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Unpacking Harriet Newell's Library

ALTHOUGH SHE REMAINS RELATIVELY UNKNOWN TO LITERARY HISTORIANS today, Harriet Atwood Newell was one of the Romantic era's best-selling authors. Going through more than eighty editions in the United States and United Kingdom between 1814 and 1840, her *Memoirs* (Boston, 1814; London, 1816) effectively established a genre, the missionary memoir, as well as cementing a place for women within that emerging movement.¹ Newell's fate as the first American missionary to die abroad—at nineteen, and shortly after the birth and death of her only child—ensured her status as a public figure. Even before news of her death reached North America in August of 1813, her letters had found an enthusiastic readership in *The Panoplist* and *The Connecticut Evangelical Magazine*.² With an eye to the promotion of their missionary cause, her husband Samuel Newell had begun sending extracts of her correspondence with his own dispatches on their arrival in Calcutta in June of 1812. Reporting her death six months later, he included copies of Newell's account of the voyage out, her brief India journal, and most recent correspondence. These papers, along with those of Newell's girlhood (likely supplied by her mother Mary Atwood), were placed in the hands of the Reverend Leonard Woods late in 1813. By early 1814 Woods had finished his selection and compilation, prefacing Newell's writings with a sermon of his own composition. Samuel Armstrong, Boston publisher of the *Panoplist*, advertised the volume under the ungainly title of *A Sermon Preached at Haverhill in Remembrance of Mrs. Harriet Newell, wife of the Rev. Samuel Newell, Missionary to India. Who Died at the Isle of France, Nov. 30, 1812, Aged 19 Years. To which are added Memoirs of her Life* (1814). (Later editions reversed the order of the contents and carried the simpler title *Memoirs of Mrs. Harriet Newell*.³) Its

1. Appearing in Anna Maria Lee's *Memoirs of Eminent Female Writers* (1827) alongside Baillie, Barbauld, Burney, Edgeworth, Macauley, More, Opie, Owenson, and Ann Radcliffe, Newell receives more sustained coverage (five pages) than any Romantic writer except Barbauld and Radcliffe.

2. See *Panoplist* (March 1813): 468–73; (April 1813): 515–23; (August 1813): 131–35; and *Connecticut Evangelical Magazine and Religious Intelligencer* 6 (1813): 235–39, 278–79, 351–56.

3. Our text for this essay is Armstrong's second edition of 1814. Newell, *A Sermon Preached at Haverhill in Remembrance of Mrs. Harriet Newell, wife of the Rev. Samuel Newell, Missionary to India. Who Died at the Isle of France, Nov. 30, 1812, Aged 19 Years. To which are added Memoirs of her Life*, ed. Leonard Woods, 2nd ed. (Boston: Samuel T. Armstrong, 1814). All further references will be cited parenthetically in the text.

success was great enough for Armstrong—perhaps responding to criticism of his venture—to provide a statement “TO THE PUBLIC” in June 1814 that Woods had earned only “one hundred dollars in the whole” from the *Memoirs* and held “no pecuniary interest in the work.”⁴ At the same time, he contributed \$200 in his own name to the Board of Missions from “profits of *Memoirs of Mrs. Newell*.”⁵ Woods went on to print six further editions in the next three years.

Within this special issue of *Studies in Romanticism*, Newell exists as a particularly compelling case of a woman mediated almost entirely by networks of print that quickly and industriously packaged her writings in the name of a specific cause. (In this respect, Newell’s example thus raises issues similar to those discussed by Sarah Anne Storti in her essay on posthumous editions of Letitia Landon.) “Harriet Newell was as much the product of print networks as . . . a phenomenon of them,” Mary Kupiec Cayton has noted, pointing to New England’s burgeoning bookselling industry: “[she] might have lived and died in obscurity but for the role these expanding networks of communication played in affirming the common identity and interests of evangelicals living thousands of miles from one another.”⁶ Like that of many women writers of the period, Newell’s labor was uncompensated beyond the financial support provided to the couple from the fundraising activities of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions. The near total absence of materials outside the heavily mediated *Memoirs* renders any investigation of Newell’s motivations and feelings about the publication of her writing frustratingly difficult. Only one autograph letter survives in archives, and her original manuscripts appear to have been consumed during the processes of compilation and production.⁷

