

A CRITICAL STUDY OF THE WORK

OF

JULIANA HORATIA EWING

(1841 - 1885)

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by Diane Vera Bailey

Bedford College, University of London.

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ABSTRACT

This critical study of Juliana Ewing traces her development and examines the considerable range of her prose and verse. As a talented and imaginative, though uneven, writer, experimenting with diverse forms and techniques, she helped to shape and extend children's fiction in the second half of the nineteenth century.

The introduction indicates the unpublished and published materials for such an undertaking, gives a brief account of the critical reception of her work and provides a selective biography describing the social and intellectual climate in which her work grew, and her formative relationship with her mother, the writer Margaret Gatty. Her juvenilia and her apprentice work in the sixties show her restless experimentation with the inherited models of children's fiction and with some of the dated, threadbare types of adult fiction. Only gradually and through her knowledge of the greatest contemporary novelists did she evolve more personal forms, adapted to young readers, but with no sacrifice of honesty or subtlety.

In the short story, her earliest successes were dream fantasies that transformed the older didactic magic into more expansive psychological accounts. Subsequently, she consciously recreated the spare style, fundamental situations and wayward magic of folk tradition in her imitative tales, and she reworked versions of the legend and parable, making an intelligent contribution to the age's rediscovery of fairy tale. Her particular achievement in domestic fiction was her development in the seventies and eighties of a nouvelle structure and of controlling images as principles of organisation. The resulting form, taut and rich, avoided the problems of her five novels of education which lay in reconciling her intense and accurate recreations of children's experience with

the novel's demand for some terminus of maturity.

Tales, nouvelles and novels present a combination of formal artistry with sympathetic penetration of children's lives that is distinctive in juvenile literature of this date.

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Abbreviations

The place of publication throughout is London unless otherwise stated.

- AE The authorized, complete and uniform edition of the works of Juliana Horatia Ewing, ed. H.K.F. Gatty, 18 vols., SPCK, 1894 - 1896. Reference throughout is to this edition, by volume number and page, unless otherwise stated.
- 1 Melchior's Dream, and other Tales
 2 Mrs. Overtheway's Remembrances
 3 Old-fashioned Fairy Tales
 4 A Flat Iron for a Farthing
 5 The Brownies, and other Tales
 6 Six to Sixteen
 7 Lob Lie-by-the Fire, and other Tales
 8 Jan of the Windmill
 9 Verses for Children, and Songs for Music
 10 The Peace Egg, and other Tales
 11 A Great Emergency, and other Tales
 12 Brothers of Pity, and other Tales of Beasts and Men
 13 We and the World, Part 1
 14 We and the World, Part 2
 15 Jackanapes, Daddy Darwin's Dovecot, and The Story of a Short Life
 16 Mary's Meadow, and other Tales of Fields and Flowers
 17 Miscellanea
 18 Juliana Horatia Ewing and her Books, by Horatia K.F. Eden, with a selection from Mrs. Ewing's Letters. This edition omits pp. 65-67 of the 1885 edition of this work, on Mrs. Ewing's 'method of working', as communicated to Charles Tindall Gatty (See MS item 13, HAS 79).
- AJM Aunt Judy's Magazine for Young People, 1866 - 1885.
- Maxwell Christabel Maxwell, Mrs. Gatty and Mrs. Ewing, Constable, 1949.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank Constable and Co. for their kind permission to reproduce the photograph of Mrs. Ewing, and Bell and Co. for their kind permission to use Edward Bell's George Bell, Publisher. A Brief Memoir (printed for private circulation).



JULIANA HORATIA EWING

INTRODUCTION1 Critical Perspectives

... if I have any gift for writing it really ought to improve under circumstances so much more favourable than the narrowing influence of a small horizon ... I only wish my gift were a little nearer real genius! As it is, I do hope to improve gradually ... I only wish I could please myself better! However, small writers are wanted as well as big ones, and there is no reason why donkey-carts shouldn't drive even if there are coaches on the road.

Mrs. Ewing writing to Mrs. Gatty from Fredericton, Canada, Jan. 2, 1868 (18, 168-9).

Written early in her career, this letter is characteristic of Mrs. Ewing in its humility and its accuracy of judgement. She lived and died a 'small writer', though the improvement she hoped for was considerable and was not slow in coming. This study shares her belief that small writers are wanted as well as big ones, and by extension, so is criticism of small writers. Good literature of any scope is valuable and it is the business of criticism to articulate its specific value. The primary intention of the following chapters is to establish the worth of a neglected writer, and to define the range and quality of her work.

Mrs. Ewing is most often classified in histories of children's literature as a pioneer in the realistic presentation of the child's domesticity¹, and as a contributor to the relaxation of the moral climate surrounding him. The reasons adduced for her subsequent neglect are those of stylistic over-subtlety or a morbid fondness for death-beds (see Introduction, 4). This study departs from this prevailing orthodoxy in its view that Mrs. Ewing's innovations of theme go beyond a fresh focusing on the child's daily activity to a more profound attempt to reveal that activity as the material of growth, and to represent, with appropriate complexity, the negotiations between the child and an external world, stimulating or

repressive, of people and creatures, houses and landscapes, obligations and invitations. She repays closer attention as a writer who, ambivalently and tentatively, attempts to reappraise contemporary assumptions about such social issues as adult authority and children's independence, the allocation and justification of gender roles, the accepted pieties of Christianity and the perpetuation of class divisions.

Coexisting with her redefinition of the terrain that could be mapped in the children's story in the 60s and 70s is a restless concern with fictional form. The sheer variety of her activity is significant here - fantasies and dream-stories, fairy tales and parables, verses, essays and novels, a range matched only by longer-lived contemporaries like Molesworth and Yonge. Her five novels are each versions of the Bildungsroman, attempts to find forms more closely expressive of the movement from childhood to maturity. They exemplify problems experienced in reconciling this ambition with her own weakness in controlling plot, often aggravated by the pace of serial publication. The study will explicate the development of her technique in the novel and suggest that one solution to these problems was her development of a nouvelle form, of proportions not common in adult fiction and unknown in children's literature.

For defining her innovations of subject and her wide experimentation with form, the study's methods are most often those of close critical scrutiny, as best adapted to elucidate what is specific in any writing. Comparisons with other writers are undertaken when this seemed illuminating, but not, I hope, in a wholesale or mechanical way. The legacy of conventions and models for children's fiction, the matrix on which she drew, is also indicated. But simple attributions are less important than the establishment of Mrs. Ewing's particular approach to form, best served by an analytical

and developmental study. As the study attempts to trace an artist's development, chapters are arranged chronologically. Chronology is based on a work's first publication, usually in a periodical, rather than its subsequent appearance in volume form, since this represents the order of composition more accurately. Very occasional departures from strict chronology are made so that works related by form or theme may be compared. The chronological list at the end gives the first magazine appearance of each work, its first subsequent volume publication, and any further important publication before that in the authorized edition, 1894-8, noting accompanying illustrations.

One argument the study advances is that Mrs. Ewing's attempts to relate theme and form depended on her wide experience of adult as well as juvenile fiction. Brian Jackson writing on Philippa Pearce² argues that at all previous periods when children's classics have been produced there has been 'a sturdy adult literature'. Carroll and Nesbit are supported by 'a flourishing adult novel'. Mrs. Ewing's concentration on the psychological, as distinct from the moral or spiritual, geography of the child in the 70s is the outgrowth of a larger concentration in the adult novel of the preceding period.

The nineteenth century's consolidation of an emerging view of the child as the key to the modern family has been conclusively discussed by Philippe Ariès in Centuries of Childhood. The romantic child of literature, first postulated in the Songs of Innocence and Wordsworth's poetry of natural piety, has been discussed in Peter Coveney's The Image of Childhood which traces the centrality of this child as a symbol of growth or of regression in later adult fiction. The burgeoning of children's literature in the 1860s was one function of society's sharper appreciation of the child's meaning,

and its occasional excellence is a consequence of the excellence of adult writing about children. The adult context is particularly important for viewing Mrs. Ewing's fiction. The novel of the child's education sentimentale which she extended downwards had already been validated as a form of contemporary significance in Jane Eyre (1847), David Copperfield (1849-50), Great Expectations (1861), Pendennis (1849-50), The Ordeal of Richard Feverel (1859) or The Mill on the Floss (1860). The novel of moral education mediated through the child's perceptions which she attempted was to be variously developed by James, Butler and Twain. She shared James's opinion, expressed in discussing Treasure Island, that 'The moral consciousness of a child is as much a part of life as the islands of the Spanish Main'³, and, paradoxically, had more trouble treating the islands than the child's consciousness in her own adventure novel.

As important as the community of subject between juvenile and adult fiction is the adult novel's achievement in form, the dazzling battery of techniques for articulating the child's inner landscape and outer movements. This study will try to show how Mrs. Ewing drew on these in various ways: in the memoir form, in the cumulative use of images, in her irony. This enriched her fiction but perhaps put her into a no-man's land between adult and juvenile audiences⁴.

The rest of this introduction is in three parts. Parts 2 and 4 are self-explanatory. But the inclusion of a biography needs explanation.

One difficulty in discussing a minor writer is that assumptions cannot be made about a reader's familiarity with the subject's life and his web of shaping influences. Such familiarity is especially valuable in Mrs. Ewing's case. Her mother, the writer Margaret Gatty, was the largest influence on her daughter's writing, and probably on her life. To understand the daughter it is necessary to know the

mother. In her memoir of Mrs. Gatty Mrs. Ewing wrote:

... those conditions of a writer's life which most moulded his mind, and those (often trifling) incidents which here and there gave the bent to its course, are keys to his art which it is often helpful ... to hold.⁵

A few such keys the following biography attempts to provide.

Mrs. Ewing's childhood was not only formative, as for any writer; it furnished in a specific and durable way the events, places, family models, images and childhood patterns of her work. Family life in a Yorkshire vicarage imprinted itself on her consciousness in innumerable ways. Less profoundly, her subsequent nomadic life as wife of a serving army officer supplied outer landscapes and inner convictions that are also translated into her fiction. Her life is everywhere in her books.

Kathleen Tillotson on novelists of the 1840s said that biography should be the critic's last, not first, resort, but conceded:

Where biography may legitimately help us is in the closer defining of the social and literary tradition in which the writer worked, the class from which he sprang, the books which he read and admired.⁶

This is as true of Mrs. Ewing as of, say, the Brontës in their Yorkshire parsonage. The account discusses her reading and her well-articulated attitudes to religion and class, to nature and advancing urbanization, to art and literature. In spite of the procrustean compartmentalization this involves which a more spacious biography would avoid, the account tries to show that Mrs. Ewing was a fascinating Victorian as well as a fascinating writer.

2 Materials for Study

The unpublished materials for any study of Mrs. Ewing's life or work are relatively rich. The Gatty family were prolific writers. Apart from their published work, noted in the bibliography and discussed where relevant in the text, they produced and preserved a large correspondence, diaries, sketches, music, literary manuscripts and family magazines. There is something characteristically Victorian in the energy and earnestness of their garnering of these documents. Compositely, they form a record of a remarkable family. The collection was deposited by Richard Gatty, Mrs. Eden's executor, with the Hunter Archaeological Society (mark HAS), in the archives of the Sheffield City Library. All such papers consulted for this study are listed in the bibliography. Some of them are interesting, but peripheral to criticism of Mrs. Ewing. Others are illuminating about the formation of her ideas, the fostering of her talent, the gestation of particular works and her view of her age.

The second group consists mainly of Mrs. Ewing's own writing and drawing. One of the least expected items is a small bundle of sketches (HAS 81), cut from her letters - for like her correspondent, Randolph Caldecott, she sometimes illustrated these. They are extremely competent, and more unconstrained and witty than her only published illustrations, to the first issue of Parables from Nature, 5th series.

More important is the collection of family magazines, handwritten by the Gatty children, usually under Julie's direction (HAS 76). Alongside these are several manuscripts, mainly fragmentary, of early Ewing stories, only two of which reached publication, as The Brownies and Monsieur the Viscount's Friend (HAS 77), discussed in Chapter 1.

Mrs. Ewing's Commonplace Book (HAS 78) has scanty references from other men's works, but many snippets of fact about names, places, dialects, later seamed into her fiction, and entries on her parish work such as 'Remedies for dreadful ailments (Diphtheria etc.)' that remind a modern reader of the passage of time. For closer information about her reading it is necessary to consult the two richest groups of papers in the collection, her letters and diaries.

Mrs. Ewing, like all the Gatty women, was a prolific letter writer. The men were less so. The Sheffield holdings include hundreds of letters by Mrs. Ewing from the late 1850s to her death in 1885 (HAS 45, 60-63, 65, 67-68). In a life full of separations she used letters to sustain those relationships essential to her. In them she wrote fully and well about work, study, travel, reading, daily doings and mental preoccupations. She also wrote from duty or love to her readers, fellow-writers, illustrators and publishers. I have not read all these, but concentrated on letters most likely to illuminate her fiction, either because they discuss her own composition and publication, or because in discussing other art or literature they suggest her artistic values or quality of mind. It is in her letters as well as her revisions of texts that her disposition appears to reconsider and rework her fiction at every stage. From a biographical point of view the greatest lack is of Major Ewing's replies to his wife's many letters of 1870 - 1882 when they were separated by his service abroad. The loss, however, is hardly relevant to a critical account.

Like a good Victorian and following her mother's example, Mrs. Ewing kept diaries from adolescence until the year before her last illness. The Sheffield deposit has those from 1856 - 1883, though 1868 and 1874 are missing (HAS 41, 1-26). Entries range from a few words to - exceptionally - a full page, the average being two

or three sentences. Sometimes entries are daily, sometimes more sporadic. What she wrote there was not what Wilde mocked as 'a young girl's record of her own thoughts and impressions (and consequently meant for publication)' (The Importance of Being Earnest, Act 2), but a more vigorous and mundane chronicling of her multiple activities - including writing. Even before she had published a word, her diaries logged work in progress, factually and tersely, without analysis or discussion. She notes the inception and completion of work in hand, the bare occurrence of difficulties, the physical effort involved, and the reactions of her family to bits read out. But none of the thinking of composition goes on in these pages. Nor does she ever use her diaries, as Dorothy Wordsworth, for instance, used her Alfoxden and Grasmere journals, as themselves a creative form. Her letters are more stylish and considered, and, paradoxically, more intimate. The diaries are rarely confessional, even in periods of personal strain. They have an objective quality. The word 'I' is infrequent, and not entirely because of the grammatical shorthand she used. Most usefully for this study, they record not only her writing, but her reading. This is done by title and without comment. The lack of opinion (sometimes supplied by the letters) is offset by the very methodicalness of the recording, which seems some guarantee of its truthfulness and completeness.

Of published materials the most important are the biographies by Horatia Gatty (later Eden) and Christabel Maxwell, her neice. Both worked in the Gatty tradition of accuracy, sympathy and reticence. The family's ambivalent attitude to making their private lives public is most acutely exemplified by Rev. Alfred Gatty's preservation of all his wife's letters, against her wishes, and his declaration on page one of his memoir, A Life at One Living, that his sacred domestic life is not for publication, rigorously borne

out in a text without one reference to his famous daughter and only one to his famous wife (and that to her memorial church window).

After Mrs. Ewing's death in 1885 copyright of her work passed to Mrs. Eden who published her brief Juliana Horatia Ewing and Her Books that year. This is sympathetic, but its combined reverence and reticence inhibit its biographical scope, and its critical judgements are most interesting as a barometer of contemporary taste. It is most valuable for its careful bibliographical record. My additions and amendments to Mrs. Eden's work are contained in the chronological list at the end of this study. Mrs. Eden also supervised the publication of the complete uniform edition by the Society for the promoting of Christian Knowledge (hereafter SPCK) in seventeen volumes between 1894 - 1896 (Crown 8^{vo}). An eighteenth volume was added in 1898, made up of a selection of Mrs. Ewing's letters and a revised reprinting of Juliana Horatia Ewing and Her Books. This omits the account of Mrs. Ewing's method of composition (pp. 65-7, 1885 edition) possibly for reasons of space, but more probably because of its complexity or its doubtful authenticity, as it comes from manuscript notes by Charles Tindall Gatty of Mrs. Ewing's communications (HAS 79).

Many of the single volumes of Mrs. Ewing's work by Bell and SPCK continued in print for several years after her death in their distinctive quarto format with impressive illustrations.

Subsequently, ~~the fullest edition was the inclusion of six~~ Ewing works ^{appeared} in Bell's Queen Treasure series, 1900 - 1910, illustrated by M.V. Weelhouse and Alice Woodward. Surviving copies show their use as prizes or presentation books, indicating that they were still well-regarded, if not well-read. Later selections appeared, like Mrs. Allsopp's The Ewing Book (1922) for schools, or The Ewing Omnibus (1935). There exists a letter from Mrs. Eden approving Mrs. Allsopp's

enterprise (HAS 83, 17 Aug. 1931) but pointing out its bibliographical errors before the list was used for the Cambridge Bibliography. Much later Dent's Illustrated Children's Classics included two volumes of Mrs. Ewing, The Brownies, and other tales (no. 25), with new illustrations by E.H. Shepard (1954), and Lob Lie-by-the-Fire and The Story of a Short Life (No. 63, 1964), with Caldecott's illustrations to the first and three new plates by H.M. Brock. A more tempting combination for children was Gillian Avery's of A Great Emergency and A Very Ill-Tempered Family (1967). But most of Mrs. Ewing is long out of print.

Mrs. Maxwell's biography Mrs. Gatty and Mrs. Ewing (1949) would perhaps not stimulate fresh critical attention for its subjects' work, but it is the fullest account of their lives available, drawing more extensively on the Gatty papers after the death of Mrs. Eden, a tenacious guardian. The writer's family memories enrich her account of her two extraordinary subjects, an account sensitive to the aspirations and constraints of their lives, and their rare reciprocal sympathies. It supplies some of the deficiencies of Eden's solemn approach, being more circumstantial and more alive to Mrs. Ewing's talent for humour and self-deprecation, though sharing Gatty reticence about such matters as marriage and money. It is characteristic, for example, that in biographies emphasising Mrs. Ewing's rapport with children, the fact of her childlessness is nowhere mentioned. Maxwell is an inadequate, even unwilling critic, relying on an emotive vocabulary and whimsical commentary on plot ('Christmas Crackers is a fantasia which epitomises all that the Christmas season can mean to the heart').⁷ She avoids direct critical confrontation, preferring to cite received opinion, or anecdote, and this often determines her use of the Gatty papers, an emphasis which the following biography tries to

redress. However, the accuracy and affection of her work are indisputable, and my own account owes a great deal to it.

3 An Analytical Biography

Juliana Horatia was the second child of the Rev. Alfred and Mrs. Margaret Gatty. She was born in 1841 at Ecclesfield vicarage, Yorkshire, where her father held the living for sixty-three years. The Gattys had ten children between 1840 - 1855, four girls and four boys surviving. Throughout Julie's childhood the nursery was never without occupants or activity, a stimulus to her storytelling and an image of ideal social relations.

Alfred Gatty was born in 1813, the son of a London solicitor. In 1820 he went to prep school in East Sheen and was extremely miserable. A schoolfellow, Richard Burn, given to inventing fantastic yarns, so inspired the two of them that they ran away, were caught and promptly returned. The episode took its place in Gatty mythology, eventually appearing as the truancies in We and the World and A Great Emergency. Alfred went on to Charterhouse and in 1826 to Eton. The family suffered a loss of fortune and moved to Sevenoaks, romantically described in Julie's adolescent writing.⁸ At eighteen Alfred went to Oxford and made friends instead of progress, not being ordained until 1837. His first curacy was at the tiny, moorland chapel of Bellerby, North Yorkshire, the original 'small minster among the moors' (13, 72) in We and the World and source of memories for Mrs. Gatty's scrupulous novel of clerical life The Poor Incumbent. After two years Alfred married Margaret Scott and moved to the more comfortable living at Ecclesfield, in the gift of her uncle, their permanent home.

Margaret was born in 1809, second daughter of Dr. Alexander Scott, Nelson's retired chaplain and secretary on 'The Victory'. Her father's early career always enthralled Margaret. Relics of Nelson, his chair-bed and a funeral cloak, accompanied her to

Ecclesfield. Three of her children were named after him. In 1811 her mother died, leaving her with an enduring sense of loss. The literary convention of the bereaved child had widespread contemporary reality and Margaret's later use of the convention is sometimes quickened by personal memory.

In 1817 the Scotts moved to the pleasant vicarage at Catterick, Yorkshire, and Dr. Scott devoted himself to his huge library and, less assiduously, to his two girls. Their governess, Maria Booth, had an exacting but liberal sense of female education. To her conscientiousness and her father's casually imparted scholarship Margaret owed her wide education and unhindered view of what areas were open to her. Dr. Scott was a prodigious linguist, ancient and modern, and his lexicons, grammars and texts became a shared family repository. Mrs. Ewing inherited her share of these. In 1883 she wrote to her husband:

I catalogued as nearly as possible all my books at Ecclesfield before I left. I got down 325 in 25 different languages ... Of course they are chiefly made up of lexicons ...

Margaret, and later her daughters, became proficient in Italian and German. In the 30s she published German translations in the Bijou annual and sent her terza rima version of some Dante to Lockhart at Blackwood's. He advised her to try prose, advice she characteristically interpreted as encouraging. Her most obvious talent was for drawing, especially studies of plant forms and trees, a skill also taught to her girls., Eleanor in Six to Sixteen compares fashionable water-colour daubs to the accurate drawing of 'the foliage of different trees, and the marking on the bark of the trunks', adding 'It was my mother's drawings I was thinking of' (6, 160). Gatty family relationships were bonded by such teaching. Margaret progressed to learning etching on copper, eventually providing illustrations (rather poor) to the first series of Parables from Nature (1855), and getting work

in the prints collection of the British Museum. The Prints room there had an exhilarating effect on her, described in My Childhood in Art, as it did on Julie in the 70s.

In 1828 Margaret founded a society, 'The Black Bag Club', to which the litterati of Catterick contributed poems, translations, Byronic imitations and romances after Scott. The black bag was made of the famous Nelson funeral cloak, an origin which gave the bag a talismanic potency for the young Gattys when Margaret later revived the society 'for the encouragement of domestic literature'⁹ amongst her children. The catalyst of that society was not Margaret, however, but Julie, 'the projector and manager of all our nursery doings' her sister wrote (18, 15). The first Catterick society was succeeded by 'The Scorton Fun Club' (motto: Rideamus) with Margaret as Secretary 1832-4. She ran its gazette of gossip, skits and satire. As so often with Margaret, life was eventually converted into fiction, and both these clubs appear in Aunt Judy's Letters (1862), in The Black Bag and The Flatlands Fun Gazette, a laborious tale of how two young people cure boredom by writing a newspaper in which local banalities are reported with pompous gravity. Gatty fun needed more imaginative shaping to become good children's fiction.

At her marriage in 1839 Margaret was nearly thirty, an intellectual, energetic woman with untapped reserves. She was not sedated but galvanized by Victorian domesticity, educating her daughters herself and helping to pay for sons at Eton, Marlborough, Winchester and Charterhouse - an expensive diversification: Her first enterprise was a life of her father, published jointly with Alfred in 1842. Publication, by subscription, proved a financial failure, not the last in her writing career. Dr. Gatty was certainly the less remarkable parent. His own writing reveals a mind of bland

orthodoxy. Literature and the Literary Character (1858) is a series of discreet observations on English letters from Chaucer to Tennyson. The Key to 'In Memoriam', 'the finest religious poem in the English language',¹⁰ is a pedestrian commentary. Even his memoir of Ecclesfield, A Life At One Living (1884), is guarded to dullness about personalities, though interesting on institutions. Julie's letters to 'the dear old Pater' suggest a warm relaxed relationship quite different from the intense one with her mother.

Margaret's attitudes were often ambivalent, with discontinuities between theory and practice. Unconstrained in her personal ambitions, she yet disapproved of female suffrage and public-speaking - discrepancies exhibited later by even more prominent women.¹¹ She repeated current wisdom on education: 'We are doing all we can over the boys' education, looking upon it as money laid out to interest. The girls are pretty well; they teach and visit the sick and are as good as four curates!'¹² But yet she taught her daughters, eagerly and erratically, languages, science, drawing and indirectly, writing. Ruskin's proposition in 'Of Queens' Gardens' that girls' education should be in content the same as boys 'but quite differently directed',¹³ was casually followed in the Gatty household, except that 'direction' was minimal. For instance, the girls learned botany, algology and geography from interest, not for training 'in habits of accurate thought'.¹⁴ The Gatty educational model, comprehensive and casual, becomes the representative ideal in Six to Sixteen.

The enormous political and social changes of the 40s left the Gattys moderately conservative. The West Riding was volatile. After the 1832 Reform Act it returned two M.Ps; after 1867, six. Ecclesfield parish had perimeters bounded by lovely countryside but enclosing an industrial village where children in 1840 made nails, forks and files for fourteen hours a day. The strange marriage of rural

beauty and industrial despoilation, of which Lawrence became the sharpest analyst,¹⁵ was the North's most characteristic landscape, described by both Mrs. Gatty and Mrs. Ewing. Mrs. Gatty was committed to the local community, teaching its children three times a week (between child bearing); but her moral earnestness, the hall mark of her writing and of the age, had no political dimension. It is confined to the meliorist view of poverty and class contained in The Drummer or The Hundredth Birthday, and never issues in the confused radicalism of Charlotte Brontë or Mrs. Gaskell whose experiences of Yorkshire were comparable. Her social compliance, even under the assault of West Riding squalor, resulted from profound religious authoritarianism, quintessentially expressed in Kicking, a parable of submission:

Animals under man - servants under masters - children under parents - wives under husbands - men under authorities - nations under rulers - all under God - it is the same with all: - in obedience of will is the only true peace.¹⁶

Dr. Gatty was vigorous in purely local reforms. In 1841 'The parish was rude and rough, notoriously so',¹⁷ and he introduced a firmer more caring administration. But he habitually located social evil in working-class laxity. ('So long as a fortnight's hard drinking can be lightly termed, "going on a spree", I can see no hope of amendment')¹⁸ and reflected with distaste on earlier local unrest: 'The whole district about Sheffield was violently disturbed by the spirit of Chartism'.¹⁹ He praises Dickens for his 'close painting of the million, and caustic reprimands of the upper ten thousand',²⁰ but his own reprimands are oftenest for the million.

Alfred's living was securely within conservative landed interest, but his congregation was less secure. An 1851 census of church attendance showed that 8.6% of West Riding population attended Anglican service (against 13.2% nationally), 7.3% Methodist, 2.5%

Congregationalist and 1.4% Baptist. Not only were nonconformists in the majority, but most of the population did not attend any church.²¹ The Gattys' religion had a sectarian edge. Margaret's theology was dogmatic, her thinking characterized by the Hebraism Arnold described which 'seizes upon certain plain, capital intimations of the universal order, and rivets itself on the study and observance of them.'²² She was hostile towards Catholicism and saw the publication of Alfred's sermons in 1846 as a blow against the Oxford Movement. Her story, The Treasure-Seeker, has its climax at a French midnight mass, interrupted by the author's reservations about ceremonial worship: if it 'could do much towards making a man pious, keeping him holy, or preserving him from sin, what saints the Popes of Rome would have been! ...'²³ But the portrait of Father Ulric, a Benedictine of 'enlightened views', is tortuously fair. And when her sister, Horatia, Romanized she expressed only thankfulness that this eccentric, restless woman was at peace.

Her example must have been a more formative influence on her children than her precepts. In 1845 on a five-month visit to Hastings, described in A Dull Watering Place, Margaret began collecting seaweeds. Her retentive memory, taste for classification and a useful ability to draw specimens turned a hobby into a science. With the help of authorities like George Johnson, marine biologist, and Dr. Harvey of Dublin University who corresponded with her for sixteen years, she made rapid progress. In 1863 she published The History of British Seaweeds (2 volumes), the standard reference work for beginners for many years. She pursued algology indifferent to the trammels of domesticity, dragging her children with her on delightful expeditions. Her achievement was to get beyond amateurism, an invaluable example for her children. In Six to Sixteen it is not the father who is the scientist, but the mother.

After the birth of her ninth child in 1851 and before she took on the editorship of Aunt Judy's Magazine in 1866 Mrs. Gatty wrote most of her fiction. Her mind was unusually alert, her prose often arrestingly exact, but she lacked what Julie had at an early age, a strong narrative impulse.

The Fairy Godmothers (1851) is a collection of four stories using fairy magic 'to illustrate some favourite and long cherished convictions',²⁴ a common enough device at this date. The supernatural powers carry no invitation to wonder, they fix attention prosaically on this world, usually a moral fault. In Joachim The Mimic, the hero is granted the power of imitation by a genie, but misuses it in ridicule. In Darkness and Light, the child suffers from the "silliness" of fear of the dark. In The Fairy Godmothers, fairies grant gifts to their godchildren which all lead to moral errancy - except that which the story reinforces, the love of employment, a virtue more at home in Ecclesfield than fairyland. Such tutelary fairies and schematized structures Mrs. Ewing tried to shed in her reconsideration of the fairy tale. Mrs. Gatty produces odd oscillations between blatant moralizing and moments of observed domesticity:

"Nurse", said Hermione, "your baby is always and always going to sleep; why doesn't he go, and then I could have a bit of fun?"²⁵

The moralizing itself is unusually harsh. Darkness and Light has a grating eighteenth century rationality; its parents could be from Edgeworth or Sherwood. Roderick's fear of the dark, like Rosamond's desire for the purple jar, must be subjected to the pressure of reason. The fairy strikes him blind for a year, so that he learns to trust darkness and God, and the parents are grateful for the efficacy of this lesson. In her earliest fantasies Mrs. Ewing was to project a relationship between real and dream worlds

that was psychological not didactic, even when she kept the inherited schematic structures. And in the best, Amelia and the Dwarfs, magic is not the devious instrument of authority but an irrational presence, more baffling to the parents than the child. The didactic collusion between parents and fairies is dissolved.

In 1855 Mrs. Gatty chanced on a form that caught and mirrored Victorian taste perfectly. Parables from Nature discloses a creation every atom of which invites moral interpretation. Nature was a sermon, the pursuit of science not unsettling but confirmatory of faith. Mrs. Ewing read The Origin of Species in 1867 and Animals and Plants Under Domestication in 1869, and remained, like her mother, unperturbed, though her view of nature became progressively secularized. Mrs. Gatty, with none of the tortuous strategies of reconciliation of fellow-scientists like Philip Gosse, author of Omphalos: an attempt to untie the geological knot (1857), translated zoophyte activity or the habits of bees into neat moral prescriptions, in stories with titles like Knowledge Not the Limit of Belief or Authority and Obedience. The cast of mind which prompted her to work this vein to exhaustion with new series in 1857, 1861, 1864 and 1871, was sympathetic to the age. Tennyson read 'Nature like an open book'.²⁶ Aunt Judy's carried essays revealing God's hand in recondite botany.²⁷ Kingsley, the writer with whom Mrs. Gatty had most in common, exclaimed 'I should like to preach a sermon on chalk downs and another on chalk streams'.²⁸

But the congeniality of parable was also a matter of artistic form. It was short, and Mrs. Gatty never sustained a long novel. It was speculative, narrative being subordinated to the abstractions spun from it. And it tolerated erratic styles. The Preface, 1855, invokes Andersen and Browne as models, also favourites of Mrs. Ewing. Browne makes an apt comparison. As he found philosophy turned to

divinity by the 'strange and mystical transmigrations' of silkworms, Mrs. Gatty's science was turned to theology by the 'wonderful facts in God's creation'.²⁹ Observation and speculation could coalesce in a style that would be bizarre in domestic fiction. Indeed it is bizarre in Gifts (Third series) on the rivalries of vegetables, or A Lesson of Hope which swamps careful analogies in sentimentality. But sometimes it suggests unexpected wonder, as on the transmigrations of the dragon-fly: '... for the time came to all when the lustrous eyes of the perfect creature shone through the masked face of the Grub'.³⁰ Mrs. Ewing learned this style of sensuous science for her essays and took the parable-form for her own uses in the 70s. But the example of Browne defines the limitations of Mrs. Gatty's achievement here. Metaphysics are not morality, and her dedicated anthropomorphization of everything, from tortoises to seaweed, to express a rather conventional morality, locks her firmly in her period, without stylistic resources to communicate more profoundly.

In 1856 appeared Worlds Not Realised, of the nouvelle length though not the artistic proportions of Mrs. Ewing's later fiction. Its lineage is again in children's fiction, not the moral tale, but the story of heuristic education, like Edgeworth's Early Lessons. In its series of scenes, two children absorb lessons, moral and practical, from situations to which their leisured and aristocratic papa introduces them. It is feeble fiction of debate. One scene in which papa and some student cousins debate the mechanistic nature of man suggests a novel like Tom Brown at Oxford (1861) - much to Mrs. Gatty's disadvantage. Only in moments of sheer domesticity, before the wheels of explication grind, is the fiction absorbing, as in the child's rescue of a cab-horse (purloined directly in Jan of the Windmill), or the described 'deerhound evenings' when the children rest on the dog to chat.

In 1857 came Proverbs Illustrated, an unenticing title. Mrs. Gatty was enormously inept at titles, changing them, creating confusion over the 'Aunt Judy' persona, and obscuring her subjects instead of announcing them. Proverbs contains three unproverbial stories. The best, The Drummer, is a 'hall and hamlet' tale which follows a poor idiot and a dissolute heir to their deaths in the same battle, a pattern similar to Jackanapes, but with the crudest of moral intentions. Its early scenes, though, a 'Cottage Tragedy', describe an elder brother's nursing of the idiot baby with undidactic delicacy that suggested possibilities for Mrs. Ewing's use of the same family pattern in Jan. The Emblem Book (another wretched title) is a more rigid tale of social contrasts in an etiolated fictional tradition, with an unquestioning morality (the rich should be more charitable, the poor more industrious). The props come to life only momentarily through the unusual psychology she evolves for her rich man, a small-scale Dombey with a violent aversion to his daughter after the death of his son and heir. He is won back to humanity and to his daughter - but in a contradictory and undercutting end gets a new son too, an ambivalent conclusion exactly matched in The Story of a Short Life which replaces its lost hero with a new heir as an afterthought. The Footstep on the Stair is a confession narrative by a dissipated hero haunted by eerie footsteps, symbolic of suppressed guilt. It blends Gothic melodrama with some Poe-like self-analysis: 'Merelina was, indeed, the heroine of self-denial, as I was the convicted ruffian of self-worship'.³¹

Gothicism, a more private indulgence with Mrs. Ewing, was even plainer in Legendary Tales (1858). These were subsequently published as The Hundredth Birthday, and other Tales with the explanation 'the tales themselves are not "Legends", either original or revived; they are all domestic stories, and treat of domestic feelings'.³² The

plain fact is that the three stories have nothing in common, either legendary or domestic. The Treasure-Seeker is a wild Gothic romance of rival brothers, cursed treasure, and daemonic astrologers, prefaced by an introduction as long as the tale on the folly of wealth. A Legend of Sologne is a hybrid of dream-fantasy, animal tale and novel of manners. Beneath an extraordinary narrative is a theme which often moved Mrs. Gatty to write well but to which she could never bring a steady fictional focus. It is the awakening of human sympathies in a hero socially or psychologically alienated, the protean hero of The Poor Incumbent, The Footstep on the Stair, The Love of God. The psychology of this interested her far more than the awakening of conscience, a more pervasive contemporary theme, because self-preoccupation appeared to her a cardinal sin:

Surrounded by one's own thoughts and habits, without reference to other people, one becomes self-deceived and self-devoted, without knowing it.³³

Mrs. Ewing in Daddy Darwin's Dovecot explored the theme's implications by conjoining it - as in Silas Marner - with that of the foundling child. This nouvelle also portrayed a rural community for which Ecclesfield supplied the lineaments, as it does for The Hundredth Birthday, but more intensely viewed and valued than in Mrs. Gatty's simple parochial tale.

Also in 1858 appeared The Poor Incumbent, a shifting, shapeless novel but a valuable record of a harsh Northern parish (discussed Chap. 6). In 1859 appeared The Human Face Divine, and other tales. The title story and My Childhood in Art are short memoir-novels, and their relevance to Mrs. Ewing is discussed below. A Dull Watering Place (first published in Excelsior, a sixpenny magazine) is simpler in events and construction. It is mainly dialogue, more realistic than Mrs. Gatty's frequently stilted exchanges, a conversation between aunt and niece about prejudiced judgements. In the background

is the moral tale, but in the foreground is a plausible relationship. Aunt Margaret uses jokes, tricks and irony, not moral hectoring; she advocates rational interests and independence of mind for girls 'unencumbered by conventionalities'. She reappears in Mrs. Ewing's more densely realized fiction as Mrs. Arkwright and Aunt Isobel. Perhaps here the accents are closer to speech because the sentiments are Mrs. Gatty's own:

" ... so many people cannot energize sufficiently to break away from routine, ... I cannot myself say that the smell of fish and tobacco is absolutely charming, Eleanor; but I do maintain that the cuttle-fishes, and the shells, and the rope-houses, and the Crusoes in the Cliff, fully counterbalance the trifling annoyance." ³⁴

This fresher realism has wider scope in Aunt Judy's Tales (1859) and Aunt Judy's Letters (1862), more completely and undilutedly 'from the life'. Mrs. Gatty's progress in fiction is random, one feels, without the artistic forethought her daughter had. Here, more by accident than experiment, she grasped a form suited to her wayward storytelling talents, as the parable suited her ingrained moralism. The first volume purports to be six tales told by a sister to a large family, the second is six stories in letters written home while she is visiting. The very patterns of Ecclesfield life become the enclosing frame of fiction; Mrs. Gatty's subject swept around her as she wrote. The form, like the Parables, minimizes the need for sustained novelistic structure, and weights the 'frame' as heavily as the inset tales. Aunt Judy, Juliana's pet name, is drawn from life:

There is not a more charming sight in the domestic world, than that of an elder girl in a large family, amusing what are called 'the little ones'. ³⁵

The eight children are referred to by number, barely characterized beyond a corporate identity. Mamma is vaguely indicated. The narrative emphasis is on the story-telling relationship itself.

Each story arises from some family crisis which Aunt Judy meets and resolves through narrative. She is neither the conventional storyteller, nor the Edgeworthian parent. She romps, dresses up, takes cowslip tea and is an ideal emissary between childhood and adulthood.

The use of a narrator to bind several stories, what Forster calls 'the tapeworm by which they are tied together',³⁶ was well established in children's fiction. Early in the century the narrator was the pointer to each tale's burden of morality or piety, as in Mary Hughes' Aunt Mary's Tales for the Entertainment and Improvement of Little Girls (1817). With the relaxation of didacticism the narrators became more genial, purveyors of reminiscence, like Mrs. Molesworth's grandmothers, or of fantasy, as in Frances Browne's Granny's Wonderful Chair (1857). Many of Aunt Judy's narratives keep the exemplary function. A case of mumps by No. 6 produces Grandmamma's Throat, a tale of an ailing child's recovery. Grumbling by 6 and 7 is quelled by The Little Victims, a lively parody representing children's lives in terms of torture and imprisonment. Some tales, like Vegetables Out of Place, a stiff fable on ambition, move back to the dominant conventions of the 40s. But others, under the pressure of Mrs. Gatty's fitful imagination, move forwards markedly to the honest representation of children's behaviour of the 60s. Aunt Sally's Life is 'the adventures of a doll half a century old', produced by Aunt Judy in the doll-convention, best exemplified by Richard Horne's Adventures of a London Doll (1846), of lively, child-sized autobiography. The methods are those of direct reporting, with brisk, accurate dialogue:

..."Let's have a trial, and hang old Blackamoor! I've got some pieces of wood here which will make a capital gibbet."

"All right!" answers the first boy, as coolly as possible; "but what shall she have done?"

"Murdered her husband", suggests boy No. 2 with a smile on his face. "Let's smash one of the old dolls for the corpse of the late lamented Mr. Blackamoor. I'll be counsel for the prosecution."³⁷

The defendant is found "Very Guilty Indeed" and the children smash the laundry window during the execution, a mishap parents should take in their stride, says the narrator. It is a matter of justice to point out how keenly Mrs. Gatty partakes of the new climate of levity in children's fiction here.

Mrs. Ewing's borrowings from these vigorous uneven books were large and small, and will be discussed below. The centrality of teller and tale she developed through the multiple strands of Mrs. Overthway. The patterns of inter-related context and stories she varied in her early fantasies (using the vertical story-within-story design) and her stories purporting to be reminiscence. Mrs. Gatty's occasional realism of representation and the underlying acceptance of children's natures, almost purged of didacticism, were a more pervasive influence.

Mrs. Gatty wrote no more successful fiction. In 1863 she translated Jean Macé's Histoire d'une Bouchée de Pain with her daughters' help.³⁸ Domestic Pictures and Tales (1864) is halting uninventive fiction. Her last works, Waifs and Strays of Natural History (1870), The Book of Emblems and The Book of Sundials (1872), collections of proverbs and mottoes, show her as moralistic to the end.

With her mother preoccupied by publication and seaweed, Julie's role as family story teller was confirmed. The children's appetite for narrative was a constant stimulation. Her diary of 1859 shows the perfect congruence of teller and audience:

- Jan 1 In the morning worked and told Dot and Regie ghost stories.
- 10 In the afternoon went out with Undine and told her 'Father Beanstalk'.
- Feb 2 ... told the children 'King Faithful and his wife or the blue-eyed bear' and 'The Don's daughters'.
- March 10 The universal suffrage was that 'The Little Housewife' was the best story they had had.

Family taste was for fairy tales of romances and melodrama, rarely contemporary life. On 25 July, 1861, she wrote '... Dot and I looked through old diaries to find the names of some of the stories that I used to tell them. Found 28'. Even when she was writing professionally, the old oral tradition persisted. In 1866, occupied with Mrs. Overtheway, she noted: 'Worked and told the bairns the story of Princess Litanian'. What is clear here is that her writing was no direct transference of the family sagas into print. In fact, they were so prolific and extravagant it required discipline to rechannel her creativity into subtler forms.

Coexisting with this miniature oral tradition were the family magazines. From 1856 until her marriage, Julie was editor, main contributor and transcriber of these home-made periodicals. The earliest, Anon, appeared from 1856-9 when it was reborn as Le Caché. In 1862 The Gunpowder Plot began, in more substantial format (several sewn sheets), and continued irregularly for several years³⁹ - one issue being subtitled 'The Invalid's Daily Magazine, warranted to come out when the Editor can manage it' (5 March, 1863), a reference to Julie's frequent bad health.

Julie was the versatile mainstay of this tradition, as she was to be of Aunt Judy's Magazine, although all the Gattys contributed to the mélange of jokes, parodies, news, poems and yarns. A typical serial was The Battle of Cranbourne Common, 1862, a crude romance after Scott, with the novel and unworkable device of a clock-narrator. Such experiments were wisely kept for family consumption. In fact, the inference that these compositions were trials for her published work needs qualification. They ran at least till 1866 by which time she had published eight very different stories. Nor did the magazines represent corporate fantasies, like Angria or Gondal; they express mutuality of taste rather than alternative worlds.

What the magazines did for Julie was to foster a talent for narrative, stimulate good working habits, and allow some ranging over modes and material. Themes from her early published work are present here, but in rough unsophisticated forms, and they all represent directions soon outgrown. The Gothic strain, noticed in Mrs. Gatty who had had a youthful enthusiasm for Mrs. Radcliffe, Mary Shelley, Maturin and Morier, was generously indulged in the magazines. One undated Gunpowder Plot has a tale called The Homeopathic Ghost, a lurid yarn of doomed sailors called The Wreckers, and an editor's introduction nicely blending graves, worms and epitaphs. Julie's early stories show her trying to give this unpromising matter respectable form (The Yew Lane Ghosts, The Mystery of the Bloody Hand) - and largely failing.

Surviving fragments of manuscript (HAS 77) show her persistent efforts to make something of this hopelessly outmoded strain of supernatural events and stereotyped historical settings. The Ghost Story was apparently abandoned as unworkable. Olivia Vane exists in a clean copy by the family friend, Eleanor Lloyd, editor of the privately printed The Powder Magazine, 1868-73, in which other work of Mrs. Ewing appeared (see Chap. 1). Olivia Vane attempts a formal complexity not found in the magazines; a girl questions her grandmother about a portrait and the ensuing first-person narrative tells of Olivia Vane's haunting by her lover's ghost. The relationship of girl and narrator approximates to that in Mrs. Overthway, but without its tender dialectic of youth and age. The inset narrative is a compilation of clichés in a creaking style. The manuscript is undated, but diary references and the fact of Miss Lloyd's copy suggest its writing in the early sixties when she had published different and better work. Her weaning from the lurid matter and the exaggerated manner of the magazines was a protracted one.

Julie's debut in print was assumed as inevitable by her admiring family. Mrs. Gatty's contributions to The Monthly Packet had led to an acquaintance with Charlotte Yonge. So when Julie finished her story, A Bit of Green, after working at it throughout April, 1861, that seemed the obvious outlet. On May 1st she recorded 'We heard from Miss Yonge who is most complimentary and will take the story for the M.P. (Thank God)'. Julie was paid twenty-five shillings (Diary, June 29, 1861). Encouraged, she produced The Blackbird's Nest and had a family reading on August 8, before its publication in the August Monthly Packet. Her next tale was more ambitious than these versions of tract-tale and moral story and gave more trouble. On September 5 she reached a low point with Melchior's Dream and resolved, on family advice, 'To write no more at present'. However, by October 5 it had been corrected and despatched. Perhaps the visit of Miss Yonge and her mother to the vicarage on October 2-3 was instrumental here. The Gatty women noted, ruefully, the Yonges' affluence, and Charlotte's unexpected shyness. Julie wrote 'Would be beautiful but for a something. A want partly of happiness, partly of appreciativeness, partly of calm about her' (Diary Oct. 2, 1861). In 1865 Julie stayed with them at Otterbourne and just missed meeting Keble whose Christian Year she had been reading. The friendship developed no further, but Charlotte's generous, informed support was a positive contribution to Julie's early start, and the two writers always noticed the other's work with respect.

Her first collection, Melchior's Dream, and other tales (1862), was shrewdly titled after what is outstandingly the best story. To the three Monthly Packet tales she added Friedrich's Ballad and Monsieur the Viscount's Friend, historical tales with roots in the family magazines. The latter, set in the French Revolution, involved

background reading so that romantic stereotypes could be modified by accurate period detail. 'Read for my French story' becomes a frequent diary entry.⁴⁰ It was a laborious task - 'Wrote for nearly two and a half hours before breakfast and accomplished sixty lines!' she lamented on April 28. The lack of ease appears in this halting, misconceived tale. The volume was illustrated - badly - by her sister, 'M.S.G', and solicitously prefaced by Mrs. Gatty (it is 'surely full of promise'). Less biased testimonials came from Charlotte Yonge and Dinah Mulock: 'I would be glad if any book of mine touched another person as that tale (Melchior's Dream) touched me'.⁴¹ The strongest evidence of originality and 'promise' is certainly in the title-story with its cunning reconciliation of domestic naturalism and dream allegory. But the volume was slight, and to add pages to its promise, Horatia Gatty brought out a new edition in 1885, adding The Yew Lane Ghosts, a parochial tale first appearing in The Monthly Packet (June 1865) and two later family stories, A Happy Family (AJM, 1883) and A Bad Habit (AJM, 1877). With this more substantial format, dignified by Gordon Browne's illustrations, Horatia hoped to bring the volume in line with other Ewing works then in print.

Between 1862 and 1865 Julie published little and read widely; it was a period in which directions were formulated. Over Christmas 1861 she had scribbled stories for The Black Bag Club, an activity itself fictionalized in Mrs. Gatty's story of that name, by the curious merging of life and art she practised. The story describes how the children are 'stumped' for contributions and turn to Aunt Judy for help. She replies that even Andersen 'was not beholden to caves or forests, or any curious things or people, for his story-telling inspiration'. To demonstrate 'the Andersenian power of spinning gold threads out of old tow-ropes'⁴² she writes The Smut,

The Crick and The Brothers, brief moral fables on humble subjects with something of Andersen's distancing irony and worldly pose. Julie's diary for December shows that she was actually their author. In the late sixties Andersen was to be an even more influential model.

Andersen was one author she read assiduously, from as early as 1856 (Diary, Jan. 1) to her courtship in 1866 when 'Mr. Ewing read Andersen to us' (Feb. 18). Reading aloud was more than a drawing-room occupation to the Gattys. They did it in bed, while they worked and while they dressed. Andersen, Grimm and Bechstein were favourites,⁴³ as well as the best narrative and romantic poetry. All Scott, Keats, Childe Harold and The Ancient Mariner were thoroughly known. Julie's private reading covered the more metaphysical even mystical strain in English poetry. Young's Night Thoughts, Blake (unspecified passages of which she wrote out in 1865), Wordsworth, Milton, and - very often - Herbert, were read in the sixties. Such reading would return her to the source of the Romantic child whose essential capacity for growth through nature involved the totality of his being, a corrective to the century's progressively sentimentalized versions which fragmented aspects of this whole into the innocent babe, the misunderstood martyr, the 'old-fashioned' sage, or the visionary, not long for this world. It is possible to detect both the Romantic child and his various descendants in her fiction. But it is hardly possible to detect any awareness of the best English poetry in her own abysmal verse.

All the Gattys revered Tennyson. Julie read The Idylls of the King in 1861. In 1865, Mrs. Gatty took her to Farringford to stay with the Tennysons, admirers of her Parables and correspondents since 1858. Julie was excited to hear the poet ('awfully jolly')

read Locksley Hall.

As an ardent, though increasingly liberal, Anglican, Julie read most devotional books fashionable amongst intellectual women. Á Kempis and Jeremy Taylor were favourites, followed by St. Augustine, Pascal, Tracts for the Times, The Perpetual Curate, The Life of John Knox, and the sermons of Butler and Vaughan. She became a connoisseur of sermons, reporting frankly in her diary on current specimens.

Her reading of fiction in these formative years was equally wide - all the Waverley novels, most Dickens, and more selectively, Thackeray, Trollope, Bulwer, Eliot and Charlotte Brontë. She read in 1861 consummately popular pieces like East Lynne, The Woman in White with its complicated mechanisms and shifting views, The Vicar of Wakefield and Sir Charles Grandison, a wide range of novelistic forms. The children's literature she read was often that spanning juvenile and adult tastes by its excellence or interest - Lamb's Tales, The Arabian Nights, the Tom Brown novels, Ainsworth, The Water-Babies, Alice in Wonderland and Tales from the Norse.

In this fallow period, Julie probably considered whether to write for adults. Her reappearance in print in 1865 was with the uncharacteristic The Yew Lane Ghosts, and The Mystery of the Bloody Hand in the adult periodical London Society (Jan - Feb, 1865). In the latter, a clumsy five-chapter nouvelle, the garish historicism and easy frissons of the family magazines are resurrected lengthily and finally. The experiment was decisive. Mrs. Gatty wrote: 'I do not think she will write much more for children. It appears to me that the higher flight suits her best, and is her natural vocation'.⁴⁴ But Julie was wiser. She recognized that her best work was the representation of children's experience and turned all her talents to this.

The Brownies (Monthly Packet, Dec., 1865) returns directly to the pattern of Melchior's Dream, her best story so far. With the sixteen pounds paid for it she organised her first trip abroad, to Antwerp to see Churches and Flemish art, with her brother Regie, 'I paying the piper'.⁴⁵ Her elation was justified by the confident skill of the story, in spite of its over-complication. This can be traced to an earlier version in the extant manuscript, Good Little People. The Story of a Gravestone (HAS 77). The published version is a many-layered narrative. The Rector's children are weary of their chores, so as a distraction from, and solution to, their problems, the Doctor tells the Brownies' story. This inset tale has two layers: an imitation folk narrative of a tailor and his sons, and the dream-fantasy which teaches them to be industrious brownies, not boggarts. The theme of work, a Victorian moral gospel, is subtly sustained through each layer. But the point of overloading is reached by the inclusion of The Story of a Gravestone, a tragical biography of the doctor's bereavements. The author comments 'it ought not to be told ... And yet it has to do with the Doctor, and is very short, so it shall be put in, after all' (5, 18). The story is a misjudgement compounded, not excused, by the comment. It is the residue of the earlier version which Julie was reluctant to abandon altogether. This has the Doctor giving a tea party to which each child takes a doll whose 'biography' is supplied, along with the Doctor's own sad history, a bizarre amalgam of 'fun' and sentimentality. The Brownies retains, verbatim, the lachrymose history of dead children and fading wife. It was to reappear in Mrs. Ewing's novels, not always so distractingly, in the sad adult figures she often makes the child's mentors.

The shift from the malformed early tale to The Brownies is towards the child as centre of interest. The relationship with

some unparental adult, as the provider of solacing narrative and the repository of experience, was to be centralized in her very next fiction, Mrs. Overthway's Remembrances. Its increased complexity and artistry resulted from the reading and trials of the sixties and from the provision in 1866 of a secure outlet for her work.

In 1866, Bell and Sons invited Mrs. Gatty to edit the new Aunt Judy's Magazine for Young People, a title given in the afterglow of her two successful volumes, and later regretted. Edward Bell wrote:

It is doubtful whether the title with its purely domestic origin was well adapted for a publication which had to depend for its existence on a continuous accession of new supporters who were not necessarily familiar with its original ... its appeal was to a rather select class, and it gained the wider popularity which can only be attained by consulting the tastes of various social levels.⁴⁶

This is true. The new magazine was part of a widespread increase in juvenile periodicals.⁴⁷ Some, like The Monthly Packet (1851-98) had a sectarian interest, here to make 'girls more steadfast and dutiful daughters of our own beloved Catholic Church of England', but backed by Yonge's talent and acumen. Some survived by flexibility. Chatterbox, also in 1866, under Erskine Clarke's editorship, began as a wholesome alternative to penny dreadfuls and diversified sufficiently to survive into the next century. Some specialized. Little Folks, from 1871, was known for the range of its illustrations, often fitting a text to existing pictures, a practice Mrs. Ewing followed several times with surprising success. To this periodical she contributed My Godmother's Picture Book in 1872. Significantly, the periodical closest to Aunt Judy's had an even shorter life. Good Words for the Young (from Nov. 1868), under Norman MacLeod, was outstandingly lively, with George MacDonald as its mainstay and contributions from Mrs. Craik, Kingsley and William Gilbert in

its first issue. MacLeod's preliminary announcement 'a child's book may be as great as well as a beautiful work'⁴⁸ was matched by Mrs. Gatty's statement of intention '... our honest endeavour and wish have been to provide the best of mental food for all ages of young people, and for many varieties of taste ... we have everywhere sought for excellence both in art and literature'.⁴⁹

During her editorship (1866 - 1873) and Horatia Gatty's (1874 - 1885), with Mrs. Ewing co-editor 1874-6, Aunt Judy's strove for excellence. However, Bell claimed it paid its way for only one year and publication was handed over to David Bogue in 1882. They intended to increase the price from sixpence to a shilling, but Ruskin who admired the magazine intervened with financial guarantees to keep the lower price. Nevertheless Bogue went bankrupt, and the Gattys were harassed by loss and disruption. Bemrose and Sons took over briefly and the magazine ended in 1885 when Mrs. Ewing died.

Mrs. Ewing was by far the most frequent contributor. In its nineteen years she brought out thirty-three poems, six translations, and sixty-two novels, nouvelles or tales in its pages. The volume for 1876 lists twenty separate contributions, her most prolific period, (in 1878-85 her average was six). Aunt Judy's would not have kept its prestige or readers so long without her. But its decline cannot be attributed directly to her reduced contribution. Reasons are bound up with Horatia's editorial inflexibility, her adherence to a formula developed by her mother for earnest readers of the sixties. The market had changed, as one study notes:

The last two decades of Victoria's reign were years of unparalleled expansion in publishing for women. Excluding family journals and all-fiction periodicals, both of which had a feminine bias, not less than 48 new titles entered the field between 1880 - 1900.⁵⁰

The gradual differentiation in the market between girl and boy readers may have meant Aunt Judy's lost its male readership.

Perhaps We and the World (1877-9) and Jackanapes were attempts to recover them? The girl of the period had a new range to choose from. Aunt Judy's earnest charm had become an anachronism.

Aunt Judy's had an impressive range of contributors. In the sixties appeared Charles Stuart Calverley (C.S.C), Mary Senior Clark, G.M. Fenn, M.B. Smedley, Lewis Carroll, Charlotte Yonge (in a translation 1869) and Mrs. O'Reilly. Later there were Ascott R. Hope, Mrs. Molesworth (as 'Ennis Graham', 1878), Flora Shaw (as Author of Castle Blair), Frances Peard, Christabel Coleridge and 'F. Anstey'. Alongside such established figures appeared a great many Gattys in protean forms, providing songs, poems, travel articles, scientific pieces, and book reviews. Reviews are not always signed, but some were by Mrs. Ewing, a task which extended her contact with the diverse patterns of children's fiction.

Her knowledge of Hans Andersen was certainly increased by his appearances in Aunt Judy's. In 1847 Mary Howitt's The True Story of My Life presented the romantic facts of his early struggles.⁵¹ Mrs. Eden opens her biography of her sister by recalling her delighted reading of this, hoping she may give similar pleasure to Ewing readers (18, 9). In 1846 at least five collections of his stories appeared in English and his popularity grew with his personal visits in 1847 and 1857. It was her awareness that he was good business, as well as personal admiration, which prompted Mrs. Gatty's writing to him in 1866 and beginning the relationship with Aunt Judy's. Twenty-five stories appeared there between 1867 - 1873. Translators are not always named but included Augusta Plesner, H. Ward, and Edward Bell. The magazine also reviewed him glowingly, if imprecisely. In 1866 What The Moon Saw, and other tales is praised as masterly, though 'rather

more touched with melancholy than we care to see',⁵² suggesting Mrs. Gatty's authorship. His abdication from moralism - profound in painful stories like The Shadow and The Little Mermaid - disturbed Mrs. Gatty. Her ambivalence was not shared by Mrs. Ewing who admired him unreservedly and also took the critical measure of her mother's limits of sympathy:

On the other hand, when Hans Andersen's fairy tales, with all their sympathy for every corner of creation, took her fancy quite by storm, she complained that so many of them were only quaint and taught nothing: imperfect 'devices' - the body without the soul!⁵³

In 1868, The Will-o-the Wisps are in Town, and other tales is reviewed rhapsodically. In later issues Andersen is the yardstick by which new fairy tales are measured,⁵⁴ a recognition of his key position in the growth of fantasy. As the Opies say, with him came 'an unfreezing of men's minds, an appreciation of fantasy literature and its limitless possibilities,'⁵⁵ a new thaw shared by Mrs. Ewing's experiments.

Her diaries show that she began Danish with Fru Maria Bojesen who stayed at Ecclesfield (June 8, 1866). The Commonplace Book notes 'She knows H.C. Andersen and says he has the mind of a child', and includes a translation of a pious poem from Danish, proudly signed 'J.H.G'. Fru Bojesen appears to be the original of Madame in Six to Sixteen, as Julie notes her eccentricities (a huge hat, veil and blue spectacles for croquet) and her encounter with Yorkshire locals at the Fair ('She highly disgusted with it'. Diary, June 11). However, it is unlikely Julie ever read Andersen with any fluency in Danish.

In 1867, Julie married. Alexander Ewing had been forced into the Commissariat of the army by his father's financial collapse, giving up the musical career he had planned. But his interests remained artistic. At Ecclesfield he joined enthusiastically in

theatricals, writing and music - playing organ, violin or cello as required. He appears to have been the ideal husband for Julie. But the Gattys at first opposed him violently. Julie appears oddly helpless in the ensuing storm, as if powerless to affect any decision. But her passivity took the positive form of furious writing. Her ill-health was always accentuated by stress, though its causes now seem obscure. In the crisis, her quinsies, headaches and 'seediness' took over. It is not to deny the authenticity of this lifelong illness to see how such behaviour ensured her a degree of privacy and consideration in what was, for a writer, a crowded life. During 1866-7 she retreated from the rows and conflict sufficiently to write Ida (AJM, May), Mrs. Moss (June-July) and The Snoring Ghost (Dec-Feb) for the new magazine. These parts of her first long novel, significantly, chart the process of leaving childhood behind.

Gradually the air cleared and the news that Major Ewing was posted to Fredericton, Canada, precipitated a decision. 'Much astonished to discover that it is settled we are to be married forthwith', wrote Julie with unnerving detachment (Diary, May 25, 1867). It says something for the durability of Gatty loyalties that no bitterness remained from this period. Julie, who portrayed parental weaknesses and abuses with scrupulous care in later fiction, herself tolerated a high degree of authority.

The Ewings were in Canada from June 1867 - October 1869, a period of unalloyed happiness. The pristine river landscapes filled Julie's mind and sketchbooks. New experiences, of housekeeping, the rituals and routines of army life, cultural differences, stimulated her to a new sense of her own powers. Gatty habits reasserted themselves. She drew, gardened, started Hebrew lessons. Their house, 'Reka Dom', ('house by the river') supplied the title of her

next episode of Mrs. Overthway, which was sent back for serialization from June - October, 1868. The story's intense feeling comes from Julie's exhilaration with her new home and retrospective affection for her old one. For the last part, Kerguelen's Land, Rex provided the geographic data, as well as the conditions of feeling which made possible the structuring of a long work in a single design. The novel came out as a volume in 1869.

The Canadian period was one of gestation, old forms were refined upon and new ones projected. New configurations of fantasy and reality, like Melchior's Dream, were developed, but with a more astringent portrayal of the hazards of childhood and a more fertile reflection of solutions in apt fantasy. The Land of Lost Toys (1869) Amelia and the Dwarfs (1870), Benjy in Beastland (1870) and Timothy's Shoes (1870-1) all belong to this development. She experimented with the model of Andersen. An Idyll of the Wood (Sept. 1867) imitates his shadowy narrator, 'the old man who lived in the wood' and vague audience of 'the children', to enclose the tale in a frame of regret (5, 139). Three Christmas Trees (Dec., 1867) was '... a sort of prose Idyll suggested to me by a scene I saw when... hunting for a sketch' (18, 167) of a single fir tree before a white house, suggesting how far her visual imagination was engaged in these Andersen imitations. Christmas Crackers. A Fantasia (1869-70) models itself on the more urbane satiric Andersen of The Galoshes of Fortune. All these stories were collected in The Brownies, and other tales (first issue 1870, second 1871).

In 1869 a new project took shape for a series of fairy stories based on the 'old originals' (18, 181-2) of oral tradition and its modification in Grimm, distinct from both her fantasies and Andersen imitations. Her preparation was thorough. She reread Grimm in translation, having tackled Kinder und Hausmärchen in her German

lessons, and a book on 'fairy mythology' (title unspecified). By November the series was begun with the excellent Kind William and the Water Sprite, submitted earlier for Mrs. Gatty's 'editorial consideration' with a carefully explanatory letter:

... they are an experiment on my part, and I do not mean to put my name to them.

You know how I have always been fond of fairy tales of the Grimm type. Modern fairy tales always seem to me such very poor things by comparison ... I have determined to try if I can write a few fairy tales of the genuine 'uninstructive' type by following out my theories in reference to the old traditional ones.

... I mean to stick close to orthodox traditions in reference to the proceedings of elves, dwarfs, nixes, pixies, etc. ... One of my theories is that all real fairy tales (of course I do not allude to stories of a totally different character in which fairy machinery is used, as your Fairy Godmothers, my Brownies etc.) ... should be written as if they were oral traditions taken down from the lips of a 'story-teller' ... and the extent to which I have had to cut out reflections, abandon epithets, and shorten sentences, since I began, very much confirms my ideas (18, 181-2).

A clarity of purpose appears here in defining models and projecting an appropriate style. In fact, she sometimes 'narrated' the stories to her husband 'and if he likes them I write them down'.⁵⁶ However, the finished style of the nineteen tales, published 1869-1876, varies from biblical gravity to undecorated simplicity. Her view of folklore archetypes was sound: 'the few original germs might, I suspect, be counted on one's fingers, even in fairy lore, and then traced back to a very different origin'. She was often successful in reworking the fundamental situations and the potent figures of oral tradition, distinct from 'poetical and literary fictions'. She prolonged the project over seven years, often turning to a new fairy tale as a relief from longer work in progress. It was not until 1882 that they were collected as Old-fashioned Fairy Tales with an explanatory Preface clarifying the theories broached thirteen years earlier.

The Ewings returned home in October, 1870, to the camp at

Aldershot where they lived until 1877, the most stable period of their marriage and Julie's most productive years. She produced three ambitious novels in as many years. A Flat Iron for a Farthing (1870-1) and Six to Sixteen (1870) both use a retrospective memoir form to place an unfolding childhood, and neither entirely solves the problem of seaming present to past in one biographical reality. Jan of the Windmill (1872-3), ambitious in its theme of the artist's growth rather than its form, took some of its vibrant local colour from her visits to Amesbury, Wiltshire. Each of her novels in some way relives her Ecclesfield childhood, yet paradoxically all her heroes are bereaved. The widespread convention of orphan-heroes is here used not for sentimentality but for a more intense focus on the child's behaviour. Without mediators, he acts for himself, and his efforts expose those psychological areas which interested Mrs. Ewing.

Separation from England had sharpened her sense of its peculiar beauty. Revisiting Ecclesfield alerted her to the meaning of her childhood experiences and to the value of nature in shaping them. Her particular feeling for nature needs some comment.

The mere idea of soil exhilarated her. A bowl of crocuses was occasion for speculation: '... I think the smell of earth and plants has a physical anodyne about it somehow' (18, 183). Her contact was specific, enhanced by the knowing and naming of plants. She described a wonderful day near Stonehenge:

... the drive over the downs was like drinking in life at some primeval spring... The charm of these unhedged, unbounded ... prairies is all their own and very perfect! And such flowers enamel ... the close fine grass! The pale yellow rock-cistus in clumps, the blue 'shepherd's thyme' in tracts of colour, sweet little purple-capped orchids, spireas and burnets, and everywhere 'the golden buttercup' in sheets of yellow (18, 257).

Horticulture and natural history were means of channelling this contact. She was a passionate gardener: 'I have a wonderful lot

of gardening on my shoulders ... It is a great enjoyment to me', she wrote from Canada (18, 171). Wild plants were domesticated and wayside hedges replenished by transplantations from her own garden, a practice described in Mary's Meadow and followed by members of Aunt Judy's Parkinson Society.

This feeling permeates her fiction, but in ways quite different from Mrs. Gatty's annexation of nature. Where Mrs. Gatty persistently traces the lineaments of God through the face of nature, Mrs. Ewing, in contexts rarely Christian or even metaphysical, values the intercourse of self and the phenomenal world as human experience. Her natural metaphors, large and small, are metaphors of human growth, or imprecise states of being, not often the strict equations of parable. But frequently nature is a form of social bonding, especially in her later pastorals. This is distinct from the traditional Romantic stance of isolated communion. She did in letters dwell delightedly on what Hopkins in 'Binsey Poplars' (1879) called the 'sweet especial rural scene'. But, as often, she emphasised the sharing of this scene:

It is one of the points on which we feel very much alike, our love for things, and places, and beasts ... No one I ever met has ... quite your sympathy with exactly what the external world ... is to me and has been ^{ever} since I can remember. From days when the batch of us went-out-walking with the Nurses, and the round moss-edged holes in the roots of gnarled trees in the hedges, and the red leaves of Herb Robert in autumn, and all the inexhaustible wealth of hedges and ditches and fields, and the Shroggs, and the brooks, were happiness of the keenest kind - to now when it is as fresh and strong as ever (18, 217).

Much of her fiction is devoted to inventing situations in which the child's inheritance of nature is displayed, but its sociality is indicated by her preference for the garden over the wilderness.

The saturation in military life at Aldershot was, unpredictably, a relief to Mrs. Ewing. Its claustrophobic round of parades, concerts, services and theatricals was soothing and undistracting. Only

occasionally, as after a visit to Ecclesfield in 1871, was she irritated by its philistine blandness: 'To see new books and get an intellectual rubbing up is always refreshing after the lack of brain food in camp'.⁵⁷ She enjoyed the challenge of beautifying the drastically unaesthetic hut and garden. She enjoyed amateur acting again, as she had at Ecclesfield. She made friends, often with children, though not in an Aunt Judy role. Her own childlessness was perhaps alleviated through writing, though after one encounter with a waif in hospital she wrote 'I never was so tempted to the folly of adopting an infant'.⁵⁸ Both adoption and, in Father Hedgehog, childlessness were to become her fictional themes.

There was usually a lapse of time before a particular period of her life was transferred to fiction. As Ecclesfield, more radiant in retrospect than any reality could support, fell into perspective in the 70s, she wrote her closest imitations of the life there - Madam Liberality, Our Field, A Very Ill-Tempered Family. By a similar slow assimilation, Aldershot with its strange topography and routines did not appear fully until The Story of a Short Life, 1882. She presented soldiers as models in Lob Lie-by-the-Fire, (1873) or as an unusual version of the Victorian pater familias in The Peace Egg (1871). But the glamour of military life from a child's point of view was not formalized until the 80s, after a visit to her old home revived memories: 'But through all the glamour of love one could see that there is a good deal of dirt and dust, and refuse and coal-boxes! ... It was an afternoon wonderfully like a Wagner opera, thick-set with recurring motifs'. (18, 242). The motifs gathered into a strange amalgam of naturalism ('the publicity and squalor' of the camp) and unrestrained sentimentality in The Story of a Short Life.

In October, 1873, Mrs. Gatty died. Julie wrote about her

mother's irremovable presence in her life: '... I feel as if I were a child again in respect of her. She is as much with me now, as with any of her children'.⁵⁹ Her mother had been her best critic and friend. To her she confessed her fears about the rootless military life, 'the natural terrors of an untravelled and not herculean woman' and about trusting herself to such a life, 'the unreality of fear of an unknown evil'.⁶⁰ She wrote a brief memoir for the November magazine, surprisingly frank about the limits of her talent:

The secret of her success and ^{of} her happiness in her labours was her thoroughness ... Whatever genius she may have had, her industry was far more remarkable.⁶¹

In 1879 she wrote Margaret Gatty, prefaced to a new edition of Parables from Nature.⁶² This expands the Aunt Judy's essay (though Eden's bibliography indicates only one piece) into an account of Mrs. Gatty's 'mental training' and processes of work. It rather skirts the problem of her ingrained didacticism. She is praised for 'innate truthfulness ... truth in fact and truth in feeling'. Mrs. Ewing states 'I find it difficult to state with needful brevity my intense conviction of the value of this quality in writers for the young'. Truthfulness involves the rejection of conventional 'morals' implied in the writing, and plots which 'exaggerate, warp or withhold' expected developments to pursue such morals. This admirable theory, however, is squared with Mrs. Gatty's practice only through the assertion that her morals were unconventional and tempered by 'common sense and a sense of humour'. She can say of the tales with justice 'not one of them depends for its pathos upon early death-beds and unavailing regrets'. But she hardly faces the fact that Mrs. Gatty sometimes avoids distorting narrative by rejecting narrative as a primary imperative of fiction. She is on safer ground arguing that Mrs. Gatty wrote better of

'children, beasts and things' than of adults, who seem 'wooden and unattractive'. Yet it is unexpected that she should point to a 'priggishness that was apt to beset her characters the moment they arriv^d at years of discretion', since few Gatty tales span such a development (My Childhood in Art is one). The criticism is much more relevant to the writer's own case, one of several points where Mrs. Ewing seems involved in oblique self-analysis as much as assessing her mother's talent.

In 1877 the Ewings were ordered to Manchester and Julie began the packing - piano and all - that burdened and unsettled the rest of her life. They lived in Bowden, then York. Finally Rex was ordered to Malta in March 1879 and Julie was left to pack the chattels and follow. Her most prolific period was closing, after a highly diverse trial of forms - parables and legends (collected as Dandelion Clocks, and other tales, 1887), animal stories, fiction of manners and fiction of domestic life. In Lob she had evolved a nouvelle form used for most of her subsequent best work. It was in defiance of disruptions and bad health she began her longest novel, We and the World, in 1877. It falls only too definitely into two parts. Part 1 describes a country childhood and parental conflict with great skill (AJM, Nov., 1877 - June, 1878). Part 2 continues as a sea adventure insufficiently related to its beginnings (April, 1879 - Oct., 1879). The delay was 'in consequence of Mrs. Ewing's illness'.⁶³ Eden sees disproportion as the novel's main fault: 'The World could not properly be squeezed into a space only equal in size to that which had been devoted to Home'. (18, 91). The writing gave enormous trouble. Before one instalment, Mrs. Ewing mocked herself ... 'by the 8th day of July - oh miserable silkworm's chrysalis! - you must have spun 36 sheets of the thread of your serial story out of those miserable brains of yours',⁶⁴

and to Rex she vowed 'I ... never mean to write against time again' (18, 214).

Waiting to go to Malta Mrs. Ewing visited Aldershot and found many comrades posted to Africa or Afghanistan. In June the Prince Imperial died in the Zulu war and she was shocked by civilian rationalizations of the conduct of his soldiers who escaped when he fell. Her tendency to idealize military loyalty was boosted. She was glowingly appreciative of Mrs. Butler's military paintings at the Academy that year, especially the 'nobly painted' The Remnants of the Army (18, 216). Jackanapes was conceived as testimony to militarism.

The idea of relating a soldier's childhood to an English rural community was fostered by a coincidental meeting with Randolph Caldecott. Jean Ingelow had encouraged Mrs. Ewing to write something for Good Words 'to try for a wider audience' (18, 207). This never materialized, but the two women met in London ('Had to roar and lash my tail! ...')⁶⁵ and an introduction to Caldecott was arranged. Mrs. Ewing already admired his work - 'the draughtsmanship so nervous and fine, the whole artistic satisfactoriness so completely free of trick'⁶⁶ - and she pressed him for a sketch to write to. Her suggestions show how far Jackanapes was already shaped:

... I am an absolute, hopeless, unredeemable stick at mere middle class modern life ...
 ... give me one sketch of an almost baby lad learning to ride 'like a Jackanapes never off' on a donkey (but not, oh not at the seaside!) ... a laddie with an aureole of warm yellow hair on a red-haired pony full tilt among the geese over a village green ...⁶⁷

The letter shows her anxious desire to fix a high level for their collaboration and yet not be over-demanding. He replied with a finely-finished picture in colours vibrant compared with the muted engraving from it accompanying Jackanapes in the October magazine (frontispiece annual volume, 1879).

The warm correspondence continued through two more collaborations. Mrs. Ewing was the more minutely communicative, perhaps because more artistically isolated. Caldecott commented on the depth of her scrutiny '... you look into, and about, and around, and up and down one's little bits of sketches in the most critical way ... if there is not much in a drawing, your imagination will supply the necessary interest and romance, poetry and story'.⁶⁸

In October 1879 Mrs. Ewing set off for Malta, but collapsed in Paris and was brought home. The nature of her illness is hard to judge through period evasions and inaccuracies. The eminent Jenner diagnosed 'neuralgia of the spine' and exhaustion. She became progressively weaker and subject to pain over the next six years. With hindsight it seems that she died of cancer. In May 1881, Rex was posted to Ceylon and all hopes of joining him were ended. They were not reunited until June, 1883. The four rootless years were not wasted. The Gattys always 'energized'. But energy was sadly diverted from writing to trivia and the mechanics of revisions, binding changes (from stone paper to boards with a Union Jack for Jackanapes), and printing in sepia not black ink. She had a sense of being underpaid. Bell's, 'a family friendship through three generations',⁶⁹ were ungenerous: 'The moment we come to deal, the firm's only notion of business is to depreciate and beat me down'.⁷⁰ The SPCK paid her a halfpenny a copy on Jackanapes when it was selling five hundred a day. From experience, Caldecott advised her to fight. But a more powerful ally advised her from principle. She had visited Ruskin at Herne Hill, 1879, and found him 'absolutely unaffected' though 'in the incense of an adoring circle' (18, 214). Nevertheless, his offer of help in bringing out a volume independently and publishing her case in Fors Clavigera surprised her. She had no confidence for this kind of boldness and the scheme lapsed.

Ruskin was probably the contemporary thinker she most respected. His moral vigour and theoretic thoroughness chimed with her own view of art as morally accountable and obedient to laws governing music, painting and literature alike. As early as 1858 she wrote 'I "Ruskinized" all evening',⁷¹ meaning talked over his work. In the lonely eighties she had time to re-read: 'I have got two volumes of The Modern Painters back with me to go at' (18, 219). His aesthetic élitism was certainly not hers. Although she wrote ecstatically about the Rubens and Rembrandt canvases seen in Belgium, she was almost as passionate about Academy favourites and narrative painting. She found Watts' allegory, 'Love and Death', the finest work at the Grosvenor exhibition of 1882 (18, 255). She preferred Constable to Turner, reading his Life in 1872 to formulate a view of an artist's childhood for Jan. His substantial, deeply meditated nature painting accorded better with her own feelings.

But Ruskin's principles of art stirred her. She read Elements of Drawing in 1861⁷² and later set herself to study the analyses of the laws of Principality, Repetition, Continuity, Contrast and Harmony, as they governed both writing and drawing.⁷³ She did both, though honesty prompted her confession 'on many things - drawing, languages - I have spent in my life a great deal of labour with little result, because it has not been consecutive and methodical' (18, 191-2). As a writer, however, she found the laws useful for analysing construction. English fiction, by comparison with French, she found lacking 'constructive power ... not stories to be told, but an artistic way of telling them', something she aimed at to a degree unusual in children's fiction. Her axioms for the telling include preplanning 'the entire plot', to fix the relative value of character and incident, allowing only dialogue which developed character or forwarded action. The length of chapters, even phrases,

should be carefully judged. These unexceptionable axioms suggest her own economy, even elegance, of means - though she sometimes in her novels flouted them extensively. The least satisfactory part of her discussion is the application of Principality to Jackanapes. The law suggests all characters are conceived to emphasise the central one. Yet this accounts for them only at the crudest level of plot, ignoring the more submerged claims of theme and idea. The Black Captain and his wife, for example, do more than parent the hero appropriately. They suggest qualities of romance and passion that link rural stability with the act of glory at the tale's climax. The simplism of discussion here suggests her brother's hand. Perhaps he added to or modified the notes he took.

Ruskin is often a point of reference in her wider response to contemporary culture. She sifted her reading through her letters in the 80s, with a new keenness. Some judgements seem wayward. Eliot's writing is 'glorious' but compared to Scott's lacking in Imagination and Dramatism: 'she draws people she has seen (Mrs. Poyser) like a photograph - she imagines a Daniel Deronda, and he is about "as natural as waxworks"' (18, 222). Some judgements are more considered: Elizabeth Barrett's poems have 'a lack of condensation ... I doubt if one should ever leave less than 50 per cent of a situation to one's readers' own imagination'.⁷⁴ Some stimulate new consideration: 'The dialogues are so far below Charlotte Brontë's real power of letting the reader overhear the duologue of intellectual intimates ...' (novel title illegible, possibly The Professor, first read 1865).⁷⁵ Some comments are exploratory: 'I begin to think that Russian Tolstoi beats the French'.⁷⁶ Most of all there is a sense of commitment to her craft:

have you read any of the novels of Henry James? They are well worth it. He has a knowledge of human nature which you would relish. Whether he will prove incisive when his chief motif ceases to be modern Americans in contrast with their cousins in the old country and other Europeans is what one must know before one can place his genius. But he is an artist at his work. I have just finished The American. It is a fine study and in many ways is Balzac, I think.⁷⁷

James's critical preface would confirm her reference to Balzac.⁷⁸

It was in approaching the new naturalistic fiction, what she called 'the French school', that Ruskin was most anxiously invoked as champion of the socio-ethical soundness of art. Re-reading The Heart of Midlothian she comments 'What a contrast to ... French novels (with no disrespect to the brilliant art and refreshing quickness of brain of the latter); but Ruskin's appeal to the responsibility of those who wield Arts instead of Trades recurs to one as one under which Scott might well have laid his hand upon his breast, and looked upwards with a clear conscience' (18, 221). In her zealous prudery and insularity both Ruskin and Scott are vulgarized. After her visit to Ruskin she rejoiced vehemently because he had seemed to agree with her by contrasting a French painting of two murdered children with a mild English work, adding to Rex 'You know my mania about the indecent-cruel elements in French art, and how the Frenchness of Victor Hugo chokes me from appreciating him' (18, 214-5). The middle-brow recoil from sexuality or violence in art was sometimes checked by her critical sense. A Zola novel was first hotly condemned, 'a French life-painter ... redolent of flesh ... reeking of carrion', and then more calmly evaluated: 'And yet what a sense - I was going to say of beauty - but I mean of everything. As if he wrote under those clairvoyant conditions of morbid sensitiveness which one has occasionally'.⁷⁹ This is well said. But often the contemporary novel caused her critical sense to narrow to mere

philistinism. Baring Gould's Mehalah (anon. 2 volumes, 1880) was censured for its sadistic passion ... 'the most respectable characters are the tenants whose desires are summed up in the desire of more suet pudding and gravy' (18, 254).

