

2001

Dungeons and Dreams: The Children and Nightmares of Emily and Anne Bronte's Gondal Poetry

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**DUNGEONS AND DREAMS: THE CHILDREN AND NIGHTMARES
OF EMILY AND ANNE BRONTË'S GONDAL POETRY**

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B.A. Gustavus Adolphus College, 1999

A THESIS

Submitted in ~~partial~~ Fulfillment of the

Requirements for the Degree of

Master of Arts

(in English)

The Graduate School

The University of Maine

August, 2001

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**DUNGEONS AND DREAMS: THE CHILDREN AND NIGHTMARES
OF EMILY AND ANNE BRONTË'S GONDAL POETRY**

By Michelle Patricia Beissel

Thesis Advisor: Dr. Naomi Jacobs

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It has long been acknowledged that Anne Bronte played a part in the saga of the imaginary world of Gondal, but more attention has been given to her sister Emily's role in creating the world. Each sister's Gondal poetry, however, is important: the poetry signals much about how each sister dealt with the world around her, demonstrates how adult rather than childish Gondal became, and indicates how realistic each sister's "escapist" world actually was. Indeed, in grappling with their changing nineteenth century world, Anne clung to the hopeful remains of Romanticism while Emily blended and denied both Romanticism and Victorianism. Significantly, too, if Gondal was at all escapist, it was more successfully so for Anne, who, unlike her sister, could dream without nightmare. Overall, this study endeavors to discover that dialogue which surfaced through the sisters' reactions to their world, most notably through the very different views – Emily's pessimistic and Anne's optimistic – such reactions encouraged

on the same themes of children and dreams. It looks to unearth the very real hope and despair which surrounded the very "unreal" Gondal and its children and dreams.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1 . INTRODUCTION: THE POETRY	1
2 . CHILDREN AND COMRADES	9
3 . DUNGEONS AND DREAMS	40
4 . CONCLUSION: THE NOVELS	63
5 . WORKS CITED	73
6 . BIOGRAPHY OF THE AUTHOR	77

INTRODUCTION: THE POETRY

The Gondalians are at present in a threatening state but there is no open rupture **as** yet – all the princes and princesses of the royal royalty are at the palace of In-struction – I have a good many books on hands but I **am sorry** to say that as usual I make small progress with any – however I have just made a new regularity paper! and I mean verb sap – to do great things – and now I close sending from **far an** exhortation of courage courage! to exiled and harassed Anne wishing she was here

Emily's 30 July 1841 diary paper (birthday-note) (*The Brontës: A Life in Letters 95*).

Emily and Anne Brontë's Gondal is often considered a child's world – a world of the imagination created by children taken too far, an escapist dream-world that should not have intruded into adulthood. With these scathing charges, critics often admonish Emily, citing her adherence to Gondal, even to her death, as too much.¹ But such critics often forget two important details: Gondal was not Emily's world alone, and Gondal is far from a child's world.

The frequently-cited concern with how Gondal fit into Emily's life generally obscures – and omits – the relationship it had to Anne's. Most critics regard the role of Gondal in Anne's life as the mere childhood preoccupation it should have been in

¹ Evidence cited for this arrives from the famous diary-note statements “The Gondals are discovering the interior of Gaaldine Sally mosely is washing in the back-Kitchin” (dated 24 November 1834) in which Gondal and “normal” events appear to be considered equal, and the admission in another diary-note paper a few short years before Emily's death that during a trip she and Anne “were” various Gondal characters “escaping from the palaces of Instruction to join the Royalists who are hard driven at present by the victorious Republicans” (dated 31 July 1845) (*The Brontës: A Life in Letters* 29; 131). **As** much as possible, all material quoted from Emily and Anne Brontë represents their original spelling, grammar, and punctuation. Their poems throughout are taken from the Roper and Chitham editions, which are more recent and slightly updated from the standard Hatfield editions of the poetry. The Roper edition, especially, **has** the advantage of maintaining Emily's original “unorthodox, and in a few cases bizarre,” spelling (Roper 21), **as** does Juliet Barker's collection of the family's correspondence and papers.

Emily's life; for Anne, Gondal belonged primarily to childhood, while for Emily it extended into adulthood. When Anne separated from her sister, they note, her Gondal poetry became increasingly sparse, as if she were less interested in it, and it seemed to resurge almost only when she rejoined her sister, as if to please her. **As** a result, Gondal disappears almost completely from any consideration of Anne's work, especially since such consideration rarely takes into its realm her poetry, and her Gondal poetry in particular. Generally, if Anne is not merely dismissed as the less capable, younger sister, the "lesser twin" (often forgotten between Charlotte and Emily, who themselves are frequently compared), or viewed merely as deeply concerned with her Christianity in her non-Gondal poems, her poetry is overshadowed by her novels.

But the Gondal saga and world *were* important to Anne's life, whether or not part of her interest stemmed from her sister's preference. Even while separated from Emily in **1841**, Anne comments on the Gondals" in her diary-paper observing her sister's birthday, and reflects that she herself is still working with them: "I wonder whether the Gondalians will still be flourishing, and what will be their condition. I am now engaged in writing the fourth volume of Solala Vernon's Life" (*The Brontes: A Life in Letters* 97). Perhaps Anne mentions Gondal because she is thinking of Emily on her sister's birthday, but the admission that she is still writing the Gondal saga indicates that she has not wholly abandoned the world even when on her own. Importantly, too, Anne's diary paper on Emily's birthday, **31 July 1845**, shows her references to Gondal buried, as Emily's

¹¹ There seems to be no set name standard for the inhabitants of Gondal and later Gaaldine. In **1834**, Emily refers to them as the Gondals, while Anne chooses to call them the Gondalians in **1841** and the Gondals in **1845**.

are, in everyday experiences. This paper is notably independent from Emily's diary paper of that day, even though both sisters were now under the same roof. In the midst of describing what is going on with the Gondal saga, Anne speaks of Charlotte's plans and activities, and of beginning "to set about making [her] grey figured silk frock" (133). Anne's and Emily's views on the "playing condition" of the Gondals in 1845 vary," and Anne's reflection on the Gondalians is more speculative than Emily's, and more uncertain about the future of the project. But Gondal's prominence in her life still shows, especially with her curiosity about Emily's Gondal poetry:

Emily is engaged in writing the Emperor Julius's life. She has read some of it and I want very much to hear the rest – She is writing some poetry too I wonder what it is about – I have begun the third volume of passages in the life of an Individual [soon to become *Agnes Grey*], I wish I had finished it . . . We have not yet finished our Gondal chronicles that we began three years and a half ago when will they be done? – The Gondals are at present in a sad state the Republicans are uppermost but the

^{III} Emily notes in July of that year that "The Gondals ~~still~~ flourish bright as ever I ~~am~~ at present writing a work on the ~~First~~ Wars – Anne ~~has~~ been writing some articles on this and a book by Henry Sophona – We intend sticking firm by the rascals as long as they delight us which I am glad to say they do at present –" (*The Brontës: A Life in Letters* 131). It should be remembered as well that many of the poems could quite literally be taken as speeches from characters in plays; indeed, the Gondal saga itself most likely derived in part from 'secret bed-plays' once shared by Charlotte and Emily as very young children.

Royalists are not quite overcome – the young sovereigns with their brothers and sisters are **still** at the palace of Instruction – The Unique Society above half a year ago were wrecked on a desert Island as they were returning from Gaaldin – they are still there but we have not played at them much yet – The Gondals in general are not in **first** rate playing condition – will they improve? (133)

The answer to Anne's perhaps hopeful, perhaps tired, question, of course, is "no." Within four years, both Emily and Anne would be dead, and their imaginary world would become frozen in time, conveyed only in glimpses through fragments. And fragments, especially these sharp-as-shards fragments representative of a larger world, are far from children's baubles.

Indeed, although children and their potential baubles, dreams, – the two themes of this study – often appear in Emily and Anne Brontë's shared world, both children and dreams can rarely call the world their own. Instead, Gondal belongs more to adults grappling with the world around them. Not only are most of Anne and Emily's escapist characters adults struggling in a harsh world, Emily and Anne themselves struggled with one. **As** the tides of their own world changed; as the currents of Romanticism and Victorianism ran parallel, with frequent attempts at merging, Emily and Anne Brontë were caught up in the middle, surrounded, in a sense, on their own island, left to cope with the debris washing up around them, residue from the past and foundations of the future.

A lot was at stake – even gender roles, a topic with strong associations to both children and dreams. **As** Lyn Pykett explains, the mostly-male "Romantic writers'

preoccupation with individualism, self-expression, and a soaring freedom of the spirit did not accord with the social and psychological situations of most **women**” (19). This situation led to the difficulty Dorothy Mermin acknowledges, and which both Anne and Emily, on the cusp of Victorianism, and torn between seeking financial independence and fulfilling societal roles, maternal and other, certainly experienced: “we can formulate the problem like this: a man’s poem which contains a female self-projection shows two distinctly different figures, poet and projection: in a woman’s poem on the same model, the two would blur into one” (68). According to Mermin as well, “it’s not really poets that are women, for the Victorians: poems are women” (68). This, perhaps, is the root of the distinction between activity and inactivity – between viewing children and dreams as freeing hopes or **as** paralyzing burdens – that so differentiates, **as** we will see, many of Anne and Emily’s Gondal poems. In Mermin’s words, “[the woman poet] can’t be two people at once, both the questing prince and the dreaming princess, both a poet and his fairy inspiration” (66). Or, one might add, a responsible parent and a Byronic hero. So, as this thesis will argue, something significant occurs when **Emily** and Anne attempt to reconcile their Gondalians to children and dreams: Emily’s poems **insist** on independence, movement, and the future (and avoidance of the past), which, in her view, both children and dreams deny, while Anne’s **insist** on the present hope of children and dreams. Even in Gondal, each poet must find her own way of dealing with the difficult legacy of her Romantic forbearers, and the promise and uncertainty of the approaching Victorianism. For Anne, this way is to embrace the legacy and the uncertainty with new ideals and hope; for Emily, this way is to be consciously ambivalent towards both.

It is obvious, then, that in Gondal Emily and Anne shared a world important to each of them. However, they did not share the same perspective of that world. Notably, many of Anne's non-children/non-dreams poems offer laments and uncertainty, a need to wallow in the past, and an inability to forget and look beyond, while Emily's non-children/non-dreams poems often represent harsher, though frequently more hopeful, realities, with more certainty, firmness, and mutability – a need to forget the past and look to the future. But Anne's poetry is certainly not devoid of hope, nor is Emily's forever brimming over with it. Indeed, with children and dreams, which vividly show the poets' struggles with their outside world inside their supposedly escapist one, Anne frequently comes out the champion of hope while Emily takes the title for horror and despair. For Anne, children were visions – dreams – of the future, hopes on the verge of coming to fruition. As such, they surface prominently in poems which depict adults suffering; for these adults, children are reminders of happier times, or are pleasant possibilities. Dreams – often including or tangled with children – work much the same way in Anne's Gondal; they are happy occurrences to which adults can seek refuge in times of need. By contrast, Emily's suffering and needing adults experience no such joy. Children are a burden to them. Craving isolation and independence to survive, Emily's adults look upon children – and dreams – as potential parasites stifling their ability to move. As a result, dreams in Emily's Gondal are dark, dangerous nightmares – nightmares which, in the bleak reality of Emily's Gondal, children's lives often echo.

Overall, children and dreams were more than just commonplace for Emily and Anne – they were signs of hope and despair, maturation and corruption. They were signs of the world, imaginary and real. They were signs of creation, offspring of their adult

minds and indications of their struggles. **As** much as children were dreams to them, so dreams were children. Gondal, their dream-world, was a child of their imagination; but, like all children and dreams, it outgrew its child-trappings to mature and became “corrupted” by outside influences – their influences, not limited to, but noticeably including, Romanticism and Victorianism. Gondal, their child-dream, became an adult sheltering Emily and Anne, as well as its own children, and nourishing their dreams; but, like all adults, it couldn’t do so always and forever.

CHILDREN AND COMRADES

Tell me tell me *smileing* child

What the past is like to thee?

An Autumn evening soft and mild

With a wind that sighs **mournfully**

Tell me what is the present hour?

A green and flowery spray

Were a yong bird sits gathering its power

To mount and fly away

And what is the future happy one?