More than other women writers of the period, then, Newell comes to us as a single book: heavily produced, and not of her own making.⁸ This is very literally the case with the first editions of the *Memoirs*, where Woods stands as primary author and his sermon critically frames Newell’s richer and more substantial work. Yet, to read Newell’s journals is to encounter writing at times raw and confronting: these are the anxieties of a young woman wrestling with the conflicting demands of social pressure, self-actualization, and religious awakening. For Newell’s contemporary readers, the unproduced nature of her prose would almost certainly have heightened the sense of its authenticity, much in the same way her religious struggles produced

4. *Panoplist* (June 1814): 288.

5. *Panoplist* (July 1814): 333.

6. Cayton, “Canonizing Harriet Newell,” in *Competing Kingdoms: Women, Mission, Nation, and the American Protestant Empire, 1812–1960*, ed. Barbara Reeves-Ellington, et al. (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010), 71.

7. See January 16, 1809 autograph letter to Catherine French, Boston Public Library MS Ch.E.2.43A.

8. Even later chapbooks and tracts base their text on *The Memoirs* rather than abridging through paraphrase or summary.

her eventual martyrdom as a proof of Providence. Our own experience of reading her *Memoirs*—in spite of decades of reading personal diaries and correspondence—remains one of deep discomfort: an inability to shed the impression that in the *Memoirs* we encounter the private writings of a minor, appropriated without her explicit approval, for ideological and economic gain. Presented with her premature death at the age of nineteen, Woods and Armstrong had promptly compiled the *Memoirs* as a spiritual autobiography defined by her foreign death, which served as the *telos* of her short life and proof of her martyrdom.

Still, other aspects of Newell remain stubbornly visible even within this heavily choreographed and commodified textual space. She is an engaging and accomplished correspondent, particularly for one so young (her earliest journal entries in the published *Memoirs* were written when Newell was twelve years old). She has a compelling, conversational style in both her letters and diaries that draws her reader into all her quandaries and reflections. Newell's seriousness and style are both evident in her description of the local dancing school that she attended at the age of eleven, and which opens the "Summary Account" portion of the *Memoirs*. Divided between her enjoyment of dancing and her guilt over its "vanity" and "foolishness," Newell makes a bargain with herself, "solemnly determin[ing] that, when the school closed, I would immediately become religious" (55). It is a startling passage of mixed self-awareness, and one only made more poignant once we discover that the dancing school was arranged by John Hasseltine, the father of her close friend (and later fellow missionary) Ann. Earlier that year Hasseltine had added a large room to the second story of his house to host assemblies, and the meetings that followed caused controversy. Religious opinion was as divided on dancing as it was on female missionaries: in 1805 there had appeared an anonymous local pamphlet attacking both the gatherings and the progressive local "parson A[llen]." Corrupted "by doctrines of Arians and Socinians," Allen was reported as having "attended frolicings and dancings with his young people, not only till nine o'clock, and ten o'clock, and eleven o'clock, and twelve o'clock at night, but even till one o'clock in the morning." In this small community, Newell is required to navigate mild choices offered by close friends. But she experiences these as matters of life and death, or life and salvation. Later in the *Memoirs* we find her once again torn by the prospect of a local ball: as much for how it might divide or endanger the spiritual health of the community, as for the frivolity of its "frolicings" (76). The inclusion of these two incidents in the *Memoirs* suggests that Newell's compiler sought to mark her first moment of religious resolve and to explore the stakes of such a decision. But Newell's vexed response to the "problem"

9. See Jean Sarah Pond, *Bradford: A New England Academy* (Bradford, MA: Bradford Alumnae Association, 1930), 7–8.

of dancing also gives us insight into her social life and competing interests, which included music, poetry, and spiritual practice, as well as the sense of freedom that comes through movement.

