INTRODUCTION

Sarah Orne Jewett was born into a Congregationalist household. Except for her grandfather Perry, who probably held evangelical opinions, no one in her family seems to have been noticeably concerned with religion.[1] At the age of twenty-one, Jewett was baptized and confirmed in the Episcopal Church. The adult baptism is puzzling since the Church normally held valid a previous administration in the name of the Trinity. Perhaps the local Congregational minister of her childhood was of Unitarian opinion, or, more significantly, her father refused to have her baptized as an infant.[2] In any case, Jewett taught a Sunday school class in the Episcopal church of her community and, upon taking up residence in Boston, became an ardent admirer of the silver-tongued Phillips Brooks, broad church Episcopal bishop of Massachusetts.

Her affiliation with the Episcopal Church seemed only to whet her curiosity for sampling other religions. In her earlier years she was befriended by Theophilus Parsons of Harvard, a Swedenborgian, and "the kindly sureness of his faith both steadied and refreshed her."[3] Generally, however, her interest ran to romantic notions of religions older than Protestant Christianity. On one of her travels to Ohio, she attended both a Catholic mass and synagogue service. She compared her New England folk favorably with "ancient Greeks

going to . . .worship the gods of harvests" and "a company of Druid worshipers, or . . . strange northern priests and their people."[5] In a remarkable letter to Annie Fields in 1885, Jewett commended the teachings of the Buddha.

> If we had better interpreters of Buddha's teachings we might reach heights and depths of power and goodness that are now impossible; but we have fallen from the old wisdom and none of us today are so advanced.[6]

Despite her New England roots, neither Jewett nor her birthplace owed much to the Puritans. She seems to have had faint interest in American history before the Revolution and "apparently made no attempt to understand the Puritan mind."[7] When the friendly critic Edward Garnett referred to "the fine flower of the Puritan nature that speaks in Miss Jewett's art," she replied (in a "charming letter") that she was "descended from English cavalier, not Puritan stock."[8] Mere vestiges of the Puritan tradition remain in her fiction, most notably her concern with a partly secularized predestination.

Notes

[1]To Jewett he once said, "You must remember that there will come a day when you will call upon the hills to fall upon you and the rocks to cover you." (MS biography of Dr. William Perry by SOJ in SOJ Collection, Houghton Library, Harvard, as quoted in John Eldridge Frost, Sarah Orne Jewett Kittery Pt., Me.: The Gundalow Club, Inc., 1960, p. 160, n. 32).

[2]Before being elected bishop, Phillips Brooks was charged by his critics with having been improperly baptized by a Unitarian clergyman. He avoided a rebaptism nonetheless.

[3]Francis Otto Matthiessen, Sarah Orne Jewett (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1929), p. 39. Though it is difficult to trace any direct influence of this relationship, the influence of Swedenborgianism in New England generally and in the circle of Sarah Orne Jewett specifically was far more pervasive than its comparatively few adherents might indicate. Emerson had called Swedenborg "the last Father in the church," and the fathers of Henry James and William Dean Howells were aggressive propagators of New Church teachings. Swedenborgianism was popularly thought the fount of more unusual aberrations from orthodoxy. Emerson's Nature (1836), which was first published anonymously, was initially believed to be a Swedenborgian tract, and Phillips Brooks was accused of being a secret Swedenborgian. See generally Sidney E. Ahlstrom, A Religious History of the American People (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1972).

[4]Frost, p. 33.

[5]Sarah Orne Jewett, The Country of the Pointed Firs (1896; rpt. St. Clair Shores, Mich.: Scholarly Press, Inc., 1974), pp. 163-64; Sarah Orne Jewett, A Country Doctor (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1884), p. 40. cf. "The Foreigner," Atlantic Monthly, 86 (August 1900), 165 and The Country of the Pointed Firs, p. 259.

[6]Annie Fields, ed., Letters of Sarah Orne Jewett (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1911), p. 26.

[7]Charles Miner Thompson, "The Art of Miss Jewett," Atlantic Monthly, 94 (October 1904), 33; Babette May Levy, "Mutations in New England Local Color," New England Quarterly, 19 (Sept. 1946), 486.

[8]Edward Garnett, "Miss Sarah Orne Jewett's Tales," Academy and Literature, 65 (July 11, 1903),rpt. in

Appreciation of Sarah Orne Jewett, ed. Richard Gary (Waterville, Me.: Colby College Press, 1973) p. 22; note, p. 25.

CHAPTER I

THE THEOLOGY OF SARAH ORNE JEWETT

Fate

The four major aspects of Sarah Orne Jewett's theology are fate, nature, evil, and ethics. Of all these, her belief in fate would probably strike the most responsive chord in the hearts of the Puritan fathers of New England. Her attitude toward the force which shapes man's destiny is not rigorous, however; sometimes she calls this force fate, at other times, God, thus suggesting predestination. Almost always it is beneficial; only occasionally does she imply its darker side. Furthermore, within this working of fats, or God, she allows some free will. Additionally, she encourages accepting what destiny brings, making the best of every situation and maintaining hope when the way is obscure or difficult .

In her literarily less successful pieces, Jewett introduces Fate as a deus ex machina to swiftly and unexpectedly bring about a satisfactory solution to her characters' problems. For instance, its miraculous workings save Mrs. Robb from the poor house in "The Night Before Thanksgiving."[1] At this holiday season, Mary Ann Robb has nothing to share with others as she has had in the past. In fact, she has about decided to enter the poor house at the suggestion of her neighbor, John Mander, knowing full well he will take

possession of her property. Reminiscing on better days, she remembers Johnny Harris, an orphaned lad whom she had taken into her home years before. Again she recalls his promise to return after he has made his fortune in the West. She gets "a curious feeling of nearness and expectancy" and says, "I feel just as if somethin' was goin' to happen (QT, p. 227)." Not surprisingly, it does. Johnny Harris appears at the door with a wagonload of food and provisions for the needy woman.

Fate also brings unexpected benefits to Nancy Gale through her friendship with Tom Aldis in "The Life of Nancy."[2] Tom has maintained an interest in Nancy's career since their youth, though he has not seen her or heard from her in fifteen years. When they meet again as adults, Tom understands why fate has not severed the bonds between them. Nancy has become almost completely bedridden by crippling arthritis which allows her only to teach some students of East Rodney in her home. After Tom moves his family to East Rodney, his children become Nancy's pupils, and his wealth provides her with conveniences which she normally could not have afforded. As Tom reflects upon his reunion with Nancy, he ponders "the curious insistence of fate which made him responsible for something in the life of Nancy and brought him back to her neighborhood (LN, p. 41)."

Less heavy-handed is the treatment of fate in "The Only Rose." Every year Mrs. Bickford puts bouquets on the graves of her three husbands. This summer, however, she has decided to put her only rose blossom on the grave of her favorite

spouse. Her heart chooses Albert, her first husband, but she is reluctant to offend the memory of the others. By the time the widow leaves for the cemetery with her nephew John, the "bright" rose "like a face (LN, p. 132)" has "become a definite symbol and assertion of personal choice (LN, p. 14-8)." John, knowing nothing of her quandary, offers to arrange the bouquets on the graves for her so that she will not have to climb the hill in the heat. "To leave the matter of the rose in the hands of fate seems weakness and cowardice," she thinks, but she gives John the flowers and waits anxiously, hoping he puts the rose on the right grave (LN, p. 153). When John returns with the rose in his lapel—it had fallen out, and he decided to give it to his fiancée Lizzie—Aunt Bickford is satisfied with the choice. Like Albert, "John was a lover too. 'My first husband was just such a tall, straight young man as you be,' she said. . . . 'The flower he first give me was a rose' (LN, p. 155)."

Jewett also shows fate moving slowly yet deliberately in the lives of her characters. Dick Dale, a city artist, in A Marsh Island,[3] is forced to spend additional time on Marsh Island because of a foot injury. At first he is "much amused at watching the effect upon himself of being transplanted by a whimsical fate into that rural neighborhood (MI, p. 11)." After his foot heals, he stays as a boarder at the Owen's home to work on his paintings and sketches. More and more attracted to the lovely Doris Owen, Dick becomes annoyed at and sometimes fearful of what fate may be demanding of him.

Could his destiny be to remain with this family to enlighten them and broaden their perspective with his worldly knowledge? Is he, a man with no driving purpose, being directed by fate to find purpose among these rural folk? Irked somewhat by this seeming insistence of fate, Dick asks himself, "If a man did not see his duty and opportunity with his own eyes, must he be attracted by a magnet-like necessity (MI, p. 85)?" Although Dick does at least make the decision to ask Doris to marry him, fate, the "unsilenced monitor, kept telling [him] to wait (MI, p. 257)." Doris, meanwhile, decides to marry her hometown sweetheart. Dick accepts her choice by concluding that "Doris and Dan Lester were destined for each other (MI, p. 284)." Upon returning to his urban art studio, he evaluated the significance of his experience on Marsh Island. "[D]imly conscious that for each revelation of truth or beauty Heaven demands tribute and better service than before, . . . [Dick] had at least gained a new respect for his own life and its possible value (MI, p. 290)." Perhaps now his life will have stronger purpose.

On the other hand, Miss Becky Parsons is unaware that fate is directing her destiny ("Miss Becky's Pilgrimage"[4]). She and her brother had lived together for many years when his sudden death leaves her future uncertain. Feeling lonesome for her kinfolk, she moves back to her hometown. She and the local minister soon become sweethearts, and shortly thereafter she becomes the minister's wife. Happy with her new life, Becky thinks of how "her life had been most

wonderfully ordered. Everything had happened just right, . . . all the events of life . . . [even] things that seemed to have no connection with her, all matched her needs and fitted in at just the right time (CB, p. 249)." In this story, Jewett leaves no doubt that fate has moved beneficently, step by step.

Yet wherever fate leads, Jewett seems to say that one should hope for the best and not despair at circumstances. In a letter to Sarah Whitman in 1897, Jewett pictures men "riding the horse of Fate." She admonishes that we should "not look back and try to change the lost days! if we can only keep our faces toward the light and remember that whatever happens or has happened, we must hold fast to hope![5] Mrs. Fanny Tobin ("A Winter Courtship"[6]) believes in the forward look, too, though she expresses it in more homely terms: "I had all my bundles done up, and I ain't one that puts my hand to the plough an' looks back, 'cordin' to Scriptur' (SW, p. 7)." Probably the most revealing application of this theme occurs in the story "Farmer Finch."[7] Although Polly Finch has trained to become a teacher, she remains to work the farm after her father suffers a heart attack. By trying new farming techniques and following her father's instructions, she makes the land productive. Under the constraint of necessity, but resolving to aid her family, she abandons her planned career. The narrator praises Polly because "she made the best of things, and conquered circumstances, instead of being what cowards call the victim of circumstances (WH, p. 84)."

Thus Jewett implies that no one can be called a "victim of circumstance" who cheerfully accepts the duty fate has forced upon him.

In A Country Doctor,[8] an early work, Jewett refers to the force of destiny as God as well as fate. She stresses the importance of training the spiritual part of man, the soul, to realize "[his] relation and dependence upon the highest informing strength," which is "the strength of Heaven (CD, pp. 111-12)." With this serious concern, Dr. Leslie raises the child Nan Prince, who prepares for her life's work with similar gravity. Nan accepts the arbitrariness of her destiny as she awaits "the whole influence of her character and of the preparatory years to shape and signify themselves into a simple chart and unmistakable command (CD, p. 159)." When the command—to study medicine—comes to Nan, she knows "God had directed her at last . . . though the opening of the sealed orders had been long delayed (CD, p. 166)." From this point on, Nan becomes more and more sure of the sanctity of her calling to become a doctor. The author stresses the spiritual implications with explicit moralizing. For instance, she says that like Nan we should "let God make us . . . [and] follow the path that his love shows us, instead of through conceit or cowardice or mockery choosing another." To allow God to rule is not bondage." [S]imply giving ourselves back to Him in grateful service" provides true spiritual liberty with no "bewilderment or ignorance or uncertainty." Only in the "strait and narrow way where God had

left no room for another," in a life of self-forgetful service, would Nan realize freedom (CD, pp. 303-04). At the conclusion of the novel, the author emphasizes in rhetorical fashion the exultation of the life governed by God: Nan "reached her hands upward in an ecstasy of life and strength and gladness. '0 God,' she said, 'I thank thee for my future (CD, p. 351).'"

Characters in Jewett's shorter works find comfort and security in God's direction of their lives also. One example is Andrew Phillips, in "Andrew's Fortune," who does not inherit the family farm because his father's will cannot be found. In addition, his sweetheart deserts him when she learns he will not receive an inheritance. He is forced by these events to move to the city. There he succeeds in business, marries happily, and discovers how much more content he is in the city than he would have been on the farm. Years later he recalls his earlier unpromising outlook and is thankful that "the hand of God had plainly shaped his course (GB, p. 85)."