Strangely, with regard to children's fiction she is rather in the progressive camp, not at the simple level (the elopment in Jackanapes is as mild as it could be), but in the more thorough examination of family roles and authorities. To a 'disgusted' reader of Jan who assumed (wrongly) that the foundling in chapter 1 was illegitimate, she replied:

... the whole subject of what children should know and read is one of overwhelming interest and very earnest convictions with me ... But we are parted theoretically by about a century, and if she wants people drawn as she would like them to be instead of as they are, she should take in the British Workman as a study of the poor, and she will find plenty of goody tales about children to suit her.⁸⁰

The reading of the 80s shows Mrs. Ewing's critical mind sometimes fettered by prejudice, though never complacent, but more often searching, committed and sensitive to excellence.

A more corrosive feeling in her last years than that of being underpaid, was that of being undervalued. She thought of new ways to reach her public - one being her verse. In 1881 she took the chance of collecting her magazine verse and having it illustrated, with no illusions about the value this venture set on the text:

On my part, I do so greatly want a larger public, that I am disposed to think that if my name could be carried to forty or fifty thousand readers, this fact might be in itself a remuneration.⁸¹

The SPCK chose R. André for the series, with a more florid style and stronger colour-contrasts than Caldecott. Caldecott's line is more delicately interpretive of text, André is more lavish and embellishing, more popularly Victorian. Mrs. Ewing's unmusical and banal verses need little 'interpretation', and André's rather

concealing art suited them better. He even embellished the type: 'How would you like to have the text written not printed - put down on the stone with the drawings?'⁸² The series came out 1883-88.

In 1881, aware of the unusual consonance of their talents, Mrs. Ewing asked Caldecott for another illustration. She had been on a memory-stirring visit to Yorkshire and remarked on the men's pigeon-fancying in Grenoside: 'It has a very rascally side - but oh! the beauty - the exquisite beauty of all the changeful play of the pretty doves ... a dozen spots of mother of pearl upon the roof'.⁸³ She heard the story of a dove-theft from Ecclesfield Hall in 1875 and their spectacular recovery from a Sheffield shooting-gallery. The elements of Daddy Darwin's Dovecot come naturally into place. She sent Caldecott her own sketch of 'gaffers', who are to narrate and frame the story in the finished nouvelle, and he replied with his own finer drawing which delighted her: 'They're Yorkshire, and Yorkshire of this district ... You have given me the spirit of the men and the spirit of the country',⁸⁴ The nouvelle appeared in the November number, and Caldecott in 'minute collaboration' with her, worked on additional drawings for the volume of 1884, a perfect matching of text and picture.

For their next and last collaboration Caldecott chose a new edition of Lob Lie-by-the Fire (1885), in spite of Cruikshank's existing work for the first edition and in preference to The Story of a Short Life: 'I do not yearn to illustrate Laetus as much as Lob'.⁸⁵ His instinct was sound. He disliked the ending, and perhaps the overpowering sentimentality, of Laetus. The doubly unpromising title of this nouvelle, Laetus Sorte Mea or, The Story of a Short Life (AJM, May-Oct., 1882) shows an uncharacteristic hesitancy. The first title was incomprehensible to many readers, the second announced its morbidity beforehand (and Mrs. Ewing, unlike her mother was good at

titles). The story's vulgar morbidity is of a different order from her other fiction. Her other deathbeds, whatever their excesses, have a subsidiary function in larger designs. This nouvelle is structured towards death. Her doubts about it were deviously expressed in anxious queries about its effect: 'its moving your sympathies does mean I have done it pretty well. I cannot tell you the pains I expended on it! All those sentences about the Camp were written in scraps and corrected for sense and euphony ... bit by bit, like Jackanapes' (18, 259). She expressed pleasure in Gordon Browne's drawings for it, perhaps with qualms about Caldecott's refusal: 'Gordon Browne has done some wonderful drawings for Laetus. Rex was wild over a "Death or Glory" Lancer' (18, 299).

In 1883 Major Ewing was at last posted home, to Taunton, with a climate that at once suggested new gardening schemes to Julie. The house, the Villa Ponente, was an extravagance at seventy pounds a year, but had a high situation, and modern drains! Sanitation was one of the few public reforms to which Mrs. Ewing gave open support. Chadwick's 'Report on the Sanitary Conditions of the Labouring Population' (Parliamentary Papers, 1842) was only slowly absorbed by a sceptical populace and conservative medical profession. Sunflowers and a Rushlight (Nov., 1882) is indirectly a tract on drains. The heroine's parents die of fever from a leaking cess-pool and their doctor attacks his own reactionary profession as 'men with large public responsibilities, almost entirely shielded from the wholesome light of public criticism, who handle more lives than most Commanders' (16, 167). The modernity of the tale, in spite of its flower symbols and more fundamental emotional themes, is marked. Mrs. Ewing's aunt objected to its 'plain speaking', and Julie replied with self-parody, but no real capitulation:

'You know how I think riding some hobbies takes the fine edge off the mind, and if you think I am growing coarse in the cause of sanitation - I beseech you to tell me' (18, 265).

The attack is especially direct in this tale, not least in its acid view of the heroine's grandmother. But Mrs. Ewing was often made uneasy by social realities, an unease that issues in the liberal climate of her fiction rather than in its programme. Mrs. Gatty's certainties were no longer possible, reflecting the poor as either pitiable (Tommy Brown in The Little Victims is free of authority, but free to starve) or as objects of rational curiosity (the intellectual aunt in A Dull Watering Place inspects poor families in a cave and a cart). Mrs. Ewing was no longer convinced of the fixedness of degree, as her successive foundling tales show, but nor did she arrive at more radical opinion. She did, though, dislike the unseemliness of the rich glamourizing the life of the poor. A sonnet by her aunt, H.S. Elder (AJM, 1874), glorifying rustic life seemed an insulting anachronism. Ploughmen were not contemplative saints:

and it would be very odd if poverty and ignorance did lead to such results: ... PERHAPS it is good for every class to have an ideal of its own circumstances before its eyes. But I don't think it is good for rich people's children to grow up with the belief that twelve shillings a week, and cider and a pig, are the wisest and happiest earthly circumstances in which humanity with large families can be placed for their temporal and spiritual progress (18, 202-3).

Mrs. Ewing claimed familiarity with the 'hard lives and dreary deaths' (18, 254) of the poor, but she always avoids the direct confrontation of this reality in her fiction. Instead, her attitudes appear obliquely, by indirection. Regie parodies the ministering child, the hero of Timothy's Shoes has difficulty finding a needy pauper, charity is gently mocked. Her foundlings are all adopted upwards in society, her gypsies (Father Hedgehog) are appreciated

in their special cultural identity. She avoids what she cannot deal with adequately, and undercuts the moral simplism of patronizing or sermonizing about the poor. Urban poverty she found more depressing. London was 'endless streets full of poverty and struggle and sin'.⁸⁶ But again she presents their denizens through the indirection of irony or humour. Her few city arabs appear briefly, to rob naive heroes like Jack in the Thames dock-land, or Timothy's tutor. This was not because she found poverty comical, but because a more comprehensive view was beyond her. She was exasperated by George MacDonald's Robert Falconer which suggested vice was less prevalent among the poor '... one wonders if he "has his Senses" or knows anything about the poor', (18, 213). Her own view, expressed through the narrator of Six to Sixteen, was that morality was personally, not socially, directed. Vice was classless.

A similar process directs the way her Christianity is fictionalized. The movement is towards dramatisation, away from Mrs. Gatty's direct Christian appeal or sectarianism. The aesthetic and liturgical props of worship appear with a dramatic function in her work, indicative of character (the Crucifixion in A Very Ill-Tempered Family, the anthem in Daddy Darwin). Parochial differences and ecclesiastical forms become the stuff of social observation - Jack and Isaac tramp on Sunday - "And they'll just meet the Ebenezer folk coming out of chapel", says the maid (13,73). The Chaplain who gets tied up in his surplice while preaching movingly, Regie and Polly playing Churches in the trees, the pious Vicar's daughter balancing accounts - these are all viewed with irony which reveals the comic scale of their pieties, but makes no attack on their personal worth. Mrs. Ewing never tackled religious hypocrisy. Her own faith was of the broadly tolerant kind, with a characteristically

energetic strain:

If people would but understand that the shortest way to anything is to go at first principles! When one humbles oneself to learn those, the arrangement of the Liturgy becomes as beautiful and loveable a piece of machinery as that of Nature or God's Providence almost! (18, 150).

The leitmotif of Mrs. Ewing's last two years was the garden.

Her letters describe her dedicated gardening at Taunton with considerable detail. Her last works focus on the cultivating child. Mary's Meadow (Nov., 1883 - March, 1884) was the best of her pastorals, though she died before its volume publication with Browne's illustrations (1886). Except for the posthumously published sketches, The Owl in the Ivy Bush, which appeared in The Child's Pictorial Magazine (June - Aug., 1885), her last work was Letters from a Little Garden, a series of month-by-month guides to children's gardening. They began in November, 1884 but were broken off in February, 1885.

The stream of her letters continued until February when Rex had to type for her. She remained wry and witty about her illness:

You can't imagine what a Greenwich pensioner I am. I told my doctor this morning he'd better send me up a wood square with four wheels, like those beggars in London who have no limbs (18, 301).

Two operations were performed on her spine, but she did not survive the second, and died in May. She had, with satisfying appropriateness, a military funeral remarkable for the wealth of flowers sent by family, friends and readers.

4 The Critical Reception of Mrs. Ewing's Work

The critical attention given to Mrs. Ewing during her lifetime was more notable for its quality than its quantity and it reached a minor watershed in 1879 with the publication of Jackanapes. Privately, she was encouraged by Dinah Mulock, Jean Ingelow and Ruskin. Tennyson and Henry James thought well of her work. Harriet Beecher Stowe's publisher wrote to express her admiration of Jan of the Windmill - 'a lovely creation'.⁸⁷ More publicly she was always well reviewed by Aunt Judy's whose editors rather incestuously noticed the volume publication of work serialized in their own pages. Charlotte Yonge, in The Monthly Packet, continued her sincere encouragement of a writer whose first five stories appeared in her own periodical. Her notices are usually brief and rely on a clutch of vaguely approving epithets ('delightful', 'exquisite', 'touching'). Reviewing for the young was then, as now, a problematic task:

... And here we should mention ... Mrs. Ewing's delightful Flat Iron for a Farthing, with the quaint old-fashioned little hero, and his delightful Rubens, and Mrs. Bundle.⁸⁸

... Loetus (sic) sorte Meâ is in Aunt Judy's own delightful style.⁸⁹

The tone and terms of her appreciation remained constant over the decade spanned by these works. But as a critic whose specific brief was held for children, Yonge was the first to express reservations about Mrs. Ewing's appeal to the young:

The leading feature in Aunt Judy's Magazine has been From Six to Sixteen (sic), by Mrs. Ewing - very amusing and clever, but rather over the heads of her young readers we should think.⁹⁰

She gave a more analytical edge to these judgements in her strong-minded pamphlet, What Books to Lend and What to Give, now useful in a way not envisaged by its author as a source for contemporary thinking on children's literature. Books are classified

according to age and social class of reader, cottage and parish needs being distinguished from middle-class ones. Old-fashioned Fairy Tales in their category are bleakly described as 'Modern, but according to the ancient rules of fairy tales'.⁹¹ Jackanapes appears under fiction for boys: 'This beautiful story wins the attention of boys, but those who read it to them find it advisable to skip the unnecessary incident of the elopement',⁹² - censorship which seems unnecessary on reading Mrs. Ewing's innocuous treatment. The absence of We and the World from this category perhaps confirms its general failure to win critical approval.

Interestingly, Bell's cheap reissue of Mrs. Ewing's Popular Tales in 1890 (including nothing later than 1879, since later works appeared under the SPCK) announced that A Flat Iron for a Farthing was in its 17th edition, Six to Sixteen its 7th, Melchior's Dream its 6th, Mrs. Overtheway's Remembrances and Jan, their 5th, and We and the World its 4th. They quoted the review of the last in The Academy:

The capability, so rare even in men, so all but invariably absent in women, of getting inside a boy's mind, thinking his thoughts, and being then able to put them down on paper so that everyone at once recognises their photographic truthfulness ... is evident here.⁹³

A shrewd assessment, but sales figures indicate that the nation's boys were unconvinced.

Under 'Drawing Room Stories' Yonge represented Mrs. Ewing strongly with Lob Lie-by-the Fire, The Story of a Short Life, Jan, and Daddy Darwin. 'These exquisite pieces of Mrs. Ewing's are too delicately worked for the ordinary style of child or the poor, though they may be appreciated by those who have time to dream over them and, as it were, imbibe them'.⁹⁴

By the eighties, Mrs. Ewing received wider, if not always discriminating, attention. She was noticed by adult periodicals

and newspapers, as well as serious children's magazines. The Academy, The Saturday Review, The Spectator, The United Services Gazette, The Nation and Every Other Saturday (the two last being American) all reviewed the later work favourably. It is significant how often Jackanapes is the standard by which subsequent works are measured, partly because its repudiation of pacific ideals caught the nation's temper, and partly for the 'pathos' and 'charm' enhanced by Caldecott's illustrations:

Among all the illustrated books we are disposed to place first one of the smallest. Jackanapes is, in spite of its title, a somewhat tragical story of soldier life, written by Mrs. Ewing, and illustrated by Mr. Randolph Caldecott. It is hardly necessary to say that the result of such a collaboration is simply charming - we should have to tell the story and enumerate all the cuts to give an idea of this delightful little book.

Thus The Saturday Review, November 3, 1883. Such unspecific praise merely indicates Mrs. Ewing's status. The Academy is more usefully detailed. In 1884, it found Daddy Darwin's Dovecot less striking than Jackanapes but proof that Mrs. Ewing was 'capable of playing on more than one string'. There is no mention of the differently tuned strings played on for nearly two decades:

Of Jackanapes we ventured to say that it recalled Thackeray in the purity of its pathos ... Daddy Darwin's Dovecot recalls George Eliot in its faithful setting of rustic life, as well as in its charming portraiture of a boy and a girl. If Mr. Swinburne will condescend to read it, he will no longer be able to say that we have but a single woman living who knows how to describe children.⁹⁵

The comparisons are more than reviewer's extravagances, as Chapter 9 will discuss. In The Daily Telegraph that year the claims for Mrs. Ewing's artistry grow more hyperbolic:

... and the name of Mrs. J.H. Ewing again shines in the list of contributors. It was high time, as many judges must have thought some years ago, that the author of Jackanapes should be recognized more generally than heretofore as the equal in pathos and humour of George Eliot, Thackeray, Charlotte Bronte, or Oliver Wendell Holmes, without question of her own exquisite originality.

She has not thrown all her strength into her country tale, Daddy Darwin's Dovecot, which falls short, in force of character - drawing, as compared with the manifest work of consummate genius which preceded it by a twelvemonth ... [the story of Daddy Darwin's Dovecot] inculcates faithfulness in a manner that no child of healthy imagination could resist.⁹⁶

The descent to considerations of the child-reader at the end shows the writer's uncertainty about Mrs. Ewing's audience. The wilder claims to genius (alongside a wrong dating of Jackanapes) are best regarded with the sceptical humour Mrs. Ewing brought to them, for a letter survives recording her wry reaction to 'D.T. butter':

... much more "consummate geniuses" than I am have had to wait many years to get a wide hearing, and where the success is more sudden it does not always seem to last.⁹⁷

She was right to be philosophic, for her success remained a quiet one. Sometimes the implication is that she is a miniaturist rather than children's writer. Alfred Ainger in an 1895 lecture on earlier children's books mentions 'the exquisite sketches of child-life' ... Jackanapes, and The Story of a Short Life, as 'beautiful tales about children, which are not meant for their reading at all'.⁹⁸ Yonge's point is remade. Repeatedly 'pathos' is stressed. Alexander Shand in 'Children Yesterday and Today' places her with Maria Charlesworth, Florence Montgomery, S.R. Crockett, Mrs. Molesworth and Mrs. Hodgson Burnett (in the 'epoch-making' Little Lord Fauntleroy) as the best of 'recent writers' - selected evidently for their affecting pathos.⁹⁹ But sharper historical assessments noted her instrumentality in the shift from didacticism:

Like all human sympathies, this sympathy with the concerns of children has increased of late years ... Mrs. Ewing's genial teachings have superseded Mrs. Sherwood's grim severities.¹⁰⁰

However, most writers repeated what had become received opinion on Mrs. Ewing, that her best work was her latest, because most affecting. Pathos is often mentioned with humour, as though a correlation existed between tears and laughter, perhaps an emphasis on emotion as a reaction against didacticism.

Two longer studies before the century ended demonstrated two views of Mrs. Ewing, the first a refinement of received opinion but still based on acute selectivity of texts, the second more comprehensive and more just.

Emma Marshall contributed any essay to Women Novelists of Queen Victoria's Reign, a collection of studies by seven authors, in which Mrs. Ewing was discussed alongside 'A.L.O.E.' (Charlotte Tucker), an unlikely bedfellow. The essay makes useful points. Mrs. Ewing's ability to identify with children's feelings is praised:

[In Mrs. Overthway's disappointment in the old lady]
in feuilles mortes ^{salin} many a child may have found the
salient parts of her own experience rehearsed! 101

And Marshall goes beyond the customary lip-service to 'exquisite style' towards more careful description:

She was a perfect mistress of the English language; she was never dull and never frivolous. There is not a slipshod sentence, or an exaggerated piling up of adjectives to be found in her pages. She knew what she had to say and she said it in language at once pure, forcible, and graceful. 102

But the essay repeats, unquestioned, the prevailing view that this style serves pathos (the implied conflict here with the child's experience is unrecognized). Kerguelin's Land (sic) is judged the most beautiful of Mrs. Overthway's Remembrances for its touching restoration of the father. Nurse Bundle's death is 'one of the most pathetic incidents in all Mrs. Ewing's work'. The deaths of MacAlister in Lob, Jackanapes ('we will not dwell on the pathos of that last scene') and Leonard after 'a bruised and broken life',

receive the most fulsome praise.¹⁰³ Pathos and humour are yoked inevitably. There is no mention of other novels, fantasies or fairy tales, and no explanation of this extreme selectivity.

Mrs. Molesworth's criticism of a writer, like herself, attempting more realistic representation of the child's experience, is of a different order, informed by penetrating sympathy: 'I myself can speak to her ever ready interest in the work of others, lying along similar paths to her own'.¹⁰⁴ She probed beyond the binding predilections of her age. 'Juliana Horatia Ewing', The Contemporary Review, 1886, deliberately sets aside 'those of her books which, in the course of the last few months especially, have become so well known, so universally loved, that they may indeed be spoken of as "household words",'¹⁰⁵ and looks at what was becoming the neglected Mrs. Ewing, the novels, early stories from Melchior's Dream and other tales (republished 1885), and the excellent A Great Emergency, and other tales. Both here and in her essay 'Hans Andersen' she relates his 'gems of fable' to Mrs. Ewing's 'delicious animal stories', with acumen: 'They are little dramas, permeated with human feelings and interests, and bristling with human fun'.¹⁰⁶

On humour, Mrs. Molesworth at least provides materials for some consideration of its nature and function, quoting the language of Jan to show its working. Where she detects pathos she identifies it as one element in a more complex fictional mesh. She isolates Mrs. Ewing's first-person narrative forms as a distinctive method. Although it recapitulates plots lengthily, the essay eventually confronts important issues responsibly and acutely. Against the critical murmur that Mrs. Ewing's fiction is about children, not for them, it argues for a redefinition of the aims of juvenile literature, not necessarily confined 'to children's

comprehension'. There must be pleasure without 'undue intellectual effort':

...But that everything in a child's book should be of a nature to be at once fully understood by the child would surely be an unnecessary lowering of the art of writing for children to a mere catering for their amusement.¹⁰⁷

Mrs. Ewing is a demanding writer, but demanding fictions are needed.

This seems to be a central perception in any assessment of Mrs.

Ewing. Mrs. Molesworth advances the case that Mrs. Ewing's power

is that of 'suggestion', treating vital issues without reducing

them to programmatic simpleness:

But - a very different thing this from tales with a visible purpose of instruction, intellectual or moral, ... suggestion, on the other hand, of the infinity of 'worlds not realised'; of beauty; of poetry; of scientific achievements; of, even, the moral and spiritual problems which sooner or later in its career each soul must disentangle for itself, seems to me one of the most powerful levers for good which we can use with ~~our~~ ever and rapidly changing audience.¹⁰⁸

This salutes two distinctive qualities. The first is that Mrs.

Ewing's fiction is addressed to readers themselves in the process

of growth, with the expectation that it will both mirror and

contribute to that growth. The second is the centrality of her

themes to the child's world and, by extension, the world he is

moving towards. 'Moral and spiritual problems' occupy many of

her characters in recognizable and manageable forms, though Mrs.

Molesworth does not specify these in any closer examination.

Nevertheless, her study remained the best available for the next

half century. During this time references to Mrs. Ewing's work

were few, and were no longer to its pathos but its sincerity or

purity of style. The Times Literary Supplement in January, 1911

reviewing two volumes, singled out the sketches imitating Andersen

as her best work, in a style of 'crystalline simplicity and sincerity'.

Christmas Crackers, Three Christmas Trees, and Dandelion Clocks are

said to indicate 'Mrs. Ewing's characteristic contribution to literature' — a shift of emphasis, though still highly selective.

By 1932, in Darton's unsurpassed history, Children's Books in England, Mrs. Ewing had become 'more lovingly remembered than closely read'.¹⁰⁹ She is grouped with Jean Ingelow, Mrs. Molesworth and Mrs. Gatty as minor writers surviving from a rich period through 'characteristic sincerity'. Her 'preoccupation with death-beds' is regarded as the outcome of her ecclesiastical childhood (?) and capitulation to 'the Little Nell-Eric tradition'. But he indicates her more enduring qualities as a 'gift of dramatic vision' (hinting the interest in theatricality discussed in Chapter 7 below), a 'variety of character-drawing' and 'realism of detail'. Darton judged that the very skills that make her an excellent recorder of contemporary country life reduce her later appeal. This has truth. He finds the people 'too natural, too little reinforced'... to survive 'as types'. Such moderation helps explain Mrs. Ewing's absence from a children's repertoire including Little Women and The Little Princess. But besides memorable characters, fiction can project typical states of being or feeling, and such was often Mrs. Ewing's object. It is significant that Darton's reassessment, moving determinedly away from the criteria of the previous century, nevertheless refers specifically only to those last three nouvelles which did most to create her contemporary reputation.

Subsequent histories have mainly aired the views that Mrs. Ewing was a fine, or overfine writer for children, 'polishing the text with infinite care',¹¹⁰ or a specialist in pathos, now a matter for censure not praise. John Rowe Townsend, 1974, again concentrates on Jackanapes and The Story of a Short Life written 'in a way that surely would have won James Janeway's approval',¹¹¹ a misconception of a 'Joyful Death' that is that of a hero not a

sinner, and which celebrates worldliness not repentance. The only modern studies, Gillian Avery's Mrs. Ewing (1961) and Marghanita Laski's Mrs. Ewing, Mrs. Molesworth and Mrs. Hodgson Burnett (1950) redress the critical balance by stressing the range of Mrs. Ewing's work and its undidactic realism, but are too slight to reveal its depth or to gauge her art with any precision.

Chapter 1 Early Tales and Fantasies, 1861 - 1871

As the nineteenth century closed, Henry James in his masterly essay 'The Future of the Novel' (1899), surveyed the English field and concluded 'By what it shall decide to do in respect to the "young" the great prose fable will, from any serious point of view, practically see itself stand or fall'. Regarding the accelerating production of all Victorian fiction, he wondered

... that men, women, and children should have so much attention to spare for improvisations mainly so arbitrary and frequently so loose ... This great fortune then,... has been reserved for mere unsupported and unguaranteed history, the inexpensive thing, written in the air, the record of what, in any particular case, has not been, the account that remains responsible, at best, to "documents" with which we are practically unable to collate it.¹

The usefulness of James's analysis to Mrs. Ewing's early work is in its raising of two fundamental issues: the relationship of all fiction to the world it takes account of, and its possible adaptation to the capacities of some specific readership - the uneducated, the unsophisticated, the child. Mrs. Ewing's hesitations about writing for children, betrayed in her wavering between very diverse genres in 1861 - 1865, were eventually dissolved by her shedding of 'simplifications' and successful striving for children's fiction not bounded by the childish. This chapter will argue that by 1865 she reached a point where, as C.S. Lewis said, 'a children's story is the best art-form for something you have to say'.²

James's recommendation of adult forms which intensify rather than dissipate the novel's focus on reality could be extended to children's fiction. In this decade, Mrs. Ewing's tales progress determinedly, and, for a writer in her twenties, rapidly, from the 'arbitrary' and 'loose' improvisations of her juvenilia towards

distinctive fiction. The following discussion argues that the restless trials before 1865 are a talented writer's rejections of 'mere unsupported and unguaranteed' histories. The diversity of these shows an almost systematic examination of the inherited forms of children's fiction, and Mrs. Ewing's dissatisfaction with them for her purposes - increasingly clarified as the responsible representation of the child's inner and outer life. Responsibility included shedding the design for his moral improvement as a fictional mainspring.

Her first, apparently wayward, directions represent a search for more complex records of 'what has been', through exploratory versions of the tract story (A Bit of Green), the utilitarian moral tale (A Blackbird's Nest), the historical romance (Monsieur the Viscount's Friend and Friedrich's Ballad), and those odd gothic excrescences that are the residue of the Gatty family magazines (The Two Abbots, The Yew-lane Ghosts, The Mystery of the Bloody Hand). Examination of these in part 1 will show their unsuitability for her purpose, as being variously 'the inexpensive thing' - archaic, reductive, infertile for mirroring contemporary actuality or penetrating beneath it.

Her return in 1867 to the more profitable model of Andersen, first approached in her Black Bag tales of 1862, suggested a freer access to poetic and symbolic methods, and thus a richer fiction, in her group of idylls, An Idyll of the Wood, Three Christmas Trees, The Hollies, and Christmas Crackers, discussed in part 2.

The limitations of these Andersen imitations are defined in part 3 by contrasting them with her much better works that are a personal and radical combination of moral tale and fantasy. In The Brownies in 1865, she returned decisively to her most potent and promising early form, the dream fantasy of Melchior's Dream

(1861), with the sure-footedness of an artist on the right road. The ensuing, innovatory sequence, through The Land of Lost Toys, Amelia and the Dwarfs, Benjy in Beastland and Timothy's Shoes, shows a finer control of form learned in the writing of Mrs. Overthway's Remembrances (1866-8). These both participate in the wide contemporary rediscovery of fantasy, and more personally, discover formulations of the child's experience neither arbitrary nor loose.

1 Early Trials: the inexpensive thing

Mrs. Ewing's first two stories, despite drawing heavily on much earlier story types, are more promising records of reality than her wilder historical and gothic excursions. Yet all these trials are oddly dated and retrospective, as though she were sifting through sets of possibilities for useful matter.

Within its narrow compass, A Bit of Green conflates several standard evangelical elements. Its hero is the familiar discontented child, whose watchful parent administers the salutary lesson in piety, a visit to 'poor William' dying in a garret but counting his blessings. The converting visit, the unashamed use of the poor as exemplum for the rich, the implicit confirmation of the existing order, are characteristic of earlier fiction. Henry Fairchild's exposure to little Charles Trueman, a poor cottager, but 'one of the most pious little boys in all that country', shows the pattern in its basic form.³ Such attitudes were soon to be satirized by Mrs. Ewing in Reginald Dacre's self-conscious sick-visiting (4, 75 ff) and Timothy's unwelcome patronage of poor old men and dirty boys (7, 128 and 131). Indeed, these patterns had already descended to the innumerable writers of tract novels and reward books. But here Mrs. Ewing's discontent is not expressed by any adaptation of the

basic didactic model. Her hero's moral conversion is as implausibly swift as in any tract, the style as stridently exclamatory:

Never out of ^{the} town! confined to the house for years!
and what a house! The tears rushed to my eyes, and I
felt that angry heart-ache which the sight of suffering
produces in those who are too young to be insensible to
it, and too ignorant of GOD'S Providence to submit with
"quietness and confidence" to His will (1, 126).

Both the heated language and the recommended submissiveness are standard evangelical fare, as is poor William's thankfulness, punctuated by coughs, but unquestioning and unquestioned. However, such ennobling poverty traditionally had a rural not urban setting, as it has in The Fairchild Family (1818 - 1847) or in its classic text, The Shepherd of Salisbury Plain,⁴ in Hannah More's Cheap Repository Tracts (1795-8). This tradition of pastoral poverty, prolonged beyond all seemliness, was to arouse Mrs. Ewing to protest, and perhaps accounts, as much as any reaching after contemporary realism, for the tale's setting in 'a dirty, busy, manufacturing town' (118). But, its top dressing of 'bits of old iron, and shoes, and the tops of turnips' (124) hardly modifies its underlying attitudes which remain pretty much those of Mrs. Gatty in The Little Victims where the rich children are exposed to Tommy Brown 'eating his potatoe (sic) soaked in the dripping begged at the squire's back-door; without anything else to wait-or hope for'.⁵

There is poignancy in Mrs. Ewing's view of squalor. The narrator notes the 'mournful fatality' of names like Rosemary Street and Primrose Place (123). The vistas of industrial Yorkshire, imprinted on Mrs. Ewing's mind, did ensure visual fidelity:

I do not think there was a whole unbroken window in all the row of tall miserable houses, and the wet clothes hanging out on lines stretched across the street, flapped above our heads (124).

But these modern fittings carry no radical weight within the fixed tract structure, and the hero's recoil from such appearances is

even defused and discounted: 'for, like older social reformers than myself, I felt more sure that the reform was needed, than of how to accomplish it' (123).

Nor does this setting anticipate urban fiction about ragged children saved from sin, though not unduly from raggedness, produced in the post-Mayhew sixties by Hesba Stretton, 'Brenda', or later Silas Hocking. Their fiction is no more reformist, but it is more truly popular than Mrs. Ewing's, taking its pungent strength from an intimate knowledge of street life. Although the first-person voice is rare, as inimical to pathos, the supposition is of poverty viewed from inside, through the daily experience of Froggy, Little Meg or Cassy, who are nevertheless objectively held before us as exemplifying its worst aspects. This requires a bold manipulative authorial presence, lacking in Mrs. Ewing. The difference is marked by the confident opening of Stretton's Alone in London (1869, Ch. 1 'Not Alone') which moves with cinematic rapidity and increasing detail from an indistinct view of open country, through London, into 'festering slums', and comes to rest on a dingy shop, a terminus of wretchedness on which the author's sight is trained. Mrs. Ewing begins and ends in a middle-class home; poverty is merely a moral excursion. She aims at a middle-class readership, whereas the true city novelists reached a wider spectrum of the newly literate public to whom James pointed with alarm.

Yet there are signs that this inherited repertoire of structures is not suited to her needs, rudimentary movements towards a more psychological, less propagandist fiction.

One discordant feature is her use of a retrospective first-person narrative, to become her favourite form. Here the sense of retrospect is almost entirely dissipated by the conversion tale's contrary demand for immediacy. The time gap between teller and

events opens only in the perfunctory conclusion (133) and the sharply etched, but ultimately irrelevant opening:

I was born and bred there; and, ever since I could remember, the last sound that soothed my ears at night, and the first to which I awoke in the morning, was the eternal rumbling and rattling of the carts and carriages as they passed over the rough stones. I never noticed if I heard them in the day-time, but at night my chief amusement, as I lay in bed, was to guess by the sound of the wheels what sort of vehicle was passing (118-9).

How much more inward and individualized an approach to the city this is than Stretton's. We are in the character's company, not the author's. The details substantiate the account as true to children's experience and as credible recollective matter by the adult. But it has no bearing on the central action of conversion. The angle of recollection attracts an author who yet finds no use for it. By 1866 she grasped the possibilities of arousing the reader to the time gap more profitably.

The first-person itself is not at such odds with the story type. It does, marginally, internalize moral change and make its communication more sensitive. The hero's reading to the dying man is not presented as the usual confident performance of the model scholar. Instead, the voice implies a more tentative, psychological experience, with interest directed, untypically, to the reader's social unease not his religious awe:

I wondered what I should read; but it was soon settled by his asking for certain Psalms, which I read as clearly and distinctly as I could. At first I was rather disturbed by his occasional remarks, and a few murmured Amens; but I soon got used to it (131).

In the tale's reiteration of some resonant text, here from Revelations, on 'the heavenly Jerusalem, where there is no need of the sun, neither of the moon', Mrs. Ewing follows the tract formula of interlarding narrative with biblical props ('hiccuping references', says Arthur Clennam in Little Dorrit). Many narratives were moulded entirely to the single text. Gillian Avery comments on the absurdity

of novels in which 'a single gospel text' was endowed with a 'seemingly magical force' to convert the unenlightened.⁶ But A Bit of Green attempts a different use of its text on God's light, as a source of quite extensive, integrating images. However, the superficial continuity of light references hardly bears examination; the necessary limpidity of tract fiction is clouded, without more complex meanings being sustained. We are sensitized to their occurrence, but frustrated by their confusion.

Their first appearances hazily imply a social dimension, not pursued because it entailed documentary social criticism beyond Mrs. Ewing's range, and contrary to the tract's inherent conservatism. Light in the hero's home is artificial, a convenience of the rich:

We had very little light, except gaslight and daylight, in our street; the sunshine seldom found its way to us, and, when it did, people were so little used to it that they pulled down the blinds for fear it should hurt the carpets (119).

Sunlight, by implication, blesses the poor - and the young, who are indifferent to carpets; in the nursery 'the windows were reflected in square patches of sunlight on the floor' (120). But such hints about a benighted bourgeoisie and receptive childhood go unpursued. There is a sense of effort subsequently as Mrs. Ewing redefines the motif as the light of holiness irradiating the exemplary William, clinched finally by the Revelations text. The hero approaches 'a dark, dirty lane, where surely the sun never did shine' (122) to a garret where 'After so much groping in the dark, the light dazzled me' (124). We are now in familiar tract country. Rather discordantly, in view of the emphasized squalor, light references underline the evangelical cancelling of poverty by piety: William boasts "the sun couldn't come into a king's room better than it comes into mine" (128). The very frequency of reference shows a writer attempting a denser texture, but their

inconsistency reveals her uncertainty as to how to do this within an uncongenial form.

The gathering of emotional charges around a single emblem, as a spearhead on readers' consciences, is also characteristic of evangelical fiction, like the organ's burden 'Home Sweet Home' in Christie's Old Organ (1882). Flower emblems were common as ready barometers of divine favour. The ubiquitous The Basket of Flowers, Charlotte Elizabeth Browne's The Simple Flower, or Mrs. Gatty's The Light of Life all invoke the simple analogy of blooming plants and spiritual nurture to bind the fiction. Mrs. Ewing quarries a similar seam in the emblematic musk plant, the 'bit of green' bequeathed to the hero on William's transplantation to the 'heavenly garden' (133). But again, the use is hesitant. Evangelical fiction 'translates' the significance of the motifs persistently, ingeniously, to provide the emotional arteries of the fiction; the sub-stratum of flower motifs in Christie's Old Organ (Ch. 7 'Little Mabel's Snowdrops') is determinedly converted into religious doctrine. Mrs. Gatty is more broadly moralistic. The Light of Life about a divine fool and his rose tree uses just Mrs. Ewing's conjunction of light and plant references, to promise paradise for the lowly:

And so it came to pass, that it was in the nursery garden, among the flowers - his only idea of an earthly paradise that the poor idiot ended his days.⁷

This language, more loose and lyrical in its analogies than the evangelical tradition is closer to Mrs. Ewing's:

... but through the glass panes that were left, in full glory streamed the sun, and in the midst of the blaze stood a pot of musk in full bloom (125).

However, Mrs. Gatty tempers lyricism with some thoroughgoing explanations (the plant is the soul, the light God's grace), whereas Mrs. Ewing avoids both the evangelist's fervour and the parabolist's earnestness. She skirts around a popular convention, unwilling to

use it popularly. Instead, she invests more life in the little history of the plant's arrival, confused in its moral significance, but positive about country joys: 'He'd got flowers in his hat, and flowers in all his button-holes ...' (130). This gives one small pointer to her later undidactic pastorals in which horticultural imagery sheds its moral burden and is moulded to the quality of the child's imagination.

Her restlessness shows in her turning in The Blackbird's Nest to the different, rationalist tale of education and, again, producing something that is neither good Edgeworthian imitation nor personal form. In Early Lessons (1801) such tales describe the child's absorption of some practical lesson, a movement from ignorance to enlightenment usually giving a linear design. This particular lesson, on the treatment of animals, is a mainstay of rationalist fiction from Mrs. Trimmer and Sandford and Merton onwards. But the standard model has a utilitarian basis; morality is rational behaviour tempered with generosity. The scientific lessons of Harry and Lucy, on making rush-lights or the mechanics of windmills, increase the child's grasp on this life, without implications about the next. As an early lesson, The Blackbird's Nest operates with rather scanty detail on its well-worn theme: young blackbirds are best reared by their parents, not incompetent little girls. But Mrs. Ewing improves on the model in different, and incompatible directions; first, she makes the lesson a spiritual one; secondly, she attempts a psychological representation of the child's motivation.

To give a religious and Victorian significance to a rationalist design, Mrs. Ewing makes the child's mentor not an Edgeworthian parent or an earnest, expository Mr. Barlow, but an introspective curate with a past. She duplicates the child's mild peccadillo in

his graver, misspent youth, and her little lesson in biology and behaviour in his major conversion from 'presumptuous sins' (1, 65). The figure of the tutelary adult whose own experience of sin is made available to the child descends, thus modified, from the more doctrinaire examples in Mrs. Cameron and Mrs. Sherwood, whose parents are sinners before they are mentors. Working in a later theology, Mrs. Ewing presents a more realistic version of this figure whose sin is now a consequence of personal failure, not of man's fallen state:

"O yes!" I cried; "I am so wicked! I wish I were as good as you are!"

"As I am!" - he began.

I was too young then to understand the sharp tone of self-reproach in which he spoke ... (59).

The psychological realism of this is not in question. But the effect of the curate's history is not to underscore the child's state but to distract us from it. Differences in the scale and tone of the duplication jar. The precise application of the larger case to the smaller is avoided by curate and child both weeping after his story, a lachrymose evasion. The lack of cogency in religious meanings runs throughout. It is only with difficulty that the utilitarian pattern is spiritualized. The child takes the birds 'to have the honour and glory of ... bringing them up' (54), hardly a case of spiritual pride. After the curate's admonition, this secular little heroine exclaims "What a preach about nothing!" (56). Later, Mrs. Ewing was to make the adult mentor a social not spiritual agent, and the treatment of animals theme a secular one, moving not backwards to the rationalist view, but forwards to the psychological one.

The second direction in which the tale pulls, towards the sensitive recording of behaviour, produces its best writing, but it is curtailed or confused wherever it conflicts with the didactic pattern. As in the previous tale, a retrospective first-person gives an initial

inwardness which is at odds with fiction types with palpable designs on the reader. The voice, even in such rudimentary children's fiction, seduces us to an empathy that conflicts with the demand that we pass judgement and infer desirable conduct.

Compare how Mrs. Ewing with some care unfolds the heroine's state of mind in stealing the birds, with the same case in the classic text on animal-treatment, Mrs. Trimmer's The History of the Robins (1786), still imitated and reprinted as Mrs. Ewing wrote. Her narrator recalls

... reading the story of Goody Twoshoes, and thinking to myself how much I should like to be like her, and to go about in the village with a raven, a pigeon, and a lark on my shoulders, admired and talked about by everybody (51).

This reverie is almost instantly given substance by her discovery of the nest: 'I stood still at first in pure pleasure at the sight; and then, little by little, grand ideas came into my head' (52).

Here is Mrs. Trimmer:

The robin-redbreasts ... at length ventured to enter the room and feed upon the breakfast-table ... Frederick was quite transported; he longed to catch the birds ... [and] could not help expressing a wish that he had them in a cage, that he might feed them all day long.⁸

Frederick is observed by a recognizably adult author; 'could not help' implies an adult deprecation of juvenile traits. His briefly-stated longings are the pretext for Mrs. Benson to rationalize, cleverly and fully, on their necessary suppression. In Mrs. Ewing, interest has shifted to the child's thinking, relayed in the inward voice and the arresting analogy of Goody Twoshoes, from Newbery's appealing publication, The History of Little Goody Two Shoes (1765), not permitted reading in a Trimmer household. The analogy prompts an interpretation of childish behaviour as the effort to realize deep and universal fantasies. Mrs. Trimmer assumes as a lamentable fact of life that boys want to cage birds. Mrs. Ewing begins to

explore not the psychic origins of such behaviour (reserved for post-Freudian fiction), but how it is characteristic of childhood and how it appears to the child himself. And her method does give some closeness to the centre of conflicting feelings:

... I felt quite a contemptuous pity for all the wretched little birds who were hatched every year without me to rear them. At the same time, I had a general idea that grown-up people always did throw cold water on splendid plans like mine (53).

This rough attempt to find correlatives for the child's inwardness, to discover a style which mimed his motions, indicates what was to be her main path.

And here such narrative closeness is rapidly dispersed by the moral tale's emphasis on the mechanics of reformation. Like Mrs. Trimmer, but with less conviction and vitality, Mrs. Ewing dutifully provides the narrative reprimand. The tale's second half is routine recantation, tediously yet uneasily written. Details which in more mature work would be developed - the solacing gift of a plant, the playing at burials to relieve her guilt - remain discordantly peripheral. The irresolutions of this and the previous tale were not reduced until Mrs. Ewing evolved the dream fantasy, a form which did allow the moral tale of correction to take on an expansively psychological dimension.

Her early excursions into the 'arbitrary' fictions James deprecated were amazingly frequent. Gothic features reappear, sometimes as a near-surreptitious indulgence, and there were at least three trials at historical romance before she retreated from this cul-de-sac. Some reasons for this have been suggested in the introduction. One central critical inference is that by far the best of these half dozen tales is Friedrich's Ballad, the only one dealing with children, and it is successful precisely where it attends to their experience, irrespective of its misty German setting

and inflated subject. These works could have left her with no doubts about her proper subject. Wellek and Warren suggest a broad genealogy of novel and romance:

The novel is realistic; the romance is poetic or epic: we should now call it "mythic"...The two types, which are polar, indicate the double descent of prose narrative: the novel develops from the lineage of non-fictional narrative forms - the letter, the journal, the memoir or biography, the chronicle or history; it develops, so to speak, out of documents; stylistically it stresses representative detail, "mimesis" in its narrow sense. The romance, on the other hand, the continuator of the epic and the medieval romance, may neglect verisimilitude of detail ... addressing itself to a higher reality, a deeper psychology.⁹

This broad distinction makes a useful scanning-grid to place over these early tales.

At the furthest pole of romance is Mrs. Ewing's pure gothic fantasy, The Two Abbots. A Tale of Second Sight, in six chapters, serialized in family magazines (18, 34), and privately published 1868 - 1870.¹⁰ It is fiction which renounces all realistic specification; it has little dialogue, a doom-laden manner, a landscape and climate which reverberate to its hero's passions, and violent oscillations in plot. It indulges adolescent fantasies, sustains an insulated medievalism throughout, and seems unaware that it is an anachronism. Mrs. Ewing's shyness to acknowledge it stems not only from its badness, but its belatedness. By 1862 Thackeray could write:

Valancourt, and who was he? cry the young people.
Valancourt, my dears, was the hero of one of the most famous romances which ever was published in this country.¹¹

Mrs. Ewing inherited her belated gothicism through her mother's taste for Radcliffe, and her stories, The Footstep on the Stairs, with its guilt-ridden hero, and The Treasure-Seekers, with its spectacular properties of identical twins, good monks and evil charletons and French landscape, all of which reappear in The Two Abbots. The latter, though, lacks one essential of the genre - a

heroine. Without her, the fiction of Mrs. Radcliffe and Clara Reeve would lack the sentimental and lyrical emotion that is the reverse side of the romantic coin to horror. Without her, The Castle of Otranto and The Monk would lack the sexual threat that contributes to their volcanic tension. Without her, Mrs. Gatty's romances would lack their essential moral resolution, for Merelina and Mathilde are agents of redemptive purity. The Two Abbots lacks all overt sexual interest. Mrs. Ewing parsimoniously combines multiple gothic attributes in the single figure of Lord Lingborough (a place name reused in Lob). He is unutterably aristocratic, prescient, and traumatically scarred by seeing his family butchered, a centre of both sensibility and threat. His single career veers between moral extremes: the pious rearing; debauchery in France, hinted in laden prose rather than itemized; penance and resolution in a monastery. The careers of more truly Victorian gothic heroes, like Mr. Rochester and Guy Morville, plot similar curves from early fatalistic trauma to absolution.

Against this vitiating compression, are more intelligent uses of the mode. The internal logic of romance cuts it loose from mundane probability. Its people live at extremes of action and feeling, sometimes combining them paradoxically in one figure, like the voluptuous nun or the living corpse. Lingborough piquantly combines daemonism and saintliness, carried through in his career from debauchee to Abbot, and in his looks: 'his fair hair floating like an aureole and his black eyes gleaming'.¹² His condition is known through outward projections in setting and landscape. It is known, too, through key encounters with a man whose face 'looked as his own might look when he were dead'. Used primarily to generate easy excitement, this image signifies the hero's spiritual deadness, as when he recognized a plague-corpse as himself. But through

repetition, the idea gains some of the unnerving power of the doppelgänger myth, recurring throughout the century's fiction to enact just this terrifying self-confrontation: in Dickens' The Haunted Man and the Ghost's Bargain, Poe's William Wilson, James's The Jolly Corner or Wilde's The Portrait of Dorian Grey. Mrs. Ewing tries, without these writers' imagination in modernizing the gothic, to make the image express some radical self-dissociation. She comes closest when Lingborough meets himself in a midnight procession, faints, and wakes:

The lamp was out, and swung from its chains like some poor body from which the soul had fled, and over the pointed roofs of the city the early dawn was breaking.¹³

The extinguished lamp and the studied simile do carry the right implications of hopelessness. But the general texture is much thinner, its startling effects more meretricious. And what Scott calls 'the torment of romance-writers, those necessary evils, the concluding chapters',¹⁴ are clumsily botched. The doppelgänger is explained as an identical twin, undercutting any psychological validity, and the style becomes jarringly sweet ("I can feel his soft little hand in mine ... " recollects the hero¹⁵). This raises a world of Victorian pathos in clear defiance of the 'deeper psychology' of romance.

A loss of nerve, a vacillation between the poles of romance and realism, marks Mrs. Ewing's two published ghost stories, The Mystery of the Bloody Hand. A New Year's Story (1865) and The Yew-Lane Ghosts (1865). The first vacillates more damagingly. It is firmly anchored in time (1813), social group, and place. It simulates freely just those documentary forms to which Wellek and Warren trace the novel's origin: a sequence of letters from the heroine, extracts from her journal and her confidant's, an incredibly explicit newspaper report. This multiple documentation seems intended

to authenticate the story's lurid plot of murder, haunting and reprieve from the condemned cell. But so many narrative disruptions intensify our disbelief, without the prismatic impression of interlocking lives, and of reality shot through with strangeness, that similarly multiple documents give a novel like The Woman in White, which Mrs. Ewing had read. She tries to embed extraordinary events in reality by retrospection, a feature persisted in until she did make it work. The heroine writes that the tragedy 'brought my husband's first white hairs, and took away my girlhood for ever' (17, 60), neatly put, but with no basis in fiction. Contrarily, the tale never explains its supernatural events. The spectral hand revealing the murderer remains a para-normal phenomenon, not even debated by the characters.

In The Two Abbots, gothic methods predominate to express human behaviour, making its final realistic explanations absurd; in The Bloody Hand documentary conventions lead one to expect rationalizations of the supernatural which are not forthcoming. Both suffer from clashing levels. These misjudgements are a matter both of immaturity and of unease in particular genres.

The Yew-Lane Ghosts, in four chapters, is more homogeneous because its parochial setting contains or confines more of its elements. The reader's complicity in the ghosts' identities makes the supernatural merely a mechanism to test the hero's courage.

Graveyard descriptions have no romantic vibrations:

... the white clouds sailed slowly by the moon, which reflected itself on the damp grass, and shone upon the flat wet tomb-stones till they looked like pieces of water (1, 226).

Her models, again, are dated: the moral cottage stories of village life, going back to Sherwood's The History of Susan Grey (1802).

Names have chap-book crudeness: Beauty Bill, Bully Tom, honest

John Gardener. The hero is the familiar industrious scholar, but with the unevangelical attribute of beauty, a kind of Billy Budd radiance that invites malice. The tale abides by the simplism that physique expresses moral essence in a direct way: Tom's 'eyes would have been handsome if the lids had been less red; and if he had ever looked you in the face, you would have seen that they were blue' (189). Like other cottage tales, it retains vestigial folk structures in its pitting of a sprightly lad against a slow-brained bully, and in its ghostly 'dark aisle of trees' on the community's boundaries, a fairy tale setting coloured by some effusive writing:

... the dearly-loved play-place of generations of children on sultry summer days - looked very grim and vault-like, with narrow streaks of moonlight peeping in at rare intervals to make the darkness to be felt! (200).

Alongside tried and basic elements is a more contemporary and clashing realism. The same effusive style overloads the slight action and uncomplicated stereotypes ludicrously:

Why did Mother Muggins of the shop let the goody side of her scales of justice drop the lower by one lollipop for Bill than for any other lad, and exempt him by unwonted smiles from her general anathema on the urchin race? (190-1)

The palpable effort here is exceptionally gauche, even for a young writer trying to impress, and it misreads the cottage tale's requirements disastrously. There is a tendency to over-elaborate or over-probe characters beyond the form's simple needs. This is most glaring in the provision of two young undergraduates to engineer revenge on the bully, involving a clash of social types. The impulse to develop one of them through a sentimental biography, as an eccentric ("You're as old as the hills" (232), his friend observes), and subscriber to the manly code, leads to severe discrepancies in tone and plot. Public school morality is hardly consonant with the parochial setting and folk contrasts:

" ... I see myself helping a great lout who came out to frighten a child, and can neither defend his own eyes and nose, nor take a licking with a good grace when he deserves it!" (229).

The importation of such values also involves some hypocrisy in the handling of class: the bully's thrashing is engineered by the gents, but administered by the humble artisan. Mrs. Ewing learned to be more circumspect, and eventually, more honest, in plotting such social interactions.

The ghost stories were blind alleys because Mrs. Ewing could find no ways to develop the several fictional types on which they depend. Only in incidental virtues, outside their inflexible structures, is there any sign of originality, moments when characters are drawn into such complexities of feeling that she confronts her models' insufficiency and is driven to alternative means of defining experience. In The Yew-Lane Ghosts, Tom's habitual kicking represents both brutality and aimlessness; he examines his boots 'as if considering their probable efficiency against flesh and blood' (194). The landscape also externalizes the menace he holds: 'at the end of a field over which the shadows of a few wayside trees were stalking like long thin giants, a man and a boy sat side by side upon a stile' (188). That menace emanates from the trees, and not from the man, expresses exactly the primitive element in the child's fear.

Early chapters of The Mystery of the Bloody Hand deal in the most stereotyped emotions. Only with a closer focus does Mrs. Ewing correlate inward conditions with adequate gestures, images, and details. The heroine's anxiety while awaiting her lover is communicated by her obsessive desire to pluck the petals from a rose before he arrives (¹⁷23). After the tragedy, we later return to the discarded rose (25). Apart from its rightness as a gesture of tension, this detail has implications for her own imminent transformation; her bloom is destroyed just as rapidly: she 'suddenly dropped like an

apple-blossom' (41-2), says her confidant. Extended, the references barely work in consort, but the original localized idea is arresting. More concentrated and unusual, though still lacking integration, is some detailing in chapter 5, when tension mounts as the heroine waits in lodgings to hear of her condemned lover:

I sat staring at the sprawling paper on the walls, and at the long snuff of the candle that Dr. Penn had lighted, and at a framed piece of embroidery, representing Abraham sacrificing Isaac, that hung upon the wall (56).

'Sprawling' suggests a raised consciousness. The sombre biblical reference implies impending tragedy. Such violence in an embroidered picture also refers to her enforced, essentially female, passivity. These composite associations are more than mere gothic decorations. The image is later consolidated, but in a way that discloses its flawed equivalence to the heroine's case. She wakes to find her lover freed: 'Abraham was still sacrificing his son upon the wall, but my Isaac was restored to me' (58).

Imperfect as they are, these sporadic images and details reveal their author's need to articulate human states more precisely and arrestingly than her two absurd plots and the uncongenial conventions of magazine romance allow.

The early historical romances, certainly in Wellek and Warren's sense, 'neglect verisimilitude of detail'. Despite her background reading, their foreign topographies remain unreal, with little sense of the historical moment as an intersection of social and political pressures. Monsieur the Viscount's Friend and Friedrich's Ballad. A Tale of the Feast of St. Nicholas (both 1862) are backward-looking in technique as well as setting. They have little in common with characteristic historical fiction for children in this period. By the seventies, writers like Emma Marshall, Emma Leslie, E.S. Holt and Mrs. J.B. Webb were providing fiction set in a specific past,

with an earnest informativeness encouraged by the Board schools. Such novels, typically, had a dual purpose. First, they were educational tours through some tract of history; Mrs. Marshall often cited her primary sources to stimulate juvenile scholarship.¹⁶ Secondly, as romances, they elevated heroic virtues and castigated their opposite vices, on either individual or national scale. Mrs. Webb especially did not shrink from reprimanding entire races, in works like Naomi, or The Last Days of Jerusalem (1841), despite a full sense of her incompetence 'to do justice to the subject'.¹⁷ Mrs. Ewing's history is neither informative nor elevating. Perhaps the closest parallel is Charlotte Yonge's popular and superior The Little Duke (serialized 1851, 1854), which treats the education of the ruler, as Friedrich's Ballad does that of the writer. Both use the high patterning of romance, expanding and telescoping time to achieve a particular biographical pulse. But Yonge's method relates the broader currents of history and culture to the single life, as Mrs. Ewing does not.

Her unpublished 'Dutch Story', left in manuscript, 'one of her earliest written efforts', Eden says (18,18), shows her problems in a raw form. Set in Holland, in a vague, picturesque past, it was evidently discarded because of its hopelessly disjointed plot. Its centres of interest change with perplexing rapidity. At first, it seems a tale of the hero's revolt against his deeply commercial family and class. But it becomes a love story and transfers the hero to England's 'Little Holland'. This provides no interplay of national qualities, however, and both English and Dutch townscapes are rather the sketcher's pictorial backdrop than the novelist's view of interacting place and person. The subject of a boy's growth, though it obviously engaged her mind even then, is treated with a pomposity which, thankfully, she outgrew:

But the soul - battles that youth fights upon the threshold of manhood are not lightly to be decided. Blessed is he whom the pious hands of love and authority have led by paths of discipline to the battlefield.¹⁸

Apparently she imagined that historical fiction solicited such misplaced rhetoric, and this tendency persisted.

In Monsieur the Viscount's Friend the aberrations in plotting are smoothed into a more controlled story in three chapters. Yet one is left wondering why a writer so widely read in Scott should produce historical romance so tasteless and superficial. In his 1831 introduction to The Fortunes of Nigel (1822) Scott justifies his attraction to the period of James I as a historical point where 'ancient manners' were subdued by civilizing pressures, affording 'the light and shadows necessary to give effect to a fictitious narrative', and permitting both 'incidents of a marvellous and improbable character' and 'characters and sentiments ... described with a great variety of shading and delineation, which belongs to the newer and more improved period'.¹⁹ Such a historical watershed requires a particular combination of methods, carefully and critically selected.

Mrs. Ewing chooses such a watershed. With youthful temerity she sets her three parts before, during and after the French Revolution. But her historical grasp is socially and politically naive. The structure suggests populist agitation as merely a disruption of beautiful lives, effecting no changes in aristocratic thinking, or indeed living: part 3 returns us to both the scene and mood of part 1. In part 2 she wisely avoids large-scale descriptions of political action for a slight human episode, the aristocratic hero's befriending of a toad during his imprisonment. But romance must ally its readers to the causes it presents by the strongest imaginative bonds. This tale implies the hero's restoration to his estates as

a culmination of romance, but provides no emotional basis to ensure our appropriate response. The central, pivotal incident is a lesson in animal behaviour, quite without historical reverberations. There is none of Scott's grasp of private destinies contributing to, or dictated by public movements. This Mrs. Ewing did not achieve till Jackanapes in 1879.

The style, too has no particle of Scott's conviction. Her loyalty to the impoverished clichés of romance is undisturbed: the Viscomtesse is 'like an exquisite piece of porcelain' (1, 136), her son has 'fatal nobility' and an 'exquisitely-cut mouth' (136). This timid writing lacks any humorous or qualifying touch, and grows blander and more lifeless as it accounts for supposedly greater depths of feeling:

She offered her cheek, on which there was not a ray of increased colour, and Monsieur the Viscount stooped and kissed it, with a thick mist gathering in his eyes, through which he could not see her face (176).

The retreat to the past which Scott found artistically liberating, the young Mrs. Ewing found only imprisoning; there is no 'great variety of shading', only a stifling sameness.

Much of Friedrich's Ballad is also mannered, stiff with archaisms and pseudo-Germanic allusions. Mechanically, it is less smoothly plotted than the previous tale. It opens with a children's family council, a vignette from Aunt Judy's Tales, and announces 'The Story Woman is to be walled up' (1, 66), a gripping opening such as Andersen favoured.²⁰ But then it halts to explain this enigma, lengthily and unnecessarily. Yet in spite of clumsy exposition, it has more promise than any other romance. This is because its subject, a writer's development and struggle for expression, engaged Mrs. Ewing deeply. It is easy to translate Friedrich's 'childish efforts at verse-making' (76) into her own long apprenticeship, and his feverish rejections of different

styles into her own more comfortable explorations. Even through the haze of romance, she still conveys the physical and emotional discomfort of a writer's lot: scribbling in bed, shielded lights, importunate siblings, the 'excited state' of writing and 'unheroic moments' (95-7) of collapse. But she also wrote better because family life is reflected from the child's view, from the bottom upwards, and this gave her the imaginative foothold she needed.

The theme of the developing artist she took from Andersen and from her mother's Joachim the Mimic, but she embedded it in an account of family domesticity that made it much more her own. The locking of these two areas, imperfect and tentative in this tale, was to be consolidated in Jan of the Windmill. In Friedrich's Ballad, the autobiographical matter is less assimilated:

The children had an instinctive belief in Friedrich's talents, to which their elders had not attained. The faith of childhood is great, and they saw no reason why he should not be able to do as he said, and so forthwith began to pet and coax him as unmercifully as they had scolded five minutes before (87-8).

Particular insights into children's life are scattered, but lift the writing from threadbare romance, towards psychological realism. The idea of the children's annual reading from their own book is transferred directly from Gatty customs; but the idea of their walling up this over-familiar book to 'rediscover' it later is pure invention, a gesture of reverse magic which childhood practises in resistance to its own transitoriness. The writing only partly capitalizes on the gesture's excellence. The walling-up is in midsummer, the seasonal opposite of St. Nicholas's Day, a sharp pinpointing of the temporal flow which the children try to reverse: 'The bees droned above, the children shouted below, and the proposal was carried amid general satisfaction' (83). Similar perceptiveness sharpens description of the hero's fundamentally childish, as opposed to artistic, nature:

But he did not cry long, he had a happy feeling of community with his brothers and sisters in getting more than they any of them deserved ... with a comfortable sensation of cakes and kindness, he fell asleep.(100).

The last alliteration is a youthful, unnecessary flourish. But the writer who can say that the child was soothed by 'a dozen or so of purposeless kisses' (97) from his sister is learning her trade, for 'purposeless' is far from unnecessary.

In using the boldest romance techniques to project an artist-hero Mrs. Ewing resorted to the most obvious method, the contemporary artist being a notoriously difficult subject for realism.²¹ Well-distributed references to Goethe (111), Petrarch (90), the cobbler-poet Hans Sachs (88) and to children's ballads which 'refused to give up their hold on the minds they had nourished ... so long' (86) deliberately blur the sense of period. Characters are generic - 'the German bookseller', 'the Duke'. The artist's conflicts are named and numbered, not dramatized. Before discovering his own subject, he works schematically through each genre, including children's literature, with the author's sly gloss: 'to write a new nursery ballad was the hardest task of all' (90). Patterning compresses and clarifies the theme. Marie's calm hymn counterbalances Friedrich's passionately secular, and by the reader unheard, ballad. Even the hymn's significance is expressed as a patterned chain reaction:

The boy lay drinking it in with that full enjoyment of simple vocal music which is so innate in the German character; and as he lay, he hummed his accustomed part in it, and the mother at work below caught up the song involuntarily, and sang it at her work; and Marie's clear voice breaking through the wooden walls of the house, was heard by a passer in the street, who struck in with the bass of the familiar hymn, and went his way. Before it ended, Friedrich was sleeping peacefully once more (106).

But in later scenes, patterning becomes hollow. Schematic dialogue, like the long cataloguing of the poet's achievements (109-113), sounds merely unreal, bleak exchanges padded with over-modern quips:

'He rather felt (as authors are not unapt to feel) that a poet who could write such poems should have critics created with express capabilities for understanding him' (108). The largeness of her task, making fiction about art, defeated Mrs. Ewing. The adult artist becomes a mere prop in the legend. The problem was to recur at the same point in Jan. Instead of spanning time, the legend eventually falters in a wordiness scarcely better than Mrs. Gatty's moralizing in Joachim the Mimic. The central problem is to provide substance for conclusions about genius. Andersen frequently rewrote the archetypal fable of the artist's progress, either in extreme legendary forms which discovered symbolic equivalents for art, as in The Ugly Duckling (English 1843), or in naturalistic forms mirroring the world of ballet and music familiar from his days at the Copenhagen Royal Theatre, as in Lucky Peer (English 1871). Friedrich's progress and restless obsessive dreams could be taken from Andersen's own life, a romance in itself to the Gattys. Certainly his ballad on 'a great man born to a small way^{of life}' (93) is a version of the Andersenian fable. But where the work itself should be is a gap. Mrs. Ewing invokes Hans Sachs, but produces a minute Die Meistersinger (1868) without monologues or prize-song. Minor fiction about a great writer is something of a paradox. In Jan she wisely opted for a painter-hero.

Besides acting as a trial run for this later and better retelling of the artist's fable, Friedrich's Ballad discovers a freer style of romance, refined upon in the parables of the seventies; but most of all, by its discrepant childhood and adult scenes, it pointed unmistakably to her proper sphere.

2 After Andersen

Mrs. Ewing's familiarity with Hans Andersen led her to copy him during the sixties. An Idyll of the Wood (1867), Three Christmas Trees

(1867) and Christmas Crackers (1869-70) were written under his influence, more accomplished copies than her brief juvenile squibs, The Smut, The Crick and The Brothers (in The Black Bag), which were

scribbled down to illustrate a saucy theory, put forward half in joke, that the recipe for "writing like" the great Danish story-teller ... was to keep your body quite still, to select the smallest object within ^{the} your range of ^{your} vision, confine your sympathies to that, and then let your imagination go.²²

Of these tiny moralities, The Smut best sustains the weird poise of Andersen's anthropomorphic fables, making humble objects express human essences. Mrs. Ewing is imitating fables like The Windmill or the hugely popular The Top and the Ball where unlikely things voice human sentiments to create grotesque or ironic disparities. Brevity is essential or the tenuous joke evaporates. The smut drifts on to a polished fender:

"How large I am!" said he, with complacency. "I am quite a double Smut. I am bigger than any other. If I were a little harder, I should be a cinder, not to say a coal" (17, 61).

He aspires higher, to a councillor's nose: 'It was not made of brass; it would not (as the cabinet-makers say) take a polish. It did not reflect the object seated on it' (62). The grotesque conceit is prolonged by the 'cabinet-makers' detail. The ending is a swift Andersenian coda; the councillor rubs his nose and eliminates the smut: 'But it died on the throne, which was some consolation' (62). The tales are creditable copies; the rapid form, satiric poise, ingenuity in knitting-up a joke are all faithfully reproduced. Yet they miss the more unnerving near-humanity of Andersen's speaking props, perhaps residing in the untranslatable, colloquial individuality of Danish. The Darning-Needle, his similar satire on ambition, is more uncanny because it works the joke to the very perimeters of the possible:

"So now I'm a breast-pin!" said the Darning-Needle.
 "I knew very well that I should come to honour: when
 one is something, one comes to something!"

And she laughed quietly to herself- and one can
 never see when a darning-needle laughs.²³

In Andersen's plant and flower fables there is a more diffused anthropomorphism, more primitive, or pantheistic, than in these elaborated conceits. As Mrs. Molesworth said: 'from the tall fir-tree to the tiniest daisy-bud, all nature, through his magic spectacles, grows instinct with sympathy and meaning'.²⁴ The suffusion of the fiction with Christian or religious feeling Mrs. Ewing also copied. It is the intensely Christian romanticism of his parables, The Last Dream of the Old Oak, or The Loveliest Rose in the World, which she distils in her privately published The Hollies. Her language mimics his famous simplicity. Her plants are invested with his amazing sentience. The hollies long to participate in the Christmas ritual:

This was the tradition of the holly-bushes. This was
 the dream which made their branches restless and
 dissatisfied with the narrow round of their existence.²⁵

The sentiments and details are those of The Fir Tree, but Andersen's tale has a more functional, powerful structure; the sequence from forest to garden bonfire embodies the fatal course of the discontented; the richly-suggested seasonal movement makes statement unnecessary. Mrs. Ewing is forced to a coarser explicitness.

Mrs. Molesworth said that Andersen united 'in one the greatest simplicity and homeliness of material with the most poetical mysticism'.²⁶ Both Three Christmas Trees and An Idyll of the Woods gather themselves around a single emotion, intensely characteristic of Andersen, the impossible longing for some other state. And An Idyll of the Woods shows some remarkably close observation of his methods. It uses his uncharacterized narrator, 'the old man who lived in the wood', addressing merely 'the children', a narrative

frame pared to essentials, which yet distances elegiacally the inset story of the captive thrush. This inset story is in more fervent prose, like Andersen's insulated from matter that might disturb the illusion of sentient and intelligent creatures:

Although he was more faint and weary than he had ever been, he felt no pain. The intensity of his hope to reach the old wood made everything seem light; even at the last, when his wings were almost powerless, he believed that they would bear him home, and was happy. Already he seemed to rest upon the trees, the waters sounded in his ears like the rustling of leaves (5, 154-5).

Andersen's captive lark in The Daisy acts as a similar focus of feeling:

"Here is no water", said the captive lark ... "Oh, I must die! I must leave the warm sunshine, the fresh green, and all the splendour that God has created!"
And then he thrust his beak into the cool turf ...²⁷

Yet Andersen could mould these period conventions of sentient birds and high emotionalism, perhaps embarrassing to modern readers, into a flawless tale like The Nightingale. Mrs. Ewing's events have no comparable universality. She duplicates the thrush's enslavement in that of the wretched woman ballad-singer, a vignette of social humiliation. Both bird and woman die. The language enforces the parallel emphatically; her song of love 'quavered as if in mockery' (146), an ironic counterpoint to the caged bird's song of 'Green leaves'. But it remains no more than a connection made. There is an uncomfortable contemporaneity about the social tragedy that grates against the nature fable.

Andersen's emotional regret imbues not only his nature parables, but the greater fairy stories, like The Little Mermaid and The Steadfast Tin Soldier, where it is crystallized by more mythopoeic narratives. P.L. Travers finds it 'a devitalizing element that the true tale never has',²⁸ partly accounting for his adult popularity. To contemplate this quality, so germane to Andersen, is to understand why the forms she copied so intelligently never became Mrs. Ewing's

own. She was a woman essentially at home in the world, unlike Andersen whose psychic and social malaise was hardly assuaged by enormous success. The difference is implicit in their attitudes to childhood, one possible touchstone of commitment to life as it is. Mrs. Ewing constantly revalued and retrieved her own childhood through her fiction, consolidating its continuity with her maturity. Andersen remained ambivalent about his fraught childhood. His selective affection for other children was neither unalloyed nor unconditional. He asked that Saabye's statue of him reading aloud should have the listening children removed, 'my aim being to be a writer for all ages, and so children could not represent me'.²⁹ From his ambivalence stems some of his greatness.

In The Three Christmas Trees, the longest first part is fresher, more densely textured, because about a child's daily life, than the two 'visionary' parts expressing his longings. These are adequately poetic:

The snow was clustered in exquisite shapes upon its plummy branches; wrapping the tree top with its little cross shoots, as a white robe might wrap a figure with outstretched arms (5, 131).

The indistinct power of that last metaphor shows her accuracy of imitation. But the earlier, domestic details of, say, snowman-building, hint at a more comfortable, child-centred reflection of experience that is at odds with the framework of regret.

Christmas Crackers imitates the Andersen story that has the sequence as its controlling design, like the large-scale The Galoshes of Fortune. It has a simplified linear pattern, surveying the private dreams of each member of a house-party, a cross-section of middle-class types, requiring closer observation of manners than before. Mrs. Ewing rises to this challenge with some exuberant social irony that became more accurate and integrated by the seventies. A young man speaks eloquently on Home and Christmas, and the narrative

glosses this:

He spoke with feeling, and it may be said with disinterested feeling, for he had not joined his family circle himself this Christmas, and there was a vacant place by the hearth of his own home (5, 167).

The magic of the tale is invested in a mysterious tutor, not the favourite Ewing mentor, a basically benevolent healer of nursery sorrows, but closer to Andersen's enigmatic mediators, agents of fate as in The Galoshes of Fortune. He has no didactic or consolatory function, but externalizes what is within each character. Mrs. Ewing attempts the uncanniness of The Shadow or The Travelling Companion by divesting her figure of humanity through gothic description:

... he fairly shook with delight, his shadow dancing like a maniac beside him (189).

or

... his shadow scrambled on the wall like an ape upon a tree (181).

She provides some colourful baroque ornament to bring wizardry into a Victorian drawing-room:

... but in their hollow sockets his eyes gleamed with the changeful lustre of two precious gems. In the ruddy firelight they were like rubies, and when he drew back into the shade they glared green like the eyes of a cat (162).

But she carefully withholds from the figure Andersen's metaphysical significance. He is neither Fate nor Providence, but a mechanism to penetrate the social surface. The tale is kept deliberately slight. Andersen's climactic and deeply pessimistic ending is exchanged for one of studied casualness. The burned-out log betokens an end of wizardry, with the conventional disclaimer that it 'remains a mystery to the present' (194). Nothing is changed. The offhand pose avoids giving the piece a greater weight than it can bear.

For all its care, Christmas Crackers has something mechanical and inert about it. Its occasionally stylish writing is self-aware, its copied patterns no vehicle for personal experimentation.

Intelligent as they are, the Andersen imitations give a sense of a writer in a mask, not entirely comfortable, sometimes awry. To turn from this 'Fantasia' to her own dream stories is to see Victorian fantasy used differently and better.

3 Dream Fantasies

Bruno Bettelheim in The Uses of Enchantment describes the child's response to Andersen's stories as lacking 'the feeling of consolation' conferred by the essential fairy tale which is 'optimistic, no matter how terrifyingly serious some features of the story may be', in contradistinction to the pessimistic myth.³⁰ The child may enjoy The Ugly Duckling without its being psychologically 'helpful' to him; it 'misdirects his fantasy' because the hero's happy, but unearned, destiny suggests that 'one's fate is inexorable'.³¹ This thesis is supported by the more terrible stories: The Little Match Girl suggests a fatalism born in social oppression; The Red Shoes contains a more unbearable fatalism, inescapable because internalized as Karen's moral turpitude. Here, a token consolatory ending barely relieves a savagely punitive story; it is the moral tale run mad, without proportion or fairness.

Mrs. Ewing's fantasies work in a contrary direction. It is possible to see them developing out of the didactic moral tale, like The Blackbird's Nest, retaining the typical tripartite structure: the child in error, under correction, reformed. Melchior's self-centredness is shifted by the dream, Amelia's wilfulness is tamed. If this were all, they would be merely respectable specimens of the innumerable fairy tales following Andersen, Carroll and the folk tale revival (discussed in Chapter 6). In 1892 Andrew Lang tartly reviewed the weaknesses of the type:

The new fairy tales, as a rule, have no human interest; in place of an unobtrusive moral naturally arising, they deal in allegory and in little episodic sermons ... there is naught but a series of fantastic dissolving views, ... The fatigued and never original fancy of the narrator dallies with talking, or, rather, prosing, flowers and beasts, which do not, as in the old kind, communicate the one necessary secret of the adventure, but which merely maunder at large.³²

Not that these flaws are all pruned from Mrs. Ewing's fantasies. The plural narrative layers of The Brownies are indeed 'fantastic dissolving views'. Timothy's shoes are resolutely corrective. Talking dogs, owls and toys sometimes 'maunder at large'. Fantasy is the children's form which most rapidly becomes meretricious. But her best fantasies are saved by their substantial psycho-symbolic core, the 'human interest' at their heart which yokes the child's reality and his dream by correlatives that go beyond didacticism. Their success depends on a closeness to the child's psyche attained through some fantastic web of events, images, details which monitor its movements. Where Mrs. Ewing conceives such a core - the 'helpful sprite' myth in The Brownies, the toy tribunal in The Land of Lost Toys, the wonder landscapes in Amelia and the Dwarfs, the fantasy is authenticated. Observably, too, she also in the sixties tightened her presentation of daily and domestic life, which provides both the contrasting reality, and the distorted, fragmented stock of the dream world. She moves from moral towards psychological fiction; the established ethical or religious tenor of her structures is adapted to make the dream represent enlightenment rather than correction. Melchior's vision is an extension or review of his daily life, a 'helpful' fiction in Bettelheim's sense, neither the dreaming incoherencies Lang deprecated, nor the older didactic magic of Mrs. Gatty's The Fairy Godmothers. The best fantasy accords with the enlightened view that the child is moulded from within not

manipulated from without by a behaviourist system of stimuli, as the rationalist tale implied. The faults of Amelia or the Trout boys are not maladaptive, as in the moral tale, nor sinful, as in the evangelical tale, but the natural consequences of childishness. The dream becomes an aid to maturation, a 'consolatory' fiction.

Melchior's Dream is over-complicated by its narrative gradations. The contemporary frame story of Richard's exasperation with his ten siblings is reproduced in the inner narrative of Melchior's discontent at sleeping in 'barracks' with all his brothers. His dream is the solvent of both dilemmas. This dream is a youthfully ambitious allegory, announced in a sub-title, and more portentous than subsequent fantasies. The adolescent's desire for privacy and independence is answered not by some rosy dream of family closeness, but with nothing less than Life's journey, conducted by Time and interrupted by Death. This dream is rather too bold, too disproportionate to the reality on which it comments, and as allegory, its equivalences are imperfect. Yet the relationship of dream to dreamer is not rigidly didactic; it spreads beyond any extractable lesson and makes the dreamer 'the powerless spectator of the consequences of his neglected opportunities' (1, 41). The coach, besides being a Victorian remodelling of Time's winged chariot, represents Melchior's own identity, a selfhood on which his siblings necessarily impinge, making the allegory a comment on the child's acceptance of his social being.

The duplicated narratives are carefully gauged to recede from realism towards dream. The swarming nursery life of the 'outer' layer is precisely contemporary. Richard speaks an identifiable public school slang:

"If a fellow wants to go anywhere, it's somebody else's turn. If old Brown sends a basket of grapes, it's share and share alike; all ten must taste, and then there's about a grape and a half^o each. If anybody calls or comes

to luncheon, there are a whole lot of brats swarming about, looking as if we kept a school" (1, 16).

His involvement with things, especially food, is solidly detailed; the 'champagne and ices' (14) at the Browns' party, the punch he is forbidden to make. This reappears in Melchior's illicit feast, also delightfully itemized, but more weirdly dreamlike (20). This growing appreciation of the specificity of children's lives is more developed in later fantasies. Here, the counterpart of things in the innermost dream is reduced to the tiger-skin rug and opera glasses Time provides which act as the register of Melchior's transformation. At first such desirable accessories provoke selfish discontent: 'one or other of [his brothers] would pull away the rug, or drop the glass, or quarrel, or romp, or do something that spoilt the effect' (27). Then he outgrows them: 'he could not dispose the rug more gracefully, or stare more perseveringly through the glass' (32). Finally, he understands their irrelevance: his hero-brother has no need of such gear (33). The movement is from objects towards the essentials underlying them.

The transition into dream, a danger spot in arbitrary fantasy, as Lang indicates, has here a subtle fidelity to dream sensations. Only slowly does Melchior relinquish his waking conventionality; he offers Time his coat, worries about his shirt catching fire, experiences irrational anxieties (22-3). Transition at the symbolic level is equally controlled; the waking 'indignity' (20) of sharing a bed actually dictates the powerful fantasy of a bed-coach into which every sibling climbs: 'there they were, sure enough, all dressed, and climbing one after the other on to the bed - his bed!' (24). Significantly, this invasion occurs when the vehicle is still more bed than coach, a lucid enactment of the violation of privacy which is the nub of the whole tale.

The substance of the dream-allegory is more schematic, rather like Christmas Crackers. Siblings are necessarily differentiated as stereotypes: the soldier, philosopher, scapegrace, flirt, and invalid. Melchior's relationship with each is summarized with brief irony. Vignettes are posed, in sequence. The method is economical, if over-portentous. Some of the thumbnail encounters are genuinely pungent, like that with the philosopher who 'found out that, well - that everything is a mistake'; his speech has sub-Carlylean eloquence:

"The world of fools will go on as they have ever done; but to the wise few, to whom I address myself, I would say - Shake off at once and for ever the fancies and feelings, the creeds and customs that shackle you, and be true" (35).

Such epitomizing skills were to serve Mrs. Ewing well in later short fictions.

Despite its somewhat inflated centre, the dream does proceed from the psychological core of adolescent restlessness. Its last episode, in which Melchior shields the scapegrace - appropriately the brother who 'really' shares his bed - from Death with his own body, has the desperate physicality of nightmare, and is an adequate symbolic enactment of his real dilemma between staving-off and embracing his family. This extreme gesture is beautifully translated in waking reality into the piggyback Melchior gives his brother; symbol becomes fact.

The movement back through narrative layers has a progressive domesticity, the reverse of the opening. Mrs. Ewing has to account for two conversions, Richard's and Melchior's, distinguished in their psychological depth. Melchior's progress around his sleeping siblings, cold shower, prayers and tears, all have the sacramental character of a new beginning, solemnized in sombre description:

The room was dark, and very still; but through the 'barracks' window, which had no blind, he saw the winter sun pushing through the mist, like a red hot cannon-ball hanging in the frosty trees; and in the yard outside, the cocks were crowing (43).

This is reality still touched by dream; its literariness suggests it as the 'helpful' fiction the doctor is telling. Richard's more mundane reconciliation with his family is conveyed in his party tricks and punch. Family supper, cakes and furrmety present an undreamlike, achievable community, in which the adolescent - temporarily - finds a place. Uninsistently, this closing emphasis on food as celebration reminds us of an opening where it provoked discord. The tale is neither arbitrary nor loose, in James's sense, but an attempt to reappraise the old moralist framework, collating it more closely with the child's experience.

