points out, Beardsley's method of illustrating Wilde's play "inevitably associated him in the public mind" with a reprehensible figure, with the ultimate result that, after Wilde's arrest, Beardsley suddenly found himself, not only unemployed, but also unemployable (75, 126-29).

¹⁶Lane's marketing strategy is indicated by his advertising of the English edition (illustrated by Beardsley) as "the play the Lord Chamberlain refused to license." As is well known, rehearsals for *Salomé* — with Sarah Bernhardt in the lead role — were already underway in London when the Lord Chamberlain refused to allow the play to go to performance because it included biblical characters. Wilde objected to Lane's method of advertising: "It is the tragic beauty of the work that makes it valuable and of interest, not a gross act of ignorance and impertinence on the part of the censor" (Nelson 237).

¹⁷Three plates were withdrawn and two altered. The withdrawn plates were "John and Salome," "The Toilette of Salome," and "Salome on Settle." The last two have erotic content, but it is difficult to see why the first plate, which is simply an eye-to-eye confrontation between Salome and the Baptist, should have been cancelled. Haldane Macfall, who was called in, along with Gleeson White, to advise Lane on Beardsley's drawings before publication, says that Beardsley himself withdrew this innocent drawing and replaced it with the irrelevant "Black Cape" out of spite (51). The "Toilette of Salome" design was substituted by another "Toilette" in which the formerly naked Salome is now fully clothed, but in fantastic anachronistic garb, and in which the masturbatory motifs are removed. The alterations included removing the phallus from the grinning herm of the title-page and decorously covering the attendant's phallus with a fig leaf in "Enter Herodias." Beardsley ruefully commented on the bowdlerization by writing on some of the proofs: "Because one figure was undressed / This little drawing was suppressed. / It was unkind, but never mind, / Perhaps it was all for the best" (Hyde 305). The Bodley Head published the original drawings in its 1907 edition, which had sixteen plates.

The *Salome* drawings dramatize, as Ian Fletcher notes, "an encounter between two of the determining artistic intelligences of the 1890s; the two who gave it cultural definition" (*Aubrey Beardsley* 57). Perhaps better than any other nineties' illustrated book, *Salome* shows how meaning, in Michael Holquist's phrase, is "rented" rather than owned — that is, meaning is the product of social exchange (in Greenblatt 164). Beardsley's picturing of *Salome* has had long and enduring effect; conventional wisdom in the early years of this century, for example, was that "the Beardsley illustrations have had much to do with the prejudices against the play" (Clark, *Wilde and Wildeiana* 1.44). As a bi-textual product, *Salome's* meaning cannot be separated from its accompanying images;¹⁸ it is embedded in the historical conditions of its origins and receptions. For this reason its generic status as a play becomes ironically implicated in the "invisible dances" seen and produced by author and artist. Since the play was not performed on the English stage for a decade,¹⁹ the text depends for its *dramatic* effect on Beardsley's plates.

¹⁸Traditional criticism has sought to make just this separation, with art historians such as Kenneth Clark dismissing Wilde's text as a mere "pretext" — and rubbish at that — for Beardsley's art, and literary critics dismissing Beardsley's images as sneering and irrelevant attacks on the author which have little, if anything to do, with the serious concerns of Wilde's play. In recent years, however, critics such as Ian Fletcher, Elliot Gilbert, Christopher Nassaar, James Nelson, and Elaine Showalter have argued persuasively for the integral relationship between image and text in *Salome*. The notable exception is Jane Marcus, who makes the untenable argument that Beardsley misrepresented *Salome* because he didn't read Wilde's play (8). Beardsley not only read the play, he also worked laboriously with its language and images in a translation he hoped Wilde would accept over Lord Alfred Douglas's (Weintraub 56).

¹⁹The play was first performed privately in England in 1905 and 1906. Charles Ricketts provided the stage design. Its first public performance was at the Savoy Theater in 1931. *Salomé's* French premiere took place in Paris in 1896, while Wilde was in prison (Hyde 305).

Without "The Stomach Dance," for instance, Salome's dance of the seven veils exists only as an invisible dance in the text, constituted by the cryptic — and parenthetical — stage direction: "Salome *dances the dance of the seven veils*." Wilde's text is parodically performed and enacted under Beardsley's supervision as artistic producer, set designer, and director. It is for this reason that the play becomes Beardsley's as much — if not more so — as it is Wilde's. If the conservative quotational illustrator, E. J. Sullivan, could see an artistic opportunity in unacted plays for illustrators to fill the missing place of the production staff "with equal adequacy" (246), then Aubrey Beardsley seized the opportunity for the dramatic assertion of his own production rights.

As Brian Reade has astutely noted, Beardsley's *Salome* illustrations convey an intense sense of drama: "It was as though he were an actor manqué . . . who had learnt the manner in which actions and gesture could be translated on paper, not in three-dimensional realism, but in the two values of black and white in flat areas, linked by lines that varied in strength to suggest something of the arrested quality in the outlines of a bas-relief" (17). Curiously, Wilde himself spoke of *Salome* as "A wonderful bas-relief, the ordinary English play being like a popular Academy picture" (Raymond 53). Wilde, perhaps, was thinking of the play's decorative and conventional aspects — the way in which the drama's symbols barely project from its surface, so that its sculpted language ultimately has reference only to itself.²⁰ Beardsley's "bas-relief" style mimics the text's playing with "surface and

²⁰*Salome* is often recognized as the first modern symbolistic play in England. See especially Peter Raby.

symbol" ("Preface" to *Dorian Gray*, *Complete Works* 17) because his abandonment of the horizon line ultimately offers, as Fletcher points out, "A world, indeed, without reference to any objective reality" (*Aubrey Beardsley* 57). It is in this mimicry that the parodic relations between image and text may be located. The function of parody is, as Bakhtin has argued, to disunify the word from its object. Parody is a travesty form which represents the direct word of the other as the *object* of representation. And just as, in Bakhtinian terms, a parodic sonnet "is not a sonnet, but rather *the image of a sonnet*," so too Beardsley's parodic pictorial *Salome* becomes, not a play, but the *image* of a play (*Dialogic Imagination* 55, 51).

Beardsley mimics stage conventions in his plates, thereby providing a parody of performance which offers a critical interpretation of the play while at the same time establishing an ironic distance between image and text. He signals to the reader/viewer his intention to enact — and therefore to "produce" — *Salome* with a variety of gestures, most of which have the effect of ironically introducing the "reality" of the process by which a play produces meaning. The title page and list of pictures mimic the design for a play-bill. The fantastic attention to dress — as in "The Peacock Skirt," "The Black Cape," and "The Toilette of Salome" — suggests the pre-production work of the costume-designer, while the latter plate also glimpses into the actress's dressing room as a reminder that all her art is not her own. "Enter Herodias," "The Eyes of Herod," and "The Stomach Dance" place the actors on a recognizable stage with curtains, and the first of these includes a caricature of the author himself, holding the prompt-copy of his play, and

introducing his cast — or rather, Beardsley's cast — with an expansive gesture.

Beardsley's images are deliberately theatrical because they frequently illustrate stage directions rather than the characters' speeches. Thus he visualizes for his audience the dramatic aspect of the play — its unspoken and parenthetical (if not unwritten) thoughts. And because he also illustrates scenes which are not "in" the text — scenes such as "The Black Cape," "A Platonic Lament," "Enter Herodias," and "The Toilette of Salome" — he is also offering his reification of the "invisible dance" behind the scenes in *Salome*. For Beardsley, this invisible dance is the dance of sexuality — the dance of difference and inverted hierarchies signalled by the presence of the predatory Beardsley Woman. "Sexually insatiable, strong and cunning, with acquired male characteristics" (Fletcher, "Grammar" 159), her power is outlined by her dangerous look, her intimidating body and only slightly less intimidating clothes, and by her prominence as the visual high point of each design in which she appears.

Beardsley also employs a variety of "connecting figures" in the drawings which not only draw attention to the theatrical element of his images, but also, as Heyd suggests, work to acknowledge the presence of the spectator/audience, either by "pointing out the events and signalling the focal point of interest to the beholder, or by installing the viewer within the picture itself" (196). The winged Eros of the title page, the masked satyr of the list of pictures, the grotesque in "Platonic Lament," the playwright in "Enter Herodias," the putti in "The Eyes of Herod," and the lute-player in "The Stomach Dance," all perform this connecting function, which has the ironic

effect of implicating the reader/viewer in the enacted scene.²¹ The image of the play thus becomes a spectacle of voyeurism which casts the reader/viewer in the role of Herod, manipulated and even titillated by the sexuality of the plates, but ultimately in control of the spectacle because the pages can be turned, the book can be closed, Salome can be "crushed" at will.

Beardsley's designs threaten to "overpower the text" not because, as Holbrook Jackson says, "they are inappropriate, sometimes even impertinent" (103), but because they are, if anything, *too* appropriate and pertinent. As a parody of the text, Beardsley's images become, in Bakhtinian terms, comic-ironic doubles for the word which achieve their effects by distorting exaggeration and comic inversion. Indeed, Beardsley's *Salome* series may be viewed as a hyperbolic performance of what Linda Dowling calls, in *Language and Decadence*, "Wilde's performative ideal of language" (187). Dowling argues persuasively that *Salome* offers a "vision of a world created and utterly disrupted by the powers of autonomous language" — a vision which reveals the idea, "implicit in the very notion of Decadence," that "without any logos to unify reality, the world at any moment can be undone . . ." (173). According to Dowling, Wilde's solution to the "post-philological problem" which emerged at the end of the nineteenth century was his performative aesthetics, his published "*contes parlés*" (186). And indeed *Salome* began as one of Wilde's many beautiful, unwritten *contes*

²¹The use of such connecting figures is one of Beardsley's favorite devices. See, for example, the satyr running from the scene (but turning to wink at the viewer as he does so) in "How King Arthur saw the Questing Beast and thereof had Great Marvel" in *The Morte D'Arthur*, or the repeated dwarf figure who shares a look and a laugh with the viewer in several of *The Rape of the Lock* illustrations (in Mohr).

parlés. According to the writer himself, *Salome* would never have been written but for Wilde's chance discovery of a blank notebook in his lodgings after he had been telling the story of the play to André Gide and others over lunch (Hyde 259). As Dowling points out, Wilde's aesthetic ideal, like Pater's, "derives its authority from the intense personality of the artist." However, since this authority "must be repeatedly enacted or enunciated through speech," Wilde's performative mode can only be self-exhausting because limited to the finitude of the artistic personality itself (188).

If the invisible dance which Beardsley reifies in his images is the dance of sexuality, Wilde's invisible dance is the dance of textuality — the dance of representation. Salome is the central character of his play, not because she is a devouring woman, but because she represents art herself. For Wilde, Art is female: seductive, amoral, subversive — both veiled and unveiling, surface and symbol. Moreover, as a dancer, Salome embodies in herself Wilde's performative aesthetic, and her ultimate death may signal the author's ironic awareness of the fatal limitations of such an aesthetic. Beardsley's exaggerated sexualization of Wilde's motifs and conventions illuminates and critically comments on the double game Wilde plays by taking on a female subject-position. Beardsley's critique suggests that the final words of the play — Herod's terse "Kill that woman"²² — represent the author's ultimate allegiance to authority and the status quo as represented by the patriarchal order and the logos. At play's end, the word's performative power is shown to be all-powerful, and the carnival of inverted hierarchies briefly instated

²²All citations unless otherwise noted are taken from the Branden edition, illustrated with the sixteen plates of Lane's 1907 edition (Boston, 1989).

with Salome's subversive (because non-linguistic) dance is suppressed under the powerful shields of the state.

Beardsley makes this criticism in two ways. In the first place, the *cul de lampe* (Fig. 15) which is printed immediately under the final stage directions — *The soldiers rush forward and crush beneath their shields Salome, daughter of Herodias, Princess of Judea* — is an ironic comment on Wilde's curtain scene and, as Robert Ross recognized, "a witty criticism of the play as well" ("A Note" xv). A leering satyr and a slyly grinning Pierrot prepare to put the naked body of the dead Salome into an enormous, rose-decorated, powder-box coffin. Between them, and descending down toward Salome's thighs, is Beardsley's signature: "a line penetrating between two lines and dissolving into drops, it is a diagram of sexual penetration and ejaculation" (Brophy 52). Since the drops point directly to the word "FIN" inscribed on the powder box, Beardsley seems to be making an ironic cross-reference to the last full plate, "The Climax," in which Salome floats orgasmically in undefined space, holding the prophet's dripping head. The parodic repetition combines the motifs of sex and death for Salome as well as for the Baptist, while at the same time bringing these associations together into a serious comment on the invisible dance of representation. The fatal devouring woman of "The Climax" is unveiled as a vulnerable and delicate virgin disposed of by a clown and a lecher — perhaps symbolic figures for the artist and writer respectively, as Fletcher suggests (*Aubrey Beardsley* 94).²³ The masked Pierrot engages the

²³Arthur Symons was one of the first critics to identify the artificial and tragic-comic Pierrot with Beardsley himself (28-9). See also Milly Heyd, who develops a substantial argument for Pierrot as a mask for the artist in the work, arguing that he appears as both Pierrot and anti-Pierrot (see especially Chapter 1).

viewer directly with his knowing look, thus involving him/her in the ironic knowledge of the writer's contradictory attitudes toward his subject.

Beardsley's *cul de lampe* confronts the reader/viewer with art's artificiality by its parodic re-working of the closing vignette for William Thackeray's *Vanity Fair*. The effect of Beardsley's irony depends, of course, on the reader's recognition that the artist has duplicated the main features of the earlier design in a new critical context. Thackeray's design features two children looking into a toybox full of puppets; the lid which they are about to close is marked FINIS. Beardsley's reworking transforms the children into a satyr and a Pierrot, the toybox into a powder box, and the multiple puppets into a single figure, whose physical unreality and dependence on her "handlers" for her action is mockingly alluded to by the way in which her left leg doubles as the satyr's left arm (Fletcher, *Aubrey Beardsley* 94). But Beardsley's ironic citation of Thackeray's pictorial text also provokes the memory of his verbal text: "Ah! *Vanitas Vanitatum!* which of us is happy in this world? Which of us has his desire? or, having it, is satisfied? — come, children, let us shut up the box and the puppets, for our play is played out" (822).

The *cul de lampe* comments not only on art's artificiality, but also on the writer's secret desire that language could be grounded in logos, that words could be fiats, that there could be an authorizing power whose statements — "Kill that woman" — would be speech acts, demonstrating the actual alignment between words and actions, desires and objects. Since Herod's

order is Wilde's innovation,²⁴ and since Salome's death follows immediately upon the achievement of her desire — "I have kissed thy mouth, Iokanaan, I have kissed thy mouth" — one way to read the curtain scene is as a turn away from the free play of art and illicit desire to the security of authority and traditional systems of power. This appears to be Beardsley's ironic reading. Hence the curiously sympathetic treatment of Salome, who has been presented as anything but a victim in the previous plates.

The second way in which Beardsley targets Wilde's divided loyalties in *Salome* is through the use of ironic caricature. The artist prepares the reader/viewer for his critique of Wilde by identifying him with the Tetrarch in his fourth — and last — caricature of the author before the *finale*, "The Eyes of Herod" (Fig. 16). Beardsley's caricatures of Wilde, which appear throughout the series of plates, are not schoolboy lampoons or insolent sneers at the author as so many critics have suggested. Rather, Wilde's repeated features — in "The Woman in the Moon," "A Platonic Lament," "Enter Herodias," and "The Eyes of Herod" — represent an ironic (because exaggerated) statement about the way in which the author's personality inscribes itself throughout the play. Beardsley's caricatures signal his recognition of the ways in which Wilde, as he later wrote in *De Profundis*, "took the drama, the most objective form known to art, and made it as personal a mode of expression as the lyric or the sonnet . . ." (*Complete Works* 912). The first two plates identify Wilde as the Woman in the Moon,

²⁴Richard Ellmann, citing Gomez Carrillo, says that Wilde's original title for the play was *La Décapitation de Salome*. Clearly Salome's death was integral to Wilde's conception of the invisible dance. ("Overtures to 'Salome,'" *Golden Codgers* 58).

thereby aligning him with the title role, for Salome is identified with the moon woman throughout the play. Because the last caricature places Wilde's features on the face of the Tetrarch, Beardsley's point seems to be that the writer is both Salome and Herod — both subversive artist and privileged patriarch of the ruling class.²⁵ The parodic relations of image and text in *Salome* thus illuminate both the writer's wish to confront the patriarchal order by taking on the female subject-position, and his ultimate inability to disrupt the ideology of the ruling class.²⁶

The caricature which precedes "The Eyes of Herod" reinforces this insight. In "Enter Herodias" (Fig. 17), Wilde appears in his own character as playwright. Beardsley supplies him with curious symbolic paraphernalia: along with the prompt-copy of the play, he bears the caduceus of the physician and wears the owl-cap of the magician. According to Brian Reade, the caduceus is a graphic allusion to Wilde's artistic creed of "curing the senses by means of the soul, and the soul by means of the senses" (337). If so, it is an ironic allusion, a parodic repetition with critical distance. Like the magician's headgear, which seems to refer to the art of illusion which Wilde practices, the caduceus is a double-edged symbol when read in terms of the whole design, for the plate's focus on "the presence of evil" (Kenneth Clark 22)

²⁵But see Richard Ellmann, who argues that Herod is the main character of Wilde's drama, and the one most closely aligned with Wilde's own nature; according to Ellmann, the caricature of Wilde as Herod indicates that Beardsley "divined the autobiographical element in Herod" ("Overtures to 'Salome,'" *Golden Codgers* 58).

²⁶In a fascinating and ground-breaking article, Elliot L. Gilbert also argues for Wilde's dual roles of Salome and Herod, and for mixed revolutionary/misogynistic messages in the play, which he sees as illuminated by Beardsley's drawings.

suggests that the cure is worse than the disease. Furthermore, the combined symbolic attributes of book and staff, together with the alignment of the art of the magician and the art of the playwright, seem to me to be an ironic allusion to Shakespeare's *The Tempest*. By casting Wilde as a world-weary Prospero, and situating the dramatically *non*-innocent Herodias as a Miranda between a grotesque Caliban and a feminized Ariel of his own invention, Beardsley comments critically on the artist's ability to create his own world.

The scene dramatizes the illusion of power in the worlds both on and off the stage by illuminating the connection between Wilde's homosexuality and his aesthetics. The intimidating ferocity of the enormous Herodias, with her out-size breasts, phallic-shaped body and crescent-studded hair, is undermined because close examination reveals her power to be illusory: armless and without adequate footing, the queen is nothing but a marionette whose strings are pulled by the fetal grotesque. If Herodias is also, as Ian Fletcher says, a caricature of Wilde, then "a less than agreeable pun types Oscar as an aging 'queen'" and the visual pun on the caduceus or crutch becomes a sexual symbol for Wilde's intercrural mode of congress (*Aubrey Beardsley* 84). Herodias's elevation, and the crescent moons on her cummerbund and in her hair, also identify her with the Woman in the Moon, so the playwright Wilde's gesture and exchanged look with the spectator becomes a directive to "look at me." The feminized page at right, who has taken off his mask, is another indication that Beardsley is here exposing Wilde's homosexual subtext, especially since, in the suppressed first version of the drawing, there was no fig leaf to disguise the naked attendant's obvious disinterest in women (Reade, *Aubrey Beardsley* 337).

The reader/viewer of parodic art must not only be an engaged participant in the critical performance, but also a literate one who can identify the conventions played with and detect the ironic distances established between image and text[s]. Beardsley initiates his reader/viewer into the kind of critical acumen he expects in his facing frontispiece and title page. With careful disposition of black and white, and with minimal lines, the landscape of "The Woman in the Moon" (Fig. 18) outlines the enormous curves of a supine female body — an ironic literalization of the Victorian woman/nature identification. But the pictorial conventions of representation are collapsed into a visual pun, because this "ground" is groundless: the sweep of the "background" landscape doubles as the outlines of the foregrounded figure's dress. This graphic technique undermines the woman/nature identification by delightfully pointing out the artifice of its own constructive principles. The subversion is dramatically enacted because the lines of the composition lead the viewer's eyes to the moon which, in an ironic inversion of its own caption, shows the face of a man — Oscar Wilde — rather than that of the woman it promises.²⁷

Beardsley's introductory image featuring Wilde as the Woman in the Moon performs several important critical functions which are developed throughout the sequence of plates. Identifying a man as a woman unveils the dances of sexuality and textuality with which the bi-textual *Salome* is concerned. By figuring Wilde as the Woman in the Moon, Beardsley

²⁷This ironic inversion, however, was not intentional. It seems that Beardsley's original title for the plate was "The Man in the Moon" (clearly establishing an ironic distance from the textual image), but that John Lane substituted "The Woman in the Moon" (Macfall 52).

identifies Salome as the author's artist figure. The bi-sexuality of the Woman in the Moon thus comments directly on the bi-sexuality of Salome herself and ultimately on Wilde's aesthetics. For Wilde, border-crossing is absolutely necessary for the creative artist, who must cross gender borders, representational borders, truth borders, and law and order borders, in order to realize fully his/her personality in his/her art. A woman (and especially a Jewish princess) — because marginal, exotic, and oppressed — is, like her twin image, the criminal, an ideal figure for Wilde's aesthetic.²⁸ If Wilde becomes Salome in drag, however, it is because such criminal subversions are necessary to his art.²⁹ Indeed, the alignment of the artist with the unique sensibility of the "third sex" is embedded in the sexual discourse of the period, as Edward Carpenter's *Love's Coming of Age* (1896) makes clear (129). Moreover, Carpenter's notion of the criminal, in *Civilization, Cause and Cure* (1889)³⁰ as one for whom "desire precedes function," is also an implicit critique of contemporary materialist society which found specific expression in the "reverse discourse" of *fin-de-siècle* decadents (Stokes 102).

²⁸Wilde's notion of the artist as criminal is given particular focus in "De Profundis" and "Pen, Pencil and Poison." See *Complete Works*. Richard Ellmann was the first to develop a critical argument for Wilde's artist/criminal figure. But see also Christopher Nassaar and Rodney Shewan.

²⁹In his biography, Ellmann provides a fascinating plate of Wilde in the character of Salome, complete with flowing wig, jewellery, a minimal top and an ample, bare, waist hanging over a jewelled belt and long skirts. Wilde was photographed kneeling, with arms outstretched, before the decapitated head of John the Baptist, which lies on a platter in front of the desirous dancer. See below, Chapter 7, for a fuller exploration of this photograph.

³⁰Wilde admired Carpenter's *Civilization, Cause and Cure*, which he read in Paris in 1900 (Stokes 102).

But Beardsley's identification of Wilde with the Woman in the Moon not only aligns the author with his artist figure and her dance, but also laughingly draws attention to the author's role as the presiding lunary of the play — the goddess who controls the characters and actions from above. The layout of the frontispiece and title page makes this clear, for Wilde's eyes look sideways, not only at the two figures of "The Woman in the Moon" design, but also toward the laughing herm of the facing title. Beardsley's cross-dressing moon, taken together with the androgynous figures which complete the design, also comments, as Elaine Showalter has argued, on the latent homosexual theme of the play, and about its status as — in more ways than one — "a closet drama" (*Sexual Anarchy* 155, 150).

"The Woman in the Moon" has two visual focal points: the moon goddess with her mother-nature body, and the figures on the right of the plate whose eyes s/he engages. Like so many of Beardsley's decorative motifs in *Salome*, these figures are floating in air, groundless. Indeed, as Kenneth Clark points out, "The setting of the two figures has no relation to visual experience" (78). Their indeterminate pictorial grounding reflects their indeterminate textual grounding: who *are* these people looking so fearfully at the Woman in the Moon? Certainly the figures "are drawn with unusual sympathy" rarely seen in Beardsley's work. "They seem," as Clark has astutely noted, "reluctant to enter an incomprehensible world" (78). The placement of this plate as a frontispiece to *Salome* suggests that the two figures are reluctant to enter the textual world towards which the author's eyes direct them.

Because the robed figure is androgynous, the identity of this fearful couple is not clear. Although most critics see the couple as the homosexual page and his effeminate beloved, Narraboth, others identify the figures as John and Salome. The second reading seems to be implicitly informed by the conventions of frontispiece designs: a frontispiece should depict the main characters or encapsulate a significant moment of the text, therefore the figures of this design must be the main characters of the drama, John the Baptist and Salome. The argument is fine, as far as it goes. By this logic, the vulnerability of the naked Jokanaan, whose left arm protects the cowering Salome, would have to be read as Beardsley's ironic commentary on the ultimate victimization both characters suffer from Wilde's re-writing of biblical myth. This critical interpretation may be confirmed by the *cul de lampe*, but it is not substantiated by Beardsley's presentations of Salome in the other plates, where she appears in full flower as the predatory Beardsley Woman. Indeed, as Ian Fletcher has noted, Beardsley's *Salome* drawings are the artist's "most vivid representations of the Fatal Woman. . . . Here the drama of sexual politics is represented visually; Salome's furious quest for psychological and physical fulfillment is expressed through her acquisition of male emblems" ("Grammar" 159, 160). The robed figure of the "The Woman in the Moon" has no such aggressive attributes, the most significant of which is the peacock headdress which Salome wears in "The Peacock Skirt," "The Eyes of Herod," and "The Stomach Dance."

If, on the other hand, the two figures are taken to be the Page and the young Syrian, then the frontispiece refuses to visualize the two central characters of the drama, focusing instead on the reverse discourse of the

play's homoerotic subtext. The later plate, "A Platonic Lament" (Fig. 19), certainly substantiates this reading, for it appears to present the (naked again) Page's grief over the body of the dead Narraboth, who has killed himself for his unrequited love of Salome. Moreover, the two plates are visually linked by the repeated images of Wilde's face in the moon and the rose, which in the second design Wilde appears to have dropped as an emblem of grief onto Narraboth's corpse. His eyes, too, appear to be shut in sorrow, and he is fading out of the sky, almost eclipsed by a cloud. The movement of the moon from left to right across the picture planes of the two designs also dramatically connects the scenes according to a time sequence. The title, "A Platonic Lament," which reinforces the notion that this scene depicts the grief of the homosexual page for his beautiful beloved, while at the same time ironically commenting on the non-consummation of that love, also seems to be an indication that the similar figures of the frontispiece are indeed Herodias's Page and the young Syrian. The point here is not so much which identification is the correct reading, but rather that Beardsley deliberately plays with gender confusion as a critical methodology for targeting the indeterminate nature of figure/ground relations, and for exposing the artificial, constructed nature of what appears to be "real" or "natural." Because the identity of the figures of "The Woman in The Moon" plate cannot be fixed and is not clearly authorized by the text, Beardsley's design constitutes an ironic disruption of the concept of the authorizing word.

Beardsley's illustration works not only by ironically repeating the themes of the text but also by parodically citing the iconographic tradition. As Milly Heyd points out, "The Woman in the Moon" scene graphically recalls

the Renaissance genre tradition of the Expulsion from Paradise. In an ironic twist, two androgynous creatures replace Adam and Eve, and God becomes Oscar Wilde (101). Showalter makes a similar point, arguing that "Wilde is here both a specter of judgment and a gay god of the night who looks down on the lovers"; thus the Page and Narraboth become "what contemporary slang calls Adam and Steve" (*Sexual Anarchy* 152). Beardsley's ironic inversion of biblical iconography, however, exploits the homosexual context with some purpose. If the figures of the frontispiece are somehow being expelled from paradise into an incomprehensible world, the artist is making a profound comment on the nature of writing/representation which is quite different from that of the author. Simply put, Beardsley's parodic overlapping of the Edenic tradition on the vulnerable figures of the frontispiece suggests that art represents a "fall" into language, a fall into the division denoted by sexuality itself, which his sexually ambiguous figures illuminate by the teasing textuality — or constructed nature — of their gender.

But if Beardsley's *Salome* focuses on representation as difference, Wilde's *Salome* focuses on representation as identity — the identity of the beholder and the object of desire, the identity of the artist with the art, the dancer with her dance — and on the revolutionary potential of this intensification of the individual to displace institutionalized power structures. Wilde's *Salome* is a symbol of the artist/criminal whose art he describes in "The Soul of Man Under Socialism" as "the most intense mood of Individualism that the world has known" — an Individualism which disrupts authority because it "is a disturbing and disintegrating force," whereas the very concept of authority is — like Herod himself — barbarous

and corrupt (*Complete Works* 1090, 1091, 1094). Beardsley's sexual symbolism ironically takes on Wilde's identity topos by providing comic doubles for the word in the form of hermaphroditic and androgynous figures and visual twins such as the two figures of "The Woman in the Moon" (Fig. 18), or the Medusa heads of Salome and John the Baptist in "The Dancer's Reward" (Fig. 1) and "The Climax." Most significantly, Wilde's conception of Salome and her dance is parodically inverted by the alien judgment of the image in Beardsley's "The Stomach Dance" (Fig. 20). If for Wilde "art is a veil," a female power who "makes and unmakes many worlds" ("Decay of Lying," *Complete Works* 982), for Beardsley art is a provocative strip-tease whose project is to tantalize and shock. Indeed, Wilde's vision of the anarchy heralded by Salome's subversive dance is mockingly re-presented by masturbatory motifs of individual gratification. Beardsley exposes the intensification of the individual in art and society as an emblem which reveals sexual solipsism rather than revolutionary politics.

Salome's dance is the central action of the play, but Wilde's text tells us nothing about it except its existence; the choreography remains one of the book's unwritten thoughts. Moreover, as Peter Raby points out, "Since Wilde was prevented from overseeing a production, it is impossible to be certain how he would have wished it to be executed." Raby posits that "One may at least assume that the merely erotic is both inadequate and inappropriate," and given Wilde's selection of the fifty-year old Sarah Bernhardt to play the title role in the suppressed production of the play, it does seem that Wilde had, at the very least, a "non-realist approach" to his young virgin's dance (112,

116).³¹ Beardsley's visualization of this invisible dance, however, depicts not the mystical symbolic ritual of the seven veils, but rather the very material and even coarse "Stomach Dance." According to Robert Ross, Wilde "used to say that 'Salome' was a mirror in which everyone could see himself. The artist, art; the dull, dullness; the vulgar, vulgarity" ("Note" xv). Presumably Wilde saw in Beardsley's "naughty scribbles" the vulgar products of a vulgar beholder. But Beardsley was also an artist who saw art when he looked in the mirror that *Salome* offers, and while his visualization of the play's central image is undeniably subversive, it is also both interpretive and critical.

Beardsley's "Stomach Dance" (Fig. 20) is deliberately anti-climactic, deflating the expectations of the text's anticipatory build-up with a passionless and virtually motionless dancer and a comic, grotesque, musician. The plate is divided horizontally by a flat black bottom, suggestive of a stage except for its lack of depth, and a blank white upper plate. The design is further divided vertically, with Salome occupying the right side of the composition and the lute player the bottom left. The placement of the figures on their respective voids produces a Japanese asymmetry which introduces a note of tension into the design. The dance itself is curiously static; the dancer seems frozen in her position and "the agitation of the dance is suggested," as Fletcher says, only "by the curve of the body throwing stomach and navel into prominence and by the outswung veils counterbalanced by the flight of pattern roses" (*Aubrey Beardsley* 87). In an ironic contradiction of the text, whose only description

³¹See also Kerry Powell, who argues at length, and against traditional criticism, that *Salome* was actually written with Bernhardt in mind. Powell also offers a new explication of why the play was censored in its third week of rehearsals.

of the dance is that Salome will "dance with naked feet" and seven veils, Beardsley's dancer is still wearing one of her rose-decorated sandals, and makes do with a minimum arrangement of scarves. The grotesque lute player is literally aflame with desire, stroking his instrument and his sexual organ at the same time, his tongue hanging out in an exaggerated parody of Herod's lust. Salome herself seems indifferent to both her dance and the musician. Her face is impassive; her look engages the viewer directly. Her gaze puts the viewer into the place of Herod, for whom Salome dances, and with that manoeuvre, Beardsley neatly implicates the viewer not only in the voyeurism of the play, but also in the complex relationships between desire and power which the artist's presentation of that voyeurism explores. His parodic reworking of Japanese erotic prints (Heyd 115) evokes the eastern *ars erotica* tradition in which, according to Foucault, pleasure is viewed as a truth in itself, "not considered in relation to an absolute law of the permitted and the forbidden, nor by reference to a criterion of utility, but first and foremost in relation to itself . . ." (57).

With Salome's impassiveness, her curious self-absorption, Beardsley argues that Salome dances not for the Tetrarch's pleasure, nor for the achievement of a deferred desire, nor indeed to undermine barbarous authority, but solely for her own pleasure. The point is reinforced by the creation of an erect pseudo-penis rising out of the dancer's thighs and ejaculating into a swirl of roses.³² Indeed, the hand hidden under the veils

³²Fletcher makes a similar point, and argues that by opting to depict a stomach dance rather than the dance of the seven veils, Beardsley may be bypassing Wilde for one of his sources — Flaubert's *Herodias* (Aubrey Beardsley 87).

which flow up between Salome's legs "seems to censor and restrict Salome's activity" (Heyd 116) in an ironic counter-statement to Wilde's vision of the connections between purposeless sexuality and the non-utility of art. Beardsley's "Stomach Dance" is a comic/ironic double for the text's dance of the seven veils in which the textual becomes defined solely by the sexual. His parodic image offers a critical interpretation of the personal/political implications of art seen as "the most intense mood of Individualism" in which, implicitly, desire precedes function. Indeed, Beardsley seems to be parodically quoting the author's own conclusions in "The Soul of Man under Socialism" that unless an artist produces art "solely for his own pleasure, he is not an artist at all" (*Complete Works* 1090).³³ For Beardsley, that art, as the lute player punningly suggests, is merely the solitary art the French name "*jouer au violon*" (Heyd 226): desire, pleasure, power, become radically, anarchically individual, not inter-actively social. In the dialogic relations between image and text illuminated by the parodic approach to illustration, Beardsley is subversive because he enacts Salome's fatal dance with his own images: solipsistic, self-reflecting, self-engendering, his drawings perform for their own pleasure.

The anarchic relations of image and text constituted by parody find their most typical form in the black-and-white art of Aubrey Beardsley. Few other art-nouveau illustrators of the period have either his critical acumen or his artistic aggression. Few are willing to be openly rebellious, to mimic the

³³"The Soul of Man under Socialism" was first published in *The Fortnightly Review* in February 1890.

word and confront the text argumentatively with a self-declared separate point of view. Nevertheless, the nineties produced some other interesting examples of parodic book illustration, even though the parody sometimes seems inadvertent or contextual rather than deliberate. One such example is *Fringilla* (1895), a book of poetry written by the popular novelist, Richard Doddridge Blackmore, and illustrated by the combined efforts of Louis Fairfax Muckley and James Linton. Another is George Meredith's *Jump-to-Glory Jane* (1892), illustrated by Laurence Housman. As is typical of parodic bi-textuality, these books interrogate the location of authority by focusing on the hierarchies of power established between the sexes.

Fringilla is a curious bi-textual combination of aging Victorian writer, up-and-coming art-nouveau decorator, and staid quotational illustrator. The text represents the novelist's attempt at poetic publication after negative critical reception prompted a silence of forty years, during which Blackmore produced such popular novels as *Lorna Doone*. The cover design, initial letters, and eight of the eleven full-page plates are by Louis Fairfax Muckley, a young black-and-white artist of the decorative school.³⁴ The other three full-page plates are provided by James Linton, a traditional realistic illustrator and engraver who produced most of his work in the sixties (Crane, *Decorative Illustration* 121). The combined illustrations produce a bizarre juxtaposition of the impressionistic and the quotational approaches to illustration. The dialogic interaction of the conservative voice of the narrative poetry with the

³⁴Like Aubrey Beardsley and Laurence Housman, Louis Fairfax Muckley was an art-nouveau illustrator who benefitted from an introduction given to his work by *The Studio*, edited by Gleeson White (Crane, *Decorative Illustration* 177-78).

contradictory discourses of the images motivates a complex series of parodic relationships. The repeated textual motifs become ironized by context. Significantly, the textual motif which is picked up on and explored most vigorously by both Muckley and Linton is the representation of male/female relations.