A sea beneath a cloudles sun

A mightly glorious dazzeling sea

Stretching into **infinity**

Emily's poem **158** (not known if Gondal).

Children are creatures of contention for Emily and Anne in Gondal. Whether due to the feelings of kinship Anne eventually acquired with respect to her governess charges, or to Emily's famed fierce independence, or as Rosalind Miles phrases it, to the tendency to the "extremes [that] were her natural mode" (78), their views on children manifest themselves strongly in their Gondal worlds. Both personally and creatively, Anne accepts children and has them accepted by others. She fully ascribes to a Romantic view of childhood where "typically, . . . children are eternity's promise to time" (Auerbach 50). Her, happy, frolicking, ideal children reflect the hope with which she can view both her real and Gondal worlds. For Anne, children represent hopes and promises for the future, dreams on the verge of coming true.

Her sister, Emily, however, can share no such view. Death – the loss of her mother and two sisters before the age of seven – rocked Emily's own childhood, making it so extraordinarily grief-stricken that, as Catherine Rayner reminds us, no room and few pieces of furniture or possessions at Haworth Parsonage would not bring some painful memory of the past to Emily as both child and adult; she quite probably even wore her dead sisters' clothes (246). As Rayner observes, "books with Maria's name on the flyleaf upset and disturbed the remaining children as the accidental turning of a page brought her memory, unexpectedly and suddenly to life" (246). Ultimately, these reminders would render the house haunted, with "a haunting so constant and inextricably interwoven with the living, because these were not alien objects or unfamiliar 'ghosts,' but the Brontes' own cherished possessions and most dearly loved relatives" (246). This loss is profoundly echoed in Emily's views on children, in her insistence that they share – indeed, be paralyzed by – the grief she herself was forced to endure. As Rayner makes

clear, “the Brontes’ fantasy world was a direct response to suffering and to changes that were beyond their control” (247). But even in her fantasy world Emily’s characters are not able to control their suffering. **As** Emily was abandoned by her mother, so must her children in Gondal be.

Anne, of course, escaped her sister’s fate by **having** had the “fortune” not to know her mother, not, perhaps, to know **as** profoundly the depths of her loss, being not yet two at the time of her mother’s death, and four when her elder sisters died. Although orphans surface in her poems, tokens perhaps of her own loss, they, like Anne herself, can **still** envision pleasant futures and remember happy childhoods. **All** in all, it seems unlikely that either sister would remember their mother particularly well, – **as** Juliet Barker comments, the slightly older Charlotte “had no more than two or three memories of her mother,” and “though she and her brother and sisters felt the lack of a mother figure, their real mother, **as** a person, was someone the younger four simply did not remember” (*The Brontes* 111) – but Emily, at least, would have had a better chance to remember her. Emily, too, unlike Anne, had directly the experience and memory of Cowan Bridge and of young Maria and Elizabeth’s deaths. **As** Chitham reminds us, “after this experience Emily hated schools: they made her physically sick” (*A Life of Emily Bronte* 33). Anne, being the youngest, as well as asthmatic and, as a baby, sickly, was nursed by Aunt Branwell, and seems to have stayed under her wing much longer than the others; indeed, Anne perhaps adopted her, even more than the other children did, **as** a surrogate mother, barely even distinguishing the loss of the original. **As** the “baby” of the family as well, Anne had two older sisters to mother her.

Overall, then, for Emily, children are wretched, grieving creatures better left alone. They do not belong to the world of Gondal for Emily any more than they belong to her own “real” world – in either case, they do her no good. But for Anne, children make a happier future reality possible, especially in Gondal, where her characters, unlike Anne herself in her own world, are able to have them. Ultimately, while Anne’s children offer renewal, Emily’s children ground themselves and those around them in the past/present. They wallow in grief and are surrounded by it – they suffer grief and bring it on to others, and are often abandoned because of the immobility and lack of independence they cause.

Grief – death and pain – beckons to Emily’s children. Consider first poem 6. There, a spectre of death hovers over a child, presumably Fernando, with premonitions of foreboding. The child, says the spirit, left his play one day, gloomily and anxiously wishing to know his future, which the spirit, given “power,” was able to convey, “to open an infant’s eye / The portals of futurity” (line 9; lines 11-12). The future the child saw, the imagery and darkness of the poem imply, was not cheerful, and now the spirit is come “to banish joy and welcome care” (line 24). The spectre notes that “if Spirits such as I / Could weep o’er human misery / A tear might flow aye many a tear / To see the road that lies before” (lines 41-44). Indeed, the spirit predicts at the poem’s end – as the quatrains and irregular rhyme scheme (the patterning of which involves every letter of the alphabet) of the majority of the poem slowly build up to the longer eight and then thirteen-line stanzas of the end’s sentencing pronouncement – that the child “is doomed,” “And childhoods flower must waste its bloom / Beneath the shadow of the tomb” (line 50; lines 52-53). The spectre haunts the doomed child, who soon himself can be

considered the very image of grief, horror, and death, an immobilized figure who might easily belong in one of Emily's characters' nightmares. **As** the spectre narrates,

He [the child] hears me what a sudden start

Sent the blood icy to that heart

He wakens and how ghastly white

That face looks in the dim lamplight

Those tiny hands in vain essay

To thrust the shadowy feind away

There is a horror on his brow

An anguish in his bosom now

A fearful anguish in his eyes

Fixed strainedly on the vacant air (lines 29-38).

In other words, there is something about this child with "tiny hands" that is overwhelmingly weak and defenseless – almost a burden to anyone around him.

"Ghastly white," he **seems** about to become a spectre **himself**. Like many of Emily's other Gondal children, this child seemingly **has** no future; instead, he is stranded in the past and present, with spectres of grief hovering nearby to keep **his** future at bay, leaving it **akin** to the "vacant air."

Generally, too, like this child and unlike their adult contemporaries, Emily's children do not get over and accept their grief. To see this further, reflect on poem 53, "Written on returning to the P. of I. [Palaces of Instruction: school for the royalty and nobility] on the 10th of January 1827 – ." In that poem, a speaker, presumably a student,

expresses sadness at returning to school to find other once prominent figures (perhaps other students) gone, never to return. The speaker realizes that trying to wait and listen for their return is “all in vain – in vain,” that “**Their** feet shall never waken more / the echoes in these galleries wide,” but still the speaker – and others – wait (lines 15-17). The poem thus ends as it **begins**, with the speaker and others still waiting, waiting for nothing, with every indication that such waiting will be frozen forever, though the future be uncertain. Although happiness – “laughter,” “merry words,” and “gladness” – tries, it cannot quite return to the scene the poem establishes, and the little hope that such happiness, given time, will be successful is cut short by the assurances of the poem’s end:

No, these dark towers are lone and lorn;

This very crowd is vacancy;

And we must watch and wait and mourn

And half look out for their return;

And think their forms we see –

And fancy music in our ear

Such as their lips could only pour

And think we feel their presence near

And start to find they are not here

And never shall be more! (lines 8-10; lines 36-45).

Although there is a future predicted here, it is not looked forward to, accepted, **or** dealt with; there is no moving on for these characters. They are trapped in this eternal condition of gloom and grief, filled with despair, not hope. Indeed, gloomy spectres

seem to haunt the scenes of this poem as well: forever, the narrator implies, must the students witness the ghosts of their friends, “think[ing]” to “see” “their forms,” “fancy[ing]” their voices, and, almost inexplicably, “feel[ing] their presence[s].” Gloom, shocking enough to make them **start**, – which is emphasized even more by the poem’s frequent use of jarring dashes, so suggestive of that other “gigantic Emily” – presides over these students, just **as** it does Fernando.

A similar situation of grief – showing as well children’s dependence – appears with poem **89** (“A S to G S”), which tells of two orphaned children, one of whom is the **main** speaker. The poem follows a typical Emily theme of adults refusing grief, though this is true for only one of the **two** orphans, the **main** speaker, who is trying to chastise the other, Gerald, into a realization of the futility of the grief: “I do not weep, I would not weep; / Our Mother needs no tears: / Dry thine eyes too, ’tis vain to keep / This causless greif for years” (lines **1-4**). Though the speaker admits that “well mayst [Gerald] mourn / That [they] are left below,” s/he ends the poem by noting that it is not acceptable to mourn that “she can ne’er return / To share [their] earthly woe” (lines **21-24**). In this **sense**, the poem follows Emily’s typical path of moving on, yet the poem still does not end happily, hopefully, or with much acceptance. Although the speaker **will** not mourn

¹ From Emily Dickinson’s Christmas **1881** letter to Dr. and Mrs. J.G. Hollard, referring to Emily Bronte (qtd. in Todd **179**). The Bronte sisters, especially Emily, held a special significance in Dickinson’s life: she frequently referred to Emily Bronte and her writing as “marvellous” in her letters, and Emily Brontë’s poem, “No Coward Soul is Mine” (once called “Last Lines”) was read at her funeral (Todd 334; MacKenzie **86**; Sewall **667**).

his/her mother, and refuses to let Gerald do so as well in an effort of acceptance and activity, the speaker still does not believe that earthly life can contain anything but “woe.” The future, even apart from the sadness of a lost parent, does not look bright. Like most of Emily’s children, the speaker has accepted death and grief, but not life.

The most dramatic indication **of** childhood gloom and doom, or grief, in Emily’s Gondal poems, however, arrives with poem 120a. Little happens in the poem; it is a frozen fragment of a moment of life, a photograph with no apparent beginning **or** end – it contains no movement or hope. The boy described is gloomy, was gloomy, and is destined always to be gloomy. No change can occur:

Never has his grim Fate
Smiled since he was **born** –

Frowning on the infant,
Shadowing childhood’s joy;
Gardian angel **knows** not
That melancholy boy (lines **11-16**).

Although childhood should, the poem implies, still involve some “joy,” the boy’s childhood “fate” is not kind (line **14**). In an attempt at a happy childhood, it seems, “youth is fast invading / Sterner manhood’s time” (lines 19-20). This change from child to adult is, according to Judith Plotz, “the appeal of the theme of childhood death to Romantic writers”: “Since the loveliness of childhood is obliterated by maturation into

adulthood, the child who survives into adulthood has, in a sense, died as a child” (173). But the youth’s attempt to flourish continues to fail, and the boy, like most of Emily’s children in Gondal, turns out to have been “vainly given,” since the “earth reserves no blessing“ for him (lines 34-35). The potential for a happy future for children in Emily’s Gondal is doubtful, if not impossible. As Teddi Lynn Chichester reflects, reminding one of Fernando as well, a “death sentence . . . hovers over each of [Emily’s] children” (7). In any case, in Emily’s Gondal, “withering” seems to be a child’s only hope or future (line 33).

Significantly, Emily’s Gondal children are not merely surrounded by and pervaded with grief; they *impose* or resurrect grief on/in others. To understand this, one can look to poem 57, which not only portrays a friendless child suffering from grief, but also shows how that child brings grief to others. The poem contains two speakers – a lady and a child – who are both touched by music. The lady’s brief four-line speech comprising the whole of the **first stanza** is made up of longer lines demonstrating movement both physically and verbally. This movement, which the child lacks, indicates hope and her attempts to endure and accept life. For example, the **first** statement, punctuated by a dash propelling it forward, is a command for movement, “Come hither child” (line 1). From there, however, the lady shows the negative effect the child **has** on her. As she asks and complains, harshly, “who gifted thee / With power to touch that string **so** well? / How darest thou rouse up thoughts in me / Thoughts that I would – but can not quell” (lines 1-4). The last line of the stanza also indicates, verbally, an attempt

¹¹ William Wordsworth’s poem “My heart leaps up when I behold” can be brought to mind here with its famous line, “The child is father of the man.”

at movement, but it is also punctuated by a dash, which, this time, stops it by being linked – chained – to other words: “Thoughts that I would – but *can not* quell.” Because of the child, the lady succumbs to remembrance, painful and grieving to her, while also forced and uncontrollable. As Andrew Elfenbein reminds us, “memory and remembrance are obsessive topics for Gondal’s women, but they remain eerily without content except as sources of woe” (134). The lady still attempts to do something about the memory the child brews within her by bringing the child forth and questioning him/her, but the attempt is only partially successful. She manages to shift the thoughts she does not want to new ones involving the child, but, despite all, it is obvious that the child’s presence disturbs her, and inspires something dark inside her.

