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Transcendental elements in the fiction of Alice Brown

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Transcendental elements in the fiction of Alice Brown

by

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I. INTRODUCTION</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II. THE DAY OF HIS YOUTH: A STEP BEYOND WALDEN</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III. OLD CROW: POST-WAR APPLICATIONS</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV. ELLEN PRIOR: ESCAPE TO NATURE</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V. THE DIARY OF A DRYAD: A TRANSCENDENTAL FANTASY</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VI. CONCLUSION</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VII. WORKS CITED</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VIII. WORKS CONSULTED</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
I. INTRODUCTION

Transcendentalism in the fiction of Alice Brown has been alluded to in the few articles and dissertations that deal with her. However, writers differ on how constantly Brown used the philosophy and how she applied it in her works. Ellen Langill, who wrote a dissertation on Brown in 1975, believes that her ideals changed throughout her life (Langill 1). However, a careful reader of her works would be able to trace one constant philosophy throughout, that of transcendentalism.

Brown's use of transcendentalism depended on the happenings of her day. She found in it a life philosophy which could be used by an individual to adjust to the many changes in her society. Brown's belief in transcendentalism enabled her to show her characters finding peace through nature and its many influences: nature as educator, nature as rejuvenater, nature as escape, and nature as a stable and strict ruler. This philosophy not only guided her characters and herself, but possibly her readers as well.

All writers are influenced by the times in which they live, and usually they reflect the culture, sentiments, and beliefs of their era in their works. In the case of Alice Brown, who lived in New England from the day she was born, December 5 1857, until the day she died, June 21 1948, this observation holds true.
Living through a period of great turmoil and change in America, Brown not surprisingly searched for a stable life philosophy in order to adjust to the major historical events that occurred during her lifetime. One historical event which greatly influenced Brown's work was World War I. Living through monumental events such as this one made it difficult to remain faithful to her beliefs, but Brown strove to keep from becoming one of the "lost generation."

Complicating matters more for Brown than the changes in her society were changes in fashions in literary style and subject matter. Poetry changed from traditional forms reflecting a well-ordered world to the arhythmical line of Whitman, Eliot, and Pound reflecting their chaotic view of life. The most popular type of short story at the end of the nineteenth century, the local color story, was losing its audience to the more realistic work of James and Crane. Sickly sweet sentimental novels were replaced by novels of blunt reality, in which it seemed that the sun never shined and all men were doomed. Brown, living through this mutation in taste found a steady life philosophy that aided her in her attempt to understand her rapidly changing civilization.

Brown's idea of how to reform a society she did not approve of was to save what was good for mankind in the past to make the present better in which to live. Brown's belief in the values of the past was so strong that she resisted change like the proud, stubborn New England woman she was. Montrose
Moses, who interviewed Brown in 1917, said that "she is an aloof sort of person, who takes progress for granted, and tries to let it change her inherited point of view as slightly as possible" (Toth 263). Sister Mary Coyne, in her dissertation New England Regionalism in the Context of Historical Change, says that Brown closed her eyes to the present and pretended that nothing had changed since her childhood (138). This is erroneous. As her novels demonstrate she does deal with the present, but not in a favorable way. It is true that she disliked what was happening to society and its morals, but she did not usually leave it to its decay; instead she tried to aid society with her fiction.

Brown definitely felt that the way society was moving in her lifetime, between 1887 and 1947, was wrong and degrading to the moral being of man. She poured forth her views on society in one of her first novels, The Day of His Youth published in 1897. The following section is from a letter that the main character, Francis, brought up in the woods, writes to his father about his impressions of life in the city. The letter clearly indicates how Brown felt about man's present civilization.

I have been introduced to dozens of people. Dozens? let me say hundreds. They are very kind. You ask me to speak frankly of civilized life. Frankly then, these people we meet in battalions I do not like. That is, I might like them individually if they appeared under a different system; but society seems to me an intricate sort of game which anybody could play, but which is very puzzling to the onlooker and not in the least worth learning. For example, their
conversations: a great deal of it is merely personality, and they speak only of a certain set. That may be a truism. I have apparently said that they do not talk of the people they do not know because they only talk of the people they know. But I find there are such different ways of talking. People seem to be in groups, and each group is labeled. I am in the smart set! I fancy some of them consider the persons who play and sing and write books (that is unless they don’t do it particularly well) as a class of beings made for their amusement; and if it is necessary to speak of scientists or diplomats, they do it with certain languid interest, and then put them aside in a drawer. There is a great deal of philanthropy, but it is not what I thought about love of man, when I read the old stories of the saints and those greater saints who came to redeem. It does not look like love; for love draws one nearer, clasps its arms about one; is it not so? This is a kind of business appointed for certain days of the week, just as one attends church on Sunday. They “go down” to obscure streets and visit, and they even make reports afterwards; but it is something like the German lessons three times a week or the piano practice every day. But who am I to blame them? (Brown 1897, 86-87).

It is obvious that unlike Francis, who sees his lack of sympathy for society as due to his ignorance, Brown felt that she had cause to be critical and expressed her views on the corruption of man’s morals in her works, as she does above in her pointed remarks on the shallowness of people’s feelings. Her concentration on her own ideas was usually not damaging to her craft.

Brown’s ideas were constantly brought to the public through her many publications. Her repertoire of published works includes over twenty-two novels, a few children’s novels as well as some poetry for children, eight collections of short stories, several poetry collections including a long poem and a dramatic poem, a collection of one-act plays as well as other plays.
published separately, a prize-winning play that was produced on Broadway, a biography, a critical study, a historical study, songs, and a travel book about a walking tour she took through parts of England. She also published extensively in the popular magazines of the day including the Atlantic Monthly, which was then edited by William Dean Howells.

Brown began publishing at the end of the nineteenth century, just catching the beginning of the end of the local color movement's popularity. Her short stories made her reputation as a good writer, and though she was forgotten fairly early in her career, she was able to support herself by her writing for the remainder of her life. She was not, however, the first woman to make a name for herself in the local color movement. The local color tradition in New England, made popular by Harriet Beecher Stowe, Sarah Orne Jewett, Mary Wilkins Freeman, and Rose Terry Cooke, developed the type of story that best suited Brown's talents. In her dissertation Susan Toth quotes a critique, from the North American Review in 1910 on Brown's collection of short stories entitled Country Neighbors.

We have had three great New England story-tellers. Mary Wilkins Freeman has untutored genius, but never acquired craftsmanship; Sarah Orne Jewett had exquisite craftsmanship and lacked the force of genius; Alice Brown has genius and the craftsman's skill combined (248).

Reviews of Brown's work like the above were common because local color's
emphasis on regional environment complemented her own interest and ability to write about New England. Her philosophy on the natural environment of her area was easily worked into her works as she concentrated on the natural landscape of her home.

Local color was a unique mixture of realism and romanticism. For Brown, local color was a combination of the approved romanticism of the past, and the popular new realism of the present. She enjoyed writing local color fiction because it was comprised of the past and the present both in subject and style. Local color enabled Brown to reaffirm what she thought were healthy views on life from the past. These views led her to equate the city and its bad influence on the human character with the present, and the country and its good influence on the human character with the past. The following passage from The Mannerings is typical of Brown's positive description of a setting in the country.

Elinor remembered the orchard as it was in summer time. The trees were old, and yet fruitful as in their first estate. The trunks were of a great girth for apple-trees, and now black against the snow. These were ancient high-tops. They spread lavishly above, and the lower branches courted the ground. Sweet shade in summer lived in this orchard, -- dark coverts with green boughs near the face; and now it did so assert its strength of growth and fruitfulness that it looked enormous, as if it held long, outer reaches. Elinor recalled its odors in May and the humming of bees there; . . . She seemed to be dwelling in a different season, all sun and flowers; but in a moment she came out of her dream into another where the moonlight lay
without on glittering snow, and inside the orchard the trees were inky (Brown 1903, 27).

Brown's familiarity with settings such as this made it possible for her to succeed in the local color style which demanded that an author deal closely with a particular region and write authoritatively about the influence of a region on the personalities of its people.

In the local color stories of New England the natural surroundings are important in their effect on the characters. Usually these stories demand that a character choose between nature and man; therefore the outcome of the plot depends upon how much a character loves nature. This conflict, as Josephine Donovan points out, is exemplified by Jewett's "A White Heron" and Freeman's "Evelina's Garden" (127). In Jewett's story, the heroine refuses to tell the man she loves where to find the white heron because he wants to kill it; consequently she loses him. In Freeman's story, the heroine destroys her grandmother's garden, therefore forfeiting her inheritance making it possible to marry her lover. Brown too used this conflict of man-versus-nature, but she constantly made nature triumph in a way that was usually beneficial to man. This was because unlike authors such as "Freeman and Cooke [who] emphasize the harshness of their physical settings," Brown found the natural world of the New England countryside to be benevolent, intelligent, and enlightening (Toth 277).
Her feelings toward the natural environment in which she was raised were probably instinctual at first. When she began to write and needed to express her feelings and thoughts about nature's place in man's life, she turned to transcendentalism, a philosophy that validated those instinctual feelings she had towards nature. She thought transcendentalism as a morally sound and accepted tradition of a past generation would enable her readers to cope with their rapidly changing society.

Since her fiction contains such an amount of transcendentalism, it is necessary to make clear exactly what is meant by transcendentalism and what aspects of it are most prominent in her works.

According to Dorothea Walker, Brown read Thoreau's *Walden* and Emerson's essays (24). In these works she found the ideology that made sense of the feelings she had about nature.

The ideas about nature that Brown believed in throughout her career are found in Emerson's *Nature*. This long essay was the first transcendental essay Emerson wrote, and its theories on nature's ability to aid man in his search for spiritual growth are quite clear. Emerson's main premise is that through the unity and beauty that man can find in nature, he can come to know of God's essence (Emerson 34). When man disrupts nature's harmony he loses sight of God (Emerson 36). Nature can help man physically, mentally, morally,
emotionally, and spiritually.