For Blackmore, the relationship between the sexes is constituted by hierarchies and difference. In "Mount Arafa," for instance, a long narrative poem in two parts which tells the Muslim legend about Adam and Eve's punishment of 120 years of separation after their banishment from Paradise, the poet's principal point is that old-time religion needs to be restored to its proper place, and with it the "natural" complementary roles of the gentle, more spiritual, and frail woman, with her strong, active, and intelligent male counterpart. Ironically, however, Muckley's decorative images confront the text argumentatively on several fronts, while Linton's images — intended to illustrate "Pausias and Glycera" — quote the poet's point of view from a distance.

"Pausias and Glycera; or, The First Flower Painter," tells the story of how the artist Pausias meets Glycera in the woods, weaving garlands of flowers. Struck by her art, which he declares surpasses his own, he announces that he will stay with her to learn "New forms, new curves, new harmonies of tone,/ New dreams of heaven, and how to make them true" (97). Glycera, of course, has no art; she is intuitive, natural:

No art, fair sir, hath ever crossed my thought,
The lesson I delight in comes untaught.
The flowers around me take their own sweet way,
They tell me what they wish — and I obey. (98)

Nevertheless, Pausias takes up his abode with her in the woods, where he learns to paint the beauty of nature in a pastoral — and chaste — idyll. However, on the very eve of the completion of his masterpiece (which is timed to coincide with his nuptials), Pausias loses Glycera to Artemis, whose votary she is. Linton's illustration of Pausias and Glycera in their pastoral setting has little, if any decorative interest: the plate re-produces the subject matter and point of view of the text in the manner of the quotational illustrator (Fig. 21).³⁵

Curiously, however, Linton's design also quotes the text of "Mount Arafa" in a way that Muckley's images do not. The hierarchical arrangements of the two figures in Linton's composition clearly denote the superiority of the male: Pausias stands in a position of authority, while Glycera sits at his feet to mark her inferior status. Pausias not only commands the pictorial focus, however. His frontal depiction, taken in conjunction with Glycera's shadowed face, suggests that he is the principal player of whom the female is but a dark reflection. At the same time, Glycera's seated position indicates more than her inferior status: it also signals both her closer connection to earth and to nature and her less upright position in the hierarchical relationship between God and man. The book or portfolio which Pausias carries under his arm reinforces his connection to art and knowledge, the discourses of power.

³⁵Linton provides three plates for "Pausias and Glycera." The first depicts the meeting of the two lovers. Glycera is seated on a bench, working on a garland; Pausias stands with one foot up on the bench leaning over her. The second plate is the scene under discussion in this paragraph. The third plate is a bedroom scene illustrating Glycera's dream of Artemis.

Ironically, these stylistic features of Linton's drawing quote the text of "Mount Arafa" with much more precision than do Muckley's decorative images. In "Eve's Song," which concludes the opening section of Blackmore's poem, a penitent Eve admits her guilt, and celebrates the justice of the punishment which makes her forever subservient to man because it is "for the best": "If God once more will shine around, / And lift my husband from the ground, / And teach him to lift me" (87). No such hierarchical arrangements evidencing the fortunate fall may be found in Muckley's decorative art nouveau design for "The Meeting," however (Fig. 22).³⁶ On the contrary, Muckley's image takes Blackmore's motifs and replays them with ironic inversion to the extent that a Pre-Lapsarian state is suggested. In contradiction to the text, Adam and Eve are neither clothed nor in the desert, and Eve's hair is defiantly — though perhaps decorously — unbound. Far from being penitent, Eve looks at Adam with proud triumph, while Adam seems to be in her thrall. Indeed, the female figure seems to have the characteristics of the sexually aggressive Lilith rather than of the humbled Eve. Moreover, the proliferation of Japanesque branches, white blossoms, and little flame flowers suggest that "The Meeting" takes place in an *ars erotica* paradise that has nothing to do with the Fall and little, if anything, with male ascendancy. Like all decorative illustrators, Muckley follows the

³⁶Muckley provides three illustrations for the two-part poem: one at each end and one between the sections. The first plate, which acts as the frontispiece to "Mount Arafa," and which shares a decorative border with the text of the facing page, depicts Michael with his flaming sword evicting a naked Adam and Eve from Paradise. The next plate also illustrates the opening section, "The Parting." The composition symbolically indicates the separation of Adam and Eve by the decorative divisions of the plate. The third plate, under discussion in this paragraph, acts as the frontispiece to "The Meeting."

interpretive ideal which gives him the right to "allegorize on his own hook." In the context of another interpretation of the author's words, however, Muckley's designs cease to be consummating impressions and begin to assert themselves as argumentative counter-narratives with the critical distance and transformational re-working one expects from parody.³⁷

Jump-to-Glory Jane is important not only as an interesting example of parodic image/text relations, but also because it represents Laurence Housman's first commission as a book illustrator. The double-voiced discourse of image and text in this book is doubly ironic, because Housman takes seriously what Meredith writes as a satire in comic verse, and there is something irresistibly funny about a humorous anecdote re-told with dead pan gravity. As M. Sturge Henderson says, "one of the funniest things in the world is to see fun itself miss fire — as when Mr. Le Gallienne narrowly misses being converted in the last stanza of *Jump-to-Glory Jane* " (220),³⁸ and certainly Housman's plate, "Her end was beautiful," which threatens to canonize Jane as a saint, also teeters on the edge of conversion. Yet it is difficult to determine, in this case, whether the images parody the text, or the text parodies the images, so completely has Housman made Jane's story his own. Perhaps, in *Jump-to-Glory Jane*, the parody works both ways to illuminate the interrogation of authority that typifies parodic art.

³⁷See, however, John Russell Taylor, who argues that Muckley's designs are not art-nouveau decorations at all, but rather "are unmistakably illustrations of the text." Taylor contrasts the decorative designs of the same text by the American art-nouveau illustrator, Will Bradley, to make his point (61).

³⁸Richard Le Gallienne published a critical study, *George Meredith: Some Characteristics, with a Bibliography by John Lane*, with the Bodley Head in 1890.

Meredith described his poem in ironic terms. According to the poet, the heroine of *Jump-to-Glory Jane* "founds in our advanced community a sect inflated by the idea that by jumping high and high we take the best way for getting to HIM; and so they go across the country, until she meets a Bishop, who is in his blindness about to bless the wicked meats and drinks of his friend the squire's feast to tenants. She and thirty of her followers jump at him to convert him. She fails and dies, of a broken heart, some think, but it is hardly possible to know, as the jumpers do not speak." Inspired by Mrs. Girling (1827-86) and her community of "Shakers," Meredith's verses, he admitted, "are a Satire, but one of the pictures of our England as well" (Bartlett 504-5). As his editor, Harry Quilter, wrote in his introduction to the illustrated *Jump-to-Glory Jane*,³⁹ part of the satire of the Mrs. Girling episode is to ridicule the Charles Kingsley style of "muscular Christianity," which emphasized the connection between physical health and religious feeling ("Introduction" 24). But Mrs. Girling was more than a Kingsley-style Christian. Mary Anne (Clouting) Girling "was a religious fanatic, who believed herself an incarnation of the deity and acquired stigmata on her hands, feet, and side." While Phyllis Bartlett says that "GM's humble Jane had no such illusions" (505), it is less certain that Laurence Housman's Jane

³⁹The poem was first published in Harry Quilter's *Universal Review* on July 29, 1889. Quilter's book edition of 1892 was a kind of pirated version which the author put up with "for the sake of peace." According to Phyllis Bartlett, when Quilter failed in his hopes of securing either Linley Sambourne or Bernard Partridge to illustrate Meredith's poem for the *Universal Review*, he secured the services of Laurence Housman and produced an elegant little book in October 1892, the same month that the poem appeared in the volume, *The Empty Purse*" (504).

had not, for Housman was always, as Charles Ricketts complained, "dotty about God" (Housman, *Unexpected Years* 113).

Housman not only had a long personal fascination with Mrs. Girling, he was also a nineties' "threshold" man who was linked with both *fin-de-siècle* decadents and New Women; indeed, he was an early male feminist (a member of the Men's League for Woman Suffrage) who marched with the suffragettes, designed banners for their parades, and argued their cause in Hyde Park and on other platforms (Housman, *Unexpected Years* 48, 267). In his autobiography, Housman curiously follows his detailing of his youthful political activity with a description of the effect on him of "something quite small and domestic — the eviction of Mrs. Girling, and her followers, the Shakers, from their holding in the New Forest. . . ." Housman says "That incident had for me a strange interest which lasted for years, and resulted finally in a book called *The Sheepfold*" (*Unexpected Years* 50). Certainly one of the incident's strange fascinations for him seems to be connected with feminist political issues. The two strands — religious revelation and female power — merge in his illustrations for *Jump-to-Glory Jane* to produce drawings of peculiar intensity and feeling. For Housman, if not for Meredith, the notion of a female deity was apparently not laughable but worthy of reverence.

Housman admitted "the poem had a peculiar calling for me," explaining that "in this poem which had been given me to illustrate, I found myself face to face with a replica of Mrs. Girling, — not dead, but in a strange mixture of tragedy and comedy, very much alive; and as I drew my pictures of 'Jumping Jane' I had Mrs. Girling in mind." For Housman, the faith that the

"'Mother' of the Shakers" inspired in her followers was not ridiculous, but beautiful (*Unexpected Years* 117), and it is this feeling that informs the eight full-page plates and the thirty-six art-nouveau designs which decorate the calligraphic text. The full-page plates combine the sense of tragedy and comedy which Housman sensed in Meredith's poem. As quotational illustrations, they also pay tribute to the artist's admired predecessor, Arthur Boyd Houghton, whose "Shaker Evening at Home" Housman re-interprets with a ninetyish intensity and exaggeration (Taylor 106). Although the full-page plates' mannered quotational style and self-conscious intertextuality indicate their parodic nature, however, it is in the art-nouveau decorative designs that the parody of Meredith's poem is most effectively enacted. In them, Housman invokes the Renaissance emblem tradition to launch a covert spiritual attack on the author's robust humor. Indeed, the page decorations, which share half the space of the text on each page, alternating top and bottom, offer the reader/viewer a counter-narrative which opposes the written word with its own alien judgment about the meaning of Jane and her experience. By distorting the text's characteristic features, the image transforms the poem, and the critique that enters the bi-textual work motivates new — and inescapably unstable — meanings by its parodic re-workings.

While Meredith's satire presents a comic slice of English country life, Housman's decorative counter-narrative depicts Jane as a mystic, a martyr, and a saint. Her head is occasionally encircled by a halo, and her jumping feet by an aura. Jane is associated with the *arbor vitae*, and one decoration features her emblematically reading a book and opening a door onto the tree

of life; but she is also shown in repeated decorations as a martyr hanging from its branches. Her purity, innocence, and connection to God are symbolized by a white dove — who shares her stippled aura — who flies free among the oak leaves when Jane is successful but sits imprisoned in a cage when she meets with persecution. In the decoration which punctuates Jane's expulsion by the Bishop and Squire's men, the dove metamorphoses into the emblem of the suffering Christ — the pelican who plucks blood from its breast to feed its nestlings. When Jane dies by the wayside, the cage motif is repeated without the bars and, on the facing page, the dove leaves the dead Jane's body as an emblem of her soul returning to God. Housman's symbolic designs suggest that his Jane is what Mrs. Girling claimed she was — the female embodiment of Christ. In the dialogic interaction with Meredith's comic verses, Housman's serious images become ironic doubles for the word which offer the reader/viewer a parodic counter-narrative of Jane's story.

Housman's Jane is not Meredith's Jane, any more than Beardsley's Salome is Wilde's Salome, or, indeed, Muckley's Eve is Blackmore's Eve. In parodic image/text relations, the critical distance between picture and word introduces an anarchic system of power relations which resists all forms of authorization outside the artist's personal reading and discursive practices. In the excess of seeing which produces the travesty image of parody, the ironic distances and critical repetitions of the artist constitute a critique more acerbic than may be found in any other kind of book illustration. Parodic images are not content to give their critique from the margins. Instead, they arrogate to themselves the authority to tell their own stories even while they mimic the story told in words. The reader/viewer of bi-textual parody is

imperiously called upon to read the picture with as much care as one reads the word, and then to re-read them both in the light of their mutual illumination and their determined opposition.

CHAPTER SIX

ANSWERING

. . . every word is directed toward an *answer* and cannot escape the profound influence of the answering word that it anticipates.

M. M. Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination*

Popular art . . . is . . . the art which is made by the co-operation of many minds and hands varying in kind and degree of talent, but all doing their part in due subordination to a great whole, without anyone losing his individuality. . . .

William Morris, *On Art and Socialism*

The decade which immediately preceded the nineties witnessed the emergence of two new and contradictory social forces: aestheticism and socialism. At the moment that the art-for-art's sake movement was at its height in middle-class England, Marxist thought was beginning to infuse the workers' movement, largely through the efforts of intellectual bourgeois such as Belfort Bax, Henry Hyndman, Edward Aveling and William Morris (Meier 28). In 1883, after a successful American lecture tour which propagated the aesthetic manifesto, Oscar Wilde was touring the English provinces lecturing on "The House Beautiful"; in the same year, William Morris joined the Social Democratic Federation and embarked on a program of political action to which he remained committed for the rest of his life ("Chronological Table" in *Complete Works of Oscar Wilde* and Meier 37). By the nineties, as Holbrook Jackson recognized, "the two paths of the modern art movement

resolved themselves into two very definite and very different aims: the communal and the individual, the public and the private" (250).

While Wilde and Morris are convenient metonymic indicators for opposing *fin-de-siècle* ideologies, the neatness of this opposition should not confuse the men's very real similarities. Wilde, of course, derived many of his notions of the "House Beautiful" from Morris himself, who turned to the subject frequently in the politico/aesthetic lectures he gave in the eighties and nineties, as well as in his utopian romances. Moreover, as we have seen, Wilde himself gave some thought to the relation between art and socialism. His conclusions in "The Soul of Man Under Socialism," however, are very different from Morris's. Wilde sees socialism as a liberating force because it is *anarchic*: it allows for the individual to express a unique personality in artistic form to the fullest extent and with the least constraint. For Wilde, the artist is the great and isolated individual who must remain separate from the masses or risk becoming "a dull or an amusing craftsman" (*Complete Works* 1090). But it is precisely this distinction between the artist and the craftsperson that Morris seeks to abolish. Morris sees socialism as a liberating force because it is *communal*. For him, the revival of handicrafts is a part of the revolutionary process — a preparation "for that which is surely coming, the new co-operative art of life, in which there will be no slaves, no vessels to dishonor, though there will necessarily be subordination of capacities, in which the consciousness of each one that he belongs to a corporate body, working harmoniously, each for all, and all for each, will bring about real and happy equality" (Morris *Art and Socialism* 244).

As the representatives of the divergent paths of the nineties' art movements, Wilde and Morris also embody the ideological positions of their spiritual fathers: Walter Pater and John Ruskin. In "The Nature of the Gothic," Ruskin privileges architecture over all the other arts, precisely because it is a social, rather than an individual artistic expression (in *Stones of Venice*). Pater takes the opposite position. In his essay on Winckelmann, Pater de-values architecture in favor of those arts which express the artist's personality most profoundly: painting, music and poetry (in *The Renaissance*). Pater's famous "Conclusion" takes this position to its individualistic limit when he asserts that "Experience, already reduced to a group of impressions, is ringed round for each one of us by that thick wall of personality through which no real voice has ever pierced on its way to us, or from us to that which we can only conjecture to be without. Every one of those impressions is the impression of the individual in his isolation, each mind keeping as a solitary prisoner its own dream of a world" (187-88). Given this view of the human condition, it is not surprising that Pater's disciple, Wilde, should view Art, even in a socialist economy, as *threatened* by the "community" (which Wilde equates with government) because "Art is the most intense mood of Individualism . . ." (*Complete Works* 1090). Similarly, it makes sense that *fin-de-siècle* artists who espoused this individualistic aesthetic should produce illustrations which represented their impressions of the text and/or constituted parodic expressions of their reading experience.

The aesthete's concept of the artist as an isolated individual whose subjectivity is so constrained by personality that it is incapable of hearing another voice was anathema to the arts-and-crafts ideology of Morris and his

followers, whose central tenet may be summed up by the word "fellowship," and whose communal aesthetic was predicated on the ability to hear and respond to another's voice. *Fin-de-siècle* artists who affirmed this communal aesthetic produced illustrations which not only listened to the voice of the text but also *answered* it with a new but counterpointing voice, often pitched in another key. Indeed, what Bakhtin has called the "architectonics of answerability" is deeply embedded in the arts-and-crafts aesthetic which bases its views on art and life on the production of architecture in the communal middle ages.¹ For Bakhtin, the architectonics of answerability describes the ordering of meaning through a creative, co-productive relationship between reader and text, I and other, in which the "I" will always retain (and contribute) something transgredient to the other (*Art and Answerability* xxii, 85-86). Similarly, for nineteenth-century arts-and-crafts theorists and practitioners, architecture is more than a physical structure: it is a symbol which stands for a complex of relationships revolving around communal production, communal use, and individual expression. As a co-operative art, gothic architecture emblemizes the very reverse of nineteenth-century individualism and competition in the capitalist, *laissez-faire* society. Indeed, Morris and his followers believed that a people with a sense of architectural power could create an ideal society. According to his daughter, May Morris, the Morris circle had "discovered the truth underlying all, that in an Ideal

¹It is interesting that in *A Dream of John Ball* (1888), Morris's first political romance, the narrator suffers from repeated unbidden, *architectural* dreams, until he receives a dream that "is at it were the present of an architectural peep-show" and is transported into fifteenth-century England, where he receives John Ball's passionate message: "fellowship is heaven, and lack of fellowship is hell; fellowship is life, and lack of fellowship is death. . . ." (1, 25).

State true art is built up on co-operative effort, and that competition must deaden or even kill inspiration" (65). May suggests that this truth — and this Ideal State — was first experienced at the Firm in Morris's pre-socialist days, but it was also put into practice after his socialist conversion with the establishment of the Kelmscott Press in 1891.

The Kelmscott Press attempted to re-create the communal relationships of independent medieval craftspersons by returning, as closely as possible, to their modes of production, though in actual fact Morris was a domineering (if not tyrannical) force, and both the practical working of the press and the favored reproductive style of illustration were closer to those of the early Victorian period than to those of the middle ages.² If the Kelmscott workers were (ideally) to establish medieval community in microcosm, the products of the press were to be miniature medieval buildings. Indeed, Morris judged production and product alike in terms of architectural principles first established by John Ruskin. In a lecture addressed to the Birmingham Society of Arts and School of Design in 1880, Morris argued that architecture sums up all the popular arts, and leads to all the arts, admitting all the while that "I cannot help feeling continually as I speak that I am echoing his [Ruskin's] words" (*Art and Socialism* 76, 64). In establishing the Kelmscott Press, Morris

²Geoffrey Wakeman suggests that The Kelmscott Press influenced the revival of printing much more by its typography than by its illustrations; although the *appearance* of the plates emulated medieval woodcuts, they were in fact wood engravings produced in the classic nineteenth-century manner (149-50). William S. Peterson provides a good insight into the daily workings of the press and of its hierarchical arrangements, depending down from Morris. He also refutes the traditional notion that Morris was absolutely opposed to the machine, and provides a detailed explanation of the surprising number of times and situations in which the use of photography, for example, was essential to production. See *The Kelmscott Press*.

attempted to revive the art that "is the expression by man of his pleasure in labour" (*Art and Socialism* 50) — that is, the "organic art" of the middle ages — by producing books which had the qualities preeminent in Gothic architecture: "the epical and the ornamental" (*Ideal Book* 26).

The Kelmscott Press is the high point and culmination of the arts-and-crafts movement in England which began with the Pre-Raphaelite revolt of the mid-nineteenth century. Illustrated books from the Kelmscott Press are, therefore, the most representative examples of this movement's approach to image/text relations. Artists of the arts-and-crafts school of illustration typically view art as a "social product" (Crane, *Morris to Whistler* 88) rather than "the most intense mood of Individualism." Indeed, the ideology underlying the "answering" approach to decorative illustration is expressed in Morris's view that the ideal political state is not, as for Wilde, anarchic individualism, but rather reciprocal community. The "answering" relationship between image and text is non-hierarchical: the two expressions are independent but linked, both individual and communal. Like the craftsman of Ruskin's or Morris's imagined middle ages, the ideal arts-and-crafts book illustrator expresses his/her individuality by imaginative decoration, acknowledges history and nature by representations grounded in the world, and affirms community responsibility by working corporately with others to produce a work of beauty and utility that is a "harmonious work of art" (*Ideal Book* 40).

The characteristics which Morris attributed both to Gothic art and to the work of the Pre-Raphaelites are also, therefore, the qualities which typify the answering approach to illustration: "love of nature, epical quality,

ornamental quality — all combined with a *romantic* quality" (in May Morris 303). Like decorative art-nouveau artists, arts-and-crafts illustrators have their roots in the Pre-Raphaelite movement, and specifically in Dante Gabriel Rossetti's approach to illustration. However, the arts-and-crafts school of illustrators developed Rossetti's decorative and interpretive ideal in another direction than did his art-nouveau inheritors. Ruskin's emphasis on architecture gave the arts-and-crafts movement its all-important historical sense, its understanding of the close connections between artistic development and social life (Crane, *Morris to Whistler* 50). Answering differs from either impression or parody because its ornamental or decorative aspect must (theoretically) be subordinate to the concept of the "whole" book — it cannot develop as independent, or autonomous, individual expression. This essentially architectural concept of the book guarantees that the decoration always has some "ground."

While art-nouveau and arts-and-crafts illustrators were both influenced by the Pre-Raphaelite view of art as the embodiment of a dream, this potentially solipsistic aesthetic is "corrected" in the second school by a belief in history and nature as objective realities that can be realized and represented. Thus, the "answering" approach to image/text relations combines the mimetic efforts of quotational illustrators with the interpretive expressions of impressionistic illustrators by producing pictures which are both imitative and inventive, representational and decorative. The answering approach to book illustration in the nineties is ideologically driven by the arts-and-crafts-movement's socialism, medievalism, historicism, and naturalism — as well as by the internal contradictions implied by this

combination of radicalism and conservatism. Image/text relations governed by "answering" embody a political outlook both nostalgic and revolutionary by dramatically enacting the relationship that Walter Crane believed the search for beauty would eventually produce in the Ideal State: "the golden link of connection and intimate association with the sister arts and handicrafts, whereof none is before or after another, none is greater or less than the other" (*Arts and Crafts Essays* 51).

Arts and crafts ideology determines both the methods of production and the subject matter of nineties' illustrated books whose bi-textuality is governed by answering. In the first place, illustrators of this school sought to abolish — or at least reduce — the hierarchical distinctions between handicraft and fine art. For an artist like William Strang, this meant reviving the art of etching.³ On the other hand, for artists like Edward Burne-Jones and Laurence Housman, this meant avoiding process reproduction for their pen-and-ink drawings, and choosing instead to have their designs translated by a wood-engraver. For both Burne-Jones and Housman, the movement from paper drawing to wood design was a deeply co-operative effort, with important interactive and communal relations established between the designing artist and the craftsman. Housman's engraver was his sister Clemence, with whom he lived, and whose skill at facsimile copying influenced his illustrative style (Engen 65). Burne-Jones's engraver, the

³William Strang was active in the pioneer Royal Society of Painter Etchers, which struggled to gain respect and legitimacy for etching as a fine art at a time when the Royal Academy both neglected and slighted this branch of two-dimensional art because it was deemed a craft. See Frank Newbolt's critical introduction to *The Master Etchers: William Strang*.

committed socialist and Kelmscott employee, William Hooper, was also highly skilled in the craft of facsimile engraving.

Unfortunately, however, Hooper derived pleasure from his labor in a way in which Morris could not approve: that is, Hooper's pride in his ability to produce exact facsimiles came into direct conflict with Morris's conviction "that the craftsman ought not to be merely the tool of an artist-designer." According to William Peterson's detailed study of *The Kelmscott Press*, Morris denounced Hooper's superlative craftsmanship as "'quite *unintelligent* in cutting'" because he believed "that the engraver should participate in the creative process by adapting and modifying the artist's design as he transfers it to the surface of the woodblock" (147). A second difficulty was that Burne-Jones's designs were virtually untranslatable by facsimile engraving because they were shaded pencil sketches (148). The matter was eventually resolved by the use of an intermediary artist, Robert Catterson-Smith, whose work it was to interpret Burne-Jones's pencil sketch into a linear design suitable for engraving on the wood by Hooper.⁴ Throughout the process, there was much coming and going between Kelmscott House and The Grange (Burne-Jones's studio), and the artist maintained an active role throughout in making suggestions and corrections (151). The paradoxical effect of all this co-operative activity, however, was to

⁴The method by which this was achieved is fascinating. Burne-Jones's pencil sketch would be photographed, and Catterson-Smith would cover the print with a wash of Chinese white so thin as to allow the lines to show faintly. Then he would trace over the drawing with thick strokes in black ink, consulting the artist as he did so over any difficulties. Next, Catterson-Smith's tracing would be photographed directly onto the surface of a woodblock and engraved by Hooper. Burne-Jones would then correct the proofs (Peterson 151).

make Burne-Jones the god-like artist-designer that Morris theoretically abhorred, and to make Catterson-Smith and Hooper his anonymous menials.⁵ On the other hand, this mode of production achieved what no other method of reproducing a Burne-Jones design could: it gave his delicate pencil sketches the solid black-and-white effect required to harmonize with the heavy Kelmscott Press type.

The arts-and-crafts movement's historicism and idealization of medieval life are also embedded in the genres typically represented in illustrated books whose dialogism is expressed by answering. The ideology that art is a social product, and that in the ideal state art is the expression of the whole community, is expressed by a preference for the folkart forms of the romance, the fairy tale, the legend, and the ballad. Like the late Victorian interest in gothic architecture, the *fin-de-siècle* revival of these medieval forms reflects a political outlook dominated by a sense of racial history which valorized the northern races, and which implicitly affirmed contemporary English political power by seeing the present, as well as the future, in relation to the past and to a specific national tradition. This folkart revival was inspired by influences as diverse as Ruskin and Wagner, and received validation from the scholarly findings of Broadwood, Baring-Gould, Frank Kidson, and Cecil Sharp, who concentrated their researches on the folk song (Jackson 250). Another important influence was Jakob Grimm's

⁵Although Hooper received credit for his work in the colophon to the Kelmscott *Chaucer*. Catterson-Smith did not; neither craftsman received recognition for his contribution to *The Well at the World's End*. An anonymous article in the *London Daily Chronicle* in 1898 "suggested that Morris had unfairly (and perhaps dishonestly) failed to acknowledge Catterson-Smith's role as collaborator of Burne-Jones in the *Chaucer*" (Peterson 152).

"communalist theory." Grimm posited "that popular poetry and fairy tales were *collectively* composed by the folk" (Bold 3; emphasis added). A literary revival of these popular, collective, and communal, art forms, then, could be seen as a political act both radical and potentially reactionary: a rejection of capitalist individualism and materialism, and a standing in solidarity with one's history and one's race.

This chapter will examine three examples of bi-textual answering, each of which reflects the nineties' folkart revival. The first, and most representative example of the arts-and-crafts answering approach to image/text relations is, of course, a Kelmscott Press production: William Morris's prose romance, *The Well at the World's End* (1896), with illustrations after Edward Burne-Jones. Since the work of the Kelmscott Press coincides with Morris's production of his late prose romances, and since both of these activities occurred during his years of committed socialism, the discussion of this book will dominate my exploration of the practical applications (and implications) of the answering approach to illustration. Clemence Housman's *The Were-Wolf* (1896), with designs after Laurence Housman, is also a northern saga set in the mythical medieval past, but its form is the short legend rather than the epic romance. Finally, Alice Sargant's *A Book of Ballads* (1898), with etchings by William Strang, is a good example of both the celtic and the arts-and-crafts revivals of the period.

The Well at the World's End, which Morris privately called "the Interminable" because it was so long in the making (May Morris 512),⁶ is a

⁶*The Well at the World's End* was on hand for almost three years, the longest of any Kelmscott Press book. According to *The William Andrews Clark Catalogue* (1921), the book "appears on lists as 'in the press' from December

four-part romance profusely decorated by Morris's own borders and half-borders, marginal ornaments, initial letters, and initial words. The text is further embellished by four wood-engravings after Burne-Jones's designs, which act as frontispieces to each section. Each plate is enclosed in a wide, double-handled border which links the picture to the facing page's title and text. By enclosing and framing his pictures with heavy decorative borders, Morris effectively ornaments Burne-Jones's story-telling as much as Burne-Jones ornaments the epical qualities of Morris's romance. Thus the epical and ornamental qualities so important to exponents of the arts and crafts movement are shared between the co-producers of *The Well*.

In fact, the two artists spent a lifetime answering each other: from the time they met at Exeter College, Oxford, in 1852, to the time of Morris's death in 1896, their personal and artistic lives were closely bound up, not only in the decorative work of the Firm,⁷ but also privately, with Morris writing verses in response to Burne-Jones's art, and Burne-Jones illustrating Morris's writing (Spalding 47). Moreover, although other artists, such as C. E. Gere and Walter Crane, did illustrative work for Morris at the Kelmscott Press, all

1892 to November 1895." 350 copies in Chaucer type were published in quarto form at the Kelmscott Press on March 2, 1896 (*Part One: The Kelmscott Press* 45-46). The book was subsequently published commercially by the Chiswick Press in two octavo volumes in October 1896 (see "Bibliographical Note" in *The Collected Works of William Morris* Vol. 18 xxxvii).

⁷The Firm of Morris, Faulkner & Co. was established in 1861, and grew out of the co-operative effort to decorate William and Jane Morris's home, Red House. Burne-Jones provided many designs for the Firm, specializing especially in stained-glass windows, though he designed for almost every branch of applied arts at one time — mostly because there were very few handicrafts to which his friend Morris did not turn his hand. According to Malcolm Bell, the two men exerted a "mighty force" over domestic art for thirty years, because "The one never faltered in design, the other never failed in execution. . . ." (73). See also Timothy Hilton, *The Pre-Raphaelites*.

failed to satisfy him except for his friend Burne-Jones (Peterson 150). In fact, Arthur Gaskin had already produced nineteen illustrations for *The Well at the World's End*, some of which had actually been engraved by Hooper, when Morris told him his work would not do and asked Burne-Jones to supply the designs instead (Peterson 158). Their unique and intimate relationship is perhaps best expressed by Burne-Jones's effusion about his friend in 1895, after an association of more than forty years: "Oh! he's most beautiful, he's a *darling*, he's the queerest thing that ever existed on this Earth, there's nobody like him, there isn't anyone that exists that in the least *bit* resembles him. . . ." (Lago 36).

In many ways, Edward Burne-Jones and William Morris were one of the period's most faithful and respectable bi-textual couples. For nearly half a century their lives were closely interwoven, with their youthful Oxford experiences establishing, as William Peterson says, "a psychological pattern for life: until his death Morris spent Sunday mornings in Burne-Jones's studio, reading and talking, while the artist worked at his easel. It was the high point of the week for both of them" (161). According to Malcolm Bell, Burne-Jones's first critical biographer, the artist "found in William Morris a mind in singular affinity with his own" (72); Morris's preference for Burne-Jones's illustrative work suggests that the reverse was also true. Significantly, their collaboration at the Kelmscott Press is the culmination of a lifelong dream, for the two had first worked on a "Big Book" of Morris's writings, profusely illustrated by wood-engravings after Burne-Jones, in the sixties (see

May Morris 63ff).⁸ As William Peterson suggests, Burne-Jones's "visual imagination . . . matched perfectly the typography and design of Morris's books. Reflecting their deep personal rapport, the aesthetic harmony of those volumes serves as another reminder that Morris's and Burne-Jones's ideas about book-illustration had evolved slowly, and in unison, since their Oxford days" (159). On illustration the two men were in absolute accord: pictures should be ornamental and epical, a decorative aspect of the book as a whole, and in harmony with the typographical style as much— if not more so — as they were with the subject matter.

Burne-Jones and Morris were not, however, two minds with but a single thought: they were strong characters whose relationship was both intimate and respectful. Such a relationship allows for differences, and the two men had some fundamental ones. To begin with, although they shared a love for the medieval past, Burne-Jones's middle ages are much less vigorous and robust, much more dreamy and languid, than are Morris's.⁹ Burne-Jones's medievalism is also less Northern and gothic, more infused with the

⁸This early collaboration, an illustrated edition of *The Earthly Paradise*, was never completed. For an account of this project see Joseph R. Dunlap, *The Book that Never Was*.

⁹This difference in attitude to the middle ages became particularly evident in the long process of illustrating the Kelmscott *Chaucer*. As Peterson suggests, "It was Chaucer the poet of courtly love and sophisticated teller of French and Italianate tales who most interested Burne-Jones (not the sturdy medieval bard that Morris found in *The Canterbury Tales*), and it was accordingly the stories of the Knight, the Clerk of Oxenford, and the Franklin which attracted him; the tales of bawdy realism he passed over in silence" (247). Burne-Jones is recorded as saying to his studio assistant, Thomas Rooke, that he'd "like to pretend Chaucer didn't do them [the *base* stories]. Besides, pictures to them would have spoiled the book. You don't want funny pictures either. Pictures are too good to be funny. Literature's good enough for that" (Lago 68-9).

spirit of the Italian Renaissance (Peterson 161). This stylistic difference is informed by a very fundamental political difference: Burne-Jones had little sympathy for the communal aesthetic symbolized by the medieval handicraft community, and almost no understanding of the passionate political convictions Morris founded on that vision. Indeed, he referred to Morris's socialism as "the one thing upon which he and I did not stand together" (Lago 166), and his preference for hierarchical distinctions in his own mode of production, coupled with an artistic style that creates a romantic dream-world, shows that the Pre-Raphaelite influence of his first teacher, Dante Gabriel Rossetti, never quite left him.¹⁰

In some ways, the dialogue between image and text in *The Well at the World's End* is the counterpointed interchange of aestheticism and socialism. According to Edward Lucie-Smith, Burne-Jones was "the hero of the Aesthetic Movement of the 1880s" (46); William Rothenstein's memoirs confirm this with the assertion that "his name at this time stood for beauty itself." Rothenstein describes Burne-Jones's work as "a child of the imagination, which had led him into an enchanted land, hidden behind high, rocky mountains, where Knights and Princesses rode through dark forests and wandered dreaming by moated granges. . . ." (1.258, 185). While Rothenstein's description might be applied with equal aptness to Morris's

¹⁰Frances Spalding argues that Dante Gabriel Rossetti's medieval dream world influenced all the later Pre-Raphaelites, of whom Burne-Jones was the leader. Rossetti's influence on Burne-Jones was profound: the aspiring artist left Oxford to study with him for three years and, except for a brief period studying with G. F. Watts, this constituted Burne-Jones's complete artistic training. Curiously, Burne-Jones first discovered Rossetti's work as an illustrator, not as a painter. As an undergraduate he came across Rossetti's illustration, "The Maids of Elfen-merc," in a book of William Allingham's poems, *Night and Day Songs* (1854). See Spalding 34-36.

romances, the writer's dream world attempted to re-animate chivalric enchantment with new political hope. As Martin Green suggests, Morris's "turn to the North" in his late prose romances must be seen as "a continuation of the same enterprise" as "his turn to Socialist politics . . . insofar as it was a search for strength and sternness in place of dreams and beauty" (181). Although William Morris has been charged with escapism, his last prose romances are the expression, not simply of medieval nostalgia and atavism (though they are also that), but also of his socialist and utopian vision. Indeed, his socialism led him to seize upon what Northrop Frye has called "the revolutionary nature of romance" (305). Morris revised the romance, a popular genre purportedly "of the people," but paradoxically the traditional expression of the ideals of the ruling class (Frye 186), in order to put into artistic form his view of the Ideal State of the future.

This view of Morris's last works has been slow in coming, and only recently have careful arguments been developed for the determining connections between Morris's Marxist vision and his prose romances.¹¹ Paul Meier was one of the first to recognize that "Morris transformed negative mediaevalism into positive mediaevalism" as a result of his socialist conversion in the eighties. Historical materialism, Meier argues, provided the ideological framework for his utopian thought, and enabled him to revitalize his previous nostalgia with a revolutionary attitude which looked to the future by re-examining the pre-capitalist past (94-95). Indeed, one project

¹¹See, for example, Carole Silver, *The Romance of William Morris*, for an especially rich and detailed version of this argument, and Kath Filmer, ed. *The Victorian Fantasists*, for a broader view of the connections of culture, society, and belief in the fantasy literature of the late nineteenth century.

of Morris's medieval romance is, as Kath Filmer suggests, "to subvert the cultural hegemony of the capitalist classes and to undermine the prevailing myth of 'progress'" (5). Opting to write in a "pseudo-medieval grapholect" is part of this resistance to the Victorian perspective of history as linear progress (Rabkin 90). However, as Green points out, there is "a severe conflict between socialism and the saga sensibility" (181).