This can be further discerned by considering the rest of the poem. The child’s speech – beginning in the second **stanza** and comprising the remainder of the poem – serves **first** to silence the lady by commanding her to “chide” not (line 5). The command also focuses the poem on the child, and launches the poem into memory and grief, looking back to that **time** which still haunts the child’s present and future. The reader soon realizes that this child, too, is doomed by lacking hope. Not only does movement, forward movement, not occur for the child, but in the past the child has, ironically, actively sought out gloom and grief. On a “festal night,” the child “[stole] away from crowds and light,” and found solitude in “a chamber **dark** and cold” (line **9**; lines 11-12). The child notes that **s/he** “went to sorrow,” and allowed her/himself to be trapped by it, becoming immobile (line 15). In the **fifth stanza** the child notes that “’twas sad to stay” in that dreary room, yet **s/he** did, **as** if under duress, – the same duress the child now seems to employ on the lady – “From all that splendor *barred* away” (lines **17-18**;

emphasis added). The mere six-year-old child, having noted him/herself to be without friend, and imagining “a thousand Forms of fearful gloom,” soon prayed for death in that chamber, hoping for no future to come (line 10; line **14**; lines 20-22). Then and later, *s/he* is only consoled by the sound of music that approaches his/her ear – the *same* music that *so* bothers and brings grief to the adult through a type of “passive” memory that Janet Gezari notes is “remembrance,” which “differ[s] from recollection precisely by being involuntary” (966). That which “never ceases to hurt survives *as* remembrance, not recollection” (967). Indeed, the child soon admits that the music is an encouraging reminder of the past to him/her, presumably because the voice *s/he* once heard through the music brought images of “hope” that “Gabriel’s self had come / To take me to my father’s home” (lines 27-28). In other words, the child’s hope and consolation is death. While the adult tries to endure and avoid the past, grief and death, the child embraces and clings to them, ultimately giving them to the lady as well. Even at the poem’s end, the child remains dependent on the thought and hope of death: “But still the words and *still* the tone / dwell round my heart when all alone” (lines 31-32). *S/he* is trapped perpetually in the immobile present, bolstered by the past and grief and only waiting for an end of death; despite the activity of the song, life and its hope do not enter here.

By contrast, Anne’s children *are* not surrounded by grief nor are they harbingers of it. Instead, happiness lies in childhood or with children, even for Anne’s adult characters. *An* interesting example of this lies in one of Anne’s later poems, “Z–’s Dream,” poem **53**, in which a man remembers his childhood and the happiness he once shared with a now-dead enemy:

I dreamt last night: and in that dream

My boyhood's heart was mine again;

These later years did nothing seem

With all their mingled joy and pain . . . (lines 1-4).

The man dreams that he, with another boy he's since killed, "was roaming, light and gay," without the "guilty stain" of his adult *We*, and with "a heart full of truth" (lines 25-30). For Anne, respite and happiness can be found in childhood, even for a guilt-stricken ambitious man who killed his childhood friend-turned-foe and so cannot properly mourn his death. Childhood is a dear time that not even drear times can take away. It is the sin-free state before time comes to shape, and, possibly, corrupt, as in the case of this man; Anne seem to borrow from Jean Jacques Rousseau in believing that "there is no original sin in the human heart; the how and the why of the entrance of every vice can be traced" (qtd. in Shaw 127). The man, unlike most of Anne's adults, knows he must look to the future, that "time's current cannot backward run"; but he also realizes that past childhood can still be cherished, so much so that he can "long" "to sleep again" to recreate it (line 117; line 90). Another example of childhood and children bringing relief – not grief – to stricken adults can be found in poem 3, "A Voice From the Dungeon." Here, Marina Sabia recalls her son to bring happiness to her in her dark cell:

Me thought a little lovely child

Looked up into my face and smiled.

My heart was full, I wept for joy,

It was my own, my darling boy;

I clasped him to my breast and he

Kissed me and laughed in childish glee (lines **35-40**).

Though the recollection in the dream does not **last**, and, after a short turn to the child's father in the dream, the poem ends **as** it begins in despair, a child in Anne's poems brings joy and peace, if only temporarily, to one discouraged.

This possibility of peace is made further evident in poem 8, "Verses to a child," where the child's role in an adult's renewal – again a parent, a mother – is also central. In this poem, the child, Flora, is both a reminder of the past to her mother, Alexandrina Zenobia, and a hope for the future. **As** Zenobia comments to the child in **stanza** two,

Thou knowest not that a glance of thine

Can bring back long departed years

And that thy blue eyes' magic shine

Can overflow my own with tears,

And that each feature soft and fair

And every curl of golden hair,

Some sweet remembrance bears (lines **8-14**).

Furthermore, Zenobia makes clear at the poem's outset that it is "not pain / Nor grief" that "drew these tears" and that the child makes her remember, but times such **as** her own idyllic childhood, when "every after joy and pain / Seemed never to have been" (lines **3-4**; lines 20-21). The child, with "one smile, and one sweet word," can "dispell" "the years that rolled between" her mother's childhood and adulthood (lines **17-18**). Sadly, for Zenobia, the remembrance of these years also includes memories of the child's father when he was a boy during "those calm and happy days" when they "loved each other

fondly” (lines 29-30). This in turn leads to the reflection that “human love too soon decays, / And ours [her and the child’s father’s] can never bloom again,” and to an indulgence in more painful reflections of the past since she “cannot banish from [her] heart / The friend of childish years” (line 32; lines 48-49). Despite this brief indulgence in memory, however, by the poem’s end Zenobia moves from the past to the present and then the future, with hope, beginning with a “but” (line 50). The speaker replaces the love she once had from and for the child’s father with the hope for – the promise of and renewal by – the love for and from her child. As she notes, “I **will** not cause *thy* heart to ache; / For thy regretted father’s sake / I’ll love and cherish thee” (lines 54-56).

Noticeably, too, this poem demonstrates an awareness of the physical look of poetry Anne frequently heeds and which Emily often lacks”, a look that brings to mind with each stanza/verse a child being cradled by a lullaby – a comforting image, perhaps, to both child and adult.

The possibility of happiness through childhood does not occur just for adults in Anne’s Gondal, however. Children, even those orphaned, experience it, too. Consider first the orphan poem 15, which presents a child speaker lamenting the loss of her mother. This poem at first reminds one of Emily’s poems on children since it bestows much grief and memory upon the child, especially through the admission that A.H.’s (the speaker’s) mother loss “can never be repaired” (line 41). Yet this child, unlike many of Emily’s Gondal children, **has** known much happiness, as the Romantic tradition dictates,

ⁱⁱⁱ As Roper acknowledges, “Emily was highly sensitive to the sound of words, less so to their appearance, as is shown by the fact that she sometimes writes a perfectly metrical line but forgets at first to go back to the left to start it” (21).

and this poem ends with an unanswered question – leaving room for hope, not perpetual doom, in the future. Another of Anne’s children poems – and presumably her **first** poem – also presents **an** orphan, who makes the best of her childhood by enduring, much **as** Emily’s adult characters might. In that poem, “Verses by Lady Geralda,” poem 1, the orphan Geralda exclaims and explains

Father! thou hast long been dead,

Mother! thou **art** gone,

Brother! thou **art** far away,

And I **am** left alone.

Long before my mother died

I was sad and lone,

And when she departed too

Every joy was flown (lines 73-80).

Yet, immediately after these lines, the child demonstrates resiliency and hope for the **future** – even to the point where she literally emphasizes the activity that Emily’s adult characters crave and **Anne’s** typically lack:

But the world’s before me now,

Why should I despair?

I **will** not spend my days in vain,

I **will** not linger here!

There is still a cherished hope
 To cheer me on my way; . . .

From such a hopeless home to part
 Is happiness to me,
 For nought can charm my weary heart

Except activity (lines 81-86; 97-100).

Though much of the first part of the poem has the orphan dwell in memory and noting that her “heart has changed alone: / Nature is constant still,” the end has her leaving the past and present, looking to the future, moving on and hoping through ambition and “activity” (lines 63-64). Movement and hope find their encouraging ways here.

Additionally, of course, these ways are also determined, as shown by the exclamation point after “lingers,” the firmness of the **will** not” (line 33) and the “still” (line 89), and the attempt to convince herself fully of the happiness of leaving “such a hopeless” home at the end. The look of the poem – with its curt and strong alternated shorter lines – emphasizes this determination as well.

Unlike Anne’s Gondal poems where children can feel themselves to at least have had a home on earth, however, Emily’s Gondal poems offer up the idea of children not belonging to this world. A first hint of this arrives in one of her rare “happy” Gondal poems, 120b, the complement to the gloomy 120a. In 120b, a happy child surfaces to try to cheer the gloomy boy of 120a. Yet little has happened by the poem’s end. Although the child of “the image of light and gladness” claims she will give to the boy her “beamy joy,” she has not yet done so; he is **still** mournful (line 12; line 14). Additionally, this

poem also suggests that children cannot get over their despair alone, but need assistance in some form, whether it be from another sibling, or, in this case, presumably a child love. More importantly, however, it is made known through the poem that the cheery child is an anomaly, and that she, like the other children in Emily's Gondal poems, does not belong to this world, **as** we shall soon see. For the poem's narrator has difficulty believing that this happy child is from the earth at all; he believes that she is a "Spirit of Bliss," though she denies it, claiming "**ah**, not from heaven **am** I descended" (line 3; line 9). The idea of a child not belonging to this earth, along with the impossibility of a child having a bright future on earth, surfaces also in poem 132 ("A A A"). In that poem, the idea of earthly happiness is **first** dispelled by noting that "bliss" always **has** a price:

Sleep not dream not this bright day

Will not cannot last for aye

Bliss like thine is bought by years

Dark with torment and with tears

Sweeter far than placid pleasure

Purer high beyond measure

Yet **alas** the sooner turning

Into hopeless endless mourning (lines 1-8).

Soon, however, the poem turns to the Romantic idea of children being too good for this world,— since they are "a prototype of the noblest human qualities" (Plotz 176) — only to shatter that Romantic image by turning the idea against itself: if children are too good for this world, they are doomed to be miserable in it. As A.A.A. observes,

I love thee boy for all devine
All full of God thy features shine
 Darling enthusiast holy child”
 Too good for this worlds warring wild
 Too heavenly now but doomed to be
 Helllike in heart and misery (lines 9-14).

Ultimately she observes that “’Tis thus that human minds will turn / All doomed alike to sin and mourn” (lines 25-26).

Because of their unsuitability for earthly life, Emily’s Gondal children are not only surrounded by the grief and misery of death and abandonment, they are claimed by death and abandonment as well. One poem which illustrates this, titled “Geraldine,” is poem 87. It foreshadows the death of a child who, depending on interpretation, could be the same child (with the same mother) of several other poems. The poem consists of a speaker describing “Geraldine,” a mother watching over her child. Part of the poem includes Geraldine’s speech to her child, in shorter lines, and it is this speech, along with the description and comment of the speaker, which demonstrates children’s suitability for death and abandonment. As Geraldine sings to her child,

“I was not tired, my darling one,

“Of gazing in thine eyes –

“Methought the heaven whence thou hast come

“Was lingering there awhile

^{iv} “Enthusiast” may have religious connotations.

“And Earth seemed such **an** alien home

“They did not dare to smile (lines 23-28).

According to Geraldine, because the Earth is such an alien world to her child, she

“ . . .breathed not but to send above

“One gush of ardent prayer.

“Bless it, my gracious God! I cried,

“Preserve thy mortal shrine

“For thine own sake, be thou its guide

“And keep it **still** devine!

“Say, sin shall never blanch that cheek

“Nor suffering charge that brow

“Speak, in thy mercy maker, **speak**

“And seal it safe from woe! (lines 35-44).