The modification of the narrator figure throughout these fantasies reflects attempts to enhance the form's subtlety. In Christmas Crackers Mrs. Ewing mimicked the Andersenian agent of mystery, an intermediary between reader and romance. In Melchior's Dream, the figure still trails clouds of wizardry: his voice is 'deep and impressive as that of the ghost in Hamlet' (15); he is unnamed and unplaced, spending 'most of his time abroad' (15). Nevertheless, his human condition is not diminished, but stressed, as the opposite of the hero burdened with family: "I have been only, and lonely, and alone, all my life, and have never felt the nuisance you speak of" (17). The impulse is to integrate him into the tale's emotional framework. However, ominous references to 'a certain woman's grave' (48) betray the desire to sentimentalize the figure that does overtake The Brownies. The grave becomes an unfortunate sandstone reality in the later tale. The story's labyrinthine form, inherited from earlier versions, has been discussed in the introduction. A closer look at its proliferating stories-within-stories will show how the over-developed narrator marws a fantasy which has a sound psychological core.

It is in a quite complex way about the child's slow reconciliation

to the need for work, yet quite distinct from the spirit of earlier fiction recommending work as the antidote to sinful sloth, the spirit in which Emily and Lucy Fairchild daily 'rubbed' the furniture. Each of its layers shares considerably in the child's own view, his instinct to resist work and seek magic means of preserving his freedom, the same primitive magic invoked in Friedrich's Ballad. The very process of resistance is more prominent than any moral stipulation in the tale, and is the psychological ground inhabited by both reality and fantasy. It is the heart of the inner dream, concentrated in the riddle Tommy cannot solve because he does not want to:

"Twist me, and turn me, and show me the Elf -
I looked in the water, and saw - " (5, 39).

This moonlit scene dramatizes resistance in detail, only slowly worn down by the Owl's catechizing, to the inexorable conclusion:

"But is it really and truly so?" asked Tommy, in a dismal voice. "Are there no Brownies but children?" (43).

This earlier inversion of Tinkerbell's famous question in Peter Pan shows Mrs. Ewing using fairy story to disprove fairy existence.

The Brownies is a helpful anti-fairy tale, parodying Grimm's The Elves and the Shoemaker to reconcile the child to adult reality.

Ironically, one child in the frame story illicitly reads Grimm's tale while being punished for carelessness, the solace for his idleness is a fable of fairy helpfulness. Irony is multiplied through the narrative layers; Deordie had lost nurse's scissors, the Trout boys find their father's measure.

The concrete detail of Melchior's Dream is increased to explore the double attractiveness and recalcitrance of things. The Victorian nursery is thoroughly particularized in the frame story:

"Have you found everything?" asked Tiny.

"Well, not the Wash, you know. And the elephant and the guinea-pig are gone for good; so the other elephant and the other guinea-pig must walk together as a pair now. Noah was among the soldiers, and we have put the cavalry in the night-light box. Europe

and North America were behind the book-case; and, would you believe it? the rocking-horse's nose has turned up in the nursery oven" (14-15).

Such profuse and precise detail about children's play was learned from Aunt Judy's Tales. But Mrs. Ewing's penetration to its psychological function is finer than her mother's. In Cook Stories, Aunt Judy finds her charges dressing up as fine ladies, regaling each other with dreadful gossip about cooks, a juvenile parody of the 'servant question' more soberly debated in the women's journals.³³ Mrs. Gatty's detail is less acute, and much less expressive of children's values:

They were all (boys and girls alike) dressed up as elderly ladies, with bits of rubbishy finery on their heads and round their shoulders, to imitate caps and scarfs; the boys' hair being neatly parted and brushed down the middle.³⁴

'Rubbishy' represents an entirely adult valuation, whereas Deordie's recital of lost playthings assumes a child's involvement with their worth. And Mrs. Gatty's intention remains moralistic. The children's stories are delightfully detailed, but more sophisticated than any child could accomplish because their informing intention is satiric, as in No. 4's imitated cook:

"Please, ma'am, ... I read in the Young Woman's Vademecum of Instructive Information, page 150, that there was nothing in the world so strengthening and wholesome as dissolved bones, and ivory-dust; and so, ma'am I always make a point of throwing a few knives into every soup I have the charge of, for the sake of the handles - ivory-handles for white soups, ma'am, and black-handles for the browns!"³⁵

Eventually, Mrs. Ewing envisaged such role playing quite undidactically, allowing it to shape the fiction (discussed in Chapter 7). In Cook Stories, although play is relished in narrative detail, the controlling intention remains prescriptive. The children's mockery invites Aunt Judy's Lady Story which redresses the balance by mocking employers.

But The Brownies attempts something more elusive and ambitious.

It is the nature of play itself, or its relationship to work, that is at issue. Victorian nursery paraphernalia has very different equivalents in the inset fairy tale. The Trout boys' play is not with toys, but with armsful of moss and whittled sticks (25-8). Things retain their ambivalent attraction and repulsion; Johnny wants to make knitting scraps for his grandmother, but they all go wrong. By the central dream, play and work appear as simply the different states of mind in which children undertake their physical tasks. Thus, they not only do their brownie-work as if it were a pleasure (49-50), but their changed perception invests the tasks themselves with glamour. The fine description of their mushroom gathering is not moralist propaganda for early rising, but a rendering of their new state of mind:

The dew lay heavy and thick upon the grass by the road-side, and over the miles of network that the spiders had woven from blossom to blossom of the heather ...

The Tailor had been right, there was no lack of mushrooms at this time of morning. All over the pasture they stood, of all sizes, some like buttons, some like tables; and in the distance one or two ragged women, stooping over them with baskets, looked like huge fungi also (50-51).

Work itself becomes a fairy tale. The boys' fantasies of fairy feasts and giants (51) act as miniature helpful fictions to reconcile them to their lot. Highly idealized moments, like the mushroom-gathering, represent possibilities not permanencies, a maximization of the child's ability to transform his world. The frame story, as befits its supposed realism, has no such idealization; these children assume their new working roles less smoothly - Tiny returns from weeding 'decidedly earthy, and seemingly much exhausted' (72). The altering perspective sets the helpful fable against the invigorated, but still recalcitrant, reality.

To this central core the doctor's 'tragic' condition has no relationship. To allow the storyteller a biography ('The Story of

a Gravestone') is a distracting complication. To allow him a swelling emotional presence is discordant in a sensitive fable about work. As an unparental mediator he is in a tradition that goes back to Uncle David in Holiday House and forward to Albert-next-door's Uncle in The Treasure Seekers, an ironist and humorist interacting with children to give a new and adult view of them (see 12). As a storyteller he relates to Mrs. Gatty's Aunt Judy. She, by dressing-up and dramatizing her advice, makes story-telling itself an imaginative experience. When she appears as a cook 'hazy sensations began to steal over one or two minds, that this was somehow really a cook, it was all in the natural course of things, and nobody resisted the feeling'. The doctor similarly gives his story-telling party 'under the verandah, framed with passion-flowers and geraniums', under a 'yellow-faced harvest moon' (20-2). So much is contained by the structure. But the figure's particular attributes, childlessness and loneliness, also have to be accommodated, by a subsidiary theme of parenthood. His tale begins and ends with the tailor and his mother debating, in folk terms, if bairns are 'a burden or a blessing'. When shifted to the realistic frame the same theme becomes blurred and maudlin. Tiny pities his lack of 'brownies', the Rector hugs his own children gratefully (73), the doctor goes home 'like a lonely owl with his face to the moon' (72). This wrenches us into a different emotional key and intrudes an adult, not childlike, perspective. Its obtrusive claims leave this a fascinating but flawed tale.

The need to expand the storyteller's role was finally legitimized and satiated by the writing of Mrs. Overtheway's Remembrances. By The Land of Lost Toys the figure is simplified and stylized. Aunt Penelope is one of 'the fairy godmothers of real life' (5, 83). Mystery is shed for homeliness. She is given no biography beyond childishness remembered: "I think I could make 'fairy jam' of hips

and haws in acorn cups now, if any child would be condescending enough to play with me" (90). She represents simply Sam and Dot grown old. By Amelia and the Dwarfs, as 'my godmother's grandmother', the narrator is no more than a residual device. And Timothy's Shoes dispenses with both storyteller and dream mechanism; it presents magic in broad daylight, a single transitional experiment, after which magic and realism parted company in the fairy tales and novels of the seventies.

As Mrs. Ewing modified her storyteller, absorbing or rejecting different influences, so she also modified the fantasy itself. The early allegorical tableau of Melchior's Dream and the simulated folk tale of The Brownies provided differently, psycho-symbolic images of childhood experience. But later fantasies work to different patterns. It seems likely that some change was due to Mrs. Ewing's growing knowledge of Lewis Carroll.

Aunt Judy's Magazine had reviewed Alice in Wonderland enthusiastically in 1866, the year after its publication: 'the exquisite illustrations do but do justice to the exquisite, wild, fantastic, impossible, yet most natural history of Alice in Wonderland'.³⁶ Its subversiveness was hinted by the reviewer who warned 'Parents must not look to Alice's Adventures for knowledge in disguise'. Julie's diary, April 14, 1866, notes 'Read Alice in Wonderland', but offers no clue as to whether she was the reviewer. Carroll certainly became part of the family stock. Julie sent them a comic rhyme in 1868, 'Tis the voice of the Bull-doge (sic)', parodying Carroll's parody of Watts.³⁷ Mrs. Gatty recommended Alice as 'the only dreamy dream I ever read ... it makes one feel as if one was asleep in a very fantastical world of animals all topsy-turvy ... It is a sort of unesoteric meaning'd Water-Babies'.³⁸ She persuaded Dodgson to contribute to the magazine. Bruno's Revenge appeared in 1868³⁹ and Puzzles from Wonderland in 1871.⁴⁰ The first is a slight Lilliputian fantasy about a large person in a small fairy

garden, the germ for Sylvie and Bruno (1889) and Sylvie and Bruno Concluded (1893). Through the Looking Glass was praised in Aunt Judy's 1872 as 'the book of the season' with a 'weird and fanciful' quality and remarkable ballads and songs.⁴¹

After 1866 Mrs. Ewing's fantasies perhaps reflect something of Alice. There is a greater effort to incorporate the recognized symptoms of dream, the dissolutions and distortions of our physical selves that Alice undergoes. In Benjy in Beastland, a title echoing Carroll's, descriptions of Benjy's drowning and falling through space are vividly dream-like, the latter grotesquely illustrated by Cruikshank whose boy wears coat-tails to accentuate the fall.⁴² The dreamer in The Land of Lost Toys shrinks until small enough to penetrate the hole in tree roots beneath 'a tiny store of dark leaf-mould' (91), unastonished at the diminution yet full of Freudian anxiety about its 'propriety' and getting her spectacles broken (92).

But Mrs. Ewing's tidier shrinking fantasy, like a whole group of children's fictions (for example, Lucy Boston's excellent The Castle of Yew whose shrinking hero penetrates a yew tree) shares the microscopic vision of Gulliver's Travels.⁴³ Miniaturized description is a primary aim, as it is not in Alice, to meet the child's day-dream of being toy-sized. Isabelle Jan claims that the Borrowers and Moomins appeal because magic is put to trivial, realistic uses. Such microscopic protagonists please the child by indulging 'not [in] impossible flights of fancy, but a search for the miniature in life'.⁴⁴ Aunt Penelope's smallness meets this need exactly; her own doll gives her tea, puts her to bed, holds her hand:

I remember vacantly feeling the rough edge of the stitches on her flat kid fingers, and wondering what would come next (112).

This dream miniaturization is more satisfying because it corrects the very lack of proportion that upset the children in the realistic scenes,

especially in Sam's reconstruction of the Lisbon earthquake:

... but the big dolls seated in an unroofed building, made with the wooden bricks on no architectural principle but that of a pound, and taking tea out of the new china tea-things, looked simply ridiculous (80).

The dream adjusts such disproportion; its rationale is not Carroll's anarchic abandonment of reality, but simply a rescaling of it to children's measure.

The influence of Alice is more apparent in the talking animals of these later fantasies who indulge in sub-Carrollian logic-chopping. They have the adherence to polite forms, veiling unspecific threat, of some Wonderland creatures:

"I don't like beetles," interrupted the spider, stretching each leg in turn by sticking it up above him, "all shell, and no flavour. You never tried walking on anything of that sort, did you?" and he pointed with one leg to a long thread that fastened a web above his head.

"Certainly not," said I.

"I'm afraid it wouldn't bear you," he observed slowly (94).

The edge of hostility in these semi-surreal exchanges is perhaps one facet of a larger debt to Carroll. That his wonderland refracts and reviews adult institutions has been often discussed.⁴⁵ Tea parties, quadrilles, trials, conversations drift by in no rational progression, without conventional orientation, encountered by a heroine experiencing no consequent moral or psychological change. The rather ceremonious conversations, meals, dances, and especially trials, in Mrs. Ewing's dream worlds may be Alice-inspired.

The idea of nursery trials merely as anarchic fun by children aping their elders was already familiar from Mrs. Gatty's Aunt Sally's Life. Her Inferior Animals, too, ingeniously satirizes social man in a supposed dream of a Rook Tribunal. This unlikely dream takes on life through the very energy of its writing. Satire merges with fantasy, as in the rooks' view of industrialized man in their litany of blackness: 'Black in all the streets struggling to overpower every

other hue. Black quiescent on the pavements and walls ...⁴⁶ The trials in The Land of Lost Toys and Benjy in Beastland are initially satiric and corrective, but they also incorporate the absurdity more deeply permeating Alice whose last level of metaphor, concludes Martin Gardner, is that life 'appears to be a nonsense tale told by an idiot mathematician'.⁴⁷ The nonsense is freer, the admonition less overpowering, in The Land of Lost Toys. The admonition is more oblique because it does not correct the child's destructiveness, so vividly displayed in 'An Earthquake in the Nursery', but Aunt Penelope's. This structure spreads and universalizes moral failure; the dream becomes an act of recollection as much as admonition. The properties and textures of toys are given fresh and fantastic scrutiny, like the toy box papered with old novel pages:

Dim memories of how these stars, and the angles of the box, and certain projecting nails interfered with the letter-press and defeated all attempts to trace the thread of the nameless narrative, stole back over my brain (101).

This strangeness of vision refracts the court proceedings, diffusing and dispelling any corrective intention. Threat is intensified in its unjudicial, wayward procedures, similar to those in Alice. The Jack-in-a-box, as counsel, makes a creditable speech (104), but the witnesses are irrelevant and unreliable; the slate mumbles crazy calculations, the paint box recites 'Never dip your paint into the water. Never put your brush into your mouth' (109). Chaos ensues:

Terrible sentences were passed, which I either failed to hear through the clamour then, or have forgotten now. I have a vague idea that several voices cried that I was to be sent to wash in somebody's pocket; that the work-basket wished to cram my mouth with unfinished needlework; and that through all the din the thick voice of my old leather ball monotonously repeated: "Throw her into the dust-hole" (110-111).

This has an evident, even dominant, propagandist slant. But it also hints that justice itself is uncertain, its operations untrustworthy.

The dreamer becomes the object of other people's hostile fantasies. Finally, she is crazily punished by excessive mothering from her own doll. The trial of the knave of hearts lacks all morality. Alice is outraged by forms of justice blindly implemented or blatantly omitted; the judge is lawless, sentence precedes verdict, mere witnesses are beheaded (Ch. 12). In The Land of Lost Toys an injection of Carrollian absurdity helps to make the substance of the dream itself more important than the moral prescription to which it is moulded.

The trial in Benjy in Beastland is all too rational, and the hero a figure from the rationalist 'cruelty to animals' tale. It is not what Mrs. Gatty called Alice, a 'dreamy dream', but a cerebral conglomeration of effects. The book suggesting Benjy's dream 'in which it was amusingly pretended that dogs went to the moon after their existence on earth was over' (7, 167) is identifiable as Mrs. Gatty's Worlds Not Realised. Her hero recalled a picture of a circle of dogs in a moon Paradise, attending to the latest arrival. Mrs. Ewing unwisely embroiders on this dull idea, making her reformatory Beastland the home of all creatures from lions to caddisflies, and the scene of the naughty boy's trial.⁴⁸ Only when placed in relation to the child's daily reality do these disparate fantasies have meaning. The man in the moon's shouting "Manners!" to quell his subjects suitably mocks nursery discipline. Benjy's rash demand to ride the nightmare, with a child's accustomed authority over his pets, is moderately comic (170). But the main fabric of fantasy runs together snatches of natural history, of sound Aunt Judy quality ('Lemraliae ... where the cells were not of one uniform pattern' (172)), with laborious puns (the tell-tale tit, the mare's nest, the round robin). The imitative word-play is infinitely weaker than Carroll's, and is accompanied by a tedious explanatoriness:

"Boy!" [the old cat] exclaimed in a tone of the deepest disgust; for in Beastland they say "boy" as a term of reproach where we should say "beast" (174).

When the Mock Turtle recalls his school curriculum, Laughing and Grief, Distraction and Uglification, the punning is not only better and faster, with a subversive ability to deprive the correct word of its reality and confer it on the overlaid one, but explanations (as of the Tortoise who taught us, or lessons that lessen) are made part of the dramatic exchange with Alice, an invigoration, not justification, of the pun (Ch. 9). Where Carroll's heroine has essential childlike variability, neither good nor bad, to observe or identify with, and the trial is nominally the knave's, Mrs. Ewing's dreamer exists for conversion and the trial is necessarily his own.

To compare Benjy with Amelia and the Dwarfs is to view the worst and best she was capable of in fantasy, to define more precisely her originality and her temptation towards easy effects. Both use the triple pattern of a dream contained within two domestic scenes, the child in error and amended. Amelia, however, contains a dream-experience neither limitingly didactic, nor influenced by Carroll, but more truly an unwarped projection of childish experience. Benjy demonstrates not only fantasy failing, but some of the more tortuous, stultifying pressures that occasionally marred Mrs. Ewing's fiction.

The fault of cruelty to animals was one Mrs. Ewing could not consider with artistic detachment. Benjy's particular gracelessness is argued through stereotypes of class and sex. He has the fatal taste for 'low company' that betokens male depravity in every juvenile genre (156). He is 'podgy' and 'smudgy' (153), whereas his sisters are 'fair, grey-eyed, demure little maidens' (157). The episode in which one takes a needle from the dog's lip whilst the other wipes her tears misses no chance to imply a contrasting male cruelty. Such formulaic contrasts require a strong authorial voice; the method

is assertive rather than dramatic:

But he had that taste for torture, that pleasure in other creatures' pain, which does seem to be born with some boys; and which human experience forbids one to hope is unknown to men (155-6).

Stylistic problems grow more pressing when the stereotypes are animal. Juvenile brutality has to be contrasted with canine benevolence, a difficult narrative feat. Both Nox and Mr. Rough had live counterparts,⁴⁹ both buried at Ecclesfield - though not in consecrated soil. And the human terms which Mrs. Ewing always used of her dogs (see 18, 183) carry over into her fiction.

Early drafts of the tale apparently provoked family criticism. In March, before its publication in May and June, Mrs. Ewing wrote to Mrs. Gatty:

I am so very much pleased that you think better of Benjy now. As I have plenty of time, I mean to go through it, and soften Benjy down a bit. He is an awful boy, and I think I can make him less repulsive. The fact is that the story was written in fragments, and I was anxious to show that it was not a little boyish roughness that I meant to make a fuss and "point a moral" about ... when I came to ... copy out, I found I had overproved my point and made Benjy into a fearful brute! ... Tell D [Horatia] I do not know how I could alter about Rough - unless I take out his death altogether ... (18, 186).

Her anxieties are threefold. First, she regrets that her hero is too brutal, that naughtiness has become depravity ('a certain devilish type of cruelty'), though with no religious context, even the superimposed one of The Blackbird's Nest. Perhaps her heavy anthropomorphization of dogs is to weight human cruelty as the enormity she feels it to be, without resorting to the metaphysics of sin. Secondly, she feels the tale is fragmented. The dream does remain disproportionate to the reality, especially in the overblown episode (181-185) in which the drowning boy reviews his past 'in a flash', though fictionally at wearisome length and without psychological credibility. Thirdly, she is defensive about the over-pitiful death. An earlier unpublished

letter betrays her ambivalent pride and shame at her own success in the cult of death:

I am afraid you will weep at the end of Benjy - but not for his cruelties - but because Mister Roof (sic) dies - and goes to the Dog Star!⁵⁰

The reasons for Rough's death are obscurely linked with the emotional balance of the tale and are worth pursuing as an example of Mrs. Ewing's very selective sentimentalism. As a structural device it precipitates the hero's full conversion: 'it was a very sad event which finally and fully softened Benjy's heart' (187). Having been unsettled by his dream, and confronted by his own death, he is harrowed by the death of his dog. Yet this is misplaced and superfluous guilt in structural terms; the dog he killed already provides a more appropriate harrowing, a horror which 'chilled him more than the cold water had done' (181). Rough's elimination perhaps facilitates a more satisfying reconciliation between Benjy and his old opponent, Nox, as master and pet. Yet here, too, the author's rhetoric is more strenuous than events can support; its defiance of animal behaviour and its energy are excessive and coercive:

And no one who knows dogs needs to be told that not a ghost of a bit of malice lessened the love which the benevolent retriever bore to his new master (190).

Rough's death is an extreme example of her remorseless attribution to dogs of an impossibly wide range of sensibilities. Amelia's bull dog, Rubens, Bernardus, Sweep and So-So are similarly, if more restrainedly, anthropomorphized. It acts as a vindication of her convictions; the logic of humanizing dogs concludes with their capacity for dying of joy, an absolute sensibility. More deviously, this joyful death is a substitution for the death of the hero. In evangelical fiction, moral purification was often the prelude to death, the last great conversion. Secularized and humanized, the tale is deprived of this consummation, and must provide striking

alternative evidence of moral or psychological change. Amelia and the Dwarfs provides such evidence through its fairy tale allegiances and summarizing ending: 'Amelia grew up good and gentle, unselfish and considerate for others' (7, 237). But Mrs. Ewing was dissatisfied with the equivalent brisk statement in Benjy: 'Yes, in spite of all past sins, Benjy lived to amend, and to become, eventually, a first rate naturalist and a good friend to beasts' (189). The 'sins' are too great for such bland expiation. She strives for a more intense pathos, through the gratuitous death not of the sinner but of his victim, with a complete abandonment of stylistic poise:

Dead? Yes, dead; with one spasm of unspeakable joy! (189).

The completeness of the transference is proved by a conclusion which trains its spotlight not on the boy but the dog. Its elements - an epitaph, a rhapsody on Christian sacrifice, a promise of the life to come (in the Dog Star) are the stock-in-trade of evangelical death.

Benjy shows fantasy flawed by its lack of true psychological basis, and by some of the submerged pressures that sometimes reached and distorted the surface of Mrs. Ewing's fiction.

Amelia and the Dwarfs is the high point of this little evolution of fantasy. Even its preliminary realistic episode is more restrained and incisive than Benjy. Amelia is also a stock type from the moral tale, the spoiled child. But she becomes contemporary and credible because Mrs. Ewing explores her wilfulness as the product of adult indulgence. Naughtiness is a social quality and Mrs. Ewing embeds it in social miniatures (5, 199). The mother's collusive role is frankly displayed in her lively dialogue (202) and social ineptness: 'when Amelia flurried her, she always rolled her r's, and emphasised her words, so that it sounded thus: "My dear-r-r-r Ramelia! You must not!" (200). This little sketch of failing parental responsibility precludes longer and more caustic ones in her later fiction. It even

records, fleetingly, the wider social consequences; the child's damage is repaired each night by a weary nurse, whereas the blame-worthy mother 'could at last lean back in her chair and have a quiet chat with her husband' (206). However, Mrs. Ewing hastily withdraws from such comprehensive criticism. Part 4 sees nurse begging to wash the dirty frocks, as if to reassure any alarmed reader.

Without making this heroine monstrous beyond redemption or identification, Mrs. Ewing, nevertheless, gives her a kind of infant hubris:

"You seem to think things clean and mend themselves, Miss Amelia," said poor Nurse one day.

"No, I don't," said Amelia rudely. "I think you do them; what are you here for?" (206)

Such an extreme naughtiness in heroes like Pinocchio or Nils Holgersson invites the drastic retribution of physical grotesqueness. In Amelia's case it is answered by swift, self-induced magic, the scaled-down Nemesis of the dwarfs. Amelia's own wilfulness apparently calls the magic into being:

Amelia peeped from behind the blinds of the drawing-room windows, and saw four haycocks, each with a deep shadow reposing at its side. The rest of the field was swept clean, and looked pale in the moonshine. It was a lovely night.

"I want to go out," said Amelia (209).

This beautiful reality is already dream-like. Fairyland appears a gradual actualization of her impulses. The dwarfs first accompany her invisibly, like rustling leaves or passing shadows (210); they take form only when she persists; they attend to her only when she pulls a cloak 'just as she would have twitched her mother's shawl' (212). Dreamland is a much closer image of her faults than Beastland is of Benjy's, a moral landscape of dirty laundry, broken china and threads of broken conversations. But this fairyland is also closer to traditional lore, a region of unpredicted possibilities as well as of correction. Its prettiness is neither the wholesale whimsicality

nor the didactic magic which Lang regretted:

... bunches of meadow-sweet swung from the roof like censers, and perfumed the air; and the ox-eye daisies which formed the ceiling gave a light like stars (214).

Only the dream countries of George MacDonald at this date had comparable psychological aptness combined with geographic solidity. The open heath eternally lit by 'early dawn' and filled by 'the first sounds of the day coming through the fresh air before sunrise' (215) resembles a dreamscape of Phantastes (1868). But traditional folk elements, the fruit of her contemporary work on 'old-fashioned fairy tales', are much stronger in Mrs. Ewing. The industrious, capricious dwarfs, the significance of the full moon and harvest time in activating this dream, the powerful idea of a stock replacing the stolen child, the whole conception of magic immanent in nature show her intelligent reworking of folk lore. K.M. Briggs recognized the intelligence:

...from 1850 tricksier, more irresponsible fairies began to appear. The fairies who stole Amelia in Mrs. Ewing's Amelia and the Dwarfs were bent at first on her moral improvement; but when she was reformed they tried to keep her like any folk fairies; and the description of the fairies and the stock in that tale are hardly to be bettered. 51

As important as its authenticity, is the narrative perception of the stock through Amelia's eyes. Traditional material is adapted to psychological fantasy. The stock represents a threat to the child:

Amelia's eyes were rubbed with some ointment, and when she took a last peep, she could see that the stock was nothing but a hairy imp, with a face like the oldest and most grotesque of apes (215).

The threat goes beyond a stimulant to moral conversion, though it does give an urgency to her reformation. The stock crystallizes the naughty child's fears that she will transgress too far, estrange her parents, be supplanted. Amelia confesses "I have been living in terror lest it should go back underground in the shape of a black cat" (234). Her punishment is not merely the didactic one of washing

dresses etc., but the fear of losing her place in the world experienced by all children as a consequence of disobedience. To articulate these deeper feelings Mrs. Ewing includes a confidante, the old woman of the heath. Like the similar Apple Woman in Jean Ingelow's Mopsa the Fairy (1869), a mortal denizen in fairyland, she expresses human values in an inhuman place. The shifts of Amelia's conscience are recorded through their talk. She experiences the emotions of contrition ('my heart ached for home') and purifying tears (228). But, as Briggs says, she is not then automatically restored. Mrs. Ewing has uncovered other meanings in her material.

The changeling motif suggests a direction away from the moral tale. The old dwarf's pursuit of Amelia, though obliquely pictured through metaphors of dancing, seems a sexual one. He is 'grotesque and grimy' (223), 'smutty, and old, and wizened' (226) in contrast to the girl he demands as partner. The implications are of sexual initiation, with Amelia as by no means passive. Her clever manipulations of the dwarf to secure her own freedom contribute to the tale's considerable tension: it is she who suggests dancing in pairs as an innovation on the dwarfs' usual circle; she feigns weariness to ensure his co-operation (227). The convention of fairy reluctance to relinquish any changeling is given high, if unspecific, colouration by the dwarf's excited language:

If she does not come, I will not. I must dance my dance.
You do not know what it is! We two alone move together
with a grace which even here is remarkable. But when I
think that up yonder we shall have attendant shadows,
echoing our movements, I long for the moment to arrive (229).

His preoccupation with his shadow suggests, though in no verifiable way, the enormity of his threat ("When one sees how colossal one's very shadow is ... one knows one's true worth" (230)). The fleeting and cunning shift of view near the climax from the dancing dwarfs to Amelia's parents watching over the inhuman stock rapidly juxtaposes

the two worlds before us, as alternative fates for the heroine. The inference we might draw is of the irrelevance of parental guardianship. Whatever the crisis, Amelia faces it alone.

The transition out of fantasy to normality is beautifully controlled, not to reduce or falsify this strange but potent material. Amelia's return, like her departure, is self-willed ('she cried from her very heart - "I want to go home!"' (232)), but precipitated by the loathsome dwarf's approach, 'wiping the mud from his face with his leathern apron', with his proposal that they be 'partners for life' (231). The escape to 'bed in her own home' (232) brings greater relief after the enormous pressure Mrs. Ewing has generated by touching the springs of so many childhood fears. The tale returns to the safe boundaries of the moral conversion. But of all the fantasies this one has moved furthest outside them into the open country of children's experience.

'The Future of the Novel' appeared nearly thirty years after Amelia. This chapter has tried to show how Mrs. Ewing, determined though inconsistently, wrote her way towards fictions that were neither complacent repetitions of the past nor the 'arbitrary', 'unguaranteed' histories that flooded the children's as well as the adult market after the sixties. The narrowing of her field to children's social and psychological relationships, coincident with the restless search for more personal forms, was achieved with difficulty and an expense of experimentation. In the fantasies, she attempted a minor redefinition of childhood problems through quite drastic adaptations of the old moralist and rationalist structures. To probe such areas as family antagonisms, instinctive cruelty, the painful acceptance of work, personal - possibly sexual - maturation, was to readjust the perimeters of the children's story. James's essay goes on to predict that if the 'prose fable' withers it will be by 'superficiality' and 'timidity'.

His cautions, of course, refer to the adult fable, not to what he acidly terms 'The literature, as it may be called for convenience, of children'. But they are also appropriate to children's literature, the artistic seriousness of which was increasingly recognized during this period. It was precisely against superficiality and timidity that Mrs. Ewing was steering in bold and subtle fictions like Amelia and the Dwarfs. Her belief was strengthening that children's fiction need not be limitingly simple or patronizingly didactic, a belief James confirmed in his different context:

The simple themselves may finally turn against our simplifications; so that we need not, after all, be more royalist than the king or more childish than the children.⁵²

Chapter 2. Mrs. Overtheway's Remembrances, 1866-68

In his article 'Myth and Education' Ted Hughes provides an authoritative account of the relationship of narrative to developing human consciousness:

[Story gives form and definition to an inner world]..
A simple tale, told at the right time, transforms a person's life with the order its pattern brings to incoherent energies.

And while its pattern proliferates in every direction through all levels of consciousness; its images are working too...

[In his example] a simple image in a simple story has somehow focused all the pressures of an age - collisions of spirit and nature and good and evil and a majesty of existence that seemed uncontainable. But it has brought all that into a human pattern, and made it part of our understanding.¹

Mrs. Overtheway's Remembrances is in a primary way about the act of storytelling. Coming as it does after the effortful trials of the early sixties, begun the year after the multi-layered The Brownies, it could be read as an interim statement on the role of fiction in young lives. Mrs. Ewing is writing about writing. It dissolves the dilemmas of form that taxed her earlier by asserting the centrality of the telling as its main structural principle, so that the child's psychological needs, so sympathetically postulated by the first section, Ida, are answered by the ensuing sequence of four thematically-related stories, each a deliberately patterned narrative. They are quite specifically 'told at the right moment', not simply to assuage the pangs of bereavement, but to win Ida from isolation by harnessing her sympathies for another's life, to provide what Susanne Langer² calls 'virtual experiences', imaginative extensions which are material for growth, to offer the retrospect of old age as a formulation of the prospects of youth. The sequence has both prospective and retrospective movement, the child's future is shaped by the old woman's past. The roles of narrator and listener split the novel's interest exactly between them. Mary Smith's

'remembrances' balance the narration of Ida's present. This division, weighting the very process of storytelling as the central framework and making the stance of reminiscence enfold the whole, avoided the problems of out-and-out memoir form encountered in the next two novels. The difficult welding of narrator's present to narrated past in one biographical reality, acutely experienced in A Flat Iron for a Farthing, does not arise here because the narrator's past and present are apprehended not as the primary experience of the fiction but through the particular, solidly realised needs of another character. Remembrances are selected to accommodate Ida's needs, and their presentation does not have to simulate autobiography, but memory.

In Victorian Conventions³, John Reed argues that in adult literature the convention of memory was a frequent device for implying discontent with an immediate reality, indicating values either lost, or 'in the case of futuristic visitations' not yet attained. Mrs. Ewing's use here is different. Memory is a resource, the transmission of one person's experience to another, not only as diversion from an oppressive present, but as a means of dealing with it by encompassing the future. This is somewhat closer to modern schemes - Reed mentions Yeats, Freud and Jung - which imply memory is 'a tool for dealing with an antagonistic present reality... not escape, but accommodation'.

This basic narrative design encourages and excuses the fragmentation besetting the longer memoir novels, the series of short memoirs being precisely adapted to the listening child. By making them inter-related, and furthermore, ideal solvents of those emotional knots disclosed in each preliminary account of Ida, Mrs. Ewing achieves novelesque solidity by an accumulation of short-story structures. Also the method was ideally suited to serialization.

The distant lineage of this form in the early 'sequence of

stories' fiction has been noted. A closer psychological model is found in books like Frances Browne's Granny's Wonderful Chair in which another isolated heroine, Snowflower, is socialized through a series of allegorical fairy tales, provided (indirectly) by her grandmother, Dame Frostyface. But Mrs. Ewing rejects the fiction of magic in favour of the magic of fiction⁴. The clear progenitors of her novel are Aunt Judy's Tales and Letters in which the circumstances of telling rival the tales in interest. But Mrs. Ewing's development entirely dissolves the didactic bond between telling and tales, replacing it with a more complex psychological relationship, with an artistry beyond Mrs. Gatty. One example will show how Mrs. Ewing worked outwards from the structural possibilities of Aunt Judy's Tales.

Rabbits' Tails, is also about the child's bereavement. Both the occasion of Aunt Judy's telling and the tale itself are strange, involving Mrs. Gatty in odd contortions to preserve their didactic correspondence. Recovering from illness, Aunt Judy is startled by No. 6's passionate claim, "I said if you were not to get better, I shouldn't want to get better either."⁵ She is perplexed how to counter such violent resentment of death. Mrs. Gatty provides unusually prolonged access to her reflections here, as if granting the difficulties of using narrative to meddle in such delicate territory. Aunt Judy actually wonders 'whether it was right to make the attempt'. Mrs. Ewing, likewise, at several points reminds us of the hazards of narrative as therapy:

"Was your father alive, too?" Ida asked, with a sigh. The old lady paused, pitying the anxious little face opposite, but Ida went on eagerly: "Please tell me what he was like" (77).

But where Aunt Judy's dilemma is chiefly theological, a justification of the ways of God to child, Mrs. Overthway's is humanitarian, sharpened by a conception of narrative as consolation,

damaging if it misfires. She has to answer Ida's queries about the protagonists of Reka Dom with the repeated "Dead-dead-dead!", but eventually refuses to prolong the narrative thus:

"Remember I am old, and have outlived almost all of those I loved in my youth. It is right and natural that death should be sad in your eyes, my child, and I will not make a tragedy of the story of Reka Dom" (221-2).

Like all artists she has preselected her matter - here towards the ends of consolation since the story proper concludes with mature love, an oblique promise that Ida's condition is temporary - and to extend her narrative destroys its artfulness. The story's value is as experience edited, not wholesale, patterned into manageable form for the child-auditor. Aunt Judy is a tutelary resource. Mrs. Overthway is a creative force and her processes are dramatised in longer, finer detail. The peculiar narrative angle, swinging between the present of telling and the past of biography, makes her role as creator continually apparent.

If we compare how the two novels fictionalize their narrator's hesitations Mrs. Ewing's different direction becomes apparent. Before Kerguelen's Land, the story which announces to Ida her 'dead' father's restoration, Mrs. Ewing fictionalizes Mrs. Overthway's deliberations over breaking the news as another story:

The old lady was silent, but at last she said, as if to herself - "Perhaps best so", and added: "yes, my love, I will tell you a story" (224).

The bases of the storytelling activity are laid bare by the difficulty of formulating an appropriate narrative still within the thematic sequence of earlier tales, nor does Kerguelen's Land fulfil these conditions, as we shall see. But emphasising the difficulty itself is part of the total dramatization, a testimony to storytelling as virtual experience, and a tiny rehearsal of the problems of fiction itself:

"I hardly know where to begin, or what to tell you of this story," said the little old lady at last, seeming to falter for the first time in her Scharazad-like powers of narration (224).

The Arabian-nights joke is at the expense of Mrs. Ewing's small-scale, homely setting, but its irony does not deny its seriousness as a claim to complex and conscious fiction. Mrs. Gatty's formulation of storytelling is more rudimentary and undramatic. Interlocution between teller and listeners is certainly important, but it is not the dialogue of equals, nor the organically-related prelude to the tales Mrs. Ewing provides. Its fabric is less dense with meanings. Aunt Judy's deliberations are imprecisely moralistic:

Aunt Judy had, however, a little hesitation about the matter. There was something sad about the story; and there was no exact teaching to be got out of it, though certainly if it helped to shake No. 6's faith in her own wisdom, a good effect would be produced by listening to it.⁶

Further justifications, uneasy and inept, follow after the telling of Rabbits' Tails. There is none of the importance consciously assigned to storytelling by Mrs. Overthway's Remembrances, as yeast in young lives and a filter for old ones, for as the narrator says, "The story is as much for myself as you. I tell myself bits of it every evening" (141). Mrs. Ewing moves towards the suggestion of narrative as basic to psychological health.⁷

Yet Mrs. Gatty, as so often, makes unexpected moves in the story itself, more remarkable than Aunt Judy's justifications allow. And some of these, too, Mrs. Ewing develops. With Mrs. Gatty it is always wiser to trust the tale than the (fictionalized) teller.

Simply as a treatment of the bereaved child in a period of strange, often uninhibited approaches, Rabbits' Tails claims attention. It contrasts interestingly with Mrs. Ewing. Mrs. Gatty's efforts are, emphatically, to reduce the emotionalism of the situation, and this in spite of the obviously autobiographical actuality of the heroines, aged 4 and 5, in 'little black frocks and crape-trimmed bonnets'

(Horatia and Margaret Scott).⁸ The same impulse to defuse the dynamite of sentimentality informs even Aunt Sally's Life when the doll's little mistress dies. The naive doll's voice relates her supposed misapprehensions and blunders about doctors, sick-beds, coffins and mourning so as to miniaturize the experience, deflate it and make it child-sized.⁹ One could imagine the reverse use of the naive perspective - of a sibling perhaps - to give a lisping intensification to emotion, like that in Froggy's Little Brother and other novels by 'Brenda'. Rabbits' Tails has the same controlling anxiety not to attribute adult responses to children - to the point of abnormal over-correction. The girls explicitly do not grieve for Mamma: 'They got up, and dined, and went to bed as usual. They were sometimes merry, sometimes naughty, as usual'.¹⁰ In place of grief is their absorbing make-believe with a set of rabbits' tails, a surrogate family. Eventually, these are removed by aunt and grandmother, guardians as rigid as any in Sewell or Yonge. Their logic is terrible: "You can't play with them rationally, nurse is sure, and so we think you will be very much better without them".¹¹ This rationale is exactly reproduced, with more unambivalent analysis, in Sunflowers and a Rushlight where a repressive grandmother ends the heroine's play as "babyish nonsense" (16,192). They replace the tails with 'proper' toys, one a fur dog called Carlo, the name Mrs. Ewing takes for the dog in Kerguelen's Land.

By this point Mrs. Gatty has created an insoluble artistic dilemma. No other fiction shows as clearly the contrary movements of her creativity. The didactic consonance with Aunt Judy's lesson is rapidly vanishing: "What a waste of good emotions it was" to love rabbits' tails,¹² is one desperate attempt to retrieve it. Further, the adults appear irretrievably punitive - and Aunt Judy's justifications here impinge even less. Sympathy is exclusively with the weird little heroines, on psychological not sentimental grounds. It is to

Mrs. Gatty's credit that she pursues the psychology and relinquishes the didactic tangle. Her powerful idea - allowed reluctant development - is that the children's grief for the lost tails is a transferred mourning for their mother. Emotional stability can be restored only by the reassurance that their 'family' is not destroyed but continues elsewhere. Once this is satisfactorily imagined - supposedly in the cellar - their grief diminishes. Mrs. Gatty describes the state with discriminating delicacy, though she cannot dramatize it:

But a new world had now opened before them out of the very midst of their sorrow itself. The fancy home of the Tods was almost a more available source of amusement, than even playing with the real things had been; and sometimes in the early morning, sometimes for the precious half-hour at night, before sleep overtook them, the little wits went to work with fresh details and suppositions, and they related to each other, in turns, the imaginary events of the day in the cellar among the barrels.¹³

The insight, here, though it remains authorial comment and merely one of several conflicting narrative strands is of the kind Mrs. Ewing developed around her bereaved child whose relief is also in palliative fictions, her own and other people's.

One parting insight in Rabbits' Tails also provided the germ for Mrs. Moss. No. 6 sets her heart on meeting the 'real' little girls:

... Aunt Judy asked her how she would like to be introduced to a couple of very old women, with huge hooked noses, and bearded, nut-cracker chins, and be told that those were the motherless little girls who had broken their hearts over rabbits' tails!¹⁴

Mrs. Ewing transfers just this image of aging to her own story, but makes it part of the child's perception, not the adult's tutelage. It takes meaning there from juxtaposition with Mary's insulated expectations of female beauty. Aunt Judy points to the lesson of time.

Mary experiences it:

"That is, I was face to face with a tall, dark, old woman, with stooping shoulders, a hooked nose, black eyes that smouldered in their sunken sockets, and a distinct growth of beard upon her chin" (59).

By such adaptations Mrs. Ewing achieved a more truly inward account,

so that here, as Mrs. Marshall said, every child sees 'the salient parts of her own experience rehearsed'.¹⁵

Having taken over the idea of storyteller as protagonist and catalyst, how did Mrs. Ewing adapt it?

Mrs. Overthway is defined by her relationship with Ida, a narrative symbiosis. Their duality is the simple one of youth and age, future and past, listener and narrator. But the unfolding structure of the narratives also shows Mrs. Overthway to be a repository of specifically female experience. Beyond consolation, the tales define the possibilities of Ida's life. Their order mountingly represents a girl's progress: Mrs. Moss on childish delusions, self-doubts and reconciliation to time; The Snoring Ghost on adolescent independence and approaching sexuality; Reka Dom on marriage as a threshold of maturity; Kerguelen's Land, indirectly on parenting - though the representative mother is an albatross. It is a pressing consideration that the novel was written during the two years of Mrs. Ewing's courtship and marriage. It is not a 'girls' book, as Six to Sixteen is; but as in Amelia and the Dwarfs or A Very Ill-Tempered Family, maturation is examined in female terms.

Mrs. Overthway's femininity is as emphasised as her age. In contemporary fictions about orphan girls under the tutelage of old women, it is often the exacerbating physical difference, evincing profound distances in ideology, which constitute the theme. The heroine of Laneton Parsonage and her forbidding aunt; the repressive aunts Barbara and Jane in Countess Kate; the ancient aunts in The Cuckoo Clock who depress Griselda by confusing her with her own grandmother, are all combinations of opposites, frictions on the heroine which the plot must somehow abolish. These old women are dragons. Mrs. Overthway is a princess:

Mrs. Overtheday's features were almost perfect. The beauty of her eyes was rather enhanced by the blue shadows that Time had painted round them, and they were those good eyes which remind one of a clear well, at the bottom of which he might see truth. When young she must have been exquisitely beautiful, Ida thought. She was lovely still (23).

Her voice is 'sweet, clear, gentle'. 'her cheeks looked like faded rose-leaves, and her white hair like a snow-wreath in a garden laughing at the last tea-rose' (2) - a somewhat confused simile. Even the silver-haired idealization of Mrs. Molesworth's grandmothers (in My New Home, or Grandmother Dear which opens with the girls wondering if their perfect grandmother is a fairy godmother) implies a simply protective, familial relationship. Mrs. Overtheday is specifically not parental. She is Ida's polar opposite in age ('She believed her friend to be old, immeasurably old, indefinitely old ...' (7)), and in happiness ("I am only a little girl, and very sad ... but Mrs. Overtheday is very old, and always happy, and so I love her"(8)). But simultaneously she offers Ida a possible self-image, through the continuum of their sex. That is the spell of her neat clothes and invariable routines ('Every morning she carried a clean pocket-handkerchief, and a fresh rose' (4)), her rituals of prayers and tea-taking ('The white cloth seemed to Ida the whitest she had ever seen, the silver and glass glittered' (138)). Her existence is ordered as Ida's is disordered. She has triumphantly survived the life that at present threatens Ida. Her autonomy is guaranteed, as Ida's is - comically - not, undermined by nurse who rudely shatters her pretended tea-taking with the old lady by sweeping the chair 'into a corner as if it had been a naughty child' (9).

Ida's fictional presence is first established by contrast to these features. Ida's domesticity is rough, like her nurse. Her milk-and-water and treacled bread are remote from elegant living. Most of all, her sadness balances the contentment of age, and Mrs. Ewing resorts to period clichés to urge this. The trappings of

bereavement, 'the crape-hung frock' and wistful pallor, appear with more predictable emphasis than in Rabbits' Tails. The rhetoric of orphaning misses no emotional trick:

... the 'Bonne Esperance' (like other earthly hopes) had perished to return no more. She foundered on her homeward voyage ... whilst Ida slept through the stormy night, with the Captain's letter beneath her pillow(6).

But sometimes Mrs. Ewing harnesses period clichés to her purposes with a thoroughness that gives them legitimacy and life. Such is her use of the Victorian vision, the wan face at the window. It is worth considering how Mrs. Ewing circumvents the standard sentimental emphasis, consequent on an external view. The story views the window from outside, as symbol of Ida's sequestration, and from inside, as the framing medium for her imaginings about the outside world. At first it makes the orthodox appeal to pity: 'she pressed her face sadly to the cold window pane' (7-8). But by its last occurrence it holds a cluster of accumulated references:

The little old lady comes through the green gate, and looks over the way, but there is no face at the window now: something in it made her start for an instant, but it is only a looking-glass, for the smart toilette-table has been brought back to the window where Ida used to kneel (250).

By a reversal of positions, Mrs. Overtheway is now the watcher, Ida herself slowly becoming a 'remembrance', in a reminder of time more gentle than Melchior's coach. This transference of roles betokens the satisfactory end of narratives and of need ('the eager, loving little face that turned to her in its loneliness'(250)). Ida's watching attitude had betrayed need, and is now redundant.

The high window is reinforced by other images of isolation. The garden 'was cut off from the world by an overgrown hedge' through which Ida watches life: 'It was as good as a peepshow, and indeed much better' (11). The unreality of contact this stance allows is suggested in her 'laconic' exchange with the village urchins and her view of the wood, prettily but distantly described. Her rapture even

is unreal: 'It was like a wonderful fairy-tale, to which Ida listened with clasped hands' (12). Unreality is what Mrs. Overthway's narratives modify and correct. Ida's early window-views are entirely dream-like: the green gate seems to 'shut in a life ... of mysterious delights' (8), 'the passers-by seemed to go up and down the sunny street in a golden dream' (22). Her habits of pretence have no basis in life. Her literariness - naming Mrs. Overthway after Bunyan - and her dreams of herself as Gerda (15), Joringel (15), Hop o' my Thumb (16) are ameliorating only, whereas Mrs. Overthway provides more penetrating narratives. This distinction between daydream and storytelling is carefully drawn at the heroines' first meeting. Ida at her window-station watches the fading light:

... even now, though the sun was setting, it seemed inclined to make a fresh start, so bright was the rejuvenated glow with which it shone upon the opposite houses, and threw a mystic glory over Mrs. Overthway's white steps and green railings (21-2).

'Mystic glory' represents the child's heightened sensibility, pleasurable but insubstantial. Darkness falls, and out of this Mrs. Overthway emerges, on Ida's side of the window. Her reality is advanced by 'the firelight' and 'large pot of hyacinth' she carries. Mrs. Ewing twice bonds her heroines through flowers - first the primroses, then the hyacinth - as aptly simple, basic, feminine. The 'realness' of narrative, against daydream, is pointed by Ida's demand for a 'true' story: "I would rather hear something about you than anything else" (26-7). The 'something' is not escape but manageable experience - Mrs. Moss being explicitly about those 'unrecognized vexations, longings, and disappointments of childhood' (31) at present besetting Ida and ending 'so I become reconciled to things as they were' (66), a recapitulation of what is Mrs. Overthway's own function for the disengaged and dreamy watcher at the window. The cliché is reinvigorated.

Comparison with Mrs. Hodgson Burnett's A Little Princess (1905), whose heroine is also a watcher and dreamer, will distinguish what is distinctive in Mrs. Ewing. Sara Crewe also comforts herself with inventions in her desolate garret, a group observed below becoming 'the Large Family' in consoling contrast to her own solitariness.¹⁶ Like Ida, she is the type of bookish heroine placed by the novel in an extreme condition. Her storytelling is elaborate, conscious; she paints the attic with 'beauties she was making herself see'.¹⁷ The great sustaining fiction, that she is a princess, pervades her reality. "Everything's a story. You are a story - I am a story. Miss Minchin is a story," she tells Ermengarde.¹⁸ But at the heart of Mrs. Ewing's view is a collaboration. The bond is forged as storytelling, whereas in A Little Princess new relationships are its consequence. Sara's ameliorating fictions enlarge her sympathies, but in predictable ways - the buns to the beggar, the new closeness to Becky. Mrs. Ewing attempts a subtler reality, but ultimately fails to carry it through. The popular strength, and artistic limitation of A Little Princess is that its course seems inevitable. It substantiates the consolations of imagination by translating them into the consolations of plot on a grand scale. The diamond mines, the Indian magic of Ram Dass, the routing of Miss Minchin make Sara a princess within the 'reality' of melodrama. They are the stuff juvenile dreams are made of. This gives the novel its splendid appeal, the sense that 'one has gone to sleep in the midst of a fairy story, and has wakened to find it real'.¹⁹

Mrs. Ewing is more ambiguous in resolving her more complex conception of fictions as transforming experience. Something is salvaged by plot - the father's restoration is one melodramatic gesture Mrs. Hodgson Burnett avoids. But even this is modified by its presentation as 'story' and an alternative concentration on Ida's changed sense of reality. However, the blend is hardly adequate

to her initial conception.

Before examining the succession of narratives to gauge this inadequacy, however, the unusual completeness and vitality of Mrs. Ewing's conception of story can perhaps be finally argued through her sly presentation of the nurse, as a failed storyteller. Ida defines the child's state, beyond tear-jerking bereavement, as social and imaginative starvation, in which nurse is a key figure. As Ida's sole adult mediator, she is disastrously hostile to pretence: "'Little girls shouldn't pretend what's not true,'" replied Nurse, in whose philosophy fancy and falsehood were not distinguished' (9). But nurse herself is mendacious, 'elaborately misleading the infant mind for good' (20) through harmful adult fictions. She misrepresents reality as surely as Mrs. Overthway comes to represent it. Ida is put to bed for her own health, but 'Nurse spoke of it as a punishment, and Ida wept accordingly' (20). To her, Ida's fancies are 'mad'. However, she is no persecuting ogre as Miss Minchin is to Sara. Mrs. Ewing's lack of popularity partly derives from the lack of such thorough badness in her fiction. Nurse is not bad, but limited. In this she is Mrs. Overthway's opposite, just as her parrot-finery is the antithesis of black silk and white tulle.

Her limits for Ida are most lucidly and ironically drawn through her 'narratives':

"I do so like hearing Nurse's stories. At least she has only one, but I like it. It isn't exactly a story either, but it is about what happened in her last place" (25).

The insufficiency of nurse's narrative for Ida's need is expressed by its decline into gossip and complaint, unselected and unstructured.

Mrs. Moss, following immediately, is enhanced by contrast.

Similarly, immediately before The Snoring Ghost, Ida regrets:

"Nurse has a ghost story, belonging to a farm-house, which she tells the housemaid, but she says she can't tell me till I'm older" (73).

But The Snoring Ghost is exactly about the child's gaining access to adult meanings less vulgarly and arbitrarily defined than by nurse.

Partly via nurse Mrs. Ewing establishes the novel's melting perspectives which early identify the static listening Ida with the active heroine of the three biographical narratives. Ida and nurse mirror Mary and the housemaid Sarah in Mrs. Moss. Sarah's limits do not preclude an easy tolerance of her charge. Mary is not expected to sit 'wearily through her kitchen confidences' but to enjoy 'day-dreams in the gardens of the deserted manor' (33). Mrs. Moss concludes with an exchange between Ida and nurse that encloses Mary's reconciliation to 'things as they are' within an envelope of Ida's daily reality. Nurse pours scepticism on Ida's 'outlandish fancies' (71), she triumphs because Ida fell asleep, she mishears and misrepresents her. Yet Ida is not cowed, as she was before the story, as though she has assumed some of Mary's spirit of reconciliation. The style is positive and comic. Nurse curling Ida's hopelessly straight hair may recall Mary's 'light ... cropped' hair which she intends shall be 'of raven blackness, and touch the ground at least' (47), both futile dreams with Mrs. Moss still in our minds. But the view of Ida is no longer pathetic:

... Ida slept upon an irregular layer of small paper parcels, which made pillows a mockery ... Nurse made so much of her own grievance, in having to use the curl-papers, that no place was left for Ida's grievance in having to sleep upon them (70).

The wit is not misplaced but reflects Ida's changed mood, more buoyant and self-appraising than before the story.

After subsequent tales, however, Ida's development is less subtly appreciated. It is by a rough progression she moves outwards from her window-station - first in her *sortée* in the woods, then her first street visit ('though the street did not prove quite that happy

region it had looked from the nursery window^s (133)), and finally her penetration of Mrs. Overthway's house. But the progression ends in the conventional gestures expressed in Ida's letter - an acceptance of nurse, a new appreciation of Uncle Garbett. The sense of reduction in the last episode is inescapable, a thinning out of texture which affects so many of Mrs. Ewing's endings, even within this ideally flexible structure. The difficulty is that the cumulative meanings of the biographical stories are hardly resolved by the 'climax' of the father's return. This outcome belongs only to the bereavement narrative, the melodramatic nemesis of the least interesting strand, but too easy and arbitrary to show Ida's assimilation of the tales. It is reward rather than resolution. An examination of these tales will show their achieved concentration which makes this ending unsatisfactory.

Through Mrs. Moss run two dovetailed themes, a child's adjustment of view to 'things as they are', and more shadowily present, the theme of a woman's life-choices (both present earlier in Mrs. Gatty's The Human Face Divine). This second theme Mrs. Ewing tries to develop by providing alternative views of the exemplary beauty than the child's delusive one that the dazzling Anastasia will be untouched by time, so that words 'did not add one wrinkle to my ideal of Mrs. Moss' (54). Alternative views, embodied in the child's aunt and grandmother, provide a range of three generations. Anastasia Eden as she begins - and the name has a glamorous promise wittily extinguished in her married title, 'Mrs. Moss', - is a standard figure from nineteenth-century adult fiction, the 'acknowledged beauty' (39) whose destiny must somehow be commensurate with her assets, yet can be defined only through marriage for either money or love, a child's Gwendolen Harleth or Isabel Archer.

This child views even the terms of choice with incredulity:

To love, and take pleasure in giving pain - to balance a true heart and clear blue eyes against money, and prefer money - was not at that time comprehensible by me (44).

There is something over-simple here. Even accepting the considerable fictional difficulties in giving a child's view of adult sexuality, or at least of the economics of sexual choice, demanding all James's resources in What Maisie Knew, Mrs. Ewing's account takes naivety too far towards sentimentality. She certainly gives the necessary space to Mary's reflections. But the excellent early passages formulating her obsession with female beauty decline into the emotional slurry typified by her recounting of her own 'loves': 'It began with my mother, and ended with my yellow cat' (45). Are little girls quite so innocently censorious? If so, there remains something over-strident in Mrs. Ewing's protestation of innocence. For example, the vehemence with which Mary states she would not exchange Sandy for any money is a blatant emotional appeal. Her moral and economic innocence is stressed through sugary platitudes. James isolated Maisie's function thus:

To live with all intensity and perplexity and felicity in its terribly mixed little world would thus be the part of my interesting small mortal.²⁰

Mrs. Ewing forsakes the child as a centre of 'perplexity' and uses her, briefly, to underline the convention of romantic love, with an unchildlike, supposedly moving, clarity:

Meanwhile, I made up my mind firmly on one point. My grandmother was wrong. Miss Anastasia Eden had not loved Mr. Standford (46).

Subsequent passages in which Mary measures herself against the standards represented by this fabled beauty are more credible, honest and comic.

Some depth is gained by setting this view against those of two older women. To the grandmother Miss Eden is a kind of femme fatale, alluring even while lending herself to moralizing. To the aunt she

is an object of disapprobation, not merely for her folly, but in some way for her reprehensible beauty. These juxtaposed views are scored with a wit that points their relatedness to the running theme of woman's lot. It is a novel particularly rich in female characters. A sub-Austen irony defines Aunt Harriet who wears wifely duty like a good conduct medal. When her husband calls:

... Aunt Harriet hurried off with a conscious meritoriousness about her, becoming a lady who had married the right man, and took great care of him (42).

The same irony functions in the miniature of Metcalfe, 'humble companion' to Mrs. Moss. Although 'unassuming almost to non-entity' (66), faded, single, and drained of sexual identity - even the past one her mistress has - she nevertheless 'exacted the married title as a point of respect' (66). Via her narrator's scorn ('I would, with the greatest pleasure, have addressed her as "My Lord Archbishop", or in any other style to which she was not entitled' (66)), Mrs. Ewing places such evasions as absurd and briefly hints their sadness. But her canvas is too narrow and her opinions too ambivalent to question social arrangements which block more legitimate avenues to self-esteem.

The other theme, of education in things as they are, is excellently pursued. Thematic dovetailing in the momentous visit to Mrs. Moss shows the author in full control. The child's outward gestures and inner reflections do justice to the psychological importance of the moment. The giving of the strawberry pincushion is a gesture properly and humorously appraised by the writing as a new maturity in Mary. Her words are simple, but without the false-naivety discussed earlier, reflecting rather what the author hopes of childhood than what she perceives it to be: 'there is no reason why old and ugly people should not have cushions to keep their pins in' (63). The retrospective angle is worked to the full in the closing summary.

Both themes gain from the vantage point of reminiscence. Indeed these last retrospective paragraphs, with widened time-gap, correlate the configuration of Mary and Mrs. Moss with that of Ida and Mrs. Overtheway, another narrative layer. The gulf of delusion between Mary and Mrs. Moss closes with time:

I fed my imagination and stored my memory with anecdotes of the good old times in the many quiet evenings we spent together (65).

Coming at the end, this particular return to the narrator's present places the remembrance directly within Ida's grasp.

The Snoring Ghost also has two narrative strands, the important one of the girls' first visit from home, and the minor one of the 'ghost' story, with no intrinsic connection. The ghost incident is merely a plot device to open and close this remembrance. Mrs. Ewing's Commonplace Book indicates an interest in supernatural happenings, noting one family 'The Suttons of Blower', who quarrelled over a family ghost.²¹ Next to this is written out Vaughan's 'They are all gone into the world of light', used in Reka Dom. A possible collection of ideas for this novel? But there is no sign of her youthful enthusiasm for ghastly effects. The 'ghost' here is merely the pretext for studying the girls' reactions.

Tension is drawn from a quite different fictional pattern, the stark opposition of fashionable life with homely style and truer values, created by transplanting the homely hero. In the adult novel the pattern is considerably diversified - in Austen and Thackeray, in Jane Eyre, Great Expectations or Daniel Deronda. But in juvenile fiction there is greater consistency in the main features. There is a distant descent from fiction like Edgeworth's Moral Tales which holds two systems of rearing in suspension before us. The Good Aunt contrasts sensible Charles with reprobate Augustus by every manipulation of plot and detail. But by mid-century it is often a

heroine we observe, fortified by plain fare and mother's counsels, exposed to fashionable seductions which she serves to analyse and which in turn act as the trial and authentication of her own maturity. With so few scenarios available to stage the testing of female adolescence, the fashionable house-party becomes Vanity Fair or the Valley of Humiliation - and the Pilgrim's Progress reference is apt as being one frequently made by the writers themselves, as though anxious to accord their fictions the due moral gravity not readily apparent in their restricted, trivial settings. Duncan Crow in The Victorian Woman describes the reality of these house-parties to which each girl took 'a small trousseau' and at which the routines were invariable.²² Both in The Snoring Ghost and Madam Liberality heroines assemble this trousseau with delight, only to find it humiliatingly short of fashionable standards.

The significance of the first visit may be stressed as an adolescent milestone, an encounter with the wide, wide world. On the degree to which the writer can chart temptations and outcomes depends the proper appreciation of this significance. Herein lies the success of Harriett Mozley's The Fairy Bower (1841), describing with keen fidelity the trials of Grace Leslie at a large house-party. Of it Charlotte Yonge wrote:

Mrs. Mozley's Fairy Bower was the starting point of a certain style of writing for the young. There was something - together with the wonderful cleverness of portraiture - in the reticence of Grace to her mother, that certainly set me to demonstrate the contrary habit, and, I suspect, had a like effect on Miss Sewell. Amy Herbert was her work, Abbey Church mine.²³

The 'reticence' to mother, who actually accompanies Grace, is something not only Yonge in Abbey Church, or, Self-Control and Self-Conceit (1844), but most later authors do not tolerate, the mother becoming increasingly the touchstone of values and means of articulating adolescent dilemmas. This particular emphasis Mrs. Ewing rejected. Mrs. Gatty, too, reversed the usual pattern in

Aunt Judy's Letters which keeps the fictional focus in the home, a bustling, fertile unconventional one, and has the visiting heroine send back messages from the sober household of mamma's friend.

Mrs. Ewing's heroine is just thirteen, explicitly chosen as a threshold: 'I was now to be allowed to read certain books of a more grown-up character ... My hair was henceforth to grow as long as I and the Fates would permit' (79). In 1875 the age of consent for girls was raised to thirteen, at which both the Factory Acts and Education Act defined childhood as ending.²⁴ Mary expects to be grown up 'in four more years', a careful emphasis necessary to mark the clear advancement from the little girl in Mrs. Moss (the hair reference looks back specifically to that tale). The home-life Mrs. Ewing extolls is, of course, a version of the Gatty vicarage. The preliminary scene emphasises freedom, frankness and unity. The children's inventiveness is advanced by their imagining the messenger with the invitation to be a wartime emissary, a highwayman, one of Job's messengers (this by a 'biblical little brother'). The scene is inevitably outdoors, remote from drawing-rooms, an idyll of natural and social bonding:

Towards evening we were all sitting on the grass, the boys with their heads on the sisters' laps, and there had been an outcry for a story, to which no one had responded; partly, perhaps, because the exquisite air of evening seemed a sufficient delight, the stillness too profound to be lightly disturbed (80).

This distinctive childhood is mediated through both associative and realistic means; the children's dialogue is keen, funny, mimetically expressive of the quality of their lives. In this Mrs. Ewing's use of the pattern is different. Home-values carried with the young visitor are more often drawn along firmly moral lines.

Some comparison, general and particular, with Louisa Alcott

who used the pattern often, will define Mrs. Ewing's approach more closely. Alcott heroines are also informed and articulate, despite homely exteriors, in contrast with fashionable girls of the period whose smart costumes are the uniforms of sexual awareness, but no disguise of the lack of solid information. In An Old-Fashioned Girl (1870) Polly Milton is labelled 'old-fashioned' by the Shaws, denizens of fashionable Boston, a society anatomized with some acumen by this small, clear commentator. The label itself becomes a matter of irony. Similarly, in The Snoring Ghost the hostess remarks "'such sensible girls!' ... as if we were not there; 'like women of fifty'" (102). Mrs. Ewing's irony claims that her heroines' sense exceeds that of the women of fifty surrounding them; Alcott's implies that Polly's old fashion is really the new fashion of independence of mind and person (the Alcott heroine is a wage-earner, something Mrs. Ewing would not contemplate).

Little Women (Boston, 1868) and its continuation (1869), now called Good Wives, are contemporary with Mrs. Overthway's Remembrances and also concerns itself with girls becoming women ('little women' was Bronson Alcott's title for his girls). Details of Meg March's visit to the Moffats (Ch. 9 'Meg Goes to Vanity Fair') tally exactly with The Snoring Ghost. She, too, is spoken of by adults 'as if she was not there' and is embarrassed by sexual gossip. Both writers castigate cliques, a frequent Gatty target, and uncertain fashionable friendships. Fifteen-year old Lucy bewilders Mary:

Affectionate as she had been when we were alone together, she was no sooner among the grown-up young ladies downstairs than she seemed to forget us altogether (98-9).

Meg is similarly confused when, on putting on borrowed finery, 'Several young ladies, who had taken no notice of her before, were very affectionate all of a sudden.'²⁵ Both novels have excited accounts of family packing, near-identical trousseaux, and

consequent disappointments. Meg's humiliating lack of night-cap bows tallies with Mary's lack of 'tattling edges' to her nightgown. Meg's white tarlatan for the 'big party', like the girls' white muslins 'for evening', is the white badge of virginity, statutory wear for the good girl in this fiction of trial by fashion.

But within this likeness of detail and symbol characteristic differences appear. Mrs. Ewing is more tuned to the situation's total comedy, conveyed by dialogue, qualified and hedged by comment, often ironic. Her control of incident is strict, but its units are shorter and sharper than Alcott's. Her heroines announce their new muslins 'with some pride' and are quickly disabused by Lucy's recital of pink silks and Indian muslins. Dialogue is followed closely by comment:

With which she left us, and we put on our new frocks (which were to be the evening dresses of our visit) in depressed spirits. This was owing to the thought of pink silk, and of the possibility of a surfeit of white muslin (98).

The irony distances the feeling, emotions are placed within the longer perspective of remembrance. The slightly comic edge to their downfall reduces moral gravity by implying other and later consolations. The distancing also renders such motions as typical rather than particular, one phase in a long maturation. Narrative flows on to the next small link in the chain.

Meg's trial is more intensely isolated, her emotions more overwhelmingly communicated. Preeminently, we must apprehend its moral importance:

... so out came the tarlatan, looking, older, limper, and shabbier than ever, beside Sallie's crisp new one. Meg saw the girls glance at it, and then at one another, and her cheeks began to burn, for, with all her gentleness, she was very proud. 26

There is no distancing, certainly no irony. Moral gravity is intensified, not reduced, by authorial comment. In fact, most of the considerable humour in Little Women resides not in style -

that would imply life as too intrinsically comic - but in odd quirks of speech (Amy's malapropisms) or of character (Aunt March's testiness), and in fine set-pieces (like Jo's disastrous experimental dinner). All these elements also carry some specific moral thrust. Meg's ordeal by fashion is substantially treated because it has representative moral status. She exemplifies the temptation to vanity, as Jo does to temper. Alcott invests the episode with this significance through multiple, delightful details of dress, described however, as Meg experiences them, with unalloyed seriousness.

In Mrs. Ewing's social comedy, too, humour is more abrasive, irony more necessary. Nowhere, however, does she provide a single scene of the scale of the Moffats' party. The Snoring Ghost is rather an accumulation of compressed and penetrating views. Its shorter rhythms give breadth of a kind, but Alcott's slower progression of solid scenes better suited her forthright methods. Mrs. Ewing estimates values obliquely. The scene of Sunday church-going shows her typical method. The girls' discomposure at so many departures from their regular pieties is registered but not stressed '... we had been brought up to have a just horror of being late for service' (107-8). More striking are the frissons of irony, such as:

... our hostess turned back from the half-open door to say in a loud and encouraging whisper, "It's only the Confession;" and we swept up the little church into a huge square pew (107).

Such dramatised moments, unadorned by comment, are rare in Alcott, or in Charlotte Yonge, a more thorough social observer of church-going. Characteristically, Mrs. Ewing subsequently moves even further from moral directives in comic observation of the congregation. She fastens on the old man who responds 'in a loud voice, more devout than tuneful, keeping exact time with the parson also, as if he had a grudge against the clerk and felt it due to himself to keep

in advance of him' (108-9). The secondary function of such comedy is in the pattern of hazards besetting the female innocents abroad. But it also has primary vitality, a Dickensian savouring of oddity for its own sake that is hardly found in contemporary juvenile fiction.

The alternative home-values, golden positives endorsed against the dross of fashion, in Little Women are embodied mainly in the celebrated counsels of Marmee. Against these winningly-articulated precepts the daughters measure themselves, often in long interrogations, so that the novel's rhythm is between dramatic scene and static analysis, between doing and confessing. Meg returns from the Moffats to a lengthy post-mortem. And Alcott uses Marmee to epitomize and set the seal on the lessons of fashion:

"Money is a needful and precious thing - and, when well used, a noble thing - but I never want you to think it is the first or only prize to strive for ..."²⁷

Mrs. Ewing implies a similarly faultless mother, but her provision of sagacious counsel is severely limited, confined to the preliminary 'home' section. There is no return to this mother-figure, an omission unthinkable in Little Women. Even the counsel itself is subordinate to dramatic psychology. The mother gives advice:

... to which Fatima and I gratefully gave half our minds, whilst with the other half we made rosy pictures of unparalleled excellence under trying circumstances, by which, hereafter, we should prove these warnings and counsels to have been, in our case, unnecessary and superfluous (85).

This mother is eased out of the story, though her standards, internalized in the heroines, remain. They are, however, asserted indirectly, as part of a wider fictional interest. For example, the largest trial the girls experience is maintaining their Sunday reading in an unsympathetic climate (tame fiction compared with the thrilling trial presented by Beth's illness). Again, a comic view of their plight is quite consistent with a recognition

of its reality and pain:

Fatima heaved a deep sigh among her cushions, and said:

"I wish we were rich."

"I wish we were at home," I answered.

"When one's at home," Fatima continued, in doleful tones, "one doesn't feel it, because one sees nobody; but when one goes among other people, it is wretched not to have plenty of money and things. And it's no good saying it isn't," she added hurriedly, as if to close the subject.

"It's getting dark," I said.

"I beg your pardon: go on," sighed Fatima (117).

The assertion of values here is merely one element, rivalling in interest the sisters' interaction. Only gradually does it predominate. Their reading is from Pilgrim's Progress, talisman of spirituality and the moral map traced throughout Little Women. Both authors introduce it to reassure readers of the seriousness of these very female lives. But quite specifically in The Snoring Ghost it transposes the narrative into a more sombre key, and leads circuitously back to mother. The narrative of Mr. Greatheart leading Christiana and her children to the green valley advances 'a standard which is not of drawing-rooms' (118), but it is also indirectly a lyrical salute to motherhood. The episode's last moment, dramatisation not comment as in Alcott, returns us, deviously, to the golden standard of home, and simultaneously resolves sisterly tension:

We went downstairs slowly, hand in hand.

"I wonder what mother is doing?" said Fatima (118).

Such a quietly urged morality, laced with human observation, typifies Mrs. Ewing's approach within a common fictinnal design.

Continuity with Reka Dom, the next and densest remembrance, is cleverly sustained. The two sections are spanned by the sad interview between Ida and uncle which anchors both in the framework. Ida, misunderstood, goes to bed weeping and Uncle Garbett sends his 'love', a cold gesture ironically qualified: 'the word seemed to struggle with some difficulty from behind his neckcloth' (136).

Thus isolation and homelessness are reiterated in between a story about sisterly closeness and another about an ideal family home. The emotional continuity is assured. Reka Dom has two phases, Mary's childhood and young womanhood. The Snoring Ghost supplies the intervening adolescence. Moreover, the bookish, fanciful child with Isaak Walton-inspired dreams in Reka Dom, is easily identified with the listening Ida.

Other links are less obvious. The Snoring Ghost ends, fleetingly, with a marriage, and so does Reka Dom. The first Mary only remotely appreciates, the second is her own. However, the inevitable culmination of this FrauenLiebe und Leben in marriage is oddly accomplished. Marriage seems to overtake Mary as an unexpected destiny as strangely as it did the author during the novel's writing. Indeed, Ivan, the traveller, linguist, Bohemian in conservative clothing, is a lover after Alexander Ewing. Mrs. Ewing wisely contrives the interferences of the Misses Brooke to preserve a focus on Mary's social embarrassment rather than her passion, what she calls 'matters most straightforward and natural' (214) but yet avoids. She praised Mrs. Gatty's avoidance of love stories in view of the 'priggishness' of her adult characters. Perhaps her own concentration on social comedy is similarly evasive action, in spite of leaving a hiatus where the central experience should be, hardly bridged by stilted phrases like 'the privileged idleness of lovers' (216).

She is much better at portraying the child's inarticulate awareness of adult love. The Snoring Ghost deals partly with what is dealt with in James's The Awkward Age²⁸ the problem of children knowing and knowing children,²⁸ a theme pursued in Reka Dom. Lucy is a 'knowing' girl, equivalent of Alcott's Annie Moffat or Flora Shaw, who prattles about offers, elopements and lovers. Mrs. Ewing

calculates her knowingness chiefly in unconsciously humorous dialogue:

"Aunt Maria doesn't approve of gentlemen kneeling; she says it's idolatory,"

or

"I shall be very careful myself; I mean to refuse the first few offers I get" (105).

But she cannot resist a sharper authorial reprimand:

And so Miss Lucy rambled on, perfectly unconscious of the melancholy and yet ludicrous way in which she degraded serious subjects (105).

Against this figure she measures the heroines, not simplistically as innocents against the guilty, but as curious clear-minded emerging women against a prematurely-informed child. The contrast relies on comedy to define its lineaments. Their questions, for example, have a bluntness revealing ignorance of the romance-game. Reading in the letter that 'poor' Lucy has lost a sister, they ask if she is dead. "No, only married," says mother (83). Lucy describes sisters who hate each other and both fall in love with the curate:

"Which of them is he in love with?" I asked.

"Oh, neither that I know of," said Miss Lucy composedly.

"They don't know him, you know" (104).

The idea of increased understanding in these naive heroines is subtly contained by the tale's ending. They sense the important currents beneath the banter of Kate and her Irishman and instinctively enter the complicity of silence:

So we kept this idea sacred from Miss Lucy's comments - why, I do not think either of us could have told in words (113).

The sense of their new 'knowingness', a moment of growth, has been most delicately dramatised within the tale.

This theme of sexual innocence is prolonged into Reka Dom.

Mary's long talk to Ivan on their first meeting ('to be understood,

was a luxury we did not often taste at the tea-parties of the town' (200)) infringes 'Miss Peckham's golden rule', only in the third stage of intimacy does a woman speak of herself. Mrs. Ewing uses the keen social comedy and intricate self-analysis resulting from this in place of the dramatisation of passion that would be the expected phase of the cycle.

It is an adequate substitution. But there are other signs that her bold conception of woman's life in cyclic tales presented her with problems. She often reveals character through the expression of girls' day dreams and self-images, from as early as The Blackbird's Nest. Mary's are especially inventive. She tells her fellow-traveller "When I am sixteen, I shall be an Amazon," claiming a female role at the very furthest limits from the Victorian alternatives of angel in the house, or licensed coquette (Lucy's ambition). Her fantasies seem to appropriate a masculine scope, like Jo March's swashbuckling dramatic parts:

Many a night did I fancy myself master of all the languages of the world, hunting up and down the windy hills in a dress of Lincoln green (90).

However, to these vivid and revealing details Mrs. Ewing adds an ambiguous rider, a typical withdrawal at the broaching of dangerous territory:

I had a mighty contempt for men, and a high respect for myself, that was the greatest of my many follies (90).

By marriage, such 'follies' are eliminated, the dream reduced to sitting in on German translation with father and suitor, the hunting costume exchanged for virginal muslin. Only in the choice of husband can unorthodoxy be prolonged. Mary and Jo March both salvage their early freedoms by unconventional unions, the only resource available to their authors. Ivan and Professor Bhaer are interestingly alike - exotic, foreign, studious, and Oedipally akin to their wives' fathers. The themes of the earlier tales are

consummated but with reduced detail, depth and clarity.

In a small-scale but deeply thoughtful way the sequence encompasses what James called 'the death of childhood'.²⁹ In a less troubled phrase Mrs. Overtheway comments 'Childhood also had slipped from our grasp' (179). After such careful coherence Kerguelen's Land, with ^{its} talking albatrosses, seems crude. Mrs. Ewing found the writing troublesome:

It has certainly given me a wonderful amount of bother this time, and I was disappointed in the feeling that Rex did not (quite) think it up to my other things. But today in reading it all, and a lot he had not seen before, I heard him laughing over it by himself, and he thinks it now one of my best (18,170).

The problem was to find a mode distinct from 'remembrances' but preserving thematic coherence and the storyteller-listener dialogue.

Contrasting style is found in an Andersenian 'talking-animals' sketch like The Storks. Andersen's Little Ida's Flowers probably provided name and flower associations. She was working on her imitations at this period. So perhaps he seemed to provide a possible model for this last unit. But the talking animals are crossed with a vestigial desert-island narrative, stripped of all its usual seductive details of survival. The father, Barker and Carlo are invoked only to express home-sickness, the emotional counterpart to Ida's loneliness and an easy intensification of feeling. Sparse details serve this sentimentalism - Ida's letter, the dreams of England, the intrusive dog.

In the preservation of thematic unity there is an equal strain. The Albatrosses, a weird nuclear family, do provide a rudimentary image of undisturbed nurture soothing to Ida's insecurity. And Mrs. Ewing tries to indicate their parenting as representative, encompassing both the single Ida and Mary's extended family:

There is always love enough for the largest family, and everything that could be desired in an only child, and Mother Albatross was as proud as if she had been a hen sitting on a dozen (229).

Childbirth is indeed the next stage in the woman's progress. But theoretic consonance is undermined by these disconcerting characters. Even talking birds can provide only the barest outlines of appropriate emotion. Mother Albatross's fussiness and nerves ("It is quite enough to be a mother" (234)) are rough caricatures of maternity. Mrs. Ewing seems increasingly to offer them as comic relief, a concealment of tonal discrepancies, an antidote to the pathos of the castaways. She introduces some mild satire on man, as in her dream-fantasies or Mrs. Gatty's Inferior Animals, but it is misplaced:

"No men have wings ... nor, for that matter, fins or scales either. They are very curious creatures. The fancy they have for wandering about between sea and sky, when Nature has not enabled them to support themselves in either, is truly wonderful ... " (231).

This is threadbare humour after earlier tales, without true purpose in the scheme.

The unit's brevity advertises Mrs. Ewing's severe pruning and compositional problems. As a terminus in the storyteller-listener relationship, the tale should vindicate the potency of narrative for Ida's life since it brings miraculous restoration. Like previous stories it should be an alloy of truth and fancy. But for the first time, the story fails to meet the remarkable conditions of the whole scheme. It seems to be with relief that Mrs. Ewing returns to her framework where such conditions can be more subtly consummated. Her strongest stroke is to end with Ida's letter, a transfer in the balance of narrative power; the listener has become the narrator. We accept the technical accomplishment of that document, with its only token incompetence, as an imaginative realisation of Ida's

health. She is no longer passive, but has the means of communication within her repertoire.

To return to Hughes' view of the function of narrative. Mrs. Ewing has suggested that Ida's life is 'transformed' by more than the whims of fate, conveyed by plot at its crudest. The narratives have brought a lifetime of human experience 'into a human pattern and made it part of [her] understanding'. It is a novel testifying to its author's own faith in the potency of fiction, and it is no accident that Ida's postscript ends "I am telling Papa all your stories by bits" (250).

Chapter 3. A Flat Iron for a Farthing, 1870-1871

Under the self-important heading 'Notes for Writers' in her Commonplace Book Mrs. Ewing wrote:

In autobiography referring chiefly to childhood - decide clearly whether the narrator speaks as a child or as a grown up person looking back, and let the style of writing throughout be in keeping with the decision.

(No date. No pagination.)