Faced in this way with the marks of Newell's own "little book" (185)—the affectionate term she gave for the bundle of diary papers she forwarded from Serampore to her mother on July 14, 1812—within the *Memoirs*, our essay attempts to set to one side Newell's death and canonization in order to ask whether we might discover a more open and less predetermined consciousness for her as a result. One of the things owed her, we believe, is not to read her life through the predetermined lens of mission and martyrdom, but rather to seek out the presence of another (or "counter") text that remains visible even within the published *Memoirs*. Newell, after all, was a writer before she was a missionary: she began writing in the established secular traditions of familiar correspondence and journal keeping. What would it mean, then, to reread Harriet Newell not as a saint to the missionary cause but as a Romantic subject? To consider the *Memoirs* as the record of a voracious reader building a vocabulary for her own ambitions and vocation? Like Lindsey Eckert's recuperation of Caroline Lamb in this special issue, then, our consideration of Newell seeks to look beyond the *Memoirs* to other books—in this case, to the myriad of quoted material underwriting the *Memoirs*. Newell's habits of allusion extend well outside the standard texts of early nineteenth-century evangelical writing to include Robert Blair, William Cowper, Oliver Goldsmith, Ossian, Elizabeth Singer Rowe, Jane Taylor, Henry Kirke White, Helen Maria Williams, and Edward Young. In Kirke White especially, Newell finds a model of familiar yet religious writing, and one that emboldens her own patterns of quotation and allusion. These patterns, we suggest, present an underacknowledged dimension within romantic writing, one associated with radical Protestantism and highly attractive to readers. Consideration of her wider influences also brings into focus another literary tradition that Newell had also begun to engage in her own work at the time of her death: travel writing.

1. Moving Allusions

Of course, "extracting" Harriet Atwood from the missionary narrative that has long framed her is perhaps easier said than done, particularly when even the basic facts of her life come to us so heavily intertwined with events of the Second Great Awakening in New England. Atwood's adolescence and emergence into a writing life coincided with the arrival of two charismatic figures: Abraham Burnham, who joined Bradford Academy as a preceptor in 1805; and Joshua Dodge, who became pastor of the First Parish Church of Haverhill in 1808. Both had a profound effect on her formative years, Dodge as her family's "beloved pastor" (59) and Burnham as her "spiritual father" (70) during her time as a student. Each encouraged (as one local historian put

it) “the guidance of each student into a . . . life of Christian service.”¹⁰ How such ideas of “service” fed the foreign missionary movement are clear enough. They were given additional force by the published convictions of preachers like Melvill Horne—recently returned from Sierra Leone—whose *Letters Relative to Foreign Missions* received its first American publication at Andover in 1810.¹¹ This climate of self-examination and spiritual activism also helps us to understand the minor sensation created by “Four young gentlemen, members of the Divinity College”¹²—Adoniram Judson, Samuel Nott, Samuel J. Mills, and Samuel Newell—who appeared in June of 1810 in Bradford before the General Association of Congregationalist Ministers to declare their serious vocation to do missionary work abroad. Their petition for “patronage and support” had immediate effect: an American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions was created the next morning, with an astonishing \$9,327.04 contributed over the next eighteen months for their training, expenses, and travel.¹³ Their project was enthusiastically covered by evangelical journals, who reported on every aspect of their planning, ordination, embarkation, and arrival.

The energy and immediacy of the new American missionaries made involvement in such a movement deeply appealing, particularly for a seriously-minded young woman considering a life of Christian service. With her friend Ann Hasseltine likely to become engaged to one emissary, Adoniram Judson, Harriet Atwood agreed to be introduced to another: Samuel Newell. Their meeting gave a new and powerful focus to her desired spiritual practice:

Oct. 23 [1810]. Mr. M. introduced Mr. N[ewell] to our family, He appears to be an engaged Christian. Expects to spend his life, in preaching a Saviour to the benighted Pagans.