In other words, the child, “pure as now,” “must go to heaven again” (lines **47-48**). Or, **as** Fannie Ratchford argues, and **as** both Steve Vine and Chichester agree, the poem illustrates the child’s mother’s “resolution to commit infanticide” (122). The child must die now or soon, while **still** young, since to keep the child pure, – by “Preserv[ing its] mortal shrine,” “and keep[ing] it **still** devine” without *sin*, suffering, or woe – the child must die. Or, in the words of Leigh Hunt, “the other children grow up to manhood and womanhood and suffer **all** the changes of mortality. This one alone is rendered an immortal child” (quoted in Plotz 173). The only way to keep one **from** woe, suffering,

and sin is to offer death – in Emily’s Gondal world, life itself consists of little outside of woe, suffering, and sin to endure. If the child were to grow into adulthood, s/he would have to experience the trials and tribulations – the sufferings and sins – of this life. As if privy to this secret of the necessity of the child’s death, the speaker comments, “**I**, whaching o’er her [at this point, perhaps, Geraldine’s] slumber wept / **As** one who mourns one dead!” (lines 51-52). **As** Plotz observes, “childhood death is frequently interpreted by bereaved adults not simply as destroyer but as the preserver of the most valuable part of life which would otherwise be obliterated in normal adulthood” (172). Adding to this, Chichester notes that Geraldine’s mother “refuses to see her daughter as a human, calling her ‘divine’ and an ‘angel,’” that she sees “her child as a kind of ‘strange’ and ‘magic’ changeling, longing for its original home” (8). Through the attempt at keeping childhood from merging into adulthood, too, an ironic comparison can be made with Emily’s own life. As Stevie Davies observes, examining the diary papers, “History would judge Emily as an Aeschylus, and a Shakespeare in his tragic phase. But here she sits giggling and conspiring in an inveterate state of childhood. Normally our childhoods are mortal. Looking round we find that they have been whipped away. Emily and Anne dawdle over theirs, spinning it out so as to defer surrender to the conformity of the adult world” (Emily *Brontë*: Heretic 5). As much as her Gondal children (or her Gondal children’s mothers), Emily attempts to keep her own childhood from being destroyed by adulthood. In each case – both real and imaginary – the result is the same: gloom, perhaps, but almost certainly premature death.

In a sense, then, Emily’s burden-refusing mothers in Gondal reflect Emily’s own enforced independence and cut-off of maternal ties. This fact makes itself most

prominent in one of Emily's most disturbing Gondal poems, poem 55, "A Farewell to Alexandria – ." There, one can witness the actions of one of those whom Pykett refers to as Emily's "female versions of the Romantic exile, that outcast, outlawed, or otherwise isolated figure, the lonely bearer of the truth who rejects or rebels against the society from which he has been exiled" (46). The poem's speaker [assumedly the child Alexandria's mother] comments that, if she could, she'd "linger here a summer day," so that she could "have laid [her child] down / And deemed [its] sleep would gentle be / [she] might have left [her] darling one / And thought [its] God was guarding [it]!" (line 13; lines 17-20). Instead, "there is no wandering glow / No gleam to say that God is nigh / And coldly, spreads [the child's] couch of snow / And harshly sounds [the child's] lullaby" (lines 21-24). The child in this poem, doomed to die, makes quite a contrast with her parent, who, Chichester argues (taking her to be Augusta) **has** "an intense need for freedom – from human ties and **from** her own (mortal) nature – [that] compels her to reject motherhood, though not without regret" (7). This *same* independence and need for freedom – and even this same regret – may perhaps be considered Emily's own, a residue from her own experience coping with mother-death and abandonment.

At any rate, while the child is silent and slowly being buried by the snow which is quite literally making her frozen, the mother is active in her preparations for leaving, preparations which have surely taken place by the poem's end, when "the flakes are heavily falling / They cover fast each guardian crest: / And chilly white their shroud is palling / [the child's] frozen limbs and freezing breast –" (lines 29-32). The last words spoken in the poem tell all: "Farewell, unblessed, unfriended child, / I cannot bear to watch thee die!" (lines 35-36). For the mother, movement has occurred. For the child,

inactivity reigns: she will seemingly never move again. Mutability is never offered her, **as** it is to Emily's Gondal adults. Instead, the prescribed preservation process is equated with the immobility involved in maintaining the status quo, which, in turn, is equated with death Preservation = immobility = death. The mother's life will move on into the future, while there is no hope for the child here: she is indeed "unblessed" and "unfriended," despite being a "child of love" (line 28). The only future the poem allows for the child is one **of** death. Two possibilities are presented: either the child dies in the future conditional, grounded in the past **of** a "summer day," with the assurance that "God was guarding" her (which the poem does not allow), or the child dies alone (Godless) on a winter's day. Through her mother's command for the present and future, the company of the "forests" must "shield" and "soothe [the child] with their song," though "harshly sounds th[e] lullaby" (lines 25-28). Even the music sings death. In other words, as Auerbach comments, Emily uses the Romantic ideal of childhood as "philosophical justification" for the child's murder through abandonment: "she finds that the true home of the child is not earth, but the eternity," *so* that "the child's existence **as** a remnant of eternity . . . is twisted . . . into the reason for its destruction . . . With dark wit, Emily Bronte takes Romantic child-worship as a motive for the annihilation **of** childhood itself" (52-53).

As further justification for child-annihilation, too, Emily offers poem 111, "Faith and Despondency," ("I.M. to I G."), which exacerbates the idea of a child's acceptance of – or perhaps complete comfort with – death. In that unusual poem, a daughter, Ierne, consoles her frozen, despairing, remembering father, encouraging death. In this case, not only does the child seem to accept eventual death, she almost seems to prefer it. Her

bright, shiny, happy image of *Me* after death echoes earlier poems' sentiments that the afterlife – and thus death – is where children truly belong, that life should be relegated to adults who have somehow managed to escape or endure childhood on earth. (Auerbach believes that Emily's children seem to come from nowhere, but more noticeably it is the adults in Emily's Gondal who seem "to have no eternal home to **miss**, having popped, like the child in the nursery rhyme, 'out of the nowhere into the here'" (52). At the very least, Emily's adults seem never to have been children themselves.) Thus Ierne is able to say, echoing the child-teachers of William Wordsworth's "Anecdote for Fathers" and "We Are Seven," or the "Romantic child [who] is perceived as a figure of authority" (Plotz 172),

"But this world's **life has** much to dread

"Not **so**, my father with the Dead.

"O, not for them should we despair

"The grave is drear but they are not there;

"Their dust is mingled with the sod

"Their happy souls are gone to God! (lines 36-41).

Later, too, reminding one of Geraldine's hopes for the "preservation" of her child, Ierne emphasizes returning to where she was **born**, and being free of sin and corruption, bringing forth as well images of the ocean for life/death:

"But I'll not fear – I **will** not weep

"For those whose bodies rest in sleep:

"I know there is a blessed shore

“Opening its ports for me and mine
 “And, gazing Time’s wide waters oe’r
 “I weary for that land devine
 “Where we were born – where you and I
 “Shall meet our Dearest when we die;
 “From suffering and corruption free
 “Restored into the Deity” – (lines 53-62).

With all of these attempts to justify child-death, then, Emily easily allows death and abandonment preoccupations to overwhelm the majority of her poems on children. In addition to those presented above, two significant poems dwell on this theme. The first, following Ierne and her father’s oceanic images of death, is poem 27, “Song to AA,” which takes as its subject the child **of**, quite possibly, poem 55 and/or 87. Here, the naturalness of death for children remains prominent:

This shall be thy lullaby
 Rocking on the stormy sea
 Though it roar in thunder wild
 Sleep stilly sleep my dark haird child

 When our shuddering boat was crossing
 Elderns lake so rudely tossing
 Then twas ~~first~~ my nursling smiled
 Sleep softly sleep my fair-browed child

Waves above thy cradle break
 Foamy tears are on thy cheek
 Yet the Oacens self grows mild
 When it bears my slumbering child (lines 1-12).

Overall, it is not **difficult** to view this poem as a symbolic foreshadowing of death. The “stormy sea” is not far off from the turbulent lives of many of Emily’s characters, and the lines “though it roar in thunder wild / Sleep stilly sleep” can certainly remind one of the stillness of death whilst life “roars” on. The second **stanza’s** “nursling smile” at the “crossing” of “Elderns lake” also easily seems to indicate an accepted crossing over into death – for at this smile, the child’s parent (generally assumed mother) wishes her again to “sleep softly sleep.” The theme continues in the last **stanza**, where life no longer seems to affect the child, though “Waves above thy cradle break / Foamy tears are on thy cheek.” It is interesting that it is not the ocean, but the “Oacens **self**” – a deity-like personification – that “grows mild” / “when it **bears** [the] slumbering child.” With the “crossing” over of the previous **stanza**, it is not **difficult** to call up images of the river Styx and a Charon bearing the now-“slumbering” child mildly on in death.

The second prominent example of child abandonment lies in poem 126, which was Emily’s original of poem 127. The long poem ends with two soldiers (?), while one lies dying, making an agreement about the welfare of a child, and the very ~~last~~ lines tell of the one’s care for the now-dead other’s daughter:

The last look of that glazing eye
 I could not rescue ~~him~~ **his** child

I found alive and tended well
 But she was **full** of anguish wild
 And hated us **like** blackest hell
 And weary with her savage woe
 One moonless night I let her go (lines 258-264).

How exactly the speaker let the child go is not made entirely clear, but it is clear that this child, **full of** “savage woe” and “anguish wild,” is also doomed to suffer; for children (who are supposed, though not actual, promises **of** life and the future), even promises to the dead perhaps cannot be kept.

In Anne’s Gondal, **of** course, children belong to life, are not intentionally abandoned, and are often given much happiness. Anne agrees with the Romantic writers **of** Plotz’s assessment who “suggest that the most meaningful period **of** a life is the earliest” (173). To comprehend this a bit more, consider one last Anne Gondal poem, “Alexander and Zenobia,” poem 2. The two characters – outside **of** the narrative speaker – are “a boy of just fourteen / Bold and beautiful and bright; / Soft raven curls hung clustering round **A** brow of marble white,” and “the other was a slender girl, / Blooming and young and fair. / The snowy neck was shaded with / The long bright sunny **hair**” (lines 9-12; lines 17-20). The two are, at the poem’s opening, in “Arabia’s distant land,” waiting for the morrow when Zenobia shall leave Alexander and return to Gondal (line 4). The two are concerned that they shall not meet again, but, as Zenobia practically – and **hopefully** – points out,

‘Yes, Alexander, we must part,
 But we may meet again,

For when I **left** my native land

I wept in anguish then . . .

‘And you too wept – we little thought

After **so** long a time,

To meet again so suddenly

In such a distant clime (lines 73-76; lines **85-88**).

To this hope, Alexander also replies practically, suggesting a place and time for them to try to meet (lines 109-112). At that time, Zenobia is to “at evening wander to that spring / and sit and wait for [him] / And ’ere the sun has ceased to shine,” he says, “I **will** return to thee” (lines **113-116**). Though, he explains, “Two years is a weary time,” “it **will** soon be fled / And if you do not meet me – know / I **am** not false but dead” (lines 117-120).

The first part of the poem thus ends somewhat dismally, and with little activity, but the poem does not leave the children in near-grief. Its second part **begins** with Zenobia waiting for her childhood love (line 131-132). The speaker-narrator (a character **almost** as elusive as one of Emily’s spectres) follows her – quite literally, as she actively runs through to a different location – **as** she goes to wait in the grove for her love, and **as** she considers whether she’s being foolish to wait since, she says, “the time is past” (line 202). But, still, she **will** not let hope go. As she says, “it may be foolish thus to weep / But I cannot check *my* tears / To see in one short hour destroyed / The darling hope of years” (lines 207-210). Still, the poem continues to remain active and anticipatory, with some slow cheerfulness, waffling with its character **as** it describes Zenobia’s hopes and

fears of what may have become of Alexander. Importantly, though he is late, Alexander does not abandon her to grief – he appears at the poem’s end – and the ~~last~~ few **stanzas** of the poem describe his movements through the hill and trees to meet her; suspense builds up through questions, movement (including a repetition of the short “lo!” in lines 251 and 261), and the fear that she may turn to leave or leave before he can reach her. Finally, in a great climax of hope and joy for these children and the reader, emphasized by an exclamation point, the two join together: “One more moment of sad suspense / And those dark trees are past; / The lonely well bursts on **his** sight / And they are met at last!” (lines 271-274). The poem thus lives both in the present and in the future as it turns into the present, relying on the past to supplement the story; and childhood, as the home of enduring love, is certainly meaningful. Ultimately, happiness and hope prevail, as it does for all children and childhood in Anne’s Gondal, with every indication that the future shall hold the same – Anne’s Gondal children belong on earth, and can experience happiness and hope there.