After the use of memory in Mrs. Overthway's Remembrances, the use of memoir for her next novel was a logical progression. She had not used the autobiographical convention since her first two published tales, where it had produced the strongest flickers of originality. The advance in her grasp of its possibilities is pronounced. Mrs. Molesworth, reviewing an opus which eventually included three novels and seven shorter works in the first-person, commented on her command of the convention for psychological inwardness, through an unusual identification of writer and narrator.¹ Mrs. Molesworth herself is the only contemporary children's writer who used the form so widely or so well. The instinct which directed Mrs. Ewing to develop the form was sure. None of these fictions have a chronicler who is not also the hero, endowed with what James called 'the double privilege of subject and object - a course that has ^{at least} the merit of brushing away questions at a sweep',² questions about the degree of inward information the historian could plausibly lay claim to. Mrs. Ewing resorted to the form mainly for its circumvention of these questions. Her talent, disclosed in Mrs. Overtneway, for the scrupulous recounting of thought and feeling, for a closer replication of introspection than was usual in children's fiction, led her to 'autobiography' as an immediately accommodating form. Its inbuilt structure is a plotting of growth, tolerating close analysis. Tactfully handled,

it could reduce the responsibility for portraying society with any breadth or density, since it anchored the reader in the individual's circumscribed world. Legitimate concentration on childhood might still further diminish this obligation to a concentration on confined, specific, entirely domestic spheres of action.

'Autobiography' does, however, carry the additional responsibility of some continuation of that childhood. Mrs. Ewing's juvenile note recognizes one inescapable problem as the selection of a stage of consciousness for the narrative vantage point, though it naively presupposes the exclusive adoption of child or adult, whereas most memoir-novels, including A Flat Iron, fluctuate profitably between the two. The note's casual reference to 'autobiography referring chiefly to childhood' also evades the problem of seaming together the past with the present of telling. At which point might autobiography satisfactorily end? Mrs. Ewing felt this to be with some clear symbolic arrival at maturity, a 'death of childhood'. Six to Sixteen's title and well-elaborated documentary convention - adolescents exchanging life-stories - define this adequately. In We and the World the return from a first voyage represents a terminus for life and fiction. The shorter pieces arouse different expectations laying no claims to autobiography, merely selective memory. But A Flat Iron reveals more problems.

The novel was revised, as was most of her work, between magazine and volume publication, one addition being the subtitle 'Some Passages in the Life of an Only Son', with a preface apologizing 'so many other incidents gathered round the incident of the flat iron as to make it no longer important enough to appear upon the title page' (4, vii). She preserves the original title, however,

out of 'honesty'. A necessary revision of Chapter 1 accounts for the two titles and excuses the uneven advance to maturity by invoking the autobiographical illusion:

It was either because - being so unused to authorship - I had no notion of composition, and was troubled by a tyro tendency to stray from my subject;...or because I and my affairs were more chiefly interesting to myself as writer, and my family as readers ... that my tale outgrew its first title and we had to add a second (1-2).

The 'we' supposedly disarms by its cosy fiction of amateurism. Such simulated intimacy, of course, belongs to the convention, a primary adjustment of readers' expectations. With similar playfulness Dickens begins The Personal History and Experience of David Copperfield The Younger 'Whether I shall turn out to be the hero of my own life, or whether that station will be held by anybody else, these pages must show'. But Mrs. Ewing's subtitle manipulates the convention of modesty for more illegitimate ends. 'Some passages' makes fewer claims to completeness or coherence than, say, the 'Personal History' Dickens offers. It announces, though not excuses, in advance, the thinning out of texture, the comparatively perfunctory treatment of the adult, against the child and youth, and a general shrugging off of the responsibilities of full autobiography.

Chapter distribution reflects relative emphases. The novel opens at the mother's death when Regie is four, and ends with Nurse Bundle's death the day he returns from his wedding-journey. Between these two well-chosen experiential watersheds are his infancy (Ch. 1-2), boyhood (3-22, he is nine in 5, outgrows his nurse in 17, has his first lessons in 19, gets a tutor in 22), adolescence (Eton in 23, confirmation in 25) and maturity (26-32). This leaves no doubt where Mrs. Ewing's interests lie - emphases justifiable only within some developmental design. Instead,

after the rector's funeral - carefully conceived as both a milestone in maturation and a piece of regional realism - the novel trickles away in plot contrivance towards an unreal union with an idealized wife that registers nothing about maturity.

Reasons for this disengagement lie in the reduced intensity of the author's view of adulthood, against her profoundly etched vision of childhood, carried with her from personal experience. There is also the conventionality in fictionalizing 'the years of discretion', detected in Mrs. Overtheway, and identified in her mother's case.

But reasons more specific to this novel are bound up with her determined modification of the methods for presenting the child in his own fiction, especially in the novel of education with its implied focus on early years. They involve also her particular adaptation of the memoir form. And they involve her absorption of the influence of adult novelists, especially Dickens, just bearing fruit after her reading in the sixties. It will be illuminating to examine each of these three areas.

A Flat Iron is at every level a novel of education. It follows the twin paths of the education of a gentleman and the education of a soul. As such, it falls heir to recognized structures and details from children's fiction of the preceding century. Mr. Dacre, a perfect English squire, is the orthodox model for the first pattern. The Rev. Reginald Andrewes, more complexly drawn, is the model for the second. Andrewes' hinted tragic bereavement replicates 'The Story of a Gravestone' which intruded into The Brownies, and in different guise, into The Blackbird's Nest. Mrs. Ewing seems unable either to let the idea alone, or develop it as a plausible aspect of the mentor-hero relationship. It is imported into A Flat Iron as a spurious

appendage to the hero's reflections after Andrewes' death ('the secret of the special love the Rector bore me' (244)), making an emotional appeal free of any obligation to develop it. But setting this aside, Andrewes is an unusual specimen in a literature full of mentor-clergymen. Between these two exempla of individual morality Nurse Bundle is established as a qualifying intermediary, her comic sense of degree and her superstitious faith reflecting back with healthy distortions their more sterling ideals.

These ideals had long functioned as determinants of plot and pattern in the juvenile novel of education. Mrs. Ewing does appropriate single features, even some of the contours, of these conventions. In Regie's education as a landed gentleman the exercises in natural history and practical charity which Andrewes sets go straight back to the methods of Mr. Barlow in Sandford and Merton (3 vols., 1783-9). But although the puzzle of how a cottager with six children is to survive on nine shillings a week (165) is precisely in the heuristic tradition of Day and Edgeworth - indeed it resembles Tommy Merton's puzzling over why gentlemen do not need to raise corn as cottagers do, which produces Barlow's 'The Two Dogs' - Mrs. Ewing extends the pattern of moral education to depicting the emotional movements underlying the child's absorption of the lesson. Regie's solution to the problem is not presented as the educational goal it would be in the moral tale, communicating the practical lesson via the character's routine gestures, but as a dramatised instant of moral development:

"She must take in washing, sir," I announced with a resigned air, and the old-fashioned gravity peculiar to me ... "Boots can't come out of nine shillings a week" (166).

This humour partakes of the changed climate which produced F.C.

Burnand's elaborate parody The New History of Sandford and Merton

in 1872.

The father's lecture on their class code of honour, delivered after Regie listens to a private conversation (and his peccadillos are all grotesquely mild after the scrapes of earlier heroes) is identical in content to that absorbed by squires' sons from Tom Brown (1856) to scapegraces of the nineties, like Hugh John in S.R. Crockett's The Surprising Adventures of Sir Toady Lion (1897). Likewise the fervent culmination of Regie's spiritual development, what Andrewes calls "the unutterable blessing of a youth given to God", in his graveside promise "I have made up my mind. It is worth trying for" (244) is the climax of innumerable juvenile novels of faith.

But Mrs. Ewing's approach to both patterns is more complex. She accepts some conventions that had become attached to them as viable for exploring characteristic states of childhood. Sometimes the acceptance is unmodified, and to it is due many of the moments of high sentimentality, like the dying mother's kiss, the graveside vow. But often her purpose cannot be served by wholesale annexation - both these moments conclude more densely observed scenes with diverse emotional currents.

The predominant method for qualifying these standard features is their placement within an organic framework through which education is more broadly scanned. Despite its muted tone and fragmentary action the novel speaks valuably on current educational issues: the poverty of girls' education, the governess's role, the limitations of the public school, and the more submerged question of the child's freedom against necessary constraint. The precise and restrained portrait of the Ascott family is the main means of achieving this breadth. Aunt Maria's 'system' of regular lessons and strict supervision, typical (the implication is) of contemporary

education meted out to girls by a conscientious, unenlightened middle-class, is brought into relationship with the apparently random but inherently servicable education the novel endorses in the hero's case.

The execution of this ambitious contrast is flawed. Mrs. Ewing increasingly overuses the mode of direct address to ride her hobby horse, the barrenness of a worthy curriculum without personal engagement. In Chapter 13 there is still wit in the observation: the Ascott girls became 'the most helpless creatures at a railway station that I ever beheld' (122). By Chapter 27 the tone is more hectoring, the detail sparse, the narrative licence abused:

The laborious and expensive education of their childhood did not lead to anything worthy the name of a pursuit, much less a hobby, with any one of them. Of the happiness of learning, of the exciting interest of an intellectual hobby, they knew nothing (250).

Only Helen in later chapters is pursued with any conception of a plausible maturation. From her early sharp characterisation as 'a bit of an enthusiast' (75) with a passion for the charity-box, she becomes, in a frank phrase, 'Tractarian and peculiar' (223), outgrowing the handicap of her useless education and becoming a nurse. The narrative tells us 'She waited long, but she followed her vocation at last' (250), a trite sentence suggesting how distant the presentation has become. The whole conception is too interesting (girls with vocations are rare in contemporary children's fiction) to be summarized, meekly reported, consigned to being an exemplum. One wishes for a more acute dramatisation of such human possibilities, and that they should be brought into a more subtle relationship with the hero's centralised case.

Where the wider educational grid does draw disparate cases together is in the early Ascott scenes, richer in detail, wit,

and human solidity. Regie's first introduction to the governess system is hearing Maria 'doing her music' (38). The scene develops in the episodic manner characteristic of the novel. Within one chapter we pass from Maria's playing, to an analysis of schoolroom practices and Miss Blomfield's role, through a long introduction to Polly, the modern girl in the 'system's' straightjacket, and outside to a description of Leo Damer, a parallel 'only son'. The educational range is considerable. The restless flitting can and does sometimes destroy our sense of the world it is meant to contain. But here the episodic rhythm is sustained by varied and apt techniques. The narrator, for example, appears more legitimately as reporter; this fresh exposure to the household is interposed between us and the scene as our proper point of observation:

I heard them, by the by, before I saw them. It was whilst I was dressing ... that I heard sounds in the room below, which were interpreted by nurse as being "Miss Maria doing her music". The peculiarity of Miss Maria's music was that after a scramble over the notes, suggestive of someone running to get impetus for a jump, and when the ear waited impatiently for the consummation, Miss Maria balked her leap, so to speak, and got no farther, and began the scramble again (38).

The wit is adult but the observation is credibly childlike.

The naive view often does provide a more astringent evaluation of the system than explicit attacks:

I used to watch their fingers with childish awe, wondering how such thin pieces of flesh and bone hit such hard blows to the notes without cracking, and being also somewhat puzzled by the run of good luck which seemed to direct their weak and random-looking skips and jumps to the keys at which they were aimed (45-6).

Dialogue punctuates the episodes. The business conversation between Mrs. Ascott and the governess on Maria's unmusicality (41-3) catches their distinct cadences of authority and subservience, without eradicating our impression of the awful sameness of their educational assumptions. Comic portraiture

increases the range. Miss Blomfield is a character developed to exactly the right point, by composite methods, both to serve Mrs. Ewing's thesis by contrasting with sound educators like Andrewes, and as a solidly perceived figure in the novel's fabric. Perhaps some effects are self-consciously startling:

Her other peculiarities were conscientiousness and the fidgets, and tendencies to fine crochet, calomel, and Calvinism ... (41).

But stylistic excesses grow from trustworthy observation. Mrs. Ewing does on this small scale anatomize the 'abiding quality of harassing and being harassed' as the unfortunate medium of girls' instruction.

The implicit contrast between this and the offered ideal education comes to the surface only in Aunt Maria's outspoken criticisms of Regie's 'running wild' and via Polly's mediation between both systems. A better novelist would have worked the contrast through a greater range of material, and sustained it beyond the obvious juxtaposition of systems into the more elusive reaches of maturity.

Nevertheless, positive educational values are asserted in the novel's first two-thirds by all the emphases Mrs. Ewing could command. The bluntly direct voice sounds more aptly about the hero himself:

It is difficult to convey an idea of the learning I gained from my good friend, and yet to show how free he was from priggishness, or from always playing the schoolmaster. He was simply the most charming of companions, who tried to raise me to his level (167).

The intended contrast here is not only with Miss Blomfield, but with Mr. Clerke and remotely, with the 'Eton' to which the novel never manages to give even a shadowy reality. Schools were better done in later novels. Andrewes, centrally, is conceived as the denial of pedagogic authority. He teaches by example

and Socratic discourse, his authority is no more than the superiority of his own nature. A similar anti-authoritarianism shapes the parental relationship. Mr. Dacre's appeal "Don't be afraid of me. For heaven's sake, don't be afraid of me!" made with 'the insight and tenderness of a mother' (142¹) represents a new emphasis in the portrayal of fathers. The relationship also operates through jokes and teasing (as in the gray pony incident), so that authority becomes a matter of negotiation. Andrewes is idealized, but the unpredictable and discordant detail surrounding this idealized core makes him more than a puppet of Mrs. Ewing's theories, not a Mr. Barlow, or Edgeworthian parent, or even a Dr. Arnold. His unexpected likeness to Nurse Bundle (162-3), his gardening which is more than a metaphor for the cultivation of souls, his northern accent and superstitious 'Paganism' (227) serve novelistic realism, not idealization.

The ideal education he purveys is a Wordsworthian synthesis of spirituality and nature study, "duty to God, and duty to Man" (162) in his aphoristic expression, a blend perhaps found most closely in contemporaries like Kingsley and Ruskin - or in Mrs. Gatty's less integrated, more erratic versions. At its theoretic level it is removed from religious education advanced elsewhere in juvenile fiction, in its easy interrelation of faith and science, in its avoidance of dogma or sectarian slanting. At an expressive level, education happens outdoors, the synthesis is enacted. All earnest talk occurs in gardens, notably the long pre-Confirmation interview the night before Andrewes' departure (Ch. 24). This contrasts with the claustrophobic soul-searching, often dialectic of surprising quality, that goes on in novels by Farrar, A.L.O.E., Alcott or Yonge. Here the setting for discourse equates with its content:

I thought I had never seen the Rector's garden in richer beauty, or heard such a chorus from the birds he loved and protected. Indeed, the border plants were luxuriant almost to disorder (226).

Ripeness in scene matches ripeness in counsels; theology spills over into landscape. Although there is the standard advocacy of the Apostles' Creed (231) and scriptures "in the original tongues" found in the strenuous programmes undertaken by Yonge characters, there is also more generous and mellow philosophy, with prose echoes rather literary than theological:

"So we purpose and neglect, till death comes like a nurse to take us to bed, and finds our tasks unfinished, and takes away our toys!" (230).

Andrewes is less a theological mouthpiece than a representative of values; his dialectic is employed against general, social targets. Yonge uses her pastors to argue theology and to resolve specific spiritual knots, like blind Mr. Clare who sets the theological seal on Rachel's conversion in The Clever Woman of the Family (1865, Ch.26-28). Mrs. Ewing, typically, works through humour that licenses a frankness unknown to Yonge clergymen:

"I often wonder," he added, sitting down at the table with a laugh, "whether the mass of educated men know less of what concerns the welfare of their souls, and all therewith connected, or the mass of educated women of what concerns their bodies, and all therewith connected" (161).

Conversely, Mrs. Ewing could not translate small, mild stabs at current abuses into the sustained trajectories of plot tracing the slow disabusement of some deluded Yonge hero. Andrewes castigates a system allowing girls to "get hold of books" which only make them "miserable and unsettled" (161). But the reference is glancing, wry, unpursued. Yonge shapes whole novels to the massive negation of such systems in The Daisy Chain, Magnum Bonum and, remarkably, in The Clever Woman of the Family, a highly ambivalent pillorying of some of her own best qualities. Mrs.

Ewing is always less concerned to expose local errors than to postulate some ideal freedom that will render them harmless.

Therefore, key points in her hero's education are not moments of self-discovery, like the fascinatingly analysed scruples of Ethel May or the shocking reversals which a near-melodramatic plot administers to misled Rachel Curtis. They are, primarily, quiet images of Rousseauesque intercourse, like the account of religious disputes in the fruit garden (Ch.19). Exact, confident description slowly composes an idyll of nurture that is peculiarly and recurringly Mrs. Ewing's own. Her horticultural precision gives substance to the view: 'gooseberries like grapes, or the highly-ripened yellows, or the hairy little reds' (179). The mentor-figure is deliberately diminished from the ideal Andrewes to 'little' Mr. Clerke, further from God but closer to man.

Religion merges with gossip, companionship replaces pedagogy

... we gossiped about schools and school-treats, cricket-clubs, drunken fathers, slattern mothers, and spoiled children (178).

The posture of retrospection ensures a Wordsworthian resonance, reminding us that the lingering aftertaste of the 'Intimations' Ode is regret:

And full of youth and hopefulness, in the sunshine of these summer Sundays, we gave ourselves credit for clear-sightedness in all our opinions, and promised ourselves success for every plan, and gratitude from all our protégés (179).

Not only is the child an equal, but this ideal educative milieu requires a high concentration of resources (Dacre, Andrewes, Clerke, Nurse Bundle), reflecting how thoroughly he had become the focus of emotional and social attention, by the progression which Ariès traced.

These Rousseauesque moments, in Chapter 19, in the first garden encounter with Andrewes, in tree climbing with Polly,

express the educational positives. Such idyllic images, slightly impure and sweetened though they are, by-pass contemporary routes to return to Romantic sources. The garden in Mrs. Ewing's imagination is the safe containment of childhood, as, say, the Echoing Green is to Blake, indeed her narrator's 'we shouted ... happy ideas that struck us, to each other across the garden' (179) dimly recalls the mood of that lyric. The Romantic plangency, though, is more apparent in her shorter fictions. Their running-titles and epigraphs are often from Wordsworth (7, 33) and Timothy's Shoes has a section, 'Kingcups', following with Blake's sympathy, though not his passion, the case of 'The School Boy' (Songs of Innocence):

I love to rise in a summer morn
When the birds sing on every tree ...

But to go to school in a summer morn,
O! it drives all joy away.

Timothy's temptations to truancy are so sweetly realised that the impetus of the moral tale, subsumed in this strange mixture, is diverted. Blake's blossoms and lark reappear here, more botanically exact but with undisguised lyricism:

Twir-r-r-rup into the blue sky went the larks;
hedge-birds chirped and twitted in and out of
the bushes, the pale milkmaids opened their
petals, and down in the dark marsh below the
kingcups shone like gold (7, 116).

Victorian didacticism and Romantic hallowing of childhood appear in intriguing proportions, a superstructure of moral magic is erected over emotional currents from earlier poetry. The mother's loving nostalgia for fleeting childhood opens and closes this tale, a circuit of regret around a naughty boy's progress. Here the controlled retrospect of A Flat Iron is indulged more unconditionally. The miniaturized romantic image of the outgrown shoes, placed as conclusion, was Mrs. Ewing's clearest symbolization

of the death of childhood, a nursery version of Blake's 'darkening green':

The little shoes pattered through the garden, and the gate opened for them and sneaked after them. And they crossed the road, and went over the hill, leaving little footprints in the dew. And they passed into the morning mists, and were lost to sight (7, 149-50).

But the prolongation of romantic lyricism into the story's conclusion is made possible by its fairy-tale allegiances. A Flat Iron owes its central allegiance to novelistic realism within which the poetic garden images function only as distilled ideals and to which they must be reconciled.

One resource in the novel for reconciling lyrical expressiveness and meshing it into more mimetic scenes is narrative irony, from outright mockery to neutral appraisal. This is part of the technical battery through which - sporadically and ambivalently - she safeguarded the purity of her statements of ideal childhood, preventing their degeneration into the popular stereotyped offsprings of the Romantic innocent. Some conventions that had overtaken the presentation of the child since the mid-century - the motherless infant, the 'old fashioned' boy, only sons, religious prodigies and ministering angels - are not exactly parodied, but dislocated, jolted into new life by her narrative perspective. In his study of adult fiction, Victorian Conventions, Reed concluded:

In so far as writers alter, attack, or ironically reverse stylizations or conventions, these conventions become indicators of new modes of perception, and often of some form of discontent as well . . . Ordinarily the preoccupations of an age would seem to be represented best in its intellectual and reflective literature, but it might equally be argued that popular literature is as good an indicator of cultural sentiments.³

Mrs. Ewing's treatment is inconsistent in that the novel fluctuates between ironic adaptations of stereotypes and blatant exploitations of them. Her departures hardly constitute an 'attack', but discontent prompts her revisions of some popular conventions, indicators of her

efforts at new modes of perception.

The memoir form was essential here, ironic distance between narrator and hero was her readiest tool. By the dual possibility, recognized in her note, of speaking as child or adult, she could provide either the purely sentimental naivety of the 'quaint' child, or a more ambivalent adult evaluation. Retrospect is particularly useful in early distinguishing Regie's genuine religious feelings, fully approved by the author, from the literary attitudes he apes. The ministering child of popular lore is mocked:

... and my imagination was fired by dreams of soup-cans, coal-clubs, linsey petticoats comforting the rheumatic limbs of aged women ... (75).

Evangelical 'enthusiasm' and the fitting death-bed are simultaneously parodied in his illness:

I remember, especially, that I begged [Nurse Bundle] would not fail to cover up all the furniture with white cloths, and to allow^{all} my friends to come and see me in my coffin. Thus, also, I groaned, and said "Amen" - "like a poor person" - at what I deemed suitable points, as the rector prayed (87).

Such possibilities for parody, through retrospect, are reduced at maturity. There are no comparable conventions to exploit. The quaintness, religiosity, infant charities all fall away, leaving the bleached and boring stereotype of the English gentleman. Childhood perplexities are narrowed to searching for a 'suitable' wife. Mrs. Ewing's technical battery was inadequate for exploring conventions of adult love, in spite of its being developed from the adult novel, especially Dickens. From him she took several means of modulating the conventions attaching to fictional children - the juxtaposition of sentimentality and caricature, the surrounding of the child with bizarre or comic characters, the humorous style which simultaneously assesses inward and outward gestures, the thickening of the social medium in which he appears, and the multiplication of instances of those issues under scrutiny.

It is the more likely she should model her first memoir novel on adult fiction because the form had been so scantily used by juvenile writers. Before proceeding to examine her differences from popular types and the relationship with Dickens, a brief review of the memoir form in juvenile fiction will show Mrs. Ewing's advancement.

Mrs. Barbauld, an early arbiter, practical and prosaic, saw only the form's difficulties, not its possible fluency of recording:

But what the hero cannot say, the author cannot tell, nor can it be rendered probable, that a very circumstantial narrative should be given by a person, perhaps at the close of a long life, of conversations that have happened at the beginning of it. The author has all along two characters to support, for he has to consider how his hero felt at the time of the events to be related, and how it is natural he should feel them at the time he is relating them..This seems, therefore, the least perfect mode of any.⁴

But Mrs. Ewing, reconstruing 'probability', pays it only the scanty service Dickens does by making David Copperfield cite Peggotty as his authority for minute familiarity with his own infancy. Important debates on Regie's education, above his childish head, are briefly excused: 'I repeat this conversation as I have heard it from my father, since I grew up and could understand it' (162). Such justifications, alongside self-interruptions and hesitations, are more frequent in Mrs. Molesworth's memoir-novels, creating an illusion of intimacy, in imitation of reality.⁵ This was the method of Six to Sixteen, but here Mrs. Ewing aims at a less mechanical probability.

This she might have found in Mary Howitt, often commended in Aunt Judy's, who brought a near-adult sophistication to juvenile fiction in the forties, as Mrs. Ewing did in the seventies. Her first person narratives, like The Childhood of Mary Leeson (1848), have a delicate introspection, a poetic probability, hardly found again till Mrs. Ewing. Her most sensitive use is in My Own Story,

or, The Autobiography of a Child (1845), with an opening rationale almost repeated in Six to Sixteen:

It has often been a subject of regret that so little is known of the workings of a child's mind during its earliest years.

But where Marjorie offers the very ordinariness and limpidity of 'her' account to meet this deficiency, Howitt, repeating Mrs. Barbauld, invokes probability:

Little of this, however, can be known, excepting in cases of great precocity in children ... for children do not reason at all, they only receive impressions. They feel things keenly ... but they neither reason nor reflect - the reason and the reflection come later, and then we draw inferences and understand the connection of one thing with another.⁶

Unlike Barbauld, she sees age as the posture necessary for such inferences. Her narrator has the romantic long view of a Mrs. Overthway: 'I stand now on this hill-top, and look back over a scene which extends through the present century'.⁷ But this narrator is never as in Mrs. Ewing, the analytical filter of childhood; instead she alternates between vivid recreations of her youth, and detailed comments on temporal changes:

The books which we had then were very different to those which children have now-a-days. They were externally mostly square, and bound ... in beautiful paper, stamped and printed in green and gold, in red and lilac. I wonder one never sees such paper now ... but alas! - I grieve to say it - they were very dry within.⁸

Vivid recreation Mrs. Ewing provides, but rarely this wider historical view or social inference, so entirely are her memoirs personal histories. The Oakford (Matlock) of her novel does suggest a rural past and ancient fashions - the beaver bonnets and frilled cap fronts 'adorned with little bunches of ribbon' (101) - but it is placed chiefly as a distinctive impression in Regie's imaginative life, resurrected in his second visit (Ch. 21), and - theoretically - consummated in his adult union with one 'beaver bonnet'. Howitt's

heroine goes to Buxton (and mentions Matlock, coincidentally), but its presence in the novel is merely as 'a curious world of spa shops and baths'⁹ and its presence in memory is as a curiosity with no personal reverberations.

A more penetrating difference is in Mrs. Ewing's humour. Retrospection in My Own Story has a uniform emotional register, throwing a steady, appreciative, uncomic glow over narrative. For example, the heroines' Nanny, like Nurse Bundle, tells anecdotes of local grotesques in dialect. Far from being comic, the narrative romanticises her in the general hazy sweetness: 'She cast, as it were, a spell over us; we sat and listened for hours to her histories'.¹⁰ Mrs. Ewing's narrative, losing some of the sweetness, is minutely appraising and consistently analytical; it deals with the 'spell' at the level of psychology:

The stories of horror and crime, the foredoomed babies, the murders, the mysterious whispered communications faded from my untroubled brain. Nurse Bundle's tales were of the young masters and misses she had known. Her worst domestic tragedy was about the boy who broke his leg over the chair he had failed to put away after breakfast. Her romances were the good old Nursery Legends of Dick Whittington, the Babes in the Wood, and so forth. My dreams became less like the columns of a provincial newspaper. I imagined myself another Marquis of Carabas, with Rubens in boots ... I planted beans in the fond hope that they would tower to the skies and take me with them. I became - in fancy - Lord Mayor of London, and Mrs. Bundle shared my civic throne and dignities (13-14).

The circumstantiality with which Howitt describes changed customs Mrs. Ewing brings to communicating the child's mental landscape, to which the appraising narrative voice is essential. The particular legacy of Mary Howitt is seen more directly in the slow reflective autobiographies of Mrs. Molesworth.

With few other juvenile memoir novels available, though plenty read by juveniles, from Pilgrim's Progress, and Robinson Crusoe to Treasure Island, Mrs. Ewing must have considered her mother's My Childhood in Art and The Human Face Divine, instructive in their

rash complications. Mrs. Gatty proliferates stories-within-stories more recklessly than Mrs. Ewing ever did. The Human Face Divine in its cruder fashion is, like Mrs. Overtheway, a story about fiction, though hardly for children. It purports to be the autobiography of a plain woman writer, approached by an editor to produce a fictional 'autobiography of a woman of unusual abilities, highly cultivated mind ... but, decidedly plain in person.'¹¹ His critical advice, reported unashamedly, is that as a plain heroine cannot be 'interesting enough to be loved', she must die. He projects an autobiography of sensibility, an 'anatomical revelation of feeling, and let the moral alone', tracing 'the girl's struggles and wretchedness minutely, and down to the very roots'.¹² Such radical inwardness at least must have interested Mrs. Ewing. Mrs. Gatty must then sustain simultaneously her writer's deliberations on her own ugliness and her development of her novel. (The whole nouvelle is a memoir written 'journal-wise' after she has married the editor!). Entrammelled in narrative layers, Mrs. Gatty has no space for plot. The 'climax' is merely the writer's discovery that 'divine beauty' may shine through 'misshapen clay', to validate which she marries off, instead of killing off her heroine, an insight rewarded by the editor's marrying her. There is no irony in any of these violent alternatives, nor in the writer's prim rejection of professional writing after her marriage, treachery neither Mrs. Gatty nor Mrs. Ewing would ever commit in person.

This ungainly experiment shows the high degree of analysis invited by autobiography, consciously recognized via the heroine as 'the surgical operation of anatomizing the case'.¹³ The proportion of comment is much higher than in Howitt, but less securely based in human action. The narrative mode becomes rather meditation than analysis, for there must be behaviour to analyse, and Mrs. Gatty's characters do so little. Mrs. Ewing learned to adjust this imbalance

Moreover, the narrative voice is hardly modulated to reflect so many layers. Its potential flexibility - recently and creatively developed in, say, Wuthering Heights, or Jane Eyre, also the autobiography of a plain, independent woman, - goes unrecognized. If we compare Mrs. Gatty's heroine looking in the mirror with an Ewing heroine (in Mrs. Moss) doing the same the the greater flexibility is marked:

Alas! Alas! alas! there was no mistaking the case! Where was the rounded contour, the delicate colouring, the soft lustrous eye, the chiselled nose ... What fellowship had that disturbed expression, those commonplace features, those thin cheeks, those anxious sad looking eyes, with beauty?¹⁴

Mrs. Ewing exchanges expostulation for a child's view overlaid with mature perception:

... the weird, startled glance of my eyes, which in their most prominent stage of weariness, gazed at me out of the shadows of the looking-glass, the tumbled tufts of hair, the ghostly effect of my white nightdress. As to my nose, I could absolutely see nothing of its shape; the firelight just caught the round tip, which shone like a little white toadstool from the gloom, and this was all (2, 49).

This approximates to the ambiguous quality of the moment, grave and ludicrous, by its co-existent vantage points. Mrs. Gatty locates us nowhere, presenting a remote arrangement of polarized elements, beauty and plainness. Mrs. Ewing learned to modulate this voice and strengthen the novel by a sequence of such moments.

Mrs. Gatty's heroine says of her novel: 'Such was the very simple and unpretending plot upon which I had tacked a full, true, and minutely detailed account'.¹⁵ 'Tacked' is revealing. A Flat Iron's plot is 'unpretending' but in imitation of daily ordinariness through which characters interact and grow, not as a peg for a burden of comment. It may lack the sustaining myth of the best novels, but it is more than a first-person monologue. Her mother's example here was a salutary one. Juvenile fiction provided few other or better models for an adventurous use of the first-person.

Dickens presented a model as different as possible from Mrs. Gatty, in the use of the first-person and every other respect. Before defining his influence more exactly it is necessary to discuss Mrs. Ewing's approach, popular or refined, to some elements in the common stock of child-stereotypes.

Peter Coveney has argued that the century's increasingly nostalgic cult of the child represented a failure of adjustment to cultural realities, the regret for childhood assuming an obsessive emotional character:

It is a remarkable phenomenon when a society takes the child (with all its ^{potential} significance as a symbol of fertility and growth) and creates ~~of it~~ a literary image, not ^{of} frailty, but of life extinguished, of life that is better extinguished,¹⁶

These are not evangelical children, like Ellen in The Fairchild Family or Mary Clifford in Ministering Children who die young and well with the fictional object of converting the reader. They are children on whom the fiction bestows the death-wish, in a sickly deterioration of the romantic image. With Misunderstood (1869) Florence Montgomery reached sales Mrs. Ewing could only dream of, and du Maurier's illustrated edition of 1874 popularized it further. Humphrey Dunscombe, like William Carlyle in East Lynne and many less notorious, is remarkable in being created merely to die. These heroes withdraw lengthily to the other world, called there from the outset by every device of the fiction. But from 'old fashioned' Paul Dombey derive the additional, piquant attributes of sagacity and prescience. Marie Corelli developed this line in her weird, prematurely knowing heroes in The Mighty Atom and Boy¹⁷ which title, like The Story of a Short Life advertises death in advance.

Mrs. Ewing's later hero, born to die, is closer to popular tradition than Regie, and is contained by fiction of coarser quality. She was fascinated by the morbid child, projecting in her Commonplace

Book (undated, 77-8) a character of 'Nervous - sanguineous temperament ... Intense susceptibility to pain or pleasure. Superdelicate conscience. Strong religious temperament drawn to "high" theology ... by aesthetics ... Contrasts - a white Bull Dog whose solidity is a comfort'. These elements appear variously in Regie and Leonard, with dogs. But Regie's removal from the odour of death and Leonard's proximity to it are through treatments, abrasive or sentimental, of the type.

Regie's early association with death certainly promises morbidity. Like Paul Dombey he is an only son, the unhealthy focus of paternal hopes, who loses his mother in childbirth. Chapters 1 - 2 proceed by oscillation between the popular sentimental approach to stereotypes and withdrawal from them through Dickensian humour. The tableau of the mother's death confirms Coveney's thesis by the closeness of its images of birth and death, its savouring of the fact that generation often brought annihilation. The tableau is standard in both adult and juvenile fiction. Regie's double loss of mother and sister exhibits the dynamics of feeling of the most blatant popular literature. The scene's iconography is pure fantasy:

The hair that just gilded the pink head I was allowed to kiss was one shade paler than that which made a great aureole on the pillow about the pale face of my "dear, pretty" mother (3).

Its iconographic ambitions are clarified in the narrator's likening of the sight to his mediaeval Madonna painting: 'With such a look and such a smile, my mother's face shone out of the mass of her golden hair the day she died' (3). The commitment to this banal unreality appears in the detail with which the analogy is pursued. As childish experience of a mother's death it compares unfavourably with the purposeful restraint of Mrs. Gatty's Rabbits' Tails (discussed Ch. 2). Yet it falls far short of the consummate pathos of Mrs. Dombey's consummation, 'a great gust of elemental feeling'.¹⁸

Mrs. Ewing's sentimentalism, like Dickens', is uncompounded with any hint of circumstantial realism. But neither does it aspire to his magnitude of feeling. He shifts the tableau to a different plane through the superimposed image of drifting out to 'the dark and unknown sea that rolls round all the world',¹⁹ commensurate with our estimation of the gravity of death and loss. Mrs. Ewing's insistent equation of mother and Madonna speaks, indistinctly, about Victorian motherhood, but not about death.

This particular iconography is reinforced throughout by the recurrence of another popular image, the mother's portrait. Here Mrs. Ewing is more ambiguous. The image was established in fiction. In evangelical novels it represented not consolation, nor pathos intensified, but the promise of heaven. In Mrs. Cameron's Emma and her Nurse, or the History of Lady Harewood it calls the orphan to a better world through piety:

Almost every day Jane took the little girl to look at this picture; and she told her it was the picture of her mamma, till the little girl^{quite} knew it, and called it mamma.²⁰

This earlier convention conjures not mamma's beauty but 'the fair and lovely country' where she now dwells. But gradually the tableau is secularized, its emotional centre becoming the pathetic child. Mrs. Gatty's Imperfect Instruments introduces an incipient pathos into the child's regard for a memorial tablet to 'the mother, whom every motherless child'²¹ wants. Paul Dombey stares unrememberingly at the portrait whose subject is supplanted in his vital memory by a wet-nurse (Ch. 16). Regie habitually consoles himself with the image of mother and baby - himself, though he translates it into his lost sister - in a supplicatory attitude that confirms its reality as icon. The same configuration, however, is reiterated most remorselessly in Misunderstood, an epitomization of its thorough transformation from the evangelical prompting to piety.

Humphrey, like Regie, approaches the Madonna-portrait in an attitude of supplication, a prayer-like pose captured in du Maurier's illustration.²² However, Montgomery is more interested in the emotional charge the attitude carries, than its revelation of precise psychology. Humphrey, aged 6 (?), lies on the floor to re-enact his baby-role, an unequivocal case of foetal regression:

... putting himself in the same attitude that he was in the picture, and then try to fancy he felt her arms round him, and her shoulder against his head.²³

Chapter 9 picks up this reference in a protracted set-piece of heart-wringing. Humphrey, at his most misunderstood, flies to a darkened (and womb-like) room:

"Mother!" he sobbed, "I want you back so much! Everyone is angry with me, and I am so very miserable!"

Cold, blank silence all around; mother and child smiled on, unconscious of his words; even as he gazed the light faded away from the picture and he was left alone, in the gathering darkness!

In vain he tried to fancy himself once more the child in the picture; in vain he tried to fancy he felt her arms around him ...²⁴

The converse of this purgation is deferred until the last chapter (17) when for sixty pages the image invites him heavenwards, a dying back into the baby-state for which the novel has destined him (du Maurier's illustration is a statuesque tableau binding motherhood, childhood and death in one ring of light).²⁵ The long regression constitutes an outright denial of the possibility of maturation. Its use of standard motifs is totally convinced, its exploitation of popular implications is insulated from qualifying detail.

If we turn from this to Mrs. Ewing, her difference from truly popular fiction emerges. The mother's portrait retains its climatic function in the structure - Regie and dog fly to mamma under threat of his father's remarriage to Miss Burton, a black anti-Madonna:

... as I kissed him he licked me, and the result was unfavourable to balance, and I was obliged to sit down on a step. And as I sat I wept, and as I wept that overpowering mother need came over me ...

"Good-evening, Mamma! ... Please, Mamma, it's me and Rubens". (Sobs on my part, and frantic attempts by Rubens to lick every inch of my face at once.) "And please, Mamma, we're very miser-r-r-able ... "

My voice died away with a wail which was dismally echoed by Rubens. Then, suddenly, in the darkness came a sob that was purely human, and I was clasped in a woman's arms, and covered with tender kisses and soothing caresses. For one wild moment, in my excitement... I thought my mother had heard me, and come back.

But it was only Nurse Bundle ... (23).

The treatment draws a much less simple response. The over-riding difference is the sense of scene being presented, monitored, by a narrator finding it simultaneously touching and amusing. We are pushed back from the experience, as it were, by the parenthesized stage-directions, the slightly pompous description of his over-balancing, the child's odd speech. The dual point of view makes impossible the single-minded, unequivocal emotionalism of Montgomery's omniscient narrative - though it introduces a different sentimentality of whimsy, the outgrowth of the humorous perspective, just as pathetic sentimentality is the outgrowth of the touching perspective. (This whimsical imbalance always threatens in the presence of Ewing dogs.) Furthermore, the scene is differently integrated into the novel. Montgomery's climax is an ultimate statement of the child's bereftness, an iconographic assertion of motherlessness, and a devious promise of death as projected resolution. Mrs. Ewing is, more honestly, defining Nurse Bundle's role in the hero's basic physical and emotional nurture. The icon answers with a surrogate mother. Thus, this image leads forwards into growth, in contradiction to Montgomery's regressive design.

We see Mrs. Ewing's relationship to popular stereotyping throughout these chapters to be both variable and ambivalent.

A more thorough withdrawal from the sentimentalization of death is through Dickensian techniques. To depict the motherless child's milieu more astringently Mrs. Ewing surrounds Regie by gossiping hags.

His 'bony nurse' and Mrs. Cadman, revelling in melancholy predictions, consciously recapitulate Paul Dombey's second nurse, Mrs. Wickam, with her 'surprising natural gift of viewing all subjects in an utterly forlorn and pitiable light, and bringing dreadful precedents to bear upon them'.²⁶ Through the calculated irony of her style, less fertile and profound, but used to the same ends as Dickens', Mrs. Ewing makes this milieu not an easy intensification of the child's vulnerability, but a means of undermining the false stereotypes of pathos and replacing them with a keener evaluation of his condition. Irony parodies the fictional convention of 'the look' (of one not long for this world). The sheer realism of Regie's puzzlement over this cliché invalidates its usefulness for sentimentalization. Building the Tower of Babel with his bricks, a detail of comic aptness, he overhears Mrs. Cadman hollowly predict "I never know'd one with that look as lived ... It took notice from the first ... it's too good and too pretty to be long for this world" (5). Anxious to fathom these terms, he topples his Tower, but gets only lies. The studied comedy presents not his pitiableness, but his determination. He is momentarily, as Paul Dombey is invariably, defined for the novel as a centre of intelligence and truth. The naive voice and mature commentary can come together to assert his comic honesty. He asks if they refer to the new baby:

"No such thing, lovey," said the audacious Mrs. Cadman; "housekeeper and me was talking about Mrs. Jones's little boy."

"Where does Mrs. Jones live?" I asked.

"In London town, my dear."

I sighed. I knew nothing of London town, and could not prove that Mrs. Jones had no existence. But I felt dimly dissatisfied, in spite of a slice of sponge-cake, and being put to bed (for a treat) in papa's dressing-room. My sleep was broken by uneasy dreams, in which Mrs. Jones figured with the face of Mrs. Cadman and her hollow voice (6).

Typically, from this moment of honest recounting, the scene slips

into the unconditional sentimentality of the deathbed.

Mrs. Ewing follows Dickens in surrounding the child, symbol of growth, with life-denying predictions. Regie is horrified to hear "He's got the look! It's his poor ma over again" (8), and Mrs. Wickam observes that Paul has been nursed by his departed mother, a sure omen of engagement to death. The humour is grim in Dickens, merely dark in Mrs. Ewing. But both contrast the child's uncorrupted clarity with adults' murky negations. However, from the established centre of sensibility Dickens could launch a multivalent criticism of society, within his novel's generous, teeming confines. Mrs. Ewing hardly moves outwards from her local focus on the sensibility's nurture, an exclusive focus served admirably by the first-person, whereas an omniscient narrative invests Paul Dombey with a graver, more damning potency in the critique of his father's world. Regie deduces: 'I felt a sort of melancholy self-importance not uncommon with children who are out of health' (8). The narrative voice sharing such basic insights is closer to David Copperfield than Dombey and Son which enhances Paul's strangeness by omniscience to the point where even 'inward' reporting increases mystification: 'What old fashion could that be, Paul wondered with a palpitating heart, that was so visibly expressed in him; so plainly seen by so many people!' 27.

Mrs. Ewing's debt is also to Dickens' particular conception of old-fashionedness. By the seventies there were quaint children enough in juvenile fiction. One type, the 'old fashioned' unfashionable good girl has been discussed (Ch. 2). Another, the more down-market 'little mother' of the city arab tradition of Hesba Stretton and Mrs. Walton, indicated the premature responsibilities of the deprived child as an assertion of her fundamental morality (though not always directed churchwards). The caring roles of these

child-adults, nursing siblings and grandparents by the score, both affirm the myth of childish goodness and - within limits - condemns the society which allows them. Familiarity with adult cares and with the city itself indicts a society hypocritically exalting innocence. In this tradition is the rough urban diamond, the 'knowing' boy who befriends the hero of Jan of the Windmill. More direct legatees of Paul Dombey are infant sages setting their elders right by profound questions, or as in Corelli, by a dazzling closeness to heaven. Mrs. Ewing's careful presentation of 'old fashionedness' largely avoids both the portentousness and pretentiousness of this last decline. And it has only moments of Montgomery's fey humour. For example, for his father's birthday Humphrey chooses a cigar-case, the smallness of which is no problem 'because you see he doesn't smoke'.²⁸ But Mrs. Ewing's wit is tougher, her humour more deftly accumulated. Regie speculates:

"I think I shall marry Nurse Bundle when I am old enough," I said, with almost melancholy gravity. "She's a good deal older than I am; but I love her very much. And she would make me very comfortable. She knows my ways" (89).

This has a wider relevance within the novel's broad themes of marriage and of children's gradual negotiation of social institutions, exemplified in the excellent scene of "dropping in and passing time like" at the Rectory. Yet there is something dishonest in the attribution of 'melancholy gravity' that humour does not dispel.

But the more significant moments of Regie's old-fashionedness gather around his questions. Mrs. Ewing returns to Dickens here, though defusing and miniaturizing his conception. Paul Dombey is preternatural, a changeling, 'like an old man or a young hobgoblin', 'like one of those terrible little Beings in the Fairy tales'.²⁹ His questions are the devastating riddles of a sphinx. "What is money?" he asks an astounded Dombey. Regie is merely 'singular', 'a rum

little chap', 'quite an original' ^{195;} (32), all epithets bestowed after some perspicacious question. Though less profoundly, and with a fuller naturalistic motivation (his living among adults and lack of playfellows is stressed (73)), Mrs. Ewing also uses Regie as an innocent eye on a specific set of problems. These are not Dickens' fundamental ones about the survival of human values in a utilitarian ethos - Paul asks Mrs. Pipchin why her niece should be fond of her and she is silenced 'lest she should receive some perfectly annihilating answer'.³⁰ But they are the recurring childhood questions about language (31), adult hypocrisy (69) and injustice (205). Mr. Clerke describes a beaten wife:

"... she reminds me very much of an ill-treated donkey; her bones look so battered, and there's a sort of stubborn hopelessness about her like some poor Neddy who is thwacked ... Poor thing, she may well look forward to Heaven ... and it's a blessed thought how it will make up, even for such a life here!"

"What will make it up to the donkeys?" I asked (205).

Mrs. Ewing uses the perspicacious child to articulate basic, often unformulated, questions of childhood. Dickens uses him to articulate his own questions and to indict present solutions.

The influence of David Copperfield is more diffuse. Some similarities one might find in any nineteenth century novel of education. The multiplication of orphaned characters allows a wider investigation of the condition of loss, psychologically interesting, and tckening that freedom to reforge identity which made the orphan a basic type of the period. Damer, the Chisletts, the St. Johns and Andrewes match Little Emily, Ham and Steerforth as paradigms of bereavement. The cardboard Damer, who 'ages' merely from a Fauntleroy stereotype (63) to a Greek God at Eton (214), equates with Steerforth in channelling the hero's fantasies of masculinity. Mrs. Ewing's is a drastically impoverished treatment, but follows Dickens in using the narrative voice to register the

hero's superiority to his object of worship. The lineaments of maturation are roughly similar, culminating in a supposed marriage of minds, after a perfunctory series of mistakes (the 'unsuitable' woman, Maria, Polly and Adelaide). Frances is as unreal as this mechanical structure suggests, like Agnes within Dickens' much larger design. What should be an emotional circuit, from 'touching' beaver bonnets to Frances's 'perfection' of breeding (271), is mere contrivance, so thin is the supporting detail. Coincidences, and farce, varnished with Mrs. Ewing's easy wit, overtake the end.

Barbara Hardy observes that David Copperfield not only moves towards a concluding dream after indicting daydreaming, but moves further from realism by the salvages of plot and idealized invocation.³¹

A parallel decline affects A Flat Iron, not from depleted invention, but a failure to fictionalize adult relationships with the earlier steady realism and poetic association. Perhaps the novel of education is always liable to over-idealization and affirmation in its conclusion, as a condition of its structure.

More specifically, it is through a minor abstract from David Copperfield in the characterization of Nurse Bundle that Mrs. Ewing refines her account of ideal nurture. The mother's emphasised frailty in fiction has been noted. From Peggotty Mrs. Ewing developed an opposite concentration of more robust maternal qualities. Remarkably in Victorian fiction we find this division of maternal attributes between two figures, Madonna-like beauty and refinement being estranged from durability and capability. In both novels insubstantial mothers, holding babies, fade away, leaving sturdier deputies behind. Death underscores the role transference. Mrs. Copperfield dies in Peggotty's arms, Nurse Bundle beneath her mistress's portrait. The pairs conjointly express the extreme bifurcation latent in society. Under the protective guise of social inferiority, these nurses

exemplify the physicality of nurture in their outward persons. Regie describes the 'size and dignity of Mrs. Bundle's outward woman' (2), David recalls his mother with 'youthful shape' and Peggotty 'with no shape at all'.³² Both are providers of food (Davy's buns, Regie's 'parliament' gingerbread), skilled workers (at sewing and nursing), and intermediaries between classes (Peggotty copes for incapable Mrs. Copperfield, Nurse Bundle sorts deserving from undeserving poor for Mr. Dacre). Peggotty's workbox 'with St. Paul's painted on the lid', like Nurse Bundle's worsted workbag, is a portable badge of industry. Both extend the child's and novel's social range - Regie's visit to the 'Dickensian' household at Oakford clearly imitates David's to Yarmouth.

These nurses function as moral educators, when parental re-marriage is broached, with cues from below stairs. For both children it is an emotional crisis. Mrs. Ewing copies Murdstone's black hair, 'shallow black eyes' and threatening sexuality, in Miss Burton's 'rolling eyes', black hair 'plastered low upon her forehead' and 'unchanging red cheeks', at first admired and then detested by the child. (15). Jane Murdstone is faintly matched by the 'lank lawyer' brother. But the clustered religious and sexual associations around Murdstone are reduced to the explicit caricatured 'wooing' of Regie by Miss Burton. The narrative appraises this in an urbane paradox, 'the unloving fondling of drawing-room visitors' (15), and a suggestion of self-mockery:

I endeavoured to act up to the character assigned me, with about as much grace as Aesop's donkey trying to dance (18).

Dickens provides a more cunning perspective on David's confused posturing when Murdstone's cronies toast him as 'Brooks of Sheffield':

The toast was received with great applause, and such hearty laughter that it made me laugh too; at which they laughed the more. In short we quite enjoyed ourselves (Ch. 2).

This loaded naivety is both funnier and more ominous than Mrs. Ewing's. Both supplement these narrative hints with the nurses' outspoken comments, precipitating childish unease into hostility, a clarification of values beyond the unaided child.

Mrs. Ewing's style becomes imitative to relay the nurse's quality, especially in domestic similes, scaled to childish sensations. David finds Peggotty's finger 'roughened by needlework, like a pocket nutmeg-grater'.³³ Mrs. Ewing almost matches this child-sized sensuousness:

My own nurse was bony, her hands were all knuckles, and she washed my face as she scrubbed the nursery floor on Saturdays. Mrs. Bundle's plump palms were like pincushions, and she washed my face as if it had been a baby's (4).

The character's distinctiveness, however, is in dialogue, unusually developed for juvenile fiction. Some features are only broadly Dickensian, by now a common comic stock, like the bad grammar indicative of good faith, or redundant negatives. Nurse Bundle's "You must ... not on no account make no noise" (2) repeats Peggotty's "Nobody never went and hinted no such thing". But much closer is the richly obscure speech which expresses obscure adult behaviour from the child's angle. David's grappling with "Barkis is willing" corresponds to Regie's efforts at "dropping in and exchanging the weather", a dramatized encounter with language. Dickens' stylistic density and its representation of adult operations to the child are both appropriated by Mrs. Ewing. Peggotty's vigorous rhetoric on marriage and confusion over 'Crockindills' (Ch.2 and 10) represent her grappling with morality and language. Nurse Bundle's ambitious rhetoric attempts something similar:

I seed enough of husbands and public houses in my young days to keep me a single woman and my own missus. Not but what I've had my feelings like other folk, and plenty of offers, besides a young cabinet-maker as had high wages and the beautifullest complexion you ever saw ...

...When next I see him he was staggering along the street, and I says "I'm sorry to see you like this, William," and he says, "It's your doing, Mary; your No's drove me to the glass." And I says, "Then it's best as it is. If one No drove you to the glass, you and married life wouldn't suit, for there's plenty of Noes there" (203-4).

This goes beyond comic portraiture, by its expansion of the novel's view of marriage and by a concentration on language itself as the child's educative medium.

Vital comic speech was not well developed in juvenile fiction. The nurse in Little Women is briefly ungrammatical, as a class token. Yonge's humour is in the content not the colour of dialogue, its discriminations rarely concerning class. Lower-class waifs, even in good city fiction, speak a stereotyped patois with token, invariable errors of grammar, syntax or pronunciation. But the range had extended by Mrs. Ewing's death - to Mrs. Molesworth's prattling (and imitated) infants, E. Nesbit's more inventive eccentrics, the regional dialects of boys' adventure novels. Of her contemporaries perhaps Mrs. Hodgson Burnett had a comparable subtlety. The speech of Hobbs in Little Lord Fauntleroy is distinctive not syntactically, but in idiomatic vigour, reflecting republicanism:

"Ah ... that's the way they go on now; but they'll get enough of it some day, when those they've trod on rise and blow 'em^{up} sky-high - earls and marquises and all ... !" 34

Language registers his impact on Cedric, at the opposite pole from the Earl's stately eloquence. But the child reacts not to the colour and quality of language but the underlying values he is used to question. Without the resources of first-person retrospect, this is done in sharp exchanges, with authorial directives; Cedric asks if he knows any earls:

"No," answered Mr. Hobbs with indignation; "I guess not. I'd like to catch one of 'em inside here, that's all! I'll have no grasping tyrants sittin' round on my biscuit-barrels!" ...

"Perhaps they wouldn't be earls if they knew any better," said Cedric...³⁵

Cedric penetrates the rhetoric of prejudice to cope with underlying attitudes - and he is used thus throughout, to reconcile apparently conflicting positions. But positions are more important than their expression.

Mrs. Ewing's focus is different. Speech is expressive in its very surface, not just in its contained opinions. Compare Mrs. Hodgson Burnett with Nurse Bundle's reflections on the new pony. These are framed by wider reflections on Regie's growing up (150) which fix the context of the pony-episode. The idiom is idiosyncratic, but not caricatured:

"Every blessed afternoon do I look to see him brought home on a shutter, with his precious neck broken, poor lamb!" (151).

The shutter reference is to a 'melancholy precedent' of a man thrown from a horse. The method of reporting conveys both the child's penetration of the rhetoric (as in Hodgson Burnett), and also a more subtle awareness of its particular colour as a reflection of entrenched folk thinking:

.."He was a little man, and suffered a deal from the quinsies in the autumn."

"What a pity he didn't die of a quinsy instead of breaking his neck!" I felt compelled to say one day.

"He might have lived to have done that if it hadn't a been for the pony," said Mrs. Bundle emphatically (156).

The child's scrutiny falls not on some specific adult attitude here, like Hobbs' republicanism, which the plot later pursues, but on the more daily, elusive discrepancies of the adult word, most evident in language. 'Felt compelled' indicates a moment of such confrontation. This is a nebulous area, without theme or foreseeable resolution, contributing to the impression of plotlessness. Sometimes the

focus comes down to language itself:

"I've seen plenty of ponies," she said, severely; by which she meant not that she had seen many, but that what she had seen of them had been more than enough (154).

This miniaturizes the running commentary on Peggotty's language and its impact borne by Dickens' narrative voice. Her recital of Yarmouth delights ends "' ... and Am to play with" ... Peggotty meant her nephew Ham ... but she spoke of him as a morsel of English Grammar.' The mature narrator in both is used to articulate the child's response to the very eccentricity of language. Mrs. Ewing was alerted to the novelistic use of dialogue for its sheer extraordinariness by Dickens, illustrated by minor characters as well as Nurse Bundle - the Irish groom, the sour housekeeper, Jemima Buckle. The range is hardly Dickensian, just as her sparser narrative medium lacks all his baroque brilliance ('a morsel of English Grammar' alone marks the difference). But her selection of dialogue is often for its human expressiveness alone. Nurse Bundle, horrified by pony-jokes, exclaims:

"... don't ye go for to tempt Providence by joking about it, and him perhaps brought a hopeless corpse to the side door this very evening" (151).

"Hopeless corpse" shadows Dickens' wit, the side-door obsession repeats his fastening upon some human vagary. Mrs. Ewing's principles of selection here are closer to Dickens than to Hodgson Burnett.

But if this is writing which has shed the didactic principle still remotely guiding the portrayal of Hobbs, it has also shed the plot which steered Little Lord Fauntleroy securely across the Atlantic. And the interest in human personality which Mrs. Ewing weights as the stuff of education, alongside the more orthodox lessons of religion and courtesy, evaporates in adult scenes without the child as focus. Dialogue becomes a mechanism for misunderstandings. Regie's proposal to Maria, a tangle of cross-purposes, (Ch. 28) illustrates this,

without relevance to the theme of religious growth, and only a token one to gentlemanly growth in his hollow public-school morality ("there is nothing I hate more than to see a woman cry" (259)). More importantly, it lacks the sharp impression of observed humanity, the narrative focus has become blurred:

"I always used to think that to live in this neighbourhood would be paradise," murmured Maria, looking sentimentally but vacantly into a box of seedling balsams.

"I am very glad you like it," said I. I could not make pretty speeches.

An unpleasant conviction was stealing over my mind that I had been a fool (260).

The bareness is hardly modified by the feeble humour of the seedling touch, or the blunt accompanying narrative comment.

Yet the novel's divided interests, acknowledged in the apologetic subtitle, are responsible for its uncertain richness, as well as its alarming discrepancies and episodic waywardness. The latter, of course, was accentuated by serial publication. As Dickens said, the novel must be planned 'patiently and expressly ... for presentation in these fragments, and yet for afterwards fusing together as an uninterrupted whole'.³⁶ The fusion of this novel of education is severely flawed. But its virtues, lying between the unalloyed sentimentalism of the early deathbed and the stilted unreality of the marriage, are some of the densest, most scrupulous expressions of the child's experience in contemporary juvenile fiction - expressions, however, measured as moments or episodes rather than as a lifetime.

Chapter 4. Six to Sixteen. A Story for Girls, 1872

One unexpected testimony to Mrs. Ewing's third novel came from Kipling in his autobiography Something of Myself for my friends known and unknown. Reading was one relief to the boy sent from India to desolate English lodgings:

There were not many books in that house, but Father and Mother as soon as they heard I could read sent me priceless volumes. One I have still, a bound copy of Aunt Judy's Magazine of the early 'seventies, in which appeared Mrs. Ewing's Six to Sixteen. I owe more in circuitous ways to that tale than I can tell. I knew it, as I know it still, almost by heart.₁

He does not elaborate on the 'circuitous ways' but it would be mistaken to read the novel too earnestly as a forerunner of his own child's eye views of British life in India. Wee Willie Winkie seems closer to Jackanapes or The Peace Egg as analysis of a boy's obsession with a military sub-culture familiar to both writers. Six to Sixteen is avowedly and successfully female in orientation. What it did offer to the starved Rudyard was a model for his own experience, a view of childhood vicissitudes and estrangements outlived in a satisfying adolescence.

The Indian chapters represent a mere fraction of the novel. Chapters 1 - 4 describe Margery's orphaning in India and return to England, aged six. 5 - 12 dissect military society in Riflebury, observable in Aldershot as Mrs. Ewing wrote, interrupted (8 - 10) by the odd complications of Margery's aristocratic lineage and visit to great-grandparents at The Vine. In chapters 13 - 18 on Bush House School interest is gradually transferred to Eleanor and the Arkwright ideology. The last ten chapters, excepting 28 on the great-grandparents' deaths record adolescence in a Yorkshire vicarage, until Margery is sixteen. This is Mrs. Ewing's most vitally circumstantial recreation of her own youth, and through the idealized portrait of Mrs. Arkwright, her tribute to her mother who

died between magazine and volume publications. The novel's double progression from India to England, and from six to sixteen, interlocked and often intensely imagined, seems the probable cause of Kipling's lasting engagement.

The investment of personal feeling and autobiographical material is palpably greater in this novel than any other. The dedicatory letter to Eleanor Lloyd, girlhood companion, editor of The Powder Magazine, and Mrs. Gatty's collaborator on The Book of Sundials, makes this explicit. But it does not explain Mrs. Ewing's choosing as heroine not the budding Gatty girl, Eleanor, but an orphan of Scottish-French extraction with an Anglo-Indian background. In the context of her artistic development the choice seems more rational. Here the wholesale shedding of parents, noted in her earlier fiction, combined with foreign associations, provides an innocent narrative eye on English life. What Lubbock calls the novel's 'centre of gravity'² is not the narrator's psychological development, except as an enclosing design of girlhood, but her collation of the scenes through which she passes. Only partly is she, like the narrator in A Flat Iron, analyst of her own state. More often, she is a fluent commentator on military mores, sex differences, or women's roles. Further, she is an admirable medium for distancing and objectifying two areas ripe for treatment, Mrs. Ewing's past and the problematic issue of girls' education.

As in Mrs. Overtheway, the form evolved allows maximum fluidity of time and plot - here to the point of looseness, as her dedication admits:

It is, I fear, fragmentary as a mere tale, and cannot even plead as an excuse for this that it embodies any complete theory on the vexed question of the upbringing of girls. Indeed, I should like to say that it contains no attempt to paint a model girl or a model education, and was originally written as a sketch of domestic life, and not as a vehicle for theories (6, v).

This seems disingenuous in suggesting that narrative fragmentation might be accounted for by ambitions to theorize - these are hardly consequent. The roman à thèse is more likely to produce tendentious than fragmented plots (Vide The Clever Woman of the Family). Often the limiting factor in adult problem novels on 'the upbringing of girls' is the unreality, not disconnectedness, of events. Her anxiety about plotlessness was a recurring one, though attempted solutions here are particular. Moreover, her disclaimer that the novel is no 'vehicle for theories' does less than honest justice to the radicalism and clarity of its scrutiny of sex-roles, going well beyond simple illustration of 'a belief in the joys and benefits of intellectual hobbies for girls', which is most the dedication admits to. This theme is the novel's binding factor, its principle of coalescence through disparate scenes, enforced by the narrative voice. The rest of this chapter will discuss this particular encompassing use of the memoir convention, and then proceed to argue the binding function of the theme of ideal girlhood.

In Chapter 3, I discussed how far A Flat Iron made a virtue of the naive voice or of the notional randomness implied in the memory convention. Six to Sixteen erects a much bolder pretence of documentation; our awareness of the circumstances of writing becomes an essential experience of the book. The long Introduction, with its concrete realism of place, and simulation of authorial inexperience, stimulates this awareness: 'We purpose this winter to write the stories of our own lives down to the present date' (11). The concluding coda, noting Eleanor's marriage, prompts similar awareness via the memory-convention: 'This dusty relic of an old fad had been lying by for more than a year' (294). But the illusion of naive communicativeness more than frames the novel; it shapes and punctuates it, so that the narrative voice itself exemplifies

the ardour or awkwardness of the adolescence which is the novel's theme. The notion of amateur autobiography, 'the simple and truthful history of a single mind from childhood' (12) organises narrative looseness more plausibly than, say, the diary form would.

Mrs. Ewing had already had disastrous experience of the diary form in The Mystery of the Bloody Hand, her plot clumsily launched with an 'extract from the first page' (17, 12) of the heroine's journal, quoted in a letter, in gauche imitation of the epistolary novel. But the artificial explicitness of this 'girlish nonsense' (17, 17) undermines its credibility as personal confession: 'I blush at my voluminousness', says the heroine, with reason. An extended and melodramatic chain of incidents cannot be communicated through a convention of intimate and haphazard recording. Lubbock said of Clarissa that its convention represented 'the attempt to show a mind in action, to give a dramatic display of the commotion within a breast',³ Problems arise when the convention has to cope with events of any scale, the significance of which cannot be sifted through daily observation.

Six to Sixteen explicitly withdraws from the convention of daily reporting:

I used to write diaries too, but, when I was fourteen years old, I got so much ashamed of them... and I was so afraid of the boys getting hold of them, that I made a big hole in the kitchen fire one day, and burned them all.

...Of course, even if I put down all that I can remember, it will not be like having kept my diaries ... (13)

Through this pretended regret Mrs. Ewing implies a preference for a more selective, organising convention, and for a narrator more flexibly adaptable as either spokesman or exemplum of her theories. It is as exemplum of adolescent feelings that Mrs. Ewing makes her dwell so precisely on diary-keeping, for example marking the difference between fourteen and sixteen ('I am less confidential

with my diary than I used to be' (167)) and stressing the girls' more adult amusement over re-reading the one surviving diary.

The novel goes some way to making this medium of communicated intimacy a substitute for plot. The very fiction of writing becomes significant. In confessing 'It seems an egotistical and perhaps silly thing to record the trivialities of our everyday lives' (11) the narrator speaks for the mass of girls - including the Gattys - who diarized and scribbled through Victoria's reign for want of more satisfactory outlets. The method constitutes part of the representation; narrative blunders and interruptions are more than contrivances. The narrator's breakdown in describing her mother's death provokes an exchange with Eleanor:

Indeed she knew as well as I did that it was not merely because I was an orphan that I wept, as I thought of my early childhood. We could not speak of it, but she knew enough to guess at what was passing through my mind (22).

The narrator steps outside the autobiographical time-sequence into a supposed present to pass judgement, a particularly adolescent judgement, on a beautiful but neglectful mamma. The method particularizes and dramatizes adolescent reaction. Similarly, casual references to things not yet explained (to Mrs. Minchin 35, the Major's insect collection 49, Arkwright habits throughout the Introduction) accentuate the impression of girlish communicativeness. This dramatic manipulation of the narrative voice represents a technique different from her previous novels.

Interspersed interruptions both imitate conditions of writing and broaden the novel's scope. Chapter 6 announces that the girls have broken their resolutions not to read each other's lives till complete, resolutions which had typified adolescent thinking:

This was partly because we thought it would be more satisfactory to be able to go straight through them, partly as a check on a propensity for beginning things and not finishing them, to which we are liable (59).

This enveloping introspection provides a binding emotional tone, replacing the clearer moral directives of a third-person narrative or the emphases of plot. But the substitution leaves large inadequacies. The gossiping voice enfolds, though it does not excuse, some random incidents without thematic value, like the death of Arthur Carling (52). It also causes the emotional or moral blurring of some reported human interactions. Matilda's wretchedness during the awkward age is honestly attributed to combined parental mismanagement and adolescent waywardness (122 - 137). The analysis is scrupulous and enlightened, but perhaps the method drains the fiction of satisfying moral colouring. Responsible psychology is bad plotting. The narrative presents Aunt Theresa as blameworthy through only mildly censorious wit:

What attention she did give, however, made her so anxious on the subject that she took counsel with every lady of her acquaintance, and the more she talked about poor Matilda's condition the less leisure she had to think about it (127).

This method produces fiction less exciting than the orthodox conflict of good and bad, as Mrs. Ewing recognises:

... there is one respect in which our biographies must always be less satisfactory than a story that one might invent. When you are putting down true things about yourself and your friends, you cannot divide people neatly into the good and the bad, the injurers and the injured, as you can if you are writing a tale out of your own head (121).

But the illusion of innocent reporting is so thoroughly pursued, without the withdrawals of earlier fictions, that finally it is a successful pursuit. We are convinced by the sustained persona, the feasible engaging voice in our ears. If it sacrifices - hugely - the novel's stock-in-trade of suspense, continuous action, striking moral polarities, it gains a proximity to youthful processes.

One point shows more acutely Mrs. Ewing's daring fluidity of form. The description of the army sale is deliberately disrupted

by reported debate on class morality, Eleanor representing the idealist, the narrator the realist positions. The digression, placed in parenthesis, though actually more germane to the novel than the sale which has minimal value as plot, is long and subtle (43 - 5). Eleanor maintains that honesty is the consequence of breeding, the lower orders being by definition liable to vice; Margery argues that morality is learned not inbred and its occurrence unrelated to class. Such narrational withdrawals, in dialectic unusually tough for children's fiction, provide the novel's longer perspective for assessing Eleanor's otherwise ideal, but protected, education and Margery's more varied worldly experiences. The overlaid context places the girls before us as products of two systems. The digression also provides a relevant shorter perspective on the immediate action. We read subsequent vignettes of army behaviour in the more critical light of the narrator's egalitarian morality:

One lady sat in our drawing-room, with twenty-five pounds' worth of lace upon her dress, and congratulated herself on having sold some toilette-china as sound, of which she had daintily doctored two fractures with an invaluable cement (46).

This particular interruption excuses both the inconclusiveness of the girls' argument and the narrative discontinuity by a plea of youth, the novel's unfailing point of reference: 'We have confessed that our experience is very small, and our opinions still unfixed ...' (45).

The novel's narrative focus is more sharply on contemporary life and locations than in A Flat Iron; its brisker tone advertises a girl of the period rather than a quaint individualist. Its contemporaneity requires less reliance on fictional stereotypes, either fully endorsed or radically modified. Therefore, its narrative approach depends less on stylistic irony or subverting

humour. Despite its being nominally an orphan-story, there are fewer purely sentimental moments. Where these threaten, the narrative filter imposes restraint rather than the more ambiguous blend of indulgence and self-mockery of A Flat Iron. Mrs. Ewing cannot resist the pathos of giving Eleanor a dead sister, the gratuitous 'Gravestone' motif noted elsewhere, but the reference is mercifully brief (208), a devious confirmation of Margery's appropriate adoption. Even the father's deathbed, first broached with a full complement of sentimental symbolism - the single ray of light, the prayer broken off at "for ever and ever", the soldier's manly tears - is subsequently moderated by the realism of the child's sensations. Her first question, "Will he go to Abraham's bosom?" (32), referring to her Sunday picture-book, undermines false emotionalism. The older narrator intervenes to convey childish grief as no less real because mingled with disappointment at a missed birthday, or pride in new mourning clothes: 'I do not think I much connected the two in my mind'(63). And following Rabbits' Tails, the mother's death is reported according to credible childish experience, remote and peripheral to her life.

Comparison with Mrs. Molesworth's female narrators in memoir-novels like My New Home (1894), The Carved Lions (1895), The Red Grange (1891) and The Boys and I (1882 serial; 1883) shows Mrs. Ewing's distinctive technique of centring narrative in adolescence to give a trustworthy contemporary view. Molesworth novels more often assume the vantage point of age, of a Mrs. Overthway, for the concerns of adolescence. She ranges less widely in her novels' encompassment of social analysis and of psychological data. Her repertoire of techniques for adjusting readers' responses is less fertile. But she gains in steady reliability of tone, more subtle

than the reflective blandness of Mary Howitt's 'autobiographies'. In My New Home which has an adolescent narrator ('My name is Helena, and I am fourteen past'⁴) the tone is remarkably consistent in its achieved limpidity and near-childish constructions. Yet the narrative consecutively and aptly comments on the memory-process, and, like Six to Sixteen, includes self-interruptions and memory-lapses to create a thicker narrative medium. This novel possibly recalls Six to Sixteen, as it also uses the names Vandeleur (sic), and Kezia for a servant, and is set in a moorland house. The narrator comments on her earliest memory, a sunset on her third birthday, likened to candles in heaven, a more contrived detail than Mrs. Ewing would select:

There is to me a sort of parable, or allegory, in that first thing I can remember, and I think it will seem to go on and fit into all my life, even if I live to be as old as grandmamma is now. It is like feeling that there are always arms ready to keep us safe ... I hope the children who may some day read this won't say I am preaching ... I must tell what I really have felt and thought, or else it would be a pretence of a story altogether.⁵

This pretence of truthful incompetence is the forming convention of Six to Sixteen ('a record of small facts important to no one but myself' (12)), but syntax and vocabulary are more truly naive. Mrs. Ewing would be restless under the imposition of such imitative simplicity, with its consequent restriction of comment. Her digression on class morality, for instance, would be difficult within a strictly childish register. Mrs. Molesworth's speculative quality here is also present in Mrs. Ewing's analyses of girlhood. But for Mrs. Molesworth this is the main function of first-person narrative in children's fiction, to extract, sift and state what is typical and true of each stage of childhood. Her novel is laced with comments like 'children very seldom remember anything before they are three', or 'I was not shy. It sounds contradictory

to say so, but still there is truth in it. I had seen too few people in my life to know anything about shyness'.⁶ Both authors are outstanding at this date for the quality of these analyses via the introspective first-person voice.

But Mrs. Molesworth is more confined in the states she fictionalizes. It is characteristic that the above quotations relate to feelings not ideas. Time and again her narrators are used to anatomize, with delicacy, the small-scale emotions of her confused, misunderstood, or wrongheaded heroines, a procedure rationalized thus by the narrator of The Carved Lions:

... for I know I have not forgotten the feelings I had as a child. And after all, I believe that in a great many ways children are very like each other in their hearts and minds, even though their lives may seem very different and very far apart.⁷

Belief in a universal repertoire of child responses perhaps accounts for a sameness of narrative tone, attitudes and situations in these novels, without the formal stylistic differences between Ewing memoirs. By largely excluding irony from her narrative voice, though not humour of a temperate, direct kind, Mrs. Molesworth narrowed its analytical range. Whereas, through irony, Mrs. Ewing often adjusts the fluctuating relationship of narrator, tale and reader. Through a concentration on feelings, together with a narrative voice that is confidential, unironic, and therefore trustworthy, Mrs. Molesworth achieves a sustained minuteness in analysis often lacking in Mrs. Ewing. Several pages of The Boys and I investigate the narrator's fears when her mother goes away, to mark an adolescent crisis adequately (Ch. 1). When Mrs. Ewing's narrator becomes distressed over the painting of an execution at The Vine, to the point of having to leave, the implied crisis is only summarily investigated: 'I do not know why I never explained, the real reason for my distress - children are apt to be reticent on such occasions'. (102)

A more pervasive difference is that Mrs. Molesworth's narrative voice is inward-looking, disclosing the meanings of the sharply-etched, but slight, plot. It provides a ground-bass of explication to the treble line of the child's small actions. Mrs. Ewing's voice ranges more freely, a cover for authorial expression, a disclosure of the wider pressures impinging on the child, an escape from plot even. For Mrs. Molesworth the mature narrator embodies the stance of memory, a guarantee of the authentic interpretation of feelings. For Mrs. Ewing maturity is sometimes the opportunity for a higher level of conceptualization. Compare two narrators reflecting on school. First, The Carved Lions:

Looking back now, I think my whole nature and character must have gone through some curious changes in these first weeks at school. I grew older very rapidly.

There first came by degrees the great disappointment of it all - for though I am anxious not to exaggerate anything, it was a bewildering 'disillusionment' to me. Nobody and nothing were what I had imagined they would be. Straight out of my sheltered home, where every thought and tone and word were full of love, I was tossed into this world of school, where, though no doubt there were kind hearts and nice natures as there are everywhere, the whole feeling was different.⁸

And Six to Sixteen:

... we suffered at Bush House from an excess of ^{the} meddlesome discipline which seems to be de rigueur in girls' schools. I think Miss Mulberry would have felt that she had neglected her duty if we had ever been left to our own devices for an hour.

To growing girls, not too robust, leading sedentary lives, working very hard with our heads ... the nag of never being free from supervision was both irritating and depressing. Much worse off were we than boys at school. No playing-fields had we; no leave could be obtained for country rambles by ourselves ...

True, we were allowed fifteen minutes 'recreation' ... but this inestimable privilege was always marred by the fact that Madame invariably came for us before the quarter of an hour had expired. No other point of school discipline annoyed us as this did. It had that element of injustice against which children always rebel (147⁸).

Mrs. Molesworth is involved in pinpointing a psychological watershed. To enhance realism she includes apologies for exaggeration. The care and cadences of the language ('Nobody and nothing', 'tossed') impress

us with the school's impact on Geraldine. Analysis bears directly on plot by preparing for her truancy. The retrospective angle justifies the weight of analysis (yet, discordantly, an adult word like 'disillusionment' has inverted commas). But there is some vagueness at the edges - the 'nice natures', the last clause which may or may not reflect the child's unsureness. Mrs. Ewing's narrator is the means for more general, conceptual inferences about the female independence for which the whole novel argues. Any sense of her individuality vanishes as she speaks for a group - and many of Margery's experiences are communal, paradoxically presenting sociality via the orphan. The language is more exact, energetic, and taxing than Mrs. Molesworth's ('inestimable privilege', 'meddlesome discipline'), the frame of reference wider (including boys' education, the head's motivation), without the feeling being less authentic, though it is less personally located. The frustration in the second passage is as keenly communicated as the bafflement in the first.

From her expressed admiration it seems that Mrs. Ewing's memoir-narratives influenced Mrs. Molesworth's own in the eighties and nineties. Molesworth narrators stay more firmly in their role, narrowed to the provision of introspective comment, a consistent anchorage in the novel's flow. Mrs. Ewing is more exploratory, both within each novel and throughout her range, and though this often produces denser fiction, it can also fail to orientate the reader consistently through lapses in plot. Mrs. Molesworth's autobiography attempts less, but achieves it more indubitably.

Mrs. Ewing's innocent eye narrative is especially fruitful in the Yorkshire scenes for objectifying acutely personal material. Gatty habits and mores are closely transferred to fiction (though the tribe is halved for economy) - the dogs, 'foying' at gardening,

wrestling with Dante, sketching and collecting are all the stuff of Julie's youth. Some incidents, like the little anti-pastoral of Madame's visit to the vulgar Yorkshire fair, are direct transcriptions of memory. The idyll of children inheriting and inhabiting the countryside is more idiosyncratically created than in earlier fiction; its detail is the insidious fabric of memory. The children's gardens are presented as eccentric, with miniature ruins, and private:

... the path that led to them was heavily shaded by shrubbery on one side, and on the other by a hedge which, though 'quickset' as a foundation, was now a mass of honeysuckle and everlasting peas (198).

Autonomy is the defining quality of this childhood. Authority is submerged. These chapters particularly do not advance by a linear plot, but through incidents and images restating ideal family life to which Margery presents no disruption. Eleanor says, "Now you've come there'll be four of us to run downhill. We shall nearly stretch across the road" (204), an image of simple sweetness that needs no romantic allusions to golden days. A brisker version appears in Jack's "we shall be all square now, two and two, like a quadrille" (214).

The value of this inside-outsider as narrator is twofold. First, it provides a moderating, if not critical, view of what might be a too complacent presentation, as in the astringent view of the boys' controversies, or the more explicit dissent precipitated by contrast with the Bullers:

Great as were the advantages of the life I now shared over an existence wasted in a petty round of ignoble gossip and social struggle, it had the drawback of being almost too self-sufficient, perhaps - I am not certain - a little too laborious (257).

But secondly, the unaccustomed eye works in the contrary direction, to appreciate what is observed as though newly discovered. The wonder in the graphic description of the train-journey northwards

is something Julie never lost, but it comes more spontaneously from the novice:

Grandeur and grandeur grew the country, less and less pure the colouring. The vegetation was rich almost to rankness; the well-wooded distances were heavily grey. The tall chimneys poured smoke over the landscape and eclipsed the sun; and through strangely shaped furnaces and chimneys of many forms, which here poured fire from their throats like dragons, and there might have been the huge retorts and chemical apparatus of some giant alchemist, we ran into the station of a manufacturing town (186).

This is patently accurate, despite its childlike fantasy of dragons and alchemists. The narrative voice yokes precision and magic in similar views of the granite moors and river Ewden. On personalities perhaps the focus is less finely balanced. The sheer volume of favourable reporting appears self-congratulatory and static:

'All the Arkwrights can work through noise and in company, having considerable powers of mental abstraction' (238). But to counteract the idealization of the tribe individuals are realistically distinguished. It is evidence of Julie's fixed allegiances that Mr. Arkwright is not so particularized, but only sketched, carrying his wife's specimens 'like a particularly distinguished milkman' (210). After the previous novel Mrs. Ewing was adept at relaying personality in dialogue. Jack and Clement are differentiated by more than stereotyped traits, as rascal and swot. On first arrival Jack's speech immediately and accurately presents a gregarious, volatile nature, through the narrator's appreciative surprise:

"I'm very popular in the village," said my eccentric companion, with a sigh, ... "though I say it that shouldn't, you think? Well! Ita vita. Such is life's half-circle. Do you know Leadbetter? That's the way he construed it" (217).

However, the outsider's narrative angle favours the composite view of the family. Beneath skilful characterization and minutely recalled locations, the spirit is celebratory. The narrative offers this unlimited natural and social intercourse as a pattern of ideal

nurture. This emerges in Mrs. Arkwright's portrait as the hub of family life, a most unexpected and unauthoritarian mother-figure for the period. The narrator's vignettes of her prize her difference: arriving home with a travelling aquarium (210), chatting bent over the microscope (241), criticizing sketches with professional judgement. Even in the more usual role of counsellor, her advice is both more liberal and more formidably abstract in its language than the mothers of Alcott or Yonge (See her on intellectual cliques, 259 - 261).

The celebratory impulse is most detectable in certain moments, curiously offered by the narrative as carefully composed tableaux, of near-photographic immobility. Such is Eleanor's vision of children spanning the road. Indelible memories perhaps. The girls' and later the boys' arrivals from school are thus treated. On the first occasion the stone Vicarage, enveloped in rose-trees, horticulturally yet poetically presented, appears 'overgrown with vegetation, like the palace of the Sleeping Beauty' (191) to the ingenu-narrator who enters 'covered with rose-leaves'. This initiation is repeated when Jack, unconsciously copying Eleanor's gesture, pulls a branch to shower them with petals:

We must have looked very queer, I think, as we came up out of the overshadowed road, like dwarfs out of a fairy tale, covered with flowers, and leading our carriage with its odd occupant inside [a hat box of beetles] (218).