These general beliefs are present in Brown's fiction in which she shows that through nature, man can find, if not God, then some form of spirituality in the oneness of the world. Though she uses the word "God" in some of her works when she describes the being that controls the universe, she also often uses the phrase "Great Spirit" or simply "spirit." An example of this is found in *Bromley Neighborhood* when Larry asks Ellen,

"You do believe in the spirit, don't you?"
"Do you mean the Holy Spirit?" asked she timidly.
"I don't mean anything that has to do with church and dogma. I mean just spirit" (Brown 1917, 259).

Brown's hesitancy to affirm the existence of God by using the name when speaking of a great spiritual being is a reflection of her own skeptical belief in Him and His teachings. Her reluctance in her writing was due to her personal doubts concerning God's existence.

Brown searched throughout her life for a religion that would coincide with her beliefs. Transcendentalism, not a religion but a philosophy, came closest to giving her comfort. It combined her love of nature and nature's beauty, innocence, and unity, with her own belief in some supreme power able to create such wonder and through it communicate with man. For her, it is this oneness found in man's communion with God through nature that breaks the
barriers between man, nature and God and unites them in spirit. When man is able to achieve a harmony with nature, then she sees man understanding his own nature, his place in the natural world, and his place in the universe.

Brown's love of nature created a dilemma in her own life at the age of twenty-three (Walker 15). She had decided that the country was a good influence on a person's character and the city was a bad one. But a problem occurred when she realized her own need to move from her small town of Hampton Falls, New Hampshire, to Boston, Massachusetts. Her wish to be at the heart of America's progress confused her at first, but she was able to rely on the ideology of transcendentalism to understand this need. Her ambition to be a published writer could not be satisfied in the country. Nature could not aid her in her quest for further growth so she was forced to seek new knowledge from the city. Though she was soon living in an urban environment, she probably felt she was able to keep her morality untainted because she had learned about right and wrong in the country where she had developed her basic character. Her country lessons gave her the maturity and sound sense to deal with the society of Boston. She most likely believed that nature had given her a strong and uncorruptable character allowing her the ability to learn new things in the city while staying morally pure.

Brown used her transcendental ideals to develop her characters' lives.
Usually she begins her tale with a character who early in life has not been enlightened by nature. Using such a naive character she is able to establish a set of opposing forces within the work. The country-versus-city theme is the most obvious. Paralleling that theme is the struggle between good and evil. And last she sets up the past-versus-present conflict.

Characteristically these opposing forces will be typified by a morally corrupt city character living in the present and a good, country character seemingly living in the past. Examples of this pattern can be found in Strafford by the Sea, Paradise, Fools of Nature, The Day of His Youth, Court of Love, and many other Brown novels. Usually the good character learns from the corrupt character and finds a union of good and evil through a mystical experience. Each character that comes to a full understanding does so through his or her own personal spiritual comprehension. No matter how much this character learns from another, an individual experience, usually mystical, is required for full understanding and the knowledge of where he or she is in the world. This experience is usually a union with nature which reveals to the character the oneness of the universe and consequently man's ability to reconcile opposites.

The quantity of Brown's works is so great it cannot be expected that transcendental ideas will be found in everything she wrote. While many of her short stories and lyrical poems contain one or two obvious transcendental
ideas, some of her works contain none. It is in her novels and in her long poem though that transcendental ideas are developed to their fullest. Four of Brown's works, *The Day of His Youth*, *Old Crow*, *Ellen Prior*, and *Diary of a Dryad*, best illustrate her use of the transcendental philosophy, and also serve as examples of the various ways Brown applied this idealism to her characters' lives.

Brown's transcendentalism in general and her nature ideology in particular give her narratives more philosophical depth than some of the other local color stories written during her time. Her idea of oneness gives her works a spiritual universality not found in most local color narratives with their focus on only specific types of people found in particular regions of the country. The elements of transcendentalism allow her to break the limits of the local color stereotype and develop "a more universal expression of human experience" (Williams 47).
II. THE DAY OF HIS YOUTH: A STEP BEYOND WALDEN

The Day of His Youth published in 1897 was Brown's first novel with a strong transcendental theme. In it she adopts Thoreau's Walden concept of living in a forest isolated from mankind in order to find spiritual revelation and examines its feasibility in the education of a young man. Like Thoreau, Ernest, the young man's father, has all the right intentions, for through nature he sees a way to help his son grow spiritually. Brown exaggerates Thoreau's situation by isolating the boy completely from society, but the basic ideas are similar. She shows that, if taken to its limits, Thoreau's plan for enlightenment through nature could end in tragedy.

Brown stylistically accomplishes this end by taking on the role of narrator. She tells the reader that she has found letters written by Ernest and Francis Hume that reveal their tragic lives. This technique enables her to either let the letters speak for themselves, giving the reader an objective view of society, or interrupt the narrative to comment on the letters making sure her reader understands their significance according to her own opinions.

The narrative begins with Ernest Hume leaving his ancestral home after the death of his wife. He retreats to the woods to live by a pond with his son Francis. They live in solitude for twelve years without any other human contact except that with Pierre, a man who brings them food from the town. Ernest's
wealth is more than sufficient for them to live in the woods for the rest of their lives. However, their peace is broken when a party of four invades their sanctuary and changes their lives forever.

These four, two men and two women, are vacationing on the pond for the summer. One of the party is Zoe Montrose, a cynical woman from the city, with whom Francis falls in love. She flirts with him awhile, but when his innocence begins to make her feel guilty she tells him that she does not love him but is in fact in love with another man.

Despite Zoe's rebuff Francis continues to adore her, and she soon softens to him but still withholds her love because she feels unworthy of him. When Zoe leaves for the city Francis follows, chaperoned by Zoe's aunt, Mrs. Montrose. Ernest is not happy with Francis' departure but accepts it as inevitable, for he has known that he could not keep Francis away from the society of men forever. He hopes that eventually Francis will tire of the city and come back to his home in the woods.

In the city, Francis is a social success among people of the upper class because his unique honesty is found to be quite amusing. He writes to his father about his experiences with society, and Ernest in turn writes letters to guide his son through confusing events, and he also urges Francis to return soon. Francis, however, continues to enjoy city life and to court Zoe, this time
with enough success to cause Mrs. Montrose to believe that Zoe will marry him. But unexpectedly Zoe inherits money from a rich relative, and Captain Morgan, the man she loves, coincidentally appears to marry her.

Francis is devastated. He isolates himself from everyone he knows in the city. Unaware of his son’s depression, Ernest, now having become ill, sends for Francis for help. But Francis cannot bear to face his father while still in pain over his loss of Zoe. Ernest eventually sets out for the city to find Francis, but halfway there he becomes so ill he can go no further so he stops at a hotel. A letter is sent to Francis notifying him that his father is dying and upon receiving the letter Francis starts out to meet his father, but it is too late. Ernest dies before Francis can see him.

Pierre and Francis bury Ernest near the cabin, and then the grieved Francis becomes ill. In a fever he has mystical visions and begins to understand the world and God. He sees the whole world and how all the parts fit together to form one complicated mechanism. He also sees what his place should be in the world and the reward waiting for him should he take that place.

After he is well again, Francis burns the cabin and returns to the city where for the rest of his life he roams the back streets helping the poor people he once thought were ugly beings. The story ends with Francis’ death. He rescues a dog that has been thrown off a boat by two drunken men but is then
unable to save himself.

... when the boat reached him, he threw the dog into it and himself slipped away. That was all. The event is confused in the minds of everybody present, and no one can wholly account for it. It seemed fatality. He simply went down, and his body was not recovered. ... Francis Hume must have gone willingly to his death, but he did not choose it. The sailors of the rescuing boat say that his face showed a strange bewilderment, but no refusal of their efforts; he did not mean to drown. There must have been, said the ship's doctor, some lesion of the heart (Brown 1897, 139-140).

Brown leaves her readers with hope that they will some day see Francis' soul among the lights of heaven. Though the novel ends on a peaceful note, its general tone is tragic, for Francis' education is only complete when he finds contentment through a mystical experience brought about by the death of his father that he could have prevented.

In the first paragraph, which explains why Ernest Hume moves to the country, Brown establishes her usual themes, and presents her transcendental views in Ernest's deliberation over what to do with his life now that his wife has died. He decides to change his lifestyle to ease his grief and to replace the beauty in his world that was taken away when she died.

His life forsook its accustomed channels. Vividly alive to the one bright point still burning in the past, toward the present world he seemed absolutely benumbed. Yet certain latent conceptions of the real values of existence must have sprung up in him, and protested against days to be thereafter dominated by artificial restraints. He
had lost his hold on life. He had even acquired a sudden distaste for it; but his previous knowledge of beauty and perfection would not suffer him to shut himself up in a cell of reserve, and isolate himself thus from his kind. He could become a hermit, but only under the larger conditions of being. He had the firmest conviction that he could never grow anymore; yet an imperative voice within bade him seek the highest outlook in which growth is possible. He had formed a habit of beautiful living, though in no sense living for any other save the dual soul now withdrawn; and he could not be satisfied with lesser loves, the makeshifts of a barren life. So, turning from the world, he fled into the woods; for at that time Nature seemed to him the only great, and resolved that Francis, the son, should be nourished by her alone (Brown 1897, 2-3).

In this passage, Brown sets up her opposing forces. For the grief-stricken husband the present is unbearable, and he longs for the happiness he knew in the past with his wife. A parallel of the goodness of the past is set up with the unhappy present. Ernest feels the only place he can find the beautiful again is in the woods. The past-versus-present theme sets up the third conflict, that between the city and the country, or more specifically in this novel, between society and the natural environment. Indeed The Day of His Youth furnishes a good example of how Brown establishes her set of opposites.

