

**EDMUND GOSSE'S *FATHER AND SON*:
RENEGOTIATING BIOGRAPHY THROUGH ILLUSTRATION**

KATHY REES

Edmund Gosse (1849–1928) is known today for one classic text, *Father and Son* (1907), the account of his early life from 1849 to 1870 in his Plymouth Brethren home. It is a profile of mid-Victorian dissenter religion, where the recollections of the urbane narrator are periodically animated by the voice of the precocious but fragile child-focaliser. On publication the book was applauded for its psychological insight, but the author was admonished for his unfilial betrayal of the father, Philip Gosse (1810–88), who had been a popular and respected writer, one who was regarded as ‘the David Attenborough of his day’ (Gould 100). A tragi-comic pathos is generated by the tension between the son, youthfully resisting the Brethren rules and restrictions, and his loving but demanding father, anxious to secure his son’s soul for eternity. This inter-generational conflict is sharpened by the strictures of Gosse’s evangelically driven mother, Emily Bowes-Gosse (1806–57), who prohibited her son any access to fiction, believing it to be a dangerous distraction to Christian service. Contemporary readers of *Father and Son* were thus astonished that a child who had been deprived not only of fairy tales and mythology, but also of poetry and drama, had become ‘the pre-eminent, prolific, established and influential late-Victorian man of letters’ (Lee 104): ‘To think of you, of all men, coming out of such an upbringing!’ wrote the historian Frederic Harrison to Gosse (436). It was a story of literary rags to riches.

The generic elusiveness of *Father and Son* attracted critical attention from the start: was it an autobiography of Edmund the son (it is told in the first person), or was it a biography of Philip the father? The genus of *Father and Son* was further complicated by the fact that Heinemann published it simultaneously in London and New York using different subtitles. For English readers, the subtitle read *A Study of Two Temperaments*: that word ‘study’ suggests an examination, or an investigation, of two contrasting states of mind. Furthermore, in his preface, Gosse describes the work variously as ‘a *document*’, ‘a record’ and ‘a diagnosis’ (*F&S* v), characterising the work as analytical and objective. For American readers, however, the same book was subtitled *Biographical Recollections*, purporting to be a memoir of Philip. As a portrait of Philip, however, *Father and Son* contradicted many of the

claims made seventeen years earlier in Gosse's biography of his father, *The Life of Philip Henry Gosse, F.R.S.* (1890). In her comparison of these two works, Catherine Raine concludes that *The Life* emphasised Philip's poetic side 'in order to glamorise Edmund's literary ancestry', while *Father and Son* denies 'his father's imaginative power' so that Gosse's own literary talent might 'spring up all the more miraculously in the inhospitable soil of Calvinism' (78). *Father and Son* was a gamble, but it paid off: the fame of the later book obscured the significance of the earlier work. Indeed, it was an informed risk: between 1890 and 1907, Gosse positioned himself at the hub of London literary and social life, interacting with writers, artists, publishers and journalists, and he was well aware of the shifting attitudes to biography. Indeed, he had contributed to that sea-change himself with *The Custom of Biography* (1901), in which he attacked conventionally 'devotional' life writing, the custom of burying 'our dead under the monstrous catafalque of two volumes (crown octavo)' (195), and with *The Ethics of Biography* (1903), in which he famously urges the biographer 'to be as indiscreet as possible within the boundaries of good taste and kind feeling' (323). Certainly, by 1927, *Father and Son* was heralded as 'a triumphant experiment in a new formula' being 'not a conventional biography; still less...an autobiography' (Nicolson 146). Its slippery genre still fascinates and frustrates readers.

Five years after its successful launch, Gosse published *Father and Son* in the form of *The Booklover's Edition* (1912), a version enhanced by eight full-page illustrations of the 'people and places mentioned in it' (*F&S* ix).¹ Having searched 'in bureaux and albums', Gosse selected for inclusion two (painted) portraits of his mother (dated 1814/15² and c.1825 respectively), two photographs of his father (taken in 1855 and 1857), the views of his two childhood homes first in London and later in Devon, and portraits of the two significant females in his life after the death of his mother in 1857: his governess, Miss Marks, and his stepmother, Miss Brightwen. Gosse was interested in the imbrication between biography and portraiture: this is evident in his earlier works of literary history, in particular, the four-volume series *English Literature: An Illustrated Record* (1903–5), written with Richard Garnett. This work seeks to use portraits pedagogically, as is emphasised in the publisher's introduction to the first volume:

It appeals to the eye as well as to the ear, and the reader becomes attracted to the writings of this or that writer, and feels his enthusiasm enkindled, he desires to know, and to know instantly and without disturbance, not only

who the writer was and what he wrote, but what he looked like. (1:v)

The publishers suggest that the reader's understanding of literature is enhanced by his familiarity with the writer's physiognomy. In 1905, clearly excited by this approach, Gosse enlarged his *Short History of Modern English Literature* (1897) to include portraits of the writers described therein, making explicit connections between their physical appearance and their literary expression:

We cannot account for the sinister sharpness of Sterne's face, for Tennyson's dark majesty, for the rugged and stormy head of Ben Jonson, but we are forced to recognise that they are severally consistent with the intellectual character of these men's writings. (vii)

Similarly, in *The Booklover's Edition*, Gosse emphasises the value of his 'illustrations' in assisting 'the comprehension of [his] text', since they were 'as scrupulously genuine as the narrative itself' (*F&S* ix). Gosse's use of the word 'illustrations' merits particular attention here: the purpose of an illustration is 'to make clear or evident to the mind; to set forth clearly or pictorially; elucidation; explanation; exemplification' (*OED*). However, in a text that was already known to be generically elusive, written by a man whose slipshod scholarship had earned him a reputation which his friend Henry James characterised as a 'genius for inaccuracy' (Thwaite 339), Gosse's reassurances ring rather hollow.³ In this article, then, I shall examine the subjectivity of Gosse's illustrative choices and explore the destabilising effects of his belated insertion of pictorial images into an already published text.

Catherine Raine's insightful summary of Gosse's personal motives in presenting his father differently in the 1890 *Life* and in the 1907 text offers a useful foundation for my discussion of Gosse's choice of illustration and his use of caption in the 1890 and the 1912 texts. The frontispiece portrait of Philip in *The Life* (Fig. 1) conveys the impression of a man of energy and vision: his gaze goes beyond the frame of the picture, suggesting his open and enquiring mind, probing the mysteries of the natural world. The oval format affords the subject an iconic status, while the reproduction of Philip's signature, characteristic of his closing in family letters, adds a touch of intimacy and warmth.



Figure 1: Frontispiece of *The Life of Philip Henry Gosse, F.R.S.* (1890).



Figure 2: Illustration of Philip Gosse in *The Booklover's Edition of Father and Son* (1912), opposite page 360. The caption reads: 'But what does my Lord tell me?'

A rather different ambience is created by the photograph of Philip (Fig. 2) inserted into the epilogue of the 1912 *Booklover's Edition*; here, Philip's direct gaze is confrontational, and the low angle of the photograph and the featureless rectangular format exacerbates Philip's dominating bearing. Gosse employs a caption from his anecdote (on the adjoining page) about Philip's imperious mode of conduct in religious discussion, his tendency to appeal to scripture: 'But what does my Lord tell me?' (*F&S* 360), and the detail of the hand rifling the pages of the book, by implication a Bible, appears to enact the caption. The use of these two photographs reiterates Raine's observations about Gosse's self-serving manipulation of Philip's life and character: it illustrates Harold Evans' famous opening line of *Pictures on a Page* that 'the camera cannot lie, but it can be an accessory to untruth' (xii).

The task of depicting his mother was more difficult. Emily had died from breast cancer in 1857, when Gosse was only eight, and photographs of her would have been emotionally charged as family icons of her saintly endurance. Chapter three of *Father and Son* poignantly describes Emily's diagnosis, abortive treatment, and deathbed avowals. Gosse gleaned much of the detail for this chapter from his father's moving testament to Emily's exemplary Christian death, *A Memorial to the Last Days on Earth of Emily Gosse* (1857), in which Philip recalls Emily's desire that the young Gosse might have

some means of keeping in remembrance his mother's features [since] no portrait of my beloved existed, except one which was taken in her early childhood, and another taken in youth, which is in the possession of a distant relative in America. (66)

As a result, three deathbed portraits were made: a watercolour impression (Fig. 3) and two photographs, one of which became the frontispiece of *Memorial* (Fig. 4). Fifty-five years later, Gosse, with all five portraits before him, had to decide which of them to publish in *The Booklover's Edition*. He had to choose between the portraits of youthful vitality (Figs. 5 and 6) or the images of deathbed sanctity (Figs. 3 and 4). Gosse chose the former, thereby suppressing the image of the saintly Emily, the way she wanted to be remembered in 1857; he presented to the public the youthful images that compromised everything that Emily valued by the time she died.



Figure 3: Watercolour portrait of Emily Bowes-Gosse on her deathbed, 1857. Gosse Family Papers: Add. 9713. Reproduced by kind permission of the Syndics of Cambridge University Library.