For sheer serendipity none of Jewett's characters succeeds like Miss Catherine Spring in "A Late Supper."[9] In financial difficulty, Miss Spring has advertised for boarders but with no results. When unexpected company comes to visit, she borrows cream from a neighbor but is prevented from returning to her house by a train which blocks the way. In a hurry, she steps up on the train to cross over to the other side; however, the train begins to move, and she is forced to

ride to the next stop. In a Pullman, car she finds a family in need of a place to board. Miss Spring's financial worries are ended. She feels "that it was such a wonderfully linked together chain." What she thought was all her foolish mistake "was all ordered for the best; and may the Lord forgive me for doubting his care and goodness." The following Sunday the pastor in his sermon echoes the lesson she has learned--that the steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord. "He plans the way we go," and we should accept whatever He has planned for us "since he knows best (OF, pp. 112-13)." The narrator cannot resist injecting another homily of her own. She recalls a sermon title, "Every Man's Life a Plan of God," and considers it a promise "that our lives are planned with the greatest love and wisdom (OF, p. 113)." In a similar way, the speaker in "Lady Perry" sees God as a source of comfort, a trusted friend who gives solace (OF, p. 184). One who tries to serve others and shoulders his own burdens as well may rest assured that "There is One who knows." He should look forward in faith, knowing that even in the darkest hours "there is always a hand ready to help (OF, pp. 221-22)." As Richard Gary has written in regard to "A Late Supper," "this theme of God moving in mysterious ways his wonders to perform is freighted with Miss Jewett's worst didactic manner."[10]

The essay "An October Ride" presents Jewett's musings on God's continuous influence in the world. Stopping at the ruins of a farm, the narrator meditates upon the natural

cycle of growth and decay. God, she says, is ever present, never changing. He controls life both mortal and immortal; "it is only God who can plan and order it all (CB, p. 103)." Again, however, she allows freedom within God's direction: "God gives our life to us moment by moment, but He gives it to be our own (CB, p. 101)." God had watched over those who had lived on this farm; "the chain of events was fitted to their thoughts and lives, for their development and education. The world was made for them, and God keeps them yet (CB, p. 103)." Thus the author views the promise of God's provision for man's soul reflected in nature's cycle of birth, decay, and rebirth.

Although Jewett is clearly aware of the negative aspect of a planned destiny, she avoids emphasizing it. The speaker in The Country of the Pointed Firs[11] laments "the waste of human ability in this world" as she considers the Bowden family. Quiet, isolated Dunnet Landing does not offer these people all the opportunities necessary to demonstrate their capabilities. "[O]nly opportunity and stimulus were lacking," she concludes; "a narrow set of circumstances had caged a fine able character and held it captive (CF, p. 174)." There the idea rests; Jewett does not develop it further.

Old Manon in "Mere Pochette"[12] complains that "fate had been hard upon her" and grieves that "the good Lord had taken" her daughter and son-in-law "to himself," but the author suggests that the old woman's problems are primarily of her own making. She is a selfish, stubborn woman who sees

her granddaughter near death before she reforms (KFI, p. 305). Similarly, the half-insane old man in "The Landscape Chamber" says that his family is under a curse and "are of those who have no hope in a world of fate (KFI, p. 114)." The author nevertheless implies that he could be saved if he turned toward God and away from his doomed environment.

Of all Jewett's characters, Andrew in Deephaven[13] makes the harshest indictment of God for His allotments to man. Circumstances definitely seem to rule against Andrew. His health is poor. He is a boat builder during a time when boats are not in demand. The rocky land on his farm is worthless, and he is unable to fish. With tears in his eyes, he tells the protagonists of the story, Kate Lancaster and Helen Denis,

> I've done the best I could, and I'm willin' and my woman is, but everything seems to have been ag'in us; we never seem to get forehanded. It looks sometimes as if the Lord had forgot us, but my woman . . . she says He ain't, and that we might be worse off,--but I don't know. (DH, p. 207)

Even with these hardships, Andrew's weak character is still a contributing factor in his own downfall, for he turns to alcohol and dies in drunkenness.

In summary, Jewett's position concerning destiny is revealed in Doris Owen's reply to Dick Dale in A Marsh Island;

> "Sometimes I think there are all sorts of powers and forces doing what they please with us, for good or bad reasons of their own."
>
> "We are taught to believe that one power is, aren't we?" asked Doris timidly. "But always for own good." (MI, p. 180)

Like Doris, Jewett is reluctant to name this force that guides man's life, though toward the end of her literary career she calls it fate much more frequently than God. Sometimes this force works for ill, but even then she makes allowances for the person's own strength of character and determination to rise above circumstance. Being a romantic realist, Jewett must hope that man's destiny is planned for his ultimate good.

Nature

If in Jewett's theology "fate" may stand for "God," so too does the term "Nature." Like Emerson, she firmly believed in "a mystical kinship between man and Nature." On occasion Jewett separates God from nature and speaks of His direction of creation. At other times she verges on pantheism. Additionally, "in 'River Driftwood' Miss Jewett speculates about an evolutionary rise in the scale of continuous existence."[15] In an attempt to define her concept of the correlation among God, man, and nature, Richard Gary has variously used the terms pantheism, transcendentalism, and "scaled biological destiny."[16] Because Jewett herself is often vague, any or all of these terms may be used to describe her religion of nature.

Jewett's affinity for nature began when she was a small child. Looking back to that period, she wrote in "A Mournful Village," "I was first cousin to a caterpillar . . . , and I was own sister to a giddy-minded bobolink (CB, p. 134)." When Jewett traveled with her father on his visits to

patients scattered around the community, he taught her the names of the numerous plants and trees growing along the roadside or in carefully tended gardens or fields. As an adult she retained her love of nature, and very few of her works do not at least mention local flora and fauna.

In a letter to Annie Fields, Jewett described one of her spiritual experiences with nature. She had just returned from climbing Powderhouse Hill alone in the moonlight. Still awed by the panorama of the twinkling night sky above and the sleepy village below, she wrote, "When one goes out of doors and wanders alone at such a time, how wonderfully one becomes a part of nature, like an atom of quick-silver against a great mass. I hardly keep my separate consciousness, but go until the mood has spent itself."[17] But Jewett did not need the moonlight for a mystical union with nature. Speaking as herself in The Country of the Pointed Firs, she says that taking "the course of a shady trout brook" one can become "so close to nature that one is simply a piece of nature, following a primeval instinct, . . . forgetting everything except the dreamy consciousness of pleasant freedom (CF, p. 213)."

Three essays--"An October Ride," "A Winter Drive," and "River Driftwood"--and Deephaven each contain major statements regarding Jewett's religion of nature. The relevant section in "An October Ride" describes the close relationship between man and nature. The author wonders "if every one feels it so intensely" as she does. Sometimes she

experiences such an intimate communion with nature that she begins unconsciously "whistling a queer tune that chimes in with the crickets piping and the cries of the little creatures around [her] . . . in the garden." In what could be called her nature creed she states, "I am happiest . . . where I find that which is next of kin to me, in friends, or trees, or hills, or seas, or beside a flower." She nearly equates God with nature when she says, "I am only a part of one great existence which is called nature. The life in me is a bit of all life." Later, however, she says that it is God who puts "again to some use the life that is withdrawn" through death. It is God who controls all forms of life and perpetuates them. Consequently she implies a distinction between Creator and creation (CB, pp. 100-02).

Furthermore, Jewett intimates the superiority of the natural world to man. The laws and forces of the world of nature are always the same. Man can only "discover and combine and use" what has forever been existing, in a sense waiting for man to find it. "Nature repossesses herself surely of what we boldly claim" after our civilizations die. Men clear the land to build and plant, but after they die "the trees they left grow older, and the young trees spring up, and the fields they cleared are being covered over and turned into wild land again." What saves Jewett from pessimism when regarding the brevity of man's existence is the belief that even nature is under God's control, and that God "cares for the least of us" humans and gives us eternal life "somewhere in his kingdom (CB, pp. 101-03)."

In "A Winter Drive," Jewett makes a strange comparison between man and the trees. She states that there is a kinship between them because "all matter lives . . . life and matter are inseparable." Though she recognizes the origin of this idea in hylozoism, Jewett insists that it does not contradict her Christian beliefs. Liberally employing the pathetic fallacy to prove that trees have life, she distinguishes personalities, families, and races among both men and trees. Trees, like men, show different character strengths. Among the trees "there is the same proportion of ignorant rabble of poor creatures, who are struggling for life . . .and of self-respecting, well-to-do, dignified citizens [as there is in human society]. It is not wholly a question of soil and of location any more than it is with us." She is not hesitant in giving trees spiritual perceptions

> If a man or a tree has it in him to grow, who can say what will hinder him . . . . There is something in the constitution of character; it is vigorous and will conquer, or it is weak and anything will defeat it. I believe that it is more than a likeness between the physical natures; there is something deeper than that. (CB, p. 169)

Although she admits *a* reluctance to assert that "higher animals are morally responsible," she does not want to deny that trees "anticipate the future, or show traits of character which [are]. . . good and evil." Hence trees have a certain self-consciousness. Jewett does not adopt the ancient belief in hamadryads, but she says she believes that the trees themselves have individual souls distinct from any nymphs

supposedly dwelling within them (CB, pp, 168-70). The tone of this passage seems absolutely earnest; it is not intended to be taken as a clever figure of speech.

In "River Driftwood" Jewett applies the same pathetic fallacy to animals with perhaps a dash of romantic Darwinianism thrown in for good measure.[19] Man, she says, has more in common with the animals than he realizes:

> They share other instincts and emotions with us beside surprise, or suspicion, or fear. They are curiously thoughtful; they act no more from unconscious instinct than we do.

Possibly with some millennium in mind, she looks forward to a day when man and nature will be in perfect accord, "when the meaning of every living thing is understood;" all creatures have value because God created them and gave them "a spirit (CB, pp. 5-6)."

In concluding this portion of the essay, Jewett mulls over ideas of a vaguely Darwinian cast. She states that "grass is made somehow from the ground, and presently that is turned into beef, and that goes to make part of a human being." She admits, "There is something distressing about being eaten, and having one's substance minister to a superior existence!" Nevertheless, "We must eat our fellows and be eaten to keep things within a proper limit." Rather than being content with a kind of pantheistic immortality through an eternal cycle of nature, however, Jewett here introduces I the possibility of man's becoming an angel, though she does

not postulate a celestial feast on spirits. To further confound matters, she says that this discussion "leads one to the transmigration of souls (CB, pp. 7-8)!"

Like her essays, Jewett's fiction contains brief but significant statements regarding the interconnection of God, man, and nature. Deephaven is a major example. Through the discussion of Kate and Helen, the author stresses the importance of natural instinct in achieving "sympathy with nature." They reflect that perhaps country folk have that instinct because they live so close to the plants and animals "which depend upon their instincts wholly." Man learns from his associations with natural life. The more intimately one lives with nature the more likely he will be able to perceive "the strength and purpose in the world around" him and thus find strength and purpose for himself as well. Furthermore, since nature is a reflection of God, it is therefore a divine teacher as well. As man spends more time with nature, he comprehends more fully the spiritual life there.

> The strength of the hills and the voice of the waves are no longer only grand poetical sentences, but an expression of something real, and more and more one finds God himself in the world, and believes that we may read the thoughts that he writes for us in the book of Nature. (DH, pp. 186-87)

Some of Jewett's other fictional works at least suggest man's spiritual kinship with nature. The conflict of "A Neighbor's Landmark" centers on whether or not John Packer will sell for timber the two giant pine trees which stand "like some huge archaic creatures" on his property (LN, p. 256).

Mr. Ferris is eager to cut them, but the neighbors and John's family regard them as a permanent part *of* their lives and want them to remain. The trees have an eternal quality about them: "They stood and grew in their places, while a worldful of people lived and died, and again and again new worldfuls were born and passed away," but these pines stayed "green and vigorous (LN, p. 257)." At the last moment John prevents Ferris from chopping down the old pines. The community-wide effort to preserve the landmarks draws the residents closer together, and John's decision strengthens the bond within the Packer family. In addition, the "intimate reciprocal involvement"[20] between man and nature has been sustained: "whatever man's hands have handled, and his thoughts have centred in, gives something back to man, and becomes charged with his transferred life, and brought into relationship (LN, p. 256)."

In "A White Heron," the spiritual bond between Sylvia and nature helps her to resist the temptation of materialism. One can sense the kinship of Sylvia and nature in her grandmother 's comment to the ornithologist, "There ain't a foot o' ground she don't know her way over, and the wild creaturs counts her one o' themselves (SW, p. 9)." Obviously Sylvia's name itself is symbolic of her communion with the forest. Thus the request of the young hunter provokes within her a conflict between the spirit (nature) and the flesh (the world). If Sylvia will reveal the nesting place of the rare white heron to the ornithologist, "he will give her ten

dollars, a fortune to a girl of her age and situation. The girl is strongly tempted both by the money and by her love for the young man, symbols of fleshly values. After she has climbed the pine to find the heron, however, she cannot give away its secret. From the top of the giant tree she experienced a sense of the "meaning of existence." She "has achieved...a merger of self with nature." The spiritual value of her kinship is worth more to Sylvia than money or love.[21]

In "Miss Sydney's Flowers," Jewett illustrates the aphorism, "one touch of nature makes the whole world kin." Wealthy Miss Sydney "was a good woman in a negative kind of way"; her sins were those of omission rather than commission. She has lived to herself, doing little for anyone else. However, when a new street is opened behind her house, exposing her greenhouse plants to public view, her heart, as well as those of passersby, begins to open. One young man is "turned back from a plan of wicked mischief by the sight of a tall, green geranium" which reminds him of his devoted mother (OF, p. 150). As the flowers bloom, "the seeds of kindness and charity and helpfulness began to show themselves in the almost empty garden of [Miss Sydney's] heart (OF, p. 157)." Through the influence of the flowers, Miss Sydney gives candy to poor children on the street, helps an old candy vendor obtain a better-paying job, and meets Bessie, through whom she donates money and flowers to the Children's Hospital. "[S]he had been so far from living a Christian

life," but now she knows how to live better for God's sake (OF, p. 165). The harvest from Miss Sydney's heart is bountiful, for she plants with love; "love is a treasure that does not lessen, but grows, as we spend it (OF, p, 159)."