The passage quoted above also gives the reader a full transcendental explanation for why Ernest moves to the woods. Every step that he takes in his reasoning is supported by Emersonian ideals found in Nature. As much as he wishes to escape from life by joining his wife, his inner mind demands that he strive even harder to live the beautiful life found in being morally good. As a
lover of nature, he can perceive the unity of nature because "his inward and outward senses are still truly adjusted to each other," therefore enabling him to understand nature's moral influence (Emerson 6). Ernest's appreciation of the beauty of nature makes it impossible for him to live within the artificial bounds of society; instead "he must live under the larger conditions of being." He can only find these conditions in nature where the unity of God's world is found. Ernest's soul bids "him seek the highest outlook in which growth is possible," and this can only be, as Emerson asserted, where "man can let his thoughts be of equal greatness with nature" (Herrnstadt 2). These thoughts result in beautiful living which is possible in nature because "nature renders man the highest service to his soul in providing him with beauty" (Herrnstadt 2). In Ernest's grief, nature's beauty can act "as a restorer of physical well being" (Herrnstadt 2). Lastly, in determining to make the move away from society, Ernest concludes that his son should be raised in a natural environment because "nature exerts a moral influence on man" (Herrnstadt 4). After Ernest's long deliberation on his move to the woods, there can be little doubt that Brown desires to instruct her reader in the benefits nature provides.

The transcendental philosophy that saturates the beginning of the novel diminishes into minimal sporadic passages leaving the story to fulfill its role as an example of the philosophy. The following passage is typical of one of
Brown's short comments.

Ernest Hume delighted in the fierceness of the winter wind, the cold resistance of the snow; cut off, as he honestly felt himself to be, from spiritual growth, he had great joy in strengthening his physical being until it waxed into insolent might (Brown 1897, 6-7).

Ernest's enjoyment in the challenge of winter is reminiscent of Emerson's belief that man's delight in participation with nature comes from neither man or nature but rather from the harmony of man and nature (Emerson 7). In this particular experience, nature acts as a restorer of physical well-being because Ernest welcomes it. But Brown implies that though he is unaware of it, nature is also "the symbol of spirit"; therefore, Ernest is actually growing spiritually through the beauty he is in harmony with (Herrnstadt 3).

Unconscious spiritual growth through the beauty of nature is the development of characters found in many of Brown's works; however, some of her other characters are aware of their experience. Thinking about an ancestor, Larry in the novel Bromley Neighborhood describes his as "a thoughtful man of wistful longings for beauty in a life where no beauty was save that of the spring and the frost and the ripening of the harvest [and] . . . that land where all beauty is; the unknown, the imperishable, the faerie home of fancy" (Brown 1917, 321-322). This ancestor was not only aware of the spirituality to be found in nature but actually sought it out.
While Ernest is not conscious of nature's spiritual potential, he does understand the goodness of nature, and the natural environment's influence assists him in the education of his son. By reaping the benefits of nature both consciously in his mental rebirth and unconsciously in his spiritual rebirth, he is improving himself in the hope that Francis will follow his guidance.

[Ernest] had bound himself the more irrevocably to right living by renouncing artificial bonds. He had removed his son from the world, and he had thereby taken upon himself the necessity of becoming a better world (Brown 1897, 7).

Expecting that Francis will know nothing of society, Ernest himself becomes a model for his son. Between nature's influence and his own, he hopes to give Francis the most beautiful life possible on earth.

Francis, growing up under such care, becomes a healthy young man with all the knowledge his father is able to teach him, all the morals that nature provides, and all the spirit and beauty that come from living in his natural environment. The only problem with Francis' education is that he is never taught how to relate to other men; he does not learn the need for giving in a relationship. When people invade their pond Francis notices his father's melancholy air though he does not understand that it is caused by Ernest's realization that their life will never be the same.

When Ernest learns that people have come to stay the summer he
realizes that his life with his son will never be the same. Francis, however, is excited at the prospect of meeting other humans and describes believably the people he sees in terms of what he knows:

The men--what were they like? I hardly know, except that they made me feel ashamed of my roughness. And the women! One was yellow-haired and pale; she had a fairy build, I think, and her shoulders were like a birch-tree. Her head was bare, and the sun--he had stayed to do it--had turned all the threads to gold. She was so white! white as a tiarella in the spring. . . . The song! if I but knew it! It called my feet to dancing. It was like laughter and the play of squirrels (Brown 1897, 13).

Comprehended in terms of his own natural surroundings, this first experience is the beginning of Francis' struggle with civilization.

Brown establishes another set of opposites when Francis, the morally good man living in the natural world, meets Zoe, the selfish woman from the city. Whereas Zoe's treatment of Francis, for example her coquettish ways and little lies, causes him pain, his sincere treatment of her eventually softens her attitude enough to cause her to be honest with him. Unfortunately, her honesty does not save him, for Francis, once pledging his love, stands strong against Zoe's reasonings against it.

Having set up her opposites, Brown continues to widen the gap between Zoe and Francis at the same time Francis himself struggles to reconcile his two worlds. In the city, Francis' unusual upbringing keeps him from being corrupted
by his friends' bad morals, but it also makes him their star attraction. The attention Francis receives makes him feel somewhat comfortable in society because he has always had his father's full attention and expects the same kind of attention from other people. There are certain aspects of society, however, which continue to baffle him because they seem rather artificial and unnatural.

One of Francis' problems is his inability to appreciate a church service. Having gained his spiritual knowledge from nature, he cannot accept, understand, or appreciate society's ideas on religion. He writes to his father about his experience.

... I have been to church. It is strangely disappointing. Of the church itself it is not necessary to speak. It seems there are no great cathedrals here; I had not realized that. The music was fine, but faint; I found I had expected not a quartette but a chorus, a multitude praising God. Then the clergyman spoke. It was very vague and very long. It seemed to me unnecessary for him to have written anything, when he might have read Emerson or Ruskin. I forgot him, after a time, and began to think of Lone Mountain and the rhythm of the wind over the firs. The sermon was something about St. John's visions and the church. It seemed to me belittling, as if a primer should be written to explain the gods (Brown 1897, 85).

It is no wonder that Francis finds his church experiences disappointing. He expected a man-made magnificence to complement the majesty he has witnessed in the natural world. He feels that only a cathedral can match the
regalness of God's natural pine forest. He anticipates a great chorus of music praising God because in the woods he has heard all of God's creatures praising their creator. And the preacher cannot replace Emerson or Ruskin because his religion is based on man's abstractions instead of on God's concrete creations and their relation to man. It is not surprising that Francis' mind drifts to his home and to memories of his own uplifting appreciation of God in His natural setting. A sermon on visions and the church can only belittle spirituality for one who has already experienced God on a one-to-one basis.

In the way Francis views church, it is easy to see Brown's attitude that organized religion looks in comparison to nature. Francis' letter is her way of rejecting the church's theology in behalf of Emerson's philosophy. Like Emerson she believes that we must learn through our own experimentation and must experience anew a religion of our own. With someone who grew up among God's creations, as did Francis, Brown is able to show how the natural world can be a spiritual teacher far better than organized religions.

However, Francis' story ends in tragedy in his inability to understand the concept of loving his fellow man. While in natural surroundings with only his father, Francis is never able to fully understand the importance of Jesus' love for man because Ernest constantly gives to his son and never asks anything in return. Nor does Francis learn the importance of giving in the city where
brotherly love is advocated only on Sundays. Francis tries to imitate his city friends by helping the poor but when he first meets the poor he is repelled by them because he expects them to be beautiful beings like the animals and plants he finds in nature. Instead of clean people with beautiful souls he finds dirty, desperate, immoral beings. Francis has read the stories of the saints and knows what loving his fellow man is supposed to be, but he never practices such love because both nature and society have failed to demand it strongly enough from him. Not until after the death of his father is he thrown back into nature to learn what love is.

Losing both Zoe and his father, Francis falls ill and he sees visions that bring him comfort and understanding. It is necessary that he experience a revelation of what love is by himself for him to be able to correct the problems in his character.

The cabin was not real. Only I was real -- and Pierre. My soul--was it my soul? -- went out of the cabin, and swept across Lone Mountain to the sea, and over the sea and back again. She saw the earth swing in space. She knew there were many worlds beside. She felt an awe of the vastness of things, and she began to be healed. ... And I looked upon the great balances wherein we are held, and millions of souls, uncounted souls, in myriads, like little points of light, fleeing home to God. That was it -- God. ... This was love; and immediately I understood everything that it was necessary for me to understand. I comprehended His perfect well-wishing toward us. I knew one blood ran from His heart through ours. I knew how small a thing it is to say "I suffer." I? What is I? A mote in the whole, an aching nerve in one great plexus. And the whole will some day
be nourished, and we shall be healed (Brown 1897, 127-128).

At last he really understands the unity of God's world, and through this unity he learns the meaning of selfless love. His sense of the unity of nature brings him enlightenment. Through this discovery he finds his place in nature and in the universe, and he understands what role he is to play in the oneness of the world. He realizes he must serve mankind in any way possible to make up for his selfishness in letting his father die when he could have saved him.

In the woods, Francis never had to give of himself to his father because his father was growing spiritually by giving to Francis by teaching, caring, and supporting him. So Francis only knew how to take what was given, and he was ignorant of what it was to sacrifice himself for another. Once in the city, he was still the center of attention, except with Zoe. He would have willingly sacrificed for her, but she did not want his sacrifices. Incapable of giving, Francis was unable to grow spiritually; therefore he was not in connection with nature and God. It was only through the pain of his body, the result of his infractions against the unity of things in not giving of himself to his father during his father's illness, that he was able to find his soul.