Indeed, this idea of the hope of children, and the renewal and potential they offer, evidences itself noticeably in a non-Gondal, seemingly autobiographical, spring 1845 poem by Anne, titled “Dreams” (poem 40). The poem, written a mere 4 years before her death, single and childless, shy of thirty years of age, gives light to a maternal instinct. It also celebrates the Romantic hope for and renewal of children that permeates the majority of her Gondal poems concerning children and childhood. **As** such, it is worth quoting in its entirety:

While on my lonely couch I lie

I seldom feel myself alone,

For fancy **fills** my dreaming eye
With scenes and pleasures of its **own**.

Then I may cherish at my breast
An **infant's** form beloved and fair,
May smile, and soothe it into rest
With all a mother's fondest care.

How sweet to feel its helpless form
Depending thus on me alone;
And while I hold it safe and warm,
What bliss to think it is my own!

And glances then may meet my eyes
That daylight never showed to me,
What raptures in my bosom rise
Those earnest looks of love to see!

To feel my hand so kindly pressed,
To know myself beloved at last,
To think my heart **has** found a rest,
My life of solitude is past.

But then to wake and find it flown,
 The dream of happiness destroyed,
 To find myself unloved, alone,
 What tongue can speak the dreary void?

A heart whence warm affections flow,
 Creator, thou hast given to me,
 And am I only thus to know
 How sweet the joys of love would be?

Overall, it seems obvious that Anne adopted in her view of childhood and children in Gondal, and perhaps outside it, the gleefully Romantic notion of childhood as a source of hope for the future wherein “comfort must come not from the thought of how little is lost [through death, or perhaps, maturation] but rather from how completely even the youngest infant has lived” (Plotz 172). Even a child who has a “helpless form/ depending thus on me alone” is viewed as precious through Anne’s Romantic sentiments. Childhood for Anne must be valued, privileged, and longed-for; children are what make life, and the future, worthwhile and happy. Emily, by contrast, eschews such idealism, and prefers instead a view of childhood that is neither Romantic nor Victorian. As Vine hints, “if Brontë’s poems in one sense mourn the loss of a Romantic ‘visionary gleam’ in another sense they indomitably refuse to mourn that loss, fiercely grasping ‘heaven’ in a strange, melancholic gesture of preservative poetic encryptment” (151). Plotz observes that, for Victorians, obsessed with child mortality and loss by their predecessor’s

privileging of children, "the child of Romantic tradition – so fully alive, **so** powerful an embodiment of Nature's vitality . . . – is thus too important a being to die, or, at any rate, to die unnoticed" (176).

But despite, or because **of**, her own childhood experience of loss, Emily won't stand simply to be like her contemporaries; though she uses Romantic justification for the death of children in Gondal, and finds them "too good" for an earthly world, she does not consider them important enough to be remembered, or to die noticed. One merely needs to remember that the child Alexandrina is left alone as a helpless, dependent burden to die in a forest, in the midst of a blinding, obliterating snowstorm. For Victorians, building upon the Romantics before them, "the child who dies remains quintessentially childlike – indeed, he is the only lasting child – and the inevitable subject of obsessive scrutiny to those who value childhood" (Plotz 173). But Emily does not value childhood. It is a time of grieving and death, that's all, and children themselves are creatures, like all other mortals, merely **born** to die. Anne insists on being a Romantic with her children; Emily insists on being both a Romantic and a Victorian, and neither. Anne's Gondal children are given the hope of the world she sees – both real and Gondal – while Emily's merely receive her own solace of isolation.

DUNGEONS AND DREAMS

I've dreamt in my life dreams that have stayed with me ever after, and changed my ideas; they've gone through and through me, like wine through water, and altered the colour of my mind.

Catherine Earnshaw, Emily's *Wuthering Heights* (85).

Like children, dreams appear frequently in Emily and Anne's Gondal poems. For Anne, dreams are realistic possibilities; like her Romantic children (who often appear in them), they are hopes and promises for the future. They are sources of comfort, respite, and potential delight often grounded in memory. For Emily, however, dreams are not hopeful. Neither they nor sleep offer respite, unless it be a fortunate sleep of oblivion; instead, dreams are nightmarish harbingers of grief and death – or worse. For some characters, not even the luxury of sleep in death is allowed. In Emily's Gondal, dreams are fearful things that cannot be securely undertaken, **as** they either obscure truth and reality or **make** life more treacherous. They can render one immobile in the present, susceptible to the past and pain.

Ultimately, this difference between Anne and Emily's poetry of dreams **marks** a more crucial distinction between the two sisters: For Anne, dreams, such **as** Gondal, are successful in that they can be used for comfort when needed, and then dispelled to be recalled again if necessary. For Emily, dreams don't work. They happen repeatedly, but – as is well indicated by the degree to which Emily clung to her beloved Gondal, and the relative prominence of sleep and dreams in her poems – the very necessity of their repetition illustrates the extent to which they fail, like an awful drug to which one becomes addicted and of which one cannot be rid.' As a result of the horror of such a dependence,

¹ Pykett reflects, in language echoing that of drug-culture, that "by retreating ever further into the 'dream-worlds' of her fictional creations [Emily] was able to experiment with alternative visions of reality in which dominance, power, and energy are not exclusively masculine qualities, and nor do they necessarily prevail" (17).

Emily's characters, more frequently than Anne's, insist upon not sleeping, bewailing the fear and falseness, the lack of safety, they find in dreams; they experience dreams as the catalysts for paralyzing immobility, and view death as a soon-forgotten slumbering oblivion; and when they do dream they discover merely wretched misery in the form of memory, grief, and pain.

By contrast, Anne's characters can happily and successfully dream in their Gondal world because Anne could happily dream in hers. Anne could believe in her dreams, just as her characters can believe in theirs as being true reality. Like her characters, too, Anne could hope that someday a pleasant future could occur in the earthly world she loved.ⁱⁱ Emily, however, found her hope in more private, non-worldly sources, **as** indicated by her frequent secrecyⁱⁱⁱ and her contentment when sequestered away at Haworth. Although Emily's characters continue to dream despite their dread, hope is never offered them. By

ⁱⁱ And she did love the earthly world. Of the four famous Bronte siblings, Anne alone is buried apart from them, having chosen to risk dying away from home to visit another earthly place she loved, Scarborough.

ⁱⁱⁱ **As** an example of this, Emily, more than her siblings, seems to have held on to the tiny script they developed as children when creating very **small** booklets to save expense and be held in the hands of their toy soldiers. **As** Barker observes, this **small** script had the added advantage of "being illegible to their father and aunt, *so* the children enjoyed the delicious thrill of knowing that the contents of the little books were a secret shared only among themselves" (*The Brontes* 153). She also notes that "as all the young Brontes were shortsighted, this would not have been so much of a problem to them" (153).

contrast, even when Anne's characters experience despairing dreams, hopeful ones soon surface to take unbearable pain away, if only for a moment – just **as** Anne herself might indulge in a Gondal poem at Thorp Green to remind herself of her sister, or to take her **mind** off her duties.” In such ways, Anne's Gondal world reflects her “real” one, **just as** Emily's reflects hers.

To further glimpse the difference with dreams between Emily and Anne, consider **first** Emily's characters' insistence on not sleeping. In the dungeon poem **114**, “From a D.W. in the N C., A.G.A,” which equates sleep with unwanted death, the presumably confined A.G.A. pleads to her lover **Elbë** not to die, not to be overtaken by the sleep of dreams and death: “‘Elbë awake, awake! / ‘The golden evening gleams, / ‘Warm and bright on Elnor's lake. / ‘Arouse thee from thy dreams!’” (lines **9-12**). Her next images of his death are those of an immortal **sea**, but her last plea returns to the image of sleep **as** death and begs **Elbë** not to surrender to it: “‘It is not Death, but pain / ‘That struggles in they breast / ‘Nay rally Elbë, rouse again / ‘I cannot let thee rest!’” (lines **25-28**). To ward off the fear and horror dreams can bring about, **AAA** in poem **132** also warns against sleeping and dreaming, in favour of the sometimes-dark truth of reality. As she commands,

^{IV} Although this Gondal poetry “indulgence” may echo Emily's own “A little while, a little while” poem **40**, it is more successful because Anne's reflections don't require her to make a choice between escaping to Haworth or escaping to Gondal. The two ‘climes’ are, perhaps, nearly synonymous in her mind.

Sleep not dream not this bright day

Will not cannot last for aye

Bliss like thine is bought by years

Dark with torment and with tears

Sweeter far than placid pleasure

Purer higher beyond measure

Yet alas the sooner turning

Into hopeless endless mourning (lines 1-8)

Dreams, by making loss possible, she hints, can only bring about pain, not security.

Dreams and sleep can keep one from doing what one should, or can cause one to succumb to a false sense of comfort and security.

This criticism of a false sense of safety has roots in Emily's Gondal poems that equate adherence to this presumed security with fear – making it so that sleep itself is associated with fear. It is only those who wish to avoid fear who sleep. Consider, for instance, Emily's 97, "E G. to M.R." When her "Guardians are asleep," Gleneden comes to take *Mary* away with him. In trying to awaken her, Gleneden reflects on what might be keeping her in the state of sleep he's trying to shed: "O waken, Dearest, wake! / What means this long delay? / Say, wilt thou not for honour's sake / Chase idle Fears away?" (lines 9-12). He encourages her not to linger in sleep, but to "Think not of future greif / Entailed on present joy" (lines 13-14). In order to fight fear, he implies, one cannot indulge in sleep; one must be ready for action. Poem 88, "Rosina," also resonates with the implication that sleep is nearly synonymous with an environment of fear, and that one

sleeps, and is offered sleep, merely to avoid fear. When Rosina awakens from delirium, rather than having her discover that her love is dead, that her “ambition” is thwarted, and that danger is presumably close, those who are near her encourage her to sleep, to remain oblivious and free of fear and reality: “They wispered nought, but, ‘Lady, sleep, / ‘Dear Lady, slumber now!” (lines 49-50). Further, they note, “‘Hope can hardly deck the cheek / ‘With sudden signs of cheer / ‘When it **has** worn through many a week / ‘The **stamp** of anguish drear” (lines 53-56). Almost needless to write, Rosina resists this too-comforting sleep, preferring to fear and to know the dark truth rather than to indulge in hopeful dreams. **As** Barbara Hardy notes of another poem she attributes to Rosina, “dreams have gone too, and passion **has** had to live on qualified by dreamlessness” (1 17). Or, as **Rosina** exclaims, “‘What then, my dreams are false” (line 25).

Overall, the lack of safety in sleep – for the very need to convey a sense of security belies its lack – is far from a subtle theme of many of Emily’s Gondal poems. The ultimate danger involved in letting one’s self just drift off to sleep is made rivetingly clear in poem 96, “To A.S.” The speaker questions, referring to death with language reminding one of rest and sleep, and with a noticeable emphasis, “Where can the weary lay his head / And lay it *safe* the while / In a grave that never shuts its dead / From heavens benignant smile?” (lines 6-8). The remainder of the poem soon solidifies its only definition of “safe” sleep as that of death, as that of those who “Escape Earth’s dungeon tomb,” before rhetorically questioning A.S., “tell me, why such blessed sleep / Should cause such bitter woe?” (line 14; lines 3 1-2). In other words, one should accept such sleep **as** natural and safe, safe from earthly griefs and torments. **Or**, unless one wishes to embrace the danger of death, one shouldn’t look too favorably upon sleep in this Gondal world.

Fear of sleep, or at least frustration with and mistrust of it, can be further seen in poems where there are those who can sleep while others can not, or when they should not. One such is 122, "M.A. written on the Dungeon Wall – NC." This speaker harshly criticizes those "friends" who can still sleep tranquilly while s/he lies languishing in a prison cell, and wishes that "Might I go to their beds, I'd rouse that slumber, / My spirit should startle their rest and tell / How hour after hour, I wakefully number / Deep buried from light in my lonely cell!" (lines 21-24). While they sleep, s/he cannot, and if s/he were in their stead, s/he ~~still~~, s/he insists, could not sleep. If s/he did sleep, the speaker assures the reader, "dreary dreaming / Would haunt my pillow if *they* were here" (lines 25-26). Not only is sleep itself false in Emily's Gondal, there is also something false about those who sleep, something false enough to make the prisoner not envy those who sleep, but rather prefer her/his truth and own ~~sort~~ of "freedom" from the guilt and the horror the dreams can not avoid: "Better that I my own fate mourning / Should pine alone in the prison-gloom / Than waken free on the summer morning / And feel they were suffering this awful doom" (lines 15-32). The prisoner would rather "pine alone" and deal with "this awful doom" rather than "waken free" on a morning only to realize the horror of "feel[ing]" a friend's own torturous confinement.