Whatever Jewett's deepest personal beliefs about the souls of trees and the possibilities of reducing juvenile delinquency with geraniums, it is certain that her Emersonian conception of nature was dated by the last decade of the nineteenth century. She was probably the last significant American literary figure to romanticize nature in this fashion. Her younger contemporaries, Jack London and Stephen Crane, were able to view Darwinism straight on, and they wrote of nature "bloody in tooth and claw," not as the embodiment of man's spiritual nature but as his enemy in the struggle for survival.

Evil

As might be expected from her reluctance to consider the grimmer side of the natural world, Jewett avoids a comprehensive definition of evil as well. Certainly she pays slight attention to the sordid and seamy parts of life. However, to agree with Pattee's evaluation that "h[ers] is a transfigured New England . . . with all its roughness and coarseness and sordidness refined away"[23] or with Levy's judgment that her characters "are pleasantly human, with their worst fault a slight avariciousness"[24] is to oversimplify the author's presentation of evil. She does portray man's depravity, and it does go deeper than greed. When Charles

Miner Thompson wrote that "[h]ers is an idyllic picture, such as a good woman is apt to find life reflecting to her," she replied with a quotation about Turgenev which she felt reflected her own artistic philosophy:

> [T]here was in him such a love of light, sunshine and living human poetry, such an organic aversion to all that is ugly, or coarse, or discordant, that he made himself almost exclusively the poet of the gentler side of human nature. On the fringe . . ., or in [the] background, just for the sake of contrast, he will show us the vices, the cruelties, even the mire of life. But he cannot stay in these gloomy regions . . . .[26]

As with other subjects, Jewett is ambiguous in her depiction of evil. Sometimes she infers that evil is passed from generation to generation within a family, possibly a reflection of the late nineteenth-century interest in eugenics; at other times she indicates that a person can choose to abstain from evil if he will. One example of the former is the story "In Dark New England Days," one of Jewett's bitterest. After being robbed of their family's wealth, Hannah and Betsey Knowles sue their neighbor Enoch Holt for theft. Having no evidence of the man's guilt, the jury finds him not guilty. To Hannah, who still calls him a thief, Enoch replies, "I swear by my right hand I never touched it." The embittered woman then cries, "Curse your right hand, yours and all your folks that follow you! May I live to see the day (SW, p. 240)!" The curse is eventually fulfilled: Enoch Holt loses his right arm in a building accident; his daughter's right hand withers up, useless; the grandson has his

right hand shot off out West. The author does not tell the reader who the thief is, an unusual omission for her. Perhaps the fulfillment of the curse is all the answer one needs

During a discussion about sin in A Marsh Island, Israel Owen says that with all the weaknesses and tendencies toward evil that are passed along in families, "'t is a wonder a good many is so decent behaved as they be (pp. 191-92)." The neighbors of Nan Prince, and, indeed, the heroine herself, speak of the wild and sinful nature she may have inherited from her parents. She seems to show evidences of it when she is a child, roaming about the neighborhood playing tricks on the unsuspecting. Nevertheless, she does not despair, but through self-discipline and determined effort to live by "the law of right and wrong," she diminishes the influence of any inherited moral weakness (CD, p. 317).

In contrast, the old man and his daughter in "The Landscape Chamber," a literary commentary on the doctrine of original sin, refuse to escape from their inherited curse and choose to wait for it to destroy them. The narrator, who has been traveling by horseback through the countryside, is forced to spend several days in the crumbling ruins of a once luxurious estate until her horse recovers from a leg injury. From the two inhabitants of this isolated and dreary place, the traveler finally learns why they are in such poverty. The old man explains, "We are all in prison while we are left in this world, . . . in prison for another man's sin." Apparently his ancestor "sold his soul for wealth," and succeeding

generations have inherited his miserliness and greed. The old man claims to have a generous heart but not the ability to give or even spend for more than necessities. The horrified guest protests "that God meant us to be free and unconquered by any evil power"; later she argues, "among human beings . . . there is freedom, thank God! We can climb to our best possibilities and outgrow our worst inheritances." Despite the narrator's pleadings, even the daughter is bitterly resigned to their gloomy fate, and the sorrowing old father remains adamant, insisting that the visitor leave and forget them. Feeling there is nothing more she can do for them, the narrator departs, looking back often in wonder that such despair and hopelessness could exist in this world (KFI, pp. 112-14).

Jewett alternated between blaming the individual for his sin and accusing circumstances, or even fate, for not allowing a different course. "By the Morning Boat" shows fifteen-year-old Elisha leaving his country home for work in Boston. His family fears the evils and temptations that may befall him in the city. His grandfather, an old sailor, uses an analogy of a ship likened to a person's character for his final admonition to the lad: "If a vessel's built out o' sound timber an' has got 'good lines for sailin', why then she's seaworthy; but if she ain't, she ain't; an' a mess o' preachin' ain't goin' to alter her over (SW, p. 205)." A little later in the narration the author remarks that now that the boy is away from his family's influence, he must accept individual

responsibility for his life, "for in the world one must be ranked by his own character and ability, and doomed by his own failures (SW, pp. 213-14)." Similarly, Father Ryan in "Between Mass and Vespers"[27] reminds Dan Nolan that his crimes of fraud and swindling are due to his own weakness. It is now up to him to change his ways and make restitution (NW, p. 246). Kate Lancaster's statements near the conclusion of Deephaven reiterate Jewett's own ambivalence concerning who or what is to blame for evil. She says individuals are to blame when "the events of our lives are hindrances; it is we who make them bad or good." Yet she implies that another influence is involved by stating that the decisions are more frequently "unconscious" than "conscious" (DH, pp. 244-45).

Though the individual be weak and prone to sin, the author is slow to judge. Kate and Helen learn that Andrew, an acquaintance of theirs in Deephaven, has died. They question family members for details and discover he died from drunkenness. He was a sickly man, weak in character, and his wife's death completely broke his resistance. Alcohol was his only solace. When Andrew's half-sister criticizes the dead man for not having borne up better after his wife's death, her husband comes to his defense. He reminds her that "they done the best they could. They were n't shif 'less . . . they never had no health; 't was against wind and tide with 'em all the time (DH, p. 212)."

When Nancy Lane ("Marsh Rosemary") learns that her supposedly dead husband lives in another town and has remarried, her bitterness demands revenge for his sin against her. She finds his house in Shediac, intent upon telling "the other woman . . . the savage truth about him." However, as she looks in the window and sees Jerry, his new wife, and their baby so happy together, "[a]ll thoughts of ending the new wife's sin and folly vanished away. She could not enter in and break another heart; hers was broken already, and it would not matter." Furthermore, she is content to disregard "the laws of the land" concerning bigamy in order to allow Jerry to live his new life (WH, pp. 120-21).

Miss Horatia Dane, another woman disappointed in love, shows forgiveness to her erring lover ("A Lost Lover"). Though her lover was reported to have gone down with his ship, Miss Dane has remained true to his memory, rejecting marriage proposals from other suitors over the years. Forty or more years after their romance, Miss Dane recognizes as her lost lover a tramp who begs at her house. Drink and wretched living have ruined him, and, with the ten dollars Horatia gives him, he buys more liquor, unaware of the identity of his benefactor. With no bitterness, Miss Horatia can say, "God forgive him." The narrator explains, "[s]he suffered terribly on his account; she had a pity, such as God's pity must be, for even his wilful sins (OF, p. 39)."

Joanna of The Country of the Pointed Firs is yet another woman thwarted in love and deserted by her lover. Her belief

that she has committed "the unpardonable sin," however, is the focus of this story of unrequited love. For her penance she has isolated herself on Shell-heap Island. She explains to Almira Todd, who comes to ask her to leave the island, "I was in great wrath and trouble, and my thoughts was so wicked towards God that I can't expect ever to be forgiven. . . . I have lost my hope. You must tell those that ask how 't is with me, . . . an' tell them I want to be alone (CF, p. 121)." The author does not condemn her, nor do the people of Dunnet Landing, who honor her request for solitude. Jewett never explicitly says that God has forgiven the poor recluse, but she implies the idea through the community's acceptance of Joanna ("Some is meant to be the Joannas in this world [CF, p. 126].") and through the fact that she was at peace with nature, living close to the sea and sky and land and having tamed some wild birds.[28] Furthermore, Almira Todd says that "Joanna was like one of the saints in the desert" (putting emphasis on the word saint); and the narrator closes with the reflection that like Joanna, all have experienced times of isolation: "In the life of each of us . . . there is a place remote and islanded, . . . we are each the uncompanioned hermit and recluse of an hour or a day (CF, p. 127 and p. 132)."

In "A Sorrowful Guest," Jewett wrote that any person could choose "the wrong way in life! The possibilities for wickedness and goodness in us are both unlimited." Whether the evil in man stemmed from hereditary causes or personal

weakness in character, Jewett was slow to blame and swift to excuse or forgive. She evidently held to the hope that God "sometimes saves what we have scorned and blamed (OF, pp. 78-79)."

Ethics

More congenial to the optimistic nature of Jewett was the exposition of the "possibilities for . . . goodness" in man, which may be summarized under the two concepts of self-forgetfulness (or usefulness) and love. Jewett found the first and most important influence upon her ethical philosophy in the usefulness and unselfishness of her father, who gave his time, abilities, and energy to the task of healing others. In A Country Doctor, she implies that the work of a physician is the noblest and most selfless of all professions.[29] Jewett also received moral instruction from her grandfather Perry. Of his influence she wrote that he was "always showing me where good work had been done, and insisting upon my recognition of the moral qualities that led to achievement."[30]

Even in adolescence, Jewett could be a serious young lady, concerned about her life's usefulness. Gradually she came to believe that her ministry, her service to the world, would come about through her writing. In September 1895, she quoted in a letter to Sarah Whitman a key sentence from Paul Bourget's address to the French Academy. The idea expressed there seemed to be her own desire for selfless dedication of her life to others through writing:

> the principle of intellectual creativeness, . . . is to be found in the gift ... of oneself; in an outpouring of tenderness for others; in warmth and enthusiasm; and that the genius of the artist is, . . .an act of faith and love.[31]

As early as 1873, when Jewett was only twenty-four, Theophilus Parsons had told her, "You will never write without knowing that you are going to say something which will make your readers wiser and better."[32] Other writers she measured on the same scale. At the death of Longfellow in 1882 she said that one

> who has written as [he] wrote, stays in this world always . . . to be a helper and friend to his fellow men . . . . [his life] is not shut in to his own household or kept to the limits of his every-day existence. . . . one's eye cannot follow the roads his thoughts and influences have always gone.[33]

Likewise, those who knew James Russell Lowell realized "how full of help to one's thoughts and purposes in every-day life" he was.[34] Yet, though she saw writing to be her own holy calling, she stressed the importance of love and usefulness in every area of life and emphasized the necessity of selfless service. She believed that "Life is best when we lose sight of ourselves in trying to help others" and that "Existence is the most frivolous thing in the world if one does not conceive it as a great and continual duty.[35] When Jewett learned that a woman friend would be left alone to care for herself because of family problems, she was troubled, mostly by the fact that the woman would have great difficulties because her life had "been so narrow and she has no great

outlook or preparation for unselfish usefulness."[36] Furthermore, Jewett sensed that selfless love benefited the giver as well as the recipient. "[T]he only certainty in this world," she wrote Sarah Whitman, "is the certainty of Love and Care . . . . The only thing that really helps any of us is love and doing things for love's sake."[37] She admired novelist and social worker Mrs. Humphry Ward for her "sympathy and feeling," calling them "gifts of heaven."[38]

In her essays and fiction Jewett offers many examples of this ethical philosophy. Two major works in which love and usefulness are principal factors are A Country Doctor and The Country of the Pointed Firs. Almost from the beginning of A Country Doctor, the author stresses the sacredness of love and usefulness. When Dr. Leslie considers his growing fondness for the orphaned Nan Prince and his responsibility to show that love, he remembers the morning's sermon in which the minister had said "that love is the great motive power" and "we are taught to pray for love to God, and so conquer the difficulty of holiness (CD, p. 53)." After the doctor takes Nan into his home, he feels the burden of helping her to be useful. He wants this training to be a means of showing love to God as well as to man. "And if I can help one good child to work with nature and not against it, and to follow the lines marked out for her," Dr. Leslie explains to his friend Dr. Ferris, "and she turns out useful and intelligent, and keeps off the rocks of mistaking her duty, I shall be more than glad (CD, p. 106)." Wanting Nan to be happy

and able to support herself, the old doctor continues to hold firmly to the belief that only a life of usefulness will give her both happiness and security.