The conservative aspects of the romance, and particularly its masculinist and chauvinist underpinnings as part of the "Sagaman" adventure genre,¹² introduce an internal dialogism into Morris's utopian project. As Martin Green suggests, the late nineteenth-century revival of fictional interest in sagas, with its concomitant "cult of the North," is "not accidentally contemporary with the efflorescence of imperial pride and anxiety, in England and the rest of Europe" (168). Like the adventure story typified by the work of Rider Haggard, the saga story dealt with sex and violence, while "Its historicalness 'justified' the story's more savage style of virility, and the story itself gave the justification of history to the imperial nations at the end of the nineteenth century" (167). In addition, although his Icelandic models allowed Morris to portray women in active roles not to be found in the tales of medieval romance (Green 165), the Victorian view "that male chivalry toward women was the special sign of achieved civilization" (Dellamora 156) is also embedded in Morris's text, despite its attempt to revision male/female relationships according to an egalitarian socialist structure. The internal dialogism of *The Well's* narrative is thrown into

¹²See Martin Green's chapter on "The Sagaman Story," which is the sixth type of adventure story he examines in his *Etiology of a Major Genre* (163-186).

stark black- and-white relief by the book's bi-textual production of meaning. Burne-Jones's stylized designs respond to the text's conservative elements, thus illuminating the internal contradictions of the narrative's radical project.

Like the other prose romances Morris wrote in the late eighties and early nineties, *The Well at the World's End* is integrally related to his socialist thought, and represents the artistic embodiment of his political thinking, reading, and activism. As Carole Silver has argued, Morris turned naturally to the romance for the expression of his socialist utopian thinking, because "Romance harmonized individual and communal interests; it suggested — or could be made to suggest, as it did in the hands of Morris — the social responsibility of the individual, his role in building man's only earthly paradise, a free society on earth" (xv). Thus, in *The Well at the World's End*, "Morris shapes a myth about the connections between romantic love and communal fellowship and demonstrates how both are forces which can conquer evil and, thus, redeem the earth" (171).

The hero of the romance is Ralph, youngest son to King Peter of Upmeads, a quiet and peaceful northern kingdom set in a mythical medieval past. Ralph leaves home to pursue a quest bestowed upon him by his godmother, Katherine, who gives him a necklace of green and blue beads to wear as a talisman during his questing. In the course of his adventures, he meets and falls in love with a "Lady" (she always retains her title, and never acquires a name) whose nature is ambiguous: she may be either a witch or a saint, perhaps both. They become lovers, but the Lady is killed at the Chamber of Love by her husband, the Knight of the Sun, and an embittered

Ralph resumes his quest. Morris adds another love interest in the person of Ursula (also called Dorothea or the Maid of Bourton Abbas), a sun-tanned lass of common blood who suffers unrequited love for Ralph. But Morris is less interested in this stock assemblage of characters — the innocent maid, the questing knight, and the beautiful sorceress¹³ — than he is in re-working the possibilities of the romance in order to express his utopian view of the ideal life. This ideal life is the life of social harmony which results from love, fellowship, and equality, based on a simple, agrarian economy with just distribution and no surplus production, and on wide-flung ties of fellowship with outside communities. Because Ursula and Ralph love "the earth and the world with all [their] souls," they are able to bring "down Heaven to the Earth" after they achieve their quests and return to Upmeads.¹⁴

Significantly, male/female relations emblemize the nature of the egalitarian society Morris envisions. Ursula, too, becomes a quester for *The Well at the World's End*, wearing a necklace-charm given by her teacher, the very Lady Ralph loves and loses. Ralph and Ursula travel on their quests separately until Ralph learns that the Maid has been captured by slave-traders for the sexual pleasure of the tyrannical Lord of Utterbol. He then determines

¹³This *menage à trois* comes up frequently in the romance revival of the nineties. See especially Clemence Housman's romance novel, *The Unknown Sea* (1898), whose questing knight is a solitary fisherman, while the beautiful sorceress is a naked sea-witch, and the innocent maid is the fisherman's cousin. The motifs of *The Unknown Sea* also repeat the iconographic details of many *fin-de-siècle* paintings of human males coming into contact with predatory sea-maidens, of which Burne-Jones's painting, "The Depths of the Sea" (1885) is perhaps the most famous. See Bram Dijkstra's *Idols of Perversity* 258-271.

¹⁴*The Collected Works of William Morris* Vol. 19, p. 36. All future citations of the *Well at the World's End* unless otherwise noted are from this source, and will be cited parenthetically by volume and page number.

to rescue her, but becomes captured and enslaved himself. Moreover, like Ursula, he endures a ritual death in the form of a threat to his sexuality: while the Lord wishes to ravish Ursula, he seeks to unman Ralph. When the Lord unaccountably releases Ralph, he plans to risk gelding by returning to Utterbol to rescue Ursula, for "it is good for a friend to die with a friend" (18. 325). But his gesture is unnecessary: Ursula frees herself unaided. Indeed, far from being the helpless maid, Ursula is clearly the proven knight in this romance, superior to Ralph in wisdom, fortitude, and resourcefulness. Dressed in armor, she keeps watch over the sleeping Ralph in the woods, then leads him safely through countless perils to the achievement of their mutual quests. Both Ursula and Ralph are seeking love-objects as well as the Well at the World's End; they find the first in each other and, empowered both by their drink at the Well and by their consummated mutual love, they return to society to establish a new world of love and justice.

That new world is symbolized not only by communal (rather than hierarchical) male/female relations, but also by communal relations among races and classes. Thus, one of the effects of Ralph's quest is to humanize and civilize the various materialistic or barbaric cultures with which he comes into contact, principally by establishing strong bonds of friendship with the men who subsequently become the leaders of their boroughs or tribes. At story's end, all the lands around the little country of Upmeads are independent but united in a "commonweal." Since there is never any question about the fair-haired Ralph's inherent superiority, however, and since the unified nations are not communally inter-related, but are rather hierarchically dependent on Ralph's civilizing model, there is an

uncomfortable alignment between Morris's socialist utopia and the contemporary British empire. A similar contradiction is apparent in the textual presentation of Ursula. On the one hand, since Ursula is "of the people," her union with Ralph is an emblem of the new classless, egalitarian, society. On the other hand, the symbolism of this new world is flawed by Ursula's reversion to stereotypically "womanly" traits after the achievement of their quest. In the fourth book, "The Road Home," she ceases to be a knight and dons "woman's raiment" again, which appears to be the cloak of silence and invisibility, for she becomes the follower, silent and beautiful, who allows Ralph to speak, act, and decide for her. As Kath Filmer comments, "Morris was not a late-twentieth century feminist, and had ambivalent attitudes to woman's suffrage and similar issues." Still, *The Well at the World's End* shows that "Morris was by no means 'sold' on chivalric plotting, for Ralph meets unexpected, painful results in the course of his quest, and is consistently "saved by the wisdom, subtlety and authority of women" (26).

If Morris's text attempts to envision female/male equality in a future egalitarian society of harmony and community, however, Burne-Jones's text answers with the picture of another, more familiar world. In a contributing essay to *Fantastic Illustration and Design*, George P. Landow remarks astutely that "A large proportion of Burne-Jones' major works concern themselves with embodying his fascination, almost obsession, with the relations of men and women. Taken together, these works comprise a sexual myth that had great appeal for the artist and his contemporaries" — that is, the myth of "the dominant male's rescue of the helpless maiden" (in Johnson 40). This myth,

of course, is the chivalric myth of traditional medieval romance as well as of conventional Victorian society. Moreover, the myth foregrounds the notions of violence and conquest which fed the identity of the middle-class Victorian male. While Morris works to re-write the romance by infusing it with the characteristics of northern sagas and socialist utopianism, Burne-Jones answers with images which re-present contemporary ideology in medieval garb, thus clarifying the underlying anxieties and concerns of the text's political project. Burne-Jones's four images for Morris's *Well at the World's End* are harmonious additions to the book because their heavy black lines and flat perspective accord well with Morris's decorative borders and dense Chaucer type, not because their presentation of the subject matter is aligned with the text's. That is, while the ornamental values are harmonious, the epical qualities of image and text remain curiously at odds. Burne-Jones counters Morris's proposed utopia with the clichéd, but comfortably familiar, medieval world of Victorian fantasy. Indeed, I think it very likely that the combination of Burne-Jones's images and the antiquated format of the Kelmscott Press, working in conjunction with Morris's archaic language and the atavistic implications of his story, is the basis for the traditional criticism which has charged Morris with escapism.¹⁵

In theory, Burne-Jones and Morris agreed that illustrations ought always depict "the essential incidents," but in practice their different points of

¹⁵Bernard Shaw, who met Morris through their shared Socialist activities in the eighties, and who was a frequent visitor at the Kelmscott coach house where the Hammersmith Socialist Society met on Sunday nights, was one of the first to condemn the romances Morris wrote "to fill the maw of the Kelmscott Press" as escapist trash, "the troubadour romance of chivalry and love which Cervantes condemned to the flames. . . ." (33).

view made choosing the essential incidents a point of contention in the *Chaucer* (Peterson 252), and doubtless in other works as well. Certainly Burne-Jones's choices in *The Well at the World End* indicate that the artist's visualization of Morris's romance-world is produced out of a chivalric dream-world as much as it is evoked by the text. In "Help is to Hand in the Wood Perilous" (Fig. 23), the frontispiece to Book One, "The Road Unto Love," Burne-Jones chooses, of all possible choices in an action-packed hundred pages, a scene of knightly rescue and maidenly gratitude. The plate depicts the outcome of Ralph's first adventure in the Wood Perilous, in which he combats two knights who are leading a near-naked woman tied with a rope around her neck. In true knightly fashion, Ralph challenges the knights for the Lady's freedom and manages to kill them both. The Lady, who is the fairest woman Ralph has ever seen, thanks him, then gallops off on one of the vanquished knights' horses.

Burne-Jones is careful to quote the important details of this scene in his re-presentation: he portrays the main characters in the dress described by the text, shows the slain knight with his foot caught in the stirrup, and suggests the forboding nature of the place by the heavy effect of the detailed black lines. But the epical is also ornamental. The darkly-shadowed trees and branches indicate the perilous nature of the woods in which Ralph rides, as does the claustrophobic framing, which compresses the details of the picture into a little space and cuts off the horse at left to the extent that its hindquarters become a mere decorative detail, a mass of white to balance the Lady's white arm. Ralph here is one of Burne-Jones's famous *fin-de-siècle* languid knights, while the Lady is his typically elongated, graceful, woman,

with a suggestion of the femme fatale. The Lady's placement in the center of the picture plane, together with her movement forward toward Ralph, who seems to be backed into a corner, is an iconographical sign of her dominance, a warning of her possible fatality.

While Burne-Jones's answering plate presents his own obsessions and private motifs — his paintings specialized in femme fatales — it also responds to the ambiguity of Morris's presentation of the Lady. Her dark red-hair, her magic powers, her rumored evil, all suggest that she represents the familiar beautiful witch of medieval romance, the fatal devourer. Ralph, who falls helplessly in love with her, never quite makes up his mind about whether she is good or evil, though he believes her assurance that "whatsoever I have been, I am good to thee" (18. 145). In some ways, the Lady is sexuality incarnate, and therefore a female version of Ralph. Whereas Ralph's fate to be "one of them with whom all women are in love" is also the source of his luck and success, however, the Lady's parallel "weird" makes her an outcast, for everywhere she travels, men desire her beauty, and death and destruction follow (18. 292, 158). Morris's view of female sexuality as politically destructive is clearly indicated in *News from Nowhere* (1891), in which the only threat to the peace of utopia is male jealousy and desire for beautiful women. Although this attitude remains in *The Well at the World's End* — in "The Road Home," for example, Ursula sometimes travels in armor as a disguise for her female beauty and a protection against male lust — this romance is also, as Carole Silver has demonstrated, the last of Morris's romances to present a woman in the role of the femme fatale, and the first to reveal that he "no longer sees romantic love and social

fellowship as separate or opposing forces" (181). Indeed, Morris moves on from the joyous ending of *The Well at the World's End* to *The Water of the Wondrous Isles* (1897), his only romance with a female hero, and the one in which he finally "resolves the problem of the triangle of love" (Silver 181).

For Burne-Jones, however, romantic and/or sexual love was always in opposition to social fellowship, which he conceived of as essentially male. Women were either helpless — preferably sleeping or dead — or predatory. Either way, women were "outside" the social sphere: their weak bodies made them socially useless, but sexually available to men, while their mysterious sexuality made them potential threats to male authority. Both these attitudes are apparent in the following anecdote. His studio assistant, Thomas Rooke, records his master as arguing that "Women ought to be locked up. In some place where we could have access to them but that they couldn't get out from." Significantly, the remark was made in the context of a female artist's application to Burne-Jones to look over and comment on her work (Lago 99). Clearly, Burne-Jones saw active women as threats to the male preserve of power. If woman's potential threat is suggested by "Help is to hand in the Wood Perilous," however, her weak helplessness — and concomitant sexual availability — is evident in the second and fourth plates in the series, "The Chamber of Love in the Wilderness" (Fig. 24) and "The Last Time of the Long Champion" (Fig 25).

"The Chamber of Love in the Wilderness" (Fig. 24), the frontispiece to Book Two, "The Road Unto Trouble," has the ironic effect of suggesting that this road can lead only to death. Although the scene is a central one to the second book, in which Ralph is sexually initiated and tutored by the Lady, but

loses her to her jealous husband, the Knight of the Sun, it is also clear that Burne-Jones chooses this incident because he likes this sadistic scene of male power. Thus the plate illuminates the text's uncertainties about the possibilities of community and sexual equality by focusing on a scene of male confrontation and conquest. The armor-clad Knight of the Sun stands astride the fallen, lightly-robed, woman, his sword point resting casually against her breast. Behind the couple is the dark opening of the cave, a detail of sexual iconography which does not need the help of the decorative title to indicate its epical function. Indeed, Burne-Jones's composition quotes Morris's text with a certain amount of ornamental freedom. Although the text says that Ralph finds the Lady lying beside the horse, and the Knight of the Sun standing between her and Ralph (18. 201), Burne-Jones removes the horse and places the lady between the Knight's legs, thus clarifying the sexual struggle.

The image's static composition, in which the figures appear as statues in classical draperies posed as in a tableau, directs the viewer to read the plate as if it were an allegory or emblem. Burne-Jones draws on Renaissance pictorial symbolism to illuminate the potentially subversive element of sexuality in the text's idealized world. Although a favorite theme of Renaissance painters was the felicitous allegory of Strife overcome by Love, represented by the coupling of Mars and Venus (who are being blessed by Cupid, usually in the form of amoretti), there was also a converse theme, showing Mars unconquered, chastising Cupid, with Venus interceding (Hall 201). "The Chamber of Love in the Wilderness" tells the story of Ralph, the Lady, and the Knight as if it were the allegory of the unconquered Mars.

Burne-Jones's story-telling is not unauthorized by the text, however. In the first place, the mythological tableau focuses the reader/viewer's attention on the theme of infidelity (implicit in the Mars/Venus allegory), for Ralph's paramour is also married to the Knight of the Sun. In the second place, the text itself identifies Ralph in this scene as a type of Cupid: Ralph obtains his bow and arrow from the Chamber of Love and later kills the Knight of the Sun with an arrow through the eye, Cupid's traditional method of striking his victims. But the image's visualization of the myth plays back the text's melody in a minor key. If for Morris human sexuality represents life, fellowship, and communal values, for Burne-Jones sex is always associated with death and disintegration, and this dialogic crossing of separate viewpoints illuminates some of the textual contradictions for the reader/viewer.

Curiously, Burne-Jones chooses to re-work the same scene for the frontispiece to Book Four, "The Road Home." "The Last Time of the Long Champion" (Fig. 25) focuses on a relatively insignificant incident in the many adventures Ralph and Ursula experience on their return to Upmeads, and the image is incapable of either encapsulating the section it introduces, or of summing up the general trend of the romance, which is now drawing to a close. Instead of celebrating the final victory — the political effect of the quest, and the inauguration of a new world which its consummation signifies — Burne-Jones depicts a tried and true chivalric theme which displaces the political vision of Morris's romance. What he offers the reader instead is the traditional story of the helpless maid rescued by her knight in shining armor.

The foreground of the plate is dominated by the prone, naked body of the "wild man," the Last of the Long Champions of the Dry Tree who has

gone mad for unrequited love of the Lady and haunted her burial place. Beside him, one hand on his chest, kneels Ralph, his sword lying at his feet. In the middleground, at right, a white-robed Ursula overlooks the scene; her kneeling position and clasped hands suggest that she is both supplicating and fearful. The plate is divided in half horizontally by the lines of a stream. In the upper background, a serpentine path leads through the grassy sward toward the cave opening of the Chamber of Love. The details of the plate reinforce the theme of sexual assault suggested by the naked man, the fainting heroine, and the vanquishing knight, for the path and the cave are unambiguous sexual motifs. This plate reworks the sexual triangle of "The Chamber of Love in the Wilderness" (Fig. 24): instead of a dead woman, we are offered a dead man. Sexual resolution is thus achieved: the knight has established claim to the body of the woman. This is romance for Burne-Jones. For Morris, however, romance is re-visioning history and imagining Utopia (Meier 106): that is why the fourth book is so essential to the quest. Although physical consummation between Ursula and Ralph occurs in Book Three, their individual love only achieves social significance when they return to Upmeads and establish a community of peace, love, justice, and fellowship.

Bakhtin argues that historical inversion and the folkloric chronotope constitute "mythological and artistic thinking [which] locates such categories as purpose, ideal, justice, perfection, the harmonious condition of man and society and the like in the past" (*Dialogic Imagination* 147). However, since the text resonates in "real-life time-space" — as, indeed, do the writer, the artist, and the reader — the present participates with the past in the creation of the represented world. That is, the medieval past, and its traditions of

romance, or ballad, or legend, operates in a dialogic relation to the tale written in the late nineteenth century (*Dialogic Imagination* 253, 256, 271). Thus, while Morris's medievalized utopia may have been the product of the political thinking of the Hammersmith Socialist League, Burne-Jones's medievalized answer was discursively produced by the Victorian concept of chivalry as the ideal for sexual relations. Positing an inherently weak female to a dominant and aggressive male, such an ideology cannot conceive of a perfect society based on equality between the sexes and the classes. However, as we have seen, Morris's own utopian vision was fractured by the dominant sexual and racial attitudes of the day which helped to shape his outlook, despite all his reading and thinking about social community and egalitarian fellowship. By re-telling Morris's story in another key, Burne-Jones illuminates some of the gaps and contradictions in his friend's utopian vision.

It is as a complete product, however, that the Kelmscott book ultimately disrupts the political message of Morris's romance. The overall design ensures the harmonious appearance of image and text — or rather, pattern and type — to the extent that *The Well at the World's End* is read in terms of its design: its anachronistic, fifteenth-century form, its medieval-style illustrations, its gothic type, its lavish wood-engraved ornaments, its massive physical size. Ironically, as Peterson's study has shown, "The Kelmscott Press books, intended to symbolize a protest against the ethos of Victorian industrial capitalism, became themselves, in all their opulent splendour, an example of conspicuous consumption," for "in attempting to restore the egalitarian basis of art, he unexpectedly found himself producing

expensive objects for the wealthy" (275, 65).¹⁶ Ultimately, Morris's socialist and utopian vision is answered, not only by Burne-Jones's conservative images, but also by its dialogic relationship with the material forms of Kelmscott Press production.

Like many of Morris's late prose romances, Clemence Housman's *The Were-Wolf* is set in a remote northern and medieval community and may be classified as a "Sagaman story." Indeed, according to Anne Born, "the atmosphere closely resembles that in William Morris's version of the sagas" (61). Like Morris, Clemence was fascinated by myth and legend, by all things medieval, and by what Silver has cited as Morris's belief, first expressed in *The House of the Wolfings* (1888), that "to die heroically for the benefit of the group insures one's survival in the memory of one's people. . . ." (xviii). In Clemence's case, however, this interest coincided with her devout faith; according to her brother Laurence, Clemence always "had an inborn appetite which she has never lost for heroes and heroines in suffering for the sins of others," and she retained a profound, though unorthodox, religious faith throughout her life (*Unexpected Years* 101). Although Morris was undoubtedly a strong influence on both Clemence and Laurence (Engen 57, 59), Kenyur Hodkins has argued that Clemence "knew and understood the raw material [of myth and legend] better than any nineteenth-century writer"

¹⁶See William S. Peterson, who deals fully with the question of why Morris, a committed socialist, printed books for the rich collector. His conclusion is that Morris, who combined "hard-headed business sense and Utopian idealism," failed to take into account how a pure craft activity might be tainted by commercial considerations (200).

(33).¹⁷ If this be true, Clemence seems to have used her folkloric knowledge for conservative rather than revolutionary purposes.¹⁸

Although an ardent feminist and a member of the extremist Women's Social and Political Union (Engen 106), Clemence does not appear — on the surface, at least — to be using the legend of the Were-Wolf to express her New Woman convictions. Her intense personal struggle for political equality is here represented, not by the masculinized female character, White Fell, but rather by the feminized male character, Christian. There is, however, an ambiguity in the plotting of protagonist and antagonist, and it is this textual ambivalence that the dialogic relations of image and text illuminate for the reader. Significantly, both androgynes die, leaving the fully-masculine man, Sweyn, alive to lead the community. This is the "mora:" which Laurence Housman focuses on in his reading of *The Were-Wolf*, thereby drawing attention to his sister's underlying political concerns which, by the end of the century, had largely replaced her artistic interests if not her religious ones (Engen 106). *The Were-Wolf* offers a fascinating bi-textual expression of *fin-de-siècle* sexual and political anxieties, for it represents the felicitous coupling of the New Woman and the Decadent man. Known to their nephews and nieces as Uncle Clem and Aunt Laurence, the

¹⁷Clemence also published *The Unknown Sea* (1898) and *The Life of Sir Aglovale de Galis* (1905). Hodgkins bases his claim especially on Clemence's last book, a psychological re-construction of Malory, and goes so far as to suggest that she may have claim to be the greatest of the three Housmans (A. E. Housman was the elder brother of Clemence and Laurence).

¹⁸See Anne Cranny Francis's article, "The Education of Desire: Utopian Fiction and Feminist Fantasy" for an interesting consideration of how, though Victorian fantasy sometimes served an ideologically conservative function, it could also be revolutionary and avowedly political in nature (in Filmer 45-59).

deep-voiced, strong-minded and strong-bodied Clemence and the high-voiced, physically weak Laurence, lived together for seventy years, during which time they shared, not simply a household and an artistic circle, but also passionately-held feminist, pacifist, and political goals (Engen 28).

The history of *The Were Wolf*, from inception to production, is a remarkable expression of the kind of communal aesthetic idealized by the arts-and-crafts ideology. *The Were-Wolf* began as an oral tale, told by Clemence to entertain her fellow-workers, the women in the wood-engraving class at the South Lambeth Art School.¹⁹ In 1890, the story was published in the *Atalanta*, with illustrations by Everard Hopkins. Later, her brother Laurence, who had become a respected artist-designer at the Bodley Head, arranged with John Lane for the publication of *The Were-Wolf* in book form, embellished by his decorative title page and six full-page plates (Engen 53).²⁰ Laurence's drawings for the text were engraved by Clemence, so the degree of reciprocal influence, correction and response is greater, perhaps, than in any other book of the period, especially since the two shared a household and worked under each other's eyes. Indeed, although the

¹⁹Art classes in the late eighties were strictly segregated. At the same time that Clemence was studying wood-engraving in the women's studio, Ricketts and Shannon were learning the craft in the men's engraving class next door. See Housman, *Unexpected Years* 107.

²⁰Laurence had approached John Lane unsuccessfully two years before with a cycle of four stories Clemence had written entitled "Strange Women." Apparently the stories were both experimental in form and scandalous in content, and had been rejected by other publishers prior to Lane. These stories were never published, so far as I can ascertain (see Engen 53). Another of Clemence's short stories, "The Drawn Arrow," was published in *31 Stories by 31 Authors*, edited by Ernst Rhys and C. A. Dawson Scott (New York, 1923), and she collaborated with Laurence on two of the stories in *The Kind and the Foolish* (1952), though it is not clear which ones (Born 57).

Housmans produced a number of illustrated books together over the decade, Rodney Engen calls *The Were-Wolf* "one of their most successful collaborations" (57).²¹

The story focuses on the relationships of the twin brothers, Sweyn and Christian, and the were-wolf who, disguised as the beautiful woman, White Fell, disrupts both the harmony of the community and the comradeship of the brothers. While Sweyn is the stereotypical male hero — the biggest and the best at everything, the final authority in the community — Christian is effeminate: submissive, loving, and self-denying, he is "given to day-dreams and strange fancies" (40). Indeed, he only excels his brother in two things: his ability to love, and his endurance and swiftness in running. These "womanly" qualities allow him to become a hero. Christian saves Sweyn from the fate which must follow White Fell's kiss by tracking the were-wolf through a race over ice and snow which culminates at midnight with the death of both. Sweyn comes to see his brother as a type of Christ who suffered and died to save him from his sins, and returns to the community bearing both the body of his dead brother and this knowledge: "And he knew surely that to him Christian had been as Christ, and had suffered and died to save him from his sins" (123).

The Were-Wolf is Clemence's first book, and seems to be dominated by her religious fervor rather than her political commitment. Moreover, the

²¹Housman himself recognized his creative debt to his sister. In *Green Arras* (published in the same year as *The Were-Wolf*), the dedicatory poem beginning "I hang my green arras before you / Of the lights and the shadows I wove. . . ." is addressed to Clemence; and *The Field of Clover* (1898) is dedicated "To My Dear Wood-Engraver," who also receives title-page credit for her work for the first and only time.

Christian symbolism — the theme of the scapegoat, and the mystical revelation, through pain, that the "true hidden reality" is not in the flesh but in sacrifice and cosmic love (106-7) — is coupled with a *literal* understanding that the most perfect love is that a man lay down his life for his brother.²² In some ways, Clemence's Christian themes seem to reflect uncritically the traditional representations of male/female relations, in which the woman is a she-devil who tempts the upright man, who is saved by the love and sacrifice of another man. Thus, White Fell, the only female character in the book with more than a walk-on part, is the outsider, the exotic in a predominantly male community whose penetration into this world brings death and division. The nineties' fear of aggressive women is emblemized here by the disguised she-wolf who carries an axe at her waist and is dressed "half masculine, yet not unwomanly" (23). Indeed, the anxieties are hystericized, for the were-wolf in most contemporary stories was a metamorphosed man, not a woman.²³ Moreover, the cultural inscription of woman as not only half-bestial, but also as vampire, is signalled by White Fell's barely concealed lust after the blood on baby Rol's wounded hand and by her kiss which means death before midnight to its recipients. Despite these

²²See, however, Anne Born, who offers a psychobiographic reading of *The Were-Wolf* whereby the Christian/Sweyn relationship reflects Clemence's relationship with Laurence, and Christian's sacrifice indicates "something of what she may have sacrificed for him by devoting so much of her life to him" (64).

²³See Anne Born, who makes this point. Born says that Captain Frederick Marryat's book, *The Phantom Ship* (1839), offers one of the few narratives in which the were wolf is a woman, and suggests that this book was a source and inspiration for Clemence's story. Another was William Morris's epic translation of the *Volsunga Saga* (1876), which describes incidents with were wolves (59-61).

conventional misogynistic motifs, however, the text implies a critique of patriarchal culture, for although the masculinized woman is to be feared, her counterpart, the feminized man, is to be respected and revered. Indeed, in some ways the text presents White Fell and Christian as androgynous inversions of each other, and it is this "true hidden reality" which Laurence Housman's plates focus on.

Like his fellow homosexual, the socialist Edward Carpenter, Laurence Housman was "deeply influenced by the twin strands of socialism and feminism" (Weeks 124). His sexual identity, his political commitment, his personal relationship with *The Were-Wolf's* author, and his arts-and-crafts training, combine to produce a bi-textual product which is dialogically crossed by some of the period's most significant cultural discourses. Without subverting Clemence's religious theme, Laurence offers a reading of *The Were-Wolf* which focuses on the political and psychological implications of the tale. Although the frontispiece, "Holy Water," directs the reader to the story's religious significance, the subsequent plates offer a largely secular reading of the tale's meaning. Laurence's images provide a reading which answers the text's overtly Christian themes by focusing on the political commitments and feminist convictions which he shared with his sister, and which he clearly saw as essential to the meaning of the story. In his role of artist as critic, Laurence illuminates the text's underlying concerns with the likely fate of masculinized New Women — with their threatening aggression and anarchic sexuality — and that of their "twins," the feminized decadents, with their imaginative sensitivity, physical attenuation and assumed homosexuality. As a result of this image/text dialogue, the story's *fin-de-*

siècle themes take on pessimistic apocalyptic overtones: both sexual/cultural deviants must die in order for the vigorous, "manly" man to retain his authority in a purged patriarchal culture. Thus, this "sagaman" legend, despite its alignment with the contemporary historical discourses which posited the Anglo-Saxons as inherently more "masculine" than any other race (and therefore sanctioned to dominate the world) (Green 168), actually motivates a bi-textual "reverse discourse" which both reflects and conflicts with the premises of Teutonic mythology.²⁴

Laurence Housman's six plates draw attention to the "true hidden reality" of *The Were-Wolf* by presenting White Fell and Christian as doubles for each other. Housman's use of black-and-white line and compositional mass suggests that Christian is White Fell's shadow, while his designs indicate that both of them are "aliens" in the masculinized community represented by the medieval farm-house. The first of the interleaved plates, "Rol's Worship" (Fig. 26), initiates the reader/viewer into the almost exclusively male world of the "great farm hall" (1). In a claustrophobic composition typical of Housman, the arched ceiling compresses the hunched dark figures seated at work at a trestle table. Beneath the table, his legs and arms entwined around the sturdy calves of his cousin Sweyn, sits the small boy Rol, with a look of bliss on his face. This aspect of the scene is a visual

²⁴See Martin Green's work on the context in which late nineteenth-century saga stories developed. Green examines the work of contemporary historians whose study of the Vikings "proved" that the power of England, America, and Germany derived from their inheritance of the Viking's racial superiority, characterized by their aggressive manliness — their energy, bravery, and love of conquest. Green also notes the contributions to this myth made by Nietzschean philosophy and Wagnerian opera, and connects the saga ideology to the twentieth-century development of Nazism (167-177).

quotation of the text, which tells us that Rol had found the best legs in the hall, and so, "crossing his own legs round Sweyn's ankle, clasping with his arms too, laid his head against the knee. Such act is evidence of a child's most wonderful hero-worship" (8). Yet this identity with and reverence for virile traits is not without its dangers. Significantly, Rol's worship leads him to emulate his strong cousin: he steals one of his "tools," but the chisel gashes his hand, and it is the fresh blood on the wound that makes White Fell later scent her first victim. The text's implied criticism of this masculine world, with its emphasis on muscle and prowess, is reiterated by its hero, Christian, who matches his brother Sweyn in height, but is built along slender lines, and can claim superiority only in his ability to run. Unlike his brother — and unlike the ill-fated Rol — Christian "took little pride in his fleetness of foot, counting a man's legs to be the least worthy of his members" (33). In "Rol's Worship," Housman manages to convey both the text's fascination with — not to say envy of — virile masculinity, and its critical attitude toward it.²⁵ The single female figure, whose face is turned from the scene toward the un-realized background, and the coiled net, which dominates the lower right hand corner, are iconographic signals which direct the reader/viewer to the limitations of this idealized patriarchal community.

Christian is excluded from the masculine world depicted in "Rol's Worship." Like White Fell, he travels through snow and wood and waste, entering the farm house late at night, an outsider to the world of hearth and light and communal activity. He, too, is a "lone wolf." Housman's plates

²⁵But see also Rodney Engen, who says "Rol's Worship" was inspired by the Housman children's relations to their elder (and authoritative) brother, Alfred E. Housman (14).

make this affinity between White Fell and Christian clear. In "White Fell's Escape," for example, we are given another interior view of the farm hall, but the rest of the community is only roughly sketched, while White Fell and Christian are the focus of the composition. Moreover, Christian's close association here with the dog, Tyr, makes him a double for the half bestial, half human nature of White Fell; to reinforce the connection, the dark curved mass of Christian's shoulder and back duplicates the serpentine lines of White Fell's body. The identity between White Fell and Christian becomes explicit in "The Finish," which depicts their final death struggle. Christian is on the ground, with the barely human White Fell standing astride him. Yet the composition suggests that the two bodies are in fact mirror images for each other, with the black form of the man reflecting back the white image of female figure.

The identity between White Fell and Christian is given its most powerful pictorial expression in the plate entitled "The Race" (Fig. 27). In a barren landscape stripped of everything but snow and shadows, the dark shape of Christian matches the white shape of the wolf-woman as a shadow does its form. The mirror image is confirmed by the uncanny locking of eyes between the two. Housman's mirroring/shadowing motifs work to produce an identity between the two figures rather than an opposition. Although binary divisions are clearly indicated — man/woman, human/beast, good/evil, black/white — these dualisms are neutralized by the presentation of the two figures as not only equal but potentially identical; certainly the reversal of the conventional coding for black/white contributes to this blending effect. In Laurence's reading, the two outsiders — the aliens to

patriarchal culture — are the threshold figures whose solidarity or joined forces could mean political victory for the New Woman and the Decadent, but whose defeat will bring the super-masculinization of western culture. Thus the figures in the "The Race" play on both the *fin de siècle's* sexual anxieties and its political hope. The uncertain nature of female sexuality and its possible threat are signified by White Fell's bestial characteristics, especially her phallicized tail; this threat is balanced by the assertion of homosexual virility in the form of the spear which Christian carries. The possibility that the political hopes of the aggressive New Woman could be aligned with those of the homosexual aesthete is expressed by the design's composition, which invites the reader/viewer to receive the double-image as one.

The answering relationship between image and text presupposes a deep mutual respect between artist and writer, signalled both by a willingness to work co-operatively with the material and by the trust which enables the artist to decorate and develop textual themes with his/her own concerns and pre-occupations. This non-hierarchical, communal, aesthetic allows for an unusual picture/word interaction which rarely occurs in any other bi-textual relation except cross-dressing.²⁶ I am referring here to the possibility that the picture might be the pre-text (in both senses) for the poem, as it generally is in the Renaissance emblem book. Such is the case in *A Book of Ballads*, produced by poet Alice Sargant and etcher William Strang, as is indicated by the author's "Preface": "In explanation of the title 'Ballads and Etchings' the writer of the letterpress begs gratefully to acknowledge that the ballad was not

²⁶The image could not precede the text in either quotation or parody, although it could in impression, as we have seen in Margaret Armour and W. B. Macdougall's *Thames Sonnets and Semblances* (see Chapter 4).

in every case written before the picture." Sargant's indication of the communal mode of production for the book is tantalizingly brief, especially since almost nothing is known of her work and life, and very little is available on Strang's biography.²⁷ Since each ballad is headed by a formal prose account of its source — historic, folkloric, or journalistic — Sargant's "explanation" strongly suggests that author and artist may have chosen their sources co-operatively, with sometimes the artist producing the image first, and sometimes the poet producing the ballad first. Unfortunately, however, we do not know which of the five etchings preceded its accompanying ballad, and so the little detail of *who* is answering *whom* cannot be determined.