Oct. 31. Mr. N. called on us this morning. He gave me some account of the dealings of God with his soul. If such a man who has devoted himself to the service of the gospel, has determined to labour in the most difficult part of the vineyard, and is willing to renounce his earthly happiness for the interest of religion; if he doubts his possessing love to God; — what shall I say of myself?

(87)

Atwood's vocation was powerfully shaped by a renewed Christian spiritualism whose call to Mission was urgent and personalized. The radical Dissenting

10. Pond, *Bradford*, 71.

11. *A Collection of Letters Relative to Foreign Missions; Containing Several of Melvill Horne's "Letters on Missions"* (Andover: Galen Ware, 1810). An earlier edition appeared in Bristol in 1794. Which the Newells carried to India is uncertain.

12. *The Panoplist* 3 (July 1810): 86.

13. *Connecticut Evangelical Magazine and Religious Intelligencer* 5 (December 1812): 470.

roots of the New England movement are important to recognize here: salvation was open to all and incumbent upon all, however modest their origins or circumstances. The project “to guarantee the welfare of religion” was, according to Horne, no longer “for the Potentates of Europe” but fearless Ministers of Christ, including—and perhaps especially—the faithful of the New World.¹⁴

Such a project of globalized, egalitarian faith was irresistible to one who, although living in a small circle, was avidly interested in the world and her place in it. A letter dated February 27, 1809, for example, reports that “I have of late been quite interested in reading Miss Helen Maria Williams’s Letters on the French Revolution, and am now reading Rollin’s Ancient History” (49). Such references reveal Harriet Atwood’s reading as deliberative and diverse; she closes this same letter by declaring to her friend an intention to “spend every moment of our time in improving our minds, by reading, or attending to conversation that is beneficial. Our time is short!” (49). Subsequent letters and journal entries amplify this sense of urgency, as she reports on the meetings of various reading groups of which she is part. While the staple of such gatherings appears to be prose works such as David Ramsay’s *Life of Washington* (1807), her own patterns of quotation at this period favor scripture, hymns, and verse, including works by Edward Young, Alexander Pope, William Shakespeare, Isaac Watts, Samuel Medley, and William Cowper.

This array exemplifies Newell’s habits of quotation during and immediately after her Bradford years: while reading broadly in prose genres like history, religion, letters, and lives, she tends to quote in verse, whether biblical or secular. One senses that, like Catherine Morland of Jane Austen’s *Northanger Abbey*, the fifteen-year-old Harriet Atwood in these months is “in training for a heroine,”¹⁵ preparing herself for some as-yet-unseen purpose through sustained reading and quotation. Her breadth of allusion typifies and exceeds the nineteenth-century evangelical reading repertoires detailed by Candy Gunther Brown and Mary Kelly, and which are nicely captured in the correspondence of Newell’s close friend, Fanny Woodbury:

My dear Miss Atwood, I have just laid down Mr. Dana’s *Memoirs of Pious Women*, which I am re-perusing, for the sake of answering your truly kind and valuable letter; for which I return you many thanks. Reading the life of the illustrious Countess of Warwick in the book above-mentioned, I recognized with heart-felt delight the blessed effects of genuine religion.¹⁶

14. Horne, *Letters on Missions* (Bristol: Bulgin and Rosser, 1794), 16.

15. Austen, *Northanger Abbey, Lady Susan, The Watsons, and Sanditon* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 7.

16. Woodbury, *Writings of Miss Fanny Woodbury* (Boston: Samuel T. Armstrong, 1815), 45–46. Further references to this book are made parenthetically in the text.