This novel is one of the few fictional works in which Jewett mentions Christ, and here she stresses His example to mankind, saying that "Christ's glory was his usefulness and gift for helping others (CD, pp. 112-13)." As Dr. Leslie instructs and guides Nan and she eventually decides to live a useful life as a physician, she becomes more like Christ. Well-meaning friends try to dissuade Nan from studying medicine, believing that this profession is for men only and that a woman's place is in the home. Nan is confident, however, that her interest in healing others comes from God, and she prays "every morning that [she] may do this work lovingly and well (CD, pp. 282-83)." Even though Nan and George Gerry fall in love, Nan decides that marriage would only hinder her service to others. In breaking off their relationship, she explains to him,

> I don't know why God should have made me a doctor . . . ., but I see the blessedness of such a useful life more and more ....It is n't for us to choose . . . but just work in our own places, and leave the rest to God. (CD, p. 327)

George knows that it is hopeless to attempt to persuade his lover to change her mind because he had sensed her high calling already. He knows she stands "nearer to holier things than himself, and had listened to the call of God's messengers to whom his own doors had been ignorantly shut (CD, p. 328)."

Nan so awes George with her spiritual strength that he is inclined to kneel before her, and as they part, she whispers a benediction upon him! Abandoning subtlety altogether in her portrayal of the young woman as an apostolic saint, Jewett announces that Nan's soul is to be a "teller of new truth, a revealer of laws, and an influence for good . . . [by] its example of pure and reasonable life." Nan "had come to her work as Christ came to his, not to be ministered unto but to minister," and she will "go about doing good in Christ's name to the halt and maimed and blind in spiritual things (CD, p. 340 and p. 342)."

The epitome of unselfish love in The Country of the Pointed Firs is Mrs. Blackett, the elderly but spry mother of Almira Todd. Though Mrs. Blackett is eighty-six, she often acts younger than her daughter, who is sixty-seven. Mrs. Blackett is described as "light-hearted"; although "[s]he's seen all the trouble folks can see, . . . she's got a word of courage for everybody. Life ain't spoilt her a mite!" She lives on Green Island, whose name connotes the springtime promise of life. In fact, when the narrator first sees this outer island, the "sunburst upon [it] . . . made it seem like a sudden revelation of the world beyond this which some believe to be so near (CF, pp. 45-46)." This allusion to heaven indicates where Mrs. Blackett gets her love and her vitality for life. At her first meeting with this saintly old woman, the narrator says, "You felt as if Mrs. Blackett were an old and dear friend before you let go

her cordial hand (CF, p. 56)." She could conclude after watching the elderly woman's cordiality and sincere interest in others that "she had that final, that highest gift of heaven, a perfect self-forgetfulness." The narrator wonders why such a radiant, selfless person lives "on this lonely island" and decides that it "must have been to keep the balance true, and make up to all her scattered and depending neighbors for other things which they may have lacked (CF, p. 73)."

The other inhabitants of the community look to Mrs. Blackett for guidance and leadership. She speaks kindly and avoids criticism and gossip. In what others may call impossible situations, she sees the possible in man and creature alike. After Mrs. Blackett had chosen the homeliest and most unlikely from a batch of kittens, she pronounced it "the smartest." The cat, she says now, is the best mouser she ever had (CF, p. 58). Of her socially backward and retiring son William, Mrs. Blackett says that she is "the gainer" because he has stayed on the island with her and did not seek a life elsewhere (CF, pp. 62-63). At the Bowden family reunion she is called the queen and marches at the front of the procession. Even on the isolated Green Island, the generous-hearted woman keeps her best room always ready for company and is never out of provisions for feeding, any visitor who may arrive. Finally, it is Mrs. Blackett and Mrs. Blackett alone whom the recluse Joanna requests to see as she is on her deathbed.

The narrator observes the respect and affection which Mrs. Blackett receives from all at Dunnet Landing and then understands "the constant interest and intercourse that had linked the far island and these scattered farms into a golden chain of love and dependence (CF, p. 147)." Mrs. Blackett's love and usefulness are a continuing legacy. Near the conclusion of her stay at Dunnet Landing, the narrator reflects that "sometimes I believed that I had never found love in its simplicity as I had found it . . . in the various hearts of Mrs. Blackett and Mrs. Todd and William . . . . . Their counterparts are in every village in the world, thank heaven (CF, pp. 286-87)."

In Jewett's shorter works there are other characters who show the same love and self-forgetfulness. For instance, in "Martha's Lady," the servant Martha does "all for love's sake"; "all she lived for was to do the best she could for others (QT, p. 151 and p. 154)." Likewise, when the ship captain in "The Taking of Captain Ball" sends money, fine china, and fancy goods to his sister Ann, she does not use them but "pinched herself to the verge of want in order to send large sums of money to the missionaries (SW, p. 158)." In addition, she puts aside his money and keeps it for his retirement, while helping to support a half-brother who has financial difficulties. Another example is David Berry, the owner of a small shoe shop ("The Failure of David Berry"). Though he worked hard and earned little, he "liked to give for giving's sake; he believed with all his heart in foreign

missions." He also gave to the poor "and was in every way a generous man (NW, p. 112)." After his death, the landlord finds on the mil next to his workbench the Bible verse "Owe no man anything but to love one another," the command which David had tried to fulfill (NW, p. 135; Romans 13: 8).

In "The Guests of Mrs. Timms," Miss Pickett and Mrs. Flagg visit wealthy Mrs. Timms, anticipating a cordial welcome and a bountiful meal, even though they have not written to tell her they are coming. Chagrined when Mrs. Timms receives them coolly and serves no refreshments, the embarrassed ladies make a hasty retreat. They then visit Miss Nancy Fell, a former member of their church with whom they had socialized little because she had "lived in a poor part of town (LN, p. 229)." In contrast to Mrs. Timms, Miss Nancy is genuinely pleased to see them and prepares a generous meal which includes dandelion greens. On the way home both visitors remark on her hospitality. "I do declare," Mrs. Flagg exclaims, "'t was like a scene in Scriptur' to see that poor good-hearted Nancy Fell run down her walk to open the gate for us (LN, p. 237)!" Miss Pickett replies with a Bible verse: "Better is a dinner of herbs where love is (LN, p. 239; Proverbs 15: 17)."

A final illustration of Jewett's ideals of love and self-forgetfulness can be taken from "The Flight of Betsey Lane." Peggy, Lavina, and Betsey "stand as living exemplars of the Christian principles love thy neighbor and love begets love."™ Though living at Byfleet Poorhouse, the three friends are not

poor in love. When Betsey uses a gift of money from, a friend to visit the Centennial Exhibition at Philadelphia, she has basically unselfish motives. She explains, "I felt sure somebody ought to go from this neighborhood, if 't was only for the good o' the rest; and I thought I'd better be the one." Believing she has seen and heard enough to last her lifetime, Betsey plans to share her experiences with the other residents who are unable to travel and thus help to broaden their horizons and enliven their daily conversation. Additionally, she has bought gifts for everyone and has met a doctor who has promised to examine Peggy's cataracts. Betsey demonstrates her practical self-forgetfulness when she proclaims, "What's for the good o' one's for the good of all." Not only Betsey's love for the others but also Lavina and Peggy's affection for Betsey become evident in the course of the story. Since Betsey had not told anyone that she was going to Philadelphia, her disappearance sparks a fear that she may have drowned in Byfield pond. The efforts that Peggy, nearly blind, and Lavina, in her eighties and crippled, make to check the pond are truly a labor of love. When Betsey, returning, meets the "pathetic figures" by the pond, they do not scold her or reveal their former anxiety. Instead they listen eagerly to the traveler's stories. Peggy carries Betsey's bundles, and Betsey supports Lavina. "With this the small elderly company set forth triumphant toward the poor-house, across the wide green field (NW, pp. 217-18)."

Jewett might have called love and self-forgetfulness the essence of practical Christianity. While in none of her writings does she suggest that these characteristics are necessary to the salvation of the soul, she does imply that they may strengthen a person for the next life. At the least; showing love and doing good works cause a person to feel better about himself and about others. Nevertheless, like others of her time, place, and station, she had no interest in what, during her very last years, came to be called the "Social Gospel." It is not clear that she rejected it; it seems more likely that she never considered it at all. To her, devotion and sacrifice were attributes of people, not governments; generosity took the form of charity, not welfare. In conclusion, the theology of Sarah Orne Jewett resembled that of other theological liberals of the period so aptly criticized by H. Richard Niebuhr: "A God without wrath brought men without sin into a kingdom without judgment through the ministrations of Christ without a Cross."[40]

Notes

[1]Sarah Orne Jewett, The Queen's Twin and Other Stories (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin and Co., 1899). All subsequent references to this collection noted parenthetically in the text will be abbreviated QT.

[2]Sarah Orne Jewett, The Life of Nancy (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin and Co., 1896). All subsequent references to this collection noted parenthetically in the text will be abbreviated LN.

[3]Sarah Orne Jewett, A Marsh Island, 12th ed. (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin and Co., 1885). All subsequent references noted parenthetically in the text will be abbreviated MI.

[4]Sarah Orne Jewett, Country By-Ways (Boston: Houghton Mifflin and Co., 1881). All subsequent references to this collection noted parenthetically in the text will be abbreviated CB.

[5]Fields, p. 131.

[6]Sarah Orne Jewett, Strangers and Wayfarers (1890; rpt. New York: The American Short Story Series, Vol. 65, Garrett Press, 1969); cf. Luke 9:62. Of course, Fanny takes the verse out of context. All subsequent references to this collection noted parenthetically in the text will be abbreviated SW.

[7]Sarah Orne Jewett, A White Heron and Other Stories (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin and Co., 1886). All subsequent references to this collection noted parenthetically in the text will be abbreviated WH.

[8]Sarah Orne Jewett, A Country Doctor (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1884). All subsequent references noted parenthetically in the text will be abbreviated CD.

[9]Sarah Orne Jewett, Old Friends and New, 5th ed. (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin and Co., 1879). All subsequent references to this collection noted parenthetically in the text will be abbreviated OF.

[10]Richard Cary, Sarah Orne Jewett, Twayne 's United States Authors Series, ed. Sylvia E. Bowman (New Haven, Conn.: College and Univ. Press, 1962), p. 113.

[11]Sarah Orne Jewett, The Country of the Pointed Firs (1896; rpt. St. Clair Shores, Mich.: Scholarly Press, Inc., 1974). All subsequent references noted parenthetically in the text will be abbreviated CF.

[12]Sarah Orne Jewett, The King of Folly Island and Other People (Boston: Houston, Mifflin and Co., 1888). All subsequent references to this collection noted parenthetically in the text will be abbreviated KFI.

[13]Sarah Orne Jewett, Deephaven (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1877). All subsequent references noted parenthetically in the text will be abbreviated PH.

[14]Margaret Farrand Thorp, Sarah Orne Jewett, Univ. of Minnesota Pamphlets on American Writers, No. 61 (Minneapolis: Univ. of Minneapolis Press, 1966), p. 39.

[15]SOJ, p. 45.

[16]Cary, SOJ, p. 73.

[17]Frost, p. 92; Fields, p. 51.

[18]This passage from "An October Ride" is reminiscent of Emerson's "Hamatreya," particularly the idea that natural growth repossesses the works of man's hands, (e.g. 11.44-52: "Here is the land, /Shaggy with wood ..... /But the heritors? -- /Fled like the flood's foam./ . . . /And the kingdom, /Clean swept herefrom.") Emerson, however, does not state that even nature is under the rule of God, as does Jewett in her essay.

[19]Gary, SOJ, p. 45 and p. 70.

[20]Gary, SOJ, p. 56. cf. Proverbs 22: 28; Deuteronomy 19: 14, 27: 17, which Jewett may have been referring to when she stressed the importance of the ancient pines as landmarks .

[21]Gary, SOJ, p. 102.

[22]Gary, SOJ, p. 100.

[23]Fred Lewis Pattee, A History of American Literature Since 1870 (New York: The Century Co., 1921), p. 234.

[24]Levy, pp. 351-52.

[25]Thompson, p. 497.

[26]Fields, p. 195.

[27]Sarah Orne Jewett, A Native of Winby and Other Tales (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1893). All subsequent references to this collection noted parenthetically in the text will be abbreviated NW.

[28]This characteristic brings to remembrance Hester Prynne in The Scarlet Letter.

[29]Such an attitude would be more surprising to Jewett's contemporaries in the days before medicine could lay much claim to being a "scientific" profession.

[30]Richard Gary, "Sarah Orne Jewett and the Rich Tradition," Colby Library Quarterly, 4th Ser., No. 12 (Nov. 1957), p. 215.

[31]Paul Bourget as quoted in A.M. Buchan, "'Our Dear-Sarah': An Essay on Sarah Orne Jewett," Washington University Studies, New Series Language and Literature, No. 24 (St. Louis, 1953). rpt. in Appreciation, ed. Gary, p. 98.

[32]Frost p. 43.

[33]Fields, p. 15.

[34]Fields, p. 85.

[35]Frost, p. 43; Fields, p. 78.

[36]Fields, p. 43.

[37]Fields , pp. 129-30.

[38]Fields, p. 240.

[39]Gary, SOJ, p. 108.

[40]Helmut Richard Niebuhr, The Kingdom of God in America (Hamden, Conn.: The Shoe String Press, 1956), p. 193.

CHAPTER II

THE PERSPECTIVE OF SARAH ORNE JEWETT ON

THE CHURCH AND CHURCHMEN

The Organized Church

In her published personal writings Jewett did not state her opinion of the function of the organized church. Therefore, one must look at her fiction to get some idea of how she viewed the relationship between man and the church. In her fiction, church services are most often occasions for socializing rather than for spiritual edification.[1] Francis Fike points out in a discussion of The Country of the Pointed Firs that religion is an excuse to hold a "meetin'" with the neighbors; otherwise "formal religion is portrayed negatively."[2] Jewett says in "Between Mass and Vespers" that for the women who are isolated in their houses all week "Sunday is the great social occasion (NW, p. 224)."