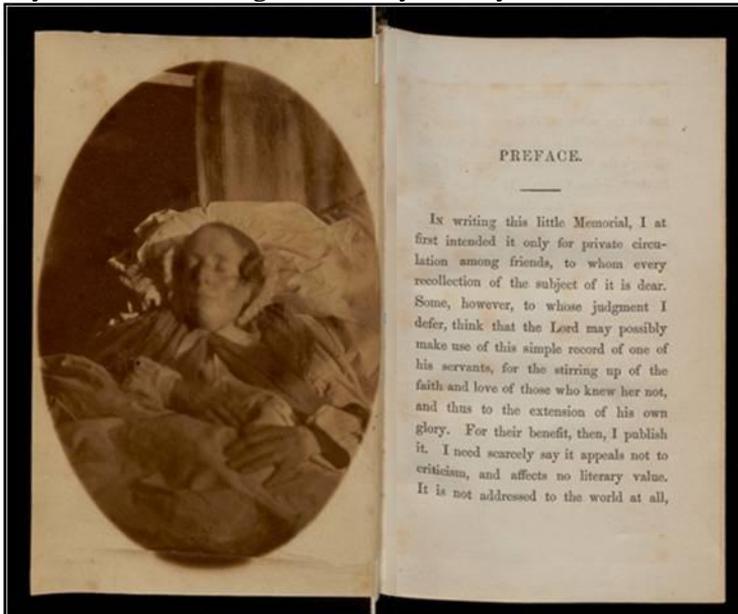


Figure 4: Frontispiece of *A Memorial to the Last Days on Earth of Emily Gosse* (1857) by Philip Henry Gosse. Reproduced by kind permission of the Syndics of Cambridge University Library.



Figure 5: Illustration of Emily aged eight in *The Booklover's Edition of Father and Son* (1912). The caption is 'On the Slopes of Snowdon, from a painting by Sir William Beechey R. A.'.



Figure 6: Illustration of Emily Bowes-Gosse in *The Booklover's Edition of Father and Son* (1912), captioned 'My Mother'.

For readers of the unillustrated editions of *Father and Son*, Emily has often been idealised as the gentle antidote to Philip's stern fundamentalism, ignoring Gosse's allusions to her strident evangelicalism.⁴ Emily's writing, however, reveals her religious fervour: she produced two books of spiritual verse, over sixty tracts, numerous magazine articles, and a book of guidance for Christian parents titled *Abraham and His Children or Parental Duties illustrated by Scriptural Examples* (1855). In the preface to *Abraham*, Emily reminds fellow parents that: 'We hold in our grasp the seal on which the soft ductile impressible wax of infant character is to be moulded' (iii), an emphasis that was noted by the reviewer of *Abraham* in an 1855 edition of *The Evangelical Magazine*: 'the mission of woman in the early culture of the young is strikingly set forth' (338). Emily's moulding of young Gosse's character was determined by the belief that children should be protected from the temptation of fiction. In an article entitled 'More Raw Apples' (1855), Emily 'strikingly' sets this forth for the readers of *The Mother's Friend*:

You may feed the young mind and infant imagination on [trite and foolish nursery ditties] and your child will like them. But if you make the mistake of thinking it is too soon to begin with spiritual teaching, and that you had better pave the way with nursery rhymes and other trash, you will find not only that you have lost the fairest and most favourable opportunity one human being ever has of influencing the mind of another, but also that you have been cramming it with sour apples till its appetite is lost for wholesome food. I was reminded of this yesterday morning, on being awakened by a little fellow at my side, who had crept out of his crib at daybreak. 'Mamma', said he, 'what is that about "Heigh diddle diddle, and the cow jumping over the moon?"' I said, 'Do you believe that story dear? Do you think that cows ever can jump over the moon?' 'Yes, I do, ma'. 'And do you suppose that dishes can run away with spoons?' 'Yes, mamma'. 'What a stupid child!' you will exclaim. Very well, your children may be wiser; but what I should think of great importance is—are you wiser than to teach your children all the nonsense you learned when you were a child? Time is short. Your child may die this year. Do all you can for him while you have him. Work while it is day, lest

darkness come upon you; and pray for God's blessing on your labours and mine, in teaching our little ones. (29–30)

This extract exemplifies Emily's theories, put forth, Gosse says, with 'unflinching directness' (*F&S* 51): her passion leads her to address the reader as 'you' or 'your' fifteen times, with imperious insistence. The target for her scorn is the imagined reader who mistakes the infant's credulity for stupidity: "What a stupid child!" *you* will exclaim' (emphasis added). By her sarcasm, Bowes inculcates the mother who arrogantly considers her child to be 'wiser', and therefore not in need of such instruction. Her imperatives 'do', 'work' and 'pray' indict such maternal complacency. Emily's language does not simply describe the world: it constructs it.