As this letter shows powerfully, shared reading serves as a means to intimacy between female friends and a vehicle for literary and spiritual self-fashioning. Continuing the next day, Woodbury quotes Matthew 11:12 as a means of prodding Newell's missionary vocation, urging her to "sit down and seriously count the cost, before you make any engagement" to go into "horrid darkness . . . in a gloomy labyrinth of Jewish, Mahometan or Pagan superstition" (47). Like Woodbury, Newell draws from the Bible, hymns, sermons, and tracts either read or recently heard. At the same time, the range of Newell's reading and citation is noticeably wider and more self-consciously literary. Even in the early days of her spiritual awakening, her allusions routinely extend to history (as with Charles Rollins's *Ancient History of the Egyptians, Carthaginians, Assyrians, Babylonians, Medes and Persians, Macedonians, and Grecians*), drama (particularly Shakespeare), and eighteenth-century poetry (Young's *Night Thoughts*, Cowper's *Olney Hymns*, and others). Like many writers at the turn of the nineteenth century, she makes what she can of the world with the sanctioned materials she has to hand.

Even within the span of her short life, Newell's writing undergoes a process of literary maturation: from around 1811 her allusions begin to deepen and change as she gains in confidence as a writer. To her fondness for the hymns of Isaac Watts she adds those of other writers, most notably Susannah Harrison, Elizabeth Singer Rowe, and Anne Steele. Around this time, she begins not just to quote scripture but also periodically to alter it to suit either her situation or her emotional state. Usually, these modifications take the form of abridgement, as Newell compresses her sacred source materials for greater rhetorical effect; Matthew, Luke, and Revelation come in for such treatment multiple times. But she also is capable of more radical adjustments—as when, distraught at the seductive power of a local ball on her friend "E," she fuses two biblical passages together, adding a closing phrase of her own formulation to create an original composition. The sentence in question—"But it is, if possible, more dreadful to see those, who have 'put their hands to the plough, look back; or being often reprov'd, harden their hearts against God'"—draws from Luke 9:62 ("And Jesus said unto him, *No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God*") and from the many moments in Exodus where Pharaoh hardens his heart against the pleas of the Israelites—while significantly altering both.

Secular sources occasion even greater liberties, particularly as Newell's reading widens and her resolve to do missionary work strengthens. "I have just read a passage in Thomson's *Seasons*," she writes in a journal entry of July 23, 1811, "which I thought I could adopt as my own language:

'Should fate command me to the farthest verge
Of the green earth, to hostile barbarous climes,

Rivers unknown to song; where first the sun
 Gilds *Indian* mountains, or his setting beam
 Flames on th'*Atlantic* isles; 'tis nought to me;
 Since *God* is ever present — ever just,
 In the void waste, as in the city full
 And where *he* vital breathes, there *must be joy*.'

(111)

With the exception of changing the final word of the sixth line of the passage from “felt” to “just,” Newell quotes lines 107–13 of *Winter* verbatim. Her major intervention comes through substituting her own closing line for Thomson’s. Unwilling to retain his deistic, even pantheistic conclusion—that God “Rolls the same kindred *Seasons* round the world” (55) so that we might feel a divine presence through them—Newell replaces the line with her own, which depicts God as actively present rather than inferred.

Arguably her most radical act of creative quotation, however, comes a little over a fortnight later (August 11, 1811), when, thinking on the past five years of her life, she quotes an unnamed source to give form to her feelings: “I think of the days of other years, and my soul is sad.’ All is a barren waste” (116). It is the kind of statement that, were part of it not cordoned off by quotation marks, one might pass over. Its source, however, proves to be two separate lines of “The War of Caros” by Ossian (James Macpherson). There, having recounted the tale of Lamor killing his son and declaring that “his soul is sad,” Ossian confesses, “Darkness comes on my soul . . . let me think on the days of other years.”¹⁷ Ossian’s presence as a vehicle for misspent youth is only one of the surprises of Newell’s *Memoirs*, as is the unquoted phrase “barren waste,” recalling Book One of John Milton’s *Paradise Regained* and a host of eighteenth-century Georgics beginning with Alexander Pope’s *Windsor Forest*.¹⁸ Newell’s reference to the “barren waste” frames a spiritual battlefield and historical crisis marking life and landscape—an extraordinary image for one’s young (repented) life. Such moments repeatedly take Newell out of her expected milieu and remind us how much she is a creature of Romanticism. Readers of William Blake will find Newell’s reading and patterns of quotation (the Bible, Blair, Cowper, Gray, Rowe, Steele, Watts, Young) particularly suggestive, since they point to a canon and influences that strikingly