The attentive assembling and presentation of these elements of children, nature and home, overshot with fairy glamour and touched with oddity, betray their importance in the novel. They, more than theorizing or plot, provide Mrs. Ewing's statement of intention.

Inevitably, with the advent of the Arkwrights we lose some sense of Margery as a character, as her narrative function expands. The theme of the orphan reclaimed is not pursued directly, but bent to

the positive emphasis of this remarkable family life. If, as a final aspect of Mrs. Ewing's first-person narrative, we consider its particular conflation with the orphan theme alongside a novel which consistently and successfully pursues the theme in the third-person, her artistic aims will be clarified. The Secret Garden (1911) follows the emotional line of the orphan's reclamation undeviatingly and with a powerful unity of symbolism, making a claim on children's memories that Six to Sixteen could make only rarely to readers like Kipling. The two novels are superficially similar. Mary is also orphaned in India in Chapter 1, and restored to psychic health by Yorkshire landscape and society. The orphaning is even more restrained; the parents' death off-stage registered only in the child's loneliness ('there was no one in the bungalow but herself and the little rustling snake'⁹) and lingering memory of the neglectful mamma, a Memsahib with 'thin and floating' clothes, 'full of lace'¹⁰ (c.f. Six to Sixteen 'like a fairy dream', 22). From these similar emotional postulates, the novels diverge.

Mary Lennox's experience of Yorkshire precipitates her reconstruction of her world:

In India she had always felt too hot and too languid to care much about anything. The fact was that the fresh wind from the moor had begun to blow the cobwebs out of her young brain and to waken her up a little.¹¹

The Yorkshire wind outside Margery's Vicarage is invoked to accentuate the community within. Mary's gardening is a finely sustained metaphor for the slow healing of her wounded psyche (more crudely referred to by the narrative as 'temper'). The Arkwright gardens are private as evidence of self-sufficiency, childhood's healthful condition. Mary's garden is secret in representation of her own disconnected identity, becoming progressively less so as her solitude is breached, until even isolated Mr. Craven invades it, in a full-scale reclamation of aliens. Mrs. Hodgson Burnett's narrative angle, directed through

substantial comment, is invariably on the progress from bitterness to love, a basic human plot. Mrs. Ewing's novel is less homogeneous. After the first half, she positively avoids suggesting an isolated heroine. Instead of psychological analysis (as in 67, 86, 95), her state is measured against the Arkwrights: 'I am not as intellectual as the Arkwrights' (239). As our window on a fresh diversity of scenes, her function would be endangered by reminders of her own precarious state. By her total, and unremarked (it is briefly noted as 'a fairy tale come true' (209)), absorption into the ideal family, she can mirror its virtues without forfeiting usefulness as a reporter.

The translation of this difference into writing appears if we set the interim report on Mary's awakening sympathies (Chapter 27, first 2 paragraphs) against the long account of Margery's revised impressions of The Vine after experience of Yorkshire (283-5) Mrs. Hodgson Burnett compels confidence by a determined omniscience. Her first paragraph advances the 'modernist' theory that thoughts 'are as powerful as electric batteries', a bad one in the mind is 'as dangerous as letting a scarlet fever germ get into your body'. Paragraph two deduces that Mary had been soured by such thoughts:

When her mind gradually filled itself with robins, and moorland cottages ... and common little Yorkshire housemaids, with springtime and with secret gardens coming alive by day, ... there was no room left for the disagreeable thoughts which affected her liver and her digestion and made her yellow and tired. ... the secret garden was coming alive and two children were coming alive with it.

Simplicity of language and construction, the assertive voice recapitulating what has already been shown happening, make these satisfying conclusions. The last sentence is a clinching articulation of the novel's pervasive symbolism. But the analysis of causes is less lucid, a clouded mixture of pseudo-psychology and folk-lore. What is the origin and nature of these 'bad thoughts'? The

analogies of batteries and germs relate vaguely to processes, not causes. We trust the account of how these children behave but not why. But the novel as a whole wisely opts for intimate proximity to a single individual rather than a network of theory.

Mrs. Ewing's narrator also, and more often, makes probing observations, nominally about herself, but actually of wider scope. She contrasts the strenuous Arkwright life with the Vandaleurs' 'vegetating existence':

...At the Arkwrights we lived so essentially with the times. Our politics, on the whole, were liberal; our theology inclined to be broad; our ideas on social subjects were reformatory, progressive, experimental ... We argued each other into a general unfixity of opinions; and, full of youthful dreams of golden ages, were willing to believe this young world ... to be but upon the threshold of true civilization (283).

...But it is strange how quickly ^{unmarked} time slips on. Day after day, week after week ran by, till a lassitude crept over me in which I felt amazed by former ambitions, and a certain facility of sympathy, which has been in many respects an evil, and in many a good to me, seemed to mould me to the interests of the fading household. And so I lived the life of my great-grandparents, which was as if science made no strides, and men no struggles; as if nothing were to be done with the days, but to wear through them in all patient goodness, loyal to a long-fallen dynasty ... till this aged world should crumble to its close (285).

This is analysis of a higher order, more intelligent and better substantiated than The Secret Garden - and also, despite dates, more modern in its assumptions. It is markedly fluent. There is hardly a careless word - the rather precious style of the second paragraph mockingly shadows its subject - and there are many striking ones. It is better argued than Mrs. Hodgson Burnett; the contrasts of 'new civilization' and 'aged world' are more relevantly related to Margery's experiences than the battery and germ images to Mary's. But the passage is more problematical in the context of the novel. The making explicit of the parallel between waking garden and waking child cements what is already

latent in the novel's action, the rather woolly analogies are peripheral. In Mrs. Ewing's summation, interest is unequally divided between the narrator's self-analysis, only remotely based in novelistic action (we have nowhere seen her sympathy having evil consequences), and her function as analyst of systems which are lived out in vivid, dramatised scenes elsewhere in the novel. Her conclusions, say, about 'youthful dreams' are hardly founded in the novel's action.

By this point Margery's orphanhood is irrelevant, whereas it supplies the entire emotional impetus of The Secret Garden. Indeed there is no reason in terms of her development for the novel's inclusion of the antique remnants of the Vandaleurs. They function, as above, as one possible mode of living and nurture, skilfully presented through images of fading works of art (67, 93-4, 96, 101) as the Arkwrights are through nature images. It is creditable to Mrs. Ewing's skill that they are neither puppets of her theory, nor the hopelessly indistinguishable aristocrats of her early fiction. But to draw all this together on a single narrative thread is artistically taxing and Mrs. Ewing's thread often too tenuous. Her first-person narrator is perhaps too diversely used for so slight a novel, but to its use is due the novel's sense of psychological depth and conceptual range in defiance of its size.

Some of this depth comes from the novel's engagement with women's roles, a thematic rather than structural pressure towards unity. The rest of this chapter will examine Mrs. Ewing's presentation of this vexed area, and by comparison with Charlotte Yonge, argue its honesty and complexity, though not, ultimately, in thoroughly satisfying fiction.

Her excellent title spans childhood and adolescence. When visitors arrived at the Gattys, the summons was 'Would Six to

Sixteen go down to the drawing-room?', under sixes being too young and over sixteens already 'down'.¹² However, this pinpointing of strategic ages in fictional titles was not new. Mary and Frances at Sixteen (1838) and the popular Five, Ten and Fifteen, 'by the author of Honour Bright' show the same practice, though Mrs. Ewing's title apparently produced specific imitations. Duncan Crow describes an unpublished memoir by Margaret Booth, Six-to-Sixteen at Gracedieu, about the seven children of reformists Charles and Mary Booth (Beatrice Webb's cousin) in the eighties.¹³ And there were M.M. Bell's Seven to Seventeen and Seventeen to Twenty-One.¹⁴

Sixteen is a vague boundary in the novel, from which a narrator could draw conclusions about female progress. The opening adolescent resolve 'to be old maids and live together all our lives' (19) has been outgrown by the conclusion of Eleanor's marriage, treated with typical reticence and preserving the focus on narrative reactions (294 - 6). The stage of 'fads', which the autobiography itself neatly exemplifies, has passed by its ending, though not the stage of rational hobbies, symptomatic of a vigorous mental life and the thinking woman's refuge. In periodicals, the general recommendations for girls' hobbies still tended towards the patronizing and trivial. As late as the 1890's, The Girls' Own Paper ran a hobbies series by S.F.A. Caulfield, including warnings against crazes promoting vanity.¹⁵ The suggested list for collections, though it includes minerals and fossils, tends towards more frivolous areas (fans, crests, corals, copies of ecclesiastical embroidery) than the Gattys countenanced. Caulfield argues 'The formation of collections is by no means an essentially selfish occupation ... since it leads to the formation of friendships', emphasizes contrary to Gatty advocacy of hobbies as intellectual discipline, and of the dissolution of distinctions between study and recreation. The novel

ends nominally with marriage, but more decisively with a plea for women's 'rational interests': 'I could really imagine even our quarrelling or getting tired of each other, if we had nothing but ourselves in common', writes the unromantic bride (296).

Eleanor and George Abercrombie are briefly, pointedly presented in comradely, passionless equality. Superficially, this ending repeats that of Mrs. Gatty's My Childhood in Art whose narrator, an Eleanor-like figure with a talent for drawing, recommends 'the pursuit of the arts and sciences' to enrich female existence, but with far more illiberal assumptions, as well as more coy expression:

And believe it not, oh! young reader, should anyone whisper that a father's or a husband's home need be rendered less happy by the fact that those who share it with them have pursuits which engage a portion of their affections and interests.¹⁶

Paradoxically, it is through her exaltation of Mrs. Arkwright, a faithful transcription of Mrs. Gatty, that Mrs. Ewing amends this relativism most thoroughly, and also, by the cursory presentation of Abercrombie and Mr. Arkwright.

Comparing Shakespeare and Tennyson as love poets, Mrs. Ewing complained that the latter seemed 'quite unable to fathom the heart of 'a noble woman with any strength of her own - or any knowledge of the world'. She found 'Enid' 'intolerable'.¹⁷ In her keenness to advertise such women in the novel, she almost eliminated their menfolk. An earlier letter attacked a sentimental novel by Miss Kirby for its pusillanimous approach to women. What irked her was the plot's presupposition of female passivity, the helplessness of goodness. Charles Kingsley was accused of similar prejudice (perhaps after Yeast, 1848, which puts Argemone Lavington at the mercy of authorial ridicule for her changing and pretentious hobbies?):

He leaves his heroines at the mercy of male generosity - which Heaven knows! is a poor enough refuge for the destitute. However men are men - but it is suggestive of a want of some feeling that ought to be a feminine quality for a lady to what I call get her heroines into scrapes in which she is incapable of supporting them.¹⁸

This is illuminating on the multiple discrepancies between Ewing theory and practice. She conceives heroines equal to any 'scrapes', but a plot which invites them into surprisingly few. The discursive form hardly risks the testing of theories. The novel's parameters of desirable nurture are liberal and undidactic. But having defined such rearing, it presents its products with no testing circumstances, allows them no unusual destiny. Yet its outline of the modern girl is sharp and moving.

Only four years before, Mrs. Lynn Linton's famous attack on female independence, 'The Girl of the Period' in The Saturday Review, had fired debate by pillorying her 'unblushing honesty', indifference to male approval, and attempted equality: the ideal girl would be 'her husband's friend and companion but never his rival'.¹⁹ So Six to Sixteen was topical in its concerns, though more temperate in its tone.

Sex differences are one of the novel's prevailing considerations, the Bullers, Vandaleurs, and Arkwrights are all paired to reflect them. The Riflebury (Aldershot) scenes are permeated by details suggesting the hopeless superficiality of female social rituals:- the 'petty social plots of Mrs. Minchin, a woman of 'restless' wasted energy (48); the mendacious politeness of 'sociable' Mrs. O'Connor; the magazine-fed ignorance of child-rearing in 'maternal' Mrs. St. John (slyly described as a reader of The Saturday Review, 133). The humorous criticism is levelled with serious, sophisticated distinctions. Its sharpest edge is Major Buller's expostulations, pointing to male freedom from rituals enforcing 'the tyranny

of the idle over the busy' (57). But Mrs. Ewing improves on the strident simplification of citing men's opportunities to excuse female triviality. Her narrator regrets the modish contrasting of the sexes to men's disparagement (131). Eleanor is vehement against the incompetent woman, 'unpunctual, unreasoning and in every respect uneducated ... with daily reason to be thankful that her necessities are supplied by other people' (130), who yet longs to be male. The implication throughout is that girls must be responsible for themselves.

In the Yorkshire scenes the contrasting of sexes is subtler, though more ambiguous, perhaps in resistance to easy solutions. Relative freedoms and constraints in the girls' lives are carefully indicated. Allowed the freedom of the moors, they are still more physically circumscribed than the boys:

The coming and going of the boys were our chief events. We packed for them when they went away. We wrote long letters to them, and received brief but pithy replies (234).

The stylistic wryness tolerates the implied emotional dependence. Their lives are socially circumscribed, the burden of social ritual falling squarely on them; the boys 'bolt' at visitors, but 'domestic authority which is apt to be magnified on "the girls" overruled us for our good' (259), a typically ambiguous statement. Vigorous argument is reserved for claiming lives not intellectually circumscribed. In 1880 Aunt Judy's reviewed reissues of Mrs. Hofland's The Son of a Genius and The Daughter of a Genius, with the ironic note that any modern female genius 'would be in more danger of overstraining from encouragement than of being nipped in the bud by the disapproval of narrowminded relatives'.²⁰ Over-sanguine about the general situation perhaps, but Margery and Eleanor have unstinted encouragement. They argue on equal terms with brothers and adults. Their reading is uncensored - within

the limits implied by a mocking treatment of Madame's confiscation of the Apocrypha (178). But the system's keystone is imaginative nourishment, for by this high faculty 'we so largely love and hate, choose right or wrong, bear and forbear, adapt ourselves to the ups and downs of this world' (170). This is the spearhead of attacks on school regimentation or social triviality.

In *Clement* the novel presents the failure of this imaginative breadth, the precondition for equality. Ingeniously, this thumbnail abridgement of male arrogance is set within the 'liberated' household:

He controlled it to fairness in discussions with men, but with men only. With Eleanor, who persisted in thinking for herself ... he had many hot disputes, in which he often seemed unable to be fair, and did not always trouble himself to be reasonable (158).

But this promising clash of attitudes never issues in events, other than reported disputatiousness, nor does it extend to Mrs. Arkwright, whose idealized intellectuality goes as unchallenged by the plot as maternal purity in more orthodox children's fiction.

The modern heroines have some of the boldness so abhorrent to Mrs. Lynn Linton. Eleanor challenges her teachers over the feeble art purveyed to girls. But the clash widens into a lesson in tolerance; old Mr. Henley's remark, "be thankful that you sketch for pleasure and not for bread" (163), is one of several moments which mesh issues of age, class and sex, an advanced insight which, again, goes unpursued. With frankness of tone, though not of depiction, the narrator reviews, intelligently, issues like adolescent love (apropos Matilda), and female health education, to abolish 'a confusion between ignorance and innocence, and of mistaken notions of delicacy' (145). The very insouciance with which Mrs. Ewing makes comic capital of their belated efforts to learn sewing ("The higher education fades from my view with every

snip" (274)), and Mrs. Arkwright's self-reproach for not domesticating them (268), advances the novel's priorities cunningly. 'Accomplishments', flouted as primary objectives, become the matter of comic fiction. Throughout these scattered episodes, as their concealed link, the novel holds steadily to a 'high education' for girls which 'put all meaner arts within our grasp' (269).

Both the unusual liberalism and the failure to contain it by plot are made clearer if we contrast this projected girlhood with those Yonge novels covering a similar span - The Daisy Chain, The Trial, Countess Kate and others.

To turn from Mrs. Ewing's novel to Beechcroft at Rockstone (1888) is to present an immediate contraction of horizons, less expected because so much later. Yonge's definition of stages is as informed, through the gamut of Merrifield girls, from 'ardent friendship' to 'beginning to be admitted to an equality' with adults (almost six to sixteen).²¹ Gillian, a standard Yonge heroine, if no daughter of genius, is as promisingly intellectual as Eleanor; she begins a novel, Hilda's Experiences, knows Greek, and owes her competence to life 'with thoughtful, cultivated, and superior people'.²² But in the nature of these formative milieux differences emerge, major but elusive of description. Yonge, too, by a system of structural contrasts, rejects other upbringings: the fashionable education exemplified in Gill's brief London visit; the Marchioness's outmoded, etiquette-bound system which treats Gill 'with careful politeness and supervision as a girl of the period, always ready to break out'.²³ Yet the contrasting seriousness and freedom of the Merrifield system differs considerably from the intellectualism and autonomy Mrs. Ewing proposes.

Superficial differences are easily illustrated. Gill cannot always walk unaccompanied, let alone race on the moors in boys'

boots. Her brother, Fergus, rejoicing that he's male, collects minerals, while she unwillingly reads to invalids. The mother, uneccentric and traditional, dislikes children 'infected by the modern spirit, that criticizes when it ought to submit to authorities',²⁴ and the novel endorses this.

More profoundly, Yonge erects or recognizes barriers within the system which Mrs. Ewing is more reluctant to tolerate, though some persist. Yonge's plot depends on characters' reactions to carefully shaded class-strata, and strictly codified behaviour. One knot of moral threads illustrates this. Gill's wrong-headedness in privately coaching Alexis White is lengthily demonstrated, followed by a counter-action proving her mistakenness in returning his Valentine. It is not simply that Yonge is less progressive, but that Mrs. Ewing lacks the sensitivity to such social shades and the impulse to perpetuate or erode them through fiction. She almost constructs a world where the need to confront them is absent. Religious observance, a source of living moral issues in Yonge's novel, is replaced in Six to Sixteen by a vague natural piety, with infusions of Jeremy Taylor. Their greatest divergence, though, is over barriers in family intercourse. Mrs. Ewing plots no assault on parental authority, but, positively, presents an egalitarian family. Yonge, despite emphasis on mother-love, postulates a psychological distance between parents and children which Mrs. Ewing had never learned. This emerges in the action. Gill has to wait some days for a 'confidential talk' because of her mother's social duties. After her father's absence he 'must be learnt over again, and there was awe enough as well as enthusiastic love to make her quail at the thought of her record of self-will'.²⁵ This language suggests distance, almost that of God and penitent. At one point the mother is called 'the true mother-confessor of her own child', allowing the first sacred 'tête-à-tête'.²⁶ Mrs. Ewing

would not recognize such emotional inequalities.

Sex roles are more traditionally enforced by Yonge. Mrs. Ewing makes comedy from the inability to sew or Eleanor's intellectual challenges to Clem. Yet the irony or humour through which sexual equality is recommended, or ambivalence cloaked, is, in a way, easily afforded in a novel avoiding protracted conflict and ending in marriage (no one is changed, and they do learn to sew). Yonge's brothers and sisters have distinct lives, with less common ground than the Arkwrights. Her humour is precisely selective. Gill's visit to Rowthorpe exposes her to 'a wider outlook, and constant conversation and discussion among superior men', gone over later with female friends, none of whom join the men's talk. The segregation and relativism are neutrally reported, with one ironic touch: 'It was something different from grumbling over ... the defective washing of the St. Andrew's surplices'.²⁷ Such limited irony makes only the slightest feminist claims - serious talk is preferable to gossip - but its control is that of a writer who knows exactly how far she wants to go, and cuts her plot accordingly.

Such sizeable differences in attitude produce differences in fictional organization. Key relationships in Beechcroft at Rockstone are between Gill and various adults. Obviously in such dense eventfulness, there are relationships with siblings and contemporaries, Valetta, Fergus, the Whites, but these represent learning material, the area where mistakes are made. Her development is gauged through encounters with aunts and parents. Education for Yonge is a matter of the child's internalization of certain principles, not too narrowly conceived, personally experienced, but formulated only through adult consultations. The Yonge novel in which pastors and masters are absent, typically, shows children overwhelmed by experience; The Stokesley Secret

(1861) involves ten children in a mesh of tribulations. Key relationships in Six to Sixteen are between the narrator and her contemporaries. Adults are important in what they permit, as well as what they say or exemplify. Education for Mrs. Ewing is the child's orientation towards his world through the 'higher faculty' of imagination that puts all meaner arts within his grasp.

Yonge's organisation depends on quantities of small incidents so deeply embedded in a peculiar culture that their meaning would have evaporated had she not fixed it by the fiction's very density. Gill, on the brink of adolescence, hopes to do some 'great and excellent thing' in her parents' absence, makes 'a most unmitigated mess of everything', and then labours 'to dig to the roots of her failures'.²⁸ This perhaps gives Yonge's fundamental pattern of girlhood - humiliation is a state she explores repeatedly and well. It often dictates the novel's shape, as in The Daisy Chain, admirably parodied in Nesbit's The Wouldbegoods: "It's all about a family of poor motherless children who tried so hard to be good, and they were confirmed, and had a bazaar, and went to church at the Minster ..."²⁹ To these now insignificant incidents, like Gill's talking through the garden railings, or skimping sick-visiting, Yonge imparts a fierce emotional or moral charge.

By contrast, Ewing's organisation is through a sequence of broad juxtapositions, socially disparate, yet all measured in a long perspective as contexts for developments. Plot is minimal. Events have short-term illustrative value, not long-term consequences. Incidents rarely involve characters in moral choices, as Yonge's do, but illuminate the quality of that particular milieu, within a spectrum of such moments. For example, the issue of censorship and female access to sexual meanings, explored by Yonge in the long Valentine episode, is glancingly treated through cumulative

not consecutive pointers. Riflebury hypocrisy is established by Margery's being sent out when men discuss her mother's looks (65), by Mrs. St. John's salacious gossip (55), by Major Buller's ban on periodicals for their 'morbid muddle of disease and crime' (134). Contrastingly, the ludicrous puritanism of Bush House appears in the mutilated Apocrypha (177) and the forbidden muslin bodices before the maths master (165). Yorkshire, by implication, avoids both kinds of prurience, and development is simply towards such freedom, though the novel fails to embody satisfactorily the causal relationship between incidents and development.

Yonge's certainties of morality and plot are matched by certainties of style. Narrative omniscience is her almost invariable choice. Mrs. Ewing's narrator filters more shifting emphases and unassertive values. For example, both treat the adolescent's resentment of supervision. Yonge's omniscience understands the girl, but condemns the rebellion:

Such glimpses of life had taught Gillian more than she yet realised ... The immediate fret of sense of supervision and opposition being removed, she had seen things more justly ... She had done the thing in her simplicity, but it was through her own wilful secretiveness that her ignorance had not been guarded.³⁰

Slight incidents need this determined interpretiveness to communicate. Omniscience can be either enlightening or irritating. This novel misses the sense of a heroine inwardly known, present in better Yonge novels, like Countess Kate. Gillian is somewhat deprived of life by the slanted pressure of moral evaluation, and we resent the plot's heavy inevitability of retribution.

Mrs. Ewing's approach has fewer moral certainties and an opposite conclusion, that independence, not submission, leads to self-discipline:

Madame watched and worried us, I am convinced, in the persuasion that we were certain to get into mischief if we had the chance, and equally certain to do so deceitfully. She gave us full credit (I never could trace that she saw any discredit in deceit) for slyness in evading^{her} authority, but flattered herself that her own superior slyness would maintain it in spite of us.

It vexed us all, but there were times when it irritated Eleanor almost to frenzy (149).

The focus is more diffuse, interest more divided here. Style seems adapted to reduce moral condemnation. Eleanor's rebelliousness is a matter of comparative observation only. Even Madame's deceit is disapproved of with stylish wit. The underlying preoccupation is not with these people particularly, but girls' schools generally, yet the style avoids an impression of either theorizing or omniscience.

There is, however, a certain deception practiced by the style and its hazy impression that something is happening. Yonge's passage justifies its summarizing and single tone by a firm location in the novel, an anchorage in incident. Mrs. Ewing's richer tonal blend conveys heightened moral complexity, but seems offered in place of incident. The forward impetus creates the expectation that Eleanor's 'frenzy' will issue in action. But what follows is more of this amalgamated narrative, theory and psychological analysis. According to the novel's peculiar rhythms, Eleanor's dissatisfactions at school are never demonstrated by crisis, rather they are balanced by the polaric satisfactions of home. The moral emphasis, so direct in Yonge, comes here circuitously, in powerful contrary images of freedom - wading the brook, riding home 'a rattler', scribbling in the kitchen. Where Yonge's passage looks back to crucial incidents, Ewing's looks forward to crucial images.

If Mrs. Ewing could not plot the intense dilemmas of conscience which carry the reader through Yonge's substantial

volumes, she had the more generous, rare (for her time) and convincing view of girlhood. The novel shows her working with artistic security within her limitations, even more so by 1875 when she revised for book publication and wrote modestly to Eleanor Lloyd 'I wish it were better to dedicate to you'.³¹ The revised novel, if it contains no model girl, works through a sequence of quite strenuous comparisons, towards some memorable images of ideal girlhood, that go some way to explain Kipling's allegiance.

Chapter 5. Jan of the Windmill. A Story of the Plains, 1872-3

In 1882, Mrs. Ewing revisited Amesbury in Wiltshire, reporting her delight in 'scenes which furnished local colour for perhaps the best bit of work I ever did - Jan of the Windmill'.¹ Her estimation - and it was apt to vary - had been endorsed by other critics. Roberts Brothers, responsible for the novel's American publication, wrote to her: 'We have been terribly disappointed in the sales of Jan ... yet our best critics and all our friends are completely in love with the book'.² Mrs. Ewing's disappointment at its failure to win wider acceptance was the more acute after the pains taken over volume publication in 1876, including careful revision and the title-change from The Miller's Thumb to Jan of the Windmill. A Story of the Plains. The magazine title was rejected as obscure, Aunt Judy's readers evidently being unaware that 'Constable, the great Wiltshire landscape painter, was wont to boast of his miller's thumb' (8, vii), and Mrs. Ewing surprisingly unaware that Constable came from Suffolk. The new title, less equivocally, advertised the novel's picturesque, regional character. Her disappointment was keener because the novel represented a new departure from earlier novels, costly to her in the rethinking of fictional methods.

So far, her novels had been variations on the theme of growth, projected through some identifiable narrative voice, and hinging on such polarities as retrospection and prospection, isolation and socialization, bereavement and friendship, independence and authority - the recurring fundamental issues of childhood. Ideals had been stated with a new generosity, their fictional modes of definition experimentally developed, but the concerns affect all children. Ida, Regie, Margery and others restate basic experience.

But Jan, unusually, treats exceptional experience, an artist in his seed-time. Earlier novels had by-passed the need for orthodox plot by adaptations of the first-person which located interest in psychological action. Jan meets the need head-on, with a hazardous conjunction of two story-types, the growth of the artist and the foundling tale, through a boldly objective third-person medium which overlooks considerable external action. Incident and conflict are increased. The artist-foundling's progress is strikingly hindered by fate and by human agencies. Exceptionally, Mrs. Ewing's plot is spun from disasters, like the plague, from blatant coincidence and suspense, from human evil. Such extreme mechanisms recall her concurrent work on fairy tales. Folk elements and the foundling melodrama, his arrival in storm, kidnapping and wandering in the urban wilderness, are rather savoured than muted by the bolder narrative voice. Also the segmentation of serialization produces some abruptly sensational chapter-endings. Throughout, she withholds some proper names in favour of labels like 'the artist', 'the man of business', 'Mr. Ford's client', partly in approximation to folk tale reference by type, partly in imitation of Dickensian mystery. Her roving plot and unfixed narrative eye span a greater social spectrum than before, from hall to hamlet, through urban streets, 'sooty church', and a 'progressive' Boy's Home such as Aunt Judy's might recommend.³ However, the weight of portrayal falls squarely on the Wiltshire community spreading outwards from the windmill, rather as Dorlecote is perceived from the novel's centre in Tulliver's mill. This is Mrs. Ewing's fullest, most intimately revealed rural society so far, perhaps because not tied to the single narrator, equalled later only by the Yorkshire of We and the World.

Each earlier novel had taken its structure from the curve of

maturation and in each some imbalance has been identified. Jan also fails in its ending to complete the ambitious curve of its main part. It, too, faces the irreducible problem of halting with an achieved, demonstrated, but not over-explored maturity. But Jan's developmental curve is further deflected by the necessary resolutions of its twin plots: the foundling must uncover his origins, the artist reveal his quality. Having advanced two designs simultaneously, alongside a rendering of basic childhood as fresh and original as any earlier, she fails to consummate the whole. The last six chapters juggle unsatisfactorily with clashing elements - the residue of melodrama (in George and the letter), the foundling plot's sentimentality (in the mother's grave), the artist's fame and the adult's love-match. Such crowding balks us of expected confrontations, notably that between hero and natural father, unnamed and largely uncriticised throughout. It cheats us of participation in needful moral choices. The convenient deaths of Master Swift and the miller evade the hero's crucial choice between domestic duty and 'the irrepressible bent of his genius' (230). As in A Flat Iron, we feel that the pasteboard adult of the conclusion is hardly commensurate with the vividly-known child. Jan is merely labelled squire, Boys' Home patron, Academy member, tokens of a different fictional order from the arresting detail which communicates awakening genius.

Why, on returning to the formidably difficult theme of the artist, rashly tried in Friedrich's Ballad, did Mrs. Ewing make him also a foundling? The early story suggests why she chose painting, writing being over-suggestive of daily bread, and its processes elusive in their transference to fiction. Paradoxically, a minor writer's words are better able to describe genius in paint than provide specimens of major literary talent. The graphically detailed

descriptions of Jan's slate-sketching are more persuasive than the trite cataloguing of Friedrich's writings. Her special affinity for painting directs her imagination, the affinity that made her exclaim of Holbein's 'Sir Thomas More' 'in my deepest dreams I did not think Holbein could paint thus.'⁴ Her frequent discussion of her own craft through the analogy of painting estimates the painter as the type of genius. Ruskin's influence confirmed this evaluation. Her Commonplace Book has long notes from Modern Painters (vol. 1) on clouds and landscapes, and on light and shade, which refer to Turner and Rubens, but could furnish the theoretical substance of Jan's sky-gazing' and 'leaf-painting'. Ruskin is cited as a clinching authority to mark a stage of his development:

He drew with extraordinary rapidity: not with the rapidity of slovenliness, but with the rapidity of genius in the choice of what Ruskin calls 'fateful lines' (310).

The free-ranging authorial voice, and commentator's license make possible such a reference outside the immediate dramatic situation. An aesthetic which identified nature, before tradition or teaching, as the artist's cradle, suited Mrs. Ewing exactly. Her artist must be humbly nurtured, as Friedrich was within the more folksy convention of romance. Here perhaps is the clue to her grafting of the foundling theme. The foundling, too, is a child apart. From Oedipus to Tom Jones and Heathcliff, the foundling, like the artist, carves his own destiny, since obscure origins do not dictate one, or he carries it with him in his inherited but as yet undisclosed nature. Jan is already marked out from his foster-brothers by his storm-stressed arrival, his black eyes and fair hair, his finer temperament, the outsider's tokens. The stereotyped marks of 'breeding' in the foundling are used to underline the more recondite marks of genius. To put it extremely, the potential mythic status of the foundling, recovering himself and his world, can reinforce

or represent the mythic status of creative genius. More humbly, Mrs. Ewing redirects the predictable emphases on breeding, even satirizing them in Mrs. Lake's shabby snobbery, to convert them into evidence of latent talent.

The rest of the chapter will discuss, in turn, the twin strands of artist and foundling to show the extent of their interrelation, their eventual drastic separation, and how, while pursuing their extraordinariness, Mrs. Ewing still explored the more ordinary transactions of child, family and community. She had few precedents in children's fiction for a novel on genius. The first part of this section will discuss some existing approaches to mark her divergence, before examining her treatment in detail.

In My Childhood in Art, Mrs. Gatty had fictionalized a childhood passion for art with knowledgeable detail. But its heroine is no genius and later chapters on her increasing proficiency, copying prints in the British Museum, are a characteristic Gatty blend of practical detail and inflated theory, attached to no dramatic centre in character or action:

...Nothing in art can be really powerful and enduring that is not based on nature and truth. Even our highest ideal is but the best chosen of truths.⁵

Jan is unusually free from theorizing and rich in dramatisation.

Mrs. Gatty's generalization concludes a long debate on Ruskin's 'lesson of accuracy', for which the heroine's copying of 'photographic oaks' by a Dutch master is a cursory pretext. The phrase is bold, but the fictional balance is awry. This Mrs. Ewing redresses.

Tree-drawing, a Gatty preoccupation, had already provided a defining incident in Six to Sixteen. The same memory stock in Jan (Ch. 19) supplies the basis of a crucial artistic development. Jan progresses from drawing pigs to studying trees. The moment is isolated in a sensational way, but its quality is conveyed in understated description, not by Mrs. Gatty's imperious theorizing. The grasp of

practical problems is as keen, but dramatically represented. Jan begins from the trunk outwards, but learns to reverse this, working from the tips inwards. Nature's power is the object of Mrs. Gatty's philosophizing and Ruskin's critique. For Mrs. Ewing, it is a child's experience, to be recreated:

But in studying the tree the grotesque likeness [of pigs] was forgotten, and there burst upon his mind, as a revelation, the sense of that world of beauty which lies among stems and branches, twigs and leaves. Painfully, but with happy pains, he traced the branch joint by joint, curve by curve, as it spread from the parent stem and tapered to its last delicate twigs. It was like following a river from its source to the sea. But that sea of summer sky, in which the final ramifications of his branch were lost, Jan did not reach. (188).

The sea simile, by simple allusion, magnifies the minute activity into due importance, as a crucial artistic experience, though in a child. The excellent chapter proceeds with similar precision to Jan's solving problems of proportion, and colour, using leaves and flowers for paint, matching 'one against the other, as a lady sorts silks for her embroidery' (190), another magnifying simile though less grand. Such delicate dramatisation of sensibilities entirely replaces Mrs. Gatty's static digressions.

Joachim the Mimic demonstrates other pitfalls in fictional biographies of painters. Itself a moral tale, it raises issues of the morality of what and how the artist paints. It defines art as the imitation of the good and offers idealization as 'the very spirit and soul of the best sort of portrait-painting'.⁶ But its darkly confused narrative founders in the contradictions such a definition carries - of the doctrine of fidelity to nature especially. Jan avoids the conflict of realism and morality. Its hero's human goodness can be vaunted through the melodramatic oppositions of the founding tale. His artistic morality is defined as truthful observation. His artist-master refers to his inability to 'degrade

his art to be a pander of vice, or a mere trick of the workshop' (359), but the plot never confronts issues this raises. Mrs. Ewing was too aware of her own violent prejudices against 'the French style' to enter such territory. By making her hero a tyro landscape painter, she both absolved him from dangerous subjects and argued the primacy of nature.

Joachim also demonstrates the problem of ending by asserting 'the course of events led him irresistibly to the use of ^{the} pencil and brush'⁷, but providing neither events nor inward account of 'irresistible' genius. In prose of stiff unreality, Mrs. Gatty indicates a conventional progress towards a portrait of the King: 'It was the work of Joachim himself',⁸ an ending woodenly close to Friedrich's Ballad. Mrs. Ewing's second solution, less stilted though still unsatisfactory, is an oblique postscript giving the view of a visitor to Jan's birthplace, providing testimony less crude than Mrs. Gatty's. However, art, not fame, is the fitting resolution to the progress of genius. The London episode, crowded by new characters and the untangling of the foundling mysteries, denies us intimate access to artistic development contrived earlier. Perhaps unable to rectify this, Mrs. Ewing created an ending whose emotional details nostalgically recall Jan's childhood. The visitor views the new commemorative window not as a specimen of his art, but an obeisance to his roots ('in pious memory of Abel, My dear foster-brother' (384)). Associations are with the early, very successful family scenes. In that sense, too, it is a backward-looking ending, a devious resuscitation of what is best in the novel and an evasion of its weaknesses. The penultimate chapter, on the 'real' mother's grave, belongs even more completely to the foundling plot, at its most threadbare. It makes a weak gesture towards re-harnessing the two plots by Jan's suggested inherited

talent. But the strained coincidence of the Lakes' engraving being by Jan's ancestor bridges no gaps. Its very introduction is shamefaced, lacking the nerve of true melodrama to make coincidence the agent of fate. Here also, the most delicate prose is that returning us, associatively, to childhood: with his mother's sketches 'gathered from homely and home-like scenes, from the level horizons and grey skies, Jan felt a sympathy which stirred him to the heart' (378). This writing is more alive than notices of artistic success which barely improve on Mrs. Gatty: 'His great gift did indeed bring fortune as well as fame to our hero' (380).

In other children's novels it is possible to distinguish three approaches relevant to Mrs. Ewing's treatment. The nineteenth century's preoccupation with great lives, with the commanding myths of self-help and the rise from obscurity to eminence, naturally included painters, though more reliable professions were preferred for popular consumption. Aunt Judy's disdainfully reviewed one especially absurd specimen, Talent in Tatters, whose hero advances from crossing-sweeper to Bachelor of Music in a few incredible pages.⁹ Semi-biographies, like Charlotte Yonge's Book of Golden Deeds (1864), originally offering desirable models of piety or industry, eventually broadened to include greatness of other kinds. The 'Splendid Lives' series by the Sunday School Union, and William Martin's Noble Boys: Their Deeds of Love and Duty (1874) included thinkers and poets, though no painters, as inspirational models. This approach can be distinguished from historical romances which occasionally chose an artist hero, real or imaginary, as a colourful centre for the tapestry of history. Finally, there is rarer fiction, intended for children, about the gifted or unusual child. Andersen's tales sometimes treated the artist directly, though he also represented the creative imagination through indirect symbols. The methods of

this type are primarily those of fantasy or symbolic association. It will be helpful to relate each of these approaches to Mrs. Ewing's.

The myth of self-help has substantial links with the foundling tale. But Mrs. Ewing's preference for a foundling with humble beginnings departs decisively from any links with self-help. One reason for Jan's having lowliness thrust upon him, rather than his being born to it, is to offset this powerful myth. He is no industrious apprentice. He shirks school for the woods. In the controlled scene in which Abel teaches him his letters, Mrs. Ewing makes her vital distinction between cleverness and genius, between self-making and 'irrepressible' self-expression:

... he drew A after A with the greatest rapidity, scrambling along sideways like a crab, and using both hands indifferently, till the row stretched as far as the flour would permit (96).

The crab simile forcefully telegraphs the instinctual, almost physiological, impulses of talent. Learning is even hindered by such facility. Jan has to be coerced into learning the names of the letters he reproduces faultlessly, an invariable pattern in his later education.

But it is through the schoolmaster that the myth of the parish boy's rise is most obviously rejected, a characterization of fine complexity for juvenile fiction. It is necessary to examine this figure in detail since through it Mrs. Ewing articulates what her artist is not. Swift provides the popularly enticing biographies of 'self-made men', and the advice 'Science is the ladder for a working-man to climb to fame' (214). But in contradistinction, the novel endorses an alternative Rousseauesque intercourse with nature. In Swift's blunt Yorkshire version, the coarseness of the materialist programme is striking: "I've seen many a man that's got an education, and could keep himself sober, rise to own his

house and his works, and have men under him" (222). Jan's career represents an alternative to these economic simplisms, though not without its own tangle of ambiguities. Finally, it is defined through socio-economic rewards, not art or psychology. Intercourse with nature also pays.

However, Swift's portrayal has subtler depths, bearing on the artist theme. He is also a frustrated poet. His fictional substance comes from the conflict between his poetry and his obeisance to the self-help myth. There is touching realism in his confession "for the love of nature is just a passion with me, and it's that that made the poet Keats a new world to me" (223). Nevertheless, the resurrection of the tenacious 'Gravestone' idea in his irrelevant dead wife and child, intrudes a maudlin emotion into an already moving account. Mrs. Ewing seems obliged to provide her outsiders with this loaded motivation, even as here, alongside a satisfactory psychological one. More credibly, Swift sublimates both disappointed poetry and self-help ideology, as a born teacher:

"I think, Jan...I'm like Rachel, who'd rather have taken to her servant's children than have had none. I thought 'If there's a genius in obscurity here, I'll come across the boy' ... but he has never come! Society's quit of that blame" (228).

The novel alerts us frequently to the irony that it is Swift's poetry, not his sermons on self-help, that is the artist's resource. There is piquancy in making the advocate of materialism the half-reluctant mouthpiece for poetry.

Thus, it is not as models for ambition that the novel is scattered with the names of poets and painters. As Swift says, Jan is "likelier to lack the ambition than the genius" (222). The references invest him with artistic stature, just as 'Jan Lake' impressionistically combines Dutch masters, colouration and the grandeurs of nature. References to Cimabue and Giotto (331) at

the climactic moment of Jan's discovery by his master elevate the scene.¹⁰ References to Rembrandt (219) and Constable as millers' sons ratify the artistic rightness of his upbringing. Despite her error over his home-county, Mrs. Ewing's diaries show that she had read Leslie's Life of Constable, confirming her view of landscape as imaginative nurture.¹¹ But the novel's web of poetic references functions differently, to provide the medium for thriving sensibility. Mrs. Ewing is careful to show the response to poetry, as to nature, to be spontaneous, and the two responses as essentially one.

Poetic references are not random. 'Il Penseroso', 'Lycidas' and Gray's 'Elegy' reflect directly on the master-pupil relationship, Swift's frustration finding relief in elegaic poetry which also sharpens his hopes of fostering some later and larger talent (223-4). Jan, initially, simply loves the sound. He loves Hemens and Scott for their rhetoric (218) and Herbert as 'a fountain of experimental religion' (214). But nature's primacy in art is most pressingly felt through Wordsworth and Keats. The latter appears crucially in the scene of Swift's first woodland encounter with Jan. The scene's power is in its containing so many seeds of their future relationship. In Keats for the first time Jan meets 'the unfamiliar terseness of poetry' (193), nature crystallized in art. Its relevance to his own efforts at 'leaf-painting' is apparent to the reader, prompted by Swift's exclamation at "the poetry of 't'" (196). But less obviously, Swift's irony on accidentally stepping on Jan's picture, "And are ye for turning earth into heaven among your other trades?" (196), prefigures his later, graver disapproval of Jan's painting. The accidental blunder is an omen of his later hostility. Conversely, Jan's joyful instinct towards Swift's poetry, but revulsion from the word 'school-master', indicate the disparities the relationship is to hold for him. Swift's naming him a sprite, familiar with

'the road to bonnie Elf-land' is one of several allusions to the transcendental, magical quality of art, and Jan's progress as a fairy-tale. It is, of course, contradictory to the model of the self-made man with which he quickly replaces it. These dual threads of promise and disappointment run through the scene to knot in a strongly symbolic ending. Keats is exchanged for Herbert, the poetry of nature for the poetry of conscience. The encounter ends not with Jan's rejection of schooling, but a more obscure, reverberating image:

And a sudden gust of wind coming sharply down the way by which he went, caught the fragments of Jan's picture, and whirled them broadcast through the wood (199).

The scene's poised ambiguities are subsequently resolved in Jan's scrupulously charted talent, opposed to the commonplace self-making Swift advocates. But the less scrupulous ending which does reduce artistry to mere worldly eminence bears an uncomfortably close resemblance to the myth of progress in its crudest popular form.

The different approach of historical romance can be judged in novels like Silas Hocking's Rex Raynor, Artist (1890), also a foundling tale.¹² A poor artist's baby is reared in a rich household and later disowned both for his art and his low birth. A plot shaped by the exigencies of serialization provides suspense and crises, but no analysis, no approximation to artistic personality, and only a patchy impression of period. The dual plot is resolved by Rex's elevation to the Royal Academy, tokening artistic and social identity. In the early scenes, Mrs. Ewing is vastly superior in the inwardness of her representation. Even in her ending she attempts more than Hocking's facile equation of talent with Academy membership. The compact characterization of Jan's master, for example, is an effort to define genius by contrast, and a commentary

on art in society. His sarcasms relate, indirectly, to Jan: "But it is only the sketches of great men that sell. The public likes canvas and linseed oil for its money, where small reputations are concerned" (348). That his own 'pot-boilers' and Academy exhibits are indistinguishable comments adversely on the institutionalization of art. This makes finer distinctions than Hocking, though finally Mrs. Ewing can do no more with them than undramatically assert her hero's superiority.

Subtler novels are 'Austin Clare's' The Carved Cartoon about Grinling Gibbons and A Dream of Rubens (1882) about twins, Peter and Paul, inspired by Rubens' Descent from the Cross to become artists. The introduction to the first, dated April 1873, conscientiously cites sources to untangle 'the threads of truth and fiction'.¹³ Clare's interest is in the exciting events attending the career of genius. Descriptions of the Court, the Great Fire and plague, using Defoe as source, provide a cinematic backcloth to Gibbons' advancement. Both novels celebrate a particular work of art as their climax - a canvas which wins a Rubens competition, and a Tintoretto copied in wood. Art is elevated by these romance techniques of magnification, quite different from Mrs. Ewing's minute attention to sensibility. Clare uses history boldly, to enhance her artist's progress, free of naturalistic limits. As the described cartoon magnifies the hero's artistry, the fire and plague are occasions to magnify his courage.

Mrs. Ewing's use of history is more problematical. Her plague episode, no romantic enlargement of the hero, actually sets him aside: 'And his achievement was absolutely forgotten in the shadow of the months that followed' (249). These chapters do dispose of redundant characters, but this is rough justification. Unobtrusively, too, they alter the novel's tone, marking the end of Jan's fruitful childhood, initiating a tougher phase. Ties of nurture and authority are loosened. His natural father is cut off, believing him dead,

his adoptive father is broken, as a sensitive, compressed image conveys:

His own little threads of philosophy were all blowing loose and useless in this storm of trouble (257).

The loosening of social bonds by the epidemic results in a new maturity in Jan, social not artistic, though we are presented with its existence rather than tracing its emergence in the low-key chapter 29, intervening between the plague and his abduction, a lull between two crescendos. His new maturity is quietly dramatised:

It was not in moments of tender feeling ... that Jan recalled his foster-brother's dying charge; but as he emptied slops, cleaned grates, or fastened Mrs. Lake's black dress behind. Nor did gratitude flatter his zeal. "Boys do be so ackered with hooks and eyes", the poor woman grumbled..(293).

But this tonal shift hardly accounts for the plague episode, which deflects attention from the artist. Other reasons may lie in the need to fictionalize the community more firmly, in Mrs. Ewing's usual seizing of a chance to lecture on sanitation, and in an ideal pretext supplied by local history. The story of the plague village, Eyam in Derbyshire, is still current; Mrs. Ewing may have seen the grave-records and monument furnished by the rector, Mompessant, and referred to in her novel (254). Also, there were literary retellings for children. Charlotte Yonge recommended The Brave Men of Eyam by E.N. Hoare as authentic 'but unfortunately rather dry'.¹⁴ William and Mary Howitt's more elegant poem, 'The Desolation of Eyam', was probably known to her. The romantic appeal of the rector who nobly sealed off his village makes it potential matter for fiction. Kipling tapped it later in A Doctor of Medicine. But Mrs. Ewing's treatment clumsily blends romantic distance with contemporary propaganda, the emotionalism of Abel's dying vision and pathetic last words with an updating of history that includes cholera as well as plague. The

style is inflated and overcharged:

And so it came about that of four men who stayed the panic by the example of their own courage, who went from house to house, and from sick-bed to sick-bed, who drew a cordon round the parish ... the most active was the old Rector (253).

But her strongest rhetoric serves the cause of reform, not of sentimentality, and it is a very blunt instrument. Advocation of sanitary reform erupts startlingly into the pathos, leading to the unthinking social categorization she elsewhere deplored. Heroism is the preserve of her four middle-class authorities, cowardice that of the poor, from outright looters to those 'of a lighter shade of demoralization' (270). The community previously viewed in its vital helping or hindering links with the hero, in the vivid pig-minding or sign-painting episodes, or as a rustic chorus on his progress, in the 'gaffers' at the Hearts of Oak, is here transformed into the shiftless poor with no observable relationship with the hero at all. This is the reverse of the romance novelist's annexation of history to magnify the artist in his time.

The third, most elusive approach, treating artistic growth through the mode of fantasy, finding poetic or dreamlike metaphors for exceptional sensibilities, is understandably rare in children's fiction. Without the popular application of other approaches, it is less available to mediocre writers. There are few novels like MacDonald's At the Back of the North Wind (1871) which finds symbolic correlatives for its hero's rarity of mind in the night journeys and seductively ambiguous Wind. And Diamond is a child-artist only by symbolic equivalence; his dulcimer is a sign, not a tool, of talent. MacDonald can risk the grand pronouncements about his hero which Mrs. Ewing can only imply through painstaking dramatisation. Diamond is 'possessed of the secret of life', 'an angel of God with something special to say or do'.¹⁵

Mrs. Molesworth's Four Winds Farm (1887), about the conflicts of a child-genius born to farming, is slighter than both MacDonald's and Mrs. Ewing's novels because falling irresolutely between their two methods, perhaps even borrowing from both. Gratian's youth is overwatched by four wind-spirits invoked in poeticisms feeble after MacDonald: 'And again the fresh waft passed across his cheeks, and again the flutter of radiant green and the fair face caught his eyes'.¹⁶ Its setting is a rural community, sketchily drawn after Mrs. Ewing's. The frustrated schoolmaster who fosters Gratian's unnamed talent has neither the depth nor the functional usefulness of Master Swift. Mrs. Molesworth's weakness is to constantly assert her hero's 'uncommonness', 'poetry', 'imagination': "One sees that sometimes in a child living as much alone with nature as he does," says the schoolmaster.¹⁷ But she provides neither Mrs. Ewing's sense of daily development and contact with nature, nor MacDonald's adequate fantasies.

Mrs. Ewing would know all Andersen's poetic fables of the artist, including What the Moon Saw (favourably reviewed in Aunt Judy's, Christmas 1866, 123) and The Bronze Pig, both about painters. The first cuts loose from realism entirely, representing nature's power over the artist by personifications and conceits, like the moon's dictation of subjects to the little hero. Mrs. Ewing, perhaps after Andersen, takes the moon as symbol of elusive beauty pursued by genius, but pins this meaning in childhood by patient, realistic detail:

On the dark ground of the slate he had made a round, white full moon with his soft slate pencil, and had tried hard to draw each cloud as it passed. But the rapid changes had baffled him, and the pencil marks were grey compared with the whiteness of the clouds and the brightness of the moon, and the slate, though dark, was a mockery of the deep, deep, depths of the night sky (115).

The Bronze Pig is closer in its story to Jan. Its hero is an ill-

treated Florentine foundling, a latent artist, solaced by magical rides to the Uffizi on a bronze statue. Like Jan, he is first apprenticed to a trade and only after difficulties becomes an artist, a coda noting that the 1834 Academy showed proof of his greatness. The scene of his 'discovery', chalking a sketch, is a possible source for Jan's similar discovery. But Andersen's tale is an elliptical succession of such moments, a fairy-tale progress. Interestingly, the compact view of the destitute child sheltering in Santa Croce during Mass, a sentimentalization of the Blakeian theme of poverty alongside Christian opulence, is repeated by Mrs. Ewing, but with an anti-sentimental rebuttal of the charge of Christian hypocrisy. She digresses stridently on this favourite theme of morality as individually not socially derived:

... I confess that I never could see anything more incongruous in the confessions and petitions of handsomely-dressed people than of ragged ones (321-2).

Andersen by contrast could hardly be more concise: 'People came and went, mass was celebrated, nobody took any notice of him'.¹⁸ Both heroes are rescued from church by the benevolent gentleman, a foundling tale stereotype. Theoretically, Mrs. Ewing's defence of Christian charity should be the better preparation for this intervention. Actually, its directness and stridency detach us from the situation and disorient us in the narrative. Andersen's fairy-tale rescue, a magical reversal which makes art possible, is more satisfactory. His elliptical fable lacks the integrity and cogency of his best tales, but its extreme selectivity shows one means of avoiding the divergence of theme that progressively overtakes Jan.

Mrs. Ewing can use poetic suggestiveness only in sparing confined images within the naturalistic fabric, like those of the sea or embroidery discussed above, and perhaps in the larger image of the mill, part-symbol part-setting, without MacDonald's or Andersen's

commitment to it as the primary representation of artistic sensibility.

Against all these approaches, Mrs. Ewing's can be distinguished as the slow unfolding of an artist's nature. Her techniques for centralizing this in fiction are distinct. Examination of them will show not only their distinctness, but how their gradual relinquishment results in the weakening of later chapters.

The novel's best scenes dramatize the artist's expanding vision, his acquisition of new skills and subjects - alphabet-making in flour, the comic and tender scenes of drawing pigs, or the mill - with a graphic solidity in representing visual effects. These early chapters hold analysis and dramatisation in fruitful conjunction. Chapter 18 shows this best. It ends with Jan deserting school for an outdoor job, an apparently trivial decision which the chapter reveals as vital to the artist. It opens with widely-ranging analysis of the child's, and artist's, necessary freedom. Perhaps the range is too wide, the over-explanatoriness which can accompany recondite ideas in children's books imminent, but the grip tightens as the passage advances. Through discussion of childhood's taste for tragedy, even sentimentality, Mrs. Ewing indirectly approaches her thesis that nature represents a central freedom and meets all imaginative needs:

But in this rummaging up of the crude tastes, the hot little opinions, the romance, the countless visions, the many affectations of nursery days, there will be recalled also a very real love of nature; varying ... in its intensity from a mere love of fresh air ... to a living romance about the daily walks of the imaginative child (180).

The strength of observation and conviction here carries us forwards. Its relevance as a context for the novel appears only gradually, through the invocation of Wordsworth, as Mrs. Ewing approaches her centre, the artist:

To the romance child-fancy weaves for itself
 about the meadows where milk-maids stand thick
 and pale ... Jan added that world of pleasure,
 open to those gifted with a keen sense of form
 and colour. Strange gleams under a stormy sky,
 sunshine on some kingfisher's plumage rising
 from the river ... stirred his heart with emotions
 he could not have defined (180).

This is the legitimate framework for subsequent action, the rationale
 beneath his slightly comic pig-minding. His freedom is both
 theoretically and dramatically presented, a complementary, not
 tautologous treatment.

The chapter shows Mrs. Ewing's imagination caught up by the
 artist as child, his qualities almost the intensification of childhood
 itself. This extreme reduction of a great Wordsworthian theme perhaps
 contributes to later falling-off. A prolongation for this artist-
 childhood is difficult to conceive - not the vindication of self-
 help, nor the historical novel's consummation of some romantic rise.
 The poetic writers avoid the problem: Andersen's extreme compression
 preserves the focus on childhood, MacDonald's hero, artist only by
 symbolic abstraction, dies a child. With the impositions of a full-
 length novel and melodramatic foundling plot, the bright vitality of
 Mrs. Ewing's childhood scenes can only fade into the common light of
 day.

The London scenes are over-compressed in treating the artist
 because they must advance the foundling. Analysis is not combined
 with dramatisation. For example, the idea is offered that Jan's
 'screeving' on pavements was better training than any 'the Squire
 had been willing to procure for the village genius' (314); but this
 valid idea is scantily treated. We are merely told of Jan's obliga-
 tion to popularize with vulgar, telling subjects, like Prize Pig,
 Playful Porkers, The Faithful Friend, through intelligent but
 undramatic commentary:

The spirit of a popular subject in the fewest possible strokes was what Jan had to aim^{at} for at his daily bread, under peril of bodily harm, hour after hour, for day after day, and his hand gained a cunning it might never otherwise have learned, and could never unlearn now (315).

This is impressive analysis, but unlike that in Chapter 18, it appears in a chapter disjointed and overcomplicated by the coincidental meeting with the father, disjunctions resulting clearly from the contradictory claims of the two themes.

In childhood scenes the artist and foundling themes can be superimposed by their common rooting in place and social group. Later foundlings, in Lob or in Daddy Darwin's Dovecot, all grow to secure identity through a defined regional community. In Jan, Wiltshire provides the specificity for both foundling identity and artistic material, as the novel's use of speech and the function of the mill itself shows.

Mrs. Ewing read John Yonge Ackerman's Glossary of Provincial Words and Phrases in use in Wiltshire (1842).¹⁹ The dialect features she adopts are obvious ones of vocabulary (sprack, bennet, gawney, main) and pronunciation (especially v for f and breaking of vowels in words like 'maester' and 'bwoan') and a quite subtle representation of syntax and idiom, as in the miller's stubbornly axiomatic speech or 'voolish' George's simplicities cloaking a mindless malice. This speech makes the comfortable unifying medium of the artist-foundling's nurture, binding hero and adoptive family. Yet there is an edge of sentimentality in the lord's son speaking like a miller's. Verbal bonding does not exclude hints of superior breeding, in his resistance to treacle-stick bribes, his 'scrupulous pride' under punishment (139). The abrupt disappearance of his dialect in London is symptomatic of a more general inability to resolve these conflicts. Yet Mrs. Ewing tries to arrive at a more successful presentation of dialect as signifying a phase outgrown, in the miller's naive letter

to Jan, making an emotional appeal through its regionalism:

I'd main like to see you, Jan, my dear, and so for sartin would [Master Swift] and all enquiring friends; and I am till deth your loving vather, or as good, and I shan't grudge you if so be you finds a better (347).

This imitates Joe's letter to Pip in his gentility in Great Expectations, even to its postscript, 'I'd main like to see your vace again, Jan, my dear', echoing 'What larks!'²⁰ But like the novel's other Dickensian borrowings, its emotional appeal is coarser, less founded in relationships. The humility here is hardly guaranteed by the earlier portrayal of the miller as a domineering man softened by trouble, ludicrously short of Joe's monumental selflessness of which his letter is the apt expression. Nor does this letter measure any psychological response in the hero, as happens in Pip. Mrs. Ewing retreats from the portrayal of clashing desires and duties at this stage. At most, its dialect makes Jan homesick, a plot mechanism ensuring his later return.

Like dialect, the mill setting was researched in reading and conversations with an ex-miller to glean technical information.²¹ Mrs. Ewing's passion for mills appeared in her earliest yarns: 'We would always let Julie tell us the "Windmill Story" over again, when her imagination was at a loss for a new one', wrote Horatia (18, 18). Accuracy and affection combine in the novel's creation of a place intimately known, in scenes like baby Amabel's dipping in the hopper, or reading lessons in the round house. Specific details of milling, like the boys' sifting flour 'for the education of their thumbs', or tolling grain, consolidate the foundling's nurture within the artisan class. His very arrival in the storm which threatens to tear off the sails symbolically links his fate to the mill's, in a powerfully compressed opening.

Other novelists had used grandly pictorial mills as settings.

William Howitt's The Life and Adventures of Jack of the Mill (1844) is a crudely picaresque novel about a talented boy adopted by a miller and later abducted by gipsies as a 'young prodigy' in the acrobatic line. This mill is a large stage-prop, the colourful sign-post to an incredible progress. Mrs. Charlesworth's Oliver of the Mill (1876), under the graver guise of novel of conversion, has an equally extravagant plot. The miller's life to which the hero is reared is imprecisely viewed as a type of Christian toil. There are brief, child-centred glimpses of 'the wonders of the Mill, the terror of the sails that come round so inevitably, with that strange low swoop'.²² But generally its physical presence is confined to those marks of cleanliness - 'the white bricks neatly sanded' - that signal godliness in evangelical fiction.

Mrs. Ewing's ambitions were to surpass such superficial relationships of place and character. If the century's best accounts of the indelible imprinting of place on young imagination, like The Mill on the Floss, were quite beyond her, then favourites, like Scott or The Children of the New Forest, demonstrated how closely the novel could trace the shaping pressure of region on human lives. On 'local colour' her brother's notes on her methods include:

... it is a great point to get one's mind into the general mental attitude of the people or period one is writing about ... To view right and wrong, pleasure and pain, life and death, with the narrow, rough and ready, timid and tender, mental attitudes of [one's characters], and absolutely apart from the colouring of one's own age, sex etc.²³

In Jan she tries to place the mill and plains as the informing location of characters' lives and artist's imagination. The limitations of both parents are cleverly traced to circumscribed lives, betokened by the mill's inevitable routines. The miller brought home his bride 'to the tall, old mill and the ugly old mother', (16) both imposing themselves on the pliant girl. In Mrs. Lake, Mrs. Ewing

builds a realistic, contradictory character by the process her notes describe. The strong social scenes, like that with the Ammabys' nurse, define her snobbery and lack of discipline. But against this intellectual vacillation is set her strength of feeling, usually maternal and almost entirely established through place, through the tender sight of Abel carrying Jan over the Wolds, or the mill's protection: 'they were well sheltered in the dwelling-room, and could listen complacently to the gusts that whirled the sails' (91). It is through the mill that the depths of her feelings are sounded:

The miller's wife was an uneducated, commonplace woman enough, but, in the excited state of her nervous system, she was as sensible as any poet of a kind of comforting harmony in the wild sounds without ... (22).

The definition of human response to environment here suggests depths in an inarticulate character. The mill is more than the pictorial backdrop it is in Howitt or Charlesworth, though less than the enclosing symbol it is in Eliot. It is a realized presence in characters' lives, through which aspects of their behaviour can be elicited or clarified.

In Jan's case, the mill and 'the poetry of the plains' (351) bind his dual roles. His sensitivity to mill 'music', an analogy insisted on throughout, presents both artist nature and sense of belonging:

... the chains jangled as the sacks of grist went upwards, and the mill-stones ground their monotonous music above his head, these sounds were only a lullaby to this slumbers (44).

In the Wiltshire scenes, such evidence of interacting sensibility and place is plentiful and honest, unexaggerated and unsentimentalized. In London scenes, it is often home recollected which produces the best writing. In the recognition episode, the artist's cry of "Giotto" is falsely climactic, jarring against the purity of feeling in described

memory:

He could have laid his hand in the dark upon the bricks that were weather-stained into fanciful landscapes upon its walls, and planted his feet on the spot where the grass was most worn down about its base (336).

But, like the last chapter's reversion to childhood scenes, these memories contain no psychological advancement. They lock the hero in his own past instead of moving forwards. The novel cannot proceed at the same depth without this intimate relating of person to place, yet the foundling plot requires the very opposite alienation from surroundings. London cannot be apprehended with the same artist's eye as Wiltshire. Mrs. Ewing's reaction is largely to abandon psychological action as a primary aim.

It will be useful to examine the foundling plot more precisely. Throughout there is some uneasiness in reconciling its potential melodrama with the psychological realism consistent with the artist theme. At first, psychological plausibility determines treatment. Jan's bonding to his foster family is realistically projected - he is cut by Mrs. Lake's calling him a 'strange child', fights school-mates who caricature his history, and has no dreams of exalted origins. Subsequent treatment, however, is less straightforward. There is an explicit withdrawal from the plot's most popular features, marked by self-conscious references - 'he ran on and on, as people do in fairy tales' (320), or the overt parody of them given by the urchin:

... he gave it as his opinion that certain penny romances which he named were a joke to it.

"Oh, my! what a pity we can't employ a detective!" he said.

"Who ever know'd a young projidy find his noble relations without a detective? But never mind, Jan. I knows their ways. I'm up to their doges" (343).

However, such parody is confined to this lightweight character, diluted by his comicality, while the plot pursues melodrama

unchecked - 'noble relations' do appear, through coincidences akin to the penny romances. Such devices appear increasingly: the chance meeting of father and son, the identical brother, the confrontation at the Academy. Yet they are not deployed or consummated with melodramatic singlemindedness. Margaret Dalziel in Popular Fiction A Hundred Years Ago comments on the foundling tale's portrayal of the blood-bond as semi-mystical.²⁴ Mrs. Ewing initiates such a view in the chance recognition: 'Jan's face, with a look of gratitude upon it, seemed to startle him afresh' (313). But she proceeds to deny it by reasserting psychology. Jan denies 'the brief dream of the jook ... If love and care ... are parental qualities, why should he seek another parent than Master Swift?' (345). There is a severe clash of intentions here, neither confronted nor solved by Swift and the miller dying, drawing 'a veil over that meeting' (376) with the father, and a hurrying towards adulthood. The dilemma of conflicting melodrama and realism originates in Mrs. Ewing's own irresolutions about nature, nurture and class, but is brought to hopeless confusion by the demands of the artist theme.

Dickens with greater wit had parodied the clichés of estranged fathers and long-lost sons in 'Astleys' and 'The First of May' (Sketches by Boz, 1839), and proceeded to use this identical stock of conventions extensively, with an artistic duplicity beyond Mrs. Ewing. The foundling plot was widespread in children's fiction. Aunt Judy's, 1875, carried Agnes Strickland's Foundling Willie where a historical setting cloaks an absurd plot. Dickens was copied in children's novels; one Oliver Twist imitation, Little Tim, His Troubles and Triumphs, by Gregson Gow, resembles Jan in having two villains, Jem and Bidy, who kidnap the foundling by posing as his parents.²⁵ Mrs. Ewing is superior to these rude juvenile melodramas,

but falls short of the Dickensian manipulation of types. Her villains show her strengths and weaknesses. The triplication of villainy, George, Sal and the Cheap Jack, presents one of her rare portraits of evil, more sinister than Gow's cardboard bogey-men.

George Sannell is excellently conceived because representing menace from a child's view, combining malevolence and stupidity in a parochial Caliban. His own childlikeness paradoxically accompanies spite against children (61), an inspired combination for fictional threat. The paradox underlies Abel's nightmare of a baby wailing at George's 'uncouth grimaces' (72). The episode illustrates the success of Mrs. Ewing's melodramatic method as a gathering of atmospheric details into a climate of menace:

He seemed to himself to fly blindly and vainly through the mill from his tormentor, till George was driven from his thoughts by his coming suddenly upon little Jan, wailing, as he really did wail, round whose head a miller-moth was sailing slowly, and singing in a human voice -

"The swallow twitters on the barn ... " (72).

Elements of the 'real' evening reappear in this crazy configuration: the mill, the moth, the song which is Mrs. Lake's lullaby to Jan. Later in London the song recurs, supposedly charged with these earlier associations of home, as an additional spur to Jan's running away. Here it serves to attach an unspecific, foreboding hostility to the figure of George.

George's speech suggests the fertile combination of village simpleton and folk-tale bogeyman, as when he frightens Abel into falling:

He only clapped his hands upon his knees, in a sort of uncouth ecstasy of spite, saying "Down 'a comes - vlump, like a twoad from roost" (62).

This bizarre linguistic violence reflects vividly his disconnectedness from ordinary motivation.

The broad outlines of his journeyman role, uncouth speech, and hatred of the hero are taken from Orlick in Great Expectations, though Orlick's satanic associations with the forge²⁶ are subdued into mere 'impishness' and associations with the floury mill. Threatening blackness becomes sinister whiteness. Images also attribute an animal cunning to him: he drives Jan out 'as a dog worries a cat, crying "Come out, thee little varment" (61). It seems probable, too, that Mrs. Ewing used Ackerman's Wiltshire Tales, called nine 'faithful pictures of rustic life', though they are exaggerated burlesques.²⁷ Wat Sannel's Ride to Highworth provided the local name and Giles Cawbacon, about a 'gawney' hired by millers at a mop who later joins the militia, provided George's career, though Mrs. Ewing's Mop is much more precisely drawn as a sordid reflection of the villain's taste.

On these foundations a strong portrait is built through both realistic dialect and melodramatic association. George's leering and squinting indicate moral distortion, gothic mutilations like the Cheap Jack's hump or Sal's cleft lip. Jan's instinctive refusal to draw him (109) signifies their moral opposition. All this works well to surround the foundling with unspecific hostility. But the plot fails to capitalize on these possibilities. What threat does he present? The famous letter he finds lacks true melodramatic significance. His reappearance at the end is without psychological significance for the artist, or mechanical significance for the foundling whose origins are disclosed by different means. In Dickens, such reappearances invariably serve the melodrama. Orlick's letter and reemergence in Pip's life (Ch. 52) advance action considerably. More fundamentally, Dickens' coincidences are not matters of contingency, but, symbolically, serve a social view which traces a path from Satis House to the Hulks. Mrs. Ewing

cannot manage the mechanics of melodrama because fundamentally they serve no view she has of the world.

Perhaps aware that George was peripheral to plot, or as a sensational duplication of evil, Mrs. Ewing provides a more efficient threat to the hero in Cheap Jack. This portrait of hostility, too, compounds realism with the associationist techniques of folk tale and melodrama. Some of these come filtered through Dickens, diluted and scaled down. His rootlessness, alternations between unctuousness and violence, and combined roles of fence and child-stealer, all suggest Fagin. From Dickens comes the much-reiterated physical quirk: Sal is never mentioned without her cleft lip, the Cheap Jack is dehumanized by references to his dwarfishness. He mirrors George in his loathing of children and creatures, and his presentation through animal images, following Sal's heels 'like a discontented cur' (169), scrambling about the mill 'like a deformed cat' (106). But such gothic suggestiveness is sharpened by exact detail. His speech, like George's, was verified by observation and reading. Mrs. Ewing's diary (June 29, 1861) noted her meeting with a 'travelling bagman' selling sketches. The type is described by Mayhew, and in 1873 (Diary March 5, April 1, 13) Mrs. Ewing read London Labour and the London Poor, evidently for her novel. Mayhew's Tally Packman or Cheap John provided details of stock-in-trade, the links with swag-shop proprietors, and the itinerant life spanning town and country. His analysis of the packman's operations becomes the basis of the scene where Mrs. Lake buys a picture:

"Do you require anything in my way today, ma'am ...?"
Without waiting for a reply, he then runs over a
programme of the treasures he has to dispose of ... 28

Mrs. Ewing develops this sparse account to enlarge our view of Mrs. Lake, as well as establish the methods of roguery:

The long disuse of such powers of judgement as she had, and long habit of always giving way, had helped to convert Mrs. Lake's naturally weak will and unselfish disposition into a sort of mental pulp, plastic to any pressure from without (100).

Mayhew's record of rather genteel patter becomes more racy, both comic and sinister, in Mrs. Ewing. But the scene's climax is not in its human interaction, but the ironic coincidence which makes this sordid villain Jan's introduction to Art. The picture he sells depicts willows, mill and child to accentuate coincidence. The villain's acting thus unwittingly for the hero's good prefigures the later kidnapping, also a blessing for both artist and foundling. But such a dexterity of coincidence is unusual in the novel.

The evil represented part-realistically, part-fantastically by this villainous trio promises well for melodrama, but suffers from indecisive handling. Their threat is hardly viewed internally; there is little sense of Jan's repugnance at the Cheap Jack for a father. Nor is external action excitingly handled to show innocence assailed, what Dickens called in Oliver Twist, 'the principle of Good surviving through every adverse circumstance'.²⁹ Melodramatic frissons are strongest in the Wiltshire chapters, like Jan's glimpse of Sal's face at the window sensationally coinciding with Swift's reading of 'Comes the blind Fury with the abhorred shears', a successful borrowing of the window motif from Oliver Twist. But such moments have neither culmination nor answering retribution. There is a carelessness which melodrama cannot afford. Innocence is rewarded, but guilt goes unmarked. Far from the amazing harrowing of Fagin, this foundling plot forgets its villains.

The failure to resolve these basic tensions is symptomatic of a general disintegration towards the end. The distant pose and nostalgic air of the last chapter, when the wind blows as it did at the outset, is suitably circular and conclusive. The emotive

evocations of the church window, of brotherly love and Pastoral care, return us instinctively to the novel's most vital, successful area. But these are salvage operations. By the time the hero arrives in London, Mrs. Ewing can no longer approach her dual themes conjointly. Artist and foundling, both symbolically distinct and driven towards self-realization, can have common origins, intensely imagined in the novel. But to give them a common destiny was beyond her vision, or plotting. The Royal Academy and English squirearchy, scantily indicated, certainly do not constitute such a destiny. There is a feeling of fragmentation, of alternation, as Jan pursues art and parentage. Her usual problems of envisaging maturity with undiminished vitality and integrity of detail are multiplied by the dualism. She did, however, learn from the novel. The artist whose seed-time is here so brightly and originally imagined she never attempted again. The foundling was to reappear often and successfully, but without the heightened colouration of melodrama, and in the closer confines of the nouvelle.

Chapter 6. Fairy Tales and Parables of the Seventies

It is paradoxical that a writer troubled by the plotting of her novels should concurrently show herself so adept at the short, tight tale. Martin Price draws a convenient distinction:

Only through implying statements do novels achieve form. The tale is a naive form whose shape is its very end. We delight in the fact that it comes out. It has a kind of symmetry, clear design, an artful building of suspense, and a satisfying resolution, like the resolution of a musical form. But the novel is more than such a tale. The resolution of its form is somehow consonant with the disclosure of meaning... But of course what interests us about the meaning is how it is earned. The statement may be, after all, somewhat banal, or at least, familiar, once we articulate it as theme. 1

In this prolific decade Mrs. Ewing's novels confront the problem of resolutions that will at least sustain the meanings disclosed in their ambitious beginnings, without capitulating to the banalities of some of their popular narrative models. Chapters 2 - 5 have discussed the strategies she brought to this task. Chapters 6 - 7 will discuss the wide range of short stories which shows a grasp of the naive form whose end is in its patterning. The experiments begun in Canada, the consequence of her early oral story-telling and a saturation in 'fairy tales of the Grimm type' (18, 181-2) resulted in particularly compact structures whose events carry their main burden of meaning. The experiments ended in the publication of Old-fashioned Fairy Tales and its critical preface in 1882.

Whereas Jan had implied meanings about the formative pressures of landscape and human affections on the developing artistic mind, carried by description, analysis, or symbolic association often quite outside the narrated events of the foundling plot, a typical fairy tale, Murdoch's Rath, has meanings about generosity versus greed carried directly by its duplicated events. Its naive bipartite structure reflects moral alternatives with extreme clarity. The

difficulties of the novels lay in evolving plots, or at least narrative structures, consonant with the subtleties of meaning Mrs. Ewing discovered in the child's human and environmental relations, whereas the difficulties of the stories were sometimes in over-rigid structures, divorced from the vital cultural matter that gives folk lore its validity, becoming mere mechanical designs in the weakest of the collection, like "I Won't" or Good Luck is Better Than Gold.

The experiments described to Mrs. Gatty as 'new combinations of the Step-Mother, the Fox, the Luck Child ... of the old traditions' (18, 181-2) stimulated Mrs. Ewing to experiment with other brief forms: parable, fable and legend. These, and her last rather lacklustre dream fantasies from the sixties, present a range mirroring something of the enormous Victorian efflorescence of fairy tale and fantasy for children. Elizabeth Cook commented:

A Grimm tradition and an Andersen tradition both flourished in the nineteenth century; and in both of them writers fluctuated between interest in what children liked, and interest in what adults ought to know, and interest in what they wanted to say themselves.²

Mrs. Ewing was unusual in having a small foot in both these camps, folklorist and fantastic. This chapter will examine first the Old-fashioned Fairy Tales and then the literary parables against this Victorian spectrum of fairy tale, from the newly-collected to the newly-minted.

The term 'fairy tale' was relatively new, entering English only about 1749, possibly through translation of Madame d'Aulnoy's Contes des Fées (French, 1698).³ Mrs. Ewing says little about the French tradition, although early extravagances in the family magazines about kings, dwarfs, blue birds and golden balls suggest Perrault's repertoire. But the cast of her nineteen fairy tales is quite different. There are no royal universals, no talking animals,

no tutelary fairies of the French or moralist school, like those in Mrs. Gatty's The Fairy Godmothers. Instead there are peasants and widows, Scotsmen and Irishmen, cobblers, millers and fiddlers. Supernatural powers are regional - necks and nixes, or elemental - water sprites and hillmen. Three tales, The Cobbler and the Ghosts, "I Won't", Knave and Fool, have no supernatural element at all, but the fabulist's encapsulation of folk wisdom, harsh lessons in stupidity and greed. The personae are unmistakably those of folk lore, though the 'oral tradition' invoked so vehemently in her letter and preface would probably not be known to her through the best scholarly collections.

This is certainly true of British material. Joseph Jacobs' English Fairy Tales (1890) and More English Fairy Tales (1894) came too late for her. So did Andrew Lang's eclectic collections begun in 1889 with The Blue Fairy Book and continued until 1910. Yet her tales do indicate an awareness of native tradition. The residue of English fairy mythology had survived often through the chap-book or penny history,⁴ in spite of the eighteenth century's insertion of moral or didactic material for young readers. It is telling that of chap-book modes listed by John Ashton in Chap-Books of the Eighteenth Century (1882), as religious, supernatural, superstitious, romantic, humorous, legendary, criminal, historical and biographical,⁵ Mrs. Ewing's nineteen tales provide examples of all but the last two, though in more artistic styles. And her heroes are mostly akin to the two archetypes Ashton singles out as most popular in fugitive literature: the insignificant hero of great cunning, and the simpleton.

In The Dictionary of British Folk-Tales Katherine Briggs claims that in Britain folk narratives are less common than folk legends which are distinguished by particularity of location and terrain.⁶

This explicitness of landscape Mrs. Ewing imitates, in the lake in The Neck or the town with its outlying tracks, one safe, one bewitched, in The Fiddler in the Fairy Ring. Briggs elsewhere comments on the mid-nineteenth century resurgence of more tricky, irresponsible fairies in literary tales drawing on native stock, citing Amelia and the Dwarfs as one example. She continues:

We are here in a different world from that of the sophisticated, moralizing fairies, and the morals in these stories are not much more obtrusive than they are in many of the folk-tales, though it cannot be denied that the tales are written around them. We have returned to the morality of the folk fairies. The Industrious Apprentice is no longer the hero; generosity and a merry heart are the prime virtues, and a miser is the greatest villain. ⁷

This describes the climate of Mrs. Ewing's tales exactly. The largest group, about wish-granting and fairy rewards, establishes a world in which kindness, good-temper and hospitality are primary laws, and they do so with the brisk attack of oral folk tale, though with a more self-conscious wit:

There was not a nicer boy in all Ireland than Pat, and clever at his trade too, if only he'd had one.

But from his cradle he learned nothing (small blame to him with no one to teach him!), so when he came to years of discretion, he earned his living by running messages for his neighbours; and Pat could always be trusted to make the best of a bad bargain, and bring back all the change, for he was the soul of honesty and good nature.

(Murdoch's Rath, 3, 96).

The folk exaltation of a merry heart colours The Little Darner and The Ogre Courting whose heroines coolly outwit cannibalistic ogres, the first by darning whilst awaiting the knife, the second, Managing Molly, by cooking.⁸ Women are strongly represented in these tales. Mrs. Ewing's return to undidactic magic appears in supernatural powers which are only intermittently part of human moral order. Their rewards are capricious (The Laird and the Man of Peace), their tempers uncertain (The Nix in Mischief), their magic indifferent to

human suffering, as in the grim The Fiddler in the Fairy Ring which reworks the common motif of hectic fairy dancing, fatal to mortals:

His dead body was found upon the downs, face downwards, with the fiddle in his arms. Some said he had really found the fiddle where he^{had} left it...But others laid his death at the door of the fairy dancers (123).

Even in the different, smaller group of religious or social parables, Widows and Strangers, or The Magician Turned Mischief Maker, with more portentous style and some ungainly personifications, the values offered remain central to folk tradition, charity to strangers and honest dealing.

Unexpectedly, a British legend underlies one of the most Christianized and elaborate stories, The Neck, though as its title suggests the material also appears in Scandinavian lore. Through Andersen Mrs. Ewing already knew of the water sprite who longed for a human soul, but she encountered 'a lovely little (real) legend' from Keightley about a pastor's children who taunt a neck to despair, but are eventually persuaded to comfort him with the doctrine of Christian redemption. She wrote to Mrs. Gatty:

He appeared like a boy with long fair hair and a red cap. They also appear in the form of a little old man wringing out his beard into the water. I ventured to give my Neck both shapes according to his age. All the rest is de moi-même (18, 185-6).