Francis spends the rest of his life practicing the selfless love he has found through nature by aiding the poor in their affliction. As Coyne points out, in Francis' last act can be seen ties with nature that are stronger than those with
man because he saves a dog, an innocent creature of nature, from the cruelty of two drunken men, typical products of society (150).

Francis' tragedy can only be explained in transcendental terms; otherwise Ernest's death has no meaning. The reason for the tragedy is the one-sided education of which Francis was a victim. He learned all that was taught him so the fault cannot be his. It was not until he learned more through the losses he suffered that he was able to correct the problem in his deficient moral upbringing. Nature itself was not the problem in Francis' education; rather it was the overprotection of his father that caused him to be a selfish individual. Even after Francis had experienced city life as well as country life he still remained unfinished because to correct the mistake made early in his education he had to comprehend the unity in nature through a mystical vision. This unity, the way nature works together to live and improve itself, made Francis realize the need of mankind to do the same.

Like Brown, Francis needed to experience for himself both nature and society. Ernest tried to keep Francis from the harmful effects of civilization, not realizing that his son's sound moral principles would protect him from bad influences but that his isolation from other men could weaken his character. If Ernest had introduced him into society, then Francis might have learned earlier the importance of selfless love and consequently have had a well-rounded
moral character. In the end, though, Francis does attain a good moral character through the tragedy of his failure to aid his father and his vision of the unity of the world.

In *The Day of His Youth*, Brown portrays an example of the development of a man. A balance and a unity among all things is important to the education of the man in order for him to survive and understand his place in society and nature. She shows that the natural environment is the place in which the young should be raised but warns that total isolation from society can produce weaknesses in character. The example of Francis shows that a middle ground must be found for young people so that they can experience the benefits of both the city and the country. The local color aspect of the novel, the regional setting, makes it easier for Brown to bring her characters into close contact with nature, but it is her transcendental idealism that gives universality to her theme and provides us with a philosophy by which we can learn to cope with our changing society.
III. OLD CROW: POST-WAR APPLICATIONS

Brown's novel *Old Crow* was published in the middle of her career in 1922. The transcendental theme of the novel reflects her reaction to World War I. At first Brown feels that the war has a holy mission to stamp out the evil washing over Europe; these sentiments are expressed by the character Larry in *Bromley Neighborhood*. Larry feels that everyone should be involved in the glorious fight against the Germans and is infuriated at America's reluctance in joining the war. Larry and Brown expect man to behave in a more moral fashion once he has seen and conquered the evil in the world. After the war, since man continued to be corrupt and immoral, Brown went through a period of disillusionment not realizing that her expectations, which were similar to many other people's of the time, had been unrealistic. Her disappointment in man's behavior after the war reinforced her nature ideology. In *Old Crow* she again focuses on the redemptive qualities nature has for man. She applies transcendentalism to a post-war individual's life by showing how nature aids in the physical, mental, moral, and especially spiritual recovery of Raven, the protagonist.

The plot of this complicated "New England tragedy" (Brown's description) is used as vehicle for an in-depth character analysis of Raven. The transcendental philosophy can only be understood through his reactions to,
and his thoughts on, the main action of the story.

Though the novel is centered on Raven, it is named after his great uncle Old Crow whose real name was Raven also, but because of his eccentricity he was given his nick-name by the villagers. He was considered eccentric because he had given up on society and tried to escape it by being alone like an old crow. He lived in a cabin he built himself a little way into the woods near the family home so he could be alone with his questions about the order of the world and where God fit into it. However, he was soon sought out by the villagers for anything from healing a broken arm to harvesting a crop. During his stay in the cabin he meets the then very young Raven and sees in Raven a boy who would have similar questions that would not be satisfied by the accepted answers of the day. Feeling sympathy for the boy, he keeps a journal of his experiences and his own answers in the hope that someday Raven will find it helpful. When the novel opens Old Crow is long dead but his journal resurrects his thoughts for a few chapters.

The novel begins with Raven's attempt to explain to his friends, Nan and Dick, his reasons for retiring from society and moving to his childhood home in the country. He is leaving the city to escape civilization as a result of his disillusionment with the war. While he was fighting, he thought as did everyone that he was fighting against a terrible evil and that the light he could see at the
end of the tunnel was God. On returning home after the war, he finds that the moral condition of people has not improved as if they had never known about the war. Raven is sickened by this lack of improvement but he feels that there is no way he can rectify the situation. His disappointment is echoed by Nan.

"... it's what we've all come back to," said she, "and what everybody who stayed at home feels, or ought to if they've got anything inside their nuts. Just think, Rookie! we were like the great multitude in the bible, somewhere, praising God. We broke our idols and -- I don't know what we didn't do. And now we're not scared anymore, we've set 'em up again: same old idols (Brown 1922, 30).

Nan aided Raven in nursing the wounded and she understands his feelings, something she characteristically does in this novel. The point of her observation is that when man was afraid of the evil he fought against, he was able to find the goodness in himself and use it, but once he was safe and comfortable again he let the goodness of his soul be cheapened once again by day-to-day wrongful actions such as cheating, stealing, and lying. Consoling Raven, she says, "I know. Coming back. Finding we aren't any better than we were before we got frightened and said our prayers and promised God if He'd stop the war we'd be different forever and ever, amen" (Brown 1922, 29). She, like Raven, expected to find the world a better place but instead became embittered by her disappointment in man.

As a result of Raven's feelings about society, he also becomes
disenchanted with God. He does not understand why God would let the world fall into ruin. When Raven explains his feelings to his nephew, Dick, who has also been in the war but is a product of popular society, Dick becomes convinced that Raven has cafard or shellshock because he does not understand.

Before leaving for the country, Raven receives a posthumous letter from Anne, Nan’s aunt. Anne had always loved him, but he had never been able to return her love; still throughout her life, she had aided him in his climb to success in her father’s wool company. He had always felt guilty for not returning Anne’s love, and hence he felt obligated to do what she wished of him. In her letter, she asks that he take the large fortune she has left for him and construct a Palace of Peace where lectures and demonstrations could be held to teach society the way of non-resistance and the abolition of war. This was a plan she had always had, but Raven had constantly fought against it because she sacrificed principles for peace. Reaching beyond the grave, Anne continues to pressure him into doing what would make her happy.

On his first day at home in the country Raven meets a woman named Tira as she is running furtively through the woods with her baby. She reminds him of a Madonna as he catches her near Old Crow’s cabin. She is fleeing in terror from her husband Tenny. Giving her safety in the cabin Raven learns her story.
Because her child looks like Martin, an ex-lover of hers, the jealous Tenny resents it though she vows it is his own child. Tenny is a religious fanatic who often gets into a religious fever which makes him want to purge the world of all its sin. It is during these frenzies that he threatens the life of his child, believing it is not his. Tira is afraid that he will kill the boy so she runs out into the woods until Tenny's rage spends itself. His sympathies stirred at once Raven offers her the cabin as a refuge whenever Tenny becomes threatening.

The action of this New England tragedy progresses in an exciting and suspenseful way. Raven and Nan continue to help Tira look for a permanent solution. Nan begins to love Raven but sees that he admires Tira. Meanwhile, Dick, who is in love with Nan, scolds her for the time she spends with Raven. Jealous of his uncle, he is persistent in his mission to get Raven to admit that he is mentally unwell. Tira's life begins to get unbearable as Martin keeps trying to make Tenny jealous; unfortunately Martin succeeds resulting in Tenny's accidental shooting of Dick. As Dick recovers he matures and realizes that Nan can never be his; hence he eventually leaves her to Raven.

Throughout the novel are long passages in which Raven or Nan think out or discuss their philosophy on life. Old Crow's journal assists Raven in formulating his world view. From this journal he gains enough knowledge to open his mind to spiritual recovery. With his newfound knowledge, he is able to
help Tira spiritually when she asks him if it is true that Jesus is in her house with her. Though Raven himself does not believe in Jesus yet, he tells her it is true. Tira then uses her new belief to keep Tenny from physical violence by reminding him that Jesus is close by watching him.

But even though Tira tells Tenny that Jesus is watching him, he finally kills the baby. Tira tells the villagers that she accidentally suffocated the baby when she rolled on top of it in her sleep. After the baby’s funeral Tira drowns herself. Feeling responsible, Tenny goes to Raven for help. Raven tells Tenny to go to the village and confess the murder, but the villagers don’t believe him. Tenny then feels that it is necessary to be told by Raven that God has forgiven him. Afraid to go home Tenny lives in the cabin with Raven. During this time Raven has a mystical experience which gives him a solution to his problem over whether he should build the Palace of Peace Anne wanted or use her money in a way that he feels will be more beneficial for mankind, such as sending it to Paris to help the city’s cultural rebirth. Having decided to use the money the way he wants to, Raven is finally able to let go of the guilt he felt all those years while Anne loved him. Unfortunately, Tenny does not achieve a similar peace, for after he tries to kill himself Raven puts him into an asylum.

Raven sends Anne’s money to Dick in Paris, the city that Raven feels has the best chance of saving the culture of the world. Then Raven and Nan finally
acknowledge their love for each other and the novel ends.

The transcendental elements in Old Crow are less apparent than those in The Day of His Youth. Still nature's role here is of major importance to the redemptive theme. Stressing the importance of natural elements in connection with Raven's and Old Crow's ideas, Brown reasserts the transcendental philosophy.

Because Raven expresses his dissatisfaction with the world at the beginning of the novel, the reader can expect from him some type of life philosophy. His disillusionment is caused by the fact that he is of an older generation and can see only that his world has crumbled. Younger men like Dick, who also went to war, have not yet established themselves; hence they see the post-war era as the beginning of a new civilization. Raven's solution to the problem of how to deal with a society that has "gone to the dogs" is to escape. He can think of no antidote for society's sickness and, being "old," decides that instead of fighting to change society, a battle which he cannot win, he will leave man to his decay. He escapes to the country and its memories of the past; the country becomes his place of rejuvenation.