17. Macpherson, *Poems of Ossian in Two Volumes* (Edinburgh: Elder and Brown, 1797), 1:95, 1:98.

18. Milton, *Paradise Regained . . . To which is added Samson Agonistes* (London: John Starkey, 1671), 1:354; Pope, *Windsor Forest* (London: Bernard Lintott, 1713), lines 28, 44–45, and 80.

resemble Blake's own. One wonders what the two might have made of one another had they met in Regency London, or what path the young Harriet Atwood's brand of radical Protestantism might have taken just twenty years earlier in that city.

2. "I'm but a stranger and a pilgrim here"¹⁹

Given her immersion in the work of poets like Blair, Young, Goldsmith, and Cowper, we should not be surprised to find Newell, on the eve of her departure to India, finding a literary soulmate in Henry Kirke White, whose *Remains* (1807), edited by Robert Southey, established him among a growing coterie of talented poets cut off by premature death. Like Newell, Kirke White sought to improve himself through reading and study. Like Newell, he struggled with his faith, flirting with deism before declaring himself a committed evangelical within the Anglican church in 1803. In him Newell discovered for the first time a writer of her own generation, similar sensibility, and committed to the same evangelical causes:

13 October [1811] — The perusal of the life, letters, and poems of Henry Kirke White, has been productive of much satisfaction. While I have respected him for his learning and superior talents, I have ardently wished for a share of that piety . . . which rendered his character so interesting and lovely. His "weary aching head," is now resting in the silent tomb. Henry sleeps, to wake no more; but his spirit, unconfined, is exploring the unseen world! O that his example might affect my heart!

(135–36)

In a passage of spiraling emotional intensity, Newell constructs herself as both comforter and kindred spirit, so that the poet's "weary aching head" comes to rest within her heart, even as "his spirit, unconfined . . . explor[es] the unseen world." Such imagined proximity causes Newell in turn to think more generally about the writer's legacy beyond the tomb, and the prospect of spiritual influence living on in letters.

In her *Memoirs*, Newell cites Kirke White more than any living writer; only the Bible and the hymns of Watts come in for quotation more often. Her favorite poems—"The Dance of the Consumptives" from *Fragment of an Eccentric Drama* and the lyric "Fanny! Upon thy breast I may not lie!"—suggest that Newell found in Kirke White a literary and spiritual model for contemplating an early death:

19. Elizabeth Singer Rowe, "Longing after the Enjoyment of God," originally published in *Devout Exercises of the Heart in Meditation and Soliloquy, Prayer and Praise* (London: R. Hett, 1738), 11.

FANNY! upon thy breast I may not lie!
 Fanny! thou does hear me when I speak!
 Where art thou, love? — Around I turn my eye,
 And as I turn, the tear is on my cheek.
 Was it a dream? or did my love behold
 Indeed my lonely couch? — Me thought the breath
 Fann'd not her bloodless lip; her eye was cold
 And hollow, and the livery of death
 Invested her pale forehead. — Sainted maid,
 My thoughts oft rest with thee in thy cold grave,
 Through the long wintry night, when wind and wave
 Rock the dark house where thy poor head is laid.²⁰

The mix of eroticism, dream-vision, and death anticipates John Keats's sonnets and "La belle dame sans merci" before yielding, in its closing four lines, to "better promise":

Yet hush! my fond heart, hush! there is a shore
 Of better promise; and I know at last,
 When the long Sabbath of the tomb is past,
 We two shall meet in Christ to part no more.²¹