The particular congruence of Christian feeling⁹ and mythopoeic elements that makes The Little Mermaid such a piercing tale is faintly matched by The Neck. Their difference in stature is revealing. Andersen's tale approaches universality as a statement of suffering rather than redemption. Unnervingly, the structure implies the validity of sacrifice, the consolation of a happy end, in the mermaid's reborn hope of Paradise as 'a daughter of the air', while the more powerful core of symbols - water and land, sun and

moon, legs and fish-tail, mutilated tongue and sharp knives - overpowers us with the sense of unreclaimed pain. Mrs. Ewing's story is less because free of such tension and unconnected with so rich a cluster of images. It is this last omission which limits most of the tales, as we shall see. However, The Neck is an intelligent reworking of traditional matter, dignified but not pompous in style. Its well-patterned structure, the part most obviously 'de moi-même', is delicately articulated as a quest, in itself a common enough mythic design, but here pointed through a blend of the seven Christian acts of mercy¹⁰ and the Orphic connotations of the neck's harping:

...And he played so sweetly that the winds stayed to listen to him, and the sun lingered in his setting, and the moon rose before her time. And the strain was in praise of immortality (25).

Biblical cadences reverberating with natural images raise the style to unstrained gravity:

... and when she could see his face clearly, her soul passed, and her body fell like a snapped flower to the earth (33).

or

... the melody went straight to the heart of the hermit as a sunbeam goes into a dark cave (26).

Such images arise naturally from the tale's physical world, but are arresting enough to extend its emotional range. The tale succeeds by the very fidelity of all its elements to the central meaning of redemption, with little of Andersen's contrary stress on unredeemed suffering. The neck's longing for immortality is distantly, elegiacally experienced, barring the impulsive identification readers feel with Andersen's mermaid. It is limited by the very homogeneity of its effects, lacking in the equivocal The Little Mermaid with its daring and disturbing symbolic content.

Mrs. Ewing was certainly more familiar with German than British folk matter. Grimm's Fairy Tales had been in English since 1823,

translated first by Edgar Taylor, and the Opies claim that Kinder Und Haus - Märchen aroused more attention and controversy than any other traditional literature in the period.¹¹ Mrs. Ewing knew Grimm and Bechstein intimately in translations and in German.

However, her own translations of fairy tales for Aunt Judy's provided salutary lessons on stylistic excesses and spurious magic remote from Grimm's spare narratives. She translated Reinick's A Child's Wishes in 1866, on a favourite theme, the human capacity for bungling magic wishes. The boy-hero first wishes himself too old, then too young for his little sweetheart. Only the last wish makes them children for ever 'of one heart and of one soul' (17, 297). These issues of growth and death are merely skimmed by a trivial narrative and blurred by an effusive style. By 1876 when she made 'free adaptations' of contemporary German tales in The Little Parsnip Man and The Snarling Princess her style was more sophisticated, trimmed to carry narrative more quickly. The first is a feeble variation on a theme popular in newly-minted fairy tale, the lonely child magically granted some compensatory night journey. Psychologically based on the consolations of dream, the theme can be sensitively worked, as in The Carved Lions, The Cuckoo Clock, At the Back of the North Wind or The Bronze Pig. But in The Little Parsnip Man it provides only a mechanical structure and sentimental ending. The Snarling Princess, similar to Mary de Morgan's A Toy Princess,¹² is about a spoilt girl turned into a pine tree by didactic magic; both these tales have the reforming fairy godmother and ironically loaded style that usually accompanies such didacticism:

...She had been in several distinct rages; first with her court ladies, secondly with her dressmaker, thirdly with the sky, which in spite of her wishes for fine weather, had become overcast with clouds (17, 263).

This world is remote from that of the 'old-fashioned' imitations.

Her most intriguing translations were of Turkish folk tales,

as Tales of the Khoja, in Aunt Judy's, April - December, 1874, accomplished through Barker's Reading Book of the Turkish Language and Major Ewing's haphazard knowledge.¹³ There are fifty-two of these pungent fables 'thoroughly Eastern in character, and full of dry wit' (18, 63). The other originals Mrs. Ewing claimed were 'not worth translating'.¹⁴ Actually a religious teacher, in Turkish lore the Khoja has a protean literary identity as wise man, knave, and fool. Both the character and his neatly structured adventures are closer to oral tradition and to Mrs. Ewing's taste than the artificial German adaptations. She could learn from their strict economy of means. Their outstanding quality is absurdity, an epigrammatic style to recount chaos. The Khoja shoots his own coat on the washing line thinking it a thief and then thanks heaven he was not wearing it at the time (17, 203). Tales like The Khoja's Quilt (No. 13) or The Khoja and the Thief (8) apparently deny morality in favour of nonsense; when robbed, the Khoja pursues the thief to his home, bringing the rest of his chattels and saying " ... we are moving into this house, aren't we?" (206).

The whole spate of nonsense writing was more warmly welcomed by Aunt Judy's than many children's periodicals.¹⁵ William Brighty Rand's Lilliput Levée had been reviewed as 'a delicious book' with 'an undercurrent of quizzical wisdom throughout'.¹⁶ A book of grotesque stories, The Man in the Moon, and other stories, was greeted as 'A fantastic collection of nonsensical stories ... entirely adapted for nursery reading ... The book is abundantly adorned with outline illustrations, somewhat in the style of E. Lear's Book of Nonsense'.¹⁷ The Gattys themselves had enjoyed inventing Lear-like rhymes. 'Made "nonsense verses" with Maggie', wrote Julie in her diary, January 22, 1861. This taste shows how congenial was the Khoja tales' comic distortion of the logical world, quite

distinct from Arabian Nights exoticism, or the sophisticated satire of the invented Eastern tale by Beckford or Voltaire, or even the Eastern Tales published by Aunt Judy's in 1875 for readers 'delighted with the stories of the Khoja',¹⁸ but actually full of earnest morality and self-conscious foreign detail.

Her Turkish translations probably did influence her subsequent fairy tales. Besides sheer absurdity, the Khoja tales reflect violence rendered impotent by a totally comic treatment. The Khoja and the Ten Blind Men (34) tells how the hero carried each across the river for a penny. Dropping and drowning the tenth, he remarks "One penny less to pay" (17, 233). This blend appears in the untypical tale "I Won't", a bizarre fable of wilfulness carried to suicidal lengths. The hero's Eastern name, Abinadab, suggests it is a product of the Khoja translations, though with a longer, repeating pattern, as he sacrifices livelihood, home, friends and nose, rather than give way on any point. The folk pattern is universal, but the psychology is discordantly modern, a view of psychic alienation. Like the Khoja, the hero offers ratiocination to justify irrational acts: "Matters have come to a pretty pass, when a man's own nose is to stand in his light" (130), he exclaims and cuts off the end. The tale falters through clashing intentions; it is too painful and moral for nonsense, too absurd for the cautionary twist Mrs. Ewing tries to give its ending. She offends against the fairy tale's usual resolution by having a hero 'never heard of again' and yet allows us to contemplate this seriously instead of as an added absurdity.

Most of this translation work must have returned her firmly to Grimm as the finest model for her fairy tales. Her Preface, naming them as 'household stories', confirms this (3, vii-x). It is a strong Preface, consolidating theories about fairy tales first

compiled thirteen years before in her Canadian letters to Mrs. Gatty. It provides justification of the whole genre as 'valuable literature for the young', rather, one feels, as a timely manifesto of her views than because she felt vulnerable before Puritans or moralists of the Trimmer mould who might survive anachronistically into the century. It was thirty years since Dickens in 'Frauds on the Fairies' had stated the responsible position on fairy tales:

... a nation without fancy, without some romance, never did, never can, never will, hold a great place under the sun.

... the little books themselves, nurseries of fancy as they are, should be preserved. To preserve them in their usefulness, they must be as much preserved in their simplicity, and purity, and innocent extravagance, as if they were actual fact.¹⁹

Mrs. Ewing, with less crusading vigour and imaginative breadth, repeats this plea for the tales' integrity, which she hopes to emulate by reproducing both their 'ideas and types' and their 'brevity and epigram'. Following Dickens, she asserts their 'positive uses in education, which no cramming of facts, and no merely domestic fiction can serve'. She defends 'wonder tales' as artistic territory where 'children's ideas of truth' develop, adding that children's differentiation between fancy and falsehood is often more certain than adults' 'care-clogged memories' recall. This argues more temperately what her favourite, Ruskin, had pronounced in absolving folk lore from immorality and untruthfulness in his famous preface to German Popular Stories, translated by John Camden Hotten, 1868:

A child should not need to choose between right and wrong. It should not be capable of wrong; it should not conceive of wrong ... [but be] true, with an undistinguished, praiseless, unboastful truth in a crystalline household world of truth.²⁰

Without this extreme idealism, Mrs. Ewing shares Ruskin's view of the necessary contribution of fairy tale to the 'crystalline household world of truth'.

Her argument for the seriousness of authentic fairy tradition was common to other children's writers who, like Andrew Lang, deprecated the modern 'dull, fancyless, didactic fairies' on one hand and the prettified and bewinged creatures on the other.²¹

Charlotte Yonge also prefaced her longest fairy tale, The History of the Life and Death of the Good Knight, Sir Thomas Thumb (1865), with a critical statement:

... The view has been to adhere as closely as possible to the legitimate and English fairy lore. Arbitrary fairies are very pretty additions to a tale of wonder; but they are not the beings that the popular mind regarded with a strange mixture of sportiveness, dread, and compassion; and as such, it has been my desire to represent them. 22

The fairies in Tom Thumb, however, are further from tradition than Mrs. Ewing's capricious sprites. Neither arbitrary nor didactic, they are agents in a tale of Christian chivalry. There is nothing ponderous in the treatment. Tom's size is a source of humour. But the plentiful miniaturized details communicate predominantly the heroism of the small against the great; they channelize Christian feeling, especially at Tom's death from a poisonous spider. Prime virtues in this world are not 'generosity and a merry heart', but loyalty and faith.

Mrs. Ewing's tales are not better than Tom Thumb, but they are closer to 'English fairy lore', perhaps because her understanding of that lore was more comprehensive than Yonge's, certainly more accepting of its earthy human content. More clear-sighted and penetrating than many contemporary theories is the Preface's central claim that fairy tales have a unique capacity for extending experience; as the Opies say, 'By going beyond possibility they enlarge our daily horizon':²³

Like Proverbs and Parables, they deal with first principles under the simplest forms. They convey knowledge of the world, shrewd lessons of virtue and vice, of common sense and sense of humour, of the seemly and the absurd, of pleasure and pain, success and failure, in narratives where the plot moves briskly and dramatically from a beginning to an end. They treat, not of a corner of a nursery or a playground, but of the world at large, and life in perspective; of forces visible and invisible; of Life, Death, and Immortality (ix).

The largeness of the claim, as she knew, is hardly supported by her own work, but is confirmed by modern theorists and the subsequent wider publication of folk fairy tales. The main contention that 'They cultivate Imagination' is accompanied by some defensive period evasions about their Christian usefulness as recommendations of charity, and about their brevity excusing their content of crime and violence.

However, the centrality of imagination to her theory has been widely confirmed by modern apologists like Tolkien. His influential analysis distinguishes the primary phenomenal world of the senses, represented by realistic fiction, from the Secondary World of the Imagination, encapsulated by myth and fairy tale.²⁴ Bruno Bettelheim's selective examination of tales in the light of psychology generally and Freudian psychoanalysis particularly, maps this Secondary World more precisely, as representing 'inner states of ^{the} mind by means of images and actions'.²⁵ The educative value of such images for children is to 'promote insights and nourish hopes', a psychologist's clarification - consolidated in enlightening discussion of the greatest tales - of what Ruskin and Mrs. Ewing, in 'forces visible and invisible', only instinctively recognized.

Consideration of this psychological dimension suggests the limitations of Mrs. Ewing's enterprise. Cleverly imitated situations cannot reproduce the language of symbols which expresses unconscious matter in myth and fairy tale.²⁶ We remain aware of a contriving

intelligence at work, unlike true folk tale, honed to anonymity and appealing simultaneously to conscious and unconscious mind. Imitation rarely attains such simultaneity. It does so perhaps in the best of Andersen whose perfect fluency of style releases us from awareness of the manipulating author. Auden would argue that George MacDonald also achieves simultaneity in fiction like The Golden Key, demanding not interpretation, but total surrender to its symbolic world.²⁷

The 'old-fashioned' fairy tales rarely approach such levels. Yet their significant features often fulfil Bettelheim's conditions. There is the frequent polarization of qualities, typical of children's thinking. In Knave and Fool and The Widows and The Strangers this is done with cautionary intent which Bettelheim believes is a limiting factor since it penetrates only the conscious level. Certainly a much better tale is The First Wife's Wedding-Ring which, like Cinderella, Hansel and Gretel and Snow White, opposes the powerful bad stepmother and ineffectual good father in uncautionary, undidactic ways that simply place a burden on the hero to prove himself. These three tales indicate the range of Mrs. Ewing's use of the pattern.

Knave and Fool is a simpleton story which denies the traditional satisfaction of seeing the weak triumph. Maureen Duffy comments that the fool-hero 'carries our hopes' because we all fear for our potency or attractiveness, making his success a psychological necessity.²⁸ But instead, Mrs. Ewing's structure, a relentless comic sequence, reflects his progressive duping by the knave to the point of physical humiliation in the stocks. The polarization has no reversal; knavery and folly are indelible. The tale exchanges Tolkien's element of Consolation in a deeper sense of justice, for ordinary probability and the nuggets of common sense: 'It was very

hard on the Fool; but what can one expect if he keeps company with a Knave?' (163). Moreover, a prevailingly ironic style and the knave's explicit use of proverbial lore for trickery open the gap between this imitation and the folk material it copies. Several of the tales remain on this superficial, moralistic level, adept vehicles for home truths.

The Widows and the Strangers could only be a nineteenth century tale. The polaric pattern here is the choice presented to good and bad characters, resulting in rewards and punishments, best known in Perrault's Les Fées (Diamonds and Toads), but transformed into a Christian exemplum. The transformation is sensitively worked; the choosers become biblical widows, the supernatural agent a monk with a 'radiant face'. What in Freudian terms are good and bad aspects of the mother become the rewarding and punishing aspects of the deity. We are in territory between folk tale and the full-blown literary religious tale like Wilde's The Selfish Giant or Mary de Morgan's The Seeds of Love. It has the spare frame of the first without the uncontrolled proliferation of symbols of the second. It is well-made and well-told, with acute parallel details marking good and bad, and a passable simulation of rustic thinking; the 'bad' widow ponders what to give the destitute guests: "And who knows if they're decent folk at all? Likely enough they're two hedge birds, who ... never slept under anything finer than a shock of straw in their lives" (83). But the very tightness of its moral equations, each widow gets exactly what she gives, limits it to one meaning. Unlike its models, it has no suppressed content, no reverberations.

Louis MacNeice in Varieties of Parable discussed varying relationships between the two levels of parable, between 'manifest' and 'latent' content, especially in an uneven fantasy like The Water-

Babies.²⁹ Where meanings are strictly assigned, as in The Widows and the Strangers, the two levels have a fixed, direct relationship. The First Wife's Wedding-Ring is richer on both levels because the relationship is indirect. It opens with an urgent folk situation, the existential problem of being turned from home by an evil parent. As in the best tales, morality is not at issue, but the 'assurance that one can succeed', as Bettelheim says.³⁰ The hero's sad departure and triumphant return are marked by a Dick Whittington device, reiterated references to bells, sun and hawthorne, which ring, shine and bloom for his success. The device stamps the tale's circularity, it registers the fulfilment of our initial hopes, and nature's participation in the hero's struggle. Other familiar motifs are treated with sensitivity to their traditional meanings: the hero's service with an ogre, his accomplishment of an impossible task (cutting through a stone forest) by contrary magic and kindness, his proof of selfhood. Time is treated representatively: a year's service indicates merely a long fixed span. Objects, like the trees and ring, are invested with potency merely by naming, not description. The style is plainer because extraordinariness emerges in happenings not surfaces, and needs no emotional colouring:

Without more ado, however, he counted seventy from the old place, and hit the seventieth tree such a blow with his axe, that it came crashing down then and there. And he found that, one after another, the trees yielded to his blows as if they were touch-wood (145-6).

This pruned style, free of moralistic irony or the whimsicality that debilitates her verse, comes closest to the ideal of the preface and gives the tale reverberations quite apart from any poetic or decorative linguistic effects.

None of the tales have the characteristic 'happy ever after' ending. Some, like The Little Darnier, make briefly explicit the

moral direction of their narrative: the bad little girls learn to darn like the good. Others, like The Cobbler and the Ghosts, a tale after the Lucky Hans or Epaminondas pattern, moralistically return the simpleton to his original happy poverty. But some, including The First Wife's Wedding-Ring, encompass the fact of death: 'But the soldier took his wife into the city, and cared for her to the day of her death' (148). This type of ending, Bettelheim believes, is admirable because it faces mortality while stressing the bonding which alone makes it tolerable.³¹

The strongest tales are those, like this, which place the hero in an extreme position and trace the survival of threat. They deal with 'first principles' rather than the slighter 'shrewd lessons of virtue and vice' (Preface). Tolkien identified four basic elements of fairy tale as Fantasy, Recovery, Escape and Consolation. To these Bettelheim added Threat. Those tales are slight which encapsulate folk wisdom, like Good Luck is Better than Gold, or offer a raw view of humanity, like The Nix in Mischief, contracted versions of those family conflicts that concurrently occupy her realistic domestic stories. Better tales are those meeting Tolkien's conditions by tracing some threat to life or selfhood, where her imagination, subjected to greater pressure, worked closest to her models. Two of these, The Ogre Courting and The Little Darner, contain the suppressed matter of cannibalism, producing a certain tension through the unexcited surface of their prose. Escape is earned by cunning. The first has the concentration on domestic habits and objects within an urgent situation characteristic of local folk legend. Molly's strategies for outwitting the ogre resemble Clever Oonagh's in the Cucullin legends, both in their reliance on food, and the dry wit of their accomplishment. The ogre eats hare-stew and thanks her:

"Don't mention it, sir!" said Molly ... "The fewer rats the more corn. How do you cook them?" (62).

Cucullin cracks his teeth on an iron loaf and Oonagh feigns surprise:

"Why...that's only Fin's bread! Even his child in the cradle there can eat it!" 32

The Little Darnier also offsets the violence of its material with domestic trappings and the mundane regularity of numbers - six girls escape, as five pigs are eaten (Aunt Judy's published it as The Six Little Girls and the Five Little Pigs). Here Mrs. Ewing approaches the fertile tensions of greater fairy tales. The story's numerous echoes suggest the closeness. Hansel and Gretel underlies the forbidden wood skirting the community, the needle trail and the threatening cooking pot. Jack and the Beanstalk underlies the child-eating ogre, the slightly humanized ogress, and the powerful intimations of cannibalism. The little girls imparting human flavour to the stew with their fingers is as fascinatingly horrible as grinding bones for bread. The tightness of the narrative, with its progressive emergence from Threat, fulfils Tolkien's requirement of satisfying Escape. The externalization of conflict, at key points, is through objects not analysis:

"Why don't you go on darning?" asked the Ogress.
"Alas! dear mother," said the child, "when I hear you sharpening that terrible knife my hands tremble so that I cannot thread my needle" (111).

The child's control of objects manifests her life-preserving resourcefulness in the same satisfying way as Gretel's manipulation of the witch, if with diminished universality. Tolkien identified in Fantasy 'the power of giving to ideal creations the inner consistency of reality'. There is greater consistency in The Little Darnier, a sense that inherited elements are used beyond the level of plot for multiple subsumed meanings. Mrs. Ewing does tap deeper springs than in the neat but purely moralistic tales.

To gauge her experiment in the context of her development it

is useful to look beyond her Preface to her attitudes to the fairy scene generally. At one end of the spectrum flourished the arbitrary fantasies, what Tolkien calls 'a dreadful undergrowth of stories written or adapted to what was ... conceived to be the measure of children's minds'.³³ Aunt Judy's published its share of these, alongside Old-fashioned Fairy Tales. The titles are expressive: Florian and the Fairies by Viscountess Enfield and A Palace in Cloudland by L.M.G. (May Day, 1868), The Princess Discontent (Christmas, 1867), or Willy and Mary in Search of Fairyland (Christmas, 1877). Mrs. Ewing herself had uneasy brushes with this world of miniaturized faerie, typified in Allingham's popular poem 'Up the Airy Mountain'. She translated Fedor Flinzer's similar 'The Adventures of an Elf. A Picture Poem for Little Ones', with fashionable silhouette drawings, in 1875. Its whimsical narrative of elves, with rose thorn swords, riding mice, is sometimes unintentionally neutralized by its banality of rhyme:

And creeping up behind the beast
Intent upon the honey feast,
Before it had the slightest inkling
The rope was round it in a twinkling (9, 153-61).

She also wrote a story for Little Folks (1871), never reprinted and not in Eden's bibliography, which inhabits the same meretricious world. The Fairy Fair deals in wee men in 'high-crowned hats and grass-green cloaks',³⁴ just the sickly pabulum for little folks against which her Preface takes a stand. The best fiction of this type, like Jean Ingelow's Mopsa the Fairy (1869), admired by Mrs. Ewing, succeeds by a fertile stream of inventions - the nest of fairies, magic Albatross, transformed bats - decorating a strong basic narrative. Ingelow's underlying form is the journey, the much-used quest pattern of fairy-fictions as diverse as The Water-Babies and Phantastes. Mopsa's progress through the hazards and wonders is to queenship. Like Ingelow's novel, The Fairy Fair

imagines the incursion of children into fairyland. But it lacks either the psychological bonding of reality and dream of early Ewing fantasies, or Ingelow's ability to make fairyland a sensuous reflection of human imagination.

Mrs. Ewing was not good at supplying sensuous detail detached from the bedrock of naturalism. She was perhaps suspicious of it in other people's fantasies, too. Significantly, she says little about MacDonald, the contemporary who best succeeded in making fantasy a personal form, as MacNeice says, approaching the Ineffable through overwhelming compilations of sensuous effects.³⁵ Aunt Judy's (1868) grudgingly reviewed Dealings with the Fairies (1867) as a 'pleasant variety of stories', but far below Andersen.³⁶ Whereas in 1875 Mrs. Ewing warmly reviewed new collections of Bechstein and Grimm illustrated by Cruikshank, and Doyle's The Famous Fairy Tales of all Nations for giving children 'the work of real artists', to match the tales' artistry.³⁷ She praised Francis Paget's The Hope of the Katzekopfs, or the Sorrows of Selfishness (5th edition, 1st was 1845) as a reworking of fairy properties: 'The style and moral are alike direct', though now morality seems to overlay folk lore rather heavily. She was predictably critical of Sara Coleridge's Phantasmion. A Fairy Tale (1st edition 1837), 'full of picture-like descriptions and fantastic marvels, and garnished with very pretty poems', but too confused for children.³⁸ It resembles Phantastes in more than title, but lacking MacDonald's fierce imagination, rambles into allegorical muddle. On the most spurious fantasies she is sharpest of all. Louisa Morgan's Baron Bruno, and other Fairy Tales is criticised for excessive 'abundance of epithets and superlatives.'³⁹ Her own style was not always simple, as evidenced by the dignified similes of The Neck, or the worldly irony of The Fiddler in the Fairy Ring, but her awareness of this fatiguing,

overwritten fantasy helped her to a new economy that calculated every effect.

How far Mrs. Ewing's experiments diverged from the mainstream of new fairy tale one comparison shows. One of the most moderate and intelligent collections was Mary de Morgan's On a Pincushion (1877).⁴⁰ She creates a world different from Mrs. Ewing even in its people. Her peasants, in Siegfried and Handa, are ornamental, her royalty splendid. Magic pervades her landscape instead of being located in specific figures. Objects are wonderful in appearance, not just potency; instead of oaks and pots we have hair-trees and talking creatures. But the diverging approaches have a recognizable common origin in traditional tales. De Morgan's fantasies are not rootless. The Seeds of Love with dark and fair heroines and symbolic tree relates to Snow White and Rose Red. But where in Grimm the rose trees are significant in their very occurrences and their emblematic relationship to the heroines, in de Morgan the tree is fantastic in its properties. Her stories move away from traditional terrain where Mrs. Ewing's stay close to home ground.

Both The Hair Tree and Mrs. Ewing's Kind William and the Water Sprite use hair as their organizing symbol, like Rapunzel which Bettelheim admires because it holds out the possibility of Escape through the resources of one's own body⁴¹ and Max Lüthi identifies as subsuming 'rites of passage' matter.⁴²

De Morgan elaborates on hair rather as a conceit, through narrative variations and extraordinary, even outlandish descriptions. A Queen with splendid hair grows bald through pride. The tale proceeds as a rambling quest through dream landscapes for a remedy in a hair-tree. However, the quest is fragmented by subsidiary adventures. The sense of Reward is sacrificed by making the

questor not the transgressing Queen, but an innocent fisherman. Pride is apparently unsubdued by events. Such imperfect justice is remote from Rapunzel's world. Hair images are assembled with little care for continuous meaning, but with strong local effects through the sensuous indulgence Mrs. Ewing avoided:

What a wonderful tree it was! The hair rippled down from all its branches, and was of all colours - black outside, and growing lighter and lighter till, quite near the trunk, it was of fine pure gold. Rupert took hold of it and passed it through his fingers.⁴³

The dominant hair-tree prompts subsidiary fantasies - lip-flowers and plants with 'white arms and hands' - that cumulatively rather than individually create a magic world in which the hero proves himself; we hardly experience their connection with the final regrowth of the queen's hair. The style is never careless or redundant; but it is removed from Grimm's plain statement that Rapunzel's hair was the colour of gold and reached the ground: this hair is a lifeline and leads essentially to the happy climax.

Mrs. Ewing controls her symbols' occurrences and their penumbra of meanings more strictly than de Morgan, though they are never woven into events as inextricably as in Rapunzel.

Kind William and the Water Sprite is a reward story. Briggs discusses the incidence of long-haired water sprites in native tradition⁴⁴ and Mrs. Ewing gives her rewarding fairy the unmoralistic waywardness, even seductiveness, of earlier tales. Her structure is as tight as de Morgan's is loose, schematically so in its numerical pointers: William's kindness to twenty-one fishes is rewarded by sixty-three golden hairs to be used after fourteen years. A more obtrusive arithmetic than any in folk lore! This structural rigour is softened by the recurring refrain:

Warp of wöllen and woof of gold;
When seven and seven and seven are told.

Her direct style imitates traditional formulae without becoming slavishly archaic:

And fishing up the river and down the river he
never again cast net into the haunted pool.
And in course of time the whole affair passed
from his mind. (92).

The economy of event is the opposite of the ramified adventures of fantasy. But in controlled and timely symbols lies the greatest difference. Hair recurs, but with carefully modulated connotations each time. It first advertises a supernatural presence to the hero, marking a deeper reality: 'How long her hair really was Kind William never could tell, for after it reached her knees he lost sight of it among the fern' (90). Then it becomes the sign of power: the sprite 'drew some of her golden hairs over her arm, and tuning them as if they had been the strings of a harp, she began to sing' (92). Finally, the gift-hairs, untarnished by time and woven as cloth, become fairy tale's limitless reward for generosity, combining beauty, power and value. This symbolism never sounds the depths of Rapunzel, but it has an internal consistency not found in The Hair Tree; hair transformations express connections across the years, from sprite to human hero, from act to consequence, from generous gesture to promised Reward. The sequence shows virtue's payment as deferred but sure. It is a sensitive proximity to inherited lore which underlies such coherence and is responsible for the artistry of the best tales, making Mrs. Ewing's small, determined experiment a personal contribution to the period's rediscovery of fairy tale.

This work in the seventies fertilized other developments. She had written no more dream fantasies. Her Christmas stories, Snap-Dragons for The Monthly Packet (1870) and Old Father Christmas for Little Folks (1872) were the remnants of her Andersen phase, pleasing but unoriginal. Between 1871-8 she pursued a different

form, between fairy-tale and parable, sometimes subtitled 'Legend', though unlike traditional local legend. Six of these were collected as Dandelion Clocks, and other tales in 1887, illustrated by Gordon Browne, but also including four German woodcuts which had originally suggested four tales. Three are ironic fables of peasant life, an extension of the moralistic fairy tales. Three are sombre parables around some dominating flower emblem, dandelion clocks, the trinity lily, and lilies of the valley, moving towards the strictly assigned meanings of allegory. Of this second type she made a distinctive form, combining the saturated moralism of Parables from Nature with narrative strategies practised in the fairy tales.

The Kyrkegrim Turned Preacher (1875), The Blind Man and the Talking Dog (1876) and 'So-So' (1878) have brevity, crispness of style, and a calm inclusion of the supernatural. She wrote disconsolately in 1880 of 'the refinement of labour with which the letter-press has been ground down, and clipped, and condensed, and selected - till, as it would appear to the larger buying-public, there is wonderfully little left for your money' (18, 236-7). Stylistic refinement, however, seems less than in the best fairy tales because burdened with greater explicitness. These slender fables are prescriptive, narrowly directed: 'So-So' towards wilful children, The Blind Man towards the discontented. They have a rigid adjustment of narrative to meaning that prevents reverberations. Bettelheim said 'Fables demand and threaten - they are moralistic - or they just entertain',⁴⁵ and these tales are somewhat insistent in their demands.

The best, The Kyrkegrim Turned Preacher, broadens into comic satire on gross peasant materialism. The church sprite's efforts to rouse the sleeping farmer in the congregation take the familiar

design of a mounting sequence with satiric climax; unmoved by sermons on death, sin or judgement, the farmer wakes at the first mention of turnip blight. The tale has the most active story to urge its moral, and the most engaging surface, because it does not gravitate towards a single tone, as do the other two. Besides irony, there is biblical dignity in the excellent sermons - a form Mrs. Ewing was educated in - and lyricism in description: 'when the gentian is bluer than the sky, and Baldur's Eyebrow blossoms in the hot spring ... ' (7, 204)

But all three tales are unbalanced, as the stronger fairy tales with their tried and tested narratives are not, away from true story, by an over-explicitness carried into every area. Events seem mechanical. Too much is spelled out. The fundamental contrast in The Blind Man and The Talking Dog is between the beggar whose contentment is represented by his possession of a unique talking dog, and the rich malcontent who desires only the dog. But this adequate basis is overloaded by further contrasts, between male and female, arrogance and humility. The material of folk lore is uneasily, intrusively proclaimed:

"That's just the way you go on," said the boy angrily. "You always think differently from me. Now remember, Aldegunda, I won't marry you when you grow big, unless you agree with what I do, like the wife in the story of What The Goodman Does is Sure to be Right" (216).

This suggests a no-man's land between Victorian nursery and the timeless world where talking dogs are acceptable. The overt reference to folk tale, a truly subversive fable of male 'maistrie', only emphasises the clumsiness of Mrs. Ewing's approach.

The sombre parables, unexpectedly, are more successful. Stronger narratives carry their morality. An elevated style, elegaic in Dandelion Clocks, frankly archaic in the others, is pursued uninterruptedly. The Christian pseudo-medievalism of

The Blind Hermit and the Trinity Flower endeared it particularly to Charlotte Yonge.⁴⁶ It is possible to detect in its apparatus of monks and blood-spotted lilies Mrs. Ewing's early Gothicism subdued into more allegorical forms, suited to a certain Victorian taste. The very persistence with which the archaisms are worked creates the self-contained world of parable, without MacDonald's poetic sensuousness or Yonge's earnest detailing of medieval properties in Tom Thumb. Ruskin's style in The King of the Golden River (1851), a masterly Victorian transmutation of fairy tale, is closer, though his archaisms are more inspired. But Mrs. Ewing's primary stylistic model was Parables from Nature, also the source of her horticultural imagery.

The Blind Hermit shows the debt most directly, especially to parables like Red Snow or The Master of the Harvest (3rd series) with a human, not zoological, cast. The latter finds its parable structure in seasonal rhythms. A farmer watches the growth and harvesting of his corn with discontent. His sick but pious wife only succeeds in changing his pessimism by her own death, symbolically coinciding with harvest day. Mrs. Ewing's parable shows the same facility for taut, irreducible narrative, a firm but not contrived correspondence between manifest and latent content. Her overt story, based on the Trillium lily observed in Canada with three crimson and white petals 'like white garments dyed in blood' (16, 224), also pursues a seasonal pattern. The hermit-gardener grows blind in one cycle and resigned during another. The lily's blooming brings him 'sight' in death, as Mrs. Gatty's 'harvest' was a harvest of faith. Both consummations are foreseen and inevitable according to the parabolic sequence. For once, Mrs. Gatty allows overt narrative to proceed unhindered, punctuated only by biblical texts on harvesting. The Blind Hermit bonds its levels even more

thoroughly; the hermit's death is resonant only in its final position and natural associations:

Without the sunshine dried the dew from the paths on which the hermit's feet had left no prints, and cherished the Spring flowers bursting into bloom (230).

Almost any extracts show the stylistic debt. Mrs. Ewing even heightens some of her mother's pronounced rhetoric. The Master of the Harvest, at its best, has:

And so it came to pass that they went out together. And together they looked all along the long green ridges of wheat and watched the blades as they quivered and glistened in the breeze which sprang up with the setting sun. Together they walked, together they looked; looking at the same things, and with the same human eyes ... but with a world dividing their hearts.⁴⁷

The Blind Hermit copies the bold biblical cadences, repeated clauses, accentuated 'Ands':

Now this hermit had a great love of flowers ... And so it came to pass that the country people from all parts came to him for the simples which grew in the little garden which he had made before his cell ...

But after many years there came a Spring when the colours of the flowers seemed paler to the hermit than they used to be; and as Summer drew on, their shapes became indistinct, and he mistook one plant for another; and when Autumn came, he told them by their various scents, and by their form, rather than by sight; and when the flowers were gone, and Winter had come, the hermit was quite blind (16, 215-6).

The long last sentence, a single enclosing utterance, shows Mrs. Ewing taking the style to greater lengths; it risks becoming tedious or ludicrous in its consciously outdated rhythms. Its occasional beauty is precarious; one reason for the tale's extreme brevity. The archaism lies in grave periods rather than vocabulary (only 'simples' is unusual). Compare this with Ruskin's more extraordinary and resourceful language even at the least intense moments of his fairy narrative:

[Hans] had been compelled to abandon his basket of food, which became a perilous encumbrance on the glacier, and had now no means of refreshing himself but by breaking off and eating some of the pieces of ice. This, however, relieved his thirst; an hour's repose recruited his hardy frame; and with the indomitable spirit of avarice, he resumed his laborious journey (Chapter 3).

This moves as far from traditional fairy tale as Mrs. Ewing's parables, but in a different direction. Besides an elaborate dignity of vocabulary that is personal, rather than an archaic simulation ('recruited', 'perilous encumbrance'), it has rhythmic assurance, and a pervasive moral presence. Mrs. Ewing's style is less remarkable, but it too sustains an uninterrupted gravity that holds together its narrative levels.

The best and briefest parable, Ladders to Heaven, is a tale 'whose shape is its very end', showing Mrs. Ewing's command of the short form at full stretch. It is an untypical anti-industrialization parable, restrained and subtle in its argument. Again, a two-part design spans time, but historical not seasonal time. The scheme juxtaposes a medieval monk-gardner who subdues pride by planting rare lilies outside the monastery walls, and a modern priest who stirs his flock to replant them in an industrial age. The simple alignment shows Mrs. Ewing 'quite Ruskinish towards mills and manufactories' (18, 190). Indeed the tale repeats, with absolute compression, Ruskin's hopes, expressed in very similar symbolism in 'Of Queens' Gardens', that England should be a garden for children not a wilderness of coal shafts. The same resonant parable style is here adapted to lamenting the seeping materialism and decaying social bonds of industrialization:

And after a time a new race came into the Green Valley and filled it; and the stream which never failed turned many wheels, and trades were brisk, and they were what are called black trades. And men made money soon, and spent it soon, and died soon; and in the time between each lived for himself, and had little reverence for those who were gone, and less concern for those who should come after (16, 238).

Social analysis is compressed but not trivial, pursuing in a tiny juvenile tale large ideas on crumbling feudalism and the frantic compensatory pursuit of beauty expanded upon by Carlyle and others as the spirit of the age. The tale gains this abstemious eloquence through its elliptical, time-spanning narrative and its charged and individual style, both illustrated in the economical ending of the first part: 'and he did not enter the new plant upon his roll, for he had no such lily in his garden' (237). Coherence is ensured, too, by unity of place, a containment of action within one Valley.

The sketch of a contemporary priest to 'grimy trades', 'striving to link ^[his parishioners] their minds with sympathies of the past' (239), was influenced by Mrs. Gatty's responsible and uncharacteristic novel The Poor Incumbent. This grapples with issues of industrialization through a realistic, if erratic, narrative about curates' lives in Yorkshire. Mrs. Ewing's parable requires the Consolation of a hopeful ending. Its parabolic economy and distance preclude close social scrutiny. Its solutions are essentially romantic: the legend of Brother Benedict works not on the rich, but on grimy workers who replant flowers 'for other folk and other folk's children' (239), a comforting and optimistic formula. Mrs. Gatty's novel cannot distance problems so elegantly, through symbolic action. Her language is occasionally biting. Williams, a bitter, isolated curate 'forgotten, like a dead man, out of mind', has the care of five thousand souls in a dreary manufacturing district, with 'a cancer of spiritual deadness'.⁴⁸ His bishop reawakens his 'Utopian vision' of beautifying and spiritualizing the parish,⁴⁹ which Mrs. Ewing only tokens in symbolic lily-planting. Her tale is an acute contraction and mollification of the issues of The Poor Incumbent, the church's role in a materialistic society. Parable deals with possibilities before realities; her parson is a catalyst transmitting

a spiritualizing legacy. The novel is bounded by probability; Mrs. Gatty's clergy alleviate brutalization but at a price: the heroic bishop dies unembittered but 'distracted about the limits of his duty'.⁵⁰ Despite different modes, these fictions share an earnest professional sympathy for the clergy's task, a social angle unusual in a period which preferred the more thrilling fiction of clerical doubt, like Robert Elsmere (1888).

A varied inheritance from her mother is apparent in these parables, in their style, and their profound moralism translated into compact narratives and dominating symbols. But Mrs. Ewing is more circumspect in her effects, less careless of disturbing the equilibrium of style, image, and narrative by interpretation, or by forcing the action along tortuous routes. Her greater familiarity with folk fairy tale taught her the greater coherence and spareness, and also enabled her to pitch these tales at a level available to both children and adults. Even the graver parables with their sombre messages of transitoriness, change and death are purged of their threatening sting by a remoteness of style and symbol.

Max Lüthi distinguished local and saints' legends as making us 'especially aware of the passage of time and the cessation of things', whereas fairy tales 'remove us from the passage of time and 'make us feel that there is another way of viewing and experiencing life'.⁵¹ And the distinction is largely true of Mrs. Ewing's parables and fairy tales. Together, they represent a small and uneven development in the seventies, but at their best they show her making of the shortest, tightest fictional form something personal and distinctive.

Chapter 7. Domestic Stories of the Seventies

This chapter surveys Mrs. Ewing's wide-ranging, heterogeneous shorter fiction written alongside her fairy tales in the 70s, but with contemporary or domestic locations and more expansive techniques. Section 1 argues that in Lob she projected a nouvelle form ideally suited to her talents. 2 and 3 show the quiet triumph of this form in two of her best works, compared with shorter, more commonplace stories mapping adjacent domestic terrain. Section 4 examines her personally proportioned conjunction of scientific and poetic strains, in essays and idylls of this period.

1. Lob Lie-by-the Fire

Lob Lie-by-the Fire was begun in 1873, the year in which serialization of Jan of the Windmill ended, in answer to Bell's request for a Christmas story with no previous magazine publication. Mrs. Ewing accepted the new challenge energetically, writing 'both a.m. and p.m.' during July and August:

I have taken no end of pains with it, and it has been a matter of seven or eight hours a day lately (18, 190).

It is not obvious why she should answer this challenge with such a prompt return to the foundling theme, which had proved an uncomfortable bedfellow for the artist theme in the previous novel, though undoubtedly she preferred experimentation within tried limits, working new permutations of material already pondered.

The differences between Lob and Jan are a mute recognition of the novel's flaws in resolution. Lob is a foundling tale first and last, with no rival or complementary matter. It has no overt conflict, no villainy, no Gothic menace, around its vulnerable hero. John Broom is forced from his adoptive niche only by inward drives, 'his restless blood', his dreams of wider destiny, the grievances of the

insecure:

He thought the little old ladies had given him over to the farm-bailiff, because they had ceased to care for him, and that the farm-bailiff was prejudiced against him beyond any hope of propitiation. The village folk taunted him, too, with being an outcast, and called him Gipsy John, and this maddened him (7, 60).

In place of the novel's melodramatic machinery, Lob uses mechanisms of social comedy. The mordant contrast of the foundling pitted against a gallery of rogues is replaced by ironic analysis of the formalized, genteel community into which the foundling erupts revealingly. The echoes raised by this ironic style are of Austen and Gaskell, not Dickens. This new programme is at first unpromising, Oliver Twist straying into Cranford. But Mrs. Ewing eventually binds a dated, backward-looking and rarefied social portrait with full-blown, demotic Victorian designs like the orphan's progress and the moral conversion - a personal synthesis perfected in Daddy Darwin's Dovecot. The least integrated passages are the sentimental set-pieces, MacAlister's death-bed, John's conversion to temperance, the bailiff's pledge-taking, introducing illicit gusts of feeling with no determined place in either social delineation or the foundling's psychology. The death-bed's hyperbolic language jars against both the ironic social style and the candid, low-keyed probing of John's state. Its images are stale: 'John Broom watched over him with the fidelity of a sheep-dog' (75). Its manipulation of feeling is indelicate:

As the light of sunrise creeps over the face of some rugged rock, it crept from chin to brow, and the pale blue eyes shone tranquil, likewater that reflects heaven (86).

These scenes create something of the splintering of direction that overtakes the end of Jan.

The greatest single difference is that Lob sheds the foundling theme's popular corollary of restored parents. John Broom remains

John Broom to the end. In doing this, it renounces the obvious resources of melodrama - surprise, coincidence, suspense, -and renounces them early, to initiate its different course. The parson wonders who are the baby's parents:

The little ladies did not know, the broom-bushes were silent, and the question has remained unanswered from that day to this (26).

The alternative to the novel's excited revelations of noble origins is a set of new interests, already detectable in Jan and more prominent in adult fiction: the analysis of motive in the adopters, the relative evaluation of nature and nurture, the search for psychological and social identity in the absence of one conferred by blood.

Consider this last interest. That the hero's orphanhood is never a source of pathos shows the nouvelle's modernity of attitude. The nineteenth century's attraction towards the orphan hero, as displaying self-help, or symbolizing some radical cultural disinheritance, recurs in the adult novel. More simply, as befits its nouvelle contraction, Lob considers only the foundling's future, not his past, with the assumption of Sartor Resartus:

In a psychological point of view, it is perhaps questionable whether from birth and genealogy, how closely scrutinized soever, much insight is to be gained. 1

Although the best of Jan was its examination of self-making, through nurture and genius, it clung damagingly to old conventions of social elevation and blood recognition. Lob advances towards the revised assumptions of, perhaps, The Way of All Flesh, that orphans like Towneley have the advantage over Ernest with his full complement of parents. Lob's refashioned identity is self-chosen. This clarity of intention appears in the simplified plot and the direct language of a more contemporary psychology:

And to a nature of his type, the earning of some self-respect, and of a new character before others, was perhaps a necessary prelude to future well-doing (101).

The fictional terms for presenting this purged and revised view, and for making the nouvelle cohere, are rather figurative than topical. Mrs. Ewing takes the folk motif of Lob lie-by-the Fire, the wayward, helping house-sprite, and makes it both a metaphor for John's career, and a realistically assumed mask for reforging identity. This dual application is more precise than the fairy tale echoes lending significance to Jan's plight, and more explicit than Dickens' fairy tale leavening in David Copperfield to adjust our view of the hero. Lob's last five sections shift the narrative view markedly. In central scenes we stand alongside, even inside, the hero. But from 'Luck Goes - And Comes Again' we see him remotely, through the lens of Lingborough society, as Lob not John, a creature of magical, undisclosed potentialities. He is rediscovered actually and metaphorically. This externality repeats that of the first six sections, in which the baby is the object of Lingborough speculation. The emotional expectations of the foundling theme are freshly completed by consoling fairy tale. The Brownies had used the same sprite motif as a source of psycho-moral fantasy. The fairy imitations reassembled its traditional settings. But Lob consciously and selectively invokes its associations to cloak a topical psychology. The progress can be poetically and circularly viewed. The baby is found at Midsummer Eve:

The long light of the North was pale and clear, and the western sky shone luminous through the fir-wood that bordered the road. Under such dim lights colours deepen, and the great bushes of broom, that were each one mass of golden blossom, blazed like fairy watch-fires up the lane (19).

He returns, like the folk hero, under conditions significantly similar:

The broom was shining in the hedges with uncommon wealth of golden blossoms (89).

This recalls the twice-blossoming hawthornes in The First Wife's Wedding-Ring. Sparse details hint gipsy origins, but gipsies viewed as romantic wanderers, not the wastrels of tract fiction - a nineteenth century distinction pursued in Father Hedgehog and his Neighbours. But gipsy details are buttressed by fairy associations. The child is 'like Puck' (35), 'the very demon of mischief danced in his black eyes, and seemed to possess his feet and fingers as if with quicksilver' (37). Later, when he deliberately apes 'the rough elf' to renegotiate his position with his benefactors, Mrs. Ewing claims the reality of his 'magic' through familiar fairy tale catalogues:

The cart-wheels and gate-hinges were oiled by unseen fingers. The mushrooms in the croft gathered themselves and lay down on a dish in the larder (93).

This dashing prose copies earlier staccato sentences cataloguing Miss Betty's reasons for keeping the baby (28), a stylistic scoring of the structural circularity. The fairy metaphor allows the nouvelle to be completed impressionistically, and therefore, optimistically. The last section retreats to surveying John Broom's subsequent reinstatement hazily, with some contradictions undisturbed, in a happy-ever-after sphere that avoids the explanatory denouement of Jan.

The use of some over-arching metaphor to bind later nouvelles became more skilful. These are often, as here, fecund images for the child's behaviour and developing relationships. Military life, gardens, amateur dramatics are all fertile sources. Such metaphors become valuable principles of organisation as her fictions become more concentrated, especially in nouvelles which exchange the novel's life-span chronology or inclusiveness of depiction for an intense

selectivity. Resolutions need no longer be the (possibly fraudulent) ones of plot, but can be achieved through metaphors reflecting the harder-won outcomes of experience: Lob's return as sprite, Isobel's triumphant theatrical performance, Charley's realization of a great emergency.

Lob was her first true nouvelle, perhaps because unhindered by serial segmentation. So congenial was it after troublesome novels, that the next year, A Great Emergency grew to natural but unusual proportions of sixteen short chapters. James bemoaned magazine publication with 'its rude prescription of brevity at any cost'.² In Daisy Miller, 1878, in subsequent nouvelles, and critical prefaces, he developed the theory that form might 'correspond to fitness; might, that is, in the given case, have an inevitability, a marked felicity'.³ His own nouvelles vindicated 'the idea happily developed' through 'a surface really much larger than the ^{mere} offered face of the work'.⁴ In their minor way, Mrs. Ewing's nouvelles achieve density and representative force not immediately advertised by their slight proportions. Lob is flawed. But later nouvelles eliminated its lacking integration and clashing styles.

However, Lob already displays some of the form's constructional virtues. The circular structure, enhanced by folk motifs, is strengthened by the creation of a distinctive society, from which and towards which the hero moves, with a world of adventure, less incisively placed, in between. 'The Little Old Ladies' establishes a warmly ironic view of Lingborough that is revived in the final scenes. An early simile fixes the identification of this autonomous society with our hero: Lob's history is hidden 'as deeply as the sea fogs are wont to lie between Lingborough and the adjacent coast' (12), slicing both off from the world at large, for nouvelle conciseness.

The demarcation of this little society follows the stylistic

tradition of Austen and Cranford.⁵ Mrs. Ewing opens with an extravagant proposition, 'The little old ladies of Lingborough were heiresses' (12), and immediately qualifies it: 'Not, mind you, in the sense of being the children of some mushroom millionaire with more money than manners ...' (12). Idiom and rhythms suggest such qualifications as the little ladies' own. Thus, the second sentence drastically modifies our estimation of their heiress-status by its direct testimony, and indicates their particular prejudices by its indirect testimony. The double-edged style both describes and estimates their qualities. Dramatizing irony operates through rhythms as well as content. Repeated phrases and clauses imitate that cataloguing habit of mind characteristic of them and their orderly culture. The 'heiress' joke culminates:

They were heiresses, finally, to the place and the farm, to the furniture that was made when folk seasoned their wood before they worked it, to a diamond brooch which they wore by turns, besides two diamond rings, and two black lace shawls, that had belonged to their mother and their Auntie Jean, long since departed thither where neither moth nor rust corrupt true riches (14).

The descending order here is a comic disclosure of the slightness of their legacy, and a comic exposure of their values. Its biblical echo gently mocks their confused worldliness and spirituality. The proposition about heiresses is dismantled, as Austen dismantles - and eventually reassembles - the opening postulate of Northanger Abbey that Catherine Morland was born to be an heroine, or Gaskell rapidly qualifies her opening claim, 'Cranford is in the possession of the Amazons'.⁶

Mrs. Ewing's method is closer to Gaskell's. The same duality of reference, half-demonstrating, half-dissecting social mores, the same cataloguing rhythms and ironically illustrative idiom, animate Cranford's first paragraph. What is satirized is also close. Both styles invoke a peculiarly English, spinsterish parochialism. Miss

Betty and Miss Kitty match Miss Jenkyns and Miss Matty as sisterly duos of authority and feeling. Social details are similarly savoured through admiring mockery. Sentimental Miss Kitty's bouts with the sarcastic lawyer, or the social lie of 'sending for the servant' which saves the ladies' faces, constitute cultural evidence comparable with Miss Matty's 'keeping blind man's holiday' by trying to burn two candles equally in case of callers (Ch. 5). Their likeness is in the selection and isolation of gesture, so as to denote social hypocrisy whilst connoting, affectionately, human oddness. The ladies are warmly embraced by techniques which also delimit their errors. The likeness of worlds as well as methods suggests Mrs. Ewing knew Cranford. But her greater miniaturization in social portrait results from its serving the foundling theme, in a narrower nouvelle form.

She stretches these methods to explore those moral attitudes bearing specifically on foundlings. Characteristically, she arouses us to discrepancies in the ladies' charity, but without condemnation. Moral evidence is economically gathered: Miss Betty's rationalization of her spontaneous longing for the child (27), Miss Kitty's fantasies, confounding mother and mistress roles (29), the arguments of Christian duty (32) and of womanly tenderness (31). From this, their position emerges in all its inconsistency:

"I hope we know what is due to ourselves, and to the estate ... as well as to Providence, too well to attempt to raise any child, however handsome, from that station in life in which he was born" (30).

The irony estimates a charity which adopts a child into the kitchen, but not the drawing-room; loves it, but hands it to the housekeeper for mothering. The epitomizing wit supplies such instantly revealing remarks as Miss Betty's, on choosing a name, "The boy is to be brought up in that station of life for which one syllable is ample" (36). But the style never reaches out, perilously, beyond this small frame;

her world's very parochialism guarantees the mildness of the satire. She prefers to let other pens dwell on guilt and misery.

The firm nouvelle structure strikes a compromise in the nature-nurture debate. John Broom does stray, but never into immorality. Circular progress reinstates him - though at servant level.⁷ But the organizing metaphor makes the level less relevant, and places the psychology of remade identity foremost. It gathers implications of the hero's fundamental goodness, gratitude and rightness with the world into a single satisfying conclusion, and relegates questions of genetics and social status to bolder and later fictions.

2. At Home and Abroad

Cornelia Meigs says:

Of all forms of writing for children the family story is perhaps the most difficult to write to order. One can set out with a full cast of characters and then find, as the work progresses, that the action focuses upon one figure and the family element fades into unnecessary background. Or, on the other hand, one can imagine a story of one individual and then discover that it needs support and presently find that it has become a family story by necessity.⁸

One feels Mrs. Ewing's domestic tales always begin with the individual. Although contributing to the increasingly accurate analysis of Victorian nursery politics, she is not properly a pioneer of 'the family story'. She originates no memorable tribe, no Marches, Mays, Underwoods or Bastables, although such a tribe, as large and inescapable as fiction, was her childhood reality. But the internalized image of the Gatty clan is never projected on to an ample canvas; instead it is concentrated in dream fantasies like Melchior's Dream or epitomized within a larger design, as in Six to Sixteen, or most often by the mid-seventies, it is distanced by some mechanism as a structure of feelings about the family. The latter process is the subject of this section and the next. The means by which the family is made manageable, without loss of definition, without stereotyping, and by which it

becomes other than an imitative account, include her old practised skills of stylistic irony and first person narrative, and the new use of over-arching and organising metaphor discussed in Lob. The best stories combine all three techniques in an increasingly refined nouvelle form. The unfamiliar A Great Emergency and A Very Ill-Tempered Family isolate images of child-society within the multitudinous Victorian world, as sharp-edged and valid as The Daisy Chain or Little Women.

If we consider A Great Emergency after a story like Madam Liberality its superior form and wider moral breadth emerge. Irony, local and stylistic in the latter, in the former is worked into structural images of voyaging, as a bonding and enriching technique.

Madam Liberality is representative of her quiet domestic tales, more of their period and genre than either her experimental nouvelles or rural idylls. It contains more autobiographical data than usual, about Julie's quinsies and headaches, but it also uses more unreal clichés than her best work. Its two simple parts describe the youth and age of an unusually 'good' heroine. Unalloyed goodness is a notoriously treacherous fictional commodity, and Part 2 shows why. Goodness is sketched through a vestigial period melodrama - the brother's debts secretly redeemed, the sister's unhappy marriage mourned, the genteel poverty endured. Virtue's rewards are equally stale - the sister widowed and restored, complete with son, 'with the loveliest of baby faces set in long flaxen hair' (11, 307). Irony can only ripple this syrupy surface, and then it is of the socially observing kind noted in Lob, but detached from that work's sense of community and of the moral challenge presented to it by the founding. It remains as simply sporadic wit:

And she had another ambition - to provide Jemima with black dresses and white muslin aprons for afternoon wear in addition to her wages, that the outward aspect of that good soul might be more in accordance than hitherto with her intrinsic excellence (301).

Part 1, on childhood, has a more engaged style in response to its autobiographical source. So vivid is the disparity that Avery in discussing the tale does not mention the existence of Part 2.⁹ The clear realism of memory sharpens the narrative of the tooth extraction, or the oyster-shell dinner service 'collected by degrees, like old family plate' (258). Goodness becomes plausible through fidelity to childhood impressions, in similes which inhabit a child's imagination: 'The fields were deeply buried in snow, and looked like great white feather beds, shaken up unequally against the hedges' (287). With equal fidelity, the narrative recollects the sensations of illness, so often the Victorian heroine's lot, so infrequently described from inside:

Madam Liberality enjoyed them already, though her face was still sore, and the pain had spread to her throat, and though her ideas seemed unusually brilliant, and her body pleasantly languid, which, added to a peculiar chill trembling of the knees - generally forewarned her of a coming quinsy (283-4).

The traces of humour ('unusually brilliant') block the commoner pathos of sentimentalized illness. Of course, irony too can sentimentalize, becoming blunted into waggishness:

The doctor was a very kind old man, and he did his best, so we will not say anything about his antique instruments, or the number of times he tied a pocket-handkerchief round an awful-looking claw, and put both into Madam Liberality's mouth without effect (279).

But despite waggishness, an unthinking period belief that pain stimulates goodness, and some strained compensatory coincidences (the arrival of the hamper, the quinsy breaking), Part 1 is honest fiction for, and about, children.

As domestic fiction, bounded by nursery incidents and concerns, it comes closest to Mrs. Molesworth, who said:

It never seems to me that my characters come into existence, like phantoms, merely for the time I want them. Rather do I feel that I am selecting certain incidents out of real lives ... 10

This is her procedure in novels like 'Carrots'. Just a Little Boy (1876), also about goodness and based on her own children.¹¹ Perhaps the autobiographical origins of both stories underlie their slightness of action. Madam Liberality loses two shillings, Carrots finds a half sovereign. Other incidents would serve just as well, one reason why their contrived, coincidental endings appear false. Both dwell instead on the texture and tone of nursery life, unsegmented and unshaped by plot. Their value is in sharing nursery perspectives; Madam Liberality's dilemma over presents is on the same scale as Carrots' over sugar in his tea (Chapter 9), and both authors are careful not to over-widen the gap created by their humorous views of these predicaments. These individuals are unmistakably preeminent over portrayed families; siblings exist in the middle ground, parents in the background; both use the withdrawn Victorian mother to ensure this preeminence (Mrs. Desart is ill, Madam Liberality's mother 'distressed to be present' (279) at tooth-extractions).

However, their styles could never be mistaken. Mrs. Molesworth's approximation to childhood impressions is also minute and honest, but simpler, more limpid, innocent of impressionistic similes. She limits herself more nearly to the character's possible range of articulation. Stylistic differences exist, too, when the authors withdraw from immediate dramatic contexts to shape our responses through analysis.

Mrs. Molesworth ponders on Carrots' future:

It was all there - the root of all goodness, cleverness, and manliness - just as in the acorn there is the oak; but of course it had a great deal of growing before it, and, more than mere growing, it would need all the care and watchful tenderness and wise directing that could be given it, just as the acorn needs all the rain and sunshine and good nourishing soil it can get, to become a fine oak, straight and strong and beautiful . . . 12

Mrs. Ewing bridges the time span between child and woman with:

I will not pretend to decide whether grown-up people's troubles are harder to bear than children's troubles, but they are of a graver kind. It is very bitter when the boys melt the nose of one's dearest doll against the stove, and living pets with kind eyes and friendly paws grow aged and die; but the death of friends is a more serious and lasting sorrow, if it is not more real (295).

Both try to convey abstractions to young readers by concretions, Mrs. Molesworth by her simile, Mrs. Ewing by her bitter-sweet examples, and their choices betray some of the commonplaceness of minor, unintellectual writers. Both combine colloquialism and formality. But Mrs. Molesworth's rhythms are more dramatic and expansive. Her prose is looser, in spite of the self-conscious triplets ('goodness, cleverness, and manliness'). She thinks aloud and hopes to take her reader with her to foreseen conclusions, through a comfortably universal metaphor. Mrs. Ewing's argument is tougher, her deferred conclusion more carefully prepared, her prose more musical, though with some sacrificing of sense to sound ('grow aged and die' seems redundant). Mrs. Ewing attempts humour alongside gravity (a doll's nose?), her serious mask reverses to comic. Conversely, Mrs. Molesworth, no ironist, often hints the gravity in a comic situation. However, both passages prove their authors' painstaking care to explain children in their daily and domestic context.

Where Yonge and Alcott give their domestic fiction interest by the frequent presentation of moral choices, Mrs. Molesworth extends the documentation downwards to the age of moral unfixedness. Even their younger heroines, Countess Kate or Polly in An Old-Fashioned Girl, go through life-changing tribulations in their daily rounds. Mrs. Ewing, like Mrs. Molesworth, often writes better without the erection of such choices. Where she does shape domesticity around a moral fault, subjecting it to glaring Victorian scrutiny, the result is the feeble A Bad Habit (1877), an anachronistic return to

the cautionary stipulations shed in earlier work, and to dated, unreal types like the brash, rich girl, the heroine who picks up servants' vulgarity, the corrective Lady Elizabeth. The stringent moral form extinguishes all Mrs. Ewing's inventiveness and lames the techniques by which she normally quickens domestic life. Here, the first person provides no psychological base, the details of play are sparse and unchildlike after Madam Liberality. And the single moral preoccupation is the opposite of the broad experiential canvas of A Great Emergency.

A Great Emergency is characteristic mature Ewing fiction, having least in common with Yonge, Alcott or Molesworth. It concerns a boy's rejection of domesticity for the male world of adventure, a world half-mocked in its title. The spate of maritime adventures that flooded the second half of the century charted the engrossing topography of an expanding world for readers confined to the geography of nursery or public school. The boy's rejection of this tediously available normality is usually glanced at only in Chapter 1. But Mrs. Ewing, unusually, found the dissatisfactions and motives of these discontented heroes more apt for fiction than the vicarious excitements of adventure. The problems of balancing this interest in process with the genre's very different demands culminated in We and the World. Her pilot attempt at providing exotic scenes and anthropological data without a strong plot, in Cousin Peregrine's Wonder Tales (1875), failed. The bare family setting in which the traveller spins yarns is a disconnected pretext. The tales are not adventures, but a compendium of facts, national stereotypes and misplaced emotion.

A Great Emergency forestalls these problems in a first person scheme adapted entirely to the hero's aspirations and their frustration. Maxwell saw it as a tidied miniature of We and the World,

about running away to sea;¹³ but it is more truly a semi-parodic nouvelle about failing to do so. Chapters 1 - 7, one of her deftest domestic portraits, detect the nature and sources of Charlie's wanderlust, in family and school mythology, in his readings of Ballantyne and Marryat, in Fred Johnson's wilder chronicles of his grandfather, the eponymous hero of their fantasies. Central chapters track the accommodation of these aspirations to outer realities, graphically drawn canals, barges, lodging-houses and docks, diligently investigated by Mrs. Ewing (18, 201). But the voyage takes on a mock-heroic cast through her varied and penetrating ironies. The rolling main is reduced to the Lancingford Canal, not quite the 'road to strange countries' (67) Charlie hopes for; sage old salts reduce to one sarcastic bargemaster; desert islands become Linnet Flash; and wild adventures that make a man of you are exchanged for minor experiences that show you what a fool you've been. The last three chapters show the foreclosure of domesticity on the hero, returned home before he even puts to sea. By the rather desperate contrivance of Rupert and Henrietta's rescue, the nouvelle perpetrates a final irony of plot, by which the hero, pursuing fictions, misses real adventure. The flaw in this irony is that the rescue itself is fundamentally unreal, as unlikely as any sea yarn, though from a different genre. It, too, is the stuff of children's dreams. Arthur Marshall in his study of girls' fiction, Girls Will Be Girls, points to the popularity of fire rescues to gratify the taste for heroics: 'It is essential, too, that the fire arrangements should be of the flimsiest'.¹⁴ And they are.

Moreover, this climax is bolstered by a quota of unreal devices - a rich cousin as deus ex machina, awkward quotations from Henrietta's diary to enhance the heroics, the posed tableau of siblings carried aloft that greets his return. But, as in the successful novels,

plot is not the sole vehicle for concluding meaning. The disintegration occurring in Jan from trusting too entirely to plot is allayed by methods of concentration on the hero's psychology. The hurly-burly of increased fortunes, public school for Rupert, the navy for Charlie, is subdued by more penetrating, controlling artistic pressures: the concept of emergency and the metaphor of voyaging. Examination of these interlocked ideas will suggest the nouvelle's substantial continuity, despite the superficial discontinuity of its ending.

The notion of emergencies is first aired through children's play, their imitation of adult rituals. Again, adults are withdrawn. However, this mother is removed with unmistakable acrimony. She is absent because inadequate; when Rupert appeals to her to solve their dispute about carriers being gentlemen, she replies, "It is very hard you should come and disturb me for such a nonsensical question" (49). She is snobbish about public festivities, which 'was a pity' (60) understates the narrative. Possibly Mrs. Ewing stresses her inadequacy to explain the children's large independence. Through the concept of emergencies, their various immaturities are marked. They ape adult conventions of lecturer and audience, text and exposition. Their text, 'the yellow leather book', catalogues orthodox, adult emergencies: fire and flood, epidemics and mad dogs. But the closely written first chapter points to the child's distance from such actual and public contingencies; first, by vivid dramatization of their play, so that artificial respiration, stretchers and splints become its fantastic materials; secondly, through the private, confessional voice of the narrator, revealing the chasm between adult and juvenile concepts of danger:

Every half-holiday I hoped there would be something about what to do with robbers or ghosts, but there never was. I do not think there can have been any emergencies of that kind in the yellow leather book (20).

Subsequently, the hero's miniature voyage is a way of protracting this playing into adult reality, slowly bridging the gap by experience. One such bridging moment is the checking of the boys' wild plans to colonize Linnet Island by Rowe's adult wisdom:

It was only when he said (with that air of reserved and funded knowledge which gave such unfathomable depth to his irony, and made his sayings so oracular) - "There's very different places in the world to Linnet Flash" - that we began to be ashamed of our hasty enthusiasm (87).

The concept of emergencies precipitates differences between the children, a tool for categorizing behaviour. Within close nouvelle confines, Mrs. Ewing indicates the complexity of such categories. By portraying Rupert through the models of boys' fiction, yet creating her hero by his departure from such types, she declares an interest in processes, not perfection. Her rapid technique draws Rupert as instigator of 'the code of honour' (24-5), idol of the cricket field ('I used to think no-one ever looked as handsome as he did in his orange-coloured shirt ...' (40)), and wounded hero (Chap. 4). Yet the narrative departs from the outright adulation usually accorded this stereotype. Ironic accentuation tips his public school lingo towards the comic:

"You are quite old enough now, Charlie, to learn what to do whatever happens; so every half-holiday, when I am not playing cricket, I'll teach you presence of mind near the cucumber frame, if you're punctual. I've put up a bench."
I thanked him warmly (14).

Mrs. Ewing is not confined by an admiring narrator to reflecting Rupert admiringly. She circumvents such singleness of vision both by what is reported and the ironic placing of the reporting. Henrietta is one of her strongest portraits of intelligent girls locked ambiguously into Victorian domesticity. Yet Mrs. Ewing suggests Rupert's treatment of her as both arrogant and undervaluing, through the admiring, but just, filtration of Charlie's

narrative. He describes her habitual tossing of her black hair, a mane with Maggie Tulliver connotations, and adds meekly, 'Nothing made Rupert angrier than this' (22). He reports 'naively' her deductive powers at the lectures, which reduce Rupert to blustering. More surely, he defines her active, realistic view of emergencies, against Rupert's inflexible conventionalism which would consign her to being the object of male resourcefulness:

I think he would have done anything for Henrietta if it had not been that she would do everything for herself (21).

One virtue of the last, text-book emergency is that it allows Henrietta to 'do everything' in style, and be first into the flames. At least there is equality in heroics. But, ominously, there is no mention of her in the ending's allocation of rosy futures.

A more difficult technical task is tracing the hero's shifting view of emergencies, representative of his view of reality. This cannot be done by the static contrast that mutually fixes Rupert and Henrietta's ideas, and the alternatives are not entirely satisfactory. At first, the simple irony of confronting Rupert's elevated notions with an intractable reality, within Charlie's experience, is sufficient. At Rupert's accident, he exclaims 'if I lost my presence of mind in the first real emergency ... my attendance at Rupert's lectures had been a mockery' (45), but his text-book ministrations prove useless. The same method of meeting received wisdom with stubborn fact is a continuing source of comedy on the voyage. Fred is the agent, and, one deduces, the only begetter, of fantasies about the Captain, unsubtle parodies of male myths and traveller's tales, of sea people seen from diving bells, seductive sirens, maritime rescues:

... the captain ... was picked up and restored to life by the first mate, who had been cruising, with tears in his eyes, over the spot in the ship's boat for seven days without taking anything to eat ...

"He evidently knew what to do in the emergency of drowning", thought I (56-7).

Such efforts to apply text-book formulae are increasingly frustrated during the voyage.

The early portrayal of camaraderie as a mutuality of fantasizing, 'whatever he could think of and I could believe', says Charlie (68), is perfectly convincing. But camaraderie is gradually eroded, and here Mrs. Ewing is involved in more elusive distinctions. She attempts to show Fred's dreams as divorced from his realities, whereas the narrator struggles to reconcile them, a sign of his moral superiority for us. The innocent narrative is adequate for treating Fred's progressive dereliction: his comic hunger, whining at discomfort, moral collapse in the cheap lodging and frank repudiation of fantasies as relevant to life: "Fiddlesticks about my grandfather!" (126). But commentary on this dereliction is over-simple, the limits of technique are reached. The narrative judgement, 'my faith in Fred's tales had more than once been ^{rather} rudely shaken' (126) seems insufficient. The best the ending manages is suggesting the hero's adjustment of view as incomplete. He clearly rejects Fred's estrangement of fiction from fact. But his departure from Rupert's conventionalism is less decisively handled. Rowe's crudely sentimental version of the rescue is mocked, but no distinct alternative is supplied by the narrator's only half-ironic label 'The Great Emergency' (143). Such human contrasts embroil Mrs. Ewing in moral distinctions beyond her range. The hero is obviously more worthy than Fred, but he is also more worthy than Rupert, and the plot's elevation of stereotyped heroics seems to contradict this. The hero's worth lies in his greater honesty, hinted only as increased self-knowledge ('I am still but too apt to dream' (147)) and in the allusive metaphor of voyaging, at a level where dreams and reality are reconcilable:

...But the harbour's mouth is now only the beginning of my visions, which stretch far over the sea beyond, and over the darker line of that horizon where ships come and go (147).

The particular use of the first person to preserve a morally fertile unity is sufficiently evident from the above discussion. It contributes to the placing of this nouvelle amongst those children's books taking their peculiar shape and pungency from their divergence from some recognizable genre, which is consistently but ambivalently invoked. A Great Emergency bears a relationship to sea adventures akin to that which Stalky and Co. bears to the public school novel. But its use of a boy's perspective to present a sibling group (minus parents) from inside, and to monitor their adaptations of 'literary' games to a supposed reality, is precisely that of E. Nesbit's The Story of The Treasure Seekers (1899), The Wouldbegoods (1901) and others. As a narrative medium, Charlie foreshadows Oswald Bastable. Mrs. Ewing's sporadic literary jokes and exploitations become the staple of a novel like The Treasure Seekers. The Bastables' efforts to live out their reading by being detectives, or rescuing Generous Benefactors, provides the series of ironic reversals that Mrs. Ewing's heroes experience in stowing away or settling desert islands. The narrator's mediation of this activity constitutes an ironic filter, supplying the reader - apparently inadvertently - with information about the narrator's own limits. This irony only tinges Mrs. Ewing's narrative, whereas it soaks Nesbit's. Mrs. Ewing's exposure of Charlie's 'manly' attitudes is gentle, and, as discussed, attempts to register their modification. The exposure of Oswald's 'manliness' is an undeviating aim of Nesbit's narrative:

Then at last the others agreed to let Oswald try his way of seeking for treasure, but they were not at all keen about it, and many a boy less firm than Oswald would have chucked the whole thing. But Oswald knew that a hero must rely on himself alone (Chapter 9, Conclusion).

Both writers supplement this indirect testimony with reported adult opinion. The relayed interview between Rowe and the dog-fancier obliquely presents their admiring and amused view of the boys ("Hup to hanythink" (91)). Rowe's richly comic letter (81) functions similarly. This technique Nesbit extends lavishly to a gallery of appreciative, appraising adults: Albert-next-door's Uncle, Mrs. Leslie, the Editor, Lord Tottenham. But in both works, adult appearances, on the fringes of action and of narrative, assert the centrality of the boy as medium, whose fantasies are both satirized and enjoyed. Nesbit's concluding deus, a rich Indian uncle, is a more complete capitulation to fantasy than Mrs. Ewing's tangled compromise. But both, by a sleight of pen, sustain at one level the literary design which their narratives also parody; Charlie does travel and Oswald does find treasure.

Through the metaphor of voyaging, we see how this dualism is sustained. In 1885, Mrs. Ewing read Huckleberry Finn (1884, New York) with enormous admiration. 'The dry humour of it - the natural way everything is told from a boy's point of view - and the vivid and beautiful descriptions of river scenery - all charmed her' (18, 130), said her sister. Fred and Charlie, as fantasist and realist, dreamer and doer, are polarized like Tom and Huck, the aspiring realist in each case providing the admiring perspective on the other's factitious "style". The Lancingford Canal is hardly the Mississippi, as Mrs. Ewing's deflationary style appreciates; when Weston apostrophizes the Goddess of the Stream, the narrative apologizes 'By the Stream he meant the canal, for we had no river, which, of course, Weston couldn't help' (42). Nevertheless, the idea of voyaging, as delight

and discovery, is central to this nouvelle, as to other composite idylls of river life and comradeship for children - The Wind in the Willows, Bevis, Swallows and Amazons, The Minnow on the Say. Interwoven with its ironic realism, the book has a perfectly compatible lyricism, predominantly communicated as waterscapes impressed on the narrator's vision. The fidelity of this lyric strain to the child's experience binds the nouvelle as securely, if more mutedly, than plot.

Light is important at every stage. Sunshine lights the childhood scenes, even before its conjunction with water. It is 'reflected from the cucumber-frame' on Rupert's lecture. It brightens their games: 'There always was sunshine when we played cricket' (41). But it positively irradiates the voyage, making a discovery of mundane sights, 'some quality which seems to go straight to the heart':

There lay the barge, the sun shining on the clean deck, and from the dewy edges of the old ropes, and from the barge-master's zinc basin and pail put out to sweeten in the air (73).

Under pressure to communicate the child's reception of the 'new and wonderful', Mrs. Ewing's prose reaches for more delicate, daring effects: the long single-sentence paragraph which unfolds Charlie's view of the Thames (100), or the sheaf of similes conveying the ingenu's impression of dockland:

[steam funnels among masts] like old and hollow oaks in a wood of young and slender trees (123).

bales of cotton packed as thickly as bricks in a brick-field (122).

Vessels ... with shining decks of marvellous cleanliness, and giant figure-heads like dismembered Jins out of some Arabian tale (122).

...[masts]covered with ropes in orderly profusion, which showed in the sunshine as cobwebs shine out in a field in summer (116).

These blend the domestic with the rich and strange in arresting sweetness, but, congregately, they also prove Mrs. Ewing unafraid, even within a semi-parodic structure, to claim a sense of beauty for the child.

Variations in light skilfully signify mood changes and carry meaning. The glare of the fire contrasts with the radiant voyage. Charlie's prefiguring dream before his voyage - a structural feature of earlier fiction - of churches 'standing up like dark rocks in a sea of dancing flames' (63) is predictive of the reality he meets on his return: 'The roar of irresistible fire - which has a strange likeness to the roar of irresistible water' (134). This sinister mingling of sea and fire in the Emergency distorts the lyrical marriage of water and sun in the Voyage. Mrs. Ewing's Commonplace Book has an odd note on this elemental union:

The Flame, the Flood and the Hurricane speak one language (See AJM Oct. 1874 A Great Emergency). The Fire Daemon licked his lips and chuckled among the crackling rafters.

But the demarcation of tranquil voyage from hectic Emergency is drawn through the most beautiful light image, neither sun nor fire, but moon:

I know that it was getting late, that the dew was heavy on the towing-path, and that among the dark pencilled shadows of the sallows in the water the full moon's reflection lay like a golden shield (132).

It is difficult to assign precise significance here (why a shield?). But by providing a moment of such wondering stasis before the frantic, and, in terms of deeper meaning, more spurious, fire scenes, Mrs. Ewing seems to insist on the value of the voyage to her hero, however miniature and unorthodox, and in face of the ironic refutation about to be dealt by her plot.

In James's terms, such a nouvelle surface, so studded with perceptions of beauty and value, does present more meanings than

the 'offered face of the work', which superficially evaluates the voyage as a 'wildgoose chase after adventures' (148). The case for the voyage as discovery must not be overstated; all that is explicit in the ending is the hero's mild 'I never can regret my voyage' (148), and the plot does work its obvious irony. But the nouvelle unrolls other strands which sensitively appreciate both the experience and the metaphor of voyaging.

3. Theatricals

In her three articles 'Hints for Private Theatricals' (AJM, 1875-6), Mrs. Ewing advises her young readers on drama as a social and imaginative exercise. She complains that basic materials for theatricals are 'not reckoned among legitimate expenses in middle-class British families' (10, 97). Her practical suggestions on costumes, face-painting, lighting and scenery, from cardboard placards to entire procenia, show how seriously the enlightened family might take their theatricals. Her social counselling is equally thorough. Stick to fairy tale plots: 'don't be too ambitious' in your choice from 'grown-up plays' (110). Allow for inexperience. Anticipate rows. The stage-manager 'will have his own way, but he will have nothing else' (88). The value of theatricals is primarily social:

... private theatricals - like so many other affairs of this life - must for everybody concerned be a compromise of pains and pleasures, of making strict rules and large allowances, of giving and taking, bearing and forbearing, learning to find one's own happiness in seeing other people happy, aiming at perfection with all one's might and making the best of imperfection in the end (87).

Viewed so, theatricals become obvious matter for children's fiction. Simply, they belong in the Ewing child's daily repertoire of activities, family matter for fictional transcription. At this level of realism, Mrs. Ewing's three 'theatrical' tales, The Peace Egg

(1871), A Happy Family (1883) and A Very Ill-Tempered Family (1874-5) are surpassed by Alcott who often describes children's drama more completely. The 'Operatic Tragedy' which fixes the liberated family tone in Chapter 2 of Little Women is quite precisely described. Both authors published plays from their fiction. Alcott's Comic Tragedies (1893) purports to be by Jo and Meg. Mrs. Ewing's The Peace Egg Mummung Play (1884) is the 'cream' of five early mummies' plays, bowdlerized of 'vulgar' accretions and simplified for children (18, 284; 10, 60). It is still in print in Pollock's Toy Theatre playlets. However, Alcott confined her fictionalized dramatics to this realistic function, an area for defining character or corporate family imagination.

Mrs. Ewing, distinctively, saw theatricals as metaphors for family psychology, for role-playing and escape, for division and reconciliation. Only A Very Ill-Tempered Family, however, has a form flexible enough to exploit such a metaphor, by relating the image of a Twelfth Night pantomime to the behavioural dilemmas of children. This nouvelle, distantly related to moral tales on a single fault, a class it satirizes in the sobering tracts on temper which the heroine gets for Christmas, expands beyond these harsh didactic origins into good psychological fiction. It does this by an unblinking, even shocking, representation of sibling hatred,¹⁵ and by the metaphor of drama which is its solvent. The shorter tales are much thinner, their theatricals being mechanisms for moral change before they are metaphors. This is closer to Harriett Mozley's use of the ornamental tableau in The Fairy Bower as a moral arena for its participants, though it is also a deceptive image of harmony, the novel's climax, hinge and symbol,¹⁶ but of a more fixed, static significance than Mrs. Ewing's pantomimes.

What the tales do best is bring children's natural role-playing

and its continuity with theatricals to an unusually explicit level. In Plays, Dreams and Imitation in Childhood, Piaget explains the child's adaptational development from early imitation, when accommodation has primacy over assimilation, and from symbolic play, when assimilation has primacy, to the stage of operational representative activity. He argues that this coordinated evolution of play and imitation is fundamental to childhood, and is towards their progressive integration, when abstract constructs become possible.¹⁷ Drama is one form of symbolic representation, and the child experiences no discontinuity between his spontaneous play and full theatricality.

In The Peace Egg, the children pretend adult roles before ever thinking of the mummies' play. 'Master Robert' and 'In The Nursery' show the range of their daily dramas, including motherhood, funerals and military routine. Pretence is their main mode of play, the language suggesting how assumed roles lead to 'theatrical' directing:

Though the Captain had sold his commission, Robin continued to command an irregular force of volunteers in the nursery, and never was colonel more despotic. His brothers and sisters were by turn infantry, cavalry, engineers and artillery (10, 17).

This pretence prefigures the more stylized but equally militaristic mummies' play, 'so far from being a play of peace, it was made up of a series of battles' (27). Adult role-playing, too, is pointedly defined, as if to show experience as basically dramatic. The Captain exercises fatherly discipline through pretence, punishing his son for 'going round the guards', instead of to bed, by putting him on 'sentry duty' all night. His worth is estimated by the variety and value of his roles: '[The Captain] had been, by turns, in one straight or another, sick-nurse, doctor, carpenter, nursemaid, and cook to his family'; he is no less masculine because his 'tenderness never failed' (13). Such descriptions point loosely to a continuum of

reality, pretence and drama.

But beyond description, the tale falters. The theatricality of the subject invades the style. The popular Victorian melodrama of the disinheriting grandfather, less tritely handled in The Heir of Redclyffe or Little Lord Fauntleroy, here becomes crudely histrionic. This grandfather exhibits a rough kind of Aristotelian *harmartia* in his unforgivingness, with a violent *peripeteia* in his sudden recognition of his granddaughter.¹⁸ The viewpoint is untypically external, as of figures in a charade, conveyed by a shrill or rhetorical authorial voice, an over-use of labels for names (the Captain's wife, the old man) and an ironic social Chorus from the philistine John Bull family. There is even a hint of 'staging' for effect; the mother opens the door to the servant, 'But it was her father, with her child in his arms' (42). The histrionic approach introduces a contaminated emotion. The mummies' play becomes a melodramatic device for wringing the old man's heart-strings, adding nothing to the earlier, subtler insights into human roles.