This kind of rejuvenation through nature is shown in many other Brown works. For example in Paradise published in 1905, Barbara the heroine has an experience similar to the one Raven will have.
She stepped out into the clear morning air, and closed the door behind her. It was cold and beautiful, and at once a keen pleasure came upon her from looking across the rolling land, snowcovered, to the fringe of firs on the farther hills. She felt the momentary exaltation that may be a thrill of nature-worship or a mystic prescience of a hopefulness beyond this valley of despair. The heart within her lifted, and her eyes filled with tears. Something in the morning was offering unseen gifts, and she who had been poor felt the magnificence of riches (Brown 1905, 219).

Barbara’s feelings are more powerful than Raven’s because she is younger than he is and more impressionable. But in Brown’s works nature gives the characters whether young or old an uplifting feeling.

Raven’s escape to the country brings back to him the beautiful feelings that nature has always provided him; he returns to the place of his innocence to find his lost security. Upon his arrival he has a calmer but no less powerful experience than Barbara’s. The first glimpse of a far-away mountain brought the surprising tears to his eyes. It was an inconsiderable ridge with an outline of no distinction, but it had the old charm, the power of clutching at his heart and dragging it up from the glories and sorrows of the sea. Raven always insisted that he loved the sea best, with its terrors and multitudinous activities; but the mountains did pull him up somewhere into a region he did not inhabit all the time. He had an idea that this was simply a plane of physical exhilaration; but it didn’t matter. It was an easement of sort, if only the difference of change (Brown 1922, 70-71).

While Raven acknowledges his feelings of wonder at the beauty of nature, he
does not anticipate the spiritual effect his surroundings will have on him. For like Ernest Hume, he feels that spiritual enlightenment is no longer a possibility for him.

Raven’s escape from society to the country not only makes possible Brown’s affirmation of nature’s transcendental values, but also allows her to work with her opposing forces. The city-versus-country theme is evident in Raven’s beliefs about society and his deliberate rejection of that society. Brown also works with the past-versus-present conflict in her depiction of the uneasy relationship between Raven and Dick. Dick is a young popular poet who enjoys life in the city, but Brown shows him to be immature and lacking in sympathy and understanding. Raven, on the other hand, is portrayed as the intelligent, sensitive old uncle who wants only to be in the country away from the corruption of the city. He wants to resurrect the past. Though the major conflict is not between these two characters, it is in their difference of opinion, country values against city values, that transcendental ideas are portrayed.

Brown uses the tragic situation of Tira and Tenny to give Raven a reason to feel again and find spiritual awareness. The plight of Tira and her baby, and the distress of Tenny arouse Raven’s sympathies and make it impossible for him to withdraw from society. His continued participation in society, forces him to ask even more questions about the world and nature.
Raven's original question is why God let man fall back into evil after man has proven he deserves better. Raven's original conclusion is that if God does not care to improve mankind there is little he himself can do. This is why he leaves the city in the first place.

However, in the country he finds more questions to ask. Having dismissed God from the scene of man, he turns to nature. But after meeting Tira, he begins questioning how nature can be so cruel to one so innocent.

But the cruelty of creation was not content with setting her [Tira] loose in the world of created things with the gift of beauty and holiness in her hand. It had veiled her also with the mysterious magic that was simple enough and directly compelling enough to rouse the beast of jealousy, the beast of mastery, in the hearts of men. She did not seem to him an Aphrodite, bearing in her hand the cup of love. There was something childlike about her, something as virginal as Nan. He could believe she would be endlessly pleased with simple things, that she could be made to laugh delightedly over the trivialities of daily life. But the hand of creation having made her, the brain of creation (that inexorable force bent only on perpetuation) saw she was too good a thing to be lost, too innocently persuasive to the passion of men. So it had thrown over her the veil of mystery and pronounced against her the ancient curse that she should be desired of many and yet too soft of her heart, too weak in her defenses, even to foresee the pitfalls that awaited her wandering feet and would sometime break her bones (Brown 1922, 129-130).

Because of his involvement in Tira's tragic situation Raven is forced to seek different answers to his questions.

His initial conclusion that God is watching the world kill itself and is
laughing every now and then does not satisfy his spiritual need. After meeting Tira and learning of her plight Raven decides that there is no God, only nature, but this belief fails to bring him comfort also. This movement from the barest spirituality to a belief in no God at all, a belief in the baseness of animal instinct and survival, is necessary for Raven in order for him to eventually find peace. His total rejection of everything previously learned and believed leaves him mentally and spiritually open for new, higher beliefs.

In his search for answers Raven turns to the journal Old Crow wrote for him. He is relieved to discover that Old Crow had had the same problems with God and nature that he is having. This makes him feel more confident that he is not indeed suffering from shellshock as Dick has suggested. Old Crow's comments on his own confusion comfort Raven and open his mind to whatever solutions his uncle finds. Disappointed in his own conclusions Raven is anxious to read about Old Crow's and finds that through an understanding of nature his uncle had arrived at the answers.

Old Crow's questions are Raven's questions, only Old Crow's are brought to him through nature rather than through society. In his journal he describes a bird, a squirrel, and a toad menaced by a snake on or near a tree. He attempts to save the fearful innocents by scaring the snake away. When he does so the snake kills the toad, but the other animals get away. Old Crow
knows that the animals will soon forget their narrow escape from death, but the episode makes him realize the role fear plays in the world.

It was full of fear. Everything was made to hunt down and kill everything else, except the innocent things that eat grass and roots, innocent as they be -- as they are -- they are killed, too. And who made it so? God. So what peace could I have -- what peace could anybody ever have -- in a world where, from morning till night, it is war and murder and fear of death? And what good is there in trying to bring the kingdom of heaven down to men? You can't bring it to animals. What if you could die for men? A good many have done that besides Jesus Christ. But who is going to die for the animals? (Brown 1922, 249-250).

He and Raven are unhappy with this view of how God relates to man and nature. In sharing with Raven the process he went through in his thinking, he is reassuring his nephew, and Brown is reassuring her readers. He continues to discover that there is more to God than he knows.

Like Francis Hume, he comes to his understanding of nature through a mystical experience.

I saw that we are so near the dust that we can no more account for the ways of Almighty God than the owl hooting out there in the woods can read the words I am writing here. I saw that nothing is to be told us. We are to find out everything for ourselves, just as we have found electricity and the laws of physics. And poisons -- we have found out those, some of them, even if we had to die trying to find out. . . . Now why doesn't he care? For the first time I knew there was a reason that was not a cruel reason. I knew His reasons were all good. And I saw that though he could not break the rules of His plan by telling us things, He could give us a kind of something inside
us that should make us work it out ourselves. ... I find the bird with the broken wing or the rabbit bit by the trap I know God knows about them, and if I cannot know, it proves it is not necessary I should (Brown 1922, 264-266).

In this passage he expresses some potent transcendental ideas. He understands that "nature is all man can know of God's essence" because man is not allowed to know God directly. Old Crow also experiences knowledge through nature when, in the transcendent way of Emerson, his "divine spirit communes with the divine spirit in nature; thus he has access to the entire mind of the creator and boundless possibilities exist for him" (Herrnstadt 5-6). It is through his life in nature and his mystical revelation that Old Crow is able to understand his place in the world and share his discoveries with Raven.

Old Crow's success in helping Raven find spirituality through nature is seen in Raven's unique transfiguration of his uncle into his own private saint and the cabin into his own private church. Whenever he is in the cabin that Old Crow built, he feels his uncle near just as Tira feels Jesus near. The cabin plays an important role in the novel because it is located in the woods where "nature exerts a moral influence on man" (Herrnstadt 4). It becomes a natural church where communion between nature and man brings about spiritual growth not only for Old Crow but also Raven, Tenny, and Tira.

Tira's spiritual growth comes from Raven. Her husband, religious fanatic though he is, does not promote an awareness of God in anyone; however, at
one of his religious meetings held in their home, he does say that Jesus is with man all of the time. This catches Tira's attention, and she sees salvation at the end of her misery, but she is afraid to believe in Jesus' protection until it is confirmed by Raven. Tira sneaks away to Old Crow's hut to ask Raven if what Tenny said was true. His affirmation of Tira's belief, though he himself does not believe in Jesus, is what gives Tira a reason to live. His act is in harmony with nature's morality because though he does not believe in Jesus, does not mean that He does not exist, nor does it mean that he should keep another from believing He does because he still has doubts. Raven is not ready to make the jump from reason to faith, and yet by helping another being make that transition, he is spiritually growing himself. His growth comes as a result of his giving to Tira that which she needs to transcend earthly bonds. When she leaves the hut for home she is secure in her belief of God.

For Tenny, spiritual growth comes from the moral influence of nature. He cannot go back to the house where he lives because in that house, in the basic societal unit of the family, he has committed evil by killing his son. His retreat to Raven and the cabin is his escape to what is good and safe. When he tries to absolve himself in society by going into the village to confess, he is not believed because the villagers have been fooled by the lies surrounding the baby's death. He is only absolved when Raven assures him that God has
forgiven him. Again Raven benefits from his aid to another human being because when Tenny, whom he had considered his worst enemy, needed help, he put aside his dislike and gave of himself. However, his ability to forgive and understand Tenny is only possible because he has read Old Crow's journal.

Their vision of the whole world is comparable to that of the Emersonian poet, or lover of nature, who can appreciate the earth as a whole body of land and not as individual farms or residences (Emerson 5-6). However, because Raven, so sensitive to the joys and sorrows of civilization as a whole, does not understand the whole and does not have his "inward and outward senses adjusted to each other," he is doomed to unhappiness (Herrnstadt 1). Nan sees the poet in him as did Old Crow, and she believes that the beauty of nature, more specifically the beauty of Tira, can help him find peace.

