

setting. At the end of almost every entry there is a vignette, as tailpiece. This, though usually tiny, is no mere finial ornament, but an engraving of exquisite quality. Sometimes it will be a feather, or a floral scroll, a bird's head with eager eye, or a jug, a bucket, a spade; it may be a naiad by a fountain, or a memorial stone. More often, and more importantly, it is a rural scene or seascape embodying some anecdote, and offering a wry or macabre insight into human behaviour, the 'moral' and 'sermon' of *Blackwood's* eulogy.

It is these vignettes which Bewick's first readers so loved, his 'tailpieces', as he christened them. In the cutting of them he took great joy, turning from the task of the 'figures' and flying 'to cut an ornamental tailpiece with avidity; for in the inventive faculty his imagination revels.'⁸ Asked upon his deathbed what he had been thinking of during a doze, 'he replied with a faint smile, that he had been devising subjects for some new tailpieces'.⁹

Tailpiece woodcuts such as these are almost Bewick's own invention, appearing first in *Quadrupeds*; their subsequent development is all his own. Its extent may be gauged from the numbers in the last edition of his lifetime, that of 1826. *Land Birds* of that date had 157 figures and 161 tailpieces, while *Water Birds* had 157 and 145. Bewick died in 1828, at his home at Gateshead, now a twin town with Newcastle. Perhaps the name Gateshead came to Charlotte's attention from some Bewick obituary.

All the pictures which the ten-year-old Jane describes are tailpieces. The range of Bewick's subjects in these goes far beyond that of the birds themselves, and surprises the modern reader, who is expecting merely an ornithological treatise. But to Charlotte's readers of 1847, the name Bewick called up a realm of 'nature . . . truth . . . humour and keen satire . . . powerful morality', as well as 'the poetry of creation.', to quote the *British Quarterly* again.¹⁰ Not having these mental images himself, today's reader may well miss the emotional significance of Jane's absorption in her book. But the first readers of *Jane Eyre* could be expected to get the point.

Now for the second question to be settled; which are the pictures concerned, and where can today's reader see them?

As has been noted, an article which attempts to be specific about this is Jane Stedman's, in *Brontë Society Transactions*, 1966, but it is not illustrated, and does not state to which edition of *Birds* its references apply. This is unfortunate, because the bibliography of *Birds* is a complicated story, especially for the vignettes; Roscoe's otherwise exhaustive study does not include information on their whereabouts.¹¹

What follows, therefore is an attempt to identify, and locate for a modern reader, the words and vignettes to which *Jane Eyre* refers, and to indicate something of their significance. By checking the repro-