Indeed, after her death, Emily was treated with tract-like reverence. The editor of *The Mothers' Friend* (1857) published what she called a 'cheering extract' from Philip's *Memorial* (141), describing the process of Emily's death from cancer. She introduces the extract in a series of tract-like clichés:

A dear friend and devoted young mother has lately been called from our world, one who was ever glad to lend a helping hand, when she could, in our work for mothers. Her sufferings were of no common order; indeed, they were so exceedingly painful that one's heart bleeds to think of them, though we view them now as past. Her sun went down at noon, but it was a glorious setting. Come with us, and look at the dear sufferer, as she waits for the angel of death. (141)

She cites Philip's description of the dying Emily with a servant beside her 'folding and addressing tracts...under her dictation. It was her last act of earthly service' (141). As her death approached, Emily's interchanges with her husband slipped into a register of tract allusions:

'I'm going home', Emily claimed, adding almost inarticulately, 'And a hearty welcome!'; this was an allusion to one of her last three Tracts...*A Home and a Hearty Welcome*. (141)

In this Chinese box structure of narratives, the editor of *The Mother's Friend* frames Philip's extract in pious rhetoric: that extract reproduces

the exchange between Philip and Emily, in which she intimates one of her own tracts, and indeed almost puns on its title. In her tracts, Emily often depicted the scene of a subject's final moments: either dramatic conversions of hardened sinners or exemplary Christian deaths. Emily's own death, as reported here, enacts that very process, a dynamic that is further emphasised by the editor's concluding comments after Philip's extract:

Such was the last day of our beloved and excellent friend. Mother!—young mother! You too must die. Are you living the life of the righteous? Then you may expect to die their death. (141)

Emily has finally shifted from subject to object, becoming a tract-death; a model lesson for the reader.

Emily was also the subject of a pious volume called *Tell Jesus: Recollections of Emily Gosse* (1863) by Anna Shipton, a quasi-disciple and admirer. Shipton rehearses anecdotes from Emily's faith-filled life, and conjures visions and dreams associated with her saintly demise. This sentimental little book had at least sixty impressions: it sold over 307,000 copies and was still in print in 1911 (Cunningham 323). Since Emily was clearly a well-known figure, Gosse could have capitalised on that saintly reputation by inserting the deathbed images in his *Booklover's Edition*. Indeed, Gosse devotes an entire chapter in *Father and Son* to Emily's cancer and the painful but pointless treatment she endured: the deathbed images would have been a moving 'illustration' of that sorrowful period. Instead, Gosse used two portraits of Emily made long before he knew her. The first image (Fig. 5) depicts Emily's early life in Wales where her wealthy parents lived with 'pretension' and 'extravagance' until bankruptcy disrupted that lifestyle (3). The caption, 'On the Slopes of Snowdon, from a painting by Sir William Beechey R. A.' emphasises Emily's socially elevated origins: few families could afford professionally painted portraits, especially one by so eminent an artist as Beechey (1753–1839), portrait painter to Queen Charlotte. The date of this portrait also coincides with Emily's decision, recorded in her handwritten *Recollections* (1835), and quoted in *Father and Son*, to forbid herself either to read or write fiction, believing that 'to invent a story of any kind was a sin' (*F&S* 25). Emily continued in this resolve until her death, and imposed the same ban upon young Gosse so that 'no fiction of any kind, religious or secular, was admitted into the house' (*F&S* 23). There is therefore an implicit contrast between the pictorial

image of Emily's comfortable and carefree infancy and Gosse's own 'strenuous childhood' (*F&S* 86, 127), moulded by maternal restrictions.

The second portrait (Fig. 6) was painted some time between 1825–30 when Emily was in her early twenties, then employed as a governess in Berkshire. It is clear from this portrait that Emily conformed to contemporary fashions, wearing a style known as the 'Romantic-Era dress', exemplified in this fashion-plate of 1836 (Fig. 7).



Figure 7: Romantic-Era Fashion Plate, April 1836.