Whatever their relationship, it may be assumed that Alice Sargant was, like Strang, a Lowland Scot deeply influenced by the celtic revival of folklore and ballad. Sargant uses the same archaic dialect and faery motifs as Strang employs in his own ballads, *The Earth-Fiend* (1892) and *Death and the Ploughman's Wife* (1894); that is, her poetry exhibits the characteristics of the Lowland Scots ballad: "poetic and emotional intensity, elemental action, and conventionalized language, often archaic and dialectical" (Laws 12). While the ballad revival is aligned both with Scottish nationalism and with the "antidecadent, strenuously masculine artistic credo" of poets like John Davidson (Nelson 151), Sargant also seems to be very much aware that she is writing in the traditional form for female story-tellers (Bold 39). In her

²⁷According to R. C. Alston's *Checklist of Women Writers: 1801-1900*, Alice Sargant published two books of poetry. In addition to *A Book of Ballads* (1898) she published *Master Death, Mocker and Mocked* (London, 1899). I have been unable to discover any biographical details about Sargant. For information on William Strang, see William Rothenstein's *Men and Memories*, Frank Newbolt's *The Master Etchers: William Strang*, and Simon Houfc, *The Dictionary of British Book Illustrators and Caricaturists, 1800-1914*.

version of "The Ploughman's Wife," for example, her focus is on the tension between a woman's hard life and her battle against the temptation to exchange it for the glitter of a fairy wedding. She maintains her struggle despite her husband's disbelief and denigration of her value — "Mat laft as he quaffed 'There's nane fule sa daft, / As 'ud take ye aff my han'" (16) — because of her love for her children. The first poem in the book, "Ursella Norn," deals with the same fairy/female marriage theme, but in a positive way. Indeed, in some ways, this ballad (like some others in the volume) represents a subversive attack on contemporary reality through the medium of popular culture. The folkloric tradition and the ballad form contain both female fantasy (in the form of wish-fulfillment) and feminist social critique.

The story of "Ursella Norn" is taken from Orkney Folk-lore and is given in the headpiece to the poem as follows: "On the mainland of Orkney lived a maiden by name Ursella Norn. At some seasons the islanders were forced for want of salt to use sea-water in their cauldrons. One evening Ursella, with her stoup, left her mother's hearth to draw water from the incoming tide. She never returned, however, nor was she ever seen at home again. Four years later, her cousin, William Norn, averred that, being becalmed in a mist at sea, she appeared to him, and took him, with the rest of the crew, to Hilda-land. He stated that she was well and happy, and averse to returning home" (9). Sargent's ballad focuses on Ursella's aversion to returning to her former life. Her new "blythesum hame" is the "faery strand" of peace and beauty, with no "rain, nor sna'; /Nor mirk o' night, nor dawn o' day," where she lives in a castle with her gallant husband, "the wild Fin-Man" and her "bonnie bairnies three" (10). Small wonder, perhaps, that she

refuses Will's offer to take her home with the reply, "Na, na, I'm ower content wi' this" — especially when her life is set against that of the women of her village. The ballad's concluding quatrain sets up the contrast between Ursella's joyful life of power and action — she saves Willie's ship in the storm, gives him a spell for his courting, and advises him on the pilot and the course back to land— and the life of women who live by the sea, condemned to a life of dependency and waiting:

An' athwart them lay the blue reek
 Saft curlin' o'er the land;
 Wi' women-folk weak, pressin' bairnie to cheek
 Awaitin' them on the strand. (12)

William Strang's etching, "Out peered the face o' the eerie man" (Fig. 28), faces the first page of "Ursella Norn" to make a double-paged unit of frontispiece and title similar to the layout of *The Well at the World's End*. The similarity is reinforced because *A Book of Ballads* is also, like the Kelmscott Book, printed in double columns in a manner which evokes the medieval tradition. Unlike Burne-Jones or even Laurence Housman, both of whom would almost certainly have chosen to illustrate the supernatural sea world of the ballad, Strang does not depict the faery realm where most of the poem's events are located. Instead, reflecting his artistic interest in both social realism and the "weird" (Houfe 468; Sketchley 58), Strang illustrates the landscape of the ballad's frame narrative: the Lowland hills, rocks, and homestead that Ursella exchanges for the fairy life. Strang's composition depicts a plain, honest-looking country lass, sitting with her "stoup" beside a sea-pool. Her back is to her home, which nestles against the trees and

hillsides of the background, and her hand is raised in a gesture of farewell to this past life, for her gaze is fixed on the pool where she sees, uncannily, not her own reflection, but "the face o' the dree Fin-man"(9). Part of the success of the composition is the subtlety with which this confrontation between human and inhuman is achieved; the plate relies on the facing poem and the Table of Content's caption, "Out peered the face o' the eerie man," to draw attention to the *unreality* of this highly realized scene. The focus of the composition is on Ursella's face and gesture; the face of the Fin-man is sketched in so roughly as to appear to be part of the water until closer inspection reveals his features. The effect of Strang's plate is to reinforce the uncanny themes of Sargent's ballad by showing how the "weird" is part of the familiar. Thus the plate answers the ballad's fascination with the flip side of this phenomena — that is, the presence of the familiar in the "weird." Ursella's married life is, after all, a double for the traditional one on earth — except that it is the life of fantasy, the life of "Feastin', an' ringin', an' gallantly singing" in "a shield-girt hall, /A' strewn wi' the sweet jonquil. . ." (10). At the same time, however, the bleakness of the landscape in Strang's etching reinforces the ballad's implied criticism of the limited possibilities for women like Ursella in their own familiar setting.

In *The Dialogic Imagination*, Bakhtin argues that "Responsive understanding is a fundamental force, one that participates in the formulation of discourse, and it is moreover an *active* understanding, one that discourse senses as resistance or support enriching the discourse" (280-81). Such active, responsive, understanding is the work of the artist as critic. Illustrations which answer the verbal text by being both representational and

decorative enrich bi-textual discourse both by providing support to the word and by initiating certain lines of resistance, certain expressions of personal difference. Burne-Jones's answering images resist Morris's socialist vision in *The Well at the World's End*, Laurence Housman's images focus on the secular rather than the religious allegory in *The Were-Wolf*, and William Strang's etchings emphasize the real rather than the fantastic in *A Book of Ballads*. In each case, however, these differences between picture and word remain variations on a theme implicit in the text itself. As pictorial counterpoints to the text's underlying concerns, answering illustrations influence and direct the active understanding of the reader/viewer. Answering is a social art — the art of informed conversation, of mutual interaction, of politely stated difference. The dialogic crossing of image and text in illustrated books governed by answering illuminates the period's social concerns: its religious as well as its sexual anxieties, its political upheavals, its fascination with history and folklore and their racial implications, its obsessions with finding Ideal States in the past or in fantasy. The illustrated book produced by committed arts-and-crafts practitioners is the meeting-point for all these strands, and its image/text relations are engaged in investigating the extent to which personal relations may be subordinated to a larger, political, cause.

CHAPTER SEVEN

CROSS-DRESSING

Two masks my fate reserves for me

Laurence Housman, *All-Fellows*

Try as we may we cannot get behind the appearances of things to reality. And the terrible reason may be that there is no reality in things apart from their appearance.

Oscar Wilde, "The Decay of Lying"

What is the relation between clothes and identity? When Oscar Wilde donned a diaphanous pair of harem pants, a *bustier* encrusted with jewels, and a wig and veils for a Parisian photographer,¹ was he still occupying the same subject-position — Irish Oxonian, upper middle-class artist, male homosexual — that he did in his trousers and jacket? Or had he changed his (socially constructed) identity with his clothing? Was he, indeed, occupying a female subject-position when he cross-dressed in the character of Salome? Like the topics of sexuality and gender roles which the *fin de siècle* explored so obsessively, cross-dressing occurs frequently — as a metaphor, a concept, and an act — in the artistic, social, and legal discourses of the period. In *The Story of An African Farm*, for example, Olive Schreiner suggests that exchanging masculine attire for a woman's dress and bonnet transforms the egotistical and selfish Gregory Rose into an altruistic, self-sacrificing,

¹See reproduced photograph in Richard Ellmann's *Oscar Wilde*, Plate 49, "Wilde in costume as Salome" (*Collection Guillot de Saix, H. Roger Viollet, Paris*).

nurturer. Rose's metamorphosis might be read as an essentialist polarization of the distinct attributes of the sexes — except that his biology remains, essentially, male. Implicit in Rose's transvestite transformation is the suggestion that the subject is not stable but in flux — that one's identity is produced materially by the cultural discourses of one's historical time and place. In "Costumes of the Mind: Transvestism as Metaphor in Modern Literature," Sandra M. Gilbert makes this point with reference to *Orlando*, arguing that "Woolf's view of clothing implied that costume is inseparable from identity — indeed, that costume creates identity . . ." (193).

Gilbert notes that the cross-dressing trope can mark a resistance to the hierarchical dichotomies of false/true, appearance/reality, artificial/natural and the like — a binary pattern based on the fundamental distinction of gender — because it offers an imaginative and radical revisionary politics which implies that no one ought to be limited by restrictive roles into a "uniform" (196).² As a multi-form product, the illustrated book similarly resists hierarchical power relations between its "female" image and its "male" language. We have seen how this displacement of power relations operates in all image/text interactions, particularly in those of "impression" and "parody." But this resistance to hierarchies and dualisms is most emphatically enacted when picture and word emanate from the same body — when the subject "cross-dresses" in picture or in word. The bi-textual book produced by a single artist/writer has at its disposal both visual and verbal wardrobes with

²Gilbert's argument makes this point specifically for women writers: according to her analysis, male modernist writers such as Yeats or Joyce use transvestite or sartorial tropes to elaborate a conservative vision of society which asserts that the socio/political world *should* be hierarchical and based on gender distinctions. See "Costumes of the Mind" 195 - 206.

which to clothe or configure its subject. As the apotheosis of the *fin-de-siècle* search for organic unity in the illustrated book, the cross-dressing bi-textuality of William Strang, Laurence Housman, and Aubrey Beardsley indicates not simply aesthetic, but also socio-political, desires for new forms. Like their great exemplar, William Blake, these poet/artists produce revolutionary work: revolutionary because the cross-dressing ideal inscribes a new cultural order into the dialogue of the illustrated book.

According to W. J. T. Mitchell's study, Blake's composite art represents an attack on the dualisms of body/soul and appearance/reality because it attempts to overcome "the fall into a divided Nature with a 'resurrection to Unity.'" Significantly, Blake's metaphor for the fall into division is the separation into male and female sexes. Mitchell argues that "The essential unity of his arts . . . is to be seen in the parallel engagements of imagination and body with their respective mediums, and their convergence in the more comprehensive idea of the 'Human Form Divine.'" The wholeness of Blake's illustrated books, then, is conceived of in terms of the wholeness of the human body or of human social/sexual relationships. Such a conception of the relationship of image and text means independence rather than identity, difference rather than diffusion — but all held together in an interdependent, complementary whole. As Mitchell suggests, "The mutual independence, lively interaction and conflict between Blake's poems and pictures is his way of enacting his vision of a liberated social psychological order. . . ." (*Blake's Composite Art* 31, 34, 75). This enactment is repeated in the bi-textual products of his *fin-de-siècle* inheritors, but their visions of

psychic wholeness and social liberation are permeated by cultural discourses specific to the English nineties.

Blake's "Human Form Divine," as represented by the image/text relations of his illuminated books, was re-interpreted, through the mediating influence of Dante Gabriel Rossetti, into an androgynous or bisexual ideal by the poet/artists of the nineties. The decadent adaptation of Blake is signalled in Laurence Housman's introduction to *Selections from the Writings of William Blake* (1893), which begins with a quotation from Walt Whitman, and which reads Blake throughout in terms of the American poet's ideal of male beauty. According to Richard Dellamora, Whitman's name was likely "the signifier of male-male desire in a new form of sexual-aesthetic discourse" in late Victorian England (87). What Dellamora calls "the Whitmanian signifier" could also represent a particular political position. Edward Carpenter, perhaps the period's best known apologist for homosexuality, and an active socialist, "saw in Whitman's belief in comradeship, in adhesive love, a counter-balance to materialism, a way of spiritualizing democracy and of drawing the classes together" (Weeks 69). A friend of heterosexual socialists like William Morris, feminist socialists like Olive Schreiner, and homosexual socialists like Laurence Housman, Carpenter campaigned for the de-criminalization and increased understanding of what he named in *Love's Coming of Age* (1896) the "third" or "intermediate sex" — "men . . . who might be described as of feminine soul enclosed in a male body" (117). Michel Foucault has recognized that the late nineteenth-century conception of homosexual identity was produced by "a certain way of inverting the masculine and the

feminine in oneself. . . . a kind of interior androgyny, a hermaphroditism of the soul" (43). As Sandra Gilbert points out, hermaphroditism or androgyny are, metaphorically speaking, aligned with the concept of cross-dressing. Moreover, she argues convincingly that "Carpenter's theories of androgyny . . . were essentially elaborations of images of ceremonial transvestism and sacred bisexuality" ("Costumes of the Mind" 203, 218). If bi-textual cross-dressing becomes, in some very significant ways, the site for what Foucault calls the "reverse discourse" made possible by the aligned psychiatric, juridical, and literary discourses of "psychic hermaphroditism" (101), it does so by experimenting with liminality and border-crossing — by experimenting with the possibilities inherent in becoming the *other*.

The *fin-de-siècle* aesthete's androgynous ideal was produced by the paintings of Pre-Raphaelite artists, the poetry of the Rossetti "fleshly" school (whose poets were characterized by Robert Browning as "men that dress up like women"),³ and the criticism of Walter Pater. As Richard Dellamora's ground-breaking work in gender and gay studies suggests, Pater's essay on Leonardo's art in *The Renaissance* espouses an androgynous ideal of beauty which transforms women such as Salome, the Medusa, and Lady Lisa into male transvestites. In order to account for Leonardo's extraordinary appeal, Pater "draws upon the long association in Western and archaic cultures of male-male desire, cross-dressing, and shamanism. . . ." Dellamora argues that, for Pater, "Cross-dressing provides a literal metaphor of the sexual

³Browning makes the remark in a letter of June 19, 1870 to Isa Blagden. Browning is agreeing with Blagden's comment on the "florid impotence" of Swinburne's poetry and extends the application of her comment to the "effeminacy" of the whole Rossetti school. The letter is quoted in Dellamora 70.

transformation that it signifies, a transformation that confers sibylline power on the male committed to sexual and emotional ties with other men" (133, 142-43). Moreover, this androgynous ideal, which asserts "the transforming power of 'becoming-woman,'" is not necessarily misogynist, but rather "is potentially reciprocal, recognizing women's capacity both to shape *their own difference* . . . [and] to occupy the terrain of traditionally male gender roles" (146). Pater's reading of Leonardo, which imaginatively explores the possibilities (aesthetic and political) of "a liminal state that is both 'masculine' and 'feminine,'" places his androgynous images within "that utopian strain of philosophic radicalism that envisages a symmetrical relation between the sexes" (140, 146). As a metaphor for sexual/cultural transformation, bi-textual cross-dressing dialogically explores and interrogates proscribed image/text roles by resisting and re-interpreting hierarchical relationships — by sharing power, knowledge, and authority. The meaning discursively co-produced by image and text in illustrated books by the same hand is free-playing to the extent that the primary writing cannot be distinguished from the secondary, the creative from the critical, the figure from the ground, the costume from identity.

The late Victorian conception of homosexuality as a kind of interior bisexuality or exterior cross-dressing enters the image/text dialogue of the illustrated book in the form of desire: the desire for integration, wholeness, organic unity — socially, sexually, and psychically. Bi-textual cross-dressing expresses the period's androgynous ideal⁴ that the two sexes should

⁴The valorization of the androgynous ideal, as discussed in earlier chapters, was limited to a particular group of aesthetes and radicals. For the rest of the Victorian public, the androgynous "ideal" was actually a threat and

somehow be incorporated into one, that the differences between male and female should be simultaneously asserted — by the valorization of socially-defined costume, gender roles, and attributes — and denied or subverted — by the actual material body beneath the clothes. The identity of the subject — sexual or textual — is thus not limited by the extremes of polarity — male/female, word/image, mind/body — but rather exists in a free-flowing continuum between the two poles in which a variety of subject-positions may be assumed in order to produce meaning. Like Gregory Rose in his bonnet and dress, or indeed like Oscar Wilde in his Salome costume, the cross-dressing image is not a redundant re-presentation of the body of meaning, but rather a creative expression whose signifying structure may oppose or contradict the subject's other position (as in Rose's transvestism) or may provocatively illuminate and expand the subject's aesthetic/political stance (as in Wilde's transvestism).

It should be clear by now that my theory of cross-dressing in book illustration does not imply a false disguise/true nature opposition. Inversions merely re-inscribe binary oppositions. As I — and, according to Gilbert's study, other women writers — use the trope, the cross-dressing metaphor signifies not polarization, but fluidity, not essential difference, but discursively produced difference. Indeed, cross-dressing critiques dualisms by re-interpreting the underlying gender division on which they are based. It is, perhaps, no accident that the single most productive artist/writer of the

the source of acute anxiety, as Elaine Showalter and others have noted. Showalter quotes a telling bit of *Punch* doggerel from April 1895 — the month of the first Wilde trial: "A new fear my bosom vexes; / Tomorrow there may be no sexes!" (*Sexual Anarchy* 9).

nineties, Laurence Housman, achieved his first financial and critical success disguised as a woman. The anonymous publication, in 1900, of *An Englishwoman's Love-letters* made him an overnight success — as long as his identity was unknown.⁵ For a year the book, which went into multiple issues, was praised for its "feminine style" as a "cry from the heart" of an "exquisite nature" who revealed the "pure flame of her soul"; but when Housman's authorship was at last revealed, the critics attacked the work for "its narrow and unhealthy tone" (in Engen 110). The book that the *Academy*, for instance, had previously extolled for having "a quality, a literary finish . . . that give distinction to the volume" was now denigrated by the same journal as being "without the living wind that blows through true literature: it is essentially vaporous and not quite wholesome" (Housman, *Unexpected Years* 165). As a cross-dressing parable, the meaning is clear: the decadent cannot get away with being a New Woman in drag. Moreover, the critical response not only says something about the social production of gender, but also about how artistic style is the product of a particular ideological discourse. Because the decadents realized they could transform themselves only by *style* — by violating conventional expectations and exploiting unfulfilled anticipations

⁵Rodney Engen describes the progress of this "sensational 'literary hoax" which took England by storm at the turn of the century. Despite intense critical pressure "to unmask the identity of this overnight sensation," Housman realized that his book's market depended on his anonymity, and managed to remain undetected for a year. Influential critics, in the meantime, developed outrageous hypotheses about the author's identity, British reviewers naming Queen Victoria, Alice Meynell and Marie Correlli, and American critics naming Edith Wharton and Elizabeth von Anim. Although "Most were sure the author was a woman" (102, 110), one discerning critic did suggest that the writer might be Oscar Wilde (*Unexpected Years* 164). When Housman was unmasked, Max Beerbohm was commissioned by *The Tatler* to make a caricature of Housman; his title was, appropriately enough, "The Englishwoman?" (See Engen 102-104 and plate on 105).

(Reed 9) — the cross-dressing or sartorial trope is deeply embedded in all decadent discourse, but really comes out of the closet in bi-textual books.

As Carolyn Heilbrun remarks in *Toward a Recognition of Androgyny*, disguise "may be another indication of the wide spectrum of roles possible to individuals if they can but find the convenient trappings of another persona" (29). This "disguise" is not a lie hiding the truth; or — perhaps more appropriately — this disguise is only a lie in the sense of Oscar Wilde's aphorism: "Man is least himself when he talks in his own person. Give him a mask, and he will tell you the truth" ("Critic as Artist," *Complete Works* 1045). In image/text relations, cross-dressing signifies a Wildean or Bakhtinian mask: not a false disguise hiding the true face or body, but a form which allows independent speech, a certain autonomous function. According to Bakhtin's theory of masks — which he extends to entire costumes, such as that of Harlequin (a ubiquitous *fin-de-siècle* trope) — the mask is both liberating and legitimating. Indeed, the mask confers the right to be "other" — the right to confuse, to tease, to hyperbolize, to parody, to be theatrical, to expose, to betray personal details (*Dialogic Imagination* 36, 159, 163). These are the essential "rights" or expressions of the cross-dressing image, as we shall see by examining the bi-textual productions of William Strang, Laurence Housman, and Aubrey Beardsley: *Death and the Ploughman's Wife* (1894), *All-Fellows: Seven Legends of Lower Redemption* (1896) and *Under the Hill*.⁶

⁶*Under the Hill* is not, strictly speaking, a nineties book, as the manuscript was left incomplete at Beardsley's death (March 1898) and was not published until Leonard Smithers brought out a private edition of 300 copies in 1907. This edition, though complete as far as the text is considered, was incomplete with regard to Beardsley's images, since no illustrations were

The work of the master-etcher, William Strang, is unlike any other bi-textual productions of the nineties. A leading artist in John Lane's stable of illustrators, Strang was also, in the Blake/Rossetti tradition, an artist/poet (Nelson 30-31). R. E. D. Sketchley connects his work with the modern interpretative ideal of illustration, but also sets him apart as "incongruous with contemporary black and white artists of to-day" because "the creative traditions, and instinctive modes of thought that are represented in the forms and formation of his art, are forces of intellect and passion and insight not previously, nor now, by more than the one artist, associated with the practice of illustration" (58-59). Certainly the force of Strang's strange and intense worlds comes through both in his commercial illustration (as seen in Sargent's *Book of Ballads*) and in the three books he produced in the nineties according to a Blakean ideal which united craftsman and artist, etcher and poet, to produce a book conceived of as a whole aesthetic object, a unity of conception and execution. Unlike Blake, however, Strang was not his own

printed. John Lane brought out an expurgated version of the text, but included the accompanying images, in his 1904 edition, *Under the Hill and Other Essays in Prose and Verse*. This edition represents the way in which *Under the Hill* had been bi-textually presented to the *fin-de-siècle* public in *The Savoy*, Nos. 1 and 2 (1896), and is, therefore, the version I shall focus on in this chapter, although my references are to Lane's second (1913) issue of the book. Beardsley's original manuscript had a separate title, *Venus and Tannhäuser*, and this is the title by which his unfinished novel is perhaps best known. However, since, in the expurgated published version in *The Savoy*, Beardsley changed the names of Venus and Tannhäuser to Helen and the Abbé Fünfreluche, the use of the title *Under the Hill* will prevent confusion. A complete version of both the text and the illustrations, completed by John Glassco, was brought out in Paris by the Olympia Press in 1959 under the title *Under the Hill, or the Story of Venus and Tannhäuser*. My references are to the English publication of this edition, brought out by the New English Library in 1966. See Glassco's introduction for a bibliographical history of *Under the Hill*.

publisher as well; rather, like Laurence Housman, he utilized the services of belles-lettres publishers. The first of his bi-textual productions, *The Earth Fiend* (1892), has the double distinction of being one of the first issues from the newly-formed partnership of John Lane and Elkin Mathews at The Bodley Head and of being the firm's most highly priced book (Nelson 294). Two years later Strang published another ballad in Scots dialect, *Death and the Ploughman's Wife* (1894), also illustrated with his own etchings. *A Book of Giants* (1898) is a collection of twelve humorous poems on a giant theme, accompanied by Strang's first published set of woodcuts.

Strang's bi-textuality is constituted by distinct figurations of his subject: always the image clothes the theme in different draperies than the words. The interaction of image and text is thus richly productive; the whole meaning of *Death and the Ploughman's Wife*, for example, depends on the interplay of figures — or, the newly clothed metaphors of visual and verbal texts. Written in broad Scots dialect, the folky verbal text may be seen as part of "the aggressively unencumbered mode of the 1890s ballad revival," which Linda Dowling argues is deliberately opposed to "the self-consciously elaborate mode of literary Decadence." Strang's Scottish contemporary, John Davidson, for example, advocated the use of the ballad for a new "poetic plain-spokenness." As a revolutionary aesthetic grounded in the speaking voice, the *fin-de-siècle* ballad revival by writers such as Davidson, Rudyard Kipling and William Sharp staged a revolt against decadence and a renaissance of romance (*Language and Decadence* 16, 226).⁷ Strang's

⁷This opposition between the ballad revival and literary decadence is suggested in a letter Oscar Wilde wrote to Laurence Housman from Bernesville, August 22 1897. Wilde represents the writing of *The Ballad of Reading Gaol* as

illustrations, on the other hand, while generally realistic in outline and contour, have a decorative touch to them, a fascination with the dark side of fantasy and the human condition — with the weird and the grotesque. As art critic Laurence Binyon wrote in his "Introductory Essay" to *The Earth Fiend*, this grotesque element introduces "something of the decadence" into Strang's peculiar sense of beauty — a beauty, Binyon said, which some had denied altogether, "convinced that he has a downright passion for ugliness" (in Nelson 294).⁸ Although the grotesque and nightmarish quality of Strang's sense of beauty gives his visual work a decadent quality, however, his designs are so rich and various, so intensely thought-out, that such description is insufficient. As Sketchley suggests, "the intellectual chiaroscuro of Mr. Strang's imagination" produces work characterized by "Intensity and large statement of dark and light; fine dramatizations of line; an unremitting conflict with the superfluous and inexpressive in form and in thought; an art based on the realities of life, and without finalities of expression, inelegant, as though grace were an affectation, an insincerity in dealing with matters of moment. . . ." (59, 64).

a contradiction of his previous aesthetic stance, which we may describe as "decadent": "With regard to what you ask me about myself --- well, I am occupied in finishing a poem -- terribly realistic for me, and drawn from actual experience -- a sort of denial of my own philosophy of art in many ways -- I hope it is good, but every night I hear cocks crowing in Bernavol [*sic*], so I am afraid I may have denied myself -- and would weep bitterly, if I had not wept away all my tears" (Wilde to Housman, typed letter in William Andrews Clark Library). Wilde had Leonard Smithers send Housman a copy of the *Ballad* when it came out.

⁸ Binyon and Strang collaborated on a book of imaginative essays and etchings, *Western Flanders* (1899). See Appendix. The artist and etcher William Rothenstein, who looked up to Strang as a mentor, recounts in his autobiography that Laurence Binyon was a familiar at the Strangs' home in Hamilton Terrace (I. 373).

Death and the Ploughman's Wife presents its image and text as two separately conceived, intense materializations, of the same uncanny theme. The twelve etchings are not grounded by any text: there are no legends for the plates, nor is there a list of illustrations. The plates are interleaved, unpaginated, throughout the seventeen-page ballad; each one is preceded by a blank paper guard which must be lifted to unveil the design. Indeed, the book functions as a portable art gallery, for each original etching is signed, mounted and framed, on large 12 x 17 1/2 inch pages. Moreover, each plate represents a fresh visualization of the theme, a new way (as the White Queen said to Alice) of "a-dressing" the subject (Carroll 245). Strang's etching style varies greatly from plate to plate, thereby enacting a resistance to a uni-form presentation of the subject. Depending on the mood or dramatic action of the scene, Strang uses a tonal mezzotint technique reminiscent of seventeenth-century Dutch etchers, and especially of Rembrandt's chiaroscuro style, or the "strong open line" (Hind 330) which shows his debts to Legros, Dürer and Goya. Recognized as a "master etcher" and a strong original artist by his contemporaries, Strang's work was also frequently charged with having an "element of pastiche," and it is this quality of artistic self-consciousness and meta-reference, perhaps, which also places his visual work within the aesthetics of decadence.⁹ Strang uses the materials of his

⁹William Rothenstein noted the "element of pastiche" in Strang's work, but thought he had caught the "infection" from his much-admired teacher, Legros (1.34). Frederick Wedmore, though recognizing Strang's art as the work of a master craftsman, also notes "all his borrowings, conscious or unconscious," which he says are coupled with "a gift of initiation" (148). In his introduction to *The Master Etchers: William Strang*, Frank Newbolt itemizes the following significant influences on Strang's etchings: Legros, Dürer, Van Dyck, Rembrandt, Millet and Goya (9).

medium — figures and landscape, art historical reference, needle and acid, rocker and burnisher — to redress his subject in each plate.¹⁰

Strang's visual text does not, then, "illustrate" the verbal in the sense of pictures which have a secondary, referential, relationship to originary words. Rather, as with all cross-dressing art, image and text are cross-referenced, and it is impossible to determine whether the subject was conceived first in pictures or in words — whether the subject was clothed "originally" in images or in language. The ballad of *Death and the Ploughman's Wife* is a simple narrative which focuses on woman-as-hero and celebrates the power of love. The woman-as-hero trope which emerged in late Victorian England became the embodiment, as Carolyn Heilbrun has argued, "of the male writer's artistic vision" (*Toward a Recognition of Androgyny* 49).¹¹ But Strang's vision of the heroic matron is also a visual transformation of his master Legros' two allegorical series of plates on *Death and the Woodcutter* (see Hind 319), and so it is very possible that Strang's primary impetus was visual, and that he wrote his verses *after* he had completed his own series of allegorical plates. By re-figuring the confrontation of the human with death as the site of struggle by a woman for her child, Strang evokes not only a long tradition in artistic discourse of

¹⁰I have been assisted in my understanding of etching techniques and styles by Arthur M. Hind's *A History of Engraving and Etching: From the 15th Century to the Year 1914*, and by my own (extremely limited) experiments in this medium.

¹¹Heilbrun makes the point in reference to Ibsen, Henry James, Bernard Shaw, D. H. Lawrence and E. M. Forster, but the trope is ubiquitous in the period. Oscar Wilde, for example, took up this position in *Salome*, as we saw in Chapter 5.

equating aesthetic production with sexual reproduction — the work of art with the child¹² — but also a whole complex of contemporary discourses surrounding maternity and the role of woman. As the embodiment of the artist, Strang's woman-as-hero allows him to take up a variety of subject positions in his bi-textual production of meaning.

The goodwife in the story is home alone with her baby daughter on Hallowe'en when a beggar comes to her door. Although poor herself, she feels such pity for him that she gives him her own supper; in return, he says he will give her a boon. She scoffs at his ability to grant a favor and asks instead for him to perform a practical task: "But sin ' ye sayt, ye noo can try / To find the pigs, and to the stye / Drive in their truant feet." The beggarman accomplishes his task, muttering a strange spell as he works, then disappears; the goodwife never sees him again. Over a year passes. "Her bairnie that could toddle now, / 'Wi' hair o' goud and een sae blue, / She lo'ed as her heart's bluid." But one day, as she returns to the house from drawing water at the well, the good wife sees a terrible sight:

For there grim Death had clasped her wean
 Within his cauld embrace,
 Close to the stye he held her there
 Against his fleshless face.

The mother falls on her knees, begging Death to allow her "A last, long, farewell kiss." But when Death releases the child with a grin, the mother

¹²See, for example, Oscar Wilde's letter to Laurence Housman, cited below (288). But also see Gilbert and Gubar's ground-breaking study, *The Madwoman in the Attic*, which examines the ubiquity of the paternity trope in nineteenth-century male writers as it relates to the position of the contemporary woman writer.

leaps into the sty with her. So soon as "eager Death sprang quickly in," she jumps out again, leaving "him prisoned fast." The pigpen is under the charm of the beggarman's spell and thus she bargains with Death:

"Gin ye let me and mine abee,
And come'na till ye're sought;
My dearie wi' her mither leave,
Your freedom shall be bought."

The *cul de lampe* (Plate 12) which follows the concluding folk wisdom — "No joy is ever half so keen / As joy that follows pain" — depicts Death lying defeated on the ground, a gaunt skeleton, with the blade of his scythe broken, and a naked, winged figure with a floral crown and staff rising above him and looking down with triumph. The allegory, no doubt, is that Love conquers Death. But the face is the face of the ploughman's wife.

The third plate in *Death and the Ploughman's Wife* (Fig. 29) is one of three mezzotints in the volume, a technique well-suited to the domestic themes it is reserved for since the style is so evocative of the Dutch interiors and subtly modelled figures of Rembrandt. The plate is interleaved between the second and third pages of the ballad and introduces a moment's pause between the beggar's knock at the door and the wife's answer. A traditional illustration would be much more likely to represent the beggar at this point — so that turning page two is like opening the door with the goodwife. Strang's plate, however, is less interested in illustrating the narrative than it is in visualizing its theme of the strength of maternal love. The composition achieves its effect by the warmth of the brown/black ink which gives it a depth and an intimacy not to be found in the stark black-and-white contrasts of the linear etchings. Moreover, the design works by tonal masses rather

than by lines: the central figures of mother and child form a curved arabesque, while the vertical thrust of the off-center doorway at right divides the plate asymmetrically. This division introduces the balance of oppositions which gives the design its interest: the left side of the plate is full of objects, whereas the right side is empty; the left is dark, the right is light; the left is inside and domestic, the right is outside and wild.

The careful disposition of objects is eloquent testimony to the goodwife's life of hardship and austerity. The wide plank boards, the broom, washing tub, bench, stool, bowl and spoon, all tell of her poverty. In contrast to her meagre and even bleak surroundings, however, the woman's face and figure are suffused with light, and the cherubic child who clasps her neck seems to be part of her body. As in all the pictorial representations of her, the goodwife has her eyes cast downward: she looks, not at her child, but at the floor. Indeed, the visual text consistently presents the woman as the image of meekness, whereas the narrative tells the tale of a strong woman. If it be true, as Frank Newbolt asserts about *The Earth Fiend*, that self-illustration ensures that "the artist is not hampered by the author. It is one of those rare occasions when the author cannot complain of misinterpretation" (16), then the different figurations of the subject in picture and in word produce a bi-textual meaning which can only be understood in terms of that paradoxical difference and identity. Cross-dressing requires that the reader/viewer read Strang's text in the light of his pictures, and his pictures in the light of his text.

If the female figures of Strang's plates convey the conventional meek image of maternity glorified almost to sainthood (as the *cul de lampe*

suggests), then the assertive and self-possessed woman of the narrative who speaks in brusque Scots and acts decisively to outwit her opponent exists as an alternate subject-position within the bi-textual whole. The contraries of strength and weakness emphasize both the fragility of life and the vulnerability of achievement. The reconciliation of these contraries in the maternal body has, perhaps, a long iconographic and literary history, but it is also a material effect of the culturally-produced discourses valorizing motherhood which circulated in the nineties. A response to fears of sexual anarchy and racial disintegration induced by the appearance of the decadent and the New Woman, the *fin-de-siècle* glorification of womanhood as motherhood was confirmed by the science of sexologists such as Havelock Ellis who argued that social roles were biologically determined (Weeks 90). Edward Carpenter, another sexologist looking for Earth-mother, also saw woman as closer to Nature, to the child, and to the primitive. Citing both Walt Whitman and Greek mythology as evidence in his polemical *Love's Coming of Age*, Carpenter argues that when economic conditions change to communism, woman's true nature will be revealed, and we will find "that instead of being the over-sensitive hysterical creature that civilisation has too often made her, she is essentially of calm large and acceptive even though emotional temperament" (70-1).

This essential earth-mother is evoked in *Death and the Ploughman's Wife* against the backdrop of the simple agrarian economic conditions implied in Strang's imagined folk-culture. Plate Nine (Fig. 30), for example, an extremely strong linear etching with marked black-and-white contrasts, clearly associates the woman with the natural world. She stands on a knoll

with her back to a group of trees which could be extensions of her body; before her, and making a strong diagonal across the plate, a thick trunk protects — and divides — her from Death. The woman is associated with life — with growing vegetation and children. Her strength is declared in what Carpenter might have called her "large calm": her secure triumph is evident in the way her hands rest lightly on her child's shoulders, and in her small but assured smile. Death, on the other hand, is conveyed as a bowed figure who has lost his power to hurt. His scythe lies beyond his reach outside the styel in which he is penned, and he is positioned opposite and below the woman in the bottom right corner of the composition. The dialogic relations of image and text in *Death and the Ploughman's Wife* illuminate a desire for an organic whole in which the circle of nature and mother-love vanquishes all hostile and external forces — an ideal society in which power dresses with the physical signs of meek female weakness but has the assertive mental attributes of male strength.

Strang's bi-textual valorization of motherhood is an artistic response to fears motivated by the appearance of New Women that modern female identity might define itself outside maternal parameters (see Showalter, *Sexual Anarchy* 3). But the cross-dressing of image and text also indicates the degree to which the artists of this period wished their work to be considered as an organic effusion of the authorizing personality, a single product in the way that the child is physically marked by its connections to the generating female body. Thus, the re-productive activity of cross-dressing poet/artists becomes a site of struggle for self-identity and artistic/social definition. This

struggle is nowhere more clearly evident than in the bi-textual work of Laurence Housman.