Similar elements in A Happy Family are scarcely more integrated, although the tableau vivant of family pets relates more obviously to the children's experience. Intended as a spectacle of the Peaceable Kingdom, its chaotic failure is simply a comic enlargement of their quarrels. The tale is short, but unrefined, written originally for an American competition with a word limit (18, 120). Its severe moral patterning limits what can be done with the theatrical metaphor, but it does persist interestingly in viewing children's play as drama. The tableau is only the culmination of more daily pretences. Bayard and Edward become Early Britons with woad and door-mats. Lettice with her 'company voice', tight curls, and shoe rosettes, a 'mass of affectation' (266), always assumes an accentuatedly female role;

even her private fantasies of St. Joan and 'peculiar' heroines (273) are histrionic. Such gender-based roles are slightly probed through one of Mrs. Ewing's licensed commentators, whom she makes an eccentric Irish cripple, as a triple excuse for his mild heresies. But he, too, is 'dramatic'; his monologues are 'entertaining' (277), he is a 'showman' whose tirades and self-mockery provide a defensive social identity; when asked about his crippling accident, he says he

"Played the fool. Broke an arm and a thigh, and damaged my spine, and - lived. Here rest the mortal remains."

And for the next ten minutes, he mocked himself, as he only can (1, 277).

But these fertile suggestions about human roles find no soil for growth in a didactic and restrictive plot.

In A Very Ill-Tempered Family, the nouvelle's greater spaciousness promotes a psychological reinterpretation of didactic moralism. There is nothing prescriptive about Isobel's movingly-won victory over temper. Avery comments on the child of conscience as a recurring Victorian type, and on self-sacrifice as a fictional theme appropriate for teeming families.¹⁹ By one of her most intimate and poised first persons, by sophisticated organisation over nine chapters, and by a controlling image of theatricality, Mrs. Ewing lifts type and theme from period commonplaces to penetrating domestic realism.

The impression of expansiveness, beyond 'the offered face of the work', is gained partly by a dextrous telescoping of time. Chapters 1 - 3 reflect backwards on Isobel's temper before the crucial period of confirmation. 4 - 5 close in intently on this period. 6 - 9 move forwards, through the accounts of children's theatricals, to Isobel's self-conquest, and its reward and symbol in triumphant dramatic production. This high selectivity brings confirmation into unlikely, but provoking, conjunction with theatricals.

Expansiveness is won, too, by the varied replication of the heroine's moral fault, in her four siblings, in semi-caricatured Mr. Rampant, and in Aunt Isobel, the most life-like of all Ewing mentors. Their variety, relayed through an ironic narrative, avoids the inert schematization of the moral tale's gallery of awful warnings. Mr. Rampant is merely a peripheral grotesque, encompassed by comic imagery (he bellows 'like a bull' (164-5), he 'became a sort of gunpowder cask at large' (155)), and by Dickensian tricks, like the narrative fixation on a physical quirk (a short, and apoplectic, neck). The germ for this character exists under 'Ideas for Plays' on the Memoranda page of her 1872 diary: 'Master hot-tempered. Missus in dread of him abusing some person'. Strangely, this character is one least touched by any dramatic associations. But if he is a thumbnail cartoon, Aunt Isobel is more finely drawn, despite descent from the Sherwood parent who points to her community of sin with the child, and her later Victorian incarnation who exemplifies some fault conquered, for the child still dogged by it (like Mrs. March). The cautionary 'tragic' past is trite enough, but this becomes the basis for a responsible exploration of the heroine's similar problems. Their pre-confirmation interview (Ch. 4) contains intricate dialectics, excellent dialogue, and interlaced details of gesture, place and person, usually absent from sectarian tales on religious crises, which more often renearse arguments than locate them in human feeling.

A way of estimating the nouvelle's coherence is examination, in turn, of confirmation as theme, and theatricality as metaphor.

On confirmation, Charlotte Yonge makes an apt comparison, fictionalizing it as both a family experience and adolescent crisis. She also represents the best of sectarian fiction. After reviewing the 'crudely belligerent' religious novel of the 1840s, Margaret Mason says, 'In her novels we see a striking advance in Tractarian fictional technique', whereby interest in ecclesiastical conflict

gives way to that 'in individual spiritual conflict'.²⁰ Mrs. Ewing could be said to take this individual conflict one step further towards secularized psychology, though both writers begin from Harriett Mozley's premise that Home is the element and trial of a Christian.²¹

For Mrs. Ewing, confirmation is a convenient, and mentionable, milestone in maturation. Ariès has indicated its dualism:

... it celebrated at one and the same time the two contradictory aspects of that idea, the innocence of childhood on the one hand and on the other its rational appreciation of sacred mysteries.²²

He discusses the nineteenth century's recognition of it as an initiation ceremony, with special costume and the symbolic presentation of devotional pictures.²³ Isobel is duly given such a token— an engraved Crucifixion. But it is her reactions to it, closely measured in the style, that signify. For example, after the quarrel, the picture, crimsoned by the setting sun, gives her a 'superstitious thrill' (216); this accurate detail pulls together several threads (her early promise, her text on not letting the sun go down on anger), and indicates her psychological rather than spiritual condition. Similarly, issues debated with her aunt are not doctrinal, but behavioural — about hating, changing, swearing and aggression, the price of self-control; the language is frank, modern, secular:

"... one's memory isn't made of slate, or one's heart either, that one can take a wet sponge and make it clean" (175).

These are acute issues for adolescence and confirmation an apt fictional pretext for their scrutiny.

For Yonge, its significance is more precisely religious. In What Books to Lend she advises on useful confirmation fiction, including her own instructive tract, The Seal (1869), and her problem novel, The Castle Builders (1854), primly tagged 'Confirmation

difficulties in a higher rank of life.'²⁴ Confirmation is primarily a milestone on the Christian way. Its importance is reflected in the plotting of The Pillars of the House (1873) where Edgar rejects confirmation and is later scalped by Indians. But elsewhere in her fiction, as in Mrs. Ewing's, doctrinal and ecclesiastical matter takes significance from the character's envisaged life. Chapter 25 of The Daisy Chain treats the family crisis of Dr. May's forbidding Harry confirmation, after a thoughtless trick which shows his 'unfitness'.²⁵ Inevitably, we learn more of formalities than in Mrs. Ewing; classes, catechisms and costumes are invested with genuine fictional interest. More centrally, Yonge's deeply authoritarian view informs the very structuring of her tensions. Dr. May's parental ban is erected as right and absolute, over-ridden only by the clergyman. A climactic reversal occurs when Mr. Wilmot accepts Harry after all. These authorities provide the conceptual and emotional framework within which the children are learning to live. Artistically, such authorities become mechanisms in the formal ordering of the novel. Where longer Ewing novels may have to resolve cycles of development by coincidence, marriage, or through the narrative convention itself, Yonge can draw on her structure of authorities to endorse or reverse children's experience, or to complete a phase of action. Chapter 25 concentrates firmly and quite finely, on the children's reactions, but they are reactions to the edicts of authorities. Mr. Wilmot's decree, by sudden letter, almost simulating the motions of Providence, acts as the chapter's fulcrum.

Mrs. Ewing invokes no authorities. Their deliberate exclusion - no vicar, no parents, no theological dicta beyond that of 'besetting sin' - suggest childhood's greater autonomy, requiring different fictional structures. Isobel, too, suffers 'unfitness', but it is

self-directed and self-resolved. The nouvelle's fulcrum is her long inward struggle, hardly a dark night of the soul, but an intensely communicated grey half-hour. Self-analysis, very restricted in Yonge, is the staple of this fiction. Mrs. Ewing departs from authorities explicitly, in plot, and implicitly, in her methods of interiority. These include lengthy monologues (Ch. 9, *passim*), and ironically dramatized dialogue, which supplements the slantedness of first person:

"The sin of ill-temper, if it is a sin," I began. I paused expecting an outburst, but Aunt Isobel sat quite composedly, and fingered her eyelashes.

"Of course, the Rector would be horrified if I said such a thing at the confirmation-class," I continued, in a dissatisfied tone.

"Don't invent grievances, Isobel, for I see you have a real stumbling-block, when we can come to it. You are not at the confirmation-class, and I am not easily horrified" (170).

Yonge's chapter has little humour (Harry's prank is already over-shadowed), no irony, and reduced interiority, because of its multiplied characters. The Mays are defined through contrast and juxtaposition of their qualities. Thus, fictional rhythm is constituted partly by the shift of interest from one to another, the kind of movement rare in Mrs. Ewing's family fiction. Yonge's success is apparent even over a small stretch. After the cataclysmic ban, she rapidly and confidently traverses the family, with a snatch of dialogue or comment abstracting the essential reactions: Margaret's grief, Richard's orthodoxy ("It is our duty not to question our father's judgements"), Harry's honest contrition ("The Captain may punish anyone he pleases") and Ethel's resentment ("It is very unfair, and I will say so"). Individual and composite lives both emerge. The confirmation ceremony is the true climax of this chapter, not only for its religious significance, but because it affirms the composite nature of this family life, their

unified purpose beneath individual distinctions, conveyed in Yonge's most elevated style ("Those four were really like a poem").

Revealingly, Mrs. Ewing begins, not ends, a chapter with confirmation. Although described with appropriate gravity, it is without Yonge's infusion of feeling (Ethel promises 'on and on straight into eternity'; Norman is a 'young knight'). Then quickly and securely she slips back to the serio-ironic vein: 'So much remained alive of the "celestial fire" that I kept my temper behind my teeth' (182). She returns, too, to the assiduous detailing of physical gesture and sensation. The 'fatigue' of the ceremony (182), the 'unendurable fatigue' and hysterical tears of reconciliation, Aunt Isobel's habitual pulling of her lashes, her 'heavy blush' at Isobel's tactlessness, and her momentary resting against the table, 'the only time I ever saw her lean on anything' - such outwardness of motion completes the inwardness of narrative in scenes of little overt action. It relays some of the objective information which Yonge supplies directly. That Yonge ends and Mrs. Ewing begins a chapter with confirmation is symptomatic of their different views. To Yonge, it is a terminus; to Mrs. Ewing, it initiates a new stage in maturity only to be completed by Isobel's self-conquest. Yonge's novel moves on to accumulate parallel episodes, accretions of family life; its form is the 'chain' of its title. Mrs. Ewing's nouvelle moves to the reality and metaphor of theatricals, as a family arena where this new maturity of the heroine's is tried.

The children's Gatty-like play is indirectly refracted, through the reported family behaviour which it illuminates. It is an unscripted pantomime, demanding every social and practical skill outlined in 'Hints for Private Theatricals', a truly collaborative venture: 'we were well accustomed to act together, and could trust each other and ourselves' (188). The scenes of violent quarrelling

and of triumphant performance are highly realistic recreations of nursery life. But the relationship of play to behaviour is more closely worked than in other tales. The pantomime is a garish projection of their more naturalistically described tempers; bones are crunched, fire threatens, people fight. Both symbolically in its plot (killing a fiery dragon, transforming Beast into Prince, happy marriage), and mimetically by the very fact of its successful production, the play sets the seal on the children's moral and psychological reconciliation.

The inverse of this is that naturalistic behaviour is 'theatrically' viewed. Drama permeates their daily interactions. This appears in jokes, such as Charles' sneer at Philip, 'in a voice of mock compliment', "Clinton can't want a fiery dragon when he's got you" (206), or in scenically presented moments:

"I beg your pardon?" said Alice, with so perfect an air of not having heard him that he was about to repeat the question, when she left the nursery with the exact exit which she had made as a Discreet Princess repelling unwelcome advances in last year's play (192).

Drama, at a level more artificial than simple role-playing, provides the children with structures and colouration for their feelings. It enables Mrs. Ewing to clarify and enlarge her expression of their psychology. The children even interpret their own conduct theatrically. Philip mocks the family temper: "the audience will be entertained with an unexpected after-piece entitled - 'The disobliging disobliged'" (220).

Mrs. Ewing elaborates the interchange of life and drama less overtly. One group of images for presenting the children has a bestiary-book picturesqueness. Charles snaps 'like a little terrier' and acts 'the Woolly Beast', an incongruous blend of childish softness and savage aggression. Philip lashes and sparks like the Dragon he plays. Isobel paces her room like 'the more ferocious of

the wild beasts in the Zoological Gardens' (210), speaks 'in a voice about as amiable as the growlings of a panther' (211) and at her lowest point, considers replacing her Crucifixion with a photograph of a lioness. This accumulation is not specifically theatrical, but it shares with pantomime a lurid exaggeration of the passions.

Most inventively, Isobel's grand self-sacrifice is through her acting out the role of forgiveness, in Piagetian symbolic play, until she makes herself feel it. This moment is almost 'staged'. Leaving her room, she encounters each sibling in turn, in three tiny playlets of human feeling, before catching Philip, a climax thus deferred and intensified. The little drama with Charles, pinching his biceps ready for revenge ("I'll make him remember these theatricals" (219)), presents her with a comic miniature of corrosive hatred that makes her gesture of reconciliation even more urgent. The deferred meeting with Philip thus becomes more truly moving and climatic. The 'staginess' of method is justified by the clarity it gives to underlying family psychology.

The vignettes exemplify, too, the subtle fluctuations of comedy and melodrama in Mrs. Ewing's presentation of family dynamics, as incisive as Yonge's, if less expansively treated. The balance and the incisiveness are both made possible by the fertile image of theatricals, related so comprehensively to children's experience, within this elegant nouvelle structure.

4. Fields and Flowers, Beasts and Men

Mrs. Ewing's essay, 'May-Day Old Style and New Style' (1874), spoke of 'two of the strongest passions of childhood - the love of imitation and the love of flowers' (17, 150). Section 3 discussed the love of imitation. This section argues that in writing about flowers and animals, outside fairy tale forms, Mrs. Ewing is

successful only where the child remains her imaginative centre, with flora and fauna as either naturalistic adjuncts, or revealing metaphors. Divergence from this centre, in her natural history essays, biological romances and animal autobiographies, produced some of her most routine writing, and strangest hybrids. Her experiments with fictionalized natural history lacked Mrs. Gatty's driving singleness of purpose. A story like Father Hedgehog and his Neighbours (1876) is an extraordinary combination of anachronistic animal narrative, and sensitive, even daring, inquiry into human issues like childlessness and class antagonisms.

Her nature essays show her imagination immobilized; odd stylistic felicities appear without appropriate form. 'The Princes of Vegetation' (1876), on palm trees, shows her restlessness within the strictly informative piece. Similar pieces filled the magazine, usually factual, occasionally whimsical; Hecratia Gatty's 'The Christmas Rose' (AJM, 1877) is a solidly respectable example of the former. But Mrs. Ewing varies this tack. Sober facts on palm-derivatives exist alongside speculations about the palms of victory and martyrdom, 'invested with poetical and emblematical significance' (17, 124), perhaps ambitious after the swift, soaring transitions from fact to metaphysics of favourites like Browne and Traherne, but without the unifying pressure of seventeenth century imagination. 'Little Woods' (1875) is more earnestly informative, discussing trees alphabetically from Ash to Willow, but still with hesitancy in its tone and direction. For whom does she digress on corporal punishment?: 'we hope our... young readers are only familiar with birch-rods in picture-books' (17, 140-1). A fond hope in 1875! She finds a greater freedom in 'May-Day', perhaps because her models are clearly literary, possibly Lamb's 'All Fools' Day' and 'Valentine's Day',²⁶ sanctioning a more indulgent, discursive style, weaving quotations and aphorisms, in

leisurely rhythms:

...It is well, in the impressionable season of life, to realize, if only occasionally, how much of the sweetest air, the brightest and best hours of the day, people spend in bed ... we wait till the world has got dirty, and the air is full of the smoke of thousands of breakfasts, and clouds are beginning to gather, and then we say England has a horrible climate (17, 175).

Among the Merrows (1872), a sketch of her visit to the Crystal Palace Aquarium, and A Week Spent in a Glass Pond, By the Great Water Beetle (1876) are much more contemporary, loading slender narratives with a mass of natural history. Kingsley's Glaucus; or The Wonders of the Shore (1855) and Madam How and Lady Why; or First Lessons in Earth Lore for Children (1870) are larger, more sober examples of this movement of imaginative biology. Where Kingsley scales down Science and Christian dogma to juvenile proportions through an avuncular persona, Mrs. Ewing, more gently, undertakes guided tours of pond or aquarium. But the factual tour is diverted by glimpses of stories and fragments of fancy: sea-anemones have faces 'like a plume of snowy feathers' (12, 199), prawns have 'black eyes glaring from their diaphdnous helmets in colourless, translucent, if not transparent armour and bristling with spears' (210). The Great Water Beetle, used as unlikely narrator, provides some consistency between fact and fantasy; but his tale is merely an updated Trimmer homily on conservation, with puppet-like children and dire didactic warnings. The best passages are of natural observation, comic or lyric, but cut adrift from narrative: 'The water-gnats were taking dimensions as usual, a blue-black beetle sat humming on the stake, and dragon-flies flitted hungrily about, like splinters of a broken rainbow' (12, 189-90). This blend of impressionism and biological exactness was precisely interpreted by André's illustrations.²⁷ Only when she could lock this sense of natural vitality into a firm narrative of children could she make it telling.

This is usually when the perception appears as the child's own. With animal narrators Mrs. Ewing was swayed towards sentimentality, by her vehement faith in animal intelligence. No-one, she said apropos sea-anemones, should believe there were 'any living creatures with whom a loving and intelligent patience will not at last enable us to hold communion' (12, 205). This belief vitiates the fabulist's view of animals as types. Her focus constantly shifts towards the animal-man relationship, blurring any conception of animal as symbol. Margaret Blount, in her study of fictional animals, argued:

While Aesop used animals as human symbols and folk tales use them as characters in semi-human dramas, the true didactic story uses their natural behaviour to point a human moral, and this tradition often bends animal behaviour further towards the human than it should go...²⁸

If Mrs. Ewing attributes human qualities to animals it is sometimes on the realistic, not symbolic, plane, not from didacticism but sentimentalism. This tendency appears in Flaps, her sequel to an imitation folk tale, The Hens of Hencastle by Victor Blüthgen, published together in 1878.²⁹ The original simulates folk patterns, folk morality and animal characters quite passably. Like Grimm's The Musicians of Bremen, it is a symbolic story of animals escaping human authority to form a new 'commonwealth' (12, 143); but in this parliament of fowls, vices soon reappear. Mrs. Ewing undertook her sequel, apparently, to modify this 'imperfect and unsatisfactory' (v) ending. Eden claimed 'the two portions can scarcely be identified as belonging to different writers' (18, 99), but this is not so. Mrs. Ewing's style is more intimate, her events less patterned, the emblematic or representative status of the animals is progressively reduced, and we gravitate back towards the area of animal-human relations. The dog who had symbolized loyalty becomes simply a sentimentalized pet, not a subject of folk lore but an object of Victorian pathos:

And Flaps' nose went right into the print hood,
and he put out his tongue and licked Daisy's face
from the point of her chin up her right cheek ...
and found that she was a very nice thing, too (12, 170).

The same creeping archness and urge to demonstrate animal sagacity as a realistic not representative attribute makes stories like Toots and Boots (1876) or The Owl in The Ivy Bush (1885) contrived or embarrassing. In the history of animal narrative, less likely spokesmen than cats and owls have succeeded, from Dorothy Kilner's celebrated The Life and Perambulations of a Mouse (1783) to E.B. White's Stuart Little (1945). But their success depends either upon offering the animal's smallness to the child as a chance to participate safely in heroic adventures, amidst a daily world imaginatively transformed, or upon the comic exploitation of natural animal behaviour. Mrs. Ewing hardly took up the first option, and in Toots and Boots shows an awareness of the second limited to verbal jokes ('this news made my tail stand on end' or 'I felt on the tip-claw of expectation' (108, 104)) and feeble effects:

I come of an ancient and rough-tongued cat family,
who always lick their platters clean. So I set to
work again, though the draught was most annoying,
and froze the cream to butter on my whiskers (105).

Successful animal autobiographies rely on a picaresque form, some thread of conflicts and triumphs, to contain such effects. Stuart Little and Kilner's Nimble are disguised children. But Mrs. Ewing was too convinced of animal autonomy to make this substitution, and her stories confine themselves, without ingenuity, to animal activity as it touches human domesticity.

A more radical confusion splits Father Hedgehog, which has a powerful narrative, but not of the hedgehog narrator's own life. The tale he tells concerns gipsies. Its double genesis lies in the Gattyst fascination with gipsies, real and literary. Mrs. Gatty

confessed 'Lavengro has nearly driven me wild';³⁰ Mrs. Ewing read The Romany Rye enthusiastically.³¹ A gipsy had actually brought a child to the vicarage for baptism and Mrs. Gatty had talked to her about Borrow and child-rearing.³² Later Mrs. Ewing recalled all this, on seeing Flinzer's hedgehog pictures (reprinted in The Brothers Of Pity, and other Tales, 1882), and combined gipsies and hedgehogs in one erratic tale. Her diary for April and May, 1876, shows its unpredicted expansion to near-nouvelle length. Its dissociation of sober human drama from a comic hedgehog reporter becomes ludicrous.

She does try to bond narrator and tale through a common theme of parenthood. Fertility and death, attachment and loss, govern both feral and human worlds. The hedgehogs represent a humorous simplification of the nuclear family - worrying mother, sagacious father, irrepressible young. 'Father' hedgehog's communication of hedgerow experience to his brood is juxtaposed with the 'grandmother's' bitter advice to Sibyl. Such family labels replace names for both sets of characters. Animal lives, against human ones, appear short and predictable, and are more serenely chronicled: 'Numbers six and seven went to Covent Garden in a hamper. They say black-beetles are excellent eating' (12,98). This cool acceptance of birth and death provides an ironic counterpoint to the human expense of emotion. Animal cycles, through three generations, alert the young reader plainly to issues of fertility and mortality, more obscure and painful in the human drama.

But this animal interest lapses; through Chapters 4 - 7 we are barely aware of the narrator's identity, so intricate is the human web he describes. Profound social and psychological issues are raised by a middle-class couple's adoption of a gipsy baby. Uncovering these gradually involves Mrs. Ewing in greater realism of dialogue and analysis - making a nonsense of hedgehog reporting.

It becomes increasingly, perhaps unwittingly, a story about women and childbearing. Male characters, both middle-class and gipsy, are dismissed by the conventional clichés they speak (See 82-3), and their snobbery or prejudice, hopeless for coping with the delicacies of adoption. The women, of all classes, have the better dialogue. Long interviews between the gipsy grandmother, the childless wife and Sibyl, representing young and abused womanhood, touch on and press against many conventions of class, sex and parenting. Their frankness and realism are remarkable for such a context. These women speak honestly through the trammels of their dependencies, even voicing some resentment against men:

"Don't cry, my dear, it comes to an end at last, though I think sometimes that all the men in the world put together is not worth the love we wastes upon one" (94).

Adoption, for men, appears a matter of lawyers and rights, for women, a matter of their deepest engagements. That the rich can buy even children is social evidence which the tale grasps responsibly. The last scene penetrates furthest, by confronting the rich childless wife, who 'must have fretted hard, before she begged the poor tinker child out of the woods' (61), with the poor grandmother, barren not through infertility but social rejection. The argument is very subtle, as though well-rehearsed by Mrs. Ewing, and resonant with feeling, especially in the projection of a mothering that sheds both prejudice and possessiveness:

.."I thought I was childless and unhappy, but I know now that only those are childless who have had children and lost them.

Do you know that in all the years my son was with me, I do not think there was a day when I did not think of you?...

I always wanted to find you to speak to you myself, I knew what you must feel, and I thought I should like you to know that I knew it (89).

... I thought I would say that perhaps I was wrong ever to have taken him away from his own people; but as it was done and could not be undone, we might perhaps make the best of it together ... That is what I have thought might be if you did not hide him from me, and I did not keep him from you" (90-1).

This is moving both as a sensibility uncovered and as the proposition of a new, shared parenting, across age and class. The story admittedly has to retreat from this ideal to a vague denouement leaving the practicalities of child-sharing uninvestigated. But its conception is remote from the tidy solutions of the foundling tale, perhaps because viewed so exclusively through women's concern. And it is remote from hedgehogs. The radical development does credit to Mrs. Ewing's humanity; but leaves her tale in disarray. The animal story cannot cope with such moral density and realism, which demands a clearly human centre.

Such a centre provided more comfortable narrative structures. Stories like Brothers of Pity (1876) and Our Field (1876) are forerunners of her last pastorals, brief, concentrated, and homogeneous. The first Mrs. Molesworth called 'an exquisite story',³³ the second Ruskin called a poem.³⁴ Through her favourite convention, the naive narrative, Mrs. Ewing can twist the various strands of nature into a whole. Flora and fauna appear as science and metaphor, as playground and as Wordsworthian landscape of the child's inwardness.

The epigraph from the 'Intimations' Ode to Our Field stakes out its emotional ground. It is a short, concentrated vehicle for many of Mrs. Ewing's strongest feelings, 'told in the language and from the fresh heart of a child' (18, 741), in Eden's words. Starting from two pretty woodcuts of children and their dog,³⁵ she builds a slight plot which nevertheless engages those feelings securely. Saving a stray dog, discovering a secret field, winning a wild-flower competition, all promote the uninterrupted contact of children and nature. Adults figure only unnamed and undescribed on the narrative margins, indicating different values: "I don't believe anybody could have such a field of their very own, and never come to see it, from one end of Summer to the other", the children say of the owner (11, 252-3).

As in the best juvenile fiction, the children solve their problems unaided, within larger adult structures, and do so symbolically, through the resources of nature. Their one rule about flower collections is "everything must come out of Our Field" (250). The Field becomes emblem and guarantee of their independence. Such a plot, as well as the unbroken childish strain of the narrative itself, dramatizes their autonomy admirably.

The exact relationship of children to nature is qualitatively suggested, rather than quantified. Its components are diverse. Descriptions of the dog are quite within the compass of Victorian sentimentality: 'People sometimes asked us what kind of dog he was, but we never knew, except that he was the nicest possible kind' (238). But outdoors the range expands. Mrs. Ewing's peculiar blend of science and poetry makes the Field both well-stocked English meadow and gilded fairyland. It assumes metaphoric force (and capitals) as the containment of children's imagination. Where their botany ends, their fancy takes over: 'the Hair-moss, and the Pincushion-moss, and the Scale-mosses, and a lot of others with names of our own'. (252). Frustrated indoor play where people 'put their feet into' their games, is liberated in the Field: 'sometimes I was a jeweller, and sold daisy-chains and pebbles, and coral sets made of holly berries' (246). The sense of possession and possibilities invades the description. Their collections win because they are both scientifically accurate and poetically arranged (251). The dualism of science and poetry, pursued by Mrs. Gatty and Kingsley as the romance of natural history, and jarringly present in Mrs. Ewing's own nature essays, is here fused through children's experience.

Both for and about children, this tiny tale bonds slender narrative and expansive meaning particularly well. It unfolds its unpretentious plot of children's triumphs (they save their dog and

honour, and keep their field intact), and simultaneously discovers a new vein of Victorian Arcadianism:

...The sun shone still, but it shone low down and made such splendid shadows that we all walked about with grey giants at our feet; and it made the bright green of the grass, and the cowslips down below, and the top of the hedge, and Sandy's hair, and everything in the sun and the mist behind the elder bush which was out of the sun, so yellow - so very yellow - that just for a minute I really believed about Sandy's godmother, and thought it was a story come true, and that everything was turning into gold (242-3).

As clearly as any tale of the seventies, this expresses the child's possession of his natural heritage, and it points forward in its delicate balance to the more intricate pastorals of the eighties.

Chapter 8 We and the World. A Book for Boys, 1877-9

Virginia Woolf in her essay on Robinson Crusoe isolates the methods by which Defoe subdues disparate elements into a single design. The chief of these is the 'shrewd, middle-class, unimaginative' perspective of the narrator on 'remote islands and the solitudes of the human soul'. She describes its establishment in Defoe's opening:

"I was born in the year 1632 in the city of York of a good family." Nothing could be plainer, more matter of fact, than that beginning. We are drawn on soberly to consider all the blessings of orderly, industrious middle-class life. There is no greater good fortune we are assured than to be born of the British middle-class ... the middle station between the mean and the great is the best; and its virtues - temperance, moderation, quietness, and health - are the most desirable. It was a sorry thing, then, when by some evil fate a middle-class youth was bitten with the foolish love of adventure. ¹

When, working against illness and time, Mrs. Ewing undertook her last serialized novel, she selected such a middle-class rebel for hero. In the intervening two centuries, The Life and Strange Surprising Adventures of Robinson Crusoe of York, Mariner (1719) had become a seminal fiction in the foundation of the boys' adventure tale. It was still, in some versions, a Victorian favourite.² But Defoe's measured establishment of middle-class values as the narrative centre and norm is reduced in the boys' novel to a mere pretext for rebellion, or a brief, contrasting prelude to adventures. Also, Defoe's motivation becomes secularized. Crusoe reminds us frequently that his 'evil fate' is a punishment, his wanderlust a sin:

... my inclination to this led me so strongly against the will, nay, the commands, ^{and persuasions} of my father, and against all the entreaties of my mother ... that there seemed to be something fatal in that propension of nature tending directly to the life of misery that was to befall me. ³

But the later adventuring hero is purged of both fatalism and guilt. His adventures are not a retribution, but, as Paul Hazard says, 'They are, on the contrary, magnificent rewards, reserved for the daring and strong'.⁴

Mrs. Ewing's 'Book for Boys' is by any judgement a divided novel and this chapter will discuss the reasons for its dislocations. Not until the sixteenth chapter does the hero get aboard ship, an unheard-of deferment in any sea novel. The disproportion between Home and Abroad results not only from incautious planning, as Eden claimed; it proceeds from Mrs. Ewing's divided intentions. Disparities between Parts 1 and 2 are not only of length and subject, but of technique and form. She was neither satisfied nor equipped to write the sea adventure projected by her original title, We Three.⁵ But neither was she able to adapt its characteristic motifs, situations and emotions to her own ends, as she had done earlier with other popular forms. Her ends in Part 1 define themselves as the examination of middle-class family relationships; but she cannot, as Defoe does, usefully harness this to the patterns of adventure.

In some ways Part 1 does repeat the social and religious concerns of Defoe.

It treats the 'orderly, industrious' province of Robinson Crusoe, not as the adventure novel's preliminary spur to action, but to detect the restraints and opportunities, the injustices and consolations of a bland English society through a boy's eyes. What Defoe consistently implies as the 'virtues' of the mercantile class, exemplified by his hero even in his rebellion, Mrs. Ewing scrutinizes more critically as the mixed blessings and goads of the yeoman class experienced by her hero. Her incisive, efficient opening immediately advertises our presence in this class and identifies both the hero and the potential source of his discomfort there:

It was a great saying of my poor mother's, especially if my father had been out of spirits about the crops, or the rise in wages, or our prospects, and had thought better of it again, and showed her the bright side of things, "Well, my dear, I'm sure we've much to be thankful for."

Which they had, and especially, I often think, for the fact that I was not the eldest son (13, 7).

As in Defoe, the hero's consciousness of his social roots provides our initiation to the novel.

Without Defoe's puritanism, indeed with an energetic liberalism, Mrs. Ewing pursues the relationship between rebellion and religion that is a major constituent of Crusoe's perspective. His sense of transgression in forsaking parents 'to act the rebel to their authority, and the fool to my own interest' colours his narration of events.⁶ The same question of religious sanction for parental authority, but now viewed in the nineteenth century's doubting spirit, occupies her hero:

The piety which kept a pure and God-fearing atmosphere about my home, and to which I owe all the strength I have found against evil since I left it, was far too sincere in both my parents for me to speak of any phase of it with disrespect. Though I may say here that I think it is to be wished that more good people exercised judgement as well as faith in tracing the will of Heaven in their own. Practically I did not even then believe that I was more "called" to that station of life which was to be found in Uncle Henry's office, than to that station of life which I should find on board a vessel in the Merchant Service, and it only discredited truth in my inmost soul when my father put his plans for my career in that light. Just as I could not help feeling it unfair that a commandment which might have been fairly appealed to if I had disobeyed him, should be used against me in argument because I disagreed with him (191).

The religion which Defoe internalizes in his hero and blends into his perspective, Mrs. Ewing isolates for fictional evaluation.

But the precision and eloquence of her distinctions here are foreign to the adventure novel. In the typical novel of W.H. Kingston the attribution of Christian sentiment to the hero is regular, brief,

and the moral guarantee of manliness, fair play and honesty; but it is no part of his perspective, as in Defoe, and is never the novel's focus, as in Ewing. An early and vigorous prototype, Peter the Whaler (1851), also a first-person narrative, shows the difference. It opens:

"Peter," said my father, with a stern look, though the tone of his voice had more of sorrow in it than anger, "this conduct...will bring ruin on you, and grief and shame on my head and to your mother's heart ... "7

These clichés are the gestures of middle-class disapproval, the necessary impetus to the scapegrace's departure, just as the hero's closing confession, "I have learned to fear God", merely signals his reabsorption into middle-class respectability.⁸ The intervening thirty-six chapters hardly concern either God or parents, nor do they represent in either Defoe's or Ewing's manner, the hero's mind, but rather his successful encounter with the physical world.

Her concentration on middle-class life in Part 1 is an obvious consolidation of earlier developments. She lingered over the writing she did well. There is the same creation of solid community as in Jan or Lob; the Yorkshire scenes of the funeral, the church on the moors, and the skating rescue are skilfully etched. There is the same dissection of the family as in the domestic tales, with even fewer inhibitions as to its inviolability. There is even, from her fairy tales, a use of folk motifs beneath a deceptively contemporary and psychologically viewed surface; inheritance, primogeniture, fraternal inequalities, and paternal favouritism are the themes. Jack's seeking his fortune at the end of Part 1 partakes of folk mythology as well as contemporary adventure.

But having deployed these techniques with practised artistry to establish the boy's resistance to a highly-particularized culture, Mrs. Ewing faces the problem of defining his alternatives.

As Woolf shows, the unity and authenticity of Robinson Crusoe

is its consummate prolongation of the middle-class perspective on remote experience so as to humanize and familiarize it. Mrs. Ewing's modernist sympathy with rebellion suggests a Part 2 in which such experience becomes a form of self-realization. But this completion eludes her and a radical split gapes between parts. Later and better novels evolved structures making either the boy's resistance or his escape more all-absorbing and central, avoiding such drastic bifurcation. The Way of All Flesh (1903) treats exclusively Ernest's 'long drawn-out patricide and matricide',⁹ while Jeffries' Bevis. The Story of a Boy builds a whole novel from the hero's alternative, self-created world, garnished with bookish fantasies and flourishing secretly within a stolid yeoman culture. Mrs. Ewing can do neither wholeheartedly. The adventures of Part 2 should represent neither Crusoe's long purgation, nor wish-fulfilling rewards, but a continuance of the psychological growth of which she has persuaded us in Part 1. For this, the adventure novel was ill-adapted because it had relatively few techniques for interiorizing action. Edward Salmon in Juvenile Literature As It Is (1888) said 'The drawback to so many stories of adventure is that they abandon every thought of home'.¹⁰ But that is rather their strength. The ability to cope with outer hazards, in landscape or climate, or in stereotyped (often foreign) human villainy, needs separation from one's roots to validate it and give it definition. This is not material for introspection and analysis. But these are precisely the areas of Mrs. Ewing's initial success. The narrator in Part 2 can be satisfactorily neither analyst of his own progress, nor hero of his own adventure. He is too often relegated to being observer of wonders, and his mere presence at them is the nearest Mrs. Ewing comes to representing self-fulfilment or alternative values.

It was not ignorance of boys' fiction which inhibited her. Her knowledge was wide. Her diaries from the fifties record her reading of such yarns as Westward Ho!, The Boy Hunters and The Rifle Rangers. By then 'Rotary presses disgorged masses of boys' sensational magazines'¹¹ into England and her four brothers consumed their share, besides the better written and constructed novels of Mayne Reid, Ballantyne and Kingston. The rather earlier boys' writers were certainly familiar. Her own hero reads well-thumbed volumes of Cooper, as if to attest the slowness of Yorkshire taste, 'full of dangers and discoveries, the mightiness of manhood, and the wonders of the world' (13, 203). Marryat, whose novels Conrad said had the 'air of fable',¹² was a great Gatty favourite. She was less fond of scientific romance; in one letter she mocks: 'This last sentence smacks of Jules Verne! I don't care much for him - after all. It is rather bookmaking' (18, 293). Aunt Judy's carried relatively little serialized adventure, though short pieces appeared by Ascott R. Hope (1877 and 1878), G.M. Fenn (Christmas, 1868), and 'F. Anstey' (1885), author of Vice Versâ (1882), a satire on fathers which Mrs. Ewing never managed to get to the end of. There were already enough magazines to feed this appetite, though the best of them, The Boy's Own Paper, 'a strong compost of varied manliness and naturalness', Darton says,¹³ did not appear till 1879. Mrs. Ewing herself was approached by The Union Jack in 1882, apparently for 'a Christmas tale', and wisely refused, perhaps after the hard lesson of We and the World.¹⁴

Aware of the intimate specificity about sea life and foreign parts that gave these adventures their solid surface, even if they lacked depth, Mrs. Ewing undertook inquiries to fill the gaps left by her reading. Her Commonplace Book has notes on sailors' tattooing that are used laboriously and irrelevantly to characterize the Irish

tar (Part 2, Ch. 5). Newfoundland fogs and ports were, of course, familiar from her Canadian years, and the episodes of the water-spout and fire-fighting were gleaned from Major Ewing's colleagues. In September, 1877, she visited the Canada Docks, Birkenhead, for 'local colour':

Delicious smell of the wood ... Went over a charming vessel with a delightful blackie and his wife. Came back on top of an omnibus so as to see the Docks as we drove (Diary, Sept. 4, 1877).

Perhaps the blackie became Alfonso the cook and his ambitious bride. These conscientious efforts, however, are remote from Marryat's daily intimacy with the sea. 'A charming vessel' does not promise well. And there is something comic in so bad a traveller as Mrs. Ewing tackling a sea yarn that her usually alert sense of irony missed. Her practical and geographical details in Part 2 are accurate enough; it is their relationship with the hero and the expectations created in Part 1 that is in question.

Examination of two aspects of Part 1 will gauge the nature of the shift: her techniques of socio-psychological analysis, at their most refined in this novel; and her use of a range of characters to define her hero and the elusive values he represents more precisely.

The first thirteen chapters concentrate consistently on Jack's milieu, his immediate circle and the enfolding Yorkshire community beyond. With no divergences, every incident contributes to the portrait, though loosely plotted, a unity contrasting with the disruptions of Part 2. The prose is either descriptive or analytical, most often and most strikingly the latter. More than in earlier fiction, the narrative voice is exploratory, probing, and there is a new maturity and intensity in this analysis. Jack is constantly pondering on the natures and motives around him. Where this style is dense, therefore, it is so because of analytical complexity,

rarely with the nouvelles' poetic density of evocation.

The School chapters (9 - 11) and their analysis (12) typify the method. Chapters 9 - 11 are deliberately undramatic and compressed. The only subordinate figures they introduce into the established framework are fictional types: Lorraine, the exiled schoolboy with connections in India, like Holt in The Crofton Boys, or Farrar's Eric and Vernon; Snuffy, the sub-Dickensian schoolmaster, a descendant of Squeers, brutal, ignorant, and physically revolting. The sketched situations are likewise a mélange from the larger plots of Dickens or the school novel: twelve to a room, no washing, boots thrown at the heads of boys who pray, little chaps used as 'horses' by weighty bullies. But none of this is dramatized. It is tightly packed into either letter form (it is a novel of many letters) or allusive narrative - whereupon it becomes a matter for analysis. The point of these chapters is their illumination of the central father-son relationship, as the first wedge driven between Jack and Jem, and the first computation of the scale of paternal injustice. And Chapter 12 explicates this point in analysis more exacting and gripping than the relatively subdued account of school experience. The attainment of these relative emphases is through extreme selection. Lorraine and Snuffy are types given particular, and daringly frank, accentuation, so that they exemplify the school's moral climate. Lorraine is wry, blasé, indifferent to the point of suicide (certainly not a feature of the school novel):

Sometimes I'm afraid he'll kill himself, for he says there's really nothing in the Bible about suicide (150).

Craysaw approaches sadism:

... the mischief of him was that he was possessed by a passion (not the less fierce because it was unnatural) which grew with indulgence and opportunity, as other passions grow, and that this was a passion for cruelty (153).

These are detachable cameos, drawn without dialogue or incident,

but persistently anatomized by the narrative:

Crayshaw's cruelty crushed others, it made liars and sneaks of boys naturally honest, and it produced in Lorraine an unchildlike despair that was almost grand ... (157).

These chapters are deliberately subordinated, distanced, held at bay by this explanatory tone. There is, significantly, no hint of educational theory such as attached to the school episode in Six to Sixteen. Instead they are enclosed by passages of analysis, predominantly of the father's motives in choosing and, for Jack, retaining such a school, and thus they contribute to the theme of growth.

These proportionately long inquiries into family relationships, running throughout Part 1, are the best and rarest thing in it, one of the practices Mrs. Ewing transferred from adult fiction to children's novel. Lionel Trilling on Huckleberry Finn discusses the primacy of the boy's sense of justice: 'Truth is the whole of a boy's conscious demand upon the world of adults'.¹⁵ It is the father's progressive violation of this sense that compels Jack's absconding as much as the contrast of tedious office and rolling main. But where the adventure novel invokes the mere contrast, Mrs. Ewing aims at the psychological recounting of the violation.

This stereotyped contrast, often backed by a portrait of an irascible father, is a stock feature of adventure fiction. In Marryat's The King's Own (1830), William is forced to ship for foreign parts by family injustice. In Japhet in Search of a Father (1836) there is a caricatured heavy-handed father. Ballantyne's The Young Fur Traders (1856) presents a more speedy, exaggerated version of Jack's plight, with neither analysis nor introspection. The adventurous hero is clapped behind a desk 'to break him in', says his father:

Charley was told that his future destiny was to wield the quill in the service of the Hudson's Bay Company, and that he might take a week to think it over ... In fact, poor Charley said that he "would rather become a buffalo than do it." 16

Mrs. Ewing expands this stock conflict into psychological fiction by a fixedness of attention that makes seemingly peripheral matter illuminate family tensions. For example, the likeness of Jem and his father, and Jack's difference, is argued through numerous details: both shrink from physical deformity so that Jem avoids looking at Cripple Charlie's legs and the father uses 'quite a different tone of voice to the one he used with other boys' (90); whereas Jack relates to Charlie's mind not his physique. Analysis accompanies all such details, surely and unobtrusively. Jem comes indoors only to sleep or eat, never reading, rarely chatting; the narrator quietly adds:

My father did just the same. I think their feeling about houses was of a perfectly primitive kind. They looked upon them as comfortable shelter. ... not at all as places in which to pursue any occupation (94).

'Primitive' is a key word in this analysis, picked up later in Chapter 9's more sustained and precise dissection of the father's condition of mind:

I suppose that persistency, a glibber tongue than he himself possessed, a mass of printed rubbish which always looks imposing to the unliterary, that primitive combination of authoritativeness and hospitality which makes some men as ready to say Yes to a stranger as they are to say No at home, and perhaps some lack of moral courage, may account for it (143).

Only gradually does the novel reveal that this mental state, while it never impairs the efficiency of an English farmer, is dangerous in a father. The interest in psychological processes is steady and penetrating, even when not obvious, or when language is deceptively simple, as in the casual but perceptive comment: 'He was deeply annoyed with himself for having been taken in by Snuffy,

but he transferred some of this annoyance to me' (181). By such variations in degree and occurrence analysis never becomes a monotonous or unbalancing mode.

The stock conflict of adventure fiction has spread over thirteen chapters. Both the quantity and quality of Mrs. Ewing's attention to human process are alien to that genre's brisk and superficial treatment of relationships. Ballantyne, after his joke about Charley's preferring to be a buffalo to wielding a quill, proves his hero right by a series of splendid exploits in buffalo territory. Mrs. Ewing's Part 1 suggests a different kind of novel, more articulate and multi-faceted. Taken beyond the mere clash of wills, to areas of emotional and cognitive experience, the theme of father and son recurs in many adult novels, memoirs and autobiographies of the period. And Mrs. Ewing's pursuit of psychology seems undertaken with an assiduity learned from adult fiction.

Leaving aside questions of the novel's larger design, its wholeness of statement, where Mrs. Ewing falters, the kinds of things she communicates about this family are such as George Eliot might tell us, more memorably and valuably, about a family like the Tullivers with closely similar prejudices, favouritisms and parochial mores. Ewing's Chapter 13 opens with expansive and meticulous analysis, which as both an author's summary of previous action and a hero's ratiocination of his immediate state, is the most apposite preparation for the climax of his absconding. Jem's debts, mentioned subsequently, are merely the honourable spur, whereas to Ballantyne they might be the whole motive. What is admirable is the embracing human sympathy of such reflective analysis:

As is commonly the case, it was chiefly little things that pulled the wrong way of the stuff of life between us, but they pulled it very much askew. I was selfishly absorbed in my own dreams, and I think my dear father made a mistake which is a too common bit of tyranny between people who love each other and live together.

He was not satisfied with my doing what he liked, he expected me to be what he liked, that is to be another person instead of myself. Wives and daughters seem now and then to respond to this expectation as to the call of duty, and to become inconsistent echoes, odd mixtures of severity and hesitancy, hypocrites on the highest grounds; but sons are not often so self-effacing, and it was not the case with me (204-5).

This shifting between particular and general statement for their mutual illumination, the lists of related qualities ('inconsistent echoes, odd mixtures ...'), slightly differing in the cause of exactness, the passage's cumulative meaning flowing from its initial sharp image to the pinpointed 'me' at the end, betrays the kind of interest in one's characters as part of a larger humanity which Eliot and the psychological novelists brought to fiction. Any one of these elements Eliot provides more satisfyingly; but her concern, too, is to establish the veracity and mutuality of her particularized humanity and generally deduced truths. At the level of general statement, she writes of the Tullivers after the crash:

When uncultured minds, confined to a narrow range of personal experience, are under the pressure of continued misfortune, their inward life is apt to become a perpetually repeated round of sad and bitter thoughts: the same words, the same scenes are revolved over and over again, the same mood accompanies them - the end of the year finds them as much what they were at the beginning as if they were machines set to a recurrent series of movements (Book 4, Ch. 2).

This is more penetrating, comprehensive and intelligent than Mrs. Ewing. But it functions similarly as generalization, or extrapolation, within fiction. As authoritative and substantiated insight into general humanity, it provides the reader, momentarily, with a platform from which to survey the unique individual specimens who occupy us for the novel's duration. These footholds Mrs. Ewing provides, more modestly, with small, fine generalizations, such as 'a too common bit of tyranny', 'hypocrites on the highest grounds', which interrelate with specific characterization. The novel's impression of trustworthiness and of inclusiveness is enhanced.

The method, even on its minor scale, asserts the novelist's wider humanity. It carries analysis beyond the explication of unique process into a more fertile bonding of the novel's experience with the reader's.

The second technique which Mrs. Ewing was unable to sustain into Part 2 is the surrounding of her hero with types of manhood, so as to elicit his own development with clarity. It is as a contrasting version of masculinity that she develops Jem towards the stereotyped public school boy with slang and debts, what Darton calls 'the plain boy' hero of the serials.¹⁷ As in A Great Emergency, the hero is distinguished by his divergence from this type: Rupert and Jem are decisively subordinated to heroes on whom the fiction sets a higher value, a newer compound of sensitivity, energy, bookishness, and self-awareness, a function of their narrative roles. Jack is a new-fashioned hero. One problem in Part 2 is that by replacing the realistic middle-class milieu which precipitates this new fashion with stereotyped sea situations, the character - being other than a stock British boy - is left with no role.

The rather elusive positive qualities of this new fashion are caught best through a sequence of carefully-drawn models or mentors, another direction blocked in Part 2. Isaac, Mr. Wood and Colonel Jervoise represent, with increasing sophistication, the man who combines feeling and practicality, in attractive, unorthodox proportions. Isaac, the beekeeper, represents simply the best of rustic life. The solid scenes defining his productive relationship with Jack, the visit to the moorland hives, the intimate readings of the Penny Cyclopaedias, establish the hero's roots in his community by methods well-practised in the earlier fiction. But Isaac also, at a basic level, exemplifies the perfect compatibility of reading and doing, charmingly suggested by his excitement on

hearing about Egyptian hives, under APIARY in the Numbers. Mr. Wood is more complexly drawn. His convict history is hardly brought into useful relationship with the novel's themes. But the more convincing and dramatized scene of his ice-rescue is done with an absorbing, knowledgeable detail that conveys the efficiency of this scholarly man. Moreover, Mrs. Ewing succeeds in attributing to Jack an increasing perceptiveness about this combination of qualities, relayed by the narrative voice. Wood's oddness fades, and a new vision of virility, not incompatible with learning, dawns in the hero. Such dawning is pinpointed in scenes like that where Mr. Wood both teaches them and comforts Charlie: 'I suppose it was his attitude which made me notice, before he began to speak, what a splendid figure he had' (102). Jervoise is a variation of this type, more cosmopolitan and socially sophisticated, the soldier of undoubted intelligence and universal competent whom Mrs. Ewing loved describing (as in The Peace Egg). She provides admiring descriptions - they are hardly scenes - of his exposing Crayshaw's, routing its head and quartering its pupils, with consummate tact, and tears in his eyes. Significantly, there is no relief generated by this episode, as of a villain punished, no melodramatic release or reversal. Jervoise claims our whole attention, as a 'new ideal' for Jack; narrative speculation replaces plot:

It was possible, then, to be enthusiastic without being unmanly (178).

Inevitably accompanying such speculation is the father's contrary, adverse reaction.

Mrs. Ewing's preservation of this double focus is evidence of her control. She gains space to concentrate on the father's hostility to Jervoise and Wood, intensifying in proportion to Jack's admiration, only by quite severe curtailment of the dramatic rendering of these characters. And, as argued above, her analysis

of this human nexus is remarkably honest:

...If he was anything he was manly. It was because he was in some respects very womanly too, that he puzzled my father's purely masculine brain. The mixture, and the vehemence of the mixture, were not in his line (174).

The touch about 'vehemence' shows the quality of observation here. She goes far to measuring the passion, even the sexual repressiveness, of the Victorian father by a technique of reporting his speech in short, spluttered, units:

... Then this Indian Colonel had taken my fancy, and it had made him sick to see the womanish - he would call it no better, the weak-womanish - way in which I worshipped him. If I were a daughter instead of a son, my caprices would distress and astonish him less (190).

The difficulties of attaching these techniques to a novel of sea adventure are manifest and overwhelming. The composite emphasis of these portraits on feeling, and feeling socially displayed, in men of indisputable competence, and the novel's negative, though not unsympathetic, presentation of John Bull in father and elder son, indicate an obstacle to the novel's completion through the patterns of adventure. Marryat's Masterman Ready is, for instance, a mentor-figure of enormous practicality and Christian piety. But his author would repudiate any suggestion that he or the hero he tutors might be the better for being 'very womanly', too; nor does Mrs. Ewing dramatise this challenging conception beyond noting Jervoise's tears and tenderness. If Part 1 traces the growth of the man of action, as Jan does that of the artist, it is her own unique notion of such a man, and demands her own situations to elicit its uniqueness. In Part 2 she seems unable to provide these unconventional structures; one feels that the fictional shipboard world with its rigid allocation of roles is not one she admires. To remove her hero thence is to reduce the level at which he can be revealed, and limit the scope of her promising man of action.

If we examine Part 2, her difficulties in reconciling these preliminary achievements with the stock features of adventure become apparent.

While her hero remains a naif, viewing new scenes with unaccustomed eyes, Mrs. Ewing has an appropriate anchor for fiction. Thus, the view of the docks is in her best impressionistic style: men work chains 'as mysterious as the figures of some dance one does not know,' sounds seem 'out of a lunatic asylum,' a rope suddenly 'quivered like a bow-string, and tightened ... till it looked as firm as a bar of iron' (14, 41-2). This approach is so congenial she seems reluctant to get her hero afloat. Even later, her descriptive skills can be legitimately deployed, in set-pieces that are a feature of the genre. Here is a Kingston seascape:

Several sharp showers fell, then suddenly the sun burst forth from behind some dark clouds with resplendent beauty, spreading over, with a sheet of silver, a wide extent of the raging sea, along which flitted the sombre shadows from masses of clouds, casting an occasional gloom, but leaving the ocean once more to roll on in glorious brightness

(My First Voyage to Southern Seas (1860), Ch.3)¹⁸

Mrs. Ewing's equivalent is close in tone and language:

Then as we dipped I saw all that they were seeing from the masts and rigging - the yet restless sea with fast-running waves, alternately inky black, and of a strange ^{bright} metallic lead-colour, on which the scud as it drove across the moon made queer racing shadows (14, 70).

However, she has, immediately before, described the rigging 'as full of men as a bare garden-tree might be of sparrows' (70), which by its very novelty creates an uncertainty of tone unlike Kingston's uniform grandeur. Such uncertainties grow more pronounced as the voyage proceeds.

A larger problem is that her hero's relationship to this geography remains that of recorder. He does not interact with the

landscape he observes. The quality and variety of description is sound - of the sparkling shores of Halifax (123), the Georgetown fire, the Bermudan climate, carefully verified (18, 62). But these present no forward-moving challenge to Jack, and relate backwards only as the Penny Cyclopaedia come to life, a matter of verification, not exploration. Even the style of recording is depersonalized, neutral, with few indications of personal involvement.

This frustrates the developmental design of Part 1 and denies the adventure novel's vicarious satisfactions in physical conquest. By contrast, Kingston's In The Rocky Mountains (1878), also a personal narrative, proceeds by placing its hero in an exhausting series of quandries. Tension is generated by successive conflicts with mountains, hot geysers, swamps and redskins - regarded as a hazard of the terrain rather than psychological adversaries. The pattern is simple, the articulation of manhood what Mrs. Ewing would call 'primitive', the narrative voice a mere mechanism for breathless immediacy. But it is a purposeful, homogeneous novel because Kingston conceives clearly his hero's relationship with the world he inhabits; it is to be lived in, even primitively, not looked at.

The same inertness affects Mrs. Ewing's handling of shipboard incident. The tyro's standard introduction to climbing the rigging, a feature of every sea novel, she accomplishes in a few limp paragraphs:

I was painfully absorbed by realizing that to climb what is steady, and to climb what is swaying with every wave, are quite different things (100-1).

The uncertainty flickers again here; 'painfully' clashes with an incipient irony present in images of the deck 'like a dancing tea-tray far below'. The incident brings no sense of the hero's advancement, but is abruptly exchanged for the next without comment.

In My First Voyage, Kingston's Ralph is first ordered aloft by an ill-tempered mate and the account of his performance occupies most of Chapter 2. It takes its charge from the narrator's minute practical comments, the mate's antagonism, and the fears of his timid brother watching below. Every element weights his success as a small step towards a clearly, if bluntly, defined manhood.

Kingston's portrait of the hostile mate and an incompetent captain raises another deficiency in We and the World. The ship-board hierarchies are competently characterized. In fact, the bosun is wittily portrayed through Mrs. Ewing's best heightened dialogue:

"... for'ards to the break of the fo'c'sle. Them that has white ties and kid gloves can wear 'em; and them that's hout of sech articles must come as they can" (102).

But there is an absence of conflict between these authorities and the hero that becomes eventually an absence of contact. A potentially crucial incident, the mate's whipping of a boy to unconsciousness, is pushed aside by remote reporting: 'As I have said, I only knew results' (167). It is as though no more emotional filtering can be risked without logically involving the hero in action. To keep him an 'observer' in such situations raises doubts as to his status as hero.

The device which relegates Jack to the reporter role most decisively is the 'shamrock' triplication of heroes. Such triangles are popular in the genre: Ballantyne's The Coral Island (1858) and Kingston's famous series, The Three Midshipmen (1862), The Three Lieutenants (1875), The Three Commanders (1876) and The Three Admirals (1878), all show characterization by contrast and the encapsulation of an ideal comradeship in the novel's fundamental arrangement. National stereotypes also people the genre prolifically, on board ship as well as on foreign soil.

Peter the Whaler wrecks an Englishman, Irishman and Scotsman in an arctic robinsonnade.

Dennis and Alister are admittedly more rounded than the novel's minor national types: The Jewish shopkeeper, Negro pilot, Chinese messenger, who are wretchedly crude and generate a pervasive crudeness of style throughout the episodes in which they appear. They also bear out Orwell's analysis of later boys' serials that fictional foreigners gravitate invariably towards the comic.¹⁹ Mrs. Ewing hardly wrote worse than the weary and witless Chapter 15 in which the Irishman mocks the Chinaman. Again, there is no interaction of hero and types to stimulate a fresher, healthier characterization, or to substantiate the perception, scrupulously earned in Part 1, that the world 'contains a great many very good people, who are quite different from oneself and one's near relations' (13, 78). The lapse is also one of honesty for Mrs. Ewing has established higher standards of questioning stereotypes by the painstaking methods of Part 1.

The unwelcome national triangle that is placed at the forefront makes of the narrator not only a fixed observer, and the representative Englishman, but the buffer between two poles, the blarneying Irishman and dour Scot. His own psychology is irrelevant to such functions, beyond complaisant neutrality. Development is impossible. The analysis bestowed on the hero's relationships in Part 1 is now expended on two characters rounded only just above cardboard flatness, consequently becoming less valuable, responsible and intelligent:

To put some natures into a desperate situation seems like putting tartaric acid into soda and water - they sparkle up and froth. It certainly was so with Dennis O'Moore; and if Alister could hardly have been more raven-like upon the crack of doom, the levity of Dennis would, in our present circumstances, have been discreditable to a paroquet (133).

This is laborious and cumbersome, with no fine generalizations. The

heavy humour strikes a compromise between taking the characters seriously and mocking them. Similarly, the treatment of Dennis veers between comic and sentimental, with no foundation of realism between. His ballad-singing, wooing and dealings with (too numerous) compatriots like Biddy and Barney, all produce extreme sentimentalism, trivial as fiction and distracting from the hero's case. Mrs. Ewing was proud of the authenticity of her brogue, but she was also aware of her artistic errors (18, 237); an early plan to have Dennis die in 'a highly dramatic passage' was scrapped when she felt her novel becoming 'batho-tic and chao-tic'.²⁰ The alternative of having him live seems hardly preferable.

The measure of her mismanagement in Part 2 is taken in its ending. Alister's letter and Dennis's antics take up almost all the last chapter, to the last sentence. They have usurped the hero's centrality completely. Part 1 demands a reckoning between father and son, some cementation of a relationship so deeply projected. This is marginally supplied by the letter Jack gets in Georgetown, a subtly ironic recapitulation of the father's conflicting attitudes, with a cunning invocation of Robinson Crusoe (178) as a bonding male myth in which father and son might find common ground. But such an invocation suggests how little Part 2 is the fitting test of that restless, middle-class, protestant hero of Part 1, how completely his middle-class perspective has been abandoned. Nor is the letter built on; the novel denies us any further consummation of the father-son dialectic, and peters out in the roughest knot-tying.

The sense of helplessness in the last chapters is inescapable. The impression is not just of hasty writing. Mrs. Ewing often wrote well under pressure. Loss of texture accompanies a loss of direction. She is working with patterns and figures for which she has no use or sympathy. The narrator hardly remains hero of his

own tale, and there are no available terms to mark his manhood. Having relinquished the psychological mode of Part 1 she has not properly grasped the adventure mode of Part 2. The resulting novel, her longest, spans the greatest extremes, from some of her best writing to much of her worst.

Chapter 9. Last Nouvelles and Poems; the Military and the Pastoral

After the stern lesson of We and the World, Mrs. Ewing kept her word to herself: 'I never mean to write against time again.' Her contributions to Aunt Judy's in her remaining six years are the regulated work of a writer who has taken the measure of her own failing strength: five nouvelles of proper and elegant proportions. The novel's more submerged lessons were also conned, if not articulated; that the loose and baggy monster was beyond her subduing, that the World at large needed wider fictional techniques for its representation, that she had reached the end of experimentation with the Bildungsroman when she had exhausted forms which tolerated an ending still within the child's purview. The last fictions garner both the techniques and the themes developed in the later 70s and bind them into personal forms: fittingly, an act of consolidation rather than exploration. The themes are narrowed to two: military life and rural spaces.

These are also the recurring themes of the verse she produced for the magazine from the mid-70s, or tried to market through the sweet and lavish illustration of André in the 80s. The spectacle of Mrs. Ewing's verse-making is a strange one and provides insight into her fiction only in so far as one finds there the same blend of moods and areas of child-life, but crudely and unfeelingly handled. The standard of poetry, even in those magazines which, as a matter of policy, sought out the best fiction, was generally low. Darton says:

Ninety per cent. of all verse written for children before the last quarter of the nineteenth century was poetry-substitute, manufactured in good faith, but in a deliberate purposeful way.¹

This hardly improved before Mrs. Ewing's death. But she lacked the bare metric competence of a Hemens or an Ingelow, both favourites, let alone the imagination of a Christina Rossetti.

Her lyric verse, the words written for her brothers to set as Songs for Music, and her hymns, suggest a defective sense of rhythm, a hesitancy about stress and pace, that makes one wonder at the occasional beauty and frequent musicality of her prose:

It was on such a night as this,
Some long unreal years ago,
When all within were wrapp'd in sleep,
And all without was wrapp'd in snow (9, 184).

Into Mopsa the Fairy Ingelow introduced songs with the sweetness of rustic detail that is also inherent in prose idylls like Our Field, but which Mrs. Ewing seems incapable of matching in verse. Ingelow's lyrics, 'Little babe while burns the west' or the apple-woman's song, are more fluent and subtly modulated than any Ewing verse:

The marten flew to the finch's nest,
Feathers and moss, and a wisp of hay:
'The arrow it sped to thy brown mate's breast;
Low in the broom is thy mate today'.²

Compare this with Mrs. Ewing's 'The Blue-Bells on the Lea':

'The rustling wind, the whistling wind,
We'll chase him to and fro,
We'll chase him up, we'll chase him down
To where the King-cups grow ... ' (50).

Where Ingelow uses rhythmic regularity and stanzaic familiarity to stabilize some pretty and intricate description, Mrs. Ewing remains satisfied to match a blandness of metre with a banality of surface.

She is more ambitious, and more disastrously banal, in verses which sketch some situation from children's playing, either military like 'Mother's Birthday Review', 'A Hero to His Hobby-Horse', 'A Soldier's Children', or rustic like 'Our Garden', 'Three Little Nest Birds', 'Grandmother's Spring'. Here, fragmented attitudes from her fiction, but divorced from any dramatic or analytic context, appear in weirdly detailed accounts that are neither poetry nor prose:

Well, we've had the Doll's Wash, but it's only
 pretty good fun.
 We're glad we've had it, you know, but we're
 gladder still that it's done.
 As we wanted to have as big a wash as we could,
 we collected everything we could muster,
 From the dolls' bed dimity hangings to Victoria's
 dress, which I'd used as a duster (43).

Many of them are in this infant singspiel, sometimes with lines
 of thirty or forty syllables before the withheld rhyme is sounded
 (see 'A Soldier's Children'). Her less alert readers must have
 forged through some poems, unaware that they were reading verse,
 of so little account does sound become.

To a modern reader there is also an irritating confusion of
 tone. How are we to take these undramatic monologues? Some, like
 'Convalescence', aim steadily at pathos and arrive at a mawkishness
 that rarely overwhelms her fiction. Some, like 'The Poet and the
 Brook' blend frank poeticisms ('A poet with long hair and saddened
 eyes') with clearly deflationary detail. It also risks a variety
 of stanza forms and a conscious wit that suggest parody, though it
 would be hard to determine what is parodied:

But whether
 The situation pleased it altogether;
 If it is nice
 To be a man of snow and ice;
 Whether it feels
 Painful, when one congeals ... (118).

Perhaps Mrs. Ewing was momentarily influenced by Aunt Judy's best
 versifier, Charles Stuart Calverley, whose wonderfully funny
 'The Poet and the Fly' had appeared in the 1880 magazine.³ Now,
 it seems that her best poem is the entirely parodic, 'The Burial
 of the Linnet', with its refrain 'Muffle the dinner-bell, solemnly
 ring':

Bury him nobly - next to the donkey;
 Fetch the old banner, and wave it about;
 Bury him deeply - think of the monkey,
 Shallow his grave, and the dogs get him out (15).

But this squib appeared in 1866, nearly twenty years before her spate of faltering poems of child-life. There is no sign of improvement.

The halting disarray of the later verses seems to come from efforts to cram children's speech and children's perspectives into a Victorian free verse more dismal than any doggerel:

I should have liked to parade the lead soldiers,
 but I didn't for
 Mother says "What's the good of being a soldier's son
 if you can't do as you're bid?"
 But we thought there'd be no harm in letting the box
 be there if we kept on the lid (124).

In 1885, as she died, Stevenson published A Child's Garden of Verses (as Penny Whistles). Poems like 'Escape at Bedtime', 'My Bed is a Boat', 'My Ship and I', do for the first time simulate a child's voice dramatically, to make the habits of his play express the contours of his imagination, a use of verse towards which Mrs. Ewing is fumbling. Her prose on the other hand, by some strange selective allocation of talents, often uses the child's voice thus, and frequently with rhythmic sensitivity.

In her last fiction, her view of militarism remains the child's, though now she included army life in its adult and routine particularity. Nicholas Tucker claims 'Children up to a certain point see themselves in a naturally heroic way, and they go to literature in a sense looking for that'.⁴ Jackanapes and The Story of a Short Life both cast children in the heroic mould, under the glare of fictional spotlights unusually harsh for Mrs. Ewing, one reason for their contemporary welcome by both children and parents. Had they been Bildungsromane, which fortunately their scope denies, they would have charted the growth of the Hero. As they are nouvelles, heroism is authenticated by lurid and consummatory deathbeds. But comparison will show the superior artistry and

taste of Jackanapes over the amazing excesses of The Story of a Short Life which conjoins an unreal literary type, the aristocratic and doomed child, with the dusty realism of a British army camp - as if Little Lord Fauntleroy had appeared in Aldershot. Jackanapes is better than its contemporary reputation for chauvinist feeling might lead a modern sceptic to expect. It deserves at least some of Henry James's fulsome praise:

...You have rendered me a delightful service in making me acquainted with Juliana Horatia's little tale. It is a genuine masterpiece, a wonderful little mixture of nature and art, and touching beyond anything I have read in a long time. I defy anyone to read it without an access of the melting mood. The subject is lovely and the lightness and grace of touch, without effort or mannerism, place the thing quite apart...5

Jackanapes has a 'lightness of touch' in its construction, if not in its death-bed emotionalism, absent from The Story of a Short Life. It is more disciplined fiction than the latter's sprawling twelve chapters and veering modes. Its mere six chapters hold steadily to a single aim, to relate a credible community to the larger flow of history by the thread of a single life. That it is a life barely personalized beyond the ruling passion of military ambition is necessitated by the form's conciseness. But the English community is enhanced more diversely, by the Cranford-like ironic style Mrs. Ewing had developed in Lob:

..The Grey Goose and the big Miss Jessamine were the only elderly persons who kept their ages secret. Indeed, Miss Jessamine never mentioned anyone's age, or recalled the exact year in which anything had happened. She said that she had been taught that it was bad manners to do so "in a mixed assembly" (15, 10).

Here, observation of manners is not at the service of moral distinctions, as so often in English fiction, but suggests the valued continuity of regional life, which Jackanapes, as representative soldier, preserves and defends. The nouvelle does not end with the stilted death-bed attitudinizing of last bequests and

interrupted prayers, the clichés of the type. Instead, a further chapter returns us, sentimentally, to the preserved comrade; and, lyrically, to the preserved community:

... in answer to a ringing call from Tony, his sisters, fluttering over the daisies in pale-hued muslins, come out of their ever-open door, like pretty pigeons from a dovecot (58).

By scarcely deflecting her gaze from the Goose Green, a centre of rural England, Mrs. Ewing subordinates even the battle of Waterloo to her single design, vindication of militarism. Militarism is defined beyond the obdurate pursuit of glory found in Henty and the boys' papers, though this strain is more prominent than in her earlier fiction. But her irony extends the rationale of soldiery from individual 'manliness' to political necessity, in arguments cogitated with some bitterness after the Prince Imperial affair. England's stability, depending on a commercial as well as political Empire, that included, as she acidly notes, 'such saleable matters as opium, fire-arms, and "black-ivory"' (14), was guaranteed by its efficient army. The tale's structure is adventurously geared to relating the Goose Green's tranquility to the soldier's code of honour. It is, unusually, a polemical structure.

The Goose Chorus, a rather maladroit device to mock parochial expediency, is taken from Mrs. Gatty's tedious tale The Goose (Aunt Judy's Letters). The idea of drawing together lads of different degree from one village in a single battle, the paradigm of manhood represented by Jackanapes, Tony, and the Trumpeter, comes from Mrs. Gatty's The Drummer where the paradigm is cruder and its integration with the portrait of village life less coherent. But Mrs. Ewing's more studied design, of taking a perspective on war from the only half-aware heart of England and from the fully-aware women who wait, might well come from the Waterloo chapters of Vanity Fair. Thackeray has a counterpart to the boy Trumpeter

in little Tom Stubble. Tony is a reduced version of Dobbin, the stolid unheroic hero. Dobbin survives believing "Better men are dead" (Ch. 35); Tony outlives Jackanapes whose life "was infinitely valuable" (49). Each writer ends a chapter with the soldier's distant death as it reverberates in the anxious, pregnant wife. Each judges the moment as history become suddenly personal and urgent. As darkness comes down on Brussels:

Amelia was praying for George, who was lying on his face, dead, with a bullet through his heart (Ch. 32).

Mrs. Ewing, after a chapter of simpler polemics, arrives at a similarly moving inference:

...Five-and-thirty British Captains fell asleep that day on the Bed of Honour, and the Black Captain slept among them.

There are killed and wounded by war, of whom no returns reach Downing Street.

Three days later, the Captain's wife had joined him (20).

Within its miniature confines, Jackanapes does efficiently tauten the fictional threads between private and historical destinies.

The 'lightness of touch' James admired is, ironically, the result of Mrs. Ewing's successive and habitual reworkings of text. Those between magazine and volume publication are refinements observable in comparing these two stages of any of her works. The notes from De Quincey on soldiers and on the accuracy of her Roll of the Dead, were added for the volume, as was the whole description of the Mail Coach, 'dressed with flowers and oak-leaves' (18), bringing the news of Waterloo; these details forge further links between battlefield and England's rustic soundness. There is an overall clarification and tightening of effects. In the magazine, Jackanapes is taught to ride by 'one of those Sikh horsemen' (721); in the volume, by 'one of those horsemen of the East' (40). 'Their race for life' becomes 'their ride for life' (49). But the

manuscript of the first version, the only one surviving of any fiction other than juvenilia, shows the greater extent of her initial labours.⁶ Alterations and rewriting are extensive. For example, the pretty and ironically domestic simile for Miss Jessamine's hair, 'it shone like the best brass fender' (11) is a reworking of 'like brass things', suggesting how consciously all the images that give sparkle and depth to her prose are gauged. Epithets are similarly pruned or sharpened. The Captain's 'reputation as an ogre having burst' becomes 'bubble reputation' (17). The Postman's going 'somewhat out of his way' becomes 'his postal way' (17). Re-castings of sentences or even larger stretches are common, especially in the highly wrought Chapters 1 - 2, significantly fewer in the stereotyped death scene. The whole revision process proves the degree of intelligent care given to the prose James found 'without effort or mannerism'.

There is patchy evidence of such care in The Story of a Short Life, most marked in the expert social reporting of camp life and mores. But the whole fiction is less coherent; the 'death and glory' emotion, disciplined by firm structure and polemical intention in Jackanapes, seeps throughout this erratic nouvelle. It is difficult to trace the source of this emotion in Mrs. Ewing. Working on An Old Soldier's Story, never finished, she wrote in 1882 'it tears me to bits' (18, 270). What she describes as Leonard's 'military mania' is obviously shared by his creator. It was Aldershot good opinion she was most anxious to secure for her tale. She rejoiced when a comrade found it 'true as a photograph'.⁷ She defended herself to Rex:

My next work for Aunt Judy's Magazine will be studiously cheery. The tragedy of Laetus is very bad - but it could not be otherwise. 8

But her mania is not Jackanapes' rationalized justification of

gallantry; it is the devious contention, argued through a steamy conversion tale, that a selfish child can be made brave, uncomplaining and prescient about his imminent death, by a transfusion of militarism.

Here, stylistic polishing is not in the cause of finer naturalism; it is often, illegitimately, made to enhance the poignancy of awaited death. As in Misunderstood the hero is designed for premature death to prove his author's point. But where Montgomery uses tricks of attitude and situation (the shopping expedition with father, Humphrey's 'quaint' delusions about the wild men's dinner party) to arouse us to impending reversal, Mrs. Ewing uses style. Leonard is bejewelled by description that awaits a framing of death:

A holiday dress of crimson velvet, with collar and ruffles of old lace, became him very quaintly ... he laid a cheek like a rose-leaf against the sooty head of his pet ... (168).

Hodgson Burnett's Fauntleroy 'a graceful figure in a black velvet suit' and Vandyke collar, drawn from her own son Vivian and popularized by Birch's illustrations, did not appear till 1886.⁹ So Mrs. Ewing is pioneering the type. Highly wrought images here are scattered to intensify an emotion touched with hysteria:

No ruby-throated humming-bird could have darted more swiftly from one point to another than Leonard (169).

... his beautiful eyes, in which the tears now brimmed over the eyelashes as the waters of a lake well up through the reeds that fringe its banks (124).

The decoration becomes less precious, the images more commonplace once he is crippled:

... like a soul fretted by the brief detention of an all-but broken chain. (194).

The texture of this prose is denser than either Montgomery's or Hodgson Burnett's, its effects more obviously calculated. What

is absent, in spite of the plot's theoretic emphasis on Leonard's moral faults, necessary for later conversion under military idealism, is any locking of this style into a projected reality. Chapter 3 discussed how in Regie Mrs. Ewing modified the 'old-fashioned' type towards a more plausible humanity through irony. In Lætus both style and structure reinforce what is unreal. Elements are tendentiously arranged to heighten unreality: Leonard's dialogue, a spoilt prattling offered as endearing, the persistent 'posing' of character epitomized in his identification with the Vandyke portrait, the elaborate setting of objets:

...He was seated among the cushions of the oriel window-seat (coloured rays from the coat-of-arms in the upper panes falling on his hair with a fanciful effect of canonizing him for his sudden goodness)... (126).

This objectifying method allows us only an external and superficial access to character.

The parents are equally unreal, though the dilettanti 'Master of the House' (a title first noted in her *Commonplace Book* for a spoiled child) gives limited scope for a wit that will not introduce any threatening realism, in his long hair that is the Barrack Master's disgust, his organ-playing, his unfinished poem, wickedly titled 'The Soul's Satiety'. This persistently external method, unwittingly, reifies the child; ludicrously, he is seen as a precious possession, the pride of his father's collection.

Descriptive unreality is the necessary prelude to a more reprehensible unreality of behaviour in the last chapters (6 - 11).

Leonard is impossibly accepting of death:

"I shall die pretty soon, I believe ... " (196).

"I do hope ... I shan't die till I've just heard them tug that verse once more" (237).

Such remarks equate to Humphrey Dunscombe's will and testament,

fictional stimulants to lachrymosity. The idea of prescience is developed, not uninterestingly, through details of the cripple's preoccupation with suffering - the V.C.'s ordeal, the Book of Poor Things recording the blind organ tuner and one-armed general. But it depends on the unsound, unproven psychological premise that a child of eight, even with the glamorizing props of militarism, can role-play his way to death.

Uncharacteristically, Mrs. Ewing flouts truth. As earlier chapters have argued, she is distinctive in her time for the honesty of her psychology, her small anticipations of the large discoveries of behavioural science, based on her unprejudiced observation of children's cognitive and affective growth. But Laetus, contrarily, diverges from this practice. It substitutes popular mythology for observation. Sylvia Anthony's wide-ranging The Discovery of Death in Childhood and After, discusses both case histories and theoretic studies, especially Piaget's thesis that death plays a key role in children's intellectual development because it challenges adult power and raises issues of causality.¹⁰ But nothing she says, particularly about the child's own death¹¹ and role-playing (e.g. at funerals)¹², provides any basis for the Victorian myth that the child can apprehend and accept his own death.

Such a radical departure from observable behaviour leads Mrs. Ewing to unusual errors of structure, as well as a manipulative style. The St. Martin story, omitted in the magazine, is such a gross error. It is, as the hero remarks with unconscious aptness, 'like a little sermon' (227). The last chapter, providing more heirs after Leonard's death, seems an unfortunate afterthought, perhaps a palliating gesture against gloom. The earlier assemblage of scenes which prepare us for harrowing have no other thematic compatibility: the saving of Blind Baby from the horses (a premonitory

frisson), the funeral-play, the Scotch lad whose egalitarian politics evaporate at the aristocrat's fate, Leonard's ironic vow to become 'an owld, owld Soldier'. None of these has an expanding or enlightening relationship to the hero's psychology. They are anticipatory testimony to the fact of death. The reiteration of the motto, 'Laetus sorte mea', has the function of the religious text in tract fiction, the harping on a single emotive string.

Beneath this oppressive drive to a foreseen conclusion, the Asholt scenes struggle for some thematic basis in the nouvelle. The quality of observation in the Field Day scene, the excellent Chapter 2, distilling a familiarized and intelligent version of camp life in a brave rhetorical style, hint what kind of army fiction Mrs. Ewing might have written. The intrusion of aristocratic cripples into this location becomes dreamlike. An adequate framework to contain such disparate intentions is impossible and the shapeliness of Jackanapes is sacrificed in the very conception.

To turn from her military tales to her last pastorals is to see Mrs. Ewing perfectly at home within fluent structures accommodating a matured view of rustic life, without special pleading and with scope for observed behaviour. Daddy Darwin's Dovecot and Mary's Meadow are as perfect as any fiction she wrote, if they stage no advance on the best 70s' nouvelles; because working with tried forms, she knowingly eliminates her weaknesses. They are rich in organic images scaled exactly to her view of children's experience. And they are intensely English. The scale is her own, and its standard unit is the English meadow, rather than Arthur Ransome's lakes, Jeffries' estates, Grahame's river, or Sutcliffe's history-soaked England with its 'cleansed and abundant landscape'.¹³ It is less grand than these, but more human than Beatrix Potter's miniaturized rusticity. Her pastorals, naturally and vitally measured to children,

are also purged of the nostalgia found in 90s work like The Golden Age which also opens with a view of 'the vacant meadow spaces':

The air was wine, the moist earth-smell wine, the
lark's song, the wafts from the cow-shed at the top
of the field ... all were wine - or song, was it?
(*A Holiday')₁₄

More than its wine references mark this as adult writing for adult readers.

The Preamble to Daddy Darwin likewise opens with a meadow, but distantly viewed by gaffers in corduroy 'which takes tints from Time and Weather as harmoniously as wooden palings do'. This meadow is inhabited by mother, father and child:

Down the sunny field, as he goes up it, a woman
coming to meet him - with her arms full. Filled by
a child with a may-white frock, and hair shining with
the warm colours of ^{the} sandstone (64).

The parents exchange burdens, child for may blossom, and go home. This dumb-show is an exquisitely apt opening for a nouvelle on the foundling's history. This idyll is his ending. Thus, the opening is also a conclusion, as it were. It is also the controlling image of the work, sweet but sane, idealized but achievable, basic but contemporary. The impressionistic style, often without verbs, imprints it as a canvas, 'Parents in a Landscape', into which the tale will move.

This extreme calculation of technique is sustained throughout. The nouvelle works through nine 'scenes', enclosed by the gaffers' Chorus (a frequent device by now) on the possibilities of social mobility in a fixed community, on 'wild graffs on an old standard' (118) in their vivid metaphor. The economy of method is in glimpsing, through this scenic cluster, fragments of those profound nineteenth century myths, the foundling's progress and the miser's socialization. The method is an alternative to scrutinizing such myths naturalistically, or manipulating them melodramatically.