Sharon Takeda notes that, at that time, the fashion was for an hourglass figure, achieved by tight, boned stays, and emphasised by a belt and leg-of-mutton sleeves, full at the upper arm and fitted at the elbow; the shoulder line of the dress was dropped, setting the sleeve much lower on the arm in order to 'display' the slope of the woman's shoulder (38). The width of the shoulder was also emphasised by the horizontal pleats over the bust and around the shoulders. The wide neckline and the sleeves ending at the forearm indicate that Emily's dress is an evening gown; day dresses usually had high necklines. Although Emily has eschewed the customary combs, ribbons, flowers or

jewels that accompanied such dresses, presumably in accordance with her Puritan principles, she indulges the contemporary practice to part the hair in the centre and to sleek down the front section, looping it over the ears, and winding the rest into a knot at the crown of the head (Ashelford 192, 202). In light of what Gosse revealed about his mother's extreme Christian commitment, particularly her evangelical activities and the renunciation of fiction from the age of nine, it is puzzling that as a young woman she presented herself in such a fashionable and worldly manner. The portrait also contrasts markedly with the portraits of Miss Marks (Fig. 8) and Miss Brightwen (Fig. 9), neither of whom were fervent evangelicals like Emily, yet both are modestly attired in Puritan black.



Figure 8: Illustration of Miss Marks in *The Booklover's Edition of Father and Son* (1912). The caption reads: 'A careful and conscientious governess'.



Figure 9: Illustration of Miss Brightwen in *The Booklover's Edition of Father and Son* (1912). The caption is: 'She was Miss Brightwen'.

Gosse seems to have long pondered on this image of his mother in the Romantic-Era dress. In Gosse's manuscript novella, *Tristram Jones* (1872), there is a minor female character, Margaret Wilbye, who wears incongruously old-fashioned clothes; she is

dressed in the most exquisite old garments that she must have gathered out of her grandmother's wardrobes, a dress of the days of Sir Joshua, soft and pale.... It was something quite out of [Tristram's] previous experience to see a girl so sweetly and yet so strangely dressed. (22)

The passage's allusion to Joshua Reynolds (1723–92) emphasises the practice of depicting a lady in anachronistic garb; in his seventh *Discourse*, delivered in 1776, Reynolds advised his audience, 'not to paint [a lady] in modern dress, the familiarity of which alone is sufficient to destroy all dignity' (138). An outlandish dress features again in Gosse's early romance, *The Unequal Yoke* (1886). The story opens with the heroine, Jane Baxter, rescuing a drowning boy by jumping into the canal. This brave act is, however, overshadowed by the girl's bizarre solution to the problem of how she would now, dripping wet, return home. Jane calls at the nearby house of 'the new Scripture-reader's wife', Mrs Pomfret, to borrow some dry clothes, but the only garment available is a curious 'flaunting dress' (500). Thus, strangely attired, Jane attracts much attention. Gosse describes the dress with peculiar attention to detail: it is 'rose-coloured sateen', a material specifically woven to achieve a luxurious finish; it is 'cut low at the neck...cut in [a] worldly shape!'; Mrs Baxter expresses her surprise that so 'serious' a woman as Mrs Pomfret even owned such a garment and wonders whether 'she had it before she was converted' or whether 'somebody gave it to her whilst out charring' (501–2). Although Gosse's friend Andrew Lang stated that he 'was not exactly wild with enthusiasm' about *The Unequal Yoke*, he commented: 'I don't like anything better than Chapter 1' (Demoor 497), as though the motif of the Romantic-Era dress was one of the few evocative features in this somewhat laboured narrative.

In the same romance, at a *soirée*, the female musician, the so-called 'Dragonetta', wears a similarly unconventional costume.⁵ Although she makes no contribution to the plot, Gosse devotes disproportionate attention to her appearance:

Her hair stood out in a multitude of rolls and loops, and her dress, which was the only really low one in the room, was a maze of lace and flamboyant emerald ribbands. She was pinched to a wasp-like slenderness at

the waist, and her hands were encased up to the elbow
in yellow gloves. (576)

It seems that the Dragonetta features in the story only because of her dress. Both figures, eccentrically clothed, attract similes that bespeak fairytale metamorphosis: in her borrowed sateen, Jane is ‘like some gigantic species of gaudy lizard escaping into a cavern’ (501) while the Dragonetta presents as ‘a brilliant insect of vast size, one bite of which would certainly be fatal’ (576). The costumes thus produce a zoomorphic transformation of the women from human to animal; a process of shape shifting that alludes to fairytale conventions.