In an appreciative (posthumous) review in *The Magazine of Art* in March 1899, Gleeson White wrote that Laurence Housman had "the felicity of expression in two mediums — 'pictures' and 'words,' and a happy knack of combining both utterances in the telling of stories which hold the reader spellbound" (in Engen 127). Without realizing it, White was summing up Housman's career as an artist/illustrator, for failing eyesight prevented him from continuing his intricately detailed drawings, and after the turn of the century he devoted himself almost exclusively to writing works for the stage (Engen 103, 106). Yet Housman did not reach this felicity of combined expression quickly or easily. As he recounts in his autobiography, Housman was engaged in the media of image and text from a young age, but his writing remained furtive and secretive, while "Anyone might see my drawings. . . ." Thus, although his "heart was always more in literature than in what is called 'Art,'" the young Housman chose art for his public career, going up to London with his sister Clemence at the age of eighteen to study at the arts and crafts schools in Lambeth and South Kensington (*Unexpected Years* 103). He did not, however, find his individual artistic style until he met his fellow art-student Charles Ricketts when he called at the Vale to obtain an out-of-print copy of the first *Dial*. "Within a month," Housman recounts, "Ricketts had dragged me away from my timid preference for fuzzy chalk-drawing, as a means of concealing my bad draughtsmanship, and had set me to pen-work, with Rossetti and the other Pre-Raphaelites as my main guides both in composition and technique. From that time on, I felt set: I acquired a new

confidence; I had found out at last what I wanted to do" (*Unexpected Years* 115). Acquiring confidence in line-work, however, did not necessarily mean that Housman found appropriate work to illustrate. Although his early illustrations for George Meredith (*Jump-to-Glory, Jane*, 1892), for Christina Rossetti (*Goblin Market*, 1893),¹³ and for Jane Barlow (*The End of Elfintown*, 1894) show power of both design and interpretation, it is also fair to say that, in the early nineties, Housman was an artist in search of an author. Ultimately, he found the writing most appropriate to his black-and-white art to be the work of his own pen.

To some extent, the illustrator's search for a compatible text is a function of style. As we have seen in previous chapters, realism in fiction evokes representational art, whereas symbolic literature typically evokes decorative art. When the artist looking for a writer whose textual interests are aligned with his/her own also has strong literary instincts, perhaps the best solution is to write one's own text. Since Housman was both a symbolic writer and a symbolic artist, it is not surprising that his illustration theory held that the artist should approach the text as a decorator, always retaining his own individuality of expression and interpretation. In a critical study of his admired sixties' illustrator, *Arthur Boyd Houghton* (1896), Housman argued that "The true illustration 'becomes not what we so often find, the dull repetition, through another medium, of things already sufficiently made

¹³*Goblin Market* is, perhaps, Housman's greatest achievement as a book illustrator and designer. See Felmingham, who says *Goblin Market* "can lay claim to being the most beautiful book of the time" (37). Housman initiated the project with Macmillan but failed to satisfy the author with his visual interpretation (*Unexpected Years* 117-118). See also my forthcoming article, "The Representation of Violence/The Violence of Representation: Housman's Illustrations to Rossetti's 'Goblin Market.'" in *English Studies in Canada*.

clear by the text; but something new with further appeals and fresh charms for the imagination . . . in a word, the result of another creative faculty at work on the same theme" (in Engen 45). Significantly, Housman applied his theory that illustration should be the expression of another creative faculty at work on the same theme to his self-illustration as well. In this regard, his greatest exemplar was Blake, whose images were never redundant repetitions of the verbal statement, but always fresh expressions of a shared theme. Housman's discovery of Blake was virtually a conversion experience (*Unexpected Years* 112), and the influence is strong in all the books he wrote and illustrated in the nineties.

The interdependence of Housman's bi-textual expression becomes evident when one considers that the conclusion of his artistic career also virtually brought to an end the kind of writing — fairy tales and poetry — that occupied him in the nineties.¹⁴ One should also remember that Housman's writing career was actually launched bi-textually. His first published story, "The Green Gaffer" (*Universal Review*, July 1890), was accompanied by his own images, and was, as Oscar Wilde told him, "a strange tale . . . with strange illustrations, and containing a beautiful sentence" (*Unexpected Years* 15).¹⁵ His subsequent books could be similarly described;

¹⁴Housman published only two more books of fairy tales and one of poetry in the opening years of the century: *The Blue Moon* (1904), *The Cloak of Friendship* (1905), and *Mendicant Rhymes* (1906). His subsequent publications in these genres were selections or collections of his previous work.

¹⁵The beautiful sentence Wilde admired, "the smoke of their wood-fires lay upon the boughs, soft as the bloom upon a grape," he also promised to use himself someday. It appears later in slightly altered form in *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (Engen 32). This exchange took place at the Vale, and was the first meeting between Wilde and Housman; they did not meet again — although

both his tales and his images are almost invariably strange and occasionally beautiful. Most of them partake in the revival of the illustrated fairy tale which took place in the nineties and which staged another kind of border-crossing — the border between adult and child audience. As Stephen Prickett's work on *Victorian Fantasy* has demonstrated, however, Hans Christian Andersen's translated tales, which "took England by storm" in 1846, had already merged the worlds of adults and children; by the end of the century, the dream-world was taken over by the decadents (4, 9). Oscar Wilde's *A House of Pomegranates* (1891), illustrated by Ricketts and Shannon, marks the decade's definitive shift to fairy tales as works of art aimed at an audience with poetic sensibility,¹⁶ and much of Housman's work in the nineties is in keeping with this aesthetic model. *A Farm in Fairyland* (1894), *The House of Joy* (1895), *All-Fellows* (1896), and *The Field of Clover*

they did correspond — until Housman visited him in Paris after his release from prison, as is recorded in *Echo de Paris*. Housman made this visit on an errand of mercy: his circle at the Café Royal, hearing of Wilde's destitution, had taken up a collection on his behalf, and commissioned Housman to redeem his debts by stopping in Paris on his way to Italy. Curiously enough, his letters home on this trip formed the basis for *An Englishwoman's Love-Letters* (Engen 101).

¹⁶In a letter to the editor of the *Pall Mall Gazette* (Dec 11, 1891), Wilde objected to the paper's reviewer, who seemed to assume that the object of *The House of Pomegranates* was "to give pleasure to the British child" — an object Wilde denied with characteristic energy, saying that "No artist recognises any standard of beauty but that which is suggested by his own temperament." An unpublished draft of the letter also denies "that so great an artist as Hans Andersen wrote stories for the purpose of pleasing children. . . . Hans Andersen wrote to please himself, to realize his own sense of beauty, and as he deliberately cultivated that simplicity of style and method which is a result of a subtle and self-conscious art, there are many children who take pleasure in his stories; but his true admirers, those who really appreciate how great he was, are to be found not in the nursery but on Parnassus" (in Mason's *Bibliography of Oscar Wilde* [1914] 368-69).

(1898) are all short fairy tales or legends in the Wildean style, while *Green Arras* (1896) and *The Little Land* (1899) are books of illustrated poetry.¹⁷ Since these books are not only written and illustrated by Housman, but also completely designed by him, they represent — as does Strang's work — a commercial adaptation of Blake's illuminated books. Certainly few other books produced in the period have the same kind of artistic control from a single source.

The main factor in the outpouring of Housman's bi-textual productions after 1894 was the intensive year he spent studying Blake in preparation for his *Selections from the Writings of William Blake* for Kegan Paul in 1893. As he writes in his "Introduction," Housman especially admired Blake because "he did invent the means by which to convey a new mind into the world . . ."; significantly, Housman saw in Blake's pictorial and verbal "visions" evidence that the poet/artist "possessed in exquisite quality that art of living which his own art may help us learn" (xxi, xv). When Housman himself turned to verbal/visual art, his approach was also that of an artist/craftsman, but his craft was book design rather than relief etching and printing. In this sense, Housman's "whole art" approach to his self-illustrated books is also the outcome of his journey-work as a book designer and illustrator for commercial publishers such as John Lane, Kegan Paul, Jarrold & Sons, Grant Richards, Constable and George Bell, where he insisted on having control of the book's format (Engen 91, 39). Typically, he preferred the illustrative material to be concentrated into a series of full-page designs

¹⁷Housman also published one other book of poetry in this period (*Spikenard: A Book of Devotional Love-Poems*), but it was unillustrated.

acting as frontispieces to new stories or sections of poetry. Such a format, evocative of the Renaissance emblem book, invites the reader/viewer to give full attention to the detailed, often symbolic, designs. Moreover, Housman worked hard to incorporate decoration and letterpress into one aesthetic whole, so that "his book designs echoed [Emery] Walker's tenet of the totally unified, balanced and well-proportioned whole" (Engen 40). According to John Russell Taylor, one of the first critics to recognize Housman's merit and influence as an art-nouveau illustrator and book designer, Housman's formats are notable for "the exquisite care and discretion with which the text pages answer the illustrated or decorated pages in balance and proportion, so that though text and decoration are segregated there is no doubt that they are part of the same ordered design" (108).

If Housman's formats were carefully designed to make clear the integral connection of picture and word, however, few critics shared R. E. D. Sketchley's insight that his "illustrations to his own writings, fairy tales and poems, cannot with any force be discussed by themselves. The words belong to the pictures, the pictures to the words" (17). Despite the fact that Housman's illustrated books were such bi-textually conceived and produced products, his critics and reviewers usually focused on the literary aspects of his work and downplayed, ignored, or dismissed the role of the pictures in the making of meaning. Generally, they found the drawings "queer," "eccentric," "weird," "grotesque"; a summary sentence taken from a review of *The House of Joy* in *The Athenaeum* is representative of the general dislike of the visual content: "Mr. Housman himself seems to be responsible for the illustrations. They are far from being good" (in Engen 116, 117, 119). Indeed,

the illustrations had the effect of making Housman's fairy tales virtually unmarketable because the booksellers balked at exhibiting such pictures in their shop windows according to current advertising practice.¹⁸ Housman's refusal to change his style to accommodate a market, and his production of self-illustrated books at the rate of about one a year, indicates that bi-textuality was fundamental to his creative expression in the nineties. Without the accompanying images, Housman's stories appear to be strangely intense fairy tales, but not, perhaps, inappropriate for Victorian children. When set in dialogic interaction with the images, however, the sensuous nature of the relationships and religious feelings explored, as well as the political attitude of the aesthetic stance, becomes clear. Indeed, the visual material becomes a mask or costume which allows for the contrary and enriching expression of another subject-position.

Although I believe all Housman's bi-textual productions to be the material expressions of his search for the hermaphroditic ideal in the human psyche and in the social order, this goal is most evident in the image/text dialogue of *All-Fellows: Seven Legends of Lower Redemption* (1896). Published the year after Oscar Wilde's conviction and imprisonment for sodomy, the writing was probably concurrent with the establishment of the Order of Chaeronea, a secret homosexual society Housman co-founded with George Ives, which Jeffrey Weeks speculates was precipitated by Wilde's

¹⁸When Kegan Paul's head traveller complained that "in his country-rounds, [he] not merely failed to find a market for [Housman's works], but was met with derision when he offered them," Housman responded with characteristic humor, suggesting that the salesman's strategy should be 'to agree heartily with my detractors, but to say that just now they were 'the thing,' and that his firm had to publish them to meet a depraved taste' (*Unexpected Years* 114).

downfall (124).¹⁹ Certainly Housman thought the book would be of special significance to Wilde. As he recounts in his memoir of Wilde, "Upon his release from prison I had sent him my recently published book, *All-Fellows: seven legends of lower Redemption*, hoping that its title and its contents would say something on my behalf, which, in his particular case, I very much wished to convey " (*Echo de Paris* 14).

In my view, *All-Fellows* is both a coded message of solidarity and fellowship to Wilde (and others), and an artistic expression of the aims of the Order of Chaeronea. The anxiety that followed Wilde's conviction, increased by the homophobic press, had two larger cultural effects: although it drove the homosexual subculture underground after 1895 (Reade, *Sexual Heretics* 53), it also, paradoxically, contributed to the formation of homosexual self-identity and political activism. These effects are evident in the secret Order of Chaeronea. Deriving its name from the "Sacred Band" of Thebans who stood by each other to the death at the Battle of Chaeronea in 338 B. C., the Order represented "A Religion, A Theory of Life, and Ideal of Duty" and acted as a homosexual support and pressure group, binding its members "together by ties of friendship, loyalty, a sexual-political awareness and a symbolic ritual" until well into the twentieth century (Weeks 123, 122). Housman was deeply committed to the Order, as well as to social reform; both these issues come together for him under the rubric of fellowship or comradeship, a theme he touched on explicitly in a pamphlet he later wrote on homosexuality, "The

¹⁹Weeks's research indicates that this secret society was established in the mid to late nineties (118, 122, 124). But see Ellmann, who suggests that the Order was established before Wilde's trial and conviction, that Wilde knew about it and was sympathetic to it, but likely did not join it (*Oscar Wilde* 363).

Relation of Fellow-Feeling to Sex" (Weeks 135).²⁰ As a material product, the image/text dialogue of *All-Fellows* re-inscribes the "reverse discourse" produced at a particular moment in English history.

Comprised of seven legends, each introduced by a frontispiece illustration, and all inter-connected by a chain of enigmatic verses, the book combines Housman's religious enthusiasm with his homosexuality and socialism. Thus, the title, "All-Fellows," refers both to a Christian discipleship — the introductory poem, for example, says that "all ye seers, and ye that seek, / Fellows with Him must be" — while at the same time implying that the "fellowship" sought after is to be found both in the solidarity of male bonding and in the socialist movement, for the one thing required for "salvation" is unity: "all fellows" must be one. Significantly, all of the stories but the first focus on same-sex desires or on the comradely attachments between an older man and a younger "son" whom he loves and teaches. Although Housman clearly thought his title would be meaningful to his mentor, Wilde either did not crack the code or chose to be coy. In his letter of thanks he wrote "Your title pleases me little — but every one has some secret reason for christening a child: some day you must tell me yours."

²⁰Housman wrote this pamphlet for the British Society for the Study of Sex Psychology, an organization which he helped to found in 1914 (with Edward Carpenter as first president) and which he later chaired (Weeks 128). In the concluding "Footnote" to *Echo de Paris*, Housman discusses his influence in the formation of this society, which he agreed to join only on the condition "that membership should be open to men and women on equal terms, and that women should be on the executive committee." When it was objected that the topic of homosexuality would need to be discussed, Housman answered "'That is why we must include women.' I contended that where a problem concerns both sexes alike, only by the full cooperation of both sexes can it be rightly solved." Housman's views were considered revolutionary, but the society was ultimately formed on the equal basis he advocated (58-59).

Wilde praised the "whole book, with its studied and [sic] imaginative decorations and its links of song" as "a very lovely and almost unique work of art." Significantly, he singled out three stories of male bonding, love, and sacrifice for special praise: "The 'King's Evil,' the 'Tree of Guile,' and the 'Heart of the Sea', are quite beautiful: and their mysticism, as well as their meaning, touches me very deeply: and while they are of course dramatic, still one is conscious — as one should be in all objective art — of one personality dominating their perfection all through." (Wilde to Housman August 9 [1897]).

Two of the stories which Wilde thus singled out for their mysticism and their meaning — "Heart of the Sea" and "Tree of Guile"²¹ — tell the stories of priests who are connected to younger men by strong bonds of love. This was, of course, a popular theme in Victorian homosexual literature, the most infamous story being "The Priest and the Acolyte" (*The Chameleon*, December 1894), published anonymously by John Francis Bloxam, but ascribed to Wilde at the time (Reade, *Sexual Heretics* 349-360).²² In "The Heart of the Sea" (37-53), the priest miraculously receives a male infant from the depths of the sea, whom he then fosters to adulthood. In "The Tree of Guile" (73-90), the priest evidently obtained his son in the usual way, repented, and vowed

²¹Wilde no doubt appreciated the story of "The King's Evil" because its theme deals with the transforming "art" or healing touch of the shunned and leprous king. Moreover, the verses which follow the story seem to refer to both the leprous king and to a homosexual love crisis overlaid with a religious or spiritual crisis.

²²The prosecution at Wilde's trial used the story as evidence against him, as well as two poems published in the same (and only) issue of the *Chameleon* by Lord Alfred Douglas: "Two Loves" and "In Praise of Shame." Wilde, of course, indignantly denied authorship. See Reade, *Sexual Heretics* 47.

himself to a life of chastity, still maintaining strong emotional bonds with his beloved (and significantly named) "Absalom." The poems which precede and follow these legends are — as always — cryptic; in his Preface, Housman offers the apology that "if one endeavours to give in dramatic form the struggling of Jacob with his Angel, strange words have to put in his mouth" (viii). One could venture that, in most cases, the Angel that the Jacob of the verses struggles with is temptation in the form of a male body. The poetry preceding "Heart of the Sea," for example, is addressed to an unknown beloved from whom the speaker is separated; the speaker complains that he cannot "escape this "wrong set down for me by fate" — a term Housman uses elsewhere to signify inborn sexual orientation²³ — and asks for God's healing of his "fever" (34-36). In both stories, the intensity of the male bonding is overshadowed by the overt religious themes, but in each case the introductory image focuses the reader/viewer's attention on the sensuous element of the story. Indeed, the dialogue of image and text in *All-Fellows* politicizes the spiritual and betrays personal commitments and anxieties in much the same way that the bi-textuality of *The Were-Wolf* does.

The introductory plate to "Heart of the Sea" (Fig. 31) is a strong composition which shows Housman's art-nouveau debts to Blake, Rossetti, and Ricketts. The forms and lines of the plate, which are set in opposition to

²³See, for example, Laurence's account of his brother, A. E. Housman's life, in the form of papers deposited with the British Museum Department of Manuscripts in May 1942. Laurence discusses the collection of twenty-one unpublished autobiographical poems and some diaries which came into his hands at his brother's death, noting that A. E. never accepted "what was natural to him," though he did express "contemptuous anger against society's treatment of these unhappy victims of fate" who "are homosexual — having no more power of choice in the matter than a man has about the colour of his hair. . ." (*De Amicitia* 28).

each other but maintain a tense balance, infuse the design with an emotional undercurrent, an aching desire. The viewer's eyes are directed to the graceful curves of the principal figure's naked back, and to the flowing lines of the draperies which loosely cover his lower limbs and which are clearly soon to be discarded. The upper garment has already been removed and lies in the bottom of the boat. The figure stands on the bow looking down into the sea with his hands holding the folds of cloth at his hips prior to his final unveiling. His beauty is the beauty of Greek classical statues — or of Blake's ideal nude, which W. J. T. Mitchell suggests is "more like an androgynous athlete than a purely masculine figure" (*Blake's Composite Art* 75). The blending of male/female attributes in the half-clothed figure, and the invitation of the eye to look upon it with pleasure, make this scene a covertly staged scene of seduction and desire which has much in common with the proliferation of *fin-de-siècle* homosocial literature focusing on boys bathing.²⁴ The placement of the rower as a figure all but outside the scene, together with his near-disguise as part of the landscape's lines of water and cliff, gives him the position of the non-participating voyeur.

There is, in short, little in the composition which would indicate that the diver is a priest about to sacrifice himself to the ones "that live under the sea," or that the rower is his father. The strained sensuality of the plate introduces a story about male fellowship, heterosexual and paternal betrayal, and sacrificial love. The heterosexual betrayal and false fatherhood themes reside in the figure of the fisherman. His faithlessness causes his wronged

²⁴For an account of the recurring "boys bathing" trope in homosexual literature between 1850-1900, see Brian Reade's introductory essay to *Sexual Heretics* 13.

beloved to drown herself in the sea. When the fisherman's luck turns, he applies to the priest on the chapel-rock for assistance and together they row to the spot where he has caught his fish in the past. After the priest blesses the water, a "new-born man-child, naked, and cold, and wet from the salt sea" is drawn up in the fisherman's net. Paternal betrayal is evidenced by the fisherman's reaction, for he disowns his child, saying "Christen it and have done, and throw it back to the fishes!" Ignoring his advice, the priest wraps "the child in his cloak and laid it to warm against his breast," then takes it home with him to raise in "love and fear." Thus unnatural fatherhood and heterosexual betrayal are resolved by foster fatherhood and male fellowship.

Nurtured in the priest's lonely hermitage by the sea, the child (christened "Babe") grows up to be a priest, a saint, and a martyr. Moreover, the miraculous birth is mirrored by a miraculous preservation. Twenty years later, the fisherman again loses his luck and returns to the same spot with his priest-son so that he may bless the water and his catch. The young priest draws up "a white form, young, and fair, and dead": the unchanged body of his mother. When Babe draws out the beautiful body of his dead mother from the sea, he takes her lifeless form back with him to the graveyard. As he goes into the chapel to say Mass for his mother's soul, the white gulls come flocking into the chapel and blue men come up out of the sea to sit on the rocks and hear him sing. After the funeral Mass, Babe seems to be given a calling: he asks his father to "take me back in your boat to the place of deep water under the rocks; to the place whence I came: the place whither you would have had me return." It is this scene that the frontispiece ostensibly illustrates:

... So together they rowed to the fishing-ground beneath the high rocks.

Then Babe stripped himself as a diver, and stood up shuddering in the boat. "Kiss me, father," said he, "and when you go home ask others to cherish you in your old age. But they that live under the sea have none to cherish them, or to teach them the word of Life."

Babe dives into the sea, never to return. Days later, however, the sea rises angrily, filling the chapel, breaking the cross over the altar, making all a ruin. When the waters retreat, "there lay on the floor of the chapel a fair youth, with hands and feet pierced, and crowned with a crown of sharp coral, the image of one crucified for the love of Him whom he had been down to preach in the depths of the sea."

There is a religious excitement, a nervous spirituality in this and all the other stories in *All-Fellows*, which include other legends of miraculous births ("The Lovely Messengers"), foster-fathering ("Truce of God"), sacrifice ("Tree of Guile") and sainthood ("The Merciful Drought," "King's Evil," "Tree of Guile"). Yet this intense spirituality is set dialogically against the intense sensuality of the plates. The introductory plate to "Truce of God" (19-33), for instance, shows a beautiful boy in lean athletic prime standing in a hut of wattles while an older man kneels at his feet; both are naked except for loin cloths. As Housman's fellow campaigner for homosexual rights, the poet and critic Charles Kains-Jackson, recognized in his review of "The Work of Laurence Housman" (*Book-Lover's Magazine* 1908), "the opulence of pleasure which it ["The Truce of God" plate] affords in the studying supplies the real contrast of the emaciation of the figures" (in Engen 145). This "opulence of pleasure" or "epicurean aestheticism" are also evident in the

aching desire of the frontispiece to "The Merciful Drought" (Fig. 32). Although Kains-Jackson suggests that the "Deliberate exaggeration of length in the body of the beautiful kneeling youth" in this plate is "an image of the spirit's importance in comparison with the body" (same), the image's relationship to the text actually introduces a physical element to the spiritual parable.

But perhaps Kains-Jackson's "spirituality" is more gendered — and therefore more bodily — than one might think. As the proselytizer for male bonding in a famous article printed in *The Artist* on "The New Chivalry" in 1894, Kains-Jackson believed that love between males was on a higher evolutionary plane, indicative of "real civilization and a high moral code," precisely because "the advanced — the more spiritual types of English manhood already look to beauty first." Kains-Jackson argues that since the male of the species has the higher mind, a man's desire for a boy rather than a girl indicates his choice of the spiritual ideal over the animal instinct.²⁵ The emblem for this New Chivalry, the flower of the "perfect civilization" is "the exaltation of the youthful masculine ideal" (in Reade, *Sexual Heretics* 314-316) — an exaltation which is certainly in evidence in Housman's bi-textual work. On the other hand, the misogyny of Kains-Jackson's male-identified separatist position is at odds with Housman's female-identified androgynous

²⁵Dellamora argues that Kains-Jackson's wit and energy in the article "suggest that the declaration is made with tongue in cheek" (157). But Kains-Jackson's position has a long philosophical tradition, going back to Plato's "Symposium" in which the higher, more spiritual form of love is identified as that between males, whereas the baser, more animal love is that which exists between the sexes.

position.²⁶ As Housman himself explained in a letter to C. R. Ashbee in 1914, "Comradeship with women made me an ardent suffragist; comradeship with man makes me more and more of a socialist . ." (in Weeks 125).²⁷ It is this desire for essential unity in the human condition which defines both Housman's bi-sexual political ideal and his bi-textual aesthetic expression.

In some ways, "The Merciful Drought" (57-69) may be read as a political parable which yearns for a classless society as much as it is a religious parable about the "brotherhood of man" (literally). This story focuses on the need for "all fellows to be one": saints and sinners, humans and animals. The legend of the merciful drought is that once in every generation God allows the waters of the earth to flow down into hell to alleviate the suffering there; the drought experienced on earth thus connects the living (or the privileged), through sacrifice and experience, with their fellows in hell (the deprived). A saint living by a holy well in the woods, however, denies water to one of the lost souls from hell when he comes to parch his thirst. It is only when his well dries up, the animals in the forest suffer, and the Saint himself is tortured by thirst, that he begins to "Feel the pains of the damned!" and recognizes his own sinfulness.

²⁶See Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Epistemology of the Closet*, for a good explanation of two models for defining the relation to gender of homosexual persons and same-sex desires. Sedgwick describes the two models, well-established by the turn of the century, by the "trope of inversion," which sees homosexuality as the effect of "a woman's soul trapped in a man's body," and the "trope of gender separatism," which refutes the position that the essence of desire is to cross boundaries of gender, asserting instead that the most natural thing is for people of the same gender to group together economically, emotionally, physically, and sexually. The first trope characterizes gay men by their effeminacy, the second by their super-masculinity (87, 251).

²⁷Housman was one of many males of his class whose sexual desires were directed toward men of the working class. Although there is, as Jeffrey Weeks points out, an "element of sexual colonialism" in this, these liaisons were also, for homosexuals like Housman and Carpenter, a symbol of class reconciliation and Whitman-like democracy, as well as a rejection of middle class materialism (40-44).

At the moment of his repentance the stag of St. Hubert comes miraculously to the well; as the animal weeps, his tears create a small pool of water. Rather than drink himself, the Saint invites the doomed man to quench his thirst, for "the Saint's suffering had made a brother of him."

The frontispiece to "The Merciful Drought" (Fig 32) focuses on the brotherhood of the two men rather than on their ostensible opposition as saint and sinner. Both are naked. The hermit sits on the edge of the empty well with an icon of the crucified Christ behind him, holding out his cupped hands to the kneeling figure positioned between his legs. The young man clasps the other's foot with one hand; his tense body leans toward the saint, his indined face raised with swollen lips. The composition captures a moment of intense anticipation rather than keen suffering: the placement of the figures, the emotional and sensuous atmosphere, the exchanged touch, make these males "comrades" in what could be described as a Whitmanian sense. For example, the Whitmanian trope which fuses the male body with landscape (Dellamora 86) is here created by the textural details of the black-and-white line drawing while the proliferation of flowers and ivy around the two figures, and the herd of deer coming down the path of leafy trees, suggests that the "drought" has been healed by the love between the two men.

Although Housman's illustrations typically contain more male nudes than one is likely to find in any other work of the period, there is an exception in *All-Fellows* which is especially significant, not only because the plate accompanies the final legend in the volume, but also because it doubles as the frontispiece for the entire book.²⁸ The reader/viewer thus

²⁸In reference to this plate ("When Pan was Dead"), Kains-Jackson remarks that "The female figure in Mr. Housman's drawings is perhaps less prominent than the male" (in Engen 145). A famous Housman drawing, "The Reflected Faun," featuring a number of male nudes posed alongside a stream, was censored by John Lane (to whom Housman submitted it as his commissioned frontispiece for Francis Thompson's *Poems* [1893]) but accepted by Beardsley for the first issue of *The Yellow Book*, April 1894 (Engen 54).

sees "When Pan was Dead" (Fig. 33) twice during the reading experience, for the plate both introduces and concludes the seven legends. The composition positions the viewer inside a dark room looking out toward a shadowy wood against whose dark backdrop the retreating figures look startlingly white. The center of the design forms an open doorway — a favorite technique of Housman's — through which we look to see a group of naked women dancing in a chain, with their hands on each other's shoulders. Standing in the interior darkness just behind the door is a graceful female figure, luminously nude, and holding the folds of her already discarded draperies in a serpentine curve beginning at the front and circling her body to her back. Opposite her at left, the figure on the threshold links the inside and outside worlds. Unlike the female of the interior space, this woman standing half inside/half outside has not completely disrobed: her hands are busy in the folds at her hips, but she has not yet loosed her garments. Something more muscular than feminine about this figure's profiled chest and arm makes it a threshold figure sexually as well as positionally, thus suggesting that dropping the lower garment would reveal that her sexuality and her gender are not in alignment — that she is, perhaps, one of the "intermediate sex" with a woman's soul inside a man's body. This figure in the composition is, I believe, an iconographic representation of Housman's own subject-position within the text.

The classical Greek forms of the female nudes and draperies work well with the pagan themes of "When Pan Was Dead" (117-134). The legend's valorization of paganism as the natural expression of the joys of living, and its characterization of Christianity as the denial of the body and its pleasures through the unnatural worship of Pain, constitutes a critique of the apparently Christian themes of the previous tales. As Housman writes in his autobiography, *All-Fellows* was written during his brief — and, for the nineties' decadent, almost obligatory — flirtation with Catholicism, when "religion had become for me not so much a possession as an obsession, which I was trying to throw off" (*Unexpected Years* 113).

This obsession seems to have been discarded with the women's garments in "When Pan was Dead."

The tale deals with a woodling who, upon waking in the spring that Pan disappears from the world, discovers that she is the last of her kind. Wandering sorrowfully through the woods, she comes upon a convent with a small sisterhood of twelve nuns. "Therein went the life of comradeship: but the little woodling was all alone." Yet the woodling is puzzled that this comradeship should not bring joy. She hears the lay-sister weeping at night and creeps in to lie beside her and give her the "wood-dream," which teaches "her the joy of living" and entices her into the world. When the lay-sister leaves the convent, the woodling puts on her discarded garments and, thus disguised, lives among the sisters, hoping to "teach them to be happy!" Everywhere she goes, however, she hears "the thin, gnat-like wail of the nuns at their early prayers: a monotonous note of feeble pain, as though all were shut in and were trying to get out, but could not"; everywhere she sees the "Figure of Pain." The woodling feeds the nuns with roots of sweet relish from the woods, and every night, "when all were asleep, she crept from cell to cell, and gave them the wood-dream that should make them happy." Sleeping with them body to body in this way does not, however, awaken in them the joy of living as it did for the lay-sister, but rather increases their pain. Despite their ceaseless prayers, the sisters feel tempted and tried beyond endurance; even the discipline of flagellation does not make their hearts whole and their prayers pleasing. The woodling feels the scourges as if in her own flesh and determines to save the nuns even at the expense of her own woodling sisters, who have reverted to mandrakes. She feeds the nuns the bitter roots and late that night the cells open and one after another the "fair nun[s] ran out naked and silvery into the moonlight." The woodling is ecstatic, thinking she has at last gained the companionship she sought. As the sisters bathe in the stream and dance and laugh and sing through the night, the woodling believes she has made them happy. But when the dawn comes, "the mandrake

poison had finished its work, leaving only shame and horror." The sisters return to the convent, shrouding themselves again in their habits, and the woodling, despairing of converting them to joy, goes down to sleep in the mandrake bed with her woodling sisters.

In common with the other legends in *All-Fellows*, this tale has strong messianic themes—like Christ, the woodling calls twelve to a new life of fellowship—interpenetrated with the thematics of democratic comradeship and same-sex desire. When read in dialogue with the text, the plate's threshold figure appears to represent the woodling who crosses the borders of human and animal, mortal and immortal, natural and supernatural. This identification is suggested by the figure's dark skin, muscular body, and long unbound hair. Yet the position of the woodling is precisely the subject-position of Housman himself in the text. Unlike the other legends, which focus principally on a homosocial relationship between an isolated couple, "When Pan was Dead" explores the possibilities of bonding within a larger community. Certainly the pseudo-religious aspects of the secret Order of Chaeronea—such as its self-description as "A Religion, A Theory of Life, and Ideal of Duty"—are implicit inside the order of nuns which the woodling so much desires to join. But her desires—like Housman's own—are not simply for the fellowship of a community, but also for the pleasures of the body. Thus the woodling sleeps in turn with each sister. If this may be described as a male lesbian fantasy, such fantasies also, as Dellamora's study suggests, allow male writers to indulge in "the 'wish to be woman.'" There is, moreover, a complex connection in literary history between the "wish to be body" and the "wish to be woman" and the sexual desires of men for each other (80).²⁹ Dressing his concluding story in female form allows Housman to assume a subject-position which frees him to express his secret desires for the body and for the spirit. The

²⁹Dellamora here is quoting Isabelle De Courtivron, "Weak Men and Fatal Women: The Sand Image" in *Homosexualities and French Literature: Cultural Contexts/Critical Texts*, eds. George Stambolian and Elaine Marks (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1979).

dialogic interactions of image and text in *All-Fellows* are embedded in the "reverse discourse" of late Victorian England which expressed its yearning for organic unity and social harmony in the concept of the hermaphroditic "third sex" (see Weeks 49).

Like the image/text relationship in Blake's illuminated books, and like Strang's self-illustrated poetry, Housman's bi-textual work achieves its "wholeness" at three levels: as verbal form, as picture gallery, and as what W. J. T. Mitchell calls a "dialogue or dialectic of poetic and pictorial forms" (*Blake's Composite Art* xvi). Unillustrated, the stories may stand on their own as fairytales—a genre which Housman believed, like Morris before him, "could teach a concept of morality he found lacking in organized religion." In what sounds like a pastiche of Morris's refrain in *Art and Socialism*, Housman asserts in his Preface to *Cammie Grethel's Fairy Tales* (1905) that "The true end and object of a fairy-tale is the expression of the joy of living" (in Engen 60). If the stories are independent, however, the pictures may also stand on their own as whole compositions interesting in their own right. As Gleeson White recognized, Housman's design achievement is exemplary "because its amazing fantasy and caprice are supported by cunning technique that makes the whole work a 'picture,' not merely a decoration or an interpretation of the text" (in Engen 122). Certainly Housman's preference for whole-page plates with symbolic designs suggests that he meant his pictures to be studied with attention and read with care. But it is bi-textually, as *interdependent* art forms, that Housman's image and text produce the richest meaning. The active dialogue between verbal and visual texts creates new meanings for its shared subject by two distinct material presentations. In the re-presentations of image and text, a third meaning is dialogically produced—a meaning which operates only in the free-flow of signification (and significance) between picture and word, body and spirit, female and male, dothing and subject.

The third meaning produced by the dialogic interaction of picture and word in the cross-dressing bi-textuality of William Strang and Laurence Housman is the product of a form straining toward the organic wholeness implied by William Blake's model of the "Human Form Divine." The limitations of this organic metaphor to the constructed forms of the illustrated book, however, are illuminated by Aubrey Beardsley's unfinished novel, which existed in the nineties only in an expurgated version, and then only in a fragmented form: a mere four chapters of the ten-chapter draft were published in *The Savoy* in January and April 1896. As Stephen Prickett points out, *Under the Hill* "is the apotheosis of one strand of Victorian fantasy. The tension between the monstrous fragment and the organic and unified whole" (112). As a work of lapidary prose and decorative black and white, *Under the Hill* explores the tensions implicit in the acts of representation and reading — in the "artificial" constructions of identities and worlds — even while it celebrates the liberating effects of disguise and the pleasures of "unauthorized" readings. Indeed, according to Arthur Symons, Beardsley's co-editor at *The Savoy*, and his holiday companion when the artist was working on the novel at Dieppe, the fragment published in the periodical was itself a disguised version of the manuscript: "Tannhäuser, not quite willingly, had put on Abbé's disguise, and there were other unwilling disguises in those brilliant, disconnected, fantastic pages . . ." (*Art of Aubrey Beardsley* 16).

Although Beardsley's unfinished novel is subtitled *The Story of Venus and Tannhäuser*, and is a parodic version of that medieval legend which late-nineteenth century artists as diverse as Pater, Wagner, Swinburne and Morris had re-interpreted, the main characters are re-named in the periodical publication as Helen and the Abbé Fanfreluche, the latter name being itself a sexual disguise, for "fanfreluche" was contemporary French slang for "bauble or penis" (Fletcher *Aubrey Beardsley* 145). Moreover, the sexually explicit nature of the

original manuscript is also disguised by conscientious editing. Even the first illustrated book edition in 1904 retains this disguise, for John Lane considered the complete version to be "unprintable" (Glassco's Introduction 7). Not until 1959 did Beardsley's ten chapters and eight full-page plates emerge in their naked splendor.³⁰ However, like all cross-dressing works, *Under the Hill* — even in its disguised public version — reveals the private concerns and secret preoccupations which motivated its production. Indeed, in this disguised story of sartorial obsession, the cross-dressing trope moves out of the category of metaphor to become the actual subject under scrutiny.