Mere association with the church and its services and rituals for non-members as well as members brings comfort and security. Jewett comments in A Country Doctor that "[s]o many of the old ideas of the efficacy of ecclesiasticism still linger." A visit by the parson to older persons near death means as much "as if he granted them absolution and extreme unction. The old traditions still survive in our instincts . . . (CD, p. 119)." The younger people, too, sometimes sense the value of traditional ritual. When Mere Pochette's

son-in-law is dying, he allows the local priest to administer the last rites to him, though he is not Catholic and probably has not regularly attended any church. At his death the rites "must have been to him a last and only provision against the evils that might be waiting for him and his (KFI, p. 302)."

Sometimes the comfort of one's religious connections are a source of pride. Marilla, Dr. Leslie's housekeeper in A Country Doctor, enjoys letting others know "she was a dissenter from First Parish Church (CD, p. 126)." She also relishes a lively theological argument in defense of her denominational ties. With a similar aggressive spirit, Mrs. Flagg and Miss Pickett ("The Guests of Mrs. Timms") are quick to inform the stranger with whom they are traveling on the stage that they are members of the "Orthodox Church." They speak patronizingly to her after she reveals she is a Freewill Baptist (LN, pp. 223-24). Like Mrs. Flagg and Miss Pickett, Becky Parsons in "Miss Becky's Pilgrimage" has prestige as a member of the established church. She is one of "the believers in the Congregational mode of worship and church government [who] were able to look down on other sects as dissenters (CB, p. 220)."

The church additionally provides purpose and security for those who seem to have little else to give their lives meaning. The servant Martha ("Martha's Lady") did not become a member of the church because she "thought she was not good enough, but life was such a passion and happiness of

service that it was impossible not to be devout (QT, p. 161)." She faithfully attends the services, sitting humbly in the back row. Old and insane, Sally Chauncey of Deephaven was clear-minded about her religion and "was always sure when Sunday came, and always came to church." Whenever offerings were collected, she gave cheerfully of the little she had. Pastor Lorimer refers to Miss Sally as an example of faithfulness: "For though bewildered in mind, bereft of . . . all that makes this world dear to many of us, she was still steadfast in her simple faith (DH, p. 240)."

Like Miss Chauncey, Mistress Sydenham ("The Mistress of Sydenham Plantation") is lucid in her religious devotion though unclear about the other activities of life. The Mistress has lived her "life . . . in a strange dream (SW, p. 23)" since her husband and two sons were killed in the Civil War. Her mind has blocked out the memory of these three, but "when she has forgotten everything and everybody else, she has known when Easter came (SW, p. 20)." Every year at Easter she puts flowers on the graves of her parents in the churchyard and attends the service at St. Helena's Church. She is like the other "recluses in the parish, who come to listen to their teacher and to the familiar prayers, read with touching earnestness and simplicity." Mistress Sydenham has found security in following "the ancient habit" of worship (SW, p. 34-35).

Other characters in Jewett's stories hope to expiate guilt through their performance of ecclesiastical ceremony."

Mere Pochette" offers two illustrations of this effort. Old Manon, who had been rather harsh and unforgiving toward her daughter and son-in-law, "appeased her conscience by" having Father David and Father Pierre say masses for their now departed souls (KFI, pp. 305-06). Manon's servant Josephine, a devout Catholic, clings hopefully to the rituals of the church. At one time she had planned to serve the church as a nun. In fact, her room, resembles a nun's cell; in the private, austere chamber she offers many prayers for others and makes continual confessions for her sins. Though not a Catholic, John Price in "An Only Son" finds a way to make restitution for his sin.[3] After his suspicions have led him to falsely accuse his son of theft, he feels guilty and thinks he must do something to show his remorse. Consequently, he walks out to the family burying-ground to pray and do penance at his wife's grave. "He would have gone to his parish church to pray if he had been a devout Catholic; as it was, this was the nearest approach he could make to a solemn thanksgiving." He stands with his head bowed at the grave for a considerable length of time to show his true repentance. Then he returns to his house and hopes for "some sort of comfortable existence and lack of self-reproof (MD, pp. 185-86)."

Jewett implies that an essential part of a person's spiritual experience is his esthetic response to the church. Little Manon in "Mere Pochette" "was devoted to church-going," and she very reverently observed the "poor

decorations of candles and gilding and the votive offering of faded artificial flowers and tinsel work." It is "not because she was satisfied with this cheap splendor but rather that she caught the hint it gave of better glories, that she liked to be in church (KFI, p. 207)." The pageantry and physical adornment of the church answered the deep yearnings of her childish heart.

For the adult, family ties strengthen the esthetic bond with the church. Nan Prince (A Country Doctor), while attending a service in the Dunport Church, is impressed by the sight of the "many antique splendors about the chancel, and many mural tablets on the walls, where [she sees] her own family name and the list of virtues which had belonged to some of her ancestors." She is convinced that even Boston could not offer such a fine church. Furthermore, she believes that the quaint, handsome building must have been uniquely preserved for her worship. The church "seemed to have been waiting all her life for her to come to say her prayers where so many of her own people had brought their sins and sorrows in the long years that were gone (CD, p. 229)." One attraction that draws the heroine of "Miss Becky's Pilgrimage" back to her hometown is the old meetinghouse. Her brother, who has recently died, had preached there, and many of her loved ones are buried at the site. She has longed so much "to set in the old pew again" and has "thought just how it all looked so many times (CB, p. 231)." Consequently, Miss Becky mourns when she learns that the familiar building has been torn down

and replaced. Nevertheless, her visits to the cemetery, which still remains, bring consolation and maintain her link with the former days. In fact, the old cemetery becomes almost a shrine: "there was a companionship to be had even in the cypress-grown burying-ground, which was dearer to her than she had dreamed it would be (CB, p. 241)."

In conclusion, faithfulness to the church and its rituals brings comfort and security. Not attending church, on the other hand, may bring upon a person his neighbors' severe disapprobation as well as bad luck. An absentee might be reminded of his absence on the past Sunday if the neighbor were bold enough to ask for a reason. However, there was "a superstitious expectation of good luck in the coming week if the religious obligations were carefully fulfilled," the narrator explains in A Country Doctor (p. 119). Mercy Crane ("The Passing of Sister Barsett") believed that not only going to church but also staying a long time would guarantee a good week. She maintained that as "sure as I didn't [attend services regularly] I had bad luck all the week. I did n't feel pacified 'less I'd been half a day (NW, p. 145)."

According to Jewett, then, the primary basis for the relationship between man and formal religion is emotional rather than doctrinal. Doctrine mattered little, if at all. The prescribed rituals and the established habit of worship provide the major benefit of the organized church. Yet, since man did not need to be a church member to commune with the God of nature, it is not difficult to understand Jewett's fascination with the pagan ceremonies of ancient communities.

The Churchmen

Although Jewett treats some churchmen kindly, they are most often targets of her satire. She believed that the physician serves his community more practically than the clergyman. The doctor knows the people intimately since he meets them on a daily basis. She remarked in A Country Doctor, that "[i]f clergymen knew their congregations as well as physicians do, the sermons would be often more closely related to the parish needs (CD, p. 70)." Jewett expanded the same idea in an interview with LaSalle Pickett. "The doctor comes nearer to the true springs of village life, nearer even than the pastor," she stated. His patients can see the results as he ministers to their temporal needs. The pastor, on the other hand, is associated with the church, which most people enter only on Sundays. Moreover, he ministers to spiritual needs, offering the intangible balm of faith. The village pastor

> comes with the mystifications of the spirit life that people like to hear about on Sunday morning when they don their Sunday clothes and come together for their weekly sermon and chat in the churchyard after service is over.[4]

Generally men of the church are judged on the basis of either personality or their ability to understand and meet parishioners' needs. Negative comments range from humorous criticism of their preaching style and sermon content to sharp denunciation of their lack of insight and compassion. The satirical characterizations of these men are sometimes evident even in their names. For example, Deacon Brimblecom,

who is also called Brimful, claims to be full of piety and has pious fits. Brothers Bray and Longbrother, known as fire and brimstone preachers, undoubtedly talked too loudly and long. Fire and brimstone could also have been the frequent topic for Elder Pry, whose bawling voice irritated some parishioners. Apparently just paddling and not accomplishing much, Pastor Padelford preached forcefully, but often his congregation could understand less than half of what he said. Parson Dimmick also delivered abstruse sermons, but he was called dimwitted because of his insensitivity toward his people and his ignorance of their ways. Finally, it is easy to imagine the earnest and nervous Mr. Peckham pecking and clucking around his parish, attempting to keep up with the demands of a minister's life.

In contrast to these Dickensian parsons of the bulk of Jewett's stories, the parsons from generations past are nostalgically remembered in the two essays "River Driftwood" and "An October Ride." These men were highly respected primarily because of their office but also because of their genial dispositions. The narrator in "River Driftwood" says that when they preached, they attacked individual sins of the congregation; they did not dwell on abstract theology. "Parson Litchfield could preach gallantly at some offender who stole from and lied about his lobster-pots when he took his text from Ananias and Sapphira." She assumes "that they all preached better because much of their time was spent in a way that brought them in close contact with people's everyday

lives." For example, the parishioners fondly called Mr. Litchfield the "fisher parson" because he spent many hours each week "in the apostolic business of catching fish." His amiable personality also endeared him to his parish: "he was a man of rare wit and drollery, with a sailor-like serenity and confidence in everything's coming out right at last (CB, pp. 21-22)."

In "An October Ride" the speaker waits out a storm in an abandoned parsonage and reflects on the life of the former tenant. She enjoys thinking of "what a good, faithful man he was, who spoke comfortable words to his people and lived pleasantly with them." Furthermore, she fancies that he "liked a good dinner, and always was kind to the poor." She "could not imagine that he ever angrily took his parishioners to task for their errors of doctrine." Lamenting over the current lack of respect for the minister's office, she calls the present "these iconoclastic and unpleasant times (CB, pp. 111-12)."

Jewett's fiction contains similar complimentary portraits of the clergy. Delineation of the benign minister is found in the characterizations of Mr. Duncan, "an old-school parson preaching sound and harmless sermons twice on every Sunday . . . cheerful . . . fatherly (MD, p. 110)"; the bishop in "Jim's Little Woman" who pleads with Jim "to come to Mass and be a Christian man for the sake of" his mother (NW, p. 107); Father David "worn out with his service to a stolid flock" and Father Henri who "goes before . . . like a holy shepherd" in "Mere Pochette" (KFI, p. 303 and p. 338).

Almira Todd compliments the priest who had come to administer the last rites to Mrs. Tolland in "The Foreigner."[5] From her initial meeting with him she had concluded that he was "a kind-hearted old man" and "looked so benevolent and fatherly I could ha' stopped and told him my own troubles (TF, p. 161)." As Francis Fike notes, however, "he evokes not awe at his priesthood but respect for his humanity." Almira's final glimpse of the old priest "is of weak vulnerability which evokes her compassion: 'he walked with a cane, rather tired and feeble; I wished somebody would come along, so's to carry him down to the shore.'"[6]

This same humanity and vulnerability make the churchmen objects of Jewett's satire. Some, for instance, are criticized for their self-importance or lack of desire or power to fulfill all their ecclesiastical duties. Mr. Peckham, in "A New Parishioner," is an "earnest, excitable . . . little man . . . [who] bewail[s] the exhaustive nature of a clergyman's work." He prides himself on his theological training and considers "himself to be the possessor of a far greater knowledge of the world and of human nature than is apt to fall to the lot of most men, especially clergymen (MD, pp. 111-13)." Mr. Elbury ("Miss Peck's Promotion") is of a "romantic, ease-loving, self-absorbed, and self-admiring nature . . . self-indulgent . . . given to indolence (KFI, p. 182)." He feels his clerical position alone, "rather than his own character and efforts," will maintain him in comfort and earn for him the attentions he feels he deserves.

Miss Peck is not deceived by "his ecclesiastical halo, nor his considerate idea of his own value (KPI, pp. 184-85)." According to her estimation, his pomposity will soon lead to his downfall.

In "The Dulham Ladies"[7] Jewett is bitterly satirical in her portrait of Reverend Edward Dobin, who "was not without pride or complete confidence in his own decisions." As a Harvard graduate, he probably felt others owed him respect. Jewett says rather maliciously that he "was never very enlightening in his discourses, and was providentially stopped short by a stroke of paralysis in the middle of his clerical career." Thereafter, for more than twenty years, he was carried to the pulpit "[o]n high days of the church" to hold "up his shaking hands when the benediction was pronounced, as if the divine gift was exclusively his own, and the other ministers did but say empty words." The loyal congregation pampered the Reverend's pride until "to everybody's relief and astonishment" he died (TE, pp. 33-34).

Though Mrs. Todd praises Reverend Bascom for the sensitivity he showed the stranger, Mrs. Tolland, she condemns his ecclesiastical bigotry. His eulogy for Mrs. Tolland is sympathetic in that "[h]e spoke very feeling about her being a stranger and twice widowed." In reference to Mrs. Tolland's French Catholic background, however, he condescended "that there might be roads leading up to the New Jerusalem from various points (TF, p. 161)." His "grudging liberalism"[8]

provokes Mrs. Todd to sarcasm: "I says to myself that I guessed quite a number must ha' reached there that wa'n't able to set out from Dunnet Landin' (TF, p. 161)!"

