

ductions offered here in whatever edition may be locally available, readers should be able to capture something of the visual and symbolic context which Bewick provided for the novel.

First, an outline of the bibliographical history of the book. The first volume, *Land Birds*, appeared in 1797, in four styles, imperial, thick royal, thin royal and demy 8vo. A second edition, still dated 1797 on the title page, appeared in 1798. Though Bewick 'regarded this edition as no more than an additional reprinting of the first',¹² there are revisions throughout, in text and typesetting. Both editions seem to have been out of print by 1804.¹³

Water Birds was published in the same four styles in 1804. Enough copies were printed to match *Land Birds* so that purchasers could complete their sets. In 1805, Bewick issued both volumes together, announcing them as available in imperial, royal, and demy 8vo. The imperial and the royal 8vo versions of both *Land Birds* and *Water Birds* have revisions in text, figures, and vignettes. Over the demy 8vo, however, there is a difficulty. The demy *Land Birds*, printed in 1805, and in all respects similar to the revised 1805 imperial and royal copies, bears instead the title page date 1804; while the demy *Water Birds*, also printed in 1805, and likewise bearing the title page date 1804, is merely 'an exact reprint of the first edition' of 1804, and has, therefore, no revisions.

It is these complications which make it difficult to accept Jane Stedman's very general reference in her article to 'Thomas Bewick's History of *British Birds*, the 1804 edition of which was owned by the Reverend Patrick Brontë.', and its footnote, 'this would seem to be the demy issue of 1805, which was dated 1804'. This remark fails to distinguish between texts; in addition, no documentation is offered for the statement that the 1804 edition is the one which the Brontës owned. The evidence as to what copy theirs was is very slight, and unreliable. Hanson¹⁴ says that the edition of 1797 is 'now' (1950) in the Brontë Museum, but of this the present Librarian knows nothing; nor, of course, was *Water Birds*, the key volume, available at all in 1797. Gérin¹⁵ says that a copy of *British Birds* 'published in 1804' was 'eventually sold at the parsonage sale after his (Mr Brontë's) death'. This, which also takes no account of the bibliographical difficulties, I have been unable to substantiate.

In 1809, a combined volume of *Birds*, demy 8vo, was published, but may be disregarded for our purposes, since Jane Eyre is using an issue in two volumes. ('I could distinguish the two volumes of Bewick's *British Birds* occupying their old place on the third shelf.')

Land Birds appeared again in royal 8vo in 1814-16, with the title page date of 1804, while a demy issue of both volumes appeared in 1816. In 1821, there was a major reissue, enlarged and with substantial