The idea of the falseness of those who dream, and of dreams themselves, is also at the forefront of poem 51, "Lines by Claudia." Claudia assures her readers that she "did not sleep 'twas noon of day" and that she "did not dream" when she envisioned her soul wandering about while "In English fields [her] limbs were laid / With English turf beneath [her] head" (line 1; line 9; lines 15-16). Claudia may be a spectre when she speaks these lines – though she speaks of lying on "long grass" under the "burning sunshine" in "exile

misery,” she ends the poem speaking of her “longsustained and hopeless doom” and of the “glory shedding star” “for which we fought and bled and died – but that only confirms sleep and dreams’ associations with death and lack of true rest, **as** we will see, in Emily’s Gondal.

In order to live on even as a spectre, Claudia must abandon dreams and sleep. She must make others believe that what has happened is true, that she is not speaking of imagination, but talking of dreams and sleep will not allow her to do so; dreams are not things to be believed. They must be destroyed or discredited to move on. Even if Claudia is merely an exile, and not a spectre, she must convince others that she has neither slept nor dreamed what she says, in order to prove its truth and be believed. She must fight for the “real,” and resist sleep and dreams **as** being “false.” Hope for the spectre, the exile, or the prisoner does not, and can not, come in dreams, but only in reality, which Emily’s characters’ dreams rarely reflect. This can also be seen in poem **92**, “Written in Aspin Castle –.” This speaker also sees a spectre, a beautiful ghost, who is not allowed even the luxury of a restful sleep of death, but instead, is given a pain wherein “on that angel brow / Rests such a shade of deep despair / As nought divine could ever know” (lines **37-39**). Having died for the “god” “of wild enthusiast’s **dreams**,”^v the “phantom pale / With spirit-eyes of dreamy blue,” “his spirit unforgiven / Wanders unsheltered shut from heaven / **An** out cast for eternity” (line **79**; lines **32-33**, emphasis added; lines **81-83**). The speaker sees this ghostly spectre, where “Those eyes are dust – those lips are clay – / That form is mouldered all away / Nor thought, nor **sense**, nor pulse, nor breath / The whole devoured

^v Again, this may have religious connotations.

and lost in death” (lines 84-87). Yet, by the poem’s end, the speaker insists on abandoning “these dreams oe’r things of yore,” on not believing them, since still beloved by earth and heaven, “on such a night / Earths children should not frown” (line **94**; lines 101-102). To put it another way, perhaps, a phantom must necessarily be considered a dream because it is too horrific not to be *so*, and because, in Emily’s Gondal, as we shall further see, horror lies in dreams. Overall, however, the two can’t merge: dreams aren’t allowed to be reality, and *so* must fight to be so.

By contrast, in her Gondal world, Anne allows – almost as a natural necessity – dreams and reality to *mix*, often in day-dream fantasies, much as Wordsworth, or even Coleridge in “Kubla Khan,” might do. Importantly, too, her Gondal characters indulge in daydreams and fantasies far more often than Emily’s characters *do*; indeed, Anne’s characters rarely experience the dark night-dreams of Emily’s Gondal dwellers. In Anne’s poem **48**, a prisoner of many years has learned to sit “unmoving” (a fact which would plague Emily’s Gondalians) and has “something in his eye / That told another tale. / It did not speak of reason gone, / It was not madness quite; / It was a fitful flickering fire, / A strange uncertain light” (lines 23-28). In “these latter years, / Strange fancies now and then / Had filled his cell with scenes of life / And forms of living men” – a mixing of imaginative dreams and reality that Emily’s Gondal world would protest. Dreams and reality begin to merge *so* much in these fantastic fancies that the poem’s end is left an open question. The captive, Orlando, learns from two men that his enemies are dead, and that he is about to be set free. But he can’t quite believe them, nor can he quite not believe them. When the “elder” of the two releasers **looks** in Orlando’s eyes “for ecstasy,” he “only found surprise,” for, as Orlando says at the poem’s end, “My foes are dead! It

must be then / That all mankind are gone / For they were all my deadly foes / And friends I had not one” (lines 53-56). Overall, his nearly mad fantasies have mixed with the actual world; dreams and reality have become **so** intertwined that one cannot be discerned amidst the other. **As** the poem reflects, without answer, “But hark, what sounds have struck [Orlando’s] ear; / Voices of men they seem; / And two have entered now his cell; / Can this too be a dream?” (lines 41-44).

Alexandria Zenobia, in Anne’s poem 4, “The Captive’s Dream,” also faces this dilemma of dreams and reality being one and the same. In a dream more horrific than many in Anne’s Gondal poems, Zenobia envisions a man, – friend or lover – “changed from what he used to be,” who is grief-stricken for her in her captivity (line 2). In her dream, echoing what will be Emily’s characters’ horror of immobility, she is not allowed to move, to speak, to comfort him: “I might not even tell him that I lived / And that it might be possible if search were made, / To find out where I was and set me free” (lines 12-14). But unlike with the immobility thrust upon Emily’s Gondal characters, hope is still present here, “it might be possible.” More importantly, however, although Zenobia at first claims the vision to be a dream, she soon realizes that such a dream is reality: “Then I awoke, and lo it was a dream! / A dream? Alas it was reality! / For well I know wherever he may be / He mourns me thus” (lines 23-25). In Anne’s Gondal, dreams are not false, but true.

Anne further dispels the falseness of dreams in her Gondal poem 29, “The Student’s Serenade.” The speaker, Alexander Hybernia, finds **himself** quite as unable to sleep as some of Emily’s characters, and quite **as** disbelieving **as** well that his playmate, Maria, can sleep when he cannot. He does not suspect Maria **of** falseness, however, and

when he does sleep, his dreams are not punctuated by the nightmarish images of death, ghouls, and doom that haunt Emily's characters' dreams, but rather they are racked by "real" images of studying and daily mundane labour:

I have slept upon my couch
 But my spirit did not rest,
 For the labours of the day
 Yet my weary soul opprest.

And before my dreaming eyes
 Still the learned volumes lay,
 And I could not close their leaves
 And I could not turn away.

While the grim preceptors laughed
 And exulted in my woe:
Till I felt my tingling frame

With the fire of anger glow (lines 1-12)

No spectres, but only "*grimpreceptors*" and "learned volumes" inhabit this "nightmare" dream poem of Anne's. Although any fellow student may commiserate with the poem, the descriptive word "mild" hardly covers it.

Noticeably, too, though "The Student's Serenade" also contains the sense of immobility that Emily's characters will, as we will see, rail against as almost certain death, such a feeling of doom does not occur here, despite the "fevered couch." No idea of

death is ever brought forth, and Hybernia is able to awaken to hope through snow – “I oped my eyes at last, / And I heard a muffled sound, / ’Twas the night breeze come to say / That the snow was on the ground” – and mobility: “Then I knew that there was rest / On the mountain’s bosom free; / So I **left** my fevered couch / And I flew to waken thee” (lines 13-16; lines 17-20). Earthly rest “on the mountain’s bosom free” is possible here, **as** it would not be for any of Emily’s characters. The closest Emily’s characters might come to such a rest is with immobility, which, for them, means immanent death. For example, when A.G.A. in poem 114 realizes that her pleas to Elbë not to yield to death are hitless **as** the death approaches ever more certainly, she negatively notes that he is (or at least his eyes are) “weighed beneath a mortal sleep” and “[growing] strangely dreary” (lines 41-43). But she is also troubled much by **his** increasing immobility and unchangedness, a sure sign of doom. **As** A.G.A. observes, Elbë’s eyes “wept not,” “changed not – / Never moved and never closed / Troubled **still** and still they ranged not / Wandered not nor yet reposed!” (lines 45-49). Here, dreams/sleep = immobility = death.

This same troubling immobility and changelessness plagues Emily’s poem 188, which also tells of the death of a man, of the sadness of the impossibility of “call[ing] / The cold corpse from its funeral pall,” or of “caus[ing] a gleam of hope to fall / With [a] consoling tear” (lines 21-23). The speaker also notes that the man is “Too truly agonized to weep / His eyes are motionless **as** sleep” (lines 16-17). Once **again**, inactivity, lack of motion or change, **as** in sleep, means death. Accordingly, Emily’s poem 18, “To a Wreath of snow by A. G. Almeda,” illustrates that it is not sleep, but only activity and change, moving on, that can bring comfort to creatures (especially to those confined) in Emily’s Gondal world. **As** Nina Auerbach observes, “Gondal’s land finds its being in its **storm**:

changes – psychic, seasonal, and political – appear to rock its world forever” (60). For, it is only upon awakening to see the “silvery form so soft and fair” of the “wreath of snow” outside her window – a change, if only that of weather – that Almeda finds hope, though not the rest that Anne’s Hybernia can find upon the arrival of his snow (line 18).

Indeed, **as** already observed, the only type of rest offered Emily’s characters **is** that of the eternal sleep of death, presuming that they avoid the snare of spectredom. But even in this sleep, earthly hope is not allowed: the only comfort offered is that of oblivion. **As** Irene Tayler observes, in Gondal, Emily is “a denouncer of dreams and a gloomy advocate of the values of time and mortality” (31). Consider first poem 107, “E.W.,” “Song,” wherein a speaker sings of the grave of a lady, now forgotten by the living. The speaker observes that this no longer bothers the lady, who “would not in her tranquil sleep / Return a single Sigh–” (lines 23-24). **Only** the constancy of the “blow[ing]” “west wind” and the “murmur[ing]” “summer streams” are needed “**to** soothe [the] Lady’s dreams” (lines 25-28). But the forgottenness, the complete oblivion, **of** the lady’s rest also resonates in poem **98** wherein one speaker gives in to death in the hope of being remembered: “**here** the world is chill / ‘And sworn friends fall from me / ‘But **there**, they’ll own me still / ‘**And** prize my memory” (lines 13-16). This hope is not borne throughout the poem, however, as the second speaker **confirms** that “cold, cold **is** that resting place” where the **first** speaker may “sleep **on**” for “heaven laughs above – / Earth never **misses** thee” (lines 18-19). Here, death cannot **bring** hope, or even the realization **of** former hope, but only the forgottenness of oblivion, if one is fortunate.

And, in Emily’s world, when one is not fortunate, one dreams. Consider the nightmare of poem 5, whose speaker awakens from a dream “in all the hours of gloom”

wishing to **flee** his/her bed "to chase the visions from [his/her] head / Whose forms have troubled me" (lines 5-9). The dream **itself** imagines death and a haunting royal ghost:

I dreamt I stood by a marble tomb

Where royal corpses lay

It was just the time of eve

When parted ghosts might come

Above their prisoned dust to grieve

And wail their woeful doom

And truely at my side

I saw a shadowy thing

Most dim and yet its presence there

Curdled my blood with **ghastly** fear

And ghashtier wondering (lines 11-21)

The horror of the dream for the speaker is made more vivid by the inherent immobility it brings with it:

My breath I could not draw

The air seemed ranny

But **still** my eyes with maddening gaze

Were fixed upon its fearful **face**

And its were fixed on me

I fell down on the stone
 But could not turn away
 My words died in a voiceless moan
 When I began to pray (lines 22-30).

Overall, the speaker pleads, “O bring not back again / The horror of that hour / When its lips opened,” for there, even in sleep, another dream of horror can be awakened (lines 41-43). When the “lips opened,” “a sound / Awoke the stillness reigning round / Faint as a dream but the earth *shrank* / And heavens lights shivered neath its power” (lines 43-46). The horror awakening in the horrific dream proclaims woe, gloom, and doom, leaving the speaker with an “almost broke[n] heart to hear / Such dreary dreary singing”:

“Woe for the day Regina’s pride
 Reginas hope is in the grave
 And who shall rule my land beside
 And who shall save

“Woe for the day with gorey tears
 My countrys **sons** this day shall rue
 Woe for the day a thousand years
 Can not repair what one shall do (lines 57-58; lines 47-54).