There was one word that, to a poet's mind only, might have illumined the darkness if only for an instant: beauty, that was the word. Mankind could not look on beauty such as this and not desire, for a moment at least, to possess it utterly (Brown 1922, 491).

But it is not the physical beauty of Tira that enlightens Raven; instead it is her spiritual beauty and his understanding of the place she takes in nature. Again, he comes to this understanding through the journal.

Like Raven, Old Crow came in close contact with someone who was cruelly used by nature, and he came to realize the importance of that individual.
Billy Jones had been overweight and a little retarded. Having been forced into isolation by other people he had no one to turn to when he found out he was dying. Old Crow coming upon Billy in one of his walks through the forest brings him home and takes care of him until he dies. While tending him Old Crow is unable to leave his cabin for long periods of time making the villagers angry because he is taking care of a worthless human being instead of helping them. Eventually Billy dies and Old Crow not only lies to him so he can die in peace but also has a mystical experience after his death which enables him to understand that if a being is isolated as Billy was or killed as the toad was it is God's will and there is some incomprehensible plan at work.

Though Old Crow's journal answers Raven's questions, and therefore helps him deal with the world, he must still find answers on his own, for transcendentalism stresses that one must experience for himself the unity and order of the world. During his stay in the natural church with Tenny, Raven has a mystical experience which allows him to see clearly how Old Crow's thoughts can be applied to himself. He uses his new knowledge to solve his problem with Anne. Like Old Crow, after having a mystical vision, he feels no more guilt: he knows his place in nature and accepts it.

Again in this novel, as in The Day of His Youth, the universal philosophy of transcendentalism sets the work apart from the typical New England local
Color narrative. Brown's ability to apply a 19th century philosophy to the present to show how it can help an individual understand and be content with his society gives her novels deep meaning and shows her concern for mankind.
Brown's 178-page poem *Ellen Prior* was published in 1923 a year after *Old Crow*. Again she applies transcendental philosophy to post-war society; however in contrast to the redemptive theme she developed in *Old Crow*, she offers an alternative theme here, that of nature as escape. She focuses on the opposition between the forces of society and nature, over-emphasizing nature to the point of weakening her characterizations by making most of her characters mere symbols of either the natural surroundings or the city. She also uses rhymed couplets, a form more common to the past than the 1920's. This reversion to an old-fashioned style may be in itself another form of retreat. Instead of using umetered line form found more commonly in long poems during the 1920's. Brown was looking for stability by going back to both a past style and a past way of life in this work.

The theme of nature as escape is found in many of Brown's works for example *The Prisoner* and *Bromley Neighborhood*. Usually she uses it in relation to one of her characters, as with Ellen in *Bromley Neighborhood* about whom we are told

> She looked like a young rough-clothed nymph caught from her revel on a mountain top, disheveled, red, angry at what she found in the valley below, and determined to make herself felt there. She had been working in the garden, in a state of warm happiness, her old skirt all over dirt, her hands black with it, and her very flesh and mind
saturate with the breath of earth. Ellen had these times of absorption into the life of the world. There she was happy. She seemed to herself, when the garden had received her and made her one with its needs, happy beyond the power of understanding, happy even though her father was dead and, in that uncomprehended separation, she ached at night and cried into her pillow (Brown 1917, 70-71).

While Brown usually focuses on her characters' use of nature as a temporary escape, in Ellen Prior she focuses on the advantages of escaping into nature permanently.

Ellen Prior is the story of a young girl who lives with her blind mother. She meets Robert, the ambitious hired man of the Wickhams, in the most beautiful woodlot on her land. Upon seeing her, Robert falls in love and tells her they must be man and wife. After their first meeting which is so filled with awe for both of them, Robert begins to think more practically about the advantages of marrying Ellen such as owning her farm and her woodlot. The mother has unvoiced reservations about the marriage, but Ellen and Robert are married.

Because of his ambitious nature he begins at once to make the farm productive. She is soon needed to help outside so he tells her to have her mother do the indoor chores. She becomes troubled because she wants to please her husband, but her mother is handicapped and cannot do the chores. Ellen solves her problem by doing her mother's chores before Robert awakes,
thus making it possible for her to give her mother the credit for doing the work. However, this first incident is only the beginning of many that cause a conflict in her heart between the love she feels for her mother and that she feels for her husband.

The next problem arises when Robert wishes to sell the woodlot for lumber. Emotionally attached to the woodlot, Ellen cannot bear the idea of the trees being cut down. She tries to dissuade Robert, but he sees only the profit to be made and ignores her pleas. In time he comes home with the news that he thinks he will be able to sell the lot. That night Ellen goes out to the woods to commune with the trees. But she is worn out, it begins to rain, and her friendly trees seem to reject her and frighten her. She races home in the rain and then falls ill. During her illness Robert realizes how important she is to him, but once she recovers, he again ignores her needs.

The third problem is caused by an outsider from the city whose name is Lilla. Lilla comes to the country to see if her lover loves her enough to come after her. She finds Ellen's innocence refreshing and Robert's ambition stimulating. She enjoys shocking Ellen and corrupting her naive beliefs whenever they are alone together, and she enjoys the challenge of sidetracking Robert from his focused ambition on the farm by tempting him with the luxuries found in the city. One day when Ellen and Lilla are alone, Lilla tells
her that while Ellen will go to heaven, Robert will come back to earth in another form because he is not pure enough for heaven. Ellen is terror stricken at being separated from the one she loves so much, so she decides to commit an evil act in order to keep herself and Robert together.

On the evening Ellen's mother has had a heart attack, Robert tells Ellen that they should send the old woman to a place where she can be cared for. Ellen is ripped apart by her husband's suggestion and decides it is time to commit her sin. The next morning, she plans to take her mother for a boat ride in Lilla's boat and then drown her so that her mother will not die in some strange hospital and so that she herself will come back to earth with Robert. That same morning Lilla waylays Robert in the woodlot and tries to seduce him. But she becomes frustrated because he is intellectually too slow to appreciate at first what is being offered to him. As Robert begins to understand they hear a scream. Rushing to the lake they find the mother hanging on to the overturned boat and Ellen gone. After Robert finds Ellen's body Lilla attempts to revive her for hours, but she fails.

After Ellen's funeral, Lilla leaves with her lover who finally comes to find her, and she gives her boat to Robert. Robert takes the boat and begins a bonfire with it, intending to burn the woodlot and himself. But he hears his mother-in-law screaming because, following him through the woods to make
sure he does no harm to himself, she has been trapped by the fire. Robert eventually controls the fire, saves the mother, and consequently preserves the woodlot; the mother tells Robert that if the woodlot had burned, Ellen would never be able to rest peacefully. Shortly thereafter the mother dies but first she tells Robert that she knows and understands his feelings of guilt and sorrow over the way he had treated her and Ellen.

Brown's emphasis on the goodness of the natural world makes this work another example of her faith in nature. In portraying the natural element as unbelievably good, she exhibits her faith in the perfection of nature and in the comfort a person can find there.

As with her other works that contain strong strains of transcendentalism, Brown establishes her view on the relationship between nature and man at the outset of the narrative.

Through mortal joy and pang are mortals made;  
Yet still is there some fiercer urge conveyed  
Through earth and water, their bright messengers,  
The murmurous trees, the wind their leafage stirs.  
The child lives not on milk and bread alone  
Nor by the fruit of tasks his sires have done  
For his inheriting. Though he must eat  
Of earth and drink her cup, yet still the sweet  
Strong secrecies she stores from hidden stills  
Are his to tap. Their breath his bosom fills.  
Before he knows an inner heart beats there  
Within his heart of flesh, alive to air  
No flesh e'er felt, the word, the very breath
Of God, in manifested life and death,  
Is quickening in him, though no eye foresee  
The spiritual body's final sovereignty (Brown 1923, 7).

Most obvious in this passage is the transcendental theme of the influence of nature on the spirit, how nature wakes the soul in man and how man's exploration of nature's beauties can aid him in unconsciously understanding his relationship to God.

Combined with her use of nature as escape is her use of the past as escape. The obvious example of this is her placing of the story at some earlier time than the present. In her enthusiasm over the past, she inevitably attacks those in the present who find the past a useless commodity.

Those years ago, the older rites and ways  
Inherited from saner, simpler days:  
Times scarce regarded now, save to beguile  
An hour's leisure, waken a tolerant smile,  
In intervals of matters that pertain  
To social uplift, gayety or gain (Brown 1923, 4).

Her antagonism towards the present is more clearly portrayed in the development of the city character Lilla, while at the same time the old-fashioned ways of the country girl Ellen are exalted. Hence the past-versus-present conflict parallels a natural-versus-societal theme which results in the good-versus-evil theme. Brown is once again establishing her polarities, but in this work she does it more symbolically by making her female characters inhumanly
good or evil: Ellen is a good natural element of the past, Lilla is an evil city element of the present.

Lilla and Ellen are exact moral opposites. Worse than Zoe Montrose, Lilla is not only aware of her own evil, but is intent upon corrupting the goodness of others as she does with Ellen.

And Lilla stretched her length upon the ground
And laughed, a low limpidity of sound,
A comment on the sweetest little fool
Conceived by woman. Troubling the pool,
A wife's dull folly, seemed the merest fun,
Not half intended, finished as begun.
She had no clear idea of any creed
Though she made shift to snatch one at her need,
To sow ripe seeds of mischief where the soil
Lay ready. All the world she found a foil
For drama. So she lunged and cut and played
At thrusts and never recked what wounds she made (Brown 1923, 119).