Cross-dressing itself is the disguised subject of Beardsley's fourth plate to *Under the Hill*, published with the last excerpt from the novel in the second issue of *The Savoy*, April 1896.³¹ In line with the Rossetti-style of illustration, "The Ascension of St. Rose of Lima" (Fig

³⁰The 1959 edition of *Under the Hill, or The Story of Venus and Tannhäuser*, is also a work of disguise, for John Glassco completes Beardsley's ten-chapter fragment with a further nine chapters. This apocryphal text is authorized only by the details of the legend itself and by Glassco's enthusiastic pastiche of Beardsley's "peculiar kind of eroticism." While Glassco admits that "The unachieved illustrations and ornaments are of course irreplaceable," he does not, apparently, believe that the same is true for the verbal text; nor does he consider the degree to which Beardsley's pictures and text are a composite whole, so that one may not be "completed" without the other (Glassco's Introduction 7). Certainly Beardsley's own plan for the text — which included a projected "chapter consisting only of drawings" (Weintraub 174) — undermines Glassco's sanguine belief that Beardsley's novel can be in any sense completed by verbal imitation alone.

³¹The first number of *The Savoy* (January 1896) published chapters 1-3, accompanied by three illustrations: "The Abbé," "The Toilet of Helen," and "The Fruit-Bearers." The excerpt published in the second number was not Chapter 4 of Beardsley's novel, but Chapter 7, with much of Chapter 5 included in a long footnote; this excerpt was illustrated by "The Ascension of St. Rose of Lima" and by "The Third Tableau of Das Rheingold" (Glassco's Introduction 7). Beardsley also left four more illustrations of his novel at his death, including "The Return of Tannhäuser to the Venusberg." The existence of this plate without a parallel narrative suggests that his visual work could precede his verbal work, for his manuscript never arrives at the stage of Tannhäuser's repentant departure for Rome, let alone his return to the Hill after Pope Urban declares his sins to be too great for forgiveness. The other plates are a double-page frontispiece and a title page, and a second design for a frontispiece.

34) does not decorate a scene in the text, but rather one of the Abbé's morning thoughts. Fanfreluche's waking reveries are itemized at the beginning of the chapter: he thinks of "The Roumant de la Rose," of "the Claude in Lady Delaware's collection," of "a wonderful pair of blonde trousers he would get Madame Belleville to make for him," and also of "a mysterious park" and a "great stagnant lake" (25-26), before he reaches "Saint Rose, the well-known Peruvian virgin," and thinks about how

... she vowed herself to perpetual virginity when she was four years old; how she was beloved by Mary, who from the pale fresco in the Church of St. Domenic would stretch out her arms to embrace her; how she built a little oratory at the end of the garden and prayed and sang hymns in it till all the beetles, spiders, snails and creeping things came round to listen; how she promised to marry Ferdinand de Flores, and on the bridal morning perfumed herself and painted her lips, and put on her wedding frock, and decked her hair with roses, and went up to a little hill not far without the walls of Lima; how she knelt there some moments calling tenderly upon Our Lady's name, and how Saint Mary descended and kissed Rose upon the forehead and carried her up swiftly into heaven. (26-29)

The Abbé goes on to think about "the splendid opening of Racine's 'Britannicus,'" about "a strange pamphlet he had found in Helen's library called 'A Plea for the Domestication of the Unicorn,'" about "the 'Bacchanals of Sporn,'" about "Morale's Madonnas with their high egg-shaped creamy foreheads and well-crimped silken hair," about "Rossini's 'Stabat Mater,'" about "love, and a hundred other things" (29-30). In an oblique and disguised fashion, "St. Rose of Lima" illustrates all these thoughts, and not simply the story whose text gives the plate its title. The "stagnant lake," for example, evokes the image in William Morris's uncharacteristic story of 1856, "Lindenberg Pool," in which a castle full of cross-dressing

entitled "Venus." All the plates are reproduced in Mohr, *Best Works of Aubrey Beardsley*.

women with "horribly-grinning unsexed faces" is reduced overnight to a "deep black lake" (in Prickett, 97).³²

Most significantly, however, the "St Rose" illustration brings together the sensual and the spiritual, not only by the composition's suggestion of an alternate, same-sex marriage and physical ecstasy,³³ but also by the design's oblique citation of, and juxtaposition to, the Abbé's morning thoughts of Rossini's "Stabat Mater" and "Morale's Madonnas" — a juxtaposition whose cross-dressing associations are implicit in the bowdlerized text, and fully revealed in the unexpurgated version. The connection between the plate entitled "The Ascension of Saint Rose of Lima" and the chapter entitled "Stabat Mater" in the unexpurgated version of Beardsley's story is made clear by the elaboration of the Abbé's incidental morning thought of Rossini's opera into an entire chapter, in which the Abbé (now called Tannhäuser) and Venus enjoy Spiridion's travesty performance of the Virgin. This connection is made, moreover, in at least three ways. In the first place, both censored and uncensored texts call the "Stabat Mater" "that delightful *démodée* piece of *décadence*, with a quality in its music like the bloom upon wax fruit" (30).³⁴ In the censored version, this description of Rossini's "Stabat Mater" is immediately preceded by the Abbé's dreamy recollection "Of Morale's Madonnas with their high egg-shaped creamy foreheads and well-crisped silken hair" (30). In

³²I am indebted to Prickett for pointing out the way in which Venus's court in Beardsley's *Under the Hill* offers an inverted parallel to the perverted court in Morris's "Lindenberg Pool" (*Oxford and Cambridge Magazine*, 1856). Although Prickett does not make the "stagnant pool" connection, his analysis enabled me to do so. See 95-97 and 107-112.

³³The plate's implicit depiction of lesbian sexual ecstasy is a critical commonplace in Beardsley studies. See especially Ian Fletcher (*Aubrey Beardsley* 156) and Milly Heyd (186-87).

³⁴Slightly altered in the unexpurgated version, which reads "the delicious *démodé* piece of *décadence*. There is a subtle quality about the music, like the unhealthy bloom upon wax fruit, that both orchestra and singer contrived to emphasize with consummate delicacy" (Beardsley and Glassco 68).

the uncensored text, an identical description is applied to the cross-dressing Spiridion, who makes "A miraculous virgin" of Rossini's Virgin because "he dressed the rôle most effectively": "His hair, dyed green, was curled into ringlets, such as the smooth Madonnas of Morales are made lovely with, and fell over his high egg-shaped creamy forehead, and about his ears and cheeks and back" (Beardsley and Glassco 69).

Finally, the unexpurgated text's description of Spiridion brings the juxtaposition of Saint Rose, the Stabat Mater, and Morale's Madonnas, into a single image, for the verbal description is just as much a gloss on "The Ascension of St. Rose of Lima" design as it is a word-picture of the alto's performance of Rossini's opera. In the text, Spiridion becomes the decadent personification of all "miraculous virgins" to the extent that the two virgins of the earlier illustration — St. Rose and the Madonna — become ironically and retroactively fused into one exaggerated and parodic *fin-de-siècle* figure. Thus both Saint Rose and the Virgin in the "Ascension" design have the alto's long curled ringlets which fall voluptuously over their ears, cheeks and backs, and Saint Rose has just such a "high egg-shaped creamy forehead" as Spiridion and "the smooth Madonnas of Morales are made lovely with." The Virgin wears Spiridion's "black cape," while Saint Rose features his "dream face" with "cheeks, inclining to fatness, . . . powdered and dimpled," and with a mouth "curved painfully" and a tiny chin, "exquisitely modelled." Both Virgin and Saint share Spiridion's "expression cruel and womanish" (Beardsley and Glassco 69).

"The Ascension of St. Rose of Lima" reveals the secret preoccupations and concerns of the verbal text which nineties' publication decorum necessarily disguised and elided. But this censorship did not affect the image's ability to re-dress its subject in ways which eluded the prohibiting gaze and escaped the editor's pencil. The image of St. Rose, with her secret, satisfied smile, and her skirts pinned up to reveal the lacy flounces of her pantaloons, coupled in a close embrace with the strong androgynous figure of the Virgin, introduces a sexually explicit

interpretation of the "marriage" described by the text. The ecstasy of these women seems both sexual and perverse, not saintly and virginal. In this way, the image exceeds and contradicts its (apparently) canonical and sacred context, thereby illuminating the way in which verbal captions — like "The Ascension of St. Rose of Lima" — function as the dothing which motivates the reader's construction of the subject. Clearly, the image's surplus and unstable meanings cannot be stabilized by a denotative (and directing) caption. The image's obvious fascination with same-sex desire reveals what is disguised in the published text, but present in the unexpurgated version: the Virgin/Saint is a man in drag, and definitely not virginal.³⁵ Beardsley's focus on cross-dressing as a subject for bi-textual exploration calls into question our representation of our own identities by revealing that how we receive images depends on textual direction. But there is always an excess, a secret surplus in the image. Beardsley's cross-dressing bi-textuality in *Under the Hill* clothes its subject in such a way as to make the reader/viewer uncertain about the actual ground or body or subject which is thus presented — uncertain about the position of the subject in relation to its context — and, ultimately, to ourselves.

Bi-textual cross-dressing signifies that meaning is in flux — that it exists only in an ongoing, active state of production, not only between image and text, but also between the reader/viewer and the double-reading experience. Neither image nor text provides the essential or original ground for the figures each medium employs to define the shared subject. Verbal metaphor and visual image thus become the dothing which, as Jacques Derrida argues in *The Truth in Painting*, cannot be distinguished from the naked "truth" of the body because there can be no such pure representation. In this regard, Aubrey Beardsley's highly artificial, sexually explicit, sartorially obsessed, and tantalizingly unfinished *Under the Hill: The Story of*

³⁵Spiridion's cross-dressing performance culminates in an orgy of homosexual liaisons, in which "The men almost pulled him to bits. . . ." in an ecstasy of enthusiasm for his costume (Beardsley and Glassco 69).

Venus and Tannhäuser, offers a fitting conclusion to my discussion of bi-textual cross-dressing. As Linda Dowling comments, Beardsley's text reveals all human behavior and social roles — including sex and gender — as play, for *Venus and Tannhäuser* offers a world constituted entirely by language: even Beardsley's decorative motifs are to be read as texts (*Language and Decadence* 144). Hence the obsession with the relationship of clothing and the body, as evidenced in passages in which "pearls embroidered over a blood-red slipper may be worn over a white silk stocking drawn over a leg painted over with black silhouettes" (Dowling *Language and Decadence* 146), or in the fantastic attention to costume in such designs as "The Abbé" or "The Toilet of Helen." Beardsley's bi-textuality suggests that there is no identity separate from the clothing which covers it — that meaning is the product of language, and exists in the dialogic relations between word and word, image and text, clothing and body, subject and society, the implied world-in-the-text and the implied world-outside-the-text — or, as Oscar Wilde might say — between appearance and reality. In some ways, the dialogic relations of image and text in bi-textual cross-dressing re-produce Wilde's famous aphorism: "The truths of metaphysics are the truths of masks" by dramatically enacting his insight that "A Truth in art is that whose contradictory is also true" ("The Truth of Masks," *Complete Works* 1078).

CHAPTER EIGHT

CONCLUSION: ENTR'ACTE

On the stage of the text, no footlights: there is not, behind the text, someone active (the writer) and out front someone passive (the reader); there is not a subject and an object.

Roland Barthes, *The Pleasure of the Text*

In the opening scene of *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (1865), Alice asks an apparently innocent and childish question. Looking over her sister's shoulder at a book with dense and non-dramatic letterpress, she wonders "what is the use of a book . . . without pictures or conversations?" (Carroll 25). Placed within the pages of what is one of the most famous of all Victorian illustrated books, the question stages a curiously self-reflexive moment, a meta-critical awareness of the illustration theory which the text itself is engaged in investigating. For what *Alice* demonstrates — along with illustrated books in general — is the degree to which books with pictures are always books of conversations, in which image and word are engaged in an ongoing dialogue with each other and with the reader/viewer.

Moreover, as we have seen, the image/text/reader dialogue is part of a larger social conversation operating within the cultural discourses in which it is both produced and received. My reading of the image/text dialogues in *fin-de-siècle* illustrated books — a reading which targets and interrogates their discursively produced meanings as sites of struggle — is also determined by

my own discursively produced subject-position as a woman writer struggling for meaning within the context of another *fin de siècle*. Like William Morris, I have found it impossible to separate out the questions of politics from the questions of aesthetics — from the representations of art, literature, and criticism. All representation — whether creative or critical — is discourse-specific. As Edward Said claims in *The World, the Text, and the Critic*, "texts are worldly, to some degree they are events, and, even when they appear to deny it, they are nevertheless a part of the social world, human life, and of course the historical moments in which they are located and interpreted" (4).

The dialogue of picture and word in the illustrated book is embedded in the social/cultural discourses and ideologies, the material histories of the institutions and people, of its period. The discourses of journalism, aestheticism, and socialism, the anxieties about sexuality, nationality, and economics, all leave their traces in the bi-textual product. What is fascinating in the study of illustrated books is the layered histories of all their writers, artists, and contexts — their ideological positions, their class positions, their sexual positions — and how these forces combine to produce specific images and particular stories which inter-illuminate each other. Since, as Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick points out, Michel Foucault's *History of Sexuality* demonstrates "that modern Western culture has placed what it calls sexuality in a more and more distinctively privileged relation to our most prized constructs of individual identity, truth, and knowledge, it becomes truer and truer that the language of sexuality not only intersects with but transforms the other languages and relations by which we know" (3). Thus the verbal

and visual languages and bi-textual relations of illustrated books intersect with, and are transformed by, the *fin-de-siècle* language of sexuality. The sexually-coded nature of the image/text exchange determines that its dialogue will engage in the topics which preoccupied the larger cultural conversation: the construction of gender, class, or racial identity, the possibilities of grounded truths, the location of authority, and the power structures of knowledge. The "female" image confronts the "male" word across the pages of the illustrated book, not as a secondary and peripheral adjunct to the self-contained significance of the text, but rather as an active co-producer whose different form and function motivate meanings and illuminate the struggle for representation in which all discourse is engaged.

Because they occupy the same time and place — Britain, and usually London, in the 1890s — the representations of both author and artist are also products of common contexts. Thus, though their two texts are produced by two hands and two looks, their points of view, their interests and obsessions, their objects and expressions, are all produced out of a shared milieu and determined by related material conditions. While the production of meaning in the illustrated books of the English nineties is specific to its time and place, however, bi-textuality as a site of representational struggle may be extended to the general relations of image/text/double reader. The dialogic interactions of quotation, impression, parody, answering, and cross-dressing suggest that the word cannot retain its place as privileged and authorizing ground in illustrated books. The word is not impermeable but porous; its interaction with the image reveals the degree to which it is saturated with, and shot

through by, the alien desires and expressions of another's language, and by the specific contexts in which it is produced.

The de-contextualization of the illustrated book — the editorial removal or critical disregard of its images — is not only a product of a certain market economy, but also the product of a certain critical economy, whereby the word is valued over all other signifying structures. Illustrated books cannot be read without their accompanying images without both the text and the reader/viewer incurring some loss — a loss related both to meaning and to pleasure, to intellect and body. If, on the other hand, the images are retained, but read only as parasitical versions of the word, another loss is incurred. Bi-textual theory suggests that when images are read only in relation to the authorizing ground of the text, the reader is deprived of both the active understanding of the dialogic production of meaning out of difference, and of the double-pleasure which bi-textuality offers.

Visual and verbal languages in the illustrated book introduce a new kind of dialogism to the literary form. Indeed, bi-textuality's double-voiced discourse foregrounds the contributing function of difference in the making of meaning, for the image can never re-present the word except in its own material and sensuous language. On the one hand, this new and alien language determines that the illustrated book will always be the site of struggle as picture and word interact with each other to represent the story for the reader/viewer. On the other hand, this struggle does not necessarily constitute the subversion of textual meaning by pictorial meaning, for to figure the image as an undermining power is to grant the text an implicitly hegemonic authority. Rather, the dialogic relations of verbal and visual

languages illuminate the degree to which the text itself is internally dialogized and engaged in struggle with itself — and with the reader — in the production of meaning. This revelation, moreover, contributes to the intensification of the double-reader's pleasure by allowing "difference [to] surreptitiously replace conflict" (Barthes, *Pleasure of the Text* 15). If the double-reader of the illustrated book's two languages is in some ways confronted with the unaligned discourses of the mythical Babel, the effect of this confrontation is not destructive but pleasurable. Indeed, as Barthes suggests in another context, "the Biblical myth is reversed, the confusion of tongues is no longer a punishment, the subject gains access to bliss by the cohabitation of languages *working side by side*: the text of pleasure is a sanctioned Babel" (*Pleasure of the Text* 3-4).

Illustrated books offer a paradigmatic model for the reader/interpreter's relationship to the text. The artist as critic demonstrates the way in which representation is always a re-writing and re-visioning which in fact *produces* the text. Book illustration presents criticism as a creative new form which includes the techniques of selection and omission, composition and framing, and interpretation and commentary, even while it is engaged in re-inventing the subject according to its own point of view, its own material needs, and its own strategies and desires. Indeed, the artist as critic's critical/creative relationship to the written word in illustrated books offers a material embodiment of the reading experience in general. As Roland Barthes suggests, "there is not, behind the text, someone active (the writer) and out front someone passive (the reader); there is not a subject and an object" (*Pleasure of the Text* 16). The dialogic interaction between picture and

word enacts this reader/text relationship of active and co-productive understanding on a stage with "no footlights" (same). Bi-textuality displaces the binary oppositions and hierarchical power arrangements implied in subject/object relations by sharing the subject of the text, and by using the material forms at its disposal to co-produce the book as a work of art, as a site of struggle, and as a text of pleasure.

"On the stage of the text, no footlights": the series of illustrative plates produce a critical narrative of the artist's reading experience, a dramatic performance of his/her responses to, and engagements with, the text. Illustrations occupy neither the "passive" spectator role of audience, nor the active signifying role of images displayed as independent icons on gallery walls. Rather, they combine the function of active and responding spectator with the work of the performing actor. Interleaved between or printed upon the letterpress, illustrations stage separate, but aligned, performances. They are *entr'acte*: dramatic narratives which occur in the intervals between the scenes of the text's own narrative. Their separate performance comments on, and illuminates, the first telling, by adding a new set of gestures and a new dramatic language to the textual presentation of the subject. Illustrations are "between the acts," but center stage: they command the double-reader's attention, and they both motivate his/her responses to the scene which follows the interval, and retroactively modify his/her responses to the preceding scenes.

Like the visual scenes which offer enacted readings of the artist's critical responses to the text, my work as double-reader has been *entr'acte* — a performance which takes place between the act of reading images and the act

of reading words. While I have listened to the ongoing dialogues between pictures and words, and to their participation in the larger cultural conversation of which they are a part, I have also entered that conversation with my own stories, and with the histories produced by my own context. As double-reader I, too, am on the stage of the text co-producing meanings and motivating discourses, not simply observing and recording them. The artist as critic confirms Oscar Wilde's inverse proposal that the critic is an artist, engaged in producing works of creative re-presentation informed by the delights and desires, the pre-occupations and concerns, the points of view and engagements, of her own subject-position. Like the artist as critic, the critic as artist wears her own mask on the stage from which she speaks, a mask which determines her speeches and defines her position. Indeed, Wilde's ironic conclusion to "The Truth of Masks" offers this text its own concluding mask: "Not that I agree with everything that I have said in this essay. . . . The essay simply represents an artistic standpoint, and in aesthetic criticism attitude is everything. For in art there is no such thing as a universal truth." (*Complete Works* 1078).

ILLUSTRATIONS

Fig. 1. "The Dancer's Reward"

Pen-and-ink drawing by Aubrey Beardsley. Plate 9 from Oscar Wilde's *Salome* (London: Elkin Mathews and John Lane at the Bodley Head, 1894).



Fig. 2. "Halblithe beholdeth the woman who loveth him"

Engraving by A. Levetus after Walter Crane. Border and initial after William Morris. From *The Story of the Glittering Plain*, by William Morris. (Hammersmith: Kelmscott, 1894). 84.



Fig. 3. "Come in," said he, blandly."

Engraving after Sidney Paget. From Arthur Conan Doyle's "The Adventure of the Greek Interpreter," in *The Memoirs of Sherlock Holmes* (London: Newnes, 1894) 207.

THE GREEK INTERPRETER.

207

we have only to fear some sudden act of violence on their part. If they give us time we must have them."

"But how can we find where this house lies?"

"Well, if our conjecture is correct, and the girl's name is, or was, Sophy Kratides, we should have no difficulty in tracing her. That must be our main hope, for the brother, of course, is a complete stranger. It is clear that some time has elapsed since this Harold established these relations with the girl—some weeks at any rate—since the brother in Greece has had time to hear of it and come across. If they have been living in the same place during this time, it is probable that we shall have some answer to Mycroft's advertisement."

We had reached our house in Baker Street whilst we had been talking. Holmes ascended the stairs first, and as he opened the door of our room he gave a start of surprise. Looking over his shoulder I was equally astonished. His brother Mycroft was sitting smoking in the armchair.



"'COME IN,' SAID HE, BLANDLY."

Fig. 4. "Holmes gave me a sketch of the events."

Engraving after Sidney Paget. From Arthur Conan Doyle's "Silver Blaze," in *The Memoirs of Sherlock Holmes* (London: Newnes, 1894) 3.

SILVER BLAZE.

3

"Because I made a blunder, my dear Watson—which is, I am afraid, a more common occurrence than anyone would think who only knew me through your memoirs. The fact is, that I could not believe it possible that the most remarkable horse in England could long remain concealed, especially in so sparsely inhabited a place as the north of Dartmoor. From hour to hour yesterday I expected to hear that he had been found, and that his abductor was the murderer of John Straker. When, however, another morning had come and I found that, beyond the arrest of young Fitzroy Simpson, nothing had



"HOLMES GAVE ME A SKETCH OF THE EVENTS."

been done, I felt that it was time for me to take action. Yet in some ways I feel that yesterday has not been wasted."

"You have formed a theory then?"

"At least I have a grip of the essential facts of the case. I

Fig. 5. "They found the dead body of the unfortunate trainer."

Engraving after Sidney Paget. From Arthur Conan Doyle's "Silver Blaze," in *The Memoirs of Sherlock Holmes* (London: Newnes, 1894) 8.

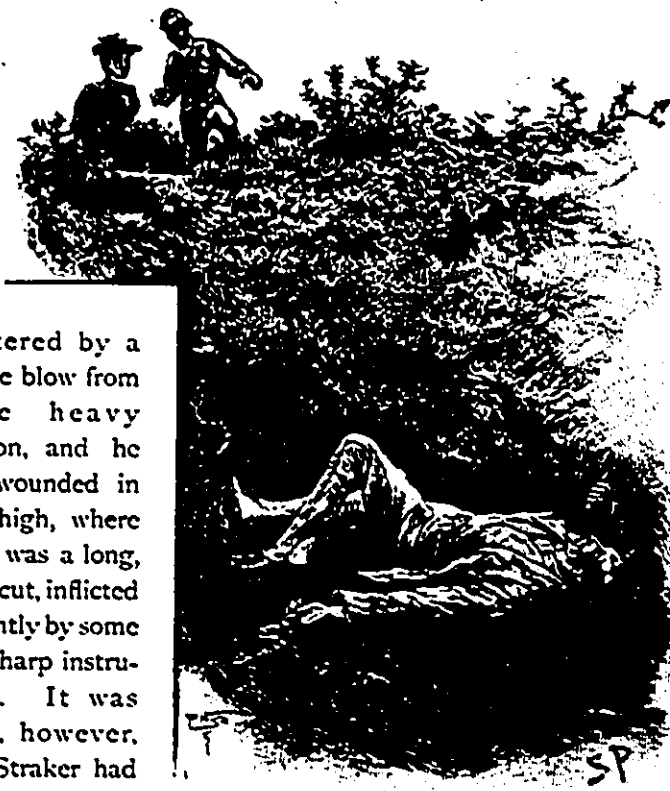
8

MEMOIRS OF SHERLOCK HOLMES.

exercise, but on ascending the knoll near the house, from which all the neighbouring moors were visible, they not only could see no signs of the favourite, but they perceived something which warned them that they were in the presence of a tragedy.

"About a quarter of a mile from the stables, John Straker's overcoat was flapping from a furze bush. Immediately beyond there was a bowl-shaped depression in the moor, and at the bottom of this was found the dead body of the unfortunate trainer. His head had been

shattered by a
savage blow from
some heavy
weapon, and he
was wounded in
the thigh, where
there was a long,
clean cut, inflicted
evidently by some
very sharp instru-
ment. It was
clear, however,
that Straker had
defended himself
vigorously



"THEY FOUND THE DEAD BODY OF THE UNFORTUNATE TRAINER."

against his assailants, for in his right hand he held a small knife, which was clotted with blood up to the handle, while in his left he grasped a red and black silk cravat, which was recognised by the

Fig. 6. "A Curious Collection."

Engraving after Sidney Paget. From Arthur Conan Doyle's "The Musgrave Ritual," in *The Memoirs of Sherlock Holmes* (London: Newnes, 1894) 101.

THE MUSGRAVE RITUAL.

101

old-fashioned brass key, a peg of wood with a ball of string attached to it, and three rusty old discs of metal.

"Well, my boy, what do you make of this lot?" he asked, smiling at my expression.

"It is a curious collection."

"Very curious; and the story that hangs round it will strike you as being more curious still."

"These relics have a history, then?"



"A CURIOUS COLLECTION."

"So much so that they *are* history."

"What do you mean by that?"

Sherlock Holmes picked them up one by one, and laid them along the edge of the table. Then he re-seated himself in his chair, and looked them over with a gleam of satisfaction in his eyes.

"These," said he, "are all that I have left to remind me of the episode of the Musgrave Ritual."

I had heard him mention the case more than once, though I had never been able to gather the details.

Fig. 7. "O Black Heart, and Body that is white and beautiful, I look into your heart."

Drawing by Charles Kerr for H. Rider Haggard's "Black Heart and White Heart." In *Black Heart and White Heart and Other Stories*. (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1900) 17.



"O Black Heart and body that is white and beautiful, I look into your heart."
No. 7, 18.

Fig. 8.

Harry Furniss's drawing of "Grislybeard," from John Davidson's *Perfervid* (London: Ward and Downey, 1890) 181.

COSMO MORTIMER'S STORY

181

saying, 'Here's a new kin' o' girnin!' Strong soul was on his legs again and, seeing the giant down, was about to strike him on the head when he remembered that Greatheart had never taken any advantages of the giants he had killed; so he paused until Grislybeard should rise.

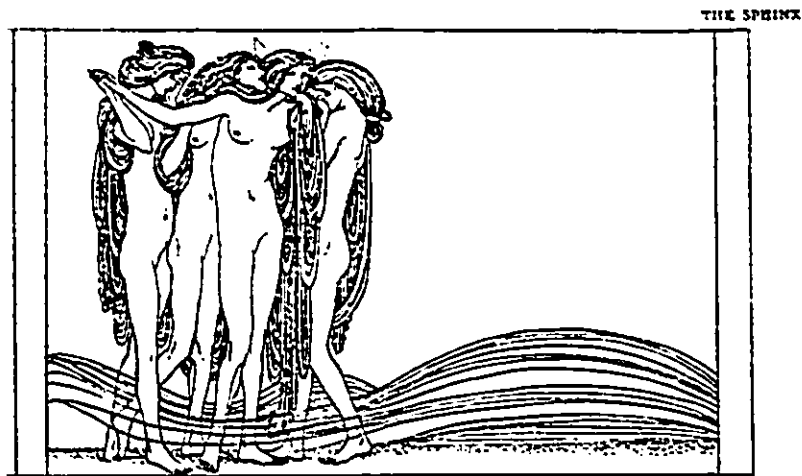
The giant got up, roaring, and straightway seized



on Saunders and began to belabour him with his stick in such a savage manner that Saunders danced and shrieked with pain. But Strong soul smote the giant a blow on the back of the head with his oaken staff. 'Coward!' he cried, 'fight with one who is armed, and leave the helpless alone.' Then the giant turned on Strong soul with an oath and aimed

Fig. 9. "The Moon-Horned Io."

Pen-and-ink drawing by Charles Ricketts. Plate 2 from Oscar Wilde's *The Sphinx* (London: Elkin Mathews and John Lane at the Bodley Head, 1894).

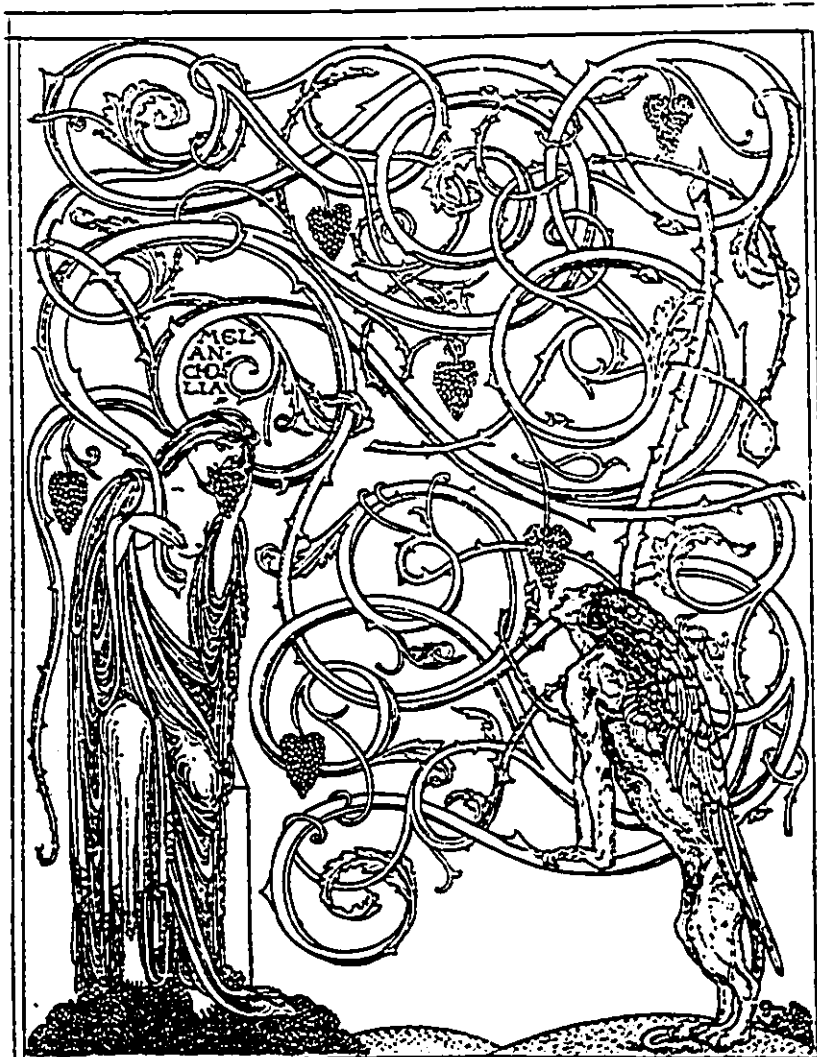


LIFT UP YOUR LARGE BLACK SATIN EYES WHICH ARE LIKE CUSHIONS
 WHERE ONE SINKS!
FAWN AT MY FEET FANTASTIC SPHINX! AND SING ME ALL YOUR MEMORIES!
SING TO ME OF THE JEWISH MAID WHO WANDERED WITH THE HOLY CHILD,
 AND HOW YOU LED THEM THROUGH THE WILD, AND HOW THEY SLEPT BENEATH
 YOUR SHADE.

Fig. 10. "Melancholia."

Pen-and-ink drawing by Charles Ricketts. Title page from Oscar Wilde's *The Sphinx* (London: Elkin Mathews and John Lane at the Bodley Head, 1894).

THE SPHINX BY OSCAR WILDE



WITH DECORATIONS BY CHARLES RICKETTS
LONDON: ELKIN MATHES AND JOHN LANE, AT THE SIGN OF THE BODLEY HEAD.

Fig. 11. "Crouching By the Marge."

Pen-and-ink drawing by Charles Ricketts. Plate 3 from Oscar Wilde's *The Sphinx* (London: Elkin Mathews and John Lane at the Bodley Head, 1894).

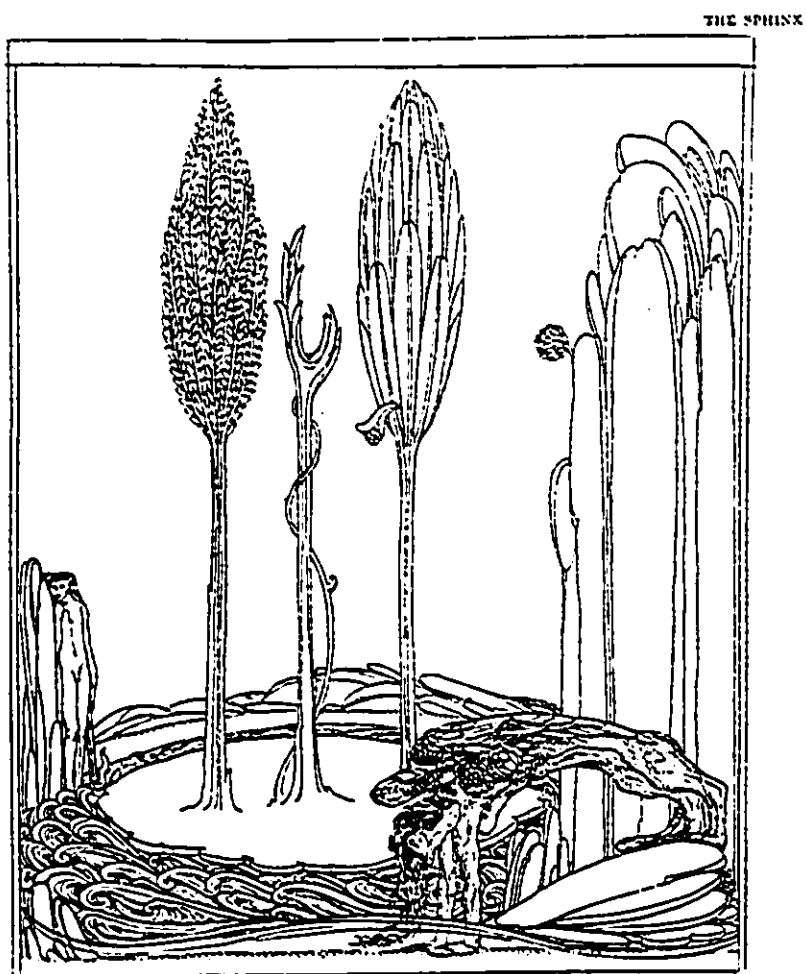


Fig. 12. "Call Me, O Sleep."

Pen-and-ink drawing by William Brown Macdougall. From Margaret Armour's *Songs of Love and Death* (London: J. M. Dent, 1896) 22.



Fig. 13. "A Dream."

Pen-and-ink drawing by William Brown Macdougall. From Margaret Armour's *Songs of Love and Death* (London: J. M. Dent, 1896) 32.



Fig. 14. "Lambeth Reach."

Wood-block design by William Brown Macdougall. Frontispiece for Margaret Armour's *Thames Sonnets and Semblances* (London: Elkin Mathews, 1897).