It resolves them by poetic conjunction.

Characters are not probed by analysis. Some are types related to the mythic patterns by poetic association. Phoebe and her mother are hardly individualized beyond images of wholeness: 'pink-and-white apple-blossom and clean clothes' (66), 'a snowy fantail strutting about the dovecot roof' (95), a plait of hair 'that would have done credit to a rope-maker' (95). Phoebe is the human reward that marks the foundling's psychological, as the dovecot marks his social, acceptance.

The figure of Jack himself is similarly, though more complexly, worked through the beautifully diversified association of hero and doves elaborated at every point of the tale. This carries Mrs. Ewing's meanings, liberal if still ambivalent, about the rise of the pauper, more aptly than, say, the analytic method of We and the World would have done.

Jack is first seen, earth-bound, digging, with hair cropped 'as short and thick as the fur of a mole' (72). (His first act of independence later will be to grow 'wild elf-locks' like a parochial Heathcliff.) But higher aspirations are signed by his passion for the pigeons who dominate a different element. The subtlety of the association lies in its multiple, unschematized implications. The pigeons' 'high-sounding and heterogeneous titles', (74) Dragons, Archangels, Blue-Owls, signify their strangeness and otherness for the drudging workhouse child. His movingly idiosyncratic letter to Darwin expresses his impulse to reach for such otherness: 'Mr. Darwin, Sir. I love them Tumblers as if they was my own' (84). The tale meets our desire to see this identification of birds and boy grandly consummated in the closely written rescue scene, when birds come 'flying, fluttering, strutting, nestling from head to foot of him' (104). The lowly hero is

unmistakably exalted. But the doves represent a domesticated wildness; they consent to their own captivity, as Jack exchanges workhouse subordination for willing servitude:

Free in the sweet sunshine - beating down the evening air with silver wings and their feathers like gold ... they flew straight home: - to Daddy Darwin's Dovecot (110).

The identification is completed at the level of plot by an ending making the dovecot Jack's home and the doves his own; his willing servitude is rewarded by a fairy tale outcome, granting him the liberty towards which he has aspired: "if ever a lad earned a father and a home, thou hast earned 'em" (114).

Darwin's doves, between naturalism and fairy tale, are supplemented by the more heavily symbolic Victorian doves of the anthem Jack hears. The scene is a fresher revision of the popular tableau of workhouse lad at the church gates (discussed Ch. 5). Its feeling is perhaps over-sweet: Jack leans on the pillar 'as if it were a big, calm friend' (79). Its choice of texts is unashamedly contrived, not the famous later setting, 'O for the Wings of a Dove', but James Kent's forgotten recitative and anthem, 'O that I had wings', a copy of which was left in Mrs. Ewing's papers (HAS 83). The freshness of treatment lies in the symbolism's entirely psychological application. There is, surprisingly, no religious dimension. The singing about, and in imitation of, doves, is conceived solely as balm to Jack's self-respect, after the wounding slurs of thieving. It becomes a lyrical promise, not of heaven, but of restored selfhood, and prompts the letter which begins his remaking. The concentration of effects is considerable. Everything is bird-like, with the tract novelist's determination put to more tasteful, covert purposes:

[Singing begins] as night-stillness in a wood is broken by the nightingale ...

The clear young voices soared and chased each other among the arches ... and mourned like doves ...

The chorus rose, as birds rise, and carried the strain ...

The choir-master's white hands were fluttering downwards (81-2).

Such singleness is diversified only through its varied sensuousness.

The powerful application to Jack's psychology is best conveyed by these associationist means, as an imprecise disturbance in 'a young heart caged within workhouse walls' (82).

The theme of the recluse's return to life through a child seems less satisfyingly contained by this dense little fable, though still much more dramatically examined than in Mrs. Gatty, perhaps because of its familiarity in the finer, more spacious histories of Dr. Manette and Silas Marner. Mrs. Ewing cannot give the same quality of attention to Darwin's state as to her hero's, the same depth of image and association. But her summary of his history shows all the acumen in analysis she had practised so assiduously:

As to his keen sense of Jack's industry and carefulness, it was part of the incompleteness of Daddy Darwin's nature, and the ill-luck of his career, that he had a sensitive perception of order and beauty, and a shrewd observation of ways of living and qualities of character, and yet had allowed his early troubles to blight him ... (89).

She keys the two themes into each other in the crucial robbery, stressing Jack's rise to manliness as exactly coincident with, if not dependent on, Daddy's collapse into near-infantilism, a cruder version of the parent-child symbiosis of the Dorrits and Manettes. Their relative dependencies are reversed, as in Pickens, so that Jack becomes master of the dovecot in fact, before in law, and restores the fertility Daddy had reduced.

Without Silas Marner's complexity, this nouvelle is close to

its details, as well as to the humanity with which Eliot viewed the theme. Silas's obsession with gold under the floor has the same consequence as Darwin's with his bed-board; it distorts his living painfully. Daddy 'in bitterness of spirit ... dreaded the dying out of the twilight into dark' (88); Silas grows shrunken and yellow. Daddy is 'mazelin wi' trouble' at his loss; Silas is 'mazed' by the robbery (Ch. 13). In both, a child reforges the communal bonds and redresses the psychic distortion. Jack 'makes the first breach in [Darwin's] solitary life'... but it was fated to widen' (91); Eppie 'created fresh and fresh links between [Silas's] life and the lives from which he had hitherto shrunk' (Ch. 14). Gestures of benediction mark both relationships. Silas put out his hand and 'his fingers encountered ^{soft} warm curls' (Ch. 12). Daddy puts his hand on Jack's black head and stirred old quiverings of tenderness (114-5). Dolly Winthrop is matched by Mrs. Shaw, notable kindly souls who advance the socialization. More deeply, both fictions locate their emotional climax in the reader's willing assent that this central experience is essentially, if not biologically, that of parent and child. And here Mrs. Ewing's limits show most severely. Silas Marner, through the threat of Godfrey's offer to remove Eppie (Ch. 19), allows the appropriate articulation of what such a relationship means. Mrs. Ewing's last scene, though it makes roughly the same point ("Daddy, not maester ..." (114)), is skimped, morally simplistic, lacking the splendid dimensions that fiction can give to such truth. And Darwin's sentimentalized death is a severe, if brief, lapse of taste.

However, the nouvelle's morality is enlightened for its time and type. The year after its appearance The Monthly Packet was still recommending the adoption of workhouse children 'into our

households, to be brought up to housework by our servants ...' If, after great care they 'prove troublesome', you can always return them 'to the workhouse'.¹⁵ Mrs. Ewing's foundlings express an increasingly liberal view of social bonds, shedding fictional conventions of gentle blood and recovered parents, to this creative interlacing with the myth of humanization.

There is a kindred moral vigour, alongside pastoral images, in Sunflowers and a Rushlight, which shows Mrs. Ewing's gentle vigilance unblunted. It uses a particularly guileless first-person voice for a particularly tart appraisal of adult prejudice and misused authority. These abuses are explored in a quietly malicious portrait of a grandmother. Unlike comparable fictional old ladies, in Countess Kate or The Cuckoo Clock, she is not basically well-meaning but out of touch; this grandmother is morally reprehensible and remains so. There is no narrative challenge to her harshness to Grace, and only a reported one to her reactionary views on medicine, leaving something unsatisfactory and unfinished about the tale. The vigorous early sections create expectations of more challenging confrontations than Dr. Brown's mild intervention.

The early emotional balance is precise. The grandmother is not directly pilloried, but deviously battered by the loaded implications of the childlike recording. The household's rigid formalism is 'innocently', but adversely, reported: the false 'visits of condolence', the Noah's Ark permitted as Sunday play, but 'only in winter', the hypocritical attitude to books:

[Mother] liked having them^{all} in the parlour, "littering the whole place", Jael says; but Grandmamma has moved them to the attic now, all but a volume of Sermons for Sunday, and the Oriental Annual, to amuse visitors if they are left alone. Only she says you never ought to leave your visitors alone (16, 168).

Slowly, as in a James story, from such hints we build, retrospectively,

a model of family tensions before the parents' death of fever from a leaking cesspool ("a vulgar word", says grandmamma). The model is a small Freudian case history of wife-mother-in-law conflict, accentuated as modernism versus traditionalism, with the hapless husband between. The grandmother's hostility to Grace's bookishness and Sunflowers ("They were your mamma's fancy and she'd as many whims as you have" (194) says Jael, an unrefined moral copy of her mistress,) can subsequently be read as transferred rivalry from her mother. This careful psychology overlays the commoner opposition in children's fiction between old disciplinarian and young hopeful. Other touches suggest cruelty more overtly, because of the extreme vulnerability hinted by the narrative voice at those points. Grace grows afraid that if thieves got in 'I could do nothing except scream for help, because Grandmamma keeps the Watchman's Rattle under her own pillow, and locks her bedroom door' (187). Even more pointedly, grandmother defers punishing Grace, until 'I really began to think she was going to be kind enough to forgive me, with a free forgiveness' (192). Such piping invocations of Christian tenets give a more savage edge to this portrait of righteous vindictiveness.

The proposed public execution of the Sunflowers ('I was to be there to see' (193)) is a more theatrical equivalent of the confiscation of playthings in Rabbits' Tails, Mrs. Gatty's story from the same family origin. But Mrs. Ewing has made of the Sunflowers a more dominant, if almost absurd, symbol of the child's identity. It is a focal point, a precipitator of attitudes, that are all indirectly attitudes to childhood itself. To the grandmother, they are whimsical fancy to be eradicated. To Jael, they are a tedious trouble, like her human charges, "ragged things at best, and all they're good for is to fatten fowls" (196). To the girls,

they are fantasy, play, a relieving wonder in a prosaic life, as the riddle of The Puzzling Tale, on the humanization of flowers, indicates. But the story withdraws from its initial complexity and ends lamely and inconclusively. Mrs. Ewing could not, or dared not, find a fictional solution to this clash of interests, beyond the palliative suggested by Dr. Brown of simply growing up.

In Letters from a Little Garden, incomplete at her death, Mrs. Ewing recites her gardening credo:

...Others again, amongst whom I number myself, love not only the lore of flowers, and the sight of them, and the fragrance of them, and the growing of them, and the picking of them, and the arranging of them, but also inherit from Father Adam a natural relish for tilling the ground from whence they were taken and to which they shall return (15, 123).

It is fitting that her last fiction, Mary's Meadow, should formalize this response with undiminished intensity in a perfectly judged narrative. As Daddy Darwin, from the external vantage point, placed figures in a country landscape and their movements in a human fable, Mary's Meadow through the child's inward view, crosses and recrosses the ground between the outside world of garden and meadow and the inside world of imagination. It is, in more than the mimetic sense, a nouvelle of exteriors and interiors. Its success in this depends upon a mode, going back to Mrs. Overtheway's Remembrances and unerringly managed here, of suspending the narrative between acute realism and distancing myth. The wild plants, the books the children read, the psychology of family tempers, are all realised with naturalistic specificity. Perhaps she is even over-specific about the books which shape the children's play, but which make tough demands on young readers. Bechstein's As Pretty as Seven, The Rose and the Ring, Miller's Gardener's Dictionary (4 vols.), Karr's A Tour Round My Garden and preeminently, Parkinson's Paradise in Sole Paradisus Terrestris (1629), are all present to give the

dimensions of these very literary children's reading, their alternative to the hopelessly illustrated pap which they mock: "I'm sick of books for young people, there's so much stuff in them" (29). Against this dense particularization is the fantasizing, myth-making pressure of retrospection, symbol and extreme moulding of the action. The resulting poise makes of the meadow itself both a recognizable English feature, and an image of the children's keenest desires. Their final possession of this meadow is through a near-fairy tale plot, unmarred by its unlikelihood, as it simply gives form to a more submerged reality:

"... I do really think it always was yours."

"What, Chris?"

"If not," said Chris, "why was it always called Mary's Meadow?" (114).

The balance is a distinctive one, removed from the perspective of The Golden Age by its secure centring in the child and consequent freedom from regret.

The balanced method can be seen in two areas particularly, in characterization and in the fabric of pastoral itself.

The children themselves present a familiar range of types. Chris is a Molesworth oddity, but retrieved slightly by Ewing similes ('smiling 'in an effulgent sort of way, as if he were the noonday sun' (104)) and by comic detail:

He was delighted to be our Dwarf, but he wanted to have a hump, and he would have such a big one that it ... kept slipping under his arm and into all sorts of queer positions (72).

The narrator is basically a Little Mother, viewed with enough irony (note the capitals) to spice the saccharine, and sufficient internality to avoid the superfluous emotion often attaching to an external view; her 'mothering' gains in realism by being shared through the narrative: 'I was glad to get off quietly and alone to plant them' (83), she confesses on escaping her charges to

garden unhindered. But these types touched with realism are also given fantastic enlargement through the literary roles they assume, under crazy titles: Honest Root Catherer, Queen's Herbarist, Traveller's Joy, Hose-in-Nose. And here the boundaries of realism and fantasy shift and merge. The slow evolution of their communal fantasy is sufficiently detailed for our grasp of its normality; we appreciate each character's struggle to match his glamorous role to an intractable reality - to gather roots from a stingy gardener, to 'delight the senses' of travellers with perfumed flowers that resent transplantation. But, conversely, this reality is invested with magic by their book-fed imaginations: the garden is Paradise, even the bull-dog is transformed: 'we think it looks as if he were laughing - like Mother Hubbard's dog, when she brought home his coffin, and he wasn't dead' (15). The children are types, but their intriguing projection in these invented roles gives body to their inward life, which has its own kind of realism. The child's fantasies are his reality. Chris's delight in thinking of four stockings, two up, two down, to represent Hose-in-Nose, or Mary's hope that her feet are like Rosalba's, express the child's resistance to boundaries, which Mrs. Ewing's method strives to represent.

Other characters exist between stereotyping, fantasy and naturalism. Some are merely stock figures of children's literature, brightened by selective detail, like Aunt Catherine, the stiff traditionalist, or the irascible father, both enlivened by Mrs. Ewing's practised wit. Others seem functions of the fairy tale plot, pushed away from any realism and into fancy: the Old Squire is a blustering ogre, with picture-book gestures ('storming and shaking his fist at me' (84)), who first terrorizes Mary and then rewards her with the Meadow, a reversal no more surprising than a folk tale transformation. The best demonstration of characterization

suspended between verisimilitude and extravagant distortion is in the excellent, three-generation trio of Bessy the maid, of 'unparalleled powers of destruction' (105), her aunt, the Weeding Woman, and her great-aunt who cuddles her plants like Christians (79). Through this human chain Mrs. Ewing shows that magic has a highly idiosyncratic and earthily regional origin. Mary's wonderful double cowslips are symbolic of such magic. They are scientifically documented and yet come via the romantically named Weeding Woman, from 'the other side of the Moor' in the remote garden of the ancient aunt. This aunt, multiplying flowers as in the parable of the talents, calculating in decades though she has one foot in the grave, gardening by folk lore not horticulture, seems a living link with the Jacobean apothecary who fosters the children's fantasies. These ancient women are both magical and insistently realistic, as Mrs. Ewing's sharp dialect and novelistic observation express:

"How would 'ee feel to see Gardner zowing's spring plants by the hundred, and a-throwing of 'em away by the score when beds be vull?..."
 And she 'low she couldn't a-bear it, no more'n see Herod a mass-sakering of the Innocents ... " (79).

In developing the meaning of the Meadow itslef, Mrs. Ewing resorts to similar fluctuations between actuality and symbol. It is astopographical and botanically real as she can make it; she describes Lords and Ladies:

In April and May, when they have smooth plum-coloured coats and pale green cowls, and push up out of last year's dry leaves, or in August and September, when their hoods have fallen away, and their red berries shine through the dusty grass and nettles (17).

A similar hedgerow in The Golden Age reveals 'treasures of hedge and ditch; the rapt surprise of the first lords-and-ladies, the rustle of a field mouse, the splash of a frog'.¹⁶ The selectivity of this cabinet of delights, as well as phrases like 'rapt surprise' marks its difference from Mrs. Ewing's faithful denotation. Mrs.

Ewing sees nature with the child's clear eye, the unfragmented view that Earthly Paradises need compost.

But the child's eye includes fantasy, perfectly reconcilable with botany because the child's experience is not yet compartmentalized. Nature and books are his joint inheritance. Parkinson's lens becomes his, Parkinson's names decorate the meadow's charm:

"Supposing we find hose-in-hose, and supposing we find green cowslips, and supposing we find curled cowslips, or galligaskins ... " (102).

Moreover, Parkinson's generous human concern stimulates their fantasy into social channels. His assumptions strengthen theirs, that gardens are for everybody, as he says in the Paradisi:

... many men must be content with any plot of ground, of what forme or quantity soever it bee, more or lesse, for their Garden, because a more large or convenient can not be had to their habitation (Ch. 2).¹⁷

This nudges the children's role-playing into charitable directions, to equalize the bounties of nature. It also makes Mary's ownership of the Meadow at the end, an act of representative, not selfish, possession. In this, the nouvelle returns to its mock-moralistic opening, the stock lessons about loving one's neighbour and 'praising Number One'. The fairy tale design reveals the children's basic humanity which the meadow as symbol articulates. Where the adults go to law over it, the children share it. Mary cannot adopt her father's view of it as a cash-asset (he wishes to pay her for grazing his sheep), or the squire's proprietorial exclusiveness (he advises her to be wary of trespassers). Instead, the children take communal possession under the romantic banners of their fantasy: "It's like having an Earthly Paradise given to you, straight off!" (110).

The Meadow is the outer space which, by play and work, by

books and pretence, by knowing and naming, they colonize without violation. Perhaps the value the tale sets on it suggests it is also the inner space to whose violation Mrs. Ewing always remained sensitive and to the recognition of which her best fiction is directed.

Afterword

These last fictions are an act of consolidation. She claimed of Sunflowers and a Rushlight: 'It was very pleasurable work, though hard work as usual, writing it' (18, 269), and the sense of pleasure and deceptive ease communicates itself. They represent a writer secure but not complacent in her command of resources. The resources were slender, but well-explored and intelligently improved upon. They include a style more fluent and finished, more daring in its occasional difficulty, than most contemporary writers could command, or would risk. They include an ear for dialogue, especially in its eccentric and distinctive variations. They include a sense of humour that is a form of serious engagement, and a sense of irony, learned from the great adult novelists, that masks a close involvement with its subject and negotiates a more complete representation of it. Such assets equipped Mrs. Ewing rather better than most of her contemporaries to assist in the century's long withdrawal from didacticism in children's fiction. In that sense, Mary's Meadow realizes the ambitions of her early tales to escape the stranglehold of prescriptive forms and tendentious accounting for human behaviour that were part, though not all, of her mother's legacy; whatever its artistic limitations, it is unwarped by the single idea.

It would make for critical tidiness if one could point to a similarly lucid advancement in technique, form, and the clarification

of subject. But, as I hope this study has shown, like many better novelists, Mrs. Ewing developed erratically. The donkey-cart to which she modestly likened herself made some mulish detours and false starts. This was particularly so in the novel, to which she kept returning doggedly with new solutions for old problems. It is perverse that We and the World, containing some of her most impressive writing, is yet a less successful novel than Mrs. Overthway's Remembrances. The problem of form, meshed as it is with the problem of plot, and with her exclusive paring down of subject to the single area of human growth from birth to adolescence, she resolved originally and intelligently by her development of the nouvelle, her cultivation of the short story, and her fertile use of images as principles of organisation, and of the narrative voice as an identification of subject with form. And her shorter fictions vindicate her experiments entirely. At its best, her work shows a grasp of her narrow subject that is both firm and delicate. It also, throughout its range, testifies to a view of the child that remained undiminished in its perspicacity and humanity.

NOTES

Introduction

- 1 For example, see Alec Ellis, A History of Children's Reading and Literature, 1968, 68.
- 2 Brian Jackson, 'Philippa Pearce', in The Cool Web. The Pattern of Children's Reading, eds. Margaret Meek, Aidan Chambers and Griselda Barton, 1977, 323. The documents and dialogues assembled in this volume suggest valuable approaches to children's literature.
- 3 Henry James, 'The Art of Fiction', Longman's Magazine, IV, Sept. 1884, 502-521. Reprinted Selected Literary Criticism, ed. Morris Shapira, 1963; see p. 64.
- 4 The question of why Mrs. Ewing is no longer read by children - and the existence of so few of her works in print suggests that she is not - involves sociological issues beyond the scope of this study, though comparisons in later chapters with some of her more durable contemporaries like Alcott and Mrs. Hodgson Burnett will suggest some reasons. It is worth saying that in my experience young readers, individually and in groups, enjoy her fiction when introduced to it.
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- 8 Juliana Gatty, 'Sevenoaks in the Rain by a Water Nymph', with accompanying sketches, dated Spring, 1854 (HAS 77).
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- 25 *Ibid.*, 36.
- 26 Alfred Tennyson, 'In Memoriam', Epilogue, line 132.
- 27 See, for example, 'Desert Plants', AJM, Aug. 1868, 230-236.
- 28 Charles Kingsley, Letters and Memories, abridged edition, 2 vols., ed. Fanny Kingsley, 1879; see vol. 1, 89.
- 29 Margaret Gatty, Parables from Nature, 1st and 2nd series, vii.
- 30 Margaret Gatty, Not Lost, But Gone Before, in Parables from Nature, 1st and 2nd series, 185.
- 31 Margaret Gatty, Proverbs Illustrated, and Worlds Not Realized, in 1 vol. 1869, 58.
- 32 Margaret Gatty, The Hundredth Birthday, and other Tales, Notice to 1868 edition.
- 33 *Ibid.*, 94.
- 34 Margaret Gatty, The Human Face Divine, and other Tales, illus. Clara Lane, 1860, 176-7.
- 35 Margaret Gatty, Aunt Judy's Tales, illus. Clara Lane, 1859, 1.
- 36 E.M. Forster, Aspects of the Novel, 1927. Quotation from 1949 edition, 29.
- 37 Margaret Gatty, Aunt Sally's Life, in Aunt Judy's Letters, 65. A frequent Aunt Judy contributor, Mrs. O'Reilly, practised the doll story, in Doll-World (1872) and Daisy's Companions (1869). Mrs. Gatty's much more inventive tale avoids the incipient whimsicality of these miniature novels and looks back to Horne's tougher blend of strange perspectives and psychological realism.
- 38 AJM, April 1870, 370, has another Gatty translation of Macé, The Rich Young Lady, a highly moral fable on the dangers of wealth.
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- 41 Letter quoted Maxwell, 140.
- 42 Margaret Gatty, The Black Bag, in Aunt Judy's Letters, 145.
- 43 See Eden, AE 18, 15.
- 44 Letter quoted Maxwell, 144.
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- 46 Edward Bell, George Bell, Publisher. A Brief Memoir, privately printed, Chiswick Press, 1924, 54.

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- 69 J.H. Ewing, Margaret Gatty. A Memoir, xix.
- 70 Letter quoted Maxwell, 233.
- 71 J.H. Ewing, Diary Feb. 26, 1858.
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- 80 Letter to Horatia Gatty, Dec. 19, 1872. Some of these 'goody tales' appeared in volume form in The British Workman Series, 1-8, 1873 and 1874. The periodical was The British Workman, and the Friend of the Sons of Toil, ed. T.B. Smithies.
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- 82 Letter from R. André to Mrs. Ewing, Nov. 8, 1882.
- 83 Letter quoted Maxwell, 225.
- 84 Yours Pictorially, 84, 90, 93.
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- 7 Margaret Gatty, The Light of Life, in Parables from Nature, 3rd and 4th series, 133.
- 8 Sarah Trimmer, The History of the Robins, as Fabulous Histories. Designed for the instruction of children respecting their treatment of animals, 1786, 29-30.
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- 13 Ibid., 325.
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Chapter 2

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- 7 Ibid., 8. See also Mary Howitt, The Childhood of Mary Leeson, 1848, a quiet study of child development. For a recommendation of Howitt, see AJM, 1872, 755.
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- 24 Ibid., 120-1.
- 25 Ibid., 211.
- 26 Dombey and Son, 92.
- 27 Ibid., 191.
- 28 Misunderstood, 83.
- 29 Dombey and Son, 93, 95
- 30 Ibid., 138.
- 31 Barbara Hardy, 'Narrative as a Primary Act of Mind', The Cool Web, 21-2.
- 32 Charles Dickens, The Personal History of David Copperfield, Oxford edition, ed. E. Kibblewhite, 1916, 27.
- 33 Ibid., 27.
- 34 Frances Hodgson Burnett, Little Lord Fauntleroy, London edition, 1886, 12.
- 35 Ibid., 12.
- 36 Charles Dickens, Letter to Mrs. Brookfield, Feb. 20 1866. Reprinted Allott, Novelists on the Novel, 243.

Chapter 4

- 1 Rudyard Kipling, Something of Myself for my friends known and unknown, 1937, 7.
- 2 Percy Lubbock, The Craft of Fiction, 1921. Travellers' Library edition, 1926, 144.
- 3 Ibid., 152.
- 4 Mary Louisa Molesworth, My New Home, 1894, 1.
- 5 Ibid., 20.
- 6 Ibid., 4, 35.

- 7 Mary Louisa Molesworth, The Carved Lions, 1895, 1-2.
- 8 Ibid., 97-8.
- 9 Frances Hodgson Burnett, The Secret Garden, London edition, 1911, 7.
- 10 Ibid., 3.
- 11 Ibid., 48.
- 12 Maxwell, 20.
- 13 Duncan Crow, op. cit., 303.
- 14 M.M. Bell, Seven to Seventeen, or, Veronica Gordon, London and New York, 1873; Seventeen to Twenty-One, or, Aunt Veronica, London and New York, 1876.
- 15 The Girls' Own Paper, Oct. 5 1892, Dec. 10 1892, Jan. 28 1893, April 15, 1893, May 27 1893. See vol. 14, 1892, 547 on the morality of collecting live specimens, and on the social benefits of collecting as a hobby.
- 16 Margaret Gatty, My Childhood in Art, in The Human Face Divine, and other Tales, 146.
- 17 Letter to Alexander Ewing, July 30, 1879.
- 18 Letter to Eleanor Lloyd, Dec. 6, 1862.
- 19 Eliza Lynn Linton, 'The Girl of the Period', The Saturday Review, March 14, 1868, followed by a series of similar articles. See also Modern Women and What is Said of Them. Articles in 'The Saturday Review', ed. Lucia Gilbert Calhoun, New York, 1868; 'The Girl of the Period' is pp. 25-33.
- 20 AJM, Annual vol. 1880, 123.
- 21 Charlotte Yonge, Beechcroft at Rockstone, serialized The Monthly Packet, Jan. 1887 - Dec. 1888. First ed. 2 vols. 1888. New edition in 1 vol. 1889, from which quotation comes. See 18; 22.
- 22 Ibid., 134.
- 23 Ibid., 194
- 24 Ibid., 209.
- 25 Ibid., 199-200.
- 26 Ibid., 201; 208
- 27 Ibid., 134-5.
- 28 Ibid., 12, 198, 208.
- 29 E. Nesbit, The Wouldbegoods. Being the Further Adventures of the Treasure Seekers, 1901, 221.
- 30 Beechcroft at Rockstone, 135.
- 31 Letter to Eleanor Lloyd, Aug. 16, 1875.

Chapter 5

- 1 Letter to Alexander Ewing, May 25, 1882.
- 2 Letter from Roberts Brothers, Boston, to Mrs. Ewing, Aug. 28, 1877 (HAS 67).
- 3 See correspondence, AJM, 1879, 758: 'Enquiries are often made for Homes where boys may be received and trained ...'. One such is described.

- 4 Letter to Alexander Ewing, March 3, 1881.
- 5 Margaret Gatty, My Childhood in Art, in The Human Face Divine, and other Tales, 142.
- 6 Margaret Gatty, Joachim The Mimic, in The Fairy Godmothers, and other Tales, 80.
- 7 Ibid., 81.
- 8 Ibid., 82.
- 9 AJM, 1878, 122-3.
- 10 Mrs. Ewing denied any knowledge of Gainsborough's similar portrait of his little colour-grinder; see note to 1884 edition, AE 8, viii. The story of Cimabue's discovery of the boy Giotto scratching pictures of his sheep on the rocks was widely current, and is recorded by Vasari. See Giorgio Vasari, The Lives of the Artists, trans. George Bull, 1965, 57-58.
- 11 J.H. Ewing, Diary Aug. 27, 1872.
- 12 Silas Hocking, Rex Rayner, Artist. A Story in Twenty-Five Chapters, The Sunday Magazine, 1890, 145, 217, 289, 392, 476, 536, 650. Subsequently, as a volume, 1899.
- 13 'Austin Clare' (Wilhemina Martha James), The Carved Cartoon: a picture of the past, 1874, Introduction, xvi.
- 14 Charlotte Yonge, What Books to Lend and What to Give, 'Historical Tales', 63.
- 15 George MacDonald, At the Back of the North Wind, 1871, 345.
- 16 Mary Louisa Molesworth, Four Winds Farm, 1887, 31.
- 17 Ibid., 23.
- 18 Hans Andersen, The Bronze Pig, in Hans Andersen's Fairy Tales, (trans. Caroline Peachey), Everyman Library, 1906, 334.
- 19 See Eden's statement, AE 18, 56-7.
- 20 Charles Dickens, Great Expectations, 3 vols. 1861. See vol. 2, 121.
- 21 Her informant had 'fallen from being a Miller with a genuine Thumb, to the less exalted position of hawking muffins in winter and "Sally Lunn's" in summer', AE 18, 57.
- 22 Maria Louisa Charlesworth, Oliver of the Mill. A Tale, 1876, 40.
- 23 Notes by Charles Tindall Gatty on Mrs. Ewing's method of composition, HAS 79, no pagination.
- 24 Margaret Dalziel, Popular Fiction A Hundred Years Ago, 1957, 132.
- 25 Gregson Gow, The Troubles and Triumphs of Little Tim. A City Story, 1882, 66 ff. This novel, like Mrs. Ewing's makes the usual melodramatic play with a letter about the foundling's origins and his physical marks of gentility (53).
- 26 Great Expectations, vol. 1, 238-241.
- 27 John Yonge Ackerman, Wiltshire Tales, first pub. Bentley's Miscellany, under the name 'Peter Pindar'; subsequently under Ackerman's name, 1853; see Preface. Some of these wild tales (e.g. Dick Dafter) are foundling stories, and many of them rely for their colour on the dialect words also used by Mrs. Ewing. See p. 35 for a comic description of the faces at the Mop that in Jan becomes more sinister.

- 28 Henry Mayhew, London Labour and the London Poor, 3 vols. 1851, vol. 4 1862. The 4 vols. reprinted, with an introduction by John D. Rosenberg, New York, 1968; see vol. 1, 381, for the statement of the Tally Packman; also, vol. 1, 326-329, 'Of the Cheap Johns, or Street Hansellers'.
- 29 Charles Dickens, Oliver Twist, or, The Parish Boy's Progress, 3 vols. 1838. Clarendon edition, ed. K. Tillotson, 1966; see Author's Preface to 3rd edition, p. lxii.

Chapter 6

- 1 Martin Price, 'The Other Self: Thoughts about Character in the Novel', in Imagined Worlds: Essays in Honour of John Butt, eds. Maynard Mack and I. Gregor, 1968, 287.
- 2 Elizabeth Cook, The Ordinary and the Fabulous, an introduction to myths, legends and fairy tales, Cambridge, London, New York and Melbourne, 2nd edition, 1976, 46.
- 3 Iona and Peter Opie, op. cit., 14-15.
- 4 See Victor E. Neuberg ed., The Penny Histories. A study of chap-books for young readers over two centuries, The Oxford Juvenile Library, 1968, 15.
- 5 John Ashton, Chap-Books of the Eighteenth Century, 1882, x.
- 6 Katherine M. Briggs, A Dictionary of British Folk-Tales in the English Language, 4 vols. 1970; see part A, vol. 1, Introduction 1-6. In both parts, A and B, collections of legends exceed those of narratives.
- 7 Briggs, The Fairies in Tradition and Literature, 186.
- 8 See Briggs, Dictionary of British Folk-Tales, part B, vol. 1, 607-623, for the 'ogres eating men' motif. See also Joseph Jacobs, English Fairy Tales, illus. Margery Gill, 1968 (a reprint of his collections of 1890 and 1894, with his notes and references); Molly Whuppie, 79-81, is a native tale of a little girl outwitting a man-eating ogre, with the same brisk pace and nonchalant tone as Mrs. Ewing's stories.
- 9 One of Andersen's inspirations for The Little Mermaid was de la Motte Fouqué's Undine (see Bredsdorff, op. cit., 363), also a Gatty favourite; their fourth daughter, dedicatee of Old-fashioned Fairy Tales, was named Undine.
- 10 Mrs. Ewing had a 'hazy memory' of these, and held up publication while she checked them; unpublished part of letter to Mrs. Gatty, Feb. 23, 1870.
- 11 Iona and Peter Opie, op. cit., 16-17.
- 12 In Mary de Morgan, On a Pincushion, and other tales, illus. William de Morgan, 1877.
- 13 See Eden, AE 18, 63.
- 14 Letter to Horatia Gatty, July 12, 1874.
- 15 The Monthly Packet, vol. 13, Jan. - June, 1872, 400, reviews nonsense much more severely than Aunt Judy's: 'we would decidedly warn people against supposing Lilliput Legends to be either a child's book, or a desirable book for anybody ... to us it^{only} seems both silly and sneering. Nonsense like Hans Andersen's or Lewis Carroll's is a rare gift; and neither this book nor The Man in the Moon attain to the mark'.

- 16 William Brightly Rands, Lilliput Levée, illus. Millais and Pinwell, 1864. See AJM, May Day vol. 1868, 61. Lilliput Legends appeared in 1872.
- 17 AJM, Christmas vol. 1872, 249. No author is given for The Man in the Moon; my copy, dated 1872, has 'By R -' printed after the title, and illustrations remarkably like Lear's.
- 18 AJM, 1875, 492-5: Eastern Tales, selected and abridged by G.J.C.; see especially the moralistic The Credulous Peasant, and No Sooner Said Than Done.
- 19 Charles Dickens, 'Frauds on the Fairies', Household Words, vol. 8, Oct. 1 1853, 97-100; see p. 97.
- 20 German Popular Stories, translated John Camden Hotten, ed. Edgar Taylor, introduced by John Ruskin, 1869, Preface, viii.
- 21 Andrew Lang, 'Modern Fairy Tales', Illustrated London News, Dec. 3 1892, 714.
- 22 Charlotte Yonge, The History of the Life and Death of the Good Knight, Sir Thomas Thumb, illus. J.B., Edinburgh and London, 1855, iv. For an early English version, see Joseph Jacobs, op. cit., 87-91.
- 23 Iona and Peter Opie, op. cit., 16.
- 24 J.R.R. Tolkien, 'On Fairy-Stories', in Tree and Leaf, 1964. Quotation from Unwin Paperbacks edition, 1975; see pp. 41, 51 and passim.
- 25 Bruno Bettelheim, op. cit., 155.
- 26 Ibid., 36.
- 27 W.H. Auden, 'George MacDonald', Forewords and Afterwords, 1973, 268-273. See also Tolkien, op. cit., 31, on the 'power and beauty' of The Golden Key.
- 28 Maureen Duffy, The Erotic World of Faery, 1972, 276.
- 29 Louis MacNeice, Varieties of Parable, Cambridge, 1965, 21, 83ff.
- 30 Bettelheim, op. cit., 10.
- 31 Ibid., 39. See also the similar ending of Kind William and the Water Sprite, AE 3, 95.
- 32 Amabel Williams Ellis, Fairy Tales of the British Isles, London and Glasgow, 1960, 66.
- 33 Tolkien, op. cit., 46.
- 34 J.H. Ewing, The Fairy Fair, Little Folks, vol. 1, 1871, 210-211. See Maureen Peters, Jean Ingelow. Victorian Poetess, Ipswich, 1972, 80-1, for some discussion of Ingelow's 'haunting quality' in Victorian fairy tale.
- 35 MacNeice, op. cit., 94 ff.
- 36 AJM, May Day vol. 1868, 61.
- 37 AJM, 1875, 250-251.
- 38 AJM, 1875, 251. Aunt Judy's also included a piece on Sara Coleridge in their series on women writers, 'by the author of Ann and Jane Taylor', AJM, 1876, 671-9.

- 39 AJM, 1876, 315. Throughout the eighties when it is unlikely Mrs. Ewing did any reviewing, Aunt Judy's continued to apply similar criteria of simplicity in style and significance in action to new fairy tales. Katherine Knox's Cornertown Chronicles. New Legends of Old Lore is criticised because '[Its] ideas and language are too vague and fanciful' (AJM, 1880, 188). Julian Hawthorne's Yellow Cap and other Fairy Tales is cautiously praised for its 'weird fancy and imagination' and 'deep allegorical meaning' (AJM, 1881, 124). Joel Chandler Harris's Uncle Remus is admired for its 'primitive humour and simplicity' (AJM, 1882, 123). In its last year the magazine carried a long article, 'Fables and Fairy Tales', by Rev. S. Goldney (AJM, 1885, 20-32), unscholarly and wild in its theories, but impressively wide-ranging in its examples, a measure of how far re-discovery had gone.
- 40 Mary de Morgan published two more collections almost as good, The Necklace of Princess Fiorimonde, and other stories, 1880, and The Windfairies, and other tales, 1900.
- 41 Bettelheim, op. cit., 149.
- 42 Max Lüthi, Once Upon a Time. On the Nature of Fairy Tales, intro. and with notes by Frances Lee Utley, Bloomington and London, 1976. See Ch. 8, 109-119, 'Rapunzel. The Fairy Tale as a Representation of a Maturation Process'.
- 43 The Necklace of Princess Fiorimonde, and Other Stories. Being the Complete Fairy Tales of Mary de Morgan, intro. R.L. Green, 1963, 101. De Morgan's symbolic association of hair and trees is widely matched in oral lore. Both Grimm's The Juniper Tree and the English The Rose-Tree (see Joseph Jacobs, op. cit., 13-15, notes 293) make this link.
- 44 Briggs, Dictionary of British Folk-Tales, part B, vol. 1, 178.
- 45 Bettelheim, op. cit., 27.
- 46 Letter from Mrs. Ewing to Mrs. Elder, AE 18, 187: 'Miss Yonge prefers it, I believe, to anything I have ever done ...'
- 47 Margaret Gatty, The Master of the Harvest, in Parables from Nature, 3rd and 4th series, 59.
- 48 Margaret Gatty, The Poor Incumbent, 1858, 40, 49. HAS 75 includes part of the MS of this novel.
- 49 Ibid., 47.
- 50 Ibid., 63.
- 51 Max Lüthi, op. cit., 44-6.

Chapter 7

- 1 Thomas Carlyle, Sartor Resartus. The Life and Opinions of Herr Teufelsdröckh. In Three Books, 1834. See Book 2, Ch. 1, 29.
- 2 Henry James, Preface to The Lesson of the Master, vol. 15 New York edition. Reprinted The Art of the Novel, 219.
- 3 Ibid., 220. See Preface to The Reverberator, Vol. 13 New York edition, The Art of the Novel,
- 4 Ibid., 220; 180. See also Preface to Daisy Miller, 274.
- 5 Mrs. Ewing (amongst others) has been called 'the Jane Austen of the nursery'. See Maxwell, 191. Gillian Avery, Mrs. Ewing, 1961, 60, says Lob depicts 'a world reminiscent of Cranford'.

- 6 Elizabeth Gaskell, Cranford, Household Words, Dec. 13, 1851 - May 21, 1853. Quotation from the Knutsford edition, The Works of Mrs. Gaskell, intro. A.W. Ward, 1906; see vol. 2, 1; see also 50-51 on the sisters' 'candle economy'.
- 7 Mrs. Gatty's The Love of God make an interesting comparison as an adoption tale, liberal in its attitudes, though tediously written. It balances 'propensities' and 'habits' (nature and nurture) in the foundling, and does finally elevate him to an emotional equality with his benefactor. See The Fairy Godmothers, and other Tales, 142-3.
- 8 Cornelia Meigs, Louisa M. Alcott and the American Family Story, Bodley Head Monograph, 1970, 104.
- 9 Gillian Avery, Childhood's Pattern, 136.
- 10 Mary Louisa Molesworth, 'On the Art of Writing Fiction for Children', Atalanta, May, 1893, 583-586; see p. 586.
- 11 R.L. Green, Mrs. Molesworth, Bodley Head Monograph, 1961, 35, 40.
- 12 'Ennis Graham' (Mrs. Molesworth), 'Carrots'. Just a Little Boy, 1876, 93.
- 13 Maxwell, 197.
- 14 Arthur Marshall, Girls Will Be Girls, 1974, 4.
- 15 Children's hatred is a surprisingly rare theme in nineteenth century juvenile fiction. Castle Blair (1878) by Flora Shaw, an Aunt Judy contributor, is a particularly vivid and honest example, discussed by Robert Lee Wolff, 'Some Erring Children in Children's Literature: The World of Victorian Religious Strife in Miniature', in The Worlds of Victorian Fiction, ed. Jerome H. Buckley, Cambridge, Mass. and London, 1975, 295-318. Mrs. Ewing is unusually frank in portraying such overwhelming antagonisms amongst siblings.
- 16 Kathleen Tillotson, 'Harriett Mozley', Mid-Victorian Studies, 1965, 45. See Mozley, The Fairy Bower, 1841, 198, for a powerful description of the bower as theatrical illusion, and 206-13 for the 'coronation' of 'the artiste'.
- 17 Jean Piaget, Play, Dreams and Imitation in Childhood, trans. C. Gattegno and F.M. Hodgson, 1951. Quotation from Routledge Paperbacks edition, 1972, 285, 287-291 and passim.
- 18 Aristotle, The Poetics, trans. W. Hamilton Fyfe, London and Cambridge, Mass., 1960; Ch. 11 41-43; Ch. 13 45-47; Ch. 16 59-65.
- 19 Gillian Avery, Childhood's Pattern, 133 ff.
- 20 Margaret Maison, Search Your Soul, Eustace. A Survey of the Religious Novel in the Victorian Age, London and New York, 1961, 32.
- 21 Harriett Mozley, The Fairy Bower, Advertisement; see also p. 13 on the relationship between Grace's 'fondest theme', her love for her mother, and her 'wild religious and metaphysical speculations'.
- 22 Philippe Ariès, Centuries of Childhood, French edition, 1960. Penguin Education edition, trans. Robert Baldick, 1973, 124; 122: 'First communion gradually became the great religious festival of childhood'.
- 23 Ibid., 124.
- 24 Charlotte Yonge, What Books to Lend and What to Give, 43.

- 25 Charlotte Yonge, The Daisy Chain, or Aspirations. A Family Chronicle, 1856. 2nd ed., 2 vols. 1856, from which quotation comes. See part 1, 269, 259-274.
- 26 Charles Lamb, 'All Fools' Day' and 'Valentine's Day', The London Magazine, 1820-1825, later in Essays in Elia, first series, 1823. Mrs. Ewing read the Tales from Shakespeare (Diary Jan. 26, 1862), but I have found no mention of the Elia essays.
- 27 See Letter to Alexander Ewing, AE 18 244-5. In an unpublished letter, Oct. 12, 1882, Mrs. Ewing writes of André 'Of course he does not approach Caldecott - but he has a great deal of fancy and vigour'. See A Week Spent in a Glass Pond. By the Great Water Beetle, depicted by R. André, 1883.
- 28 Margaret Blount, Animal Land. The Creatures of Children's Fiction, 1974, 42.
- 29 Victor Blüthgen, The Hens of Hencastle, trans. Major Yeatman Briggs, AJM, Jan. 1878.
- 30 Letter, 1851, quoted Maxwell, 44.
- 31 J.H. Ewing, Diary Jan. 11, 1862.
- 32 Maxwell, 44-5.
- 33 Mary Louisa Molesworth, Studies and Stories, 61.
- 34 John Ruskin says Our Field 'is not a mere story - it's a poem! Great praise from a great man', Letter to Alexander Ewing, Sept. 19, 1879 (AE 18, 214).
- 35 The original woodcuts are reproduced in A Great Emergency, and other Tales, 1877, 98, 101.

Chapter 8

- 1 Virginia Woolf, 'Robinson Crusoe', in The Common Reader, Second series, 1932, 55, 58. See also 'Defoe' in The Common Reader, First series, 1925, 121-131.
- 2 Amy Cruse, The Victorians and their Books, 1935, reprinted 1962, 286; 291-299.
- 3 Daniel Defoe, The Life and Strange Surprising Adventures of Robinson Crusoe of York, Mariner, 1719 in 2 parts. Oxford English Novels edition, intro. J. Donald Crowley, 1972; see p. 3.
- 4 Paul Hazard, Books, Children and Men, trans. Marguerite Mitchell, Boston, 1944. 4th edition, 1960, 54.
- 5 Letter from Roberts Brothers, Boston, Aug. 28, 1877, refers to the novel as We Three and the World.
- 6 Robinson Crusoe, 40.
- 7 W.H. Kingston, Peter the Whaler, 1851, 1.
- 8 Ibid., 408.
- 9 George Bernard Shaw, quoted in the introduction by A.J. Hoppé to The Way of All Flesh, Everyman Library, 1933, vi.
- 10 Edward Salmon, Juvenile Literature As It Is, 1888, 52.
- 11 Sheila Egoff, 'Precepts and Pleasures: changing emphases in the writing and criticism of children's literature', in Only Connect. Readings on children's literature, 427.

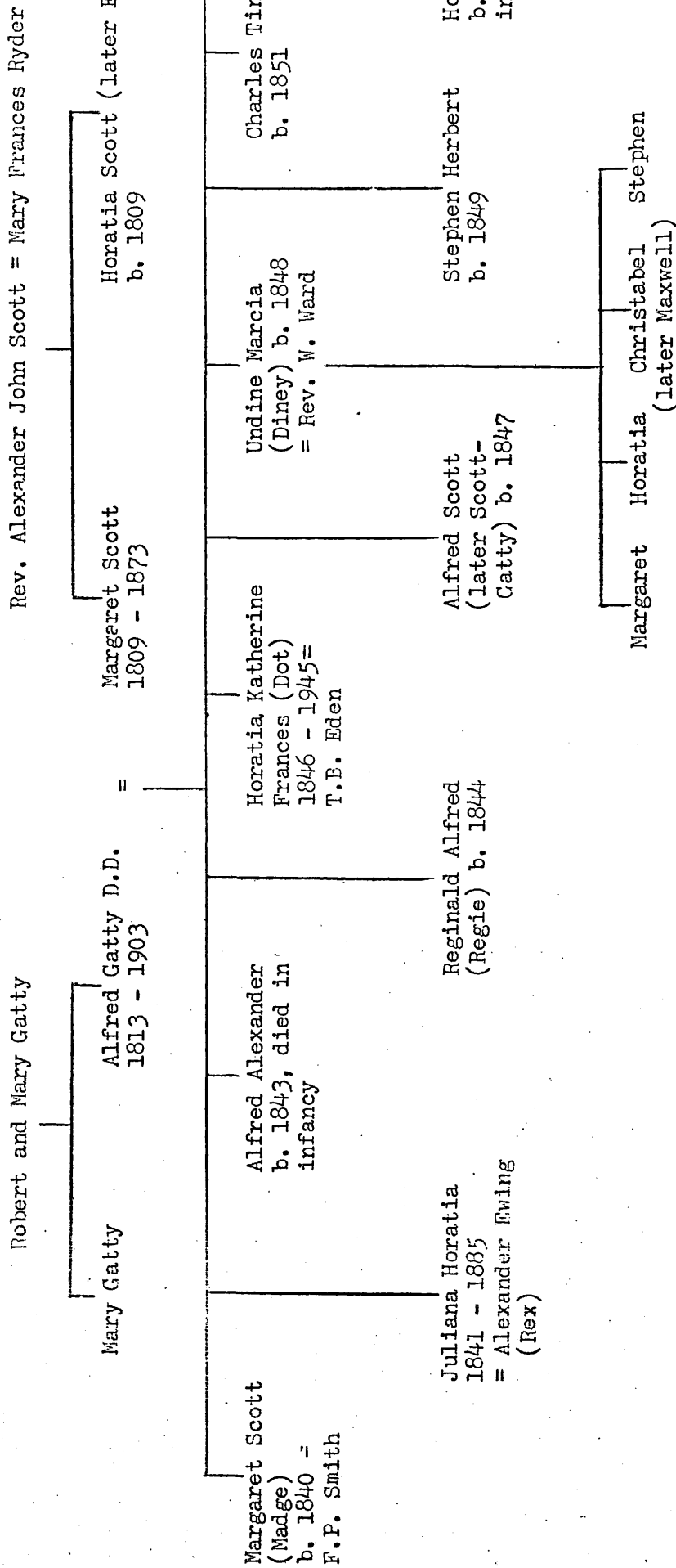
- 12 Joseph Conrad, 'Views and Reviews. Tales of the Sea', The Outlook, I, 18, June 1898, 560-1. Reprinted A Peculiar Gift. Nineteenth Century Writings on Books for Children, ed. Lance Salway, 1976, 420.
- 13 F.J. Harvey Darton, op. cit., 307.
- 14 Letter to Alexander Ewing, Aug. 25, 1882.
- 15 Lionel Trilling, 'Huckleberry Finn', 1948. Reprinted in The Liberal Imagination. Essays on Literature and Society, Mercury Books edition, 1961, 105.
- 16 R.M. Ballantyne, Snowflakes and Sunbeams, or, The Young Fur Traders, 1856, 9 (Subsequently known by its second title).
- 17 F.J. Harvey Darton, op. cit., 307.
- 18 W.H. Kingston, My First Voyage to Southern Seas, 1860, 65.
- 19 George Orwell, 'Boys' Weeklies', Horizon, No. 3, March, 1940. Reprinted Selected Essays, Penguin Books, 1957; see p. 187 ff.
- 20 See Maxwell, 197-8.

Chapter 9

- 1 F.J. Harvey Darton, op. cit., 324.
- 2 Jean Ingelow, Mopsa the Fairy, 1869, 145.
- 3 AJM, 1880, 80. See also The English Poems of Charles Stuart Calverley, ed. Hilda D. Spear, Leicester, 105-109.
- 4 Nicholas Tucker, 'How Children Respond to Fiction', 1972. Reprinted in Writers, Critics, and Children, 185.
- 5 Henry James, Letter to Miss Peard, Dec. 24, 1884, quoted in Marghanita Laski, Mrs. Ewing, Mrs. Molesworth and Mrs. Hodgson Burnett 1950, 11. Mrs. Ewing knew Frances Peard who was an Aunt Judy contributor (see AE 18, 257).
- 6 The British Library, Add. MS, 46, 198 A - B.
- 7 Letter to Alexander Ewing, May 17, 1882.
- 8 Letter to Alexander Ewing, Sept. 21, 1882.
- 9 Frances Hodgson Burnett, Little Lord Fauntleroy, 90 and Ch. 5 passim. See also How Fauntleroy Occurred in The Captain's Youngest, Piccino, and Other Child Stories, London edition, 1894, 109-160; see p. 137 on her son's outfits and 'aesthetic poses'.
- 10 Sylvia Anthony, The Discovery of Death in Childhood and After, 1971. Quotation from Penguin Education edition, 1973, 248-249.
- 11 Ibid., Ch. 5 'Imagining'.
- 12 Ibid., 37, 44, 116, Ch. 6 'Acting'.
- 13 Fred Inglis, 'Notes on the Politics of Children's Literature', 1971. Reprinted in Writers, Critics, and Children, 170. On Sutcliffe's invocation of 'a landscape intolerably vanished' and her implicit politics, see 170-173.
- 14 Kenneth Grahame, The Golden Age, London and New York, 1895, 14.
- 15 The Monthly Packet, 3rd Series, vol. 4, July - Dec. 1882, 834.
- 16 Kenneth Grahame, op. cit., 124.

- 17 John Parkinson, Paradisi in Sole Paradisus Terrestris, 1629. 2nd impression, much corrected and enlarged, 1656; see 'The Ordering of the Garden of Pleasure', Ch. 2, p. 3. The other work which supplies one of the imaginative roots of Mary's Meadow is Alphonse Karr's Voyage autour de mon Jardin, 2 vols. Paris, 1845. The translation to which Mrs. Ewing refers here (AE 16, 52) and in We and the World (14, 182) is probably that by J.C. Wood, London, 1855.

APPENDIX 2: THE GATTY FAMILY



APPENDIX 2: STORIES BY HANS ANDERSEN IN AUNT JUDY'S MAGAZINE
(Unattributed translations were anonymous)

AJM

- 1867 The Will-o'-the Wisps are in Town, trans. Augusta Plesner.
(Also in this year and the next, Popular Tales from Andalusia, trans. by Caroline Peachey, known for her Andersen translations).
- 1868,
May Day The Horn-Book
The Toad, trans. H. Ward and Augusta Plesner.
The Porter's Son, trans. H. Ward and Augusta Plesner.
- 1868,
Christmas Brownie and the Dame, trans. H. Ward and Augusta Plesner.
Flitting Day.
Kept Close is Not Forgotten
Peter, Peterkin, and Perkin, trans. H. Ward and Augusta Plesner.
The Summer-Gowk, trans. H. Ward.
- 1869,
May Day The Dryad, trans. by A.M., and Augusta Plesner.
Godfather's Picture Book, trans. H. Ward and Augusta Plesner
Who Was The Luckiest?, trans. A.M., and Augusta Plesner.
- 1869,
Christmas The Comet
The Story of the Seasons, trans. Lucy Carrington.
- 1870,
Christmas Sunshine Stories, trans. Rev. W. Wilkinson.
What One Can Invent, trans. Edward Bell.
What the Thistle Lived to See, trans. Edward Bell.
- 1871 'Luck-Peter', trans. Edward Bell.
- 1872 The Candles, trans. Augusta Plesner.
The Teapot, trans. Edward Bell.
- 1873,
Christmas Aunt Toothache, trans. A.G. and E. Bell.
The Cripple, trans. Edward Bell.
The Gardener and his Master, trans. Edward Bell.
- Good Luck May Lie in a Pin, " " "
 The Great Sea Serpent, " " "
 Great-Grandfather, " " "
 The Story Old Joan Told, " " "
 What All The Family Said, " " "
- 1876 The Galoshes of Happiness. A Christmas Extravaganza, freely adapted by S.H. Gatty.

Articles on Andersen

- 1875, 699-70 'In Memoriam Hans Christian Andersen', died Aug. 4 1875.
(An anonymous verse tribute.)
- 1876, 1-11 Hans Christian Andersen, by Edward Bell, with a frontispiece by C.H. Jeens.

APPENDIX 3: A CHRONOLOGICAL LIST OF MRS. EWING'S PUBLISHED WORK
 Listing, where appropriate, each work's first magazine publication,
 first subsequent volume appearance, and publication in the authorized
 edition, 1894-6 (AE).

A. PROSE

A Bit of Green

The Monthly Packet, July 1861. Melchior's Dream, and other Tales,
 by J.H.G., with a Preface by Mrs. Gatty, and illus. by M.S.G.
 (Margaret Gatty the younger), Bell and Sons, 1862.
 AE 1, reprints the text of the 1885 edition of this collection,
 but without illus.

The Blackbird's Nest

The Monthly Packet, Aug. 1861. Melchior's Dream, and other Tales,
 1862. AE 1.

Melchior's Dream

The Monthly Packet, Dec. 1861. Melchior's Dream, and other Tales,
 1862. AE 1.

Friedrich's Ballad

Melchior's Dream, and other Tales, 1862. AE 1.

The Smut; The Crick; The Brothers

The Black Bag, in Margaret Gatty, Aunt Judy's Letters, Bell and Sons,
 1862. AE 17.

Monsieur the Viscount's Friend

Melchior's Dream, and other Tales, 1862. AE 1.

The Mystery of the Bloody Hand

London Society, Jan.-Feb. 1865, illus. J.A. Pasquier. AE 17.

The Yew-Lane Ghosts

The Monthly Packet, June, 1865. Melchior's Dream, and other Tales,
 by Juliana Horatia Ewing (J.H.G.), with a Preface by Mrs. Gatty and
 an introductory note by Horatia Gatty, illus. Gordon Browne, Bell
 and Sons, 1885. AE 1.

The Brownies

The Monthly Packet, Dec. 1865. The Brownies, and other Tales, illus.
 George Cruikshank, Bell and Sons, 1870 (first issue dated 1870,
 second 1871). AE 5; without illus.

Mrs. Overthway's Remembrances

Ida, AJM, May 1866; Mrs. Moss, June and July, 1866; The Snoring Ghost
Dec. 1866, Jan-Feb. 1867; Reka Dom, June-Oct. 1868; Kerguelen's
Land, Oct. 1868. All parts illus. J.A. Pasquier and J. Wolf.
Mrs. Overthway's Remembrances, with 10 illus. J.A. Pasquier and
 J. Wolf, Bell and Sons, 1869. AE 2; without illus.

An Idyll of the Wood

AJM, Sept. 1867, illus. J.A. Pasquier. The Brownies, and other Tales,
 1870. AE 5.

Three Christmas Trees

AJM, Dec. 1867. The Brownies, and other Tales, 1870. AE 5.

The Land of Lost Toys

AJM, March-April, 1869. The Brownies, and other Tales, 1870. AE 5.

Kind William and the Water Sprite

AJM, Nov. 1869 (bound in vol. 1870), pub. anon., illus. A.W. Bayes.
Old-fashioned Fairy Tales, with 12 illus. by A.W. Bayes, Gordon
 Browne, and others, SPCK, 1882. AE 3; without illus., but a few
 small decorations.

The Two Abbots. A Tale of Second SightThe Powder Magazine, Dec. 1869 and July 1870.Christmas Crackers. A FantasiaAJM, Dec. 1869 and Jan. 1870 (bound in vol. 1870), with 1 anon. illus. The Brownies, and other Tales, 1870. AE 5.Amelia and the DwarfsAJM, Feb-March 1870, illus. George Cruikshank. The Brownies and other Tales, 1870. AE 5.The Cobbler and the GhostsAJM, Feb. 1870, pub. anon., illus. A.W. Bayes. Old-fashioned Fairy Tales, 1882. AE 3.The Nix in MischiefAJM, April 1870, pub. anon., illus. A.W. Bayes. Old-fashioned Fairy Tales, 1882. AE 3.Benjy in BeastlandAJM, May-June 1870, illus. George Cruikshank. The Brownies, and other Tales, 1870. Also in Lob Lie-by-the Fire, or, The Luck of Lingborough, and other Tales, illus. George Cruikshank, Bell and Sons, 1874 (1873). AE 7; without illus.The Hillman and the HousewifeAJM, May 1870, pub. anon., illus. A.W. Bayes. Old-fashioned Fairy Tales, 1882. AE 3.The Neck. A Legend of the LakeAJM, June 1870, pub. anon., illus. A.W. Bayes. Old-fashioned Fairy Tales, 1882. AE 3.Under the SunAJM, July 1870, pub. anon., illus. A.W. Bayes. Old-fashioned Fairy Tales, 1882. AE 3.The First Wife's Wedding RingAJM, Aug. 1870, pub. anon., illus. A.W. Bayes. Old-fashioned Fairy Tales, 1882. AE 3.The Magic JarAJM, Sept. 1870, pub. anon., illus. A.W. Bayes. Old-fashioned Fairy Tales, 1882. AE 3.Snap-Dragons. A Tale of Christmas EveThe Monthly Packet, Christmas, 1870. Snap-Dragons. A Tale of Christmas Eve; and Old Father Christmas. An old-fashioned tale of the young days of a grumpy old God-father, illus. Gordon Browne, ed. H.K.F. Gatty, SPCK, 1888. AE 10; without illus.Timothy's ShoesAJM, Nov-Dec. 1870, Jan. 1871 (bound in vol. 1871). The Brownies, and other Tales, 1870. Also in Lob Lie-by-the Fire, and other Tales, 1874. AE 7.A Flat Iron for a FarthingAJM, Nov. 1870-Oct. 1871, illus. Helen Paterson. A Flat Iron for a Farthing, or Some Passages in the Life of an Only Son, with 12 illus. by Helen Paterson, Bell and Sons, 1872. AE 4; without illus.The Widows and the StrangersAJM, Feb. 1871, attributed to Mrs. Ewing, illus. A.W. Bayes. Old-fashioned Fairy Tales, 1882. AE 3.The Fairy FairLittle Folks, vol. 1 1871, 210-211.

The Laird and the Man of PeaceAJM, April 1871. Old-fashioned Fairy Tales, 1882. AE 3.The Blind Hermit and the Trinity FlowerThe Monthly Packet, May 1871. Dandelion Clocks, and other Tales (under title The Trinity Flower. A Legend), illus. Gordon Browne and others, SPCK, 1887. AE 16; without illus.The Ogre CourtingAJM, June 1871, illus. A.W. Bayes. Old-fashioned Fairy Tales, 1882. AE 3.The Six Little Girls and the Five Little Pigs [The Little Darner]AJM, Aug. 1871, illus. A.W. Bayes, Old-fashioned Fairy Tales, 1882 (under title The Little Darner). AE 3.The Peace Egg. A Christmas TaleAJM, Dec. 1871 (bound in vol. 1872). Lob Lie-by-the Fire, and other Tales, 1874. Later in The Peace Egg, and A Christmas Mummung Play, illus. Gordon Browne, SPCK, 1887. AE 10; without illus.Six to Sixteen. A Story for GirlsAJM, Jan-Oct. 1872, illus. Helen Paterson. Six to Sixteen. A Story for Girls, with 10 illus. by Mrs. W. Allingham [Helen Paterson], Bell and Sons, 1875. AE 6; without illus.Murdoch's RathAJM, Feb. 1872, illus. A.W. Bayes. Old-fashioned Fairy Tales, 1882. AE 3.The Magician's GiftsAJM, March 1872, illus. A.W. Bayes. Old-fashioned Fairy Tales, 1882. AE 3.Knave and FoolAJM, June 1872, illus. A.W. Bayes. Old-fashioned Fairy Tales, 1882. AE 3.The Miller's Thumb [Jan of the Windmill]AJM, Nov. 1872 - Oct. 1873, illus. Mrs. W. Allingham. Jan of the Windmill. A Story of the Plains, with 11 illus. by Mrs. W. Allingham, Bell and Sons, 1876. AE 8; without illus.Among the Merrows. A Sketch of the Great AquariumAJM, Nov. 1872. AE 12.The HolliesThe Powder Magazine, 1871-1873 (No months indicated in this vol., but the story appears in the last quarter for 1872).My Godmother's Picture Book, a serial story [Old Father Christmas]Little Folks, Christmas, 1872, 298, 306, 322, 346. Lob Lie-by-the Fire, and other Tales, 1874 (under title Old Father Christmas). Also in Snap-Dragons. A Tale of Christmas Eve, 1888. AE 10.The Fiddler in the Fairy RingAJM, Jan. 1873, illus. A.W. Bayes. Old-fashioned Fairy Tales, 1882. AE 3.In Memoriam: Margaret GattyAJM, Nov. 1873 (bound in vol. 1874 with the announcement, 'Contains a memorial of Mrs. Gatty who died before it came out'). AE 17. This article is substantially different from the next item, but they are listed together for convenience.

Margaret Gatty. A Memoir

In Margaret Gatty, Parables from Nature, new and complete edition, illus. Holman Hunt, E. Burne Jones, H. Weir, J. Tenniel, and others, Bell and Sons, 1880 (Memoir is pp. i - xxviii). Reprints of this edition after 1885 contain a note by Mrs. Eden on Mrs. Ewing's own death (pp. xvii - xviii).

Madam Liberality

AJM, Dec. 1873 (bound in vol. 1874). A Great Emergency, and other Tales, illus. Helen Paterson and others, Bell and Sons, 1877. AE 11; without illus.

Lob Lie-by-the Fire, or, The Luck of Lingborough

Lob Lie-by-the Fire, or, The Luck of Lingborough, and other Tales, illus. George Cruikshank, Bell and Sons, 1874 [1873]. Lob Lie-by-the Fire, or, The Luck of Lingborough, illus. Randolph Caldecott, SPCK, 1885. AE 7 without illus.

May Day, Old Style and New Style

AJM, May 1874. AE 17.

A Great Emergency

AJM, June - Oct. 1874. A Great Emergency, and other Tales, 1877. AE 11; without illus.

A Very Ill-Tempered Family

AJM, Dec. 1874 - March 1875, illus. J.A. Pasquier. A Great Emergency, and other Tales, 1877. AE 11.

Cousin Peregrine's Wonder Stories

The Chinese Jugglers and the Englishman's Hands, by A. and J.H. Ewing, AJM, March 1875; Waves of the Great South Seas, AJM, May 1875; Jack of Pera. Founded on Fact, AJM, July 1875, illus. Gordon Browne. AE 17; with Browne's illustration.

Little Woods

AJM, Aug. 1875, with 4 illus. by B. Foster. AE 17; without illus.

Good Luck is Better Than Gold

AJM, Aug. 1875. Old-fashioned Fairy Tales, 1882. AE 3.

The Kyrkegrim Turned Preacher. A Legend

AJM, Nov. 1875 (bound in vol. 1876). Dandelion Clocks, and other Tales, 1887. AE 7.

Hints for Private Theatricals, parts 1, 2, and 3.

AJM, Nov., Dec., 1875, and Feb. 1876. AE 10.

Toots and Boots. An Unfinished Tale in Three Chapters

AJM, Jan. 1876, with 2 illus. by Fedor Flinzer (which prompted the tale). Brothers of Pity, and other Tales of Beasts and Men, illus. by Fedor Flinzer, with a frontispiece by Charles Whymper, SPCK, 1882. AE 12; without illus.

The Blind Man and the Talking Dog

AJM, Feb. 1876, with 1 anon. German illus. (which prompted the tale). Dandelion Clocks, and other Tales, 1887. AE 7.

The Princes of Vegetation

AJM, April, 1876, with 1 anon. illus. AE 17.

"I Won't"

AJM, April, 1876, with 1 anon. illus. Old-fashioned Fairy Tales, 1882. AE 3.

Father Hedgehog and His Neighbours

AJM, June-Aug. 1876, with 1 illus. by Fedor Flinzer (which prompted the tale). Brothers of Pity, and other Tales of Beasts and Men, 1882. AE 12.

Dandelion Clocks

AJM, Aug. 1876, with 1 anon. German illus. (which prompted the tale). Dandelion Clocks, and other Tales, 1887. AE 16.

Our Field

AJM, Sept. 1872, with 2 anon. German illus. (which prompted the tale). A Great Emergency, and other Tales, 1877. AE 11.

A Week Spent in a Glass Pond. By the Great Water Beetle

AJM, Oct. 1876, with 1 anon. illus. A Week Spent in a Glass Pond. By the Great Water Beetle, depicted by R. André, Wells, Gardner, and Co., 1883. AE 12.

The Magician Turned Mischief-Maker

AJM, Nov. 1876 (bound in vol. 1877), with 1 anon. illus. Old-fashioned Fairy Tales, 1882. AE 3.

A Bad Habit

AJM, Jan. 1877. Melchior's Dream, and other Tales, 1885. AE 1.

Brothers of Pity

AJM, April, 1877. Brothers of Pity, and other Tales of Beasts and Men, 1882. AE 12.

Ladders to Heaven. A Legend

AJM, May 1877, with 1 anon. German illus. Dandelion Clocks, and other Tales, 1887. AE 16.

We and the World

AJM, Part 1 Nov. 1877-June 1878; Part 2 April-Oct. 1879, illus. W.L. Jones. We and the World. A Book for Boys, with 7 illus. by W.L. Jones, Bell and Sons, 1881 [1880]. AE 13 and AE 14; without illus.

"So-So"

AJM, Sept. 1878. Dandelion Clocks, and other Tales, 1887. AE 7.

Flaps. A Sequel to The Hens of Hencastle

AJM, Jan. 1879; also in this number, Victor Blüthgen, The Hens of Hencastle, trans. Major Yeatman-Briggs, illus. Fedor Flinzer. Brothers of Pity, and other Tales of Beasts and Men, 1882. AE 12.

Jackanapes

AJM, Oct. 1879, with 1 coloured illus. by Randolph Caldecott; SPCK, 1884 (First issue in uncoloured wrappers, with background of screen blank. Second in boards, with design coloured and a Union Jack as background). AE 15; without illus.

Daddy Darwin's Dovecot

AJM, Nov. 1861, with 1 illus. by Randolph Caldecott. Daddy Darwin's Dovecot. A Country Tale, illus. Randolph Caldecott, SPCK, 1884. AE 14

Laetus Sorte Mea, or, The Story of a Short Life

AJM, May-Oct. 1882. The Story of a Short Life, illus. Gordon Browne, SPCK, 1885. AE 15.

Sunflowers and a Rushlight

AJM, Nov. 1882 (bound in vol. 1883, with coloured frontispiece to this tale by R. André, and 5 small anon. vignettes).
AE 16; without illus.

A Happy Family

AJM, Sept. 1883, illus. Gordon Browne. Melchior's Dream and other Tales, 1885. AE 1.

Mary's Meadow

AJM, Nov. 1883 - March 1884, with 1 illus. by Gordon Browne, and several vignettes. Mary's Meadow, and Letters from a Little Garden, illus. Gordon Browne, SPCK, 1885 (these illus. are different from that in AJM). AE 16.

The Peace Egg. A Christmas Mummig Play

AJM, Jan. 1884. The Peace Egg, and A Christmas Mummig Play, 1887. AE 10.

Letters from a Little Garden

AJM, Nov. 1884 - Feb. 1885. Mary's Meadow, and Letters from a Little Garden, 1886. AE 16.

The Owl in the Ivy Bush, or, The Children's Bird of Wisdom

Introduction, The Child's Pictorial Magazine, June 1885; Owlhoot 1, July 1885; Owlhoot 2, Aug. 1885, illus. Gordon Browne. AE 12; 14 illus. by Browne reprinted.

B. TRANSLATIONS: PROSE AND VERSEA Child's Wishes

From the German of R. Reinick, AJM, Aug. 1866. AE 17.

War and the Dead. A Dramatic Dialogue

From the French of Jean Macé, AJM, Oct. 1866. AE 17.

Tales of the Khoja

From the Turkish, AJM, April - Dec. 1874 (bound in vol. 1875). AE 17; with anon. illus.

The Snarling Princess

Freely adapted from the German, AJM, Dec. 1875 (bound in vol. 1876, illus. Ludwig Burger). AE 17; with illus.

The Little Parsnip Man

Freely adapted from the German, AJM, Jan. 1876, illus. George Bötticher. AE 17; with 5 illus. by Gordon Browne.

'Teach Me'

A Poem, trans. from the Danish of Oelenschläger, AJM, Dec. 1866. AE 9.

'The Adventures of an Elf. A Picture Poem for Little Ones'

Freely adapted from the German of Fedor Flinzer, AJM, Nov. - Dec. 1875, illus. Fedor Flinzer. AE 9; with illus.

C. VERSES

'The Promise'

AJM, July 1866, with music by A. Ewing, composer of 'Jerusalem the Golden', AE 9.

'The Burial of the Linnet'

AJM, Sept. 1866. Aunt Judy's Song-Book for Children, containing 24 popular songs, set to music by Alfred Scott Gatty, Bell and Daldy, 1871. Also in Songs for Music by Four Friends [J.H. Ewing, Alfred S. Gatty, Stephen Gatty and Rev. G.J. Chester], H. King and Co., 1874. AE 9.

- 'Christmas Wishes. A Carol'
AJM, Dec. 1866, with music by A. Ewing (bound in vol. 1867). AE 9.
- 'From Fleeting Pleasures. A Requiem for One Alive'
 As a hymn, in The Two Abbots, The Powder Magazine, Dec. 1869 - Jan. 1870. Songs for Music, 1874. Also set to music by A. Ewing in Sacred Songs, Boosey's Royal Edition, n.d.
- 'The Little Master to his Big Dog'
AJM, Sept. 1871. Papa Poodle, and Other Pets, depicted by R. André, SPCK, 1884. AE 9.
- 'Ran Away to Sea', also as 'The Runaway's Return'
AJM, Nov. 1872 (bound in vol. 1873). Songs for Music, 1874. AE 9.
- 'The Willow Man'
AJM, Dec. 1872 (bound in vol. 1873). Tongues in Trees, depicted by R. André, SPCK, 1884. AE 9.
- 'A Friend in the Garden'
AJM, Jan. 1873. AE 9.
- 'Our Garden'
AJM, March 1874, with 1 anon German illus. Our Garden, depicted by R. André, SPCK, 1883. AE 9.
- 'Dolly's Lullaby: a Nursery Rhyme'
AJM, April 1874. Baby, Puppy, and Kitty, depicted by R. André, SPCK, 1885. AE 9.
- 'The Blue Bells on the Lea'
AJM, May 1874. The Blue Bells on the Lea, depicted by R. André, SPCK, 1884. AE 9.
- 'The Dolls' Wash'
AJM, Sept. 1874. The Dolls' Wash, depicted by R. André, SPCK, 1883. AE 9.
- 'Three Little Nest-Birds'
AJM, Oct. 1874, with 1 anon. German illus. Three Little Nest Birds, depicted by R. André, SPCK, 1883. AE 9.
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|---------------------------------------|--------------------------------|-------|
| 'Ah! Would I Could Forget' | <u>Songs for Music</u> , 1874. | AE 9. |
| 'The Elleree. A Song of Second Sight' | " | " |
| 'Faded Flowers' | " | " |
| 'Fancy Free. A Girl's Song' | " | " |
| 'How Many Years Ago?' | " | " |
| 'The Lily of the Lake' | " | " |
| 'Madrigal' | " | " |
| 'The Maiden with the Gipsy Look' | " | " |
| 'My Lover's Gift' | " | " |
| 'Other Stars' | " | " |
| 'Serenade' | " | " |
| 'Speed Well' | " | " |
| 'With a Difference' | " | " |
- 'A Hero to His Hobby Horse'
AJM, Oct. 1875, with 1 illus. by Oscar Pletsch. Little Boys and Wooden Horses, depicted by R. André, SPCK, 1884, AE 9.
- 'House Building and Repairs. A Child-Poem'
AJM, June 1876, with 1 illus. by Oscar Pletsch. Dolls' Housekeeping, depicted by R. André, SPCK, 1884. AE 9; with Pletsch's illus.
- 'An Only Child's Tea-Party. A Child-Poem'
AJM, July 1876, with 1 illus. by Oscar Pletsch; Dolls' Housekeeping, 1884. AE 9; with Pletsch's illus.

- 'Papa Poodle'
AJM, Sept. 1876, with 1 illus. by Oscar Pletsch. Papa Poodle, and Other Pets, 1884. AE 9; with Pletsch's illus.
- 'Big Smith'
AJM, Oct. 1876, with 1 illus., signed F.H. Little Boys and Wooden Horses, 1884. AE 9; with illus.
- 'Kit's Cradle'
AJM, April 1877 (misprint attributes it to G.H. Ewing). Baby, Puppy, and Kitty, 1885. AE 9; with 2 vignettes by Fedor Flinzer.
- 'Boy and Squirrel'
AJM, June 1877. Tongues in Trees, 1884. AE 9; with 1 illus. by Fedor Flinzer.
- 'Master Fritz'
AJM, Aug. 1877 (misprint attributes it to G.H. Ewing). Master Fritz, depicted by R. André, SPCK, 1883. AE 9; with 1 illus. by Oscar Pletsch.
- 'A Sweet Little Dear'
AJM, Sept. 1877. A Sweet Little Dear, depicted by R. André, 1883. AE 9; with 1 illus. by Oscar Pletsch.
- 'The Yellow Fly. A Tale with a Sting in It'
AJM, Dec. 1877. Baby, Puppy, and Kitty, 1885. AE 9; with 6 illus. by Fedor Flinzer.
- 'Canada Home'
AJM, Jan. 1879, with 1 anon. German illus. AE 9; with illus.
- 'Garden Lore'
AJM, March 1879, with 1 anon. German illus. AE 16.
- 'A Soldier's Children'
AJM, July 1879. A Soldier's Children, depicted by R. André, SPCK, 1883. AE 9; with illus.
- 'Grandmother's Spring'
AJM, June 1880. Grandmother's Spring, depicted by R. André, SPCK, 1885. AE 9.
- '"Touch Him If You Dare". A Tale of the Hedge'
AJM, July, 1880. "Touch Him If You Dare", depicted by R. André, 1884. AE 9, with 1 illus. by Fedor Flinzer.
- 'The Mill Stream'
AJM, Aug. 1881. The Mill Stream, depicted by R. André, SPCK, 1885. AE 9.
- 'Blue and Red, or, The Discontented Lobster'
AJM, Sept. 1881. Blue and Red, or, The Discontented Lobster: his history related in verse and painted in colours, by R. André, SPCK, 1883. AE 9.
- 'The Poet and the Brock. A Tale of Transformations'
AJM, Jan. 1883, illus. R. André. The Poet and the Brook, depicted by R. André, SPCK, 1883. AE 9.
- 'Mother's Birthday Review'
AJM, April 1883, with 2 illus. by Randolph Caldecott, originally pub. in his Sketch-Book, London and New York, 1883 (3 of Caldecott's original pictures prompted the verses; 1, 'The Infantry', is not reproduced). Mother's Birthday Review, depicted by R. André, SPCK, 1885. AE 9; with Caldecott's illus.

'Convalescence'

AJM, May 1883, illus. Gordon Browne. Convalescence, depicted by R. André, SPCK, 1885. AE 9; Browne's illus. is frontispiece, see note p. vii.

'Tiny's Tricks and Toby's Tricks'

The Child's Pictorial Magazine, May 1885. AE 12.

Confirmation Hymn: 'Long ago with vows too much forgotten'

(Sung in Ecclesfield Church, 1866). Gatty, Juliana Horatia Ewing and Her Books, 1885, 17-18. AE 9.

Whitsuntide Hymn: 'Come down, come down! O Holy Ghost!'

(Sung in Ecclesfield Church, 1864). Gatty, 17-18. AE 9.

'Anemones' (left in MS)

Set to music by Alfred Scott Gatty. AE 9.

'Autumn Leaves' (left in MS)

AE 9; Gatty, Preface, 9, viii, calls this 'Autumn Tints'

Verses for Children, illus. R. André, 3 vols. SPCK, 1888.

A reissue in 3 vols. of the 24 verse books illus. by André: A Soldier's Children, and five other tales in verse; The Blue Bells on the Lea, and ten other tales in verse; Mother's Birthday Review, and seven other tales in verse.

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- B. Papers, Letters and Literary Manuscripts of Margaret Gatty and Juliana Horatia Ewing. Items 40-84 of the deposits of the Hunter Archaeological Society in the custody of the Sheffield City Library (HAS).

Items consulted

- 1 HAS 41 (1-26) Diaries of J.H. Ewing, 1856-1867, 1869-1873, 1875-1883.
- 2 HAS 45 Correspondence between Margaret Gatty and several members of her family, including J.H. Ewing.
- 3 HAS 60 Letters of J.H. Ewing to her family from Fredericton, Canada, 1867-69.
- 4 HAS 61 Letters of J.H. Ewing to her husband, 1870-1882.
- 5 HAS 62 Letters of J.H. Ewing to her family, 1860 and 1870-1884.
- 6 HAS 63 Correspondence between J.H. Ewing and Randolph Caldecott.
- 7 HAS 65 Letters of J.H. Ewing to Eleanor Lloyd, M.H. Newman, the Bishop of Fredericton, and miscellaneous correspondence.
- 8 HAS 67 Correspondence between J.H. Ewing and many people, including her publishers, about her books.
- 9 HAS 74 File of Margaret Scott's early writing, with papers of the Fun Club and later the Black Bag Club, with a copy of a letter to Jane Crumby, 1834.
- 10 HAS 76 Family magazines: Winter Wag, Le Caché, Anon, Gunpowder Plot.
- 11 HAS 77 Stories, some incomplete, by J.H. Ewing.
- 12 HAS 78 J.H. Ewing's Commonplace Book.
- 13 HAS 79 Notes by Charles Tindall Gatty on J.H. Ewing's methods of writing.
- 14 HAS 81 Sketches by J.H. Ewing.
- 15 HAS 82 Published magazines with contributions by or about Mrs. Gatty, Mrs. Ewing, Alfred Gatty and Alexander Ewing.
- 16 HAS 84 Miscellaneous newspaper cuttings, souvenirs, playbills, and a few unidentified manuscript items.

2. PERIODICALS TO WHICH MRS. EWING CONTRIBUTED

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