Lilla's moral character is more clearly revealed when Robert finally realizes her potential for evil as she tries to seduce him. "My God in heaven!, he exclaims, I don't believe you're good!" (Brown 1923, 138). All of Lilla's characteristics are explained by her relationship with the city and the way she continually brings city life into her conversations with Robert. The natural surroundings have no effect on Lilla's moral character because she is so evil, further proving Brown's use of her as a symbol rather than as human. The characters in the better
novels cannot help being affected by nature even if they are from the city. In *Robin Hood's Barn* for instance, the character Stayson lives in the city, but he is not immune to nature's influence.

In those few days even, the trees had leaped into green and he, used for so many months now to the city's way of taking things, felt the beauty of it overwhelmingly. It seemed to call him to more vivid issues than the routine of his desk, though he might even have been serving the highest ambition there: as if no man could afford to ignore the bourgeoning of the earth for any mandate less imperative than that of the earth herself (Brown 1913, 51).

In *Day of His Youth* Zoe Montrose is also influenced by nature, and even Robert in this poem for all his insensitivity is not totally immune to nature's beauty. So completely evil is Lilla that she not only admits her evil but sees no reason to change. To Lilla being a moral person means being as foolish as Ellen.

On the other hand, Ellen, like Francis Hume, is uncorrupted as long as she is not exposed to city values. Her characteristics of goodness are referred to constantly throughout the poem to remind the reader of her purity. Lines such as, "Renewedly he saw how purely fair/ She was, how sweet, how gentle and how good" (Brown 1923, 23) and "The earth was hers. It made her strong and sweet/ For earth's own ends, to grow and seek and meet. ..." (Brown 1923, 9), also reinforce Ellen's natural capacity. These descriptions in turn create a symbol of nature from Ellen that can parallel Lilla as the symbol of the city.
Ellen not only symbolizes nature she is a creature of nature. Upon meeting Robert, she plays no coquettish games but reacts to him without any hiding of her true emotions.

He found her strange, so pure, and yet not shy,
A wonder bloom, a maiden mystery.
He could have sworn no lover yet had kissed
Those lips or woven that sweet enshrouding mist
Upon her eyes. Even now her ravished face,
Her trembling shoulders bruised by his embrace,
Were virginal. No blowsy damsel she,
Reeling to pipes of orgiastic minstrelsy
On the dark slopes of savage carnival (Brown 1923, 27).

Ellen's character is the result of her life among the trees and of her harmony with nature. It is not until she has been exposed to Lilla that she is deluded into acting against nature by planning to kill her mother.

Ellen is a living symbol of nature. Her connection with the woodlot as well as her likeness to a "dryad" is expressed throughout the story. When the woodlot is threatened by man, Ellen's soul is threatened. But Ellen's soul is torn because, though she wants to please her husband, she also wants to save her trees. This conflict pains her deeply and results in a mystical experience.

So she stood musing, rapt into a maze,
Half midnight dreaming, half a mid-noon haze,
All quickened vision, and yet dimly seeing,
Like the dark fringes of inanimate being,
Arboreal pageants: for her kindling thought
Dwelt on mingled destiny enwrought
of earth and man (Brown 1923, 67).

Ellen's vision is one that reaffirms nature's excellence and reassures her of the
ingenuity of her instinctive feelings despite the confusion she has known since
encountering man and marriage. Unfortunately, her experience does not help
her solve her problem. She never finds the medium between nature and man
that Robert eventually does because she is so attuned to nature that being
exposed to people who are not in harmony with nature causes her death.

Though Ellen is the central figure in the plot, Robert is the central figure in
the transcendental conflict. He is caught between the two women and is in fact
the most human of the three characters. He appreciates the goodness of Ellen,
and yet longs for the rewards that Lilla tells him are found in the city. Robert
constantly drifts between appreciation of nature and the need to move ahead.

And once a sunset flaming in the west
Halted his haying, though the weather pressed
Him hard to get his load in before dark,
And he called Ellen out and bade her mark
What was going on up there.
... The rose of beauty burned
To a green saffron ash. He looked again,
But dulled his wonder, choked the wakening pain
That springs at beauty's call. A hindering thing,
Ridiculous comin' at the end of day
When a man's tired and gettin' in his hay (Brown 1923, 60).

Such an episode symbolizes Robert's moral struggle between the entities Ellen
and Lilla represent: the beauty and goodness of the sunset and the accomplishment of getting the hay into the barn. Robert's temporary rejection of the beauty he sees hinders nature from "rendering his soul the highest service" (Herrnstadt 2). If Robert does not let himself enjoy the beauty nature has to offer, then he can never benefit from its moral goodness. He does eventually come to an understanding of the importance of the beauty found in nature, but only after he has experienced the loss of the beauty he had in Ellen.

It is not until Lilla attempts to seduce him that Robert is repelled by sin; however he realizes his own crimes against nature too late to save Ellen. Once she is buried, Robert sees himself as an evil person. Like Raven, he has accepted the worst and believes that he can never find his way back to God; therefore he is ready to accept any belief that is better than what he already feels is true.

Robert's mystical experience is the inverse of that experienced by Francis Hume and Raven. It is one of communion with the destructive aspects of man, but it is still an individual experience. Upon his setting fire to the boat and the woods, Robert's vision shows him the destruction of his soul as the way to absolve himself. While bending to the will of his vision, he hears the screams of his mother-in-law who now symbolizes the fear the trees feel at the presence of fire.
The screams wake Robert from his trance and remind him of his ability to overcome his sin with good acts toward nature. He accomplishes two good acts. The first is the saving of his mother-in-law, who forgives him on her deathbed. Because of his fight against sin he is able to accept her forgiveness and forgive himself. Robert's second act is his saving of the woodlot, that part of nature that Ellen symbolized. His actions toward nature allow him to understand man's ability to be saved through service to nature.

Since Brown is showing nature as an escape from the corruption of the post-war society, she believes that in giving himself to nature, man can find the moral goodness in himself. Man cannot fight against nature's influence, as Robert does, or he will find himself lost in sin. Only by portraying nature as a safe haven and a place of salvation can Brown promote the advantages of retreating from society to the country.

Robert is an example of one who, though he discovers the benefits of nature late in his life, is still able to reap nature's rewards. At the end of the poem, the reader feels confident that Robert will never sell the woodlot and will in fact keep it as a memorial to Ellen. This memorial will be for him a constant reminder of the beauty and goodness of both Ellen and nature.

The poem's concentration on the natural surrounding of a region helps Brown show how transcendentalism can offer nature as an escape. If man
wants to leave society to its moral destruction, then Brown offers nature as an always available option. Nature is a place that man can find beauty, goodness, safety, and the simplicity of the past.
V. THE DIARY OF A DRYAD: A TRANSCENDENTAL FANTAS

The Diary of a Dryad was received in 1932 by the few loyal readers Brown had left. Throughout the forty years that she published, her dedication to her career never weakened though her readership decreased almost constantly every year. As her career neared its end she became more mystical and unrealistic in her writing; the transcendental aspects of her work remained. In The Diary of a Dryad, Brown gives her reader a look at transcendentalism from nature's point of view and in doing so shows how unyielding natural laws are for both man and nature.

The Diary of a Dryad is a fantasy told by a dryad who comes into contact with man. Laura, as she identifies herself to humans, can only be seen when she wears human clothes that have been worn at least once before. She, her sister dryads, and her cricket friend, all find humans laughable and sometimes frightening. But Laura joins the human world because she falls in love with the voice of a man, David, a poet who lives in a house near her tree.

Laura decides to explore the human side of life so she can be closer to David. She comes upon his house when the nurse taking care of Mrs. Lee, David's mother, is dismissed. She steals the nurse's dress from its bag and upon donning it becomes visible. She goes straight to Mrs. Lee who is enchanted with her and demands that she stay.
David continually tries to find out more about Laura because, as much as he wants to, he cannot believe she is what she says she is, a dryad; however, he knows that her innocence and ignorance about usual human actions are not feigned. Though he is protective of her, he is always a little afraid of her because, like Ellen Prior, she does not hide her feelings of love for him, and he is already in love with a woman, Amy.

David is suffering from heartache over Amy because she cannot decide whether to be David’s wife or take her vows and be God’s wife. Laura distracts David by helping him find out more about herself. They spend evenings together in his library which she likes because the room feels like a tree. David tries to get Laura to remember her past, but it is all unclear to her, and the only parts of it she remembers with certainty are the times since she first came in contact with his family. As Laura stays longer with the family, she loses more of her dryad self and becomes more human, though she still has the ability to become invisible and float on air whenever she takes off her clothing.

She is told by Mrs. Lee that there are letters in a dresser drawer that must be destroyed without being touched by human hands. Mr. Lee having died suddenly was unable to destroy the letters and as a result his wife found them and realized that he had married her only after he could not have another. Mrs. Lee feels that she needs the kind spiritual Amy to come to the house and pray
away the letters. Only a miracle will satisfy Mrs. Lee. David tells Laura that if Amy does come then Laura will have to leave. Laura cannot bear the thought of being separated from David so she decides that in order to keep Amy away she will make herself invisible and put her cricket friend in the drawer where he can eat the letters.

As Laura is closing the drawer, Mrs. Lee wakes up and believes that a miracle is taking place. Laura locks the drawer again and slips the key back under Mrs. Lee's pillow and leaves the room. Soon a scream is heard and Mrs. Lee, all on fire, comes running into Laura's room. David comes in after his mother and puts out the flames. Both David and Mrs. Lee are badly burned but they survive although they are bedridden for a time. Mrs. Lee tells Laura that she had wanted to see if the letters had been destroyed and finding them only half chewed up, set fire to them. In doing so she carelessly caught her gown on fire. The cricket which had been thrown on the hearth by Mrs. Lee is stepped on in the bustle of tending the injured.