The servant Melissa in "A Lost Lover" is piqued at the clergy for their lack of sensitivity and perception. Her present minister once prayed over her when she was sick and referred to her as "this aged handmaid" almost "a dozen times." Understandably she believes that ministers "haven't got a speck o' consideration nor faculty; they think the world was made for them." Lest she be considered prejudiced, Melissa insists that she does not judge all the clergy on the basis of one incident, and she tries to give a more objective appraisal: "I like to see a minister that's solid right straight through, not one of those veneered folks (OF, pp. 20-21)."

Other clergy are too sensitive to certain parishioners and thus compromise their clerical position. Father Pierre's inconsistency in fulfilling his priestly duties eventually results in his conspiracy with a wealthy parishioner against her granddaughter ("Mere Pochette"). Initially Jewett describes him as a "little priest . . . not man enough to control [the new parishioners] . . . or to lift them up in the arms of faith," but at least he is "conscious of the dignity of the church (*KFI*, p. 304)." The Father would like to see conditions improved in his parish, but he is unwilling to expend the effort himself. Thus, weak in character, he succumbs to Manon Pochette's request to burn the letters which

come from her granddaughter's lover before little Manon can see them. "Even his holy calling could not lift above the earth and its weaknesses (KFI, p. 327)." When he is suddenly replaced by a new priest, one wonders if his tendency to promote his own welfare had led to further violations of his holy office.

The new minister in A. Country Doctor is "a dyspeptic, nervous soul" who is "too conscientious" and thus gets himself into quandaries. He wants to please everyone in his parish, including himself, yet maintain the expected clerical piety and restraint of fleshly appetite. He is really put to the test when his parishioners slaughter their pigs and clamor to invite him to partake of their feasts, or as Dr. Leslie says, they "vie with each other to offer spare ribs on that shrine (CD, p. 128)."

The content and style of the churchmen's sermons also come under attack. Mrs. Goodsoe ("The Courting of Sister Wisby") blames the lack of sound preaching for the decline in church attendance:

> some of them old ministers . . . did preach a lot o' stuff that wa' n't nothin' but chaff; 't wa' n't the word o' God out o' either Old Testament or New. But everybody went to meetin' and heard it, and come home, and was set to fightin' with their next door neighbor over it. Now I'm a believer and I try to live a Christian life, but I'd as soon hear a surveyor's book read out, figgers an' all, as try to get any simple truth out o' most sermons. It's them as is most to blame. (KPI, p. 62)

During discussion in "The Town Poor" of the change of emphasis from fire and brimstone sermons to more sedate homilies,

Miss Rebecca Wright admits she prefers the "more reasonable" contemporary emphasis. She can imagine, however, the indignant response from the old-time fiery preachers to the more liberal theology: "if old Mr. Longbrother an' Deacon Bray could hear the difference they'd crack the ground over 'em like pole beans an' come right up 'long side their headstones (SW, p. 43)."

Mrs. Bonny of Deephaven says she never receives much benefit from Mr. Reid's preaching because he does not cover "foreordination and them p'ints." Pastor Padelford, on the other hand, must have included sufficient Calvinistic doctrine to satisfy her. At any rate, she did not seem to mind that the rest of his sermon was almost incomprehensible: "He'd get worked up, and he'd shut up the Bible and preach the hair off your head, 'long the end of the sermon. Couldn't understand more nor a quarter part what he said (DH, pp. 196-97)." Father Harlow's flock are not so concerned with the content of his sermons, for he preaches the familiar "faith an' works." What irritates them is that he is long-winded; he can wear them "holler" because he "never knows when to cease (CF, p. 168)."

Jewett, furthermore, presents some ministers as downright ludicrous or helpless. Elder Fry, Mr. Teaby complains, "bawled more 'n any pipes could stand. I git so wore out settin' under him that I feel to go an' lay right out in the wood arterwards, where it's still." The ridiculous irony is that Mr. Fry plans to retire to go into the "creamery

business." Thus, Mr. Teaby's next comment is especially meaningful! "'T won't never do for him to deal so with call-in' of his cows; they'd be so aggravated 't would be more 'n any butter business could bear (SW, pp. 67-68)." A crazy woman in The Tory Lover attempts to auction off some of her neighbors from the roof of her house, attracting a number of spectators. She asks seventy thousand pounds for her crippled neighbor Paul, but she is willing to take nine pence for the pastor and both deacons together. One can imagine the crowd's amused response to this evaluation of the local clergy. "[A] fixed Calvinist in her prime," she evidently dislikes the minister's laxness. When he comes to pray with her during one of her fits of madness, she rises up and chases him down to the river, where he has to be rescued by men working in a nearby field.[9]

Another satirical account showing the foolishness and helplessness of some churchmen is the tale of Deacon Brimblecom in "The Courting of Sister Wisby." For his own prestige, Brimblecom had adopted his clerical title; he was not really a deacon, "'less it was for a spare hand when deacon timber was scercer 'n usual." Nevertheless the Deacon "felt sure he was called by the voice of a spirit bride" and deserted his wife and four children to join a new cult which waited to be translated, then to return to earth to reign with the spirit brides. What resulted only confirms the idea that the Deacon is eccentric. When the cult broke up after some members "went crazy," Brimblecom was still willing

to remain with his spirit "bride. However, "the spirit bride did n't turn out to be much of a housekeeper . . . so he sneaked home again." Later, he "had another pious fit that looked . . . like the real thing" and became a member of the Christian Baptists (KFI, pp. 266-68).

There are, in addition, several examples in which the learned pastor is gotten the best of by sharp-witted, worldly-wise older women. In "An Autumn Holiday" a young Methodist minister is deceived into believing Mrs. Adams when she feigns fatal illness, something she apparently did regularly to gain sympathy. Her shrewd neighbor intervenes and sets the parson straight. Henceforth she delights in telling others how the parson was duped (CB, pp. 150-51). When the Deephaven minister, Mr. Lorimer, seems to be ignorant of the uses of the almanac, a book which was staple reading for the back country folk, Miss Bonny corrects him "with a tone of pity in her grum voice; could it be possible he did n't know,--the Deephaven minister (DH, p. 201)!"

The ever-capable Almira Todd proved her superiority over Parson Dimmick as a boatman. While they were sailing to an outer island, Almira recalls, the parson insisted on tying "the sheet, though I advised against it." He was talking and not paying much attention to wind conditions, when "[a]ll of a sudden there come up a gust, and he give a screech and stood right up and called for help 'way out there to sea (CF, p. 112)." In her hurry to grab the sheet and untie it, Almira knocked Mr. Dimmick to the bottom of the boat. He

still appeared offended even after she helped him up and apologized. The parson's inability to operate a boat was one fault his seaside parish could not quite forgive him.

Jewett's most devastating criticism of a churchman occurs in the characterization of Parson Dimmick during his encounter with Joanna, who had isolated herself on Shell-heap Island after being rejected by her lover. The parson "was a vague person, well meanin', but very numb in his feelin's (CF, p. 110)." His treatment of Joanna is recounted by Mrs. Todd who denounces it with almost bitter scorn. When he visited Joanna on the island, he did not read the Bible with her or, as Mrs. Fosdick said, encourage her to renounce her life of seclusion for one of "self-forgetfulness and doin' for others to cure . . . [her] ills (CF, p. 110)." Instead he attempted to move her to repentance when "he put on his authority and asked her if she felt to enjoy religion in her present situation"; he failed to see her well-worn Bible lying nearby and probably felt one could not worship God unless he attended church services. Although he prayed with her, "'t was all about hearin' the voice o' God out o' the whirlwind . . . anybody that had spent the long cold winter all alone out on Shell-heap Island knew a good deal more about those things than he did (CF, pp. 118-19)." Mrs. Todd, who had gone over to the island with him, became so angry she only stared straight at him during the prayer. The experience with Joanna did not seem to open the parson's heart to his congregation's personal needs, for the following Sunday

he preached "somethin' high soundin' about the creation . . . ; he seemed to know no remedies, but he had a great use of words (CF, p. 123)." Furthermore, the author seems to show that even the small creatures of nature have more understanding than does the parson. At Joanna's funeral a sparrow "lit on the coffin an' begun to sing while Mr. Dimmick was speakin'. " Chagrined, the clergyman hesitated, not knowing whether to continue or stop his funeral oration. Mrs. Todd concludes with the judgment that "I wa'n't the only one thought the poor little bird done the best of the two (CF, p. 125)."

Though Jewett seems to give the Catholic parish priests more the benefit of the doubt than Congregationalist preachers--probably because she had a greater acquaintance with the latter than with the former--virtually all her clergymen are either incompetent, insensitive, or both. They seem to be the most ineffective of all her ineffective men. Jewett's ideal parson, which she best describes when romanticizing the rural clergy of the past, is a minister of genial disposition who understands the daily lives of his parishioners, one who can meet their social and psychological, if not their strictly spiritual, needs.

Notes

[1]William Dean Howells, a friend and contemporary of Jewett, states essentially the same views of the church in A Modern Instance (1882). In the New England town of Equity the "habit of church going was . . . strong (p. 17)." "Religion there had largely ceased to be a fact of spiritual experience, and the visible church flourished on condition of providing for the social needs of the community (p. 18)."

[2]Francis Fike, "An Interpretation of Pointed Firs," New England Quarterly, 34 (Dec. 1961), p. 484.

[3]Sarah Orne Jewett, The Mate of the Daylight and Friends Ashore, 3rd ed. (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin and Co., 1883). All subsequent references to this collection noted parenthetically will be abbreviated MD.

[4]LaSalle Corbell Pickett, Across My Path: Memories of. People I Have Known (New York: Brentano's, 1916), p. 146.

[5]Sarah Orne Jewett, "The Foreigner," Atlantic Monthly, 86 (Aug. 1900). All subsequent references noted parenthetically in the text will be abbreviated TF.

[6]Fike, p. 174.

[7]Sarah Orne Jewett, Tales of New England (1894; rpt., Short Story Index Reprint Series, Freeport, New York: Books for Libraries Press, 1970). All subsequent references to this collection noted parenthetically will be abbreviated TE.

[8]Fike, p. 174.

[9]Sarah Orne Jewett, The Tory Lover (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin and Co., 1901), p. 115.

CHAPTER III

TEE PERSPECTIVE OP SARAH ORNE JEWETT ON DEATH AND IMMORTALITY

Death

In Jewett's writing, death is considered an inevitable, though natural, part of man's life. "She neither ignores it nor lets it dominate the present."[1] Rarely do her characters fear or resist death. On the contrary, many look forward to death as the commencement to a better life and as an escape from the cares of this world. For the most part, her depictions of death are somber, but not morbid, reflections on this great mystery and its imminence. Processions of solemn-faced mourners march frequently through her stories.

Jewett consistently expounds her belief that death is a natural and inevitable part of life. The narrator in "Lady Ferry" states that "under the best-loved and most beautiful face we know, there is hidden a skull as ghastly as that from which we turn aside with a shudder in the anatomist's cabinet (OF, p. 221)." Nevertheless, one should not fear death nor be oblivious to death's presence but should prepare for it. Her personification of death in "The Gray Man" indicates that it has a beneficial ministry to mankind. In this tale, Death, a stranger dressed in somber clothes, comes to dwell in a rural community. He is cordial, takes an interest in local issues and events, and tries to be helpful by instructing old and young alike how best to meet the

emergencies of life; "in every way he left the stamp of his character upon men and things (WH, p. 30)." His unsmiling countenance, however, finally raises suspicion and chills the once friendly acceptance of his presence. Shunned and feared by his neighbors, he departs, "unsmiling Death who tries to teach and serve mankind so that he may at the last win welcome as a faithful friend (WH, p. 35)!"

Helen and Kate, the youthful visitors to Deephaven, come to a "sudden consciousness of the mystery and inevitableness of death" and "the limitation of this present life" after watching the funeral of a local acquaintance who had died unexpectedly. They contemplate how quickly one can cross the thin boundary between this familiar physical world and the mysterious spiritual world. Eternity no longer "seemed so far away out of reach of even [their] thoughts, beyond the distant stars (DH, pp. 221-22)."

Since death is natural and imminent, its coming should not cause surprise. In "Miss Peck's Promotion" the author emphasizes the idea that the time of death is usually right because the deceased has completed his work, and "this world [holds] . . . no more duties or satisfactions for him (KFI, p. 184)." Indeed, Old Elijah Tilley's attitude toward death is almost matter-of-fact. Elijah misses his wife greatly since she died eight years ago, but he seems to have accepted the inevitability and timeliness of her death. He says, "Oh, I did n't want to lose her an' she did n't want to go, but it had to be. Such things ain't for us to say; there's no yes an' no to it (CF, p. 204)."

Perhaps it was easier for those living in the nineteenth century to see death as natural since families and neighbors often would gather around the bedside of the dying and view death firsthand. After watching the struggle of the final illness and the pangs of death, one could more readily conclude that the soul departed gladly, seeking respite. In a scene from "Andrew's Fortune," for example, the friends and relatives of Stephen Dennett "stood by the bed-side watching, with awe-struck faces, while the mortal part of him fought fiercely . . . to keep its soul, which had gently and surely taken itself away." And thus it happens quickly, and "dying seems after all, to those who watch it oftenest, a simple and natural and blessed thing (CB, p. 51)." Captain Littlepage reports to the narrator of The Country of the Pointed Firs that those who witnessed Mrs. Begg's demise said she went "very easy at the last . . . ; she slipped away as if she were glad of the opportunity (CF, p. 22)."