In Emily’s Gondal world, dreams are the realm of death and ghosts, of “phantom horrors.” Consider as well bits of poem 7, from a speaker who has spent some time with tears that have “wet a dongoen floor,” and who “used to weep even in my sleep / The night was dreadful like the day” (line 31; lines 33-34):

O God of heaven! the dream of horror

The frightful dream is over now

The sickened heart The blasting sorrow

The ghastly night the ghasstlier morrow

The aching **sense** of utter woe

The burning tears that would keep welling

The groans that mocked at every tear

That burst **from** out their dreary dwelling

As if each gasp were life expelling

But life was nourished by despair

The tossing and the anguished pineing

The grinding teeth and stareing eye

The agony of **still** repineing

When not a spark of hope was shineing

From gloomy fate's relentless sky

The impatient rage the useless shrinking

From thoughts that yet could not be borne

The soul that was forever thinking

Till nature maddened tortured sinking

At last refused to mourn – (lines 1-20)

Here the horror may be true events, – the speaker may have experienced a “ghastlier morrow,” a “sense of utter woe,” and “impatient rage” as a result of some awake actual Gondal occurrence – but, given the events’ extreme awfulness, they can only be made sense of by the speaker as dreams, which is where, again, for Emily’s Gondalians, true horror always dwells. Or, as Hardy observes, “the world which needs to be changed by dreaming is established in all its undiminished horrors” (1 12). Here, too, the horror and the dream are inextricably tied up with immobility, immutability and futility: “the burning tears that *would keep* welling,” “the agony of *still* repining,” and “the impatient rage the *useless* shrinking.” Significantly, too, the horror of memory and the past also invades the poem and the dream. In addition to “the soul that was forever thinking / till nature . . . at last refused to mourn,”

O even now too horribly
 Come back the feelings that would swell
 When with my face hid on my knee
 I strove the bursting groans to quell (lines 51-54)

Because the memory is so awful to behold, it merges quickly for the speaker into a dream; indeed, the only way the speaker can perceive the horror is **as** a terrifying dream:

And ~~so~~ the day would fade on high
 And darkness quench that lonely **beam**
And slumber mold my misery
Into some strange and spectral dream
Whose phantom horrors made me know
The worst extent of human woe – (lines 63-68; emphasis added)

As Vine reminds us, for Emily, memory “harries the self rather than heals and harmonizes it . . . if, in Wordsworth, remembrance is a force for organic continuity in the life of the self, in Bronte it is an agent of disruption, invading the self’s present being with unappeased ghosts from the past” (106). And ghosts for Emily, of course, are **best** relegated to the horrific and “false” realm of dreams.

Poem 26, “Gleneden’s Dream,” also shares this horror of memory in dreams, though Gleneden’s nightmarish **dream**, also occurring in the confinement of spending a night sequestered away and languishing in a dungeon, takes the form of bloody, deadly ambition and revenge, thwarted: “Memory pondered untill madness / Struck its poignard in my brain – / Deepest slumber followed raving, / Yet, methought, I brooded **still** – / Still I saw my country bleeding, / Dying for a Tyrant’s **will**“ (lines 31-36). Soon his slumbering imagination turns the brooding into a “Glorious dream!,” which he makes triumphant through murder:

None need point the princely victim
 Now he smiles with royal pride!
 Now his glance is bright **as** lightening!
 Now – The Knife is in his side!

Ha, I saw how Death could darken –
 Darken that triumphant eye!
 His red heart’s blood drenched my dagger;
 My ear drank his dying sigh! (lines 57-68)

Even a “happy” dream in Emily’s Gondal means death and doom, for, as Tayler comments, “Emily’s vision is far more dark and comfortless; and . . . her journey takes her away **from** human community, not toward it” (42). Furthermore, even this poem’s speaker is not allowed the privilege of a true comforting dream, for it won reveals its predictable falseness: “Shadows come! What means this midnight?/ **O my** God, I know it all! / –Know the fever-dream is over; / Unavenged, the Avengers fall!” (lines 69-72).

Ultimately, dreams and especially awakening bring grief and pain (embedded in tears) to Emily’s Gondalians. In 36, where the speaker is **A G A**, a male stranger with “dark curls” and a “stern glance” may bring “a dream-like comfort” to her, but his voice “still spoke to [her] of years gone by” and “seemed a vision to restore / That brought the hot tears to [her] eye” (lines 4-6; lines 10-12). In 44 as well, “a mute remembrancer of crime” that lies beneath a “spectre ring” “long lost concealed forgot for years / it comes at last to cancel time / and waken unavailing tears” (lines 4-9). In poem 90, “H.A. and A.S.,” the speaker also has “dreamt of tears whose Traces/ **Will** never more depart / Of agony that fast effaces / The verdure of the heart” (lines 9-12). Even more horrifically, however, the speaker dreams of death – involving two lovers – amidst life. The speaker first reflects, without immediate trace of the darkness that slowly begins to creep **in**, that “I dreamt, one sunny day like this / In this peerless month of May / I saw her give the unanswered **Kiss** / As his spirit passed away” (lines 13-16). **Soon**, of course, “pale Death” arrives upon the scene to have “changed that cheek devine / To his unchanging hue,” and to make obvious the hopelessness of a situation where “if he came not for her woe / He would not now return / He would not leave his sleep below / When she had ceased to mourn (lines 19-20; 33-36).

In contrast with all of this wretched, nightmarish horror, Anne's characters' dreams are much more hopeful. Dreams in Anne's Gondal can be nightmarish – the speaker of poem **3** reflects on her sometimes wretched, “sorrow[ful]” (line **18**) dreams, and the speaker of **53** has his happy dream of childhood later merge into the reality of adult gloom – but they are not necessarily so, and even those instances of nightmare are juxtaposed with dreamful comfort and bliss. Poem **3** begins despairing, but shifts about halfway through to reflect, “And yet it is not always so” (line 29). From there, the poem tells of a happier dream of promise naturally entwined with childhood: “I dreamt a little while ago / That all was as it used to be: / A fresh free wind passed over me; / It was a pleasant summer's day, / The sun shone forth with cheering ray, / Methought a little lovely child / Looked up into my face and smiled” (lines **30-36**). The child turns out to be the speaker, Marina Sabia's, own “darling boy,” who “kissed [her] and laughed in childish glee” (line 38; line **40**). Her dream soon turns to the also-happy image of the boy's father, with his “whisper sweet,” who, she thought “smiled and spoke to me, / But still in silent ecstasy / I gazed at him” (line **41**; lines **45-47**). Although the dream does not last, and a darker reality soon returns, it offers her a comfort and respite foreign to those who inhabit Emily's Gondal world.

In poem **53**, “Z-'s Dream,” E.Z. is also allowed a happy dream of childhood as a respite from the harsh reality in which he now lives: “I dreamt last night; and in that dream / My boyhood's heart was mine again. . . And I was roaming, light and gay, / Upon a breezy, sunny day, / No guilty stain was on my mind; / And if, not over soft or kind, / My heart was full of truth” (lines **1-2**; lines **25-30**). Again, dreams for Anne can offer truth and hopeful possibility. The dream, which made the speaker “long to sleep again,” also

gives him strength to endure and move on, to exclaim “Back foolish tears!” accept what he’s done, and realize that “onward I must press . . . / Onward, unchecked, I must proceed. / Be Death or Victory mine!” (line 90; 110; 138; lines 149-150). This, of course, could not happen in Emily’s Gondal world, where dreams serve merely to hinder movement, action, and hope. Ultimately, Emily’s view of dreams in Gondal can be epitomized in poem 15, with A.G.A. as its speaker:

Sleep brings no joy to me

Remembrance never dies

My soul is given to misery

And lives in sighs

Sleep brings no rest to me

The shadows of the dead

My wakeing eyes may never see

Surround my bed

Sleep brings no hope to me

In soundest sleep they come

And with their doleful Imagry

Deepen the gloom

Sleep brings no strength to me

No power renewed or brave

I only sail a wider sea

A darker wave

Sleep brings no friend to me

To sooth **and** aid to **bear**

They all gaze oh how scornfully

And I despair

Sleep brings no wish to knit

My harrassed heart beneath

My only wish is to forget

In the sleep of death

Robin Grove believes that Emily's Gondal world "would not bear exposure to daylight" (63). I would agree, but only in the sense that Emily herself could not bear such exposure, or in that Anne wouldn't take well to moonlight. Pykett comments that "Emily Brontë's commitment to the private Gondal world appears to be positively empowering rather than a self-indulgent escape" (45). Yet if Gondal represents Emily's creative empowerment, it also demonstrates her entrapment. In creating **an** escapist world to empower herself, Emily created a world from which she herself could not escape – a world which merely reflects, as water rather than a mirror would, her own "real" world. Not only could she not find escape, in the **sense** that she kept playing the "Gondal games" up until her death, but she could not create a world where her characters could happily escape, even to the dreams she herself tried. Instead, she created a world like her own,

whose (imaginary) inhabitants needed **an** escape (both from frequent dungeon imprisonments and dark dreams) that was not possible. Anne's characters, of course, were as happily and easily able to partake in dreams as she was – but for them, as for her, leaving the realities and Romantic hopes of Gondal (or earth), even in dreams, was nearly unthinkable. Indeed, as Winifred Gérin observes, “it might also be deduced that . . . the poetry of Gondal was so close a reflection of their way of life and their most personal aspirations towards liberty . . .” (26). To both sisters, then, Gondal is, in Anne's words, a “strange, untrue, but truthlike dream” (line 58, “Z–'s Dream”).

CONCLUSION: THE NOVELS

Nightmares and dreams, through which devils dance and wolves howl, make bad novels.

From a 19th century critic (Goreau 33, qtd. from Allott 247-8).

In a world on the precipice of idealism looking over the soon-arriving abyss of despair, Anne and Emily Bronte struggled against both their Romantic predecessors and their soon-Victorian contemporaries. This struggle, evidencing itself with the beloved and fundamental Romantic ideals, and subsequent Victorian adoption and alteration, of the notions of children and dreams, emerges not only in their Gondal poetry, but in their later novels as well. For the two sisters, dreams and children are inextricably tangled together: indeed, for Anne, children are dreams, whereas for Emily, children represent the nightmarish product of dreams. One can detect the trace of the ideal dream in *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall* and the shadow of the nightmare in *Wuthering Heights*.

It has often been observed that *The Tenant* is a realist novel. Margaret Smith notes that “the realism and the force which impressed readers of *The Tenant* also caused shock and indignation,” and that *The Tenant* “conveys its moral message forcefully because of the bold naturalism of its central scenes” (ix; xv). Angeline Goreau reflects that what was to become *Agnes Grey* “was very probably the ~~first~~ fully realized work by any of the Brontes that had its origin in observed reality, rather than the more extravagant ‘clime’ of Gondal or Angria,” and that “believability was essential to [Anne’s] purpose in writing” (37; 38). This emphasis on Anne’s novels’ realism and naturalism may well be deserved; however, one must remember that ‘believability was essential’ to Romantic writing as well. One merely needs to recollect Wordsworth’s “Two-Part Prelude” and “Resolution and Independence” to realize this. In the “Two-Part Prelude,” Wordsworth reflects, believably, on a journey in his younger days to a spot where a man was hanged for murdering his wife. In his notes on the poem, Duncan Wu is quick to point out that “The *Prelude* is not a record of fact, and it is worth noting that Nicholson’s gibbet had not

‘mouldered down’ in 1775, and a five-year-old would not have ridden that far” (307). “Resolution and Independence,” too, documents events that happened, though not as they are depicted. The poem tells of a leech-gatherer Wordsworth met while walking alone on the moors; in fact, the poem itself is based on a similar event, recorded in his sister Dorothy’s diary, that had happened over a year and a half before, while Wordsworth and Dorothy were walking together near their Grasmere cottage. Again, Wu comments, “As in *The Prelude*, [Wordsworth] is not concerned with factual truth, but with truth to the emotions” (369). And this is certainly the case as well with Anne in her novels, and, perhaps, poems. There is truth and believability in both Anne’s and Wordsworth’s work, but neither’s works – not *Agnes Grey*, *The Tenant*, or Wordsworth’s poems – are complete records of truth. Nor, of course, are they false. Victorian governesses and married middle to upper-class women certainly shared Agnes’ and Helen’s experiences. It has frequently been noted that Anne, as she herself said, “wished to tell the truth, for truth always conveys its own moral to those who are able to receive it” (*The Tenant* 3). But Romantics such as Wordsworth also wished to tell the truth, and like Anne they used fiction to convey such truth. Tellingly, one of those authors most quoted “with delicate aptness” in *The Tenant* is Wordsworth (xv).