Unfortunately, due to the fire, Laura's plan fails for Mrs. Lee has her sister send for Amy. Unable to bear the love she sees between David and Amy, Laura leaves. She realizes that her selfishness in trying to keep David to herself was against what nature demanded of her. So she turns to the "Great Spirit" that David told her about during their sessions in the library and runs
east forever looking for Him.

This novel, like most of Brown's fiction, has its opposing forces, only they are not expanded on as much as those found in the three works already discussed. Brown does not establish a definite good-versus-evil battle nor does she set up the past-versus-present confrontation. Her focus is on the encounter of the natural with man's society.

As the representative of nature in this novel Laura can tell how humans respond when they see a dryad.

I had seen mortals before when they had caught sight of us. Most of them seemed surprised, but only a little, as if they were wondering what it could be they saw, whether a green light perhaps or a brown shadow. With children it was different. They often saw us. I am sure they did. But they said nothing. I have thought there is something in them that knows the forms of earth better than men and women do, something so quick and quiet that they hardly feel the strangeness until it is gone, and then only for a little (Brown 1932, 4).

When mortals are excited by the sight of a dryad they are looking for the divinity of nature and think they have found it. The children that she speaks of are obviously more attuned to the natural world because their innocence has not yet been spoiled by society. This assertion that children are less stained by life than adults is another common belief held by transcendentalists. Because of their honesty, children are able to see great wonders in nature, but because of their limited development they cannot appreciate them.
Adults give dryads amusement. Laura relates how men ignorant of nature's gifts seemed to her and the other dryads.

They are very silly and they have never learned that the earth is older than they. They do not know that we Dryads can learn in a breath of wind things that take them years to learn, from childhood on. It is true that they believe other things we know nothing about, and perhaps it is really those that make the difference between us (Brown 1932, 7).

Dryads can see the unity of the earth because they never die and so see the earth overcoming all its changes, but men see only what they individually "own." Moreover men believe "other things" which separate them from nature, and these other things are their beliefs in God.

While nature is an example of the unity of the world and guides man to moral goodness, nature cannot be substituted for God. The spirituality derived from nature comes from a harmony each individual man must find with nature. This is because nature is the symbol of God on earth, the minimal manifestation of his laws. Therefore, Laura has no knowledge or belief in God until she encounters humans.

"Did you ever hear of God?"

I [Laura] shook my head, and he seemed to hunt about for some other way of speaking. He tried that other way.

"Did you ever," he said, "hear of a spirit? A Great Spirit, we'll say."

I shook my head. But I liked the sound of it (Brown 1932, 61).
When Laura asks her friend the cricket about the Great Spirit, he also has not heard of such a being. Natural elements like Laura never die and do not prepare for death. They live day to day with few thoughts for the future or for the past. Because Laura will never die, she will never meet God; therefore, she has had no reason to contemplate such a being. Man, on the other hand, needs God because he is mortal, and he can understand God through God's work in nature and know Him when he dies.

Laura is not only ignorant of God but is also of the basic natural laws by which she lives. She is aware that by entering into the human world she is upsetting some kind of balance, but she is does not know how she knows this, and she never attributes the order of things to God. Like the other dryads she does not know how she gets in and out of her tree, or why she should not let humans see her.

But it was true that we did know human speech. For not only had we listened to it and stolen it for fun, but it had been passed on to us like the smell of things that are dangerous, and the mind of birds and trees. How did I know the cricket speech? And yet I did (Brown 1932, 24).

Laura never has reason to question such facts because she has not the curiosity that man has for understanding nature. She is simply a part of nature, and her place is not to wonder about the order of the world but to accept and
follow that order.

Laura's problems develop from her exposure to man, as do most problems for natural characters in other Brown novels and this exposure is both beneficial and detrimental to her. It is beneficial in that she is raised up to a higher level of consciousness and complexity of character. However, this new knowledge is not necessarily good for her because it is not complete.

It is natural that Laura fall in love with a poet, who is in harmony with nature. Through him she enters the human world. The problem is that Laura has never experienced or needed to experience the feeling of love, and so in participating in this human emotion, she opens herself up to both selfishness and God.

Laura's selfishness leads her to the heartache that most humans encounter. She actively tries to change the order of life by entering the forbidden world of man so that she can have David. In disrupting the harmony of the natural course of things, she is punished in the loss of that which she loved. She is also so selfish in her need to be with him that upon understanding that David will die, Laura wishes to die also. Like Ellen Prior, she does not realize that her willingness to make sacrifices for David has personal motives. David tries to explain her uncomfortable situation in the world, but Laura does not understand yet.
But here you are, mixed up with mankind. You can't follow their rules because you don't know them and you wouldn't think they were of the least importance if you did. And whatever you are, I've really no idea I could turn you into anything else. . . . There's another thing they tell you: not to grab, to think of yourself last, or rather, don't think of yourself at all. It's that old stunt: heaven and earth, and earth in the discard (Brown 1932, 96-98).

Like man, Laura suffers pain and through the pain of having lost her human love she comes to understand what moral goodness is.

Throughout the story, David tries to tell Laura what God is because He plays such an important role in the future of David's life due to Amy's struggle between God and him. Laura begins to understand and believe in Him as she becomes more human. Finally, in her suffering and pain she turns to this God she never needed before. She also comes to realize her own selfishness in regard to Amy and David and in regard to her cricket. She can no longer find her tree nor become a part of one. Because of her selfish desire to love a human, she has sacrificed her security in nature and is not welcome there. She no longer belongs to the natural world, and she is certain to receive only pain in man's world; hence she reaches out to God. Her last act is a desperate plea to be punished and then allowed some place of rest.

And I shall try to call Him down to me, for He is the only One that knows about all these things, and the One that truly cares. He knows what I have done. . . . And now there is but one thing left, and
that is to find the great spirit and let Him do what He will with me. . . . I shall go out of the house and run with all my strength forever and forever into the East to find Him (Brown 1932, 122).

In using this novel as a medium for philosophy, Brown sacrifices realism to her ideas. But the transcendental theme saves this story from being pure fantasy. The harshness of nature is exemplified by Laura’s isolation as a result of her deviation from nature’s laws. Though Laura does not become human after her entrance into man’s society, she does forfeit many of her natural instincts leaving her in a limbo between man and nature. The brutality of nature when its unity is disturbed is sobering; if one “deviates from nature, one deviates from God” because nature is the symbol of God on earth (Herrnstadt 6). Though God is not consciously known by a natural element such as an animal, a tree, or a dryad, He made the natural laws and environment; hence if a natural creature breaks those laws, it is left stranded. This focus on the natural element subtly communicates definite warnings to man concerning his own deviations from natural laws. These warnings and the transcendental philosophy in general predominate in this novel. Brown attempts to imbue this work with a spiritual universality that is not found in fantasy novels, or in old-fashioned local color narratives.
VI. CONCLUSION

All of Brown's works which have transcendental philosophy running through them contain elements of her own patterned workmanship. The four works examined here show some of those elements, particularly her interest in nature. Her preoccupation with nature made it easy for her to write local color stories and to introduce transcendental beliefs into them.

She sees in transcendentalism a way to deal with present-day problems. Far from being didactic, she makes it enjoyable for her readers to think about life by watching her characters unravel their own problems. Her characters' beliefs motivate their actions, actions which make for fuller characterization and more meaningful solutions to life's problems than those sometimes found in local color narratives.

Brown's nature ideology is a reaction to the society of her time. When she writes The Day of His Youth (1897), she is interested in the education of the young. When she writes Old Crow (1922) and Ellen Prior (1923) she is trying alternative ways of applying nature's influence to post-war disillusionment. Near the end of her life when she writes The Diary of a Dryad (1932), spirituality becomes more important and her interest in mysticism brings her to consider nature's viewpoint. Each of these works applies Brown's nature ideology in a specific way, and though her application of this ideology is not limited to these
four ways, these four are most commonly found in her canon.

Much of her fiction centers upon a character who is a part of nature and is usually found retreating into natural surroundings. This preference for the natural over man's company immediately cues the reader that this character has Brown's sympathy. In *Paradise*, it is Ned who is constantly wandering around in the woods. In *The Mannerings*, Gilbert Horne often walks in the forest to find solace. And in both *Bromley Neighborhood* and *Ellen Prior* it is the character Ellen who is comfortable in nature.

Also commonly found in the works of Brown is the cabin or hut in the woods that is used as a place of refuge, enlightenment, or escape. This element is found in *Old Crow*, *The Mannerings*, and *The Day of His Youth*. And if it is a house that functions as the place of resolved conflict, then it is usually surrounded by nature as it is in *Judgement* when storm floods the area cutting the house off from the town.

As Brown's belief in transcendentalism deepened over the years, she became more mystical and fantastic in her writing. After the war, she writes such works as *The Wind Between the Worlds*, *The Diary of a Dryad*, and *The Marriage Feast: A Fantasy* which use unrealistic devices such as inhuman characters or alternative planes of existence for setting. Despite her drift away from realism, her belief in nature's ability to help man gain knowledge about
himself and the world was constant.

All of her works with a strong transcendental strain contain common themes. They have the conflict between the natural environment and the man-made environment, between good and evil, between the past and the present. Also common to these works is the idea that only an individual mystical experience can bring understanding.

Brown saw realism and naturalism taking over the literature of the time; consequently, her society began to accept their circumstances, believing that to try to improve the condition of their lives would only end in defeat. She thought that transcendentalism was the balance between zealous Christianity and blind acceptance. Here was a philosophy which allowed man to hope for something better, to experience the wonder of the world first hand, and to understand what it all meant.

To say that Brown's transcendental views were her way of rejecting reality is to make an error. She knew transcendentalism was an old-fashioned philosophy, but she felt its applications to the present could aid people in coping with a faster-paced world. With an idealism of this nature Brown felt man could survive the changes of society and not become "lost."
Vil. WORKS CITED


VIII. WORKS CONSULTED