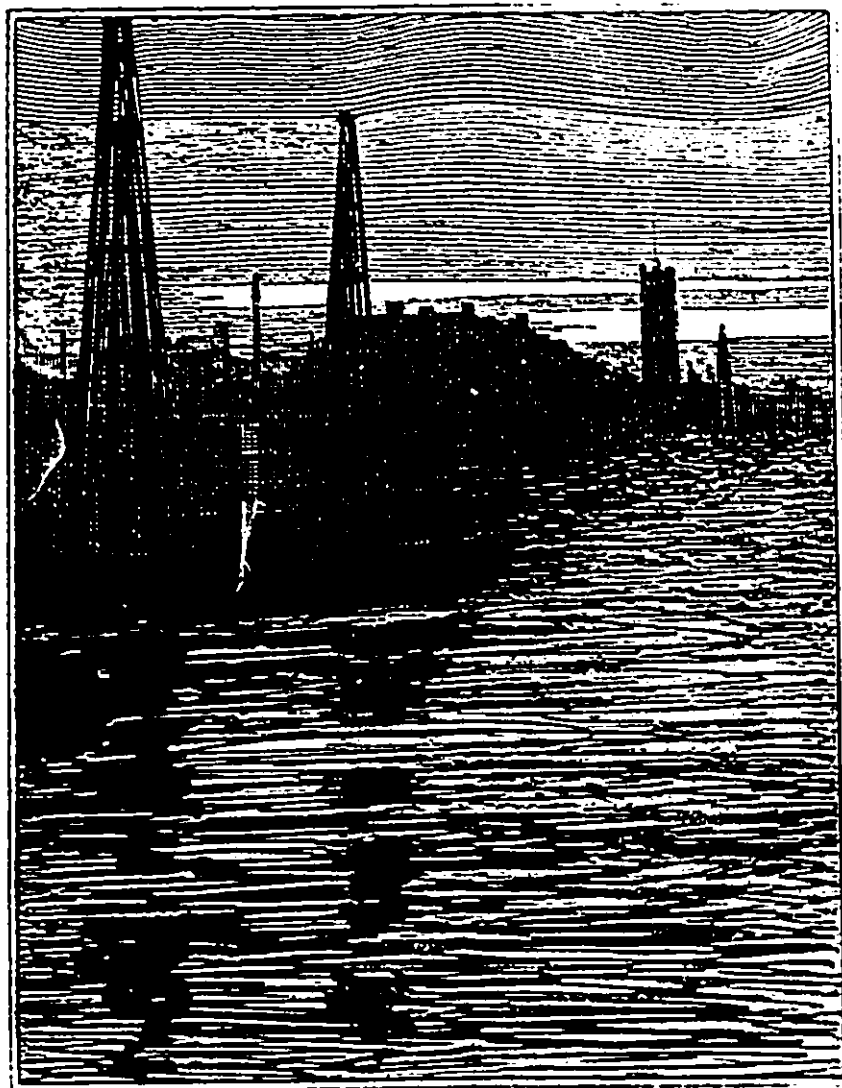


Fig. 15. "Cul de Lampe."

Pen-and-ink drawing by Aubrey Beardsley. Page decoration for Oscar Wilde's *Salome* (London: Elkin Mathews and John Lane at the Bodley Head, 1894) 67.

say that love hath a bitter taste. . . . But what matter? what matter? I have kissed thy mouth, Iokanaan, I have kissed thy mouth.

[A ray of moonlight falls on Salome and illumines her.]

HEROD

[Turning round and seeing Salome.] Kill that woman!

[The soldiers rush forward and crush beneath their shields Salome, daughter of Herodias, Princess of Judaea.]

CURTAIN.



Fig. 16. "The Eyes of Herod."

Pen-and-ink drawing by Aubrey Beardsley. Plate 6 from Oscar Wilde's *Salome* (London: Elkin Mathews and John Lane at the Bodley Head, 1894).



Fig. 17. "Enter Herodias"

Pen-and-ink drawing by Aubrey Beardsley. Plate 5 from Oscar Wilde's *Salome* (London: Elkin Mathews and John Lane at the Bodley Head, 1894).



Fig. 18. "The Woman in the Moon."

Pen-and-ink drawing by Aubrey Beardsley. Frontispiece to Oscar Wilde's *Salome* (London: Elkin Mathews and John Lane at the Bodley Head, 1894).



Fig. 19. "A Platonic Lament."

Pen-and-ink drawing by Aubrey Beardsley. Plate 4 for Oscar Wilde's *Salome* (London: Elkin Mathews and John Lane at the Bodley Head, 1894).

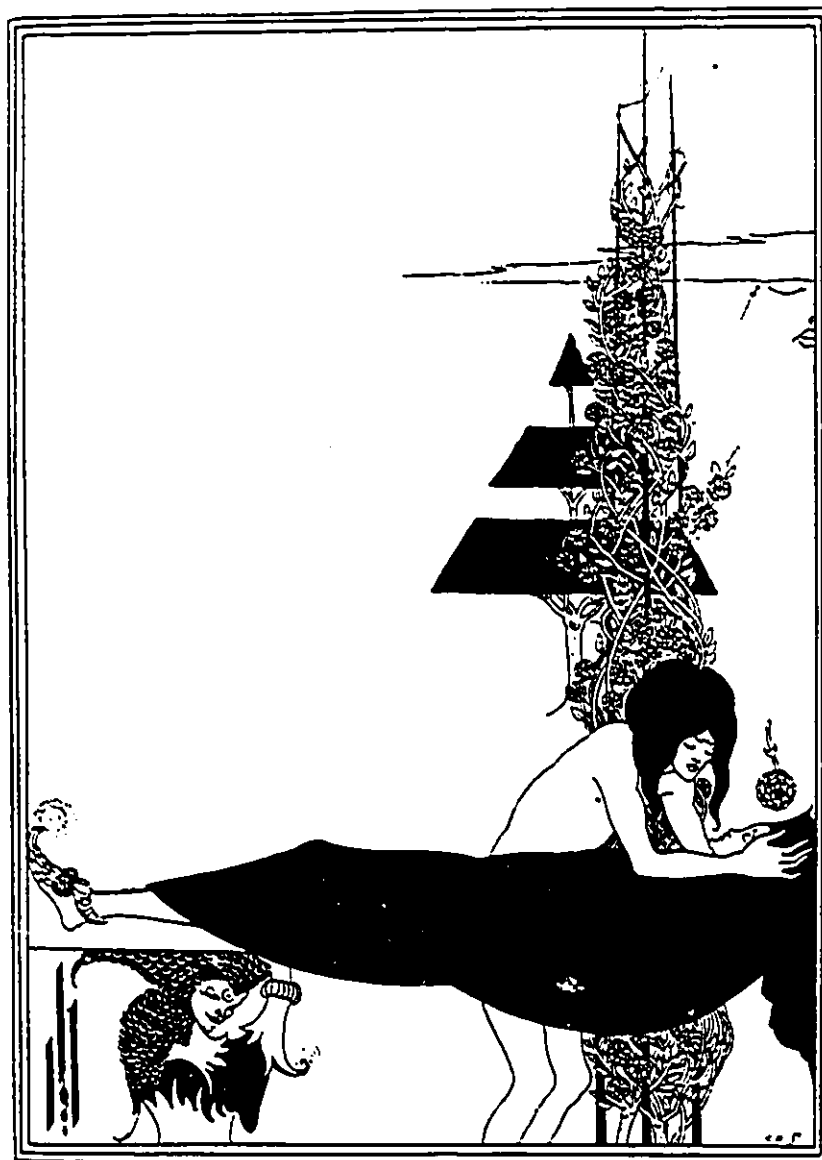


Fig. 20. "The Stomach Dance"

Pen-and-ink drawing by Aubrey Beardsley. Plate 7 for Oscar Wilde's *Salome* (London: Elkin Mathews and John Lane at the Bodley Head, 1894).



Fig. 21. "Pausius and Glyceria"

Drawing by James Linton. Plate 10 for R. D. Blackmore's *Fringilla* (London: Elkin Mathews, 1895).



Fig. 22. "The Meeting"

Pen-and-ink drawing by Louis Fairfax Muckley. Plate 8 for R. D. Blackmore's *Fringilla* (London: Elkin Mathews, 1895).



Fig. 23. "Help is to Hand in the Wood Perilous."

Wood-engraving by William Hooper after Edward Burne-Jones's design. Border and lettering after William Morris. Frontispiece to "The Road unto Love," Book One of *The Well at the World's End* by William Morris (Hammersmith: Kelmscott Press, 1896).

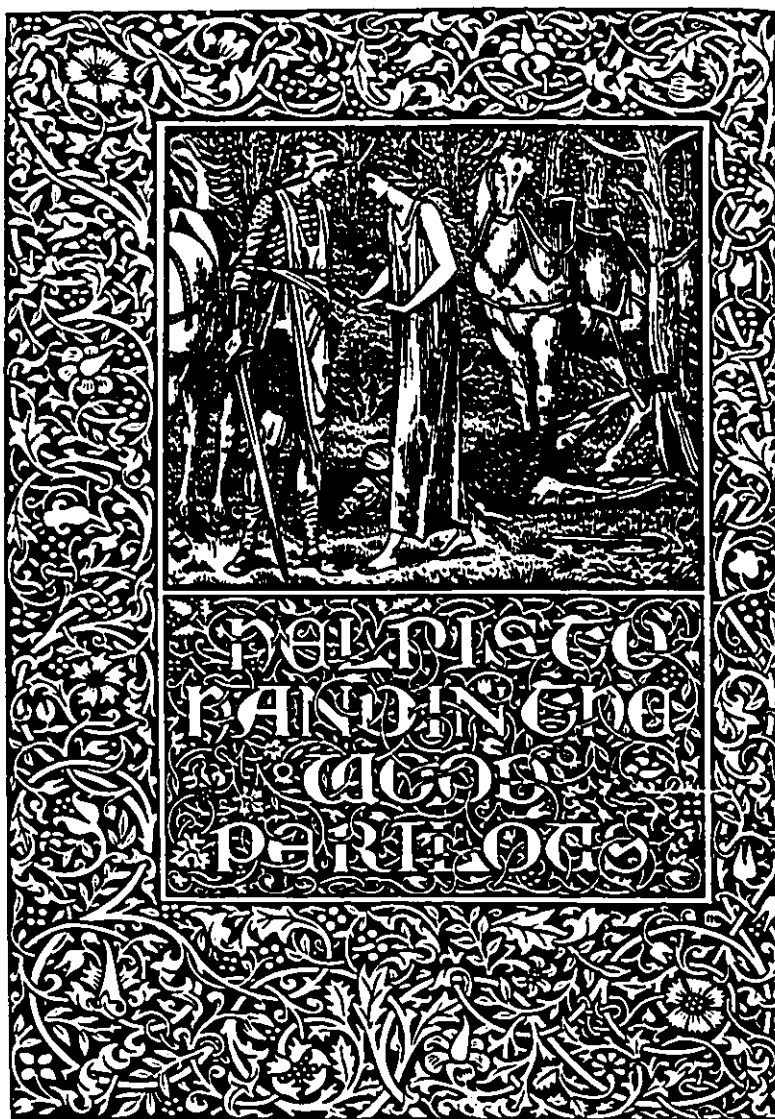


Fig. 24. "The Chamber of Love in The Wilderness"

Wood-engraving by William Hooper after Edward Burne-Jones's design. Border and lettering after William Morris. Frontispiece to "The Road unto Trouble," Book Two of *The Well at the World's End* by William Morris (Hammersmith: Kelmscott Press, 1896).

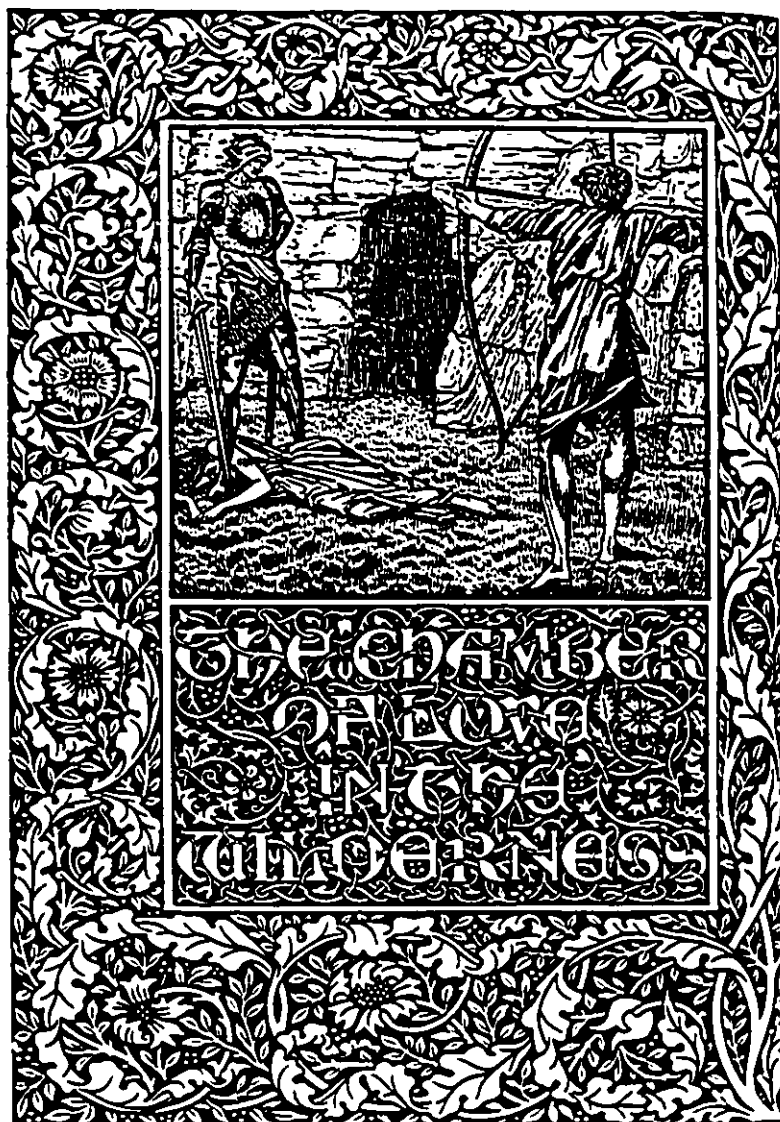


Fig. 25. "The Last Time of the Long Champion"

Wood-engraving by William Hooper after Edward Burne-Jones's design. Border and lettering after William Morris. Frontispiece to "The Road Home," Book Four of *The Well at the World's End* by William Morris (Hammersmith: Kelmscott Press, 1896).

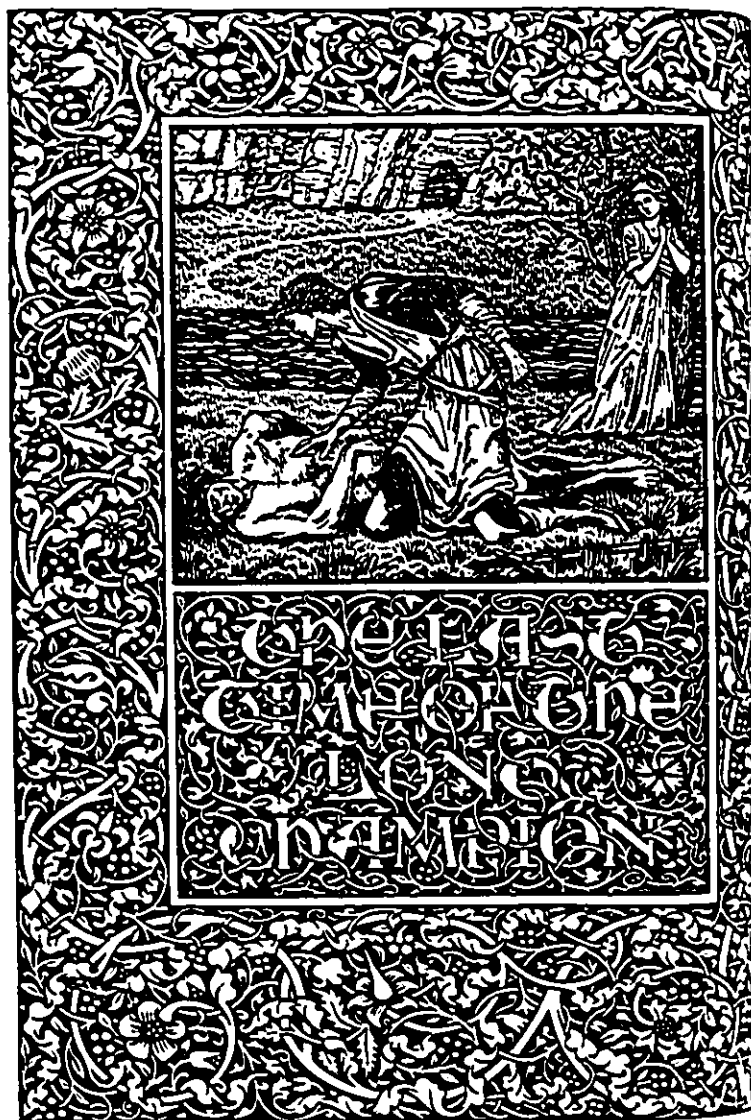


Fig. 26. "Rol's Worship"

Wood-engraving by Clemence Housman after Laurence Housman's design. Plate 2 from Clemence Housman's *The Were-Wolf* (London: John Lane at the Bodley Head, 1896).



Fig. 27. "The Race"

Wood-engraving by Clemence Housman after Laurence Housman's design. Plate 4 from Clemence Housman's *The Were-Wolf* (London: John Lane at the Bodley Head, 1896).



Fig. 28. "Out peered the face o' the eerie man"

Etching by William Strang. Plate 1 from Alice Sargant's *A Book of Ballads* (London: Elkin Mathews, 1898).



Fig. 29

Etching by William Strang. Plate 3 for *Strang's Death and the Ploughman's Wife* (London: Lawrence & Bullen, 1894).



Fig. 30

Etching by William Strang. Plate 9 for *Strang's Death and the Ploughman's Wife* (London: Lawrence & Bullen, 1894).

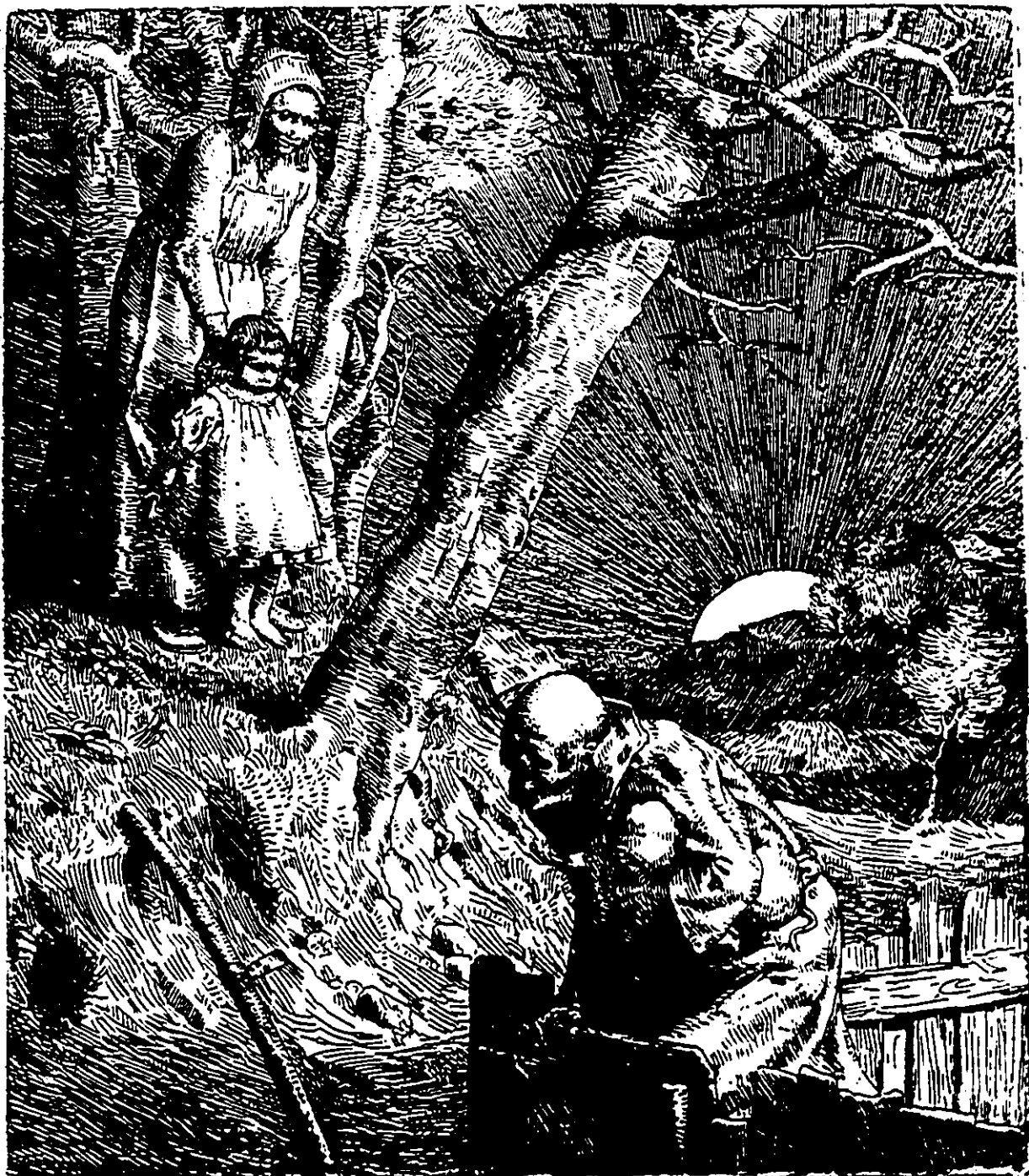


Fig. 31. "Heart of the Sea."

Pen-and-ink drawing by Laurence Housman. Plate 4 of Housman's *All-Fellows: Seven Legends of Lower Redemption* (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner & Co., 1896) 37.



Fig. 32. "The Merciful Drought."

Pen-and-ink drawing by Laurence Housman. Plate 5 of Housman's *All-Fellotes: Seven Legends of Lower Redemption* (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner & Co., 1896) 57.



Fig. 33. "When Pan Was Dead."

Pen-and-ink drawing by Laurence Housman. Frontispiece and Plate 8 of Housman's *All-Felloz: Seven Legends of Lower Redemption* (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner & Co., 1896) 117.

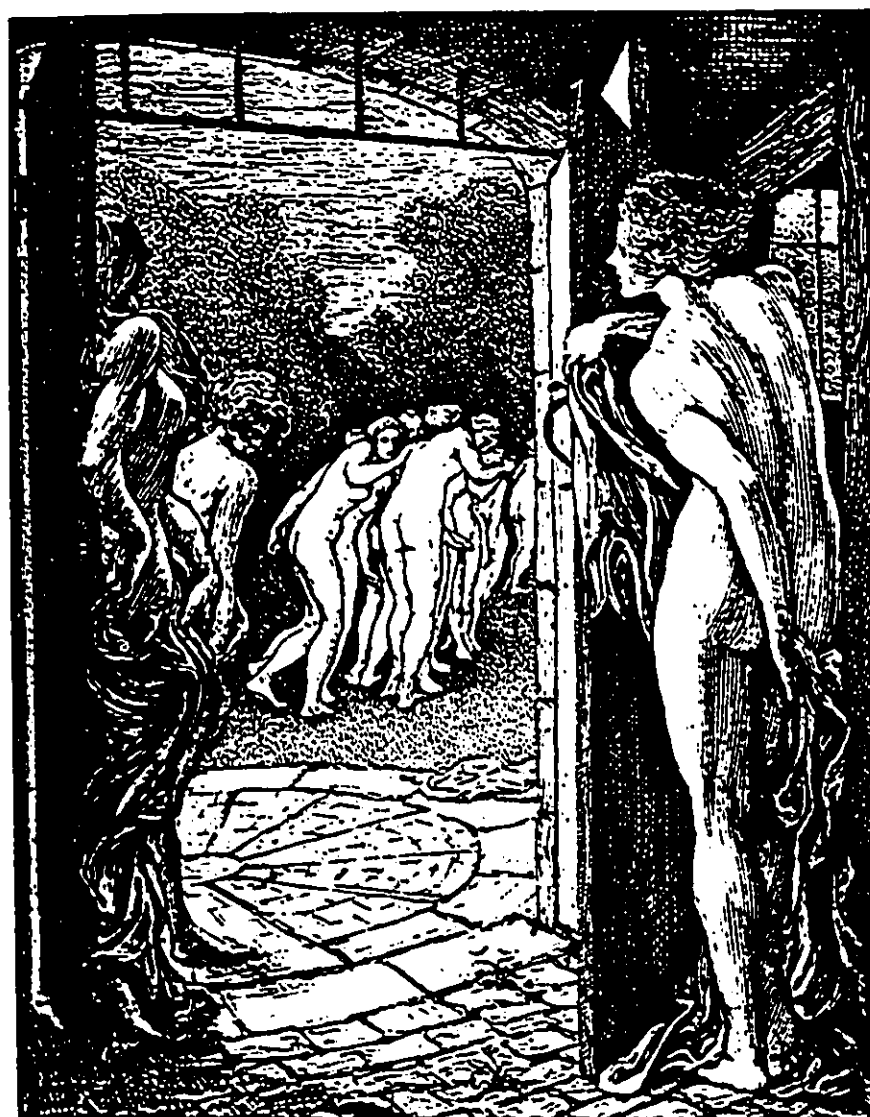


Fig. 34. "The Ascension of St. Rose of Lima"

Pen-and-ink drawing by Aubrey Beardsley for Beardsley's "Under the Hill."
In *Under the Hill and Other Essays in Prose and Verse* (London: John Lane at
the Bodley Head, 1913) 27.



APPENDIX

SELECT ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY OF FIRST EDITION ILLUSTRATED BOOKS OF THE 1890s

This Select Annotated Bibliography indicates the material base on which my critical investigations and theoretical developments are grounded. Since much of the material in my study is arcane, and housed only in Rare Books' Libraries, the Bibliography provides a general introduction to books which are difficult to obtain for study or reference purposes. Moreover, since most existing bibliographies of illustrated books do not provide sufficient content summaries for the unfamiliar reader to know what the book is about (typically not providing even generic classifications such as "poetry" or "essays"), my Bibliography provides a detailed summation of each text's contents.¹ The Select Bibliography performs three principal functions: 1) it indicates the range and variety of illustrative material produced at the English *fin de siècle*; 2) it provides a supplement to my criticism of illustrated books in the thesis; and 3) it offers the late nineteenth-century specialist a resource for the study of the period's illustrated books.

¹My "Select Annotated Bibliography of First Edition Illustrated Books of the 1890s" is indebted to Charles Baker's *Bibliography of British Book Illustrators 1860-1900*, whose classification of first edition Victorian books by illustrator motivated my research in its initial stages. Although I have also consulted the bibliographic work of Michael Felmingham, John Harthan, Simon Houfe, Joachim Möller, James Nelson, Gordon Ray, and R. E. D. Sketchley, the contents of the "Select Bibliography" are the result of my own primary research, with the exception of William Strang's *The Earth Fiend*, which I was unable to examine myself; my description of this text is principally indebted to Gordon Ray, as indicated below.

Armour, Margaret. *Songs of Love and Death*. 1st ed. 11 full-page pen-and-ink designs, title-page border and 2 textual decorations by William Brown Macdougall. London: J. M. Dent, 1896. 136 pp.

This collection of verse, written mostly in quatrains, is grouped into three sections: "Songs of Love and Death," "Thorn and Blossom" and "In Memoriam," each introduced by a half title-page. The illustrations are equally divided between the first two sections; the last section is unillustrated except for stylized floral decorations on the recto and verso of the half-title. The frontispiece takes its caption from "Grieve not, Beloved!," one of the "Songs of Love and Death." The other illustrations have no captions except for the title of the poem on the facing page. Macdougall provides heavy borders of foliage for his inset compositions, which are decorative black-and-white art-nouveau designs. Since Armour and Macdougall not only collaborated on a number of illustrated books in the nineties, but also eventually married, the relationship of image and text has a biographical and social interest as well as an artistic one. Armour's poems in "Songs of Love and Death" are pastoral love lyrics which assert the active lyric voice of the female lover; the beloved becomes the male "other" who is mute and passive. "Thorn and Blossom" has four titled divisions ("A Love Idyll," "From a Young Maid's Diary," "Regrets," and "Love's Obituary") as well as an untitled grouping of miscellaneous poems which deal with the theme of the female poet finding her place in the poetic tradition. Most of the poems also deal with the desire for oblivion, figured by sleep and death motifs. The themes of gender, locale, tradition, and death, come together in the last section, "In Memoriam," which provides elegies for

Matthew Arnold, Alfred Tennyson, Robert Louis Stevenson (for whom Armour and Macdougall produced an illustrated biography in 1895), Christina Rossetti, and W. B. Blaikie. (See Figs. 12, 13)

Armour, Margaret. *Thames Sonnets & Semblances*. 1st ed. 12 full-page wood-block designs and a title page decorated in red by William Brown Macdougall. London: Elkin Mathews, 1897. 57 pp.

Twelve semblances in black and white by William Brown Macdougall introduce each of twelve sonnets by Margaret Armour. Each semblance has its own title, identifying the geographical location from which the Thames is viewed; only the twelfth semblance shares its title ("Way for the Dead") with its accompanying sonnet; this is also the only illustration with human figures. All the illustrations depict the river and the buildings of London; most also have ships, in an impressionistic black and white style concerned with space and the effects of light. The sonnets explore the themes of love, death, history and the past, day and night, time, life and art, nature and culture, and the social problems of urban life. The speaker sometimes addresses a human beloved, sometimes the river itself; the river is both the image of male culture and of the feminine nature which this culture has distorted; it also becomes an imaginative vehicle for the speaker's sense of her own temporality and fluidity. (See Fig. 14)

Barlow, Jane. *The End of Elfintown*. 1st ed. 7 full-page pen-and-ink drawings, title page, and decorations by Laurence Housman. London: Macmillan, 1894. 77 pp.

This is a narrative poem in three parts — "The Building," "The Council," and "The Flitting" — which tells the story of a spell cast on

Oberan by the Bad Brown Witch which causes him to desire a town such as humans have. The fairy world is endangered by this building, and the fairies call a council to determine how they can return to the old careless and joyous days before building, greed, and acquisition undermined their economy. The fairies are successful in destroying the spell, and Oberan's kingdom is once again a joyous woodland place. Housman's full-page illustrations and marginal ornaments, reproduced by process blocks, focus on the grim results which occur when the fairy world is contaminated with human desire.

Binyon, Laurence. *Western Flanders*. 1st ed. 10 full-page etchings by William Strang. London: Unicorn Press, 1899. 46 pp.

Binyon's background as poet, art-historian, and critic is in evidence in this collection of short essays on different parts of Western Flanders. Far from being simply a travelogue or travel guide (though it is both these things), the text also fulfills the requirements of its subtitle: "a medley of things seen, considered, and imagined by Laurence Binyon, with ten etchings by William Strang." Binyon's essays include scenic descriptions, dramatic dialogues, and historical or traditional narratives, all of which are crossed with lyrical moments and critical digressions on art and literature, ranging from Michelangelo's sculpture and painting (and their connection to the present symbolist school), to little known Flemish poets, to *vers libre* and the work of Walt Whitman. The size of this large folio, its limited edition, and the inclusion of Strang's etchings, are other indications that this work is not intended as a traveller's guide, but rather as a reflective art work recording the impressions of two gifted

artists. Strang, an R. A., is arguably the best of the English school of original etchers of the period. The etchings he produced to accompany Binyon's text suggest not only that he travelled to the same locations as the writer, but also that his project is to record his own views of these scenes. Ten of the fourteen essays have accompanying plates, but the etchings present architectural or landscape views of the places seen rather than impressions of the things considered and imagined while visiting Western Flanders.

Blackmore, R. D. *Fringilla: Some Tales in Verse*. 1st ed. 21 illustrations, 11 full page, by Louis Fairfax Muckley and James Linton. London: Elkin Mathews, 1895. 128 pp.

Six long narrative poems or poetic dramas are framed by two lyrics; the first, dated 1854, is "To my Pen"; the second, dated 1894, is "To Fame." As the author's preface indicates, the "ancient bird" is attempting to sing once more, after having been frightened off in his younger efforts by adverse criticism. Judging from his swan song, Blackmore's critics were likely justified in their "random shots," for the verse is uneven, and the rhymes, meters, and images sometimes ludicrous. Blackmore takes for his subjects exotic Egyptian or apocryphal legends and biblical stories. In general, his attitude is that of a conventional late Victorian whose style and opinions have been influenced by Tennyson and Kingsley: his males are heroic, his Christianity muscular, and his women beautiful — mentally weak and spiritually strong. Louis Fairfax Muckley's art-nouveau designs are evocative of the exotic east and underlying sensuality of Blackmore's poems, but they do not share his

conventional conclusions. Indeed, Blackmore looked somewhat dubiously at these foreign "trimmings" as he calls them in his preface, which he acknowledges have "conquered the taste of the day," but which, he implies, have not conquered his own. Perhaps the three drawings by J. R. Linton which accompany "Pausias and Glycera" are more to Blackmore's taste, but their uninspired visualizations of scenes from the text are conventional depictions of classical Greece which have an uneasy relationship with the bold black and white designs by Muckley which surround them. Muckley also designed the cover, the borders, and the initial letters. (See Figs. 21, 22)

Buchan, John. *Scholar Gipsies*. Arcady Library Series. 1st ed. 7 etchings by David Young Cameron. London: John Lane, 1896. 206 pp.

These sixteen essays by John Buchan, first Baron Tweedsmuir, are the third volume published in Lane's Arcady Library Series. The essays are loosely connected by the theme of the art of life; they are, as the author's preface indicates, sketches of character and nature, with interspersed bits of criticism and moralizing. Interleaved in this text of light and open spaces, Cameron's full-page plates, printed in brown-black ink, make curious companions to the essays. They are dark, sketchy compositions of tenuous lines which contrast strongly with the bold confidence and self-assurance of Buchan's essay style.

Campbell, Walter D. *Beyond the Border*. 1st ed. 167 illustrations, 40 full page, by Helen Stratton. London: Constable, 1898. 456 pp.

These thirteen stories by Walter Campbell deal with the events in the land beyond the border of everyday life — the land of trolls, treasures, kings and queens, hoodies, talking animals, witches, wise

women, magic, violence and death. Like many of the fairy or folktales written in the nineties, these stories also inhabit a nebulous border region between literature meant for adults and literature intended for children. Helen Stratton's experience in illustrating gift-books for children (such as *Songs for Little People*, by Norman Gale) is evident in this volume, for her drawings have elements of the grotesque, the weird, the frightening, the humorous, and the lovely — all, perhaps, necessary for the young palate, but also typical of many art-nouveau illustrations. Indeed, although some of Stratton's drawings are straightforward and undecorative depictions, others are more Pre-Raphaelite or art nouveau in composition.

Chaucer, Geoffrey. *The Works of Geoffrey Chaucer*. Ed. F. S. Ellis. 87 wood-engravings after Edward Burne-Jones. Borders, titles, and initials after William Morris. Hammersmith: Kelmscott Press, 1896. 554 pp.

This book, although obviously not a first edition of Chaucer's work, deserves a place in any bibliography of nineties' illustrated books because it is the supreme achievement of the Kelmscott Press. The type in which it was printed, cut specially for this edition, is the famous Kelmscott Chaucer type, named for the work in which it first appears. The book is a labor of love and is a beautiful folio printed with fine black and red ink, with 115 pages of the text in elaborate wood-engraved borders in fourteen different designs by Morris; there are also 26 large initial words and numerous initials of different sizes throughout the text. The engraving was done by W. H. Hooper, C. E. Keates, and W. Spielmeier. Burne-Jones's designs answer Chaucer's text at moments of interest to him. Romantic or mythological moments are preferred, to

the extent that some short tales are lavishly illustrated, while some longer ones, even several in a row, have no plates at all. Burne-Jones responds to the text with his own romantic version of medievalism which — like the text — frequently draws on classical or Christian motifs in its iconology. Unlike Chaucer's text, however, Burne-Jones's images lack irony, wit, and humor: the representations are all very serious and static, with none of Chaucer's delight or self-parody.

Davidson, John. *Perfervid: The Career of Ninian Jamieson*. 1st ed. 23 illustrations, 5 full page, by Harry Furniss. London: Ward & Downey, 1890. 254 pp.