This reconciliation of life and death appears to have modulated Newell's own thinking, at least as reported by her husband as she lay dying on the Isle de France: "My wicked heart," she writes, "is inclined to think it hard that I should suffer such fatigue and hardship. I sinfully envy those whose lot it is to live in tranquility on land" (237). Challenging her own worldly "fond heart," Newell quiets herself in the very language of Kirke White's lines—"Hush my warring passions"—reminding herself "that I wander from place to place and feel no home" in order to find a reconciliation in heaven: "Perhaps" she said, "my dear mother has gone before me . . . as soon as I leave this body I shall find myself with her" (238–39). In Kirke White's cool eroticism of the grave, Newell found an additional model for the early death she had begun to contemplate prior to her departure to India. Such a death could be still in the service of the Mission—while couched in the emotional vocabulary of Newell's desires.

For Newell's literary executors and publishers, *The Remains of Henry Kirke White* perhaps provided another, equally powerful model, where literary remains take on a monumentalizing function to present a life cut

20. Kirke White, *The Remains of Henry Kirke White*, ed. Robert Southey, 2 vols. (London: Vernor, Hood, and Sharpe, and others, 1807), 2:133, lines 1–12.

21. Kirke White, *Remains*, 2:133, lines 13–16.

short in all the fullness of its promise. Like the *Remains*, the *Memoirs of Mrs. Harriet Newell* opens with a lengthy introduction by an editor who doubles as a literary patron. And like the *Remains*, it quickly became a best-seller. It is no accident that Newell's publisher Samuel Armstrong, emboldened by the runaway success of the *Memoirs*, quickly brought out his own edition of the *Remains* in 1815. Three years after her death, Harriet Newell would have found herself appearing with Kirke White in Armstrong's bookshop, two evangelical writers who died tragically young. The image of two young writers—their title pages perhaps even appearing side by side in Armstrong's window at 50 Cornhill, Boston²²—reminds us of the degree to which premature death was big business for Romantic publishers.

Thoroughly shaped and mediated at every stage by her death, Newell's status as a martyr gathered additional poignancy by that death being unnecessary: the British East India Company's refusal to admit missionaries forced the heavily pregnant Newell to depart Bengal and make the journey to Isle de France that killed her. Her death also secured her extraordinary influence as a missionary role model for women. (It is difficult now to understand the power of Newell's personal example until you encounter on various genealogical websites the number of children given "Harriet Newell" as forenames in the nineteenth century.) But death not only created the possibility of Newell's book; as the arrangement of her letters and journal shows, from the time that she commits to life in "a land of strangers" she becomes increasingly preoccupied with the possibility of dying abroad. Her entry for September 12, 1811, for example, shows her attempting to "contemplate, with serenity and composure, the painful scenes of a missionary life" (128–29) only to find herself picturing the end of her own: "Oh how can I think of that hour! But it is a glorious work . . . could I become the instrument of bringing one degraded female to Jesus, how should I be repaid for every pain!" (129). Here, Kirke White's *Remains* again provides a potential model as Newell weighs vocational duty against the possibility of an early demise. Writing to Benjamin Maddock less than four weeks before his death, Kirke White had refused his friend's injunctions to give up reading: "My heart turns with more fondness toward the consolations of religion . . . and in some degree I have *found* consolation. I still, however, conceive that it is my duty to pursue my studies temperately, and to fortify myself with Christian calmness for the worst."²³ Newell finds a similar calm in this dance of risk and duty; faced with the very real threat of dying from home, she marvels at her own temerity. In one of her most memorable passages, Newell reflects after a storm at sea, "I know not how it is; but I hear the

22. On the history of Samuel Armstrong's printing business and his decision to set up a bookshop at 50 Cornhill in Boston in 1811, see Rollo G. Silver, "Belcher & Armstrong Set up Shop: 1805," *Studies in Bibliography* 4 (1951/1952): 204.

23. Kirke White, *Remains*, 1:253.

thunder roll;—see the lightning flash;—and the waves threatening to swallow up the vessel;—and yet remain unmoved” (176).