Additionally, of *The Tenant*, Charlotte claimed, “[Anne] hated her work, but would pursue it. When reasoned with on the subject, she regarded such reasonings as a temptation to self-indulgence. She must be honest; she must not varnish, soften, or conceal” (19). Importantly, however, as with the poems, though Anne “must not varnish, soften, or conceal,” there is still hope and much that is “soft” in *The Tenant*. For this softness, one must look to the children, sources of consolation in both the poems and the

novel. Shaw observes, “Helen’s growing perception is that ‘natural goodness’ does not exist like a hidden jewel to be uncovered but is rather a potential which must be cultivated from childhood, just as ‘natural evil’ is a potential which equally may be fostered into a character and way of life” (130). But this isn’t entirely true. For Anne, in the novel as well as the poems, children are indeed born with inherent goodness; it is only time and corruption that render them other than good.

In tracing this model of children and goodness, Plotz notes that “seen as more fully alive than adults, children [for the Romantics] often therefore are addressed – and not ironically – as exemplars, preceptors, guides” (170). Although Helen assuredly takes it upon herself to be the guide of her young **son**, Arthur, **still** Arthur himself is Helen’s guide – showing her the path she must follow, if only for his sake. Because “childhood psychological powers were increasingly seen as the foundation and model of all substantial adult achievement” (Plotz 170), childhood gains in power and prestige. But, by the same token, adulthood loses these qualities. As Roderick McGillis reminds us, too, for the Romantics, including “for Wordsworth, childhood is bound by time; it passes” (152). This, of course, is what Emily plays off of in her Gondal poems for her abandoned Romantic children – to ‘preserve’ them, she fixes time by providing death.

Overall, Helen **still** insists on ‘cultivating’ little Arthur’s goodness, just as, Anne’s symbolic image shows, a garden must be tended. But both the garden of Wildfell Hall and Arthur show the Romantic influence **of** Gondal and its children. The garden, wild as it is, brings to mind Gondal imagery, as does the discovery of the adult Arthur Huntington’s adultery, which Davies refers to as “rather stagely”: “It is, appropriately, a night-scene amid trees, with a gust of wind scattering the dead leaves, ‘like blighted hopes’”

(Introduction xvii). Davies further reflects that “Perhaps both houses [Wuthering Heights and Wildfell Hall] derive from a common Ur-hall in Gondal. Emily’s utilitarian Romanticism is answered by Anne’s picturesque rationalism” (x). But Anne can be just **as** utilitarian in her Romanticism as her sister; despite her focus on the non-Romantic idea of ‘cultivation,’ she still uses some of Romanticism’s main tenets for her own purposes. For even the novel’s main child, little Arthur, makes one think of Anne’s hopeful, innocent, and very Romantic Gondal children, as this passage illustrates:

Milicent and I were in the garden enjoying a brief half hour together with our children . . . We had been romping with the little creatures, almost as merry and wild as themselves, and now paused . . . while they toddled together along the broad, sunny walk; my Arthur supporting the feebler steps of her little Helen, and sagaciously pointing out to her the brightest beauties of the border as they passed, with semi-articulate prattle that did as well for her **as** any other mode of discourse. From laughing at the pretty sight, we began to talk of the children’s future life; and that made us thoughtful. (*The Tenant* 281-2).

The child Arthur is not shown to be perfect, and Anne indicates at points – for example, in Helen’s discussion of heaven with Gilbert near the novel’s end – a realization that adulthood can also be enlightening (and the possibility of a happy adulthood **as** well as childhood that exists in her Gondal poems is also present here). Yet, the remarkable Romantic idea that the innocent purity and hope of childhood is obliterated through the passage of time and maturation still shines through in both poetry and novel: for, as with the poems, the younger the child is, the more likely s/he is to be innocent and sublime, and

the older, the more likely to be corrupted. Obviously, it is the growing Arthur who becomes increasingly susceptible to his father's corruptive influences, and the new-born babe who is described as "yet a guileless, unpolluted lamb," while Helen pleads, following closely the romantic ideal, for the "Eternal father" to "tear him from" her "if he should live to disappoint [her] hopes, and frustrate all [her] efforts – to be a slave of sin, the victim of vice, and misery, a curse to others and himself"(240). In other words, if Arthur grows up to mature as most do, to be corrupted by adulthood (for a counterpart, one can bring to mind young Tom, already too old, in *Agnes Grey*), she would rather he be taken from her and 'preserved,' though she won't quite abandon him as Emily's Gondal characters might. Like Anne and her female characters in the Gondal poems, Helen **still** has hope, that Romantic ideal of hope for the future through children. This hope of renewal, of course, is rewarded in the novel, in a fashion after Cathy and Hareton in *Wuthering Heights*, though with much less pain, by the union of the young Arthur and Helen by the novel's end.

In many ways, *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall* is not a completely Romantic novel, but nor is it a completely Victorian one – as Smith observes, "Helen shatters the Victorian icon of the submissive wife by shutting the bedroom door against her profligate husband" (xvi). Yet, naturally, the mere presence of a Victorian icon, although it be dismissed, demonstrates a Victorian influence. *Wuthering Heights* also shares both this influence and its dismissal. Indeed, Catherine, and later Isabella (paralleling Helen even more, perhaps), can hardly be considered submissive wives. As in her Gondal poems, however, in *Wuthering Heights* Emily insists on being both Victorian and Romantic, and neither. Just as children are not allowed to live happy existences in Gondal, they are not allowed them

at the Heights. Even those such as Linton and the young Cathy, who have semblances of a happy childhood (significantly away from the Heights) despite loss and over-protection, soon experience a harsh world upon maturation.

In addition to the older children being shown to live in misery – including the child Heathcliff’s confused entrance in the novel – even the novel’s new-born infants are not depicted with much hopeful promise, as Nelly’s first description of the new-born Cathy, interrupted frequently by the telling of the death of her mother and other events happening at the time, well indicates: “About twelve o’clock, that night, was **born** the Catherine you saw at Wuthering Heights, a puny, seven months’ child . . . **An** unwelcomed infant it was, poor thing! It might have wailed out of life, and nobody cared a morsel, during those first hours of existence. We redeemed the neglect afterwards; but its beginning was **as** friendless as its end is likely to **be**” (*Wuthering Heights* 151). The image of this unblessed birth certainly resonates with those images of abandoned child-burdens in Emily’s Gondal, and Nelly’s lack of hope for this now-grown infant’s future is consonant **as** well with such a lack in Gondal.

By contrast, the birth of Hareton brings about much expression of hope, but that hope is short-lived. Although he is described **as** a “bonny little nursling,” “such a great bairn,” and “the finest lad that ever breathed,” he, too, soon experiences **his** mother’s loss, and, unlike with Cathy, his “neglect” is never “redeemed”; rather, it is reinforced. **As** he grows, **his** corruption and neglect become pronounced. Ignored or tormented by his father, abandoned regretfully by his nurse, Nelly, and eventually adopted for the purpose of intentional detriment by Heathcliff, the boy lives a hellish, though ignorant, childhood. He thus reminds one of the gloomy boy about to behold his saving “Spirit of Bliss” in

Emily's poem 120a (which is also reminiscent of the necessary childhood alliance of Heathcliff and Catherine). More fortunate than many of the Gondal (or novel's) figures, Hareton does manage by the novel's end some happiness through union with Cathy, but much horrific torment must be endured until that conclusion can be reached.

And horror, of course, permeates *Wuthering Heights* as much as it does Emily's Gondal poems. Although brief violence is depicted in *The Tenant* with Gilbert's striking of Lawrence, and with the drunken party, it still pales next to the intentional viciousness of much in *Wuthering Heights*. The *Tenant* offers amends – Gilbert's apology and Huntington's untimely death – for the cruelty; *Wuthering Heights* offers no such compensation. Hindley does manage to drink ~~himself~~ to death, but his death offers no respite to anyone – his son is sunk into further corruption and dissolution, and Heathcliff lives on to cause damage and inexplicable violence, such as that of the hanging of Isabella's dog. Indeed, as in the poems, this horror makes the children of the novel miserable, and allows them – as in the case of the young Cathy in seeking out Wuthering Heights, or in that of Linton or Hareton in being the cause of dismay to Edgar Linton and Nelly by being forced under Heathcliff's control – to bring misery to others. This horror also manifests itself prominently in dreams, which themselves can involve children. One can hardly forget Lockwood's nightmare of the "First of the Seventy-First" in which Catherine – depicted **as** a child – comes to a window and clings to Lockwood, and whereupon Lockwood observes that, in the dream, "terror made me cruel; and, finding it useless to attempt shaking the creature **off**, I pulled its wrist on the broken pane, and rubbed it to and fro till the blood ran down and soaked the bed-clothes: still it wailed, 'Let me in!' and maintained its tenacious gripe, almost maddening me with fear" (42). Though

Lockwood manages to trick the ghost-child into letting him go, still the child, until Lockwood's own shriek wakens him, moans on, haunting the rest of the scene and the novel **as** well.

The horror of this dream echoes **as** well in the novel's later mention of Catherine's own dreams, when Catherine asks Nelly if she ever "dream[s] queer dreams" (85). When Catherine **first** tries to remark on one of her dreams, she admonishes Nelly "not to smile at any part of it," to which Nelly responds by refusing to listen to her description of the dream at all. Nelly's reasons for refusing are telling, **as** they bring forth strong memories of dreams in Emily's Gondal: "We're dismal enough without conjuring up ghosts and visions to perplex us" (85). Tellingly, too, Nelly immediately ties this dream-aversion to the innocence of the sleeping baby Hareton, observing "he's dreaming nothing dreary. How sweetly he smiles in **his** sleep," in response to which Catherine immediately reminds Nelly, and the reader, of the corruption that is bound to come, by saying that the child's now-horrifying and corrupt father was once "nearly as young and innocent" (85).

The horror of dreams and children in *Wuthering Heights* is enforced by Catherine's own dream of heaven, which is in startling contrast to that of Helen in *The Tenant*. While Helen dreams of a heaven made for children, even those children who are now adults, Catherine certainly doesn't: indeed, she dreams that she herself; weeping, makes "the angels **so** angry that they flung [her] out, into the middle of the heath on the top of Wuthering Heights; where [she] woke sobbing for joy" (86). Although Catherine seems to find less consolation in death than many of Emily's Gondal characters do, – and it is not unremarkable that it is she and Heathcliff who seem likely to be experiencing the "unquiet

slumbers” of Emily’s Gondal spectres at the novel’s end – still neither they nor she finds much encouraging in life, as her own tortured childhood and premature death well attest.

Children and dreams, then, for Emily and Anne Bronte, are significant things.

They mark the roles of the prevailing ideas of Romanticism and Victorianism in their lives as well as signal how their own maturation processes affected them. Gondal was, by all accounts, a dream-world with tracings back to the imaginary games and play of children. Yet Gondal was prominently **an** occupation undertaken by adults; **as** such, it was a battleground on which Emily and Anne could test out the delicate accords between Romanticism and Victorianism they were attempting, and a place of repose, allowing them to withdraw from the exhaustions **of an** ever-wearying world that offered few prospects for middle-class women. Anne’s method **of** dealing with these trials was to try to maintain a hopeful balance between Victorianism and Romanticism, – emphasizing the future hope **of** present children and dreams when the realities of Victorianism became too overwhelmingly depressing – while Emily’s method was to consider both Romanticism and Victorianism, and, at the same time, to deny both, as she denied dreams and children, as unfulfilling. In a sense, then, Gondal is an extension **of** reality for both authors; but, as a dream (not a nightmare), its original purpose, perhaps, **only** Anne is able to make it successful.

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O come with me thus ran the song
The moon is bright in Autumns sky
And thou has toiled and laboured long
With acheing head and weary eye

Emily's fragment 162 (not known if Gondal).

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