This is Davidson's second novel. *Perfervid* is composed of two parts: "The Campaign of Ninian Jamieson," accompanied by 11 pen-and-ink drawings, and "The Pilgrimage of Strong soul and Saunders Elshander," accompanied by 12 pen-and-ink drawings. Each section has its own frontispiece. Part One is introduced by "Ninian and Cosmo at Miss Morton's House" and Part Two by "The Meeting of the Great Men." The first section is dramatic and comic, and deals with Ninian Jamieson's foiled attempt to establish himself as the King of Scotland, as the true descendent of the Stuart line (via the Chevalier de St. George, otherwise James III of England and VIII of Scotland). Since his campaign includes reviving the customs of the feudal monarchs, he presses Cosmo Mortimer, an annuitant with passionate theories, into service as his court-jester. Jamieson is forced to give up his attempt when he suffers bankruptcy, and the narrative concludes with his marriage to his cousin Marjory Morton, and with his settling down, like his father

before him, to be a grocer in Mintern. Part Two is descriptive and narrative; it is composed of a long story told by Cosmo Mortimer twelve years later to his "Great Men Club." The story he narrates has been told to him that morning by Ninian Jamieson about his son's quest for greatness in the form of Christian's pilgrimage to the Celestial City. Although Ninian formed his self-concept as a great man and a hero by reading two thousand novels by the time he was eighteen, his son, self-styled "Strong soul," forms his self-concept as a hero by reading "the greatest book in the world" which, once read, eliminates both the need and the desire to read another: *Pilgrim's Progress*. But the narrative shows the boy's pilgrimage to be neither allegorical nor spiritual, and exposes the egotistical and violent nature of *Pilgrim's Progress* when read literally. Both Ninian and Strong soul are romantic heroes in search of a text, and their attempts to write their own narratives, and to enforce their readings on others, are presented in an unsettling book of complex ironies and mismatched structures. As a *Punch* illustrator of satirical turn, Harry Furniss's illustrations are adequate for the comic first half; but in Part Two, the drawings fail because he reads the text as a quest fantasy, or a boy's romantic adventure story: he takes the duplicitous narrative literally, and so the text's ironies and self-criticisms are muted. (See Fig. 8)

De Tabley, John Leicester, Baron. *Poems Dramatic & Lyrical*. 1st ed. 5 full-page photogravures after Charles Ricketts. London: Mathews & Lane, 1893. 212 pp.

This is the first publication of De Tabley's poems, and considered to be his best work. He also published plays and novels under pseudonyms. The poems fall roughly into two categories: lyrics, with pastoral settings, which deal with the passing of time and love; and monologues by various speakers, often with mythological or biblical subjects. Both types of verses are concerned with death and, although they ostensibly deal with the vanity of earthly things, they betray a fascination with wealth, power, and heroes. De Tabley's treatment of women — and he takes on the voices of women in some of his monologues — is conventional and misogynist. See especially "Jael," in which the woman's attempt to find fame in heroic action which will make her name immortal is criticized; this poem, and others in the volume, suggests that woman's lot should be silent oblivion, in which she functions either as maternal nurturer of the weak, or as love object of the strong. Ricketts' pen drawings, photoengraved by Dawsons, are early works which show his style still strongly influenced by the illustrative work of Dante Gabriel Rossetti and William Blake. Of the five plates, three (including the frontispiece, "Defeat of Glory") present a visual narrative of the vanity of earthly wealth and power by depicting the plight of kings facing death or the loss of kingdoms (see "Nimrod" and "The Two Kings"). The "Prodigal Son," however, undercuts this theme by suggesting that wealth and power are to be preferred to a rural life of poverty. "The Knight in the Wood" departs not only from the

visual narrative launched by the frontispiece, but also from the verbal text, by introducing a new scene of romance which has more to do with Pre-Raphaelite mythologizing than it does with the title-poem.

Dowson, Ernest. *The Pierrot of the Minute: A Dramatic Fantasy in One Act*. 1st ed. 4 pen-and-ink drawings by Aubrey Beardsley. London: Leonard Smithers, 1897. 44 pp.

Dowson's dramatic fantasy takes place over the hours of one short summer night. Pierrot arrives at the Parc du Petit Trianon with his arms full of lilies, a basket with wine, and a parchment which directs him on his quest for love and knowledge. However, he fails to read the final directions on the parchment, which warn him against the kisses of the moon, and his prayer to Cupid — accompanied with gifts of wine and lilies — is answered: when he falls asleep at the foot of the temple stairs, a moon-maiden descends and kisses him awake. The remainder of the night is passed in the Moon Maiden's instruction of Pierrot in the "grammar of love," but his desire is never satisfied, and his future grief seems more certain than the equivocal joy of the present night. Dowson's ornate couplets, his fantastic theme, his focus on the sensations of the moment and on the (in)achievement of desire, make this play a typically *fin-de-siècle* piece, and Beardsley's stark black-and-white pen drawings, finely drawn in his ornate Baroque style, add to the play's decadent flavor. Indeed, Beardsley's illustrations are as much obsessed with time and the individual as are Dowson's verses. Beardsley provides no illustrations of the Moon Maiden, but concentrates on the effects of experience on Pierrot, whose malleable

white face moves from the innocent youth of the frontispiece, through the middle-aged experienced man who can laugh sardonically at time even while he holds the hour-glass in his hands, to the old and wrinkled clown who leaves the garden but looks back over his shoulder at the scene of his experience.

Doyle, Arthur Conan. *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes*. 1st ed. 103 illustrations by Sidney Paget. London: Newnes, 1892. 317 pp.

This is the first issue in book form of the first series of the Sherlock Holmes stories, published in *The Strand* magazine between July 1891 and December 1892. The book consists of 12 short stories dealing with the incredible detection of the cocaine-addicted Holmes and his ever-observant Boswell, Dr. John Watson. Paget's illustrations are all printed as part of the textual page, and determine the set-up of the letterpress itself, which often provides the only frame for the inset drawing. Paget downplays scenery and background to focus on character, particularly the transformation of Holmes in his various disguises. Because the magazine series was originally illustrated by Paget, the public's conception of Sherlock Holmes owes as much to Sid Paget as does Carroll's Alice to Sir John Tenniel; even stage and film versions of the famous detective flesh him out according to Paget's model. Curiously, Paget's model for Sherlock Holmes was in fact the publisher's intended illustrator: the artist's brother, Walter. Paget's contribution is not acknowledged on the title-page, which merely announces that *Adventures* is published "With Illustrations." However, Sidney Paget's initials may be found on all the drawings.

Doyle, Arthur Conan. *The Memoirs of Sherlock Holmes*. 1st ed. Strand Library Series. 90 illustrations, 1 full page, by Sidney Paget. London: Newnes, 1894. 279 pp.

This volume contains 11 stories published by *The Strand* magazine as additional episodes of *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes* between December 1892 and November 1893. Conan Doyle, perhaps a little weary of meeting the public's voracious demand for stories of the popular detective, and wishing to make his fame as a writer of historical novels, kills off Holmes in the famous last story, "The Final Problem," in which Holmes meets his match and his doom in the person of the nefarious Moriarty. This solution to Doyle's problem, however, was not successful; his "serious" novels never reached the success of his "hack" work, and he was forced to reincarnate his hero in *The Return of Sherlock Holmes*, a series published in *The Strand* between October 1903 and January 1905. Paget receives title-page credit for his contribution in *The Memoirs*, and provides a frontispiece, two facsimiles of a handwritten note which provides the clue to "The Adventure of the 'Gloria Scott,'" and many textual designs, which are generally engraved more carefully than those in *The Adventures*. (See Figs. 3, 4, 5, 6)

Doyle, Arthur Conan. *Rodney Stone*. 1st ed. 8 full-page illustrations by Sidney Paget. London: Smith Elder, 1896. 366 pp.

This book represents Conan Doyle's aspirations as a serious writer of historical fiction; his preface credits many sources which provided the background for what he calls "his endeavour to draw various phases

of life and character in England at the beginning of the century." Although very different in style and treatment from the Sherlock Holmes series, and published by a different firm, the Doyle/Paget relationship still operates. Paget is not given credit, either on the title page, nor in the list of illustrations, but each of his full page plates is signed variously with his initials or his full name. Paget responds to the difference in style of writing by providing illustrations which are also very different in style to those of his Holmes drawings. The compositions are less linear and more shaded, with more fully realized backgrounds, figures and costumes.

Doyle, Arthur Conan. *The Tragedy of Korosko*. 1st ed. 40 full-page illustrations by Sidney Paget. London: Smith Elder, 1898. 333 pp.

Unlike *Rodney Stone*, *The Tragedy of Korosko* is not an historical novel set in the English past, but takes place in the present (it is set in 1895) in the exotic middle east. Like the earlier novel (and like the Holmes tales), however, this adventure story also gestures toward the historical by purporting to be the true narrative, based on documents and sworn statements, of events which the public should know about, but which, for political reasons, the newspapers have been unable to expound fully. The story deals with the fate of the passengers of the *Korosko* as they travel 200 miles up the Nubian Nile. The novel has action, violence, and romance, but it also exhibits the period's imperialism and chauvinism. The outcome of the adventure, however — the increase of knowledge and wisdom in the main characters as a result of their desert experience — also puts this story into the category

of the quest romance. Paget, who is not named as the illustrator, provides soft pencil drawings which focus on character, the exotic landscape, and the confrontation of east and west.

Garnett, Edward. *An Imaged World: Poems in Prose*. 1st. ed. 5 full-page half-tone plates by William Hyde. London: J. M. Dent, 1894. 120 pp.

Garnett's "Poems in Prose" are divided into three parts: "The Lover in Autumn," "In Grey Crowds," and "The Lover in Spring." Each part is differentiated by place, time, season, and mood. The first part records the narrator's impressions of life on bleak northern hills and moors during autumn storms when he is separated from his beloved. The second part moves to London in winter, where the narrator's impressions of his environment are recorded during both night and day; both times, however, are grey like the crowds he sees passing before him, and whose lives he recreates in images — images which, the title-poem suggests, are both as substantial — and as insubstantial — as the mirage of the Imaged World itself. Observing the consuming and laboring world of London gives the narrator the opportunity to record his social criticisms of civilization's market and herd mentality. This section is linked to the other two by giving the background of the narrator's separation from his beloved (Lucille) because it is the horror of the grey crowds itself — the hypocritical herd mentality which sets the price of respectability and the determines the commodification of marriage — which has separated them. The third part takes place in the sunny days of spring, in the hills, woods, and seashores of the north, and is a pastoral celebration of new life which includes the

consummation of the lovers' passion. The prose poems are uneven in achievement — they are sometimes strained and overdone, particularly in Garnett's use of elemental symbolism to convey the love relationship — but at their best, they are lyrical word-paintings of land, sea, sky, and city scapes. Hyde's full page illustrations are evocative visualizations of the moods and settings. The text is also decorated with marginal borders, and each section is introduced by a small vignette on the facing page.

Haggard, H. Rider. *Black Heart and White Heart and Other Stories*. 32 full-page illustrations by Charles Kerr and F. H. Townsend. London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1900. 414 pp.

This is a collection of three long adventure stories by Rider Haggard, all set in Africa. "Black Heart and White Heart" is set during the 1879 Zulu war in the Transvaal and tells the story of the confrontation between two men — a mercenary white trader, Black Heart, and a noble Zulu warrior, White Heart — as an individualized account of the British defeat. The story also involves a love triangle between the betrothed Zulu couple, Nahoon and Nanea, and the designing Philip Hadden. The second story, "Elissa," is an attempt to recreate the life of ancient Phoenician Zimbabwe, again with the romantic addition of a love story. The third and longest story, "The Wizard," tells the story of the victorious faith of the Rev. Thomas Owen, missionary to the Children of Fire in Central Africa. Pitting native superstition against white, the story shows how Christianity "is the only true and efficient magic." This story, too, has a romantic interest in the shape of the

Wizard Hokosa and his beautiful temptress, Noma. Charles Kerr's shaded pencil drawings, reproduced by process, add their own sensuousness and intimacy to the stories of "Black Heart and White Heart," for which he provides six illustrations, and to "The Wizard," for which he provides 18 illustrations. F. H. Townsend's eight pen-and-ink drawings for "Elissa," by contrast, are linear depictions whose austerity lends a certain horrific dignity to the proceedings of sacrifice which the story details. The collection of three stories by different illustrators suggests that the printing was set up from the illustrated periodicals in which they first appeared. (See Fig. 7)

Hewlett, Maurice. *A Masque of Dead Florentines, wherein some of Death's Choicest Pieces and the Great Game that he played therewith, are fruitfully set forth*. 1st ed. 15 illustrations, 4 full page, by John Dickson Batten. London: J. M. Dent, 1895. 51 pp.

Hewlett's verse masque, in which a chorus of twelve tired ladies and twelve forgotten poets invoke the shades of great Florentines, is divided into two parts: the first deals with the poets, priests, and princes of medieval Florence (Dante, Petrarch, Boccaccio, Giotto, Fra Beato), the second with the poets, painters, scholars, and princes of renaissance Florence (Fra Lippo Lippi, Pico, Scala, Leonardo, Francesco, Domencio, Sandro, Botticelli, the Mediccis, Savanarola, Luca, Macchiavelli, Michael Angelo). Both sections also invoke the women who played parts in the lives of the great men: Beatrice, Laura, Fiammetta, Piccarda Donati, La Simonetta, Clarice. However, this historical structure is fluid rather than fixed; as the author's prefatory note suggests, "It will sufficiently be seen that this poem does not treat of *Florentine* history; that it flouts

chronology." The chorus provides invocations, celebrations, and elegies; the shades speak for themselves about their achievements and their inevitable defeat by Death. Hewlett's subtitle is played on throughout Batten's illustrations, which frequently feature skulls, the gaunt hand of Death, or the figure of Death himself in their designs. One of the leaders of the Birmingham School of artists, John Dickson Batten provides arts-and-crafts style illustrations which exhibit medieval and Pre-Raphaelite influences in sympathy with the subject of the text.

Housman, Clemence. *The Were-Wolf*. 1st ed. 6 full-page designs and a title page decorated in red engraved by Clemence Housman after Laurence Housman. London: John Lane at the Bodley Head, 1896. 123 pp.

The story, set in feudal northern Europe, concerns twin brothers, Sweyn and Christian, and the were-wolf who, disguised as the beautiful woman, "White Fell," disrupts both the harmony of the community and the relationship between the brothers. Christian saves his brother from the fate which follows White Fell's kiss by tracking the were-wolf through a race over ice and snow which culminates at midnight with the death of both. Sweyn comes to see his brother as a type of Christ who suffered and died to save him from his sins, and returns to the community bearing both the body of his dead brother and this knowledge. Laurence Housman's six plates draw attention to the uncertain "true hidden reality" of both White Fell and Christian, which their outward bodily forms disguise, by iconographic details and by varying presentations of their forms; his use of black and white also

suggests that, in some sense, Christian is White Fell's double or shadow (see especially "The Race"). Clemence engraved the plates after Laurence's drawings. (See Figs. 26, 27,

Housman, Laurence. *A Farm in Fairyland*. 1st ed. 14 full-page process-engravings after Laurence Housman. London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner & Co., 1894. 160 pp.

This is the first book for which Housman produced both image and text. The twelve fairy tales seem to be meant both for children and for a wider audience. The themes of love, greed, and death dominate. Some of the tales are moral (see "Gammelyn the Dressmaker"), but some are unpleasant, with sadistic undertones (see "The Hidden End" and "The Man who Killed the Cuckoo"), or pedantic allegories (see "The Parlous Tree"), or unsettling revisions of a traditional fairytale such as Sleeping Beauty from the point of view of an outsider (see "KcNoonie in the Sleeping Palace"). At their best, Housman's tales are beautiful little stories which develop sensuously without belaboring a point (see especially "Japonel" and "The Wooing of the Maze"). Housman provides a frontispiece to face each story, and the arabesques of the decorated title page enclose miniatures of each of these twelve designs. The title page includes personal symbols for Housman's strange graphic world: a broad-brimmed hatted figure with wings and abundant hair holds a key and a wheel (see *Field of Clover* and *House of Joy*). The illustrations, which are stronger than the text, do *not* seem meant for a child audience. The intricate designs demand much of the viewer; they are tense linear compositions with unsettling motifs and grim figures set within claustrophobic compositions.

Housman, Laurence. *All-Fellows: Seven Legends of Lower Redemption with Insets in Verse*. 1st ed. 8 full-page process engravings and a title page decorated in red after Laurence Housman. London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner & Co., 1896. 138 pp.

All-Fellows is a collection of seven legends with Christian themes, accompanied and divided by a series of verses which Housman describes in his Preface as "the statement of an essentially incomplete phase of spiritual emotion." The poems are untitled quatrains, divided into two or three sections by trefoil decorations. Each legend is preceded by a black-and-white illustration on the facing page, and the accompanying image for "When Pan was Dead" doubles as the frontispiece to the volume. The conflict between Housman's spiritual/ethical allegiance to Christianity and his horror of its institutionalized form provides one of the thematic tensions of these modern legends, the more so because the linking verses also partially deal with this inner conflict. Some stories contrast the hypocritical morality and blindness of the established church and its denial of the joys of the body, with the real numinous meaning of human existence (see "The Lovely Messengers," "Heart of the Sea," "The Merciful Drought," and "The King's Evil") or with the almost mystical joy of a full life of the senses (see "The Tree of Guile" and "When Pan was Dead"). Housman's drawings, reproduced by photogravure, are unsettling designs in black and white, full of gaunt nakedness and religious icons. (See Figs. 31, 32, 33)

Housman, Laurence. *The Field of Clover*. 1st ed. 12 full-page wood-engravings by Clemence Housman after Laurence Housman. London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner & Co., 1898. 148 pp.

Housman's five fairy tales are dedicated "To my dear wood-engraver" and Clemence also receives credit for her work on the title page of the volume. The first fairy tale, "The Bound Princess," is a long story in six parts, each with an introductory illustration. The other four fairy tales take up less than half of the book's contents; each of them is introduced by a half-page title and a facing frontispiece. The figure with the winged hat is named Mercury in the volume's frontispiece; the facing title-page inset features a half-naked reclining man between a statue of Cupid, who looks across the border at Mercury, and an angelic, winged, female figure, who looks down at the man. The collection of stories is linked principally by the theme of desire and possession. In "The Bound Princess," "The Wishing Pot," and "The Passionate Puppets," the active male hero embarks on a quest which will bring life to a dead, dying, or passive woman. But "The Passionate Puppets" also deals explicitly with the theme of the artistic creation of romantic stories which do not have enough "real life" in them. The remaining two stories, "The Crown's Warranty," and "The Feeding of the Emigrants," express spiritual themes; the first of these explicitly combines the fisher-king myth with the Christian death and resurrection myth. The second story should be read against Wilde's "The Fisherman and his Soul," for Housman's "The Feeding of the Emigrants" may be viewed as a rewriting of this story from *The House of Pomegranates*; indeed, Housman's accompanying picture recalls Ricketts' illustrations for the

earlier book. Housman's drawings in *A Field of Clover* are uneven in execution; in particular, "The Princess Meililot" is poorly drawn (or engraved), and "The Burning Rose" is so confused a composition as to be almost indecipherable. Some of the other drawings, however, are Housman at his best. See especially "The Crown's Warranty" and "The Wishing Pot."

Housman, Laurence. *Green Arras*. 1st ed. 7 full-page designs wood-engraved by Clemence Housman after Laurence Housman. London: John Lane, 1896. 90 pp.

Housman's first volume of lyric verse is illustrated by grim and haunting compositions. See especially the title-page plate, which seems to respond to the dedicatory poem the poet addresses to Clemence: "I hang my green arras before you / Of the lights and shadows I wove" The plate depicts a female violinist playing to a gaunt male figure, who sits at her feet, swathed in draperies, and apparently bound. But see also "The Corn-Keeper," which Kains-Jackson calls "one of the most beautiful drawings that the last decade of the nineteenth century produced from any hand" (in Engen).

Housman, Laurence. *The House of Joy*. 1st ed. 10 full-page process engravings after Laurence Housman. London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner & Co., 1895. 181 pp.

This volume of eight fairy tales, each with a separate half-page title and facing frontispiece, is Housman's second collection of whimsical short stories. As in *A Farm in Fairyland*, the title page for *The House of Joy* provides an emblematic "contents" page for the stories to follow by means of miniature vignettes enclosed within arabesque medallions.

The personal symbols of the title-page's central figures also repeat those of the first volume: a similar broad-hatted male figure who stands with a wheel faces an abundantly-haired woman who leans out from an opening in the design. Indeed, the two books are connected by a shared character, Gammelyn, who passes out of sight on the track of the moon and the sun at the end of his story in *A Farm in Fairyland*, and reappears as the silver child born to an earthly prince and a moon daughter in *The House of Joy's* "Moon-Flower." Unlike *A Farm*, however, the stories of *The House of Joy* seem to be addressed principally to an adult audience. One recurring theme is the love relationship between male and female, often with an incestuous twist: the ideal relationships are those between a childless husband and wife who may be brother and sister, or who live like brothers and sisters (see "The Prince with the Nine Sorrows," "The Story of the Herons," "The Luck of the Roses," and "Happy Returns"). Housman's pacifist convictions are in evidence in these moral tales, especially in "The White King." However, his feminist politics are often undermined by his stereotypical portrayals of women driven by jealousy to mutilate their sisters' beauty or cause their destruction (see "The Traveller's Shoes," "Syringa" and "The White King"). The black-and-white drawings for *The House of Joy* are singularly joyless compositions: the moment Housman the artist chooses to illustrate for Housman the writer is usually the narrative's most strained moment of pain, fear, separation, or death.

Housman, Laurence. *The Little Land: With Songs From its Four Rivers*. 1st ed. 4 full-page designs wood-engraved by Clemence Housman after Laurence Housman. London: Grant Richards, 1899. 97 pp.

Housman's collection of lyric verse, dedicated to his companion, the painter Herbert Alexander, is divided into four sections, each introduced by a symbolic plate of a mythological figure, part faun, part Cupid, pouring out a jug of water — presumably into one of the "Little Land's" four rivers. Many of the verses are love poems, but others express Housman's interest in children, animals, nature, death, and religion. The division of the poems into sections is determined by theme and mood, both of which are reflected in the iconography of the introductory frontispieces.

Matthew, Frank. *At the Rising of the Moon*. 1st ed. 22 drawings by Fred Pegram, 4 by A. S. Boyd, and 1 by J. Stafford. London: McClure, 1893. 240 pp.

Matthew's twenty-one short stories are anecdotal in style, and are connected by their common setting in Ireland's county Clare, by the vivid characters who reappear in several stories, by the narrative voice who meets all these landlords, agents, moonlighters, beggars and priests, and re-tells their stories in their own dialect and with the flavor of dialogue and the oral tradition; and, finally, by the stories' evocation of the heart-throbs of Ireland: celtic folklore, witches, fairies, superstitions, the church, and politics. The title-story suggests that the tales are organized by an over-riding political, rather than a folkloric, structure, because its narrative deals with the rebellion of a group of moonlighters

who meet at the rising of the moon to pressure a resisting tenant into joining the Secret Society. But the moonlighters are betrayed by their leader, and the man who tells the narrator the story in a London slum is the only one of their number to escape prison or death, although it is clear that his six-year exile in Chelsea has spared him neither of these. The illustrations by Fred Pegram, A. S. Boyd and J. Stafford, all pictorial journalists, are well-executed drawings which focus on the characterizations and settings of the stories without attempting to decorate or embellish them.

Meredith, George. *Jump-to-Glory Jane*. Ed. Harry Quilter. 1st ed. 44 illustrations, 8 full page, with calligraphic text by Laurence Housman. London: Swan, Sonnenschein, 1892. 37 pp.

A satirical narrative arranged in 36 six-line stanzas, *Jump-to-Glory Jane* tells the story of an English country woman who, inspired by books of the Shakers in America, and instructed by a lady at a fair, begins a revivalist campaign in her village by silent jumping. Although ridiculed by neighbors, teased by boys, and ultimately stopped by the combined powers of the Bishop and the Squire, Jane gathers a following of fellow jumpers who reject the things of this world in the form of beer, meat, speech, and shelter, for an outdoor life of jumping. The narrative suggests that the secret of life is to be found in the dancing body, and that the preaching tongue is an anti-life force which must be silenced. Despite her commitment and her leaping ability, however, Jane is vanquished by the blind powers of preacher and police. Her death is portrayed as a beautiful martyrdom which could raise England

out of its darkness. Yet the rhythm of the tetramic couplets, and the combined effect of the bizarre images and the strange yoking of inflated and homely diction, sing Jane's story in an ironic voice, and the meaning of her life and death remains ambiguous. . Housman provides 8 full-page drawings, the calligraphic text, and head or tail designs for each stanza, all of which are reproduced from process blocks. The stanza designs are art-nouveau decorative motifs, but his full page illustrations are more realistic in style. Realistic or decorative, Housman's drawings take Jane's story seriously, evenly earnestly: Jane is never "grounded" by the perspective requirements of the plate, but floats uncannily — even angelically — in her own space.

Morris, William. *The Story of the Glittering Plain Which Has Also Been Called the Land of Living Men or the Acre of the Undying*. 23 wood-engravings after Walter Crane. Title, borders and initials after William Morris. Hammersmith: Kelmscott, 1894. 179 pp.

The Story of the Glittering Plain was the first book published at the Kelmscott Press in 1891; this edition was ornamented with initials and borders but not otherwise illustrated, and was set up from the *English Illustrated Magazine*, where it ran serially. The 1894 edition of *The Glittering Plain* is noteworthy because, apart from the *Chaucer*, no other Kelmscott book is so lavishly illustrated. Set in an imaginary medieval north, the story deals with the quest of Hallblithe of the House of the Raven for his betrothed, the Hostage of the House of the Rose, who has been abducted by the Ravagers of the Sea. Fighting through a web of lies and betrayals for a year, Hallblithe pursues his

quest faithfully, first on the grim Isle of Ransom, and then in the beautiful but chilling Land of the Glittering Plains — the land of eternal youth, unending pleasure, peace, and prosperity. He is brought there, through a series of tricks contrived mostly by Puny Fox of the Ravagers, at the command of the King of the Glittering Plains, whose daughter is the only unhappy inhabitant of his land, being consumed with unsatisfied love for Hallblithe, whose image she studies every evening in a book. But for Hallblithe, there is only one woman in the world, and he shuns the offer of a princess's love in the Land of Living Men, and pursues his quest through the wasteland, where he is succored by the three seekers for The Land whom he met at the tale's opening. The three seekers fulfill their quest for the Land of the Glittering Plain, and Hallblithe also fulfills his quest for the Hostage, whom he finds when he returns to the Isle of Ransom. He wins the Hostage back as the gift of the Erne, who becomes his blood brother, as does Puny Fox, who returns with Hallblithe to become one of his kindred. Peace is restored between the Ravagers of the Sea and the House of the Raven, and Hallblithe and the Hostage return to their homeland, Cleveland by the Sea, where they are married. The designs by Walter Crane respond well to the medieval narrative; like the text, they also are inspired by the art of the middle ages, although in a mannered and overdone way. The designs are heavy and cluttered compositions, in general very black; the figures lack depth and the compositions lack movement. Crane's decorative embellishments are sometimes misleading, as when he includes a rose bush in the chapter head to "Hallblithe beholdeth the woman who

loveth him." This plate also shows the limits of Crane's dramatic sense; the figures are stiff and lifeless, frozen in melodramatic poses. Also, the ambiguity of the rose motif here is compounded by the resemblance between Crane's rendering of the King's daughter and his depiction of the Hostage at the head of Chapter XXII. (See Fig. 2)

Morris, William. *The Well at the World's End*. 1st ed. 4 full-page wood-engravings after Sir Edward Burne-Jones. Borders and initials by William Morris. Hammersmith: Kelmscott, 1896. 496 pp.

Morris's story is a quest romance in four parts, each introduced by a frontispiece designed by Burne-Jones and cut on wood by W. H. Hooper. Ralph, the youngest son of King Peter of Upmeads, embarks on a quest seeking the Well at the World's End, which brings youth and vigor, wholeness, health, and wisdom, to all who drink its waters. Ralph is given his quest by his godmother, Dame Katherine, and led in the quest first by the Lady of the Wood and then by Ursula, to whom the lady has taught the lore of the Well. Helped by the Sage of the Dry Tree, Ursula and Ralph find the well, drink its waters, and are made fair and far-sighted. They return to Upmeads to reign there as King and Queen in peace and wisdom, helped in this endeavor by the many liaisons they have made throughout their travels in perilous lands. Burne-Jones's designs are mannered and static vignettes which do not respond to the life and movement of the quest, but the romanticized medieval style of the wood-engravings harmonizes well with the type and format. (See Figs. 23, 24, 25).

Radford, Dollie. *Songs for Somebody*. 1st ed. 33 illustrations, 7 full page, by Gertrude M. Bradley. London: Nutt, 1893. 28 pp.

Although this is principally a volume of poetry for children, the verses are also aimed at a wider audience, in the manner of Blake's "Songs." See especially "And Father's Hand," with its diptych division of the plate by means of a central picture which contrasts a happy schoolboy running home with a barefoot flower girl leaning against an iron grill. The decorated pages are printed in calligraphic script in green ink. The full-page plates are colored illustrations depicting scenes from the nursery.

Sargant, Alice. *A Book of Ballads*. 1st ed. 5 full-page etchings by William Strang. London: Elkin Mathews, 1898. 46 pp.

The author of these ballads in Scots dialect says in her Preface that the verses were not in every case written before the picture: however, she does not say whether the subjects were mutually agreed on in advance by poet and etcher, or whether the plates (unidentified) which preceded the verses provided the impetus for the writing. Sargant heads most of the ballads with a prose section, printed in black letter, which gives the background for the legend; the sources vary from folklore to history to newspaper accounts of tragedies to Jewish fables. In general, the ballads reflect the period's celtic revival, not only by their expression in dialect, but also by their focus on Scottish history and on traditional tales of the meetings between the worlds of the human and the superhuman. The ballads exhibit both a fascination with, and a fear of, the eerie: some poems which take the meeting of human and fairy as

their theme focus on outcomes of love and contentment, while others focus on death and despair. The illustrated ballads are ones which deal with stark contrasts and high passions: the felicitous meeting of the human with the Fin-men ("Ursella Norn"); the violence of a clan feud ("Donald Campbell"); the sympathy between a soul from purgatory and a poor shroud seamstress ("Maggie Ross"); the tragic murder of a young woman by her lover (Jessie O'Ardrossan); and the uncanny meeting of an alchemist with a demon ("Paracelsus"). Strang's etchings, which act as frontispieces to each of the poems they face, are powerful expressions in black and white of the companion piece's emotions and settings, but they also have a grim emotional graphology of their own. (See Fig. 28)

Strang, William. *A Book of Giants*. 1st ed. 12 woodcuts. London: Unicorn Press, 1898. 56 pp.

Twelve humorous verses by William Strang are introduced by a half-title page and a facing original woodcut. The poetry is high-spirited, but if the verses were meant for Victorian children, as the publisher suggests, then they are unusual in their refusal of sentiment and sweetness. These are poems of violence — which may be standard children's fare — but the violence is combined with a dark humor and a social criticism which departs from late nineteenth-century convention. In some poems, the giants are the typical objects of fear who prey on human victims, but in others, they are the victims of humans — either because they are mastered by human individuals, or, more cuttingly, because they are the victims of a giant larger than they, a giant with an insatiable appetite who is out of control and growing everyday: modern

industrial civilization and its technology (see especially "The Giant and the Underground"). Strang's plates are notable for being the artist's first published woodcuts. With a masterful use of white, and a strong black line, Strang makes each of his twelve original woodcuts express a different kind of giant, and a different object of fear or grim humor. One of the book's humorous features is its size. Although Strang typically produced giant books (see, for instance, *Death and the Ploughman's Wife* or Binyon's *Western Flanders*), *A Book of Giants* is a small slim volume, measuring only 7" by 8 1/2".

Strang, William. *Death and the Ploughman's Wife*. 1st ed. 12 full-page etchings. London: Lawrence & Bullen, 1894. 18 pp.

The ballad, told in Scots dialect, is in three parts. Part One opens on Hallowe'en and narrates a poor woman's kindness to a hungry beggar. Part Two deals with the coming of winter to the bleak moors. Part Three takes place "a year and more" after the events of Part One, which would place the narrative in late winter or early spring; the plates suggest the setting is early spring. In this section, the woman saves her child from the grasp of Death through her wit and cunning, but also (it is suggested) through the supernatural aid of the beggar, who offered her a boon when she was charitable. Strang's etchings, which vary from strong and harsh linear designs to soft tonal mezzotints, show him to be a master etcher. All the designs play on the domestic/wild interplay in the story's setting and theme. The title-page plate announces the ultimate meaning of the ballad — love's vanquishing of death — by depicting the mother and child in a pastoral setting in which the child

plays by kicking a death's head into the air like a football. The frontispiece adumbrates the story to follow by depicting the characters of the ballad — the ploughman, the beggar, the wife, the child, and Death — in a grim "Dance of Death" composition. The plates are interleaved with the text, framed and mounted, and bear no legends. (See Figs. 29, 30)

Strang, William. *The Earth Fiend*. 1st ed. 11 full-page etchings. London: Elkin Mathews and John Lane at the Bodley Head, 1892.

This ballad in Scottish dialect tells of a young man whose hard work on his farm brings him no profit. Discovering from a witch that a fiend is thwarting his labors, he manages to catch and domesticate the fiend. As time goes on, the farmer prospers, and the fiend becomes a trusted family friend. Eventually, however, his wild nature overcomes his tamed conditioning, and he kills his sleeping master. As in *Death and the Ploughman's Wife*, Strang's etchings are both grotesque and domestic (see Gordon Ray 168).

Wilde, Oscar. *A House of Pomegranates*. 1st ed. 13 designs, title-page and numerous decorations by Charles Ricketts, 4 full-page plates by Charles Shannon. London: Osgood and McIlvaine, 1891. 157 pp.

This is Wilde's second collection of fairy tales; the first, illustrated by Walter Crane and Jacomb-Hood in 1888 (*The Happy Prince*), is much more clearly aimed at a child audience. The four stories in *A House of Pomegranates* — "The Young King," "The Birthday of the Infanta," "The Fisherman and his Soul," and "The Star Child" — are dark fairy tales, dealing with the moral nature of authority and self knowledge, with appearance and reality, with dreams, visions, illusions, and,

especially, with reflection and mirrors. A unifying theme in these stories is their interrogation of the relationship between art and life. Ricketts' black-and-white designs and decorations show a sensitivity both to page design and to the underlying thematic concerns of the stories. His series of four small decorations introducing each story, each a variation of the woman and pomegranate design of the title page, together with the repeated motifs of fruit, flower, shell, snail, fountain, water, and tree, also integrate image and text. On the other hand, Shannon's series of four half-tone plates seem to develop their own narrative line and thematic concerns, initiated by the first plate, entitled "The Triumph of Beauty"; the subsequent plates are not titled, and are only suggestively related to the accompanying story. Unfortunately, Shannon's plates were printed by some "improved" process which left the reproductions faint and almost obliterated.

Wilde, Oscar. *Salome: A Tragedy in One Act*. 1st English ed. 10 full-page pen-and-ink designs, decorative title page and list of pictures, and *cul de lampe* by Aubrey Beardsley. London: Elkin Mathews & John Lane, 1894. 67 pp.

Salome was written in French and first published in that language in 1893; this is the first English edition of the play. The story is loosely based on the biblical passage which tells of John the Baptist's beheading after Salome, daughter of Herodias, dances for Herod. In Wilde's version, however, it is Salome, not her mother, who demands John's head on a silver charger, and she does so because her lust for the prophet is unreturned, and hence unsatisfied. The play, written in

jewelled poetic prose, is sensuous and oriental in its handling, and passionate and violent in its subject matter. The moon dominates the actions, moods, and characters throughout the play. *Saiome* was a *cause de scandale* in England, and it is sometimes suggested that Beardsley's illustrations contributed to the prejudices against the play. Like the text, the images are both exotic and erotic; however, Beardsley handles his subject with ironic detachment. His drawings counter Wilde's purple patches with the cutting edges of black-and-white line. (See Figs. 1, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20)

Wilde, Oscar. *The Sphinx*. 1st ed. 10 pen-and-ink drawings, 9 full page, by Charles Ricketts. London: Ballantyne Press, 1894. 34 pp.

Wilde's poem is a metrical and linguistic *tour de force* in couplets whose wide-ranging and complex subject — the history of the Sphinx and Egyptian mythology — also evidences the writer's virtuosity. The narrator is a student staying up late who begins his fantastical reveries by addressing a small monument he has in his room. The poem begins as a high-spirited series of questions — which, as the Sphinx remains silent, the narrator must answer for himself, thus creating his own intricate complex of ancient history — but ends in a recoil from the images which the flights of fancy have summoned. The panic verging on hysteria with which the poem concludes is directed not only at the Sphinx and her uncontrollable power, but also at the narrator himself. The narrator fears his own sensuality, and the threat this brings to his creed; his debilitating fear, however, is the recognition of his ability to summon — but not to send — the Sphinx. The fantasy has become

more powerful than the fantasizer. Charles Ricketts' delicate designs, printed in red-brown ink on ivory paper, are beautiful and evocative renderings of the exotic passions and esoteric mythology of the poem. With thin lines and minimal statement, these illustrations show a mastery of Egyptian lore and a tense, erotic symbolism equal to Wilde's own. (See Figs. 9, 10, 11)

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