Jewett's finest narrative on death is "Miss Tempy's Watchers." Mrs. Crowe and Sarah Ann Binson keep watch during the night before the funeral of Tempy Dent, whose body lies upstairs. The lights are blown out in all the houses except Miss Tempy's. Only the loud brook nearby disturbs the silence of mourning in the house. The warmth of the kitchen becomes a refuge for the women from the cold room where Miss Tempy lies, and their conversation centers upon the anticipation of their own deaths as well as the deceased and her passing. All these details intensify the mystery yet

commonness of death. With a simplicity which belies the complex meaning implicit in this scene at Miss Tempys' bedside, Jewett conveys the naturalness of death. Sarah Ann recalls her last conversation with Miss Tempys

> "Can I do anything to ease you, Tempy?" . . . "No Sarah Ann, you can't, dear," says she; . . . and says she, looking at me real meanin', "I'm only a-gettin' sleepier and sleepier; that's all there is," says she, and smiled up at me kind of wishful and shut her eyes. I knew well enough all she meant. (KFI, p. 222).

Prom that brief explanation--death is like sleep--the mourners receive comfort. Perhaps for them some of the fear of death is dispelled.

Since death is commonplace in Jewett's writings, it is no surprise that funerals appear frequently and are often described in specific detail. They are religious and social occasions, times for neighbors to come together. The mourning ritual also has therapeutic value. One of the earliest social events Jewett records is her grandmother's funeral. She was only five but recalls that "as for the funeral, it gave me vast entertainment; it was the first grand public occasion in which I had taken any share (CB, p. 138)."

The funerals of her friends Phillips Brooks and Sarah Whitman seemed to have been religious, almost mystical, experiences for Jewett. Describing Phillips Brooks's funeral, she wrote of the "sudden glooms [which] darkened the great church, . . . followed by instant sunlight that made the windows glow, and shone again from the faces that were turned upward." She was impressed by the color contrasts of the

black, purple, and white in the mourners' dress and funeral draperies with the splotches of red and green from the flowers. "The scene grew into the unreality which is the true reality, the life of the world to come."[2] Jewett said in a letter to Annie Fields that the funeral "was like some old Greek festival and Christian service joined together . . . . nothing has ever been such an inspiration,--it has been like a great sunset that suddenly turned itself into dawn."[3] A year after Sarah Whitman's funeral, Jewett recalled having noticed a large cloud which reflected the glow of the sun while the mourners "were in shadows." She thought the cloud "had something to do with [Sarah]. It was like a great golden ball or balloon, as if it wrapped a golden treasure; her golden string (that Blake writes about) might have made it.[4]

In contrast to these impressionistic accounts of funerals from her own life, the funerals for the country folk in her fiction are a functional part of their religious and social life. The narrator of A Country Doctor explains that "[a] funeral in the country is always an era in a family's life; events date from it and centre in it." Their lives are private and quiet, but a death draws public notice to mark the day as significant. Closer to nature than city residents, these rural people are more intimate with the growth and decay in human life as well. They wash and dress the dead for burial, dig the grave, and carry the body to the

burying site. The citizens of the community "pay homage to Death rather than to the dead; they gather . . . because there is a funeral, and not because their friend is dead (CD, pp. 38-39)."

The rituals and etiquette of a funeral provide a sense of usefulness to the bereaved, as they strengthen the communal social structure. Watchers sit with the dead who lie in the best room or in an upstairs bedroom. A privilege of the watchers is to be well fed. Mrs. Crowe and Miss Binson, who watch with Miss Tempy's body, "quelled their hunger with good country appetites"; and Miss Binson said, "I know [Miss Tempy]'d like to have us comfortable now, and would urge us to make a good supper, poor dear (KFI, p. 224)." For walking funerals the mourners are arranged in a designated order to march two by two in the procession which follows the wagon carrying the coffin. Kate and Helen in Deephaven "heard some one scold in a whisper because the wagon was twice as far off as it need have been. They evidently had a rigid funeral etiquette, and felt it important that everything should be carried out according to rule (DH, p. 219)." Even the funeral feast is an important part of the ritual; the deceased's reputation might be at stake if the offering is scanty. "Andrew's Fortune" describes such details of Stephen Dennett's funeral. Mr. Dennett "had been a hospitable man, and it should not be said that any one went away from his house hungry (CB, p. 52)." An elderly relative dies during Mr. Dennett's funeral, disrupting the planned routine, and his family fears her death

will be "a great drawback to the funeral feast (CB, p. 60)." Despite the unfortunate interruption, the "pomp and piety of the old-fashioned country funeral (CB, p. 55)" continues as it has for preceding generations.

Generally in Jewett's works those who are dying or who are otherwise anticipating death look forward to the better place waiting for them, to an escape from the sorrows of this world, and to an attainment of wisdom unknown to mortals. After Stephen Dennett's earthly struggle had ended, his "face took on a . . . strange look of satisfaction,--a look of rest, as if it found its sleep of death most welcome and pleasant." Seeing his expression, the mourners at his bedside feel "a sudden eagerness to follow the living soul into the new world (CB, p. 51)." Dr. Prince could say after his many experiences with death that even though people talked fearfully of death during their lifetimes, "when they come to the last, he'd never seen one but was willin' and most were glad to go. 'T is as natural as bein' born or livin' on (KFI, p. 222)." The old people, such as the old man in "The Hiltons' Holiday," are especially ready to leave this life; they are lonely for those who have gone before them. "[A]s lonely as if he were the last survivor of a former world," the old man said, "'Most everybody's gone now an' I want to be goin' . . . . I want to be there 'long o' the rest o' the folks (LN, p. 123). '" Finally, the narrator in both "Lady

Ferry" and "Martha's Lady" speaks of a "better world (QT, p. 178)" or "better life (OF, p. 226)" that man can anticipate.

As man looks forward to the bliss and peace following death, so can he rejoice at leaving the world's cares and sorrows behind. To Annie Fields, Jewett wrote of visiting a Miss Barrel, old and enfeebled by a stroke: "I had found her in the prison of her body." In her suffering, "[n]othing was really alive but her eyes."[5] To her, Jewett believed, death would be a welcome escape. Similarly in "Lady Ferry" the author describes the world as a "schoolroom for the larger life of the next . . . . This world is no heaven; its pleasures do not last even through our little lifetimes (OF, p. 176)." Furthermore, the author asks who would not wish to escape "the bewildered state" of old age which is "like a long darkness and drowsiness," and awaken when "the brightest of all mornings dawn (MD, p. 240)?" After stating her plans to attend the funeral of a Miss Grant, Jewett reflected that "it is one of the moments when I am glad to think that there shall not be any more tears, neither sorrow nor sighing."[6] In "A Sorrowful Guest" Helen Ainslie thinks about the sad life of Mr. Whitson who has slowly gone mad and is now on his deathbed. She muses, "His days had been all winter days in this world . . . . and I hoped some wonderful, blessed spring was waiting for him in the next (OF, p. 75)."

Mrs. Tolland, who had had more than her share of sorrow, was ready for death when it came ("The Foreigner"). Her first

husband and their children had died of the yellow fever. Soon after she moved to Dunnet Landing with her second husband, she was ostracized by the community for her unconventional behavior. Consequently, when Mr. Tolland was reported lost at sea, she no longer had the will to live. Even the generous-hearted Almira Todd admitted she could not mourn at her friend's death: "You can't be sorry for a poor creatur' that's come to the end o' all her troubles (TF, p. 162)." The young suffer and die, too, and like the sick children mentioned in "Mere Pochette" they are "taken up from this blighting and evil world" to the presence of the saints (KFI, p. 33).

Jewett implies that passing through the vale of death gives one a wisdom to be envied by those who yet live. Dr. Ferris (A Country Doctor), though not old or sickly, is anxious to go on to the "next world." In part, he wants to satisfy his curiosity, "to know what [it] . . . is like." His primary interest, however, is his belief that beyond the grave he will gain knowledge and satisfaction that he cannot find in this fast-paced, materialistic world (CD, p. 106).

Thinking about General Grant's death, Jewett wrote in a letter:

> Good Heavens, what a thing it is for a man . . . to sit day after day with that pain clutching at his throat, looking death straight in the face! ....And now he knows all, the step is taken, and the mysterious moment of death proves to be a moment of waking. How one longs to take it for one's self![7]

Mrs. Crowe expresses somewhat the same idea when she speaks

of Miss Tempy's death, having in mind every man's death: "'T is a great thing to have got through, ... Well, it's all put behind her now; she knows what 't is (KFI, p. 221)." She is somewhat frightened and awed by the thought yet perhaps made a little envious, too. By passing through death, Andrew (Deephaven) has gained an enviable advantage over those acquaintances he left behind. Poor and sickly, he in desperation had turned to alcohol, and his drinking brought him to a miserable death. According to the author, however, death has advanced Andrew above his neighbors. He "was immeasurably their superior now . . . . if he could come back, he would know secrets, and be wise beyond anything they could imagine, and who could know the riches of which he might have come into possession (DH, p. 221)."

Death and funerals occur more frequently in Jewett's writings than births or weddings. In fact, the latter two events appear rarely; even then they are only briefly summarized. At times the author's interest in death verges on the abnormal, especially when she speaks of longing to experience it for herself. One explanation for her intense personal interest may be that she regarded death as the means to eternal life. She does not refer to conversion, baptism, or good works as effectual in achieving immortality. Furthermore, her emphasis on faith and optimism in the anticipation of death could imply its spiritual significance. One could say that for Jewett, therefore, "death was no alien thought, no ending but a beginning."[8]

Immortality

It is obvious from, her writings that Jewett assumed the immortality of man. She believed that after physical death the spiritual part of man rises to a better state where even the wayward on earth have an opportunity to become better. She often wrote of the dead watching mortals on earth and sometimes even communicating with them.

In "Lady Ferry" Jewett recalls the legend of the Wandering Jew in order to state a view regarding immortality. Lady Ferry claims to have lived through centuries of earthly history, traveling all over the world. She tells the narrator, who is a child then, that she wants to die but cannot. The little girl thinks that Lady Ferry, with her white, wrinkled skin and ghostly appearance, must indeed be ancient; and she remembers her father saying, "it was horrible to have one's life endless in this world (OF, p. 180)." The memory of the sad old woman remains with the girl as she grows up. Therefore many years after her encounter with the Lady, she returns to the community where the mysterious woman had lived to find her tombstone. When she locates the grave, the narrator is relieved to know her childhood fears of endless life on earth were unfounded and is thankful to God "that death comes surely,--say, rather, that the better life comes surely (OF, p. 226)." According to Jewett, then, man will have immortality in a more perfect state and in a more perfect place than is possible on earth.

Jewett has called the eternal dwelling place heaven; at least it is heaven-like in the suggestion that man will achieve perfection. Israel Owen (A Marsh Island) asserts the point that most people should be thankful they have immortality in which to achieve perfection. It seems improbable they can attain the likeness of the Lord in their temporal existence:

> Plenty of us is growing towards him [the Lord], and kind of stirring about some; but it's a mercy . . . that we've got another life to continue the upward way. If we can only git started whilst we 're here, that's about all we can do, most on us. (MI, p. 191)

In a more esoteric passage Jewett reveals her belief that through some mysterious evolutionary process a man could become an angel. In "River Driftwood" she says, "In some way our present state ministers to the higher condition to which we are coming." A few sentences later, she explains what "the higher condition" is: "We are not certain what an angel may be, but the life in us now will be necessary to the making of one by and by (CB, pp. 7-8)." Still thinking of men becoming angels, the author remarks somewhat facetiously in "An Only Son" that those who knew the deceased may not have recognized the angelic potential in them. Nevertheless, they had "angels . . . growing in them all the while, and out of our sight at last have thrown off the disguise and hindrance of the human shape (LN, p. 181)." The bereaved may find hope in this prospect of individual perfectibility.

At any rate, man should be aware of his eternal nature and prepare for eternal existence. After Celia Thaxter's death, Jewett recalled the visit she had had with Celia just the month before. Jewett had sensed then that her friend's soul was already prepared for its entrance into immortality. "[T]hose days we spent together last month," Jewett wrote to Sarah Whitman, "brought me to know better than ever a truly generous and noble heart." Celia had put her earthly burdens behind her, and "[l]ife had come to be quite heavenly to her."[9]

In A Country Doctor and Deephaven the author also suggests the future perfectibility of man. In A Country Doctor Dr. Leslie says, "our possibilities are infinitely beyond what most people even dream." That is true because man has a "spiritual intellect" which has astounding potential if educated by God (CD, p. 111). Another example from this novel concerns Nan Prince and her deceased mother. Nan's mother had lived a wayward and careless life but had loved her daughter enough to get her into a good home before dying. This one final act of love demonstrated the possibility of her improvement in the life to come. The narrator says that perhaps Nan's mother was "made pure and strong in a better world, in which some lingering faith and love had given her the true direction at last, where even her love for her child had saved her (CD, p. 350)."

In Deephaven Kate parallels the God-man relationship with the goddess-child bond in the myth of Persephone and

Demeter. God has given man incredible powers and instincts which remain only partially realized because the flesh is limited. In the next life, though, they will be fully perfected. Like the child who "had some wonderful inscrutable grace and wisdom, because a goddess had loved him," so does man "have these instincts which defy all our wisdom . . . . They are powers which are imperfectly developed in this life, but . . . the mystery of this world may be the common place of the next (DH, p. 185)."