The insertion of the portrait of Emily in the Romantic-Era dress also has a disruptive effect on *Father and Son*. It is placed opposite the page where Emily is described as ‘a Puritan in grain’ (*F&S* 14). The phrase ‘in grain’ derives from dyeing, and denotes the process of the colour saturating the texture of a fabric; figuratively, therefore, it means ‘to implant ineradicably (habits, convictions, prejudices, tastes) in a person’ (*OED*); so, by this phrase, we know that Emily is a Puritan through and through. What results is a disconcerting gap between text and image. Given the context of Gosse’s bizarrely dressed women in his early fiction, this disparity actively destabilises *Father and Son* as a biographical narrative, and propels the figure of Emily into a fictional realm. In *The Booklover’s Edition*, the clause, ‘My Mother was Puritan in grain’ is abbreviated to become the caption, ‘My Mother’. This act creates a triangle of intertextual tension between the caption, the main body of the text, and the image. Readers are left unsure whether to prioritise the text or the caption. Any attempt to read the illustration in relation to the sentence, ‘My Mother was Puritan in grain’, fails because there seems to be no connection between the notion of the stereotypical Puritan, as typified by the portraits of Miss Marks (Fig. 8) and Miss Brightwen (Fig. 9), and the fanciful appearance of Emily on the adjacent page. If, however, one reads the portrait in relation to the caption, ‘My Mother’, a new narrative materialises: for Gosse, this pretty, romanticised Emily is *his* mother. As Kevin Barnhurst has observed, ‘the caption eliminates all the potential narrative frames but one, the depicted content’ (91); this principle directs the caption to be viewed as an integral part of the illustration. In this case the caption points up the dream that Gosse might have wished for his childhood; of having a beautiful young heroine for his mother. Certainly, Gosse’s desire for an attractive and devoted mother is suggested in his description, in *Father and Son*, of Miss Brightwen who nursed him during adolescent illnesses:

‘my pretty, smiling stepmother lavish[ed] luxurious attendance upon me’ (*F&S* 328–29).

Not only does the relationship between caption, image and text inject instability into the reading of *Father and Son*, but it also highlights the problematical status of the portrait as an illustration. Marsha Bryant asserts that when the caption ‘functions as the valued term, photography is subordinated to the role of “illustration”’ (13). By being transformed into an illustration, its purpose is subtly changed. Even at the point of origin it is, according to John Berger, a mediated image, ‘a record of how X had seen Y’ (10) and, as Berger elaborates in *Another Way of Telling*, it is ‘woven together by the energy of countless judgments...everything about it has been mediated by consciousness, either intuitively or systematically’ (Berger and Mohr 93). It is also poignant to note that the portrait is an interpretation of Emily’s view of herself at that time: it is a construction as valid as her later projection of her religious persona in her evangelical tracts. We can presume that Emily chooses this particular dress because it is the one in which she deems herself most attractive. Her likely expectation was that the portrait would be viewed by family and friends, and by her descendants: a private audience. However, Gosse’s act of translating the portrait into a book illustration, making it available to any reader, dramatically overturns the original conception of the image, changing its status from private record to public fiction.



Figure 10: Portrait of Emily created for Potter’s play, *Where Adam Stood* (1976).

The only other commentator to fix upon this portrait of Emily was Dennis Potter in his television play, *Where Adam Stood* (1976). In his drama, loosely based on Gosse's early childhood as described in *Father and Son*, Potter explores the classic theme of the son's disengagement from the religious father, but employs the portrait of Emily to conjure a haunting maternal presence. Through the softening of the facial expression, the use of atmospheric lighting, and the addition of colour, Potter's version of the portrait markedly sentimentalises the original (Fig. 10). By adding the seascape as background, Potter alludes to the plot of his drama: young Gosse's deep desire for a model ship displayed in the village shop window (identical to the one in the painting) becomes a bone of contention between Gosse and his father because Philip fears that his son's dreams and prayers are contaminated by the desire for the toy. The deep blue tone of his mother's dress strongly associates her with the ocean, reinforcing the female symbolism of that element, but also linking her to her son. John Cook observes:

Cut into sequences depicting Edmund's dreams are shots of a painting of his mother in which, clearly visible in the background, is a sailing ship. The desire for the toy ship is really a symbol of the child's longing for his mother who has departed for the 'far shore', something which his father, whose Puritanism forbids toys, cannot comprehend. (86)

Although Potter's reading of the portrait conjures an atmosphere of soft maternity, rather different from Emily's strict evangelical voice forbidding fiction to infants, what is notable is the visual power that the image exerts on the drama. The camera lingers on the painting twice: firstly in the dining-room scene, and secondly in young Gosse's dream. For the child, then, the maternal portrait dominates both conscious and unconscious spheres. The spectral Emily broods over the household.