Strangely, one place where Newell's fixation on death seems to lift is during the couple's long sea passage to India. Having spent the past two years of her life preoccupied with the purity of her faith and questioning her worthiness to dedicate her life to a cause, Newell finds on board ship new interests and concerns. The religious dimension of her journal is always present, but the register of its experience and expression shifts. Spiritual autobiography ending in premature death—until now a dominant genre of the *Memoirs*—gives way to something more expansive as she takes pleasure in the sensations of travel: the climate and sea conditions; the motion of the vessel; the oppressions of a hot and close cabin; and the great refreshment of a salt-water bath. She reports on the taking of turtles, flying fish, and porpoises by the sailors, on her first encounters with sharks and “*Albatrosses*,” and on a surprisingly pleasurable diet:

We have learned to make yeast. We have occasionally flour-bread, nuts, apple-puddings, apple-pies, &c. We have baked and stewed beans twice a week, which you know are favourite dishes of mine, also fowls, ham, &c. We drink tamarind-water, porter, cyder, &c. I have been agreeably disappointed respecting our manner of living at sea.

(163)

Newell notices the change in herself. Despite high winds and seas, a confinement with sea sickness, and the discovery of a dangerous leak in the ship, she wonders: “I do not know why it is that I do not suffer more from fear than I do” (164). Here, in the changed patterns of everyday life, she reflects for the first time openly on the relationship which has so shaped her new life:

My time passes more pleasantly than ever I anticipated. I read, and sew, and converse at intervals; rise early in the morning, retire early at night. I find Mr Newell to be everything I could wish for. He not only acts the part of a kind, affectionate friend, but likewise that of a careful, tender *physician*.

(165)

“I have for the most part of the time since we sailed” she reflects, “enjoyed a great deal of real happiness” (166).

It is at this moment of lived praxis—the spiritual journey becoming a physical voyage—that Newell's lifelong habits of omnivorous reading are again revealed. The shipboard journal and brief account of Bengal are marked by an attentive curiosity and a growing talent for relating incidents and describing people. Shaped by her early reading of Williams, Horne, and the “account of

Birmah" (175) the couple consume on the voyage out, Newell begins to imagine a different kind of pilgrimage for herself, one fed by activity, discovery, and reportage. These final sections of the *Memoir* chronicle her growing interest in the world outside. They also show a developing, journalistic understanding of audience: which details and anecdotes will prove most interesting to different readers. This attention to the new demands of travel writing surfaces especially in the repetition of materials in letters to different correspondents sent from India. Some of this duplication is dictated by circumstance (what Newell has to tell must be proffered more than once) and the urgencies of the moment (the boat which is to carry their letters to America is leaving imminently). But even within these constraints we find her weighing which materials will interest mother, brother, and other correspondents: whether the gardens at Serampore, or a local temple, or the cleansing of juggernaut, to the hospitality of the Baptist missionaries. Each letter is different, subtly geared to its reader.

In this sense, in coming to the *Memoirs* first, we once again read Newell in the wrong order—or at least not in the order she was encountered by her first readers. Before the *Memoirs* there were Newell's published letters in *The Panoplist*, composed of her shipboard journal and selected letters from India and appearing well before news of her death reached New England. Newell thus appeared to her audiences first as a traveler and travel writer, her journey shaped by many of the same wartime forces that produced Byron's eccentric European tour a few years earlier. And just as Byron's readers avidly purchased the "romaunt" produced from those travels, so the *Panoplist's* editors and readers did with Newell, even prior to receiving news of her death. It is in these travel guises—consumed by readers hungry to know the next chapter in the missionaries' real-life romance—that we find Newell, arguably, at her most romantic: inquisitive and increasingly fearless, intrepid yet surprised by the strength of her resolve. Faced with new experiences from the point of her departure in Salem, she characteristically searches for a new literary and affective vocabulary to explore these sensations. Just as she once appropriated Ossian, Thompson, and other writers to her own purposes, so Newell begins during her voyage to adopt and adapt another kind of writing to describe her spiritual journey in her "little book": that of the voyage to distant lands.

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