Even the insane Sally Chauncey has a future hope: a mansion in heaven. In her earlier, lucid days, Miss Sally had generously entertained many guests in her large, stately house in Deephaven. Now the decaying structure is almost empty; the only visitors are figments of her deluded mind. Kate and Helen recall their visit with Miss Chauncey, during which the elderly woman poignantly indicated her future expectation. After Sally had read John 14, "the tears came into her eyes as we watched her look of perfect content. Through all her clouded years the promises of God had been her only certainty (DH, pp. 238-39)." In that heavenly mansion her social standing and state of mind will be at once perfected.

As surely as she held to the belief of man's immortality, "Miss Jewett clung to the metaphysical belief that despite corporeal separation at death, souls continue to communicate across the void with those who love them." The bereaved have "a new relationship with heavenly things" as they maintain

departed. Jewett explained to Horace Scudder that the soul "goes away only to come nearer to one's heart than ever before. It all seems like a transfiguration of the old way of loving, and of friendship, too." For illustration she referred to Sylvia Scudder, whose twin sister had died when they were eighteen months old. Although Sylvia was then a mature woman, Jewett said that the sisters were "dear friends . . . the little one the elder and wiser of the two."[10]

The author may have had a similar relationship with her deceased mother. "When a larger life opens for those nearest and dearest it seems as if a larger life opened for us too," she wrote in a letter to Thomas Bailey Aldrich shortly after her mother's death. She then reiterated her belief that a person is drawn closer to eternity after the death of a loved one. "I never felt so near to my mother or kept such a sense of her love for me and mine for her as I have since she died," the letter continued. "There are no bars of shyness or difference or inexpressiveness or carelessness; it seems as if I had never known my mother before."[11]

Mortals can sense the presence of the one in the unseen world watching and even acting as counselors or guides. Jewett wrote of visiting the home of a Miss Wormeley after her death, looking at all the familiar objects and believing [s]he was there."[12] Jewett was constantly aware of the influence of her father, who died in 1878; on March 24, 1882, his birthday, she wrote to Annie Fields, "I wonder if I am

doing all the things he wishes I would do, and I hope he does not get tired of me."[13] Comforting Annie Mower on the death of her aunt in September 1903, Jewett assured her that she "will always have the blessing of her ["aunt's] love and her true wisdom."[14]

Three examples from Jewett's fiction also illustrate the link between the physical and spiritual worlds. The first concerns the influence of a dead mother on her child's moral development. Because her parents died when she was a small child, Nan Prince is raised by Dr. Leslie. When she becomes a young woman, Nan makes the decision to give her life in usefulness to others as a physician. A Country Doctor concludes with Nan strong in selfless dedication, and the narrator says:

> the mother had been still taking care of little Nan and guiding her. Perhaps she had helped to make sure of the blessings her own life had lost, of truth and whiteness of soul and usefulness; and so had been still bringing her child in her arms toward the great shelter and home. (CD, p. 350)

Doris Owens (A Marsh Island) thinks of the "friends in the unseen world" as guardian angels who go with her to direct her behavior for good and protect her (MI, p. 181).

In "Miss Tempy's Watchers" Miss Tempy, though dead, dominates with her subtle but ever-present influence on Sarah Ann Binson and Mrs. Crowe. During her last days, Tempy had purposely asked her two friends "to look after her affairs when she died." Over the years the women had drifted apart, and Miss Tempy had realized that the wealthy yet

selfish Mrs. Crowe and the generous Miss Binson needed each other. "As they recall Tempy's multiple virtues, Tempy's spirit becomes a felt arbiter, dissolving differences of "class, personality, and" church faction which lay between them. Before the night is over, Tempy's influence brings humility to Mrs. Crowe, sympathy to Miss Binson, and deeper self-perception to both."[15] The reason that "[t]he watchers could not rid their minds of the feeling that they were being watched themselves (KFI, p. 212)" is that "Tempy herself stood near. . . . Perhaps she herself was the only watcher (KFI, p. 227)." Her influence has achieved what she had desired for her two old friends.

Not only can the departed souls influence mortals, they can also return in bodily shape. Jewett indicated that such an experience may have happened to her. In 1894 she wrote to Mrs. Fields about Celia Thaxter who had died earlier,

> never before. . . have I been able to see how a person looked who has died, but again and again I seem to see her. That takes me a strange step out of myself .... and yet where imagination stops and consciousness of the unseen begins, who can settle that even to one's self?[16]

An elderly friend told Jewett that two people (one being the friend's brother) had come from the dead to visit her. Regarding this experience, Jewett said, "As she told me this I believed it was the truth, and no delusion of her unsteady brain."[17] Sometimes the author speaks of these visitors from the other world as ghosts.[18] Dan Lester (A Marsh Island) saw his friend Israel, who had been killed in the war, as a dream.

What had made the meeting seem real was that Israel had spoken to him concerning a current decision he needed to make, whether to board ship or to farm. Israel "had come to him, not in his soldier clothes, but wearing his old school-boy jacket and boyish face,--and stood by his bedside, and begged him to go and live at the farm (MI, p. 168)."

In her fiction the most convincing account of a return from the dead occurs in "The Foreigner." The figure of a woman appeared in the darkened doorway just minutes before Mrs. Tolland died. Not only did the dying woman see her mother returned from the spirit world, but Almira Todd did also. Almira recalls the incident, "I was one that did n't know what it was to faint away, no matter what happened; . . . but 't was somethin' that made poor human natur' quail. I saw plain while I could see; 't was a pleasant enough face, shaped somethin' like Mis' Tolland's and a kind of expectin' look." Furthermore, Almira says that Mrs. Tolland spoke "perfectly reasonable" when she asked Almira if she too had seen the spirit. Almira herself felt calm then and affirmed that, yes, she had seen it. Within five minutes of this event, Mrs. Tolland quietly died. Almira "felt they'd gone away together" and was not "alarmed afterward" and "never called it beyond reason [she] should see the other watcher" but "saw plain enough there was somebody there with [her] in the room (TF, p. 166)." It is not unreasonable either to assume that Jewett meant for the testimony of Almira Todd to

be accepted as true, for she has already established her as a truthful source for the history of Dunnet Landing in The Country of the Pointed Firs. Her steadiness of mind and heart and her ability to heal with herbs add to her credibility as well.

Jewett was certain of immortality and communion of the dead with persons on earth. Particularly appealing to her was the prospective reunion with those who had preceded her in death. During a period of bereavement following the death of a dear friend, Jewett voiced her hope: "[T]here are sights of friends to say good morning to, even if there are few to say good night."[19] Her belief in communion with the dead had already put eternal life only a step beyond temporal existence. These words of Almira Todd in "The Foreigner" could be Jewett's own affirmation of immortality:

> You know plain enough there's somethin' beyond this world; the doors stand wide open. "There's somethin' of us that must still live on; we've got to join both worlds together an' live in one for the other."[20] The doctor said that to me one day, an' I never could forget it. (TF, pp. 166-67)

Notes

[1]Susan Allen Toth, "The Value of Age in the Fiction of Sarah Orne Jewett," Studies in Short Fiction, 8 (Summer 1971),440.

[2]Sarah Orne Jewett, "At the Funeral of Phillips Brooks," Atlantic Monthly, 71 (April 1893), 566-67.

[3]Fields, p. 108.

[4]Fields, p. 203.

[5]Fields, pp. 36-37.

[6]Fields, p. 208.

[7]Fields, pp. 28-29.

[8]Frost, p. 136.

[9]Fields, pp. 108-09.

[10]Richard Cary, ed., Sarah Orne Jewett Letters (Waterville, Me.: Colby College Press, 1967), p. 105-11.

[11]Matthiessen, pp. 94-95.

[12]Fields, p. 232.

[13]Fields, p. 16.

[14]Cary, Letters, p. 158. ,

[15]Cary, SOJ, pp. 105-06.

[16]Fields, pp. 110-11.

[17]Fields, pp. 49-50.

[18]CB, p. 115; Fields, p. 149.

[19]Fields, p. 109.

[20]Quotation from Sir Thomas Browne which Jewett often used. The "doctor" was probably a reference to Jewett's father.

CONCLUSION

The religious attitudes of Sarah Orne Jewett defy precise categorization. This difficulty in pinpointing her belief stems in part from her reluctance to be specific, in part from the contradictions inherent in her religious philosophy. What does seem certain is that Jewett was the last true Emersonian in American literary history. Reflected in all her allusions to religion are the salient aspects of Transcendentalism: an exaltation in nature which verges on pantheism, a disinclination to confront the reality of evil, and the paradoxical combination of a transcendental religious experience with the glorification of man. Like theologian Horace Bushnell (1802-1876), Jewett appealed to those "who believed in reform, self-improvement, and gentility, who were nervous and nostalgic about the faith of their fathers, who were affronted by Calvinistic accusations and bored by theology."[1]

Though Emerson and Bushnell were both radicals in their day, their romanticism, with all its ambiguities, had been assimilated into the mainstream of the American cultural tradition by the end of the nineteenth century. The optimism of the era allowed an almost imperceptible adoption of this philosophy by the social and intellectual elites when it was presented to them both by the post-bellum clergy and by the New England writers who were Jewett's older contemporaries.

After the Civil War, *a* new type of minister with a discernibly "progressive" message gained prominence in the large urban churches.[2] Perhaps the most eminent of these clergymen was Phillips Brooks (1835-1893) of Trinity Episcopal Church in Boston, a preacher greatly admired by Jewett, who often attended his services. Like her, Brooks believed that "the whole of mankind was the family of God, and the goodness and nobility of men as children of God was the essential article of his faith."[3] Like many of his contemporaries who ministered in the large downtown churches of the Northeast, he attempted to combine the philosophical presuppositions of American Romanticism with the old orthodoxy. The result was a "benign and genteel form of religious humanism."[4]

Even more influential than these ministers were the "parlor poets," such as Whittier, Lowell, and Longfellow. All three were friends of Jewett, though many years her senior. While the twentieth century is often scornful of these poets, they had a considerable influence in the pulpits, classrooms, and parlors of nineteenth century America where their works were memorized and declaimed. Each in his own way, these writers tried to deal with the religious issues of the time. "Longfellow and Whittier seem almost deliberately to have assumed roles as lay preachers to the American people."[5]

In common with Jewett they believed that Christianity was a way of life rather than a creed. They held similar views concerning a divine love and plan for the world, Christ's example for man, and the hope of immortality.

Lowell affirmed "belief in a universe governed by a divine force according to fixed moral laws,"[6] and Whittier spoke of the importance of being "in harmony with the Divine Will" at work in the world.[7] Nature, Whittier also believed, is a "mute ambassador . . . who spoke in gestures which pointed toward truths of greater beauty and eternal goodness,"[8] and thus is a representative of God. Longfellow sensed God's presence in nature, and Lowell thought that men could learn God's plan through nature. Whittier and Lowell, like Jewett, emphasized the ministry of love to one's fellow man, and most often they perceived of God as the source of love. Whittier and Longfellow echoed Jewett's concept of Christ as an example to mankind.[9] Man needed to emulate His self-sacrifice, particularly through service to others. Immortality was the ever-present hope for all four authors, though none was specific about the nature of the future state. Tending to play down any future judgment for sin, they were basically optimistic about the next life.

Thus in "the twentieth century unorthodoxy of her fervent creedless religion,"[10] Jewett represented the final step in the conversion of radical Emersonian Romanticism into a new orthodoxy, the American genteel tradition. She could not write with the sometimes acrid satire of Mark Twain or even with the hesitating social concern of William Dean Howells. She seemed unperturbed by the theological and spiritual implications of Darwinism. Her finest work, The Country of the Pointed Firs, was published in 1896, three years after the

publication of Stephen Crane's Maggie and only nine years before the publication of Jack London's The Call of the Wild. Obviously the future portended a harsher, more pessimistic naturalism. To this glorification of scientific naturalism Sarah Orne Jewett was a stranger, and in her literature the religion of American Romanticism was given its final statement.

Notes

[1]Barbara M. Cross, Horace Bushnell: Minister to a Changing America (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1958), p. 157.

[2]Sydney E. Ahlstrom, A Religious History of the American People (New Haven, Conn.: Yale Univ. Press, 1972, p. 738.

[3]Ahlstrom, p. 739.

[4]Ahlstrom, p. 740. Cf. C. Gregg Singer, A Theological Interpretation of American History (Nutley ,N.J.: The Craig Press, 1964), p. 61.

[5]Ahlstrom, p. 614.

[6]Martin Duberman, James Russell Lowell (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1966), p. 265.

[7]Albert Mordell, Quaker Militant: John Greenleaf Whittler (Port Washington, N.Y.: Kennikat Press, Inc., 1933), p. 298.

[8]Lewis Gaston Leary, John Greenleaf Whittier, Twayne's United States Authors Series, 6 (New York: Twayne Publishers, Inc., 1961), p. 93.

[9]Augustus Hopkins Strong, American Poets and Their Theology (Phila.: The Griffith and Rowland Press, 1916), p. 242.

[10]Julia R. Tutwiler, "Two New England Writers in Relation to Their Art and to Each Other," Gunton's Magazine, 25 (Nov. 1903), rpt. in Appreciation, ed. Gary, p. 29.

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