At the beginning of this article, I quoted Gosse's seemingly bland claim that the belated act of inserting illustrations into *Father and Son* would be 'helpful to the comprehension of my text' (*F&S* ix). For Gosse, portraits were powerful instruments, offering perspectives on character; his use of Philip and Emily's portraits subtly critiques their behaviour as parents. The domineering, almost sneering, expression of his father (Fig. 2) reinforces his caricature of Philip as a doctrine-driven fundamentalist and unapproachable parent: here, text and image work together. The portraits of Emily, however, disrupt the text, conveying Gosse's deep ambivalence about his mother. There is a yawning gap

between the ambience of freedom and romance in the early portraits, and the sense of sanctity and suffering in the deathbed images. Why, Gosse seems to be asking ‘within the boundaries of good taste and kind feeling’ (323), did Emily not live up to her youthful promise? How came the Romantic Emily to be transformed into a figure of severity and narrowness? Gosse’s belated insertion of the illustrations thus generates an alternative biography for Emily, a narrative that pulses within the palimpsest. To the mother who forbade him fiction, Gosse answers back, asserting the very fictionality of auto/biography.

NOTES

Abbreviations

F&S *Father and Son*

¹ In this article, all quotations from *Father and Son* are taken from *The Booklover’s Edition* (1912).

² The provenance of this portrait can be traced through William Roberts’ monograph, Sir William Beechey, R.A. (1907), which includes the artist’s account books and a list of works exhibited in his lifetime. There is a reference to the painting of Emily Bowes, dated ‘to 1814 or 1815’ when she would have been eight or nine (203).

³ After delivering the 1884 Clark Lectures at Trinity College, Cambridge, Gosse translated his lectures into a book, published under the university imprimatur: *From Shakespeare to Pope* (1885). The work was ridiculed in *The Quarterly Review* (1886) by John Churton Collins who exposed, in painstaking detail, Gosse’s mistakes, misquotations and misconceptions about seventeenth- and eighteenth-century literature. Gosse’s name became so associated with the act of misrepresenting one’s sources that in the 1880s his name became ‘a stock saying for anyone who had made a “howler” that “he had made a Gosse of himself”’ (Charteris 194).

⁴ Several critics have tended to idealise Emily and to demonise Philip. Nancy Traubitz groups Emily together with the family servant who breathed life into the new-born Gosse, and with Miss Brightwen, his stepmother, to form a female ‘tripartite deity’ that opposed Philip, ‘a vengeful, jealous and destructive masculine deity’ (148). Elihu Perlman claims that Emily’s deathbed dedication of Gosse to Christian service was a beneficent impulse, making Gosse resilient ‘in the face of his father’s inquisitorial demands’ (23). The Lacanian lens of Douglas

Brooks-Davis locates young Gosse in the ‘imaginary order’ with Emily, united against the ‘symbolic order’ of Philip (133).

⁵ Although there is no record of the word ‘Dragonetta’ in the *OED*, a ‘dragonet’ refers to a South American lizard, *Crocadilurus*; a significant gloss, given the zoomorphic associations afforded this figure (*OED*).

WORKS CITED

- ‘*Abraham and His Children* by Emily Gosse’. *Evangelical Magazine and Missionary Chronicle* 15 June 1855: 338.
- Ashelford, Jane. *The Art of Dress: Clothes and Society, 1500–1914*. London: The National Trust, 1996.
- Barnhurst, Kevin G. ‘The Alternative Vision: Lewis Hine’s *Men at Work* and the Dominant Culture’. Bryant. 85–107.
- Berger, John. *Ways of Seeing*. London: Penguin, 1972.
- Berger, John and Jean Mohr. *Another Way of Telling*. London: Writers and Readers, 1982.
- Bowes, Emily. *Recollections*. Gosse Family Papers. MS Add.7035. Cambridge University Library, 1835.
- Bowes-Gosse, Emily. *Abraham and His Children or Parental Duties illustrated by Scriptural Examples*. London: Nisbet and Co., 1855.
- . ‘A Page for Young Mothers: More Raw Apples’. *The Mothers’ Friend*. Sept 1855: 28–30.
- Broadley, John. ‘Where Adam Stood’. *Nettlesome*. 3 Dec 2010. 29 Nov 2012. <<http://jbsource.blogspot.co.uk/2010/12/where-adam-stood.html>>.
- Brooks-Davis, Douglas. *Fielding, Dickens, Gosse, Iris Murdoch and Oedipal Hamlet*. Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1989.
- Bryant, Marsha. ‘Introduction’. Bryant. 11–20.
- Bryant, Marsha, ed. *Photo-Textualities: Reading Photographs and Literature*. Ed. Marsha Bryant. Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1996.
- Charteris, Evan. *The Life and Letters of Sir Edmund Gosse*. London: Heinemann, 1931.
- Collins, John C. ‘English Literature at the Universities’. *The Quarterly Review* 163 (1886): 289–329.
- Cook, John. *Dennis Potter: A Life on Screen*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1995.

- Cunningham, Valentine. 'Mad Pilgrimages, Aimless Discontinuity, and Painful Transitions: Faith and Doubt in Victorian Fiction'. *Victorian Studies* 22.3 (1979): 321–34.
- Demoor, Marysa. 'Andrew Lang's Letters to Edmund Gosse: the Record of a Fruitful Collaboration as Poets, Critics, and Biographers'. *The Review of English Studies* 38 (1987): 492–509.
- Evans, Harold. *Pictures on a Page: Photo-Journalism, Graphics and Picture Editing*. London: Heinemann, 1978.
- Gosse, Edmund. *Tristram Jones*. Gosse Family Papers. MS Add 2768/XV. Cambridge University Library, 1872.
- . *From Shakespeare to Pope: An Inquiry into the Causes and Phenomena of the Rise of Classical Poetry in England*. New York: Franklin, 1885.
- . 'The Unequal Yoke'. *English Illustrated Magazine* April 1886: 500–12; May, 1886: 562–76; June 1886: 604–15.
- . *The Life of Philip Henry Gosse, FRS*. London: Kegan Paul and Trench, 1890.
- . 'The Custom of Biography'. *Anglo Saxon Review* 8 (March 1901): 195–208.
- . 'The Ethics of Biography'. *The Cosmopolitan: A Monthly Illustrated Magazine* 35 (1903): 317–23.
- . *A Short History of Modern English Literature (Portrait Edition)*. London: Heinemann, 1905.
- . *Father and Son: A Study of Two Temperaments*. London: Heinemann, 1907.
- . *Father and Son: Biographical Recollections*. New York: Scribner, 1907.
- . *The Booklover's Edition of Father and Son*. London: Heinemann, 1912.
- Gosse, Edmund and Richard Garnett. *English Literature: An Illustrated Record*. 4 vols. London: Heinemann; New York: Grosset and Dunlap, 1903–5.
- Gosse, Philip. *Memorial of the Last Days on Earth of Emily Gosse, by her Husband*. London: Nisbet, 1857.
- Gould, Stephen. *The Flamingo's Smile: Reflections in Natural History*. New York and London: Norton, 1985.
- 'illustration, n.' *OED Online*. Oxford University Press. December 2014. 12 April 2014. <<http://www.oed.com/>>.
- 'in grain, adj. and n.2.' *OED Online*. Oxford University Press. Dec 2014. 10 March 2014. <<http://www.oed.com/>>
- Lee, Hermione. *Body Parts: Essays on Life Writing*. London: Chatto and Windus, 2005.

- 'Memory of Emily Gosse'. *The Mother's Friend* 10 (1857): 141.
- Nicolson, Harold. *The Development of English Biography*. London: Hogarth Press, 1927.
- Perlman, Elihu. 'Father and Mother in *Father and Son*'. *Victorian Newsletter* 55 (1979): 19–23.
- Raine, Catherine. 'The Secret Debts of Imagination in the Life of Philip Henry Gosse, F.R.S.'. *Literature and Theology* 11.1 (1997): 67–79.
- Reynolds, Joshua. *The Discourses of Sir Joshua Reynolds, illustrated by Explanatory Notes and Plates by John Burnet*. London: Royal Academy of Arts, 1842.
- Roberts, William. *Sir William Beechey, R.A.* London, New York: Duckworth, Charles Scribner's Sons, 1907.
- 'Romantic Era Fashion Plate. April 1836: The World of Fashion'. *Romantic Era Clothing*. May 2012. 24 March 2014. <<http://romantic-era-clothing.blogspot.co.uk/2012/05/romantic-era-fashion-plate-april-1836.html>>.
- Shipton, Anna. *Tell Jesus: Recollections of Emily Gosse*. London: Morgan, 1863.
- Takeda, Sharon, and Kaye Spilker. *Fashioning Fashion: European Dress in Detail 1700–1915*. Los Angeles: L.A. County Museum of Art, 2010.
- Thwaite, Ann. *A Literary Landscape: The Life of Edmund Gosse*. Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1984.
- Traubitz, Nancy. 'Heavenly Mother: The Trinity as Structural Device in Edmund Gosse's *Father and Son*'. *The Journal of Narrative Technique* 6.2 (1976): 147–54.
- Where Adam Stood*. Writ. Dennis Potter. Dir. Brian Gibson. BBC 2. 21 April 1976.